

# My most memorable Christmas



Staff photo by Mike Williams

*'We started calling around asking people to join us,' Capt. Lane Briggs says*

## Spreading joy to foreign seamen

By JERRY ALLEY  
*Staff writer*

Three years ago, Capt. Lane Briggs led a small fleet of boats out of his marina on Willoughby Spit and filled the December air over the Chesapeake Bay with Christmas carols.

Sailors from many ports stood on the decks of colliers at anchor as holiday music drifted from loudspeakers.

Briggs' tug, the Norfolk Rebel, led the way as the little holiday fleet moved around the coal ships.

Musicians from around Tidewater were on board the dozen or so boats. Scouts, representatives of the Seamen's Friends Society and others led the singing.

A few sailors on watch heard the music and saw the boats. Others began to drift in groups to the decks of the coal ships. Before long, entire

crews were standing on the decks, joining in the singing.

It was, says Briggs, his most memorable Christmas.

"I saw an article about this being done in New Orleans. We just started calling around asking people to join us. Most of the boats were private yachts. There was one tour boat from Newport News."

Briggs, 51, who has been in the tug business since 1966, is a native of Mars Hill, N.C. Years ago, he took his four sons into the woods and they cut their own Christmas tree. Then they made the decorations.

That, he says, was his most memorable Christmas until three years ago.

The sons are grown now, and, says Briggs, the caroling from the little holiday fleet "is my Christmas."

*Mike Williams*