

# *The Canvasback*

Spring 1992

Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

\$3.00

## **Jim Currier**

*Havre de Grace Carver Profiled*

## **Charlie Bryan**

*Middle River Carver Interviewed*

**Gunning the Flats Gallery Plan  
Madison Mitchell Turns 91  
Letter from Gov. Schaefer  
Chesapeake Bay Report  
1992 Decoy Festival**



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**can·vas·back** (kan'vas 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

## On The Cover

Jim Currier is the Honorary Chairman of the 1992 HdG Decoy Festival. Pictured from the Museum's Collection, a Mallard drake & Green Wing Teal drake.

photograph by Richard Bonn

## 5 Jim Currier Carver Gunner Gardener

by Doug Woodburn



1992's Honorary Chairman lived in HdG his whole life and had a distinguished career as a decoy carver, a hunter and a gardener.

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## A Visit With Charlie Bryan

by Richard Bonn



Charlie Bryan shares stories covering fifty years of his experiences as an avid hunter and master decoy carver.

## 9 1992 Havre deGrace Decoy Festival

by Barbara Gilden



The 1992 version of the Festival has many old time favorite activities, as well as some new events guaranteed to please all in attendance.

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## R. Madison Mitchell Birthday Bash

by Richard Bonn



91st Birthday Party for R. Madison Mitchell, at the Museum, drew a large crowd of well wishers, including a proclamation from Governor Schaefer.

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## Chesapeake Bay Report

by Kata Lovejoy

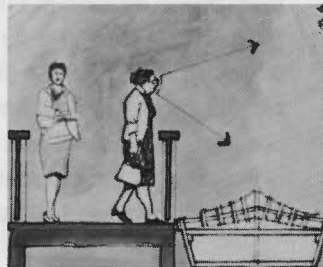


A study of waterfowl population trends on the Chesapeake, featuring the Canvasback and the Black Duck.

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## Gunning the Susquehanna Flats

by John Quarstein



A new exhibit gallery brings to life the story of the gunners, game laws and the beginning of the conservation movement.

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The Editor wishes to thank everyone who contributed to the second edition of *The Canvasback*.

**From the Editor**

You will notice that the second edition of *The Canvasback* has increased in length from 20 to 32 pages. The comments I have received, both positive and negative have been very helpful and some of our readers will see the results of their ideas and suggestions.

A special thanks goes out to Doug Woodburn who wrote the article on Jim Currier. Doug's wife, Dale, was Jim's niece and the two of them spent many an hour visiting with this remarkable man. As you read the article I hope you'll agree that Doug has done an excellent job capturing the spirit of Jim, who will be the Honorary Chairman of this year's Decoy Festival.

The interview in this issue is with Charlie Bryan. One of the best parts of my job is to visit with the legendary carvers who make this institution what it is today. Charlie is the type of man who treats you like an old friend the first time he meets you and I think you'll find his story interesting and informative.

In the last issue we spoke briefly about the new exhibit being planned- "Gunning the Flats." In a follow-up story, Museum Consultant, John Quarstein offers more details about this exhibit which tracks the history of waterfowl hunting with an interesting use of artifacts, photographs and interactive technologies.

In closing, as an indication that *The Canvasback* has "arrived" you will find the obligatory subscription and membership cards inside. Please don't throw them out, but rather see if a friend or relative may be interested in joining the museum or receiving the magazine at home. We would not exist today if it were not for the support of our membership and your help in selling our dreams is always appreciated.

**Richard Bonn**

**Letters to the Editor**

Dear Editor:

I am very interested in decoys and their reference. I am a member of your museum in Japan since 1989. What a pleasant surprise for me yesterday. I was excited very much to find a first issue of *The Canvasback* in the mail box. I really enjoyed reading this magazine. The articles were informative and interesting for me. I would like to visit to Havre de Grace in future. This trip is my dream. Many thanks for your *The Canvasback*.

Shiroh Hibi  
Aichi, Japan

Dear Editor:

*The Canvasback* is a great addition to your wonderful Decoy Museum. We look forward to each May so that we can enjoy your beautiful town and Decoy Museum. Naturally, we come in May to spend the week-end of the Decoy Festival as we have done for the last five years. Keep up the great work!

Scott Peach  
Richmond VA

Letter to the Editor:

It gave me great pleasure to see the first issue of *The Canvasback*. Please accept my congratulations and I'm sure those of many other museum members and lovers of decoys and waterfowling.

The first issue's concentration on the environment, as well as the people who mean so much to the museum and decoys was great. Keep up the good work!

Lou Nolan  
Philadelphia PA  
Charter Member



# Jim Currier

## Carver Gunner Gardener

by Doug Woodburn

---

*Jim Currier was born in Havre de Grace in 1886 and lived his entire life in town. His lasting legacy is that of a decoy maker who, unlike most carvers in HdG, never used a duplicating lathe. Jim is the Honorary Chairman of this year's Décoy Festival, an honor well earned and deserved.*

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It is early spring, 1922. Presently residing in New York, you and some friends decide to make a weekend excursion to that little town in Maryland that has become so well known throughout the Northeast for its "Gunnin' on the Flats." You are especially interested in meeting Jim Currier, a ducking guide who is highly recommended by some fellow executives in your office. He has been described as personable, talented, knowledgeable, and highly skilled at gunning on the Susquehanna Flats. Knowing that you are interested in gunning in the Upper Bay area later in the year, a casual trip to Havre de Grace to meet Mr. Currier would make that winter gunning expedition much more enjoyable. Through word of mouth, you find that a terrific weekend simply entails booking travel on the Penn-

sylvania Railroad, which stops immediately on the northern tip of town, then use one of the many available taxis to take you the short distance to the newly opened Bayou Hotel at the south end of town. With reservations made, you are on your way!

Arriving on a humid, hot Friday afternoon, you are immediately impressed by the "feel" of the town. The tall shade trees on Union Avenue with its wide boulevard and turn of the century Victorian homes makes it a truly inviting place to have an address. The panoramic view of the water from your room at the newly built Bayou Hotel is breathtaking. Looking out your window the sight of Canvasbacks filling the sky convinces you that Havre de Grace was a

wise choice for your planned hunting excursion.

After relaxing in the rathskeller in the basement and a refreshing dip in the swimming pool, located in the power house a few steps from the main building, you and your friends retire anticipating a full day of exploring tomorrow. (*Ed note: The power house mentioned is the current site of the Décoy Museum.*)

Next morning, you awaken to one of the most glorious sunrises reflecting a multitude of hues from the vast acres of the Susquehanna Flats. After a Maryland breakfast, armed with the knowledge that Jim Currier lives on South Market Street, you and company begin your search.



Just next to the building in which you swam, you are nodded to by a very friendly gentleman taking a breather from his task at hoeing in a garden. Maybe he will provide a bit of local color. "Good morning," you offer expectantly. The gardener replied, "Howdy; you staying in the Bayou?" Your search for Jim ends when you quickly discover the gardener your talking with is the hunting guide you have heard so much about.

Jim tells you the last few years have been especially good for Cans (Canvasbacks) and Blackheads. When asked if he had a blind on or near the flats, he tells you that he used a sinkbox, a wooden coffin-like box that floated, when occupied, nearly flush with the surface of the water. Extended from each of all four sides were hinged boards to help smooth out any waves. Iron decoys were also placed on these "wings." One can imagine the ruggedness necessary to lie flat and motionless in the biting cold and spray, while waiting for those cans to come tolling into the rig of 300 to 500 decoys. He loved to tell the story of a very prominent New York executive whose wife used to accompany the party. As she was enjoying the buckwheat cakes in the warmth of the cabin, Jim's cook would proudly exclaim how he had mixed up the batter in the coal bucket! One can imagine her reaction.

Jim's boat you are told is basically a skipjack hull, which he calls a "sharpie."

Designed on the lower eastern shore with a rather wide beam, she was very suitable to the shallow waters of that area and those of the Flats. Jim went on to explain that as gunning became more popular, he found the space on this 35-foot sharpie becoming too limited. His father-in-law, Captain Bill Chesney, suggested that rather than buy a new boat (Jim was notoriously "thrifty"), why not cut this one in half, and insert about 10 more feet in the middle! And that is precisely what they did! "Now," says Jim, "I can offer you plenty of space, a warm stove while waiting your turn in the box, an excellent cook, a reasonable price, and a guarantee of your fill of ducks!"

Convinced that this is the guide for you, you make the necessary reservations with Jim for the fall. You find yourself now prompted to ask, "Jim, if you require over 300 decoys, where do you buy them?" With a rather prideful smile on his face, he leads you from his garden to a small workshop located just across the lane from the powerhouse for the Bayou. Inside were racks filled with wooden decoy bodies, some appearing to be Canvasbacks, Redheads, and possibly Blackheads. It becomes obvious that you are in the company of not only an expert guide, but an ex-

tremely talented decoy carver.

Upon requesting a demonstration, Jim obligingly pulled a pre-cut 13-inch section of white cedar from a huge stack near the door, held it at an angle on his chopping block and began "parting the chips away from the duck that lay within." When asked where he obtained the pattern, he indicated that after years on the Flats, you have it locked permanently in your head. As he chopped, Jim explained that he used a "left handed hatchet and a right handed hatchet!" Thinking that he may be taking advantage of city slickers, you laugh, exclaiming that you are not to be had so easily! "No... it's true! I file one hatchet like a chisel blade, with the cutting edge flush with one side, and another hatchet with the edge flush with the other side. This allows me to chop curves going inward, or curves going outward."

When questioned as to his source of wood, you realize that a carver must be rather resourceful. Jim explained that through some friends up in Wilmington, he had learned of a building being torn down. He managed to have an enormous load of timbers brought by rail to Havre de Grace and stored at his father's livery stable uptown.

Later he would use a wagon and a team of horses to haul them to the shop as he needed them. Old telephone poles were a good source, especially with his contacts with those in the phone company. His huge chopping block

## Recollections and Reflections

### **Jim Pierce- Carver**

"he hand chopped from whatever size wood he had on hand"  
"I remember his Gladiolas too...you'd never find two of 'em alike"

### **Dr. William Brendle- Friend**

"he was so patient...he led a different lifestyle"  
"he was one of the first to carve a canvas-back bill swooping upward"

### **Adelaide Barnes- Sister**

"not too religious. He said one time he went to church and someone stole his hat...and he never went back"

### **Donald Asher- Paint Store Owner**

"his place was quite picturesque"  
"he had a unique painting style"  
"pleasant...quite a gentleman"  
"you'd think his decoys were machine made"

### **Madison Mitchell- Carver**

"Jim has a style all his own. You could identify it anyplace."

### **George Juergens- Collector**

"his birds were always striking to me"  
"all his birds were hand chopped; his style of painting was unique, very feathery and different than any other"



was a butcher's block that he was able to get from a butcher's shop up on Stokes Street.

After completing the chopping, Jim placed the body in his huge wood vise, and using a draw blade, spoke shave, and rasp, he completed the body to such a degree of perfection that very little sanding would be required. This whole process took only 15 - 20 minutes, although Jim said that when he really got going, he could do a body in about 10 minutes!

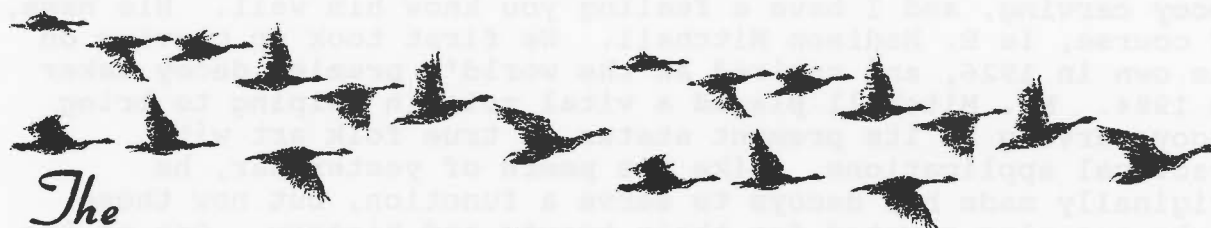
You noticed that Jim had an electric belt sander, but strangely designed so that one end of the belt extended outside of the workshop. Jim explained that in the warmer months, he paints here in the shop. This arrangement was designed to keep the dust off the newly painted bodies. Ingenious indeed! During the winter, the painting operation is moved to the basement of his home, just a few yards away.

Also, his home is the location of the head whittling operation. You found that to be true when Jim invited you and friends up to his house for coffee. Grace, his wife, so warm, jolly and friendly to strangers such as us, pointed out the well-worn chair where he spends "many an evening" sitting there next to the wood stove whittling on heads that have been sawed out on the bandsaw down in the shop.

After having been satisfied with some of Grace's devil's food cake and coffee,



Jim escorts you down the outside entrance to his basement. Here you see an impressive display of canvasbacks and black-heads lined up on rows of planks, supported by saw-horses. All are being readied for the flats. Weights have been attached and painting has been completed. You stand in awe at the similarity between each decoy, since each has (cont. 22)



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April, 1992

To the readers of THE CANVASBACK

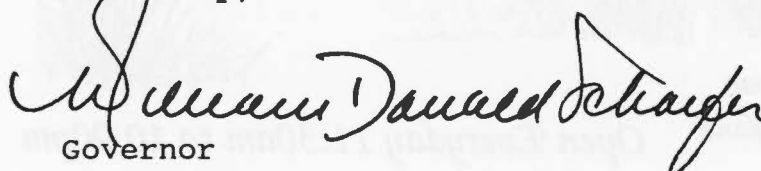
Dear Friends:

What a great publication! As Governor of Maryland, I am pleased to extend my warmest regards as you have such a strong desire to nurture the vibrant and time-honored traditions of decoy carving in Maryland. THE CANVASBACK is certainly a welcome addition to the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, as it promises to nurture the museum's impressive commitment to preserving the heritage of the decoy making art as it pertains to Maryland and, in particular, to the Susquehanna Flats. I am honored to wish this outstanding publication the best of success in the months and years ahead.

There is a very special individual who piqued my interest in decoy carving, and I have a feeling you know him well. His name, of course, is R. Madison Mitchell. He first took up carving on his own in 1926, and retired as the world's premier decoy maker in 1984. Mr. Mitchell played a vital role in helping to bring decoy carving to its present status as true folk art with practical applications. Like his peers of yesteryear, he originally made his decoys to serve a function, but now these works are also coveted for their beauty and history. One of the greatest pleasures for me as Governor has been to forge such wonderful and personal friendships with interesting people like R. Madison Mitchell, who is truly a living legend in this state. At 91 years young, he continues to stay active at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

I am fascinated by the heritage of decoy carving in Maryland. I cherish my own decoy collection, and have enjoyed the many talks I have had with masters of this trade. I look forward to reading future issues of THE CANVASBACK. Keep up the good work!

Sincerely,

  
Governor





# 1992 Havre de Grace Decoy Festival

## Jim Currier to be Honored & Many New Activities Planned

by Barbara Gilden

Mark your calendars now for Friday, Saturday and Sunday, May 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. The Eleventh Annual Havre de Grace Decoy Festival will prove to be the most interesting festival ever. Why, you may ask? Because this year's show has new events and past favorites that have been expanded. This is truly a family affair for all to enjoy, and it's happening once again at the Havre de Grace High School, Middle School and the Decoy Museum. For those who attend the Festival each year and don't come by the museum because "you've seen it before", please make a point to hop on a shuttle bus and come see the new second floor. The museum's staff will be on hand to describe the new plans you've been reading about in *The Canvasback*. The architect's drawings of the planned expansion are worth seeing and once you do, you'll know why we are so excited about the changes taking place.

This year everyone purchasing a ticket to the festival will receive a free copy of the 1992 Festival Book. Last year's visitors had so much fun with the special postal cancellation that we're doing it again this year. The first page of the Festival Book has been custom designed for this cancellation. For the cost of a twenty-nine cent stamp, autograph collectors can create a unique collectible. Employees of the Havre de Grace Post Office will be on hand Saturday and Sunday for this cancellation activity.

This year the Autograph Session will be on Saturday and Sunday from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. Past Honorary Chairman will be on hand to sign books, posters, and anything you might think to bring from your own collection. You can expect to see,

meet and talk to R. Madison Mitchell, Charlie Bryan, Bob Litzenberg, Charlie Joiner, Capt. Harry Jobes, Capt. Bill Collins, Capt. Roger Urie and Jim Pierce. It is not possible to thank these men enough for all they do for the museum, but perhaps your words of thanks will help convey how appreciated their efforts are.

Exhibitors will be showing and selling antique working decoys, contemporary gunning decoys, decorative birds, guns, waterfowl art prints and paintings, jewelry and arts and crafts. As always there is



*Dick Martindale helps at Festival Auction*

something for everyone, both male and female, young and old, rich and not so rich.

A new event which should be a lot of fun for everyone: a Goose and Duck Calling Contest. Visitor input has convinced the committee to put it on the agenda. Anyone who wishes to take part in this event will have to sign up ahead of time. So if you're an expert caller, or just starting out, you better start practicing.

Other scheduled events include the "Gunning Stool Floating Contest" and "Decorative Contest". Both these events will be held on Saturday at 1 pm in the High School gym. The Auction has been moved

up to 4 pm on Saturday in the High School Auditorium. A limited number of ticket remain for Saturday night's Cocktail Party. This event is a great opportunity to visit with carvers, dealers and friends. To order tickets by mail send \$15 per ticket to: Decoy Festival Cocktail Party c/o the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

Sunday's schedule includes a "Gunning Rig Competition" at 11am in front of the museum. The new boardwalk is a terrific vantage point for viewing this event.

Activities at the High School begin at 12 noon with the "Slick Decoy Contest", followed by the "Decorative Canvasback Contest" at 12:30 pm, sponsored by Canvasback Cove. Events scheduled at the Middle School include the "Head Whittling Contest", a highlight event full of fun and laughter at 1 pm, and a "Decoy Painting Contest" at 3 pm.

We are pleased to announce the return of Canvasback Caterers to both the Middle and High School. Anyone who had a chance to sample their bill of fare will attest to the outstanding food they provide. Special fast food service is provided for exhibitors who are concerned about getting back to their tables as quickly as possible.

The Havre de Grace Decoy Festival is an annual event that is organized by a multitude of volunteers, museum staff members and the Board of Directors. Obviously, we want to please you and know that many of you have valuable suggestions. We take your compliments and criticisms seriously. Send your comments about this year's event to the Festival Committee c/o the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

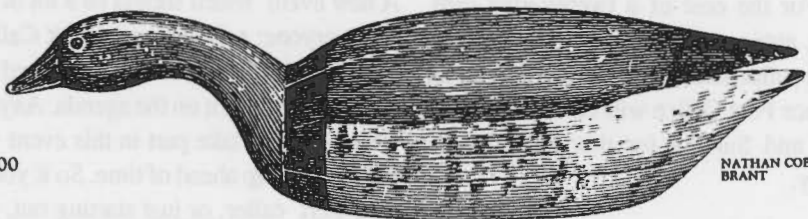
# Events Around the Bay

<p><b>April 18th &amp; 19th</b>  <b>CHINCOTEAGUE ISLAND</b>  <b>EASTER DECOY FESTIVAL</b></p> <p>@ the Chincoteague High School  Chincoteague, Virginia</p> <p>Contact Jacklyn Russell  PO Box 258  Chincoteague VA 23336  (804) 336-6161</p>	<p><b>April 23rd thru 26th</b>  <b>WARD WORLD</b>  <b>CHAMPIONSHIP CARVING</b>  <b>COMPETITION</b></p> <p>@ the Ocean City Convention Ctr.  Ocean City, Maryland</p> <p>Contact: Jane Rollins  655 S. Salisbury Rd.  Salisbury MD 21801  (301) 742-4988</p>	<p><b>May 1st thru 3rd</b>  <b>HAVRE DE GRACE</b>  <b>DECOY FESTIVAL</b></p> <p>@ the Havre de Grace Middle  &amp; High Schools</p> <p>Contact: Ken Lay  PO Box A  Havre de Grace MD 21078  (410) 939-3739</p>	<p><b>June 27th thru 28th</b>  <b>SUSQUEHANNA FLATS</b>  <b>DECOY CARVERS &amp;</b>  <b>ART FESTIVAL</b></p> <p>@ the Perryville Firehouse  Perryville, Maryland</p> <p>Contact: Ed Gray  591 Mountain Hill Rd.  Perryville MD 21903  (410) 642-6861</p>
<p><b>July 18th</b>  <b>HAVRE DE GRACE DUCK</b>  <b>FAIR</b></p> <p>@ the Havre de Grace Decoy Mus.  Havre de Grace, Maryland</p> <p>Contact: Richard Bonn  215 Giles St.  Havre de Grace MD21078</p>	 <p><i>Charlie Bryan- Decorative Black Head Drake</i></p>		<p><b>SEND US YOUR LISTING</b></p> <p>Events Around the Bay is a free service of <b>The Canvasback</b>. The magazine is published quarterly, so send us your information as soon as possible. Deadline for the Summer 1992 issue is June 1st.</p>

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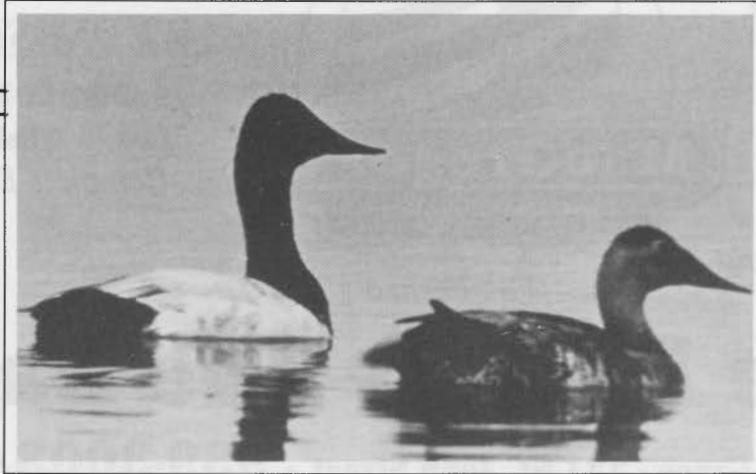
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# Chesapeake Bay Report

## A Waterfowl Population Study

by Kata Lovejoy



There are two types of waterfowl that spend their winters on the Chesapeake Bay; "dabblers" and "divers". Dabbler refers to a group of waterfowl that forage for food in shallow waters, along shoreline, and in marshes. Their diet is limited to the plant life and insects they find in these areas. Diver ducks on the other hand have a wider ranging diet. These ducks are able to dive at considerable depths, up to 25 feet, to reach underwater grasses, shellfish, and other animal life. Divers also feed in shallow areas for plant life. Despite the differences between these two groups of waterfowl, both dabblers and divers are facing an equally unclear future on the Chesapeake Bay.

The differences in feeding habits of dabblers and divers are determined by their body shape and the placement of their feet. On dabbling ducks the feet are placed closer to the center of the body, making it easier to balance and therefore easier to walk on land to forage for food. Conversely, diving ducks are much more clumsy on land, but they are much more efficient on water. Their feet are placed further back on their bodies, making it hard to balance while walking, but easier to swim. It is also much more difficult for divers to land and takeoff from solid ground due to the placement and shape of their bodies. Therefore, divers will naturally spend their time feeding from the water and dabblers from the land and shallow areas of the Bay.

The Black Duck (*Anas Rubripes*) is an example of a dabbler living in the Bay region that is in trouble. According to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the numbers of Black ducks have gradually decreased since 1955 at an average rate of 2% each year. In the Chesapeake Bay watershed, population numbers of Black ducks and other dabblers have been dramatically effected by habitat loss due to human development, poor water quality, and hunting pressures.

Habitat loss around the Bay limits valuable breeding grounds and food resources for Black ducks. Historically, Black ducks produced a large number of offspring here on the Bay, but today, with the destruction of thousands of acres of wetlands and forested areas, it is rare to see these ducks nesting on the Chesapeake at all. Loss of breeding grounds in the Dakotas and Canada is a strong contributing factor to the decrease in Black duck offspring as well.

Some of the food Black ducks depend on is also lost with the impoverishment of wetlands and forest along the Chesapeake

Bay. This land is disappearing fast as human population escalates, and only half the wetlands that once existed around the Bay remain.

Loss of habitat for breeding and food is not the only cause for the plummeting numbers in Black duck

populations. Poor water quality is probably the most significant cause for this remarkable decrease in numbers, resulting in major declines of food resources. Poor water quality prevents the growth of underwater grasses, the main staple of the Black ducks' diet. The high levels of algae found in the Chesapeake Bay waters are caused by run off from farm fertilizers and manure, pesticides from agricultural land, individual lawns and gardens, and leaking septic tanks. High nitrate levels in the water from these sources of run off cause algae blooms which deplete the water of oxygen and make it more difficult for sun light to penetrate the surface. This turbidity prevents growth of submerged aquatic vegetation and thus deprives the Black ducks of nourishment.

In addition to losing precious breeding habitat and necessary food resources, Black ducks also have the unfortunate fate of being labeled as a prestigious prize among waterfowl hunters. Although a reduction in the harvest of Black ducks has already been in effect for several years, it seems that more restriction may have to be called for in order to stabilize the Black duck



population.

Poor water quality and hunting pressures have also affected diving ducks in much the same way as dabbling ducks. The Canvasback (*Aythya valisneria*) is an example of a diving duck whose population numbers have decreased dramatically on the Chesapeake Bay. In the 1950's the number

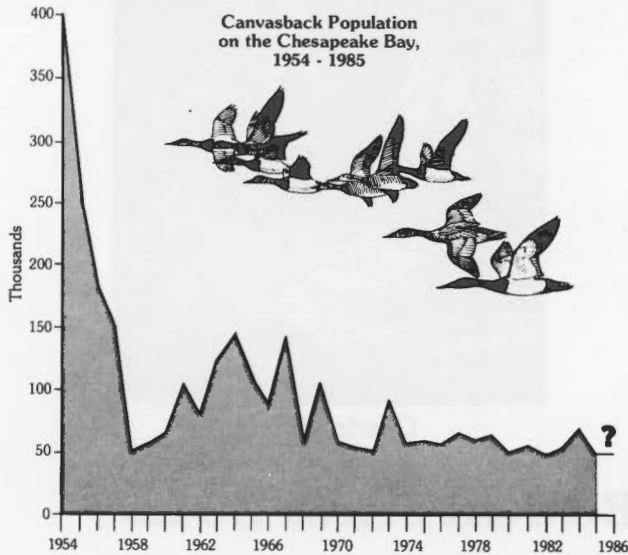
of Canvasbacks migrating from the North American prairies, Canada, and Alaska to the Chesapeake, numbered close to 250,000. Current population studies however, show the number of migrating Canvasbacks on the Bay have decreased to only 70,000.

Because Canvasbacks are diving ducks, spending the majority of their time on the water in search of food, the destruction of land around the Bay region has not affected them as greatly as it has the Black ducks. The condition of water quality within the watershed has however.

Like the dabblers, Canvasbacks and other divers once had a diet consisting mostly of underwater grasses. With the rapidly deteriorating condition of water quality and the subsequent loss of submerged aquatic vegetation, Canvasbacks have been forced to change their feeding habits. What was once only about 20% of their diet, shellfish, has now become their primary food source. As the population of shellfish, such as oysters and clams, deteriorate dramatically, the future of Canvasbacks and other diving ducks on the Chesapeake Bay is even more questionable.

Scientists continue to study the relationship of nutrient runoff, water quality, and the loss of submerged aquatic vegetation in hopes of finding the answer for a comeback of this valuable food source. These studies include cultivating and replanting underwater grasses such as wild celery, an especially popular food source among wa-

*(continued page 30)*



# Gunning Decoys

## by Joey Jobes

Joey Jobes is the youngest of Capt. Harry Jobes' three sons. He grew up around a decoy shop and continues the fine Upper Bay tradition. He currently works out of his own shop in Havre de Grace and is one of the finest young carvers in the area. His swan are unique for the feathering he applies and he proucdces a full line of gunning birds. Lamps and half size swan can be found in his shop as well.

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*Joey Jobes applies feathers to a Black Head hen*

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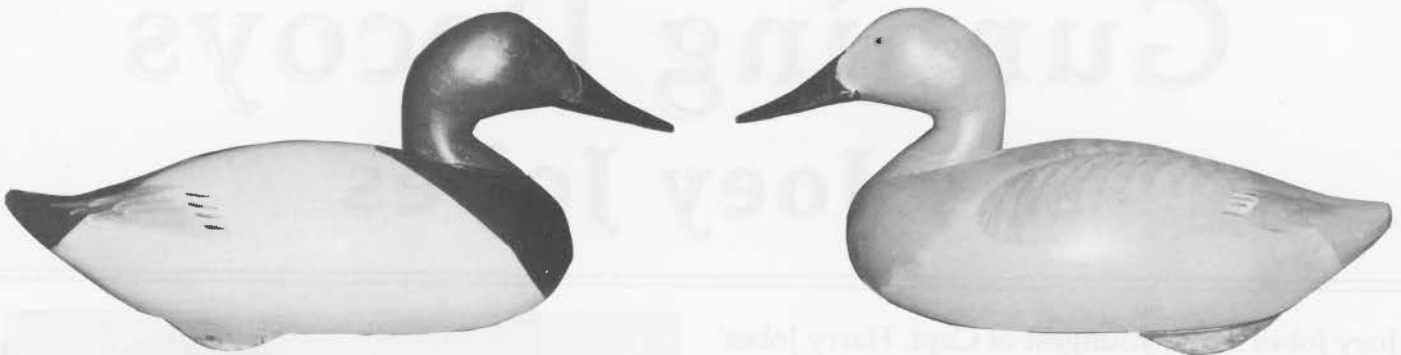


Bob Jobes



Charles Jobes

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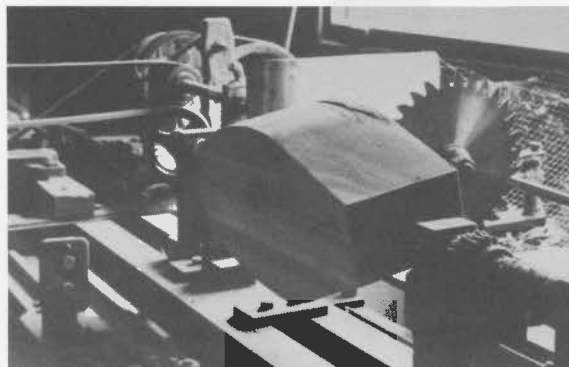
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# from the COLLECTION

by Virginia O'Flaherty

***"Most old timers taught themselves to do whatever they had to do."***

Paul Gibson



*Lathe used by Gibson and Mitchell*

The Decoy Museum acquired a number of artifacts from Mr. Gibson's shop for its permanent collections in the fall of 1991. These objects represent a significant body of the material heritage of the decoy makers of Havre de Grace, and particularly of Paul Gibson. His career as a decoy carver stretched from 1915 to 1984. In a 1980 interview Mr. Gibson remarked "I've been on the Flats all my life. I hung around the older men - Bob McGaw and Sam Barnes - who lived in Havre de Grace. All watermen." These men were Paul Gibson's mentors.

His first decoy reveals the sharp angular chine reminiscent of Sam Barnes' work and the square breast of Bob McGaw. His later decoys retained the square breast, and a careful look at the breast and tail reveals marks from the tail stop of his lathe. Pat Vincenti who worked with Mr. Gibson from 1976 to 1982 explained that "he was thrifty - if a pattern called for a 13" block, he didn't put 13 1/2" in it."

The decoy maker's purpose was to turn out decoys in the most economical way possible. A loss of 4" on each block in waste wood meant a loss of one decoy every four or five blocks and it wasn't always easy to secure a good supply of the right kind of wood. Western Cedar, the kind found in old utility poles was and still is the material of choice for many carvers. Paul Gibson said "We get them any way we can - beg,

steal, or buy." Cutting these poles to workable size was accomplished on a big gas powered saw mill, a piece of equipment assembled from various component parts by Gibson, that stood in back of his shop on Ontario Street.

A decoy cradle, one of the unique items in this collection, is constructed from cast iron Singer Sewing Machine legs and is fitted with a padded cradle. This device holds a finished decoy while the weights, ring and staple are applied to its underside. Attached to the front of the cradle are several wooden boxes to hold these items. Jim Pierce remembers this rig included a metal wash tub to test float the decoy before applying the weights.

The duplicating lathe used by Gibson from 1941 to 1984 bears a long pedigree based in the Havre de Grace tradition. According to Madison Mitchell it all began in 1928. A visitor convinced McGaw that a duplicating lathe used to make rifle stocks for the British Army could be adapted for use in turning decoy bodies. This must have seemed a good idea to McGaw because soon a lathe was in his shop. Madison Mitchell liked the idea that he could stop laboriously hand chopping his bodies and ordered a lathe from the Wertky Machine Shop in Havre de Grace.

An accident in Bob McGaw's shop initiated the transfer of duplicating lathes from McGaw to Mitchell, and from Mitchell to

Gibson in 1941. A cutting blade rotates at enormous speed following an eccentric path laid out by a simple wheel that follows a body pattern. From the day that the cutting blade failed and hurled into the wood floor behind him, McGaw lost his enthusiasm for this piece of equipment. Mitchell jumped at the chance to have McGaw's duplicating machine, an Gibson was happy to have Mitchell's. A deal was struck between the two men that they would turn bodies for Bob McGaw when he needed them.

These machines more than any other highlight a controversy about what constitutes Folk Art. Certainly many carvers resisted the transition to technology in the 20th century. But they did not equally resist the use of motor driven sanders or band saws to aid their work. What then is the difference between folk art and the vast world of manufactured commodities? In the next issue of *The Canvasback* we will take up the question of what distinguishes folk art from other objects in our culture.

Photo courtesy of C. John Sullivan

## **Valerie A. Lloyd** Artist



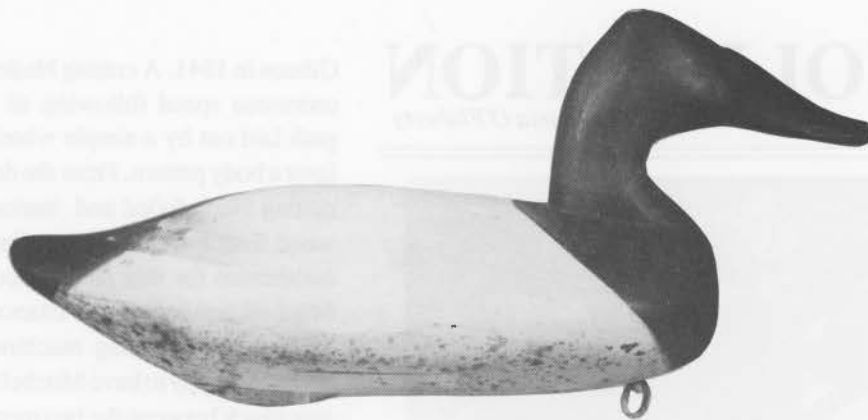
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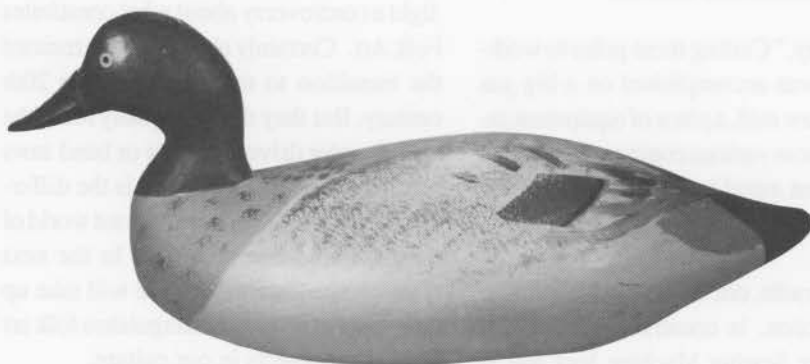


# From Colle

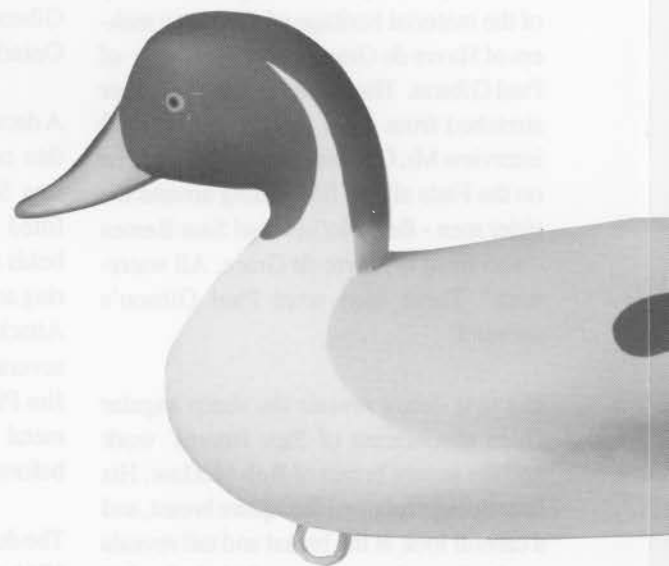
In this issue we highlight two  
Jim Currier and Charlie Bryan  
The following photo essay r



*Jim Currier- Canvasback drake*



*Jim Currier- Green Wing Teal drake*



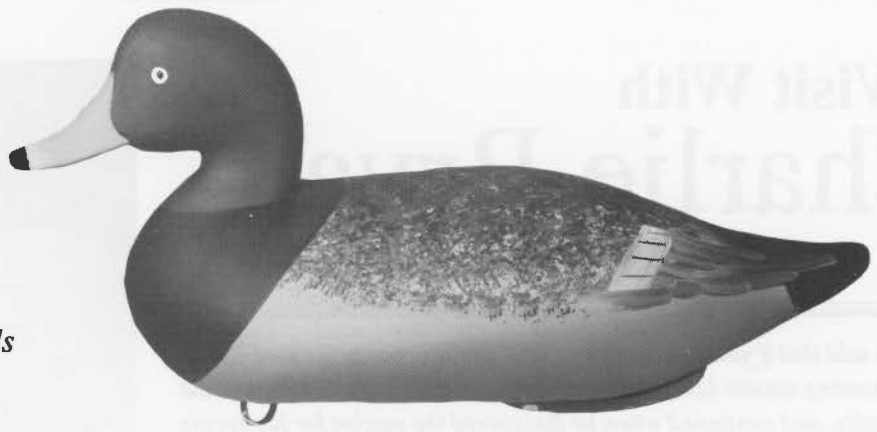
*Charlie Bryan-*



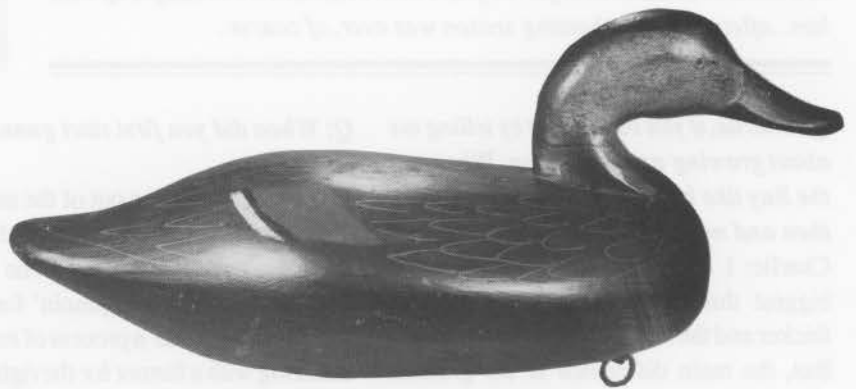
*Charlie Bryan- Wood Duck drake*

# n the ection

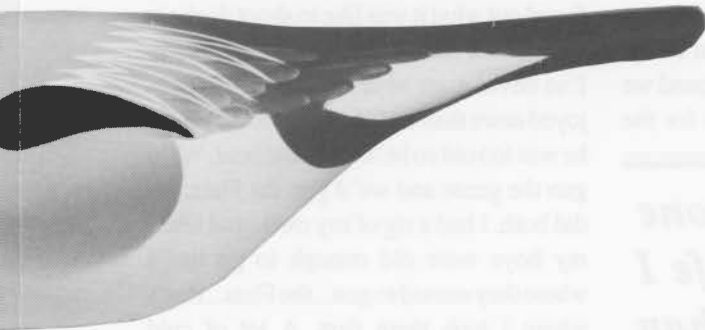
at two legendary carvers-  
Bryan  
ay represents work from both these individuals



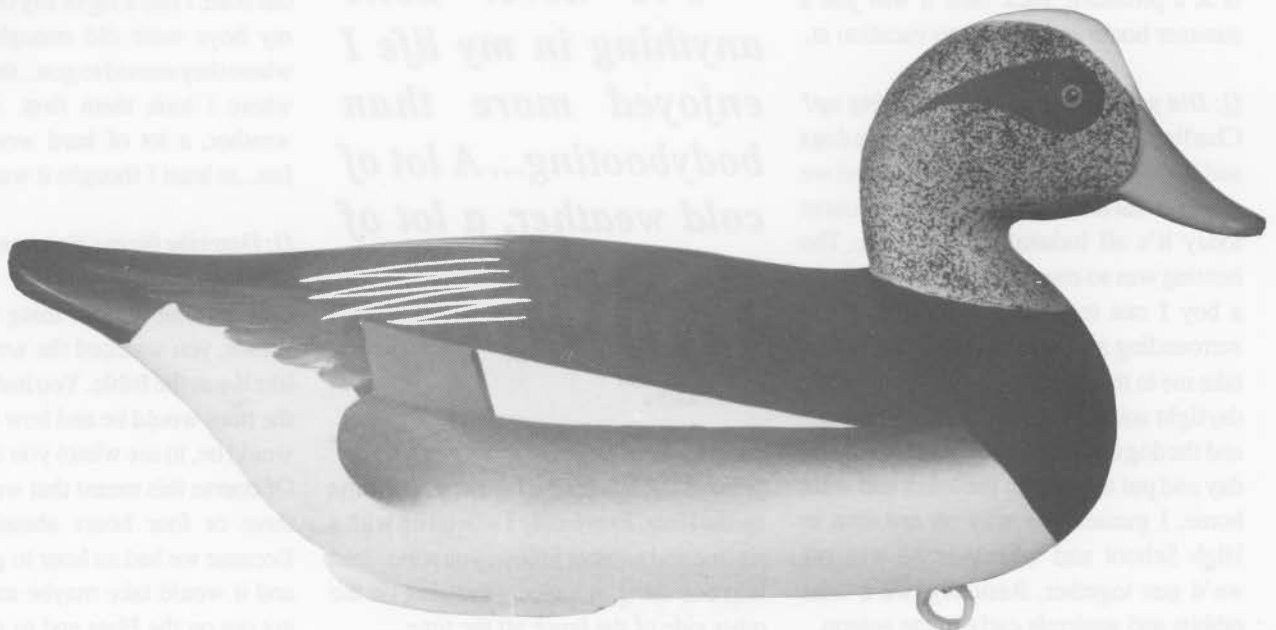
*Charlie Bryan- Red Head drake*



*Jim Currier- Black Duck*



*an- Pintail drake*



*Charlie Bryan- Bald Pate drake*

# A Visit With Charlie Bryan

by Richard Bonn

---

*It's been said that if you're trying to reach Charlie Bryan make sure you do it after hunting season. Like many decoy makers, Bryan learned to carve out of necessity, and continued when he discovered the market for his decoys helped offset the cost of hunting. His work has some Havre de Grace style influence, but the 40 mile distance from his home to HdG, put a similar distance between his work and those of the HdG area carvers. He has lived in a home in Middle River for 43 years where Richard Bonn caught up with him...after the goose hunting season was over, of course.*

---



**Q: Charlie, if you could start by telling me about growing up in this area. What was the Bay like back then. Try and compare then and now.**

Charlie: I think the cleanliness was the biggest thing. The grasses were much thicker and the fishing was so much better. But, the main difference is the grasses, they were everywhere, in all the creeks and rivers. There were a whole lot less people, I think that's the reason things have changed. A lot of the shoreline was virgin, just trees and bushes...no houses. Today it's all development. Waterfront property is at a premium, back then it was just a summer home and a place to vacation at.

**Q: Did you do any hunting growing up?**

Charlie: Oh yes, my father had beagle dogs and he had friends in Hunt Valley and we did an awful lot of hunting there. Of course today it's all industrial complexes. The hunting was so much closer and easier. As a boy I can remember in Essex all the surrounding area was farm. My dad would take me in the morning, he'd go to work at daylight and he'd take the car and myself and the dog and drop me off and I'd hunt all day and put the dog on the leash and walk home. I gunned this way on my own in High School and whenever he was off we'd gun together. Basically, we'd hunt rabbits and squirrels early in the season.

**Q: When did you first start gunning waterfowl?**

Charlie: After I came out of the service in '46. At that time my father had hunted some ducks and geese. In fact he was the first one that took me gunnin' for waterfowl. I found it was a process of renting or bartering with a farmer for the right places to gun. I tried some of the other things en route, before I got to shooting out of the fields. I tried body booting and I found we could go up to the Flats, just for the

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***"I've never done anything in my life I enjoyed more than bodybooting... A lot of cold weather, a lot of hard work, but it was fun... at least I thought it was."***

---

price of the license, so I spent a little time on the Flats. Eventually I wound up with a rig, me and another fellow, you sorta' lead into one thing, it looks promising on the other side of the fence all the time.

**Q: Tell me about the Flats back in the early fifties, I guess this was after the heyday, but tell me what it was like back then?**

Charlie: There was a lot of grass, all kinds of grasses up there. It was a new ballgame. First I went up there just bushwacking, and I only did it two or three seasons, then I found out what it was like to shoot ducks in body boots and there was nothing like it. I've never done anything in my life I enjoyed more than bodybooting. My dad said he was too old so he'd sit on the boat. We'd gun the geese and we'd gun the Flats, we did both. I had a rig of my own, and when my boys were old enough to go that's where they started to gun...the Flats...that's where I took them first. A lot of cold weather, a lot of hard work, but it was fun...at least I thought it was.

**Q: Describe for me if you could bodybooting?**

Charlie: The biggest thing was the night before, you watched the weather forecast like it was the Bible. You had to know what the tides would be and how bad the winds would be, to see where you wanted to gun. Of course this meant that we had to get up three or four hours ahead of daylight. Because we had an hour to get to the Flats and it would take maybe another hour to get out on the Flats and to get the decoys



out. So we were up three or four hours before daylight came, to start to go. I didn't have rigs that were big enough to have stoves, I had runabouts that I used here on the river locally and on the creek I live on. So we just stayed till it got too cold, or it got so bad that we called it a day. If gunning was good you'd stick it out, if it wasn't you'd quit early. When I first started I just had chest waders and being tall you could really get wet quick when the geese or the ducks would come to you. You'd try to get under the water, just force of habit I guess, kinda like hiding. The decoys for the small rig were basically silhouettes and they were light so you could put more in the rig. The full bodied geese were so heavy that I got to making some foam birds and they worked real well, but you had to be careful with 'em cause the paint would nick and chip so often you just had to be careful with 'em...treat 'em a little more gentle than you would with a wooden decoy. But, the rig was basically silhouettes 'cause they showed up so well and they do work.

***Q: The first decoys you used, where did they come from?***

Charlie: The first decoys I made were for duck hunting. The first ones I bought were from a fellow over in Charlestown. At the end of the season the grass was so thick that the grass would roll, and it would pick up decoys, so if you didn't get your birds up in time you'd lose 'em. This fellow would walk the beaches and he'd find decoys and I'd buy 'em from him. I think I paid \$1.50 a piece for 'em. And I worked with my hands so I said to myself if he can do it, I can do it too. Some of my first decoys were non-descript...some were real nice. They were a little crude, but there were plenty of ducks and we made out with it.

***Q: When you decided to make your own decoys how did you go about starting?***

Charlie: Well, I basically I took a pattern from a bird that I had and I traced it out on paper and then band sawed it and worked it up completely by hand. I used a big 'ol draw knife which is still out in the garage

---

***“... you try to make  
'em as nice as you  
can, and when  
somebody  
compliments your  
work it feeds off  
that...”***

---



in fact. The first decoys I ever made I painted from some paint kits and I found out the stuff dried too quick and the colors were little bit too dark for me. The first birds were black heads and they were black and white, and brown and grey for the hens, so it wasn't too difficult. Then I found Bauer's Hardware, over on Monument St., They mixed house paints...you'd go in and he'd put some white lead in a bucket with some linseed oil and a little drier and he'd mix a color for you. So I would take Madison's (Mitchell) decoys and say, "This is what I want." To this day paint's still a problem...I have my trouble with the paint. The first decoys I made, we took 2" X 6"'s and just flat sawed the shape and rounded the heads off and this was it. A little bit of paint and a little bit of corn and they worked real well, they were basically just a silhouette.

***Q: After you made your first rig you were basically all set. How did you continue making decoys.***

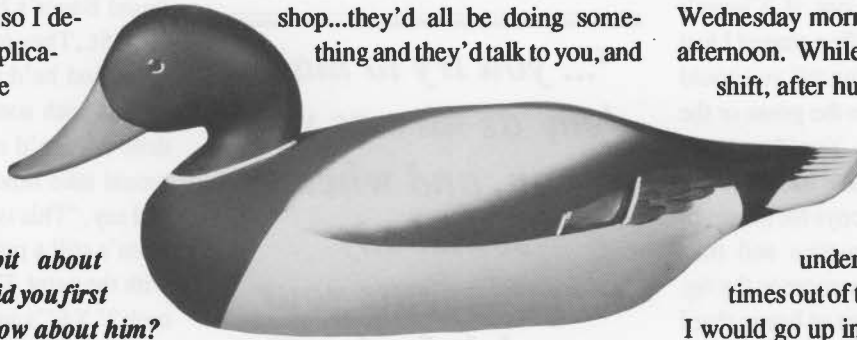
Charlie: Well, it was something I enjoyed doing and it was a new game to me, so consequently you're always looking for somewhere to go or something else to do. I never took any of the decoys home when I went gunning anywhere with other people. The decoys just stayed with the group. I thought I'd keep improving, so I kept trying. I used to hunt with Stanley McKinney from North East and he had a bushwhack rig full of Madison Mitchell decoys. So I found out that if you took wood to Madison he'd swap with you. You gave him two blocks of wood and he'd turn the bodies for you, and you'd get one body back and he'd keep the other. From that point on my decoys were all made from turned bodies. When I'd go to Madison's with

blocks of wood they didn't always earmark the wood as being Charlie Bryan's wood. They just threw 'em in a pile and it was first come, first served. I was living down the road and I didn't feel the wood of the bodies I got back were as good as the wood I dropped off, but that was just the way it was done, so I decided to make my own duplicator. I did it piece meal...when the boss looked the other way I made a piece.

*Q: Tell me a little bit about Madison's shop...when did you first visit and how did you know about him?*

Charlie: Well, Stanley McKinney had a whole rig of his decoys and at this time I was gunning on the Flats and everyone up there knew about Madison and he was the only one I knew about, so I went to see him. I found out later about Capt. Harry Jobes

and Jim Pierce. When I first went to Madison's shop you gotta' remember I lived forty minutes down the road and you just didn't jump in the car and run up there. If he had a funeral you didn't get to talk to Madison at all. Nine out of ten times you went, there would be a crew in the shop...they'd all be doing something and they'd talk to you, and



*Charlie Bryan Mallard Drake*

tell you what to do. Every time you went, you looked and saw what they did and maybe you'd ask some fella why he was spokeshaving or what filler they were us-

ing. You just sorta' picked every bodies brain as best you could, without being too rude or impolite. You just tried to find out what he did and how he did it. I had an opportunity to work nights, so I took it 'cause this meant I could go gunning Monday morning, sleep Tuesday, gun Wednesday morning and go to work that afternoon. While I was on this evening shift, after hunting season was over, I

found out that Madison painted decorative decoys in the boiler room,

under his funeral home. Nine times out of ten he was by himself and I would go up in the morning and sometimes spend an hour or two talking with him and watching him paint. At this time it was just a one-on-one relationship. He'd cut brushes for me and I always took a note book and a pen along and I'd make notes.

*(Continued page 28)*

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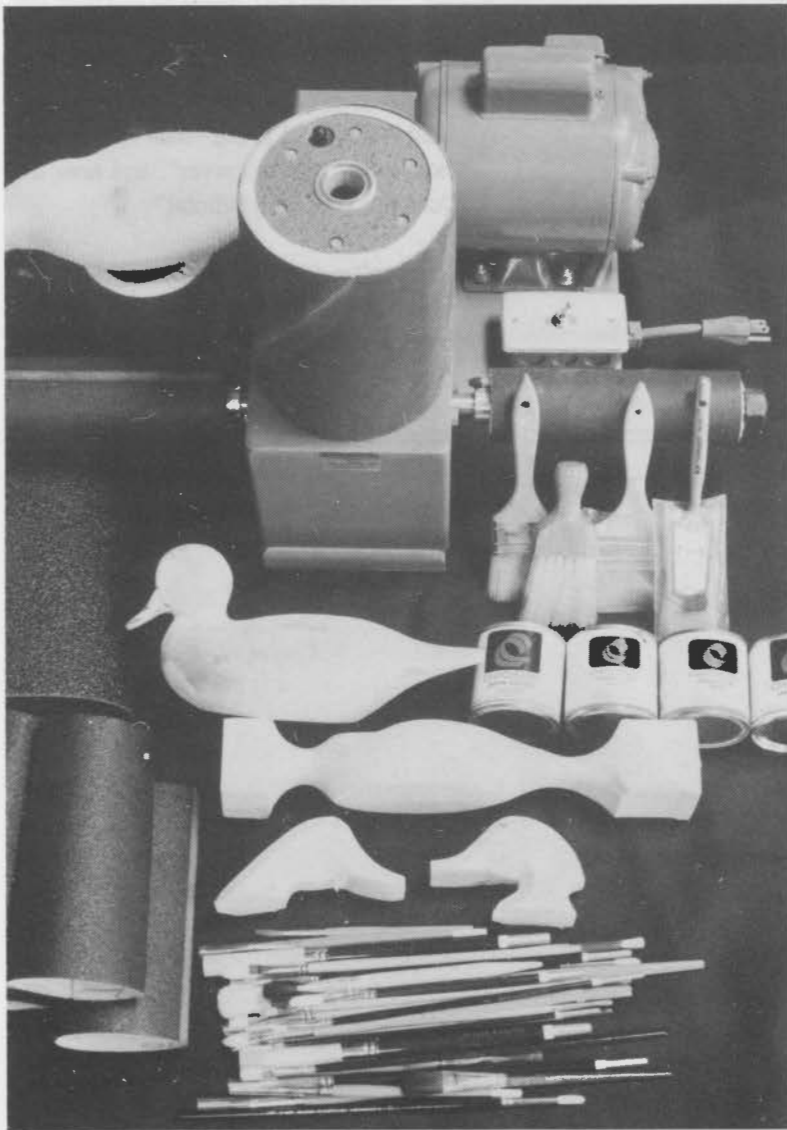
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(Currier Cont.) been individually hand chopped. Your mind begins to wander . .

"How can such a gentle man be so rugged on the Flats; so humble, and not compare himself to competitors; so content to work in solitude, but yet willing to share his secrets with others; so mature, to realize that his endeavor can share attention with others; Jim Currier should contribute more than decoys to this generation!

It is summer of 1952. You had many spectacular gunning trips during the 20's and early 30's accompanied with various "sport" friends in New York. Of course, Jim Currier was always the guide; constantly providing you and your party with bag limits, humorous stories, buckwheat cakes, and a desire to return. However, waterfowl begin to disappear, sink boxes were outlawed, and the area lost its attraction to such elaborate expeditions as to which you were accustomed. You de-

cide to visit your friend Jim that summer. You find him again resting on his hoe.

"Jim, are you doing any more gunning?"

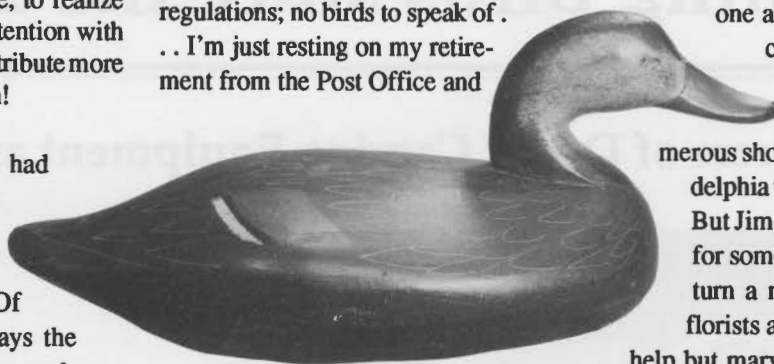
"No, that's a thing of the past. So many regulations; no birds to speak of . . I'm just resting on my retirement from the Post Office and

when you first visited. You are astonished that they have grown so well and are a center of attraction for many visiting Havre de Grace during the spring of each year.

You notice that his garden is not only productive with beautiful vegetables, but one area seems completely dedicated to flowers. He shows

you the many blue ribbons he has won in numerous shows from Baltimore to Philadelphia with his gladioli and dahlias.

But Jim, why spend all this time just for some blue ribbons? "Well, they turn a mighty nice penny too . . florists and funerals . . ." You can't help but marvel at the "man of the sink-box," the "master carver", and now the "champion of the gladiola!"



*Jim Currier Black Duck*

having fun with my glads, dahlias, and some carving."

You remind him of the azaleas he planted

You can't resist asking the inevitable. Since your gunning days with Jim, the lathe has entered and dominated the process of decoy carving. "Jim, have you considered using

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a lathe to duplicate your patterns?"

"Well, no, I never felt the need for that. The boys that use it are putting out a lot of decoys, and that's just fine, but I'm content to chop away."

You cannot help but be impressed with his pride in one decoy rather than becoming boastful of numbers.

"Are you doing much carving now?" "Well, now that gunning has come to an end, I still keep my hand in it and do some that are about half size, and some still full size. Some gentleman from Virginia seems to like what I do, so I keep him supplied about once a month with

whatever I feel like chopping. He says a lot of folks like to use them as decorations. I've tried to change my painting using a bit more detail than I would for a gunning rig. Takes a little longer, but I have a lot more time now. I've been getting about \$3.00 a piece, and that's all they're worth, spite of what my friends and family have been tell-

ing me. No decoy is worth more than 3 - 4 dollars!"

You leave with that thought. The value of the decoy to the gunner . . . no more than a few dollars . . . a fish hook in a sea of fish . . . but up in New York; in the game rooms of the "sports," and in the stashes of the collectors . . . \$3.00? . . . I'll take a hundred . . .

Jim Currier left us in April of 1969, only four months after Grace, his beloved wife, passed away. The home is still occupied by a member of her family, and the very mature azaleas are still an annual spring attraction to many. His garden has since been claimed by the city of Havre de Grace, covered with fill, and is utilized for community parking and summer events.

His workshop, located just across from the entrance to the present decoy museum, was dismantled with most of the contents being absorbed by unknown devotees to the legend of Jim Currier. These treasures may still be cherished by a few, but his unique charismatic personality should be indelibly inscribed in the hearts of many far removed from the boundaries of Havre de Grace.

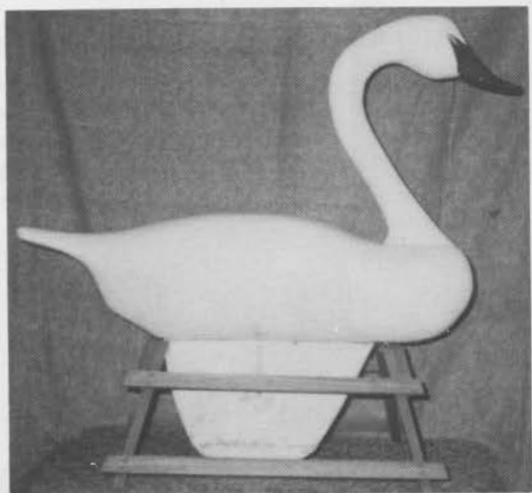
*Doug Woodburn is married to Jim's niece Dale. The two of them spent many a day visiting with this unique individual and The Canvasback would like to thank Doug for writing the article and Dale for the photos.*



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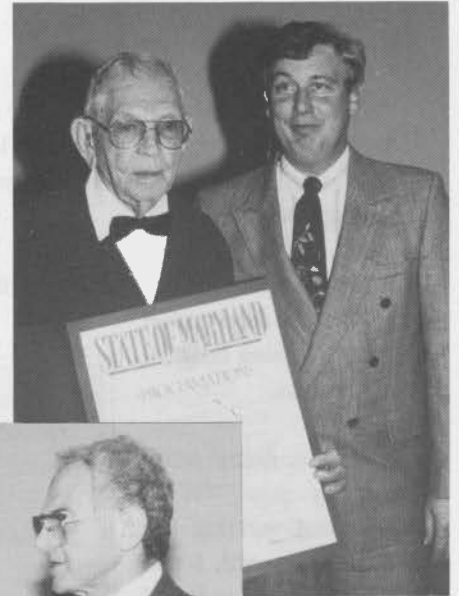
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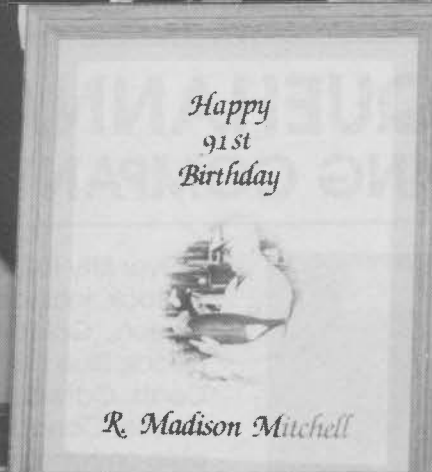
**Photo right:** R. Madison Mitchell receives Proclamation from Governor Schaefer presented by Rep. David Craig.

**Photo left:** Hugs from Cap't. Harry Jobs



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**Photo above:** Congratulations from Mayor Gunther Hirsch, Decoy Museum President Allen J. Fair looks on.

**Photo lower left:** Charles "Speed" Joiner & Jim Pierce share a moment with their mentor.

**Photo lower right:** Decoy Festival Honorary Chairmen Back row (l to r): Roger Urie, Harry Jobs, Jim Pierce. Front row (l to r): Bob Litzenberg, R. Madison Mitchell, Charlie Joiner.





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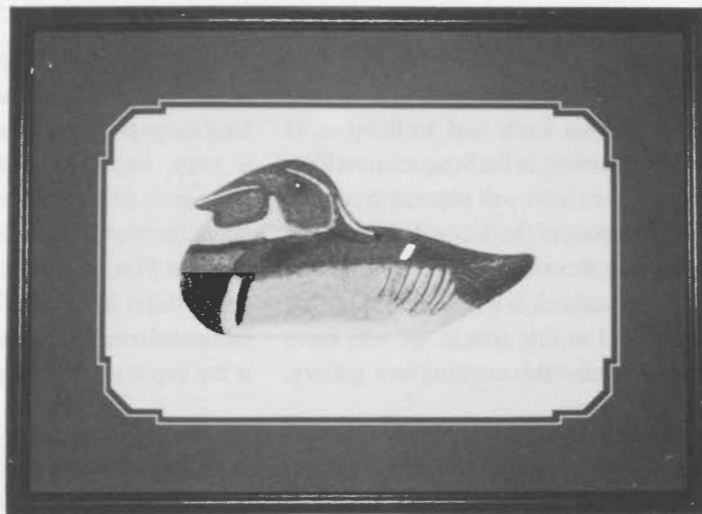
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# Gunning the Flats

## Exciting New Exhibit Planned for 1992-93

*By John Quarstein*

"Gunning the Flats" is the theme of an upcoming exhibit gallery which will focus on the various tools and techniques of waterfowl hunting in the Susquehanna Flats region. The exhibit will place into context the true purpose of the decoy: to lure waterfowl within shooting range. The last issue of the *Canvasback* briefly touched on this exhibit, and in this article we will more closely examine this exciting new gallery.

Gunning the Flats' thesis is to interpret the history of gunning so to understand the reason for the large scale production of decoys by so many carvers in the Havre de Grace area. It will review firearms technology, economics, boat construction, various methods of disguising the hunter, and nature's gift to mankind, the thousands of birds that migrated to the Chesapeake Bay each year. The exhibit will also seek to interpret why, due to environmental pressures and "outlaw" gunning techniques, waterfowl hunting has changed, which has therefore changed the purpose and production of decoys.

The Gunning the Flats exhibit was one of several new exhibit

galleries identified during a series of workshops held in 1990 as part of the museum's long range planning process. It was seen as a very important component of the museum's experience and due to the displays location within the museum, Gunning the Flats was selected to be the first new exhibit installed. The gallery will be fabricated over the existing pool area, giving it the depth to display gunning boats and

blinds in a manner which will allow the visitor to view these large objects similar to a real environment. The exhibit participant will be guided through the gallery on a boardwalk, which will give the display a designed traffic pattern to ensure thematic flow.

The Gunning the Flats exhibit will begin with an introduction to the Susquehanna

Flats region, explaining why this area beckoned so many migratory waterfowl to its waters each fall. This section will culminate at a recreated duckblind which will be a mini-theatre featuring a short interactive program, projecting a realistic understanding of this environment made for gunning.

The following section will focus on the economic and technological factors that gave rise to the intensive hunting on the Susquehanna Flats. After the Civil War, waterfowl gunning became a business. Rapid fire guns, specially designed boats, and decoy rigs enabled hunters to harvest large numbers of waterfowl which could be quickly shipped to market by railroad and steamship. The rise of market hunting will be interpreted

### Sinkboxes on the Flats

No discussion about the glory days of gunning on the Susquehanna Flats would be complete without mentioning the sinkbox. On November 1, 1893, Jesse Poplar of Havre de Grace killed 235 ducks using this type of boat. There were over 50 boxes operating out of Havre de Grace by 1920, with sportsmen like Grover Cleveland and J. Pierpont Morgan travelling to the head of the bay to enjoy this type of gunning.

Sinkboxes (also called batteries) were used by market and sport hunters on the Flats from the 1870's to 1934. These hunters took daily bags of one hundred plus birds from these deadly offshore blinds. Originating in the New York area (where it was first outlawed in 1839), the sinkbox reached its finest hours on the Susquehanna Flats. The *Baltimore Sun* reported that 5,000 birds were killed opening day in 1893 on the Flats, with many of the ducks being killed from sinkboxes.

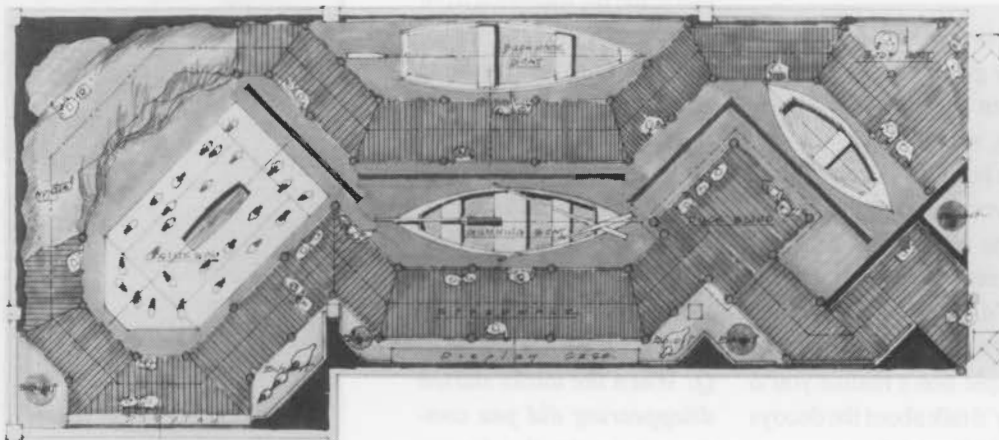
A sinkbox resembled a floating coffin with wooden canvas wings attached to it's sides to dampen the action of the waves. When properly weighted with iron decoys on the edge of the box, the entire rig was nearly flush with the water. Surrounded by two to four hundred decoys, the hunter sitting or lying down was well hidden from a low flying flock. The sinkbox would be transported out onto the Flats by a larger vessel (called a "sharpie" or "lay boat"), and smaller skiffs would be used to lay out the decoy rig in a pear shaped pattern.

The Decoy Museum is fortunate to have in it's collection the sinkbox used by Harry M. Barnes from 1918 to 1934. Barnes gunned with Ralph Murphy off Carpenter's Point. This sinkbox will be restored during the summer of 1992 and will be one of the featured artifacts in the "Gunning the Flats" exhibit gallery.

through a display of firearms, c. 1820-1918, depicting the evolution of ignition systems and self-contained cartridges that allowed the development of the automatic shotgun. Original duck price guides will detail this market as well as photopanel depicting the tremendous killing of birds during the height of the market gunning period (c. 1870-1918).

This exhibit section will focus around a punt gun skiff (which can be viewed from both sides of the gallery) and a fully rigged

sinkbox, two of the primary tools used by market gunners. The sinkbox, known as



“one of deadliest ways that has been devised to kill ducks” will also be used to discuss the Migratory Game Laws of 1918, 1934, and 1935, which were created to save the declining number of waterfowl.

The next major component of Gunning the

Flats will study the outlaw gunner, individuals who continued to use illegal hunting methods for sport or market. This section will feature a second view of the punt gun skiff as well as a bushwack boat to illuminate this deadly type of illegal hunting. Gunning lights, hand paddles, a battery gun and clothing will provide visual components to an oral history tape describing an evening's shoot. Models and photographs will also help to place this theme into perspective.

*(Continued page 29)*



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I'd say that's where the whole thing for me of Havre de Grace style of decoys became a reality.

**Q: One thing that strikes me about working decoys is they generally were much better looking than was actually necessary to lure ducks, why is that?**

Charlie: It's got to be ego a little bit along the line...I mean you try to make 'em as good as you can, as nice as you can, and when somebody compliments your work it feeds off that. I'd go somewhere every once in a while and see a pile of decoys that I'd made, and people don't realize you'd made 'em and they'd talk about the decoys and that made me feel good. I can remember one incident, I had this opportunity to gun in St. Michaels and we got there and this fellow must of had two or three wheelbarrels full of decoys on the lawn and I made 'em all...that made me feel proud.

**Q: Back in the fifties, how many decoys were you making each year?**

Charlie: I'd say I was averaging about five or six dozen decoys a season and I always made a couple hundred silhouettes, 'cause geese were coming on pretty strong and at that time they raised the goose limit from two to three, and a lot of fellows turned to

gunning geese instead of ducks because it was a whole lot better gunning. The geese had made the transition from the water to the field 'cause when the corn pickers came along the geese started feeding in the field. They made the transition, along with man, where the ducks didn't. I think this is the big thing that hurt the ducks...they stayed in the rivers.

**Q: When the ducks started disappearing did you continue to make the decoys, were people still trying to hunt?**

Charlie: There's always a few die hards, you'll even find a few today that still want the decoys to hunt with. I didn't realize a transition between gunning birds and collectors had come about. There is still a lot of people who prefer to collect the gunning birds, I don't know if it's a nostalgia thing. There's an awful difference in price between the \$35 decoys that I make today and the decorative birds that go for a couple of hundred dollars, so maybe it's financial. Of course, the decorative carvers, they're artists. They have a studio, and use tools like dentists tools and all that. I could never paint like they do.

**Q: It seems to me that you weren't really aware of the collecting boom?**

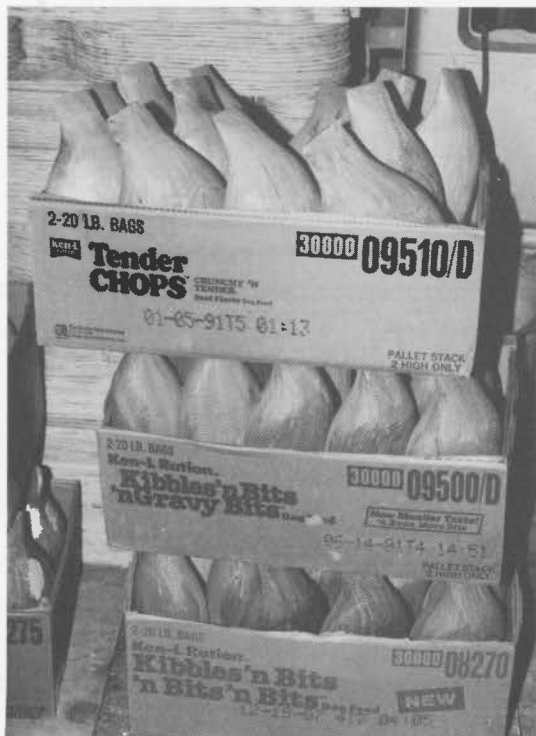
Charlie: I didn't even know it was happening, I knew that people collected decoys and you try and do the best you can with everything and you keep trying to improve, but I wasn't in it for a living, 'cause my living was as a railroad machinist, but I got a real satisfaction out of making the birds. The only thing I see today is you used to paint everything so it was flat, for the gun-



ning, no reflection. Today, you deliberately try to put a little sheen on the bird, they dust easier, they clean a little easier and they make a lot better appearance. A lot of people like glass eyes, but I never liked 'em because the water would get under them and they'd break. So I stayed with the painted eyes...the only time I use glass eyes is if I try to do something decorative.

**Q: Does it amaze you just how popular and expensive decoys have become?**

Charlie: I personally feel that a decoy costs too much. You can't say that it costs you X number of dollars to make, because you make decoys in steps. First you get a telephone pole and you break 'em down, and by the time you get the body turned you might have an hour or so into a bird and you don't realize it, because it's not working on 'em...you do it in stages. Somebody will say, "Well how long did it take to make it?" To this day I couldn't tell you. You make fifty or sixty birds and you make all the bodies, then you make all the heads. You might sand on the heads for awhile and something else will come up and then you go back and finish the heads. You never keep track of the time, so I couldn't tell you how long it takes or what it would



cost to make a decoy.

**Q: It seems that your style of decoy making has gotten away from the Havre de Grace style and become your own. Was this a conscious decision or one of evolution?**

Charlie: Well, I like the flat bottom decoy...I think they ride a little better and with the transition from all gunning birds to decorative birds, I tried to do what appealed to me. I've got the paint like Havre de Grace style, don't get me wrong, but I don't have the talent to paint like Charlie Joiner. Whenever I can mix it in or I think I can dress it up in some way this is what I'm gonna do. And I truthfully think I want as much detail in the head, and I want the head to be as close as possible to that specific bird. Because to me the character of the decoy is in the head. Basically you take any diving duck body and you can make almost any bird out of that body by the head you put on it. That basic Black Head or Canvasback body we make, you can make Red Heads, you can make Blue Bills, Cans, Golden Eyes...you can make all of them by changing that head. If you can make a decoy head you can make a decoy, anybody can do it. Anybody can learn to paint, if they have the patience. If you can paint window frames and don't have it all over the windows you can paint decoys. The only technique you have to learn is to put the wings on. That gingerbread, that Madison puts on, is with the cut brushes and when he gave me the brush I smeared a lot of paint, but each time you try, you get better at it.

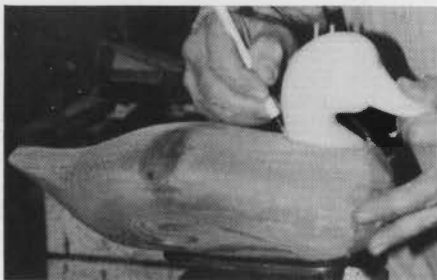
**Q: I'd like to finish up by asking you about the conditions which exist on the Bay. Do you think we're stemming the tide and that conditions are improving?**

Charlie: Well people are more aware of it, and I think this will help. Each generation will get more involved as they realize that its got to be done. Somebody like myself or that's older than myself saw all these ducks, but he's hard headed and can't make up his mind that something's got to be done, but

he still wants to go out there and catch Rock Fish. And I'll tell you there's plenty of fish, but that doesn't show the whole picture. The biologists and the people who actually measure and weigh 'em and do all this research work, they're the people you've got to trust and believe. You've got to have certain measures or the fish will disappear.

**Q: When you think back to the way things used to be what do you think is the primary reason for the problems the Bay is faced with today?**

Charlie: I think development has done it...I really do. Reason I say that is all these new homes and developments they put up, everything's got black top on the drive-ways and everyone has to have a beautiful lawn. At one time that was all farm land and nature took care of itself. Now the guy out front has got to have a better lawn than his neighbor and he's got a fertilizer company coming in and they put down *nine thousand* different chemicals, just to kill one weed. And I'll tell you, one weed isn't gonna hurt anything, you just pull them out. When you put all this on the grass its got to go somewhere and it all winds up in the Bay. And it carries all these pollutants with it, so consequently the quality of the water has got to go down hill. Remember, the Bay can't clean itself out with every tide, so it eventually builds up. Industry is the same way...dump it overboard is the easiest way. Its kinda like out of sight out of mind. Its just got to change and I think over the generations they will realize this. Unfortunately, its up the young generation, but I think they'll do it...they will help it, because I think they realize better than us that things have to change.



### **(Gunning the Flats Cont.)**

The final section will discuss the sport of hunting today with insights provided to review "legal" gunning. Topics such as "body-booting" will be interpreted using objects like a seine-hauler's outfit with a swan decoy stand for holding shells and shotgun, juxtaposed against a vivid photo-panel.

Construction of Gunning the Flats will begin this September, with the anticipated completion date of May 1993. The Decoy Museum is still seeking additional artifacts as well as financial contributions to help underwrite fabrication costs. If you are interested in helping to support this important exhibit project, please contact the Museum's Curator, Jenny O'Flaherty.

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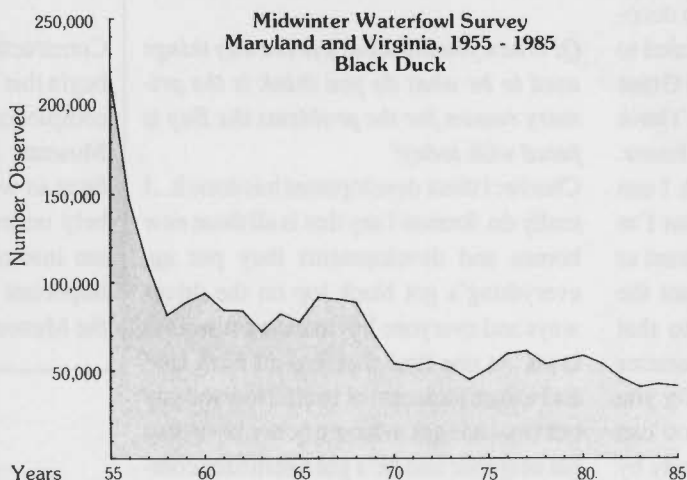
terfowl. In some shallow ponds the replanting projects have been successful, but unfortunately, until the overall quality of the Bay's water improves, even cultivated plant life has very little chance of flourishing enough to sustain both dabblers and divers.

Fortunately, the hunting pressure on Canvasbacks no longer exists to the extent it did in the past. Historically, Canvasbacks were hunted by the thousands for its delicious flavor and sold to markets all along the East coast. As underwater plant life declined and the Canvasbacks switched their diet to shellfish, their taste also changed to an undesirable "fishy" essence. Therefore, hunting Canvasbacks for food is no longer occurring at the rate it once did. There were two laws passed in

the early part of this century which greatly reduced the impact of hunting on waterfowl populations. The first law was the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, which banned commercial hunting, and in 1934 the state of Maryland outlawed the use of the sinkbox, which, as most readers are aware, was extremely effective for hunt-

ing waterfowl. The hunters of today can only dream about the number of Black ducks and Canvasbacks which used to migrate to the Chesapeake each year and these two important laws helped keep the populations from declining further.

There has been some successes on the Chesapeake in improving land use, water quality, and restrictions in hunting waterfowl by various government and private groups working to save the Bay, but there is still a long way to go for a significant comeback in the dabbling and diving duck populations. There still remains a strong hope however, that waterfowl populations on the Chesapeake Bay will return to their historic levels.



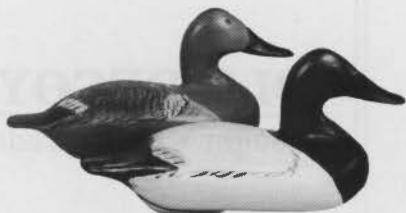
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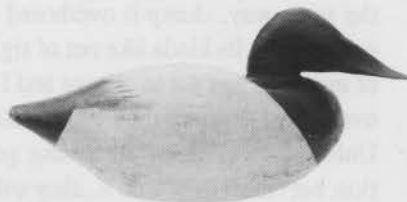
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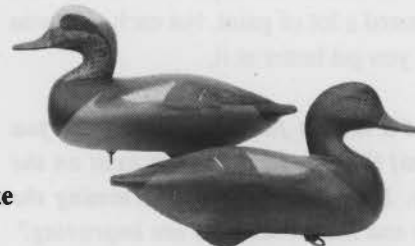
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Unknown maker  
Susquehanna River Canvasback Drake  
in original paint



Pair Clarence Webb Baldpates

*Dick Larimore is a Lifetime Member and supporter of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum*

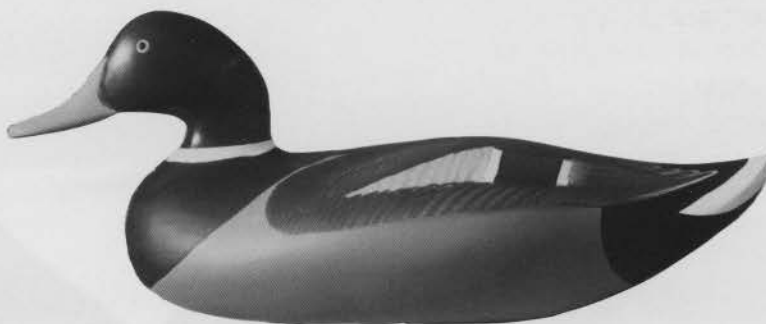
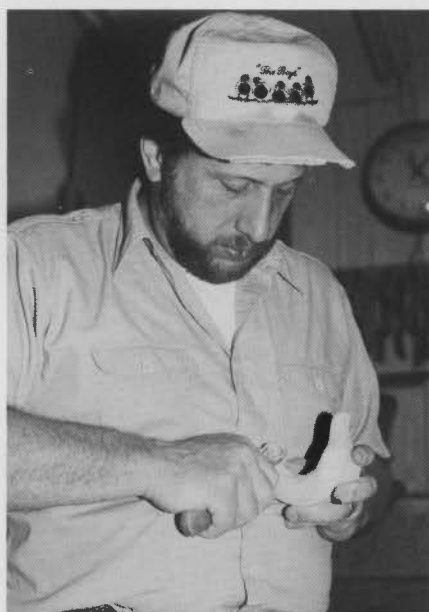
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