

# This Fish Dealer Makes His Business As Exciting as a Three-Ring Circus

By Ruth Peeling

Ottis Purifoy of Morehead City can be numbered among the few fish dealers who have a flair for showmanship, the ability to catch the public's eye, and the intelligence to keep his business constantly before the consumer.

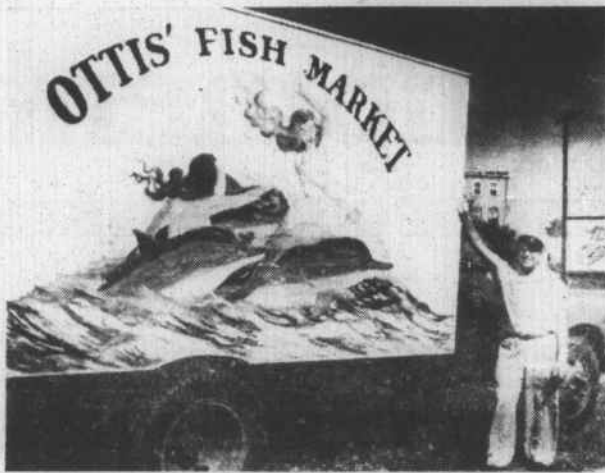
For 15 years he has been in the retail and wholesale fish business in Morehead City. His ruddy complexion and bright eyes betray the fact that prior to 1935 he himself helped haul a net. He has fished in waters from Maine to Florida.

Ottis has a hankering now to get out on a boat again but shaking his head, he declares, "I can't do it. Have to stay here and look after things."

### Operates Fleet

The "things" he refers to are a fleet of 15 boats, a large icing and packing house, dock, and retail fish market which dominates the waterfront part of the "jib" in Morehead City. The jib constitutes the area where Shepard street branches off at an acute angle from Evans street and follows the waterfront.

No waterfront visitor can overlook "Ottis' Fish Market." The front of the white shingle building is



Ottis Purifoy, right, stands beside one of his trucks which is probably the most unique in the fish business.



Outside Ottis' fish market, C. W. Lewis, clerk in the retail market, stands between a painting of a buoy and a speedboat towing a bathing beauty on a surfboard.

brilliantly painted with beach scenes, a girl on a surfboard, a leaping sail fish and a buoy. One of his trucks, however, tops everything. Cavorting merrily on each side of it are mermaids riding porpoises.

Visitor or taciturn permanent-resident, neither can help but look twice.

### 'Picture Gallery'

The retail store is a showplace in itself. The walls are covered with mammoth, beautiful paintings of marine life, all done by the same artist, R. W. Lewis, who painted the exterior of the building and the truck.

In the store are more than a hundred photographs, mounted fish and handsome models of cabin cruisers ranging from less than a foot in length up to four feet. The models were built by Kenneth Eldridge of Morehead City.

The ice display cases, holding all species of fish in season, are, believe it or not, the main attraction to the housewife or poor-luck fisherman who is looking for a delectable bite for the evening dinner table.

In addition to commercial fishing boats, Ottis operates four party boats, the Shearwater, Dolphin, Sea Raven, and Dolphin II. It looks like carnival time in the summer at Ottis' fish market. Brightly colored pennants whip excitingly in the sou'westers, luring sports fishermen to Ottis' dock where they board one of the party boats and set sail for the Gulf Stream.

### Willing Snapshot Subjects

The day has yet to dawn when the fishermen fail to return happily to pose with their catch for the professional or amateur cameraman.

One of Ottis' most prized possessions lies out in the wind and weather at the front of his retail store. No attempt has ever been made to put it under lock and key. After all, it weighs 800 pounds. That's how big anchors had to be in civil war days. This one, however, was probably 1,000 pounds in weight when it was new, Ottis be-

lieves. It's the anchor off the "iron steamer" which went aground between Salter Path and Atlantic. See FISH DEALER, Page 13

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