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MEET OUR FISHING FLEET

By Jack Rivers, Jr.

There are those who believe in the conservation of fish thru larger mesh regulations and there are the greedy ones who insist on catching everything on the ocean bottom regardless of the consequences. Without some rules or measures to keep things under control our fishing fleet faces a short existence which will certainly effect the economy of the town.

One of the strongest supporters of the larger mesh is the captain and the crew of the dragger James M. Burke. She is skippered by John Silva, Jr., and owned by his father John Silva, Sr.

Skipper of the James M. Burke

Johnnie, Jr., is 38 years old, was born, raised and educated in Provincetown. He left school at the age of 14 to go to

His first taste of the fishing business was as a scalloper on the scalloper Dora Ramos, skippered by Capt. Ramos. Later he went trapping with Capt. "Fatty" Meads and stayed until his father bought the James M. Burke in 1939. Johnnie went aboard as skipper at the age of 22 and has always been up with the top boats. Capt. Silva, a firm believer in the larger mesh, has well proven his point by always catching a lion's share of whiting. Fishing side by side with any boat in the fleet regardless of the kind of nets they may use the James M. Burke always catches as much and at times more marketable fish than the rest. He has an uncanny sense in catching whiting. Many times when they are scarce he always seems

something you read about and everything was propelled by sails. John and his father would go out in dories rigged with centerboard and sail to set their tubs of trawls. Sand bags were carried for ballast that was discarded as the fish came aboard. It wasn't uncommon for them to start out the day without wind and have to row to the Race Point and back. When engaged in catching hake they would start out at sunset and fish the gear during the night. Hard back-breaking work was taken in stride as they sought to make a living for themselves and their families.

A few years later he and his brother, Frankie, had a gasoline dory built and went line trawling as partners until John shipped with the fleet's high-liner, the Mary C. Santos, skippered by the late Capt. Manuel Santos. In those days the vessels were propelled by sails and everything was done by hand. Even taking out the fish when they arrived at the Boston Fish Pier. Mr. Silva can remember seeing the deck completely covered with 75,000 pounds of haddock all caught in one set of the dories. It wasn't very long after he had been aboard that the schooner was powered with two 36 horsepower Lathrop gasoline engines.

In the early days the gasoline was passed from the gas boat to the vessels in cans and poured into the tanks. It was during this procedure that the Mary C. Santos was ripped by an explosion while tied to the gasboat in Boston harbor. She was sunk in order to save her from being burned and when the smoke had cleared three men were killed and seven were hurt.

A few years later he tried his luck swordfishing on the schooner Funchal then skippered by the late Capt. Louie Sears. It was on board her that they were caught in a hurricane that saw winds registered as high as 127 miles per hour. In the hours the barometer covered 23 tenths as the wind went from the southeast to the northwest where it hit full force on the swordfishermen. For five hours they rode out the storm with bare poles and when it died out came across the schooner Dorcas which had lost their captain overboard and had to be towed to port.

Mr. Silva in his years around the water has had his share of close shaves that range from explosions to falling overboard. While swordfishing on the Jesse Dutra with Capt. Manuel Dutra he was a lookout when the boat took a roll and down came the top mast and all, throwing him into the sea dislo-

cating his shoulder. For ten hours until they made port John had to lay in agony with it out of place and later learned that if there had been someone aboard with a knowledge of first aid they could have snapped it back into place.

When Manuel bought the Viola D., John shipped as cook until 1939 when he bought the "Burke".

He is married and has three sons and a daughter. His youngest son, Clifford, is in the Army and stationed in a motor pool unit of the 17th Infantry Regiment and is presently serving in Korea.

The Holdman and Engineer

The holdman and engineer is the captain's brother and owner's son. He is Francis Silva, 36 years old, who left school when he was 16 to try his hand at carpentry with his uncle, Jesse Meads.

In 1939 when his father bought the boat, Francis came aboard and stayed until 1942 when he enlisted in the U. S. Army. He was attached to the 80th Division, 313th Engineers and spent 22 months overseas in African and Italian campaigns.

The Corp of Engineers during the War is to increase, by construction or destruction, the fighting power of our forces. It helps facilitate the movements of our troops and impede the progress of the enemy. The record of the Engineers speaks for itself. It is

an honorable and valiant one as is the record of the men who make up the Corp.

Francis was awarded the Bronze Star while engaged in the Italian campaign. After the war with Germany was over he was transferred to the 255th Engineers and bound for Japan when it all ended and he was discharged in 1945. Upon returning home he went back fishing with his father again.

Francis is married daughters.

The James M. Burke with a 14 foot beam and of water. She was built Boothbay Harbor, Maine by a 115 horsepower C engine and can knife at about 9 knots. She ing during the summer erates with the ground, the off season.



WEEK OF MAY 20, 1901. FISHING:

The schooner Addison Center, with 6000 haddock and 18,000 codfish, landed and sold trip at Boston.

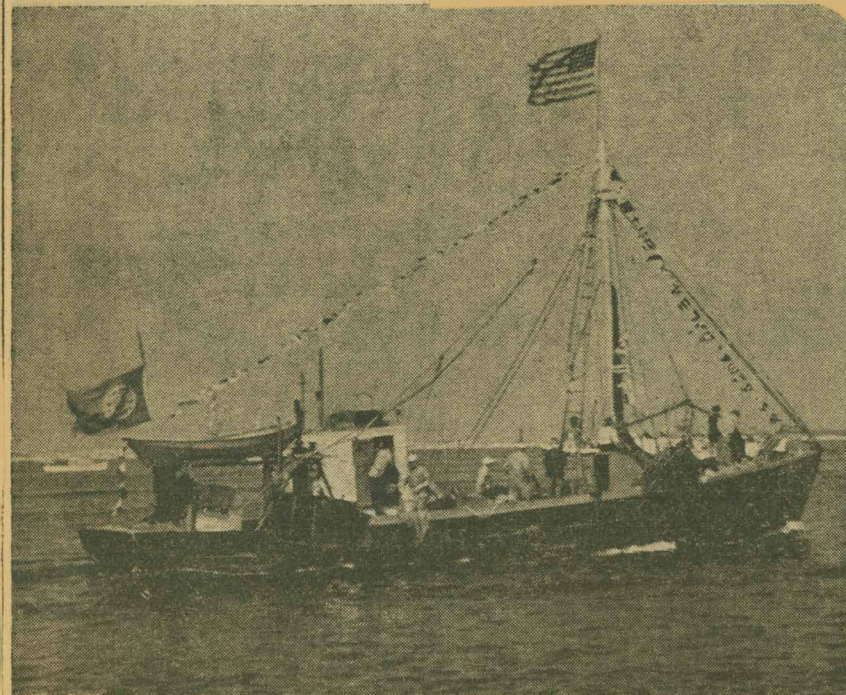
Schooner Julia, 2nd, captain John Davis, of Lisbon, Portugal, arrived at Provincetown to fit out for the Grand Banks.

The fishing steamer A. B. Nickerson landed about 35,000 pollock at Chase's wharf on Monday, May 21, 1901.

Schooner Addison Center's crew shared \$19.00 on the trip landed on Monday.

Schooners Wm. Matheson, captain Nelson, Monitor, Captain Johnson, Fannie Freeman, captain Marshall, and Lottie Byrnes, captain Quinn, sailed for the Grand Banks on Wednesday.

Schooner Rose Cabral's crew shared \$140.00 each on a trip landed Tuesday in Boston.



The Dragger James M. Burke

work as an order boy for the J. A. Rich grocery store. Later Capt. Silva was employed as a "skinner" for the Atlantic Coast Fisheries. The whiting was frozen and two men working as a team would cut and take the skin off the fish so that they could be packed. They were paid for piece work so it meant the fastest workers would get the fastest pay checks.

to make the right turns at the right time and run into a school. For years he has been known as the whiting king.

Owner of Dragger Is Cook

Holding the unusual position of both owner and cook is John Silva, Sr., age 67, born in Provincetown and started fishing at the early age of 14 with his father, the late Capt. Frank Silva.

In those days mechanical power was

