

The Canvasback

HAVRE DE GRACE DECOY MUSEUM

Winter 2012
Vol. 21 No. 1

\$7.00

ALLEN PURNER

*Upper Chesapeake Bay
Sportsman, Carver, Historian*





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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.



FROM THE DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

Since my last Director's Column, exciting events have taken place here at the Museum.

First of all, on November 2 was the 25th Anniversary celebration held at the Museum—an evening to recognize many improvements over the past 25 years. The event, held on the second floor of the Decoy Capital of the World, was the first opportunity to visit the newly renovated deck and to see the upgrade of the building façade. Maryland State Senator Barry Glassman presented Board of Directors President Pat Vincenti with an Official Citation “in recognition of the Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Museum.” Additionally, a Certificate of Recognition from State Comptroller Peter Franchot

was presented to the Museum. The Citation recognized the Museum for fulfilling its Mission Statement and being the “pride of the citizens of Maryland and beyond.” United States Senator Benjamin L. Cardin issued a “Special Recognition Certificate” to the Museum accompanied by a letter of congratulations on the achievements and tremendous efforts to preserve the history and artifacts of our state heritage.

The Dorfman Company owner, Joe



Bezold, reported to the membership the progress in the making of a wax figure of Jimmy Pierce. Raffle tickets were sold and an enthusiastic crowd participated in a lively bidding auction for a number of choice items. A delectable array of food was served up by McGregor's Restaurant.

On Saturday November 5, the official ribbon cutting marking the “Grand Opening” of the new deck was held. It was not only an opportunity to see the deck but to enjoy the breathtaking view across the Susquehanna Flats. Contributors to the Edward L. Funk, III, Observation Deck, The RBC Family, Friends and Clients in Partnership with the R. Madison Mitchell Endowment Trust, the City of Havre de Grace, IMARK Builders, Inc., MacGregor's Restaurant, Bill Denny's Automotive, and Ed & Jane Zimmer, were recognized and honored. Mr. Todd Pauliny, son-in-law of Edward Funk, III, told an amusing story of how their association with the Museum began. Mr. Funk witnessed the installation of a bronze plaque naming the all-new observation deck in his honor and cut the ribbon in front of the assembled crowd.

It was a time to reflect that without the generosity of our donors, this Museum would not be the site of our incredible collection and a destination for those who visit our City and State.

—C. John Sullivan

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Havre de Grace, MD 21078
(410) 939-3739

www.decoymuseum.com

From the President

Dear Museum Member,

Looking back at the year 2011 as a whole, it amazes me how quickly it seems to have passed. Maybe it is because everyone here at the Museum is constantly working toward a specific goal or a special event and this year was no exception. We had several goals set forth by the Museum's Board of Directors and we have been successful in achieving them. All were to assure that our visitors have a great and memorable experience, while keeping the Museum financially sound.



Photo by Leo Heppner

We have had success in welcoming three new members to our Museum's Board of Directors; each with different professional backgrounds. With each comes new ideas and great enthusiasm which will help guide our growth in the future. The need for growth is imperative, however display and storage space are at a premium inside our building. Over the past twenty-five years working with the Museum I know there are many artifacts from this area available to the Museum in the form of loans or outright donations but unfortunately at this time our collection display and storage areas are not adequate to handle them.

Given the recent interest and success we experienced with the deck renovations and the enhancements to the front of the Museum building, a Long Range Planning Committee has been formed to review and re-evaluate existing plans.

These include expanding the Museum building to

the north and to the east so that we can grow our collections and educational programs to better preserve, present and interpret the waterfowling heritage of Havre de Grace and the Upper Bay as well as waterfowling across the country. As our plans evolve and move forward we will keep our members informed. Please feel free to offer input.

None of our success would be possible without your continued support. We look forward to visiting with you at the May Decoy Festival. Participate in the raffles and remember it is not too late to support the annual appeal. I hope you are able to attend the Mitchell Endowment Trust Banquet this year. All of these fund raisers are what keep us here; you are what keeps us here so that we can continue the legacy of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Pat Vincenti
Pat Vincenti

FUNDED IN PART BY

Maryland State Arts Council • City of Havre de Grace • Harford County

The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum is funded by an operating grant from the Maryland State Arts Council, an agency dedicated to cultivating a vibrant cultural community where the arts thrive.

Funding for the Maryland State Arts Council is also provided by the National Endowment for the arts, a federal agency.

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 decoys as this art form applies to the social and economic life of the upper Chesapeake Bay region.



31ST HAVRE DE GRACE DECOY & WILDLIFE ART Festival Chairmen

photos by Rob Leslie &
Margaret Jones

The Havre deGrace Decoy Museum is proud to announce the 31st Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival's Honorary Chairmen. This year, two individuals were chosen. We are proud to have renowned wildlife artist Rob Leslie and Allen Fair, past Decoy Museum president, collector and longtime Havre de Grace resident, as this year's Co-Chairmen. These men represent all that the Festival promotes; decoys, wildlife art and the preservation of the art of decoy making. Come join us May 4th, 5th & 6th to celebrate 31 years of festival fun.



Carvers... It's time!

for the 31st Annual
*Decoy & Wildlife
Art Festival's*

CARVING COMPETITION

May 4th, 5th & 6th, 2012

If you have works that you would like to enter in the competitions, call the Museum at **410-939-3739** and we will send you a copy of the rules and divisions.





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Charlie Packard's
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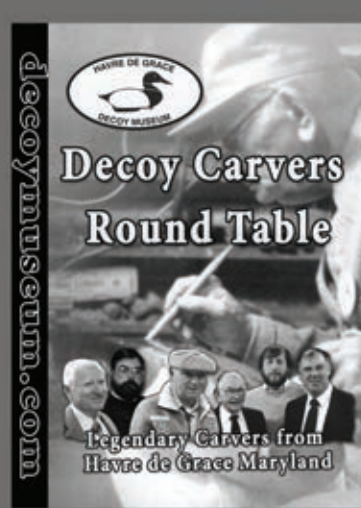
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Decoy Museum!*

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**Visit the Museum Gift Shop or Call the
Museum at 410-939-3739**

Wanted

**Auction items for the Live Auction
to be held Saturday, May 5, 2011
during the 31st Annual Decoy &
Wildlife Art Festival.**

If you have decoys that you would like to sell or donate to the Museum for inclusion in the live auction, please contact the Museum. If we receive the item BEFORE February 17, 2012, your item will be photographed and included in the Festival issue of the *Canvasback* magazine. We will continue to take consignments and donations for the auction until we have reached the 100 lot limit. Any items received AFTER February 17th will not be included in the Festival issue of the *Canvasback* magazine but, will be listed on the AMENDED list that will be made available as soon as the 100 lots are filled.

The commission rate will be 10% from the buyer and 25% from the seller. All proceeds will benefit the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. Consignments must be received by February 17, 2012, in order for photographs to be included in the Festival catalog.

If you have any questions or have an item to consign or donate to the auction, please do not hesitate to call the Museum Monday — Friday between 10am and 4pm at 410-939-3739 or email decoymuseum@yahoo.com.



25th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

by Margaret Jones

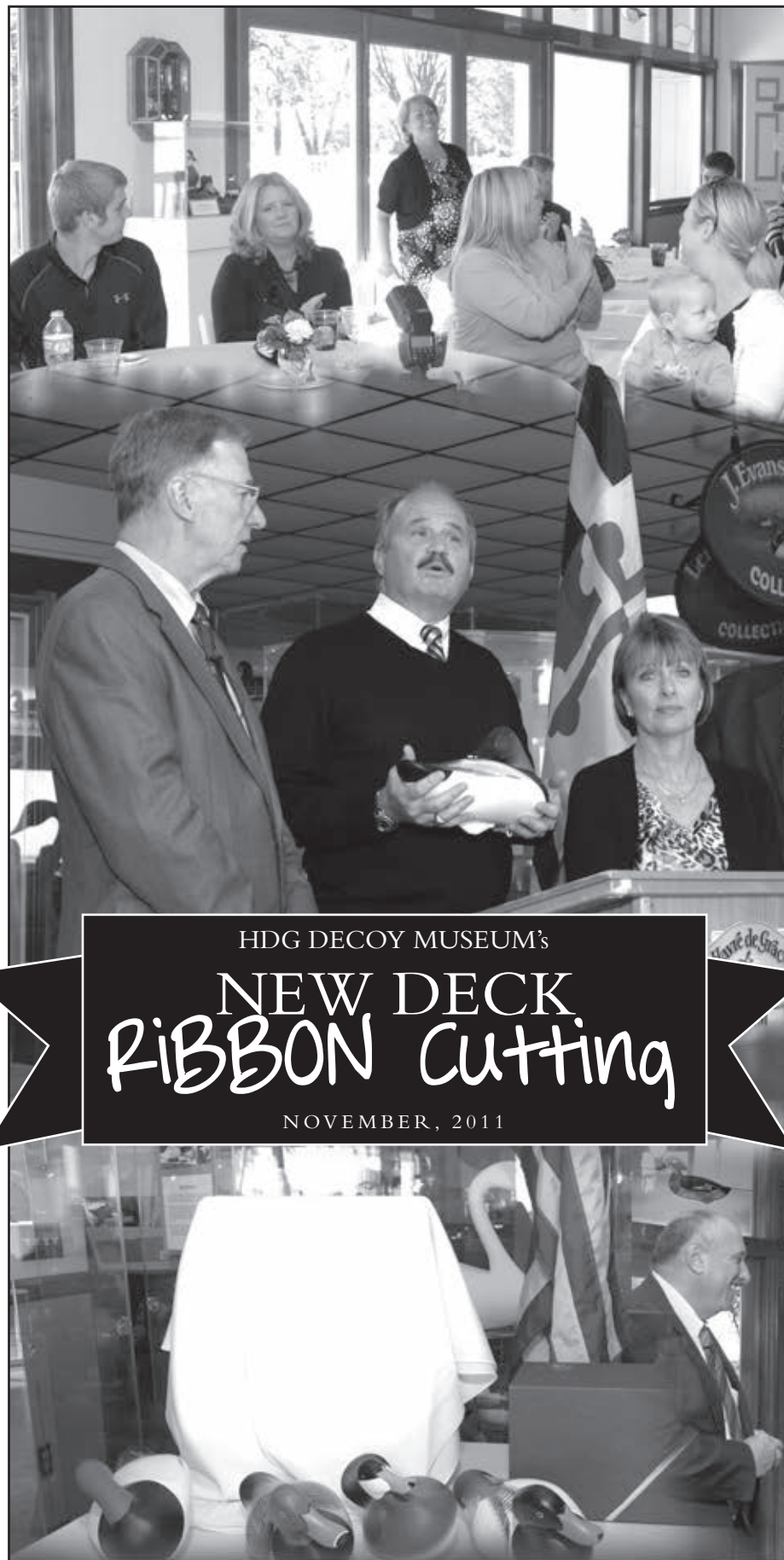
Photos by Leo and Terri Heppner

November 2, 2011 celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. It seemed fitting to hold the event at the Museum because we had much to reflect on and so much more to look forward to.

The evening allowed many long time members and new members an opportunity to talk about the building as it was and what it is now. A presentation was given by an owner of the Dorfman Company, Joe Bezold. He described the creative process of the new wax figure of Jimmy Pierce. Do you remember the original figures being made? The full head casts and time spent making sure the details of the carvers were captured just right? We learned that Jimmy Pierce is getting off "easy." The figure will be digitally produced and a sculpture made. This procedure will provide details even more incredible than the original figures while making it easier on the subject, Jimmy Pierce. Members were allowed a quick peak at the newly renovated deck which was officially opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony of Saturday, November 6th.

A number of dignitaries were on hand including Senator Barry Glassman, Mayor Wayne Dougherty, Sheriff Jesse Bane, and most importantly many Museum members. Several citations and certificates were presented to the Museum and everyone enjoyed the atmosphere and the fine food that MacGregor's Restaurant supplied. A lively auction and oyster can raffle provided fun and friendly kidding rounded out the night.

Stop by the Museum and get a first-hand view of the new renovations. Step out onto the deck and take in the view of the Susquehanna River and use the new observation binocular that is on the deck. It will give you a whole new view of the river and the far shores. ■



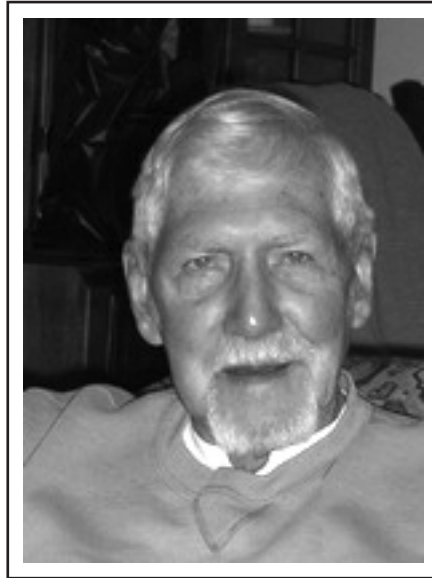


DUANE ALLAN HENRY

On December 14, 2011, the Decoy Museum lost a great friend with the passing of Duane Henry. Duane and his wife Christianne were both Charter Life Members of the Museum. In the late 1970's Duane and Chris opened the doors of the Susquehanna Trading Company in the store front adjacent to their historic home on Union Avenue.

It was the beginning of a wonderful and long lasting friendship with Duane. I was to drink many cups of coffee in the Henry's kitchen over the years. In more recent years Duane and I would walk just down the street to Vancherie's. We would talk "decoys" over breakfast as Duane would greet and chat with the locals.

The Susquehanna Trading Company was the very first local retail outlet for most all of the up and coming young carvers from the region. Duane's marketing skills and innovative merchandizing of local carvers' work brought attention to the decoys of the region's youngest folk artists.



Duane and Chris developed a national reputation among decoy collectors and their store became a "must visit" destination for visitors to Havre de Grace. On many of my visits to see R. Madison Mitchell, Mr. Mitchell would often times start the conversation with "your friend Duane brought in some interesting birds the other day." For decoy collectors of both contemporary and vintage birds there was but one place to go and that was Duane Henry's.

Duane was the first merchant in town to offer a discount to Havre de Grace Decoy Museum members. Duane Henry was a decoy collector, a decoy promoter, a friend of mine, a friend of the Museum but most of all he was a gentle man and a merchandizing innovator years

before eBay and computers became a standard for doing business. ■

—C. John Sullivan

MEMBERSHIP UPGRADES

Coming
Soon!

Look for our new Membership upgrade opportunities in the next issue of the *Canvasback*, including:

- Charter Members
- Life Members
- Business Membership
- Family Membership
- Individual Membership

Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2010 — JUNE 30, 2011

MISSION

The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum exists to collect, document, preserve, and interpret waterfowl decoys as this art form applies to the heritage of the Chesapeake Bay. Within this context, the Museum will strive to study styles of decoys, seeking to understand the decoys' artistic and social values and to pass on this heritage to our future generations. The Museum will also educate, present, and document the influence that the surrounding environment, the Susquehanna Flats and the Chesapeake Bay, has had on decoy history.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

TOTAL ASSETS \$1,269,792

Includes cash, investments, inventory, land and leasehold improvements, furniture and equipment, accumulated depreciation, and the value of the Museum collection.

TOTAL LIABILITIES

AND CAPITAL \$1,269,792

TOTAL LIABILITIES: \$10,238

Includes line of credit, accrued expenses, and sales tax payable.

TOTAL CAPITAL: \$1,259,554

Includes unrestricted net assets, restricted net assets, and net income.

ENDOWMENT FUND BALANCES

Bryan/Joiner \$47,852

C. J. Sullivan \$15,271

EARNED REVENUE \$136,171

Investment \$249

Contributed \$137,322

TOTAL REVENUE \$273,742

EXPENSES

Program \$84,954

Fundraising \$288

General & Administration \$151,920
(excludes depreciation of \$40,205)

TOTAL EXPENSES \$237,102

STATISTICAL SUMMARY

GENERAL VISITATION 10,323

Paid: 7,056

Free: 3,267

Total School Children: 1,408

Number of Groups: 13

Number of Other Groups: 22

Classes/Workshops: 127

MEMBERSHIP 874

EXHIBITIONS & CLASSES/WORKSHOPS

Permanet Exhibitions: 4

Temporary Exhibitions: 5

Classes/Workshops: 20



Museum Donors

The Board of Directors of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum wishes to extend sincere thanks to the many contributors during this fiscal year and extend a special thanks to the R. Madison Mitchell Endowment Trust for allowing us to retire our line of credit and enter the current fiscal year debt free. Thanks, also, to the City of Havre de Grace, Harford County and the Maryland State Arts Council for their continued support.

H. William Acker	John Case	Dale Druyor	Richard Hartman
Richard Allegar	Cecil & Harford Cty. Watermans Assn	Tom East	John C. Hartman
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Boring Waterfowl	Caroline Cooney	Joel & Charlotte Gaydos	Judy K. Horne
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Odin & Lillian Brooks	Howard Cox	Golden Age Club	J-K Mechanical
Anna Bryan	Thomas & Margherita Coudon	Joyce Gorsuch	James Javorski
Kaye Bushel	Ruth M. Craig	Patricia Grace	James C. Johnson
Thomas Byrne	Edward Cranston	John Graham	Charles Joiner
Joanne Calder	Peter Darwin	Jack Graham	Ken & Kay Keetley
Frank & Joanne Calder	Paul & Maggie Davis	Louis & Carolyn Guerrina	Dan Keithley
Paul Caldwell	Delta Waterfowl Upper Chesapeake Chapter	HdG Chamber of Commerce	William Kerkam
Luke Campbell	Bill Denny's	Dave & Joan Hagan	G. Hunter Kerlin
Charles Canova	Mary Louise Devereaux	Leonard & Terri Hamilton	Carl Kilhoffer
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Carpet by the Yard		Carolyn Hargis	Robert & Pam Knight
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Collector's corner

BY C. JOHN SULLIVAN



Bronze Blackduck head.
Joel Barber, New York, New York, from the collection of Jeff Pelayo

The Responsibility of a Collector



The life of a collector comes with a variety of responsibilities. In the decoy world as in any specialty collection world individuals must realize that they are merely custodians or care takers of the objects which they have gathered around themselves. The most perfect plans in life are seldom fulfilled. As the saying goes: "life is what happens while

we are making plans." I have witnessed "downsizing" of objects that the original owners or collectors would never have imagined in their wildest dreams. I have attended auction sales since I was a young boy. I can recall standing between my maternal grandmother and aunt at household auctions in the northern end of Harford County as an 8 year-old. As the wind blew leaves from the trees on cold fall days, I would stand close to family members for what if any warmth they radiated. I was struck as

a youngster with how odd it seemed to watch family photo albums being sold for something less than a dollar bill. In my early twenties I witnessed a Circuit Court Judge's certificates and diplomas being sold to the highest bidder. Those framed items, the same ones that I had admired and respected in the Judge's chambers were sold as I watched; they were then slit open from the back and the document tossed into the trash so that the new owner could now insert their treasured documents. Each of us



Collector's corner

will at some time be forced to prepare for the dispersal of our treasured objects. If we don't prepare, our heirs are left with the task. The last treasured items which I have added to my collection were once another family's most precious possessions and now they are mine. I understand that those items which I enjoy and admire were enjoyed and admired by others before me. Someday, they will hopefully be at very least respected by future generations.

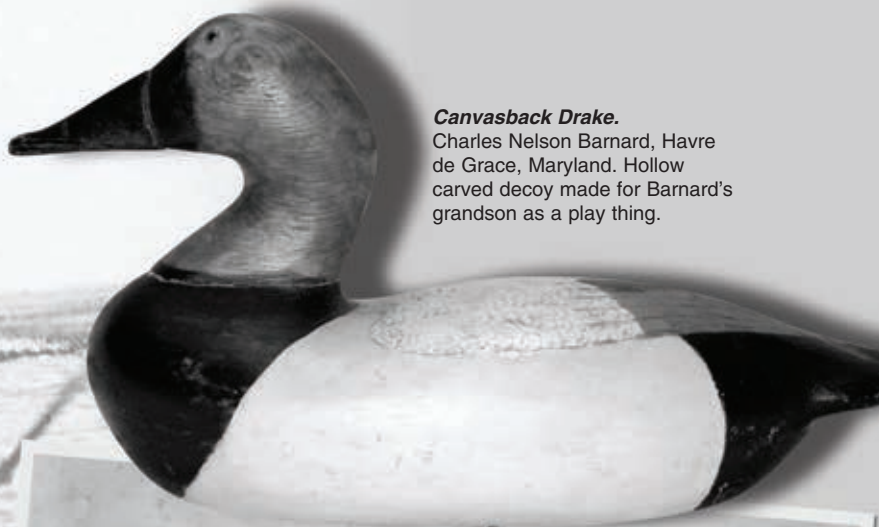
Continues on page 17

If we don't prepare, our heirs are left with the task.



Miniature Canvasback Drake.
James T. Holly, Havre de
Grace, Maryland,
from the collection of
Eugene V. Connett

Collector's corner

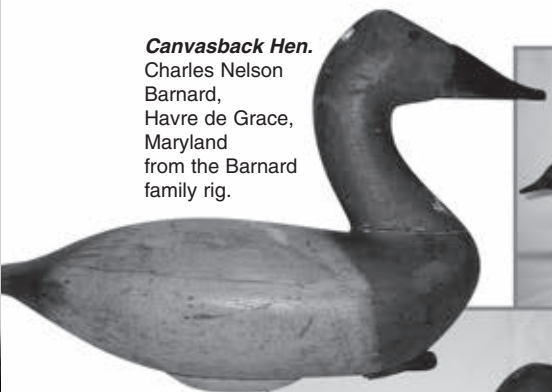


Canvasback Drake.
Charles Nelson Barnard, Havre
de Grace, Maryland. Hollow
carved decoy made for Barnard's
grandson as a play thing.

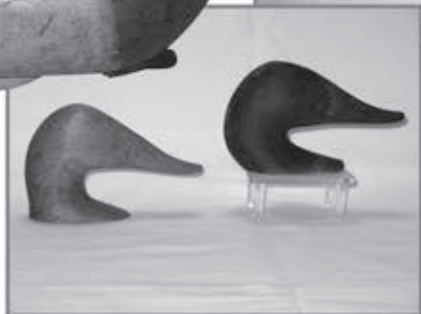
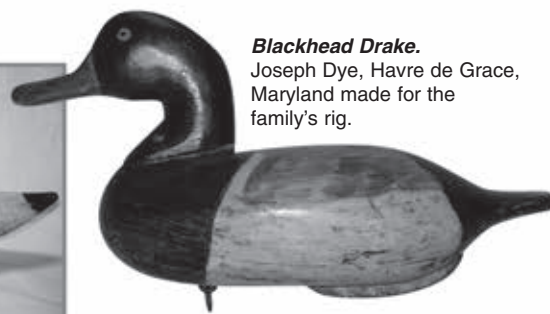


Ruddy Duck.
Captain Benjamin Dye,
Perryville Maryland, from
the collection of Henry
Fleckenstein, Jr.

Canvasback Hen.
Charles Nelson
Barnard,
Havre de Grace,
Maryland
from the Barnard
family rig.



Blackhead Drake.
Joseph Dye, Havre de Grace,
Maryland made for the
family's rig.



Canvasback heads. Leonard Pryor,
Chesapeake City, Maryland from the work-
bench of Henry A. Fleckenstein, Jr.

**Cast Iron Teal
Sinkbox decoys.
(Above)**
Charles T. Wilson,
Havre de Grace,
Maryland from the
collections of Frank
Maslin and Henry
A. Fleckenstein, Jr.



Canada Goose. Captain Jimmy Wright, Masey, Maryland
from Captain Jimmy's personal gunning rig.

COLLECTOR'S Continued from page 15

On one recent evening I caught a portion of an episode of the Antique Road Show. It is the only one of the current collector shows that has real experts and is an honest factual presentation of unusual and unique objects. The episode that I watched was a presentation of unusual and unique objects. A lady brought in a wide-seated rush-bottomed chair. The chair had belonged to her great-grandfather. The grandfather was one of the Siamese conjoined twins. She told the story of the unusual life styles the twins lived and how the chair had been passed down to her. When the expert presented her with his estimate of the value she stated that's wonderful to know but it will never be sold. The next morning on route to work I had one stop to make. The stop was to visit someone who I have purchased many items from through the years. The items I sought were family photos, not of my family but photos from his family album. The photos are wonderful and extremely important

to me as a collector and a writer. Among the hunting and fishing photos were photos of the family home, the dogs, the cats, the family business, and numerous images of family members. They were many photos that should never have been sold. But, like the chair on the "Road show" that will never be sold, they were. As times goes by everything changes hands, everything! Think about your own most prized possessions, where did they come from, but more importantly where will they go? Think about, plan for it, where will it all go? If there is something important to the history of your family, your friends, local history or a museum; perhaps that is where it should go. I've been the recipient of many wonderful things that never should have been sold. I have done my best to share the history of these objects with others. It is the collector's responsibility, for after all, we are only "caretakers" for a short time. ■



ALLEN PURNER

UPPER CHESAPEAKE BAY SPORTSMAN, CARVER AND HISTORIAN

By James L. Trimble

Cecil County, Maryland, located at the top of the Chesapeake Bay, is the northernmost boundary of the Susquehanna Flats. Its bay and river shorelines, besides supporting numerous fishing operations, were primary waterfowling grounds for early market gunners and sports, who came each fall with the noisy arrival of migrating ducks and geese that wintered in these waters, feeding on the nutrient rich celery and sago grasses that grew thick along its bottom.

Decoy makers flourished in the surrounding riverfront communities of Perryville, Charlestown, North East, Elkton and Chesapeake City. Their counterfeit ducks, purchased by area gunners and duck hunting clubs, filled massive sinkbox rigs and floated in front of blinds that dotted the waterfront. Club memberships were comprised of wealthy notables;

prominent business owners, government officials, even presidents gunned there.

Elk Neck is situated between the North East and Elk Rivers, both tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay, and the waterfront communities of North East and Elkton lay

at the head of the navigable portion of those rivers. The town of North East was established sometime prior to 1700 as an early colonial outpost, and the peninsula was the landing spot for the

British invasion forces that sailed up the Elk River for their historic 1777 march on Philadelphia.

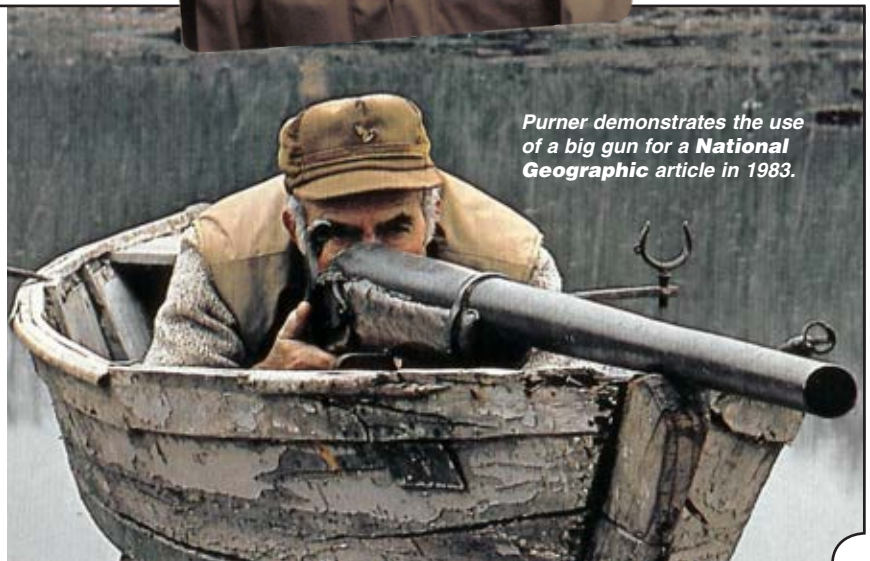
Elk Neck's main commerce was derived from farming, as well as an iron works and eventually a fire-brick manufacturer who later established a business there. But many of the locals earned incomes as watermen or in jobs of commerce associated with the water. During the early to mid-1800s the Pennsylvania Railroad opened a



Allen Purner in his Army uniform, ca. 1942

*“When the moon is full and bright
We feed the cornfields through the night
When daylight breaks we’re on our way
Winging swiftly to the bay”*

—Allen Purner, penned on the back of a flying goose wall plaque

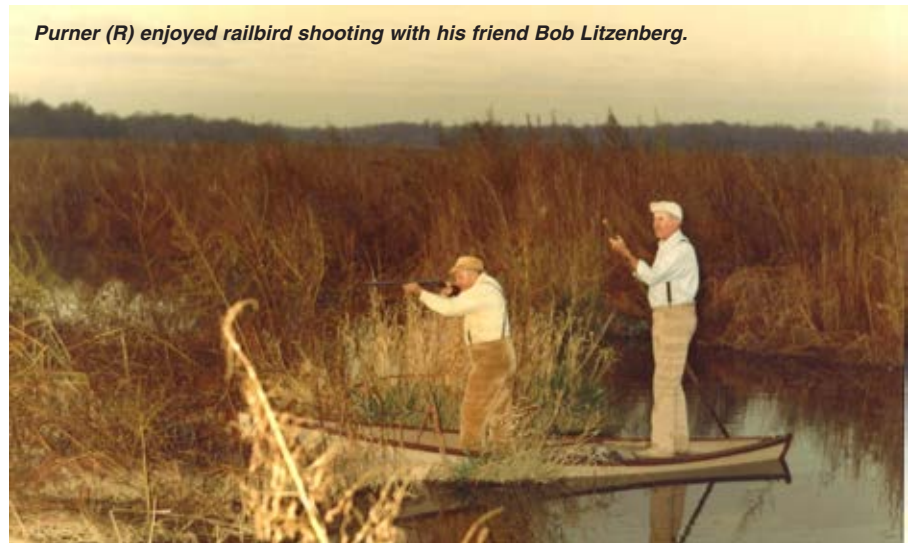


*Purner demonstrates the use of a big gun for a **National Geographic** article in 1983.*

depot in North East, which eventually provided an alternative link to Washington, New York and other urban markets.

Allen Purner, one of eight children—four boys and four girls—was born in North East in 1921, the son of a hauler who worked on the water. The senior Purner was raising his family as the Great Depression engulfed the U.S. economy. His children and the children of his neighbors were classic examples of Tom Brokaw's "Greatest Generation," a term he coined to describe those that came of age during these years. They had grown up with deprivation then had gone on to fight in World War II, meeting the patriotic call of their country. After the war, they stoically rebuilt both their lives and their country.

The Purner boys learned to hunt and fish at their father's side. They were also influenced by their grandfathers, who had water access and maintained small wooden boats. "Grandfather Clinton Purner owned the 237-acre White Point Farm, located on the river," says Allen's younger brother Marshall, who was born in 1927. "We were raised on stories about grandfather Clinton and the sinkbox operations that he ran. He was also a fisherman who built and repaired his own boats. We all fished,



Purner (R) enjoyed railbird shooting with his friend Bob Litzenberg.

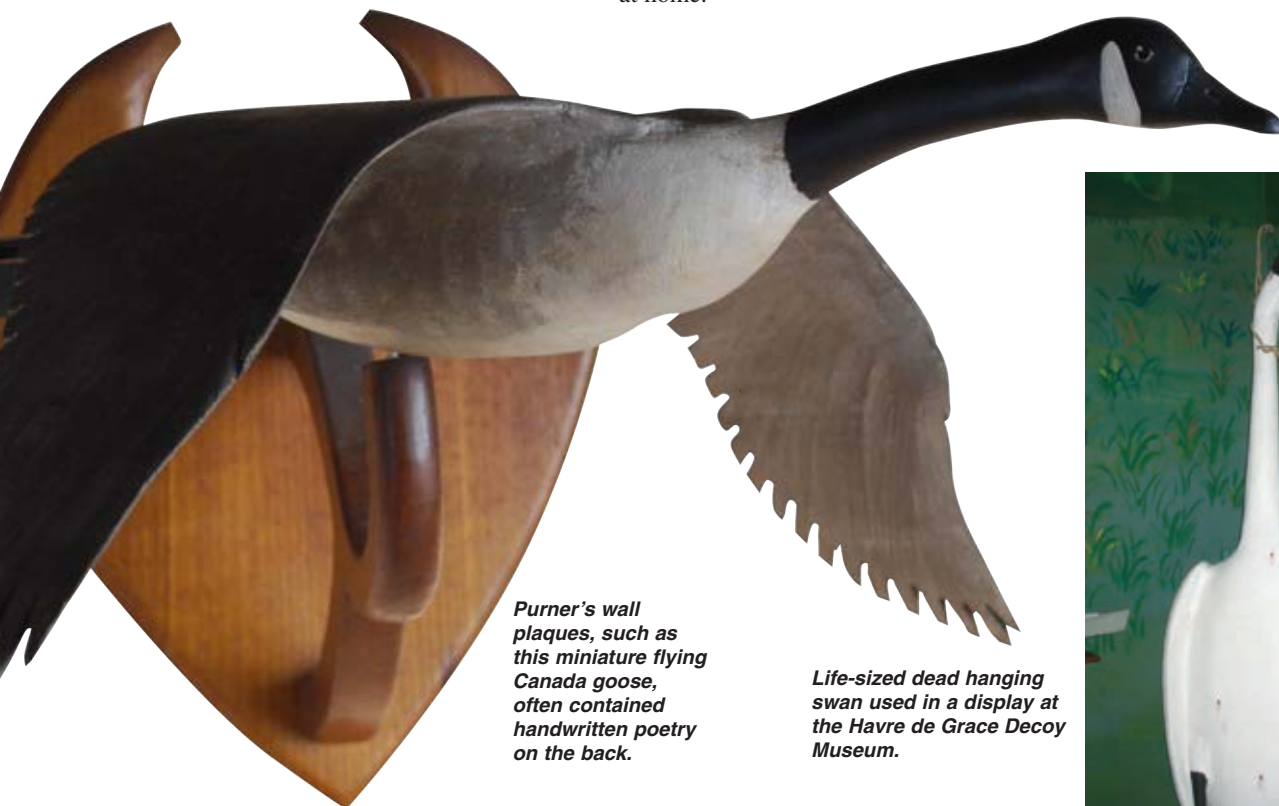
but Allen and I were the only two that eventually took to waterfowl hunting."

Towards the end of the 1920s the family moved downriver to Charlestown. Their backyard neighbor was Will Heverin, a well-known Cecil County decoy maker. David and Joan Hagan's 1990 book, "Upper Chesapeake Bay Decoys and their Makers," recounts Allen's stories of time spent in his neighbor's decoy shop, watching the older man work. According to Allen, the family dog liked Heverin so much that he spent as much time there as at home.

After about three years the family returned to the Perkinsville area of North East, just off North East Creek, where the children fished and swam in the waters and walked the shorelines in search of sea creatures and washed up treasures, including driftwood, derelict decoys and uncovered Indian artifacts. Sometimes one of the grandfathers' small boats was available for use.

According to Marshall, Allen had a creative touch and was artistically inclined

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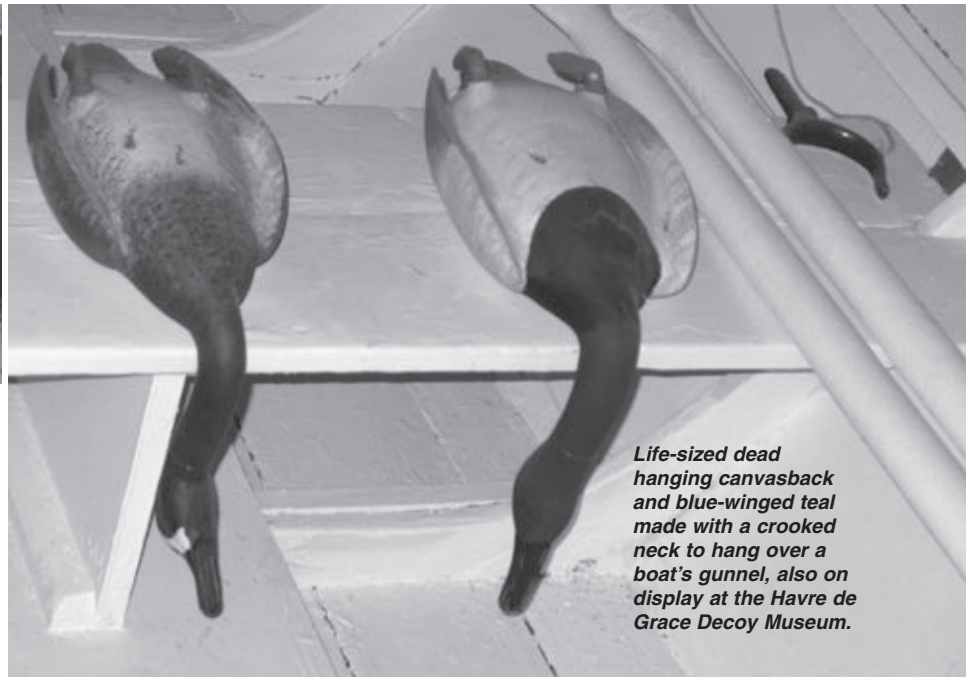
Purner's wall plaques, such as this miniature flying Canada goose, often contained handwritten poetry on the back.

Life-sized dead hanging swan used in a display at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.





After the purchase of the H.L. Harvey Fish Company at the mouth of the North East River, which became the location for the newly formed Upper Bay Museum (L-R): George Harvey, Jeff Purner, Robert Harvey and Allen Purner.



Life-sized dead hanging canvasback and blue-winged teal made with a crooked neck to hang over a boat's gunnel, also on display at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

PURNER Continued from page 19

as a child. In seventh grade the teacher scolded him for drawing ducks instead of paying attention. But upon closer examination of his creative flair, and with Christmas approaching, rather than punishing him, she had him draw Santa and his eight reindeers across the blackboard. Their efforts were rewarded when the entire school was invited to file through the classroom and examine his creation.

Allen also collected metal lids with a beveled edge that he scavenged from grease drums, perfect for hanging, which he decorated with painted waterfowl scenes. This fun-loving brother would dress up at Halloween in a scary costume, often as the "Rattler," and make unannounced visits to his younger siblings' classrooms. Allen was proficient with a self-made leather sling, sometimes able to hit birds on a wing, and his fishing experiences expanded from a line and pole to use of a seine net, using small boats to set and retrieve his catch.

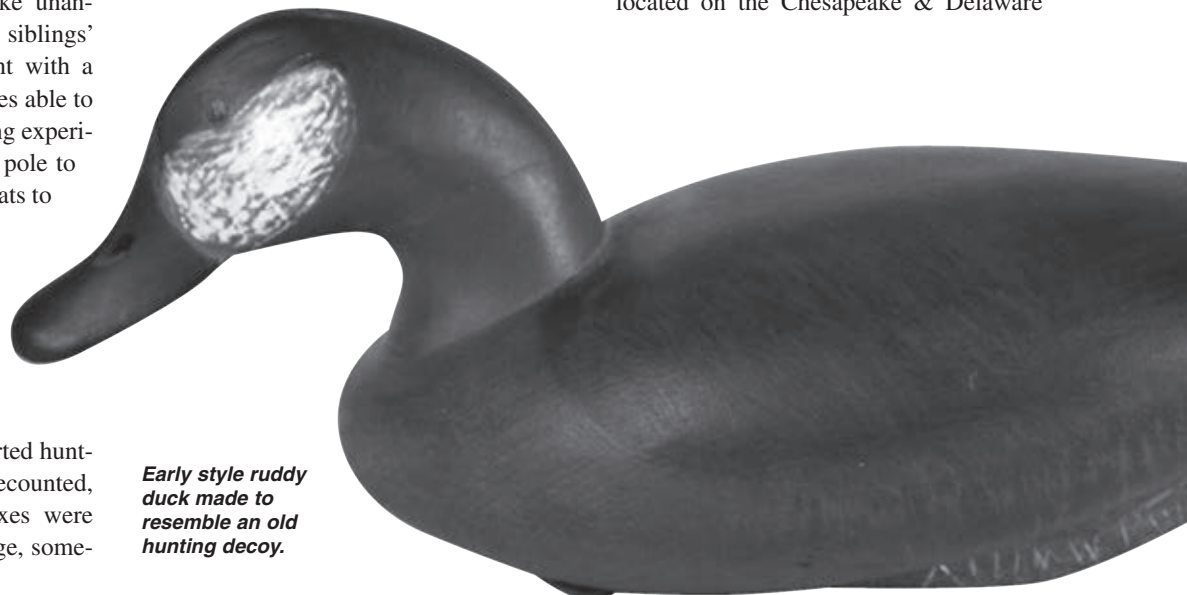
The Purner boys were waterfowlers by the time they were twelve. The family hunted with guns that belonged to their grandfather, their dad's a Browning automatic that was handed down. "By the time I started hunting it was 1939," Marshall recounted, "and the big guns and sinkboxes were gone. We hunted the marsh's edge, some-

time from a small boat or vacated blind. But my brother Allen was old enough to remember my grandfather's sinkbox operation and the hundreds of decoys used until outlawed in 1934. The bushwhack boat soon became the preferred method of hunting." He recalled the excitement of a young boy as he watched family and neighbors prepare for the arrival of each waterfowl season.

About the time Marshall started hunting in 1939, his tall lanky 6'6" brother went to work for the Civilian Conservation Corps, a popular federal jobs program, planting trees, building roads and creating parks, among other improvements to federal and

state owned lands. He was assigned to the camp on Elk Neck.

By then World War II had started in Europe, and the U.S. was going through a pre-war induced economic expansion. Triumph Explosives had opened in 1938 on a 1,200-acre site in nearby Elkton producing munitions, primarily 40 mm shells to feed the countless twin anti-aircraft cannons on U.S. and allied warships that fired 80-90 rounds a minute. Several Purners eventually worked there, including Allen, his wife Mary Ellen, who he married in 1941, his sister Ellen and his aunt Reba. Allen and his bride set up housekeeping in nearby Chesapeake City, located on the Chesapeake & Delaware



Early style ruddy duck made to resemble an old hunting decoy.

An avid fisherman, Purner carved models of his favorite species, like this crappie.



Canal, but not for long as the U.S. entered the war in December of that year.

Allen served in the U.S. Army's 38th Division, fighting in the Pacific Theater from August 1942 through August 1945. Marshall remembered how the family was constantly reminded of his absence and peril, as day after day they watched train after train head north through town, hauling tanks, jeeps, large guns and other military items for transit overseas. Allen made many of the Pacific Island invasions during the Philippines' campaign and was wounded on New Guinea. His numerous decorations included two bronze stars and a Purple Heart. While in the service he learned to play poker, a game he would spend a lifetime perfecting. After his discharge Allen took a job at nearby Aberdeen Proving Ground working in the paint shop and raising through the ranks to foreman. He eventually became a building inspector, the job from which he later retired.

It was "After WW II ...when I started to make decoys...to gun over," Purner is quoted in Hagan's book. But it is not gunning decoys that made his mark in the collecting community, but rather a body of finely made "wall hangers" of flying waterfowl—ducks, geese, swans, terns and shorebirds—many

He was not only a savvy hunter, but was knowledgeable about the history of waterfowling in his area.

with short sonnets written on the back of the plaques. He later captured collector's attention with life-sized dead-hanging ducks, geese and swans, some in matching pairs, complete with decorated blood-droplet shot marks. Some were carved with a neck crook to resemble a dead duck hanging over a boat's gunnel. He reportedly made about 300 pairs, starting in the 1960s.

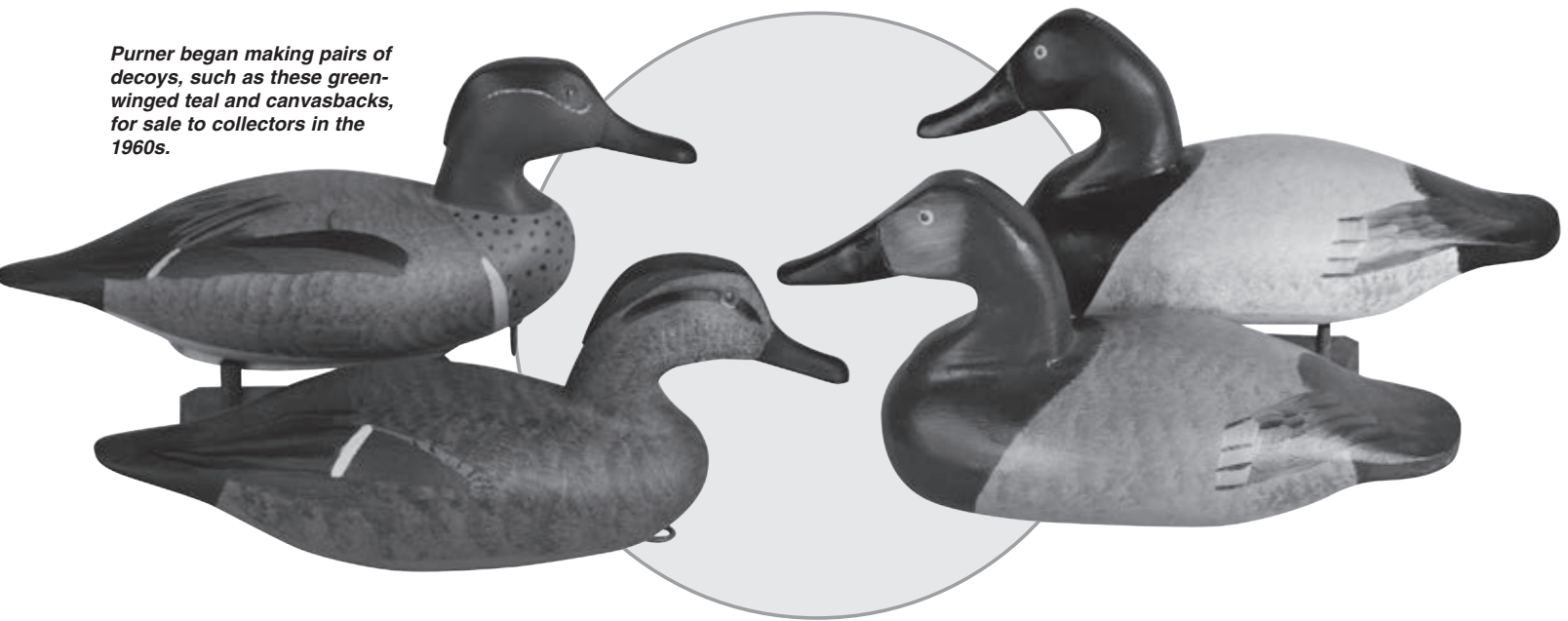
Purner remained an avid waterfowler his entire adult life, using the Browning Automatic that belonged to his grandfather. (His father had sold the gun, but after he passed away Allen tracked down the owner and bought it back.) He was not only a savvy hunter, but was knowledgeable about the history of waterfowling in his area. A good storyteller, he could intertwine historical knowledge with local gunning lore. He had many gunning buddies and his trips were numerous. He was primarily a bushwhacker but body-booted and hunted from a blind as well. And he loved to fish for perch, shad and herring during the spring run.

Purner was a member of the Cecil County Hunters' Association, an early sportsman's organization that lobbied the state on hunting and related issues. In the 1960s, then the Cecil-Harford County Hunters' Association, it encouraged the town of North East to purchase the old H.L. Harvey Fish Company properties at the mouth of the North East River. The group, through fundraising and donations, took control of the ground's two large buildings, which later became the Upper Bay Museum. Purner was pivotal in getting many locals to donate decoys and waterfowling artifacts and sought out additional items for purchase. Its primary fundraiser was the North East Water Festival, now the Upper Shore Decoy Shore. It included sinkbox and punt gun demonstrations and exhibits of old and new decoys were put on display. Now in its 45th year and held in nearby Charlestown, it's billed as the "oldest continually run decoy show in the U.S."

Purner owned a 16-foot plank-bottom sculling or bushwhack boat, his favorite method of hunting. It required propelling

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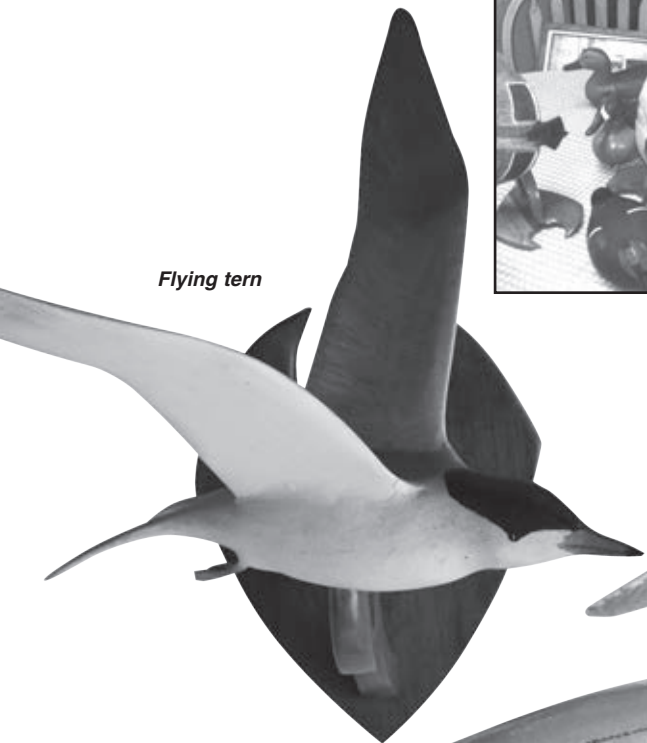
Purner began making pairs of decoys, such as these green-winged teal and canvasbacks, for sale to collectors in the 1960s.



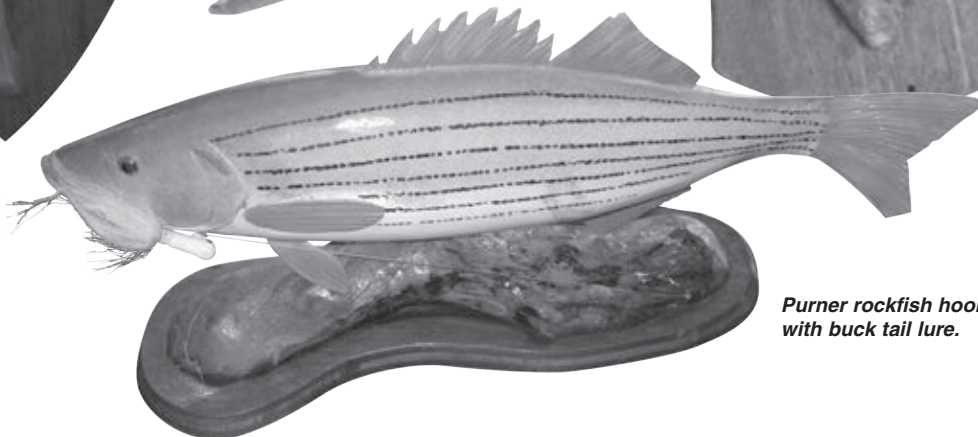
Allen's younger brother Marshall who has taken some of his brother's carvings off of the shelf and off of the wall for our photo shoot.



Sitting dove wall hanger



Flying tern



Purner rockfish hooked with buck tail lure.

PURNER Continued from page 21

and steering the boat one-handed with a single stern mounted sculling oar towards the decoys and the ducks they attracted and positioning the boat to allow both the bow rider and sculler to shoot. It was a stealth procedure he had mastered. Each year at the North East Water Festival they held watercraft races, and sculling was one of them, and it was an event that the powerful long-limbed Purner had won multiple times.

In addition to sculling, he enjoyed railbird hunting with his good friend Bob Litzenberg, a decoy maker from Elkton. And they were quite proficient at it. He was quoted once in an article as saying, "Bob and I could kill more in the skiff in one day that most guys could in a season." It was Bob who encouraged Allen to begin making decoys in matched pairs for collectors, as well as decorative shorebirds and fish carvings for sale. He initially hand-chopped his bodies as did most Cecil County decoy makers, but eventually he had Jim Pierce, who hunted and fished with both men, turn them for him on the lathe.

"They were good friends," Pierce recalled. "You would see them together often. They would get on each other, the same way

brothers do." He chuckled while recalling one visit. "One time Allen showed up here and I inquired about buying a pair of his dead-hanging teal," he said. "Several days later he returned and I asked him about the price. He responded, 'Let's make it \$30 as I have a poker game this evening.'"

The November 1983 issue of National Geographic featured an article entitled "Humble Masterpieces—DECOYS," which told the history of waterfowling in America and the use of decoys in this pursuit. Part of the story dealt with market hunters and featured a photo of a big gun and skiff, owned by the Upper Bay Museum, floating on the water. Purner was hunkered over the gun demonstrating how it was used. This method of hunting on the Chesapeake Bay was outlawed in 1918.

Around 1990 Purner received an award from Maryland Governor William Donald Schaefer for the "Maryland, You Are Beautiful" program for his artistic waterfowl carvings. During the ceremony he presented the governor with a hand-carved duck head cane.

Purner passed away on July 14, 2006 as the result of a fall while helping friends. He was featured in an article in a local magazine entitled, "*Allen W. Purner; Cecil County's Renaissance Man—A Tribute.*" It told of his life as an outdoorsman and a local historian. His Cecil

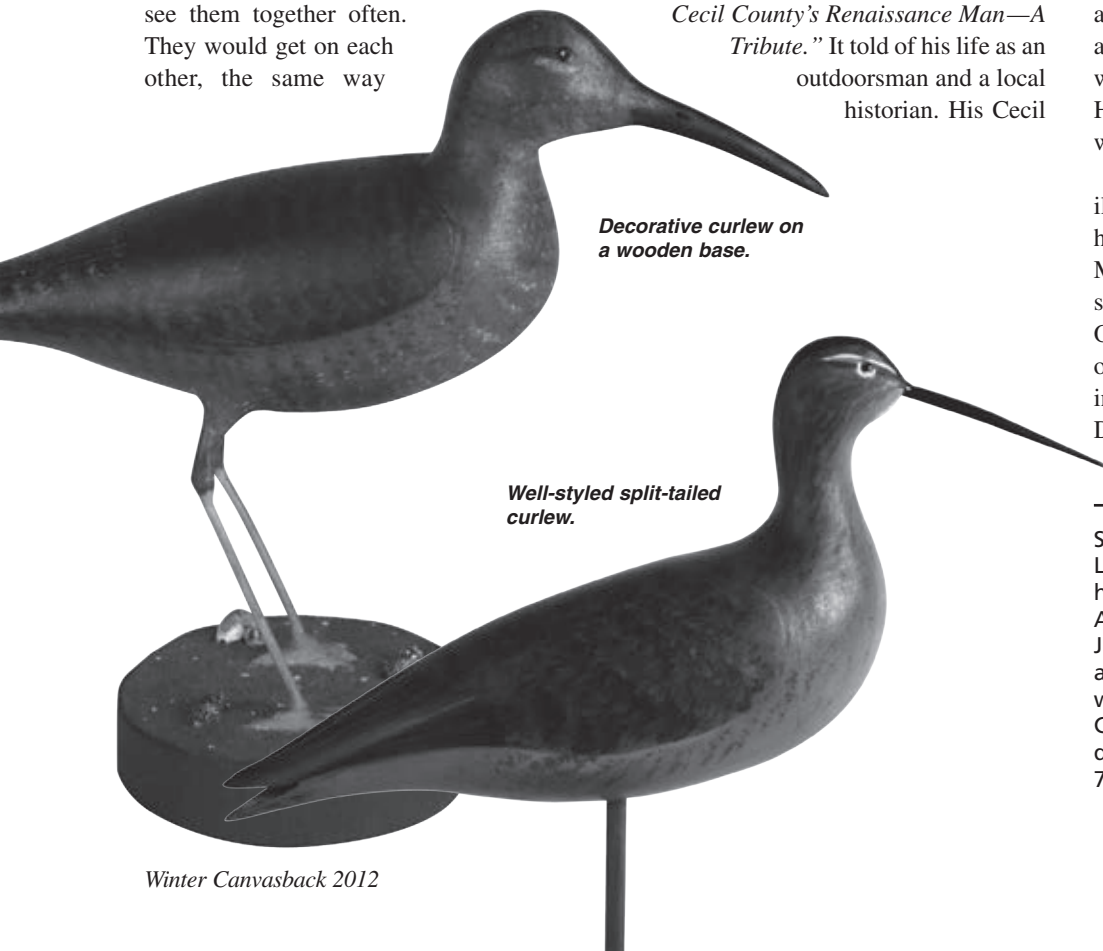
County home, the writer suggested, was like a small museum loaded with local memorabilia. He described a room filled with ducks, decoys and waterfowling artifacts along with numerous photos of Purner and his hunting buddies with their dogs, boats, guns and game. Old photos of Cecil County, including historical documents, were hung on the walls, including a painting of John Schaeffer's legendary Chesapeake City store as seen from the C&D Canal. There was also a collection of arrowheads and other Indian artifacts from Purner's lifetime collection.

It also told of his World War II decorations, including the bronze stars and the Purple Heart. Not surprisingly, while many knew of his service, few knew he was a decorated war hero. "I have hunted with him many times and ate lunch with him often," Pierce says, "but never heard him say a word about the war or his war time injury or accomplishments." Few of his generation ever spoke of those days.

But many knew of his hunting and fishing accomplishments and his years of devotion to his waterfowling community. "Besides being a driving force behind the acquisition and establishment of the Upper Bay Waterfowl Museum, I knew him as a fine self-assured individual with a creative artisan eye who loved to hunt and fish," Pierce says. "He was steeped in waterfowling knowledge and techniques. He was a fine man who was fun to be with. We all miss him."

Quite fittingly, after his death his family donated his workbench and some of his workshop tools to the Upper Bay Museum. It's also the resting place for some of his finest waterfowl carvings. One of his dead-hanging swans and a pair of his dead crooked-neck canvasbacks are in the collection of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. ■

Special thanks to *Decoy Magazine* of Lewes, Delaware (302-644-9001) who has given permission to run this story. Another thanks to Marshall Purner, Jim Pierce, Randy Futtty, Jack Manning and Margaret Jones for their assistance with the story. Jim Trimble specializes in Chesapeake Bay and Chincoteague area decoys. He can be reached at (703) 768-7264 or potomacduck@cox.net.



Decorative curlew on a wooden base.

Well-styled split-tailed curlew.



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Thank you and welcome to the following members and businesses that recently renewed their membership or newly joined us (from 9/11-11/11). Your continued support and contributions are essential to the overall success of the Decoy Museum:

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Holidays

M at the MUSEUM

The Museum all decked out.

Some of our decorations.



The Decoy Museum's Duck Head Christmas Tree.



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Free Decoy Appraisals

PUBLIC WELCOME

J. Evans McKinney Old Decoy Contest

2012 COMPETITION

The 10th annual J. Evans McKinney Old Decoy Contest to be held in conjunction with the 2011 Havre de Grace Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival will be held Saturday, May 5th at the Middle School Gym. Entries will be accepted at the stage area from 10:00 a.m. until judging at noon. Joe Engers, Editor & Publisher of *Decoy Magazine* will head up a three-member judge's panel. Participants must make a best faith effort to assure that all decoy entries were made prior to 1950. Each decoy will be limited to one category competition only. Matched pairs entered in other than a Matched Pair category will be considered as one entry. There is a competition ban, regardless of category, on last year's winning birds. Competition decoys will be kept in a highly visible roped-off secure area and will not be handled by the public. At approximately 1:00p.m., the public will be invited to review the roped off and secured tables once the judges have made their selections. A blue ribbon will be awarded for each of the following ten category winners. The three-judge panel will also select a best in show winner. Winners will be requested to display their decoys and ribbons at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum for a three month period.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Best Upper Bay Sleeper | 5. Best Wood Wing Duck |
| 2. Best Upper Bay Matched Pair | 6. Best Dorchester County Diving Duck |
| 3. Best Upper Bay Canvasback—
<i>with old known market
gunner, gunning yacht,
or gun club brand</i> | 7. Best Rock Hall Puddle Duck |
| 4. Best Decoy in Severin Hall Paint | 8. Best Virginia Brant |
| | 9. Best Jim Pierce Decoy—
<i>age requirement waived</i> |
| | 10. Best Unknown |

There will be no restrictions as to those who can participate or number of categories entered; however participants are restricted to no more than three birds per category. Competition issues will be resolved at the sole discretion of the competition chairman and/or competition chief judge. Any questions, please contact contest chairman Jim Trimble @ 703-768-7264 or potomacduck@cox.net.

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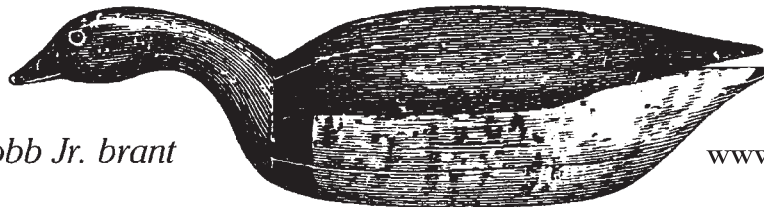
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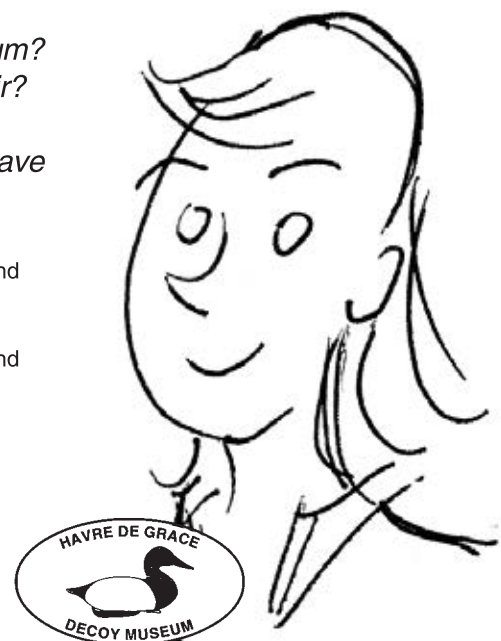
*Do you have a few hours a week you could give to the museum?
How about a few hours a year for the Festival or the Duck Fair?
Do you enjoy early morning bird walks and would you like to
share your knowledge with others? If you have the time, we have
the need.*

The Museum is dedicated to offering a wide variety of activities to its members and to the public. We are looking for volunteers who would like to assist with leading adult group tours, and/or answer phones. Can you help with large mailings or assist with special events like the Festival and Duck Fair? We would like to expand our activities and programs, but we need your help.

Volunteers are a great asset to any organization. We would love to have you come aboard.

Contact Margaret Jones

at the Museum 410-939-3739 or email us at decoymuseum@yahoo.com to see how you can become a part of our volunteer staff.



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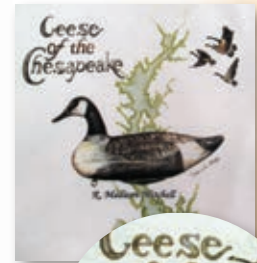
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Jimmy Pierce Design.

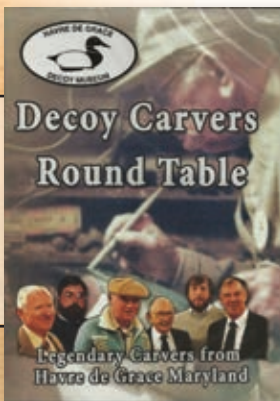
\$25 each—plus shipping

Limited T-Shirts by Valerie Lloyd available in two designs. When ordering specify size and design.



TOP: R. Madison Mitchell Design.

AT RIGHT: Museum logo on front left side of shirt.



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Enjoy round table discussions about “old times” hunting on the Susquehanna River. Listen to stories about how the decoy carvers we know today got started. Learn things about the carvers you never knew and watch the “old times” from 8mm film footage of hunting on the flats.

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Located inside the HdG Decoy Museum



Calendar of Events

The Ward Foundation Education Series

Call the Ward Foundation for a complete listing of this year's seminars, classes and workshops, programs and exhibits.
Call Salisbury University Education Department at (410) 742-4988 ext 110 or visit their website at www.wardmuseum.org

The Decoy Museum's Exhibits

"Tools of the Market Gunner" Exhibit featuring a number of punt and battery guns, on loan from the R. Madison Mitchell Endowment Trust, in the Library

Potomac Decoy Collector's Association High Head Decoys exhibit, second floor gallery

An exhibit of Factory Decoys, donated by Dr. M. Kramer, second floor gallery

The Magnificent Michael Bequest, an extraordinary pair of "Daddy" Holly canvasbacks, First floor near the "Gunning the Flats" exhibit

Tour Reservations

Book your tours early. Talk to your children's or grandchildren's teachers now about signing up for educational programs and tours of the Decoy Museum. Harford County school system classes are free and we have several different tours to offer different age or grade levels. Programs for scouts and home schooled children are also available.

FEBRUARY 4TH	FEBRUARY 25TH
Upper Chesapeake Health Foundation's 5th Annual Red Pump Ball. 6–10pm. Held at Bulle Rock's Residents' Club. This is a black-tie optional dinner dance featuring live entertainment and a silent auction to benefit UCH cardiovascular programs. 443-643-3460 Email: dtlenzerner@uchs.org www.uchs.org	Maritime Mexican Fiesta (to benefit the Maritime Museum) 6pm–9pm Come to the Community Center at 100 Laraget Lane and join us for our Mexican Fiesta! We will have traditional Mexican and Tex-Mex fare. Hit our pinata and win a prize! Wear your sombrero! 410-939-4800 Email: museum@comcast.net www.hdgmaritimemuseum.org
FEBRUARY 16TH	MARCH 15TH
War of 1812 Lecture Series. 7pm. Researching Free People of Color in Harford County. Speaker: Reggie Bishop, Genealogist. Location: City Hall, 711 Pennington Ave. HdG. Price: FREE Contact: Heidi Glatfelter 410-252-7519 Email: Heidi.hdg1812@gmail.com http://hdg1812.wordpress.com	Ellsworth Shank Lecture Series. 7pm Sponsored by the Susquehanna Lock House Museum. "Havre de Grace in the 30s from the eye of Herbert McCommons" presented by David Craig at City Hall. 410-939-5780 Email: lockhousemuseum@gmail.com www.thelockhousemuseum.org
FEBRUARY 21ST	MARCH 17TH
5th Annual Mardi Gras parade and Festivities 6:30pm, line-up at 6:00pm. Join in the festivities as we parade down Bouborn Street to Washington Street to celebrate Mardi Gras. 410-939-2100	Historic/ Nature Walk. 10 am Enjoy a free, guided nature and historical walk of the north Park Trail. Walk is approximately one hour. 410-939-5780 Email: lockhousemuseum@gmail.com www.thelockhousemuseum.org

<p>MARCH 22ND</p> <p>War of 1812 Lecture Series. 7pm Search of the USS Scorpion: Recent Investigations of the War of 1812 Chesapeake Flotilla. Speaker: Troy Nowak, Assistant State Underwater Archaeologist, MD Historical Trust Location: Maritime Museum, 100 Lafayette St. HdG. Contact: Heidi Glatfelter 410-252-7519 Email: Heidi.hdg1812@gmail.com http://hdg1812.wordpress.com</p>	<p>APRIL 23RD</p> <p>HdG Recreation Committee's Easter Egg Hunt at Tydings Park. 12 noon. Bring your family and enjoy a spectacular Easter Egg Hunt! Don't be late, race starts promptly at noon! Sponsored by the HdG Recreation Committee. 410-939-6724</p>
<p>APRIL 14TH</p> <p>Susquehanna Lockhouse Museum's 2012 Re-opening Event. 1–5pm. Join us as we re-open the Lock House Museum for the 2012 season. 410-939-5780, 410-939-2100 Email: lockhousemuseum@gmail.com www.thelockhousemuseum.org</p>	<p>MAY 4TH, 5TH & 6TH</p> <p>31st Annual Havre de Grace Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival. Friday 6pm–9pm, Saturday 9am–5pm, Sunday 10am–4pm. Admission is \$8 for the weekend. Join us for our annual festival. Carvers & Wildlife Artists will be joined by hunting outfitters, suppliers and merchants. Retrieving dog demonstrations, Carving Competitions, a live auction and silent auctions included. For more information contact the Decoy Museum at 410-939-3739.</p>
<p>APRIL 15TH</p> <p>Women's 5K by the bay. 8am. Presented by RASAC- The Harford County Running Club, this is a race (run/walk) for women runners of all ages and abilities. Part of the 2012 Women's Distance Festival. 410-399-9948 Email: gusandsuerun@comcast.net www.rasac.com</p>	<p>MAY 4TH TO DECEMBER 7TH</p> <p>First Fridays! 5–9pm. A fun-filled night for the whole family. Come to downtown Havre de Grace where you will find bargains galore, restaurant specials, music on the street corners, face painting, and other fun attractions. 410-939-1811 Email: hdgmainstreet@verizon.net www.mainstreethdg.org</p>
<p>APRIL 19TH</p> <p>Ellsworth Shank Lecture Series. 7pm. Sponsored by the Susquehanna Lock House Museum. "Harford County and the Civil War: An Overview" presented by Jim Chrismer at City Hall. 410-939-5780 Email: director@lockhousemuseum.org or thelockhousemuseum@gmail.com</p>	<p>MAY 5TH</p> <p>War of 1812 Re-Enactment. 10am–4pm. Visit the grounds of the Susquehanna Museum at the Lock House as the British once again storm Havre de Grace as they did on May 3, 1813! There will be drill formations, men and women in period attire, troop encampments, craft demonstrations on the War and its effect on the town of Havre de Grace. 410-939-5780 or 410-939-2100 Email: thelockhousemuseum@gmail.com www.thelockhousemuseum.org</p>
<p>APRIL 21ST</p> <p>Annual River Sweep Event along lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway. 8:30am–1pm. Rain date Sunday, April 22. General clean-up along shoreline of Susquehanna River and its tributaries in Havre de Grace from Tydings Park to Susquehanna Museum at the Lock House. 410-939-7644 or 410-808-6118 Email: Peter.d.green@att.net www.hitourtrails.com</p>	<p>MAY 12TH TO MAY 13TH</p> <p>Medieval Days at Stepping Stone Farm Museum. Sat. and Sun. 12-5pm. Event features a Medieval encampment with fighting and fencing demonstrations, period crafts, music and dance, children's games, food, tours and more! 410-939-2299 or 888-419-1762 Email: steppingstonemuseum@msn.com www.steppingstonemuseum.org</p>
<p>APRIL 21ST</p> <p>City-Wide Yard Sale. 8am–4pm. Huge, community-wide event. Yard sales, sidewalk sales, and bargains galore. 410-939-2100 or 410-939-6562 Email: info2@havredegracemd.com www.hdgtoism.com</p>	

members:

You can help promote the Decoy Museum by sending the name and contact information of your local newspaper to The Canvasback. With this information we can reach out and send our news releases to the papers in your area! Please mail this information to the Decoy Museum, 215 Giles St., Havre de Grace, MD 21078, attn: Margaret Jones or email to decoymuseum@yahoo.com



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