

FISHERMEN'S VOICE

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News & Comment for and by the Fishermen of Maine

FREE

Roger's Reminders

“...And Roger, after you pick up the mail go to Lucien's and bring home a pound of bacon, two dozen extra large eggs, a quart of cream and a tin of cream of tartar. Now can you remember that? Perhaps you should write it down. “

“Now Vesty,” Roger says to his wife of 55 years, “I'll remember those few things. You know I never forget anything.”

“Please come right back dear I need them soon.”

“Yes Vesty, yes,” he replies and heads out through the middle barn to his ‘wharf’ truck, one with a rope holding the hood down, fenders fibreglassed, rear window missing and 4 x 4 wood body. He'd bought a new diesel powered Dodge Ram 3500 year before last but he still enjoyed the comfortability of twenty-odd years in the old Ford and besides, the flashing electronic messages on the dash screen were often confusing and the intrusion of the new fangled GPS telling him how to get to the town he'd grown up in got on his nerves. Knew how to shut it off but hated to bother. Finally understood the old loran on his boat, but this one was different. He'd bought the truck for Vesty anyhow.

Day was one of those grey and lowery harbingers of winter with a northwest wind blowing cold at 40-plus knots. Boys hadn't been out to tend traps for goin' on four days, what with the misguided southern tropical that had blown through. Two boats had broken loose and slammed on to the rocks. One a new Ocean 38 belonged to his grandson Stevie. Looked like they'd be able to salvage the running gear and engine. This storm had been a ‘Christer’. A late-in sailboat had broken loose first. Come between the ‘Vesty Lynn’, named for his grandmother and mother (who was a Tracey) and her mooring ball. Local thought was the barnacle laden keel or rudder had sawn through the ‘Vesty Lynn's’ pennant and both had been thrown up on the ledge together.

Perigree Harbor shaped like a capital ‘G’ lying on its back had long ago filled with boats. The older working fleet occupied the right-hand protected cove while newcomers, younger fishermen and summer folks took up the majority of space which lay exposed to the east and dreaded easterly storms. Every year since way back in Roger's memory boats had been blown ashore and every year there was talk of a breakwater. But, in the fatalistic way of Mainer's, decision was around the coffee shop that to apply to the Corps of Engineers for help would be futile and the little town of Perigree Harbor could never afford it. So, like spring when one or more of the local kids with freshly printed driver's licenses would succumb to the thrill of speed before graduation and

then in the fall when a half dozen or so deer hunters would be shot or lost, and the inevitability government put more restrictions on fishing, life went on accordingly.

Roger pulled out the hand fashioned choke, turned the key, pumped the accelerator and hit the starter button. The old truck came to life with the screeching roar of a loose fan belt, leaking exhaust manifold and muffler patched together with sheet metal and baling wire. After a minute to let her warm up, Roger carefully steered his way out by the two tractors, the hay rakes and trailers which like Roger and the truck were still serviceable. He waved to Vesty in the kitchen window as she stood washing breakfast dishes. Came to the end of a long driveway bordered by hayfields tended by four generations of Hadlocks, turned right down the now bare, tree shrouded road over Hadlock Hill and eased into town.

Roger allowed he should probably stop at “Sheila’s”, the only all-day diner in town, for coffee and find out when the other lobstermen were thinking about getting out. He knew there’d be a mess waiting. Twisted lines, smashed traps, gear just plain lost. This would be the first storm with the mandated sinking line and Roger feared there’d be traps hung down they’d never recover.

With a not so silent curse directed to the Fishery Board, he swung into the filled parking lot, carefully closed the truck door and walked into the coffee steamed diner, redolent with odors of bacon, fresh bread and home fries. He spotted son ‘Rusty’ and grandson ‘Rory’ sitting with the Kelley twins at the corner table. Finding an empty chair at another table, Roger carried it over and squeezed in.

“Hey Gramp,” Rory said, “what brings you into town this mornin’?”

“Oh,” Roger replied, “your grandmother needs some cream, eggs, and bacon. She’s trying out a new recipe. How you doin’?”

“Okay, I guess. Insurance should cover the boat. Guess they’ll go after the sailboat owner. Somethin’ about negligence, the mooring line was old.”

Table conversation soon changed from the storm to local politics and gossip. Tables around soon joined in and the red-headed Kelley twins voices were heard above all. Somehow a side conversation changed the direction from the moment to relativity of those involved and to this, Roger with family roots stretching back over two centuries was the genealogical Dean.

“Yes,” he said, “that would be Vern’s daughter. She was an Emory by marriage, came from up around Augusta. Moved here when the wheat farming gave up in the early 1800’s. Vern found her when he and the delegates gathered to go down to Boston and argue for Maine statehood. Her mother they say always wore a flower pinned to her blouse. Fresh or dried, said it gave her a positive outlook on life.”

At a break in conversation, Roger looked at his watch now reading 11AM and allowed, “I’ve got to move along, gotta get to the Post Office before noon or Vesty’ll shoot me.”

Roger walked the two doors down to the tiny Post Office which shared space with ‘Addie’s Gift Shop’, Addie doing double duty as Post Mistress. He stopped to talk for a minute with Amos Mayhew, a lifelong chum

with whom he'd played high school basketball and between them never forgotten a game. They were soon embroiled once again in a deep and heated verbiage of an ancient game with all its subtle moves.

“What brings you to town on a blowy day like this?” Amos finally asked.

“Oh, Vesty's trying out some new recipe on me before she does it for the Church supper next Saturday. Needs some cream and bacon and I'd better get it back soon. See you Amos.”

With mail in hand, Roger ambled across the street to 'Lucien's Grocery and Dry Goods' a store that had been run by the Bouchard family since the depression, they having arrived virtually destitute from the St. John Valley and by stint of hard work, astute business sense, and eight children, had opened a store that became a legend in this small town for having just about anything needed.

Danny Bouchard, Lucien's grandson gave Roger a hearty backslap greeting, asked him about the summer's hay crop and then about Roger's neighbor Bannock's dairy farm.

“We're all worried about Everard's latest heart attack. There's no one left to work that farm.”

For a good half hour Danny and Roger worked over the problems of small farms and the disappearing way of life along with some of the perennial issues facing Perigree Harbor.

Finally Danny says to Roger, “What can I get for you?”

“Oh,” Roger replies, “a pound of bacon and I'll be gettin' along.”

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There are many versions of Hungarian Gullash Soup (Gulyásleves). This one is the simplest and I think the best with smoked sausage playing off against the cooked beef. Simple to make and great for a feel good supper after a cold fall day. Can be also served over wide flat noodles such as fettuccini. Use a heavy 2 quart covered casserole.

2 lbs. beef (chuck)	2 medium potatoes
1 or 2 smoked sausages (Kielbasa)	2 teaspoons paprika
1 lb. onions	3 pints hot water
2 fresh tomatoes	Salt – cooking oil or fat
2 red or green peppers	

Shred the onions and cook to light golden in cooking oil (or fat). Add meat cut in inch-long pieces, chopped tomatoes, and shredded peppers. Season with paprika and salt. Simmer gently for about 45 minutes. Add hot water gradually and cover. Simmer very gently for about two hours. Half hour before serving add potatoes (peeled and quartered) and about ten minutes before serving add the smoked sausage. Enjoy!!

Have you heard President Candidate John Edwards's speech yet?

Fair winds and good roads.

Lee S. Wilbur