



# 2 SLAIN NEAR QUEENS MOSQUE

Imam, associate shot in Ozone Park

A3 | VIDEO AT NEWSDAY.COM



Imam Maulama Akonjee



DANIELLE FINKELSTEIN

## 'Like A Captain Sully But On Sand'

Pilot with engine  
troubles alights  
at Smith Point **A2**



ED BETZ

## Phelps Finale: Gold No. 23

SPORTS



GETTY IMAGES / TOM PENNINGTON



Newsday

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## Digging clams

THE ICONIC DOXSEE FAMILY'S IMPACT ON LI'S SEAFOOD INDUSTRY E2

BOB DOXSEE JR.

act2



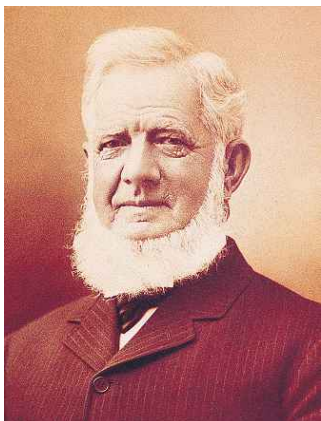
Setauket race walker takes competition in stride E23





NEWSDAY / ALEANDRA VILLA

Bob Doxsee Jr. ran the Doxsee Sea Clam Co. until its remaining operations in Point Lookout were ravaged by superstorm Sandy in 2012. ■ More photos at [newsday.com/lilife](http://newsday.com/lilife)



**James Harvey Doxsee, 1825-1907, founded J.H. Doxsee & Son in 1865.**

DOXSEE FAMILY

# A sea change

**Bob Doxsee Jr. looks back on his family's century and a half in the clamming industry**

**BY BILL BLEYER**  
*Special to Newsday*

**B**ob Doxsee Jr. and three generations of his ancestors made their living netting fish or dredging clams off the South Shore. He no longer goes out on the water — for business or

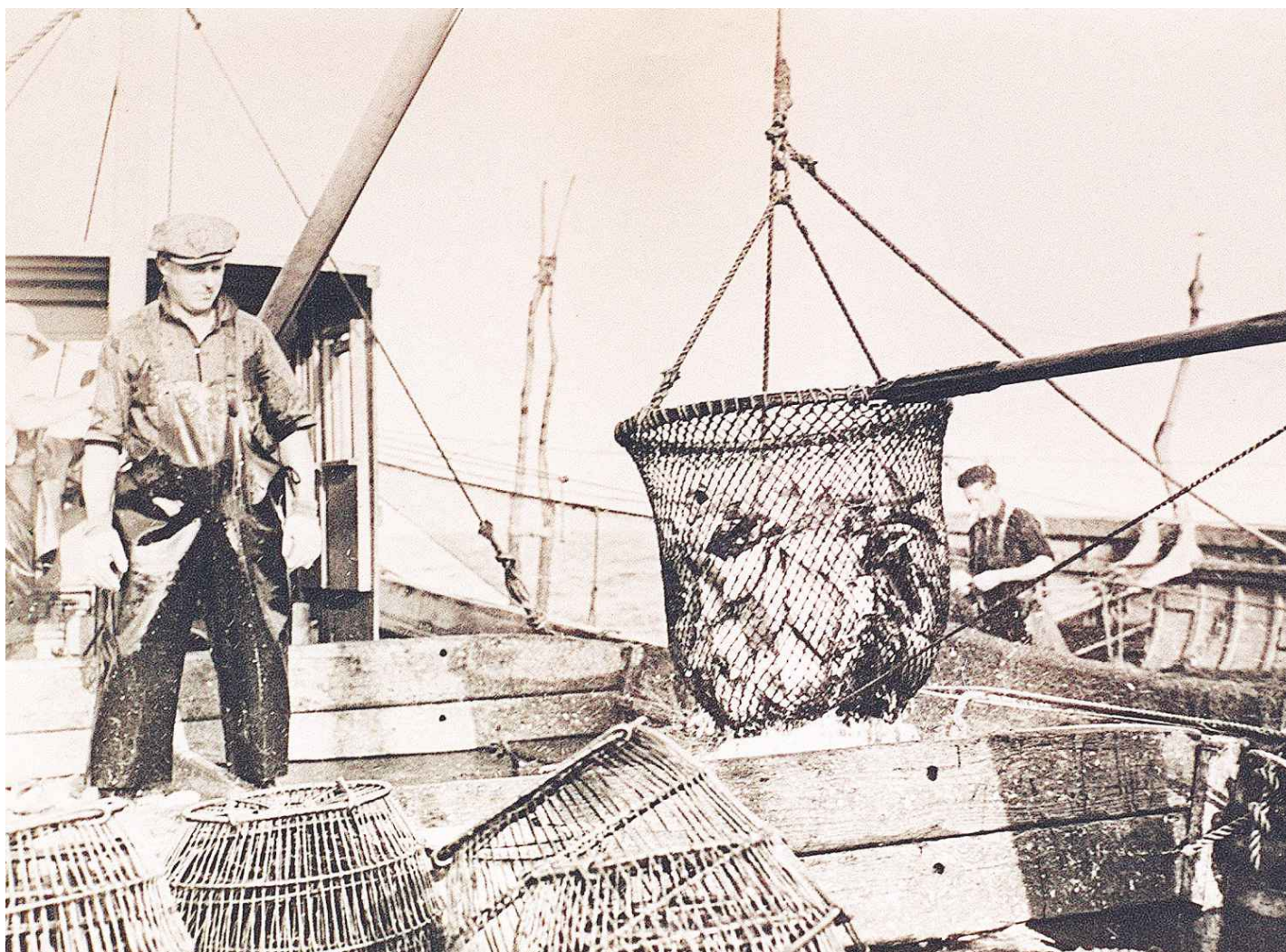
pleasure — but has still managed to keep the family's storied legacy afloat.

The Doxsee family had been legendary for its fishing and seafood processing business since the Civil War. When superstorm Sandy wrecked the company's dock and last processing shed on the shore

of Point Lookout in October 2012, Doxsee's only connection to the water became the view of Reynolds Channel from the spacious house built on what was once company land.

Doxsee, 85, is intent on making sure the company's legacy is not forgotten and said

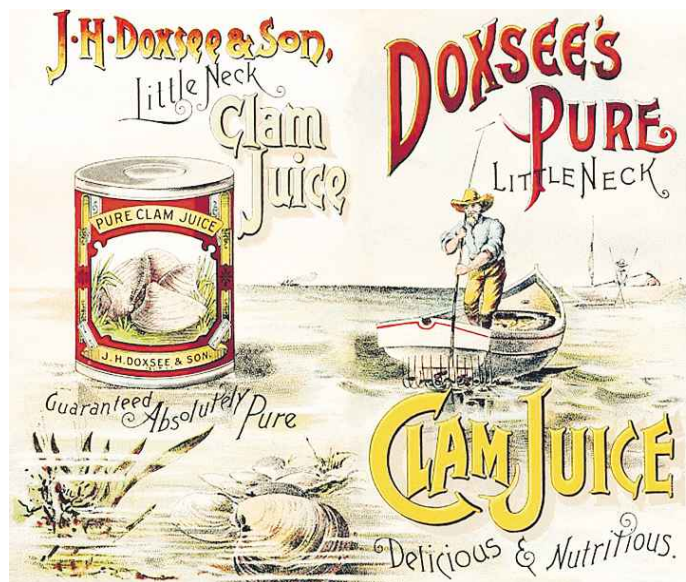




Bob Doxide Sr. collects the catch on board the Bright Eye 2 fishing boat, circa 1940, in the Atlantic Ocean off Point Lookout.



Fishermen with Deep Sea Fish Co. onboard a pound boat, circa 1910. The boats were used to haul fish from traps. At right, the J.H. Doxide & Son logo circa 1892 for canned clam juice.



he has increasingly enjoyed talking publicly about that maritime life and the history of his family.

He is stepping up his schedule of lectures at museums and libraries around the region, including upcoming appearances in Seaford, Bay Shore, Huntington and elsewhere on

Long Island.

He has also presented Power-Point lectures at museums in the region, including Mystic Seaport in Connecticut "for quite some time. But it's only been the last few years that I've got serious about it," Doxide said. "It's Long Island history, and I enjoy it. A lot of

it has to do with not letting the brain cells wither."

#### GENERATIONS IN BUSINESS

The Doxide seafood story begins in 1865, when James Harvey Doxide was running his family's Islip farm. It included a cannery that processed corn, tomatoes and

other vegetables. Family lore has it, though Doxide isn't so sure about it, that two men whose names have been lost rented a cannery from James Harvey on the Great South Bay waterfront in Islip and attempted to can seafood.

"They failed and couldn't preserve it," Doxide said.

## MARITIME MUSINGS

Bob Doxide Jr. will recall his decades carrying on the family clamming tradition at libraries across Long Island:

**Levittown Historical Society**, Sept. 19, 7:30 p.m.  
levittownpl.org/research-history

**Bay Shore Historical Society**, Sept. 21, 7:30 p.m.  
bayshorehistoricalsociety.org

**Connetquot Public Library**, Oct. 12, 7-8:30 p.m.  
connetquotlibrary.org

**Seaford Historical Society**, Nov. 3, 7 p.m.  
seafordhistoricalsociety.org

**Huntington Public Library**, March 25, 2017, 3 p.m.  
www.myhpl.org



**ON THE COVER** An employee, in the mid-1970s, shovels clams into a funnel for bagging on Bob Doxide Jr.'s boat Martha Ruth. The Doxide family had been involved with clamming since 1865.

"Their cans would go bad." So James Harvey and brother-in-law Selah Whitman took over the operation after a year. "He had some help and it took some time, but he solved the problem of the spoilage," Doxide said. "He was a pioneer in that respect."

J.H. Doxide & Son (later renamed J.H. Doxide & Sons) became the first Long Island company to can hard-shelled clams and bottle clam juice. It also began to can "American Lunch Fish" in 1872; that was bunker bait fish processed to compete with sardines after James Harvey figured out how to make the bones dissolve. The Islip cannery closed in 1905. Two historical markers near the Islip town dock com-

See COVER STORY on E4



# A legacy on LI's seas

COVER STORY from E2

memorate the company.

In 1900, with Great South Bay harvests dwindling, James Harvey's oldest son, Henry, set up a branch operation in Ocracoke, North Carolina. A decade later, his son James Harvey II moved to Marco Island, Florida, where canning continued until 1948. That branch of the family business was sold several times and is now part of the Bumble Bee line, which sometimes includes Doxsee clam juice produced in Cape May, New Jersey.

When Henry went south, another of James Harvey's sons, John C., under the name of Deep Sea Fish Co., began setting traps from a fishing camp where the Fire Island Coast Guard station is now situated. The company published brochures that claimed clam juice would cure indigestion, dyspepsia, disordered stomach, constipation and hangovers and provided recipes for its use.

In 1919, John moved the operation to Meadow Island in the bay near Jones Inlet. John's sons, Bob L. (Bob Doxsee Jr.'s father) and Spencer, moved the business to Reynolds Channel in Point Lookout in 1933 and renamed it Bright Eye Fish Co. because bright eyes are the hallmark of fresh fish. They staked "pound traps," a maze of nets to catch migrating fish, to the bay bottom and caught albacore, bonito, mackerel, butterfish, porgies, bluefish, fluke and squid.

There was really no community of Point Lookout then. The company set up a tent and then a little cottage and the dock. The processing plant came later. As did the family's in-water aquarium in Reynolds Channel. "We had sharks in there, a great big sea turtle, stingrays," Doxsee recalled.

## OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

There were setbacks along the way, no surprise for a business dependent on the uncertainty of Mother Nature. The great hurricane of 1938, the Long Island Express, and another in 1944, the Great Atlantic Hurricane, destroyed



In this 1980s photo, workers dump clams into a hopper on the Day Star, a boat built in 1978 by Bob Doxsee Jr. for dredging sea clams.

the family's nets. A month before the second storm, the company had begun a transition to dredging for surf clams — primarily used for fried clam strips — while also netting finfish. But after the Great Atlantic Hurricane, the Doxsees switched entirely to dredging for clams.

Initially, the clams were

raked out of the bottom by steel "dry" dredges. Later the company used hydraulic dredges to dislodge the clams from the bottom.

At its peak during World War II, the company had five boats, while another 17 independent craft supplied seafood. It employed about 100 workers, half on the boats and

the rest shucking and packaging clams.

In the beginning, the clams shucked in Point Lookout were shipped to the F.H. Snow Canning Co. in Maine. About 1960, J.H. Doxsee & Sons began shipping frozen chopped clams packed in half-gallon milk cartons all around the country.

Doxsee's father, who was mayor of Freeport in the late 1940s and died in 1967, turned over what was then called Long Island Sea Clam Co. to his son about 1960.

He had spent time around the company operations "as far back as I can remember," Doxsee recalled. "When I was too little to help, I would hang





Bob Doxsee Jr. on site in Point Lookout in July 2010, when he was still president of Doxsee Sea Clam Co.



Doxsee is stepping up his schedule of lectures, during which he focuses on the history of his family's business.

over the rail and watch the fish swimming around." As he got older, "I did everything," working on the boats and in the processing plant. Doxsee started working full time after high school.

He was at the helm of the company when Mother Nature dealt the business its worst setback. In 1975 one of

its boats, Doxsee Girls, with its crew of four was lost in a line squall off the Virginia coast. "That's painful," Doxsee said.

With catches diminishing, in 2008 Doxsee made a dramatic change. He ended the wholesale processing operation and demolished the processing plant decorated with artifacts



J.H. Doxsee & Sons' factory in Islip, circa 1900. At the plant they processed clams and fish as well as produce from the family farm.

dredged up by the boats.

"It was time," Doxsee said. "I was old. The plant was old. The business was no longer viable."

Declining catches and increased regulations to protect the marine life that was left were part of the equation. "We need regulations," Doxsee said, although he has not always been

happy with the regulators.

#### WINDING DOWN

With the main plant razed, Doxsee continued selling frozen products retail out of a shed next door.

The company further contracted in 2010, when Doxsee sold the remaining two boats — the 75-foot Day

Star and 58-foot Bright Eye IV — and then bought shucked clams from other processors.

That downsized version of Doxsee Sea Clam Co. continued until Sandy stormed ashore in 2012.

"My dock was totally destroyed, but I didn't need it anymore" because the boats had been sold, Doxsee said. "I was so lucky."

He wasn't as lucky with the processing shed. It was knocked off its foundation and had to be demolished. That was the end of the Doxsee family seafood business — after 146 years.

The company owned 360 feet of shoreline until 2004, when Doxsee built a spacious pale green shingled house on part of it. He shares it with his wife of 60 years, Pat. The only hints of the family business are a painting of one of the Doxsee boats and a framed poster of James Henry on the walls of Doxsee's third-floor office.

Their two daughters worked for the seafood operation part time. Beth lives in Vancouver, where she retired after serving as captain of tall ships, including the Hudson River sloop Clearwater and Corwith Cramer. Jennifer, who lives in Long Beach and runs a marketing firm, has two sons.

After superstorm Sandy, Doxsee sold the remaining property. Four other houses have been built, and a fifth is pending.

"I never really had time" for recreational fishing or boating while working six and a half days a week, Doxsee said in his gravelly voice, its severity offset by flashes of wry, sarcastic humor. And now that he has the time to relax on the water, he's just not interested after being tied to the sea for so long.

"The history of harvesting shellfish by European settlers can be traced to the Doxsee family, among many other settling families," said Nancy Solomon, executive director of the nonprofit Long Island Traditions, which preserves maritime history.

"James H. Doxsee was perhaps one of the first to recognize that clamming could become a major industry for Long Islanders, creating hundreds of jobs," Solomon said. "Bob is looked upon as one of the last authorities on western Long Island's fishing heritage, and the last of a generation that saw fishing as a way of life, rather than a job."

NEWSDAY / MARIO GONZALEZ

FRANK DOXSEE

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