

# The Canvasback

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HAVRE DE GRACE DECOY MUSEUM

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Summer 2018  
Vol. 28 No. 3

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THE MAGIC  
OF THE  
*Ward Brothers*





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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.

THE MUSEUM WAS INCORPORATED IN 1981 AS A 501(c)(3) TAX-EXEMPT ORGANIZATION TO COLLECT, DOCUMENT, PRESERVE, AND INTERPRET WATERFOWL DECOYS AS A UNIQUE FORM OF FOLK ART.

FUNDED IN PART BY



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.

## ON THE COVER

These flying canvasbacks were made as wall hangings and are part of nearly three-dozen magical Ward brothers carvings that collector John Collier has graciously loaned to the Decoy Museum for display.

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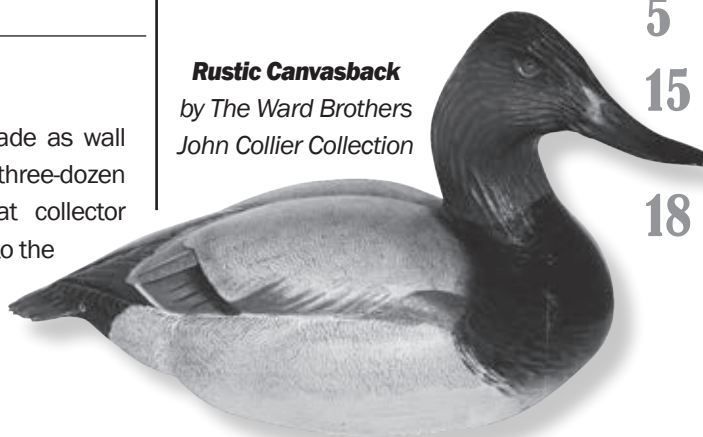
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## Rustic Canvasback

by The Ward Brothers  
John Collier Collection





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## From the President...

Dear Museum Member:

We had nice weather and good attendance for the Decoy Museum's 37th annual Decoy and Wildlife Art Festival on May 4th - 6th. The final tally has shown it to have been another successful fundraising event, and Jim Trimble has provided his usual glowing review.



This year's Honorary Chairmen were J. Noble Mentzer from Havre de Grace and former director John Hostetter from Aberdeen. We were delighted that Noble was able to make it to the Festival both Saturday and Sunday, but we were very sad to learn of his death on May 25th at the age of 90. Noble was a grand person, a very talented carver, and a true friend to the Museum. He will be missed.

Jim Trimble, Joe Engers, and Decoy Magazine again sponsored the J. Evans McKinney Old Decoy Contest, which always attracts treasures. Come see the winners on display in the Museum.

Loyalists regard our Festival as one of the best in the region, but like all similar festivals there has been a steady decline in exhibitors and visitors over the years. Recognizing that we need to reimagine this great event, director Mike Tarquini took the bit in his teeth and began an extensive series of interviews with participants. We have gotten some great ideas on ways to improve the experience for exhibitors and visitors, which we plan to implement for 2019.

A big "Thank you!" goes to every contributor – generous sponsors, devoted staff, and volunteers – for the success of the 2018 Festival. Special thanks go to Principal James Johnson and the Harford County Public Schools, as well as Mayor Bill Martin and the Havre de Grace City Council. Dan and Cindy Lee at MacGregor's Restaurant provided excellent food for the Friday night exhibitor reception and the Sunday breakfast buffet.

Our great friends and supporters at the Potomac Decoy Collectors Association will be replacing their breathtaking collection of wood ducks with a new exhibit, as yet undefined but guaranteed to be stunning. In April, we returned John Collier's collection of Bill Gibian carvings, and he entrusted us with his equally superb collection of Lem and Steve Ward's carvings. You've got to see them!

Great news... the Harford County Office of Economic Development renewed our grant for FY2019, and we are very grateful for their support and that of County Executive Barry Glassman.

And thank you, our members, for your part in helping to improve the Decoy Museum and keep it growing!

Sincerely,



*Standing on the side of the two-man sinkbox are three hunters (left to right): J. Mowell Hawkins of Baltimore, a merchant, is holding a Winchester model 1887 pump shotgun. Hawkins had been gunning on the Flats since 1898. In the middle is James R. Malone, a native of Baltimore who worked as a dairyman; he had been gunning on the Flats since 1891. In 1893, he and his partners recorded a kill of 119 ducks. Standing next to Malone is George P. Mordecai holding a double-barrel shotgun. Mordecai, a sporting goods merchant from Baltimore, continued to gun on the Flats until at least 1910. All of these photos were taken on the same day in 1905.*

## Why I Always Enjoy the Decoy Festival

*By C. John Sullivan, Jr.*

I have participated in the annual Havre de Grace Show since its beginning 37 years ago. For a relatively young collector, the early shows were an exciting time. The old-time carvers from the region were honored each year, and the annual auction provided an excellent opportunity for collectors to increase the size of their wooden flocks. Over the years the number of exhibitors has decreased ever so slowly, fewer and fewer quality old decoys appear in the hallways, the gym and the activity room. Most every year after the show, a discussion takes place: "what can we do to improve this show, how can we get more exhibitors, how do we get more collectors and carvers to return?" I have always enjoyed this show, and each year I manage to sell a few things, but more importantly, as a waterfowling historian, I almost always find something that excites me and is important to this history we share and have a passion for. This year afforded me the opportunity to sell



*The hunters stand on the side of the sinkbox in the same order as in photo 1. In this image, each of the hunters is holding a pump shotgun, with a larger-bore under-lever double-barrel resting on the box behind Mordecai.*

a few decoys and some of my books and trade for an important early Maryland bufflehead decoy (one that I have sought since the first time I saw it). But most importantly, I had the opportunity to purchase a group of early and highly important original photographs of a rare two-man sinkbox rig on the Susquehanna Flats. The images are significant for a couple of reasons: the photographs are crystal clear, they are dated and the hunters are identified. Of most importance to the history of waterfowling are the canvasback decoys that rest on the sinkbox and float on the water surrounding the box. The distinction in style between the Havre de Grace decoys and the Charlestown decoys is instantly noted. The decoys were obviously created by the Hollys or the Grahams. There is one humpback decoy resting on the box that is an unknown. Although I have one of these in my collection, I don't know and probably never will know the carver. But I know now that that style was in use in 1905, the date of the photos.

So how do we improve the show? To me, the excitement generated by the discovery of these photographs is all that is needed to keep me going back year after year. The history of waterfowling and the camaraderie among the collectors are the most important parts of the show. I will always return, and my hope and goal is that by sharing this history, the new generation of collectors will find the show as important as I have.

*George P. Mordecai stands on the gunning scow holding his pump shotgun with what appears to be two dead canvasbacks in his right hand. An identified man is visible between Mordecai's spread legs.*



*Hunters Hawkins (left) and Mordecai (right) are seated in the two-man sinkbox.*





# Thank You!

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## 2018 Festival Acknowledgments

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**Pat & Jeanne Vincenti • Lori Whitlock**

**Jacque & Lola Williams**



Wood Duck by  
J. Noble Mentzer

# 37TH ANNUAL *Decoy & Wildlife* *Art Festival*

by Jim Trimble

Photography by Jim Trimble, Neil Geisel, and staff

Early May each year is when duck enthusiasts flock to the small Chesapeake Bay waterfront community of Havre de Grace, Maryland, the self-proclaimed Decoy Capital of the World. It is almost like they were following a trail of corn with the town filling May 4-6, Friday through Sunday, for the Festival which celebrates and glorifies the duck. This annual duck & wildlife art festival is the chief fund raiser for the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum; with the small Havre de Grace community putting their collective shoulders to the wheel in full support. The yearly duck people influx is an economic boom for local businesses, hotels and restaurants. Some of the visitors are there to buy, some to sell, some to compete in a variety of events, and some to just plain enjoy! It is a homerun weekend for all!

As an added bonus, the museum Festival dates usually over-lap the town's First Friday celebrations, as it did this year. Streets closed Friday evening for several blocks around the merchant district and transformed into a packed



Virginia collectors Rich & Carleen Taylor admiring an Oliver "Tuts" Lawson 1/3 sized swan with vendor Lawson standing to the right, and making the sale.

pedestrian thoroughfare. Besides restaurants and shops opened, there were about 40 or so street vendors, as well as several groups of live music musicians pumping it out to an appreciative crowd. It was a family friendly zone throw-back to yesterday. The weather was mostly overcast and pleasant for the weekend.

This year's festival featured two Honorary Chairmen, one of them being Noble Mentzer of Havre de Grace who sadly passed away on May 25th at the age of 90. In addition to waterfowl, Mentzer carved realistic song birds. He was a Korean War veteran who worked at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds. He was also a life member and past President of the Havre de Grace VFD. You would often see Mentzer at the museum where he volunteered as a docent, often leading tours, as he taught along the way. Determined to the end, Noble checked himself out of hospice care to attend the Festival. Co-Chairman John Hostetter owns a successful local insurance agency, is community minded, and has been a generous museum supporter over many years. He was also a longtime board member who recently made a significant donation of songbird carvings to the museum in memory of his parents.

Even though the whole town is celebrating duck, the Festival's two primary event locations were the museum grounds and the town's middle school. River gunning decoys along with single, tandem and rig decoy competitions were held Saturday on the museum's grounds, with birds floated in contiguous Chesapeake Bay waters. Most/all of the participants were hunters who made their own decoys and decoy rigs; with good nature banter flowing back and forth.

The middle school was the venue for the decorative carving competitions. It was also the venue for the decoy vendors and for the J. Evans McKinney Old Decoy Contest. The tables of old birds offered as well as the old decoy contest competition draws vintage decoy collectors to buy, sell and to compete. Vendor tables offered a mixture of contemporary and vintage with 54 vendors who occupied 99 tables per the Festival magazine issue; with a few other artisans later added to the count. Saturday saw a "goodly" crowd with most vendors reporting an "OK" to good sales activity.

Other tables included an Upper Bay Museum sponsored table as well as a decoy display table



Vendor/carver Pat Vincenti holding one of his canvasbacks. Vincenti's multiple tables offered his decoys as well as a large variety of old Chesapeake gunners for sale. Pat serves as the President of the Havre de Grace Museum; and he and his wife Jeannie are the driving force behind the museum, this decoy show and other event fundraisers for the museum.



Pennsylvania collector/vendor Jeremy Houser with his Susquehanna River Old Decoy Contest category entry, a confidence swan decoy by an unknown maker, that floated the upper Susquehanna River during the 1950s













Maryland collector Don Kirson's winning birds. An Elmer Crowell black belly plover, "Dust Jacket style," circa 1890, in alert position with carved shoulders and primaries; all original, with "CW Loud" brand. This bird also won Best in Show honors. Kirson's James T. Holly original paint blue wing teal, circa 1890 that won Best Holly Family category; as well as winning 2nd Best in Show honors.

full of show decoys sponsored by the recently formed Upper Bay Decoy Collectors Club. Upper Chesapeake Bay collector/historian John Sullivan, besides vendor table, displayed 25 or so fine decoys, primarily Holly and Graham, that included black ducks, mallards, teals and ruddies....all drawing much attention and many fine comments.

Jim & Clo Trimble worked again this year as festival volunteers, taking responsibility for the 10-category J. Evans McKinney Old Decoy Contest. Museum Curator Ginny Sanders worked side by side with Clo, accepting and tagging the decoys with Jim assisting "duck handler" Steve Dudley. Dudley also handled the online contest promotion posting many sites, which obviously paid off. Decoy judge selection is on a yearly rotation basis with collectors Joe Engers, Will Freng and Chad Tragakis selected to serve. Judges did not serve where disqualified because of decoy entry. This year saw 26 contestants enter over 100 decoys



Virginia/North Carolina collector Steve Dudley who worked the Old Decoy Contest as "duck handler" as well as handled online contest postings prior to the show.

with six different individual category winners. The quality as well as the number of birds entered this year ranks among the best in the 16-year history of the contest. Maryland collector Mort Kramer won the Best Upper Bay Teal or Ruddy category with a fine worn original paint Charles T. Wilson green wing teal that was from the J. Evans McKinney collection. Maryland collector Don Kirson won the Best Shorebird category with an Elmer Crowell black belly plover, "Dust Jacket style," circa 1890, in alert position with carved shoulders and primaries. It was all original with "CW Loud" brand. This bird also grabbed Best in Show honors. Kirson struck again with a fine James T. Holly original paint blue wing teal, circa 1890 that won Best Holly Family category. This decoy also



Pennsylvania collector/ carver Bob Biddle examining a Paul Gibson teal and enjoying the show.

won 2nd Best in Show honors. A diminutive John Graham teal, circa 1900 and never weighted won the John Graham category for Maryland collector Henry Stansbury. The bird also placed 3rd Best in Show. Stansbury also won the Delaware River category with a fine hollow original paint sleeping pintail drake attributed to R. W. Davids of Philadelphia, circa 1920s, or earlier, and carries a Davids brand. Stansbury's Ed Parson palm-sized bufflehead pair, circa 1920s, with alert heads and fine original paint won the Best Mid-Bay/Eastern Shore Diving Duck category. Stansbury's fourth category win was a magnificent pair of Delbert Hudson mallards in original bone-dry paint, both with scratch-paint applications, that won the Best Virginia Puddle Duck category.

The recently deceased Art Boxleitner category was won by Pennsylvania collector Ed Heltshe with a well carved and a magnificently painted wood duck pair. A Joe Walters' original paint sharp chime pair of canvasbacks won the Best



Maryland collector/vendors Chris and Vivial Worsh holding a Charles Bryan mallard decoy.

Susquehanna "Up River" category for Virginia collectors Jim & Clo Trimble. The Best Unknown category was won by Maryland collector Ronnie Adams with a canvasback from the first quarter of the last century in fine old gunning paint reflecting a strong Sam Barnes/Jim Holly influence.

It should be noted here that there were many fine other decoys on the table including a magnificent pair of Bob McGaw blue wing teal, several John Blair decoys including an original paint widgeon, several fine Virginia puddle ducks including an original paint Doug Jester pintail and an original paint Charles Jester black duck, plus many other fine Graham and Holly decoys.



Orioles baseball fans Reed Cox & Zachary Lipsky who accompanied the senior Zach Lipsky, a Maryland collector, to the show. The boys are holding a "bagged" swan and goose, that was gifted to them by Maryland collector/vendor Marshall Purner.

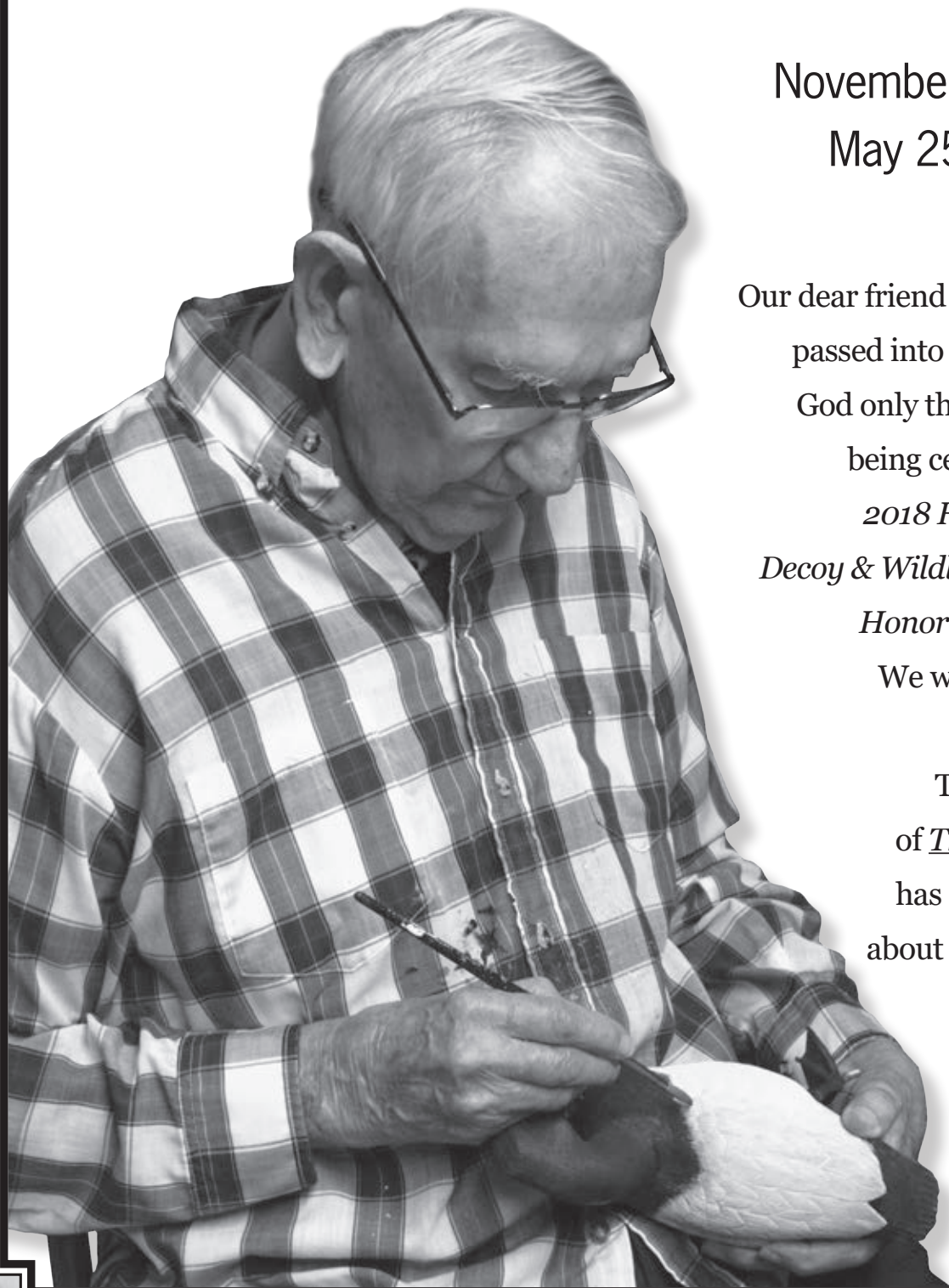
This was a fun duck-packed weekend for the mid-Atlantic decoy collector. Pat and Jeannie Vincenti and a legion of others at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, work hard putting on this show for our decoy collecting community. Hopefully it was a big plus in their fund-raising efforts.

# J. NOBLE MENTZER

November 3, 1927 -  
May 25, 2018

Our dear friend Noble Mentzer  
passed into the presence of  
God only three weeks after  
being celebrated as the  
*2018 Havre de Grace  
Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival  
Honorary Chairman.*  
We will miss him so.

The spring issue  
of *The Canvasback*  
has a tribute article  
about this wonderful,  
talented, and  
generous man.



LET THE BEAUTY OF WHAT YOU LOVE BE WHAT YOU DO.

~RUMI



# CARVING COMPETITION RESULTS

Beaming in this picture is 10-year old Noah Moretz, a Meadowvale Elementary School student who took two honors at the Decoy Festival with his ruddy duck. Remarkably, this is Noah's first effort with a full-size bird.

Noah became interested in carving after attending the Ward Museum show three years ago with his father, Havre de Grace carver Rich Moretz, and won top awards there with silhouettes the past two years at ages 8 and 9.

This hollow-bodied ruddy duck was all hand-shaped with drawknife and spokeshave, which he did under Rich's watchful eye, then refining it with rasp and file, and adding the detailing using a Foredom tool. Painting was all done with oils.

There is nothing more gratifying in the decoy world than seeing a new generation of carvers embracing this important folk art with such evident enthusiasm. We expect to see more of Noah!



## GET ALL THE DETAILS ONLINE!!

The Results of the

37TH ANNUAL

### *Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival*

are now available as a printable PDF on our website:

**[DecoyMuseum.com/CarvingCompetition](http://DecoyMuseum.com/CarvingCompetition)**

Call us at **410-939-3739**  
if you don't have Internet access.



## From the Executive Director...

I cannot believe that another Festival is now behind us – my, how the year has flown by! I am so grateful for the many sponsors, exhibitors, volunteers, and of course guests, who make our annual Festival such a spectacular event time and again. Thanks to feedback obtained from our exhibitors, we look forward to implementing some improvements to next year's Festival and I hope to see you all then, if not before!



The Museum was “alive” with children this Spring (almost 650 children!!), as we had eight different local school groups, ranging from 2nd to 6th grades, visit us for free educational programming between mid-March and June. It is always a treat to share the heritage we so value with young children and to see the resulting excitement on their faces! We are currently planning a summer reading program so that we can continue to keep that momentum.

We are proud to again partner with the National Endowment for the Arts and Blue Star Families in serving as a Blue Star Museum in 2018. We will join more than 2,000 museums nationwide who offer free admission to active duty military personnel and their families between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

Finally, we are pleased to once again have the R. Madison Mitchell Shop open to guest carvers. Since opening on March 31st, we have had a carver here both Saturday and Sunday of every weekend, and we hope to be able to continue that pattern through October. We also hope to offer a few carving/painting classes later this summer – stay tuned to our Facebook page or our website for further information!

Wishing you a fantastic summer,

*Keri*

## Current Exhibits @ the Museum

- A new exhibit in the library from John Collier's extensive collection of carvings by renowned Crisfield carvers Lem and Steve Ward, including the legendary Lem Ward eagle.

- A new collection of Len Burcham's unpainted cedar half-size decoys with beautiful grain patterns.
- A rare exhibit of Carteret County and Core Sound, North Carolina decoys, courtesy of Kroghie Andresen and the Carolina Decoys Collectors Association.

- The breathtaking decorative carvings from the personal collection of master carver and 2018 Festival honoree J. Noble Mentzer.

- The Potomac Decoy Collectors Assoc. stunning collection of nearly seven-dozen colorful and elegant wood ducks in the Carvers' Gallery.

- A sampling from Bob Gregg's extensive collection of Dan Carson decoys.

- The Home Run Baker rig and bushwhack boat.

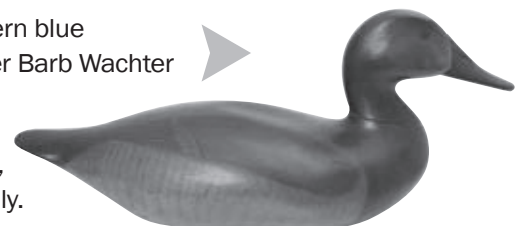
- A traditional tule decoy in the centuries-old “Lovelock style” by Paiute decoy maker Joe Allen.

- A teal carved in the 1930s by Joseph Coudon of H, a gift from Pat Doherty.

- A lifelike rockfish (striped bass) carved by master carver Lee Tate, Sr.

- A beautiful decorative eastern blue bird carved by master carver Barb Wachter

- The extraordinary pair of “Daddy” Holly canvasbacks, a gift from the Michael family.







# Museum News

## J. Evans McKinney 2018 Old Decoy Contest

by Jim Trimble

Twenty-six collectors entered over 100 competition birds with six separate entrants winning in this ten-category vintage competition event. The three-judge panel of seasoned collectors were Joe Engers, Will Freng, and Chad Tragakis, who recused themselves in categories where they had an entry.

At right, Maryland collector Don Kirson won the Best Non-factory Shorebird category with an Elmer Crowell black belly plover, "Dust Jacket style," circa 1890, in alert position with carved shoulders and primaries. It was all original with "CW Loud" brand. This bird also grabbed Best in Show honors. Kirson struck again with a fine James T. Holly original paint blue wing teal, circa 1890 that won Best Holly Family category. This decoy also won 2nd Best in Show honors.

The winning birds with their ribbons are currently on display at the Decoy Museum where they will remain through at least the summer. **Come see these fine pieces of folk art!**



PLACE	CATEGORY	OWNER	DECOY ENTERED
<b>Best in Show</b>	Best Non-Factory Shorebird	<i>Don Kirson</i>	Black-bellied plover by Elmer Crowell
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Best in Show</b>	Best Holly Family	<i>Don Kirson</i>	Blue-winged teal by James T. Holly
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Best in Show</b>	Best John Graham	<i>Henry Stansbury</i>	Teal
	Best Art Boxleitner Decoy	<i>Ed Heltshe</i>	Wood Ducks
	Best Delaware River	<i>Henry Stansbury</i>	Pintail drake by R. W. Davids (attr.)
	Best Mid Bay/Eastern Shore Diving Duck	<i>Henry Stansbury</i>	Buffleheads by Ed Parson
	Best Susquehanna "Up River"	<i>Jim and Clo Trimble</i>	Canvasbacks by Joe Walters
	Best Unknown	<i>Ronnie Adams</i>	Canvasback by Barnes/Holly-style
	Best Upper Bay Teal or Ruddy	<i>Mort Kramer</i>	Green-winged teal by Charles T. Wilson
	Best Virginia Puddle Duck	<i>Henry Stansbury</i>	Mallards by Delbert Hudson



## FIRST ANNUAL EASTER SCAVENGER HUNT AND CRAFT TIME!

On the beautiful, albeit chilly spring morning of March 31st, we hosted our new Easter Scavenger Hunt and Craft Time! Hundreds of Easter eggs were concealed throughout the field surrounding the R. Madison Mitchell shop behind the Decoy Museum, and the kids eagerly found almost all of them, leaving just enough undiscovered for the Decoy Museum staff to have a little chocolate treat later. Additional challenges and treasures were to be found inside the Museum.

This was the first time we tried this event, and it got off to a very encouraging start with good community support. It also piggybacked on the 2018 reopening of the R. Madison Mitchell shop where we had fun activities for the kids and their families, featuring decoy painting.

After the departure of the kids in late morning, the “craft time” became all about the adults who buckled down to repaint the prominent and ubiquitous canvasback signs that advertise the Decoy Festival in May. Importantly, Matt Kneisley and Joey Jobes finally got to paint eyes on the canvasback signs, an omission that has been bugging them for years.



**Stay tuned to Facebook and the website for announcements regarding the summer/fall schedule of guest carvers and other activities in the R. Madison Mitchell shop!**

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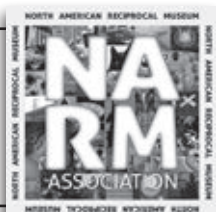
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A Decoy Museum membership provides financial support for museum exhibits and programming, as well as offering individuals special benefits and opportunities. All members receive a membership card, free admission year round, and a subscription to **The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

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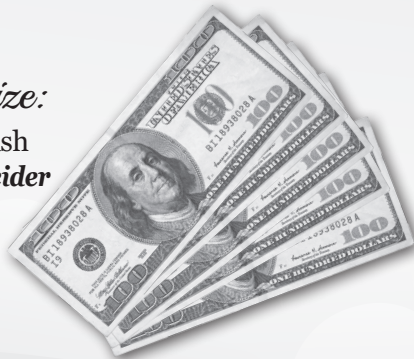




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**Jeffrey Reider**



## *Third Prize:*

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## *Fourth Prize:*

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by Harry Jobs  
**Kenny Stevenson**

## *Second Prize:*

Red-breasted Merganser Pair  
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Can you lead tours, explain decoy making and the history of the Flats, present programs for school children, greet visitors at the information desk, assist in the museum store, help our curator on special projects, provide carving demonstrations, plan events, maintain IT systems, do exhibit signage and creative work, assist with fundraising and membership, organize chaos?



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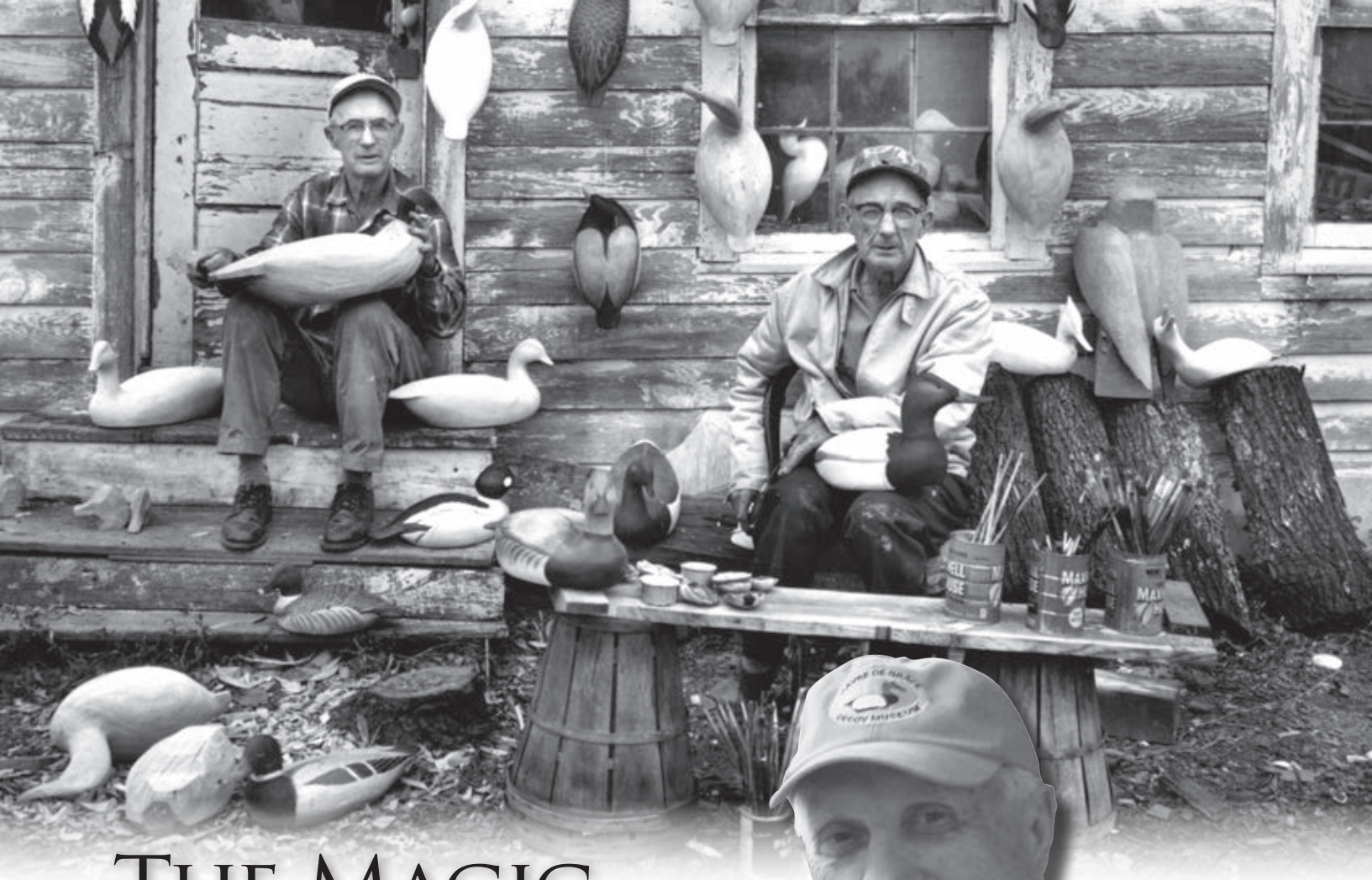
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# THE MAGIC OF THE *Ward Brothers*

For two years, we have had the privilege of exhibiting part of collector and long-time Decoy Museum supporter John Collier's amazing collection of carvings by Bill Gibian of Onancock, Virginia.

Needless to say, John ultimately began to miss his Gibian birds and asked if we would like to trade them for part of his collection of carvings by the famous Crisfield, Maryland carvers Lem and Steve Ward, namesakes of our sister museum in Salisbury.

So, both sad and excited, we packed up the Gibians and drove to John's house to trade one amazing collection for another. The pictures on the following pages are only a teaser for what this new display looks like.

Don't miss John Collier's extensive collection of this very important folk art by two legends of the métier, now on display in the Carvers Gallery.

***Thanks, John! You are the best!***







Blue-winged Teal



Bufflehead



Canvasbacks  
Flat Bottom



Canada Goose Sleeper



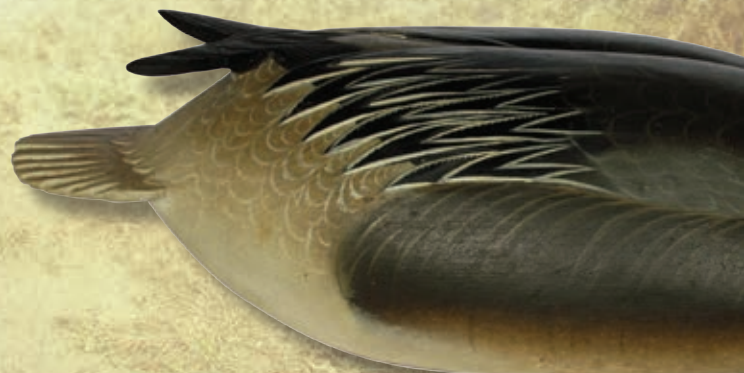
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Blue Goose





# East Coast Decoy Collectors Swap Meet 2018

*By Jim Trimble*

The 20th annual buy-sell-swap was held Thursday through Saturday, April 5-7 at the St. Michaels Motor Inn in St. Michaels, Maryland. The weather forecast included hi-winds, torrential rains with wet deep snow forecast for Saturday that impacted with some room cancelations and smaller crowds. The room cancelations of the prime rooms re-filled quickly; but the crowds never materialized. The storm by-passed with wind, overcast skies, some sunshine and cold prevailing. Decoy transactions seemed to be primarily between vendors and hard-core collectors from the Chesapeake Bay area. There was much discussion about the positive impact that the various decoy oriented Facebook sites with pictures and pickle-barrel type of discussions was having, with most agreeing that it was a good teaching tool that seemed to be drawing new collectors to our hobby. This writer notes that there were many quick posting on these sites as to decoys acquired at ECDC. One collector's photo post was of a "Fresh Air" Dick Janson pintail acquired at the swap meet sitting beside a bottle of Decoy Wine that carried a Janson pintail logo. The commentary was about the bottle of wine being a daughter's gift and how he was pleased to match-up with similar decoy.

President Tim Siegar's welcome letter to membership dealt primarily with how our event has grown versus room demand. Room count was in the 70s with many occupied by two collectors per room. Offered items were primarily old decoys with oyster and fishing stuffs in the mix. Local savvy collectors were on hand both Wednesday and Thursday to see what was being unpacked for early buy. Outside vendors set-up was primarily on Friday and Saturday, but in fewer numbers from years past. With Saturday's heavy wet snow forecast, Friday was the best day crowd wise and sale wise. Some who visited the show took the opportunity to visit the nearby Guyette & Deeter show room to preview decoys for their upcoming Pheasant Run auction. Some members of the Potomac Decoy Collector's Association arrived early for artifact pick-up from the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum who had recently broken down the year-long Potomac River gunning display to make room for the new *Kent County Maryland's Carvers and Clubs: Guides, Gunners and Co-Ops* artifacts display. ECDC club members were encouraged to bring along a few favorite items for room display. Maryland collector Will Freng displayed eight original paint partial sized Ward Bros. goose decoys, signed and dated between 1960 and 1966, with a variety of head positions, some with open mouths. The white different level elevated tier stands with white backdrop provided a dramatic setting. Freng advises that the decoys were collected from a variety of previous owners and took over six-years to assemble. One collector's room that drew many curious visitors was not a display, but a video that featured hunting geese with a live rabbit. Maryland collector Rick Fish delighted many as he ran a 1929 video of the wealthy Wagner family of Long Island that owned 80 acres of waterfront property at Figgs Landing, along the Maryland shoreline that faced Chincoteague Bay. Figgs Landing is a stone's throw and visible from Fish's hometown of Public Landing, Maryland.



*Pennsylvania collector/vendor Rick Fitch holding a Bob Biddle style blue wing teal.*



*Maryland collector/  
vendor Steve Dorrell  
holding a Holton Legg  
Canada goose.*



*Virginia vendor/carver Reggie Birch and Maryland collector Gary Sargable holding two of Birch's finely carved and sculpted decoys.*

Fish narrated as the video rolled.....there were 20 or so spread-out and tethered live caller resting geese held in place by bottom line weight. As the hunters approached in a skiff, one holds up a live rabbit by the ears.....releasing it in the direction of the tethered geese.....the rabbit takes off darting and swimming in circles.....while the geese react with excitement and flapping wings that attract..... the next shot shows the bounty of dead geese hanging on the larger service boat. The video fades to other local Wagner family clips including a visit to local boat maker Ira Hudson to pick-up a completed gunning skiff.....the film shows Hudson, and then Mrs. Wagner christening the skiff with a bottle of champagne, before the successful trial run in Chincoteague Bay. Needless to say, as word spread, Fish ran the video many, many times for the interested and curious. The film clip is now owned by The Edward H. Nabb Research Center for Delmarva History and Culture at Salisbury University. Thank you Rick Fish!

Most vendors shutdown late Friday afternoon to attend the preview party at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum that featured their new *Kent County Maryland's Carvers and Clubs: Guides, Gunners and Co-Ops* exhibit. The reception, with food and drink, was held in the old boathouse; and was sponsored by Henry Stansbury and the auction house of Guyette & Deeter. The exhibit features a collection of decoys, oral histories, historic photographs, and other artifacts that tell the stories of Maryland's Kent County carvers and hunting clubs. "Kent County's bountiful waterfowl population and picturesque shorelines drew gentlemen hunters from the cities to organized gunning clubs, especially along the shores near Rock Hall and Eastern Neck," said CBMM Collections Manager Jenifer Dolde, curator of the exhibition. "Knowledgeable local men served as guides, savvy property owners leased their land for clubs, and skillful Kent carvers created co-ops to craft decoys for the rigs of neighbors and club members."

Later Friday evening, at the St. Michaels Motor Inn venue, the Potomac Decoy Collectors held a meeting/open house with light fare and their usual competition tables; with about 18-20 collectors attending.

Because of weather, Saturday's mid-day cookout was held inside over barbeque, roast beef, a variety sides along with a variety of beverages offered. Membership gabbed, talked ducks and weather, and enjoyed the live folk music. President Tim Sieger addressed membership, acknowledging and thanking those who contributed..... he also promised a fine weather forecast for next year. After clean-up, farewells were said as members returned to their rooms to finish packing and head home. When we think 2019 ECDC, we need to think ducks, sunshine and warmth!



left to right Maryland collector/vendor Will Freng, Oregon collector Barry Serafin and New Jersey collector/vendor Dick Gove discussing Freng's fine Ward Bros. partially sized original paint goose display.



Contiguous parking lot vendors



Dick Janson pintail with a bottle of Decoy wine containing a Janson pintail label.....one of the many decoys that ended up promptly on Facebook pages, this one with commentary about matching a decoy to a bottle of wine that was a gift from the collector's daughter.



# ANNAPOLIS DECOY SHOW 2018

Jim Trimble

The 3rd Annual Annapolis Decoy Show, sponsored by the Potomac Decoy Collectors Association, was held Sunday, June 3rd at the spacious and well lit Annapolis Elk Lodge. The admission was free to this one day show with short show-hours from ten till four. Vendor tables totaled around 70 and were filled primarily with vintage Chesapeake area decoys, with a few hi-profile contemporary carver vendors in the mix. Vendors as well as show visitors were primarily from the Virginia, Maryland and Washington, DC areas. The Upper Bay as well as the Ward and Havre de Grace Decoy Museums also occupied tables with waterfowl history related information and displays about their respective museums. Vendors were mostly seasoned, including a few PDCA long-time collectors who took this opportunity to thin out their collections.

The show was heavily advertised including posts on a handful of decoy Facebook sites. Despite monsoon type waves of heavy-falling rain, the parking lot filled quickly with good morning crowds that packed the aisles. Zeb Barfield's table displayed decoys for his forthcoming August 5th online Sportsman Auction. He was also busy delivering decoys from last month's auction as well as accepting consignments for future auctions; some of the consignments coming from show vendors at the end of the day. Maryland vendor/restorer Rod Schwarm's table was filled with early Maryland gunners, some of those birds that this restorer brought back to life. Schwarm was busy receiving birds in need of repair as well as returning birds that had been restored.

Annapolis collector Dick Larrimore, besides a vendor table of primarily Chesapeake Bay decoys, displayed a tableful of Anne Arundel County decoys, about 20 or so gunning birds as well as a handful of minis. The decoys included stools made by four different Larrimore family members, representing different generations, who carved between the late 1800s to the 1940s. They were a family of watermen and farmers who lived at nearby Larrimore Point since the early 1800s, and who hunted the

South River and tributaries. Collector Dick Larrimore, like his great grandfather decoy maker James K. Larrimore, also hunts these same waters. The Anne Arundel County birds that Larrimore displayed were the forerunners of the upper Chesapeake Bay style decoy that soon replaced them.

Some show visitors arrived with bags of old decoys for identification and valuation, with some vendors called on to opine. One visitor from Calvert County arrived with a bag of three or four vintage golden eyes and a ruddy in early gunning paint that were thought to be from Dorchester County, whose western shorelines are located across the narrowing part of the Chesapeake Bay from Calvert County's southern shorelines. Another visitor from Maryland's Eastern Shore arrived with a pair of early Bob McGaw bluebills in original paint and with fine head carving that was purportedly part of a larger rig of similar decoys. To my knowledge, none of the birds brought in this day for identification/valuation changed hands.

Blue ribbon contemporary carvers in the mix included Maryland carvers Ray Whetzel, Eddie Wozny, Dave Farrow and Bruce Eppard with Farrow's and Eppard's tables also containing numerous vintage decoys for sale. Eppard, who in the past, has won national competitions at the Ward Museum's "World" competitions, besides an assortment of ruddy ducks, buffleheads, coots and grebes, displayed a life-sized Canada goose taking flight.....it was a crowd pleaser.

PDCA President Chad Tragakis, who also serves as Show Chairman, was pleased with the attendance; and with the many new faces that were seen roaming the isles; much of that due to the publicity efforts of PDCA member Steve Dudley. Tragakis also commented that it seemed to be a buying crowd and that many vendors were reporting good sales. This writer's observation is that Tragakis has made an effort to provide quality vendors, both vintage and contemporary, for this fun June show. Plans are already being made for next year's show return to this venue.



Maryland vendor/carver/collector David Farrow offered a fine mixture of vintage upper Chesapeake Bay decoys as well as some of his finely made decoys.



Virginia collector/vendor Phyllis Krochmal, shown here with Maryland collector/vendor John Henry, holding a Virginia black duck that many opined was made by Ira C. "Glory-bound" Hudson of Chincoteague, Virginia.



South Carolina collector/vendor Tom Reed's table was filled with Maryland and Virginia decoys as well as a few fine birds from elsewhere. He also had a nice offering of shorebirds.

Maryland carver/vendor Eddie Wozny with his display board of two fine wood duck flyers. The third mounted bird flyer, a dove, had flown the coop by the time this photo was taken.



Maryland collector/vendor Joe Walsh holding a Bob McGaw hi-head pintail hen.



Maryland collector/vendor Don Kirson holding an early original paint Jim Holly redhead. Kirson reports that he sold a few decoys and a lot of books.



The Potomac Decoy Collectors Association is located in the metropolitan Washington DC area and its membership includes directors of East Coast waterfowl related museums, publishers of decoy related periodicals, authors of decoy related books, plus several contributing writers to various decoy related magazines. For more information about PDCA and its activities, please contact Chad Tragakis @ 703-593-3034 or chad.tragakis@gmail.com



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# LEONARD BURCHAM

## THE “OLD SCHOOL” DECOY MAKER

*By Corinne M. Litzenberg Schultheis, Ed.D.*

Some say the success of a carver not only depends on his talent but also on his character. Len Burcham of Havre de Grace exemplifies the traits of being a talented decoy carver, miniature boat maker, and Havre de Grace citizen. After retirement in 2001 as a Laboratory Leader in Research at Cytec Industries (formerly American Cyanamid) for thirty-six years, Len knew he had to find a hobby to keep himself busy and active. That hobby had to be related to his passion for hunting and living on the Upper Bay. He loved to hunt and started body booting in the early ‘60s with Tommy White, Denny Bolen, Sam Waddell, John Ward, and Donald Brewer. Later, Len built a layout boat in the old Odd Fellows building in nearby Churchville with the help of Bryan and Bernie Bodt, John Paxton, Mike Hodges, Steve Smith, Dave Nelson, Larry Chapman, and Jim Ramsey. This boat, known as the “Cuckoo’s Nest” could fit four hunters lying down.

Len’s reputation for carving waterfowl and building boats grew. Then one day, Richard Tome, at the time the owner of a flower shop across from the American Legion in Havre de Grace, approached him with an idea. The Jacob Tome Institute, a preparatory school for boys across the Susquehanna River in Port Deposit, was slated to be demolished on August 1, 1980. Would he be willing to make some decoys out of reclaimed wood

from the old Tome School with partial proceeds going to the Port Deposit Historical Society? Len responded to Richard, “It’ll have to be suitable wood – something I can carve.”

Len left for the beach on his family vacation. When he returned, he found that Richard had brought him sixteen classroom doors, complete with the hinges, stacked near his front door. The banana pine that was within the frame of the dark thick doors probably came from Pennsylvania, and Len thought he could make some miniatures with the soft wood. “Yeah, I’ll do it,” he told Richard.

At the time, most carvers were roughing out their birds on a lathe, but Len was still hand carving his birds the “old school” way. He looked carefully at the grain







pattern in each door and began to rough out 100 ducks from the banana pine. After sanding the ducks, he painted them with a natural finish to show the beauty of the wood grain. The bases for the ducks were made from white pine that he had in his shop. A lady in Aberdeen fashioned brass plates which read, "Carved from wood of Jacob Tome Institute demolished 8-1-80". A sequential number followed the date.

After ten months of carving, the ducks were ready. Richard Tome put a price tag of fifty dollars each with part of the proceeds going to the Port Deposit Historical Society. People began calling and coming to his door to buy the Tome ducks, and Len started to keep a record of the buyers. But when people wanted certain numbered ducks, such as the year they graduated from Tome, the record keeping became tedious. He saved carving #1 for his wife, Gail, #2 and #3 for his daughters, Deborah and Sharon, and #100 for his son, Timothy.

When the Havre de Grace High School was being renovated in the early 90's, Charlie Montgomery, Mayor of Havre de Grace, asked Len if he wanted another duck project. So, Len made 100 more ducks the "old school" way with the brass plates on each of them using wood reclaimed from Havre de Grace High School with part of the proceeds to benefit the Havre de Grace High School Alumni Association.

Len's workshop is in the basement of his lovely home on Market Street in Havre de Grace. Brushes of all sizes stick straight up in a plastic bin of uncooked rice. Plans for building the next boat and pattern pieces lie on his drafting table. A small batch of unfinished birds are ready for sanding. His current project is working on some mid-sized ducks of various species that he carved



from cedar he acquired from Churchville carver Bryan Bodt. Len commented, "I hate to waste wood. So, if I have enough to make six ducks, then I'll make six ducks."

At 80-years old, Len enjoys sharing his knowledge of the Upper Bay, hunting, and carving both here at the Decoy Museum as well as the Maritime Museum. Len fondly says, "I feel very fortunate that we live in this area so close to the water." Len is a tireless volunteer at the Decoy Museum and often sets up inside the front door to spend the day demonstrating his talent to fascinated visitors. He has donated many ducks and boats to the Decoy Museum, Ducks Unlimited, and other worthy causes. His micro-miniature lead decoys make great paperweights. They have been a long-time favorite in the Decoy Museum Store and fly out the door as fast as he can restock their supply. If you are lucky enough to own a decoy or boat from this generous and kind-hearted carver, you have a treasure!



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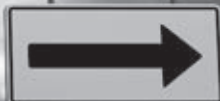
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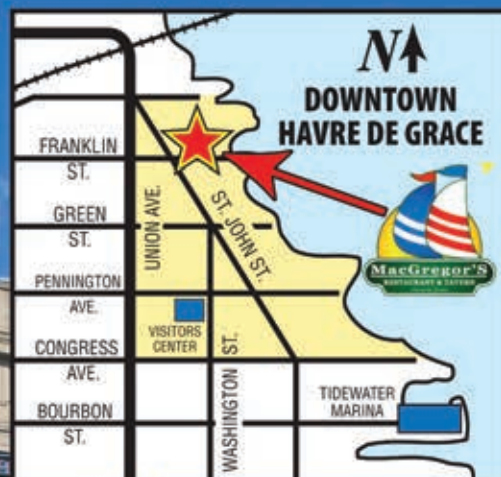
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