UNC Sea Grant November/December, 1982

Photo by N. C. Division of Marine Fisheries

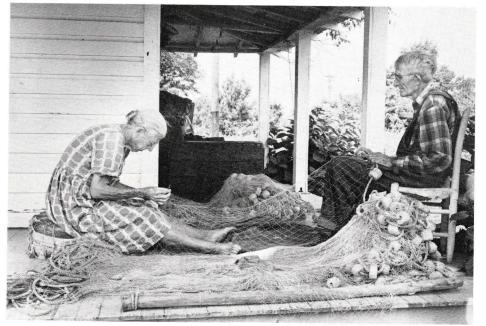


Photo by Neil Caudle



Photo by Jane Oden



This month, Coastwatch looks at the changing role of women in commercial fishing. The traditional: partners in net-mending (top). And the new: Margaret Hopkins at the helm (left); Carol Teague stacking her crab pots (above).

Carol: spell it 'Fisherman'

The scene is a Dare County courtroom, and the lawyers are selecting a jury. One of the prospective jurors is a tall, blonde young woman who looks as though she might have acquired her tan on the tennis court.

The lawyer asks her name, address and occupation. Her answer raises a titter in the courtroom.

"My name is Carol Teague," she says. "I'm from Hatteras. I'm a commercial fisherman."

After some ado, the answer held up that day in court. But more importantly to Carol Teague, her claim to the title "commercial fisherman" holds up in Hatteras, where fishing ranks somewhere between love and death as a matter of consequence.

"I am a fisherman," she says, "and I mean *fisherman*. I'm not a fisherperson or a fisherette or any of those strange words. The word says what I do. I fish. The word has been around a long time, and it deserves respect."

She arrived in Hatteras eleven years ago, fresh out of Old Dominion University, with a friend who wanted to give island life a try. The friend didn't stick; Carol did. She liked the place, even though she did begin to tire of the questions she heard when she traveled off the island—questions such as, "What's a pretty girl like you doing stuck way off in a place like Hatteras?"

Her answer: "I love Hatteras. It's home. Everybody's got to have a home. Right?"

Hatteras was home for four years before Teague fell under the spell of

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commercial fishing. It happened the day a neighbor gave her 20 old crab pots.

"They were just falling apart," she says. "Nobody else would have tried to use them. But I rigged them up somehow, painted my buoys, and threw them out in the sound. The first day, I got one box of crabs and sold them for twenty dollars. At that time, I was making about fifteen dollars a day working in the general store. So I said, 'Man, I'm going to quit this store and get me a hundred crab pots.""

And that's just what she did. Word drifted around to Wanchese and Manteo and Stumpy Point about a young woman with a little 13-ft. boat and a few rag-tag crab pots. In some of the stories, she was known as "Crab-Pot Carol." In others, she was "Crazy Carol." It took a while for word to get around that she was just Carol, the commercial fisherman.

Her first year crabbing, she shared the work with a friend who helped her learn where to set the pots, and when not to take a chance on the weather.

"I wasn't very smart about the weather," she says, "not the way they are in Hatteras. They've grown up with it; they can read the signs. I would just go out, and if I didn't see any other boats, then I started getting nervous."

Her second year, she had more pots and did the crabbing alone. She became a student of fishing. She questioned the old pros. She experimented.

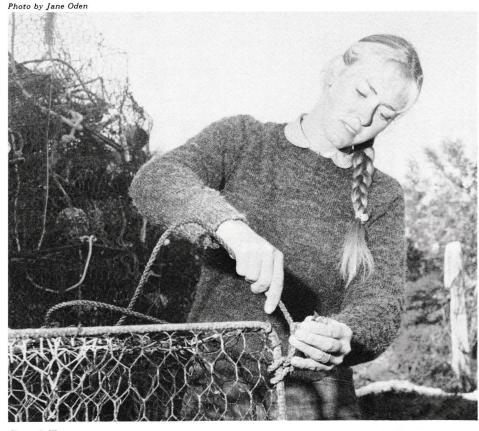
"That year, the crabs moved on the backside of the reef, into deeper water. I'd never worked that kind of place before. I'd listen to everybody and then I'd make my own decision. To me, it was constantly trying to figure out how to catch more crabs—trying to get little bits of information each time I went out."

Some of her experiments tickled the Hatteras funnybone.

"When I first put those twenty pots out, they laughed out loud," she recalls. "But when I set out a hundred pots, they saw I was serious. When I came in with my first thousand-pound day, they were real proud of me. My little boat was full. There were crabs everywhere."

After that, Carol Teague was a respectable advanced beginner in the Hatteras school of practical experience. She had some good instructors there, she says.

"I really don't think the fishermen treat me special because I'm a woman," she says. "The thing down on the docks at Hatteras is that everybody helps



Carol Teague

everybody else out. I've had people come looking for me, when I've been out in the boat alone in rough weather, just to see if I'm all right. But they didn't do that because I'm a woman. They do just the same for any fisherman."

Few fishermen live out of their crab pots year-round, and Teague's boat has spent a lot of time tied up in Hatteras while she has been off drop-netting in the ocean, gill-netting in the sound, or hunting king mackerel on fall days offshore. hook man." (Longlines are reeled aboard as the crew attaches or detaches buoys and hooks.) "Talk about excitement," she says, "it's pretty exciting to gaff a live swordfish and see him hauled aboard." She developed a knack for dressing billfish: "I'm a perfectionist about it," she says. "I like to see them cleaned and iced just right."

She's less enthused as she describes her bout with pound-netting, which, she says, demands more physical power than she can muster to handle the huge

"Every time I do go out, I learn something, and it doesn't matter if I'm crabbing or working a trawl boat. I learn. I learn about the wind and the water, and I learn where the fish might be."

— Carol Teague

She likes to talk big boats and long trips. Scalloping off New England three summers ago was "wonderful," she says. "We were out to sea fourteen days at a time."

When she goes longlining for swordfish, Teague and two men take turns cooking and working the deck.

"I was the buoy man, when I was on deck," she says. "The other guy was the

stakes and heavy nets. But when it comes to sheer endurance, she says, she holds her own.

"Trawl-boating is very, very, very hard work," she says. "But if you put your mind to it, you can do it. One trip, we got seven hundred boxes of fish. We'd work for twenty hours straight, sometimes, and there would be times when I'd say, 'I can't make it.' Then one of the guys would say, 'We're all thinking the same thing,' and that would help get me through it. Of course, your motivation is the money. If you're catching that many fish, you're making money. But you never know, when you go out, whether you'll find fish or not."

From time to time, she hears another version of that old question—the one that begins, "What's a pretty girl like you doing . . ." This version has to do with why a woman would dare go out to sea for days or weeks with a bunch of roughneck fishermen. She doesn't bat an eye, answering that one:

"The way they treat you depends on the way you act," she says. "I'm out there to work, and they know it, so they treat me like a worker, that's all.

"I've never been to sea with a captain I didn't have confidence in," she says. "The captains I've worked with are so good, they can even *think* like a fish." Once in a while, she has a notion to be a captain herself. She even took a course, offered by Sea Grant, that she says prepared her for the Coast Guard's licensure exam.

"I would have passed the test, too," she says, laughing, "if I hadn't left in the middle of it to go scalloping off New Jersey. They called me that night, so I got on a plane. When you get a chance like that, you take it."

This fall, Teague has been a mate on Captain Ernal Foster's charter boat,

The Albatross. Her job is to help with the gear and to keep sportsfishermen catching fish. She first worked for Foster six years ago, when she became the first woman mate in the Outer Banks fleet, according to Foster.

"He started me on the wheel (steering)," she says. "Any time you go out to sea, it's good if the captain knows his mate can get the boat in, if something happens."

Sooner or later, the people she meets usually come around to asking if she plans to be a commercial fisherman all her life. That question worries Carol Teague a little. She is 31. She doesn't want to fish her life away, to wake up some morning weathered and worn out from all that hard work. Now and then, she thinks she might like a "straight" job, maybe even a family. But so far, nobody's tempted her into surrendering her fishing, her home or her freedom.

"I feel like I'll always have a few crab pots and go fishing now and then," she says. "I'm a worker. I like to work, and I like working on the water. Every time I do go out, I learn something, and it doesn't matter if I'm crabbing or working a trawl boat. I learn. I learn about the wind and the water, and I learn where the fish might be. That's the way my life is." — Neil Caudle

Margaret: an equal partner in family-style fishing

Photo by Neil Caudle

There's something of a family portrait in the arrangement of three boats tied up just outside Hopkins Seafood in Pamlico Beach. There against the far bank lies the old 27-foot trawler that Margaret and Murphey began married life on some 38 years ago. Here at the dock, a newer larger trawler is waiting for repairs. This boat, the *Libby and Robbie*, represents a second generation of Hopkins. In its shadow floats a tiny fiberglassed foam hull, battered and cracked. Its makeshift rigging holds a scrap of shrimp net. This is the third generation, a grandson's plaything.

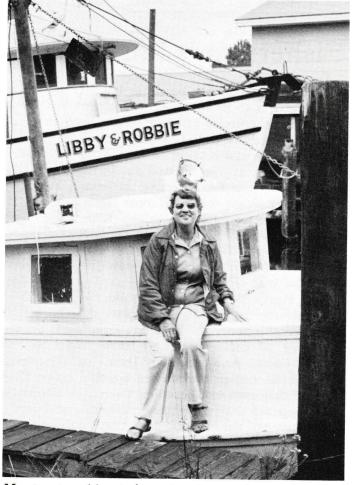
"Soon as my little grandson comes home from school, that's where he wants to be, dragging that little shrimp trawl up and down the ditch," Margaret says. "I guess we've got fishing in our blood."

Fishing has always been part of the family for Margaret and Murphey Hopkins. She has been his equal partner in their seafood business, whether the job is dredging oysters, driving the truck or keeping the books.

She points to their old trawler.

"That boat over there, my husband had her when we got married. He bought her in January, we got married in May, nineteen forty-five. We've been out oystering on that, me and him together, when you'd pull the dredge in and the water would ice, right on the dredge, and stay right there. We've had her loaded down to where we couldn't put another one on her. I guess you could say it's been our life."

Margaret spends more time weighing crabs, culling



Margaret and boats from two generations

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Photo by Neil Caudle



Margaret and Murphey Hopkins

fish and keeping records than she does fishing.

It has never worried her to be the only woman on a boat. "In all the years I fished, no fisherman ever insulted me," she says. But she admits that she's had to remind crewmen of their manners once or twice. On one fishing trip a few years ago, she found some of the crew reading "girlie magazines."

"I asked them nice the first time," she recalls. "Then I had to *tell* them, 'Put those girlie magazines away.' But when I came back in after while, there they were out again, lying right there on the table. That was when the girlie magazines went swimming."

Margaret sees no reason why young women shouldn't aspire to be commercial fishermen, if they're willing to work. She says there's nothing unfeminine about fishing. Murphy agrees with her.

"I'd always rather have her on a boat with me than some man," he says.

Femininity, according to Margaret, is a matter of the mind.

"I have feminine thoughts," she says, "but I can do a man's work. And I love a boat more than any man ever loved a boat. Being out there on the water, well, it's better than a trip to the psychiatrist. It eases your mind."

Fisherman's life troubles wives who wait at home

Women don't have to be on the boat culling fish or mending nets to be involved in commercial fishing. Often the fisherman's wife who never leaves the dock contributes significantly to her husband's occupation. She is the one who is understanding of the long hours fishermen put in, the fluctuations in catch and pay and the heavy expenses fishing sometimes incurs.

In a Sea Grant study, Marcus Hepburn and Jim Sabella, two sociologists, talked with fishermen's wives at Harkers Island about commercial fishing. They wanted to find out how the women felt about their husbands' occupation and how it affected their lives and that of their family.

The Harkers Island women told the researchers they felt that life for a fisherman's wife was hard. The unpredictable hours, the unsteady income and the uncertainty of retirement were main concerns the women voiced. And because of their own difficulties, more of the women interviewed opposed rather than favored their own sons becoming fishermen. Similarly, more opposed their daughters marrying fishermen.

Predictably the women said they worried a lot about their husband's safety and nearly two-thirds wanted their husbands to limit fishing to day trips to "inside" (sound or estuarine) areas. Hepburn says the women's worries influence their husband's fishing activities. Research has shown that men who work the offshore fishing boats for extended periods of time are typically younger, unmarried men. Older, married men tend to fish closer to home for shorter periods of time.

While the women may not be enthusiastic about fishing, they are supportive of their husbands. Many do the bookkeeping and file the taxes.

Among fishermen's families, the children tend to have greater contact with their mothers than their fathers because of the fisherman's long absences. And the more the fisherman is away from home, the closer his wife and children become to her side of the family.

Hepburn says most fishermen will marry women who have been exposed to the fishing culture. Usually their father, grandfather or close relative was also a fisherman. "A woman is not a fisherman's wife by happenstance," Hepburn says. "She usually knows what it is like to be a fisherman's wife. They are women prepared for the unique pressure of fishing."

"It takes a special woman to be a fisherman's wife," says Mary DeBoy, president of the Brunswick County Commercial Fishermen's Association. "You have to understand fishermen don't work by the clock. Their clock is the tides, the weather and what is out there to be caught."

Social barriers don't stop women who fish

Lucille Truitt doesn't hesitate about closing the door on her junk shop in Oriental to go fishing with her husband, Billy. After living some 50 years on the banks of the Neuse River, Lucille feels at home on the water. She can smell a school of fish on the air and read the weather in the sky. She talks of mare's tails, mullet fishing and painting the thing she knows best—the river.

Billy, a commercial fisherman, says Lucille is good help when it comes to fishing. "I'd rather take Lucille fishing than any man I know," Billy says. "She always believes we're going to catch fish."

Lucille has pulled crab pots, shrimped and fished nets. She fishes alongside Billy on the couple's 30-foot boat, the Sea Hound. "Fishing was born into me," Lucille says. "I spent the first six years of my life on the river. We lived on an old flat my father pulled up and down the river. He fished for shad and my mother dried the fish and picked the fatbacks. We finally settled in Oriental when they had to put me in school. My mother says those days on the river were the happiest days of her life."

A sparkle comes to her eye and a smile spreads across her face as Lucille talks of fishing. "Mullet fishing is the best sport in the world," Lucille says. "Billy and I go out on dark nights before the moon comes up and we listen for the mullet to jump. We wait until we hear two or three. That usually means there's a pretty large school. We set the net and then start hollering, banging the side of the boat and slapping the water. Boy, the mullet start flying. One hit me right in the head last week. We had fifty jump in the boat and the net was loaded. We caught 23 boxes of mullet that night."

Lucille says Billy gives the orders on the boat. "He does favor me," she says. "He treats me like a woman. He's the boss on the water and I'm the boss at home."

Lucille says she hasn't received any flak from other men about her job on the water. And occasionally when another fisherman needs some help, Lucille abandons Billy to become first mate on another boat. "They all accept me as one of the boys," she says.

While Lucille loves fishing, she wishes it offered a more steady income. "You never know how much you're going to make," she says. "And things are worse than they used to be. We're getting fifteen cents a pound for mullet, the same price we were getting fifteen years ago."

Lucille says she is seeing more women on the water these days. "More men are taking their wives," she says. "It's cheaper to train the wives than to hire help."

Today more and more women are taking to North Carolina's coastal waters to fish. Some women, like Lucille, help their husbands; others fish alone. And some women crew on large trawlers. But no one knows exactly how many North Carolina women are plying the waters in search of fish.

Barbara Jordan, a Belhaven crabber, says she loves the freedom fishing offers her. "It's great not having a boss looking over your shoulder," she says. "I go out there, work hard and make decent money. I couldn't stand putting forty hours behind a desk each week."

Barbara rises before dawn and cranks the motor on her 19-foot *Sea Ox* before covering 13 miles of Pamlico Sound. She pulls up every one of her 150 crab pots by hand, occasionally leaving her 116pound body sore at the end of her run. "It's man's work," Barbara says. "But women can do it. Women aren't as fragile as they used to be."

Barbara believes her career as a fisherman actually gives her more time for her family than a conventional job would. She's back at the dock most mornings by 10 a.m. with the rest of the day to call her own.

After eight years of fishing, Barbara says she feels confident on the water. "You can't go out there scared or something will happen to you," she says. "It takes self-confidence to fish just like it does to do anything else."

Ida Mae Kennedy can put most men to shame when it comes to clamming. On a good day, Ida Mae can rake 1500 clams in four hours. Only recently has openheart surgery slowed her pace. Born in Shallote 70 years ago, Ida Mae has been fishing all her life. "If you take me away from fishing, I'd probably die," she says.

Ida Mae hasn't let being a woman stop her from doing anything she wanted to do. She's worked in factories, driven a city bus and hauled logs for a timber company. "I've never met any resistance from men or women," Ida

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"Fishing was born into me. I spent the first six years of my life on the river. We lived on an old flat my father pulled up and down the river." —Lucille Truitt Mae says. "They've always admired me because I was able to do the things I did. Besides, I hold my own doing any job. I don't take anything off anyone."

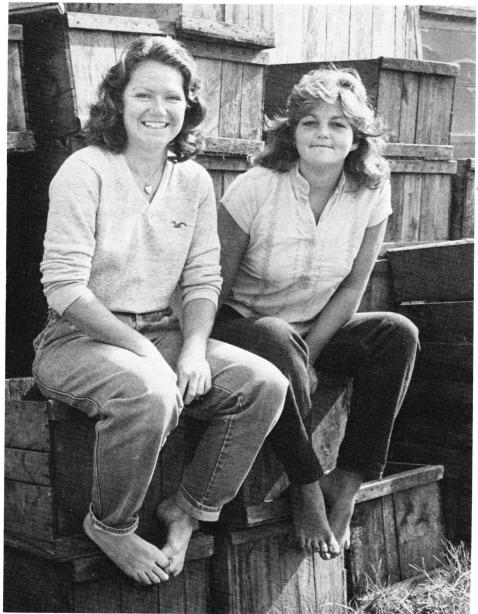
Marcus Hepburn, an East Carolina University sociologist, says social barriers may keep many women from becoming fishermen. Many fishing communities have restricted women to clamming, oystering and scalloping. But things are changing. Larger fishing vessels are more mechanized, taking much of the heavy work out of fishing. And some boats are equipped with separate facilities for women.

Debi Daniels, a Wanchese native who makes occasional offshore trips as a crew member for her brother, Steve Daniels, says the social barriers still exist. "It's all right for me to go fishing with my brother," she says. "But if I were to go out on another boat, people around here would talk. They think it's not a woman's place to be out there on the water with a group of men for a week or more at a time."

Yellow-tailing off the George Banks constitutes hard work, 22-year-old Debi says. She cooked, worked on deck, and operated the hydraulic net. She was paid the same wage as her male counterparts and a little more for cooking.

"I wouldn't recommend fishing for everybody," she says. "I went four days without a bath. There were a lot of times when I had to be on deck to cull fish for hours at a time. There wasn't much time for sleeping. I'd go back again though. It's fast money and I love to be on the water."

-Kathy Hart



Debi Daniels and Melodye Cannady, two fishermen from Wanchese

Coastwatch is a free newsletter. If you'd like to be added to the mailing list, fill out this form and send it to Sea Grant, Box 5001, Raleigh, N.C. 27650.

Name	I am in the following line of work:	
Address	Boatbuilding/Repair	Marina operator
City•State•Zip Code	City/County government	Marine recreation
	Commercial fishing	Mass media
	Educator	Seafood processing/marketing
	Farming	State government
	Homemaker	University professor/researcher
Coastal property owneryesno Boat owneryesno	Lawyer	Other

THE BACK PAGE

"The Back Page" is an update on Sea Grant activities—on research, marine education and advisory services. It's also a good place to find out about meetings, workshops and new publications. For more information on any of the projects described, contact the Sea Grant offices in Raleigh (919/737-2454).



It's not too late in the season for farming, especially if the crop is rainbow trout. And this year for the first time, Sea Grant aquaculturists and a Belhaven businessman

are teaming up to help put prospective trout-farmers in business.

In May, Johnny Foster and Randy Rouse of Sea Grant's Aquaculture Demonstration Project in Aurora harvested their first crop of rainbow trout grown in brackish water off a pier in South Creek. While the fish grow best in waters between 38° F and 70° F—the normal range of water temperatures in the mountains—Foster and Rouse proved the pan-size trout can be raised in the state's coastal waters during winter.

Encouraged by their results, Doug Clark of Belhaven bought a truckload of tiny trout, 2580 of the 5-inch fingerlings. He's selling them complete with cage and feed for the winter growing season.

Foster hopes to get some help with his research from Clark's customers. "It's a way for us to get information from people other than researchers about raising fish. It'll be more representative of the general public," he says.

Foster will be checking with people who buy the fish to find out what problems they have, how they deal with them and what their final productions are.

Already, Clark has had calls from Roanoke Rapids to Wilmington. He recommends 250 fingerlings per cage. With cage and feed, the cost is \$250. For more information, call Clark at (919) 943-2257, weekdays, and (919) 943-3346, evenings.

Why would 10,000 fishermen flock to a convention center in Baltimore? The answer: to see new gear, compare products, learn new fishing tips and visit with old buddies. The East Coast Commercial Fishermen's Trade Show will be held Jan. 21-23 in the Baltimore Convention Center in Baltimore. The convention, sponsored by the Maryland Watermen's Association, is geared toward small-boat fishermen.

Agents and specialists from the mid-Atlantic Sea Grant marine advisory services staffs will be conducting the seminars at the Expo. Bob Hines, the UNC Sea Grant agent at Bogue Banks, will give seminars on small-boat maintenance and on his experiments with anti-fouling treatments for crab pots.



The cure to that queasy feeling you get from tossing on the rolling sea may be stashed away in your spice rack. Ginger, used as a spice and as medicine for years,

may replace the old treatments for seasickness, says Larry Giardina, a marine advisory services agent.

Two psychiatrists recently tested powdered ginger root to determine its effectiveness in preventing seasickness and found it to be twice as effective as dimenhydrinate, a drug often used to prevent motion sickness.

While ginger is available in powder form in grocery stores, doctors caution that it may burn the throat, Giardina says. They advise buying the capsule form which is available in health food stores.

The capsules come with a built-in dosage meter known as the "ginger burp," say the psychiatrists. They prescribe two to four capsules to start. If you haven't burped in about five minutes, take four more capsules. When you burp after the last capsule, you've had enough.

So far, Giardina has seen no conclusive evidence that ginger is effective against seasickness. While some folks have tried the new remedy and still gotten sick, others have said they thought it worked, Giardina says.

He sees another problem testing the ginger cure: "If it works, there's no way of knowing if it was the ginger that worked or if you wouldn't have gotten sick anyway."



John Sanders, Sea Grant's coastal weather awareness specialist, traveled the Outer Banks between Hatteras and Corolla during the October 24th northeaster.

He would have gone farther north past Corolla, but his car wouldn't make it through the six to eight feet of sand that had washed over the roadway.

Sanders saw the worst flooding at Rodanthe and Waves where the storm left two feet of water standing in the streets.

Offshore from Hatteras at Diamond Shoals, weather service specialist Robin Seib reported winds of 60 to 70 mph with gusts up to 80 mph.

Farther south at Frying Pan Shoals, the National Weather Service reported windspeeds of hurricane intensity with sustained winds of 84 mph and gusts of 94 mph.

Even so, Sanders says this storm had two major differences from a hurricane. While a hurricane has a warm core (the temperature in the center of the storm), this storm's core was cold. And, on land, the wind velocity didn't reach the hurricane intensity of 74 mph.

"For those who've never been in a hurricane, they can see this storm ... and get a better feeling for what a hurricane might mean," Sanders says.

"This particular storm happened very suddenly," he says, adding that

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residents had only about six to eight hours of advance warning. "Fortunately it was not of greater intensity. It's the type of storm you basically ride out because you don't have time to prepare for it."

Hughes Tillett, Sea Grant's marine advisory agent in Manteo, plans to take disability retirement December 1. Tillett became Sea Grant's second marine advisory agent when he joined the program in 1973. He has been instrumental in building astrong commercial fishing program, advising fishermen of changes in gear and fishing techniques. Sea Grant Director B. J. Copeland says he hopes Tillett's disability retirement is temporary and Tillett can return to the job when his recovery is complete.



UNC Sea Grant is bringing the classroom to the fishermen. Sea Grant has invited the Fisheries Mobile Unit from the Massachusetts Maritime Academy, a school for

seamen, to conduct three day-long workshops for fishermen along the coast.

The first workshop, co-sponsored by the Southport-Brunswick Library, will be held Dec. 3 at the library. This workshop will focus on fish finders how they work and which kinds to use. To register, call the Sea Grant office at Ft. Fisher (458-5498).

The next day the mobile unit travels

to Beaufort for a Dec. 4 workshop at the District Courthouse. This workshop, a survey of electronics, will cover marine radar, Loran C, fish-finders and more. To register, contact the Sea Grant office at Bogue Banks (726-0125).

The final workshop will be held Dec. 6 at the Seafood Industrial Park in Wanchese. It too will focus on electronics. To register, contact the Sea Grant office in Manteo (473-3937).

If you can't attend the workshops, you are still welcome to tour the mobile unit, view the video tapes and ask questions.

The new writer in Sea Grant's communications office is Nancy Davis. She will join Neil Caudle and Kathy Hart as a staff writer for *Coastwatch*, and will also help produce Sea Grant news releases, brochures and public service announcements. Davis, a graduate of the UNC School of Journalism, comesto Sea Grant from *The Raleigh Times*. She replaces Cassie Griffin, who resigned in September to accept a job in the public relations office of a computer software company in Cary, N. C.

Frank Thomas, project director for Sea Grant's Seafood Laboratory in Morehead City and a member of the North Carolina State University Department of Food Science, has been given the Earl P. McFee Award for excellence in the field of fishery technology. Thomas received the award during a September meeting of the Atlantic Fisheries Technological Conference in Portland, Maine.



This New Year's some coastal residents will be turning old Christmas trees into new dunes. If you'd like to join them, attend the third annual dune-repair and

Christmas-tree-recycling program January 2. Bring only a natural tree, stripped of ornament, to the N.C. Marine Resources Center at Ft. Fisher for the 2:30 p.m. program.

Spencer Rogers, UNC Sea Grant's coastal engineering specialist, will lead the program along with help from the staff of the Marine Resources Center. Participants will take their trees to the Ft. Fisher beachfront to repair breaches in the dunes caused by pedestrian and vehicle traffic. Rogers says trees placed in the worn areas help trap and hold sand in their branches—creating a new dune.

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