



“Summer afternoon - summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language.” ~Henry James

## Leprechaun Sited in Cape May

by Fritz Butler



Granddaughter, Diane McMonagle & her friend Sue Brennan on an early morning trip, 1968



Grandson Timmy Butler was the official Leprechaun Mascot at all boat parades.



The Leprechaun sets out to sea on its maiden voyage, 1964



Timmy Butler & Joey McMonagle, 1974



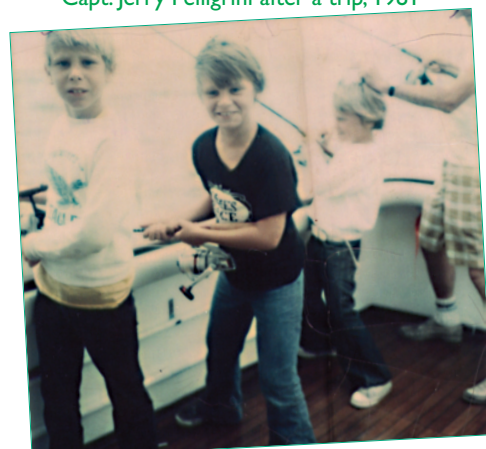
Grandson Mickey with his dad Pat 'Micko' 1973



Sharon McMonagle & Capt. Jerry Pelligrini after a trip, 1981



Jimmy McMonagle, 1981



Jimmy & Frank McMonagle, PJ Butler, 1974



Bobby McMonagle after a perfect summer day onboard his brother's boat, 1980

It has been written that if you capture a Leprechaun he can be fooled into revealing the location of his pot of gold, but the wily Leprechaun is good at tricking mere mortals and if you take your eyes off of him for an instant, he will vanish. And so begins the tale of a Leprechaun right here in Cape May County.

The year is 1964 and it is the glory days of Big Game fishing. It's a time when only the privileged could afford the boats and equipment capable of venturing into the deep off our coast in pursuit of the largest of game fish, the marlins & tunas. Dot & Joe McMonagle's all mahogany, 38 foot Chris Craft sportfishing boat, the Leprechaun, has just arrived at her home port marina in Cape May after a two year rebuild at the famed Rybovich Boatworks in Florida. The rebuild marked the beginning of a series of boats known as a Chrisovich, but that is another story for another article. A crowd has formed to welcome the boat home at what was then Cape Island East Basin Marina, now known as the Canyon Club. You see, very few people in the mid-Atlantic area have ever seen a vessel such as this with its spiked outriggers, radar mast, etc. A site it was to see as the Leprechaun backed into her slip for the first time, and it is my earliest memory of life at the beach.

The Leprechaun went onto compete in many fishing tournaments from Montauk,

NY to Ocean City, MD and true to its name, many pots of gold were surrendered in the form of tournament wins. But that was not the Leprechaun's true treasure. Leprechaun's treasure was in being an extension of what Dot McMonagle, AKA Grandmom or GG, called our own summer camp. From Grandmom & Grandpop's home at 14th & Ocean in North Wildwood to the back bays, and the big boat in Cape May, they gave the gift of the shore and all it had to offer. We learned how to swim, fish, water ski, surf, and crab. Most of all, we learned to love the sea. Joe & Dot had 8 children, 7 boys & one daughter (my mother.) Their children had a combined 32 children. Nearly all of Joe & Dot's grandchildren were old enough to enjoy the Leprechaun. Sure, the adults fished offshore all the time and some of kids got to go on the long trip to the Canyon from time to time, but some weekend days were often what Grandmom called Kid's Day. A bunch of us kids would pile into the boat to go bluefishing, fishing for weakfish & flounder, or just a cool boat ride to places like Lewis, DE.

We grew up, and the Leprechaun was sold, so Grandpop could buy one of the new fiberglass fast boats, a move he always regretted. In true Leprechaun fashion, we averted our gaze and the Leprechaun disappeared.





**“Grandparents are those with silver in their hair and gold in their heart.” ~Dorothy**

Flash forward to 2008. Our grandparents have passed away some years ago and family as it often does has drifted apart somewhat. Many of us have our beach houses and some have moved away. I or anyone else in the family has not seen the Leprechaun since it was sold some 20 years ago. By complete surprise, my brother Jimmy-Joe calls to tell me he found the Leprechaun and it is for sale. Imagine the flood tide of memories that came rushing back. What was I to do, but go and see her? I pulled into a rickety old marina in Tuckerton, NJ and there she was, the Leprechaun. She was in sad shape riding low in the water, her engines were balls of rust, her main salon area had been gutted, the forward lower areas were in shambles, her bright chrome & stainless steel hardware had been painted to cover corrosion, and I nearly stepped through the rotted foredeck. I gave the current owner a tour and description of what Leprechaun was like in her day and thanked him, but felt the work to restore was overwhelming. Needless to say, I left with head hung low in utter disappointment and sadness. You see, classic wood boats of yesteryear are not just objects, they have a soul and a story to tell.

But that’s not the end of the story. Several months pass, I received another phone call. Leprechaun had been purchased by a gentleman intent on moving the boat to Florida for a rebuild, but the fellow had to abandon the boat at a marina in North Carolina. It seems the gentleman found out what I already knew. He was, however, willing to let the boat go for a number more reasonable as to make a rehabilitation possible. What was I to do? The wily Leprechaun had captured my brother & I and not the other way around. You guessed! We bought her back. Now what? Off on a truck to VA for a full custom rebuild.

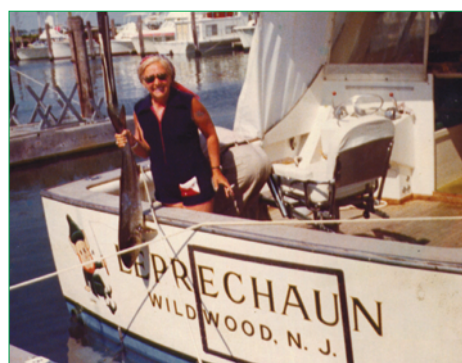
Leprechaun is now back in Cape May at her original marina and wouldn’t you know it, the rebuild was almost 2 years. What’s more? A crowd had gathered at the dock as she backed into her berth, but this time it was a crowd of family & friends reunited to lay eyes on a legend and legacy created by Joe & Dot McMonagle, The Leprechaun. The Leprechaun is as new and she rests in her berth as a Thoroughbred rests in her stall. She is once again running the Canyons off New Jersey. I don’t think we will gaze away this time. No, the Leprechaun is firm in our family’s grasp this time and shall not get away.



Joey & Fritz Butler



Robert McMonagle & JimmyJoe Butler 1974



Grandmom with a Keeper, 1972



Dot & Joe in their glory days



1960s~ Grandmom (right) preparing to receive the prized trophy at the Crown Colony Awards Ceremony.

Grandmom is noted in Sportfishing history as one of the best fisherwoman there was!



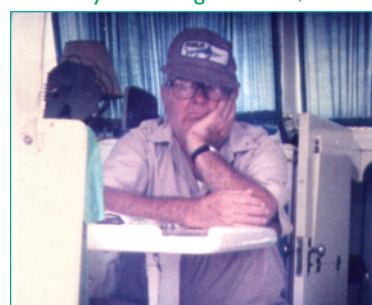
Dot & Joe with baby Mickey, 1970



Dorothy McMonagle Kulisek, 1984



Joe Mick & Billy Betz, B Dock, Cape Island Marina, early 1970s



Grandpop napping on a trip home, 1984

**And so begins the rebirth of the Leprechaun**



This is what a 50 year old mahogany plank boat looks like under all that paint.



Major repair work was required on the deck



This was someone’s solution to stop the leaks with temporary patching ~ pieces of plastic secured with screws and 5200 Blahhhhhhhhh.



Glassing almost complete... soon to be on her way to Cape May!

photo courtesy of Karen Betz Holland