Island Hails Member of Space Team for Ideas on Oyster

By EVERT CLARK
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CHINCOTEAGUE, Va. — In a short while Guglielmo G. DeBriganti will leave and this fishing village will have lost something it values.

As Bill DeBriganti, he is one of two honorary citizens in Chincoteague’s history. The other was a man who helped establish an inland waterway some years ago.

Chincoteague has a population of 4,400. It is the kind of town in which the Volunteer Fire Department—famous for the annual roundup of wild ponies on Assateague Island—is a focal point for social and civic activity.

A roster of firemen, living and dead, carries no name that is not clearly of Anglo-Saxon origin. It is doubtful that one family represented has less than a hundred years’ residence in Tidewater Virginia behind it.

Bill DeBriganti came here less than two years ago. He is one of about 75 Italian space scientists, engineers and technicians who have been trained by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration at its nearby Wallops Island site.

Last December the team demonstrated the value of this training by launching an Italian-built, 254-pound satellite from the Wallops Island sand. Only the Soviet Union and the United States had launched their own satellites before Italy.

The satellite is measuring atmospheric density at the same point in each orbit, thereby presenting a continuous picture of atmospheric changes caused by heat, cosmic radiation, and other forces.

The space agency now has cooperation agreements with more than 65 nations. These range from mere exchanges of information to the complex training in satellite testing, vehicle launching and satellite tracking the Italians have received at Wallops and elsewhere.

The Italian agreement is the most extensive entered into so far.

The understanding that has grown up between the Italian team and the people of Chincoteague demonstrates the cooperative program’s intangible values.

“You people call them for—"

Continued on Page 51, Column 1