



A Family Tradition

by **John H. Vargo,**
Publisher

Nana Dawn Furfaro, the heart and soul of 4 generations of Verplanck Furfaros, doing what Furfaros do best-- enjoying the magnificent Hudson River on a gorgeous blue sunny day in early July.



The word was out: the Blue Claw Crabs were running in Haverstraw Bay!

Usually the telltale sign that the crabs have arrived is when commercial fishermen start reporting that the crabs are starting to show up tangled in the gill nets while trying to get at the bunker.

Blue claws usually stay in deeper water in early spring and very slowly migrate to shallower waters as the summer progresses. By the end of August it is possible to catch bushel baskets of delicious Blue Claws in a few hours by doing what Dawn and David Furfaro are doing; bottle crabbing from a small boat.

This is a very simple operation consisting of a small boat and engine, a line attached to each crab trap, and a buoy that keeps the line floating. Most bottle crabbers use an empty detergent bottle as the pick up buoy. Really serious crabbers use a small piece of foam. The theory behind this is that the larger bottle moves the line and the doors of the trap, thus scaring the blue claw as it enters the trap.

Dawn Furfaro pulling in a crab cage with husband David Furfaro operating outboard and enjoying every moment of this wonderful day..

The most important part of this crabbing operation is the bait that is placed in the traps. In the Furfaro's case they extend interest in the final operation of crabbing by taking some of the clan's children fishing for crab bait. Sunny's and white perch are usually their bait of choice. Others doing the same operation use bunker, which are caught in gill nets in Haverstraw Bay and sold to crabbers. Many believe that chicken legs are the best option and use them religiously.

The crabbing expeditions are just part of the day for the Furfaro clan. They picnic and swim throughout the day, with grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends enjoying the river all together.



Success!
Luca has connected the hook to the eye of the boat.



Dawn and David are using special custom made crab trap buoys purchased in Maryland.

Children are very important and the multitude of them running to and fro, doing what they do best on the shore of the Hudson River is a tribute to the way the Furfaro's raise their children--very independent at an early age. In the picture below, Jake Dicob is instructing his nephew in how to hook the line to the bow of the crabbing boat so that it will not float away. His wife, Angela, is a Furfaro and Jake accepts the traditions of the Furfaro family whole-heartedly.



With a line of twenty crab traps, all on buoys out in front of the picnic area, it did not take long for some of the traps to produce results.



The Furfaro picnic has become a tradition of the crabbing operation.