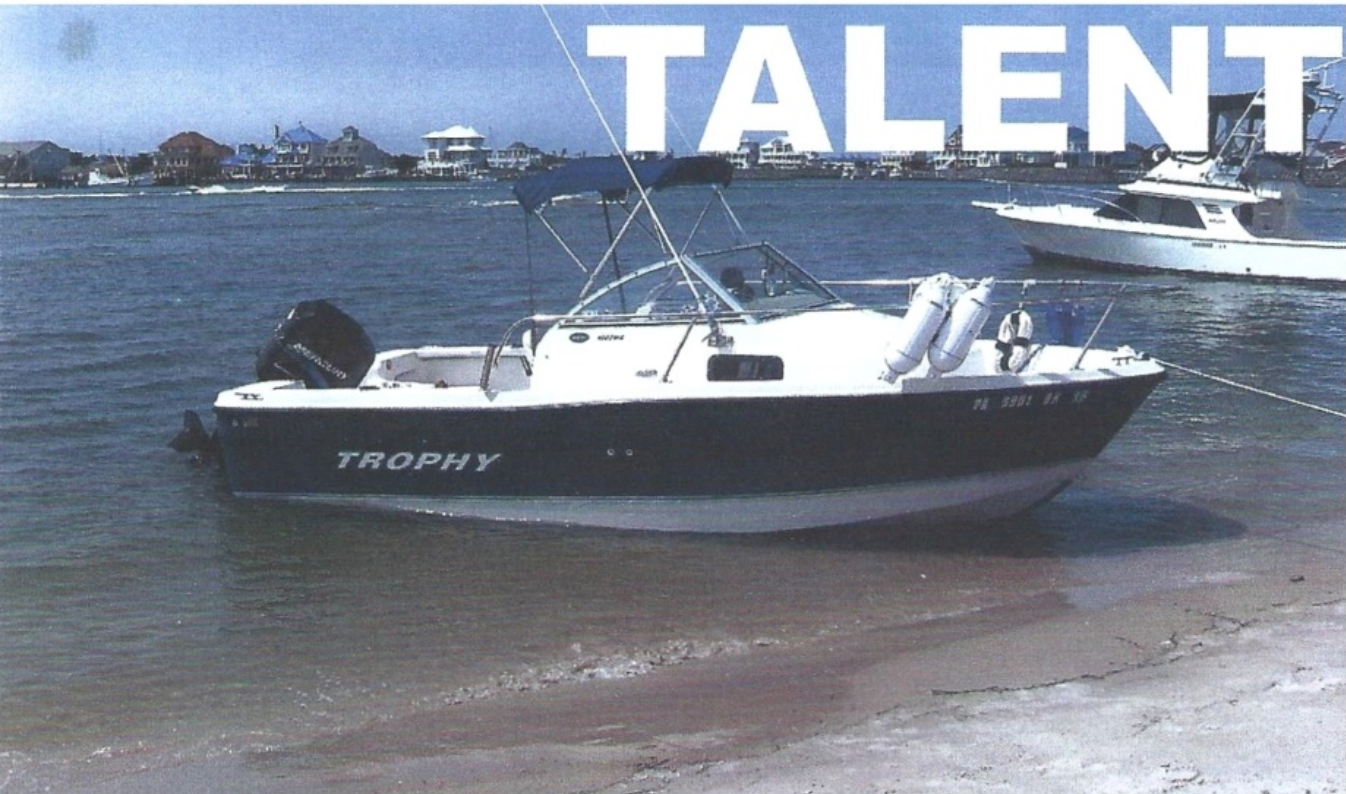




**HIDDEN**



**TALENTS**

**S**

Back by popular demand, American Window Cleaner Magazine presents the fourth in a series of articles on window cleaners, suppliers, manufacturers, and company employees who have hidden talents, hobbies, community involvements, etc. little known within the industry. In the past, we've featured a mountain climber, gem and fossil collector, a drummer, car racer, a painter, athlete, triathlon competitor, whale chaser, hockey referee, guitarist, and many more. In this issue, we add more to the list beginning with . . .

### SHARK MAN.

As a young kid, A.J. Lopata loved to freshwater fish but he was really fascinated with sharks residing in saltwater. "I knew early on that shark was the fish for me to catch and I got my chance while on a family vacation in Puerto Rico and St. Thomas Virgin Island." There he ocean fished for the first time both from the shore and dock. The year was 1977, and while he didn't catch a shark then that didn't stop him from continuing to go after the most feared fish in the sea. Stateside, he began fishing from the shore and a pier at Ocean City, Maryland, a 377 mile drive from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, home of AJ Window Cleaning, Inc. Then, at age 17 while fishing from a dock on the Isle of Wight Bay, he reeled

in a 22 inch Sand Shark. "Funny thing, looking back on that day," AJ says, "You would think that I had just hooked a shark, but in reality it hooked me." During the 1990s and on into the 2000s, AJ headed out to sea from Ocean City and Delaware and fished for shark from charter boats, but he no longer does that having bought his own boat. Named "The Offshore Blue," it's an 18 ft., cuddy cabin sleeping two and powered by a 125 hp saltwater engine.

AJ's favorite fishing companion is his wife, Amy, who shares his passion for shark fishing and also "likes filming sharks underwater with a go-pro camera on a pole when the shark is close to the boat." To fish, they usually head two to six miles out from Ocean City, and sometimes as far as 20 miles. While they sometimes go trolling at 4 to 6 knots (4.6 to 6.9 mph), "usually the method is anchoring or drifting because you have an established chum line," AJ says. Rather than being strapped to a chair while fishing, he is standing up wearing a fighting belt which is a padded belt with a plate and gimbal pin for the butt of the rod to slide onto. "It allows the angler's body weight to do all of the work while positioning the rod for power lifting," he explains. "It provides leverage and takes the stress off of you," he explains. The bait is fish or squid because "that's what they eat. It's what they know."

His biggest catch thus far came in September 1994 when he



landed a 9ft. 10 inch Blue Shark after about 45 minutes of reeling him in. It was the first shark he caught from his boat and that big boy is mounted *on his* living room wall while a 3ft. 6 inch Dusky Shark is mounted in his bedroom. Actually, the mounts are replicas of those sharks made by a taxidermist in Florida who uses photographs AJ took along with the approximate length, date, offshore location and bait used. "By creating a replica you promote catch and release fishing," AJ explains, "and unlike skin mounts the replica will not deteriorate over time. A taxidermist may use the actual jaws from the shark but no shark should ever be killed strictly for its jaws." The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has a list of shark species that fishermen are prohibited from bringing aboard as part of the agency's responsibility for the stewardship of the nation's living marine resources and their habitat, according to AJ. "Those sharks on the list should not be boated and must be released at the side of the boat. Also State and Federal laws apply. Some sharks are tagged and then released." And if you don 'tknow, let it go."

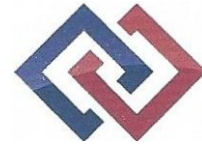
Although he has never competed in any shark fishing contests on the east coast, he may enter the 2015 Ocean City Shark Fishing Tournament this summer. Is it a dangerous sport? "It can be," AJ says, noting that "the first captain I did a charter with was killed a few years later when he was pulled over board by a Mako Shark." He says that while the gear- rods, reels, and tackle made to withstand saltwater conditions - can be expensive, "it's better to buy quality equipment rather than low end gear that could fail at a critical moment." A permit to fish is also required. Like most coastal states, Maryland requires those who fish to have a saltwater fishing license. "And to fish for sharks offshore you need a Federal Fisheries Permit. It's called an Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) angling permit," AJ says.

Currently, he's working on obtaining an Operator Uninspected Passenger Vessel (OUPV) Captain's License which allows the holder to offer fishing and sailing charters, drive a dive boat and run sightseeing tours, etc. "This license is commonly referred to as a "six-pack" because it allows the bolder to take up to six paying passengers and crew on the water." He explains that the requirement to get such a license include 360 days of experience in the operation of vessels with 90 of the 360 days occurring in the last 3 years. AJ will soon complete an online course and take a proctored exam at a Coast Guard approved testing site and expects to



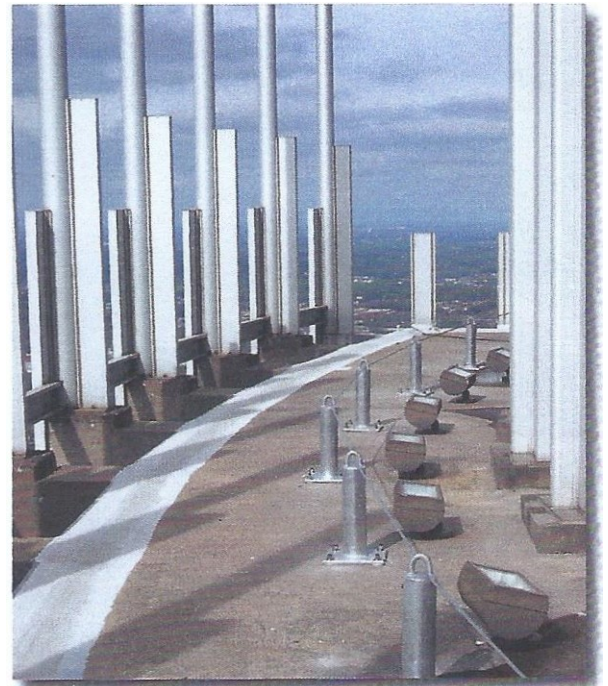
DESIGN - INSTALLATION - INSPECTION

TESTING - CERTIFICATION



## PEAK FALL PROTECTION

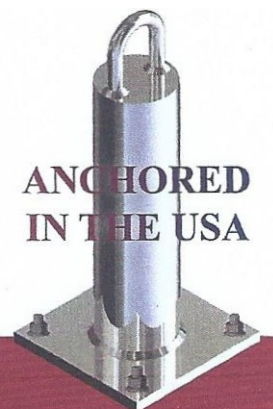
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### RESTORATION MAN

have his captain's license by this coming spring. He says he is seeking the license "for the knowledge that comes with it and the title, Captain." And although he will have the right to operate charters, he will not. "I might take a friend or two fishing, but I am not interested in that" With his boat and the ocean being 377 miles from Pittsburgh, he isn't out in the ocean as often as he would like but he manages to shark fish four or five times a year. What AJ gets out of it is the "pure excitement along with respect for the ocean and conservation of sharks."

Like most young guys back in 1975, Steve Blyth could not foresee the future value and desirability of the 1968 Z/28 Camara be bought from the guy down the street It was the one with the headers in the trunk, and an engine with a slipping clutch and those pain in the neck solid lifters that kept bending push rod. Steve, a car restorer for 40 years, would sure Like to have that one back, not just for its value but for the reason the ZJ28 was initially made. Built originally by Chevrolet to overcome Ford's dominance at stock car races, it had to be

modified to drastically reduce the noise level before it could ever hit the streets as a passenger car. The engineers achieved that by moving the noisy headers - special exhaust parts - from under the hood back to the trunk. Thus, an "exceptional race car was slightly disguised in order to be sold to the public," says Steve, who installed a new clutch and sold the Camara for double what he originally paid for it. "At the time, I was so happy to sell that car then buy a 1967 Pontiac GTO because it had air conditioning, a real back seat, and more room in the trunk. "And he held onto it for the next 20 years\_ Around the same time he acquired the GTO in 1976, Steve really got into car restoration beginning with a Jaguar XKE belonging to a friend who was given a \$1,000 estimate from a British shop to replace a pump. Steve bought the car, dropped the fuel tank and repaired the pump, then "flipped the car for a profit."

Among Steve's favorites to restore are Mustangs, Camaros, Barracudas and the odd little British car. He says he finds "orphan cars, spends some time working on them, sometimes to be stock, other times to be highly modified. Alas, they are all projects, some started near perfect, and others started being towed back from some other state." For example, he bought a 1968 Red Mustang in Chicago that only made it as far as StLouis before it was put in a trailer for California. It needed little cosmetic work, but lots of mechanical care and was returned to near stock before being sold. One white 1968 Mustang Convertible with white top and interior underwent light modifications

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## “Update to American Window Cleaning Article”

On March 22nd 2016 AJ Lopata received his Merchant Mariner credential (Captain's License).

He also upgraded to a Boston Whaler 23 foot Conquest that he named "Squalus"

