Wanted: A Pet Seal

Whaleback Light Station, New Castle, N.H. — "Well, here it is the end of January already, and the year is going by so fast that we here at Whaleback can scarcely believe it." writes the crew. "In our last letter, I stated that I would write as soon as something exciting happened here, so here goes."

"I guess that the most newsworthy item here was the caper pulled by Hickey on the last day of 1956. He departed the light at 08:30 to go on liberty, and resulted in only getting lost on the way in to shore. He had a little engine trouble, and by the time he repaired the outboard, the tide and wind had changed and swung the boat out to sea. The extensive search performed by the Coast Guard boats and ships from Portsmouth Harbor Lifeboat Station, Hampton Beach Lifeboat Station, Merrimac River Lifeboat Station, and a ship from the C. G. Base in Portland took a total of six and a half hours. Hickey was found drifting by the C.G. 40-footer from Merrimac River, about seven and a half miles out to sea off Rye Beach, N.H. He was taken aboard the ship from Base Portland, and brought into Portsmouth Harbor, where he was met by an ambulance and taken to Portsmouth Hospital, only to be released less than an hour later, none the worse for his experience. Need it be said that he had had enough excitment for the day, and that he spent a quiet New Year's Eve at home on the sofa watching television.

"In December we had quite a bit of time running the Fog signal, a total of 99 hours and 45 minutes, starting off the month with 41 consecutive hours of running time, in the first two days yet. What a way to start a new month. Inspite of all the noise and labor involved, we all slept like babies.

"The weather has really been rough out here this winter. There have been many days that the water broke around the galley windows, giving them a good washing. The results of this bad weather are that we spend most of our time inside working, and keeping warm. The lowest temperature so far had been a mighty windy cold 21 below zero. No time for fishing. We thought that the harbor had been moved up into the Arctic Circle at times when the tide brought chunks of ice down from up the river. There was better than an inch and a half of ice on the outside of the structure at one time, with more forming as each wave left its own deposit.

"I was out in the rowboat the other day trying to catch a seal so we could have it for a pet, but I didn't have any luck. The nearest I got was 20 or so yards. I tried whistling, but all they did was look at me, so after an hour or so, I gave up the expedition. I must say here though that was the best workout I've had since last summer.

"Contrary to all the letters I've read in the MCF, we haven't seen anybody out here since last summer either. It would be good to see a new face out here once in a while. There are a few of the lobster boats going by now and then, but not too often. We make the best of it, though, and are all pretty happy when we have a good day.