

# Bill Sharpe's Story About Fatback Fleet On N. C. Coast

## CARTERET COAST CENTER OF THIS PROFITABLE FISHING INDUSTRY

(Editor's Note: Cooperating with Bill Sharpe of the State News Bureau of the Department of Conservation and Development in Raleigh, who has just released the story which follows were several leaders of the menhaden industry in Carteret County. Majority of the pictures to be used in the layout accompanying the story are by Roy Eubanks, of Beaufort, who has perhaps the best collection of menhaden industry pictures of any person in the world. One or two of the pictures to be used in the release are by Aycock Brown, editor of The Beaufort News, who sold Sharpe on the idea last year to publicize this important North Carolina Coast business.)

By Bill Sharpe

The fatback fleet is setting out again from North Carolina ports. From the curious little crow's nests which peculiarize the fatback boats, keen eyes are scanning the seas for the great school of menhaden which mean fortune to captain and crew. If the look-outs are alert and the weather is favorable and luck is right, the boats will steam in tonight loaded with hundreds of thousands of the oily fish, loaded so heavily that the low deck will be awash; loaded so heavily that when the day's catch is sold and the proceeds distributed among the crew, the cash will make up for many a week of fruitless efforts.

Most hazardous and in ways the most colorful and adventurous fishing in the world is the fatback fleet. And it pursues the most numerous fish on the Atlantic Coast—more numerous by far than the shad, the cod or the halibut. And yet not one American in a thousand ever heard of the fish, perhaps not one in 10,000 ever tasted it—the menhaden, or "fatback" or "mossbunker," as the fish is variously known.

The migration of the menhaden are incredible to inlanders. On September 18, 1901 an enormous school of oily fish came into the bay at Beaufort, North Carolina. For days the fish had pressed through the inlet until the shallow waters were packed with them. They were discovered and followed by blues and sharks, which began feeding on the menhaden. Panicky, the smaller fish tried to escape, rushing back out the narrow neck of the inlet until it was gorged from surface to bottom. But multitudes of them, fleeing the vicious blues and sharks, hurled themselves upon the land until the beach was strewn knee-deep. Eleven million menhaden were picked up that day by natives, and sold to the Beaufort and Morehead processing plants. Similar jams are not uncommon and one occurred on the North Carolina coast in 1937, when so many fatback invaded a sound that boats could not be navigated through them.

The menhaden fleet roams up and down the coast, following the migrations of the fish, for which no laws are known. The boats take their catches to factories conveniently located along the coast, where the valuable oil is cooked out of the fish, the residue becoming fish scrap and fertilizer. In a good season, 750,000,000 of the fish will be taken on the Atlantic coast, more than 150,000,000 of them off this coast.

In spite of the apparent inexhaustible supply of fatback, the profession of catching them is almost as hazardous as gold mining—almost as profitable and profitless. If the weather is too bad for the fleet to put out when the schools pass, all may be lost. If a skipper is inept—if he does not have an instinct for wind, weather and water conditions, his crew may be sorely penalized. Therein, perhaps, lies the fascination of the highly specialized industry, for in

Take home **FRUIT BOWL**

# SALE OF TAILORED SUITS AND OVERCOATS

BUY ONE SUIT Get Extra Pair of Pants At NO EXTRA COST

OVERCOATS REDUCED 25%

Place Your Order Now For Tailored Suits And Overcoats

Dial 447-1

## JOHNSON-SAUNDERS

DRY CLEANING CO. BEAUFORT NORTH CAROLINA

tion they impart to the sea when disturbed by bluefish, sharks or porpoises. Speed and direction of the two purse boats take off from the school is quickly calculated, the ship. A "strike" boat follows. The purse net is paid out around the school and gradually shortens, while the striker boatman attempts to head off the fish, at the same

### NOTES ON MENHADEN

It is the most numerous of all the fish on the Atlantic Coast.

A great industry built to follow the whims of the fish, is built around the menhaden. Factories along the coast open or close as the fish proceed on their journey.

The migration of the fish are almost incredible. Sometimes schools pack the inlet so thick that boats cannot be navigated through them. Eleven million menhaden, driven onto the beach by bluefish, were picked up at Beaufort in one day.

It takes inborn understanding of wind, weather and currents to succeed in the industry. So hazardous are the economics of the industry that it is almost a family calling. Perhaps 85 per cent of those engaged in it are named Willis.

750,000,000 menhaden are taken in a single season off the American east coast.

Sharks are "drowned"—suffocated by the press of menhaden when they are caught in purse nets.

time signalling with his oars to the purse boats the movements of the school. The two purse boats are lashed together, and the purse line is drawn. This line closes the bot-

haul them. A few days of luck like this will make the fatback captain and his crew richer or the winter, repay them for many a bootless errand into a wintry sea.

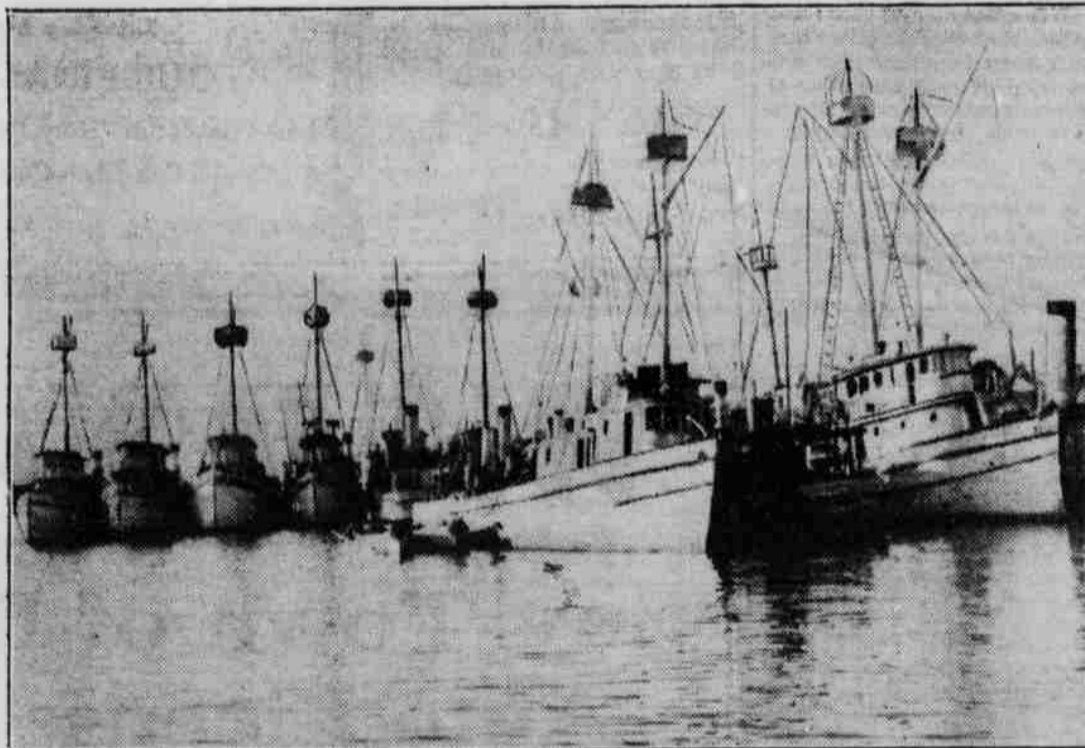
A menhaden boat has no fancy jobs. Everyone must help in decking the catch except the engineer and cook. The engineer is constantly on duty to maneuver the boat into position. The cook, an important figure in the industry, is always a past-master at preparing short orders. He is subject to call 24 hours a day, and in many cases his cunning would be the envy of the chef of a metropolitan hotel.

The fatback boat continues to follow the school until it is loaded or until the fish disappear beyond their ken. Back at port the fish are unloaded by elevators, conveyed immediately into huge ovens and the oil extracted. This oil is used extensively in paints, varnishes, soaps and in some countries in food products. The residue of fish flakes are dried and used as fertilizer and for animal feed.

The factories along the coast operate only while fish are being caught in the vicinity. After the migrations pass on, the factories are closed and those at Southport or places further south opened. Processing, too, so dependent upon the fleet's luck, is a highly speculative business, and a season may mean a fortune or utter failure. Charles S. Wallace of Morehead City, is the dean of the industry and is said to have made and lost more fortunes than any other man in North Carolina. He has a large fleet of boats which he operates cooperatively with fatback captains.

The menhaden is rarely eaten in this section, though when carefully prepared, it is said to have a delectable flavor. Freed of some of its ail, the fatback has a rich sweet taste, somewhat like that of a mullet.

SEND HIM OR HER THE NEWS



PICTURESQUE MENHADEN FLEET BASING AT BEAUFORT—Eubanks-News Pic

tom of the net like a purse, preventing the fish from escaping by swimming underneath the net. Meantime, the menhaden steamer has come up and to the right side of a triangle, in which the captured fish are packed in the "bunt" section of the net. All of this must be done with the utmost dispatch if success is to attend the "set". The menhaden become panicky, and if by command turn their course first in one direction and then another to escape the net. If this panicle turns into desperate flight, there is danger of the whole school breaking through by sheer weight. If the pursuing has been done swiftly and skillfully, however, the mass by now is so thickly packed that the fish have no space in which to swim. They thrash about violently, turning the water white with the oil which exudes from their bodies.

Woe betide the day if the crew has inadvertently entrapped a 1,000 pound shark in the net. Such a monster will quickly rip through the bottom of the purse, rending a hole perhaps 30 feet wide, through which the whole school of fish escapes and forcing the boat to return to port for repairs. Small sharks caught in the net are quickly dispatched, though many of them suffocate from the pressure of the smaller fish.

If the seining has been well done and the school a large one, the fishermen happily turn to the laborious task of dipping them onto the deck. The net is pulled up on three sides, the lucky fishermen working to the tempo of an ancient sea chantey. When the boiling mass is brought to the surface, a huge dip net is lowered from the boat into the fish and the school transferred onto deck. A reasonable "set" is from 50,000 to 100,000 fish. But many a boat has been so fortunate as to take 600,000 in a net, and then released as many more to rick of capacity to

### Important Health Measure Becomes Law January 1st

Raleigh, January 2.—One of the most important public health measures ever enacted by a North Carolina Legislature became effective Monday, January 1, after which, in the language of Chapter 313 of the Public Laws of 1939, "every woman who becomes pregnant shall have a blood sample taken and submitted to a laboratory approved by the North Carolina State Board of Health for performing the Wasserman test or other approved tests for syphilis." Dr. Carl V. Reynolds, State Health Officer, reminds the public.

Summarized, this new law provides: That any duly licensed physician shall, upon request of the woman, secure the required blood sample and submit it to the laboratory. Midwives may not take such samples but shall refer their patients to a duly licensed physician.

Any pregnant woman who is not able to pay a physician to take the blood sample may have such sample secured by the county health officer or the county physician for submission to the laboratory. In reporting births and stillbirths, physicians shall be required to state whether such serological tests have been made during pregnancy, this information to appear on the birth or stillbirth certificate in each instance.

Violation of this act will constitute a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of \$25, imprisonment for 30 days, or both, in the discretion of the court.

Four-H Club members in Caldwell County are electing their 1940 officers, planning future club programs, and starting project activities for the new year.

### 'Human Cannon Balls' Need Rigid Training

Cliff Gregg of Plymouth, Wis., who trains human cannon balls, has disclosed some of the secrets of the breath-taking trick which thrills circus and exhibition crowds.

Pointing out that the human projectile experiences a few thrills of his own each time he's shot from the cannon, Gregg said:

"The performer enters a shell that is shaped according to his body dimensions. Compressed air shoots the shell violently to the muzzle, which springs back and ejects the performer.

"Simultaneously, an explosion is set off in another chamber to produce an artillery fire effect."

However, the performer must play his part to perfection if the trick is to be culminated successfully.

"As soon as the performer is released he thrusts his head up," Gregg said, "and starts a climbing motion with his arms and legs.

"If he permits his head to drop he will fall short of the net."

He added: "Hitting the net is no simple matter. He lands with such force that the net frequently is torn."

Gregg has built and sold five of the cannons which shoot men—not at them. The guns are designed to hurl a man approximately 150 feet.

The net in which the man lands is 50 feet long, Gregg pointed out, because no two performers are alike.

"A slight movement in the actions of the performer will cause the distance he is hurled to vary," he explained.

He declared a man could not be thrown more than 200 feet—"The landing would kill him."

Despite the danger of the profession, Gregg never lacks candidates for the job of human cannon ball.

He said he has a drawer full of applications from young men who think that a firm back and a strong heart are the only requirements.

"What they do not understand," he added, "is that the requisites are familiarity with the mechanism, agility and above all presence of mind."

### New England Gourmets Stage 'Chowder' Battle

New Englanders have won a hard-fought battle over whether tomatoes properly deserve a place in clam chowder.

The decision of gourmets was that tomatoes should be outlawed from the succulent dish.

Now, they have ruled that milk has no place in fish chowder and that the correct liquid is Madeira wine. They based this on a recipe found in an early cook book.

Andrew S. Seiler, Boston caterer, found the recipe in the "Cook's Own Book," published by Monroe & Francis in 1832.

"This receipt (not recipe) is according to the most approved method practiced by fishing parties in Boston harbor," read a preface. It continued:

"Chowder—Lay some slices cut from the fat part of the bellypiece of pork in a deep stewpan, mix sliced onions with a variety of sweet herbs and lay them on the pork. Boil and cut a fresh cod into thin slices, and place them on the pork; then put a layer of pork on that a layer of biscuit; then alternately the other materials until the pan is nearly full, season with pepper and salt, put in about a pint and a half of water, lay a paste over the whole, cover the stewpan very close, and let it stand, with fire above as well as below, for hours.

"Then skim it well, and put it in a dish, pour a glass of Madeira made hot over it, also some Jamaica pepper, stewed mushrooms, truffles and oysters; brown the paste slightly and lay it over the whole."

### Statue of Liberty

A Frenchman, Frederic Bartholdi, designed the Statue of Liberty for the Franco-American union in 1874. It was built by popular subscription in France to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of American independence, and took five years to complete. It was mounted in Paris in October, 1881. The American pedestal for the statue, built by popular subscription here, was built between 1883 and 1886, and the statue was erected on an iron framework bolted firmly to the stone pedestal. It was dedicated October 23, 1886. The statue is of copper sheets 2 1/2 mm. in thickness. Its total weight is 225 tons, including 100 tons of copper. From the water level to the top of pedestal is 149 feet 10 inches; from the statue base to top of torch 151 feet 5 inches. From the heel to top of head is 111 feet 6 inches. Forty persons can stand comfortably in the head, and the torch will hold 12 people.

### German Speed Camera

Capable of taking 80,000 pictures a second, an all-electric slow-motion camera has been developed in Germany. Motion pictures produced were shown before invited guests in Berlin, not long before the outbreak of the war. Among the pictures shown was the movement of warm air circulating in a heated room, the discharge of electric sparks over insulators and flying bullets hitting suspended steel wires. Known technically as a stroboscope, the camera is designed primarily for technical and scientific research.

### Diphtheria Law Is Being Violated By Parents In State

Raleigh, January 2.—The law designed to prevent diphtheria by requiring that children be immunized, which was passed by the last General Assembly and ratified March 17, 1939, is not being enforced, it was asserted here Friday night by Dr. Carl V. Reynolds, State Health Officer.

In substantiation of this assertion, Dr. Reynolds pointed out the fact that, according to the report of the State Board of Health's Division of Epidemiology, there were 476 cases of diphtheria throughout the State in November, 211 of which occurred in children under 5 years of age and 176 in children from 5 to 9.

"It requires only about sixty days for a child to become immunized," Reynolds said, "and if this law had been observed to the letter, diphtheria could have been wiped out by midsummer of this

year. Instead, we see where 476 cases occurred last month, and in some communities the disease was prevalent to a marked degree. In fact, in thirteen counties from 10 to 27 cases occurred.

"If people of this State could only witness these helpless children and see the scores of them in hospitals with tubes in their throats, some of which had to be inserted by making incisions in their necks, our people would wake up to just what this means.

"The State Board of Health requests all parents to see that their children are immunized against this highly infectious disease, thereby saving us the embarrassment of having to take drastic steps," Dr. Reynolds added significantly.

"The results of diphtheria are not only dangerous to the child, but through the neglect of not having children immunized the lives of all susceptible within the range of its contact are endangered.

"I call upon the parents of North Carolina to act now, before it is too late!"

**GENERAL AUTO REPAIRING**  
BODY AND PAINT WORK BY  
EXPERT CRAFTSMEN  
**WRECKER SERVICE**  
TELEPHONES:  
Day—439-6 - Night—519-6  
**BARBOUR MOTOR COMPANY**  
Chrysler, Plymouth & Federal Trucks  
13th and Arendell St. Morehead City

**Carteret County's**  
-GREATEST-  
**USED CAR SALE**  
Now In Progress  
**SAVINGS FROM 10% to 50%**  
FREE: For a limited time only we will give 1940 License Plates with each car selling for over \$150.00.  
"WE GUARANTEE TO SAVE YOU MONEY"  
**LOFTIN MOTOR CO.**  
SALES SERVICE  
Beaufort North Carolina

**Notice To Taxpayers**  
—of—  
**Carteret County**  
A Penalty of 10 % Will Be Charged All Taxpayers Who Fail to List Their Property During the Month of JANUARY 1940  
All Taxpayers in Carteret County are hereby notified that pursuant to the Requirements of the Statute, they are required to return to the List Takers and Assessors in their Townships all Real and Personal Property which each Taxpayer owned on the First Day of January, 1940, and said Returns shall be made to the List Takers during the Month of January, 1940.  
**List Your Property During JANUARY**  
The Books will be open in all Townships during the month of January. It is to your interest to cooperate with the List Takers and  
REMEMBER!—You will be subject to Indictment by Grand Jury and also a 10% Penalty if you fail to List Taxes.  
**F. R. SEELEY**  
Tax Supervisor of Carteret County