It is early morning in a time long ago, a simpler, less hectic time and the sun has just come up over the horizon in this summer of 1951. I am asleep in the attic of our bungalow by the front window when Harry Moeckle awakens me. I dress quickly and we walk east on 1st Ave, cross the railroad tracks and north on NJ Ave. There is still a hush over the Anglesea section of North Wildwood and we talk in low voices so that we do not disturb those who are still sleeping. We are going to Moore’s Pier at Spruce and NJ Ave, to see for ourselves the weather and ocean conditions before we commit ourselves to going deep-sea fishing.

As we reach the pier the sun is still low on the horizon, it is a brilliant gold-pink and its rays turn the waters of the becalmed inlet all shimmering where they reflect off the few small ripples. Although it is still very early, there is much activity. We are somewhat surprised by what is going on. Trucks are coming and going with deliveries. A large number of people are already on the pier in addition to the captains and mates.

People come to the pier by foot, trolley car, bus or car. There is ample parking along the foot walk or in the rubble strewn parking lot on the east side of NJ Ave, opposite Moore’s. With all the activity around us it is still quiet, still peaceful, no one yelling or screaming shouting to “park your car here.” There is no need. People know this is the place. At one time the “Fisherman’s Special” trains came huffing and puffing into Anglesea R.R. Station at 1st and New Jersey Ave. Special trains came huffing and puffing into Anglesea R.R. Station at 1st and New Jersey Ave.

When Moore’s Inlet Café was built in 1913 the Pier was called Mace’s after Charles Mace. Most of the boats were commercial fishing boats but there were at least 22 party boats at the pier.

As we reach the main pier we see that one boat dock is empty. That captain has sailed over to Olson’s Pier to gas up. There is a boat on the marine rail at Olson’s Boat Yard being hauled. There is activity at Jessie’s Pier on Hereford Ave where the Patricia-C is berthed. We find Captains O’Brien and Wiederstrom, of the Sea Hawk II and Miss Wildwood, and talk to them about the weather, ocean conditions and yesterday’s catch. We ask about yesterday’s catch even though I was on the pier when the fleet came in and I know there was a good “catch.” We also ask about ocean conditions even though we can see for ourselves that it is calm. There are no breakers on the Ocean Bar or on the Bay Bar opposite us. There are only long gentle swells moving up the bay. We can see all this right from the pier. There is no other pier quite like this one. Harry wants to go out, but has no money. He makes some sort of arrangement with one of the captains. Today, it will be the Miss Wildwood. It is agreed and I am off to home and breakfast. On the way I pass the mates who are preparing the day’s bait. The surf clams are delivered in bushel bags made of burlap. They make it look easy and I suppose it is with practice, to shuck a clam. They sit on a piling, take a clam, run a knife around the top inside of the clam shell cutting both muscles at the back of the shell and the clam is open. Repeat on the bottom and drop the meat into a bucket or can with its juice. The shells are dropped into another burlap bag.

Some of the captains are in Moore’s Café having an eye-opener. All of the captains have run-up their engines; some are doing it now. Boat engines are very cranky in their damp environment and some skippers such as Capt. Harris of the Lucille II, are having difficulty starting them. Some captains run-up their engines every fifteen minutes or so. They do this either to give patrons a sense of security and the knowledge they won’t be left behind, or they just know their engines.

I reach home, but am unable to eat much. I wasn’t very hungry last night after working at Marguerite’s Fudge Shop. I just figure it is nerves, so I keep telling myself, I want to go. I pick up my lunch, my rod, reel and a bucket and back to the pier I go. I almost run up New Jersey Ave. to the wooden walkway alongside Moore’s. I hear the boards under my feet, they yield to my weight. It is somehow a pleasant feeling.

When you consider the total cost of this trip, you can see why we have carefully planned this trip over the past several weeks. The trip itself cost $2.50 for a full day. The hooks, sinkers and rig total almost $2.50. With money set aside for the “pool” and soda, the total cost of the trip could amount to about $6. Earning $.40 an hour it has taken me about 15 hours of work to pay for this trip. Maybe I can sell some of the fish I catch on the pier to make up part of the cost. The most important thing, I tell myself, is the coming day and not if I catch a lot of fish.

Capt. Wiederstrom of the Miss Wildwood is in his small wheel-house talking to Capt. O’Brien of the Sea Hawk II. Capt. Wiederstrom is a big man and this helps make the wheel-house smaller. The Miss Wildwood is the same type boat as the Lucille II, known as the old fashioned type. They are fishing yachts with their below deck cabins. To get to the bow on this type of boat you have to climb around the cabin and sit on the cabin top. The two captains are talking about which grounds they will try today. All boats at the pier are equipped with the latest equipment.
I quickly drop my line over. My line hits bot-
tom and I eagerly await the tug of a porgy. I wait. 
Nothing happens. I reel my line up and both baits 
gone! I felt nothing. This happens several more 
times. Then I remember George Fords advice 
that if you don't feel them bite, either they bit 
before your line hit bottom, or they bit before you 
got the slack out of your line. I try it, I stop my line 
just before it hits the bottom and raise the rod tip. 
If nothing happens I drop the line to the bottom 
and again raise the rod tip. One, or both of these 
work and I start to catch fish. Soon my bucket is 
over-flowing and my fish are lying on the deck. 
We continue to catch fish. It's a good thing the ocean's 
resources are limitless or else we would catch all 
the fish and not leave any for those still to come. 

The captains drop clam shells over the side, 
either whole or broken up for chum to attract the 
fish. You can see other chum in the water 
that is not clam shells. Some are not enjoying 
this trip. I am not criticizing, I am just making an 
observation, a few moments ago I thought I might 
join them.

One of my Porgies is very large and may do 
difficulties on the balance arm later. The fish still 
bite so we continue fishing. Around noon we are vis-
ited by a school of summer mackerel. They don't 
usually bite on clam, but on this day they do. 
Someone hooks one reeling in his line. Soon, most 
of us, including myself, drop our lines just under 
the surface. These summer (Boston) Mackeral 
gives us diversion and a bit of sport. They are 
more lively than Porgies, but an heavy tackle they 
just splash around. Some have ignored the 
Mackerel. They are concentrating on meat 
in their burlap bags.

At 1:30 P.M. the captain calls “all lines up”, 
and there is grumbling from the stern where the 
“meat” fisherman are sitting with their full bags. 
Some of the bags are so full they can't be closed 
amore! They want more! They know we are moving 
clsoer to shore (in shore) to drift for fluke 
(summer Rounder) and not that many are caught. 

We have sat here all day in one spot because 
the fishing was good. The weigh-in is an event and 
people crowd the edge of the pier to watch the catch of the day. 
Those with large edible fish put them on the bal-
ance arm and pit one fish against another. Some-
times, unsure that the arm is accurate they ask 
that the fish be swapped end for end. The heavier 
fish goes down the lighter one goes up. My large 
Porgy goes on the arm and beats all comers but 
one, by a visible margin. It is very close but in 
my favor. He asks they be switched end to end. I do 
not object. I want to be reasonable.

The result is the same. He doesn't give up. 
He squeezes my fish to see if there is a sinker 
inside! This stinker doesn't give up and now he 
wants me to cut open my fish. Now, I object. There 
are no weights in my fish and I ask the mate to 
verify it. He does. I receive the enormous sum of 
$3.50. Amazing!

Dad goes home to get the wash tub. I start to 
sell some of my catch. I sell 3 Porgies for .25c. I 
don't really have to sell them, they sell themselves, 
and people want to buy! I sell $3.25 worth of 
fish, a total of 39 fish. I sell the last 10 for .25c 
and still have plenty to take home. The wash tub 
is still need. The fish are put in the tub and 
taken home where I spend more than an hour 
cleaning the fish only to give them away.

The trip cost $2.50 including the pool. I won 
the pool, sold part of my catch and had fresh 
fish left over. I had a wonderful day on the wa-
ter, fresh air and sunshine. For a layout of about 
$5.00, I returned with $7.00. Not bad!

So ends my tale of “A Day’s Trip”. The day 
ended, the trip is over, these boats sail no more – 
even in my memory which fades a bit more 
every year. Until? Were you there?