

# *The Canvasback*

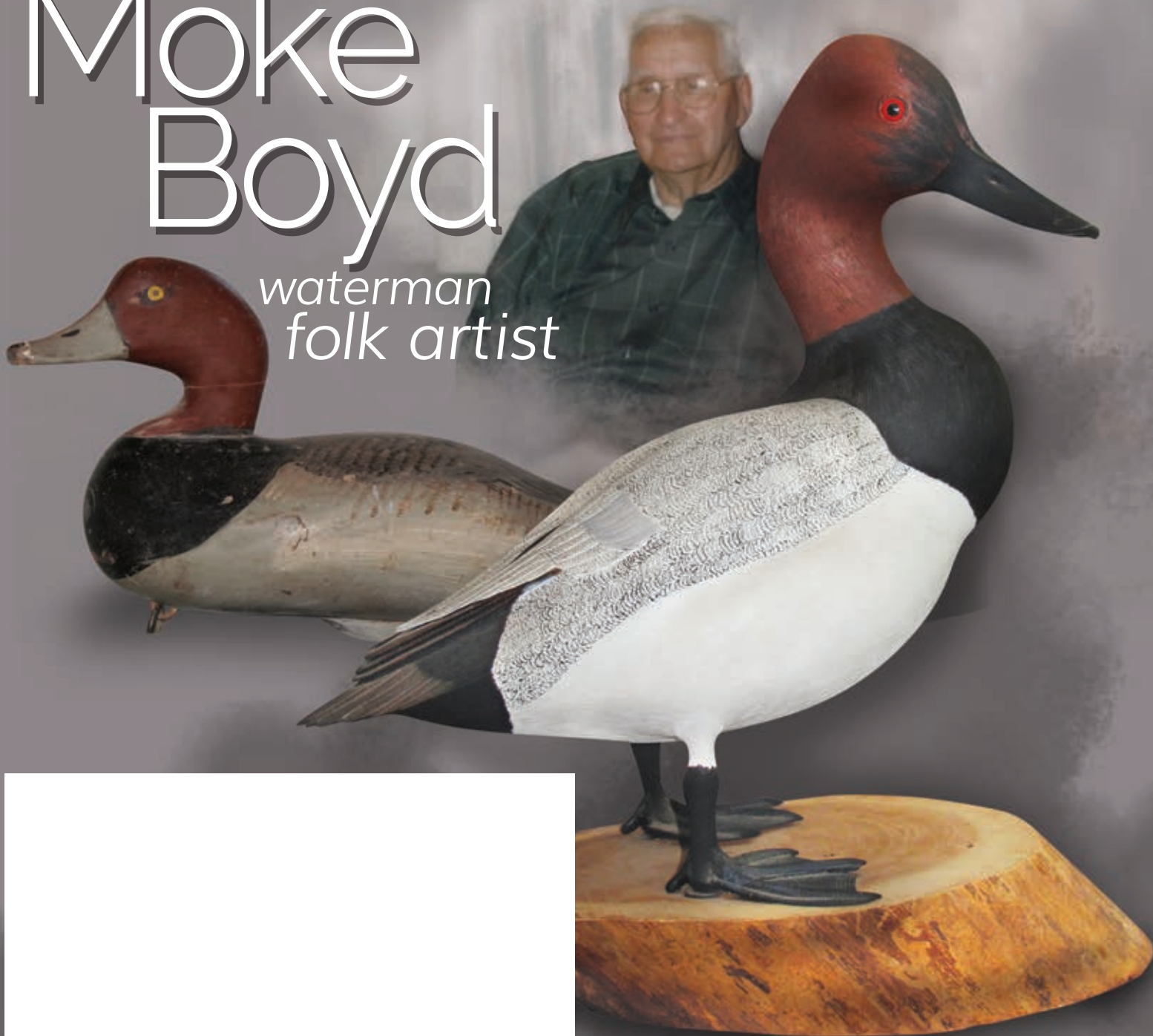
HAVRE DE GRACE DECOY MUSEUM

Fall 2015  
Vol. 25 No. 4

\$3.00

## Moke Boyd

waterman  
folk artist





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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.



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#### FUNDED IN PART BY

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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.

The Museum was incorporated in 1981 as a 501(c)(3) 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. Contributions made to the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum Tax may be deductible.



## Madelyn Mitchell Shank

(FEBRUARY 10, 1928 –  
OCTOBER 12, 2015)

A guiding light has gone out. Our hearts are broken. To paraphrase W. H. Auden:

*She was our North, our South,  
our East and West,  
Our working week and our  
Sunday rest,  
Our noon, our midnight, our talk,  
our song.  
We thought that love would last  
for ever: We were wrong.*

We cannot count the ways we will miss  
our Madelyn.

## ON THE COVER

Long revered by waterfowlers as the King of Ducks, the canvasback has every attribute that a duck hunter can desire. Sleek and elegant, the rusty red head of the drake is held high, and its striking blood-red eyes are unmistakable. Early English settlers thought the sooty white feathers on its back and sides looked like white canvas fabric.

However, it has also become a symbol of the struggles and triumphs of wetlands and waterfowl conservation. Now uncommon on the Susquehanna Flats, half the entire North American population of canvasbacks overwintered on the Bay as recently as the 1950's. This noble bird is the symbol of the Decoy Museum and has been rendered here in wood by Perryville (Md.) carver Melvin E. (“Moke”) Boyd (circa 1960s, from his collection). Also pictured is Moke and one of his original gunning redheads, circa 1948, from the collection of Jim and Rosemary Boyd. ■





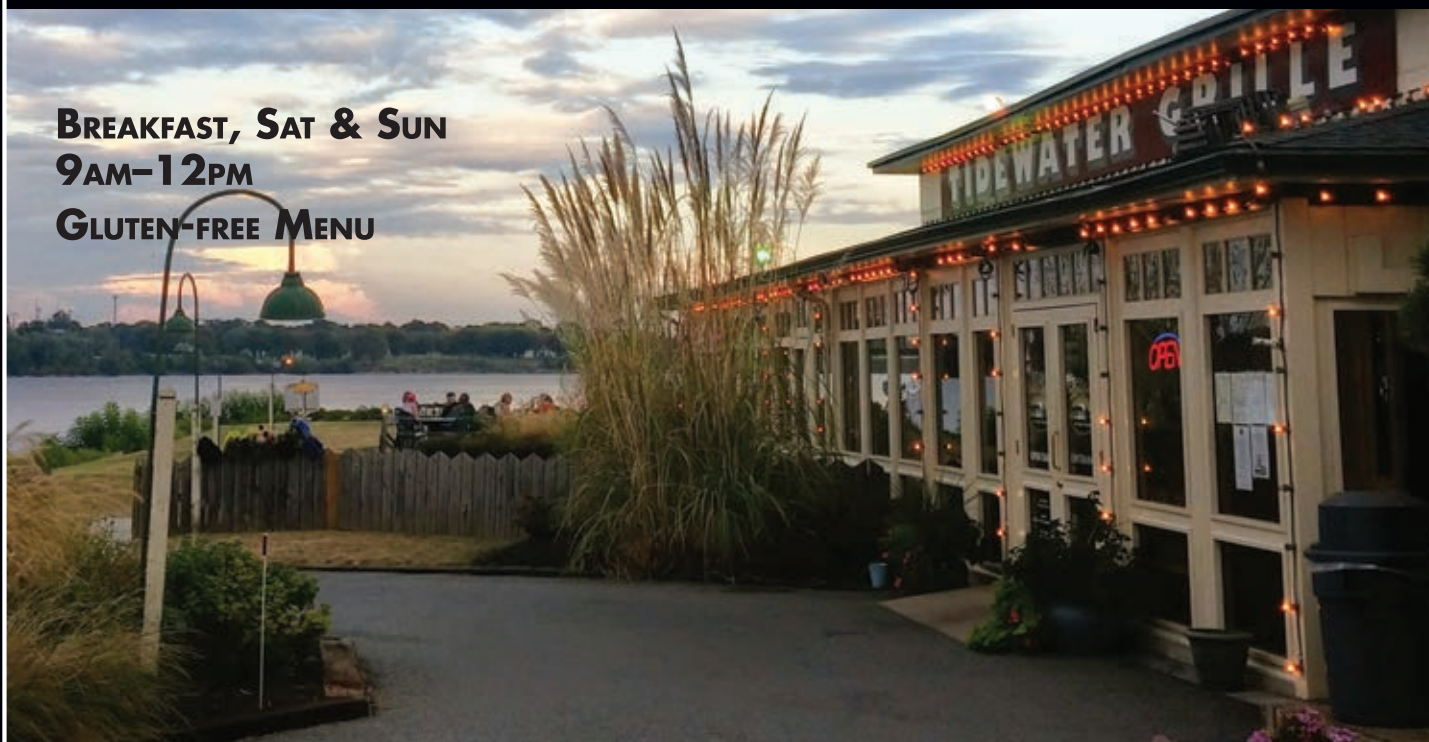
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# From the President

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Dear Museum Member,

We hope you have had a relaxing summer and this issue of *The Canvasback* finds you refreshed as we head into autumn and a new year. It has been a GREAT summer here. We started out in June with the good news that the Harford County Office of Economic Development and the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway had both approved some much-needed grant money. By Labor Day weekend, Kerri Kneisley had agreed to join the team as our new Executive Director. We are very pleased!



Photo by Leo Heppner

The 3rd annual Waterfowl Day and calling contest is coming up on Saturday, October 24th. We will again sponsor eight state and regional calling contests, of which two will be for juniors and four will be "sanctioned" events. This is one of the last chances for anyone aspiring to compete in the 2015 World's Championship in Stuttgart, Arkansas in November – who must first win a sanctioned calling contest. This has become a nice autumn event for the Museum. Come have some fun with us!

We have five great prizes for the fall raffle! Watch for your tickets in the mail, and give generously. You have to play to win, and five lucky people always win.

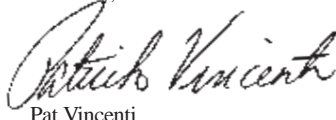
Please don't miss the Potomac Decoy Collectors Association amazing assortment of bufflehead decoys currently displayed in the second floor Carver's Gallery. This is truly a "must see" display. We are grateful to Chad and Cristy Tragakis, Jim and Ina Jo Van Ness, and the PDCA for sharing these beautiful and historic carvings.

This autumn 2015 issue completes our 24th year of publishing *The Canvasback*—95 consecutive quarterly issues of this wonderful journal. It is a tremendous value proposition to publish this fine magazine for our members and other supporters. It is also a tremendous effort to do so on a very slim budget. Thanks to all who make it possible.

We are indebted to our loyal staff, volunteers, and directors who generously devote time and effort to help keep the Museum's doors open 360 days every year, provide an unforgettable experience for our visitors, and keep our events running smoothly. I never cease to be amazed at what we accomplish with slim resources. Membership Coordinator Bonnie Castillo works hard to help new members and to keep our renewal rates up. Special Events Coordinator Margaret Jones tirelessly manages our events, both large and small. Finance Director Mindy Elledge has been relentless in managing our finances effectively. Samantha Castillo heads up the Gift Shop operations and is assisted by Turner Whitehead, Marissa Smith, and Kassi Farkas, who also fills in on the front desk. There are too many volunteers to name, but I particularly want to thank Len Burcham, Elly Coale, Pat Hockman, Henry Krotee, Noble Mentzer, and our curator Ginny Sanders for all of the things that they do for us. With Kerri Kneisley now leading the team, the future never looked brighter.

I also want to thank you, as I do in every issue of *The Canvasback*, for your part in making the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum a very special place. Members, volunteers, visitors, exhibitors, monetary and in-kind contributors – or simply a good word in someone else's ear – we appreciate your support.

Sincerely,



Pat Vincenti

# Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!

This fall 2015 issue marks the end of our 24th year of publishing *The Canvasback*—95 quarterly issues of this wonderful journal (the winter and spring anniversary issues of 2006 were merged). It is an effort that benefits from a great team. Special thanks to each of our partners who had a vital role in getting out *The Canvasback* during 2015:

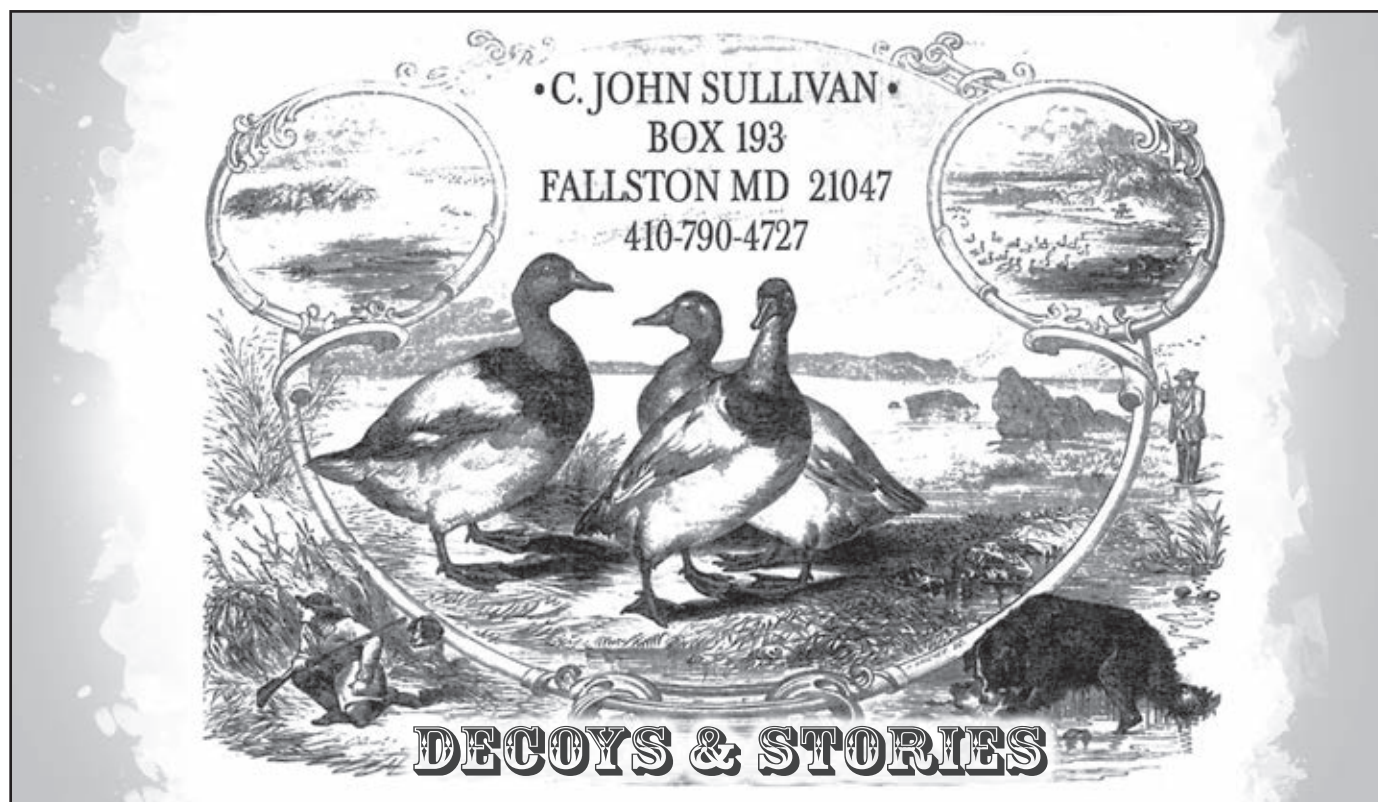
**iDesign Graphics.** Brian and Kellie Boehm have channeled their creative talents and computer skills to bring concepts alive. They are the design team that completes the layout and design of each issue, and this is the 51st issue they have done for us.

**Heppner Imaging.** Terri Shepke-Heppner and her late husband Leo have always been available to apply their photographic skills for our events and other needs in order to provide the visuals that enrich the pages of *The Canvasback*.

**Stockson Printing Company.** Mat and Ryan Stockson have taken Brian and Kellie's graphic designs and provided top-quality printing and binding services, coordinating with them to meet our deadlines.

**BriteStar Business Communication Experts.** Fred Borleis and his team have gotten each issue addressed and mailed. Cases of *The Canvasback* are delivered "hot off the press" from Stockson's loading dock to BriteStar's and are almost always in the mail that day or the next. ■

*Please join the Decoy Museum Board and staff in thanking all of them for their support.*







# 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Candlelight Tour

Saturday  
December 12, 2015

**Museum Hours: 10:30 a.m. – 8 p.m.**  
Admission after 4pm requires Candlelight Tour ticket

**Candlelight Tour: 4 p.m. – 8 p.m.**

**\$15.00** per ticket

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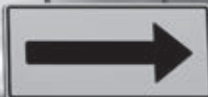
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visitors at the information desk, assist in the gift shop, help  
our curator on special projects, provide carving demonstra-  
tions, plan events, maintain IT systems, do exhibit signage  
and creative work, assist with fundraising and member-  
ship, organize chaos???



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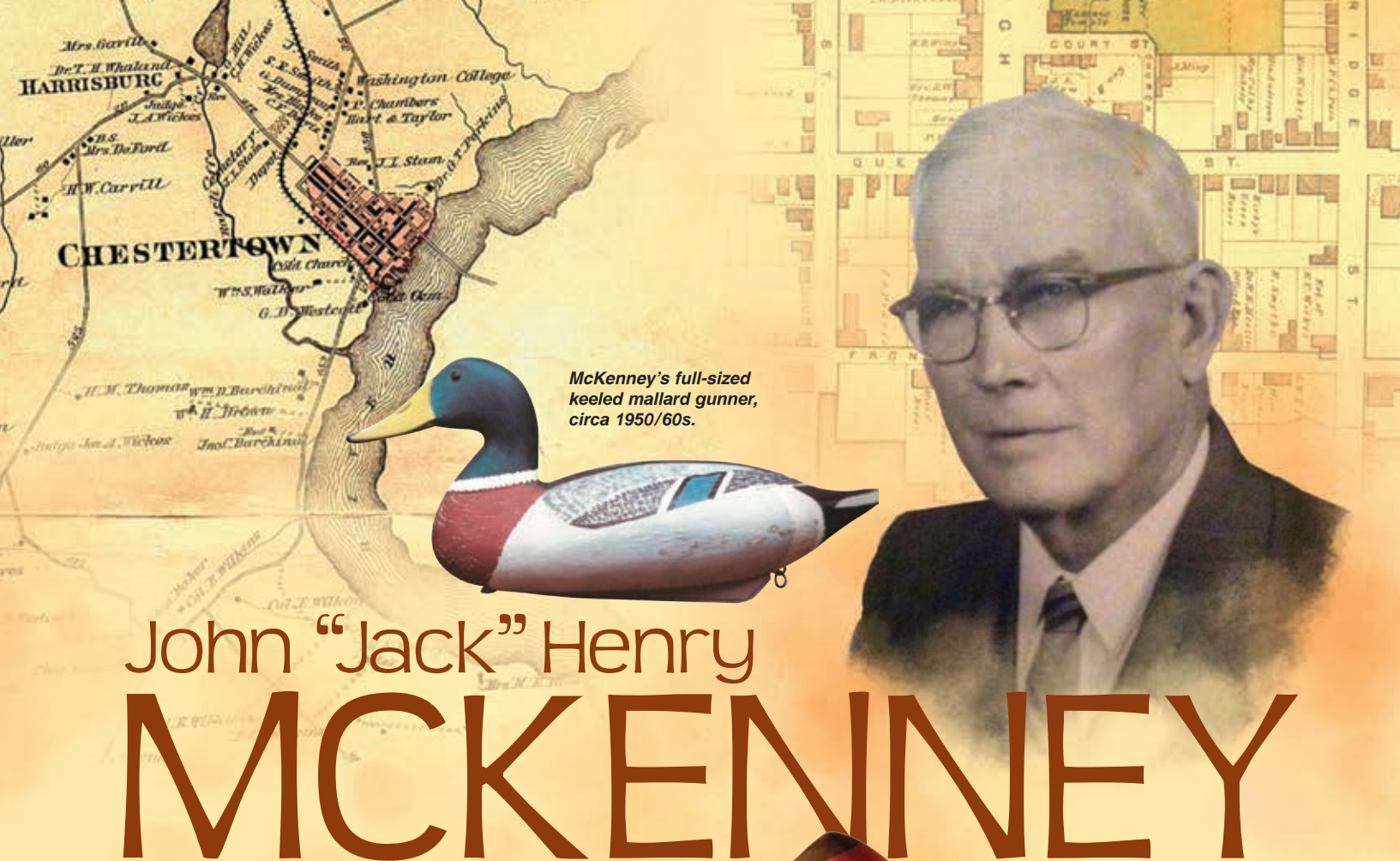
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*McKenney's full-sized keeled mallard gunner, circa 1950/60s.*

# John "Jack" Henry MCKENNEY

(1889-1973)

SHIP YARD WORKER  
CHESTER RIVER  
WATERFOWL HUNTER  
DECOY MAKER



*McKenney full-sized semi-decorative canvasback with relief carved wings, circa 1960s.*

by James L. Trimble

**T**he Eastern Shore's 43-mile long Chester River is a major tidal tributary that feeds the top portion of the Chesapeake Bay. The port of Chester (eventually Chestertown), located near the mouth of the river, was a major port of entry for Maryland's English Crown colony, pre-Baltimore growth, and second only to Annapolis.

As colonial wealth grew, much of it tied to the growing and shipping of tobacco, planter-merchant families as well as skilled trades and craftsmen thrived. Single-masted sloops and two-masted schooners, some locally built, carried flour, salted pork, and tobacco to the West Indies, Spain, the Azores, and Madeira. They returned primarily with salt, fruit, and wine.

Houses, warehouses and commercial buildings were built, as well as the solid brick manor (plantation) houses still in evidence today. During our war for independence (1776), British soldiers were garrisoned there. Post revolutionary war, George Washington visited there many times, taking a ferry from Annapolis, on his way to Philadelphia, where representatives (Continental Congress) from the original 13 states met. Many scenes and portraits from this pre and post revolutionary war era are captured on canvass by famed Chestertown artist James Peale (1749-1831), and hang in museums today.

As other ports and towns grew, Chestertown's post-revolutionary period stood still, with only a brief economic resurgence during the Civil War. Post war plantations gave way to farms, mills, dairy operations, boatbuilding yards and small industries. It was not a fishing village like nearby Rock Hall; but there were a few who harvested the bounty of the Chester River and Chesapeake Bay. 1900 census figures show a population of 3,008; with slow growth for the next 110 years. The 2010 US Census population was reported at 5,200 with farming operations that surround.

Gone are the commercial wharves that once served sail and steam-boats in their trade with the outside world. However, many of the colonial era



*A group of six used McKenney gunners on the display tables at the Barfield 2014 Fall Sportsman's auction.*

red brick buildings built during the 1700s, some before, are still there and are a part of a vibrant shop and restaurant filled downtown that attracts present day visitors.

My first exposure to a John McKenney (1889-1973) decoy was in the early 1990s, when several original paint Cecil County style mallard gunners, sold at a Rising Sun, Maryland auction for just under \$200. I had never seen a McKenney decoy before and knew little about him as a decoy maker. On the way home, I thought about those decoys, and the opportunity missed.

Apparently he was well known to the miniature collector. David and Joan Hagan's 1990 book *Upper Chesapeake Bay Decoys and their Makers*, lists McKenney without background write-up, but does show photos of his canvasback and mallard decoys as well as his decoratives, including miniatures, dead-hangers and flyers. Since that time, a few decoratives have been found, but no gunners.

In 2014, Virginia auctioneer Zeb Barfield located and brought to auction 76 fully-rigged canvasback gunners, remnants of a Chester River rig. They sold through his two semi-annual Sportsman's Auction sales. The consignors tag note described the birds as circa 1950/early 60s and that they had been made for self-use.

The birds were burr-tool branded; some carrying McKenney's "J. H. McK" brand; while others carried the brand name of Chestertown resident Ed Voshell (1924-1978). Tag notes also stated, that besides McKenney and Voshell, Chestertown resident Bob Coleman (1921-2004) had also hunted over these decoys. Birds were hammered in groups of three, four and more. Some of the more knowledgeable decoy collectors there, who were familiar with McKenney, felt that his decoy production was limited, probably for neighbors and self use.

*McKenney's full-sized keeled canvasback gunner, circa 1950/60s.*



**NOTE.** Voshell brand & keeled weight with 24-finish nails to attach.



Bob Coleman was well known to me. Besides hunter, decoy maker and knowledgeable collector steeped in Chesapeake waterfowling lore, he also bought and sold decoys. For years and years, as Chestertown's Charles Joiner's decoys were increasing in collectability, he was the sole distributor. If you wanted to buy a newly carved Joiner decoy, you had to buy it from Coleman. He was also gun savvy and dabbled in firearms.

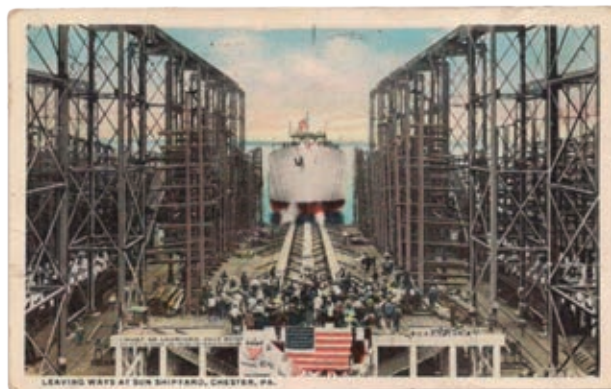
John H. McKenney was born in 1889 and raised in Cecil County, Maryland. The 1910 census reflects him living at home with his parents, working on his father's farm as a 20-year old laborer. The farm was located along Turkey Point Road, on the Elk Neck peninsula, about 4-5 miles south of North East, Maryland. This part of Elk Neck was populated with the Lockard Family, lots of Lockards, including brothers George (1866-1931) and Henry (1868-1944) who were producing decoys commercially. McKenney's mother, Mary A. Lockard McKenney, was George and Henry Lockard's sister.

Elk Neck—extending southwesterly from North East and Elkton—is bordered by the North East River and the Susquehanna Flats to the west, and the Elk River to the east. Those bodies of water, with their beds of wild celery and sago pondweed, were the wintertime feeding habitat for millions of migratory waterfowl each fall and winter. With boat and waterman's knowledge, along with stealth and firepower, it was another bounty to be harvested. Kills were for the table or were sold to the market. McKenney became steeped in waterfowling knowledge, as he watched and helped each fall, as local hunters prepared for the southbound migration of hun-

gry ducks that soon filled the skies. These were fertile gunning grounds for a young upper Chesapeake Bay boy growing up during the turn of two centuries back.

A June 5, 1917 draft registration card reflects that McKenney was age 27, single, and lived in Delaware County, Pennsylvania. The card reflected that he was a shipyard worker at the Sun Ship building Company, located on the Delaware River, just north of Wilmington, in Chester, Pennsylvania. Sun, founded in 1917, built ships, lots of ships, for the war (WWI—1914-1918) effort. After the war, Sun became the primary builder of ocean going tankers for the Standard Oil Company.

McKenney 1917 draft registration, confirming spelling with an "e".



An old colorized 1918 photo postcard – "Leaving ways at Sun Shipyard, Chester, PA." McKenney worked at Sun Shipyard during WWI & WWII. This WWI-era merchant cargo ship named "Deerfield", was torpedoed and sunk in 1943 by a German U-boat.

McKenney dead hanging partial-size cans on a 12-inch plaque.

McKenney's well-made and attractive full-sized gunning decoys have been prized by present day collectors. However, there is also a large contingent of collectors who seek his miniatures and decoratives, as they like the wider variety of species that McKenney made and because of his fine detailing in things like relief carved wings, raised primaries, and glass eyes.

—Pat Vincenti





*McKenney miniature snow geese with raised crossed wings, circa 1960s.*



*McKenney miniature goldeneyes with raised crossed wings, circa 1960s.*

In the early 1920s, McKenney married Elizabeth “Lizzie” Schaubert of Chestertown, Maryland. Present day Google maps show the distance from Chestertown to Chester, as less than 70-miles. Elizabeth Schaubert (1892-1955) was the aunt of current day decoy maker, waterfowl hunter and 77-year old Chestertown resident Bill Schaubert (b. 1938).

John McKenney’s ancestry records, after he left the family farm, reflect domiciles in Pennsylvania as well as Chestertown, possibly coinciding with shipyard fluctuating needs. For instance, the previously referenced WWI draft registration card, as does the 1920 US Census, list him as living in Pennsylvania and working at the shipyards. The 1930 US Census and a 1935 census entry have him living in Chestertown, however the 1940 US Census and his 1942 WWII draft registration card has him back living

in Delaware County, Pennsylvania with occupation again as shipyard worker. He was a home-front critical industry worker for both WWI and WWII.

A date certain could not be established as to when the McKenneys returned to Chestertown on a permanent basis. It is thought to be sometime in the late 1940s, where he worked as a cabinetry carpenter and general handyman. The McKenneys lived just east of town, on a small two acre or so plot of land. Their small plot was surrounded by woods and farmland and backed up to the deep water navigable Morgnec Creek, that turned, twisted and flowed downstream to the Chester River. McKenney raised vegetables, fished, and shot small game and deer for the table.

As the bird flies, McKenney lived about a half to three quarters of a mile from younger gunning partners Voshell and Coleman, both of whom backed-up to, and had piers that extended into the

Chester River. During gunning season, McKenney’s wooden rowboat and decoys were kept at Coleman’s pier... it was a short row down river to Brickbat Point, or several hundred yards further to the Edward Woodall property; both properties containing shore blinds along the marsh edge, from which they hunted.

The previously referenced *Upper Chesapeake Bay Decoys and their Makers* book also profiles Bob Coleman and his decoys. In Hagan’s Coleman write-up, Coleman tells: “I started hunting in the sixties, and that one day, my neighbors McKenney and Voshell came down with 150 decoys that McKenney had made. We put out all of those decoys plus my spread. It made the biggest rig out there that day.”

He continues, “We got real good shooting on the Chester River. There were many good days in the 1960s. The action would be fast and furious with canvas-backs... then the blackheads would start

*McKenney miniature standing wood ducks on a branch, circa 1950s.*



*McKenney miniature swans with relief carved wings.*

buzzing our rig. My Chesapeake, Missy, would work her heart out. I could watch her eyes and tell if something was coming that we could shoot at. She ignored seagulls and crows, but when it was ducks or geese, her eyes would get brighter and brighter.”

Coleman also comments that McKenney was the nephew of early decoy maker Henry Lockard from North East, Maryland. There was also commentary about hunting with Pennsylvania sportsman, decoy maker/collector, gun dealer, and Chesapeake waterfowl historian Norris Pratt.

Ed Voshell’s oldest son John (b. 1949), started hunting with his dad and McKenney, and sometimes with Coleman, from about age 13 or 14 (about 1961), through age 20. He has pleasant memories of uncle Jack McKenney and the time he took to properly instruct the do’s, don’ts and the expectations that went with his

hunting trips. He also taught the young hunter how to handle and properly take care of his shotgun... as well as good sportsmanship. Voshell comments: “He was not only teaching a lifetime of waterfowling techniques, he was also full of stories about ‘his early days’ of hunting the Susquehanna Flats, and selling his bounty for much-needed cash.”

The stories included details of early market hunting such as shooting and killing ducks with the “big guns,” then rounding the story out with something like: “Back then, the 12-gauge was only used to kill cripples.” John Voshell continues: “He hit what he aimed at... it was obvious that he grew up with guns.” As he remembers, McKenney used a 12-gauge pump, he believes a Remington. If they were not hunting with Coleman and his dog Missy, the cripples were chased down by rowboat —oar power—the same oar power used to go to and return from the blinds.

It was not until much later that a small Johnson motor was purchased. John Voshell also recounted a story about a dove hunting trip with Uncle Jack snoozing when the birds came in. “With a quick heads-up, Uncle Jack popped up and dropped three doves. What we killed was cleaned, dressed and was for the table or freezer... and he always had meat in the freezer.” John Voshell also tells that his dad Ed, who was 40-years younger than McKenney, helped Uncle Jack build his boat and helped with his decoys.

The part of the river that they were hunting was known for diving ducks, especially the canvasback. These men were hunting the Chester River at the same point in time that legendary hunter/guide Ed Robinson, who was profiled in Dr. Harry Walsh’s *The Outlaw Gunner* book. It is noted that Dr. Walsh was a Chestertown resident, and practiced medicine there. He was also an outdoorsman,

with a passion for waterfowling history, who hunted the Chester River. Dr. Walsh's son Joe advises that one of his father's gunning partners was Coleman, who also refurbished the doctor's rig. The rig was comprised, among others, of Madison Mitchell, Charles Joiner and Rock Hall made birds. They carried his W. brand.

Schauber tells that like Doctor Walsh's rig, most area gunners used a Havre de Grace produced decoy, primarily Mitchell's or Joiner's, who lived in Chestertown and had worked for Mitchell, or a somewhat similar style decoy that was being produced or had been produced by several makers in nearby Rock Hall.

In proving his point, Schaubert tells that when he was 18 years old, and working full time, he was hired by the local Wilkins Gun Club, that had three blinds along the river, to "put out" about 300



*McKenney miniature goldeneye with relief carved wings.*



*McKenney miniature wood ducks with raised primaries.*



*There has been much confusion over the years as to the spelling of his name... McKinney versus McKenney, one being a derivative. Most of the McKinney/McKenney names, from this part of the Chesapeake Bay, share the same DNA pool.*

canvasback, redhead, and bluebill decoys—all divers—early morning before he went to work; and then retrieve and wrap them late day after work. "The decoys were all Mitchell's and Joiner's," said Schaubert, "and the kills were primarily canvasbacks and redheads. He also noted, that from time to time, a few pass-over pintails, mallards and black ducks, were also bagged.

The McKenney/Voshell rig was unique, as the wooden birds were not made by a commercial decoy maker but by a local hunter who was making a large rig of fine attractive decoys for self-use and his neighbor's use. The 76 rigged canvasback decoys sold through the Barfield sale were purportedly the remnants of a

200 stool rig that were consigned by the Voshell family. Most birds carried the Voshell brand with only a few carrying McKenney's.

The decoys are distinctly similar to those produced in McKenney's native Cecil County, north of the Susquehanna River. They have rounded solid bodies, with pronounced neck shelf, carved nostrils and distinctive tail. The alert heads are finely carved with stout bill and deep set glass eyes. The necks are doweled without evidence of dowel and without neck nails to secure. Most had flat bottoms and were keeled for river gunning. A flat lead strap, attached with two rows of 12 equally spaced small finish nails, ran along the keel from one tapered end to the

other. The keels are without tie-line holes as a separate staple and ring are driven into the body. Wing paint patterns are uniquely Cecil County Angel Wing; most in 2nd coat McKenney paint. They were all hand chopped, hand finished, well made decoys with plenty of eye appeal. Some of the birds were laminate construction. They all have perfect balance. The tie-line weights were uniformly heavy, with a four corner semi-pyramid shape. They were designed to grab a muddy bottom and hold against river flow. It is hard to believe that the maker of these self-use birds did not have prior decoy making experiences.

The only other McKenney gunner species that have surfaced to date are mallards, again hand chopped, keeled, and with the same basic description as the canvasbacks. Schaubert, who owns both species of gunners, is not aware of any other species made, "or I would own them!" he comments. Schaubert also tells that the Chester River, from time to time, is full of puddle ducks, mostly mallards.

When questioned about the finely made miniature decoys, Schaubert advises that the production was probably limited, mostly for family members and friends, and if there were any for sale to collectors, it was probably handled by Coleman. He





**McKenney miniature Canada geese with raised crossed wings, circa 1960s**

**McKenney's full-size decorative dead hanging ducks, a mallard and a canvasback, circa 1960s.**



also advised that there were five complete sets of Eastern Flyway ducks made; one of which he owns. Schauber reflects on a story, as told to him by Coleman, about a pair of miniature widgeons, that Schauber now owns. McKenney and Coleman were riding in the cab of McKenney's pickup truck, trailering the boat. On the seat between them, was a recently completed pair of McKenney miniature widgeons that had been brought along for critique and comment. Apparently while dropping the boat into the water, McKenney at the wheel, was taking some serious ribbing from his passenger about being stuck deep in the marsh mud. A sharp "if you could do better" reply offered up the widgeons as bounty. As the story was told, Coleman got behind the wheel, maneuvered the truck and trailer out, and graciously accepted the widgeons.

The auction consignor tells that the decoys were stored year after year with McKenney and that responsibility passed to his dad, Ed Voshell, just prior to McKenney's 1973 death. Voshell died a few years later, with the decoys being

basement stored since. I know of very few collectors like Schauber, who, prior to the Barfield auctions, own or have owned full sized McKenney gunning decoys. It makes one wonder if there are more rig canvasback or mallard decoys stored along the banks of the Chester River, or earlier stored along the banks of the Delaware River, where he worked and lived for so many years.

McKenney carved a fine decoy that reflects his Cecil County roots. It would be interesting to know when he started to carve and how much tutorial time was spent with his uncles/decoy carvers George and Henry Lockard; or was it just time spent as a kid in and around their shops. McKenney has passed, as have his adult children and his gunning partners. What does remain, besides his finely made decorative and miniature carved ducks, are his well-made canvasback and mallard gunners. They are quality birds that floated the Chester River to attract and deceive, and are appreciated and sought after by today's decoy collector. ■

*A special thanks to Bill Schauber, John Voshell, Tom Voshell, Joe Walsh, Darrell Hagar, Ron & Kim Newcomb, and research historian Ray Yingling who helped with this story. Also a thank you to David and Joan Hagan, authors of "Upper Chesapeake Bay Makers and their Decoys," for the use of their photos. I also want to acknowledge Chestertown's historical background website. Jim Trimble specializes in Chesapeake Bay and Chincoteague area decoys. He can be contacted at 703-768-7264 or [potomacduck@cox.net](mailto:potomacduck@cox.net)*

# William Veasey

by James W. Carroll, Jr.

## A Living Legend

At a ceremony in April, the Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art at Salisbury University (Md.) recognized Bill Veasey with one of its three Living Legend Awards for 2015. This prestigious award highlights those who have been long-time advocates for wildfowl art and the Ward Museum. Winners are men and women who have created an impact on the field of wildfowl art—people who are generous in spirit with a commitment to teaching others and passing on their knowledge, skills, and talents to future generations of carvers.



**Bill** currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. He was born in 1932 in Elkton, Maryland, and graduated from Elkton High School in 1949. He served in the US Air Force and later attended Lebanon Valley College (1957). Bob Biddle, his brother-in-law, an accomplished carver and painter in his own right, insisted Bill meet the late Pennsylvania carver, Harry Waite, and the rest is carving history.

Carving both decorative and working decoys is a family affair for the Veaseys. Bill's late wife Dottie carved, and three of Bill's four children are carvers and painters who, in turn, have passed along their

enthusiasm to their spouses and children. Shannon Dimmig was one of Bill's protégés and is now his partner in carving and in life. Bill regards her as one of the most talented airbrush artists in the country. The community of decoy carvers and waterfowl artists hold Shannon in such high regard that they asked for her to be one of the judges at the 2014 Decoy and Wildlife Art Festival. We believe this is the first time that a woman judged a hunting decoy class!

Exhibiting his unique working and decorative decoys at the wildlife and waterfowl shows is one of Bill's joys. He was inducted into the Easton Waterfowl Festival's Hall of Fame in 1994, and his impressive list of other awards and community service leadership roles is extensive. The high regard for Bill, his decoys, and other wildlife art is demonstrated by the fact that Ducks Unlimited presented a pair of his green-winged teal to former president George H. W. Bush, who told him in a letter that the carvings grace his Kennebunkport, Maine home.

Though incredibly successful as a carver in his own right, Bill is best known to





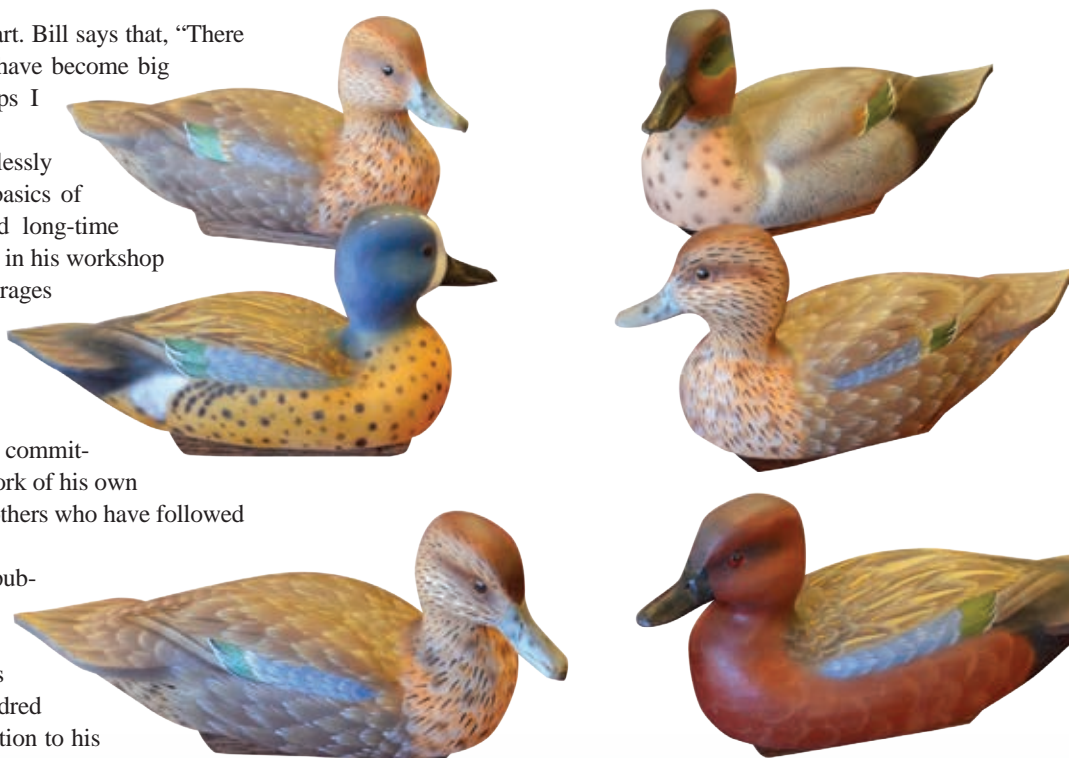
many as a dedicated teacher of wildfowl art. Bill says that, “There are so many little things in my life that have become big things, but I value most the relationships I have made that all grew out of teaching”.

Bill Veasey works tirelessly and selflessly to involve students and teach them the basics of carving a traditional hunting decoy, and long-time friends and students find the perfect space in his workshop for crafting their own creations. He encourages his students to enter proudly their hand-crafted art in shows and festivals, and they reward his tutelage by earning blue ribbons and other awards.

Mel Stout, a close friend, wrote, “He is committed to creating beauty not only with the work of his own hands, but with the hands of hundreds of others who have followed and are following his teachings.”

Teaching prompted Bill to write and publish fourteen books about carving and painting—one of which was so popular it sold out in 90 days—and he has been instrumental in getting over two hundred books by other authors published. In addition to his books, he teaches through workshops and classes at festivals and events throughout the year.

He says quite simply that, “The important thing is that we preserve this legacy. It is part of Americana, and it needs to be preserved.” ■



***Shown above is Bill's limited-edition collection of teal (from top: green-winged, blue-winged, and cinnamon teal).***



# HAVRE DE GRACE DECoy AND WILDLIFE ART FESTIVAL Then (1989) & Now (2015)

By Jim Trimble

One of the visitors to this year's Decoy Festival was early collector and duck dealer Don Dean who in the early 1980's, along with his young son Doug, not yet a teenager, were distributors of Jim Pierce decoys.

We knew Don and Doug from the many trips they made to area decoy makers' shops over several years, buying for their collections and for re-sale at a variety of booths leased in Washington, DC area's antique shops. Besides Pierce birds, they were also buying many Madison Mitchell, Paul Gibson, and Charlie Bryan decoys, whose shops, among others, they frequented.

Young Doug also collected decoy heads with area decoy makers happily supplying him with an abundance of signed carved heads in a variety of species. Once Doug graduated from high school, and went off to college – say about 20 or so years ago – father Don dropped out of the decoy collector world, as he had other interests (race horses).

In 1989, I only knew Don Dean casually as another collector that I would see and converse with at area decoy shows and auctions... but I was well aware of his blue-tagged decoys with historical waterfowling information, primarily on Jim Pierce birds, that were being sold at a variety of metropolitan Washington, DC area venues.

In 1989, just a day or two before the Havre de Grace show, I got a call from Don asking if I could run his stand at the show, where he annually sold Jim Pierce birds. He advised that his horse, Mount Airy Mama, was a late entry at the Penn National Race Track, and besides that, I had been recommended by Jim Pierce. At that point in time, Pierce was not a show vendor.



*Jim Trimble & Jim Pierce talking ducks over a table full of Pierce's decoys at the 1989 Havre de Grace Show.*



*Jim & Clo Trimble selling Pierce decoys at the 1989 Havre de Grace Show.*

So Clo and I worked the 1989 show as vendors, selling Jim Pierce decoys, with Pierce visiting our table from time to time. A specific recollection that Clo and I both have is of Charlie Bryan arriving at our table with a blue goose under his arm. After greetings and pleasantries, he advised that the goose was for Don's son Doug and that Don owed him \$65. Dean returned to Havre de Grace late that Saturday to take over his vendor table from us.

When we saw Don Dean at the 2015 show, we discussed and relived the 1989 show with lots of chuckles... and we thought that this would be a wonderful photo op 26-years later. ■

*1(L to R) Jim Trimble, Don Dean, Jim Pierce & Clo Trimble in front of Pierce's 2015 decoy booth discussing yesteryear's 1989 show.*



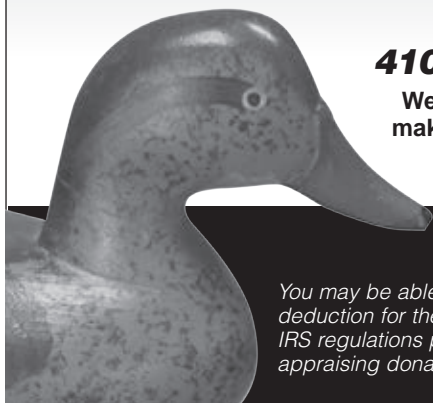
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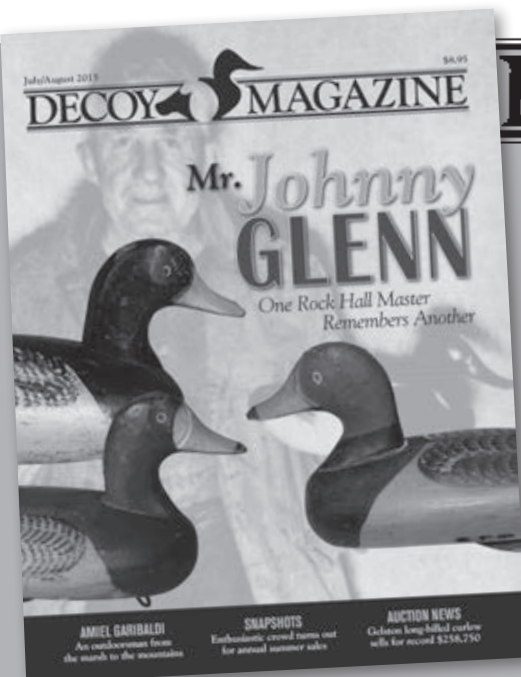
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Melvin E. ("Moke")

BOYD

# HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

## 70 YEARS OF DECOY MAKING

*by James W. Carroll, Jr.*

Sitting down to talk hunting, fishing, and decoys with brothers Jim and Moke Boyd is a bit like trying to take a drink of water from a fire hydrant—the details of their rich and interesting lives pour out in a torrent. Jim is intensely proud of his decoy-making older brother—who just celebrated his 92nd birthday in September—and Jim's enthusiasm draws out the more taciturn Moke (a nickname from childhood).



*Wood ducks circa 2007 from the collection of Margherita and Tom Coudon.*



*Northern shovellers, circa 1990, from the collection of Moke and Eileen Boyd.*



*Yellow-billed loon, circa 2001, from the collection of Margherita and Tom Coudon.*



*Redhead, circa 1947, from the collection of Margherita and Tom Coudon.*

Moke and Eileen's lovely home on Perryville Road is just across the Susquehanna River from Havre de Grace and only three-miles from the Decoy Museum as the duck flies. Moke and his father-in-law built the house decades ago using recycled lumber from Aberdeen Proving Ground. Barrels for artillery pieces were shipped to APG in crates made of sturdy boards that were 16 feet long by 16 inches wide by five-quarters thick. Moke bought over 300 discarded crates for \$0.50 apiece plus \$0.50 for delivery—21,000 feet of lumber for about \$300.

The Boyds are one of Maryland's oldest families, and their ancestors were definitely settled in the Perryville area by about 1700. Like so many local families, their lives have been intertwined for generations with the Chesapeake Bay and waterfowl as avid watermen, commercial fishermen, and hunters. Moke said, "We lived on the water our whole lives", and his tales are common ones among the watermen who have made a livelihood, in whole or in part, off the bounty of the Bay.

If the name Boyd sounds familiar in connection with Perryville and decoys it is because their grandfather Harry Boyd (1874-1954) was the nephew of renowned decoy carver Taylor Boyd (1856-1944), who is regarded by many to have made "some of the finest decoys ever produced" (see *The Canvasback, Fall 2005*). Taylor was a contemporary and great friend of another renowned Perryville carver, Joseph Coudon of Henry (see *The Canvasback, Spring 2007*).

If nothing else, tiny Perryville was a railroad town in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Grandfather Harry and Harry's son W. H. "Bill" Boyd (1893-1973)—Moke's father—were both engineers on the Pennsylvania Railroad. However, they were also both watermen who made a life on the Bay and would take a furlough from the Pennsy during ducking season. A man named Ed Cooling had a barge with a cabin where Harry Boyd worked as the cook during hunting season, but he never took up the carving knife.

Bill Boyd was a market gunner who often hunted with Ansley H. Fox, founder of the Fox Gun Company. He would also take the "sports" from Baltimore out gunning the Flats and made his own decoys for gunning. Moke recalls that his father used tacks for the eyes. Bill Boyd also made bushwhack boats and sink boxes and hunted in a double sink box until they were outlawed in 1935.









**Model (about 18" long) of Moke's Eastern Shore deadrise, circa 1970s from the collection of Moke and Eileen Boyd.**



**Hooded mergansers, circa 1990s, from the collection of Moke and Eileen Boyd.**



**Swan, circa 2000, from the collection Jim and Rosemary Boyd.**

Bill Boyd was a leftie and shot with a double-barreled A. H. Fox and an L. C. Smith, probably acquired from the gun shop of decoy maker John Bailey Moltz in Havre de Grace (see *The Canvasback, Fall 2012*). Moke remembers his father as “a good shot”, and Jim quickly adds that Moke shares his father’s prowess with a shotgun.

When Moke returned from England in 1945 where he had served in the US Army Air Forces, he began a career with Philadelphia Electric Company, primarily on the line crew. Like his father and grandfather before him, Moke also made a life on the water by gunning, guiding, and fishing when he wasn’t working for PECO. Moke fished commercially for years—“every night in the spring”—and kept his Eastern Shore deadrise fishing boat tied up at Owens Marina on the Susquehanna in Perryville. In later years, he made a model of his boat that is now on a shelf in his cozy den.

Back in those days, Moke gunned from his bushwhack boat: “All you did in those days was bushwhack.” His contemporaries on the Flats were people like Craig Jackson from Charlestown, Ralph Murphy, Poppy Beck, and Hen Davis. Effective use of a bushwhack boat (also called a sneak boat) required proficiency at sculling, which is a unique talent.

Tom Barnes taught Moke to scull, and he worked for a year sculling for local builder Hayes Martindale. After that, he only took the sneak boat out by himself or with family members. When the canvasbacks quit coming to the Flats in the 1960s, Moke got ahold of an old canvas diving suit and started body booting.

Moke first began to make decoys—mostly canvasbacks and redheads—when he resumed gunning after the war, starting with a string he made out of chopped bodies that he got from his father-in-law. He and his brother-in-law Bill Weaver (they married sisters) started hunting and carving together.

In those early years, Moke only made decoys for his own use—to build his own rig and to replace what he lost. As is the case with virtually all decoy-making folk artists, Moke never had any formal training in decoy making but picked up bits of knowledge from other carvers along the way. He often traded pieces of old cedar poles with R. Madison Mitchell, Paul Gibson and others for decoy bodies and advice. He taught himself how to paint.

In the late 1940’s Moke began to make decorative decoys, and collectors Margherita and Tom Coudon (grandson of Joseph Coudon) proudly





display a redhead that Moke made in that timeframe. In the late 1950s Moke took lessons from Bill Veasey (now a Decoy Museum director and a 2015 recipient of the Ward Museum's Living Legend awards), but he soon began developing his own style for creating decorative masterpieces.

Moke started out carving with white pine and cedar but later moved to basswood (also known as linden. His production has been limited—he doesn't do the decoy shows, and his reputation as a talented folk artist has spread largely by word of mouth. Moke has made his decorative decoys almost exclusively on request for friends and family.

The comfortably cramped workshop behind Moke's house is right-sized for one person making a few carvings at a time. No one who has been in a decoy maker's wood shop would be surprised by the organized chaos of carving tools, paint cans, parts of decoys, and more. A small duplicating lathe is in the corner with the usual assortment of other power tools. Moke's old sculling oar evokes fond memories and hangs prominently in the workshop over an old cast-iron wood stove that came out of a Pennsylvania Railroad passenger car.

Moke has on the bench in various stages of completion three half-size blue herons that are promised to family members. On a shelf are the remaining decoys from his old gunning rig of canvasbacks, three of which he has donated to the Decoy Museum.

Asked about any favorite decoys, Moke quickly responds, "Wood ducks." He just as quickly qualifies that by saying that he could never kill a wood duck and describes their beauty and distinctive whistling calls. Jim agrees with Moke and admits that one time he unintentionally killed a wood duck as it hurtled toward him out of the glare of the sun. Upon realizing his mistake, he nearly wept.

So, it is particularly people who have hunted for the table and hunted for the market who have learned a heartfelt respect and affection for the waterfowl that have provided them with a life and a livelihood. This respect and affection is unmistakably demonstrated by Moke's artistry in wood that honors these beautiful birds and the countless generations of watermen whose folk traditions have become part of the cultural landscape of the Chesapeake Bay. ■



*Great blue heron, circa 1990s, from the collection of Margherita and Tom Coudon.*



*Northern pintail and Canada goose, circa 1990s, from the collection of Moke and Eileen Boyd.*



*Wood ducks, circa 1990s, from the collection of Moke and Eileen Boyd.*


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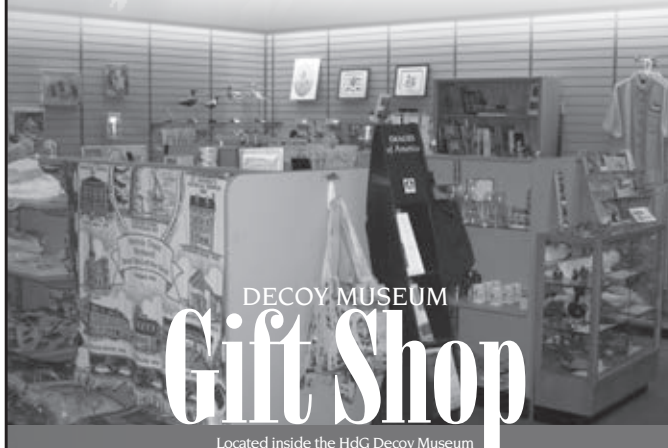
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# Welcome

## KERRI S. KNEISLEY

### OUR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By James W. Carroll, Jr.

The Board of Directors welcomes to the Decoy Museum our new Executive Director, Kerri Kneisley from Conestoga, PA. Kerri is a 1990 graduate of Millersville University and earned her Juris Doctor degree from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law in 1993. She was admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar in 1994.

Kerri has recently retired as the Deputy Chief of the Lancaster County Adult Probation & Parole Services where she has worked for over 20 years, and she has a great number of skills that will prove valuable to the future of the Decoy Museum.

In addition to overseeing a staff of 140 people with responsibility for personnel matters and staff development, she has also been involved in expansion planning and implementing new computer systems in conjunction with the County's IT department. She also has experience in departmental procurement, developing and monitoring a \$10 million budget, as well as contracting and grant processes. No shrinking violet, Kerri has completed the same County firearms training applicable to the probation officers under her supervision.

She also shows her entrepreneurial spirit as an independent sales representative with Wildtree, which offers high quality herbs,

spices, and culinary blends that are free of preservatives, additives, or fillers to promote a healthier lifestyle. Maybe we will get some good waterfowl cooking tips out of her, too!

If the name Kneisley sounds familiar, Kerri is married to the Decoy Museum's newest director, Matt Kneisley, who has been carving decoys since he was six-years old and whose day job is a Regional Director for Delta Waterfowl. Kerri and Matt are both deeply involved in the Lancaster Chapter of Delta Waterfowl, as was Matt's late father Ron, and they travel all around the country to shows and events. So, Kerri also knows a thing or two about program development and event planning, especially as it relates to decoys and waterfowling.

Unfortunately, the Decoy Museum's policies require Matt to leave the Board, but we suspect that we have not seen the last of him. The Kneisley family have long been loyal supporters of the Decoy Museum with strong ties to Havre de Grace. Welcome to the team, Kerri! ■



*Thank you for the warm-hearted welcome!*

*It is exciting to begin this next chapter in my life and embrace the opportunity to utilize my skills and experiences in charting the course of the Decoy Museum. I am eager to work alongside the Board of Directors, the staff, and the many dedicated volunteers to bring the Decoy Museum into the 21st century, sharing the*

*deep-rooted heritage and traditions of the Upper Chesapeake Bay in vibrant fashion. I envision many new generations being introduced to our love of waterfowl and the folk art of decoys.*

*As we move onward in achieving our goals, I look forward to meeting many of you.*

*— Kerri Kneisley*



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**Help us spread the word and fulfill our mission.** A Decoy Museum membership provides financial support for museum exhibits and programming, as well as offering individuals special benefits and opportunities. All members receive a membership card, free admission year round, a subscription to *The Canvasback* magazine, invitations to special events, and discounts in the Gift Shop.



**Not a member? Join Now! — Already a member? Tell a Friend!**  
**Go to [DecoyMuseum.com](http://DecoyMuseum.com) or call us at 410-939-3739**







## Lt. Governor's Meeting Held at Museum



**L to R: Decoy Museum President Pat Vincenti, Executive Director Kerri Kneisley, and Lt. Governor Boyd K. Rutherford**

The Decoy Museum is becoming an increasingly popular venue for parties, receptions, and organizational meetings. On September 24th, Lt. Governor Boyd K. Rutherford held one of several regional meetings for the Regulatory Reform Commission at the Decoy Museum. Governor Hogan's administration is committed to giving Maryland business

owners a voice and a seat at the table when it comes to devising and enacting common sense policies that empower businesses to thrive and rolling back unnecessary impediments to conducting business in the state. The Regulatory Reform Commission is holding meetings across the state to engage business owners, stakeholders, and the public to learn from their experiences and to identify areas for improvement. We thank them for their support! ■

## Fall Calling Contest

The 3rd annual Waterfowl Day is coming up on Saturday, October 24th. We will sponsor eight Maryland state and regional calling contests, of which two will be for juniors and four will be "sanctioned" events. Anyone aspiring to compete in the 2015 World's Championship in Stuttgart, Arkansas during Thanksgiving week must first win a sanctioned state or regional calling contest. Since the Stuttgart contest is only a few short weeks away, and there are few options for hopeful competitors, we hope to draw quite a number of entrants. The calling contests will be set up on the lawn in front of the Decoy Museum under a big tent overlooking the Susquehanna Flats. This has become a nice autumn event for the Museum, so please make plans to attend! ■



## Reciprocal Museums

The Decoy Museum is in the process of joining the North American Reciprocal Museum Association (NARM), which is one of the largest reciprocal mem-

bership programs in the world! NARM has over 750 arts, cultural, and historical institutions along with botanical gardens, children's museums, science and technology centers and more that offer their individual NARM qualified members reciprocal benefits. There are eight in Maryland alone, including the Ward Museum, the Baltimore Museum of Art, and the Maryland Historical Society. It's easy for individuals and families to participate! Join the Decoy Museum at the new Associate level of membership – or upgrade your existing membership. (Note: The reciprocal privileges offered by the North American Reciprocal Museum Association require that members must be enrolled at a \$100 membership level or higher in order to be eligible.) Then, simply present your Decoy Museum membership card, validated with accepted NARM identification, to any participating NARM institution to receive free/member admission during regular museum hours, member discounts at museum shops, and discounts on concert/lecture tickets. Details are available at [NARMAssociation.org](http://NARMAssociation.org). ■



# Fall Raffle 2015

## HAVRE DE GRACE DECOY MUSEUM

A chance to win ONE of five valuable prizes. Five tickets will be drawn.

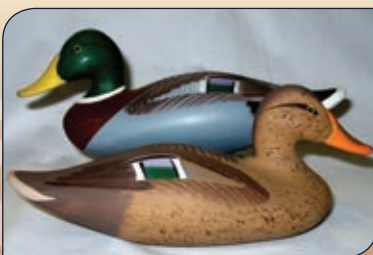
**Tickets are \$5.00 each**  
**6 for \$25.00 or 10 for \$40.00**



**1<sup>st</sup> Prize**  
Cash Prize of \$500



**2<sup>nd</sup> Prize**  
Pair of Wigeons  
full size by Jim Pierce



**3<sup>rd</sup> Prize**  
Pair of Mallards  
half size by Charles Jobes



**4<sup>th</sup> Prize**  
Pair of Canvasbacks  
donut-style by Vernon Bryant



**5<sup>th</sup> Prize**  
Framed Print  
Ward brothers and their decoys

Drawing will be held 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, December 12, 2015  
during the Candlelight Tour. For tickets  
call **410-939-3739** or email **information@DecoyMuseum.com**  
(additional tickets will be available at the Museum)





## New Membership Categories

We have reviewed our membership levels and decided to make some changes that are more reflective of the financial challenges that many of our members and prospective members face. Also, the new Associate level enables our members to be eligible for the reciprocal privileges offered by the North American Reciprocal Museum Association. Call or check out the website for details.

Junior/Student .....	\$15
Individual .....	\$35
Family .....	\$50
Associate .....	\$100
Life .....	\$2,000

## Sullivan Donates Display Cases

A special shout-out and hearty “Thank you!” to John Sullivan who has once again come through with some special display cases for us. One display case is a fine glass case with a mirrored back that is perfect for displaying special merchandise in the Gift Shop. The other is a companion to the two hand-crafted display cases originally from the old Canvasback Gallery



in Easton, Maryland that John donated in 2014. So we now have a pair of these handsome cases in the library and one downstairs with an amazing carving of a rockfish. We are delighted with our new cases! If you see John, please shake his hand and tell him, “Thanks”.

## New Grants to Bring Improvements

We applied for two grants back in the spring: one with the Harford County Office of Economic Development and one with the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority/Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway. Both have come through for us! In the previous issue of *The Canvasback* we noted the grant from the Office of Economic Development that has enabled us to hire Kerri Kneisley as our new Executive Director as well as make some improvements to *The Canvasback* and some other outreach initiatives. The \$16,250 MHAA/LSHG grant represents matching funds specifically to fund some new purpose-built display cases that will enable us to get some exhibit material out of storage as well as to borrow unique and valuable pieces from members, collectors, and other museums. Thanks to the generosity of our members, our share of the matching funds is already in the bank. We are very grateful for the support!



## LATE BREAKING NEWS!

As this issue was being sent to press, the Board of Directors announced that the 2016 Honorary Chairmanship of the 35th annual Havre de Grace Decoy and Wildlife Art Festival will be shared by Shannon Dimmig of Elkton, Md. and brothers Jonathan and Daniel Irons of Queenstown, Md. All three are award-winning carvers and protégés of 2009 Honorary Chairman Bill Veasey. We will take a closer look at Shannon, Jonathan, and Daniel in the winter and spring issues of *The Canvasback*.



# MUSEUM NEWS

## CURRENT EXHIBITS

- ▶ POTOMAC DECOY COLLECTOR'S ASSOCIATION BUFFLEHEAD EXHIBIT
- ▶ THE NEW DISPLAYS OF BOTH FULL-SIZE AND MINIATURE CANADA GEESE FROM THE COLLECTION OF C. JOHN SULLIVAN, JR.
- ▶ THE EXTRAORDINARY PAIR OF "DADDY" HOLLY CANVASBACKS, A GIFT FROM THE MICHAEL FAMILY.
- ▶ "TOOLS OF THE MARKET GUNNER" EXHIBIT FEATURING A NUMBER OF PUNT AND BATTERY GUNS
- ▶ THE "GUNNING THE FLATS" EXHIBIT
- ▶ THE "WHAT IS A DECOY?" EXHIBIT
- ▶ AN EXHIBIT OF FACTORY DECOYS, A GIFT FROM DR. MORT KRAMER
- ▶ "POP" SAMPSON'S HOMEMADE DUPLICATING LATHE FOR MAKING MINIATURE DECOY BODIES
- ▶ COUDEN TEAL CARVED IN THE 1930s, A GIFT FROM PAT DOHERTY
- ▶ THIS YEAR'S WINNING MARYLAND ART FOR THE FEDERAL JUNIOR STAMP CONSERVATION AND DESIGN PROGRAM WILL BE ON EXHIBIT FROM OCTOBER 20TH UNTIL NOVEMBER 10TH.



- ▶ A BEAUTIFUL DECORATIVE EASTERN BLUE BIRD CARVED BY MASTER CARVER BARB WACHTER
- ▶ A BEAUTIFUL DECORATIVE CANVASBACK FAMILY MADE BY MASTER CARVER J. NOBLE MENTZER
- ▶ A LIFELIKE ROCKFISH (STRIPED BASS) CARVED BY MASTER CARVER LEE TATE, SR.



## Tour Reservations

Talk to your children's or grandchildren's teachers and scout leaders about educational programs and tours of the Decoy Museum. Harford County school system classes are free, and we will also welcome your home schooled children! Tours can be tailored to the curriculum and different age/grade levels.

*Book your tours early by emailing Margaret Jones at [information@decoymuseum.com](mailto:information@decoymuseum.com) or by calling (410)-939-3739.*

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND TOWN



*Explore Havre de Grace*



*After visiting the Decoy Museum - See what else is happening in town!*

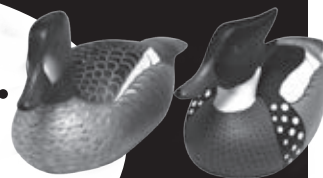
FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT

[www.explorehavredegrace.com](http://www.explorehavredegrace.com)

**Join the Conversation.**

**facebook**

[facebook.com/decoymuseum](https://facebook.com/decoymuseum)







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*Open 365 Days a Year!*

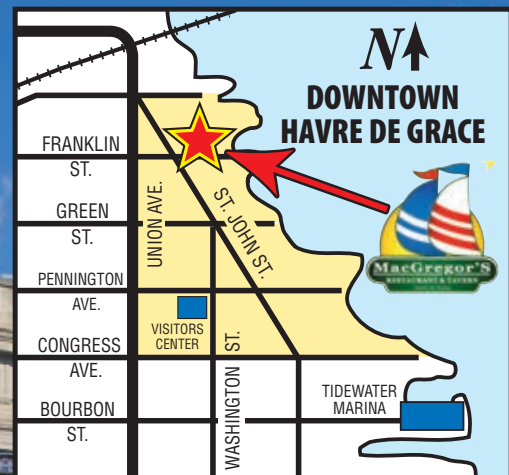
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