

MOUNT KISCO, N. Y.
PATENT TRADER
(NEW YORK CITY MARKET AREA)
YORKTOWN EDITION
YHURS. 16,000 & 16,000

FEB 14 1976

Fishy itch spoils the catch

KATONAH — The fish was a fine striped bass, fresh from the Hudson. Its color good, its flesh firm.

Within an hour after he'd pulled the 5 pounder from the Hudson's waters at Croton Point Park, Peter Phelps slapped the fish's body on his kitchen counter here, took out his sharpened cleaning knife and cut into its belly.

An avid and experienced fisherman, he worked only a few minutes before he had the entrails out, the scales scraped and rinsed, and the fish wrapped for the freezer. He folded the entrails in newspaper and tossed them in the trash.

An hour later, his hands began to itch, infuriatingly. Blotches appeared. The itching lasted four days — from November 18 to 22, 1975.

"Sounds like PCB to me," Fred Dehback of Yonkers, coordinator of the "Save the Hudson Coalition," said this week when he heard the Phelps story. "I would strongly suspect it," he said.

Polychlorinated biphenyls, PCBs, have been the focus of a major contro-

very over pollution of the Hudson and contamination of fish. The chemical is now considered so toxic and so prevalent in the Hudson that it threatens to end both commercial and sport fishing in the Hudson for at least three years.

Itching and rashes on the hands were symptoms reported by workers in contact with PCBs at the General Electric plants along the river north of Albany.

GE this week was found to have violated two state laws by its discharges of PCB into the Hudson. The company was told it would have to take steps to limit drastically the discharges, consider using substitute chemicals, and explore how it could undo damage already done to the river.

The Phelps kept the bass in their freezer for several weeks, convinced they shouldn't eat it but wondering what it was that had caused such a strong reaction.

Finally, one very cold day, they wrapped the fish tightly in newspapers and put it in the garbage on collection day. They had considered burying it in their garden but were afraid they would contaminate the soil.