

THE BROTHERS HART (GURNEY, PHIL AND SHORTY)

As young boys, the Brothers Hart would stand on the beach to watch the fishermen in their pound boats head through the surf to bring in the catch from their offshore nets.

The boats were rolled from their perches on the dunes to the water's edge on well-worn gumwood logs placed and replaced on boards in front of the boat. Once through the heavy surf the boat went out to the nets, a mile or two offshore.

Later, the boats came back in, deeper in the water and weighed down with the fish. As they headed back in through the surf they were met by horses to pull the boats up on the beach. The horses were replaced later by tractors.

The term "pound" comes from the same source as "dog pound" or "im-pound" and the pounds themselves were simply funneled nets set from one half to three miles off shore to trap the fish. The nets were fished from about March until Thanksgiving, depending on the weather. They would set the poles out in early spring, sometimes late February, pumping them 15 feet into the sand beneath the sea.

When those fish boats came in the fish would be sorted, put in baskets, iced, then taken up to the fishery on 12th Street in Beach Haven. They would take a Model A and tear the top off and put balloon tires on it to tow the rig instead of the tractor. They called it their beach buggy and Shorty was the driver.

The catch for the season would be about 5,000 tons. Their father, Bergen Amundsen, worked in the pound boat.

They lived on 11th Street, but they could stay at the fishery because there were bunks there for the fishermen who wanted to stay. In 1937 the average wage was \$40 a month, plus the food and keep. The catch had nothing to do with the wages. The only thing was, if you had two very successful trips for a day you would get back to eat and the table would be set with your plate and cup upside down and under it would be a five-dollar bill.

The brothers used to make the boxes for the fishery. As far as they know they have the only two boxes left. They got paid two cents a box for them and then they were allowed to go in and eat lunch with the fishing crew. Being poor, you can't imagine what it was like for them when they saw that table all set up — puddings, cakes, cookies, pies. But most people who lived on the island in winter were poor. They were pre-teenagers at that time and now Gurney is 76, Shorty is 74 and Phil is 72.

When they were younger they used to deliver the newspaper to the fishery. Sometimes they'd go inside the door and yell, "Anybody need a paper?" When nobody answered they'd take their bag, sneak in and load it with food. One day Phil got his bag all filled up and the cook walked through the door with a cleaver. He took off out of there and ran all the way home where his mom had to do the laundry.

They were great pranksters, those guys at the fishery. If they caught the kids riding their bikes between the shanty and the stink house (named because it stunk) they would get a galvanized bucket from where they soaked their socks and wait on the second floor and throw the rank, smelly water on them.

Then, sometimes when they'd all sit down to dinner at the long 24 foot table, unbeknownst to them, mustard would be smeared on their knives and they would get it all over their hands.

They came in once with 9,000 pounds of lobsters and they didn't know what to do with them because nobody was buying lobsters at that time back in 1950. They got only 10 cents a pound for lobster.

One of the fishermen there was scared to death of lobsters and anything similar. He was six-foot four and would run the other way. One day the other men gathered a lot of little fiddlers and stuffed as many as they could under his cup. He came to dinner and turned his cup up, let loose the crabs, jumped up, upset the bench and the men on it, and ran out.

They used to put out lobster pots off of Holgate. They would put them out six to seven miles and in the deep water. They had a pulley for hauling in those heavy lines.

Later, when the pound fishery closed, Phil and Shorty went their separate ways, and Gurney went to work on the "Endeavor," a 60-foot dragger out of Barnegat Light. They would go out for eight to 10 days and fish Hudson Canyon in the winter for flounder. They would haul in three to four bushels of lobsters per run. Whatever they caught the boat took 15 percent off the top. Then came the ice they

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carried on board and the food and fuel. The rest was divided between the four or five men of the crew. They came in once with 9,000 pounds of lobsters and they didn't know what to do with them because nobody was buying lobsters at that time back in 1950. They put fresh water on them and iced them up and called all over to find a market. They got only 10 cents a pound for them.

Phil said that if the fishery had kept up, that's what he would have done for the rest of his life.

After pound fishing stopped, Phil went into electrical work, and Shorty became a carpenter. After the "Endeavor" was sold, Gurney went to work with Phil in the electrical business.



