

MAY 31, 1979

"REGISTER"

# From The Morris Chair

by Ellis Morris

## BORN-AGAIN CHARLOTTE

"I can tell you this - I had a few moments of extreme skepticism."

Mrs. Josephine DelDeo, chairman of the Provincetown Heritage Museum board of trustees, was describing her feelings as she stood on a town beach almost two years ago. The Charlotte, a trapboat, long abandoned, was being rescued from its sandy grave by a giant crane. Straining cables screeched and the crane shivered. The question in the minds of the many spectators who watched with Mrs. DelDeo was: "Will the old boat hold together?" Miraculously, the Charlotte did.

Today, thanks to the acceptance by the Cape Cod Regional Technical High School's boat-building and repair class of its biggest challenge to date, the Charlotte now rests completely restored on a cradle outside the Provincetown Museum, destined to become a prime exhibit of that institution, a fitting legacy of one of the Cape Tip town's major industry.

Indication of what sad shape the 40-foot craft was at the time of its disinterment comes from Dick Alberts, who with his fellow Tech instructor Odd Lilleheil supervised the school project.

"When she arrived her rotted planking was hanging from her bottom — most of her hull was gone and the same could be said of her deck and superstructure. In fact, before the job was finished, it added up to something like a 70 percent restoration."

Her hull and deck were replanked, sister frames were installed next to her rotted ones, the transom and coaming around her hatch were rebuilt and keelson refastened. Old photos helped assure authenticity to the work.



To the Museum people the \$5,000 which went into providing materials for the long project was well spent in order to save something so important to the town's past. The Charlotte had been one of many trapboats — "the harbor used to be filled with them" — churning out to the weirs to load their holds with fish.

Soon she will sit majestically atop a cradle, surrounded by authentic implements used in the industry's hey-day which ran from the early 1920's up to its demise only a few years ago.

Sponsorship was a community effort said Mrs. DelDeo, whose husband, Salvadore, had served on the Tech School Committee since its inception ten years ago. She spreads credit to many fellow townsmen, including Cyril Patrick, at the time of the "rescue" president of the Provincetown Historical Assn., financial helpmate of the Museum; Warren "Pinky" Silva, contractor who engineered the ticklish crane job, and Joseph "Ducky" Perry, the Charlotte's last skipper who spent many hours at the restoration site in an unofficial capacity as valuable consultant.

Vital helping hands were offered by Phil Deschamps of Orleans' Nauset Marine, whose flatbed trailer hauled the badly deteriorated craft to the Harwich school site, and the gleaming finished product back to Cape Tip, and by Fred Pina, Harwich contractor who loaned the crane.

May 16 was "moving Day". Guests at Provincetown were Alberts and Lilleheil and the 42 Tech students who had had a part in the restoration. Under a fusillade of compliments, they were given a tour of the museum and treated to a spaghetti dinner by Mr. DelDeo at his Sal's Restaurant. It was a great day for everybody concerned.

Absent in the festivities were two girls who had had a part in the project: Beth Meigs, since graduated and now employed at the Crosby Yacht, Inc. yard in Osterville and Debbie Greet, since shifted to Horticulture Class.

Mrs. DelDeo, when looking back at the restoration as a "community" venture, was probably thinking of the support from her own Provincetown. But it embraced a larger "community". Cape Tech draws its students and faculty from each of the 11 towns, so in a real sense Charlotte's re-birth was an all-Cape undertaking.