Decoy, Wildlife Art, & Sportsman Festival



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1982-1996 Havre de Grace **Decoy Festival**

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R. Madison Mitchell	1982
deceased	
Paul Gibson	1983
deceased	
Charles Bryan	1984
No Chairman	1985
Robert "Bob" Litzenberg	1986
Charles "Speed" Joiner	1987
Captain Harry Jobes	1988
Captain Bill Collins	1989
Captain Roger Urie	1990
James "Jimmy" Pierce	1991
James Currier	1992
deceased	
William "Bill" Schauber	1993
and	
Allan Schauber	
Robert "Bob" McGaw	1994
deceased	
J. Evans McKinney	1995
Harry V. Shourds II	1996

Honorary Artist

1993	Louis F.X. Frisino
1994	Durant Ball
1995	Christopher White
1996	Paul Shertz

R. Madeson Mitetall Paul Bilson

James a Bunier Potent f. W. Yaw Je.

The Havre de Grace **Decoy Museum**

Welcomes everyone to the Festival!



Homestead Publishing

The Aegis, The Record, The Weekenders, APG News

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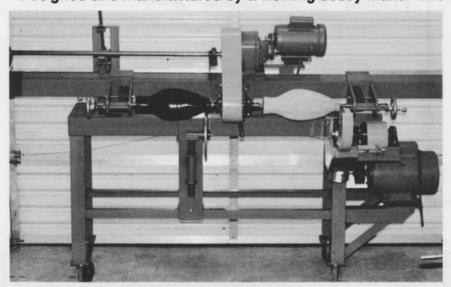
Species	Price
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Black Heads	\$40 ea
Blue Wing Teal	\$40 ea
Blue Geese	\$50 ea
Brant	\$50 ea
Buffleheads	\$40 ea
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Cinnamon Teal	\$40 ea
Coots	\$40 ea
Gadwall	\$50 ea
Green Wing Teal	\$40 ea
Goldeneyes	\$40 ea
Mallards	\$40 ea
Pintails	\$40 ea
Red Heads	\$40 ea
Ringnecks	\$40 ea
Ruddy Ducks	\$50 ea
Shovelers	\$40 ea
Snow Geese	\$50 ea



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Red-Breasted Mergansers	\$130pr
Hooded Mergansers	\$150pr
Swan -Flat Bottom	\$350ea
Swan -With Keel	\$400ea
Wood Ducks	\$350pr
Canada Goose	\$80 ea
Loons	\$60 ea
Pigeons	\$35 ea
Doves	\$35 ea
Oversize	Price
Canvasbacks	\$50 ea
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Black Heads	\$50 ea
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1/2 Swan	\$75 ea

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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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FROM THE EDITOR

Cha, Cha, Changes... As with each year, there will be many changes at the Annual Decoy, Wildlife Art, & Sportsman Festival. This year, one of the first changes will be the addition of a few outside exhibitors. These exhibitors are taking a chance with the weather, but they'll enjoy greeting everyone first as visitors make their way inside. More wildlife artists have joined us this year, and they will fill the lobby and hallway of the High School Cafeteria, where most of the artists are located.

Two important titles have been added to our competitions. The Susquehanna Flats Regional Duck Classicis now sanctioned for 1996. This means the first place duck caller will be able to compete in the World's Championship Duck Calling Contest in Stuttgart, Arkansas. Dave Hagan and Jack Palmer applied for sanctioning back in 1993. Great work guys!

Also, the Atlantic Flyway Classic carving competitions are now under I.W.C.A. rules (International Wildlife Carving Association). So walk through the competition room in the back of the High School gym, and take a look at all of the quality entries for this year's Festival.

Be sure to enjoy all of these changes at the Decoy, Wildlife Art, & Sportsman Festival on May 3, 4, 5, 1996.

Mary Jo Moses

ON THE COVER

Two brant decoys made by the 1996 Honorary Chairman Harry V. Shourds II, rest by a twisted piece of driftwood near the Concord Point lighthouse. Photo by Mary Jo Moses.

and Sportsmans

Festival Exhibitor List

Havre de Grace Decoy Museum **Board of Directors**

1996

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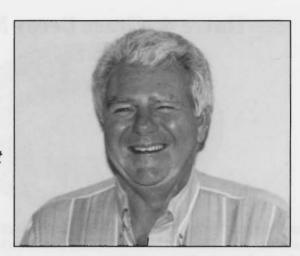
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> The Canvasback Havre de Grace Decoy Museum 215 Giles St., P.O.Box A Havre de Grace MD 21078 (410) 939-3739 TDD

From the President



Dear Museum Member,

On behalf of the Decoy Museum's Board of Directors, I heartily welcome you to the Havre de Grace Decoy, Wildlife Art and Sportsman Festival. This year's festival is filled with a wide variety of exhibitors all guaranteed to please and entice everyone with some of the finest examples of folk and wildlife art. There is more here than ever before, so I do hope that you will enjoy yourselves.

This year's festival features our first non-Chesapeake Bay carver to be selected as the festival's Honorary Chairman. Harry V. Shourds, II, of Ocean View, New Jersey, is well deserving of this honor. Harry represents not only the distinct Barnegat Bay decoy style, but also his family's major contributions to the decoy art form. Harry's grandfather and namesake made the ultimate examples of New Jersey's decoys. The younger Shourd's smooth and graceful decoys represent a continuation of this tremendous tradition. He is a powerful symbol of how the past influences the present.

Whether Barnegat or Chesapeake Bay, decoys are just wonderful examples of American folk art. The Decoy Museum's newest exhibits tracing the nationwide development of decoys are tributes to men like the festival's first Honorary Chairman, R. Madison Mitchell, and our current chairman Harry V. Shourds, II. These carvers and a host of others found throughout America, have created an art form that we all hold so dear.

Please enjoy this heritage while attending the festival this weekend or whenever you visit the museum.

President, Board

Tax deductible contributions can be made to the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. The museum was incorporated in 1981 as a non-profit organization which exists to document and interpret waterfowl as this art form applies to the social and economic life of the upper Chesapeake Bay region.

Book Review

New Jersey Decoys

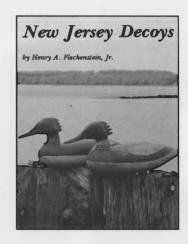
Written by Henry A. Fleckenstein, Jr. Reviewed by Bill Smart

As the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum holds it's fifteenth annual Decoy, Wildlife Art and Sportsman Festival this year, there is a significant change in tradition. As many of you know, this year's honorary chairman, Harry V. Shourds II, is not from the Chesapeake Bay region, but rather the New Jersey coast. Therefore, in recognition of Mr. Shourds, I am reviewing New Jersey Decoys.

Referred to by the author as "a natural outgrowth" of his first book, Decoys of the Mid-Atlantic Region, this book exhibits enhanced quality and indepth regional information. Like any good book for the decoy collector, it is limited on text and abundant in photographs. Mr. Fleckenstein was able to access some of the more prominent area decoy collections, which resulted in some 700 decoys (ducks, geese, brant, and shorebirds) being featured along with superb old gunning photos.

Henry admits that his book's title may be somewhat misleading. In addition to the New Jersey coastal decoy community, his book includes decoys and makers from the Delaware River. This enabled him to clearly define his book into chapters covering both regions. In each chapter he has provided the reader with biographical summaries for carvers, watermen, and hunters in each area. He presents 85 summaries for the New Jersey decoy makers and an additional 39 for the Delaware River craftsmen.

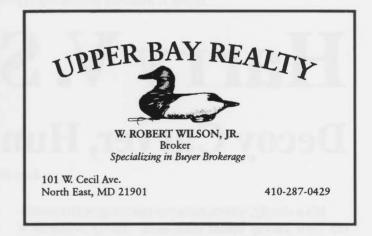
As always, I enjoyed Henry's book. He captured my attention with his historical reflections on gunning in the region and with a circa 1900 picture of a Barnegat



gunning camp complete with hunters, guns, boats, and an alert Chesapeake Bay retriever ready to go to work.

This is a great book to add to your resource shelf. Moreover, if you are at the Havre de Grace Festival this year, it would prove to be a good opportunity for Henry Fleckenstein and Harry Shourds to add an autograph.

New Jersey Decoys is 269 pages and was copyrighted in 1983 and published by Schiffer Publishing Ltd., Exton, PA. It is available at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum for \$37.50.



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Harry V. Shourds, II standing in front of his shop. Photo by Lou Nolan.

Harry V. Shourds, II

Decoy Carver, Hunter and Gentleman

Lou Nolan

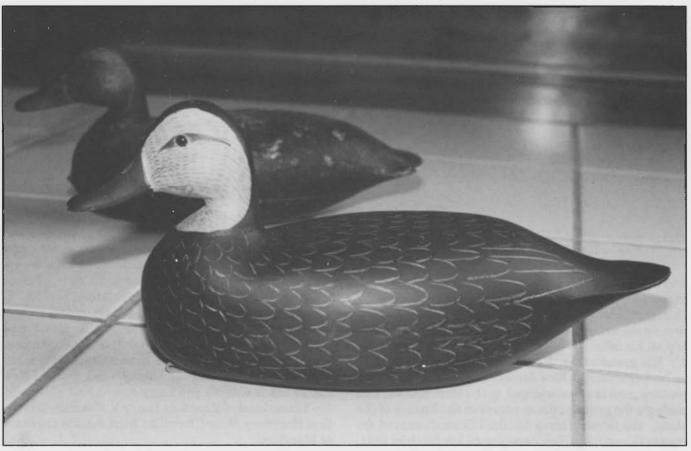
It's a cloudy, warm, summer morning on the southern New Jersey costal mainland. Harry Shourds is busy in the red barn at "The Duck's Nest." In his workshop, he's at the bandsaw cutting hand picked swamp cedar into decoy blanks and then sawing them once again in half. This begins the same process his father and grandfather used before him to produce the traditional hollow gunning stool characteristic of the Jersey Coast.

As he begins roughing out the cedar decoy halves with his hatchet, he is interrupted by what he knows

will be the first of many visitors on this overcast day.

Harry has been expecting the tourists who come off the beaches in search of the antiques and other diversions offered by the mainland, to visit him at "The Duck's Nest." Some will browse and watch as Harry turns swamp cedar into hollow works of art. Still others will look through the inventory of ducks and shorebirds for sale, and decide on a bird to add to their collection, or take home as a vacation souvenir.

Whatever the reason for taking home a duck or carving, they've acquired a piece of folk art by one of the



Harry Shourds black duck with his grandfather's in the background. Photo by M. Moses.

State of New Jersey's and America's treasures, Harry V. Shourds.

As we mark the Fifteenth Anniversary of The Havre de Grace Decoy, Wildlife Art, and Sportsmans Festival, for the first time the Honorary Chairman, Harry Vinuckson Shourds II, a third generation carver of the Barnegat Style of decoy, was chosen from outside the state of Maryland.

The easy going and gentle man from Ocean View, in New Jersey's Cape May County, has the distinction of being the First New Jerseyite to receive the National Heritage Award from the National Endowment for the Arts. This award, which he received in 1989, is in recognition of his superior craftsmanship as a decoy carver.

Perhaps the best summation regarding Harry's

decoys came from the head of the New Jersey Folklore Society's President, Fred Thomson, speaking in a 1989 Philadelphia Inquirer article, when he noted that Harry's decoys reflected his approach to life. "Other decoy carvers produce many of the same varieties as Harry's," he said, but "his are much more original, much nicer."

Prior to going "full time" in the decoy carving business in 1982, Harry served in the U.S. Navy and did a stint selling Electrolux vacuum cleaners door to door. For those of us who know Harry and those of you who will meet him, it's hard to imagine him as the stereotypical salesman. Many acquainted with Harry believe his low key approach and his genuineness are some of his finest traits.

Harry, who presides over his shop most weekdays

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Somers Headley and Harry V. Shourds, II. Photo by Lou Nolan.

and Saturdays, unless the fish are biting, or the ducks in season, hasn't come by his carving aptitude by chance. He has a true "Decoy Pedigree," and has been around decoys and the wetlands of southern New Jersey all his life.

His grandfather, Harry Vinuckson Shourds lived in Tuckerton on the New Jersey Coast at the turn of the century, and is acknowledged as the most prolific, and perhaps the greatest decoy carver in the history of the state. His father, Harry Mitchell Shourds carved decoys in Ocean City, New Jersey until his death in 1941, when Harry was twelve years old.

Harry always puttered around in his father's shop but didn't carve any decoys there. "My father was very strict," Harry notes, "He wouldn't let me touch his tools." Harry made his first decoy at 14 or 15. They were for his own rig, and "were ugly." He used those to shoot ten or fifteen ducks every day and generate some family income.

Harry's decoys are hollow birds, in the Barnegat Bay tradition, hand chopped from New Jersey cedar. The heads are carved from sugar pine. Harry's species include most of those common to the Jersey Coast; Canada geese, brant, mallards, black ducks, redheads, bluebills, pintails, mergansers, goldneyes and buffleheads.

Harry also carves several species of shorebirds. These include plovers, ruddy turnstones, curlews, dowitchers, dunlins, avocets and, of course, the Jersey gulls. Sometimes on a visit to his shop, you'll find a miniature or two, various songbirds and his much sought after Santa Claus carvings, many with geese over their shoulders and carrying a shotgun. Harry has also been known to build a miniature gunning skiff on occasion, complete with decoys.

Mr. Shourds' prominence is not limited to our country. Recently, he spent a week with a film crew from Japan. An entire production group followed Harry and documented his craft, beginning with the choice and cutting of the Jersey cedar for decoy bodies, the whittling of the white pine

for the head, and the priming and painting to produce the traditional New Jersey Coastal Decoy.

Harry Vinuckson Shourds, II is a quiet, accomplished artist, who would just as soon be hunting or fishing as carving decoys and shorebirds. As collectors; you and I are lucky. We have the opportunity to catch him "in the office", and take home a true piece of New Jersey art to cherish and enjoy.

It's certainly fitting that Harry V. Shourds, II is the first Honorary Show Chairman from outside the State of Maryland.



Miniature pied-billed grebe. Photo by M. Moses.

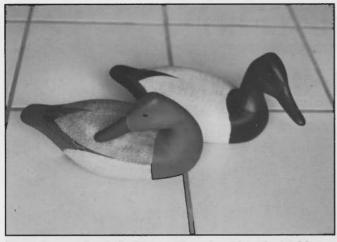
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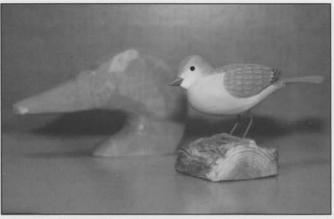


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Pair of canvasbacks by Harry Shourds. Photo by M. Moses.



Miniature bluebird by Harry V. Shourds, II. Photo by M. Moses.



Harry V. Shourds, II working in his shop. Photo by Lou Nolan.

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ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

Donna L. Dellaganna

Donna Dellagana was born in a small town in Massachusetts and moved to California at an early age. With high school and a year of college behind her, she moved to Germany for two years where she furthered her artistic instruction studying the work of the Old Masters. It was here that she met and married her husband. Upon returning to the United States she began her family, and in 1979 moved to Texas and returned to college.

Dellaganna graduated from Central Texas College in 1981. It was the hill country of central Texas and the art of Dalhart Windberg that inspired her to pursue a fine arts career. As she developed her talent as a landscape painter and wildlife, she experimented in several mediums, but developed a love for oils and began refining a technique which reflects the traditional style of the Old Masters. Through extensive reading and continuous practice, she developed a unique style that is seen in her work today.

Dellaganna's paintings echo her love of traditional art forms and subjects. They fall into several catego-

ries: landscapes, figurative, equine, wildlife, and still life. Reminiscent of the 16th and 17th century Flemish and Italian schools, she begins with a detailed drawing on her painting surface and applies transparent layer-upon-layer of oil paint, building color and detail. These thin transparent layers allow the light to penetrate through the glazes and reflect back from the surface, providing a threedimensional quality to the work. The process may, depending on the painting size and complexity, take several hundred hours to complete.

In order to maintain a fresh perspective, Dellaganna creates color studies in pastel, colored pencil or acrylic.



A hunting scene by Dellaganna.

Her community involvement includes donating art to the Virginia Wildlife Hospital, Public Television, the United Way, and other worthy organizations. Her studio is at her home in Earlysville, Virginia, in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, where she lives with her husband and three daughters.



"Winter Solitude" by Dellaganna.

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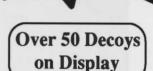
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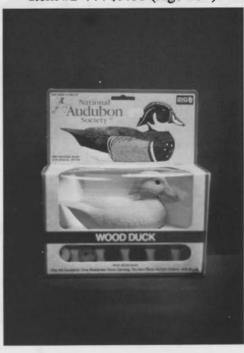
Havre de Grace Decoy Museum mug. Black and white, water, and boat scene. Item #3... \$5.40



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R.Madison Mitchell, His Life and Decoys.

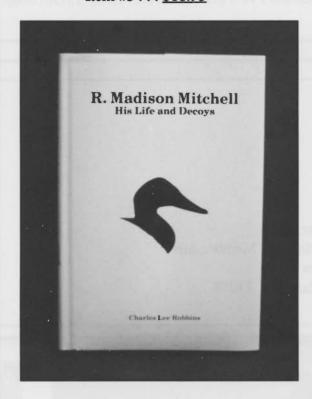
By Charles Lee Robbins.

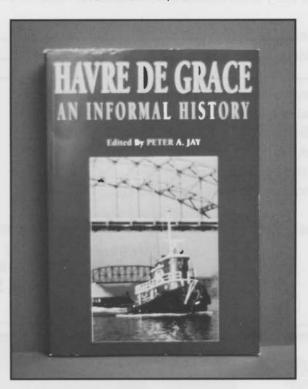
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Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

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HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!



The original building. Photo from the museum's collection.

Ten years ago a crowd gathered in front of the old Bayou Hotel utility building. Balloons were flying and cameras held at the ready, waiting for the second that would be the fruition of four years of hard work. The frail, charismatic carver R. Madison Mitchell, was surrounded by politicans and well wishers as he cut the bright ribbon that stretched across the building's entrance. It was official. The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum was open! But the work was just beginning. Over the next decade, volunteers and staff would continue the ambitious pace of development and expansion.



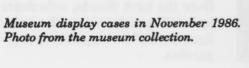
Cutting the ribbon at the opening of the Decoy Museum. Jim Pierce, R.M. Mitchell, Senator W. James, and Barbara Cramer. Taken in 1986. Photo from the museum's collection.



Construction at the museum in January 1984. Photo from the museum collection.



Behind the Decoy Museum. Photo from Ken Lay's collection.



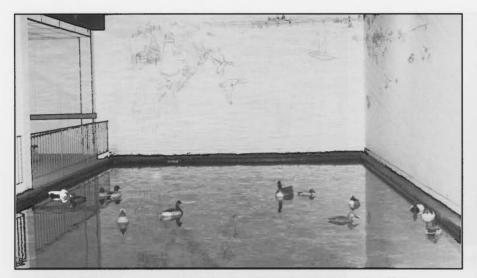
The beginning of the diorama in March 1986. Photo from the museum's collection.







Stuccoing the walls. Photo from Ken Lay's collection.



The old swimming pool with decoys. Photo from museum's collection.



The moving of R. M. Mitchell's shop.

Dedication of R.M. Mitchell's shop.

Construction of the museum's second floor in 1988.



Spring Canvasback



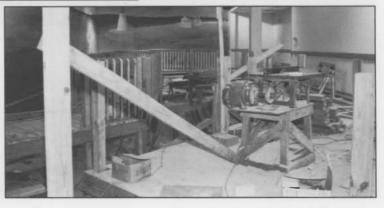
The second floor being laid. Photo from the museum's collection



Bob Litzenberg in the display case with his reflection in 1989. Photo by Oliver Steele.



Ribbon cutting for the second floor.



1994 construction of "Gunning the Flats." Photo from the museum's collection.



Inside the exhibit "Gunning the Flats." Photo by H. Miles.



The new "What is a Decoy" exhibit, February 1996. Photo by M. Moses.



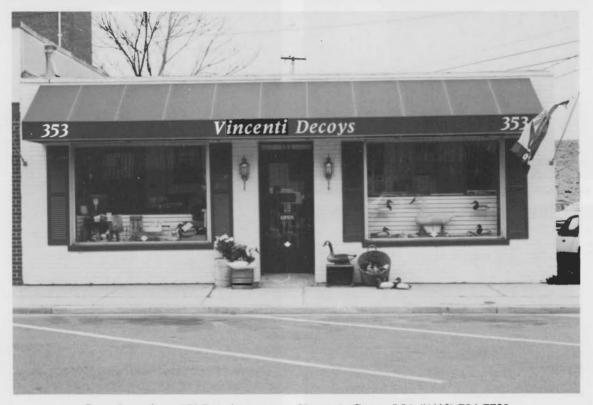
The first of the honorary chairmen cases, February 1994. Photo by M. Moses.



Here we are today. Photo by M. Moses.

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Auction News

Carvers'Appreciation Day Auction

The Carvers' Appreciation Day auction was, once again, a delightful fund raiser for the Museum. The wine was flowing, the food was plentiful and the company was convivial. Donations of decoys and related items came from all over, giving everyone something exciting to bid for. As usual, decoys by prior Honorary Chairmen were highly sought after, but many of the younger carvers also had their day in the sun. Many collectors discovered Mike Affleck's talents and sent him home with an armload of orders. Overall, the auction raised \$3,004.50 with 48 lots. Norm Hunter of Hunter's Sale Barn volunteered as auctioneer.

Top Five Lots of February 24, 1996

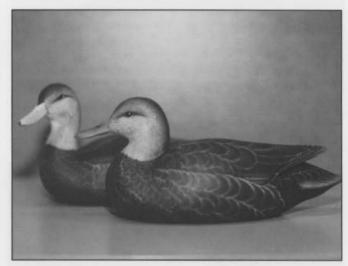
Charlie Bryan 1/4 sized Canada goose	\$360
Mike Affleck pr. 1/2 sized black ducks	\$360
Bob & Charles Jobes pr. wood ducks	\$210
Fred Gillotte Jr. 1/2 sized widgeon drake	\$140
Bill Collins miniature swan	\$135

Duck Fair Auction

As if the Duck Fair wasn't fun enough, we have decided to juice up the auction. Traditionally the auction held on the Saturday of the Duck Fair is composed entirely of donations from exhibitors. This year we will be accepting consignments as well. So if you meant to consign decoys to the Decoy Festival Auction but missed the deadline, bring them to the museum for the Duck Fair Auction. We will also be accepting related art work and sporting collectables. To make it a little easier on the auctioneer and bidders, it will be held on the second floor of the museum. For more information, call Karla at (410)939-3739.



Charlie Bryan miniature Canada goose in Carvers' Appreciation Day Auction. Photo by M. Moses.



Mike Afflecks's pair of black ducks in Carvers' Appreciation Day Auction. Photo by M. Moses.

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Decoy Festival Auction

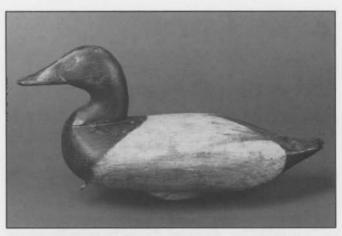
The Decoy Festival Auction is the biggest auction the Decoy Museum has annually. Selling nothing but decoys, the auction begins May 5th at 6:00 p. m. in the High School Auditorium. The preview starts at noon and bidder registration at 4:00 p.m. There is something for everyone in this auction: classic Upper Bay carvers like Jim Holly, decoys by local heros like Madison Mitchell, decoratives by major talents like Jeff Moore, and elegant contemporary pieces by Bill Porterfield. Of special interest is the Honorary Chairman Collection by New Jersey legend Harry Shourds. Remember, the 10% buyer's premium directly benefits the Decoy Museum.



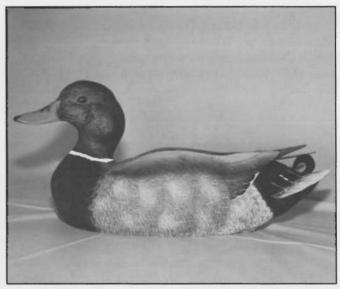
Harry Shourds' black duck in the 1995 Decoy Festival Auction.



Bob McGaw's canvasback drake. Photo by Joe Engers.



Jim Holly canvasback drake. Photo by Joe Engers.



Jeff Moore's mallard drake. Photo by M. Moses.

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1996 VOLUNTEER CARVER OF THE YEAR Joe Cook

Karla Mattsson

Joe Cook was raised on Coney Island. He and his friends often fished for striped bass along the beaches and jetties. They had no interest in duck hunting or decoys. Ironically, Joe says, "We used to see, after storms, decoys laying all over the place. We didn't think anything of them. We used to burn them and throw them at each other. God knows what we picked up! Those ducks were probably floating in from Long Island."

When Joe was a boy, he liked working in wood and did a lot of whittling, he even won an award for a lamp he carved in high school. He wanted to go to a wood working trade school, but his parents pressed him to attend college instead. Joe quit to join the army, where he took basic training with Elvis Presley. Joe fondly remembers that while they were on the troop ship, Elvis played "Blueberry Hill" for them on the piano; his contract prevented him from playing the guitar. While stationed in Texas at Fort Hood, Joe continued whittling when he could.



Joe Cook in his shop. Photo by M. Moses.

Joe later became interested in painting, surrealistic painting in particular. He laughed, "I had four little kids running around the house and I was doing a still life of a bowl of fruit. I had left it in a certain place and it had grapes and all kinds of stuff hanging out of the bowl and it had light hitting it in a certain way. I had to do a four to twelve in the police department that night and I came back and my kids ate all of the fruit. That was the end of that painting!"

Joe became excited about carving decoys in 1981 while visiting relatives in Edgewood. His nephew took him to meet "Titbird" Bauer's brother, Lamar. He bought a bushel of decoys from Lamar and decided that he could carve at least as well. Joe remembers, "I carved my first duck, it was a bufflehead, with a pen knife. I thought it was a work of art until my first decoy show, and then I wanted to hide it."

He started out carving decorative ducks. After a short time on his own he took carving classes from Bill Veasey in New Jersey. Waterfowl carving remained a hobby while he worked for the New York City Police Department as a crime scene photographer. When Joe retired and began working as a private investigator, he continued carving in his spare time.

In 1987, Joe broke his back falling off of a ladder. During the long months of convalescing in a wheel chair, he started carving miniature ducks to keep his mind occupied. He then started selling his carvings to buy new equipment. He boasts, "I probably got every machine known to man. Machines I don't even use!"

When carving, Joe uses any variety of these machines to make his job easier. He frequently uses a foredom tool and also does extensive feather burning. He uses an airbrush to soften the color divisions on a duck after it has been hand painted. Jeff Moore has heledp Joe improve many of his decorative carving and painting techniques. Joe feels that painting is the more difficult part of creating decoys, as well as the most important part. In his opinion, a good paint job can save a poorly carved piece.

When he moved to Havre de Grace in 1991, Joe met Henry Gonzales who encouraged him to carve working



Red-breasted merganser drake by Joe Cook. Photo by M. Moses.

decoys, as well as the decoratives. He studied Jimmy Pierce's techniques and met all the carvers around town. Pat Vincenti and Dan Carson have both served as role models for creating quality carvings.

Joe now carves both flat bottom and round bottom decoys. He observed that like himself, many great carvers are left handed. What this means he doesn't know, but he figures it creates a predisposition for decoy carving. Joe carves around seventy-five to one hundred decoys a year. He is constantly striving to make each decoy better than the last. Every year he tries to add a new species to his repertoire; this year he is working on a widgeon pattern. If he had a bigger shop, he would carve geese, but space is too limited in his garage for bigger pieces. Joe still carves miniatures, as well as an occasional songbird or flying duck. His wife is very supportive of his carving. He says, "She's prejudiced. She'll go to a show, she'll look at all of the



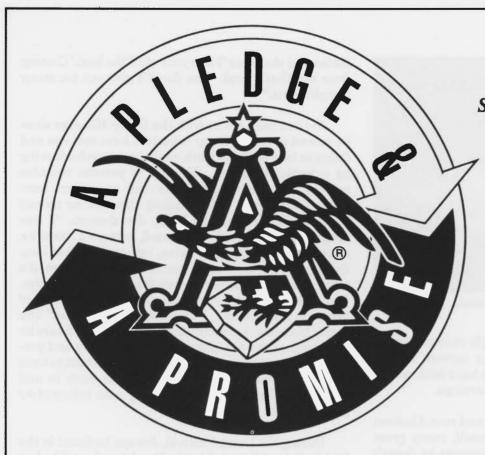
Old squaw drake by Joe Cook. Photo by M. Moses.

tables and she'll say 'I like your stuff the best.' Coming from her that's good. She doesn't give out too many compliments."

Joe has been active with the Decov Museum since he moved to town. Many collectors have met Joe and fallen in love with his work while he was volunteering as a weekend carver. His list of patrons includes mayors and army generals as well as visitors from around the world. When asked about being named Volunteer Carver of the Year, Joe demurs, "I was surprised they gave me the award, because to me it's a reward to come here and carve, rather than that I am doing you a favor. If someone comes here to carve, it's more of a benefit to the carver than for the museum. You meet so many people, you never get this kind of exposure sitting home. You're doing me the favor." The Decoy Museum is grateful to Joe for the many hours he has spent at the Museum talking to visitors and promoting the art of decoy carving. It is important to have volunteers like Joe, who are willing to pitch in and make the Museum an interesting and informative place to visit.

During the Decoy Festival, Joe can be found in the Middle School Gym, table 20. Stop by and see if he has that widgeon pattern finished yet.





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Autographs!

Joe Mitchell

Each year, the Havre de Grace Decoy, Wildlife Art and Sportsman Festival honors a decoy carver who has

established a

A. Madesta Mitetal fine, outreputation in his region. He is given the title of Honorary Chairman of the show for that year. This tradition began in 1982 when R. Madison Mitchell was honored. A new Honorary Chairman was selected by the Board of Directors of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum each year thereafter.

The list of past Honorary Chairmen is as follows;

- 1982 R. Madison Mitchell
- 1983 Paul Gibson
- Charles Bryan 1984
- No Honorary Chairman 1985
- 1986 Bob Litzenberg
- Charles "Speed" Joiner 1987
- 1988 Capt. Harry Jobes
- 1989 Capt. Bill Collins
- 1990 Capt. Roger Urie
- Jimmy Pierce 1991
- 1992 Jim Currier, (deceased)
- Bill and Allen Schauber were honored, a father 1993 and son team
- 1994 Bob McGaw, (deceased)
- 1995 J. Evans McKinney

This year will be the 15th anniversary of the Decoy, Wildlife Art, and Sportman Festival and Harry V.

aul Gibson

Shourds, II of

Barnegat Bay,

New Jersey has been selected as

the Honorary

Chairman. Being an Honorary Chairman carries major responsibilities. One requirement is that the HonTames a Bunies

orary Chairman must complete two sets of his decoys. One set is given to the Decoy Museum to be put on permanent display. The other set is auctioned off at the Festival and a portion of the proceeds are given to the Honorary Chairman. The rest supports the Decoy Museum. Each Honorary Chairman is expected to participate in most of the Museum's functions and to help the Museum in its endeavor to preserve the heritage of decoy making.

Potet f. Willaw Je

One of the events in which each Honorary Chairman participates in is the autograph session held each year at the Decoy, Wildlife Art, and Sportsman Festival. This year, the autograph session will be held only on Saturday, May 4th between 12:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. in the library of the Middle School. The US Postal Service will be available during this same time and place to offer free postal cancellations to commemorate this year's Festival. This year's cancellation will feature a Harry Shourds brant.

As an added attraction to the autograph session and the postal cancellation, each visitor to the festival before 3:00 p.m. on Saturday will be given a coupon upon entering the show, that will entitle them to a FREE previous year (from 1983 to 1995) show book. This way you can visit the library, select your free showbook and have your favorite Honorary Chairman sign it for free! There is a limit of one free showbook to each attendee, but you will be able to purchase additional copies of any of the previous year's books for \$5 each.

The Decoy Museum Thanks All Of It's Volunteers



The Decoy Museum **Enjoy The Festival!**

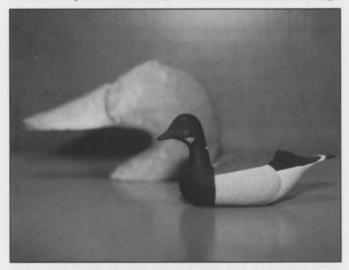
Exhibit Update

Ward Museum Exhibit at Decoy Festival

This year, the Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art has volunteered to host the artifact exhibit on the Middle School Auditorium stage. While you are enjoying the festival, be sure to stop by the stage and see the fascinating array of beautiful and important decoys that the Ward Museum is displaying. The Ward Museum also has a temporary exhibit in the Decoy Museum.

Miniatures by Harry Shourds

To coincide with the festival, the Nolan family has placed on loan a large collection of miniatures carved by this year's Honorary Chairman, Harry V. Shourds, II. Most of these gems are ducks, carved and painted with all of the attention to detail that has made Harry's full sized decoys so desirable. There are also a large



Miniature brant by Harry Shourds on loan from Lou Nolan. Photo by M. Moses.

number of shorebirds as well. For a touch of whimsy, this exhibit contains turtles, ducklings, and a Santa Claus or two.

Litzenberg Collection Relocated

As the Museum is expanding and enlarging its collection, each of the Honorary Chairmen collections will be moved to the second floor gallery. Bob Litzenberg's extensive collection has been moved this spring, so his decoys are once again side by side with Charlie Bryan's. This, summer Evans McKinney's decoys will also have a permanent spot among this august company.

More "What is a Decoy?"

After finishing the introductory section of "What is a Decoy?" we jumped to the conclusion. The focus of this case is to demonstrate the different directions that carvers have taken with their work. On one side are examples of contemporary working decoys by carvers from all over the country and Canada. On the other side are highly decorative carvings. The middle of this exciting exhibit is filled with examples of historical decoys from around the continent. If you have a good old decoy from your favorite region, we would be grateful for the donation. The first region to be finished will be the Pacific Flyway, so look around your basement and see if you can help out.

Research Library

Thanks to the Easton Waterfowl Festival and private donors, the Decoy Museum has built a research library on the second floor. Open to the public, this library contains an extensive collection of decoy books and periodicals. Other areas that are being developed include bird watching, waterfowling, boating and the Chesapeake Bay. If you are looking for a quiet place to read up on your favorite subject, stop by and stay a while.

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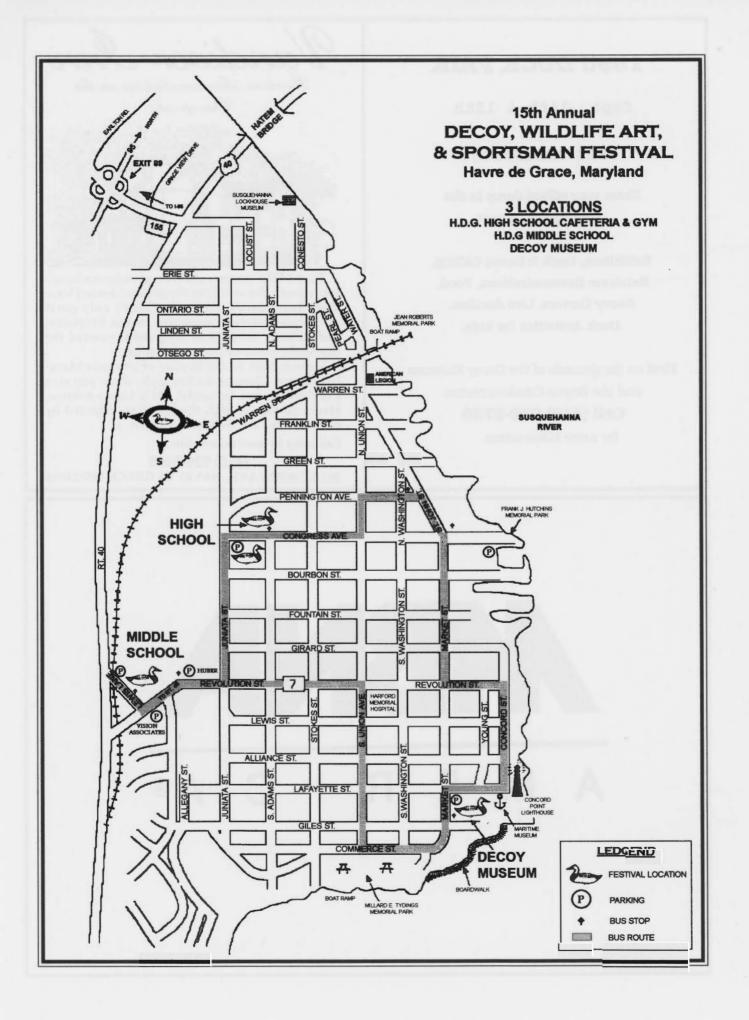
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Festival Program

DatesMay 3, 4, 5, 1996

Locations

Havre de Grace Middle School, Lewis Lane (MS) Havre de Grace High School, Congress Avenue (HS) Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, Giles Street (MUS)

Admission Price

Decoy Festival Tickets are \$5.00 each per day. \$8.00 for a weekend pass. Children under 12 are admitted FREE.



Wildlife artists in the High School Cafeteria. Photo by H. Miles.

FRIDAY EVENTS, MAY 3

Show 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

SATURDAY EVENTS, MAY 4

Show 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

6:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Exhibitors Breakfast at the American Legion. Sponsored by Cello.

11:00 a.m. Gunning Stool Floating Contest (HS Gym)

11:00 a.m. Decorative Floating Contest.

Sponsored by Chroma Acrylics. (HS Gym)

11:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., 3:00 p.m. Retriever Demonstrations (MUS)

12:00 Noon, Auction Preview (HS Auditorium)



Duck and Goose Calling Contest on Sunday at the Decoy Museum. Photo by H. Miles.

12:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Postal Service Stamp Cancelling & Honorary Autograph Session (MS Library

4:00 p.m. Bidder Registration (HS Ausitorium) 6:00 p.m. Decoy Auction (HS Auditorium)

SUNDAY EVENTS, MAY 5

Show 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Duck and Goose Calling Contest.

Sponsored by MBNA America (MUS)

8:30 a.m. Calling Seminar

9:30 a.m. Junior Division, Novice follows

12:00 Noon Senior, Team follows

10:30 Youth Division Decoy Competition (HS), Sponsored by J.M. Huber

11:30 Decorative Slick Decoy Contest (HS)

12:00 Noon, Gunning Rig Competition Contest (MUS)

12:00 Noon, Slick Decoy Contest (HS)

1:00 p.m. Head Whittling Contest (MS).

Sponsored by Mitchell-Smith Funeral Home

3:00 p.m. Decoy Painting Contest Judging. Sponsored by Cytec (MS Gym)

3:30 p.m. Raffle Drawing



Carving competitions at the High School. Photo by H. Miles.

1996 Havre de Grace DECOY, WILDLIFE ART AND SPORTSMAN FESTIVAL COMMITTEES

Honorary Chairman	Harry V.Shrouds, II
Honorary Artist of the Year	Paul Shertz
Show Bird	Brant
Show Chairman	
Advisor	
Co-Chairman	
Buses	
***************************************	Allen J. Fair
Collections Exhibit	Ward Museum
Festival Poster	Paul Shertz
Gift Tables	Joe Mitchell
***************************************	Mert Street
Billboards	Allen J. Fair
Advertising	Connie Daub
Hospitality Room	
***************************************	Bill Smart
***************************************	Pam Smart
Painting Contest and Head Whittling	Bob Wilson
	Mitch Shank
***************************************	Pat Vincenti
Finances	
***************************************	Ron Levison
Retriever Demonstrations	Tim Carrion
***************************************	Chuck Mushinsky

Silent Auctions	Pam Smart
Gunning Rig Competition	Bob Wilson
Volunteer Coordinator	Madelyn Shank
	HavredeGracePoliceDept.
	George Juergens
	Karla Mattsson
	Sherry Ramey
	David Hartzel
	Ron Hartzel
	Smokin' Joe
	Island Inn
School Coordinators	
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	Cathleen Hepler
	Madelyn Shank
	Barbara E.F. Gilden
	Carving ContestWarner Taylor
Wood working as Decorative of	Norm Smith
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	Jack Palmer
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Dear Visitors and Exhibitors:

As Mayor of Havre de Grace, I welcome you to the fifteenth annual Decoy Show. We take great pride in the quality of the Museum and attribute its success to the many, many hours of hard work and dedication given by the organizers, volunteers, members and Board of Directors.

The citizens, government and City Council wish all the exhibitors, carvers, visitors and tourists a pleasant weekend in our lovely, historic city and hope that everyone will enjoy their visit by the Bay.

We invite you to visit our promenade for a stroll along the waterfront, browse through our shops, enjoy our restaurants and tour the Concord Point Lighthouse and our Lock House Museum. I can assure you that the City government along with the Havre de Grace Tourism Commission will do everything possible to make your visit here a pleasurable event.

Enjoy! With kindest regards, I am

Sincerely.

Dr. Gunther D. Hirsch, M.D.

Mayor



Welcome:

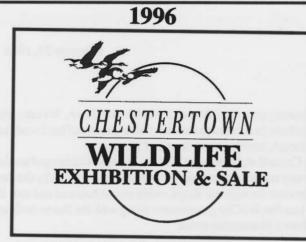
On behalf of the 170 members of the Greater Havre de Grace Chamber of Commerce, I welcome you to the 15th Annual Decoy Festival. This fantastic tradition continues to highlight the artistic talents of carvers, artists, friends and neighbors, both near and far.

We hope you will enjoy the Festival and have a great day in the Decoy Capital of the World. Visit our many businesses, restaurants and museums and enjoy particularly the beauty of our waterfront on the Susquehanna River at the confluence of the Chesapeake Bay. We also salute the many volunteers who make this event possible.

Thanks again for visiting with us and for letting us share some of our heritage with you. Don't let this be your last visit to our City. Come and see us again!

Sincerely,

Philip Barker President, Chamber of Commerce



SATURDAY OCTOBER 26TH

9:00 am - 5:00 pm

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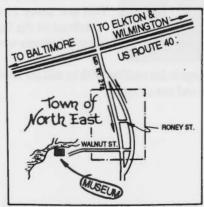
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Bodt, Bryon 2917 Churchville Rd. Churchville, MD 21028 (410) 734-7702 MS-065, 066

1990 Decoy Festival Honorary Chairman Roger Urie with R.M. Mitchell and C. Joiner. Photo by K. Novak.

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Branacato, Joe Box 255 Ridley Park, PA 19078 (610) 522-0840 HS-035, 036, 037

Briddell, Don 8002 Dollyhyde Rd. Mt. Airy, MD 21771 (301) 831-7088 HSC- 24

Britton, Jim 2707 Pineridge Lane Powhatan, VA 23139 (804) 598-4370 MS-194

Brunori, Carlo Conservation Consulting MS- Activity Room

Bryant, Vernon 90 Greenbank Rd. Perryville, MD 21903 (410) 287-8548 MS-164, 165

Budden, Michael P.O. Box 69 Columbus, NJ 08022 (609) 298-4619 HSC-19, 20 Bull, Linda 2317 Bowersox Rd. New Windsor, MD 21776 (410) 875-2260 MS-139, 140

Burcham, Leonard 703 Market St. Havre de Grace, MD 21078 (410) 939-2971 MS-046, 047, 048

Burk, Al 7000 Beachmont Dr. Sykesville, MD 21784 (410) 795-0849 HS-041

Butcher, Paul & Deborah 10609 Bird River Rd. Baltimore, MD 21220 (410) 335-3237 HS- 51

Carroll, David 24095 Chestertown Rd. Chestertown, MD 21620 (410) 778-6437 MS-100A

Carson, Dan 14 Matte Lane Havre de Grace, MD 21078 (410) 939-5723 MS-082

Carver's Corner-Pete Micchie 36 Leo Place Lodi, NJ 07644 (201) 365-2202 MS-144, 145, 146

Cassedy, Ed 17317 Wesley Chapel Rd. Monkton, MD 21111 (410) 329-6244 HS-085

Cheezum, Eddie P.O. Box 213 Hillsboro, MD 21641 (410) 820-2077 HS- 074

Ciesielski, Vincent 36 Hassell Ave. Bethany Beach, DE 19930 (302) 539-2413 HS-039

Clark, John 1620 Chapel Rd. Havre de Grace, MD 21078 (410) 939-5889 MS-055, 056

Clevenger, Dennis 358 Harrard Ct Ladson, SC 29456 803-572-8214 HSC-18

Clevenger, Walter 3621 5th Ave. North St. Petersburg, FL 33713 (813) 321-1283 MS-076, 077

Clodfelter, Ken 1230 Gittings Ave. Baltimore, MD 21239 (410) 435-7133 HS-082

Collier, John 636 Kensington Ave. Severna Park, MD 21146 (410) 315-9787 MS-037, 042

Collins, Frank RR#1, 146 T&C Villa Moline, IL 61265 (309) 749-3931 HS-050

Conwell, Elizabeth 450 Grasmere Ln. Aberdeen, MD 21001 (410) 272-1433 HS- 004

Cook, Joseph 949 Chesapeake Dr. Havre de Grace, MD 21078 (410) 939-3714 MS-020

Coppock, Joseph 751 Claire Rd. Philadelphia, PA 19128 (215) 483-5418 HS- 072



1995 Decoy Festival Artist of the Year, Chris White. Photo by H. Miles.

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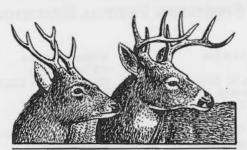
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ED ITTER

Waterfowl Artist and 15 Year Havre de Grace Decoy Festival Exhibitor

Chad Tragakis

This year marks the 15th year decoy carver Ed Itter has exhibited at the Havre de Grace Decoy Festival. It also marks his 32nd anniversary as a serious wildlife artist. Itter's art has grown in both scope and quality since his first attempt (a pair of buffleheads) he made back in 1964. In three short decades, he has acquired both an artistic mastery, and a collection of experiences few can claim.

Itter's story begins in Baltimore, where he was born



Ed Itter, holding a painting contest winning mallard. Photo from the museum's collection.

in 1929. He was one of the first art majors at City College, and was the only male at the all-girls Eastern High School. "It was a pretty good ratio," he said of the experience. Soon after graduation, Itter joined the Air Force and fought in the Korean War. Although he was scheduled to return home, his radar skills made him too valuable an asset and he was "stuck" with a Marine unit for another half-year. Upon returning home to Baltimore in 1952, Itter attended the Lumalay Art School on the G.I. Bill. He immediately went to work for the Baltimore Sun as an illustrator, a position he held from 1956 to 1994. "It wasn't work," he says of his years at the paper, "I loved it."

Itter admits that his decoys, "are a hobby that got out of hand." It all began with a series of paintings of regional decoyshe produced, prompting him to try his hand at carving. Having studied sculpture in college, and with a strong background in painting, decoy making came easily to Itter. He soon became acquainted with the Ward brothers, Madison Mitchell, Paul Gibson,



Ed Itter at his table in the Middle School. Photo from the museum's collection.

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200 Milton Ave. Fallston, MD 21047 (410) 877-3700 (410) 789-0500 RIGHT: An Ed Itter hingfisher. Photo from the Ed Itter collection.

FAR RIGHT: An Ed Itter Atlantic puffin. Photo from the Ed Itter collection.

and Corb Reed — friendships he still cherishes to this day. Over the years, Itter has befriended most contemporary carvers and truly enjoys being part of the decoy community.

Besides having sold decoys all over the world, Itter's carvings grace the homes of some of Hollywood's brightest stars. Tom Selleck, Robert Redford, Stephanie Paris, Forest Tucker, and Carol Channing have all purchased Itter's birds. Harrison Ford bought a decoy and then invited Itter to lunch. Most recently, Itter sold a piece to Fran "The Nanny" Drescher. "I got two kisses outta' her," Itter chuckled.

Itter lives in Pasadena, Maryland, where he works hard to fill his decoy orders — although he never seems to get ahead. Besides keeping busy with his own work, Itter judges for the I.W.C.A. (International Wood Carvers Association), teaches wildfowl painting to children throughout several area school systems, and conducts carving seminars for the North American Wildfowl Trust. Itter hunts occasionally, but spends most of his free time on his first love — bird watching. He recently discovered a rare backel teal near his home, prompting visits from duck-lovers up and down the East Coast.

Itter expresses concern for both duck populations and for our national interest in decoys and waterfowl art. He feels the two are connected and that unfortunately, "the average person is losing interest." Whatever the future holds, Itter is doing his best to promote decoy making and collecting, and to keep the legacy alive. He loves to share his stories and knowledge with others, and looks forward to spending another fifteen years exhibiting at the Havre de Grace Decoy Festival.







Ed Itter and a good friend, Harrison Ford. (I am the one on the left!) Photo from Ed Itter's collection.

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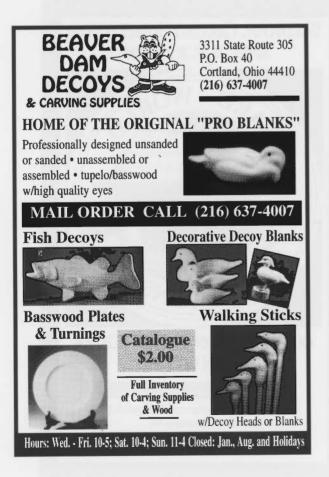
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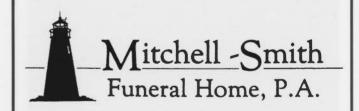
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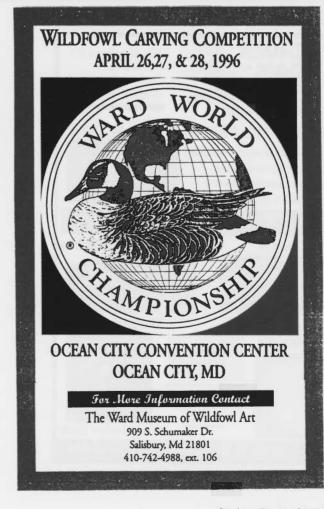


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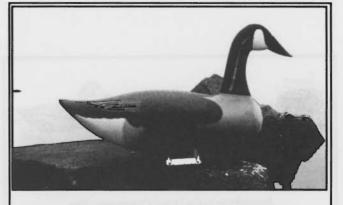
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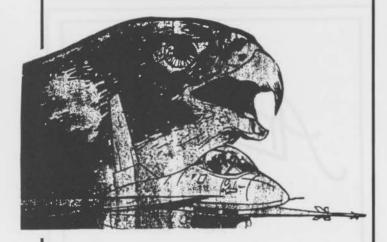
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Visit the Decoy Museum this May, June, and July to see demonstrations of contemporary decoy carvers and waterfowl artists. Enjoy this unique opportunity to meet and talk with these wonderful artists.

There are several open dates available this quarter. If you are interested in being a weekend carver on any of the open weekend dates this May-July session, please contact Arlene at 410-939-3174. Thanks for your support!

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Paul Shertz, Artist of the Year

John V. Quarstein

Paul Shertz's selection as the Decoy Museum's Honorary Artist of the Year should come as no surprise. He has spent the last twenty years illustrating the unique Chesapeake Bay decoy heritage. Each of his fifteen previous prints are reflections of his deep interest in decoys which has, in turn, provided collectors with valuable guides to the subtle differences found in

each decoy he represents. Paul has now combined his tremendous skill and vast knowledge in beautiful image honoring the first fifteen Havre de Grace Decoy Festival Honorary Chairmen.

Paul was born in Yorkshire, England, but grew up in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he first gained his



Bill Collins, Paul Shertz, and R.M. Mitchell in the decoy shop. Photo from Paul Shertz collection.

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Alterations on the design. Photo by J. Quarstein.



An individual sketch of a merganser being inked onto the final

image. Photo by J. Quarstein.

The final stage of the image. Photo by J. Quarstein.



appreciation for wildfowl while hunting upland birds. Pheasant hunting soon turned to waterfowl hunting which prompted his interest in decoys. Shertz started collecting decoys through his friendship with a coworker, Evans McKinney, and soon began attending decoy shows. He noticed that there were no paintings of decoys at the shows so he decided to create some historical illustrations of old decoys using examples provided by Evans and Joel Barber's 1934 publication, Wild Fowl Decoys. Much to his surprise, Paul sold twelve paintings at the first show where he exhibited and he has not stopped since.

"Decoy Makers of the Susquehanna Flats" was his first print and was designed to provide collectors with an overview of the major decoy makers that flourished during the heyday of duck hunting on the Flats. His intention was to detail the various differences found in each maker's work, and Paul achieved this goal in an admirable fashion. "Decoy Makers of the Susquehanna Flats" combines Shertz's multi-faceted historical knowledge and artistic skill, with his marvelous mapmaking and composition techniques, into an image that answers certain key questions that collectors might wish to know about a decoy: who is its' maker, or perhaps why and where was it made.

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Paul Shertz after the hunt. Photo from the Paul Shertz collection.

Shertz has utilized this theme on numerous other occasions, as he went on to create several other similar images such as "Harford County Canvasbacks." Collectors enjoy his prints immensely because Paul strives for historical accuracy. When this knowledge is combined with his artistic ability, the end result is a perfect reflection of the way individual birds look. He believes that because an average collector can not afford to collect a complete set of decoys by particular makers or geographic region his paintings and prints are perhaps the "only way a person can have a complete set of Mitchell's or Gibson's."

Many people appreciate Paul's work simply because it looks good which is a tribute to his composition. He does not follow the "classical rules of composition" but rather, as Shertz admits, "on a combination of whether the overall form is attractive and the color balance is pleasing to my eye." Each image he has completed has presented Paul with various historical and design problems. In his "Decoys of the Lower Chesapeake Bay," he first sought out the assistance of

noted author, Henry Fleckenstein, Jr., to assist him in his selection of makers and decoys. The color imbalance of lower bay birds, mostly various shades of black and white, presented him with the need to "liven up" the print. He achieved this goal by airbrushing background color to the shoreline, giving the print a unifying spectrum of excitement. "Decoys of the Lower Chesapeake Bay" is a tribute not only to the carvers depicted in the print, but also to Paul's design abilities.

When he was selected as the 1996 Artist of the Year, Paul felt extremely honored and surprised. While he jokingly thought, "Maybe they just chose the artist who looked the oldest," he feels very lucky to be able to present an image to commemorate the 15th Annual Festival. Shertz, immediately upon being chosen, considered how he could best honor the fifteen decoy makers who have previously been selected as Honorary Chairmen. As with all his other prints, he spent much time just contemplating the print's composition especially how he could fit all the carvers into a map format. "Getting the idea into your head is the hardest part," Paul admits, "sometimes it's over 70% of the time spent on the painting."

While working on the layout Paul quickly realized that the image had to command the respect that he felt for each of the fifteen decoy makers. As he toyed with the design, he decided that he should subdue the bay's geographic features and stress the creations of these marvelous carvers. He knew that the birds must be the focal point, each one emphasizing its maker's distinct style and quality.

Once he had formulated the design, Shertz began selecting and sketching the individual decoys. Paul's experience of creating so many decoy prints prompted him to organize a reference notebook on every major carver containing photographs, drawings and notes. This resource enables him to precisely recreate each decoy, detailing paint patterns, chine lines, bills and other features including how various birds weather. All this information enables Paul to understand a decoy's topography, which he skillfully transposes on to the finished sheet. He knows that he must pay strict attention to these details since a simple mistake could change the bird's date or even the individual maker.

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123 S. Washington St. Havre de Grace, MD 21078 (410) 939-2882 After he has completed each decoy on mylar, Paul then inks them onto the final image. Shertz mounts his paper and foam core, encapsulates it in brown paper, and then begins to create one decoy at at time. A bird is drawn, then painted, before he moves to the next maker. However, Paul places shadows on all the birds as his final step in the process to give the appearance that the decoys are being seen from the same light source. His process is meticulous and time-consuming, but the end result is a beautiful interpretation of the decoys that have made each Honorary Chairman famous.

Paul has created a very special image, which he has entitled "The First 15," as his personal tribute to the master decoy makers that have served as Honorary Chairmen of the Decoy Festival. The historical detail and accuracy expressed within the image is amazing and is a tribute to Paul's growth as an artist. The artist himself believes "The First 15" is the finest image he has ever produced documenting decoys. "I really enjoyed completing the piece," Paul reflected, "I knew all but two of the carvers and it seemed as if the detail and design all flowed together into a really quality piece." Shertz spent over 180 hours working on the final image as many of the birds were rather complex to create. "Bob Litzenberg's was the hardest because of the subtlety of the back shading," Paul noted, "but Madison's was the most fun, as I tried to paint it just out of my head without any references, since I have done so many." He soon realized that "something wasn't quite right" with his version, so he finally pulled out a Mitchell decoy to

follow. "The whole project made me feel like a kid again," Paul happily commented. "Maybe it was the new paints I used (JoSonya's Artist Gouache) perhaps how each decoy's detail comes across on paper," he added, "but I believe that the composition highlighting the birds across the background of the bay makes it a special homage to these very special carvers."

As Artist of the Year, Shertz also assumed the duty of creating the festival's poster. He decided to make this a quick study of various items found in his studio. "An eclectic mix," Paul noted, "so that everyone could feel the spirit of the old gunning days gone by." An old gunning coat, Peters shell box and two Upper Bay decoys (modeled after Madison's of course!) help fill the image that also contains his favorite shotgun, a 1948 Belgian A5 Browning ("the sweetest gun I ever fired), a can of brushes,

and a 1982 festival badge. "It is my expression about what the show is all about," reflected Paul.

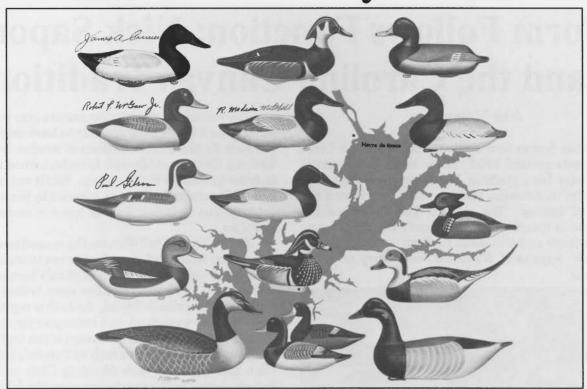
Paul Shertz should know all about the festival as he has attended every one since embarking on his career as an artist. While recognizing his own talent, did not study art in school but rather received a degree in Business Administration from the University of Delaware. After twenty-five years at DuPont he retired, but quickly was back in another administrative position with Delaware Transit Corporation. During all this time. Paul pursued his art diligently, but is happy that he "is making his living somewhere other than art," as it keeps his painting enjoyable. He documents a wide range of subjects including NASCAR racing and waterfowl scenes, but decoys have been his favorite topic ever since his first visit to Madison Mitchell's shop in the early 1970's. Shertz believes that the "lines of decoys are so smooth and stylish that with the scars of use and patina of age, they are perfect models for paintings." Paul's deep appreciation for the beauty of this unique folk art has been transposed through his inherent skill and in-depth study into fine illustrations that delight collectors everywhere.

Decoy lover, historian, and artist, Paul Shertz has given his tremendous talent and knowledge to create two marvelous images documenting the festival's theme and heritage. Paul himself, however, is also part of the Festival's past, present and future. He will always remain so because of his thoughtful and attractive images which pay tribute to the decoy makers we all hold in such esteem.



Paul Shertz. Photo from Paul Shertz.

15th Annual Decoy Festival



Print by Paul Shertz

For the fifteenth year of the Havre de Grace Decoy, Wildlife Art & Sportsman Festival, Paul Shertz has designed this unique arrangement of decoys. Each Festival Honorary Chairman is represented by one of his favorite decoys. Paul Shertz painstakingly painted each decoy to capture the style and shape of the carver's decoy. Paul Shertz, from Wilmington, Delaware, has made many other compositions of decoys. This print is a limited edition of 1,200. These prints are only available at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. The edition was printed on Imperial Cream 80# stock using fade resistant inks. The image size is 17" by 19", overall size is 20" by 24". All proceeds from the print sale will go into the elevator fund at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

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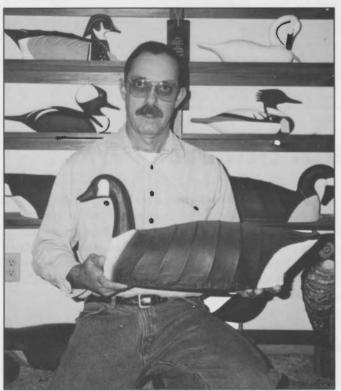
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EXHIBITOR SPOTLIGHT

Form Follows Function: Nick Sapone and the Carolina Canvas Tradition

John V. Quarstein

Canvas decoys first appeared on the North Carolina Sounds around 1900. Since then, more canvas decoys have been made in North Carolina than anywhere else in America, making the Outer Banks the capital of canvas. The story of this decoy making technique is intertwined with North Carolina's gunning heritage and the decoy makers of today, people like Nick Sapone of Wanchese, who carry on these traditions.



Nick Sapone. Photo by J. Quarstein.

The technique of wrapping canvas over wire hoops to recreate a bird's body appears to have originated in the New England area. Makers of wooden decoys like Lothrop Holmes and Joseph Lincoln, turned to canvas in order to make a lighter decoy. While canvas decoys were being made throughout America by the turn of the century, this style found a true home in eastern North Carolina.

Following the Civil War, northern sportsmen sought untouched waterfowl-abundant areas to hunt in. One such place was along North Carolina's barrier islands and sounds. The vast, shallow open bodies of water typified by Currituck Sound, made this region perfect for migrating waterfowl, and consequently, a gunner's paradise. Within twenty-five years of the war's conclusion, major gunning clubs such as Corolla's Lighthouse Club and the Currituck Shooting Club were established. Added to the sportsmen were the local market hunters who prospered by harvesting ducks. Railroad and canal connections provided the transportation link necessary to bring the sportsmen in and ship the game out. Sinkboxes and blinds would dominate the wintry waterscape as bags of hundreds of canvasbacks or black ducks were made daily.

Legends persist that gunners did not need many decoys to hunt. Corn was easier to use and was by far a better lure. It worked well in the marshes and lakes which dominate coastal Carolina until its use was outlawed in 1918. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act also outlawed the sale of waterfowl which virtually ended market gunning. The use of mechanical pickers on nearby cornfields brought more geese than ever before, however, and spawned a new era in Carolina gunning. Clubs and guides needed more decoys, but they needed to be big and durable, yet light to carry out in large numbers onto the marsh ponds, lakes and sounds. The canvas style, perhaps first brought from New England

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226 N. Washington St. Havre de Grace, MD 21078 (410) 939-1080 by sportsmen to their Carolina clubs, fit the bill.

Tilman Lewark of Corolla is credited with making the first canvas decoys in North Carolina around 1900. Limited numbers of wooden and canvas decoys were made by various makers along the sounds prior to 1918 mostly for large sinkbox rigs, but the 20's and 30's became the golden age of canvas in Carolina. It seemed as if every other guide, gunner, surfman, lighthouse keeper, or waterman turned their hands to canvas decoys and an individual Carolina style eventually developed. Makers like Fred Lewark of Knotts Island. Joe Hayman of Coinjock, Ellie Saunders of Poplar Branch, Dexter Snow of Powells Point, John Austin of Corolla, Mannie Haywood of Kill Devil Hills, and Captain Wayland Baum of Wanchese are just a few of the men that forged this special style. Many of these carvers, particularly Ned Burgess of Churches Island, hand chopped wooden decoys as well as wrapping canvas ones. But it is their canvas birds that stand out as a unique design, perfectly crafted for gunning on the sounds.

Canvas decoys appear to be a natural extension of Carolina watermen's lives: canvas used from old sails stretched across the back of wires formed like boat ribs then sealed watertight with paint. The bird's head would be secured like a ship's mast and an anchor line was attached to the bow. Some makers added keels if the decoy's use would take it into deeper water. Obviously, each decoy was a tribute to its maker's vision of practicality. Mannie Haywood's geese all have notched canvas at the stem; a self bailing feature that Mannie thought necessary. All of these decoys are amazingly functional, and use readily available materials to build a bird light enough to transport yet strong enough to

handle. Underneath the canvas lies the decoy's strength as the wire hoops are firmly secured to the wooden bottom, then strutted with string-like sail battens. These birds can dance the waves like a sharpie and dip and bob in the slightest breeze.

Canvas decoys continued in popularity until the 1950's, when many of the older makers began to pass away, and plastic decoys started to flood the market. Even though the very nature of decoy making had changed throughout America, there were a few individuals who sought to continue the Carolina canvas tradition. One such individual, Nick Sapone of Wanchese, North Carolina, is also considered among the best.

Decoy making came to Nick Sapone in an unusual fashion. Sapone had always enjoyed working with his hands and his interest in decoys had been fostered by his friendship with his wife's uncle, decoy maker Cliff Tillett. Tillett was an "old hatchet and rasp man" according to Nick and he befriended him by providing Cliff with logs to chop into decoys. Soon Sapone was carving his own as a hobby. The canvas bug did not bite him until a relative gave him an old damaged canvas decoy her husband had gunned over many years before. Nick thought about repairing it, but after studying the decoy for a while, he thought, "instead of wrecking this old decoy, I'll try to make one just like it."

Nick was initially intrigued by the intricate variations found in canvas decoy construction. He started to make his own. "The first one was the hardest," Nick fondly remembered, "but with patience and persistence you can get the hang of it." He still believes the hardest part is "getting a good wrinkle-free cover in place." Yet, through trial and error, he mastered the technique and



A neat row of unpainted canvas swans. Photo by J. Quarstein.

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Nick Sapone working on a swan. Photo by J. Quarstein.

began making his own reflection and tribute to the old canvas gunning decoys that once filled the sounds.

Sapone's decoys quickly became popular. "I made them first for myself," he readily adds, "but then everybody seemed to want one and all of a sudden, it just started to get out of hand." He entered his first contest at the Virginia Beach Mid-Atlantic Show in 1984 and won a Third Place. The next year, Nick won First Place which prompted him to quit his job as a diesel engineer on a sea-going tug, which hauled oil barges from the Gulf of Mexico to the East Coast, and began making decoys full time. Sapone has not looked back since.

Even though he also makes wonderful wooden decoys such as Doug Jester styled mergansers or classic Carolina canvasbacks, Nick excels at his canvas birds. He spent a weekend demonstrating his craft at the Smithsonian Institute, and has won numerous awards for his gunning swan, including First Places at the 1990 Ward Foundation World Show and the 1991 Core Sound Decoy Show. Nick thrives on the attention, but hopes that such accolades he might receive will also bring attention to the canvas decoy heritage.

Sapone will quickly admit that his creations are a little different than those made back in the 1920's. He uses the same hardware store oil paints "like the old timers did" and seldom adds any paint details. Sapone uses glass eyes and also adds several carved features to his decoys such as mandibles and nostrils. These details set his work apart from older decoys. "The old timers didn't get so fancy. They'd figured that if the birds were that close," Nick noted, "they'd had 'em anyway." These changes in a canvas decoy's construction have been necessary according to Nick because of the need to reach out to collectors who do not have the same appreciation for canvas decoys as they do wooden ones. Canvas decoys are regional so the secret is to make them look good for the mantel. Nick achieves this goal, but he insists that every one of his decoys can go overboard and many are still used by hunters today.

Nick still marvels at how the old canvas birds were made. Durable and practical, the old makers used whatever was at hand to make their decoys. While repairing old decoys, Nick has discovered that some makers used striped bed ticking to cover their birds.

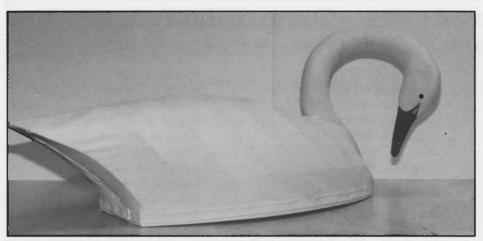
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Nick Sapone's finished swan. Photo by M. Moses.

His favorite makers are Mannie Haywood and the hardworking 92-year old waterman, Captain Wayland Baum. Nick feels an affinity with Haywood's style and approach to decoy making, especially the shared sense of accomplishment in making something useful as well as pleasing to others.

Nick makes a wide variety of species including swan, brant, baldpates, canvasbacks, and mallards. Hissing, preening, feeding and swimming are just a few of his Canada goose interpretations. Every swan he might enter into a competition has a keel because he believes it makes the decoy float more naturally. Most of his other swans, however, are without this feature, noting that only "1 out of 100 keels are useful." "Keels,"

according to Nick. "are a rare find on older Outer Banks decoys, but on one will go if asked." Nick is a traditionalist, while also being a businessman who strives to intertwine the past into a beautiful and marketable decoy. He probably can make any type of canvas waterfowl. as evidenced by the unusual canvas



Front of a Canada goose. Photo by M. Moses.

owls and crows Nick has made on request (he admits that they're a handfull). He loves making decoys and it shows in every bird he creates.

Nick Sapone lives on Roanoke Island in the hamlet of Wanchese, North Carolina, with his wife and two of his three children. He was born in Norfolk, Virginia in 1943 but spent most of his early life in Manteo, North Carolina. Following high school, he served as a submariner in the U. S. Navy and then worked for fifteen years as a

seagoing diesel tug engineer. Nick now spends most of his days in his shop, which looks like a one-man factory, complete with hundreds of decoys in various stages of production. Making about 300 canvas and wooden decoys a year, his goal is to make a good looking decoy at a reasonable price, while maintaining the Carolina canvas decoy tradition. Nick achieves his goal in a beautiful manner when each completed swan or goose is branded "NS."

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For our members we offer free classified ads to buy, sell, and trade decoys or related objects. Please keep it under 15 words. For non-members, it is \$5.00 for 15 words. Mail your classified ads to: Decoy Museum, P.O. Box A, Havre de Grace, MD 21078.

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