

Putting Water To Work

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tank of oxygen-enriched water.

Brought back to holding tanks, the fish will be sent out in a week to ten days.

To fill a customer order, the harvested fish are put into a double-walled box with a waterproof coating.

A plastic bag that gets one gallons of water is pumped up with pure oxygen and filled with four pounds of fish, which could be 1,000 small Comets, one hundred fifty 3-4-inch fish, or one 14-16-inch Koi.

A cold pack also in the boxes helps to keep the fish cool and slow their metabolism.



Dan Shelly, assistant biologist, probes for parasites in the fish's gills and tails.

The water is treated with a bacteriostat and salt "to put the slime coat on them" that the fish may have lost as they were transported and handled.

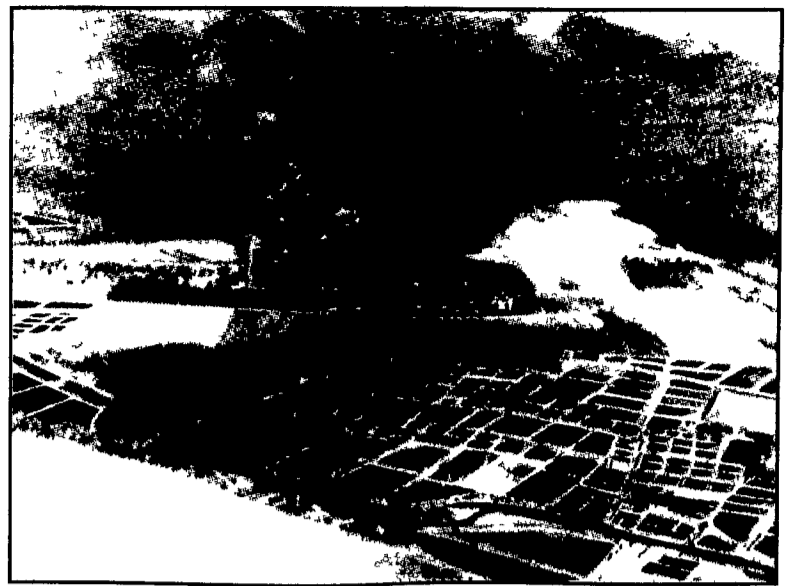
The feeder fish are sold by weight. They are graded as they swim through size racks "so we get a uniform size in each pool," he said. The fancier fish, however, are hand-

sorted and hand-counted.

The fish are taken to airports to be shipped. Typically, the farm has four trucks on the road on Mondays.

Business Beginnings

Rice's grandfather, Earl Rice, founded the business in 1923. Attracted by the water source of the Conococheague Creek, he purchased three ponds that



The farm includes more than 300 ponds ranging from a quarter acre to six acres in size.

are still in use at the farm.

To keep up with the increased volume of fish raised at the farm, seven wells now add their water to the farm's ponds.

In 1958, Mike Rice's father, Richard, took over after working with his father, Earl Rice. Richard, who managed the business for 40 years, increased pond numbers from approximately 40.

In 1998, Richard's son Mike took over the management responsibilities after working together with his father for 15 years.

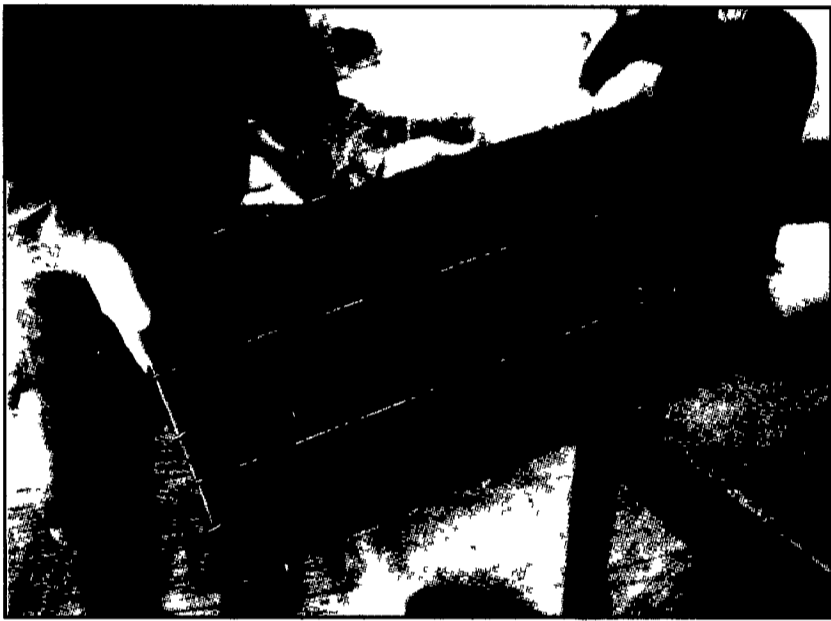
"It is a total team effort," said Mike Rice. "Mount Par-

nell is here because of its loyal employees. We have folks that have been here 15-30 years." The business includes 25 full-time employees including two biologists.

Besides helping out at the farm, Richard and his wife, Sue, operate a retail gift shop, The Goldfish Barn, to sell fish to walk-in customers.

Mike is joined by his wife, Nancy, and children Laura, Garrett, and Will, who help care for a herd of 30 Black Angus cattle.

The entire farm lies in the shadow of nearby Mount Parnell.

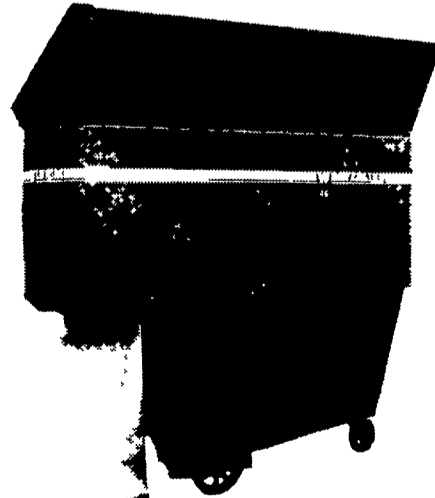


Racks with spawning mats made of hog hair and horse mane for the fish to gravitate to. The mats are collected "when we get a decent amount of eggs on them, ideally 10,000," Mike Rice, manager of the family business, said.



Employee Sharon Riley prepares fish for shipment. The harvested fish are put into a double-walled box with a waterproof coating. A plastic bag is filled with one gallon of water and is pumped up with pure oxygen.

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