

'Combining' Oysters Challenges Bay Visitors

Part 1 of 2

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — "Ahoy there, Captain."

With a smile and a hearty handshake, Lancaster County Extension Agent Leon Ressler greeted Captain Don Baugh of the Oyster Boat *Stanley Norman* in downtown Annapolis at the city dock.

Two van loads of Lancaster County farmers set out on a trip recently into the Chesapeake Bay to learn more about bay-area farming, and some of the difficulties bay area farmers face. Ressler was joined by four married couples, two retired men, a 7-year-old boy, five straw-hatted Amishmen, Lan-

caster County Soil Conservation District Assistant Administrator Gerald Heistand, Chesapeake Bay Foundation employee Lamonte Garber, and Kim Bower-Spence, a Pennsylvania Farmer reporter.

They all boarded the 80-year-old, 58-foot skipjack, a sloop sailboat. Two coolers and a water jug were also hoisted on board to ease the sting of the warm day in the making.

Captain Don Baugh first gave a short talk about marine safety. "First, don't fall overboard," he said. "The water's too deep. And keep your head down — this boom can swing with the wind and bash in foreheads. All stay seated aft

(nautical term for rear) while we're sailing out of the harbor, so I can see to steer the boat."

As all sat tight, the Captain barked, "Cast off!"

First mate Earl White and boatswain Nancy Merrill slipped the ropes off the dock posts. The motor started, and the Captain revved it up. With a twirl of the 44-inch, 12-spoked cast iron wheel, the boat headed out of the harbor.

The Captain said "set sail" as we entered Severin River. The blue sail cover, called the gasket, was

removed, rolled up, and stowed below deck.

The first mate said, "Now pull on this rope," and eight farmers obliged, so up went the main sail to the top of the 45-foot mast. When the front, or Jib sail was set, and the boat came under sail power (a method of water transportation about as old as farming), it made some wonder — did the first Amish settlers sail like this on the way over from the old country?

The Captain shouted, "Here, farmer, take the helm. Keep the boat pointed towards that square

building on yonder island." The critter steered like an old steam roller, a half dozen turns either way before anything happened.

Captain Baugh said, "This boat is owned and operated by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), which was begun in 1966 by Art Sherwood. We presently have a staff of 125 persons and an annual budget of \$6 million. Our funding is about 90 percent from private sources, from charity foundations and education funds — the rest comes from the government. 'Save

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Captain Don Baugh points out the heartbeat of the oyster he opened on the Chesapeake Bay tour.

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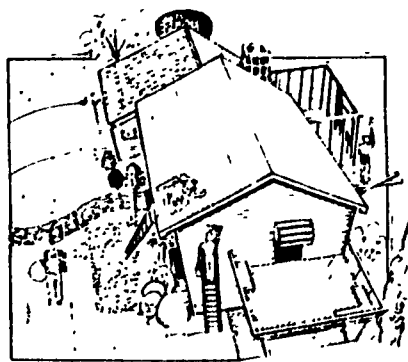


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