

The Canvasback

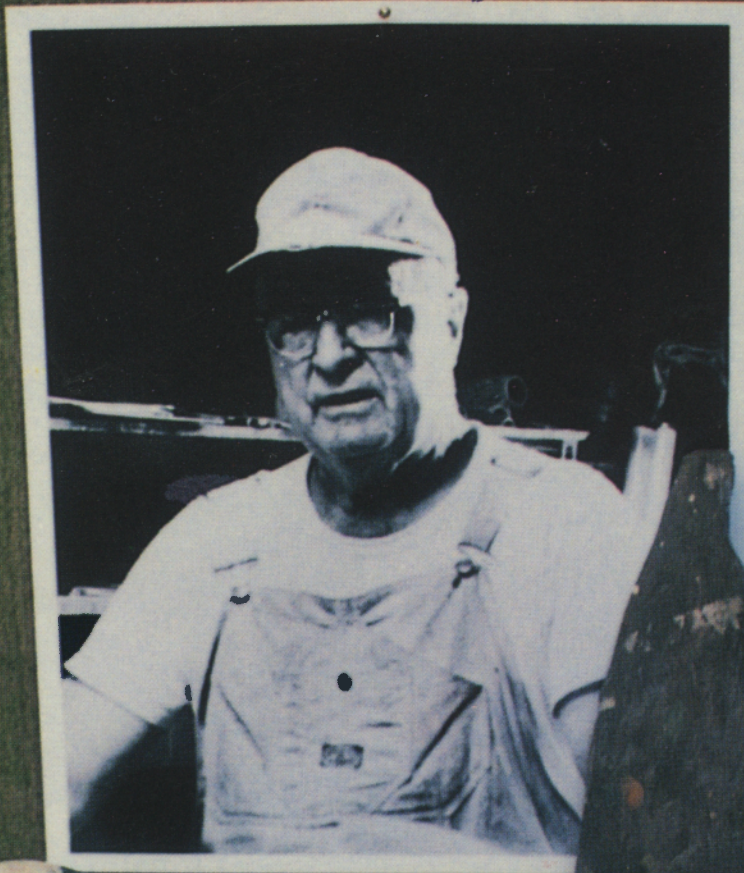
Fall 1992

Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

\$3.00

Paul Gibson

Decoy Maker
and
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Havre de Grace Decoy Museum



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 of the Susquehanna Flats region. 3. A quarterly publication of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

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ON THE COVER

Photo of Paul Gibson in his shop on Ontario St., by C. John Sullivan, c. 1983. Drake baldpate decoy, c. 1948. Sheet lead template, made by Gibson, a painting aid for marking speculum placement.

Photo and decoy courtesy of Barbara & C. John Sullivan. Template from the HdeG Decoy Museum collection.

THE EDITOR'S DESK

The Canvasback is pleased to have essays in this Fall issue from two excellent writers. We hope that you enjoy these pieces. Our purpose is to inform our friends and supporters about the museum, and provide interesting and educational articles to our readers. Please feel free to write the editor with your suggestions, constructive advice and criticism.

Several changes have occurred since the last issue was printed. The museum's Curator resigned but continues to work for the museum as the Canvasback's editor. Her decision to make this move was based on a desire to spend more time with her growing children. New staff member Karen Marshall will serve as Museum Manager. You can read about her in this issue. Recent elections brought new faces to the board and changes in the officers of the board.

The Board of Directors and Staff hopes the joy of the upcoming holiday season will bring peace and contentment, and that the New Year will be prosperous and secure.

Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

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1992-1993

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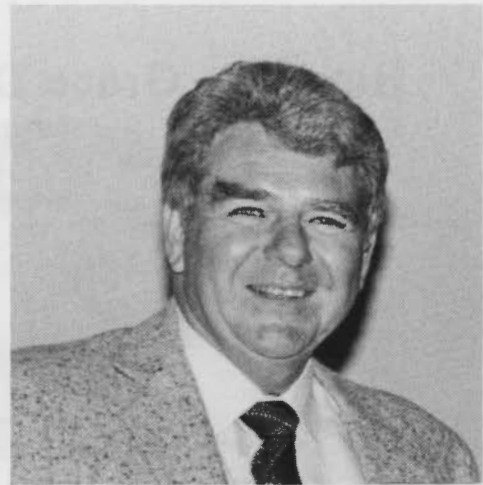
Bel Air, Maryland

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The Canvasback

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From the President



Dear Museum Member,

First, thanks to everyone who helped to make this year's Duck Fair a success. The over fifteen hundred people who attended had a great time and had the opportunity to meet the legendary decoy painter Severn W. Hall. This fair is one of my favorite events and its yearly improvement can be attributed to the efforts of its chairwomen Barbara Gilden and her committee.

Let me remind the museum's friends about two upcoming events. I hope you will be able to join us on Nov 20th for the **6th Anniversary Dinner**, a live auction following dinner will feature items of interest to decoy collectors. The Decoy Museum is featured on the **Christmas Candlelight Tour of Historic Havre de Grace** which begins at 4 pm on December 13th. The museum's gift shop will again feature a special 25% discount to museum members all day. So come see us on the 13th and save on your Christmas shopping while helping support the museum.

On September 12th the 1st annual Carvers Appreciation Day marked the first regular use of the second floor. A new exhibit featuring tools and equipment used by Paul Gibson and a demonstration area for weekend carvers was dedicated that day. The second floor is further enhanced by twenty-three stained glass windows designed by artist Paul Shertz and made by A Touch of Glass in Havre de Grace. These windows frame the view of the Susquehanna Flats and are a tribute to various decoy makers and are a fitting memorial for beloved family members and respected friends. Thanks to each person who contributed to the fund that made this beautiful display possible.

Allen J. Fair
President, Board of Directors

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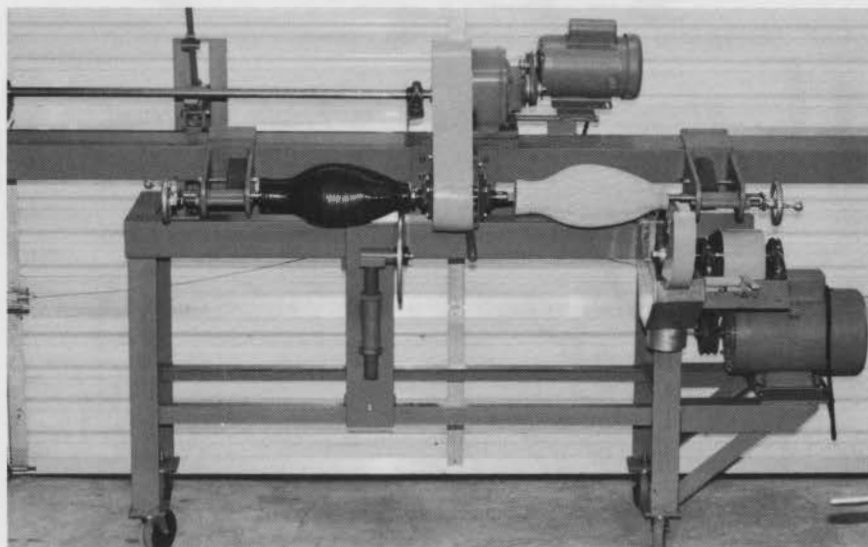
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Species	Price	Species	Price	Species	Price
Mallard	\$40 ea	Green Wing Teal	\$40 ea	Ruddy Ducks	\$50 ea
Black Duck	\$40 ea	Cinnamon Teal	\$40 ea	Blue Geese	\$50 ea
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Canvasback	\$50 ea			1/2 size Swan Lamp	\$120 ea
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Events Around the Bay

<p>November 13, 14 & 15 Waterfowl Festival</p> <p>@ Sites throughout Easton, colonial capital of Maryland's Eastern Shore</p> <p>contact: Ann White (410) 822-4567</p>	<p>November 20, 21, 22 Chesapeake Craft Fair</p> <p>@ Maryland State Fair Grounds, Timonium MD</p> <p>contact: Donald A. Hastings (410) 524-9177</p>	<p>November 28 & 29 Chincoteague Island <i>Chapter of Deborah</i> Waterfowl Show @ Chincoteague H. S. Gym</p> <p>contact: Jean Boggs-Clark (804) 336-3478</p>	<p>December 13 Christmas Candelight Tour <i>of Historic Havre de Grace</i> @ sites throughout Havre de Grace</p> <p>contact: Norma Montgomery (410) 939-2686</p>
<p>January 29, 30 & 31 Mid-Atlantic Wildfowl Festival</p> <p>@ Virginia Beach Pavillion, Virginia Beach, Va.</p> <p>contact: Charles N. Seidel (804) 426-2542</p>	<p>November 20 The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum's 6th Anniversary Dinner</p> <p>@ the museum's beautiful 2nd floor 6:00 P.M. - Dinner at 7:00P.M. Tickets \$20. - Cash Bar - Live Auction -Volunteer of the Year Award- for tickets or reservations call (410)939-3739</p>		<p>Send us Your Listing</p> <p>Events Around the Bay is a free service of the Canvasback. The magazine is published quarterly, so send us your listing information as soon as possible. Deadline for the Winter issue is December 1</p>



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Weekend Carving Demonstrations

at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum



Visit the Decoy Museum this November, December and January to see demonstrations of contemporary decoy carvers and waterfowl artists. Enjoy this unique opportunity to meet and talk with the following artists.

October 3	Joe Cook	December 12	Jack Simpers
October 4	Capt. Harry Jobes	December 13	George Hendricks
October 10	Joe Cook	December 19	Ken Clodfelter
October 11	John Simpers	December 20	Harold Goodman
October 17	Leonard Burcham	December 26	unscheduled
October 18	Nick Birster	December 27	unscheduled
October 24	Ken Clodfelter		
October 25	John Meredith	January 2	Richard & Frances Gick
October 31	Noble Mentzer	January 3	Richard & Frances Gick
November 1	Ed Watts	January 9	Capt. Roger Urie
November 7	Butch & Mary	January 10	Jim Pierce
	Carol Larrimore	January 16	Al Berger
November 8	Butch & Mary	January 17	Tom Harmon
	Carol Larrimore	January 23	Warner Taylor
November 14	Harold Goodman	January 24	Lou & Jim Hottes
November 15	Charles Bryan	January 30	Dave Walker
November 21	Steiner Pierce	January 31	Rick Raposelli
November 22	Bob & Charles Jobes		
November 28	Mike Dedekind		
November 29	Art Hott		
December 5	Margaret Todd		
December 6	Linda & Dick Robinson		

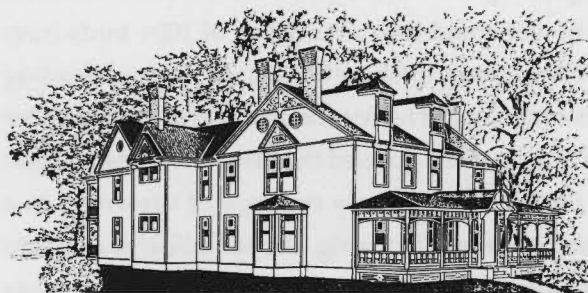
A BIG "Thank You" to all the carvers listed here, and to those who will follow....

Dottie

Dottie Wise, Program Coordinator

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Fall Canvasback



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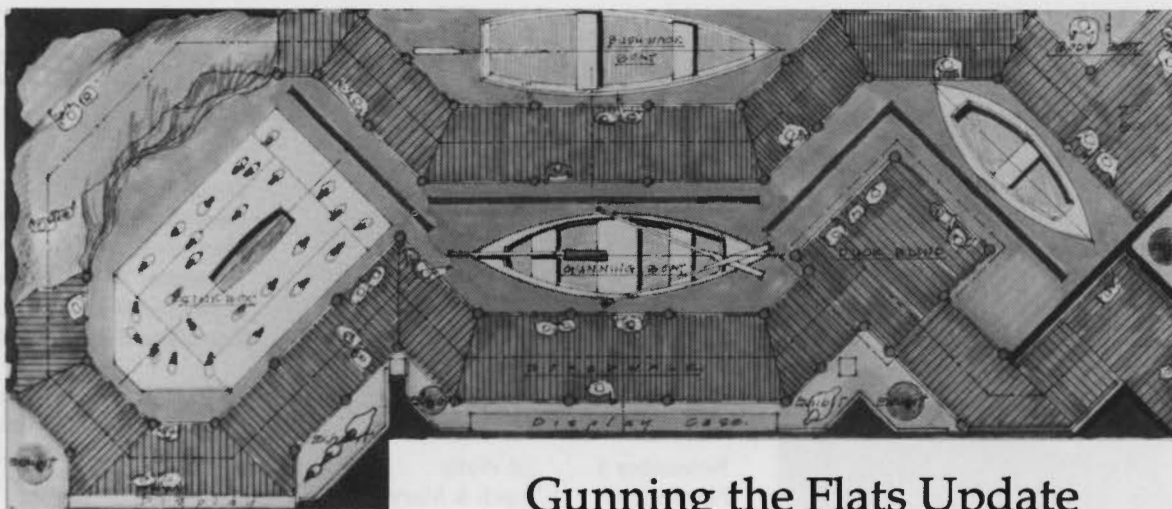
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Gunning the Flats Update

Volunteers are hard at work preparing artifacts to display in the Gunning the Flats gallery. In the past four weeks Ed Watts, Jim Pierce, Ron Chavers, Norm

Smith, Warner Taylor, Butch Larrimore, Wayne Thayer and Kenny Lay have completed the restoration of the Harry S. Barnes sinkbox. The conservation process entailed the replacement of the canvas wings and rotten wood, as well as repainting the box once sanding had been completed.

The sinkbox was one of the most effective methods of duck hunting during the heyday of market gunning on the Susquehanna Flats. A seasoned hunter could take a daily bag of 100+ birds from these deadly offshore blinds, yet sinkbox shooting

was also cold, wet and often dangerous. If heavy seas ran over the box a hunter was in mortal danger. Bennet Keen, who gunned the Flats for 70 years noted: "Strange as it may seem, I can remember only one case of drowning in a sinkbox, and I am glad to say it was not in my rig. A poor fellow shot a hole in the box and went to the bottom with his boots on." The use of sinkboxes was outlawed in Maryland in 1935 as part of the state's effort to conserve the nation's waterfowl populations.

The Harry S. Barnes' sinkbox will be one of the key artifacts in the Gunning the Flat exhibit gallery. Barnes gunned with Ralph Murphy off Carpenter's Point from 1918 to 1934, using a punt gun at night and the sinkbox by day as 'it took both to make a decent living as commercial gunners.' This sinkbox will be displayed rigged for gunning and will make this section of Gunning the Flats come alive as the essence of duck hunting as a sport and commercial endeavor.



by John Quarstein

The Decoy Museum is currently in the process of restoring the various boats and blinds for Gunning the Flats in preparation for construction of the exhibits boardwalk. If you have not had the opportunity to purchase one of the boards, please consider doing so now as the museum needs your support to help make this gallery a reality. And please consider volunteering your woodworking skills to help build this important new permanent exhibit. If you are interested contact Jim Pierce or Ed Watts at the museum. ♦



Carvers Christmas Tree

Last Christmas a new kind of tree was on display at the museum. A threaded rod serves as the axis for raw wood branches that radiate in ever decreasing length from its base to its top. Scattered at the foot of the tree are shavings and chips collected from the carvers who demonstrate at the museum during the year. The tree is decorated with more than twenty painted and signed duck head ornaments.

Mary Bengtson, the museum's clerk, who conceived and coordinated this charming project, invites carvers who have not yet made a decoration for the tree to bring in one of their creations. Let your imagination be your guide, on this tree there are no rules. Please bring in a head and join in good company to decorate this new Christmas tradition at the Decoy Museum. Thank you, each and every one.

On December 13th

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Contretemps: A Duck Hunter's Tale

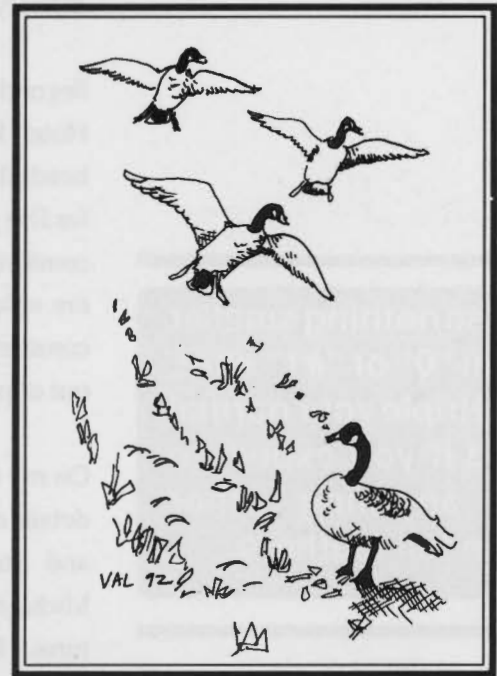
I grew up in the nearly duckless state of Georgia, so it was inevitable that when fate brought me to Delaware, part of the peninsula embraced by the Delaware and Chesapeake Bays, I should be introduced to duck hunting by well meaning friends. During my youth I sought whatever walked, climbed, flew, crawled or swam. If it lived in the fields or swam in the waters of Georgia, I was after it. But I never had any quarry capture me the way duck hunting did here in the land of pleasant living. Nor have I experienced a greater thrill than the challenge offered by faster-than-a-speeding-bullet ducks. As I discovered later in my duck hunting career, there are faster-than-a-speeding-bullet ducks, and they are sea ducks.

Several years ago I decided not to shoot any more Canada geese. Over the years I brought home more Canadas than I willingly care to remember and something about their majesty finally overtook me. I will always feel there is no greater sight in nature than a flight of Canadas turning into the wind and settling down into a cornfield, and I want my grandchildren to enjoy that sight.

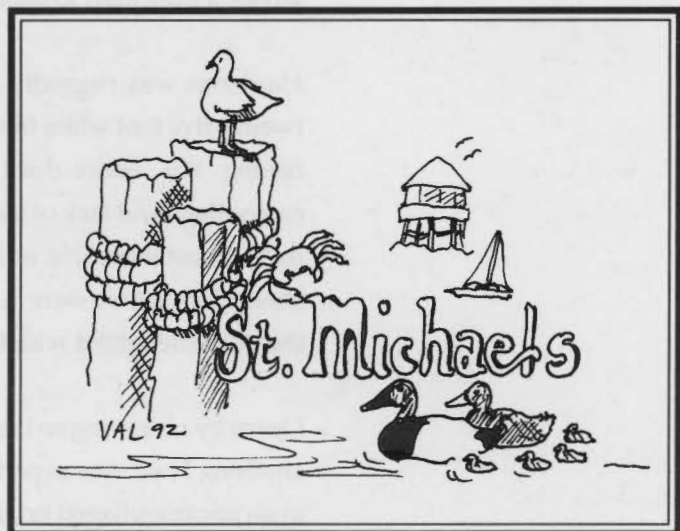
With these magnificent geese no longer a target I turned my attention solely to ducks. Given the fact that our duck population on the Delmarva Peninsula has been on the wane, I faced the very real possibility of losing my wintertime avocation until I discovered the sea duck.

For a long time now my heart has resided in the general area of that most quaint of Eastern Shore Maryland towns, St. Michaels. As often as possible I take my body there to be briefly joined with my heart, and on one trip I went beyond St. Michaels to the fishing and crabbing community of Tilghman Island.

In order to be completely at peace with this waterman's village, you stop just before crossing the drawbridge and turn your watch back one hundred years. At the city dock a small fleet of working boats is tied up. The largest are the mag-



by Mel Stout
Illustrations by Valerie LLoyd



...use nothing smaller than "0" or "#1" shot, and triple your normal lead if you expect to hit anything other than tail feathers.

nificent skipjacks, the last true working sailboats in the United States. These large single-masted boats work the bay for oysters and clams during the coldest months of the year, and in warmer months for that Chesapeake Bay delicacy, the blue crab.

Beyond the city dock and hard by Harris Creek sits the Chesapeake House Hotel, known as the Harrison House to its aficionados. "Buddy" Harrison heads this restaurant, fishing marina and sea ducking conglomerate which has for five generations been run by the Harrison family. I have come to love the comfort and camaraderie of this most casual of institutions. It isn't that neckties are unknown here - some restaurant patrons wear them - they just aren't considered an essential part of one's wardrobe. A hunting party wouldn't be out of place if a well mannered retriever was brought into the restaurant.

On my first visit to the Harrison House I spotted a brochure spelling out the details of their sea duck hunting package. I thought the price was reasonable and started talking it up to my friend, Dick Hartman. This transplanted Michigander is always interested in middle of the night duck hunting adventures. He was intrigued and so we made plans to take on sea ducks during the coming season.

Experience had taught both of us to do a little reconnaissance work before going hunting. The problem was, we couldn't find anyone who had been "sea duckin'" as we learned to call it. The only universal truth we could discover was that the ducks weren't fit to eat unless lots of pre-cooking work was done on these winged wonders. Among the few tidbits of information we did learn was to use nothing smaller, "0" or "#1" shot, and to triple your normal lead if you expected to hit anything other than tail feathers. I found that last bit of advice a little hard to believe - until I shot out my first tail feathers.

Harrisons was ruggedly outfitted to go after these birds, using the same twenty-five foot white fiberglass center console boats used in the summer for fishing. My entire duck hunting experience dwelt on the proper use of camouflage and lack of movement while laying in wait for ducks, preferably on the most miserable weather days of winter. As I studied the star filled sky I knew for sure we were in for a "blue bird" day and was quite surprised to see the guide delighted with the weather conditions.

I learn by observing so I decided to be quiet and what I saw was quite unlike anything I had ever experienced. There we were several miles out in the Bay in an uncamouflaged bright white boat, sitting in deck chairs drinking coffee

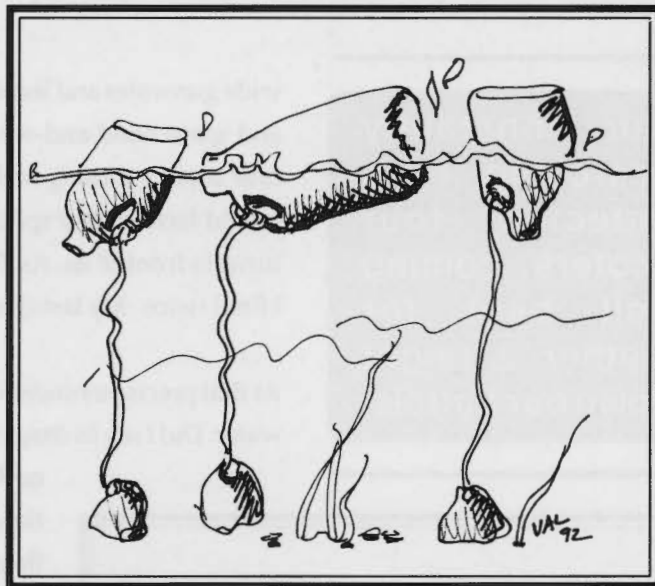
and looking out over several strings of decoys made of black painted Clorox bottles! I knew that my money was probably wasted but consoled myself that any day spent on the Chesapeake couldn't be all bad. How wrong I was.

Pretty soon the first scoters came barrelling down on us. Amidst plenty of shells being spent, we gave a whole new meaning to the word humble. Neither Dick nor I are the worst shots in the world, but at that moment you could have made a pretty good case for it. I couldn't believe that it was possible to miss birds so badly. Regular duck hunting doesn't prepare you for the speed of these sea ducks. I am told they fly about 65 miles per hour on a calm day and these birds were flying downwind! The limit back then was ten birds per hunter and I thought it likely that we would have a birthday in the boat before we got our limits. We eventually made the limit but I can assure you that shotgun shell manufacturers were greatly enriched before the day was over.

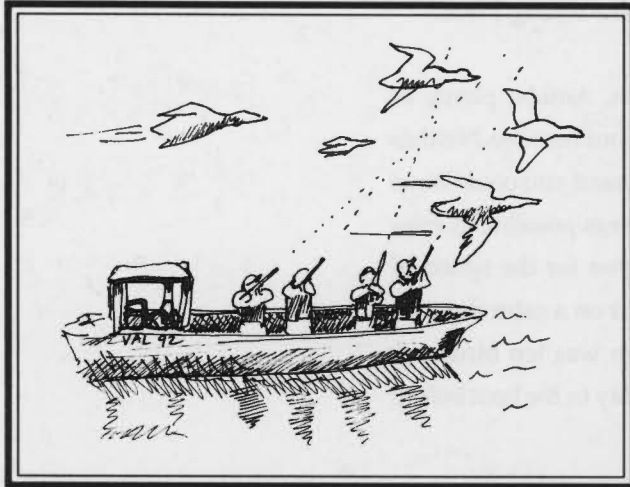
Many things have changed in the seasons since then. Clorox bottles no longer fool these birds, and Dick and I are no longer directly responsible for the college educations of a generation of Remingtons. Our sons have joined us and enjoy the sport at least as much as we do. I even recall my son eager to plan our next trip after shooting his first sea duck.

My son Tom began duck hunting with me in the sixth year of his young life. Against my better judgement I took him hunting with me on a cold and miserable December morning. His clothing was no match for the weather and he spent most of that day being very, very cold. I eventually took his shoes off and put his feet inside my parka for warmth. As I laid out my clothes for the next trip he came and placed his alongside mine. Right then I knew he had identified with my love of the outdoors and duck hunting and I was a very happy father.

So it was on a pleasant November day in 1991 that Tom, my son-in-law Kevin, and Greg Horning, one of Tom's business partners, and I went sea duckin' yet again. Neither Kevin nor Greg had been before, so I maneuvered them into the prime shooting locations in the stern of the boat, anticipating they would at least have opportunities to fire their shotguns, whether they hit anything or not. The day was full of adventure, that is if you like no birds flying and the boat motor conking out. Fortunately our guide was a good enough mechanic to



finally get it running again and we picked up the decoys (now actual ducks, not bottles) and went to what we hoped would be a better location. It was better, but not great, and we did get in some shooting but the highlight (or lowlight for me) occurred near the end.



Our constantly searching eyes detected four scoters coming hell bent for leather straight down our barrels.

Tom and I were up towards the bow, standing on the wide gunwales and leaning against the homemade cabin - actually a plywood and glass wind-and-water shelter. Our constantly searching eyes detected four scoters coming hell bent for leather straight down our barrels. As luck would have it they split into two pairs and did two opposite ninety degree turns in front of us. As Tom turned to fire on his pair I did the same on mine. I fired twice. My last clear memory is of one of the two birds hitting the water.

At that precise moment I had lost balance and was in danger of falling into the water. Did I say in danger? I grabbed desperately for some purchase but found nothing that would stop my inexorable backwards direction. Somewhere between the gunwale and the water I threw my empty double barrel in Tom's direction and yelled an appropriate obscenity before hitting the water. My cap floated like a marker used by scuba divers indicating my position.



During the trip to the bottom I thought many things about the absurdity of what had just happened, not the least of which was "You dumb s— of a b——!" I was hoping not to go as far as the bottom, which I did; or to find it hard, which it was. When I hit bottom I flexed my knees and sprung back to the top where I was greeted by eight of the largest eyes I have ever seen. There was a great rush to get me back aboard, so great that my head slammed into the side of the boat. That move gave me a colorful eye the next day to give credence to my story.

cont. p.30

In today's age of restricted seasons and bag limits, many duck hunters are in hot pursuit of a different breed of duck, the working or decorative decoy. One of the finest "hunting grounds" for these rare birds is Easton, Maryland, during the twenty second annual Waterfowl Festival. The Festival, which will be held on November 13, 14 and 15 this year, has numerous venues for serious and casual collectors.

A good place to start the hunt is the Old Armory, where the world's finest carvers display their artistry. These decorative decoys, which

1992 Waterfowl Festival

November 13, 14 & 15
Easton, Maryland

The Waterfowl Festival, a celebration of the arts, is produced annually in November by Waterfowl Festival, Inc., a non-profit organization. All proceeds are used to fund groups acting in the cause of waterfowl conservation and education.

by Bob Blatchley



can also be found at the VFW, and the Gold Room, are unparalleled in their exquisite feathering and painting detail. A chance to chat with the creators of this art form adds to the enjoyment of the Festival visitors.

While not for sale, the decoys on display at the Artifacts Exhibit at St. Mark's Church give the collector a chance to appreciate the work of legendary decoy makers from various regions of the country. These decoys are obtained from some of our nation's finest private collections and

cont. p. 29






Paul Gibson

Decoy Maker & Painter

by C. John Sullivan



In the mid-1960's I began to acquire decoys with an unrelenting enthusiasm that is shared by so many new collectors. In those days I, like hundreds of unguided souls, headed out to accumulate rather than collect. The concept was to acquire as many decoys as possible - anything that vaguely resembled a duck was fair game.

It was at about this time that I was to meet and become lasting friends with some individuals who would change my direction in decoy collecting, and ultimately, my life. In 1968, R. Madison Mitchell, Jr. came to work for the county government where I was employed. When Mitch was assigned an office, one of the first decorative items he was to place in his office was a photo of his father holding one of his decoys. The photo, of course, caught my attention, and based on my keen interest, Mitch arranged to take me to Havre de Grace to meet his father and purchase my first new Mitchell decoys.

I will always recall those first decoys: I paid six (6) dollars each for ducks and eight (8) dollars each for geese. I quickly gathered those decoys from my accumulation that most closely resembled my recently purchased new decoys and traveled back to Havre de Grace. When Mr. Mitchell examined those decoys he looked at each one, identifying his and setting aside those made by others. The decoys all seemed so very similar that I couldn't distinguish any differences between them. Madison then proceeded to give me my first lesson in decoy identification, pointing out subtle differences between decoys by the various Havre de Grace carvers.

Many of the examples which Mr. Mitchell set aside he identified as being made by Paul Gibson. I loaded up my decoys and headed across town to Ontario Street, to the shop of Mr. Gibson. As I opened the side yard gate and started toward the shop a big burly-looking man opened the kitchen door and asked if he could help me. I identified myself and found myself in the presence of none other than Paul Gibson. This congenial gentleman invited me into the kitchen to meet his wife Mae, where I was to join them for Mrs. Gibson's homemade cookies and coffee. That first visit was to be one of many over the years to come. Paul and Mae would go out of their way as hosts for me and my wife, and especially my young son John. Saturday morning was always a good time to visit, and many hours were spent sitting on a stool in front of Paul's carving bench, or in a chair facing him as he painted decoys.

Those visits were pleasant recollections on Paul's life in and around Havre de Grace. Paul was born in 1902, one of five children in his family. His father Hugh, a waterman, market gunner and woodworker, died in 1904. Paul left school at an early age to help support the family. His association with old time

hunters, watermen and decoy makers influenced him, and under Samuel T. Barnes' tutelage, Paul carved his very first decoy, a miniature canvasback, at age thirteen.



Paul Gibson on his lawn on Ontario Street with Country Girl and Brownie.
Private Collection

Paul's stories, as he worked about the shop, related his experiences duck shooting on his beloved Susquehanna Flats and gunning for rabbits in the River Hills. Paul much preferred bushwhacking for canvasbacks, than gunning from his sinkbox. His pleasure in rabbit hunting seemed to come as much from watching and listening to his prize beagles, as from the actual shooting experience. Paul had belonged to a club that gunned on Marlyand's Eastern Shore. He had one favorite story from

an outing with his beagles. One winter day it was so cold, Paul said, that the dogs, Country Girl and Brownie, couldn't pick up the rabbit's scent. When the rabbits ran past the beagles, Paul had to chase the dogs to make them run.

Paul's gunning partners told me that, when Paul gunned with them, he loved to tell stories about his experiences with the Edgewood Arsenal Fire Department. Paul had retired as chief of that fire department in 1965, and had fought every major fire on that military reservation during his career.

Over the years as I watched Paul sign his decoys, he always signed each one the same, "Paul Gibson, Maker and Painter, Havre de Grace, Md." This signature, I was to find out, indicated that no one else had worked on the decoy - it was Paul's work and no one else's. Paul sawed the block, turned the body, carved the head, spoke shaved the body, sanded it, attached the head, primed it, and painted it, floated and weighted it.

From the moment that a visitor entered on the Gibson property, they would be struck by the fastidiousness of the lawn, the house, and the garden. The same attention to order was evident throughout the shop. Paul prided himself on making as good a product as he could possibly make. His workmanship was evident in his decoys, the furniture he made, the boats he built and repaired, and the novel items he turned out. I have a bird feeder that Paul made in approximately 1940. It is designed to last at least 100 years with the proper care.

Paul was an innovator in his one-man operation and set aside specific areas in his rambling two-story shop for each step in his decoy making process. As a visitor entered the shop, Paul's attention to order was an immediate eye-catcher. The long workbench (where Aubrey Bodine photographed Paul in 1940) was arranged in such a fashion that everything was placed for easy access: spoke shaves, draw knives, and carving knives each had their own reserved space. Two large windows above the workbench flooded the room with natural light. Placed in the windows were head patterns for the various species that Paul carved. Attached to the bench were wooden vices to hold decoy bodies.

One of my favorite spots was at the left of the workbench. Here were hung a series of five drawers from an ancient Havre de Grace apothecary shop. The drawers were marked with porcelain labels in Latin: *Thymus*, *Prunivirg*, *Nux Vomica*, etc. Then, next to their proper former life names, Paul had attached sample nails indicating what had now replaced the drawers' first life contents. If that was not enough to build character for those drawers, Paul had attached to their exposed sides small decoy body sections decorated with his very best paint. These body sections were slender slabs removed from decoy bodies when Paul had made ornamental wall plaques in the 1940's.

In that same bright room with the long workbench, were Paul's lathe, band saws, table saws and sanders. Wood dust rested on the window mullions and the floor below like a soft dry snow. Out the door to the left was his saw mill, while a small door to the right led to his lead melting and iron working shop. Out of the main door and into the garage, a visitor would head up the stairs to

The moment that a visitor entered on the Gibson property they would be struck by the fastidiousness of the lawn, the house, the garden... the same attention to order was evident throughout the shop.

the paint loft. Paul would warn each guest to watch their head on the low beam, but somehow I managed to get a minor concussion about every other visit to the shop. Paul's paint loft was heated by a large wood stove, which warmed one thoroughly on a cold winter day. There is no heat more pleasant than that from a wood stove, and when the fuel is white pine and cedar from decoy scraps, it seemed even more so.

The paint loft held not only the painting necessities, but the paints, the brushes, a painting table and drying racks, but other bits of nostalgia from a waterman's life. Here rested Paul's skulling oars, two sets of loom oars, boat lights, anchors and rope. From the paint loft one step led up to a large bright room with a long row of windows and an additional drying rack. This room was usually reserved for the larger birds and geese. This drying room was where Paul had placed his weighting table. Paul floated every decoy in a tub, then moved the bird onto a padded table where the weight would be attached. A formal air was

given to this room, not by just the order maintained on the drying rack, but by the presence of Paul's fire chief's uniform hanging to the right of the rack.

Paul's production of decoys over the years was not enormous. He made a quality product and if a decoy buyer was willing to wait, he could be sure that he would ultimately receive a decoy that would last. Paul made Canada geese, canvasbacks, redheads, bluebills, baldpates, mallards, blackducks, bluewing teal, greenwing teal, goldeneye and bufflehead, some swan and twelve coot.

Paul's decorative work included decoy lamps, miniatures, and natural unpainted decoys in cedar and walnut. Some of the most sought-after decoys are the rare preeners and sleepers he made.

One of my favorite on-going orders from Paul was for one dozen coot. I had been given the assignment to have the coot made by my oldest decoy friend, Henry A. Fleckenstein, Jr. Henry would write to Paul and include an order for coot. Paul would write back and say, "Henry, I don't make coot." Henry tired of the job and turned it over to me. For years, Paul gave me the same answer, but he finally tired of my persistence and said he would think about it. One bright fall Saturday morning, in 1983, I stopped by the shop to see if Paul had anything for me. As I called out for Paul I heard him upstairs in the shop. When

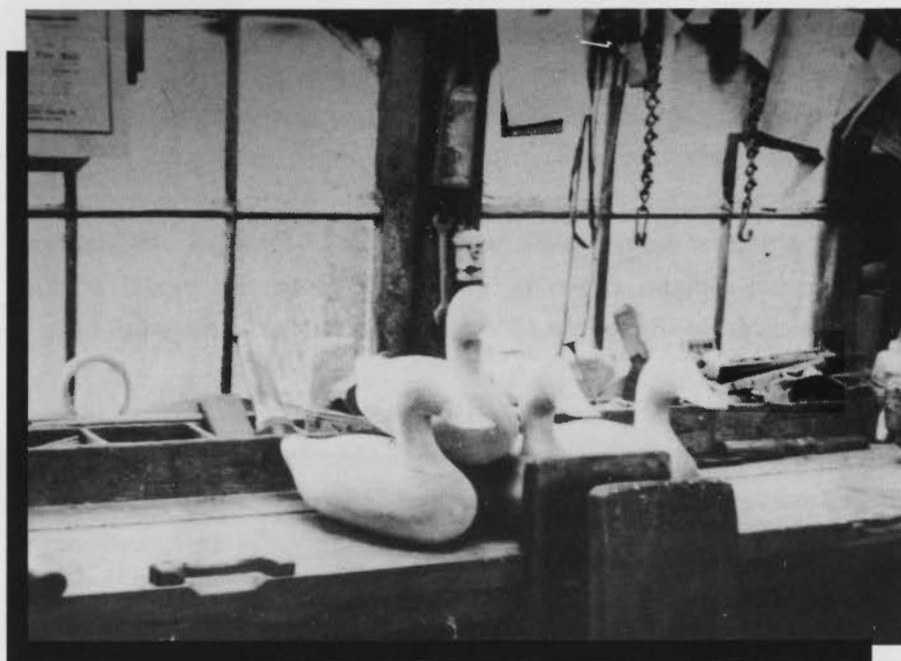


Paul Gibson and the 35 foot cabin cruiser he built by hand.
Private Collection

I walked into the paint room, Paul said "Get these coot out of here before someone else sees them and orders a bunch." It was the only order which I ever picked up from Paul which he tossed out of the second floor to me on the ground. Paul let me know his intentions by saying , "Can you catch a duck, boy?"

A decoy shop becomes a special place for a collector and a lover of decoy history. Such was the case with Paul Gibson's shop. Here I was in a historic shop, hearing the tales of the good old days from someone who has lived them. The artist who left a monumental gift to carving died in 1985. I will always be grateful that both my son and I served as pallbearers at his funeral.

In the past when I have searched for historic photos of gunning on the Susquehanna Flats, the ancient decoy carvers and their shops, I have wondered why so little of this important part of our heritage was documented. Certainly I took photos of Paul and his shop, but I never once recorded him telling one of his favorite duck hunting stories. What happens, I believe, is an overwhelming desire for those times never to end. This desire drives us from the reality of man's mortality. Maybe in a sense, this is best. For what it then forces us to create is a folk tale of a folk artist, and that is as it should be.



A decoy shop becomes a special place for a collector and a lover of decoy history. Such was the case with Paul Gibson's shop

About the Author: C. John Sullivan is a collector and historian of the material culture of the Susquehanna Flats. He has written two books and published numerous essays on this topic.

Modifying the Modified

In 1965, at the age of 63, decoy maker Paul Gibson lost the sight in his right eye due to acute glaucoma. Instead of giving up his favorite pastime he altered the stocks of his guns so he could continue hunting rabbits and waterfowl. Gibson was right handed so he made a unique stock modification of his Model 29 Remington pump action shotgun that enabled him to aim the shotgun with his left eye while shooting with his right. Gibson's Model 29 Remington 12-gauge pump action is also a modification of a firearm that helped to revolutionize waterfowling.

Paul Gibson's modified Model 29 Remington, 12 gauge, pump-action shot gun.
HdeG Decoy Museum Collection

Union Metallic Cartridge Company's production of fixed, low-cost paper shotgun shells in the late 1870's created an immediate demand for faster firing guns. Gun designer John Browning took up this challenge, first creating the Winchester Model 1887 lever action five-shot gun. However waterfowlers required a more durable action for heavier loads, he then designed the Model 1893 hammer pump-action shotgun. Browning quickly improved this model with the Winchester Model 1897 pump which continued in production until 1956.

By the turn of the century, Browning began designing weapons for Remington. His Model 10 pump-action shotgun was hammerless and unique in that it ejected its empty shell through the bottom of the receiver. Paul Gibson's Model 29 Remington is the final stage in the development of the pump action shotgun, a design that led to the end of the supremacy of the double barrel shotgun.

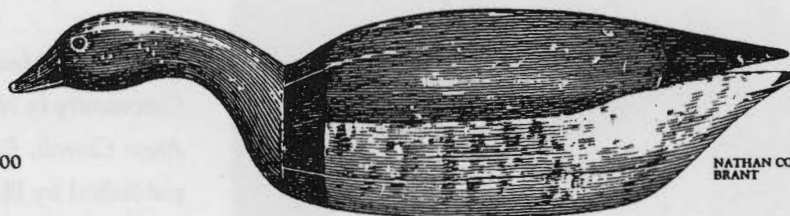
The Decoy Museum is fortunate to have Gibson's unique shotgun on display. This 12 gauge pump-action shotgun also features a full choke with a rubber recoil 'gun pad.' As with his handsome decoys, numerous hand fabricated tools, Paul Gibson's modification to this firearm illustrates his pragmatic approach to problem solving and industrious creativity that marked his career as a decoy maker. ♦

by John Quarstein

DECOY MAGAZINE

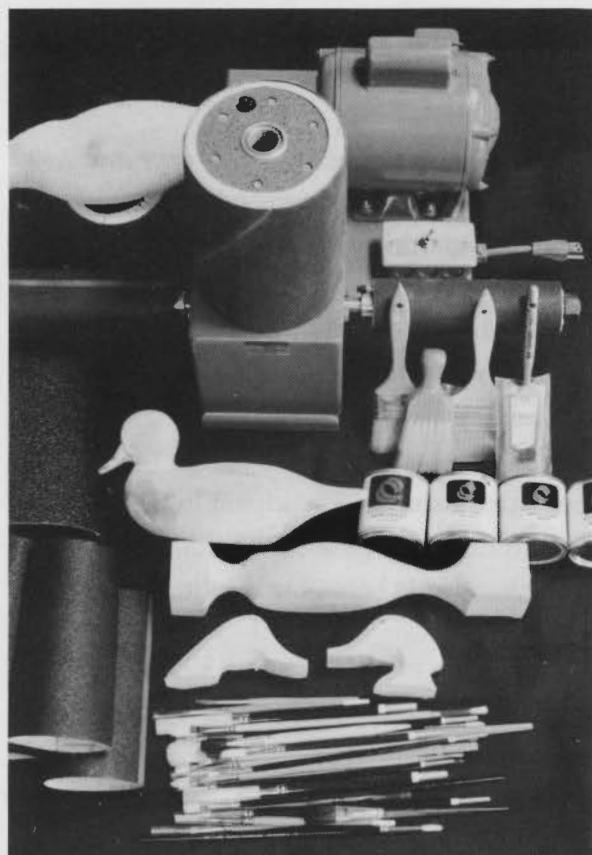
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Staff Notes

Introducing... Karen Marshall



The Board of Directors is pleased to introduce a new staff member, Karen Marshall who has accepted the position of Museum Manager. Karen comes from Cooperstown, New York where she has most recently achieved a Masters of Arts in History Museum Studies from the Cooperstown Graduate Program at the State University of New York.

Her thesis, *Memory Makers: Captured Images of Family and Community in New York State: 1900-1950, the Photographs of Anna Carroll, Edna Benedict and Lena Underwood* is being published by Black Dome Press of Hensonville, New York and is expected to be released in early 1993.

Karen was born in Denver, Colorado and has lived in Washington, West Virginia, North Carolina and New York. She has worked with several museums and major tourist attractions, receiving a variety of professional museum experiences in the areas of education, collections management, volunteer coordination, and exhibit production. The breadth of museum experience she brings will greatly benefit the Decoy Museum.

Karen is delighted to bring her skills, energy and good humor to the Decoy Museum in this time of tremendous growth and development. Karen's primary goal is to work to improve management of the museum. She will also actively assist the board in its plans to develop the museum. In her spare time Karen can be found exploring barbeque restaurants, miniature golf courses, and pursuing her interest in early 20th century American decorative arts and material culture.

Karen looks forward to becoming a productive participant in the Havre de Grace community. If you wish to meet Karen, please call before dropping in. She encourages anyone who is interested in becoming a volunteer to call or write her at the museum. ♦

Grant Announcements

The Board of Directors of the Havre de GraceDecoy Museum is pleased to announce that it received grant awards from the Maryland State Arts Council and the Harford County Cultural Advisory Board for fiscal year 1992-1993 in support of the museum's Gunning the Flats exhibit.

Education Programs

Workshop Series Announcement

The Summer issue of the Canvasback announced a series of workshops to be held at the Decoy Museum for anyone interested in learning more about museum education, exhibits, collections, interpretation and conservation. Beginning in January, six carefully planned sessions will address the following important topics.

Museum Magic

Issues and Ideas for Volunteers, Museum & Board Members, and Staff

January 14 Hands On - Minds On

Explore the ways people think and learn in the museum environment and see how this relates to the educational goals of museums.

February 11 Interpreting the Heritage of the Susquehanna Flats

Explore the many ways of thinking about the history and culture of this area, and how to apply this information within our museums.

March 11 Terrific Tours: Enhancing Visitors Museum Experience

Learn methods of presenting information and practice applying these methods to your audience so that they learn from and enjoy their museum experience.

April 8 What is an Artifact and Why Collect?

This session will explore the difference between personal and institutional collecting. Learn about conceptual organization and physical storage of objects.

May 13 Physical care of collections

Examine conservation theory, learn about materials used to preserve objects, and how to apply some of these procedures to your own collections.

June 10 Understanding Exhibits

From exhibit concept and thematic organization to the finished product, learn how you can use museum exhibits and the artifacts displayed in them to inform and educate the visiting public.

All sessions begin on the second Thursday at 7 PM and will last 1 1/2 hours, with time for discussion and questions. Refreshments will be offered. The cost is \$3.00 for an individual class or \$10.00 for all 6 workshops. The fee covers educational materials provided to the participants. Pre-registration is required so please call for a registration form.

For more information or to register call Karen Marshall at the museum, (410)939-3739, weekdays from 9am to 5pm. ♦

Decorative Carving Classes

Jan Calvert, noted decorative carver, is offering classes this Fall at the Decoy Museum.

Classes started on October 6, but space is available on Wed 6:30 to 10:00 P.M. and Tues. 9:00 to 12:30 P.M. classes for interested students. Special arrangements will be made with late registrants. Call for information.

Jan will be moving to Sedona, Arizona in January, so this will be a last opportunity to learn from this talented teacher. Congratulations Jan, on your exciting move... the carving community will miss you.

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Board Notes

Introducing... New Officers and Board Members

Judy Cline: Treasurer

The Decoy Museum is a focal point for a city in transition. I would hope to be able to assist in expanding the museum's services to the community as it, with the City, creates challenges and opportunities for growth.

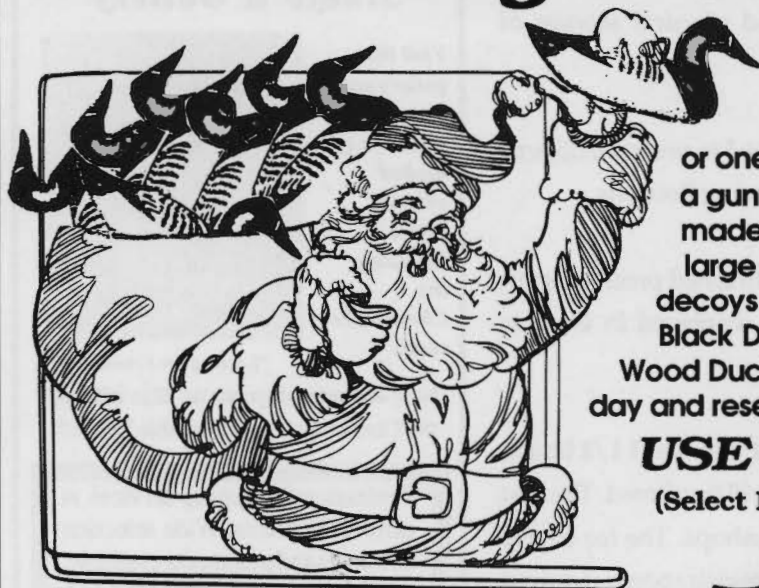
Ken Moretz: Recording Secretary

I have served on the Decoy Museum Board of Directors for five years as membership chairman. I see my continued service as providing long term stability to the governance of the museum, and I look forward to the challenges of serving on the Executive committee.

William Smart: Member

As a new member on the Board of Directors of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum I will actively work to maintain the founding ideals of the museum and become an integral part of the body guiding the museum toward the future. I hope to gain

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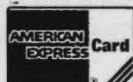


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insight and working knowledge of the operations and management of the museum so to be able to contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization. I will support and enhance the success of key museum projects, through time and work. I will represent the concerns and recommendations of the membership. My first concrete goal is to increase membership by at least 25 new members.


E. Mitchell Shank: Member

The Decoy Museum offers great cultural and economic benefits to the City of Havre de Grace. In fact the Decoy Museum, as part of the cultural and historic attractions in Havre de Grace, helps to enrich all of Harford County. I think much more can be done to benefit both the museum and the local economy.

There are three specific areas where I want to focus my energy. First, I want to take a dynamic role in promoting and publicizing the museum and its activities. Second, I want to develop solid contacts to improve artifact donations to the museums permanent collections. And third, I want to forge mutually beneficial partnerships between the museum and the local business community. I will dedicate my service on this Board of Directors to make these goals a reality. ♦

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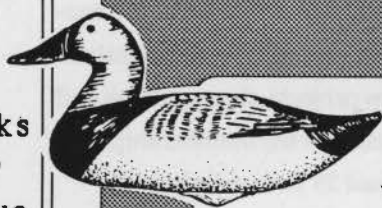
Profiles on New Books

Decoys Fabulous American Folk Art, a 90 min. Video cassette by Joe French, c. 1992.

Fine private collections, interviews, rare photos & slides and scholarly commentary combined in a fast paced presentation. Fascinating viewing.

The Collectors Guide to Decoys Book II, by Bob & Sharon Huxford, C. Schroeder Pub. Co., Inc. c.1992

Like the first guide, Book II presents recent sales and auction prices seeking to establish a guide for decoy buyers and sellers.



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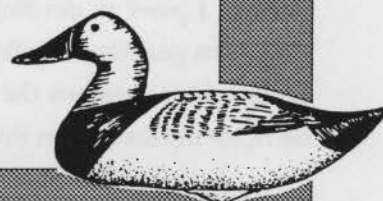
to be held at the

Havre de Grace Decoy Museum
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This informal gathering is being held to
invite friends of the museum to learn
more about volunteer opportunities at
the Decoy Museum.

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(cont. from p. 15)

are often accompanied by their owners who delight in sharing a bit of history on each bird displayed. A visit to the artifact exhibit presents a rare opportunity for collectors to view the artistry and history of carvers of yore.

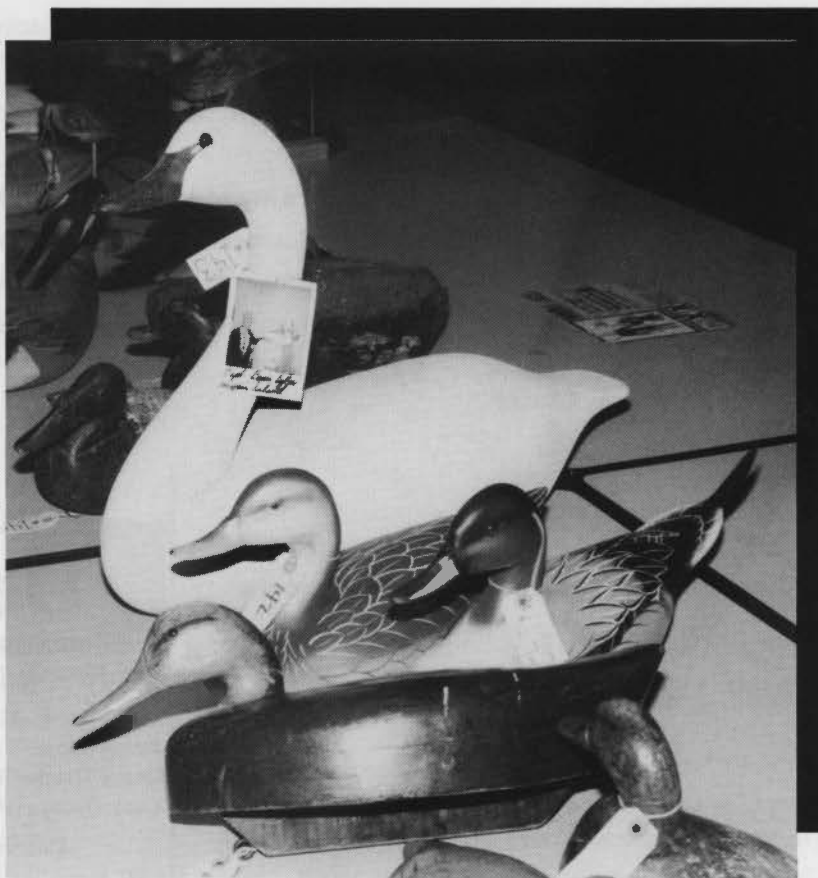
A trip to the Workshop at the Easton Fire House gives Festival visitors a chance to observe carvers in the process of creating new works of decoy art. The entire process from selection of the wood blanks to the finished product reveals the patience and skill required to produce a quality decoy.

As the decoy collector continues his hunt he or she will be astounded by the spectrum of decoy art displayed at the Festival's Buy-Sell-Swap exhibit at the Easton High School. Here over 100 dealers are willing to buy, sell, barter, haggle, or just shoot the breeze about decoys from around the world. Both the novice and the seasoned collector will find something new and exciting as they chat with exhibitors about the history and origins of ducks, geese, swans, and shore-birds priced from several dollars to several thousand.

Last but not least, our duck hunters have a chance to do some active and competitive "shooting" for decoys at the Festival's Decoy Auction. The bidding is often hot and heavy and everyone is entitled to take a shot at that bird which is a "must" for their collection. The Auction is held at the Easton High School on Saturday, at 2:00 P.M., with a preview at 12 noon. Usually over 100 decoys are up for bid and over 200 bidders are actively hunting for that special bird at the right price.

The Board of Directors of the Waterfowl Festival extends a warm and sincere invitation to all decoy "hunters" to attend this year's Festival. Happy hunting, and we hope to see you on November 13, 14 and 15, in Easton, Maryland.

For information about exhibit hours, admission prices and special events please call (410)822-4567 or write to - Waterfowl Festival, P.O.Box 929, Easton MD 21601



Grant Announcement

The Waterfowl Festival, Inc. has given a grant in support of the Gunning the Flats exhibit. The Board of Directors of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum wishes to express its thanks to the Waterfowl Festival, Inc. for this very generous support to the museum's exhibit effort.

Contretemps: A Duck Hunter's Tale

cont. from p. 14

As I stood on the deck looking wet and relieved, I began to laugh. What else was there to do? That broke the tension among the young men who began to give me style points on my dive, ungenerously taking away points because of too much splash at the point of entry. We headed for the dock after those who chose to be in my will decided to lend me various parts of their dry clothing.

It was remarked later that I was lucky that the air temperature was only in the mid-30's. Believe me, when you're underwater in the Chesapeake and the temperature is in the mid-30's, it's cold.

About the Author: Mel Stout is Vice-President of Prudential Preferred Properties. He is a Life Member of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum; an enthusiastic collector of antique working decoys; a member of Ducks Unlimited, and a conservationist and duck hunter.

I still have a mystery to pursue. Christmas did not follow this event by many weeks and someone chose to send me an anonymous gift that has become my dearest memory of my November swim - a camouflaged, CO2 inflatable Mae West life vest. Whoever you are, I'll eventually find a way to make it hard for you....

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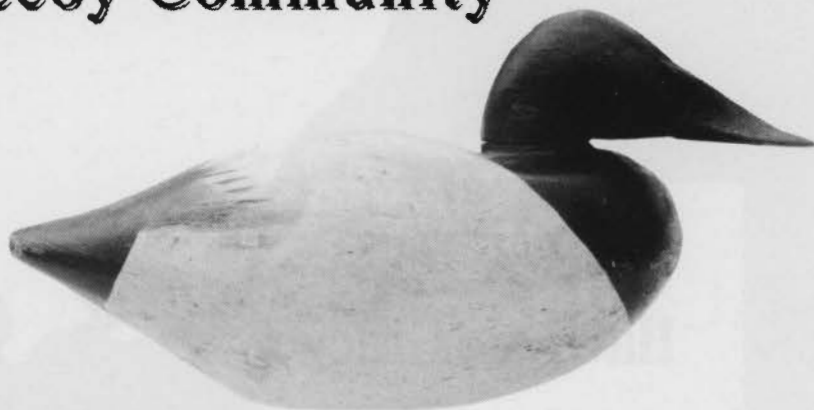
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121 West Main Street	275-8131
Chesapeake City	
2579 Augustine Herman Highway	885-5600
Havre de Grace	
238 North Washington Street	939-3000
* 313 North Union Avenue Drive-in	
North East	
* One South Main Street	287-9600
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* 101 East Main Street	658-5571
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