Lobstermen are losing their turf to aquaculture, say three generations of Carlsons in Tenants Harbor. A million more pounds of mussel meat than lobster meat were landed in 1985 as the sea is "fenced" for farming.
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Cover photograph by Lynn Kippax, Jr.
The Three Salts

What is Salt? A magazine? An educational experience? An archive of Maine folklore and culture? The answer is all of the above. Salt is not one, but three. The three Salts interact and build on each other.

At Salt, college students and their teachers study and record the distinctive culture of Maine as a means of returning what is recorded and learned to the people of that culture.

It is an idea that links teachers and students, Maine's people and scholars, in an exchange of learning and knowledge that provokes new insight and preserves traditions of the culture of present day Maine.

How do the three Salts link together? Lynne Hallee, a student from Hampshire College, studied at Salt during the fall semester in 1985. For her field research, she conducted a series of interviews with students and their teachers at a one room schoolhouse on Cliff Island in Portland Harbor. The interviews led to a finished article, "One Room School of Today," which is published in this issue of Salt Magazine. The tape recorded interviews, along with the accompanying photographic negatives, became part of Salt's archives.

At the Salt Center for Field Studies in Cape Porpoise, Maine, Salt Magazine is published quarterly; educational programs are conducted in the fall and summer; and the Salt archives are housed. Salt has grown and evolved since it was founded in 1973, always working to strengthen its three selves. Here are the three Salts of today.

Salt Educational Programs
Salt conducts regional field studies programs in the summer and fall for college students from Maine and across the United States. It also offers a July program for teachers and advanced students who wish to engage in field research and/or learn publication skills.

Academic credit is awarded by the University of Maine system. During the summer semester, students may earn 12 credits; during the fall, 15 credits. Participants in the July program earn six credits. A special fall regional studies program also awards six credits. It is designed for part time or commuting students. (For further information about the programs with a listing of courses, see page 62.)

Staff for the educational programs is composed of visiting humanities professors, guest lecturers and the participating journalists and other professionals who produce Salt Magazine. The teaching staff is as interdisciplinary as the makeup of the student body.

Salt Magazine
Taskmaster for students and teachers who participate in the educational programs is Salt Magazine. Hailed for its articulate and sensitive portrayal of Maine's people, both in words and photography, the magazine demands a high level of artistry and perception from those who contribute to it.

Through Salt Magazine, Salt disseminates the results of its field research, reaches the people of the culture that it writes about, and teaches students. The magazine is the axis of the exchange of knowledge between Maine's people and Salt. Here, Salt displays and returns what it has learned to an audience that is its subject matter. Here, Salt reaches scholars with cultural studies of present day Maine.


The magazine is supported by subscriptions and memberships, by newsstand sales, and by corporate and individual contributions.

Salt Archives of Folklife
Through its efforts to document and record the lives and work of Maine's people, Salt has developed a large, significant, and irreplaceable collection of tape recorded interviews and photographic negatives. Its archives are one of the major repositories of tape recorded interviews and photographic negatives in New England, housing over 800 hours of tape recorded interviews and over 100,000 photographic negatives.

Citing the importance of the archives, Joseph Hickerson, head of the Archive of Folk Culture at the Library of Congress says, "I have followed Salt's work since its inception and know the value of these materials—to students, scholars, and to future generations of Down Easters. Our philosophy has been to see such significant collections permanently archived in two locations—a regional facility and a national repository. I laud your efforts in seeking that goal."
The Season Grows
From January to May it's just us year-rounders here in the south of Maine. The rest of the year we share the place. Our four months is now up for 1986.

Oldtimers say we used to be alone down here for nine months, nine lonely months. But that was before the autumn foliage tours and before people got back to nature by coming to Maine in person to buy their Christmas trees and wreaths and stocking presents.

Places like Addison and Jackman still have nine months. Places like Meddybemps and Madawaska have the whole twelve.

But down here in southern Maine we're highly accessible and the time when it's just us gets shorter and shorter each year. Some say the four months may shrink to nothing in our lifetime, but they're forgetting March.

Nobody wants Maine in March. Not even us. So we can be pretty well assured that ten years from now, no matter what else changes around us—and it's changing faster than we can talk about it—there will always be a time when it's just us, all alone here in Maine.

Off Season Silence
People who come to Maine for the good months are powerfully curious about what we do when they're not around. We know that and we won't tell them.

It's our revenge for fair weather allegiance. Those effusive exclamations about how beautiful it is here and how hot it is back home and how their trees don't turn into a symphony of color like ours.

The more observant returning summer visitors see signs we've been around. Low woodpiles. New February stickers on our license plates. Potholed back roads.

But what do we DO? Ha! Try and find out. If they ply us with sympathy about our long winters, we encourage 'em. (Never mind that we just went through the mildest season in years.)

If they think we spend our evenings winding old pieces of twine into dingy balls or building ornamental clam baskets, we let 'em. (Who's going to admit he's hooked on his new personal computer?)

If they think we hibernate, let 'em. (Even we were surprised when Stilly Griffin's street emptied right out for Florida in February.)

Now that our tardy summer sun has finally warmed things up enough for the great migration to Maine, we are prepared. We will be cordial. We will give directions. We will drive slower. We will be friendly at the gas pumps and the checkout counters. But never, never will we let on what we do around here when it's just us.

Tom, Dick and Harvey in Print
Three local people have been "shining the seat of my pants," as Harvey Bixby puts it, during the winter months. A rash of writing will see the light of day, as books by Cape Porpoise writers go to press.

Since the manuscripts landed on our desk for reading and

Continued on page 5.
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The magazine about the really important people in Maine.
Continued from page 3. We can vouch for their quality. Taken together, they point to a veritable renaissance of letters here, not by seasonal people who choose a pretty place for writing, but by residents who are writing, in some cases their first books.

Tom Bradbury has written his first, a children's book about the adventures of a seagoing cat named Scraggly who shipped out of Cape Porpoise on a Nunan vessel. The book, to be out in early summer (Gannett Publications), was hardly finished before he had completed the second in what will be a series.

The book is based on tales Tom heard from Seth Pinkham about a Cape Porpoise cat who travelled the seas with the fishermen and, when on shore, hung out at Pinkham's Store. It is illustrated by two local artists, Ron Goyette and Nancy Cooper Funk.

Another familiar figure who has completed a book is Harvey Bixby. Harvey, long known as an "artist in stone work," has written a well crafted book about stone work, with the friendliest of advice about how to do it, followed by some "adventures" of his own in stone work. He has illustrated the book himself with drawings that have a nice craggy quality to them. Several publishers are now considering the book.

A third book which grew up right under our nose is in part authored by Hugh French, an associate editor at Salt. This is an archeological study of Fort Sullivan in Eastport called Beneath the Barracks, published by the Border Historical Society.

What might have been a dull study is instead a handsome, well written, richly illustrated book. Its excellence, along with that of a companion volume edited by Hugh French, Coastal Fort, earned an Annual Preservation Award from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission for the Border Historical Society of Eastport for publishing "two remarkable volumes."

Wildwood Chapel

This time last year we were going to a wedding in Wildwood Chapel on Wilde's District Road. It was a family wedding with about forty relatives and a few close friends. "A country bride in a country church," said the urban bridesmaid.

The bride had a special affection for the little stone chapel in its setting of protective trees—like many locals and summer people. She knew its history. How it was built in 1910 with stones dragged from the nearby shoreline. How some of the stones were so massive they could only be supported by ship's knees. How friendly churchmice ran across the rafters when the congregation sang in the early years.

This season, when the bride and groom celebrate their first wedding anniversary, they would be ill advised to return to Wildwood Chapel. Its setting has been despoiled, the trees hacked away, the land bulldozed, and a sprawling ugly motel reaches toward its north wall. On the south, staked in front of the few remaining trees is a sign proclaiming that this land, too, is for sale.

Earl's Return

With his recent escape from California in mind, Earl turned to grim humor for comfort. "Have you seen how they're straightening the road by Nat Smart's house to give the cars a racetrack?" he asked.

"I can't wait til they elevate Wildes District Road so you can have a great view of the ocean driving along there. And then they can put in a few ferris wheels. It's gonna be tremendous."
The Deacon's Bench
Mainely Mundane

By Thomas Bradbury

The Bradbury's were once noted party goers. If there was the smell of a charcoal broiled steak in the air, one or the other—or all—of us would be there. Weekends were spent cruising the beaches in search of a clambake. And, it was rumored, one uncle could hear the crank of a homemade ice cream maker from at least two miles away. We were even invited to some of these functions!

Of course, we seldom turned down an invitation. This prompted some relatives to design a new family coat-of-arms. Their suggestion was a crossed pair of salad utensils over an hibachi, with the Latin phrase "Arce numquam cenam libenter offertam" (refuse never a dinner freely offered) inscribed ornately below.

Times have changed though. Parties have grown more elaborate. It’s difficult for any of us to sneak into a social situation today. We tend to stand out like a lighthouse on a dark summer’s night. I know from experience.

The first thing that gives me away as a social incompetent is the way I'm dressed. I don't own an alligator shirt. If I did, I wouldn't know when to wear it. It never fails. If I come dressed in my best suit (several years old and tight), everyone else is wearing jeans. Should I make the mistake of dressing informally, the rest of the crowd looks like they're on the way to the prom. Consequently, I find myself heading for the corner where my improper attire will be less obvious.

There's a second advantage to spending the evening in the corner. From that location, the demands for conversation are limited. I'm not a mingler by nature. What's there to talk about? I don't sail, play golf, tennis, or travel. I'm not a member of any country club and I don't have the slightest idea what my "sign" is. In short, I'm boring. Even worse, I'm terrible at remembering people's names. Thus, the better part of my time is devoted to trying to figure out who I'm being boring with.

In days gone by I avoided much of this confusion by investing my full concentration on the food table. Even that is no longer safe. Everything is so fancy! Anchovie paste on crackers, stuffed mushrooms, and caviar are not my style. Who really knows when the Brie is ripe? What do you do with those little toothpicks when you can't find your way back to the serving table? I even have trouble with the simple things. My chips keep breaking off in the clam dip.

No, as far as I'm concerned, there's no improving on the old days. Parties were simpler then, less pressure to perform, leaving more time for enjoyment. You never had to guess what you were eating. You knew who you were talking to.

I take comfort in the fact that I'm not alone in this assessment. Many in the native population have expressed to me their anxieties about trying to have a good time. They like to get out, but when they do, they end up feeling socially stressed.

It is for those people that I announce proudly the formation of my own catering service. I'm calling it "Mainely Mundane." Mine will be a "back to basics" approach to parties, lots of coffee and brownies a la mode. I'm going to leave the potato chips and pretzels in the bag—less clean up. The same applies to the cans of peanuts.

For those with more discriminating tastes, I will feature my own "onion dip a la Lipton" and I might even mix up a few flavors of Chex cereals. Of course, when a heartier fare is needed, I'm more than willing to put together some peanut butter, egg salad, or chicken sandwiches. For an extra price I might even remove the crust from the white bread and cut them into little shapes with my cookie cutters. And speaking of cookies, we'll have plenty!

Yes, you other caterers out there beware. We native misfits are making our move. We’re demanding from a party what we’ve really wanted all along—not much. And we won’t give up until we get just that.

THOMAS BRADBURY is a native Mainer whose family has lived in Cape Porpoise since 1730.
By Jill Harvey

(Part I of a series of stories told by Avery Kelley of Beal's Island)

Avery Kelley is called "Crazy Avery" by his friends because he will go to almost any lengths for a laugh.

Avery is the great great grandson of Barney Beal, the Maine giant of legendary strength, who could fell a horse with a blow, carry full barrels under each arm, lift boulders and boats. Avery is not the size of this seafaring Samson, but he grew up to tales of Barney in a house that had been Barney's on Beal's Island.

Avery himself is often the butt of his funny stories. And though he casts himself as the country bumpkin bungling through a sophisticated world, the country ways come out on top in the end.

This is not the humor of the cosmopolitan outsider who summers in Maine and tells stories about Mainers. It is not "Bert and I" humor, which Edward Ives, Maine folklorist, is careful to point out is not real Maine humor or folklore.

Avery's stories are. We found Avery through his fishermen friends, who said, "If you want to hear some awful funny stories, go see Avery Kelley. Be sure to get him to tell you the stories about kitin' and goin' to New York and his pet turtle in the army."

"WELL," HE SEZ, "WELL, WHATCHA gonna DEW! He emphasizes the last word by slapping his hand smack on the knee. The current he creates resurfaces. It flows through his hand, down the leg and out his foot with a stomp. An electric stomp, it marks the final beat of this story. It joins the cadence of other stomps, other stories, all echoing in the room and reverberating into the next.

Avery leans forward on his chair, shadowing his belly. His voice rolls out like an Irish
"I was a little sea-bum. They wasn’t gonna launch a boat without me aboard."

jig. His accent is cockney-Maine. As he speaks, he uses this voice, that accent, those giggles as a musician uses his instrument. Loud and sustained, soft and trembling, a roller coaster of sounds as he travels through stories.

He begins each sentence booming out phrases, and afraid of losing the rhythm if he stops for breath, squeezes out the last words in a throaty whisper. His hands conduct the music of his mouth. And as he finishes another story, Avery sits back, beaming, as entertained as his listeners. Nobody enjoys Avery’s stories any more than Avery.

“If you knew my grandmother’s people, they was great storytellers. That was one a the big things, ya know. I got it on that side, an’ they was always in’aresting people.

“My grandmother was Marjory Emerson Beal. Her husband, my grandfather, was Avery. I was named for him. Big Avery and Little Avery, that’s how they used to distinguish us. I spent a lotta time with poor old grampy, he never had any boys.

“An’ I stayed more at my gran’father’s an’ gran’mother’s than I did at ma own house. We lived in this house, big white place here. My gran’father’s house was his great-gran’father’s, which was Barney Beal. They do so many stories on Barney, he was the giant. That was his own gran’father’s home. An’ so I’d stay with them up there.

“I’ve had some things happen to me, in’aresting things that most kids would never ever have happen to ’em.

“I was a little sea-bum. No kids had ever done anything like that at my age. I had a great life. I’d run with these old fellas, ya know. I was nine years old. I run away from school when they launched ‘er, an’ went to the captain’s bunk.

“They just wasn’t gonna launch a boat without me being aboard...especially a big boat. I went on lots a boats. An’ I went with older people.

“I didn’t run around sa much with kids. Mostly in the summer when most kids was running around, I was fishing away on fishin’ boats. But, I did have my childhood.

Avery’s skin is wind-whipped and rosy, his hands chapped dry. For all the toil of his 43 years, his face is amazingly boyish. The only wrinkles that have settled in are the crow’s feet gulleys along his eyes, irrigated from smiles and laughter. His grin is contagious, and you laugh just anticipating the origins.

“I’ve had lot a works. Like kite flying.
Course, we always done it, it was just like playing mahbles. At certain times a ye-ah [year] you done certain things. Kids don't never do it now, they don't know what a mahble is, they ain't got a clue, hardly. They, yes they see one, it's a mahble, but I doubt if they'd know how ta play the game a mahbles the way we used to.

"At other times of year, you'd do other things, like flying kites. An then there would be the time in the spring. Well, course we always made kites with heavy wrappin' paper, an' we mixed up paste with a flour. Well, we nevah had a mod'n [modern] kite, we never'd seen a mod'n kite.

"So this Friday night, course my gran'father, just about anything I wanted, why I'd keep a needling. Well he 'elped me, we worked an' got the sticks, got 'em put together, an' got the thing made. Got the paper on it, an' Grammy mixed the paste. Got 'er pasted, an' I went ta bed in the feathah bed. They had a big feather bed up there, all ma life. Ye'd get in that feather bed, you'd sink two feet.

"Well, the problem in the spring, we got rain. Nine times out a ten on the Sat'day, it'd be a rainstorm. Well there you was, licked.

"Anyway, got this kite built, ya know, an' Grampy said, 'Boy,' he said, 'Av'ry,' he said, 'it rain storm.' He said 'You can't fly that kite, it won't last no time in th' air.'

"There was a rainstorm, an' I was gonna fly that kite. 'Well,' I said, 'okay, I don't care, Grampy, if it falls right ta pieces in five minutes.'

"So I grabbed the kite under ma arm, an' went down ta, we called it 'The Openings' down in there. Well I went down in there, an' the wind was south-east going right through there, perfec'.

"Aw, the kite went up, but lord, she didn't stay five minutes. Like he said, the minute that paper got wet, why, kite torn, down she come.

"I gathered 'er up an' away'd I went ta the house a yellin'. I set in that rockin' chair, lookin' out that window an' a rockin' an' jawin', half-crying.

"My gran'mother was doing Sat'day cooking. Well, they had what they used ta have, an ol' fashion pantry, that they cooked in, ya know. Well, I seen 'her in there, an' she had the little table in there.

"Well, I see 'er gather that plastic tablecloth right up, an' she brought it out an' put it in the settin' room on the table. An' I took th' tablecloth off. It was when plastic tablecloth's first come out, the clear ones. Judas, jus' quick's 'at, come to me.

"'Why,' I said, 'if I could have that plastic tablecloth on that kite, I could fly it in a rainstorm.'" Avery claps his hands, capturing the current and then releasing it with laughter. "Well sir, I said, 'Grab it!'

"I said, 'Tell me YES!'

"She said, 'Tell ya yes 'bout what?'

"I said, 'Tell me yes, I wanna know about that. I want you say yes, if you say yes I got it licked.'

"'Well,' she said, 'I can't say yes, till I know what you want!'

"'Well,' I said, 'if you'd just tell me yes, I can get this...get this problem. I got a problem, an' you tell me yes an' I can solve ma problem.'

"By an' by I said, 'Grammy, I got ta have your tablecloth.'

"'Well wha' you want that tablecloth for?'

"I said, 'I gotta have it cut an' put on this kite so I can fly it in this rainstorm day.'

"'Oh,' she said, 'I jus' got that tablecloth,' she said, 'you can't have that tablecloth.'

"Now I said, 'Grammy, I've got ta have the tablecloth, 'cause I've got ta fly the kite, an' ya can't fly with paper, it's destroyed. An' if I could have the tablecloth, it'd fly.'

"'Talked her right into it. She took an' got the tablecloth out an' we cut it. An' then she went ta sewing machine, sewed it right on, see. Lord, I went right back to Th' Openings, put ma ol' jacket on, walked out, an' went right down ta Th' Openings.

"Set right down all day an' flew a kite in the rainstorm!' Avery giggles. Sitting forward with his hands clenched you can almost see Little Avery crouched down, battling the rainstorm with his kite.

"But, I got the tablecloth out of her!"

If Avery had stayed at home, perhaps he'd be just another one of many local tellers. But Avery took himself beyond the island. By then he'd been busy fishing for three or four years. At eighteen years, he went to New York City and introduced himself to the world beyond.

(To be continued. Next issue, Avery's adventures in New York.)

JILL HARVEY was a student at the College at Purchase, State University of New York, when she studied at Salt for a semester.
"THE LOBSTERMEN ARE PUTTING up a terrible battle. They're mad as hell. You can't blame them. We're restricting the free range."

A candid official from Maine's Department of Marine Resources (DMR) gives his view of the fierce struggle between fishermen and aquaculturists for the coastal sea bottom.

"It's the cowboys and the sodbusters competing for the range." Today's new sea farming "sodbusters" are a direct threat to the "cowboys" or lobstermen who roam the open range.

For lobstermen, this challenge to their traditional turf has sprung up overnight. The 1985 harvest tells the story of a violent shift in catch.

The lobster catch fell below the mussel harvest by an astounding 1.3 million pounds, measured in meat. Close to 6.3 million pounds of mussels were harvested, while 5 million pounds of lobster meat were landed (20 million pounds unshelled).

Maine's new sea farmers are responsible for this dramatic shift. In 1961, Maine harvested only 2,000 pounds of mussel meat. By 1966 the figure was still only 240,000 pounds. But in 1976, with the beginning of mussel culture and marketing, the harvest jumped to 1.2 million; climbed to 2 million in 1977; to 3 million in 1979; to 4.5 million in 1983; to 4.8 million in 1984; and catapulted to 6.3 million in 1985.

Over 600 acres of sea bottom along Maine's coast have been leased by DMR to the new farmers at the bargain price of $15 an acre per year. With their seeding practices, mussel farmers can bring to maturity in 18 months what nature takes up to nine years to produce. Farmers of oysters and salmon expect similar harvest cycles.

Lobstermen in places like Tenants Harbor are outraged. As they see it, such growth is at their expense.

Illustration by George Hughes
DIGGING UP A BATCH OF MUSSELS to eat along Maine’s stony coast is about as easy as collecting driftwood—if you know the ropes. In Tenants Harbor where I’ve spent pieces of the year for the last fifty, all I do is grab a bucket (or a large tub if I’m expecting company) and a pair of hip boots, and wait for low water. Then I get in a punt and row 200 yards across the harbor to Mouse Island.

At a low drain tide on the bar there, you can find yourself a God’s plenty of mussels in a jiffy. All it takes is three minutes of pawing around in the grey-black ooze before I’ve got a bucket full—seven minutes a tub full.

That’s the easy part, getting the mussels off their bed. It’s much easier than digging clams where the back is bent longer and you need an implement. What takes time with the mussel is the post-dig ritual. Back on your dock or in your kitchen you’ve got to break them out of their tightly knit clumps and then scrub them with a firm brush to remove all the mud and byssus, those dangling hairs that the mussel uses to attach itself to a perch. Then you’re free to steam your catch in wine and garlic, or stuff them with cheese, parsley, bread crumbs and butter, or cook them in a tomato-laced broth, whichever way the palate inclines.

For many in Maine and elsewhere in this country, the palate has not inclined towards the mussel (Mytilus edulis) until quite recently. Fifteen years ago, about the time I began my periodic voyages to Mouse Island, you would have been hard pressed to find mussels for sale in any self-respecting fish market along the coast, much less on the counters of local supermarkets inland. Back then the mussel had virtually no retail value. Clammers found the mollusk a pest which fouled their flats. Fishermen thought of the mussel as bait. And no Maine native in his right mind would ever set a platter of mussels before the family at suppertime.

That local distaste still lingers, as the conversation between a mussel salesman and a Tenants Harbor villager confirms:

“Would you ever eat mussels?”
“I guess so, if I ever got hungry enough.”
“Have you ever tried them?”
“No, I never got that hungry.”

But as the man says, the times they are a-changing. Not that the mussel has become a staple in the American diet, but there has been a liberation of our palate, at least where seafood is concerned. Monkfish, skate, shark, squid, “trash fish” whose mere mention a decade ago would probably have induced reverse peristalsis, now find their way into commendable seafood dishes served both in the home and in restaurants of repute. What lies behind this current drift in tastes is at one hand the emergence of cooking as an art not a chore, at the other the ease of travel which has brought foreign recipes into the American kitchen. My Mouse Island foray began, in fact, at the behest of my stewardess cousin who for years flew Pan Am’s New York to Paris route and convinced me that some delicious protein lay right in the harbor below my house. Whatever the reason, it is evident that with all this reshaping of the American taste buds, the mussel has become, as one New York Times writer put it, “the mollusk of the moment.”

In the last 75 years the mussel has had two other “moments.” Both began, oddly enough, during wartime in 1914 and 1942. During World War II, Maine’s production of wet mussel meat jumped from 114,000 to over 2 million pounds between 1942 and 1943, most of it canned and shipped to Europe. Though no actual records exist, we can suppose that a similar increase took place between 1914 and 1916. Several reports in the New York Times from those years reveal that the mussel had become a common item in the popular diet. Not surprising when we discover that in Boston the government supplied barrels of free mussels at police stations. Word was not long in getting out. Yet in each instance, as soon as the country returned to a peacetime economy, when beef was no longer scarce, the landings of M. edulis declined once again.

That is until the Great Eastern Mussel Farm (GEM) set up shop in Long Cove in 1982.

AS FATE WOULD HAVE IT, GEM’s operation lies exactly one mile north of Mouse Island. To get there by water, you head northerly out of Tenants Harbor, up past a red nun buoy where the cove narrows, swings west, and then opens onto a broad expanse of water.

On a still summer’s morning with the tide at full flood, that tidal lagoon can be as pretty
Packing mussels at the Great Eastern Mussel Farm plant in Tenants Harbor.

a meeting of land and water as you'd ever want to find. Six hours later, at the bitter end of the ebb, that same place is a pitted crater lined with mud, very little water, and lots and lots of mussels.

The GEM plant, a gray warehouse building, sits on the western shore of the lagoon on holdings that have in years past been respectively a granite quarry and a marine construction depot. The land gives up its history, a small eyesore on the cove. There is grout and the detritus of what was once a healthy paving stone business on this property, and the Prock Marine Company of Rockland has scarred the surroundings with the twisted steel remnants of old barge cabins which resemble pillboxes. You don't need all that much imagination to visualize this staging as a Guadalcanal beachhead just after the marines pushed through.

But for the silting that has filled a once deep water anchorage, the waterfront proper with its neatly inlaid granite behind the wooden pilings is probably not much different from what it was one hundred years ago when the three and four masted schooners lay alongside that very spot to take on their cargo of stone.

Inside the GEM plant there is a neatness honed by efficiency. Large pay loaders convey tons of mussels from the purging tubs to the start of the conveyor process which readies the product for market.

When you step into GEM's second floor offices with the secretaries and Xerox machines and computers you might just as well be somewhere in the Trump Tower, until you look out the window and there, indisputably, is the coast of Maine.

The two men who have brought the mussel business to this corner of Maine are indisputably, as the natives are quick to point out, "from away." Endicott Peabody "Chip" Davison, the president, graduated from Yale in 1974 with a degree in American Studies. His great grandfather, Endicott Peabody, founded Groton school back in the late 19th century.

For a time after leaving Yale, Chip Davison sailed a boat half way around the earth, learned to fly and bought a plane. "I became," he said, "a kind of adventurer." Then he did a turn in the paralegal offices of New York City before he moved to Maine in 1977 and began an eight month tutelege under Ed Myers, a mussel farmer on the Damariscotta River.

Chip Davison met Frank Simons, the vice
president, shortly after he moved Downeast. Their backgrounds tallied. Frank was also a well heeled adventurer. He had graduated from the University of Colorado with a degree in English and worked for the Outward Bound program both in Maine and Colorado. He also had a pilot's license and his own plane.

Both men were on the lookout for something that would allow them to live in Maine, and after they had canvassed the fishermen on the coast from Kittery to Calais, they decided the mussel business offered the greatest promise.

GEM started small, "a dory into bag type operation," Chip Davison called it. They worked out of Frank Simon's house in Sheepscot. They bought from local fishermen who fished for mussels when they felt like it, and they trucked their wares themselves all the long hours to Boston in their own vehicles. At its inception GEM was largely an exhausting tax write-off.

From those lowly beginnings in 1979, the company has developed into a considerable enterprise with more than 50 plant employees, a fleet of its own trucks and truck drivers, nine vessels and 27 men fishing for them full time. According to Chip Davison, it's all been done by what he calls, "marketing up." Then he quotes his former tutor, Ed Myers.

"The mussel has always been badly thought of. Not long ago down in New York or Boston they used bags of mussels for walking on in bad weather. If there was a puddle in their way, they'd get over there and put a bag of mussels there to step over the puddle. And that's the way they were treated. We just gave them a new lease on life, said they were the greatest and better than lobster."

When the New York and Boston markets seemed soft, GEM took their product south and west and marketed it, literally, restaurant to restaurant, door to door in places like At-
lanta, Dallas, Phoenix, San Francisco. "We've been in every city in this country," Chip Davison boasts.

"In Dayton, Ohio?"

"Yes, we've been to Dayton."

What GEM has done is take the mussel to the eating public and foist it upon them. "What's basically happening now," Chip Davison explains, "is that we've created a demand for mussels. Now Boston calls us—just the way the marketplace works: generally speaking there's a restaurant guy, here's the wholesaler in Boston or New York, and here's the producer down here.

"And the guy out here in the restaurant says, 'Can you get me any periwinkles?' And the guy says, 'Hold on, I'll call you back.' Calls out to his fisherman here, he says, 'Can you get me any periwinkles?'

"We've done it the other way; we've changed it around. We've gone out and marketed up as opposed to just fulfilling a need. We've gone to the people and said, 'Try these.'"

Behind GEM's aggressive marketing program lies careful processing within the plant to insure a mussel selection which can justify $18 to $25 a bushel in metropolitan areas.

Once off the sea bottom, the mussels go from boat to truck to the plant, where they are held in large bins or purging troughs as salt water circulates over them. When the assembly line personnel arrive, the mussels are fed onto a conveyor belt and into a chamber of intense water pressure, thence onto two separate belts and into a room where they are sorted and graded and closely examined for "quality control."

Before the processing comes the harvesting of the shellfish itself, of course, an endeavor of more controversial concern since it focuses on who, if anyone, can do what, if anything, out there on the ocean floor. As Frank Simons explains it sitting in his office, it all seems simple enough.

"Basically we are farmers as opposed to hunters. That's the big difference in terms of a viable commercial fishery. And what we do is we grow mussels from start to finish, and the way we do it is to collect mussel seed from the wild. What happens is each spring the mussels spawn and they release millions of little sperm and eggs and they fertilize in the water column and they float around for about three weeks. They look like a grain of pepper but actually they're in the shape of a mussel shell. And then the mussels set. They extrude a little protein hair and they attach to the bottom of a boat or a float or something like that.

"We look for this natural set which is usually a blanket somewhere along the coast, and what happens to this natural set is one of many things. It can get decimated by predators—eider ducks, starfish, crabs. It gets taken out in winter by ice. It generally sets in the inter-tidal zone and gets crushed by ice and then carried out.

"Another thing that can happen is that only the mussels on the periphery grow because they need the filtration and the nitration and so forth, so you get stunted growth of this seed."

What GEM does in effect is to dredge the half inch to inch long seed mussels off the wild beds and replant them on leased bottoms where the conditions best encourage their growth. It's a system that has been practiced in Holland for centuries.

Frank Simons holds up a specimen just over two inches long. Its shell is pitted, tortured looking, a grey white mixed with the predominant purple—a wild mussel grown in thick clusters 400 to a square foot on beds exposed in respective seasons to a burning sun or an arctic wind.

"That mussel," Frank Simons explains, "might be five or six years old, but it's only that big."

Then he holds up another specimen. This one is about the same size. Its shell is a deep rich purple, smooth and uniform, attractive to look at. A cultured mussel, cultured on one of GEM's leased bottoms, twenty mussels to a square foot.

"This is what our seed looks like," Frank Simons continues, "when it's been grown on our leases for only 18 to 24 months, then harvested at 55 millimeters, two inches or better."

The Lord's mussel, so it seems, has been tinkered with and improved.

I

F FRANK SIMON SPINS AROUND IN his swivel chair in the small office at GEM where he tells me all this and looks out the southeast window behind him, he can see the low tide ledge where he guns buffalohead and eider ducks on fall mornings before he comes to work. He can also look beyond to the set of islands, Clark and Seavey's and the Spectacles, which arrange themselves comfortably in a February's morning sunlight.
Were Frank Simon to look due south out his window, he could see, less than a hundred yards down the shore from the plant, the dock Wilfred Carlson uses for fishing lobsters.

Willy Carlson doesn't care for Frank Simon very much, nor Chip Davison, nor "that whole damn mussel plant, if you really want to know." Willy Carlson's bind is a double bind. Not only does this wharf abut the GEM operation, but his house lies a scant 25 yards from the entrance to the plant on Long Cove Road.

Everything that moves to or from GEM by road passes beneath Willy's stern surveillance.

Three generations of lobster fishermen, whose traditional boundaries are threatened. Willy Carlson, right, his father, Stanley, center, and son, Richard.
Except for a brief tour of duty in the service, Willy Carlson has lived all his life on the Long Cove Road. He has always used the shoreside facilities down by the GEM plant, as his father did before him, and as his son does now, with him. Except for a short time 12 years ago when he hurt his back in a car accident and ran a VW repair shop out of his house and its adjacent buildings, Willy Carlson has always lobstered.

In the spring, summer, and fall, Willy's unnamed vessel swings to a tether right off the dock, in plain view from Frank Simon's window. Were Frank Simons to look out his other window, he could see the small island Willy Carlson owns lying just a hundred yards northeast of the plant in Long Cove.

Willy Carlson has the look of a zealot, the energy of a dynamo. And he is a talker. His friend Mac Beam calls him "motor mouth." When Willy is riled up, that mouth can trip right along, and Willy's a bit more than riled up about GEM, he's enraged. He feels they have polluted the cove with their purification systems and pushed the lobstermen towards insolvency with their attempts to lease the bottom for mussel dragging. The root of Willy Carlson's anguish goes back to 1982.

"It started out one day I was out hauling my traps, I see two fellas in a skiff rowing around. I didn't know at the time, but one was called Amory and somebody else, the biologist. Then the next thing we knew Mac and I was down at the wharf and this fella called Amory came along and said they wanted to put up a building to process mussels. Nothing else, just process mussels."

"So you know how a good Yankee does, wondered if it was good or bad, if they had really got the place, and the next thing we know they was down there and they put up a building like that," he snaps his fingers. "One day they was down there and the next day the building was there, OK? 'Bout that quick.

"And so I got along real good with them, set a mooring for their pump, you know, so they could pump water. They pump like 5,000 gallons an hour of water through there to clean the mussels. And the next thing, yeah, the winter went by and I went down and plowed for them. They put a new road in down there and I kept the road open for them. I done everything I could.

"I thought we was going to be real neighborly, and then the next thing we know, we get this letter in the mail to all riparian landowners, which said that they was going to try to get some leases. What they wanted to do was lease the whole of Long Cove, which would be 70 to 80 acres, five acres in front of the mussel plant. Well, we really didn't understand, actually didn't understand what they was up to."

What GEM was up to entailed the rigamarole that any individual or institution must go through to lease ocean bottom on the coast of Maine. They must first apply to the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) stating what the lease is for and how it will be implemented. Then they must inform all the riparian landowners whose properties frame the lease. If enough landowners object, an adjudicatory hearing is held at which both sides air their views in front of the commissioner, Spencer Apollonio, or one of his aids. The DMR then weighs the arguments on both sides, and comes down with a verdict, to lease or not to lease.

GEM planned to lease 75 acres in Long Cove jointly with Alvin Hawkins, a local fisherman. They intended to use the bottom to grow seed mussels for harvest near the plant. The letter they sent out to the abutting landowners was a strange document. On it they misspelled a number of landowners' names, gave addresses incorrectly and most oddly of all, listed the township of St. George where both Tenants Harbor and Long Cove are located as "Georgetown, Maine."

In time the local fishermen and other villagers came to view this announcement as a ruse on GEM's part, their sullied attempt to confuse the landowners and get them to disregard the whole matter.

Willy gets mad just recollecting these tactics: "The letters that we got was like [addressed] to Ralph Carlson and they wasn't really the right names or anything that was on the letter and that was what got us to wondering what was going on and so me and Mac says, 'This don't smell right,' this smells real bad and something's going on that we should know about and then Christ, we went to see Fred Newcomb—he's an attorney in Rockland—and he looked the things over and he said, 'This don't smell right, they're trying to pull a fast one here, but we don't know just what it is.'"

Willy Carlson is not a man you pull a fast one on. He went back home to Tenants Harbor and began to drum up opposition to GEM's proposal for the 75 acre lease. He cited pollu-
tion as a factor to be on the lookout for. He claimed GEM's real intent was not to grow seed mussels in Long Cove but to store wild mussels that had been dredged up elsewhere. And most alarming of all, if GEM and Alvin Hawkins got their lease, it would spell the end to some of the best lobstering grounds in the area. It was obvious that GEM was going to have to get someone else to plow their driveway.

Willy engineered a town meeting at the local school in Tenants Harbor where he and others set forth their complaints. The town formed the Ad Hoc Committee for Coastal Preservation, nominated a handful of men to serve, and voted Willy in as chairman. From the time the letters to the riparian landowners went out on April 22, 1983 until the time of the designated hearing on June 7, that committee met seven times, compiling a formidable list of objections to the lease.

Then came a series of denouements. The hearing which was originally scheduled for the evening of June 7 in Tenants Harbor was unaccountably changed to June 13, a Monday, midday in the Rockland Recreation Center, an inconvenient place and time for the working fishermen. Nonetheless, more than 100 people showed up to voice their concern. When they entered the hearing, Kenneth Young, Deputy Commissioner for the DMR, rose to say that Alvin Hawkins and GEM had withdrawn their lease request in Long Cove.

This news came as both a relief and a letdown. But it did not deter Willy Carlson and his committee from keeping the heat on GEM. The committee turned now to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) which in turn forced GEM to revamp its dumping procedures by trucking wastes to towns with sewage plants, instead of depositing them in Long Cove.

Another thing we're interested in is that a big part of these leases would have been on eel grass which everything we could read about it is where everything was grown from small herring to small lobsters, anything that goes to breed starts out in this eel grass and about 60 acres of this cove is all eel grass and if they was to drag this up, put all this garbage all over the bottom, where would all our fishing business be?

Of broken promises (Steve Maxwell): “The interesting thing about that—we had had the Saturday prior to that the mussel draggers, or the people that wished to drag came and had a meeting with us here to find out what our concerns were with the cove, etc., etc., and we basically told them that we would like to have a moratorium on any kind of dragging out there to let the whole thing settle down and find out what we had.

“And they said they thought that there were about 50,000 pounds of mussels out there that were ripe for the taking and they wanted to take them. They had given us a written agree-
ment that they would not drag until they had had another meeting with us the following Saturday. They dragged on Friday, and you know it just didn’t make sense.”

Of suspect collusion (Guy Scarpino): “Well, let’s put it this way: Shortly after all of this started, in the spring of 1983, there was an opening on the marine advisory board which is a council which advises the Department of Marine Resources on marine issues. Out of nowhere appeared Chip Davison as a nominee for the marine advisory council. Nobody knew who nominated him. The commissioner didn’t know who nominated him, the deputy commissioner didn’t know who nominated him, the governor didn’t know who nominated him or presented his name to the governor for nomination.”

Of monopolistic designs (Willy Carlson): “They’re going to put down these [wild] mussels on their leases, and when there’s no more wild mussels—that’s what me and you and him [the part time mussel fisherman] we’re taking—they’re going to put us out of business. Then they get the whole thing to themselves.

“They can charge any damn thing they want. If they want to charge a dollar a piece for a mussel they can do it, and I think that’s what they’re trying to do, put the little guys out of business. They’re not going to put them all out, but they’re going to make it so that it’s going to be hard for you to make a living with mussels. They’re going to take over. They want to own it lock, stock and barrel.”

Of misconstrued intentions (Bill Iliffe): “That’s the ways they’re presenting it, see . . . well, we employ twenty people and we do this and we do that and yet they are and it’s very much appreciated, you know, and we want them to continue and follow the rules and regulations that everybody else has had to follow in the past and they seem to be circumventing all the time.”

In another vein, it is the tale of a community’s awareness and adhesion. “Nobody in this town,” claims Willy Carlson, “has ever been so stirred up that I know of since the mussel plant moved in.” Out of this apprehension, Scott Viatonis believes, has come an uncharacteristic galvanizing of the fishermen themselves.

“I’d like to question too what it’s done to feeling. I think it’s a tribute to just the fact that we stayed together. The reason fishermen can’t accomplish anything in the state
Scott Viatonis of Ad Hoc Committee

Steve Maxwell of Ad Hoc Committee

legislature is we’re all so damned independent. I mean we won’t agree on an issue or even if we do, we won’t go and present that, but we’ve all felt so strongly about this that we stayed together and we’ve stayed with the facts.

"I think the one thing anybody will tell you is that we have our credibility throughout this. We have never been the one who’s calling names."

Nine months after GEM withdrew its lease request, the local fishermen still had reason to band together, this time to exact some vigilante justice. Although the Long Cove bottom was not formally leased, that did not preclude mussel dragging boats from coming in and scouring the cove floor for wild mussels.

In March 1984 when Joe Upton and Mike Mesko brought their vessels to Long Cove to drag, they were met with a large number of bogus traps and floating pot warp, set there to dissuade them. It was the same tactic used by Freeport lobstermen in the fall of 1985, a move that forced Commissioner Apollonio to confiscate all the traps and close that area to any lobstering for ninety days. He took no such action in the Long Cove incident, but clearly there too the local lobstermen had become desperate enough to take the law into their own hands.

Between April of 1984 and the fall of 1985 the mussel/lobster controversy lay on a back burner. Then in November Alvin Hawkins, this time alone, applied again for a lease in Long Cove. Now he wanted only 36 acres instead of 75. The committee swung back into action. They got the lease rejected at the first hearing on a minor technicality. Hawkins reapplied.

At 7 P.M. on the 26th of February, 1986, the DMR held a second adjudicatory hearing in the gymnasium of the public school building in Tenants Harbor. More than 80 people sat in the bleachers along the east wall of the large room. Commissioner Apollonio, dressed in a gray suit, faced them at a long green table set up on the floor. Peggy McLosky, an attorney for the DMR sat to his left, Ken Honey, the recorder, sat to his right. A floor microphone stood to the right of the table, a hand microphone lay on it.

"Please speak into the microphone," the commissioner constantly admonished.

For those not comfortable with speaking in public places, the adjudicatory hearing is not designed to turn the timid into Daniel
Websters. For the first half of the meeting, the applicant makes his presentation at the floor microphone and then entertains questions from the floor. When the interrogator drifts from the inquisition into argument—an easy thing to do when you’re hot under the collar—he is quickly warned by the commissioner, “That is not a question, Mr. Allen.”

More than one quilt-vested, bill-capped lobsterman lay down the hand microphone in disgust and walked back to the bleachers, his testimony broken in two. Caught in this breach of protocol, Willy Carlson turned on the commissioner, “I’m not the kind of man who goes along with the procedures, commissioner,” he announced. And shaking his finger at Spencer Apollonio, he said, “I know why you’re down here. You’re trying to screw us.” Then he sat down.

The last half of the meeting was thrown open to general statements from the floor, made at the microphone under oath. Now came a long list of objections from landowners and fishermen alike. Alvin Hawkins’ lease would, if granted, disturb a seal-breeding reef, alter bottom ecology, interfere with waterfowl nesting, introduce disease with mussel seed brought in from other areas, and most flagrant of all, curtail the lobster take in Long Cove.

Throughout the commissioner listened attentively and took copious notes. He ran a tight, well-structured meeting. Given the contorted strictures of the adjudicatory hearing, everyone received a fair shake.

Spencer Apollonio obviously knew his constituents. He had been there before. At five minutes after ten, he closed up shop, packed his gear and headed back to Augusta to make his decision.

The Ad Hoc Committee for Coastal Preservation was not optimistic. The commissioner wants to see the mussel business prosper in Maine, they said. He doesn’t give a damn about the lobstermen. You just wait and see, they said, Alvin will get his lease, no doubt about that.

The Ad Hoc Committee guessed right—or almost right. On April 22, all but 8.28 acres of the proposed 35.61 acre lease was approved, giving Alvin Hawkins the use of 27.33 acres for mussel farming for ten years.

The two tracts of 8.28 acres that weren’t approved were excluded because of eel grass. The Ad Hoc Committee claimed the entire tract had eel grass and that it was, as Willy Carlson put it “our shedder ground. We lost one-eighth of our shedder ground. This man has taken 28 acres of our most vital lobster ground.

“You name it, it’s there. Flounder, herring, lobsters. There’s everything there. Everything. “They’re just gonna take the whole works, all 200 acres of our shedder ground. Put us 35-40 fishermen out of business. The commissioner’s going right along with it.

“For one guy, gonna put all of us out of business.”

The Hawkins lease is similar to other current DMR leases. Seeding and harvesting are prohibited between May 15 and November 5, the time when mussels reproduce and lobsters come into shallow waters. No limit is placed on mussel size or on type of dragging gear, such as reducing the length of the bag. The Ad Hoc Coastal Preservation Committee is seeking both these restrictions. Price per acre each year is $15.

Lobstermen are also seeking to force the per acre lease price up to over $400, equal to leasing a lobster pound. Their first step toward this was to push through a bill transferring to the Bureau of Public Lands the setting of fee schedules.

One DMR official said aquaculture should not be charged at the same rate as lobster pounds.

“It’s not appropriate for aquaculture. They’re not doing the same thing. Boats can navigate on a lease, but can’t on pound space. We’re talking about apples and oranges.”

A decision on the fight to push fees for mussel farming up to the prohibitive level of $400 or more per acre is not expected for at least a year.
II. The Practitioner

STANDING IN THE cold starlight in an inch of new snow outside the schoolhouse after the meeting, Sherman Hoyt of nearby Clark Island lays his finger to the core of the lobsterman's problem.

"The real issue is territory. For generations these lobstermen have been trying to establish their territories, and where they can and can't go is all firmly set by tradition.

"There's no law in Augusta that says you or I can't put our traps anywhere on the coast we want to. But you'd better not try it. Now these mussel draggers come along and they get a lease and they have total say over who can fish on their territory. And the law in Augusta will back them up.

"But there's no one to back up the lobsterman; he has to depend on the honor of the other fellow since the restrictions he's established over the years are outside the law. He has a lot of trouble dealing with that."

Then too, there is the matter of size. Most lobstermen would like to see the mussel business stay small time. They fear GEM's size and big money, and they resent what they see as the large conglomerate's insensitivity towards an older, more traditional fishery.

If GEM would just buy from the small time mussler who digs by hand, everyone would be happy. It's musseling at this level that the lobsterman can understand, for the take at the end of a day on the water is about the same as his own.

"These guys," explains Bill Iliffe, "are hauling six days a week to get 100 bushels at six dollars a bushel. Now the economics of that doesn't sound too bad if you turn around and just calculate that for a month, you know.

"There's three fellas going, they got a scow and two skiffs and they're digging by hand. Now I mean the economics behind that, you start calculating and you say, gee whiz, they got few expenses, but what expenses they got... all of a sudden they seem to be making pretty good dollars now."

What seems like pretty good dollars to Bill Iliffe, doesn't to Jack Hamblen. Jack fishes out of Stonington for GEM in his 40 foot mussel dragger and in two hours dragging on one of his leases of a given morning, he can gross better than $1000. Pretty good dollars in anyone's accounting.
To see how Jack Hamblen can make this kind of money in the fishing business, I decided to take a trip with him in late August. “Be at the Stonington Lobster Coop east of town at 4:30,” he instructs me when I call him from Searsport on my way Downeast to Stonington.

I have no alarm and very little confidence in my own reveille system, so I sleep in the back of my pickup truck alongside the Coop office, just out of the glare of the night light.

When subconsciousness sucks me under about 10:30, it is a fine warm starlit night; when I awake about 0300, the stars are gone and my sleeping bag is wet. A dungeonous fog has set in off the Gulf of Maine. An hour later I hear voices, and I am about 0405.

The lease that Hamblen and Burgess are dragging on this August morning is the first of three they acquired in conjunction with GEM back in 1981. The 56 acre lease is registered in all three names, and five years ago cost them five dollars an acre, a total of $284.50 payable the first of every October for the ten years it runs. The three parties secured their bottom lease in the conventional way, first with an application, then with letters of intent to adjacent landholders, then with a hearing.

“I said he’d take me out with him today.”

Joe looks at me sitting in the pickup in the fog in the shadow of the building, with a soggy sleeping bag around one shoulder and says, “Oh.” He turns and heads down to the wharf.

Jack Hamblen is a punctual man. By 0445 he has Sea Rider II in along the pier and ten minutes later we are bound east out the Deer Island Thoroughfare behind Northern Star II. Jack’s uncle, Bobby Burgess, owns Northern Star, a sister ship to Sea Rider. Both men fish in partnership for GEM, have for five years.

With the shroud the fog and the early morning blackness have dropped over the boats, the only view we get of Northern Star is the occasional glimmer of her mast headlight as it fades in and then fades out again. We ride in her wake and roll with it.

Jack seldom separates from his radar screen. He holds the wheel with his left hand and peers constantly into the eye-piece. There is, after all, not much to see through the windshield of the vessel’s doghouse. Burgess’s static-choked voice comes over the VHF from time to time with navigational suggestions or a weather supposition.

It is a long 30 minutes to the lease off of Stinson’s Neck northeast of Stonington, a long 30 minutes. By 0530 when the first dredge drops overboard onto the bottom, we have a wan daylight and visibility known in these parts as “fisherman clear”—about 20 yards.

The lease that Hamblen and Burgess are dragging on this August morning is the first of three they acquired in conjunction with GEM back in 1981. The 56 acre lease is registered in all three names, and five years ago cost them five dollars an acre, a total of $284.50 payable the first of every October for the ten years it runs. The three parties secured their bottom lease in the conventional way, first with an application, then with letters of intent to adjacent landholders, then with a hearing.

“At that first hearing,” Jack explains, “nobody was there. There was one man there who owned a lobster pound and why he was there, he wanted to find out how much rental he had to pay for his lease compared to us. That was the only person there, nobody else in town could have cared less.

“Everybody always used to make fun of us, stupid musselers. They was going to lay it right onto you, you know, can’t do nothing else and all this crap, but then it turned out and it started to work and we started to make a pretty good business out of it and things changed.

“Second lease, four or five people showed up. They had the usual bunch around here, the clam diggers who said we’re killing everything and everything else, the only thing is they’re clamming and they’d like to have the mussel beds and so they’re doing it, you know.”

By the time they requested their third lease in 1983 (a 25 acre expansion of their first one) they met considerable opposition. The lobster pound operator now complained openly that Hamblen’s dragging stirred up so much silt that it raised havoc with the lobsters inside his pound. Others at the hearing complained of noise and questioned disturbances to the bottom in the area.

Still, the lease was granted, again for ten years, now at $15 an acre, but where the conditions on the 1981 lease contract read only, “Storage prohibited” the new contract was less lenient: “No seedings, culturing or harvesting operations in the lease tracts except between sunrise and sunset; operations shall not interfere with moorings in the lease area; lessees shall make every reasonable effort to confine the deposit and movement of seed mussel and other materials to within the boundaries of the lease area; storage prohibited.”

By 0600 Sea Rider’s dredge has made four passes over the bottom of the lease. From the moment the first dredge dropped into the water, activity aboard has been feverish. Joe and Ken, the young crew members, move deftly in what gradually becomes a dimin-
ished work space. As the red and green fish trays, neatly stacked ten high at the outset, become filled with mussels, their stowage takes over the beamy cockpit of the vessel.

The dredge, 1200 pounds of steel, chain, netting, mud and mussels, comes up out of the water and swings menacingly in over the port gunwale, just aft of where Jack holds onto the helm.

Joe pulls the purse string and 1000 pounds of mussels fall into the cylindrical washer. Both dredge and washer return to the water simultaneously, the dredge to the bottom once more, the washer into the wake alongside the boat where it turns for five minutes washing the catch and dropping the smaller seed mussels through its iron grates back onto the lease to further prosper.

Five minutes later the washer, hydraulically driven, swings back inboard and dumps its load into the six fish trays set beneath it. Joe and Ken push the pile about with squeegies until each tray is full, then slide them to the stern of the vessel where they stack them two deep.

From cove floor to its seat in the stern of Sea Rider, a mussel's travel time is eight minutes. Frantic movements, frantic toil, a stacatto beat—and noise. The dredge cable squeals in and out of the metal snatch block, the washer whines and beats alongside. Beneath the deck of the doghouse, the huge diesel thrums out its incessant cadence. When you communicate aboard this vessel in these hours, you reach for the deep decibel.

Amid the commotion, Jack guides Sea Rider with cool aplomb. He courses the cove aimlessly, or so it seems to me. In 80 minutes of work, I have caught the black loom of the spruce only once to give me any bearing.

In Jack's head there must be a set grid he is following and each track he lays down is one he has not run before. There must be a similar grid in Burgess' head too, but one that never intersects Jack's. Periodically, Northern Star sweeps out of the fog and glides by us comfortably, either ahead or astern.

Obviously, these two men have done this waterborne minuet before.

I stand on the starboard side of the boat observing. All at once against the fog, something catches my attention, turns my head abruptly. A strange humanlike figure set on a raft, a strange stunted figure, arms thrown upwards in supplication like some tormented soul on the wrong side of the River Styx.

I must confess, were I to come upon this weird sentry, rowing alone on a foggy morning, I would seriously consider switching bootleggers.

"My God, Jack," and I have to reach for that deep decibel, "What is that?"

"Scarecrow," he yells. Later he explains that the American eider duck is one of the mussel's greatest predators. In a three week period several years back, he figures these ducks ate close to $25,000 worth of seed mussels off one of the leases.

"And they're smart, too. Those ducks are so smart they even know our boats. Come in there in someone else's boat and you can get right up close to them, but they seem to know the stern of our boats and they'll take right off before we even get close enough to shoot."

Jack has a license that allows him to shoot 50 birds a year. He mounted a small cannon on his boat for a time hoping to scare the eider off with noise. First time he touched it off, he told me, it scared every bird in 50 miles, the second time it scared every bird in 25 miles, but about the fifth time, the critters just swam casually over the mussel lease, old combat veterans.

"What it's going to come down to is hiring an armed guard just to keep them off."

Aboard Sea Rider underway with dredge and washer in operation, everything goes at only one speed: full bore. At 0725, the madness ends just as quickly as it began. With good reason. There is no room to move.

All 500 square feet of the boat's cockpit are squeezed tight with fish trays stacked two deep. One hundred fish trays, two bushels a tray, at $5 a bushel, comes to $1000. Clocking it from start to finish with travel and unloading time included, it all works out to $250 an hour, pretty good dollars.

Yet that money leaks away rapidly when you start to pay out the overhead. Joe and Ken do not toil for free; they require one tenth of each day's take. Sea Rider must be maintained, fueled and repaired. The lease must be rented and seeded and that takes either time or money or both.

"That's why we need the lease," says Jack. "When you've invested that kind of time and that kind of money, you've got to have protection. A lease'll give you that protection.

"But the fishermen around here, they can't understand that. They don't want any
leases at all, but what they don't see is if we didn't have this lease, we'd be out there fishing on the wild beds they fish when they don't go lobstering."

By 0735 Jack maneuvers Sea Rider off the lease which I can now see is staked and posted, "Lease Area" in bold letters. The early morning fog has scaled up and a fair summer's day lies in the offing. Forty-five minutes later we are in along Settlement Wharf in Webb's Cove, the huge 17-wheeler from the GEM plant above us taking on the morning's catch.

B ~

0930 SEA RIDER, now washed and shipshape, swings to her mooring pennant in the thoroughfare once more, and I am sitting in Jack's small greenhouse on the hillside above the Coop with a cup of coffee.

Jack Hamblen is a short man built low to the ground. Fireplug construction. At 42, Jack has not always fished for mussels. Like others he backed into the business. After high school he went away to Connecticut for a while, married, and then decided to come back to Stonington where his roots were.

"I went lobstering for a couple of years and I went scalloping with my father and I worked over here in the boatyard as a machinist and I left there and I went to work at the Coop down here and then I got into the mussel business.

"I worked at the Coop and I see them going musseling and whatnot and I watched them and they looked like they was making a living and it looked pretty good to me and I wanted to try it. And from there I built that other boat, the 34 foot Duffy, fiber glass, and my dad he helped me build that one.

... We had 400 traps at one time and we sold them, got rid of them before they rotted on the rocks and then I got into this, into musseling."

At first Jack sold to local buyers, Doug Hardy, Danny Hypes, the Stonington Coop. Then GEM came down to Deer Isle. At first they tried to interest local fishermen in growing mussel from suspended culture, that is on lines hung from rafts or tires, but that idea never caught on.

When GEM came back to them with the idea of bottom culture, imitating Dutch methods, Jack and his uncle went along with it and decided to work full time on his joint lease with GEM.

In June of 1981 they began dredging up seed mussels off the wild beds into their boats, then taking the seed to the leases and shoveling it over.

Continued on page 54.
NAPLES, MAINE APRIL 1986

"If you think you've seen some emotion so far, wait 'til you come in and try to take this land away from us."

Gary Plummer
Cumberland Co. Commissioner

"I moved to Maine eight years ago from New York because I wanted to live here. Gentlemen, I plan to be buried on my land."

Townsend Southard
Bridgton

"I am angry at what you have put us through."

Linda Vaillancourt
Otisfield

"We will fight you for the next hundred years if necessary to keep your dump out of Maine."

David Call
Casco

"Not even the might and millions of the U.S. Department of Energy can command the Maine earth to stand still for 10,000 years."

Robert Van Waes
Bridgton

"Here is a linear foot of lake frontage, worth $550. I give it to you. And that is as much as you're ever going to get!"

Margaret Krainin
Naples

"We will not surrender our town."

Walter Riseman
Harrison

"I wonder if you can even hear us anymore. I invite you to visit us, so that you can see what Sebago Lake can do for body and soul."

Tim Porta
North Windham

"You may think we are a bunch of Don Quixotes, but we are not insane. We have become a single minded entity and from that strength we will overcome you."

Ethel Blow
Otisfield Selectwoman

"No human institution in history has failed to make mistakes—DOE is no exception. As a physician, I view this as a threat to the public health and safety."

Dr. Stephen Barter
Bridgton Hospital Spokesman

"The DOE has invented a new game, American Roulette, the Nuclear Waste Site selection."

Steve Edwards
Naples

"I'm gonna try to impress you with the level of Yankee defiance if you come here to do site selection. Here's a piece of granite. Granite is kinda like mainers. Doesn't look like much. kinda bland. But it's very, very tough. Don't ever forget that."

Bob Dunning
In Naples, Maine, the heart of an area chosen for a possible nuclear dump site, the U.S. Department of Energy held a hearing on April 5, 1986. Salt recorded that hearing.
Editorial: Galling to Mainers

The most galling thing of all about Maine’s selection as a possible site for a nuclear waste dump has largely gone unsaid. This is probably because it was too maddening to talk about, too close to the quick and maybe too close to the pride.

It has to do with the sacrifices Mainers make to live in Maine, to keep this their home. The price they pay is heavy for living in one of this country’s most beautiful, most unspoiled spots. To live in Maine, most residents must give up part of the material wealth they might have in more developed states.

The average income of Mainers is well below the national average. The average of $11,423 is only about four-fifths of the national average. Maine is more than $2,000 below the national average, close to the bottom of the list for income level in this country.

People do little complaining, because it’s a fact of life. If you live in Maine, you swap money for beauty, you swap manmade wastes and congestion for largely unspoiled natural surroundings.

So it was a monstrous affront that a people who have deliberately made non-material choices in favor of the land should be chosen to lose what they value.

It was enough to make one apoplectic. Enough to make one militant. Enough to make one weep. Enough to give one nightmares. And yet the officials of the Department of Energy warned Maine citizens who came to testify during hearings that they must not be emotional, that they must be reasonable, that they must base their arguments on logic.

There is no logic in the rape of a land that has been largely protected by a people who understand its worth and wish to pass that worth on to their children and grandchildren.

The dishonest euphemisms of the DOE were a further insult. They talked about “back yards.” They said, “Nobody wants a nuclear waste dump in their back yard, so you must prove to us, under our guidelines, that your back yard is unsuitable.” People who were testifying with such passion at the hearings would no longer have back yards. They would lose their homes, their livelihood, their towns, their links to land and people.

Little wonder they spoke with such passion. Little wonder the DOE dropped Maine like a hot potato as a potential nuclear dump site in late May. Washington had discovered, to its utter discomfort, the stuff that Mainers are made of.

It is the stuff that brought David Call of Casco to his feet to make the first speech in his life, the stuff that turns “a mayonnaise and pickel salesman”, as he calls himself, into a rousing champion of his birthplace who trumpets to the DOE, “We will fight you for the next hundred years if necessary.”

—Pamela Holley Wood
The eight children who go to Cliff Island's one room school, with teacher Earl MacVane and teacher's aide, Muriel Anderson.

Large numbers of Mainers went to school in one room schools in 1949 when there were 676 such buildings. Today only ten are left, most of them on islands. Hundreds were closed after the state consolidation bill in 1957.

What goes on in these one room schools today? Do the children learn what they need to learn for today's world? Is there a seminal link between the schools and island life? Are they crucial to the survival of an indigenous population or simply a curious anachronism in 1986?

Photography by Lynn Kippax, Jr.
By Lynne Hallee

THE FERRY'S HORN sounds loud and decisive at 5:15, cutting through the darkness of the early winter morning to announce Casco Bay Line's departure to an empty Portland dock.

The early boat regulars have already gone below to the warm inner belly. Their familiarity with this trip through Casco Bay contrasts with my own excitement at being on the water, under an inkblack sky, heading for a one room school on Cliff Island.

Although a native Mainer, I've been on a boat only twice before. My sea legs are nonexistent, as is my "typical Maine accent." Dressed for the cold in a long, sleeping-bag-of-a-coat, carrying a yellow ammo case full of recording equipment and a knapsack, I lurch over to one of the benches up top. Somehow I never imagined that the leave I took from college to practice writing would give me the chance to enjoy the hum of a ferry and the salty, crisp sea air.

Very little is visible this early in the morning. All that I can see of the city are the streetlights and an occasional sign. The islands appear in the distance as dense, immovable black shadows. Out of nowhere a bell buoy rings or a seagull cries but otherwise the ferry seems to be alone on the water.

Cliff Island is a small community less than ten miles from Portland, the last stop on a ferry ride that takes about an hour. Approximately 70 people live there year round. Their children go to the island's one room school, which was built in 1895. Only ten of Maine's 676 one room schools in 1949 are still functioning schools today. The number had dropped to 129 by 1963.

A law passed in 1957 by the Maine State Legislature encouraged consolidation of community schools into school administrative districts. One result of that law has been the closing of many small, local schools.

The one room schools that remain open serve isolated rural areas. The parents in these areas fight to keep the schools open so their children won't have to travel great distances to school. Six of the remaining one room schools are on islands.

The Cliff Island school houses kindergarten through fifth grade. Both the teacher and the teacher’s aide attended the school as children. At present eight students go there, two for only part of the year.

On a prior visit to Cliff, my image of one room schools as rustic remnants from another era was dispelled. Wooden desks, outhouses, and the rigid education that accompanied my illusion don't exist. Today the island school functions as a vital part of American education, with its own qualities and eccentricities. From what I've seen of Cliff, I can't help but wonder if we destroy an important means of educating our children when we close these small community schools.

The sky grows lighter. Streaks of winter reds and purples appear over the islands, warming them with light, but not with heat. The chill in the air has nipped my ears and nose, numbed my hands and feet. Gathering the ammo box and my knapsack, I tramp down the stairs to join the others in the drowsy heat and rhythmic sounds of the engines.

When the ferry gets close to
the island, it's light enough to see houses perched among the trees. Most of those on the dock side of Cliff belong to summer people, "dog fish" as they are called by the winter residents. Some of their houses are painted proper New England white and others stand out in startling shades of summer colors. Closed and empty now, they are evidence of the seasonal changes that affect many of Maine's island communities.

On the other side of the island lies a harbor where the school and many of the year round houses are located. Often the houses of full-time residents are discernible by the stacks of lobster traps and boating gear surrounding them and the battered cars out front. Many people on the island lobster for a living, Cliff being just far enough away from Portland to discourage most commuters.

The gangplank is shoved into place with a loud abrasive scrape of metal on metal. On the dock a few teenagers and working people wait to take the ferry to school and jobs.

Earl MacVane, the teacher for the Cliff Island School, stands amongst the crowd on the dock in his rust and blue wool plaid jacket and leather cap. He's come down to the dock to see off his wife, who tutors mornings at the Long Island School. Although only one car, he is still tan from lobstering in the summer. His eyes . As we head towards the front in a game of dodgeball, agreeing to be a thrower. Heath MacVane, one of the teacher's three children, is the other thrower. The game speeds up as the two of us are able to catch and throw the ball fairly well. The kids run around in the middle, stopping to pose and then darting out of the way. When I hit Michael Fisher in the chest, he soberly informs me that only hits below the waist count.

At 8:15 Muriel Anderson, the teacher's aide, rings the black handled brass bell. The children filter into the room and are given five minutes for duties. Michael and Heath race for the bathroom. Michael wins and Heath decides to get a drink of water instead. Astrida hands back papers, pronouncing the names aloud. Farah sits on the floor trying to dislodge a book from her desk. Tayler finds a pencil and sharpens an inch or two off it. The room buzzes with the activity of children readying themselves for the day.

Collecting the recording equipment and my notebook I take the empty seat in the middle row.

"Michael," says Heath.

"Yeah."

"We finally get someone to sit in the middle seat."

The teacher goes to the front of the room to make announcements and the children take their seats. He asks them to check their corrected papers to see if either he or Muriel made a mistake.

"Another thing we brought up yesterday is that Muriel and I are humans. We're not machines."

"I wish you were," Tayler Barden says under his breath. The prospect of having machines for teachers interests him. He grins and rolls his eyes, but keeps his blonde head bent to-
wards his desk. Being in the first grade, he has little control over his imagination and energy. The former spawns mischief which the latter impels him to do.

"Because we're human, we make mistakes, so check your homework over. All right, let's have the president, please."

Katrina Rideout, a second grader with long dark braids and deep brown eyes, gets up and disappears behind the piano, emerging a few seconds later with the tall flagpole. She hugs the staff against her body, bringing the flag to an unsteady tilt over her head.

"Please stand."

**This morning the students seem unable to sit still.** There's a fidgety undercurrent in the air, a vibrant disruptive flow of energy. Farah Barden, a fourth grader with blonde hair, wide eyes and feathery lashes, works in her reading book. But a good deal of her time is spent kicking her feet and making faces to herself. She is Tayler's sister.

As the two of us glance around the room, our eyes meet and we smile. Shaking her hair and rolling her eyes, she goes back to work.

Heath MacVane's impatience erupts continually in bursts of action. As he works, his left fist pummels his desk top while he kicks the legs with his feet. A lesser victim would have crumbled long ago.

He's so full of restless energy that he purposely drops his pencil, just for the exercise of picking it up. "Done," he says vehemently as he finishes something and races to file it or have it checked over.

Slumping in his chair, fidgeting in his desk, looking at the walls, waving his hand, Tayler is an exaggeration of his normal self. He finally attracts Mr. MacVane's attention and gets to ask a question about a paper he got back. He hasn't been able to figure out what's wrong with it.

"Check your work, Tayler. You said an elephant could be a pet."

"An elephant *could* be a pet."

"We're talking about normal homes, Tayler. Would you want an elephant in your home?"

Within the realm of Tayler's imagination, any animal could be a pet and he's prepared to argue for even the wildest. But someone else's frantic waving has caught Mr. MacVane's attention and he moves on.

Michael's blonde head is bent over his desk. He uses the pointer finger on his right hand to mark where he plans to write, and the pointer finger on his left hand to keep track of what he's reading. Muriel has helped him earlier and now deep in thought, he seems to be oblivious to the chatter around him.

The mornings are filled with reading, spelling and science. Math and social studies come after lunch with the last 15 minutes of the day reserved for silent reading. The schedule is amended when necessary for special projects and work that needs to be done. Progress is determined in part by the students' capability and motivation, but Mr. MacVane pushes his students to get their work done when he feels they're lagging behind.

Astrida Rideout, like her sister Katrina, has long dark braids and deep brown eyes. She works intently on her paper, but stops more frequently than usual to ask questions. Katrina doesn't have any work she needs to complete. She plays with her braids and

"A third grader can help a first grader."
watches the class for a few minutes before beginning her reading. From the back the two sisters look like carbon copies of one another.

Hope MacVane, with her shoulder length light brown hair, nail polish and hightop sneakers, goes to the teacher's desk to have a paper checked. "Ah, Hope, what's the best thing you can think to do before you pass a paper in?"

"Check it over."

"So check it over."

"How do you spell piano?" she says walking back to her desk.

Heidi, Hope's younger sister, sits on her knees with one hand raised and the other playing with the earring in her lobe. The hands waving in the air never seem to stop today.

As Mr. MacVane moves around the room, hands beg for attention. Can I? We need Mr. MacVane, how do you spell? The questions regarding work aren't answered directly: they are rephrased or examined from a different angle. The teacher pushes his students to think, to figure out, to solve. Once the students have grasped the new questions, they return to their work to ponder.

Mr. MacVane arrests the action within the room temporarily by reading "Three Billy Goats Gruff" aloud to Farah. She has told him she knows the story, but not well enough to answer the questions in her text. For each character, he creates a dramatic voice. One by one the children stop what they're doing to listen. With the conclusion of the story, he slams the book shut and the pace picks up again.

Tayler bear-hugs his desk and tilts it towards the floor trying to dislodge a book. Three or four fall out.

Michael, his "do-overs" complete, checks the terrarium he's working on with Heath and Astrida. "Hey there's my snail!" Picking the snail up, he turns it on its back to examine it. He decides the terrarium needs water. On the way back to the sink, he buzzes the water bottle over Astrida's head and vigorously denies it when accused. Heidi has finished her other work and invites him to join her and study vocabulary.

Heath taps his pencil on his desk while reading out loud to himself. Tayler, who sits in front of him, is now crawling around on the floor looking for an eraser that he's dropped and Heath has recovered.

"Heath, you took my eraser out of my hand," Tayler says, looking first at his empty hand and then at Heath.

"I did not."

"Mr. MacVane, I can't find my eraser."

"Can't help you, Tayler."

Tayler returns to his work, repeating to no one in particular that his eraser has vanished.

Centers of activity and attention continually form and reform in the room. The kids keep track of one another and comment on each other's progress. Did you? What number are you on? You're done!"

EARL MACVANE'S STYLE of teaching tends to be a relaxed form of the Socratic method. He answers the students' questions with more questions, trying to draw the answers from them. He relates the work they're doing to experiences they can understand. A good deal of humor comes through in the day to day exchanges between the teacher and the students.

"Be careful," he says to Astrida. "Make your numbers so they're clear. Like, make that five a better five. Look at that five up there [on the wall]. Yours looks like a six with a flag on it. You know what someone did one day? They put the flag on the building upside down. You know what that means?"

"Not really."

"It's a distress signal. So you know Goody?"

"Like a fire or something?"

"No, it means someone's in trouble. You know Goody Pherson. She came flying into the school. She's in her seventies. Pant, pant, pant. 'What's the matta, your flag's flying upside down?' Scared her half to death. So don't put a flag on the end of a six. That's a distress signal."

Mr. MacVane describes his manner of working with the children as demanding, but says that he feels it is necessary in order to get work done.

"I think I'm pretty strict with them. You might not see that. But my aide, Muriel, spoke with my mother this past summer and said, 'You know Earl is pretty strict with those kids.' So my mother says, 'You've got to cut that out.' I say, 'I'm not that bad.' But I do make them do what they have to do. Sometimes I raise my voice."

When he feels the class needs to be reminded of certain classroom rules, or reprimanded for bad behavior, he does raise his voice. But on an individual basis, he finds ways of disciplining without seeming to.

"How do you learn things, Tayler?"

"By listening to directions."

"Right. Do you always listen to directions?"

"Yup," Tayler responds, breaking into a hopeful grin.”
"No way. Where are your ears, Tayler?"
"When I don't listen, they're down at my feet."
"Right, exactly, and you're stepping on those ears and you don't hear what's going on, do you?"
"No."
"All right. So you've got to listen to directions."

Behind this humor lies a demand for good, neat, well thought out work. The best that the children are able to give.

This high standard is enforced by Muriel, his aide. She began working at the school in 1967 and with the exception of one year has continued to work there for 17 years.

Muriel complements Mr. MacVane's style of teaching with her own more discipline oriented approach. She works close to the book, drilling the children, and stares at them intently, as if trying to read the thoughts and words in their minds.

With her graying hair, silver rimmed glasses and sneakers, she provides the extra pair of hands that keeps things running smoothly in the classroom.

A RECESS THE KIDS play kickball, boys against the girls. Hope asks me to play on the girls' team and then they all want to know if I can kick. I haven't played kickball for over ten years, and I feel rusty, but my kick is fairly strong and the girls are pleased.

The boys get first ups. Heath kicks and gets on base. Then Heidi catches Michael's kick, which is an automatic out. When it's Mr. MacVane's turn, he kicks the ball over to the church next door; both he and Heath make it home. Tayler's kick is short and he's thrown out at first. Heath gets on base, but I'm able to stop Michael's kick and throw Heath out as he heads for home.

Both Heidi and Farah get on base with their kicks. Astrida is thrown out at first, then Hope, the team captain, puts me up. My first two kicks go foul and she decides I need some advice.

"Kick it straight, Lynne," she whispers, holding onto my sleeve.

My third kick is hard and straight. It gets past the outfield and Heidi and Farah make it home. Hope's kick brings me home. The boys are amazed and a little worried. I think they usually win.

During their last ups, the boys score five more runs, making a total of seven. The girls score five runs making a total of eight.

We win the game. The girls are elated, but later in the week we are beaten soundly by the boys.

When they complete their spelling, the students begin work on their science projects or use their computer time.

AT LUNCH, Recess the kids play kickball, boys against the girls. Hope asks me to play on the girls' team and then they all want to know if I can kick. I haven't played kickball for over ten years, and I feel rusty, but my kick is fairly strong and the girls are pleased.

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Astrida is the first to get to use her computer time today. She enjoys working on the computer and gets to one of the higher levels before making a mistake.

Tayler and Katrina are doing an experiment using magnets. Throughout the classroom their excitement can be heard as they try the magnets on objects. Tayler is very pleased when a magnet he's using picks up a whole string of stuff. He brings it over to my desk to show me.

When lunchtime is announced the kids are absorbed in their work and the room empties slowly. There's an hour for lunch and everyone goes home. Mr. MacVane and I head for his house. His wife is home and lunch is all laid out.
In the rafters over the kitchen are many different types of birds, lifelike and beautifully preserved. As a means of relaxation from teaching, he practices the skill of taxidermy.

"And when I got there I remember I did not know as much as the other fifth graders and maybe they put me in a higher group than I was supposed to be in, but it was really tough."

"...I had a very hard time with math, awfully hard time. And the teacher up there made me go to the front of the room and do some examples on the board and I just couldn't do them.”

Preparing children to attend school on the mainland is something every island school must deal with. The transition is a source of worry for the parents and the teacher. Are the children getting enough of what they need? Are they getting the right sorts of things? Having gone through it himself, Earl MacVane understands what the children will have to face and tailors his teaching accordingly. Although academics are important, socialization plays an equally important role.

"I think the needs are more social here, because they don't know how to interact with kids their own age. That's what I'm working on by getting them to go to different places. The Y (M/WCA) is a good thing for them to do 'cause there's other kids there. It's a different place.”

Friday afternoons the children go to Portland on the ferry to these activities. "I want them to be accustomed to that type of thing when they eventually leave the island, go up to the middle school and then the high school.”

Alan Argondizza, the principal for the Cliff Island school, serves as principal for two other island schools, Peak’s and Long Island, as well as Longfellow Elementary in Portland. Because of the distance to the islands, his role is largely advisory. The teachers at the schools are responsible for the day in, day out decisions. He manages to get to the islands once or twice a semester, but keeps in touch through letters.

When I spoke with Mr. Argondizza, he agreed that isolation is a problem. “The kids have a need for socialization.” To that end, he supports Mr. MacVane’s efforts to get the children off the island. In general he said he feels the education the children receive is very good. “There are things that they are probably missing, but they get things that the kids in town don’t. I think the kids are thriving. Who’s to say which is the better education?”

Isolation takes its toll on the teacher as well. Before coming back to teach at the Cliff Island school, Mr. MacVane taught at Skillings School in South Portland for five years. One of the adjustments he had to make in coming back to Cliff was the loss of teacher interaction and support. On Cliff, as in many other island schools, there’s no teachers’ lounge to escape to and discuss the victories and defeats over a cup of coffee. The teacher is on his own.

"I think that's it. It's not being able to talk with a fellow teacher about a problem or a good day. That's the major problem. Another problem is that there is so much going on at the same time that you've got to keep track of it all. Every once in a while I get side tracked with where is this, where is that, and I can't find this. I get lost.”

"You gotta make your own thing. I mean I like going clamming. And I like to go when it's cold, but it's a good relaxation for me... I mean you gotta make
your own thing, or you could kinda go crazy.”

In the Classroom Earl MacVane's approach to teaching combines traditional book learning with active experiential based learning. Computer work, individual and group projects, as well as class trips are part of an effort to achieve a well rounded educational experience.

This past fall most of the children went on an overnight to Chewonki, an outdoor learning facility that stresses environmental awareness and team work. In the coming spring a trip to Washington, D.C. is planned. Arranging these trips, obtaining permission from the parents and the school board, ironing out the details and working out the money all fall on his shoulders. And sometimes the parents are the most difficult part to deal with.

"And some have ideas that, you know, you understand, but you don't accept, I guess. And vice versa. I think some of the parents understand what you're trying to do, but they don't accept that.

"The most important part (of teaching) to me is to see the child do the best they can do, and then to learn about it later, when they're gone. If they come back and say I'm doing well then that means you've done what you were supposed to do. And it certainly isn't the pay that you do it for...I think that to make the child do the best they can do, and to get them to think, it is difficult.

"Well curriculum wise I try to do a different type thing. And I think if you have a hands on approach you learn more. But it was difficult always coming up with an idea along those lines, so lately I've fallen out of ideas and I go back to the units and objectives stated in the textbooks. And then once in a while, I'll get a brainstorm and come up with something that is unique and different and they usually work."

One of his brainstorms is a wooden clock that lies flat on a desk, to help children who can't tell time. A blue marble marks the hour and a yellow marble marks the minutes. The children roll the marbles and read the time.

Another brainstorm was to ask the children to write and illustrate books. He has a collection of their books bound in oaktag.

Some of his ideas take the form of units on subjects that the whole class participates in. Earlier in the year, he did a unit on oceanography. The class took trips out on the bay that surrounds them and collected materials.

"Let's see, we went on a number of field trips and we had to find some mollusk and some crustaceans, which we talked about first, and then so they would remember what a mollusk and crustacean was, we ate them. So we, boiled them up, steamed them up. We had melted butter. And we sampled barnacles and periwinkles. We didn't find any sea urchins, but we wanted to try that. We had clams and mussels. We had dog winkles which are the white ones.

"But they seem to remember that. Like I asked Farah today if she knew what an octopus was, mollusk or crustacean. And she knew it was a mollusk even though it was an exception to the rule."

One of the challenges in doing a unit on something with the whole class is adjusting the material to fit the different
levels of knowledge in the classroom.

"I found that if you do things together you can get a lot more accomplished, but you also have to get the content across at a different level. So you have to simplify it and at the same time make it complicated enough for the older ones."

Earl Mac Vane works to turn this span of grades into an advantage.

"You can always have...the one who's doing more help the one who's doing less...I try to do that anyway. Have a fourth grader help a second grader. Or a second grader help a first grader."

Back in the classroom after lunch, I could see examples of this. Katrina and Tayler work together in some subjects and I asked her about this.

"I take my chair over to Tayler's desk and we get out our social studies books and then he reads it and I read it. Correct him on the words he doesn't do so well. Problem is that they're too long."

ON MY LAST DAY OF observing, as I was heading for the ferry thinking about the children, Tayler sped up behind me on his bike, red ski mask covering most of his face.

"Hi, Lynne. Muriel said you were heading for the boat."

"Hey, Tayler, you going out on the boat?"

"No, I'm gonna watch it come in."

Whizzing past me down the dock, he flies past the sign prohibiting motorcycles and bikes on the wharf and into a wooden area that doubles as a waiting and storage area. When I catch up with him, he's pulling a book of matches from his pocket.

"Gonna smoke, Tayler?"

"No, I'm gonna light it and throw it in the water."

Tossing his mittens and ski mask down on the dock, he lights the single match left in the book. It catches, but a gust of wind blows it out before he can light the matchbook cover. He throws both down on the dock and kicks them into the water. The two of us stand on the edge of the wharf staring into the water. The day is overcast and the ocean is black and mirror flat. In the water below us lies a mixture of seaweed, garbage, shells, and a starfish. A school of small fish hover around the pilings.

"Lotta fish down there."

"Where?"

"Right there among the pilings."

"Pollack," he yells. "I'm gonna get my rod, watch my mittens."

He runs full tilt up the dock to his house and in a few minutes is running back down, with his fishing rod in hand. His cheeks are bright red and his eyes flash with excitement.

"You got bait, Tayler?"

"Don't need it, I got a mackerel lure."

He casts out his line with energy and impatience. "I'm gonna jig it. I'm gonna jig it. Scared 'em. They went around front, I know they did."

I follow him around to the front of the dock and there are the pollack. He casts again and within a few minutes one bites. He reels the fish in, having me catch the line. Once he's freed his hook, he throws the fish higher up on the dock.

"Will it be all right? I ask, thinking maybe he should kill it.

"It'll die." He says giving me an aren't you stupid look.

"Why don't you kill it?"

"I like to let 'em die slowly."

Then after a few minutes, "It's probably dead."

The environment he lives in makes the death of a fish by whatever means no big deal. He casts again and in a short time has another fish on the line. With a few feet of line still out and the flywheel blocked, he swings the rod in a high, fast arch, slamming the fish against the wharf in a kind of reverse cast.

"That probably breaks their backs."

"Do you eat them, Tayler?"

"No, I give them to my animals."

He begins to tell me about his animals but is distracted by a large fish swimming among the pollack.

"Bottom fish, I'm gonna get that bottom fish. Hold on to me."

We'd been sitting on the edge of the dock. As he leans forward, I wrap my arms around him.

"Know why they're called bottom fish, 'cause they live on the bottom and eat trash. I caught one once had two crabs and a golfball in it. Wait a minute, I can just let out more line."

He sits up and I let go of him. He's so excited that he tries to talk and smile at the same time.

"A golfball!"

"Yeah."

A little farther out from the dock, the fish are jumping. A seal's head pops up and Tayler forgets about the bottom fish. He casts out in the direction of the seal, determined to catch it. Instead he keeps pulling up pollack, exclaiming happily about where he's hooked them. As people gather to catch the ferry, they are forced to jump out of the way of Tayler's reverse cast, or face being hit with pollack. Fish die slowly
all over the wharf.

"You fish, Lynne" he says in a tone that’s more a command than a question.

"My boat’s coming."

"You could take the later boat back, it’s not that long."

With his red cheeks and impish grin I’m tempted to stay and see if I can master the reverse cast. But reason wins out, I have stuff to do in town.

"I have to go."

"Why?" he demands.

"I have to cook dinner for my family. Tonight’s my night."

"Well, fish till it gets here, then hand it to me. Deal."

When I don’t respond immediately he says “deal” again and I agree. He hands me the rod and I cast out.

"Hold on with both hands. Now jig it, Lynne. Jig it!" says my three foot tall instructor.

I get a fish on the line, but it escapes before I can reel it in. When the ferry arrives, I board and go to the bow of the boat.

"What’s alphabetical order?" Tayler calls.

"Well you know the alphabet has a certain order. A-B-C."

"Yup."

"Well when you put something in alphabetical order you go by the first letter of the word and put the words in the same order as you would the alphabet. So with bird, apple?"

"Applebird."

"Right."

"When you coming back?"

"Soon I hope."

"Okay bye."

Tayler continues to fish. The ferry pulls away from the dock and I wave good-bye.

LYNNE HALLEE is a student at Hampshire College who participated in Salt’s fall semester programs.
Ruth Jackson Pinkham's
One Room Schools

Ruth Jackson, center back row, with children of one of her first one room schools.

By Salt staff
Interviewing and transcription
by Lynne Hallee

RUTH JACKSON PINKHAM WAS AS eager to teach this day of her 86th year as any time in her life.

She drew herself up. Shoulders squared, eyes direct, voice firm. Her always erect spine reached taller. Her face and body dropped their delicate translucence, charged by the task at hand. How could she make these students from Salt comprehend what it is to be a teacher in a one room schoolhouse in Maine in the 1920s?

Not easy, one glance at the complex tools they used told her (professional tape recorder and microphone, sophisticated cameras), tools such as she and her students neither had nor dreamed of having. But Ruth charged forward, undaunted. Nearby, in a wheelchair sat her husband, Seth, gravely ill, whose shoulder she touched now and then to bring him closer to the talk. Her native Nova Scotia, she explained, is where she began teaching.

"I was 17 when I started teaching, right out of high school. I took a little country school in Lakeville, which was a small country village under the brow of the North Mountain. That's on the north side of Nova Scotia.

Ruth's birthplace, even after 60 years in this country surfaces in her voice, the reed stopped down, the manner direct and as clear as a cloudless day.

How she learned to teach is obvious to her, though remarkable to her guests. "I taught them the way I'd been taught," she said, "I had to pass an examination before I was allowed to teach, just out of high school.

"But I had a very nice school there. There were no problem children. The equipment that you didn't have was the hardest thing."
Why she decided to teach brings a direct answer, too. "I had very little choice. I could get married if I could find a man and I didn't. I could teach. I taught two years on that temporary certificate.

"And I liked the teaching much better than clerking in a dry goods store or working in somebody's kitchen washing dishes and scrubbing clothes. There wasn't much of any alternative. A girl could work and clerk in a store but there was no store near."

Fort Williams, where she grew up, "Well, it wasn't a summer resort place 'tall, was farming. Post office, two grocery stores, hardware stores, barrel manufacturer, two churches. Just a country village. And there were country schools all 'round.

"If you want a good country school story, this is Nova Scotia, you can use it or not, doesn't matter. It was a big school building, it would hold 45 pupils if you have that many. The desks were carpenter made of plain boards painted gray. The seats were attached to the desks behind. The teacher's desk was a table homemade from boards painted gray.

"And those desks were the most horrible things. They didn't fit the children atall. But one of the worst features of it was the stove. It was a great big pot bellied stove and they burned anthracite, soft coal.

"The stove was in the middle of the room. Stovepipe went up to the ceiling, 'bout eight feet, then it went across till the end of the room which was another 15 or 20 feet and went in the chimney.

"When I tried working with the boy who was the janitor, to make the fire, the first cold day in the fall, the stove didn't draw very well. Well I fussed and fooled with it. I helped him rebuild the fire. And when the fire went out and wouldn't draw, one cold day in the fall, I sent the children all home.

"If you want to get action, send the children all home from school. The next day, we all came back to school and the fire drew beautifully. And I went out and looked behind the schoolhouse and there was a heap of soot that they took out of that stovepipe that was that high," Ruth measured three feet and laughed. "And don't ever under any circumstances," she admonished the Salt students, "burn soft coal." They nodded obediently, caught by the authority of her tone, though they knew no more of coal than outdoor charcoal cooking on a summer's day.

After seven years of teaching in Nova Scotia, Ruth decided to come to America to teach. Again, the reason has the clear ring of a bell for her, hardly any wonder to it "attall", to use one of her contractions.

"I needed to get away from the area where I grew up. I didn't have anything there to measure myself by. I wanted to get far enough away to see if I could do anything in another area.

"I just had to try myself out. And it was so fortunate that I should go to Fryeburg Harbor for the first school.

"It was a neat tidy country school, with double desks and so on. And they had a small school library and about 23 pupils. They were some of the nicest that you could ask for in school."

Ruth Jackson taught eight grades in the school, the first through eighth. "The desks were different sizes, of course, so the little ones could have their feet on the floor hopefully. And if there was a little fellow in this seat, I tried to put his brother or his sister, someone he knew well right across the aisle from him."

Going to school was not a strange or formidable venture, Ruth declared. "The children, they'd been in the schoolhouse. It was like going to one of the neighbors next door. 'Twas nothing special to it.

"And this is an interesting angle I think of country life there, if you're 'tall interested in it. Every year the community gave the school a supper. And the money could be used for anything we wanted in the school room. Library books or maps or anything of that kind.

"And I said to the lady I boarded with, Maud Gray, 'We have so many baked bean suppers, don't you think it'd be nice to have a casserole supper or something?'

"'Oh yes,' she said, 'it'd be great, but if you want the men to come and eat, you'd better have baked beans.' We had baked beans. We made thirty dollars.

"We bought two or three books that would be interesting for the pictures and reading. And then we spent some of it on equipment like drawing devices, dividers and paints. Water color paints. So we had quite a good time spending the thirty dollars.

"We bought two or three books that would be interesting for the pictures and reading. And then we spent some of it on equipment like drawing devices, dividers and paints. Water color paints. So we had quite a good time spending the thirty dollars.

"That was in 1926 and 27. And come a complete stranger from a foreign country. And to board with one of the best cooks. Mrs. John Gray. Bless her heart, she's gone to her reward. And her husband was an equally fine..."
man. He was a farmer in the summer. He farmed sweet corn. There were three sweet corn canning factories at that time in Fryeburg. In the winter he hunted."

Ruth took a careful reading of the faces of her listeners. Were they understanding this distant time? "Would you like to see a picture of what he trapped that winter?" she asked. "I haven't got many pictures to show you, but I've got a few. He trapped largely. It was a fine family."

The questions turned to the ages of the children in the school. "Well, you know what eighth grade age is, thirteen, fourteen. And they began their first schooling there, so they were five years old.

"There was one little girl there, so cute, she stuttered, stammered. And she could read like nobody's business. She knew the words. So I'd say, 'What's that word, do it.' And if it was jump, she'd jump. And she'd say, 'Please Miss Jackson, don't ask me to read if anybody comes in to visit.'

"I said, 'Of course I won't. You can read like everything. And I know you can.' And they were that kind of children to work with. They were delightful."

She began to describe the school day. "Well, in an ungraded school, if you have eight grades, you begin in the morning with the little ones and you work with 'em for a while. And get them settled down to doing some practice writing or copying something. Of course when you first begin, they can't do much of anything.

"And then if some little child looks up with a distressed look on his face, you just nod to his brother, sister, that older pupil will go over and take care of his little brother or sister.

"And there was a great deal of cooperation in a school like that, because the older pupils helped the teacher. If they got along well with her.

"I think that considering that you had eight grades in one room that the children learned to work by themselves. When one of her visitors used the educator's phrase "self motivated", Ruth nodded quickly.

"They had to be. Their parents hired the teacher to teach. And they sent the children to school to learn and they expected them to learn. And that's a wonderful attitude. You get the backing of the parents like that, you've got something.

"We began at nine o'clock," in Fryeburg Harbor, Ruth said, "and we stayed in school till we got done. No transportation, no buses. Youngsters walked home. On a stormy day, we got the children out and on the road home so I'd be sure in the winter they'd got home before the storm got worse or it got dark.

"But we felt we had to get our work done. And if we had little children that got tired, why if they lived near, why we could send them home at two o'clock or half past two or three.

"The teacher was absolutely autonomous. You ran the show. And parents didn't complain about things like that. And there was always somebody home. That's where we had a definite edge on the situation, was always somebody home."

Once again came the question of how Ruth learned to teach children of different ages and abilities all in one room. She mused only a moment before the answer came, clear and straight to the point, like all her answers.

"One of the things is being taught by good one room teachers. Well to make it simple as I can, one thinks back into the days when in school oneself. What we did that helped us. We think what we did with various teachers. I had one teacher that was very interesting. She had us
get little notebooks and collect wild flowers. And we got the proper names and we made pressed flowers. Now that was her nature study work with us."

Ruth continued to outline what happened in her own school days. To a remarkable degree, they corresponded to her later teaching days. The continuum was clear, from one generation to the next, the traditions of teaching that the young Ruth followed, seeking the best of what she knew, secure in the firmness of her ground, mingling courtesy with absolute expectation. Ruth Jackson never had any "discipline" problems as a teacher.

"You didn’t have to sit there and watch every second. The kids all had something to do. And they could draw. They used to send out government bulletins and the inside of the front cover was nice drawing paper. The children all had crayons and you could put a bottle or a cup or saucer or a jug or something up somewhere where they could see it. They could take their crayons out and draw.

"But they all had something to do. It was waiting around the corner for them.

"They had to learn these things. Now it may be very much structured, but it had to be structured. You couldn’t be dancing in one corner of the room and playing piano in the other and singing songs in the third. It had to be structured."

When one Salt student asked if the younger children imitated the older children, if they knew what was coming, Ruth looked pleased. As a teacher she was pleased. "That’s a good question," she replied, smiling warmly.

"They listened. When they were in the second grade, they knew what was coming in the third grade. And they weren’t so surprised when they got to the third grade. And sometimes they actually learned something. They could remember what they’d heard."

The school holidays were a little different in Fryeburg than other places, she said. "The children had some time off in the mud season. Fryeburg is built in a lake bottom. That’s where they get the good soil to grow sweet corn and vegetables nowadays.

"And there would come a time in the spring when the mud was very bad. Then they take a few days off until they got over it.

"One man told me when I first went to Fryeburg Harbor, with a very straight face he told it, ‘You know there was a very sad accident. A man with a good team of horses struck one of those soft spots and he went underground for a quarter of a mile and came out way down the road there!’"

The best part about teaching, Ruth said, is "when I can help come child who has a real problem.” These are not dramatic moments. "I guess you’ll have to gather your satisfactions in little pieces as you go along. One some would win, some another.

"If you really want a big challenge, try school teaching," she told the Salt students. What kind of advice did Ruth have for a young person who is thinking about teaching?

"It’s hard for me to say now, because things have changed so since I was teaching. But I would think that a young person going into teaching today should be thoroughly prepared. Not superficial, but a sound educational background.

"Second, they need to be dedicated. If you’re going to get along with the superintendent, the school board, the parents, the other teachers, the children, you’ve got to be dedicated."

Then she used a phrase that was so uncharacteristic as to make her listeners smile. "You’ve got to be cool. Got to keep your cool. You’ll be getting someone who’s all bothered and upset coming to tell you what a rotten teacher you are and how you abuse their child. ‘Come in and sit down a minute. Let’s talk about it,’ she imitated herself.

"You’ve got to learn to realize that different children are so different. What will work with one won’t work with another. Got to have the patience to find out about them.

"It takes a lot of patience at the first of September because they’re still full of vacation. They don’t want to settle down. But they’ll sing for a half an hour quite gladly.”

As the Salt students took their leave, Ruth Pinkham was gracious. "Well, I feel honored that you would come and spend the time and hear the tales of days gone by—far by. My husband and I both celebrated our 86th birthdays this summer. Now he got ahead of me. He’s 87. For ‘bout two months, we’re the same age. And then he has another birthday.” She patted Seth’s shoulder and followed her guests to the landing. Back erect, shoulders straight she waved them away.

It had been one of her best afternoons of teaching. Hadn’t someone said, once a teacher always a teacher?

A few months after these interviews, Ruth Pinkham died. The taped interviews, numbers 85.36 and 85.42, are preserved in the Salt archives.
Duffy gave the vessel more maneuverability so that when the wind or current changed, they could adjust their course. The crew could also transport more weight, including additional gear and supplies. The increased size and capacity of the new vessel allowed them to operate more efficiently and effectively.

The crew believed that the new vessel could carry more weight than the old one, enabling them to bring more gear and supplies on each trip. The increased size of the vessel also made it easier to transport larger quantities of goods, including additional gear and supplies.

The crew believed that the new vessel could carry more weight than the old one.
We looked along the coast till we found some seed down in the Ellsworth/Trenton area, nice bunch of young seed. Course it’s too far for us to go in our boats and haul it back to make it pay. You’ve got to drag at least a thousand bushels to a clip. So we hired them to bring it back and seed our coves. We don’t know how that’s going to come out.”

However it works out, there is no gainsaying Jack Hamblen’s opinion of the GEM organization. He holds them in high regard. “They back you up, more so than any other dealer I’ve ever worked with.” He believes that GEM has been pivotal in opening up opportunities for people in the business.

For fishermen like himself, GEM guarantees a market. What Jack fishes, GEM will purchase.

“The whole thing of it is, they’ve helped the mussel. They’ve promoted them. They’ve put a good product on the market. They’ve done everything to take care of their product. They get a truck in here in the middle of the summer and haul them through to Boston.

“Christ, you couldn’t get near the truck, the sun’s so bad. They take ’em, put ’em on ice, keep refrigerator units on all their trucks. They take good care of their mussels. You promote the market, you make a better market for the mussel.”

Unlike many of his fellow Maine fishermen, Jack looks upon the people in the Department of Marine Resources as both intelligent and helpful. “Before I started in aquaculturing, before I had anything to do with the state other than getting a lobster license, I used to think like some of the other fishermen think: that the DMR don’t know nothing about anything.

“But you deal with those people, they’re smart people. They know. They’ve done tests. They knew the ducks would bother us. ‘Ducks’ll eat your mussels,’ they said.

“I don’t care what any of the fishermen say. I would have said the same thing even if they’d gone against us with the leasing, ‘cause we’ve worked with them a lot, and if the other fisheries would work with them more and try to help them instead of standing there saying somebody should do something. They got to work with them.

“Like Spencer Apollonio. If they’d work with him, he’s doing everything to try and help them. He’s come down here and talked with us. But they won’t work with him.”
III
The Farmer Philosopher

SOMEONE WHO HAS WORKED WITH Spencer Apollonio is Ed Myers. Like Jack Hamblen, Ed Myers thinks the Commissioner of the DMR is a reasonable man with a difficult job on his hands. Ed Myers should know. He’s been in the fisheries business since 1949 and in that time he has seen a lot of road shows come and go up in Augusta.

“The Commissioner,” he says, “is in a terrible spot really. I’ve been through eight commissioners and he’s by far the best of the bunch. I like him very much. He knows his business. He spent a year by himself in Hudson’s Bay, got a Master’s degree in Oceanography at Yale, and has been fishing himself.

“The mussel thing so far as he’s concerned is something completely extra. He has enough troubles with the scallopers versus the lobstermen and the scallopers versus the scallopers. We have problems here that are perennial. There was a time Eddie Blackmore of the Maine Lobsterman’s Association wouldn’t even talk to him. The commissioner’s calendar has many more hours a day on it than eight.”

Ed Myers has come into contact with the commissioner because he too, like Jack Hamblen, harvests mussels.

Ed Myers farms mussels in Clark Cove down on the Damariscotta River in Walpole. He doesn’t do it the way Jack does, by shifting his product from one bottom to another.

He grows mussels by hanging them from 20 foot lines suspended from 400 rubber tires out in the cove. Six lines to a tire. Suspended culture, to the aficionado. Where Jack follows Dutch techniques in his fishing, Myers models his methods after the Spanish who since the late 1940s have successfully farmed in this manner from huge rafts along their northern coast in the bays and estuaries of Galicia.

Ed Myers got into the fisheries business differently from Jack Hamblen. He went to Princeton University. He left the Ivy League in 1938 with a degree in philosophy, but only for a year, to work for a chemical company in New York. Then he returned to his alma mater to run their annual giving program until 1949 with a year out for the service. In the late 40’s what he saw happening to the corridor between New York and Philadelphia, he didn’t like. “It was not the place I really wanted to raise my kids.”

So he pulled out and moved to Maine where he had touchstones: a summer place in Christmas Cove, and a set of grandparents from old Belfast stock. He cast about looking at possible newspapers to buy, before he struck on the idea of shipping live seafood out of state. He tried it, working first out of Sprucehead and Rockport under other auspices, then he went on his own, bought and converted a chicken coop six miles up the Damariscotta River at Clark Cove, and established Salt Water Farm.

Eventually the transportation got him. The railroads dried up in 1958 and air transportation was ill suited to getting his clams and lobster to their destinations on time. “You can’t use Portland for a business that goes all over the place, because you have to transfer live seafood from one airline to another. You’ve got to go all the way to Boston to get direct flights.” So in 1971 he sold the business.

That left Ed Myers with a chicken coop on a river and a mid-life crisis. For several years he took an administrative job at the University of Maine’s marine research center less than a mile from his house, but he knew that wasn’t quite what he wanted. Something was missing.

“That job was a pleasant departure, but I had this dream of going from age 50 into the sunset working 15 years over there, and it didn’t look like something I could do.

“And so I thought, here is this place with an arm of the ocean coming up bringing goodies. Can’t we set this up, maybe make some money and let it run and enjoy it? I’d been learning a little bit about mussels working over there, but I learned a lot more when I went to Spain.”

He went at the business (he calls it Abandoned Farm Inc.) alone at first, but in time both the Sea Grant College Program and the National Science Foundation beknighthed him with small grants and helped him lift off financially. Though appreciative, Ed Myers is really anti-grant.

“I think you’ve given up your independence. You can be audited and inspected. That can happen to you with the IRS, but the IRS doesn’t determine how I work. I suppose it’s a childish approach to grants, but it takes so
long to get them and then they don’t give you what you want and they keep changing the rules.”

By 1977 Abandoned Farm was well underway. Its total sales for that year were projected at more than $66,000. The operation has grown beyond that, but never much and that is the way Ed Myers wants it.

He may not invoke Henry David Thoreau all that much, but Ed Myers lives by the credo that things run best when the accounts can be fitted onto the thumbnail. In the sizeable library behind his desk at the chicken coop office, he points to a book that has shaped his philosophy: E. F. Schumacher’s Small is Beautiful.

What other man that I know of, I think as I browse here, would set The Fresh Water Aquaculture Book, The Ashley Book of Knots, Physics Principles, Quality is Free, alongside The Phenomenon of Man and the Oxford English Dictionary?

The same man, I later realize, who could write in the acknowledgments to a long article on mussel farming, “Abandoned Farm could not have survived to this point without Polybius’ comments on the balance of power, the Sermon on the Mount, the works of Joseph Conrad, the marine hardware catalogue of the Harris Company . . . .”

“A coruscant failure,” he calls himself, and that took me to the Oxford English Dictionary to uncover a new word for brilliant.

When you come upon Ed Myers for the first time not knowing much about him, you get a bit of a comeuppance. He is not your average fisherman. Actually I had not expected him to be. I knew Ed Myers had lived in Princeton, the same town where I grew up, and I know just how hard it is to get the preppie lineage out of a man.

I found him sitting on a float at the end of his pier one glowery June afternoon. He was bent over a bucket of mussels, examining. From toe to belt Ed Myers wore a pair of hip boots over some faded bluejeans. Above that he had on a white and blue oxford shirt, a red bow tie, a chamois shirt layered over with two pens stuck in the pocket. Silver-framed bifocals hung around his neck on a cord.

It was as though in 37 years of handling the sea’s harvest, its effects had only seeped as high as his waist, leaving the upper torso free to consider other concerns, loftier matters.

A Salt student from the Midwest later remarked to me, “He looks more like a pharmacist than a fisherman.” Perhaps so, but he certainly doesn’t think like a pharmacist, at least no pharmacist that I’ve ever met. When Ed Myers talks or writes about the fishery business, he sounds like a cross between Rachel Carson and E. B. White.

On the earth in general: “We’re on a planet that will heal itself if you don’t insult it, if you don’t take things too far.”

On the effects of the proposed dam on the west branch of the Penobscot River: “I’m against messing with the Gulf of Maine.”

On the mussel’s reproductive cycle—a seven minute spawn, a two month recovery: “The mussel is a creature that takes its sex life very seriously.”

On what a bottom lease entitles you to: “A year-round job keeping your gear clean of 59 species, but you may harvest the 60th.”

On doing more with less: “Take Buckminster Fuller’s theory to which I subscribe, which is if you’re really working at something you’re going to be able to do more and more with less and less. He talks about the Atlantic cable that weighs 700,000 tons between here and England, and now with a couple of hundred pounds of copper you can put a satellite in the air and carry on 200 conversations at once.

“When you get into an area of things the lobsterman doesn’t like, you can talk about the 1889 catch which is the largest one Maine’s ever had, done mostly from peapods with 200,000 traps. Now you have two million traps and catch half as much. What has happened in the lobster business is they’re doing less and less with more and more. They have sonar and fishfinders and depth finders and all these things that weren’t in the peapod and their catch per unit of gear is going down.”

To farm his mussels, Ed Myers had to apply for a lease like everyone else. His lease (he calls it a license), taken out in 1974, was one of the first of its kind the state issued, and back then there was no hue and cry; no one really cared. If someone was foolish enough to farm the sea that way and pay for space to do it, well then, someone was that foolish.

From the western side of the chicken coop office which connects to the Abandoned Farm dock, you can look out to Ed Myers’ five acres of rented space and the 400 tires undulating quietly on the cove. Inside the building, there
is a sign over Ed Myers’ desk. It reads: “All the lies about Cape Horn are true.”

Sir Ernest Shackleton

“All the truths about the mussel business are lies.”

Ed Myers

Ernest Shackelton knew a good deal about Cape Horn. He explored Antarctica on several expeditions from England and in 1916 sailed an open boat 900 miles across Drake’s Passage. Ed Myers knows a good deal about the mussel business, including the falsehoods.

“Unfortunately the first truth about the mussel business that is a lie is that we’re not producing any aquacultured mussels. They’re all wild. Now that’s not a dishonorable estate. They say in that ad, ‘We’ve tamed the wild mussel’ which is not saying we’ve cultivated the wild mussel for market.

“The small mussels are being dragged by people like Hamblen and are going onto an aquaculture lease in Eggemoggin Reach so that the seed is really part of gathering wild mussels. That’s what GEM and Maritec down here are doing.

“The more wild mussels you sell that you gather from this wild state, the more you’re going to have to put back on the lease.

“The other lie is that all the figuring done by the scientists is generally done under perfect conditions. They have a five pound bucket and they have a graduate student clean it for them every month. We don’t have any graduate students to do that, so those scientists don’t really get a handle on the fouling, and what they publish comes off a calculator. And then they extrapolate from a five pound bucket to a farm, and for us it doesn’t make any sense.”

Unlike Ernest Shackelton, Ed Myers has chosen to do his exploring nearer home, right back of his house in the river, but even here it’s not unheard of to get a good dollop of Cape Horn weather. There’s plenty of ice in the Damariscotta River in the poorly lit months—something the Spanish don’t have to worry about—and a good winter gale from the wrong quarter doesn’t do much to soothe the mussel farmer’s temperament.

During one storm in the winter of 1978, the southwest wind which seldom blows at that time of year, came funneling up the three mile fetch between Fort Island and Clark Cove packing winds of over 60 knots. The tides rose 11 feet above normal.

“The only thing that held the entire fishhouse was the chimney. It was floating but the chimney held. When the tide went down, it had no underpinning; it was all gone. . . .

Never blows from the south in January and the water’s too cold for crabs to be really active, so we pick all our lines and bring them in close to the dock for overhauling, grease the shackles and so on.

“And we had everything right in here and by one o’clock it was all in a ball, tons of mussels and entangled rope, anchors adrift. It was not a good storm.”

Five years earlier, in Abandoned Farm’s first season, an equally conspiratorial combination of a low drain tide and adverse winds and eddies nearly carried Abandoned Farm to the edge of insolvency. The low tide slackened up the anchor lines to such an extent that when the odd wind and current began to swing things around, they wrapped the entire farm up into a kind of bouquet and lifted the anchors right off the bottom.

The tide was ebbing at the time, the wind northerly, and when Ed Myers found his business it was a mile downstream bound out for the Gulf of Maine and ultimately, for all he knew, to Spain.

In his desire to stay small to understand how things work, Ed Myers has contained his life and combined vocation and avocation. If he looks east from his office door he can see his home one quarter of a mile up a dirt lane on Clark Cove Road. The license plate on his car reads “Moules.” To the west in the cove proper is his dock and his farm. There is a flat-bottom skiff or two at the float and a barge rigged with a hoist for pulling up his lines.

In a shanty at the end of the dock he processes his mussels. Nothing fancy, just make-do. Inside, the set-up looks like a dishwashing arrangement for a restaurant, circa 1909. A Howard Johnson clam meat cleaner serves as a declumper and initial washer. Next to that is the sorter made out of bedsprings. What seed falls through those springs gets put back into mesh plastic bags and set back out on the lines to grow.

It’s a far cry from the conveyor belts and automatic baggers at GEM, but Ed Myers is able to put forth as good if not better a product.

Were money one of Ed Myers top concerns, he would probably have stayed with the chemical company in New York. Or he would have gone big time like GEM. (In fact, Chip Davison offered him one third interest in the
Ed Myers points out location of his mussel farm in Clark Cove. He uses the Spanish method of suspended culture, adapted to vertical lines connecting automobile tires.

enterprise when it started.) But Ed Myers would rather stay small, observe more, write about what he sees, and hope that man will come to his senses and let nature bring things round right.

"This is a wasteful society we live in, and here's this great engine running," he points at the ocean, as if to say just leave it alone, let it hum along. He fingers a small organism, something quite unremarkable.

"Now that's a tube worm. It makes its home in the mussel feces. Lives in there. You see, nothing is wasted."

Man could be equally resourceful, if he chose. Ed Myers cites an example. "There is a fellow in the Philippines that—let's see what the order he uses? He has chickens on the second floor walking around on gratings and pigs on the first floor eating the chicken droppings and half the first floor is out over his fish pond and half the pig droppings nourish his fish and the other half he puts in a methane digester and he gets so much gas from that that he burns a two burner stove 24 hours a day. He has to so the top won't blow off the methane digester."

You need not stray far from mussel beds though, for examples.

"Back in 1900 there were seven wharfs in Yarmouth that did nothing in winter but bring mussel mud, and they took it by horse and cart to as far as Gorham. The dairy farms loved it. If you were raising clover and you put mussel mud on your fields in the fall, it froze so that it leaked the salt out and then you got magnificent clover."
It's reasonable to suppose that if the mussel thing did get that big that somebody cleaning a thousand bushels a day, 60,000 pounds that would be twelve tons of mud they were putting back into the water, so it was there in the first place and you're not changing anything. At the same time, if there were a use of it, it would be great.

Even for the mussel byssus, the fibrous tendril the mussel uses to attach itself to a rock or a mooring line, Ed Myers dreams a utilitarian dream. He holds up a handful of stuff that looks like steel wool.

"This is a byssus thread from half a bushel of mussels. Not in this country, but in Greece they take the byssus off of pinna [a Mediterranean mussel] and make yarn out of it and knit gloves for fishermen, and it is reported that some of the gloves are 100 years old. They keep the gloves underwater all the time.

"And then the Greeks, in a sort of Greek inspiration, they knit out of mussel byssus a pair of long underwear for Queen Victoria. It's in a British museum. I don't know if she ever wore it, but I've been meaning to get some wool person to see whether this could be carded and turned into something, because apparently those gloves are indestructible."

Not surprisingly, Ed Myers identifies with others who take their living from the sea. His operation rankles no one. It could be seen as a small part, a tiny coil perhaps, in the great machine. The fact is Ed Myers actually encourages crabbers and lobstermen to tie their lines to his floats and fish the cove bottom.

"We don't take any credit for it, but part of it is with our gear out there and worms and mussels and things falling off those lines, that bottom is carpeted with crabs and lobsters. When I first started here, there were two lobster traps in the cove, now there are more than one hundred.

"Berk Weston who fishes out there told me he had once taken fourteen counters out of five traps, fourteen counters!"

As for the future of the mussel, Ed Myers would like to see it become a product as generic as chicken though, he concedes, "the expectation of feeding the world is remote."

"Yeah, I should know more about the chicken, but you're talking in the 20s that is 60 years ago, the big thing was to have a chicken on Sunday. You went to the poulterer and he fixed it up, and now chicken has gone to sending after a bucket full of legs. It's gone down to parts. And mussels, well you're talking 3,000 bushels for Maine in 1950 and now you're talking 300,000. It's gone up 100 times."

Here someone asks if he thinks there will ever be a "mussel roll, you know, like the lobster roll?"

"Well, you can get mussel pizza now in Newark, New Jersey, and there's canned paella done by a singer named Julius La Rosa. He's got a canning company and he's canning paella. The mussel is getting around."

Out of a cluster of mussels on the counter before him, Ed Myers selects a prime specimen, dark purple in hue, just over two inches long, the perfect cultured mussel. He holds it up. "Beautifully engineered, that triangle," he says. There is affection in his voice, and not a little pride.

"To you," he adds, "that may be just a mussel, but to me it's a beautiful thing."

IV. Afterword

ED MYER'S REMARK HUNG IN MY mind on a bright bitter day at the end of February when I rowed the cold harbor across to Mouse Island. The full moon the night before provided the low drain tide I needed for my chore, and with my hands in that icy slime for less time than it takes to tell the yarn, I had half a bucket of mussels, quite enough for myself.

Back in the kitchen, I separated and cleaned the clumps, then placed a single specimen on the counter. The white formica set it off: an old mussel, blotched purple and white, corrugated shell, no sign of aquaculture here. Still, I knew how it would taste; Mouse Island had never let me down. As I studied the mollusk, I couldn't help thinking how something so unpretentious could cause such anguish and anxiety, such toil and speculation, such pride and promise.

I must confess when I finally ate that winter catch—the firm meat laced with a twinge of garlic and white wine—I knew, for me at least, the truth of the matter lay in the foraging and the eating.

GEORGE G. CAREY, a visiting professor at Salt, is a folklorist and professor of English at the University of Massachusetts.
Salt’s Field Studies Programs

Producing Salt Magazine from a fishing village in Maine, participants learn to interview, write, edit, research, report, photograph and design as sensitive professionals of the future. They combine their academic interests—journalism, history, English, folklore, anthropology, sociology, photography or art—with the practical tasks of publication.

SEMESTER PROGRAMS
Semester programs are offered in the fall and summer (no spring semester). The semester programs are designed for advanced level college students who have chosen a major and wish to test their interests and build their skills in the field. Students take four courses in the summer, earning 12 credits. They take five courses in the fall, earning 15 credits. The summer semester of 1986 is from June 16 through August 8. Fall semester of 1986 is from September 15 through December 12. Credits awarded by the University of Maine System and cooperating colleges and universities.

JULY PROGRAM
This four week program, from July 7 to August 1, is designed for teachers, graduate students and advanced students who wish to engage in independent field research, practice oral history techniques, and/or learn publication skills. Six upper division credits may be earned from the University of Southern Maine (ARS 493).

FALL FIELD PROGRAM
Designed for part time or commuter students who wish to engage in field studies, the program begins September 15 and closes December 12. Students combine independent field research with one of the interpretive skills (either photographic documentation or writing/editing for publication). Six upper division credits may be earned from the University of Southern Maine (ARS 493).

COURSES ARE INTERRELATED AND COMBINE PRACTICE AND theory. They add to and draw strength from each other.

THE ORAL INTERVIEW
Training and experience in interviewing and collecting original materials in the field. Designed to prepare students to gather the materials they will use in “Topic in Research” and “Independent Research.” How to conduct an interview, finding contacts, mastering recording equipment, transcribing and archiving, as well as intensive practice and critiques.

TOPIC IN RESEARCH
Applying research techniques and analysis to a specific subject or problem. Students and faculty engage together in a research topic, producing a body of original material that serves as the basis for published work.

The effects of tourism on Maine culture is the topic for the summer of 1986, directed by Professor George G. Carey, folklorist and professor of English at the University of Massachusetts. “Maine: Myth and Reality” is the topic for the fall of 1986, directed by Professor David C. Smith, historian, of the University of Maine at Orono.

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH
Original field research by participants, advised by Salt’s faculty. Topics are as broad ranging as the culture. The course must be taken in conjunction with one of the interpretive skills courses and must culminate in a finished article or photographic documentary body of work.

INTERPRETIVE SKILLS:
1. Writing and Editing for Publication
2. Photographic Documentation
   Participants are expected to master needed skills and theory toward the development of a significant portfolio of work, along with a finished, published article or a body of finished publishable prints as a culmination of their field research work.
3. Publications
   Learning to publish Salt Magazine. Content, design, page mechanicals, typesetting, printing, deadlines, circulation. Taught by Salt’s staff.

ADMISSION AND FEES
Admission to all programs is based upon demonstrated interests, ability and background experience and education. For further information about the programs call 207-967-3311 or write Salt Center for Field Studies, P.O. Box 1400, Kennebunkport, Maine 04046.

Fees range from $900 for the July program and Fall Field Program to $1,800 for the summer semester and $2,500 for the fall semester. Maine residents eligible for scholarship awards. Matriculated students in the University of Maine system eligible for reduced tuitions. Non-Maine residents may apply for financial aid to the programs.
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