



## Studying the sounds of the sea

By MIKE BARLOW  
Staff Writer

It's not everyone who would spend two months aboard an icebreaker off the coast of Antarctica, listening to the conversation of killer whales.

But then again, 26-year-old Sheldon Fisher has no ordinary job. He's a bio-acoustician for the Hubbs Seaworld Research Institute in San Diego.

A 1975 graduate of Ramapo High School, Fisher studies the sounds made by schools of marine

mammals such as whales, dolphins and sea lions.

The data he accumulates helps other scientists determine the size and density of the schools, as well as their feeding and migratory habits.

Each species has its own distinct voice and conversational mannerisms. With practice, a researcher can even differentiate between the accents of individual schools of the same species, he said.

"Just as somebody from Boston sounds different from somebody from Brooklyn, killer whales from

the Antarctic sound different from those off Puget Sound," he explained.

Seals could make a variety of sounds, ranging from buzzsaw-like growls to high-pitched trills. "Sometimes they would sound like something from 'Star Wars,'" he smiled.

This information is essential to the development of responsible, rather than haphazard, harvesting of marine life forms.

Eyed by many nations as a potentially rich source of food, the marine life of the Antarctic could be decimated if careful harvesting

techniques are not introduced, Fisher said.

Although the former Rockland man is a veteran of several research cruises, he just returned from his first trip to Antarctica — the planet's fifth-largest and southernmost continent, an awesome world of ice.

"You would see these vast sheets of ice, eight to ten feet thick," he recalled the cruise aboard an icebreaker. "When the steel prow of the vessel struck an ice sheet, the ship would rise up

Please see LISTEN  
on page C4



Staff photo — Ted Neuhoff

Sheldon Fisher

...listening in on the ocean's secrets

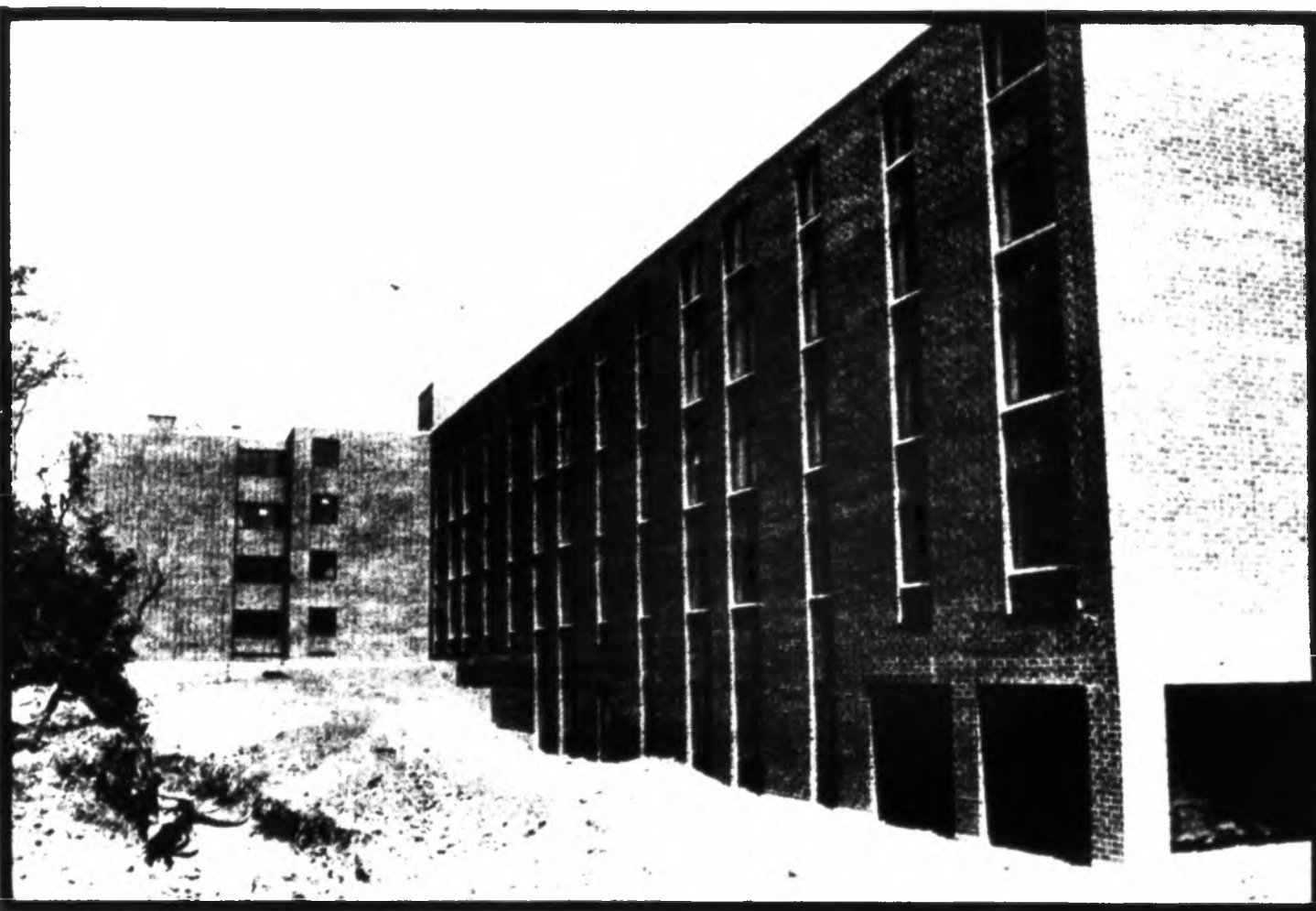
## Sunday Journal-News LOCAL

ROCKLAND COUNTY, N.Y. SUNDAY, MARCH 27, 1983

Party line.....C2  
What's ahead.....C2  
Obituaries.....C5  
Classified.....C7-15

Obituaries

Classified



Staff photo — Art Sarra

The Ross Towers senior citizens complex in Suffern — Hope for the elderly?

## Housing crunch here crimps life for poor

By KEVIN McCOY  
Staff Writer

It was going to be a bright new life for Sheila. The days of constant beatings by her husband were over. A six-week stay at the Rockland Family Shelter had prepared her for making "a real new start."

Then, the 21-year-old woman — eight months pregnant and the mother of a 20-month-old daughter — started looking for an apartment, and the roof caved in on her dreams.

"I get my hopes up high every time I go looking for a place or get a lead on something," she said with a nervous smile during an interview at the family shelter office this week. "Then I get let down, and it's 'Oh God, here I go again.' There doesn't seem to be any place for me to go."

Sheila's problem, while quite common for battered women seeking a new start, is even more typical of the bleak outlook for Rockland's poor and underprivileged. A brutally tight low-income rental housing market leaves them scraping for decent shelter in a county of affluent split-levels and suburban plenty.

"It's a very, very difficult situation," said Noah Weinberg, commissioner of the Rockland Department of Social Services. "We're just lucky that there wasn't a really terrible winter. If the winter had been bad, we could have had fires in some of the places people are forced to live in."

The situation is so bad, even the federal government has noted the county's rental housing problem.

Statistics from the 1980 census show that the median monthly rent in Rockland was \$295, higher than all but two counties in the tri-state area.

By comparison, Bergen and Westchester, relatively affluent counties to the south and east, had median monthly rents of \$280 and \$267, respectively, the census showed.

Other census statistics placed Rockland's rental vacancy rate at 4.2 percent, better than Westchester or other neighboring New York counties, but still tighter than the five percent figure set by the state as the standard for declaring a rent emergency.

Sheila didn't have to see the numbers. She's lived the problem.

Each month, she receives a \$261 housing stipend, the standard for a family of three, from the county Department of Social Services. The money supplements her \$110 eating allowance and food stamp allotment, but it doesn't even approach the rent on the few decent apartments she's found.

"Most of the places are \$420 or more for a one-bedroom apartment," she explained. "There's just no apartment for \$260. It gets more depressing because you look through the papers and you see the same places, day after day."

Part of the problem is the reluctance of many landlords to accept welfare clients, who in most cases have a government voucher, rather than cash, to offer

Please see HOUSING  
on page C2

## Bus pact talks resume Monday

By RICHARD WOLF  
Staff Writer

Contract talks are scheduled to resume Monday in an effort to avert an April 1 strike by Rockland Coaches bus drivers that could leave New York City-bound commuters with nothing but their cars to get to work.

With more than 1,000 Rockland and Bergen county victims of the NJ Transit rail strike crowding on to the Red and Tan Line buses, union and management officials are anxious to settle their remaining differences in hopes of permanently converting some of the riders.

The United Transportation Union that represents the bus drivers and other Rockland Coaches employees is the same one that has struck both NJ Transit and the Metro-North Commuter Railroad in Westchester, Putnam and Dutchess counties. But officials on both sides of the negotiating table insist the affiliation does not enhance the chances of a strike.

Since the brief appearance of a federal mediator two weeks ago, in fact, both sides have expressed confidence that the outstanding salary issues can be resolved before the March 31 expiration of the current three-year pact.

"We don't have any problem at this point. We're having normal negotiations," said Richard Capitani, general manager of Rockland Coaches. "We haven't had a strike here since 1956. We have fairly good relations with our people."

"We're very close, and we're meeting almost every day," said Joseph Garnarz, general chairman of UTU, Local 1558 in Westwood, N.J. representing about 300 drivers, dispatchers, mechanics and clerical workers. "We're not threatening anything right now."

Neither side would reveal the latest offers, but Garnarz acknowledged the differences have "boiled down to money." The last contract, negotiated in 1980, provided average pay hikes of 7 percent, he said.

Rockland Coaches carries more than 14,000 people on an average weekday, most of them commuters. That number has risen by about 1,000 since the start of the NJ Transit strike, which wiped out train service on the Pascack Valley and Erie Main lines serving Rockland.

Although the last walkout was almost 30 years ago, several have been threatened since then as negotiations reached critical points. "We've come down to the wire a few times," Garnarz said.

This time, however, both union and management officials would like to settle so they can go about the business of attracting riders away from the rails. More riders would mean more work for union members, Garnarz said, while adding coins to the company's coffers.

"Both of us have the same interest as far as the ridership is concerned," Garnarz said. "To say that we don't care about the riders is stupid, because let's face it, our salaries depend on the farebox."

Capitani said the company did not expect to retain many rail passengers once the strike ends. Most

Please see BUS  
on page C4

## Many losers in rail strike

By JERRY SCHWARTZ  
Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK — Railroad strikes have forced 160,000 commuters to find other ways to get to work, adding up to profits for some businesses and losses for others, but the overall economy of New York City has barely been touched.

Bus and car rental agencies are among the economic winners in the strikes against New Jersey Transit and Metro-North Railroad. There are losers, too: the shopkeepers at railroad stations; the strikers themselves, who receive no strike or unemployment benefits.

About 2,000 Rockland commuters are affected by the NJ Transit strike, but for the most part, city businesses and their suburban employees fall somewhere in between — suffering inconveniences because of the strikes, now in their third and fourth weeks, but feeling no catastrophic pain in the pocketbook.

Walter Heithaus, a spokesman for the New York Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said his group surveyed 30 companies employing 200,000 employees this week. Sixty percent reported that employees were arriving late or leaving early because of the strike.

At the same time, though, half of the companies had adapted to the strike by permitting employees to vary their hours; 35 percent had formed carpools; a third were reimbursing employees for extraordinary travel expenses; and one unnamed company was even allowing employees to work at home.

Some companies said they did not worry about a loss of productivity or an increase in absenteeism; the commuting employees are strongly motivated and inner directed, they said, and somehow, they would complete their work.

The strike's ripple effect, however, has not been a large one. "It's not like the transit strike (that halted buses and subways in the city itself in 1980). It doesn't affect as many people," said Art Perfall, spokesman for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which operates Metro-North.

Department stores, theaters, museums, and concert halls say the strikes have had no ill effect on their business. "Most of our audience is from Manhattan," said Connie Shuman, spokeswoman for Carnegie Hall.

And hotels have not profited from the strikes, said Albert Formicola, executive director of the Hotel Association of New York City.

Please see STRIKE  
on page C4

## Budget item may help save PIP lives

By RICHARD WOLF  
Staff Writer

Buried deep within one of the budget bills scheduled for adoption by the state Legislature this week-end is a \$100,000 appropriation that could save a few lives in Rockland.

The money, included in the Department of Transportation's capital budget, is expected to buy the first few hundred yards of beam needed to prevent head-on crashes along the scenic but often dangerous Palisades Interstate Parkway. The road claimed five lives in three such accidents last year.

Transportation officials hope to begin installing the median barrier in the fall as the first step in what could be a multi-year project costing \$500,000. And they plan to start where the barrier is most needed.

"We can't do it all in one year. There's just so much parkway funds," said Albert Dickson, director of the transportation department's regional office in Poughkeepsie. "We'll try to hit the worst spots first."

That could include the sites of the fatal crashes, all of which involved cars that sped over the grass dividing the parkway's four lanes without overturning or striking natural barriers, such as shrubs and trees.

One of those 1982 accidents killed 63-year-old Russell Aicher of Pearl River and prompted a letter-writing campaign by his orthopedic surgeon, L. Paul Brief, and friends of his widow, Marion. Their pleas for construction of a median barrier along sections of the parkway prompted officials to examine the idea.

A survey of the 26-mile New York section of the parkway revealed about five miles in need of a barrier, officials said. Most of the areas deemed dangerous are south of Middletown Road in New City.

Dickson said the complaints from aggrieved parties had the desired effect. "We're committed to spending \$100,000 this year," he said during a recent visit to Albany.

Please see PIP  
on page C2

## Bridge repairs planned

The state Thruway Authority is planning to rehabilitate two bridges near the Garden State Parkway connection this year.

Seven bids for the work have ranged from a low of \$1,371,503, offered by the Yonkers Contracting Co., to a high of \$1,851,736 proposed by Del-Reid Construction of Lyndhurst, N.J.

The bids are being reviewed by state engineers, said Arthur D'Isabel, assistant director of the Thruway Authority, and the contract is expected to be awarded in mid-April.

The bridges to be refurbished are those that pass over Pascack Road, and over Route 45 in

South Spring Valley.

Other contractors vying for the job include Halmar Contracting Inc. of Mount Vernon, which proposed \$1,495,704; the Ritangela Construction Corp. of Bardonia, which offered to do it for \$1,517,366; Deverho Construction Inc. in Vails Gate, which wanted \$1,557,639; Gardner M. Bishop Inc. of Mount Vernon, which sought \$1,578,516; and the Bellino Construction Co. Inc. of Yonkers, which bid \$1,832,293.

— JAMES WALSH