



MEMBERS of the Anglers Club of Absecon Island fish from their own pier in Margate. The 500-foot-long pier is off Exeter

ave. When not fishing, club members play pinochle and other indoor games in their clubhouse.

Sept 29
1974

A More Leisurely Way

Piers Delight Fishermen at Shore

By CHARLES LIBRIZZI
Of The Bulletin Staff

Margate — one of the more leisurely ways to fish South Jersey coastal waters is via the fishing pier, about a dozen of which are in operation in Atlantic and Cape May counties.

The method is an attractive alternative to bobbing around in a boat or standing in a crashing surf wearing hip-high boots.

Because there's usually a fee involved, the fishing pier is generally more selective and less crowded than the waterfront bulkheads at street ends or the rock-ribbed jetties jutting into the sea.

Not Real Piers

Some of them are not true fishing piers. They were not originally built for that purpose. The one in the north end of Atlantic City was part of an old bridge, as was the one in the channel leading to Avalon and still another in Scotch Bonnet, just west of Stone Harbor.

Some are privately-owned but open to the public on a daily, seasonal or yearly fee basis, such as the Sea Horse Pier, off 14th Street North, Brigantine; the 59th Street Pier, Ocean City; the Avalon Fishing Pier, off 32d st., Avalon; and Dad's Place, in the Grassy Sound Channel, west of North Wildwood.

At least one is municipally

operated. The Ventnor Fishing Pier off South Cornwall ave. in that city, is open to Ventnor residents only from May to October for \$2 a day or \$21 a season.

Private Clubs

Then there are fishing piers operated by private clubs for members and guests only, such as the Angler's Club of Absecon Island, which has a 500-foot long pier here off Exeter ave.; the Ocean City Fishing Club, with its pier off 14th st. in that city and the Wildwood Crest Fishing Pier, off Heather road in that community.

"One of the problems with fishing piers along the Jersey coast in this area is that we have a very long, shallow surf," said Louis Rodia Jr., assistant director of Cape May County's advertising and publicity bureau, and an avid fisherman.

He said a pier would have to be constructed to extend well beyond the low-tide line because over the years shifting sands caused by natural littoral drift could render it useless.

Now Not in Water

Such is the case with the fishing pier off 22d ave. in North Wildwood.

"In the last 10 years, the beach has built up in front," said Rodia, "and now the pier's not even in the water." On the other hand, too long a pier can render it more vulnerable to the vagaries of weather.

"One of the real problems with all of these piers is the fact that hurricanes and other extreme weather can really tear them up," Rodia said.

State, Federal Aid

Much of the \$90 a year dues levied by the Angler's Club here, goes into maintaining its fishing pier which was first

built in 1923 after receiving state and federal approval.

A loan on the initial \$45,000 investment was paid off in three years and club members bought \$25,000 worth of reconstruction bonds to rebuild part of the pier destroyed in a hurricane 30 years ago.

150 Members

"We have quite an affluent membership here for the most part," said Samuel J. Knox, club secretary. "We have a great many professional men — doctors, dentists, lawyers."

He said the membership

numbers around 150 including residents from as far as North Carolina who come up to try their luck. Weakfish and bluefish are especially abundant this time of year.

"We have all the comforts of home," he said, showing a visitor through the clubhouse complex, with its locker rooms, ladies lounge, card room and bait and tackle shop among other amenities.

Social Interest

He said members tend to be in the older age brackets ("we have them in the club well up in their 80s"), who have joined for both the fish-

ing and the camaraderie.

"Actually pier fishing offers an opportunity for a number of people who otherwise might not be able to fish on boats because of age or other infirmities," said Rodia.

"The social interest is important," he added. "Fishing on a pier, you tend to get to know one another, and there's a rapport."

Knox, who himself retired last year after operating a finance company business, said he believes that if some of the older members had to do without the club, "they would die."