

## Chatham mussels and horseshoe crabs at Cotuit Town Landing

07/08/08 · 9:45 am :: posted by **Paul Rifkin**



**W**ade Behlman of Hyannis, is shown at the Cotuit Town Landing with Chatham mussels and horseshoe crabs that he uses as bait for the conch he gathers outside the Cotuit Harbor. After fishing that morning, Wade's catch of the day is shown above.

### **What *IS* a conch?**

A conch (pronounced in the U.S.A. as "konk" or "conch", is one of a number of different species of medium-sized to large saltwater snails or their shells. Many people believe that the sound heard when a conch is placed against the ear is the sea. However, it is actually the echo of the blood circulation in your head.

True conchs are marine gastropod mollusks in the family Strombidae, and the genus *Strombus*. The name "conch" however, is often quite loosely applied in English-speaking countries to several kinds of very large sea snail shells which are pointed at both ends, i.e. shells which have a high spire and a noticeable siphonal canal.

### **In Hindu and Buddhist tradition**

A Sankh shell (the shell of a *Turbinella* species in the gastropod family Turbinellidae) is often referred to in the West as a conch shell, or a chank shell. This is a major Hindu article of prayer. It is used as a trumpet, as a part of their religious practices, blowing on it during worship at specific points, accompanied by ceremonial bells and singing.

In the story of Dhruva the divine conch plays a special part. The warriors of ancient India would blow conch shells to announce battle, such as is described in the beginning of the war of Kurukshetra, in the Mahabharata, the famous Hindu epic. The god of Preservation, Vishnu, is said to hold a special conch, Panchajanya, that represents life, as it has come out of life-giving waters.



## **In Literature, Cape Cod and Key West**

William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* features frequent references to "the Conch". In the book the conch is used as a trumpet to call everyone together and held by whoever is speaking at meetings, symbolically representing democracy and order. When a boulder released by Roger, Jack's lieutenant, smashes the conch, it is a sign that civilized order has collapsed and Jack's domination has begun.

Many Cape Codders spend the winter in Key West, where the residents are also called Conchs.

### **Cape Cod CONCH**

Conch is also the name of a group of people who live in Chatham and Harwich who meet to develop friendships, and enjoy social, sport, games, outdoor and indoor activities. Membership is open to residents of both towns. An acronym for Continuing Newcomers of Chatham/Harwich, [CONCH](#).

**Paul Rifkin** was born 66 years ago and not a day too soon. Socialist Jewish blood flows through his arteries and veins - his capillaries are getting clogged with the righteous indignation directed toward our fellow citizen's complicity with the immorality of our government.

Born in Brooklyn, N.Y., first kiss at the age of 14 at Pottstown (PA) Community Camp, U.S. Army (1960-1962) honorably discharged but barely, graduated from George Washington University (1965), San Francisco hippie (1965-1972), Zen Buddhist monk (1972-1974), world traveler, hedonist and womanizer (1974-1979), ran Boston Marathon (1982) but barely, settled down with Ellen Mycock (1988) and stopped womanizing, co-owner of Moonakis Cafe in Waquoit, Falmouth (1989-present), photographer (1948-present), professional videographer (1994-present) peace activist (seemingly forever), hot-tempered but good-hearted (from birth).

