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such as a wedding, reunion, or festival, because of how it displays cultural identity.

Although some may think the fish noodle soup is simply a comfort food, I think of it as more than being just very convenient and filling. It is also a reminder of home, as the unique taste and smell unlock certain memories, so feelings of heavy emotion are also invoked. This explains why older generations, such as our parents and grandparents, would want to maintain the Karen culture and tradition and keep it alive, so that it is not forgotten and lost when the years pass. Keeping the traditions alive and known is a way to reflect on beliefs and values and depicts the accurate details of everyday life and language for a specific cultural group.

My family's *kaw naw* would always be made on a Saturday morning, when my mother would wake up early—and we'd wake up, too, with all the noise from her footsteps and the strong aroma coming from the kitchen. To make *kaw naw*, the first ingredient is a whole fish that you prepare by boiling and taking the skin off. After the fish is boiled and softened, my mother would retain its head and bone, and later, she would mash the meat into a paste with aromatics and spices, stirring the broth every five minutes. Onions, star anise, garlic, ginger, and turmeric would also be incorporated in the soup. While waiting for the soup, my mother also ground fresh red pepper to put it in the soup to add some spice. My family loves heat, so usually, our *kaw naw* is super spicy. The rice noodles in the soup are boiled and cooked separately.

For spices and seasonings, my family stays with the classics, using Thai chili pepper. Most important is the lemongrass, which gives a nice fresh, distinct taste and smell. The ingredients to this dish have not really changed at all in my family since I was young, and I think that is because it is best to keep it culturally traditional as well as original, so that when making the dish, it can be a reminder of the Karen history. When the soup is done, we usually eat it with a side dish of bean sprouts, parsley, basil, boiled eggs, lime, fried onion, Chinese

long bean, Asian meatballs, and fried split chickpeas.

As a Karen American, sometimes I feel that it's hard to find acceptance and clarity on where I belong, because I don't always feel fully traditional and culturally Karen, but also am not completely Americanized. I think this is something shared with many other Karen youth, as many of us came to the states at a very young age, and we are always adapting and assimilating to a new American culture, sometimes unintentionally losing parts of our own. Older generations sometimes subconsciously judge the youth over this adaptation, especially when not practicing a certain tradition or part of our culture. On the other hand, we also struggle sometimes to find acceptance of our Karen culture and traditions in mainstream American culture.

When I eat traditional food like *kaw naw*, it gives me that feeling and sense of belonging to the Karen culture. Having the ability to cook the dish is important, because it reminds us of where we came from and the sacrifices that our parents had to go through, helping me to understand more why I am where I am today.

Eating food together is essential and a big part of the Karen culture. It unites everyone—both my family and our community—as one. It enables us to stay connected with the ones we love, and I feel it helps improve our mental health and our well-being. When we eat together as a family, there are usually some sort of stories or jokes being shared, especially by my mother and brother. The stories are usually about something one of us did when we were younger, but we also talk and reflect on what's going on in our lives. When my mother tells stories from my childhood, no matter how repetitive the story is or how many times she tells it, when we're all together, it brings us warmth and comfort: just like the bowl of *kaw naw*. ▼

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# In Search of Healing

BY NANCY SOLOMON

As I wrote last spring, we were at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, and unfortunately, we are still social distancing, if emerging at all. The toll of this pandemic is new to all of us, but sadly, it is not the first one in our region's history. In 1917, the flu pandemic struck New York, ultimately taking the lives of millions of people around the world. One of the side effects of the pandemic was the exodus of many New York City residents to Long Island, on the advice of the health care community. Some came to West Meadow Beach near Stony Brook, where they erected tents on platforms and later, built modest summer bungalows, taking advantage of the cool Long Island Sound breezes to escape the tenements and apartment buildings where the flu had spread like wildfire.

Then as now, city residents came to Long Island's beaches for fresh air and salt water, where they could enjoy swimming and have picnic lunches and dinners. Others flocked to the party boats for a morning or afternoon of fishing and were able to eat outdoors on canals throughout Long Island. As an avid beachcomber, I enjoyed seeing families marveling at the variety of seashells found on our beaches and watching young children learning to swim in the bayfront beaches on the north and south shores. In addition, those with summer homes on Long Island have moved here semi-permanently, enrolling in local schools.

On the bright side, most of the party and charter boats returned to work in late June when the first restrictions were lifted. Recreational fishermen patronized the fleet, which had limited capacity to prevent contamination, and also went to the public docks and fishing piers around our coastlines. Often, there were families



Ted Fishing Boat: Recreational fishermen rented boats from Ted's Fishing Station in Point Lookout. All photos courtesy of Long Island Traditions.

John Remsen, Sr. in one of his garveys c. 1988.



Camping c. 1925, West Meadow Beach.

a World: Bay Houses of Long Island” was shown on PBS, as part of their *Treasures of New York* series. You can purchase it on our website, if you are interested, along with our book *On The Bay*.

We also lost a legendary boat builder, John Remsen, Sr., this summer. As I wrote in 2012, John was the builder of garveys, a traditional flat bottom boat used by South Shore baymen to harvest clams, killeys, and finfish in the shallow bay waters. John was generous and built boats not only for baymen but for the local environmental group SPLASH (Stop Polluting Littering And Save Harbors), which cleans the canals of many South Shore communities. He also received an apprenticeship grant from the New York State Council on the Arts so that his son John could carry on the tradition. We shall miss him. You can learn more about him on our YouTube Channel. Meanwhile, we hope all of you are well and staying safe. ▼

participating in the time-honored tradition of catching their own bait in order to catch fish for their families. The families included immigrants and long-time residents alike, sharing tips on how to catch fish from the shorelines.

In addition, local commercial fishermen were able to sell directly to local residents and saw more orders placed by restaurants when they were able to re-open for outdoor dining in July. Baymen, like Bill Fetzer of Oyster Bay, survived this way, along with trawler fishermen in Montauk and elsewhere. Under the Cares

Act, Congress also appropriated funds for commercial fishermen affected by the loss of income due to the pandemic, which we hope will be available by the end of the year.

Although we, here at Long Island Traditions, are glad and thankful for all these developments, we have been greatly affected by the loss of public programs. For the first time, we were not able to host bay house tours, participate in various maritime festivals, or host our long planned maritime film festival. Thankfully, our new documentary “A World Within

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