



Crusader At Sea

*One man's efforts at making
the world a little bit better*

By Hal Lyman



Frank Carlton became one of few with his first swordfish.

ROCKS used in the construction of the Jacksonville Beach jetties in Florida were higher than he was when Frank Eberle Carlton, III, started fishing. Some of the political and bureaucratic cliffs he is now trying to scale as prime mover in the relatively new National Coalition for Marine Conservation, Inc., loom even higher. Carlton can remember being lifted onto those jetty rocks by paternal hands nearly 40 years ago and his enthusiasm for angling has accelerated steadily since that time. His equal enthusiasm for blasting mountains of red tape and inertia to push for proper use of marine resources seems jet-propelled.

Lean and tough of frame, he might well have become just another doctor-fisherman if it were not for his extraordinary dedication and energy. Describing his angling ability, one of his friends compared him to an all pro football running back. Another, when asked how it was possible for any individual to tackle so many problems at once, replied: "A river never sleeps—neither does Frank!"

An exaggeration, of course, but this southern bald eagle of the marine world has the ability to catch a quick nap and awake refreshed. That his energy requires a check-rein from time to time, Carlton is the first to admit, for some of those with whom he works cannot keep up the pace. They tend to become groggy and to lag several points behind his presentation of programs and arguments.

An outline of his professional career sounds more or less routine: a B.A. degree in 1957 from Emory University in his home state of Georgia, an M.D. from the same in 1961, followed by specialized training at Harvard and the Massachusetts General Hospital, with the result that he became a urologist in 1967. Throw in foreign training and travel, 13 months in Korea in the U.S. Army Medical Corps, and you have a picture of a young surgeon on the way up. The fact that he managed to sneak in some fishing for little tuna

A look at a marine conservationist . . .

and the like while in Korea is incidental.

Then add a few extras. An avid tennis player, Carlton also enjoys sailing, hunts the uplands for quail and the marshes for waterfowl when the weather cools, and has fished from Nova Scotia to Panama. Until recently, he flew his own plane. He still carries a pilot's license and his "pilot's eyes"—useful in spotting fish. Toss in a charming wife and children. One would think that the doctor would not want to add anything more to an active life.

However, he did and he has. As president of the National Coalition for Marine Conservation, Inc., based in Savannah, Georgia, at least a third of his time is spent trying to guide the efforts and activities of this young organization. How did he happen to grab this tough organizational tarpon by the tail?

"It was time for it to happen," Frank replies.

Although he likes fishing of any sort and has taken many species, ranging from black bass among the lily pads to channel bass in the southern surf, the offshore challenge appeals to him particularly. Blue marlin are his favorites—and he likes to fight them with a 50-pound test outfit, standing up. The fact that he has taken more than 30 puts him out of the amateur level. Among those pioneering this marlin fishing off Savannah, Georgia, Carlton naturally started to move in fishing tournament circles. His recent election as the next chairman of the Masters' Tournament, in which sailfish are battled on 20-pound test against a time limit, indicates that his fellow fishermen in that league respect his angling ability.

In talking with those who follow the

tournament circuit, Frank became more and more conscious of the overall problems in marine fisheries along all coasts. Foreign fishing, political trade-offs at the federal level, difficulties in handling regional problems, were just a few of the troubles which were evident.

"There was a vacuum to be filled," he told me recently, "and there was no sense of unity among the fishermen themselves. Many organizations in the conservation field were concerned, but none was geared to get into the political arena and fight."

In January, 1973, Carlton decided to start fighting. He sat down with three others, all experts in their fields, and they decided to build a new army. John Rybovich, Jr., boat builder of West Palm Beach, Florida, has contacts everywhere in the big game fishing world. Frank T. Moss, a former charter boat skipper out of Montauk, New York, and associate editor of *Yachting Magazine*, has been in the marine angling field most of his adult life. Frank J. Mather, III, marine biologist of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and authority on bluefin tuna, could give both the angling and scientific viewpoints. The seed of the Coalition was planted. Christopher M. Weld, Boston attorney, angler and big game hunter, joined the group shortly thereafter and is now secretary of the organization.

I was asked to sit in on one of the early meetings with Moss, Mather, Weld and Carlton. The issues were basic, but the proper approach to them was confused. Adding to that confusion was the fact that, if I said "Frank," three different individuals might answer!

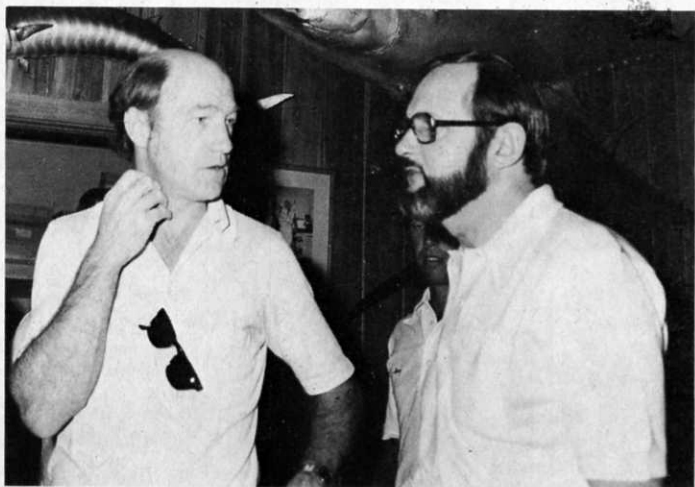
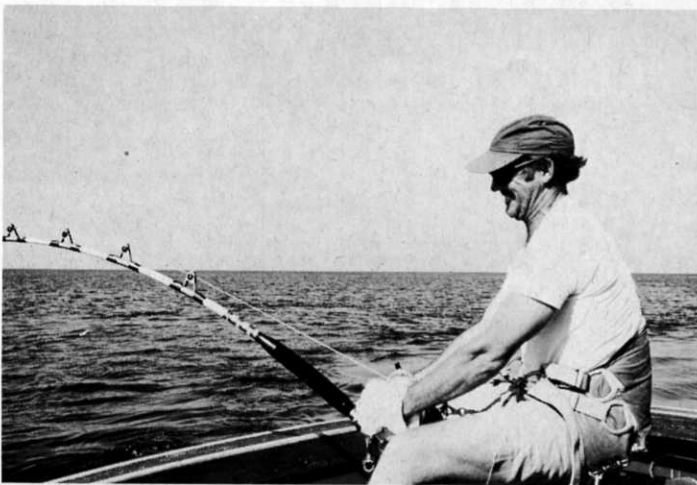
After considerable discussion, however, ground rules were set—and

have changed very little since that time. The Coalition would not compete with existing organizations such as the International Game Fish Association or the Ocean Fish Protective Association of California, but would attempt to enlist their support to find solutions for common problems. Any group involved in marine resources, whether in the angling world or otherwise, would be included.

Among the problems were—and are—heavy fishing pressure on stocks, particularly on billfishes and tunas, from foreign and domestic commercial fleets; spread of industrial pollutants throughout the oceans of the world; lack of representation for marine recreational fishermen in governmental and political decision-making bodies concerned with fisheries matters. Coupled closely with these were research efforts to be conducted on species of particular interest to marine anglers.

As is the case with many similar organizations, the Coalition financing was divided into two sections. The first, which is the Coalition proper, would be active in lobbying, organizational activity, working with other groups and generally making those who draw up laws and handle governmental organizations aware that salt water sportsmen have a vote and an economic impact. Contributions to the Coalition cannot be deducted from taxes. The second, which is the Marine Resources Conservation Foundation, Inc., would be the repository for tax-deductible funds to implement research programs. It is a tribute to the effectiveness of Carlton and his co-workers in selling the idea of a marine anglers' lobbying group

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Whether it is fighting a fish or dealing with a delicate issue, Frank Carlton gives his maximum effort.

minutes to make, and is the mark of a man who knows something of "mar-linespike seamanship."

But it isn't recommended out of snobbery, nor am I trying to convert a man whose prime interest is angling into an old salt. It is, very simply, the best way to whip a rope's end so it won't deteriorate into a fagged cow's tail. So make the small investment required in proper materials, and needle-whip the ends of all your lines.

When not in use, lines should be neatly coiled for storage. Coil clockwise, which comes naturally to most people. The exception would be with a rare rope possessing a "left-hand lay." Most ropes are right-hand. Hold

it upright, and the lays twist up and to the right.

Boathook hangers, available at most marine stores, make ideal hooks on which to hang coiled lines. Don't just toss them into some compartment, especially in the bilges where they might stay wet weeks on end. Dampness isn't good for rope, not even for synthetic. They should be hung with some air circulation around them. If you do toss them in lockers, make sure they are dry when you store them between trips.

And when you dock your boat, tying up with respectable lines neatly needle whipped, you can take a little pride in the appearance of your favorite fishing machine. S

gling world. He wanted workers and, if they did not work, the telephone lines grew hot. The Advisory Board is representative of all segments interested in marine resources, ranging from leaders in the commercial fishing industry to those high in governmental administration, from research scientists to magazine writers.

"Three months after I started this whole thing," Frank said wryly, "I wanted out. Everyone admitted the problems were there, but no one seemed willing to put time into correcting them."

Being a fireball himself and one who does not cherish a fool gladly, he did not realize that many who had been involved in marine resource matters over the years were watching and waiting. The late President Truman said: "If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen" when referring to the rough and tumble of politics. The watchers wanted to see what effect the heat would have on the doctor.

If his first discouragement had killed his basic plan, the Coalition would have become just another organization which did not make the grade. Fortunately, aided by advice from others who had labored in this field, he survived the test. By the time the annual meeting of the Coalition was held in November, 1974, it was obvious that things were really beginning to happen. Directors and Advisory Board members turned up in such numbers that chairs were at a premium. Support both for the work Carlton had done and for the ideas set forth was strong.

Others also felt that he was someone to whom they should listen. Since the founding of the outfit, Carlton has been named to an assortment of boards, committees and commissions dealing with marine resources at the state, interstate, federal and international levels. Always articulate, he has not hesitated to make the Coalition's position known. His own concepts have done much to shape that position.

"I started working only with oceanic game fishermen," Frank told me, "but soon broadened the field to include general marine problems and national use of resources. The nation, and indeed the world, are both on the threshold of allowing things to happen that should not. Conservation issues are focussing on the oceans and long term solutions are necessary.

"Although present problems may appear tough to solve," he continued, "the future right now looks comparatively good. No one man is capable of finding all the answers and neither I nor the Coalition itself is out to em-



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that contributions to the Coalition last year were almost three times those of contributions to the research arm. Sport fishermen obviously are willing to back something in which they believe whether tax deductibility is involved or not.

Armed with a set of working rules, Carlton and his cohorts were off and running. One of the first moves was to meet with Richard H. Stroud, executive vice-president of the Sport Fishing Institute, who has spent many years working in Washington for recreational fisheries, both fresh and salt water. The Institute itself is supported by the fishing tackle industry and those closely connected with it. Dick Stroud has juggled politically hot fish-cakes successfully over a long period of years. He welcomed the idea of a new consumer-level marine fisheries organization, but, like myself, wanted to see what sort of a track record would be developed before giving the Coalition full support. Both of us had seen organizations in this field flourish briefly, then die due to lack of financial and personal support.

If Frank Carlton needed any further challenge, this was it. When he hooks a blue marlin, he is a tiger with great stamina, never giving the fish a moment to rest. He applied the same tactics in his approach to making a success of the Coalition. Conservatives—and even some not so conservative—may consider him pushy, but the doctor replies that if no one pushes, nothing will happen.

By the spring of 1974, Carlton had lined up a Board of Directors for the Coalition. He did not want to start with deadwood nor to carry a director on the roster simply because the individual might be a big name in the an-

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pire-build. The hope is to bring marine problems to the man in the street and suggest alternatives—in brief, to humanize the conservation effort. There is a great need for those who are interested to become personally involved."

Carlton feels that governmental agencies, such as the National Marine Fisheries Service, in the past have considered these fisheries as a commodity to be sold for financial gain only. The concept of feeding the hungry masses of the world has been displaced by the desire to make a fast buck. Management on this basis simply has not worked—and will not work in the future. Natural resources are connected with people and people as a whole, not as a specialized pressure group, should have some influence upon how they are managed.

How long will he keep working towards Coalition goals?

"I'll keep at it until I'm sure that momentum in the Coalition will carry forward with the people involved," Frank stated. "I set an original time limit of five years for my own active involvement. I have no intention of becoming a perpetual president and I also believe in rotating directors, for people can become stale and complacent after being in office too long. Let me emphasize that the Coalition works with people. Perhaps that is why so many doctors are involved, for they tend to identify with their patients. I try to do the same with fellow fishermen."

Rhetoric and flag-waving are not part of the Coalition's action line. When a program is needed, Carlton and his cohorts go to work on it immediately. They have fought for the 200-mile fisheries limit, have filed bills in Congress to give anglers a greater voice in marine management, pushed for conservation of bluefin tuna in the northwestern Atlantic and are working to build the necessary data base to reduce Japanese longline catches of the marlins and swordfish. Work is progressing to bring uniformity to the hodgepodge of striped bass laws now in force among states on the eastern seaboard. At the research level a program to re-establish spawning stocks of stripers in northeastern river systems is being investigated. Many other projects, now on the back burner, will be moved forward when quick action is required.

When Frank Carlton finally steps aside, he hopes to spend more time writing. A great admirer of William Shakespeare, he plans to concentrate on his own literary style—not to rival the Bard, but to set forth his own experiences in the angling world. If he tackles the job of author as he has that

of president of the Coalition, his name will be one to reckon with in future outdoor literature.

And, of course, the future still holds blue marlin. If Frank has his way, there will be more of them around when he gives up the Coalition presidency than there are now, and he is a man who is developing an amazing record of getting his own way!

MARLIN

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"When the fish eats the jig, he will come up and turn sideways on it. When the drag is tight the hook will often be held against the hard part of the bill and as the line tightens the marlin's head will be jerked toward the boat and the hook will tend to pull off of his bill.

"I have spent a lot of time watching fish that we've unbuttoned and in almost all cases it comes when the bill is pointing toward the boat. It comes after 20 minutes, 40 minutes and even at the gaff. We could see that we had pulled the hook straight off the end of the bill because it wasn't hooked properly.

"Now, by using virtually no drag when the fish swims away from the boat after taking the lure, he takes out line until it is over his back. Then when you tighten the drag and set the hook, it will tend to slide back into the corner of his mouth, and into a better place for the hook to dig in. Since we have employed this technique with marlin lures most of our fish are mouth hooked rather than bill hooked."

The Trainors have also found that it isn't necessary to have the boat going full bore when the time comes to set the hook, because when the fish is going away from the boat he will automatically take most of the slack out himself.

"The main thing is to get rid of the slack and sock it to him when his bill is pointed away from the boat" Pat emphasized.

Both Al and Pat feel that it is best to gaff the fish as soon as you can . . . the longer he is on the more chance you have to lose him. The hazards of handling a "hot" fish on a flying gaff are not that great compared to the chances of losing the fish in the hours that it may take to get the striper back to the boat.

Also, don't hesitate to combine the trolling of a marlin lure with the presentation to that same fish of a live mackerel if he toys with the lure without taking it. Many times the angler

will take a reluctant fish by presenting him with an active alternative.

The Trainors have many other little nuances that they employ that consist of good common sense precautions, such as thoroughly checking the hook and leader condition each time they use the lure and after every strike. They regularly check and replace the line (30 and 50 pound test monofilament is used almost exclusively) if it shows any sign of wear. Tackle is kept in top shape and such articles as flying gaffs and gloves are stored aboard in a handy place for quick use.

Techniques reflecting their creative approach to taking the marlin include hand holding the rod and moving the lure or trolled live bait away from the fish, dropping it back—almost down his throat—then pulling it away again to try and antagonize him into hitting. The Trainors are also continually trying new designs, colors and sizes of lures to entice those 100 to 200

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