

# 'Combining' Oysters

(Continued from Page E26)

The Bay' is our slogan.

"We teach the public that runoff, chemicals, and nutrients getting into the water are polluting the Bay and explain how we can make efforts to improve. This will make life easier for the watermen."

The boat, according to Baugh, is called the *Stanley Norman*. It was built in 1902, weighs 26 tons, and cost \$40,000. If made new today it would cost about \$140,000. The CBF operates two such vessels, and there are 27 such oyster boats in use today.

Hacketts Points slid past the starboard bow. Hundreds of little Navy training boats, operated by Navy trainees called "Plebes," sailed into the harbor heading for the Naval Academy.

The oyster boat is a full-time sailboat. But for harbor travel and for cruising on a calm day, a 12-foot dinghy (small boat), outfitted with a 150 HP motor, is tied to the stern and is pushing the oyster boat, akin to having an overpowered garden tractor pushing a 100 HP tractor.

Oyster harvesting is governed

by laws. All catching must be under sail power, from November 1 to March 15 only, from sunrise to 3 p.m. five days a week. All the catch must be stored above deck so the inspectors can see them.

Captain Baugh said, "There're about 4,000 full-time Maryland watermen making 30-40 grand a year harvesting whatever the bay offers. Like farmers, each waterman carefully keeps his secrets — how to bait, where the best oyster beds are, etc. And there may be 10,000 part-time watermen, making 5-8 grand a year. So a cleaner bay will help a lot of persons."

"But years ago, there were maybe 50,000 watermen, so like farmers, watermen are getting less all the time."

First business of the day was to check the crab traps. Several farmers helped haul up the steel crate-like lures. The first one contained an oyster cracker, a half toad/half fish-like critter who eats oysters. It was quickly stabbed and tossed overboard. The next trap contained a nice crab. Second mate Saake held it up so all could see. "Watch the claws, they can really pinch," said Saake.

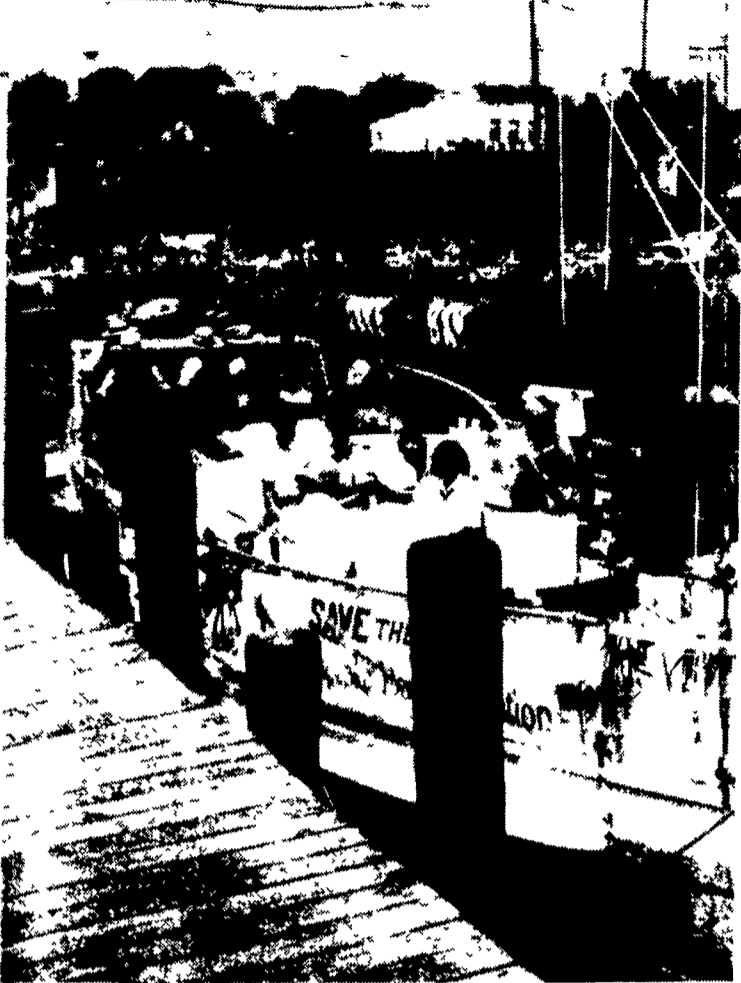
The captain put another farmer at the helm, and instructed him to point the bow toward the port bridge about 3 miles off the bay bow. The wind was a mere breeze, the water very calm — what sailors say is "slickalm."

All hands went after oysters. To the passengers, it was a wonder how the crew found the beds. The sun was beating down. The white deck reflected the heat, and all were mired in sweat.

Saake said, "There're three ways to catch oysters. First is to dredge like we will do. Second is to put on a diver suit and walk around down below, shovel them into baskets, which are hauled up by a power winch. Third is by long handled tongs, a grabber-like tool which works only in very shallow water."

Then began the real oyster combining. The dredges, which are steel rod and chain affairs about bushel-crate size, were chucked overboard on each side, and the boat dragged them along. The motor was shut down and the little dinghy was pulled out of the water (the law decrees that all the oyster

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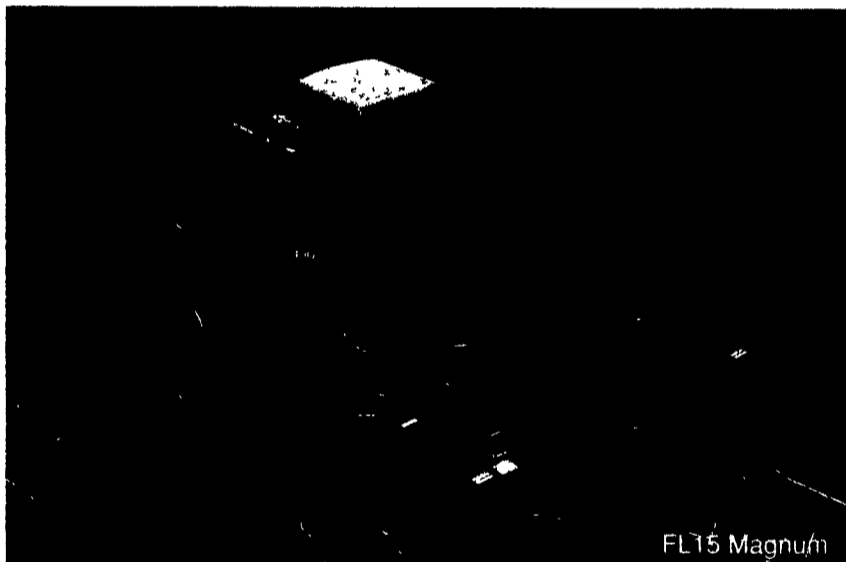
Lancaster County farmers board the *Stanley Norman* for a morning on the Chesapeake Bay.



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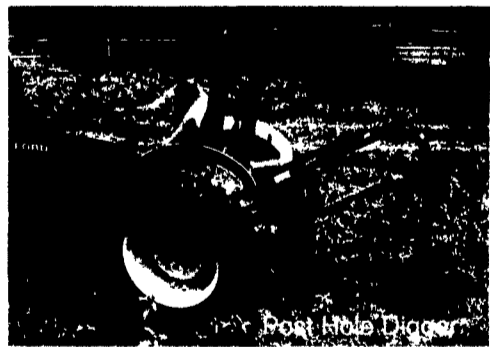
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