

**Small Worlds Around Us**  
By Lynn M. Watkins

**When Thorny Oyster's Support Goes—So Does He**  
The common, or edible oyster has prosaic relatives that have neither commercial importance or economic prominence.

One of these is the "rock" or "thorny oyster" whose irregular, purplish colored shells are common on some beaches. They are never found in the large colonies, so typical of the common oyster, but in small groups, and always in warm water. Because of the often highly colored shells they are sought after by collectors of sea shells.

**Adhesive Secreted**  
Like all the family, these bivalves have a period of free swimming, when very young during which time they move about freely, and often travel some distance. Soon, however, they settle down and attach themselves to some solid support and spend the rest of their lives in a fixed position.

To attach the shell to the support, most of them, including the edible oyster, secrete a body fluid, or adhesive, that cements them firmly, and under most conditions, securely, against the tearing actions of waves and tides. The majority of the mollusks use this method of attachment; others use what is called "byssus threads", which act like tiny anchor ropes, and which hold the animal in a given place.

Both the "threads" and the adhesive method are effective. The barnacles use the "glue" and remain attached to their "home grounds" in spite of pounding surf, or ripping tides.

But the "thorny" oysters has to be different. It seems almost to knock itself out by attaching itself the hard way. It spends a great deal of time, and expends a vast amount of energy building "limestone fingers" to accomplish what the rest of the oyster family does with adhesive.

When the baby "thorny" oyster arrives at that stage in its development when it must settle down, it selects a twig, a root; even a piece of wire if one is available, or even on such an unstable thing as a piece of sea weed, and there its instinctive reaction prompts it to hang on. The point of contact is where some "oyster sense" tells it to attach itself.

So it proceeds to accomplish the seemingly impossible job of building a series of limestone nubs, or "fingers" that clasp the support. It becomes a "death grip" on the support, for no wave could possibly break this stony grip. **Support Breaks Away**

Unfortunately, however, the poor dumb oyster cannot anticipate such a catastrophe as the breaking away of the actual support on which its castle was so laboriously built. He cannot foresee that time and water action, as well as the rotting away of the support, will some day end in disaster.

Then the same waves and tidal action he worked again, will cast the entire structure adrift. Following waves will roll, and pummel the poor oyster and the broken support, along the ocean's bottom.

The "fingers" hold, but the root, or plant stem on which the fingers clasped proves to be "the weakest link in the chain"; its breakage canceled out both the strength and the ingenuity of the carefully laid plan. All of which proves that, "when the bough breaks, the cradle will fall; and ashore will come cradle, oyster and all."

(Released by The Register and Tribune Syndicate, 1960)

**Audie Murphy, Wife Separate**  
Hollywood - (UPI) - Actor Audie Murphy, 35, most decorated U. S. serviceman of World War II, separated Wednesday from his wife of nine years.

A spokesman for Murphy and his wife Pamela said the couple did not plan at this time to file for divorce. They separated last year but reconciled within a few days. They have two children, Terry, 8, and James, who celebrated his sixth birthday Wednesday.

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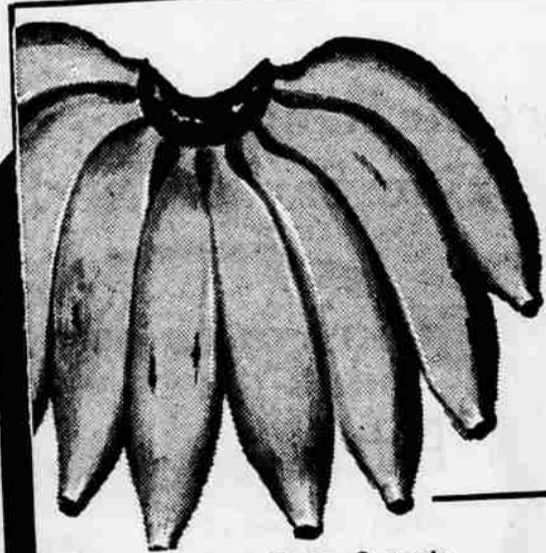
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