

Island  **THE WEEKLY
Ad-Vantages**  **PACKET**
THE VIEW FROM ATLANTIC AVENUE
By: Bobbi Billings

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Lifelong Learners

Tuesday through Saturday the giggles and sounds wafting through the walls of the Discovery Wharf are heartwarming and fierce. But don't think for a moment that those are only children enjoying the Marine Touch Tank, or the antics of Captain Leroy Weed. The average age of our delighted guests is likely close to 55-60 years old.

The hourly tours begin with guests watching a 15-minute video of Captain Leroy lobstering on the *F/V Hello Darlin'* with Captain Genevieve McDonald. This is followed immediately by an introduction to the Captain by his first mate Michael Cichoracki. And this is when guests of any age hold on, since the Captain isn't shy and no one ever knows what's going to come out of his mouth! What you do know is that it likely will result in laughter around you, and sometimes at your expense. You'll also know that you will leave *Discovery Wharf* a lot lighter, and more informed about the ocean and the critters that live in it. What one needs to decipher on their own is what pieces of information from the Captain are actually accurate and what pieces have been stretched and embellished a bit for the amusement of others.

The interactive touch tank is always very engaging and amusing and while the sea critters are all banded and safe to hold, some still put up a fight and resist human contact by splashing about and sometimes giving their captor a rinse. This is always entertaining. Have no fear, we always have plenty of paper towels on hand for water mishaps. Captain Leroy shows visitors how to tell a male from a female – and usually interjects his own 'birds and the bees' dialog into the conversation, as he strolls down Memory Lane reminiscing on his 81 years, the majority of which have been spent in commercial fishing.

When just eight years old, he used to go out lobstering in a 16' peapod and he'd row all day, or occasionally sail around Deer Isle, hand-hauling 80-100 half-round wooden traps. In those days, they'd find an old telephone pole and fashion new wooden buoys, using a broom handle as a spindle and a glass bottle as a float. Nothing was synthetic, basically everything was handmade - a lot like the stories Leroy shares. And while the captain is known to occasionally hum a song or sing a ditty, unfortunately there's no Tennille to accompany him and sing the backup.

Stop by and see Captain Leroy at our headquarters in Stonington on 13 Atlantic Avenue. Trust me, you won't regret your time with this character. If you have any questions about fisheries or would like to make a reservation to visit the Discovery Wharf this summer go to www.coastalfisheries.org.

Prices to Harvesters in Stonington, as of 6/24/2024

Lobsters (select): \$5.50/lb.
Lobster (hard): \$4.90/lb.
Lobster (shedder) \$4.15/lb.
Bait (pogies): \$90/box
Fuel (diesel): \$3.11/gal

Oceanographic Buoy I-01

44°6'10"N 68°6'44"W - Frenchboro
Top Temperature (1 meter): 52.3°F 11.3°C
Bottom Temperature (50 meters): 44.92°F 7.18°C
Source: www.neracoos.org