

Written on the wind

By Ron Schaper

The last ocean pound trap fishery on the U.S. East Coast, Sunrise Fish Company (Islip, N.Y.), was started by my Dutch immigrant grandfather, Peter Schaper, in the 1920s. As my dad and his brothers grew this business, my brothers and I, along with our cousins, all worked fishing with them — at least during the summer months.

Summer was that golden time when we lived at the beach house, which was the fish camp on a small island in Long Island's Great South Bay. From here, the boats would head offshore each day to raise the net or to maintain the intricate array of poles and leaders and nets.

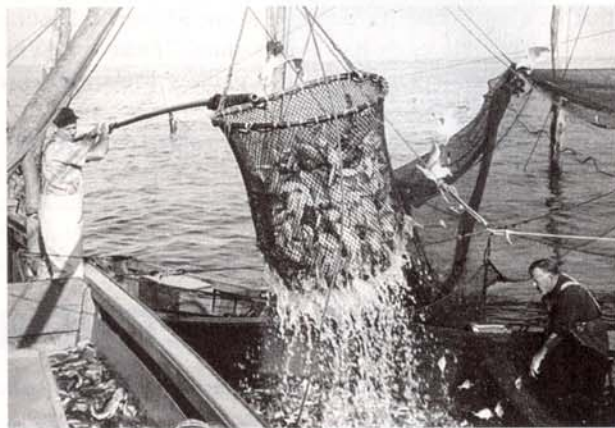
As with fisherman everywhere, the weather played as big a role as the seasonal runs of fish. My mom, Mary Schaper, who prepared my dad's hearty breakfast daily at 6 a.m. and packed his lunch box, also was attuned to the winds that affected us all.

My dad is gone now, as are his three brothers. My 89-year-old mom wrote this piece, which will strike a chord with all who go to sea.

A Fisherman's Wind Barometer

The wind blowing from the north causing kitchen curtains to billow doesn't mean much to most folks, but to a commercial fisherman it's a good sign that the men will "have a day" in the ocean. The scow can roll, poles can be pumped, a dirty net can be changed or leaders set.

A South-east "slop" is an almost sure omen of a swinging boatload of blues with the boat coming back filled to the



COURTESY RON SCHAPER

gunnels.

A nor'easter brings rain and wind — too stormy to raise the nets that day and maybe for a day or two thereafter. But with a dry nor'easter (though too rough as white caps churn up the bay), the crew can catch up on mending the holes that the bluefish chewed through the net, or untangle a section of leader jumbled up from the last storm.

The prevailing summer wind direction at the beach, southwest, brings a gentle cool breeze from the ocean and allows the fishermen easy access through the inlet and out to raise the trap.

The driest wind of all comes from the northwest. Not only does it hasten the nets drying on the dock but it actually flattens out the ocean like a mill pond, knocking down the waves and making it almost a pleasure to work with, instead of against, the elements.

The wind plays an integral part in a fisherman's life. The tops of the trees are scrutinized at dawn and at dusk — "Is it blowing?" "Are the treetops moving?" "Does it seem to be blowing hard or gently?" "Where is it coming from?" The wind sets the tone. Will it be a good day or one of struggle? **NF**

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Email Dock Talk submissions to jhathaway@divcom.com, or fax them to (207) 842-5603. Submissions should be approximately 600 words and include daytime phone number and Social Security number. Authors published in Dock Talk receive \$150.

Consequences

Paradise lost

From U.S. Coast Guard reports

Every year several million visitors come to Hawaii for coconut palm-lined beaches, sun and fresh local seafood. The island state's commercial fishing industry hauls in more than \$70 million in annual revenue.

On the last day of October, a 69-foot, steel longliner loaded with fuel, ice, fresh bait and an eager crew of six, left Hilo to fill its holds with mahi-mahi and ahi tuna

on a 12-day trip.

On the second day out, the skipper noticed the steering was somewhat sluggish. He ordered one of his crewmen, who doubled as the engineer, to go below and inspect the steering gear. The engineer reported a small leak in one of the lines leading to the hydraulic ram that controlled the rudder. The problem was addressed, and the engineer was instructed to check the



USCG

steering and hydraulic fluid levels during his rounds of the mechanical systems, routinely adding fluid.

Ten days into the trip and with more than 3,000 pounds of fish onboard, the