

# Metaframe's Magnificent Brine Shrimp Machine

Everybody knows brine shrimp are a great food, popular with many species of fish yet few retailers know how to increase sales. Luckily this dispenser can help.

By  
Lee Edwards

SAN FRANCISCO, CA - The myriad of Tom Swift books, written in the early 1900s, are now folklore - Tom Swift and his Incredible Flying Machine, Tom Swift and his Electric Submarine - and nearly two dozen more. And if there comes a time when publishers are looking for a sequel we can recommend Metaframe and their Magnificent Brine Shrimp Machine. The subject might not interest everyone, but it would be a hit with aquarium dealers.

The device, which resembles a frozen juice dispenser can open a variety of merchandising possibilities for innovative retailers. It can sell brine shrimp as they have seldom been sold and in the eyes of the firm who invented it, brine shrimp is what the aquarium world is all about.

## Brine shrimp

Before continuing, even before discussing the dispenser, it is necessary to consider brine shrimp, a strange animal that has occupied man's attention for a number of years.

In terms of fish food brine shrimp (*Artemia salina*) are a recent innovation, commercially available for less than a decade and used experimentally by public aquariums before that. They are, as most retailers know, a miniature brackish-water shrimp, rarely more than 3/8-inch in length, rich in protein and an excellent food for young and adult fish. They are available in a variety; live, frozen, freeze-dried and flakes; literally, in forms for every aquatic palate.

The shrimp have become popular with aquarists around the world yet are pro-

duced in only a few places, San Francisco Bay is the largest producer.

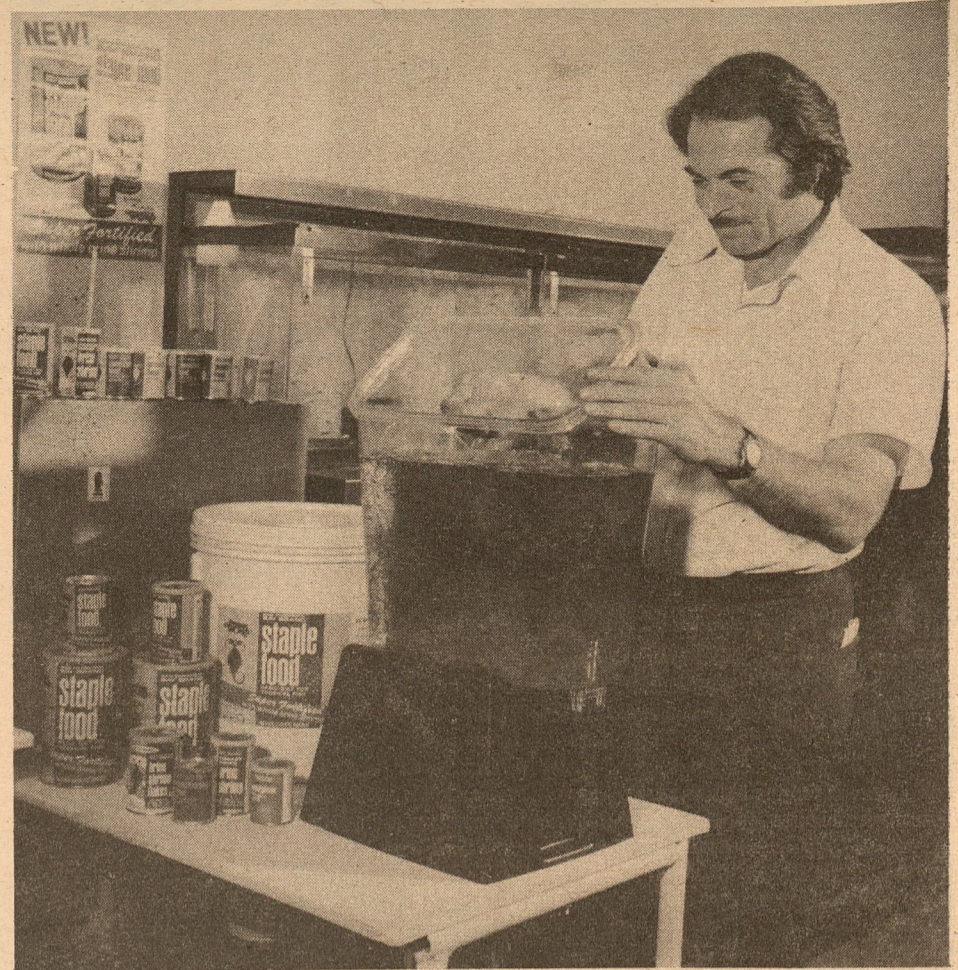
## San Francisco Bay

By far the greatest numbers of shrimp, more than one million pounds annually, are produced in areas of San Francisco Bay where they develop naturally as by-products in evaporating ponds where sea water is converted to table salt. In the drawn-out process of evaporation the water becomes brackish, many times as salty as sea water, and in that environment brine shrimp appear and prosper. Most of the evaporating ponds around San Francisco Bay are owned by the Leslie Salt Company.

Large scale use of these shrimp as fish food began 15 years ago when teams from San Francisco's Steinhart Aquarium harvested them. Later Leslie tried operating the ponds commercially and about ten years ago decided to lease them. Since then the largest producer, processor and distributor of brine shrimp and related products has been San Francisco Bay Brand, a division of the Metaframe Corporation. And that automatically brings us full circle to Anton Schmidt, for Anton Schmidt is San Francisco Bay Brand products.

## Anton Schmidt

A corporate vice president with Metaframe, his industry background dates to the 1950's when he established Schmidt's Aquarium in Mountain View, a San Francisco suburb. In the early 60's Schmidt's



Anton Schmidt testing a prototype of the latest dispenser.

firm merged with the original Metaframe Corporation and Schmidt took over the production of brine shrimp.

Out of this came the original idea for a dispenser. Schmidt experimented with ways to display and sell shrimp and his first solution was a juice dispenser. The then available devices were complex, too professional with built-in refrigeration and priced between \$350 to \$450. He felt aquarium retailers would appreciate something less involved and less expensive. The latest unit is Schmidt's answer.

## Using the dispenser

Schmidt, who tested the device in a number of Bay Area aquarium shops before releasing it nationally, says it can be used in many ways.

The most obvious is as a tank in which to keep and display live brine shrimp. The second is as a dispenser. Shrimp, mixed with water, can be dispensed by liquid volume which means you can literally sell one or two ounces of a water and shrimp mixture. In most areas that is both a quick and acceptable system, but in a few places shrimp may have to be sold by dry weight, something the dispenser cannot currently do. Then, you sell the packaged forms.

"The biggest potential of the dispenser is always for display," Schmidt says, "It can hold a lot of live shrimp and will keep them active and alive. You not only can sell them, but they in turn help sell a lot of frozen, freeze-dried and flake food."

The unit is small, requires little counter space and when set up literally sells itself as shrimp are churned and swirled in the clear plastic container. The biggest plus may be in the fact that live shrimp are surprisingly safe. Raised in water five times more salty than the sea the environment is one in which few, if any, organisms can survive.

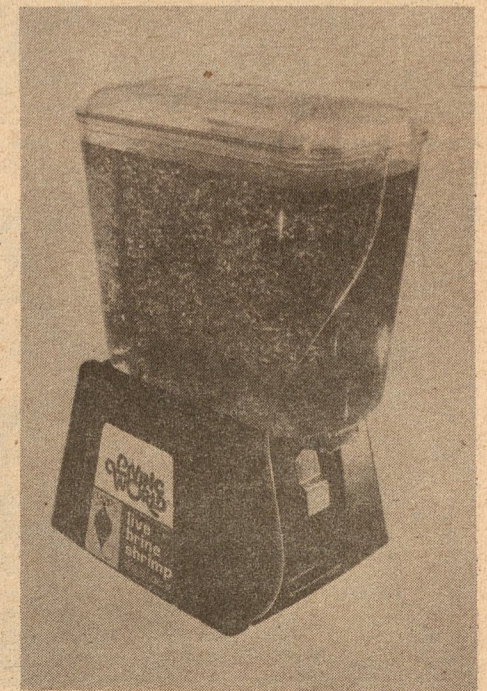
## Metaframe's offer

With any sales approach the dispenser,

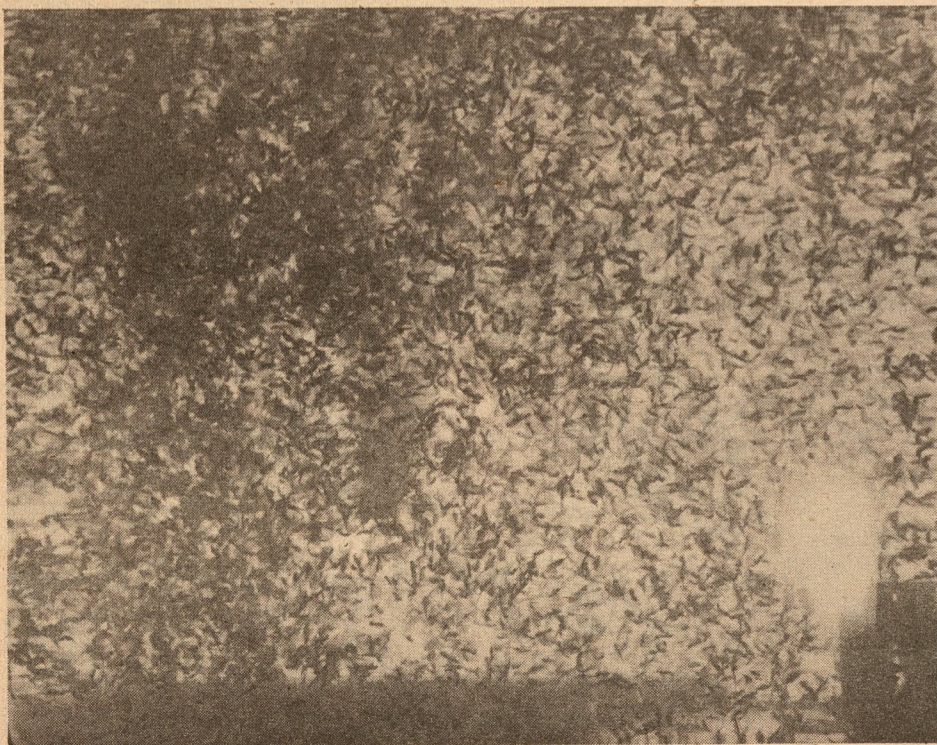
as a way to generate impulse sales, seems more than worth its cost and Metaframe's recent offer literally gives you one free. The deal works this way:

When you purchase a dispenser at the regular price (\$49.95) San Francisco Bay Brand gives you 16 ounces of live brine shrimp. Mixed as directed the pound can mean up to \$54.50 in sales, more than enough to liquidate the original dispenser price.

The device seems surprisingly simple, a few plastic parts and a stand with room beneath for a pump, aerator and tubing, yet in reality it is a splendid thing indeed. Here, on the edges of San Francisco Bay, retailers are calling it Metaframe's Magnificent Brine Shrimp Selling Machine. That is a mouthful at best and if you want to shorten the name, you can. Many people simply call it the Profit Maker. **AI**



Brine shrimp display tank as set up for use in a dealer's store.



Brine shrimp are aerated and swirled inside a clear plastic display tank.