

The Canvasback

Winter 1992

Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

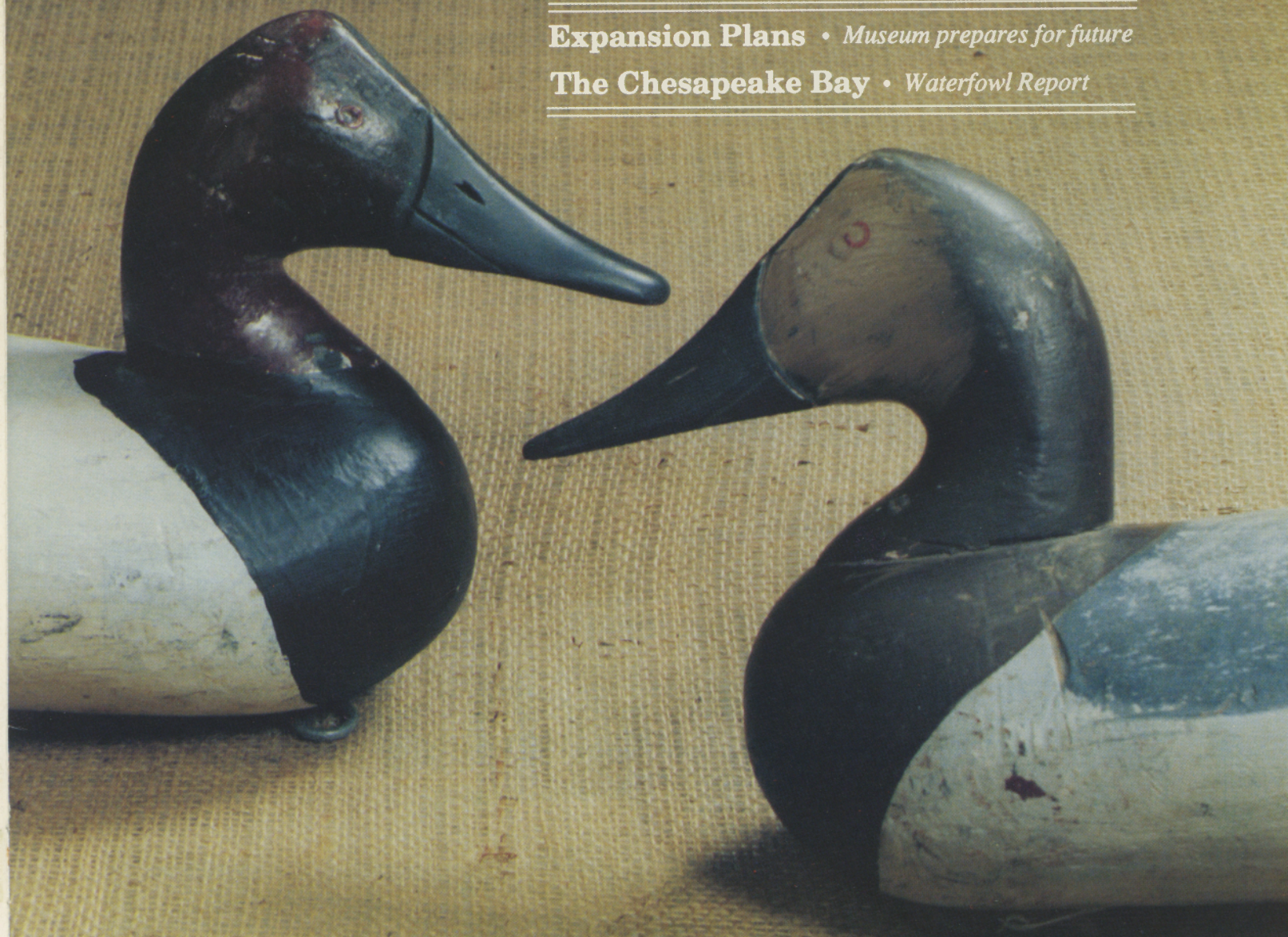
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Bob Litzenberg

Elkton Carver Interviewed

Expansion Plans • *Museum prepares for future*

The Chesapeake Bay • *Waterfowl Report*



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1991-1992

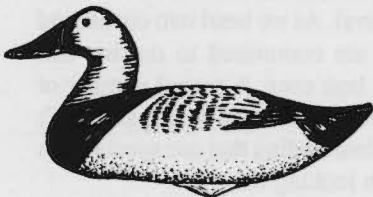
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THE CANVASBACK

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The editor wishes to thank everyone who contributed to this first issue of **THE CANVASBACK**.



can•vas•back (kan'ves bak'), *n., pl. -backs, (esp. collectively) -back.* 1. A north American wild duck, the male of which has a whitish back and a reddish-brown head and neck. 2. A style of decoy made famous by carvers in the Susquehanna Flats region. 3. A quarterly publication of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

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On the Cover

A pair of canvasback decoys from Bob Litzenberg's original gunning rig of 80 drakes and 20 hens. c.1930

from the Editor's Desk

You'll have no doubt noticed a new look to what used to be the Museum's newsletter. We have given this publication a new name and a new look. We will provide articles in these pages that are not only informative, but fun to read.

The Museum's stated purpose is to preserve the heritage of the decoy making art as it pertains to the Susquehanna Flats and **The Canvasback** is an extension of this philosophy. We hope to educate and entertain you. If we accomplish these goals, then the work involved in revamping the publication will have been worth it.

We gave a great deal of thought to our new name and in the final analysis **The Canvasback** seemed most appropriate. No other duck better symbolizes the decoy making art in this area or seems more threatened by the conditions which exist on the Bay today. It is a highly symbolic bird and we hope you agree that our choice was a good one.

In closing, if you or your company has an interest in display advertising give me a call. We will create a classified "Swap Shop" section for our next issue. Please call for details.

1992 will be an exciting time at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. Let me know your reaction to **The Canvasback**, and please come and visit the museum soon!

Richard Bonn

President's Message

This first edition of **THE CANVASBACK** shows the new direction the museum is taking. Our purpose is to bring you articles and features that satisfy your interest in decoys, their makers and the environment of the Chesapeake.

This is all part of a new direction for the museum. We have developed a dynamic ten year plan to expand our museum which will better serve this community, our members, and the visiting public.

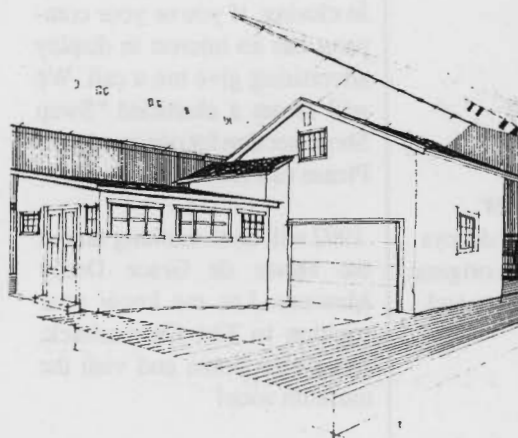
Phase one of this project is the development of new exhibit galleries to better interpret the unique heritage of Upper Chesapeake Bay decoys. A new visitor entry area that includes an elevator will provide easy access for all museum visitors.

Phase two will see the museum triple in size. Included in this expansion will be a 125 seat auditorium, the enclosure of Madison Mitchell's decoy shop, and an exhibit featuring living waterfowl in a naturalistic environment.

The Decoy Museum is one of the fastest growing museums in Maryland. Our message touches each person in a different way, but I'm sure you all feel the excitement building.

1992 is the start of a new era. As you turn the pages of the **THE CANVASBACK** I hope our vision becomes yours as well.

Allen Fair



Valerie A. Lloyd
Artist, Illustrator

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Museum Calendar

There are two Museum events worth marking on your calendar. The first is R. Madison Mitchell's Ninety-First birthday party on March 7, 1992. This party is open to VIP's and Museum members only, so don't miss this opportunity to rub elbows with many master carvers.

Festivities begin at 7 PM and will include refreshments, photo opportunities, and a chance to see the Museum's new second floor. If you haven't seen this exciting new space you'll be amazed at the view of the Susquehanna Flats. We'll also have on hand drawings and a model of the Museum's long range expansion plans.

But, of course the party's primary focus is Mr. Mitchell. Whenever the Museum has needed his assistance, whether it be a visit to Annapolis to meet with the legislature or to sign books, he has tirelessly given his time. Everyone associated with the Museum appreciates everything Mr. Mitchell has done to make the institution what it is today. Please come by to thank him personally.

While you have your calendar out, mark May 1st thru 3rd, the dates for the 1992 Decoy Festival. As we head into our second decade we are committed to making this festival the best ever. A record number of exhibitors will be on hand so you shouldn't have a problem finding that one special item you've been looking for.

For those who wonder what a gunning rig looks like, this year's festival will feature a gunning rig contest out on the Susquehanna Flats. The completion of the new boardwalk is set for February, so everyone will have a great view of this unique contest. The Spring edition of The Canvasback will have more details about the Festival, so for now just mark down the date...May 1st thru 3rd.

The Chesapeake Bay: Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow



A look at ongoing efforts to protect the Chesapeake Bay. The Canvasback would like to thank the Chesapeake Bay Foundation for supplying this article

In the natural world, a biological community that offers diverse habitat for food and breeding will in turn draw a diverse population of wildlife. At one time the Chesapeake Bay was able to provide this richness of habitat and the population of waterfowl attracted to the Bay was also abundant and greatly varied.

The Bay ecosystem made the estuary a perfect place for waterfowl forage and breeding. The Bay's shallow water provided vast acreage of wetlands with plenty of underwater vegetation for food. The system has also allowed for plentiful shellfish beds upon which some species of waterfowl feed. In addition, the large number of tidal rivers flowing into the Bay has developed fresh water areas. It is these characteristics that once made the Chesapeake such a powerful magnet to waterfowl.

With the onslaught of industrial technology, population growth, and land development the Bay has lost some of the attraction it once held for the waterfowl. As we have changed the face of the watershed and water quality has declined, waterfowl populations have decreased as well.

It is surprising that the numbers of individual waterfowl have not plummeted as much

as one might expect (less than 10% between the 1950's and the 1980's). On the other hand, there has been a huge decline in the number of species in the Bay area. This loss in population diversity of waterfowl is a reflection of loss of biological diversity in the whole watershed.

A significant reason for the decline in waterfowl diversity is the result of the impoverishment of the types of habitat necessary for nesting and feeding. Loss of breeding habi-

"...with the onslaught of industrial technology, population growth, and land development the Bay has lost some of the attraction it once held for the waterfowl."

tat in Canada has had a devastating impact on waterfowl populations as well. However land development in the watershed especially along the shoreline, and exploding population growth is the main cause of habitat loss here in the Chesapeake Bay.

It is encouraging to see that some waterfowl species have been able to adapt to the de-

struction of their natural habitat. Wood Ducks for example have done remarkably well in adapting to change. According to the Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage in Easton, Maryland, "Wood Ducks are one of only four native waterfowl species breeding in Maryland unlike most other ducks they nest in tree cavities. These natural cavities are most often found in dead trees, which are usually the first trees removed from wood lots. Fortunately, when wood ducks are deprived of their preferred nesting sites, they will use artificial nest boxes. Studies show that Woodies hatched in these nest boxes become imprinted and often prefer them over natural cavities."

Perhaps the most devastating impact upon waterfowl population is water quality. The high levels of algae found in bay waters are caused by runoff from farm fertilizers and manure, pesticides from agriculture land, individual lawns and gardens, and leaking septic tanks. High nitrate levels in the water cause algae blooms which deplete oxygen and make it more difficult for light to penetrate. This turbidity prevents growth of submerged aquatic vegetation and thus deprives waterfowl of nourishment.

Underwater grasses are disappearing at a very fast rate and waterfowl are forced to



Donations in 1992

leave or adapt to the loss. It is clear that unless water quality improves waterfowl recovery for many Bay species will not happen regardless of habitat restoration. Some species such as Redheads and Wigeon have not done quite so well and have almost disappeared from the region. Fortunately for some waterfowl, adaptation has not been too difficult.

“High nitrate levels in the water cause algae blooms which deplete oxygen and make it more difficult for light to penetrate. This turbidity prevents growth of submerged aquatic vegetation and thus deprives waterfowl of nourishment.”

The Canada Goose has proven resilient enough to develop new feeding patterns. As early as the 1950's changes in farming practice such as mechanical harvesting left large amount of corn on farm fields. Canada Geese and Tundra Swans were able to substitute the corn for the underwater grasses. It is ironic to note that much of the nitrate killing the underwater grasses comes from these farm fields.

To restore the Chesapeake waterfowl population to its historical state, the Chesapeake Bay must also be restored, where habitat, underwater grasses and other food sources are plentiful. With the work that various groups in the region are pursuing, there is still hope that this can happen.

Congress has extended for six months the “window of opportunity” tax break for anyone wishing to donate art or other personal property to museums. For the first half of 1992, a deduction can be taken when filing your taxes for the appreciated value of the object. If you have an unusual artifact you have been considering donating to the museum, this would be the most advantageous time to do so.

The Decoy Museum is seeking new artifacts for inclusion in its planned new exhibits. The “Gunning the Flats” gallery needs additional firearms, hunting accouterments such as boots and calls, licenses, etc.. The museum will need to acquire a wide variety of older Susquehanna Flats decoys for the “What is a Decoy” exhibit as well as examples of decoys from other noted hunting regions. Your donation will not only provide you with a tax benefit, but will also enhance the museum's excellent collection. As the Museum embarks upon its ten year expansion program the need to allocate all incoming revenue in a careful fashion is critical and donations of decoys and hunting artifacts will enable us to expand our collection faster than is otherwise possible.

While on the topic of donations the museum is attempting to increase the size and quality of its photographic archives. The pictorial documentation of Upper Bay carvers, both at work and play, is a vital component of the museum's educational programs. We currently have an excellent collection of decoys, but photos of carvers is an area where much work is needed.

If you have negatives or photographs of carvers, hunters, boats, etc. the museum



would love to have them donated. Photographs of deceased carvers or from days gone by are especially needed. One of our goals is to build a library which will one day be a nationally recognized center for the study of the decoy making art and photographs will become a key component of this library. While on the subject of the library, any out of print books on decoy making are also sorely needed. Please look through your book collection and if there is an item you'd consider donating give us a call to see if we need it.

On May 1st the Havre de Grace Decoy Festival will celebrate its eleventh anniversary. Through the years thousands of people have attended and many have brought cameras. If you have any photos of past festivals please give some thought to donating the negatives for our files. This event is an important part of the museum's history and we are in need of photographs from past festivals.

If there are any amateur shutterbugs who would like to volunteer their time to this years festival please give us a call. When May 1st rolls around the museum wants to have several photographers on hand to document the event like never before. So if you have an interest in seeing your photos in print please call the Museum as soon as possible.



Planning for the Future

by John Quarstein

The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum has spent the last year creating a long range building and development plan which will allow it to better preserve the heritage of the decoy making art and the heritage of waterfowl hunting on the Susquehanna Flats.

Developing the long range plan began in 1990. The exhibit themes identified during this process were: What is a Decoy, Why Decoys-Gunning the Flats, Making Decoys, Susquehanna Flats-A changing environment, Decoy Makers-a tribute. The Board contracted the noted architectural firm of Carlton Abbot and Partners, to devise a master development plan for future improvements. This 10 year plan will give the Decoy Museum the facilities needed to function as an educational institution and tourist attraction of national significance.

The first phase (3-4 years) is to complete renovations to the existing buildings and to enhance visitor access. Work includes construction of exhibit galleries, a library lecture room, and the installation of an elevator with a lobby for rest

rooms. The second phase will focus on new building construction and will feature a 125 seat auditorium, an addition to house the R. Madison Mitchell decoy shop, a visitor entry area, and an enlarged gift shop to enhance museum revenues.

This long range plan gives the museum the ability to allocate its resources and obtain new supporters who will want to be a part of the development process. Truly, through wise and prudent application of Thoreau's chosen words..."a conscious endeavour"...yesterday's



Architect Carlton Abbott's concept of planned expansion

dream has been transformed into today's reality- the Decoy Museum. Tomorrow's needs are here today and by planning for the future now, it will become a reality.

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Area Events Calendar

February 8th & 9th

ANNUAL WILDFOWL CARVING AND ART EXHIBITION

@ the Richmond Fairgrounds in Richmond Virginia. Contact: George Koger, 6713 Sunnyside Dr., Mechanicsville VA 23111 (804) 371-3169

February 15th & 16th

ANNUAL HARFORD DAYSCHOOL WATERFOWL SHOW

@ the Harford day school in Bel Air Maryland. Contact: Carol Brady, 715 Moores Mill Rd., Bel Air MD 21014 (410) 838-4848

March 7th & 8th

WILDLIFE ART & PHOTOGRAPHY SHOW

@ the Wakefield Recreation Center, Annandale, Virginia. Contact: Tom Mullins, 4020 Hummer Rd., Annandale VA 22003 (703) 941-1065

March 21st & 22nd

RAPPAHANNOCK RIVER WATERFOWL SHOW

@ the White Stone Firehouse in White Stone, Virginia. Contact: William Bruce, Box 413, White Stone VA 22578 (804) 435-6355

April 18th & 19th

CHINCOTEAGUE ISLAND EASTER DECOY FESTIVAL

@ the Chincoteague High School in Chincoteague, Virginia. Contact: Jacklyn Russell, PO Box 258, Chincoteague VA 23336 (804) 336-6161

April 23rd thru 26th

WARD WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP CARVING COMPETITION

@ the Ocean City Convention Center in Ocean City, Maryland. Contact: Jane Rollins 655 South Salisbury Rd., Salisbury MD 21801 (410) 742-4988

May 1st thru 3rd

11th ANNUAL HAVRE de GRACE DECOY FESTIVAL

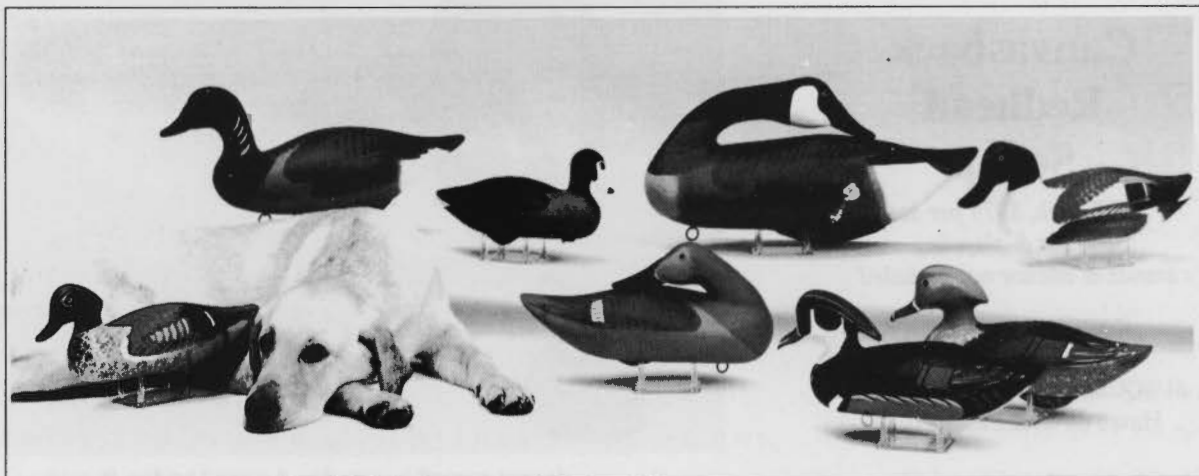
@ the Havre de Grace Middle & High Schools. Contact: Kenny Lay 610 Lewis St., Havre de Grace MD 21078 (410) 939-3489



Send us your listing

Events Around the Bay is a free service of The Canvasback. The newsmagazine is published quarterly, so send us your information as soon as possible. Deadline for Spring 1992 issue is March 15, 1992.

CHESAPEAKE BAY GUNNING DECOYS



Wooden working decoys unchanged in 100 years

Capt. Harry R. Jobs, 77 Baker St., Aberdeen MD 21001 410-272-2055

A Visit With Bob Litzenberg

by Richard Bonn

Born in Cecil County in 1910, Bob Litzenberg is a carver with a style all his own. The last person in the area to use a hatchet to chop out his bodies, he is a perfectionist who believes in doing it "the old fashioned way." In 1986, Bob was the Honorary Chairman of the Havre de Grace Decoy Festival, something he cherishes to this day. Bob is not only known for his carving, but is an expert duck hunter, something he has done for 70 years. Richard Bonn caught up with Bob at his home in Elkton, Maryland and they talked about hunting, decoy making and decoy collecting .



Bob Litzenberg in his basement shop, holds one of twelve Pintail drake sleepers he ever made.

Q: What is your earliest hunting memory?

Bob: When I was a 14 year old boy my father said I was old enough to have a rail bird skiff. My father was always a great hunter and gunner he said, "I'll take you down and show you where the rail birds are." Well, there was a woman in Elkton named Clay who was advertising a skiff for \$25.00. I went down to see it and it was twenty something decoys, black duck decoys, and there was two sets of oars and a push pole. My father said it was a good buy, so we bought it. The following week he took me down and showed me, on the Scotland Marsh, where there was acres and acres of wild oats and an awful lot of water lillies where the wood ducks would feed, and he took me up to Matt Singer's ditch first and I said "If there are not any Railbirds in here there isn't any." So we went up in there and goodness they were jumpin' everywhere. So we killed rail birds so he said, "Now that you know how to hunt take your brother Bill when you go."

Q: What can you tell me about live decoys?

Bob: Well, back then we were allowed to

use live decoys, so we had what you called English callers. And we'd take ten or twelve English callers in a crate down and we'd gun for ducks. Mostly all black ducks, there wasn't any Mallards back then, there were a few Pintails, but there were mostly Black ducks. And those English callers were deadly. When the ducks would come up into the marsh, the callers would just work beautifully. Killed an awful lot of ducks with those English callers.

Q: How did you make the transition from Railbird hunting to hunting for Canvasbacks?

Bob: With the railbird skiff the tide would go out and it'd be nothing but a mud flat, you had to get out and push that railbird skiff and there'd be mud all over you, and when I got older I told my brother Bill, "There's got to be better gunnin' than this." So, when I was nineteen I made my first decoys, cause I wanted to go to the river to gun for Canvasbacks. As I got older I had a bushwhack boat made and we started gunnin' in the middle of the river for Canvasbacks...we had hun-

dreds of thousands of Canvasbacks and Redheads. We had the greatest hunting in the world for Canvasbacks, Red Heads and Black Heads. Later on we got a cabin boat, so if you wanted water to drink you drank out of the North East River, the water was that pure. If you wanted coffee you reached over the side of the boat and got it out of the North East River.

Q: When, in your opinion, did the quality of the water begin to decline and what was the cause?

Bob: After I came out of the service, in the early fifties, they started to put in the sewage plants. And that was the beginning of the end of gunning in the North East River for the Canvasbacks. Before that the river was a solid mass of vegetation, wild celery and wigeon grass. The Red Heads fed on the wigeon grass and the Canvasbacks on the celery. And we had Coots by the thousands, but then we could see the vegetation and everything leaving the river, that's when the chemicals started to take effect. Back in those days everything was soap powder.

Then they came out with the detergent and that was the worst thing that happened to our waters. The sewage plants couldn't filter it out and it just absolutely killed all the vegetation that we had in the rivers. Then the mil foil came in, it was real thick in the rivers...all the ducks and geese were feeding on some of it, but the boaters complained about it in 1960's so the state came along and they sprayed it off the Flats and the North East River, and we haven't had a bit of grass since they sprayed it in 1960...that really fixed everything.

Q: Getting back to decoy making, when you were young there were a lot of carvers in your area. Which carver influenced your style the most?

Bob: I knew the Lockards, and I knew Will Heverin. At first, I wanted some ducks to gun, so Norris Pratt, I heard he had some decoys over in Kimblesville. I went over and I met Norris Pratt and I said, "Mr. Pratt they tell me that you have decoys here to sell. What do you want for them?" I was working at the grocery store at the time

for \$13 a week and I was working there six days a week. So Norris told me he wanted thirty five cents a piece. So I said, "I wouldn't mind having about forty of those to gun with." But, there was all Red Heads and Black Heads, and I wanted Canvasbacks. So he said, "I've got some Canvasbacks, they've never been painted, for fifty cents a piece." So I bought forty of those for \$20 and I bought forty of the Red Heads. Well, I was workin' at the grocery store and I couldn't afford to take off, so Otts Cameron and

"...if you wanted water to drink, you drank out of the North East River, the water was that pure."

Ralph Robinson used to borrow 'em, and they'd gun with 'em, and they lost an awful lot of 'em. After that I found out that the Red Heads and Black Heads were Heverin's, Daddy Holly's and Jim Holly's...for thirty-five cents a piece. I wanted Canvasbacks so I made my first in 1929, I made one



Blocks of wood, cut out patterns, finished heads, and a roughed out decoy in Litzenbergs shop awaiting completion.

hundred...80 drakes and 20 hens was the first rig I made. . for my own use. Back in '29 people didn't have money to buy decoys, 'cause that was during the worst part of the depression. You either made things yourself those days or you did without. There was one Canvasback I bought from Norris Pratt, it was a Heverin and I liked the looks of it and I tried to copy off that to make my decoys look like a Heverin duck.

Q: What kind of paint job did your first 100

ducks get?

Bob: We just painted the drakes black and white and the hens I tried to feather 'em the best I could, I wasn't a very good painter then. You didn't see many hens 'cause people would paint 'em 80 drakes to 20 hens. The Canvasbacks decoyed to the white, the whiter the drakes the better. We never did any wing painting on the drakes, in fact at the end of December when the season started to end, the backs of the decoys would get dirty so we'd take the drakes out and just paint the backs to make 'em white.

Q: What happened to the sport of hunting after the sinkbox was outlawed in 1934?

Bob: A lot of people quit gunning 'cause your limit dropped down...I think around three ducks to a person, that was the bag limit...it went from 25 to 12 to 6 to 3. And when it got down to 6 ducks and 3 ducks to a person, it wasn't worth gunning for hardly. But, then the people started to bushwhack...you'd take four or five people with you and you'd kill three

ducks apiece, and you'd divide 'em up which would make a good meal for you to eat...the Canvasbacks were the king of all ducks...there was never any duck that was as good as the Canvasback.

Q: What were the needs for decoys after the sinkbox was outlawed?

Bob: We had hundreds of thousands of decoys here and people didn't know what to do with 'em, so they practically gave 'em away to get rid of 'em. You were still al-

"...like good wine, it gets better with age. The same way with making decoys, the more you chop the better they look."

lowed to bushwhack for ducks, but after they closed the season for Canvasbacks altogether in 1960, along in there, decoys then weren't worth anything...you could buy all the ducks you want for fifty cents apiece, wasn't any market for them at all. A fellow named Burton came down from Lancaster and he took 'em out of here by the truck loads. I understand he shipped an awful lot of 'em over to England. Everybody quit making 'em because there weren't any buyers. But, Madison Mitchell started to make Mallards because you could still gun for Mallards and Black Ducks. 'Course, then in the late 60's

people started to collect decoys. Who would of ever thought decoys would end up on shelves...now they call it folk art. Yes, sir times have changed.

Q: What happened to the decoys from the first rig you made in '29?

Bob: When I quit gunning I gave alot of 'em away. People would come and say I'd love to have a pair of decoys to put on the mantel so I'd say, "Pick out a pair." I'd give 'em to 'em. I wish I had 'em back today, with what they're selling for!



The classic Litzenberg style seen in his Wood Ducks, Merganser, and Golden Eyes.

hatchet and chop 'em out like my first rig of decoys and I just never went for a lathe. There's nothing wrong with a lathe, but I guess I'm old fashioned I just stuck to the way I started out making 'em.

Q: Your painting style is unique, how would you describe it?

Bob: Well, my duck styles are different from everybody else and I paint 'em the way I think a duck should look like. I paint to make 'em look more like a duck...I just picked up my own style as I went along. Back in the 30's we never put any wings or feathers on a drake canvasback. The whiter the back the better. We painted 80 Drakes to 20 Hens. The hens were there just for variety to get a duck to decoy to better.

Q: Has your paint style changed between the early 60's and now?

Bob: Oh yes, my paint style has changed, especially on the hens. I've improved on 'em, I must say that. As anybody will improve as you go along...like good wine, it gets better with age. The same way with making decoys, the more you chop out the better they look. I don't care how old you are, you can still improve on things as you go along.

Q: You started carving again in the early 60's and have always used the same hatchet to shape your bodies. Why is that?

Bob: I'm a believer in the old fashioned way. I like to do things like the old timers did. The same way when I made my furniture, I hand dove-tailed my furniture instead of getting a router to do it. I figured the best way, the easiest way, my way, was to just take a



Lifelike figure of Litzenberg stands in the display of his decoys at the museum.

Q: Anybody that has seen your sleepers (see photograph) has marveled at its uniqueness. What was your inspiration for that style?

Bob: I didn't have any inspiration, I just designed my own. I decided to put the bill down like if a duck is sleeping he's got his bill beneath his feathers, he doesn't have it

"I hope my grandchildren see the vegetation come back, and see the ducks come back to the rivers, but I'll never see it in my time...never"

way up high, off the back. Of course when you see his neck it's down even with his breast. And that's the reason I did it that way. They're different than most sleepers.

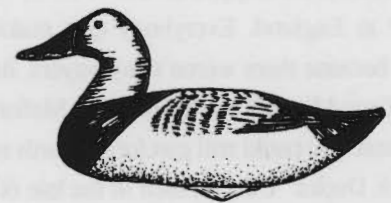
Q: You have enjoyed making several decoys in extremely small numbers, such as the 12 pair of Sleeping Pintails. Describe this for me.

Bob: It's like Art Patterson said one day, "I can see the cabinet maker come out of you the way you made those sleepers. You cut the bills down into the body and the necks into the body. The average person would never take the time." Time doesn't mean anything to me. I get an awful lot of self satisfaction when I make something, and then when I finish, I stand back and look at it and I get pleasure out of it. I don't really do it for the money, goodness gracious, I'd starve to death if I charged by the hour for the time I put into those Sleeping Pintails.

Q: What is your hope and what do you think will happen to the Chesapeake Bay over the next ten to fifteen years?

Bob: I hope to see the Bay cleared up, so the

rivers would get the vegetation back, but I don't think I'll ever see it in my lifetime, 'cause there's too much chemicals and pollution still going into the rivers. The runoff from the no-till farming, all the salt from the highways, where they put thousands of tons down each winter...it runs into the Bay. Your sewage plants are still going into the rivers. I'll never see it in my time, of course I'm 81, I hope my grandchildren see the vegetation come back and see the ducks come back to the rivers, but I'll never see it in my time...never!



A Pintail drake sleeper rests on chopping block Litzenberg has used for 30 years. Also pictured, the one and only hatchet he has used since 1929.

Attention Traders

In the next issue of *The Canvasback* we will begin accepting classified advertising. Do you, or someone in your family, think you have one too many decoys lying around your house, well we can help you sell...or trade. It's easy to do and your ad will be seen by over two thousand readers who have the same interest as you do.

Classified rates are \$7.50 for 20 words or less. Add \$.40 for each additional word. All classified ads must be prepaid. Send a check with the copy to **The Canvasback**, Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, PO Box A, Havre de Grace MD 21078.

If a classified just won't do for your advertising needs we also have display ads available. Call the Publisher at (410) 939-3739 for details. The deadline for the Spring issue is March 15th.

Autumn Activity at the Museum

by Virginia O'Flaherty

New Board of Directors

On October 3, 1991 the membership elected a number of new faces to the museums Board of Directors. Welcome to new members: Ken Bengtson, Ralph Broth, Warner Taylor, and Gary Reich and Norm Smith. New officers elected by the board are: Allen J. Fair, former Vice-President moved into the position of President; Jim Pierce, who served for ten years as president of the museum, moved into the Vice-President's position; new member, Norm Smith replaces Sherry Ramey as treasurer, who held the position for four years. Rotating off the board this year are: Donna Belinko, David Denton, Jimmy McMillan, Ernie Mauldin, Jane Pierce, and George Juergens.

New Staff



Richard Bonn, Museum's Director

Richard Bonn began working at the museum in mid-December in the capacity of Director. His background in radio and television broadcasting promises to bring many new skills and a different focus to the museum.

The Long Island native spent the last three years in Washington DC working for the NBC Radio Network where he served as Executive Producer of the sports department. While at NBC, Bonn produced two Super Bowls, three Olympics, and numer-

ous New Year's Day Bowl Games.

Bonn graduated from Southern Illinois University in 1980 where he studied radio and television production. Board president, Allen J. Fair says, "Richard's background will add an exciting element to our museum. As our ten year plan unfolds audio-visual elements will play a key role. No one will be able to assist us in this area more than Richard."

Bonn's first project, revamping the membership newsletter to a twenty page news-magazine is just the first of many positive steps he will take in his new position. When asked about his decision to leave the corporate for the non-profit sector, he said, "One thing that interested me was the ten year plan. I'd like to be a part of seeing it become a reality. The big difference between this museum and NBC is that instead of your project becoming just part of the overall picture (like at NBC), you can see the results of your work and an appreciation for what you have done."

Holiday Decoy-rations

Mary Bengtson, the museum's office clerk, hopes that you were able to see her inspired Carver's Christmas Tree. Mary conceived and coordinated this charming project, an unfinished wooden tree, decorated with duck head "ornaments" signed and dated by twenty-two carvers.

There are several people to thank for making this a successful project. Besides the carvers, we owe a big thank you to Ron Anderson of Holton, Kansas, who let us use his original tree pattern; Ed Watts, who furnished the lumber and center rod and cut the many branches; Henry Gonzalez, who cut out more than fifty duck heads; Jim Pierce for letting Ken Bengtson use his shop and equipment to sand the tree and drill all the holes; Philip Jennings for making the tree stand; and Noble Mentzer for cutting out the star for the top of the tree. We know there are many carvers who would have painted heads for the tree. We do encourage everyone to make heads and bring them in so they can be added to the tree next Christmas. Again, thank you, each and every one.

Museum's Second Floor Finished

This fall the long awaited second floor construction project was completed in time for two special events, the 1991-1992 Capital Campaign Kick-off, and the 5th Anniversary Celebration. Everyone will agree that this capitol expansion project resulted in one of the most beautiful public spaces in Harford County. Although it will eventually be used solely for formal museum purposes the Board of Directors will use the space soon to help raise revenue needed to fund the many upcoming projects.

Jim Pierce, who managed the project wants to thank the many individuals and businesses for their contributions to the project. The A. R. Burdette Inc. for the deck railing; Arvid Inc., Havre de Grace Marina for the loan of equipment; Cheasapeake Rent-All for the loan of stress test material; Paul Shertz for designing patterns for the stained glass memorial windows; Henry and José Gonzalez, Rick Stephens, and Charlie Pierce for painting; John A. Jasczak for structural engineering services.



Charles and Pam Shaw

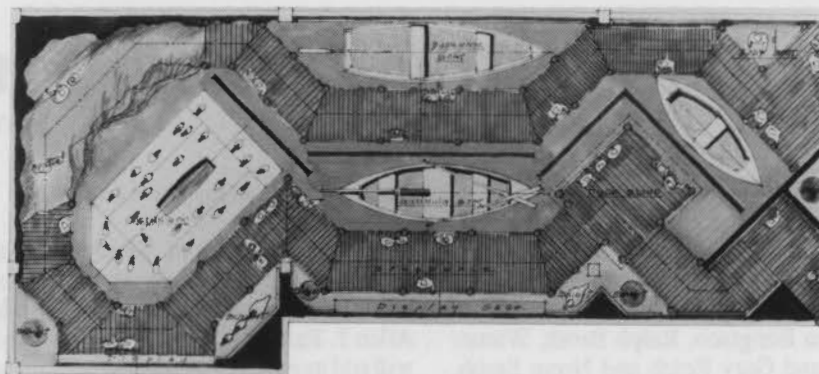
Architect Designs New Exhibit

This autumn marked the kick-off of a new era in the museum's development. On Friday, November 1 the long range plan defining the museums future was presented to numerous guests. The first phase of the plan includes an elevator and other visitor ameni-

ties, and an interpretive exhibit telling the story of "Gunning the Susquehanna Flats". The design for this exhibit was created by Charles Shaw, a landscape architect from Columbia, Maryland.

Shaw, a collector of decoys, met Jim Pierce at the Baltimore Zoo. Through this chance meeting Shaw became interested in the Decoy Museum and volunteered his professional services. On the subject of volunteering Shaw says "I believe in volunteering and belong to many different organizations. I think volunteering is very important. As for the personal benefit, I've gotten to meet the people associated with the museum. It's been a wonderful experience."

Shaw explains that there is a difference between the architect who works primarily with the built environment, and the landscape architect. The landscape architect uses the environment as a given. Shaw's work includes the Baltimore Zoo new elephant and hippopotamus exhibits, the "Childrens Zoo", and the African Water hole exhibit due to open this spring. He is currently working on the Otter Creek project for the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources and the Inner Harbour East park near Fells Point.



Design for "Gunning the Susquehanna Flats" exhibit gallery

The center room on the museum's first floor was chosen because it posed the greatest problems for the museum. By emptying the pool two key difficulties were eliminated. Environmentally, water caused high humidity and all the attendant problems related to humidity in a closed building. Space utilization was another problem in this area - as most of the room was taken by the pool. Shaw's challenge was to develop a exhibit design concept that worked with existing conditions, created an efficient layout, and allowed changing views within the exhibit environment. He created a dynamic space that moves the visitor through the gallery to

see and experience the dramatic story of "Gunning the Susquehanna Flats".

The board of directors met and approved the design and the museum staff is proceeding with fund raising needed to produce and install this exhibit. By Fall of 1993 the museum's membership and our visiting public will be invited to celebrate the exhibit's opening. We are sure that the quality of this exhibit will herald a new level of quality in exhibitry at the Decoy Museum. We extend our most appreciative thanks to Charles Shaw for his fine work on this project.



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from the COLLECTION

by John Quarstein

Learning about items in the museum collection is key to understanding their historical and cultural significance. The Canvasback will examine important pieces in its collections in each issue.



"I believe I started hunting as soon as I could stand up. Seems like I hunted all my life", says the famous Kent County decoy maker Charlie Joiner. Like so many other decoy makers, "Speed" began creating his own decoys out of necessity for his use while gunning near Betterton, Maryland. He quit gunning in 1956 after crippling a goose. Running that goose down on thin ice made him realize that even though he loved the taste of waterfowl, he could never kill another bird.

Joiner had originally purchased his Model 11 shotgun in Havre de Grace, right after WW II. He had gotten used to automatic rifles during the war and wanted a Remington for duck hunting. He used this shotgun until 1960 and embellished its walnut stock with his own brass duck inlay. Joiner returned his Remington Autoloader to Havre de Grace in 1988 when he donated it to the Decoy Museum.

The firearm is an important part of the museum's collection, not only because it was used by "Speed" Joiner, but also because of this shotgun's role in the evolution of weapons technology. The Remington Model 11 Autoloader was designed by John W. Browning, one of America's most prolific gun designers. With the development of fixed ammunition, hunters demanded faster repeating guns, thusly Browning created the Winchester Model 1887 lever action, five shot gun which sold more than 30,000 in the first four years of manufacture. Browning was not permitted to rest long on his laurels and by 1900 he had conceived the first autoloading shotgun. Browning allowed Remington to begin marketing his design in 1905 as the Model 11 Autoloader. This weapon remained in production virtually unchanged for over 45 years and continues to be a favorite with waterfowl gunners.

As "Speed" Joiner has set a standard in decoy making, his Remington Model 11 also changed the firearms industry and gunning. The automatic shotgun, firing as fast as the trigger could be pulled, caused the need for conservation laws. Few ducks could escape the combination of a well concealed gunner armed with a 5 shot automatic and surrounded by skillfully carved decoys.



SUSQUEHANNA TRADING COMPANY

Fifteen long years ago, when the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum was barely a dream in the minds of a few local residents, the world was beating a path to the door of the Susquehanna Trading Company. We were promoting Havre de Grace as "The Decoy Capital of the World" in an intensive advertising campaign that spread across the nation in a series of ads in local and national publications. We also were fortunate enough to be featured in several books and in features in magazines of national distribution. We became the primary retail outlet for the decoys of many of the up-and-coming local carvers who have now gained national prominence. We also became known as a leading source for Upper Bay collectible decoys by carvers such as Sam Barnes, the Holly family, Bob McGaw and especially for our fine selection of decoys by R. Madison Mitchell. We have established relationships with collectors in nearly every state of the nation.

When the dream of the Decoy Museum became a possibility, the Susquehanna Trading Company and its owners became staunch supporters of every aspect of its concept. From the very outset, we supported it financially to the limit of our ability and through endless hours of work. We have handled the publicity and advertising for the Havre de Grace Decoy Show, the major fund raiser, for the Museum for many years. Every visitor to our shop is advised of the Decoy Museum and encouraged to visit it.

We feel that without our support and equal support by the many other merchants of Havre de Grace that it would have been much more difficult for the Museum to have achieved its goals.

We look forward to supporting the Museum for many more years, financially and in any other way that we may be of help.

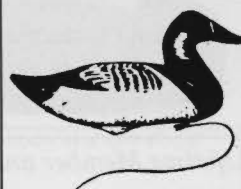
However, in order to do so, we also need the support of the museum members. Local merchants are not supported by grants, contributions, admissions, raffles or fund-raising drives.

Our only income is from whatever profit we may derive from the sale of merchandise in our stores. All of us would appreciate it if you would shop in Havre de Grace stores whenever you are in our beautiful city and enjoying the benefits of not only the Decoy Museum but also the many other local attractions that we all help support.

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Volunteer Spotlight

by Virginia O'Flaherty

What do guest carvers, tour guides, gift shop clerks, electricians, architects, office assistants, and painters have in common? At the Decoy Museum they are all volunteers. Our museum works because a partnership between the staff, the trustees, and the volunteers make it work.

The staff and Board of Directors know how important volunteers are to the success of this museum. Each year at the annual anniversary dinner one outstanding volunteer is chosen to be honored for their service to the museum. This year's award was presented to Dotti Wise.

Dotti Wise, a native Havre de Gracian, is a retired businesswoman. She and her late husband, John, owned and operated the Edgewood Press in Edgewood, Maryland for 30 years. She brings gracious and thorough professionalism to her volunteer responsibilities as Weekend Artist Program Coordinator at the museum. This program brings working artists to the museum to



demonstrate their techniques and display their work. Almost 9,000 visitors a year attend on weekends and are able to observe and talk with the artists.

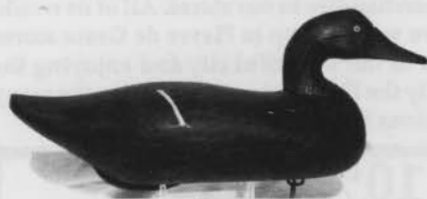
Mrs. Wise has gone beyond scheduling. She makes it a point to greet the carvers when they arrive and makes sure that they have what they need, she takes photographs of the carvers for the museum's archives, and she seeks out new artists to include in the program. This year she invited carvers from as far away as Georgia to demonstrate at the museum. Mrs. Wise is very modest about her contributions, when asked, she stated that her association with the museum gave her more than the museum received from her service to it.

We are fortunate to have talented people like Mrs. Wise, who are so modest about their contributions, and so generous with their time. The public who visits our

museum are the true beneficiaries of the spirit of voluntarism that is manifested in Dotti Wise, and in all of the people who give their time.

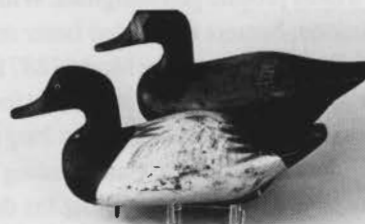
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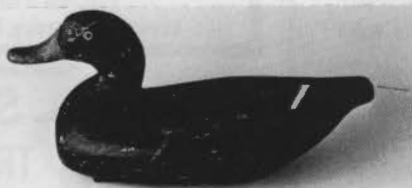
*Black duck
c.1945*

Bob McGaw



Bluebills

*William "Snake" Heverin
High tail black duck*



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From the



Gift Shop

Here are some new items which will make nice additions to any decoy collection. They are produced in limited quantities and feature autographs of past Honorary Chairmen of the Havre de Grace Decoy Festival. An easy to use order form is enclosed, so if something catches your eye, simply fill out the form and send it in...we'll take care of the rest. Due to the limited nature of these items we are unable to offer the usual 10% member discount.

Limited Edition of the "Upper Chesapeake Bay Decoys and Their Makers"

On May 5, 1991 the Havre de Grace Post Office created a special cancellation commemorating the 10th year of the Museum's Decoy Festival. We secured post marks on 250 copies of this excellent reference book. Since the cancellation has been destroyed, in accordance with postal regulations, these books are the only ones that will bear this special postmark. On the same page as the cancellation you will find autographs of 8 of the Festival's Honorary Chairmen: Madison Mitchell, Charlie Joiner, Bob Litzenberg, Charlie Bryan, Harry Jobses, Roger Urie, Bill Collins, and Jim Pierce. **\$79.95**



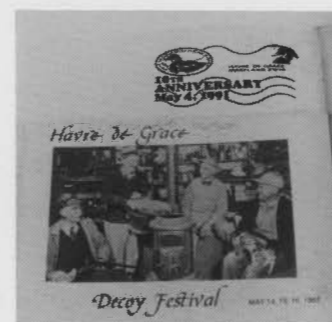
Commemorative Cachets of the Decoy Festival's Honorary Chairmen

Using the same cancellation described above, we are offering 100 numbered sets of these unique cachets. A Wendy Mitchell sketch of each Chairman highlights the 10 envelope set and they have also been autographed by the Chairman depicted. (The autograph of Paul Gibson is a facsimile). A very limited item which cannot be duplicated again. The first 75 sets, **\$49.95**; thereafter **\$99.95**.



Special Edition of the 1982 Decoy Festival Book

The Museum is quickly running out of copies from the '82 festival. What makes this version so unique is the special cancellation of the Festival's 10th Anniversary that is on the inside cover of the booklet (only fifteen copies bear this cancellation). Each book is autographed on the cover by Mr. Mitchell **\$49.95**



To order any merchandise described, fill out this form and mail to:
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Book Review

Chesapeake Bay Decoys- The Men Who Made and Used Them:

edited by Robert H. Richardson
240 pages, 32 in color, nearly 400 photos
\$40.00 Coming soon to the Gift Shop.

Twenty years ago Bobby Richardson's book Chesapeake Bay Decoys - The Men Who Made and Used Them was the book on Chesapeake Bay decoys, and it still is today.

The Chesapeake Bay area produced more decoys and subsequently more decoy collectors than any other area in the country. On the Chesapeake Bay the canvasback duck was king and market gunners needing hundreds of decoys for their rigs ruled the roost. Because of this happy convergence of nature and hunters, collectors of decoys from this area have many fine examples to choose from.

In organizing this book, Richardson solicited chapters from a number of knowledgeable decoy collectors and historians. Well known collector, Norris Pratt, in the chapter on the

Susquehanna Flats, highlights old timers' stories on the glory days of sink box gunning. Other chapters of interest focus on decoys and their users in Kent, Dorchester, and Somerset counties by Richardson; in Talbot County by J. Newman Valliant; and the eastern shore of Virginia is represented by Roy Bull.

Historical corrections and improved reprography of the original historical photographs, and 350 new photographs of some of the finest decoys from the Chesapeake Bay region make this new edition a visual treat. A newly written preface by Decoy Magazine publisher, Joe Engers, and an epilogue by Ron Rue, begin and end this classic treasury of Chesapeake Bay decoys.

CHESAPEAKE BAY DECOYS

The Men Who Made and Used Them



EDITOR

Robert H. Richardson

CONTRIBUTORS

Roy Bull—Grayson Chesser

Henry Fleckenstein—Norris E. Pratt

Robert H. Richardson—Ronald Rue

J. Newman Valliant—F. Phillips Williamson



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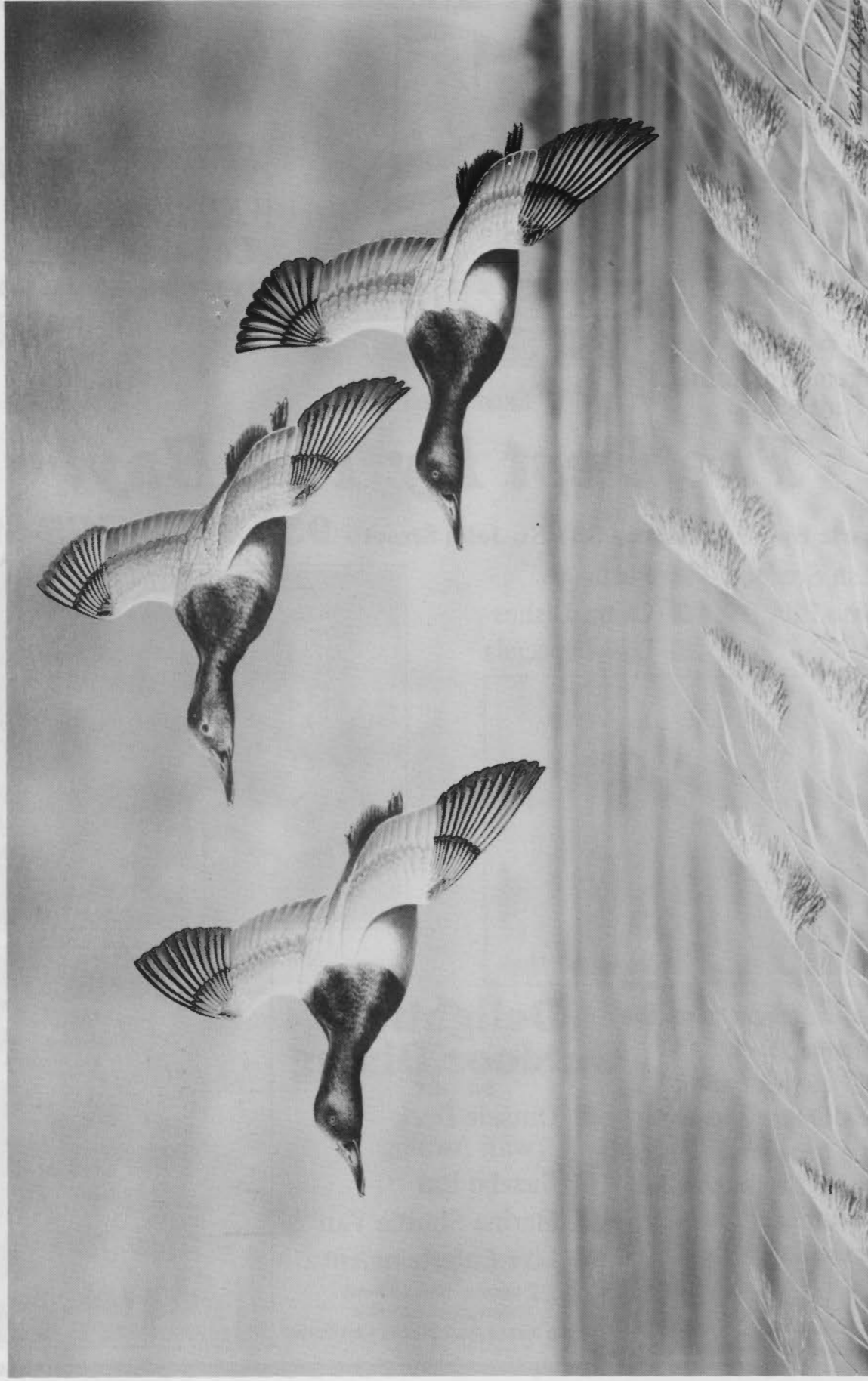
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