

Local Fishing Fraternity Loses Three Good Friends

BY JAMIE MILLIKEN

April is finally here, the month I look forward to more than any other. Her cool mornings and warm afternoons mark the beginning of our beloved offshore fishing. The refreshing days of April bring new-found energy into my life that always fades into near hibernation during the winter.

These past few winter months were extremely hard for me and some families I dearly love who are greatly tied to the fishing community in southeastern North Carolina. This past December Mr. Mateland Bellamy passed away. Mr. Mateland was a lifelong friend of the commercial fisherman, the men and women who carve out their living from gill nets, shrimp boats, crab pots and oyster rocks of Brunswick County.

He was one of the most knowledgeable persons in the field of boats and fishing that I have ever met. Mr. Mateland may be gone, but his stories of life's experiences will always stay with me.

February was not a kind month, either. Norman Farrow, a regular on the local billfishing tournament scene, died unexpectedly while on a business trip to Atlanta. Norman and his crew of the *Double Exposure* were always the class of the field in the Wrightsville Beach Marlin Tournament. I remember last November, while I was fishing aboard the *Caribbean Soul*, Norman gave me a call on the VHF and turned me on to one of the best wahoo bites that I have ever witnessed. He was that type of guy.

How can anyone explain the loss of my good friend Ed Jones? Ed was a fierce competitor on the local king mackerel fishing tournament trail. Only the ones who knew him and loved him like I did knew how much he loved this sport. Ed worked countless hours each year as a volunteer and sponsor of our South Brunswick Islands King Classic each Labor Day.

Ed was an owner of Ocean Isle Motel and Marine, which has served yearly as an official weigh station for the tournament. I loved the hours that I spent fishing beside Ed and his crew of the *Southern Style*. I will always recall the hours of fellowship and stories of "the ones that got away" that we shared back at the docks.

Ed, old buddy, you gave a great deal of time and effort to this sport, and your life will always be a part of the fishing fraternity of the South Brunswick Islands. I am pleased that your name will forever be on the aggregate winners' trophy of my tournament, the Jolly Mon King Classic held each July at Ocean Isle. It will be an honor to present the Ed Jones Award.

Each of these three men was different, but their love of God's precious ocean was the same.

So here it is April, and life is new again. The fish will start moving in close to shore as the water temperature continues to rise. King mackerel will begin to show up in the 30-mile range within the next two weeks. The Spanish and cobia runs will begin in May. Speaking of May, the 100-fathom line will again light up with blue marlin, wahoo and dolphin.

I hope to bring you a vivid recreation of the Southern Kingfish Association's National Championship to be held this month in St. Petersburg, Fla. This promises to be an exciting shoot-out as 62 captains' chase the top prize. Please wish me and the crew of the *Caribbean Soul* lots of luck, and I hope to have a story for you when we return.

Until next time, good fishin'

This Week's Tide Table

Day	Date	HIGH		LOW	
		A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
Thursday	8	9:59	10:32	3:53	4:03
Friday	9	10:51	11:24	4:44	4:51
Saturday	10	11:42	-----	5:33	5:42
Sunday	11	12:16	12:35	6:27	6:33
Monday	12	1:10	1:30	7:19	7:28
Tuesday	13	2:06	2:28	8:15	8:29
Wednesday	14	3:01	3:27	9:11	9:29

ADJUSTMENTS
 SHALLOTTE INLET—add 17 min. high tide, add 32 min. low tide.
 LOCKWOOD FOLLY—subtract 22 min. high tide, subtract 8 min. low tide.
 BALD HEAD ISLAND—subtract 10 min. high tide, subtract 7 min. low tide.
 SOUTHPORT—add 7 min. high tide, add 15 min. low tide.
 LITTLE RIVER—subtract 11 min. high tide, add 18 min. low tide.

Beach Area POAs To Meet Saturday

At least four local property owners' associations plan meetings of some type Saturday, April 10. The Ocean Isle Beach Property Owners Association (POA) Board of Directors will meet at 9 a.m. Saturday at the Museum of Coastal Carolina at Ocean Isle Beach. Sunset Beach POA meets at 10:30 a.m. at the fire station, with coffee and refreshments starting at 10 a.m. The Holden Beach POA meets at 10 a.m. at the town hall, with a board of directors' meeting at 9 a.m. The Harbor Acres POA will also meet Saturday at the Holden Beach Town Hall, at 2 p.m.

Correction

A child photographed on a playground slide during the Spring Fling celebration at Union Primary School was incorrectly identified in a cut-line in the April 1 edition of the *Beacon*. The child was actually Heather Hickman.

Commercial Fish Catch Down Sharply In 1992

POOR YEAR FOR MENHADEN

BY DOUG RUTTER
 North Carolina commercial fishermen landed 27 percent fewer fish and shellfish in 1992 than they did in 1991, mainly because of a poor year for menhaden.

Also down last year were catches of popular finfish including blues, croaker, flounder and Spanish mackerel and shellfish such as oysters and clams, according to state statistics.

After harvesting 212,641,148 pounds of fish in 1991, Tar Heel anglers caught just 154,429,821 pounds last year for a decrease of 58,211,327 pounds or 27.4 percent.

The value of the commercial landings fell accordingly, from \$66.7 million in 1991 to \$58 million last year. The poundage and dollar figures for 1992 were their lowest in at least seven years.

"Overall the landings are down, and the landings of many of the desirable and edible species are down," said Mike Street of the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries.

The largest drop was in commercial finfish landings, which were down 32.7 percent compared to 1991.

Most of the decrease can be blamed on a lousy year for menhaden, which is caught for its oil and fish meal value. Commercial fishermen harvested 110 million pounds of menhaden two years ago and only 57 million pounds in 1992.

"There was fairly poor fishing all along the Atlantic coast for menhaden last year," Street said. He blamed North Carolina's 53-million pound decrease on severe weather during the peak menhaden months

N.C. Commercial Fish Landings

Year	Pounds	Value
1986	168,881,954	\$63,230,931
1987	157,323,919	\$65,707,286
1988	192,693,176	\$77,756,754
1989	165,197,479	\$73,957,607
1990	174,992,869	\$70,692,290
1991	212,641,148	\$66,787,706
1992	154,429,821	\$58,024,642

Source: N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries

of November and December.

Also down in 1992 were commercial landings of favorites such as flounder, bluefish, croaker, Spanish mackerel, pompano and speckled trout, according to preliminary statistics released last week.

The flounder harvest fell more than 2 million pounds to 5.8 million pounds last year. Bluefish landings were down 28 percent to 2.8 million pounds, while the croaker catch dropped 19 percent to 2.8 million pounds.

"The stocks of most of these fish are stressed or depressed," said Street, indicating that the species are suffering as a result of overfishing or environmental conditions.

The commercial shellfish harvest fell 12.1 percent last year, from 55 million pounds in 1991 to 48 million pounds. Fishermen reported decreased landings of shrimp, clams, crabs and oysters.

The oyster harvest dropped only slightly last year, from 319,040 to 293,956 pounds, but the catch totaled 913,100 pounds just five years

ago. "Oysters continue to be very depressed," Street said.

State officials blame the rapid decrease in oyster landings on bacterial pollution caused by septic tanks and stormwater runoff and tiny parasites that kill oysters.

Street attributes last year's 27-percent decline in the clam harvest to overfishing. "Clams are getting fished very, very hard and landings are going downward," he said.

The shrimp harvest dropped nearly 50 percent last year, from 10.7 million pounds to 5.5 million pounds. However, Street said the 1992 figure was about average and the previous year was excellent.

Last year wasn't entirely bad for North Carolina fishermen. The grouper harvest increased from 609,520 pounds in 1991 to 761,909 pounds.

Landings of drum also were up 23 percent last year to 134,787 pounds, while the commercial mullet harvest jumped 24 percent to 1.8 million pounds.

Still in its infancy, the dogfish shark fishery saw a tremendous increase in 1992 when fishermen landed 8.6 million pounds for an increase of nearly 600 percent. The harvest of other sharks also doubled to 1.3 million pounds.

"Sharks are about the highest they've ever been," Street said, adding that the dogfish sharks caught in nets off the Outer Banks are usually shipped to Europe.

Blue crab landings were down slightly from last year. But Street said the 40 million-pound harvest in 1992 was the second best on record and the \$12.8 million value was the greatest on record.

Remaining about the same as the previous year was the commercial king mackerel harvest at just over 1 million pounds, sheephead at 47,526 pounds and spot at 2.8 million pounds.



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