

# The Canvasback

HAVRE DE GRACE DECOY MUSEUM

Vol. 32 No. 1

Spring 2022

*Celebrating*

**35 Years  
at the  
Museum  
& 40 Years of  
Festivals!**

**Charlie  
Pierce**

**Festival Chairman 2022**







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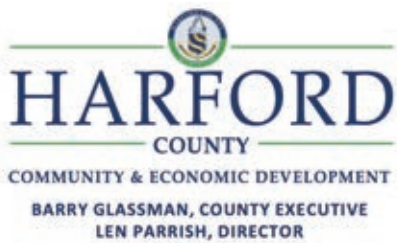
### can•vas•back

(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.

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### ON THE COVER

Honorary Chairman Charlie Pierce spokeshaves a freshly turned decoy body. The spokeshave removes the kerf marks created when the circular saw blade cuts a rectangular wooden block into the shape of a decoy body. The spokeshaved body then goes on to be breast and tailed, drum sanded and belt sanded prior to getting fitted for a whittled head.

### Departments

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The 2022 Winter edition of the Canvasback featured an outstanding article titled "Charter, Chowder & Cleveland? The History of One Cecil County Gunning and Fishing Club" The article was written by Michael Daley. The author's name was accidentally omitted from the article. The editor regrets the error.



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## From the President...

Well, we made it through another COVID resurgence and find ourselves feeling much more confident that the Spring and Summer may show signs of normalcy, whatever that is these days. Despite some reduced visitorship during the months when the State positivity rate was elevated, the Museum fared out well and progressed many of the initiatives that we have undertaken.



Our effort to preserve the R. Madison Mitchell Shop by means of a museum expansion for future generations to enjoy is moving along. We have organized both Building and Fundraising Committees. The Building Committee is actively working with local subject matter experts to define the scope of the project, arrive at an architectural rendering, and estimate costs. Working in conjunction with the Building Committee is the Fundraising Committee. It is anticipated that the building expansion and encapsulation of the R. Madison Mitchell Shop will require in excess of \$1M to complete. Members of the museum Board have already stepped up and made financial commitments to the project. The Museum has submitted a grant proposal to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) through the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway (LSHG) for \$100K to support our Capital campaign.

Those who have visited the museum lately have noticed that our Museum Store is undergoing a major renovation. Board member Dan Thanh Dang and employee Dena Cardwell have spearheaded an effort to "Reimagine our Museum Store". The project goes beyond giving the store a facelift with new walls and flooring. Our entire staff has been involved in planning for product offerings as well as improving how we feature our traditional products. Some of our staff and volunteers actually traveled to successful gift shops throughout our region to "benchmark" on best practices. We are also looking at offering some of our product stock for on-line sale. A special thanks to staff member Charlie Lawson and volunteer John Popowski for sharing their carpentry skills as we have dismantled "the old" and "installed the new". Special thanks to Board members John Currier and Rodney Swam who have shared their professional skills to prepare our new walls and relocate electrical wiring and communication cabling. Our goal is to be back up and operating before April 1.

While the museum leadership keeps both of these major initiatives moving forward, our focus will soon shift to executing our 40th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival being held April 29, 30 & May 1. The Festival returns to the venue where it all started in 1982, the gymnasium of the former Havre de Grace High School and celebrates Charlie Pierce, the youngest son of Festival founder Jim Pierce, as Honorary Chairman. As of this writing, the vendor spots have nearly filled up with just a few left. All decoy competitions will be held in the small gymnasium of the venue. This year, we are pleased to be able to have an outdoor food vending area anchored by The Susquehanna Flats Chapter of Delta Waterfowl and TB3 Bar & Grille with a beer garden being offered by Hopkins Farm Brewery. We are excited about this year's event and encourage all of our readers to get out of the house and celebrate 40 years of decoy festival success and the ability to enjoy the event without restrictions due to COVID. See you there!

**Mike Tarquini**  
*Board President*



40th Annual

# Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival



Canvasback  
Sleeper Pair  
by Charlie Pierce



Honorary Chairman  
Charlie Pierce

April 29, 30 & May 1 • 2022

**April 29**

Exhibition Set-up & Carvers Reception at Museum

**April 30 & May 1**

Decoy & Wildlife Exhibition  
Gymnasium & Auditorium Facility of the  
former Havre de Grace High School



# Festival INFORMATION



## A note about the venue . . .

In light of the uncertainty surrounding the COVID 19 resurgence on the public school system and its facilities, the venue for the 40th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival has been changed to the Gymnasium & Auditorium of the former Havre de Grace High School, located at 710 Congress Avenue. This venue was the site of the inaugural Festival in 1982. This facility is now owned and operated by the City of Havre de Grace.

## A note about the Honorary Chairman . . .

Charlie Pierce is the youngest son of Jim Pierce (1991 Honorary Chairman). Charlie has worked side by side with his father making decoys since he was a youngster and has developed a style that he can now call his own. It's only fitting that Charlie serve as the Honorary Chairman of the very Festival his father help organize in 1982. Come celebrate 75 years of Pierce Decoys in Havre de Grace.



39th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival

## Friday, April 29

- **Vendor Set-up**  
1:00 PM – 4:00 PM • Exhibition Venue
- **Carvers Reception**  
6:00 PM – 9:00 PM • Decoy Museum

## Saturday, April 30

- **40th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival Exhibition**  
8:00 AM – 6:00 PM • Exhibition Venue
- **River Gunning Decoy Registration & Competition**  
Registration is 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM • Exhibition Venue
- **Carving Competition Registration & Competition**  
Registration is 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM • Exhibition Venue
- **J. Evans McKinney Old Decoy Competition**  
Registration is 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM • Exhibition Venue

## Sunday, May 1

- **40th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival Exhibition**  
10:00 AM – 4:00 PM • Exhibition Venue
- **Museum Spring Raffle Drawing**  
3:00 PM • Exhibition Venue

**Food & Beverages will be available on-site  
throughout the weekend.**

Please visit our website [www.decoymuseum.com](http://www.decoymuseum.com)  
for up-dates to this schedule as we draw nearer  
to the event.



40th Annual

# Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival

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# Charlie Pierce

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



*By: Dan Thanh Dang*





Charlie Pierce is stewing over details of a batch of decoys that he's long been prepping in his mind for several months. The 53-year-old Havre de Grace native wants to make sure he mixes the paint colors just right. He is laser focused on the brush he is using to sweep wing feathers on 25 pairs of half-size sleeper canvasbacks, his favorite ducks. At the same time, he's making sure to add a couple geese, maybe some half-size swans and perhaps, even a few more colorful ducks to the fold. There has to be enough variety, Pierce figures, to show the immense creativity bubbling inside his head.

Indeed, the son of renowned Chesapeake Bay decoy maker Jimmy Pierce has created thousands of such birds in his lifetime. But this particular flock of wooden waterfowl is the beginning of a journey of firsts for the younger Pierce.

It marks the first time that such a varied assortment of decoys he makes will carry Charlie Pierce's signature and only his signature alone. It's the first time that such a collection will be unveiled at the Havre de Grace Decoy & Wildlife Festival, which starts April 29.

And it's the first time that Pierce will serve as the event's honorary chairman, a most timely distinction given that his father helped start the first festival 40 years ago.

"This is long overdue," says close family friend and hunting buddy Allen Bryan Jr. of St. Michaels, MD, a longtime collector of decoys.

"Charlie is the man behind The Man," Bryan says. "As Mr. Jimmy has gotten older, Charlie handles the bulk of the work now. But he's never wanted the limelight for himself because it's meant a lot to him just to work side-by-side with his dad all these years. I think Charlie gets fulfillment out of that, helping his dad still live a full and healthy life. Jimmy Pierce's name and legacy mean a lot to Charlie."

It's the main reason why virtually every decoy turned out in the Pierce shop that is still painted by the 87-year-old also carries only his name.

Charlie Pierce may be one of the best known and respected decoy makers in the Upper Bay area who has been practicing his craft for decades, but avid collectors would be hard pressed to find one of his works of art.

And that suits Pierce just fine.

"When I start selling my own ducks, I know there aren't 10 million of them out there," says Pierce, who has always shied from the spotlight. "The actual reason I stayed here was to spend time with my dad."

"My dad was here, but never here when I was growing up," Pierce says. "He worked for the telephone company during the day and then he was always working on ducks at night. He never came to any of my baseball, tennis, basketball games or anything. We would have an hour together for dinner as a family. It wasn't until I came back here that I got to know my dad."

It took going away to find his way back because it wasn't always meant to be that the son would follow in his father's footsteps. As the story goes, sometimes you have to leave something behind to realize that it's what you wanted all along.

Pierce was surrounded by decoys at a young age. Sure, Jimmy Pierce had a day job, but it seemed every other waking hour was spent learning the craft of decoy making from his mentor, R. Madison Mitchell, the dean of Havre de Grace decoy makers. Little Charlie spent a lot of time in Mitchell's shop, taking in the smell of sawdust, watching carvers spokeshave bodies, and listening to a brotherhood of artisans swapping stories about life and hunting.

When his father decided to make decoys full-time, teenage Charlie worked part-time in his dad's shop, turning bodies on the lathe for a \$1 apiece, spokeshaving and attaching weights to decoys. The work helped him buy his first car, a red Nissan Sentra for \$6,000, at age 16.

By that time, Jimmy Pierce was already establishing himself not just as an elite decoy maker, but also a force in the waterfowl world as he helped found the Upper Bay Museum in North East, MD, the decoy festival in his hometown, as well as the city's own Decoy Museum.

But even as Jimmy Pierce's reputation solidified, Charlie Pierce would head off to what was then known as Towson State, now known as Towson University, to pursue a degree in finance.



"I wanted to be a stockbroker," recalls Pierce, who pursued jobs in the field after graduation, but discovered that his heart wasn't in it. "I took a year off to work here with my dad and figure out what I wanted to do. I never left."

That was no surprise to longtime friend, Joey Jobes, who jokingly says, "Charlie went off to college and wasted all that money."

Both men come from a storied lineage — master decoy maker Captain Harry Jobes produced three sons, including Joey, who are all respected decoy makers in their own right. Their fathers, too, were good friends who were schooled by Mitchell.

Those ties helped forge a bond between two men who couldn't be more different.

Counter to Joey Jobes' brusque and plain-spoken temperament, Charlie Pierce is more soft-spoken and unassuming. As adept as Joey Jobes is at marketing his talent, he knows his friend prefers to stay in the shadows.

"Charlie and I have partied together, drank together, and made decoys together since we were very young," Jobes says. "We've fished together. Hunted together. His parents were like my parents. I can tell you; Charlie is a Grade A Nice Guy. He's my brother. My fourth brother. I love him. He's the kind of guy who would help anyone at any time."

Between serving as caretaker for his 79-year-old mom, Lori, and turning out hundreds of decoys with his dad every year, Pierce still finds time to make decoy heads for other carvers. He still finds time to mentor others. He still manages to donate time and energy to good causes.

"I have a foundation that holds a dinner every year to raise funds," says friend Bryan, who is executive director of the Bryan Brothers Foundation, which honors his father and three uncles who passed away. "There are people who know April is coming, which is when we hold the dinner, and they kind of avoid you because they know you're going to ask for help."

"Charlie will pick up the phone and say, 'Hey, when is your event and what do you need?'" says Bryan, who adds that all funds raised go toward helping children on the Eastern Shore. "Charlie and Mr. Jimmy have always been very generous, donating their decoys and rounding up other decoys for us."

That eagerness to help is a trait Charlie Pierce shares with his father, who often says when asked why he doesn't charge more for his decoys, "I'm not in this business to get rich."

Support a family, yes. Help make patterns and turn bodies for other working carvers, yes. Mentor upcoming decoy makers who want to learn and hone their craft, yes. Meet interesting collectors who become lifelong friends, yes. Help build a community of artists who champion each other, yes. Encourage more people to help keep a declining folk art alive, most certainly yes.

But make gobs of money selling what they consider to be a labor of love? Not high on the priority list.

In keeping with his dad's principles, Charlie Pierce says they keep prices low so that anyone from any background can afford to purchase a Pierce decoy, which run from \$80 to \$100 apiece.

Paying for a Pierce decoy may be within reach, but actually getting your hands on one is somewhat more difficult.

Just ask Jason Superczynski, a grocery store stocker, who wraps up his job at 6 a.m. and heads over to the Pierce shop to assist the duo in his down time.

"I work for ducks," Superczynski says. "To hell with money. I'd rather have a duck. People wait two to three years for a Pierce duck. You could call me







“Charlie is a bit more of a perfectionist than his father,” says good friend and fellow hunter Jamie Weston of Wye Mills, MD. “Mr. Jimmy says if a duck gets that close and can see that flaw in a decoy, he should be dead. Charlie would go back and redo it to fix that flaw and make it right.”

Superczynski agrees, adding, “Mr. Jimmy has been doing this for so long, it’s second nature to him. He can flat paint in no time at all. Mr. Jimmy goes with the flow. Charlie has it down to a science. He likes to take his time. Everything is very uniform and exact.”

It’s those little differences that his friends, contemporaries and collectors say they will be looking for when Charlie Pierce’s decoys are unveiled.

“It’s a big step,” says Jobses, who has crafted decoys with the younger Pierce. “And I’m glad of it. I am glad he is being recognized. Charlie has made and sold decoys under his father’s name all his life. It’s time for Charlie to make decoys under his own name. It’s the right time.”

Well, maybe not yet, Charlie Pierce says, somewhat wistfully because the day that Pierce decoys carry Charlie’s name alone will be the day that his father is no longer painting by his side.

“As long as my dad feathers the ducks, those decoys will carry his name,” Pierce says. “I actually love that I got to spend this time with my dad. That’s the best thing I got out of this.”

And perhaps the best thing his father got out of this is seeing his son pick up the mantle and proudly carry on the Pierce legacy.

“He is very talented and better than I am now,” Jimmy Pierce says. “I’ve made friends all over the world. We’ve shipped decoys all over the world. It’s fun, especially when you’ve got your son beside you. I have a relationship with him, as my son and as a partner. I am proud of him.”

the shop help. I clean paint brushes. I sweep the floor. I’m learning how to paint. I look at this like an apprenticeship. I am learning from the best. Charlie is teaching me what he learned from his dad, who learned from R. Madison Mitchell. I feel honored to be cleaning their paint brushes.”

To work with Charlie Pierce, Superczynski says, is to learn from the master because both father and son are so similar.

Both believe decoys allowed them to make friends and hunt with all types of people who collect their work. Both are patient. Both are good teachers. Both are passionate about hunting, decoys and family, but not necessarily in that order. But as alike as they are, they also squabble like an old, married couple when Charlie’s meticulous nature butts heads with his father’s quick and skilled brushwork.

Charlie always enjoys time away from the decoy shop when he can schedule a hunting trip with friends and family.

*Left to Right: Charlie Pierce, Allen Bryan, Charlie Bryan and Jimmy Pierce.*







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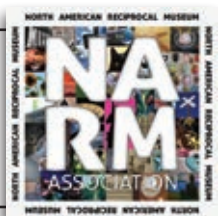
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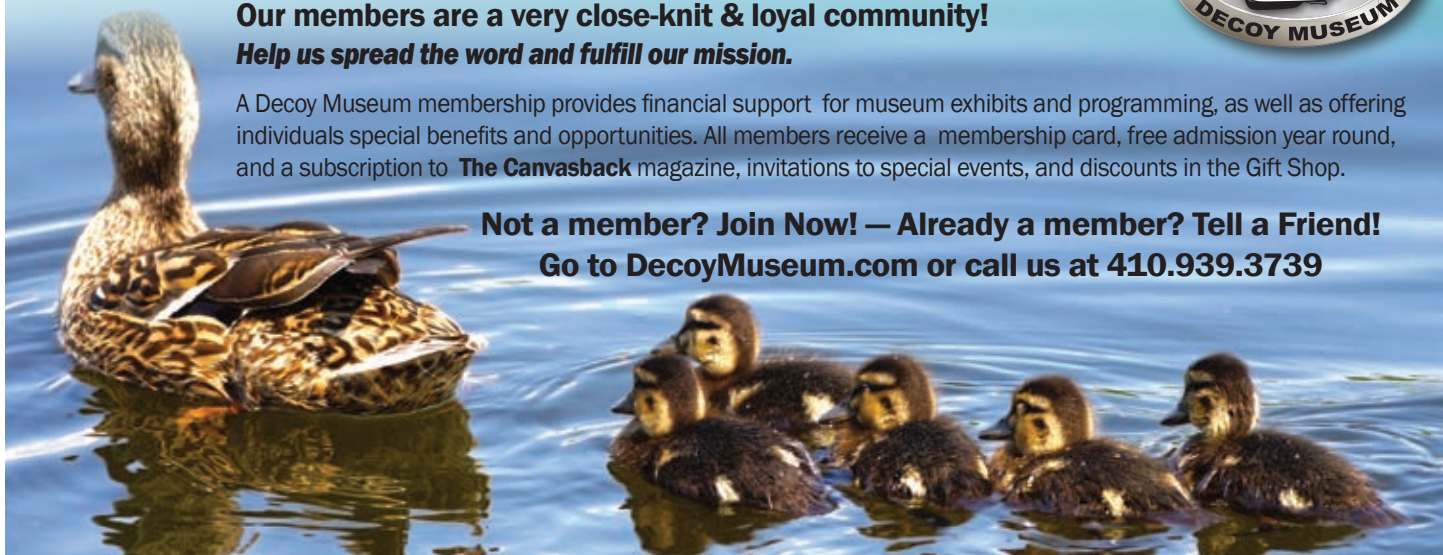
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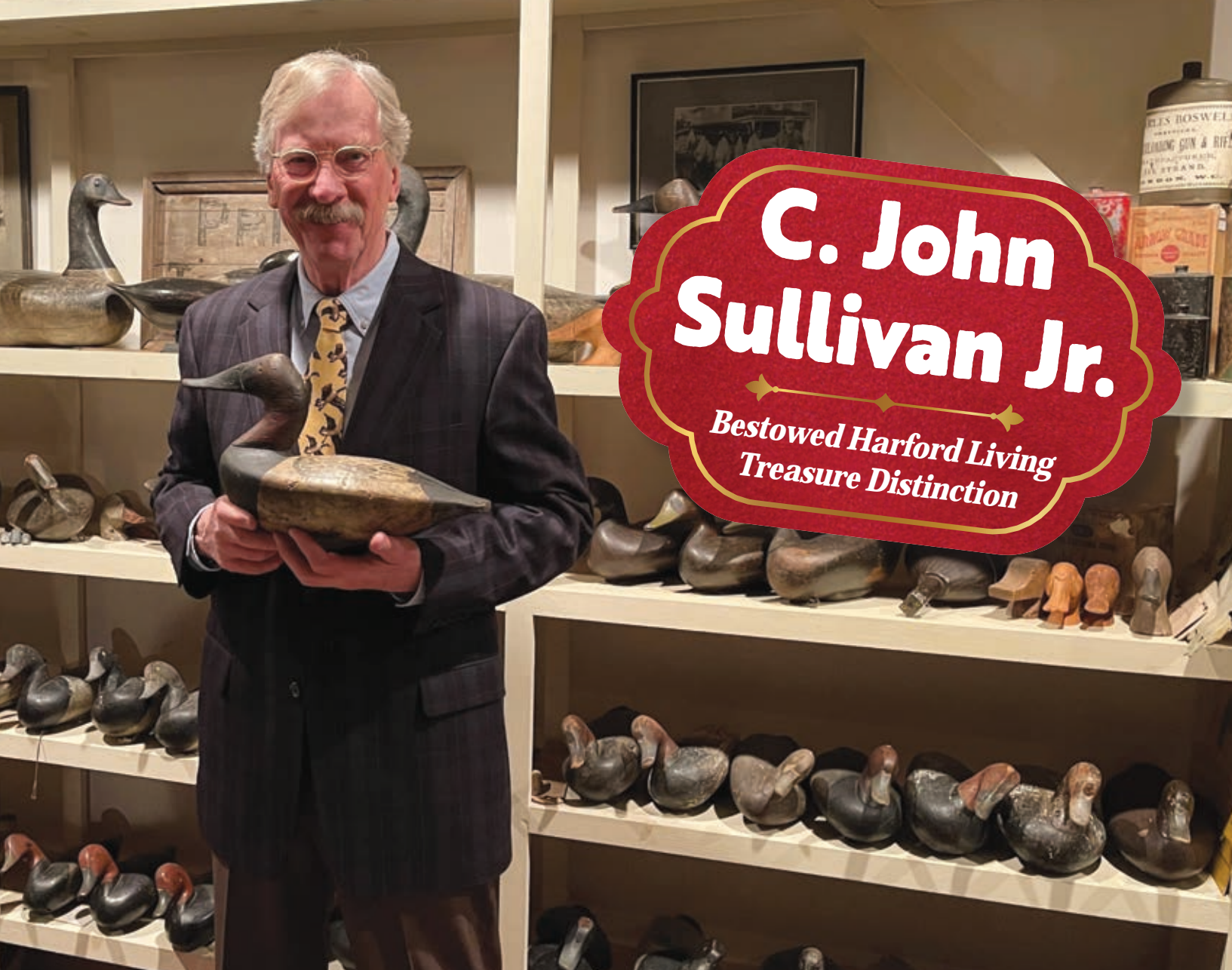
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# C. John Sullivan Jr.

*Bestowed Harford Living Treasure Distinction*

Since 1981, the Harford County Council has bestowed the title of “Harford Living Treasure” to more than two-hundred fifty residents who have made significant contributions to the County. The intent of the program is to capture the memories of these aging individuals and preserve them for future generations to enjoy.

On January 19, 2022, C. John Sullivan Jr. (Bel Air, MD) became one of this esteemed club’s newest members. As a published author, with a vast background in waterfowling history and the folk art of decoy making, John has served the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum in numerous capacities over the last several years to help preserve the valuable heritage of our region.

The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum wishes to congratulate C. John Sullivan Jr. on this recognition and thank him for his continued support of our mission to collect, document, preserve, and interpret waterfowl decoys as a unique form of folk art that is a distinctive element in the cultural landscape of this region – The Lower Susquehanna River and the Upper Chesapeake Bay.



*Harford County Councilman Chad R. Shrodes presents C. John Sullivan Jr. with a proclamation designating him a “Harford Living Treasure”. Left to right: Councilman Tony “G” Giangliordano (District C), C. John Sullivan Jr., Council President Patrick S. Vincenti, Councilman Chad R. Shrodes (District D), Councilman Robert S. Wagner (District E).*



Spring 2022

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**Drawing: Sunday, May 1, 2022 - 3 pm • 40th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival**

For tickets call **410.939.3739** or email: [information@DecoyMuseum.com](mailto:information@DecoyMuseum.com)  
(Additional tickets will be available at the Museum and at the Festival venue during the show.)

# BACK ISSUES

GET THEM BEFORE THEY FLY OFF THE SHELVES!



Each of these issues includes a thoroughly researched, well-written and abundantly illustrated cover story on one of Havre de Grace's most important decoy makers. These are just a few of the many back issues that feature articles on Upper Chesapeake Bay decoys and their makers.

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# Celebrating

35 YEARS  
AT THE



*By: Mike Tarquini*

In the Spring 2006 edition of "The Canvasback", Richard Flint, then Executive Director of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, authored an article "Founding a Festival, Making a Museum." Flint summarized a brief history of the 20-year old Decoy Museum and the 25-year old Decoy Festival. Sixteen years later, it is appropriate to revisit and update this topic.

*Photo by Kyle Presnell*



**I***magine* – a casual conversation in **1981** between local businessmen Allen Fair, Donald Asher, and Mitch Shank and a phone call to prominent waterfowl decoy maker Jim Pierce led to the establishment of a decoy festival that is about to celebrate its 40th year (missing 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic) and a museum that has just finished its 35th year of operation. Together, they honor and preserve the traditions and the rich heritage of waterfowling and the folk art of decoy making in the Upper Chesapeake Bay and Lower Susquehanna River.

The 40th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival will recognize the contributions and skill of Charlie Pierce – the youngest son of the decoy maker who answered that phone call forty years ago – who will be its Honorary Chairman as he carries on the decoy-making tradition of his father.

In **1981**, the founders of the Decoy Museum identified a site for the museum on a small bluff overlooking the 21-square miles of the Susquehanna Flats, where legendary waterfowling once took place, and only a few yards from where the Susquehanna River ends and the Chesapeake Bay begins. The building that would become the Decoy Museum was an abandoned steam heating plant, laundry, and indoor swimming pool for the adjacent Bayou Hotel, which welcomed both waterfowlers and horse racing fans from far and wide during its post-World War I and pre-Depression heyday. It was the perfect location to recognize the contributions of Harford and Cecil County carvers to the folk art of waterfowl decoy making.

In an effort to raise funds to support the museum vision, the inaugural Havre de Grace Decoy Festival was held in May 1982 in the gymnasium of the Havre de Grace High School with the assistance of the Havre de Grace Chamber of Commerce. Legendary decoy maker R. Madison Mitchell served as the Honorary Chairman. Based on the success of that festival, the City of Havre de Grace agreed to lease the dilapidated Bayou Hotel steam heating plant building to create a museum. It was then that the hard work began.

The task of transforming a derelict and vine-covered building into a museum was daunting. In **1982**, the Chamber of Commerce membership accepted the challenge. A decision was made to hold a second Decoy Festival in **1983** to generate additional funds to continue the work. The movement to build a museum was gaining popularity and growing stronger. But in **1984**, funds were dwindling and the pay as you go strategy was abandoned. R. Madison Mitchell, undertaker, and dean of Upper Chesapeake Bay decoys reinvented himself as the leading lobbyist for the cause.

With the assistance of State Delegates Eileen Rehrmann and William “Bill” Cox and State Senator Catherine Riley, hearings before the House of Delegates and the State Budget



The dilapidated heating plant of the former Bayou Hotel.  
Photo from the museum collection

and Taxation Committee were held. In **1985**, the Maryland General Assembly approved \$200,000 for completion of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. Encouraged by the growing popularity of the Decoy Festival, by the promise that the Decoy Museum would soon become a reality, and by the recognition and civic pride that they were both bringing to the community, the Mayor and City Council that same year proclaimed Havre de Grace to be “The Decoy Capital of the World”.

Nearly five years following that conversation among Allen Fair, Donald Asher, Mitch Shank, and Jim Pierce, R. Madison Mitchell cut the ceremonial ribbon for the newly-named Havre de Grace Decoy Museum in November **1986**. The Decoy Museum then consisted of a single gallery of mostly borrowed decoys, but it was now a reality. The project cost to that point was estimated at \$300,000, although co-founder Jim Pierce pointed out the unknown cost of “the countless hours of free labor that had gone into it.” Loyal volunteers remain the backbone of the Decoy Museum to this day.



R. Madison Mitchell opens the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum in 1986. Left to right: Jim Pierce, R. Madison Mitchell, and Sen. William James. Photo from the museum's collection





The original footprint for the  
Havre de Grace Decoy Museum (1986)

Diorama created from A. Audrey Bodine photo (1942). Left to right:  
Lou Klair, Bob McGaw, R. Madison Mitchell & Paul Gibson.



A favorite for early museum visitors is a life-like diorama featuring Mr. Mitchell gathered around a cast-iron stove with fellow carvers Bob McGaw, Paul Gibson, and friend Lou Klair. This exhibit was influenced by the well-known 1942 photograph taken by famed Baltimore Sun photographer A. Audrey Bodine.

Perhaps the Decoy Museum's most significant artifact was acquired in **1989** when Mitchell student and successor Captain Bill Collins sold the original R. Madison Mitchell decoy shop complete with all its tools to the museum. The two-story shop was carefully moved across city streets and onto the Decoy Museum grounds, where it remains to this day.

Plans then (and now) were to eventually enclose this historically important structure as part of a larger museum expansion. Why is it historically important, you ask? By some estimates this modest shop not only produced over 100,000 decoys but for over half a century was the training ground for succeeding generations of decoy carvers. Decoy makers today – two or three generations removed from the days of the Mitchell shop – are passing down skills in the art of decoy making that emerged from there.

Money remained short, but in **1987**, the Maryland General Assembly awarded the museum an additional \$150,000 allowing for the addition of a second floor and gift shop. Both opened by **1991**. In **1996**, the museum added an elevator to provide handicap accessibility to the second floor.





The R. Madison Mitchell Decoy Shop was relocated to the site of the Decoy Museum in 1989

Unfortunately, the expense of dealing with foundation settlement issues under the new gift shop addition haunted the museum for several years and limited further growth.



The addition of a second floor, gift shop and elevator to the original museum building

As the museum building grew, so did other aspects of the effort to keep Havre de Grace in the forefront of all things decoy. The museum first published “*The Canvasback*” for its members as a newsletter in **1991**. It quickly morphed into a twenty-page glossy publication in the Spring **1992**. The quarterly publication featured scholarly historical and educational articles as well as kept members up to date with events at the museum and throughout the Chesapeake Bay region.

Today, “*The Canvasback*” boasts a 48-page, full-color format consisting of regular sections that include *The Canvasback*

*Naturalist*, *Shots from the Wild*, interviews with prominent decoy carvers, and historical general interest stories related to the waterfowling culture of the Upper Chesapeake Bay. This publication has proven vital to promoting and fulfilling the Decoy Museum’s mission and is a top priority for the future.

The museum exhibits grew with time as well. After three-years of planning, the museum opened its “Gunning the Flats” gallery in September **1995**. The exhibit presents the evolution of the shotgun, decoys of the Susquehanna Flats, sneak boats equipped with punt and battery guns, and of course the art of body booting, a unique form of waterfowl hunting practiced on the Susquehanna Flats.

Many state, county and local elected officials have visited the Decoy Museum over the years. R. Madison Mitchell shared a special friendship with the late Maryland Governor William Donald Schaeffer who became a loyal supporter. But perhaps the greatest honor came when President Bill Clinton, Vice President Al Gore, and then-Governor Paris Glendening visited



Memories of R. Madison Mitchell, Sr.



The covers of a 1993 (then) and 2022 (now) edition of *The Canvasback* magazine.

*Gunning the Flats Gallery.*  
Photo from the museum collection.







Allen Fair (left) and Jim Pierce (center) present President Bill Clinton (right) with a pair of Canvasback decoys to commemorate his visit to the Decoy Museum in 1995. Photo from the museum collection.

the museum on Earth Day in **1995**. The museum continues to be visited regularly by a variety of elected officials.

The “What is a Decoy” gallery was first introduced in **1996** and remodeled in **2007**. The objective of the gallery is to acquaint the visitor with the “what, why, and how” of waterfowl decoys and to show the tools of the decoy-making trade. The gallery contains both hand tools and machines, including an historical duplicating lathe from the shop of the renowned Havre de Grace carver Bob McGaw whose young protégé was none other than R. Madison Mitchell. A McGaw canvasback was featured on a first-class stamp as part of the Postal Service series honoring folk art.

Exhibits throughout the museum change as individuals and clubs such as the Potomac Decoy Collector’s Association (PDCA) work with the museum to freshen up the offerings. Collections grow annually with each donation. Historically relevant material has a more random donation pattern: an important Sam Barnes decoy that won second prize at one

of the earliest decoy contests organized by pioneer collector Joel Barber in the 1920’s or the more recent bequest of the finest “Daddy” Holly birds known to exist. The museum’s reference library benefitted by a substantial donation of over two-hundred titles by Melvin L. Conrad in **1998**. The gift included a copy of the rare Book of Duck Decoys by Sir Ralph Payne Gallwey (London, 1886). The museum began an on-line presence with the launching of the museum website in **1998**.



What is a Decoy Gallery?  
Photo from the museum collection.



Postage stamp  
featuring Bob McGaw  
canvasback



In **2000**, the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum received the highest honor that a museum can receive – accreditation by the American Association of Museums. This achievement placed the Decoy Museum in the company of the nation's elite collecting institutions. Only nine percent of the nation's museums have achieved this honor.

The opening of the R. Madison Mitchell Exhibit took place in **2001**. Located in the Carvers Gallery, the exhibit consists of a variety of Mr. Mitchell's gunning decoys as well as his famed "Christmas" (ornamental) ducks.

As a tribute to J. Evans McKinney, the Old Decoy contest was established in **2003**. The competition, held as part of the Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival, features vintage decoys from a variety of makers. The categories are chosen each year by the Potomac Decoy Collectors Association (PDCA) who have partnered with Decoy Magazine (Joe Engers) and the Decoy Museum. The winning decoys are exhibited in the Museum following the Festival.

The Museum began an ambitious project to reconstruct the Carvers Gallery outdoor observation deck in **2011**. There were structural issues revealed during the work that led to a more complex project than originally planned. The project was completed in time for the 25th Anniversary Celebration in November **2011**.



Rare "Daddy" Holly Canvasbacks  
that were donated in 1995 by the Michael family.  
Photo from the museum collection

The museum has always cultivated close relationships with community youth groups. Carving classes have been offered through the Boys and Girls Club of Harford County, Harford County Parks and Recreation, and the Girl Scouts of America. Perhaps the most rewarding interactions have been with the Boy Scouts of America. Aside from hosting tours of the museum by numerous Scouting groups, the museum has hosted "Whittling Chip" classes for many years, giving the younger Cub Scouts an opportunity to learn pocketknife safety and make an actual carving while earning their certification.



The Melvin L. Conrad Library  
at the Havre de Grace Decoy  
Museum





Havre de Grace Mayor Bill Martin shares a Captain John O'Neill history lesson with members of Troop 238 (Forest Hill, MD) during their camping trip in 2019.

The museum has hosted overnight camping for local Boy Scouts exposing them to the offerings at the Decoy Museum as well as other neighboring museums. In **2019**, the museum worked with Eagle Scout candidates on their Eagle Service Projects -enabling the construction of a rear stairwell to the historic Mitchell Shop as well as a significant re-landscaping effort in the front of the museum.

Also in **2019**, the museum commissioned Matthew Harris to create an outdoor waterfowl art sculpture to honor the many men and women whose dedication, vision and contributions were invaluable in the growth and development of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. The artwork was funded through the generosity of the Carolyn Hargis Foundation and Harford County Government. County Executive Barry Glassman formally dedicated the sculpture in **2021**.



In the Spring of **2021**, the museum completely resurfaced the front parking lot completing the entire museum front entrance project that involved landscaping, installation of lamp post banners and a new parking lot. The parking lot project was completed through the generosity of local contractor DXI Construction and the City of Havre de Grace.

During the Winter of **2022**, the museum gift shop is undergoing a complete renovation in an effort to modernize the store and make its offerings more appealing to our visitors. It has become a growing source of revenue for the Museum.

In **2021**, the museum was awarded a grant from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) to capture testimonials and interpretations of history through audio and video media from subject matter experts. The collected data will be made available to museum visitors by means of touch screen monitors strategically placed throughout the museum. QR Coding will be added to many exhibits that will allow visitors to read them with their own devices to learn additional information pertaining to the exhibit. The content will download from the museum website to the visitor's device. The objective of this entire effort is to update the museum exhibits with interactive electronic hardware in order to deliver the intended message as opposed to the reliance on traditional story boarding. Look for these interactive touch screen monitors to appear in the museum galleries in late **2022 - 2023**.

The last two years have been very taxing as we navigated the ebbs and flows of a COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has had a major impact on each and every business, and the museum has certainly been among them. Despite having to close for a period of three months in early 2020, the museum has emerged successful from the virus threat despite losing essentially its entire staff. Today, we find ourselves building back infrastructure with a new staff and continuing to pursue the mission of the museum.

Perhaps the most significant impact of COVID has been to our Festival and educational programs. The **2020** Festival was cancelled, and the **2021** Festival was reconfigured as an outdoor tailgating event. The annual Festival is the museum's single greatest source of revenue, and two years of festival revenue was lost.

Plans are at full throttle to restore our traditional indoor format in **2022**. The museum will return to the venue where it all started in **1982**, the gym of the former Havre de Grace High School (now owned by the City of Havre de Grace) in an effort to avoid the uncertainties of planning an event within a public school facility during a pandemic.

While our founders had the vision to purchase and move the R. Madison Mitchell Decoy Shop to the site of the museum in





The new parking lot at the Decoy Museum.  
Photo from the museum collection



The original R. Madison Mitchell Decoy Shop.  
Extreme weather has deteriorated the building structure  
and threatens its future

**1989**, funds for proper stabilization and preservation did not come along with it. Significant exterior deterioration has taken place as a result of the building's continued exposure to weather over the past 33 years. The building's future is at a tipping point, and the Decoy Museum risks losing its single most important artifact. It will fall on the current museum leadership to ensure that it is preserved for future generations to enjoy.

Planning was started in **2021** for an ambitious project to fully encapsulate the R. Madison Mitchell Shop and connect the structure to the main museum building. This historic landmark will become an interior exhibit that can be enjoyed by all visitors well into the future. The project scope is currently being defined.

The Executive Committee of the museum's Board is spearheading this effort. Grants for funding have been submitted, Board members have pledged their financial support, and a formal

fundraising effort is about to get underway. It is our highest priority to get the Mitchell Shop protected from the weather as soon as funds allow.

We need your help to preserve this irreplaceable treasure – the R. Madison Mitchell Decoy Shop – and to make it accessible to the public so future generations will understand in full the folk art of decoy making and the man who was the inspiration and driving force behind the establishment of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, the Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival, and making the city of Havre de Grace the Decoy Capital of the World.

An aggressive fundraising drive will begin when plans for the building expansion are more mature, but please, don't wait for us to ask. We can use your help now.



# Sporting Clay Classic

**September 11, 2022**  
Registration 8:30 AM • Must start by 11:00 AM

**50 Targets/Lunch - \$70**  
**Trappers Provided**

Special Side-by-side & Pump-gun Only Class  
**30 targets/\$30.00**  
(Must shoot main first)

**All proceeds benefit the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum!**

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# A 40th Anniversary Retrospective: Because We Stand on the Shoulders of Giants

*By Jim Carroll*

The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum selects an Honorary Chairman for each festival in order to recognize and showcase people who in their own way have been a crucial part of advancing and supporting decoy folk art, waterfowl art, and the Decoy Museum. As we celebrate the Decoy Festival's 40th anniversary, we must look back and reflect on the past honorees. If we see more and farther than our predecessors, it is not because we have keener vision or greater height, but because we are lifted up, borne aloft, and carried along by their achievements and contributions.



**Left to right: Dr. John Carriere, Jimmy Pierce & Allen Fair**

**1982** —

**R. Madison  
Mitchell**

Havre de Grace, Maryland  
1901 – 1993

R. Madison Mitchell was one of the most renowned and prolific decoy makers. He is estimated to have made over 100,000 finely crafted decoys and is regarded by some as making “the best canvasback decoy on the Chesapeake Bay.” Mr. Mitchell changed forever the design and production of Upper Chesapeake Bay decoys and left a large footprint in terms of his decoys, the Decoy Museum, the R. Madison Endowment Trust, the Decoy and Wildlife Art Festival, and the countless carvers who apprenticed in his shop. He, more than anybody else, made Havre de Grace “The Decoy Capital of the World”.

**1983** —

**Paul  
Gibson**

Havre de Grace, Maryland  
1902 – 1985

Paul Gibson described the relationship between Havre de Grace residents and decoys – “Carving decoys here is like the water; it’s almost the same as your religion. It’s what you were brought up in. It’s how you were raised.” All of his decoys were hand chopped until he bought R. Madison Mitchell’s old duplicating lathe. Gibson’s sturdy decoys have chunky features and heads of white pine. He carved in the “Havre de Grace style”, but the bodies and tails of his birds are thicker than usual and have shorter necks. Gibson could carve any species, but was famous for his swans.

**1984** —

**Charles  
Bryan**

Middle River, Maryland  
1920 – 2008

Charlie Bryan was born in Baltimore County, Maryland. He took a liking to hunting for ducks and geese and became an avid water fowler on the Susquehanna Flats. At the age of 36, he began to make bird silhouettes and carve decoys. When he first started making decoys, he had never seen anybody do it. He later met R. Madison Mitchell and eventually made many carving friends in Havre de Grace. Over the next fifty years, Charlie became a skilled and well-known carver in the Havre de Grace style who is remembered as making some of the region’s finest decoys.



**R. Madison Mitchell**

**1985** —

No Honorary Chairman



**1986** —**Robert "Bob" Litzenberg**Elkton, Maryland  
1910 – 1997

Bob Litzenberg started carving because of a love of hunting. He was raised near the Elk River in Cecil County and began hunting in the Depression era. During his lifetime, he hunted ducks by bushwhacking, from a sinkbox, and from a duck blind. As with most people at that time, he didn't have much money. If he was going to hunt successfully, he needed to make his own decoys. He eventually became friends with noted carver Will Heverin who hand chopped his own bodies and carved his own heads with a knife. Litzenberg adopted Heverin's technique and never used machines.

**1987** —**Charles "Speed" Joiner, Jr.**Chestertown, Maryland  
1921 – 2015

Charlie Joiner began carving decoys as a teenager and is regarded as one of the most interesting and important carvers of the Upper Chesapeake Bay. With over 40,000 working decoys and an unknown number of miniature and half-size decoys to his credit, he considered the canvasback to be his carving specialty. Charlie said simply, "I've carved a few ducks". He was a long-time friend and protégé of legendary carvers R. Madison Mitchell and Steve and Lem Ward whose carving and painting styles inspired his own. He was one of the most devoted supporters of the Decoy Museum from the beginning.

**1988** —**Captain Harry Jobs**Aberdeen, Maryland  
1936 – 2019

Born in Havre de Grace, Harry Jobs spent considerable time in the shops of decoy makers Charles Nelson Barnard and Jim Currier. He subsequently worked with R. Madison Mitchell for 28 years and said he was influenced the most by Mr. Mitchell's painting and carving. Like most of his fellow carvers, making decoys was an avocation. He spent much of his life working on research vessels and piloting a patrol boat at Aberdeen Proving Ground. He was easily spotted at shows and other events in his signature outfit of Panama hat, suspenders, duck pants, and hand knitted "Captain Jobs" sweaters.

**1989** —**Captain William E. "Bill" Collins**Centreville, Maryland  
Active

Born at Perry Point and raised in Perryville, Bill Collins began hunting and repairing decoys at an early age under the encouragement and tutelage of his older brother. Not long after he graduated from high school, R. Madison Mitchell hired him for a job in his funeral home and then informed him that they would be "making decoys when we aren't burying people." When Mitchell retired in 1981, Collins bought the shop and re-opened it as Upper Chesapeake Bay Decoys. In 1987, Collins sold the shop, lathe, machine tools, and fixtures to the Decoy Museum where the shop now resides.

**1990** —**Captain Roger Urie**Rock Hall, Maryland  
1933 – 2002

At thirteen, Roger Urie began painting and making decoy bodies and heads for his next-door neighbor, Captain John Glen. Rogers's father, Captain Jess Urie, also started to make decoys. They used Glen's patterns initially and later designed their own with a flat bottom. Roger showed Jess how to mix paint colors. In 1955, Roger built "a decoy machine", and all the bodies were turned on the duplicating lathe after that. In 1967, the Uries started to make miniature decoys. Urie decoys were all signed by Captain Jess Urie until his death in 1978. Following that, Roger made only miniature decoys.

**1991** —**James Pierce**Havre de Grace, Maryland  
Active

Jim Pierce was raised in close proximity to the shops of Paul Gibson and Bob McGaw. He regularly visited R. Madison Mitchell's shop where he did "a little bit of everything". Jim established his own shop and son Charlie later joined him. Jim describes his inspiration as the "Flats connection" with a Holly body and head and McGaw and Heverin painting. Jim and some friends organized the first Havre de Grace Decoy and Wildlife Art Festival in 1981 with the objective of starting a decoy museum. When the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum opened in 1986, Jim was named president.

**1992** —**James A. "Jim" Currier**Havre de Grace, Maryland  
1886 – 1971

Jim Currier is regarded as one of the most prominent carvers of the Susquehanna Flats, who was widely known for navigating the Susquehanna Flats in his 40-foot boat to serve the Northern "sports" who came down to hunt canvasbacks. He carved his decoys in a workshop behind his house, working alone. Jim's bodies were hand chopped and finished with spokeshave and drawknife. Most of his decoys have a low-head or contented position, but some high-necked canvasbacks were made. The distinctive heads and feather-like painting set Currier's decoys apart from others. Very few of his decoys are left in the area.





**"Legends of the Game"** Left to right: Captain Harry Jobes, Paul Gibson, R. Madison Mitchell, Clarence "Tit Bird" Bauer and Jimmy Pierce.

**1993**

**Bill & Allen Schauber**

Chestertown, Maryland  
Active

Bill and Allan Schauber of Chestertown epitomize the evolution from gunning decoys to refined, decorative birds. Father and son work independently with different styles, but they think and act in many ways as if they were a team, not just two carvers with the same last name. Bill emphasizes full-size decoys, while Allan prefers miniatures and half-sizes. Their beautiful decoys delight collectors with their individuality – birds designed for the mantle rather than the water. Both rely on hand tools such as draw knives and spoke shaves with a band saw and belt sander as their principal power tools. Bill prefers to work with soft sugar pine because "it's easier for me with the arthritis in my hands." The Schaubers' paint style is distinctive, carrying on traditions of the Ward brothers and Speed Joiner – their teacher and mentor. Allan, who made his first decoy when he was 14, is left-handed, and his father is right-handed. Bill says, "Anything I tried to show him was totally backwards, so basically he taught himself." Many decades of decoy making combine in the Schaubers' work, which they relish. Awards do not interest them – they just enjoy carving, continually striving to improve their interpretation of waterfowl.

**1994**

**Robert F. McGaw, Jr.**

Havre de Grace, Maryland  
1879 – 1958

Born on Spesutie Island, Bob McGaw and his wife moved to Havre de Grace in 1919 where he established his decoy shop. In 1929, he bought a surplus rifle-stock duplicating lathe and was reputedly the first local carver to use such a machine in the production of decoys. McGaw's painting style reflects that of Sam Barnes and the Holly family and is said by C. John Sullivan to be "among the most realistic to ever float on the Susquehanna Flats." A McGaw canvasback appears on a first-class stamp as one of the decoys in the 1985 USPS folk art series.

**1995**

**J. Evans McKinney**

Elkton, Maryland  
1913 – 2000

Evans McKinney was a native of Elkton where he began both gunning and decoy collecting in 1927. McKinney met and made friends with master decoy maker Will Heverin. The hours he spent observing his mentor came in handy, and McKinney decided in 1944 to try his own hand at it. He typically hand chopped his decoys, except for a period in the early fifties when he traded blocks of wood to Madison Mitchell for turned bodies. McKinney put together a collection of over 500 decoys and published his signature book "Decoys of the Susquehanna Flats and Their Makers" in 1987.

**1996**

**Harry V. Shourds, II**

Linwood, New Jersey  
1930 – 2017

The first Honorary Chairman from outside Maryland, Harry Shourds was a third-generation carver and the grandson of the noted carver Harry V. Shourds (1861-1920) of Tuckerton, New Jersey. When he was a teenager, he started carving in his father's decoy shop where he could observe and acquire the skills of a man who was considered by many to be the finest carver in the state of New Jersey. Harry carved a classic hollow Barnegat Bay working decoy, like those of his father and grandfather, hand-chopping bodies from western cedar. He also carved several species of shorebirds, some miniatures, and songbirds.



**1997****Ronald  
Rue**Cambridge, Maryland  
1931 – 2005

Ron Rue made his first decoys as a teenager around 1948. His first decorative decoy was a merganser he made in 1953 or 1954. He was so proud of it he took it to Lem and Steve Ward of Crisfield, Maryland, which was the start of an enduring friendship. Their mentoring influenced his carving and painting. He carved most species of shorebirds and waterfowl, all hand chopped. Rue's carvings won many awards in the major East Coast contests, and he passed along his expertise by judging competitions or teaching others how to carve, which he enjoyed for over 30 years.

**1998****Lem & Steve  
Ward**Crisfield, Maryland  
1896 – 1984  
1895 – 1976

The Ward brothers, barbers by occupation, are regarded by many as the founders of this folk art form. They are believed to have produced more than 25,000 decoys and decorative birds. At first, carving decoys was just spare-time handiwork, but word got out and business grew. Their only advertisement was a sign outside their shop saying, "L.T. Ward & Bro. – Wildlife Counterfeiters in Wood". Steve did the carving, and Lem did the painting. Ward Museum in Salisbury, Maryland opened in 1977, and its director stated, "Lem and Steve Ward were two of the most important men in American art history."

**1999****Oliver "Tutsy"  
Lawson**Crisfield, Maryland  
Active

Tutsy Lawson began making decoys when he was ten or twelve by spending his spare time with his neighbors Lem and Steve Ward, watching them carve and paint decoys and learning their techniques. By the time he was seventeen, Lawson was earning a respectable income carving and painting full size and miniature decoys. Tutsy works from nature, reference books, and bird skins. He carves waterfowl, shorebirds, upland game, and songbirds and, on occasion, crabs and other wildlife. His tools include a hatchet, chisels, and knives, but what sets him apart from most of his colleagues is his talent for painting.

**2000****The Holly  
Family**Havre de Grace, Maryland  
John "Daddy" Holly (1818 – 1892);  
William W. Holly (1847 – 1925);  
James T. Holly (1849 – 1935); and  
John W. Holly, jr. (1851 – 1927)

Daddy Holly and his sons established the "Havre de Grace style" and made tens of thousands of decoys. Daddy was making decoys by the early 1850s, and the Holly men worked closely producing decoys well into the 20th century. Jim was a market gunner who made decoys for his use and for sale locally. He refined his father's style, gaining a national reputation that placed him in the forefront of Upper Chesapeake Bay makers. Chad Tragakis writes, "If Havre de Grace, Maryland, is indeed the 'Decoy Capital of the World', then its 'First Family' would have to be the Hollys."

**2001****Charles Nelson  
Barnard**Havre de Grace, Maryland  
1876 – 1958

Charles Nelson Barnard was taken out of school to work on his sea-captain father's scow when he was in the fifth grade. There is no record of when he began carving, but it is believed that he worked alone on most of his decoys. His production probably consisted of only a few thousand pieces, and his work is in demand among collectors. He most enjoyed making miniature birds, some only an inch and a half long. His best-known works are his high-head canvasbacks. C. John Sullivan says, "Barnard birds achieved (better than any) the true look of a canvasback duck."

**2002****Patrick  
Vincenti**Churchville, Maryland  
Active

Pat's family moved to Havre de Grace when he was a baby. In 1975, he went to work part-time in R. Madison Mitchell's decoy shop, later set up his own shop, began carving full-time in 1986, and was joined by Captain Bill Collins in 1987. He has been described as "the best painter of production decoys in the Upper Bay region." He annually turned out approximately 1,200 mostly-decorative decoys until becoming active in the county government. Pat has long been a member of the Board of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, serving as its President for over a decade.

**2003****Ned  
Mayne**Vienna, Maryland  
Active

Ned Mayne is known for his decorative decoys, 75% of which are cork. He also has a reputation as a painter, and his painting of a pair of black ducks was chosen for the first Delaware duck stamp. Ned began hunting with his father as a child and started carving for his own needs. His interest in environmental issues now causes him to spend a lot of time in Dover, Delaware. Mayne has stopped hunting because of steel shot regulations claiming, "It is a crippler of ducks and geese, and it is a sin to shoot them without killing cleanly."





The sons of Captain Harry Jobes ; Bobby Jobes (left), Charles Jobes (center) and Captain Joey Jobes (right).

**2004** —

**Grayson  
Chesser**

Jenkins Bridge, Virginia  
Active

Grayson Chesser is as a carver and collector on Virginia's Eastern Shore who acquired an interest in decoys at about age 12. He began carving seriously in 1976, and has carved full-time since 1984. Chesser carves hollow decoys designed to look as if they are old and hunted over even though most will never be on the water. He uses machinery to cut out the bodies, but finishes them with hand tools. Chesser has appeared on PBS, has judged federal duck stamp competitions, has had decoy exhibitions at the Smithsonian, and co-authored a book titled "Making Decoys the Century-Old Way".

**2005** —

**Jim  
Britton**

Reedville, Virginia  
Active

Jim Britton carves "a hundred or so birds" each year in a workshop that is separate from his house near Reedville. His flat-bottomed birds are made to look like working decoys, but they are shaped and painted with the detail demanded for decorative carvings. Knowing that his birds will most likely spend their lives on the mantle and never go in the water, he is able to focus on detail and paint rather than spending time to ensure proper balance, weight placement, and natural-looking flotation. Though he prefers diving ducks, Britton also carves "tippers", herons, egrets, pelicans, and some songbirds.

**2006** —

**George  
Williams**

Dover, Delaware  
Active

George Williams has been making decoys for over 40 years, mostly from the shop in his home. Like many decoy makers, he figured it would be cheaper to make his own gunning decoys. The bodies are cork, and the heads and tails are cedar. George says cork carves faster, sits better in the water, and is easier to repair when it gets shot. He was inspired by R. Madison Mitchell, Roger Urie, and the Ward Brothers and makes over 150 decoys per year – "pretty much everything in the Atlantic flyway." He encourages young carvers, as a "mentor rather than teacher."

**2007** —

**Joseph  
Coudon**

Perryville, Maryland  
1860 – 1947

Joseph Coudon of Henry was a gentleman farmer and truly a renaissance man. He started carving birds and making decoys when he was still in his teens and created some of America's finest waterfowl art. Coudon's solid-body decoys – primarily canvasbacks – were typical of the unique Cecil County style with flat bottoms and squat, undersized, compact bodies that slope gently downward into a broad tail. He made about 300 – 500 decoys each year. Coudon is also widely accepted as the originator of the Chesapeake Bay-style folding silhouette decoy and holds a patent. They are wonderfully folky and a joy to behold.



# 2008

**Bryon Bodt**

Churchville, Maryland  
Active

Bryon Bodt began carving decoys as a teenager in 1977 and spent three years in the early 1980s as an apprentice to Havre de Grace decoy maker Jim Pierce. Bryon's present style is also patterned after R. Madison Mitchell, Paul Gibson, Charlie Bryan, and Bob McGaw. He and his father, Bernie, produce over 20 species of ducks and other waterfowl. Bryon is featured in the book "Upper Chesapeake Bay Decoys and Their Makers" and has displayed his decoys at many shows and festivals. His decoys have been selected as part of the Maryland Ducks Unlimited state art package several times.

# 2009

**Bill Veasey**

Elkton, Maryland  
Active

Bill Veasey got his start when his brother-in-law, an accomplished artist in his own right, insisted that Bill meet the late Pennsylvania carver, Harry Waite. Bill now works with students at all levels and teaches them the basics of carving a traditional hunting decoy as well as highly refined decorative bird carvings. Bill is also a talented flat artist, has written fourteen books about carving and painting, and he has helped his students get their books published. Exhibiting his spectacular working and decorative decoys is one of Bill's joys. He says, "The important thing is that we preserve this legacy."

# 2010

**Dave Walker**

Havre de Grace, Maryland  
Active

Dave Walker began carving at fourteen, riding his bike to Jim Pierce's shop where he did the "dirty work" and learned from the bottom up. Dave also apprenticed at the shop of R. Madison Mitchell and knew all the carvers who came through the doors to work or to talk and share. Dave says that each of the carvers "was a mentor in his own way." Charlie Joiner took Dave under his wing and showed him how to transition from working decoys to decorative decoys. He learned many secrets from Joiner who, in turn, had learned from the Ward Brothers.

# 2011

**Thomas Humberstone**

Skaneateles, New York  
Active

Tom Humberstone is from an area that is home to many migrating waterfowl. He started hunting in 1965 and became an avid waterfowler, collector, and carver. He carves in the style of the St. Lawrence River carvers and has produced many different species since 1975, preferring black ducks and canvasbacks. He was inducted into the New York State Outdoorsman Hall of Fame in 1995 and was honored by New York State Ducks Unlimited as Conservationist of the Year, 2010. Tom and wife Betsy are great supporters of the Decoy Museum, the R. Madison Mitchell Endowment Trust, and the Decoy Festivals.

# 2012

**Rob Leslie & Allen J. Fair**

Turnersville, New Jersey  
Active  
Havre de Grace, Maryland  
Active

Rob Leslie is a creator of art and Allen Fair is a collector, but both have a passion for the beauty of decoys, art, and waterfowl. Rob's passion for painting wildlife began while growing up in a family of duck hunters in Wisconsin. He won the Delaware duck stamp in 1986 and now has about 20 duck stamps, including four for New Jersey and the first-ever stamp for Idaho, to his credit. He likes to paint everything related to waterfowl, and says, "I think it is important to paint what you love, not create art to cater to the market." He considers "the Havre de Grace Decoy Show a perfect match for me." Allen is a local entrepreneur whose passion is promoting Havre de Grace as a great place to live, work, and play. He was one of the visionaries behind the first Decoy Festival in 1982 and led the effort to establish the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. He has been a board member and key supporter of the museum's healthy growth for four decades and is President Emeritus. Allen helped to create civic pride and to make the city a tourist destination – *The Decoy Capital of the World*.

# 2013

**John Meredith**

Worton, Maryland  
Active

John Meredith is an Eastern Shoreman who has been carving decoys and guiding hunters for over 50 years. He carved his first decoys when he was twelve and says, "Carving decoys has always been a part of me." His flat-bottomed style is typical of Eastern Shore carvers, and he names the Ward brothers and Charlie Joiner as key influences. All of his decoys are hand chopped, and he produces about 400 annually. He also carves miniatures. John can be found in his shop seven days a week doing what he loves – creating gunning and decorative decoys and other wildlife art.





**Noble Mentzer**



**Charlie Bryan**

**2014**

**Capt. Bob  
Jobes**

Havre de Grace, Maryland  
Active

Bob Jobes is the quintessential Havre de Grace waterman and decoy carver. His shop is behind his family's home where his great-grandparents and grandparents once lived. As a kid, Bob helped his father, Capt. Harry, in R. Madison Mitchell's shop with other renowned carvers. He learned the beauty of ducks and geese from hunting, and decoys challenged him to create that beauty in wood. Bob worked in his father's shop and then began working fulltime for Mr. Mitchell after finishing high school. As decoy collecting peaked and moved more upmarket, Bob has shifted his focus in recent years to miniatures.

**2015**

**Joe  
Engers**

Lewes, Delaware  
Active

Joe Engers has been the owner and publisher of Decoy Magazine since the autumn of 1979. Joe is well known and highly regarded for his contributions to the decoy collecting world through this bi-monthly magazine, book publishing, participation in shows held coast to coast each year, and his support for clubs and institutions that celebrate decoy folk art. Decoy Magazine is the sine qua non among serious decoy collectors and provides comprehensive information on decoys and makers. His coverage of decoy auctions, shows, and other waterfowling events has for years taken his followers into the heart of the decoy market.

**2016**

**Shannon Dimmig  
Daniel & Jonathan  
Irons**

Elkton, Maryland  
Active  
Queenstown, Maryland  
Active

The 2016 honorees have taken decoy art to a new level. Carver and teacher, Shannon found her calling in the shop of Bill Veasey who regards her as possibly the most talented airbrush artist among the decoy makers. Rather than making "ducks for ducks", she loves decorative carvings for people who appreciate the inherent beauty of waterfowl and the artistry of rendering them in wood. Fussy, her preferred wood is tupelo from the underwater portion of trees that have been harvested from swamps. A Foredom tool, high-speed dental drill, and wood burner enable her detailed sculpturing that achieves an almost lifelike appearance. Shannon's students include Daniel and Jonathan Irons who began carving birds by the age of six and got their start with the Kent Island Carvers Club. Both agree that they like ducks and other waterfowl but find the varied shapes and colors of the smaller birds more challenging and interesting. Their preferred woods are tupelo and cedar. Mentors have introduced them to new skills and technology that they are incorporating in their work. It is inspiring to see their creations. Both have taken top honors with various award-winning masterpieces. Shannon said admiringly "I see the future of carving!"



**"101 Years of Decoy Making"**  
 Chestertown, MD carvers Bill Schauber (left) holding his pair of old squaws, Charlie "Speed" Joiner (center) with his pintail and Allan Schauber (right) with his old squaw take time out to pose for a picture together.



**2017**

**Bill  
Hickson**

Cordova, Maryland  
Active

Bill Hickson is a retired farmer who grew up hunting. Bill says that he "always liked to mess with wood," and has been carving for over forty years – "always decorative" – and has turned out some real masterpieces, including "lots of miniatures." He is self-taught and developed his own style of carving and painting based on techniques that he observed in other carvers and what he learned from wildlife art books. He prefers using white cedar and tupelo for carving and uses a wood burner for feathering. Painting is with acrylics. He says, "I just start out and go from there."

**2018**

**Noble  
Mentzer**

Havre de Grace, Maryland  
1927 – 2018

Noble grew up amid the waterfowling traditions of Havre de Grace. Upon retirement he took a class and "fell in love with carving." Noble created stunningly realistic decorative birds but rarely sold a carving or charged for a lesson. Typically, he carved only three of a kind – one for his son, one for his daughter, and one for himself. Noble was at his best when working with children and giving them a memorable experience. Noble Mentzer made extraordinary donations of time and service to the Decoy Museum over 30-plus years – a kind and generous man who remains in our hearts,

**2019**

**Capt. Joey  
Jobes**

Havre de Grace, Maryland  
Active

Joey turns out primarily decorative decoys from his workshop in the old barn behind his house where for years he has been "100% decoy making." A son of Capt. Harry Jobes, Joey also learned from R. Madison Mitchell and Pat Vincenti. He describes his decoys as Mitchell-style using mostly white pine for bodies or tupelo for decorative decoys. Heads are made of basswood. Paint is always oil. Joey says he "never had a real job" and feels like he was "destined to make decoys". Joey Jobes has been one of the Decoy Museum's most loyal and unselfish supporters for decades.

**John  
Ingoglia**

Havre de Grace, Maryland  
1951 – 2015

John Ingoglia loved the Decoy Museum and was one of its greatest contributors of time and effort. "He had a heart bigger than this room", said Bill Collins. John's aptitude for working with his hands made him a natural to take up the art of decoy carving. He took lessons from Cecil County carver Bill Weaver learning to carve an old-style gunning decoy, and the high-head canvasback was his favorite. Influencers were Vernon Bryant, Joey Jobes, and Pat Vincenti in whose shops he was a regular. The canvasback-shaped roadside signs advertising the Decoy Festival were one of John's enduring creations.

**2020**

**Pandemic**

No Festival

**2021**

**Jeff  
Coats**

Berlin, Maryland  
Active

Born in Havre de Grace, Jeff Coats now lives in Berlin, Maryland. His hunting experiences gave rise to an interest in carving his own decoys. Pat Vincenti and Bill Collins influenced his early carvings along with the "angry attitude" style of Ned Mayne. His USCG Captain's license enabled Jeff to develop Pitboss Waterfowl, his sea duck hunting guide business. Jeff created a video series in 2006 called Ducks, Dogs and Decoys (D3TV) to chronicle waterfowl hunting. Jeff's decoys have hollow bodies, a leather loop, brass screws to attach the weight to the bottom, and branding with the Pitboss Waterfowl trademark





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A Great Blue Heron is the central focus of the image, standing on a weathered tree stump. The bird is shown in profile, facing left, with its long, sharp beak pointing forward. Its plumage is a mix of grey and white, with darker feathers on its wings and back. The background is a dense, out-of-focus forest of green foliage. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the bird's feathers and the rough bark of the tree stump.

# Springtime in the Chesapeake, & Great Blue Hérons

## CANVASBACK NATURALIST

Each edition will feature a natural history topic relating to the mission of the museum. The author, **John Hughes** is a retired science teacher from the John Carroll School (1972-2015). His subject areas included Chesapeake Bay Studies, Ecology (freshwater and marine) and Environmental Science. As a naturalist, John helped to develop natural history programs for a myriad of environmental organizations and schools. As a field educator and canoe guide, he led trips throughout the Eastern United States (especially the Southeast), Central America and the Caribbean. He presently serves as a member of the Museum's Board.





As the Earth spins and wobbles on its axis during its orbit around the Sun, those of us living in the middle latitudes of either the northern or southern hemispheres experience life in the temperate zone. This area between 23 ½ degrees north or south latitude and 66 ½ degrees north or south latitude is the land between the extremes. It is the zone of transitions caused by that wobble of the Earth and the changing exposure to sunlight. It is a zone of moderation wedged between polar and tropical extremes. Its greatest characteristic is the annual changing of the seasons which occurs as our location is either tilted more or less to the Sun. Where I live in the northern portion of the Chesapeake Bay region, this changing pattern leads to four seasons of approximately equal length - the 3 month periods of winter cold and summer heat and the 3 month transitions of spring and fall with varying temperatures. Most of us set our mental calendars to this rhythm. Most of our activities and culture are a response to these seasonal changes. From a climatic viewpoint, air temperature changes and precipitation amounts help to define seasonal differences especially in the temperate zone.

When it comes to the seasons, I enjoy the transitions of spring and fall the most. Summer offers long periods of bright sun - filled days with warm to hot periods leading to myriad out-of-door activities. Winter at the other extreme provides short periods of long distance sunlight, leading to harsh cold which can limit and challenge exposure to being outside. I've learned to enjoy both of these extremes. Summer is welcomed with a green brightness intertwined with a plethora of blooming colors and a strong feeling of vitality. Summer is filled with diversity and much life activity. In contrast, winter often provides too short a period of direct light and an overpowering greyness which leads to a sense of dormancy. For me, winter seems more a time to survive and get through. These, of course, are generalizations born from my personal experiences and interactions with the world. In my 70 years, I've found summer too hot and humid with too much grass to keep cut and winter too cold with too many periods of cabin fever. As you can tell, my human condition is very fickle! With these thoughts as a backdrop, my love of fall and especially spring and the reasons for it will become obvious.

Spring and fall are always in flux; never a climax. As seasons of change they are always headed somewhere else, they are never there yet. They are temporal edges to changing conditions. They possess some characteristics

of the extremes (winter and summer) especially at the beginning and end of each, but a strong aura of their uniqueness exists throughout their transition. They provide an overlap, a "softening", a wedge to the more pronounced. As chlorophyll begins to reassert its potential in green plants in the spring, photosynthesis leads to more production. Now more food becomes available to consumers and consumer numbers increase rapidly. Life is on the rebound! As a naturalist, this is the most exciting time to witness the "splendor and awe" of nature. Energy is flowing throughout the ecosystems.

In fall, the reverse is true. A decline in the intensity and duration of sunlight begins to shut down the system. Chlorophyll can no longer mask the true color of leaves and the overall production of plants begins to shut down and growth in systems stabilizes. Consumers become more competitive as resources are more limited and their numbers begin to decline. Brown replaces green as the dominant color in ecosystems. Leaves begin to fall rather than grow. Instinctively many creatures begin preparation for the scarcity of the winter as fading light signals their future. Breakdown processes are underway and a whole set of differing survival strategies begins. For the naturalist, this is really the other side of life which brings a balance to the year. It is a beautiful time to witness and enjoy but with a different sense to understanding it.

Significant to mention is a special component of life related to the transition seasons. Some groups of specific organisms choose to practice migration as a strategy to enhance their potential survivability. The hows and whys of migration have been under study for hundreds of years with only partial answers. Changing food and shelter conditions are the keys to answering the why but still today the answers to how are debated. For example, in spring hundreds of species of neotropical migrants such as warblers (birds) and Monarch butterflies travel for hundreds and even for some, thousands of miles escaping the conditions found in the tropics for the temperate and even lower reaches of the polar zones. There they will nest and produce their offspring. In late summer and throughout fall, these same species will head home to the tropics. In fall, many new creatures will replace them. Migratory waterfowl will wing south into the temperate and upper tropical zones from polar regions to search for food and sanctuary. These movements of migratory creatures fit into the seasonal transitions of spring and fall. As a naturalist, this is what draws



me to spring and fall. I would add, for me, the moderating temperatures of each transition season makes it a much more pleasant time to be outside, even though I know there can be awful days of exception. I still choose them as my favorites.

So, what is it about this springtime Chesapeake Bay that makes it so exceptional? Lengthening photoperiod as well as increasing directness of the sun's rays are the key factors to getting the transition from winter to summer underway. The cold waters (mid 30s - 40sF) of late winter and early spring need heat. First the air, then the land, and finally the water around and in the Bay begin to warm. The slow gain begins in the shallows and surface waters of the Bay as heat becomes absorbed and begins to diffuse. In time, more heat enters into the greater water column. Greater numbers of phytoplankton become activated and production begins to boom. More rapid reproduction begins. Grasses begin to push both below and above the surface of the water. At 58 degrees F., fish become more vigorous, spawning runs begin, and crabs start to crawl. New birds move into the Bay area and others migrate out of it. Many year round avian residents begin to nest. A frenzy of life activity reasserts itself. All this comes back to warming waters in the Bay.

As winter ends and spring begins, salinity in the Bay is at its highest. A study of isohaline dynamics yields salt content as much as 3-5ppt higher at this time for each increase in the Bay's latitude. Limited snow and rainfall have diminished freshwater input into the Bay yielding this result. During spring the greater portion of our average of 44 inches of rainfall occurs. These "April showers" will not only bring "May flowers" but also reduced salt content to the Bay. This freshwater infusion into the Bay largely comes from land drainage in the Chesapeake's 64,000 square mile watershed. This freshwater is critical to much of the spring activity which is transitioning in the Bay.

Early spring waters in the Bay are very clear. With phytoplankton growth just beginning and limited winter runoff into the Bay happening, these clear waters let you see deep into the water's depths, sometimes seeing the bottom in 10 feet of water. As spring progresses, this condition will change with increased runoff and phytoplankton growth. By late spring or early summer, a Secchi disc (device for measuring water clarity) will only be detected to about 18 inches of depth showing the increased turbidity (cloudiness of water). The clearer spring waters are very important to the

growth of the Bay's submerged aquatic plants which are a critical habitat to the overall health of the Bay. The colder waters of the winter and early spring Bay also hold higher levels of dissolved oxygen which are necessary for life's revitalization at this time. Readings of DO will be well higher than the 8 ppm average. Phytoplankton production will release DO into the water but in time plankton's growth and expansion by summer will prove problematic to the Bay's health.

Note: As climate change occurs, these general historic precipitation patterns of water to the Bay are changing. Precipitation amounts into the Bay as a result of intense fall rainfall from hurricanes are modifying freshwater temporal distribution. Also, more intense thunderstorms in the summer with as much as 7 inches of rainfall in a short period of time may be influential. This changing data with its impacts is beginning to be processed by scientists.

So a springtime Chesapeake Bay transitioning from winter to spring reveals cold water becoming warmer, saline waters becoming fresher, clear waters becoming more turbid, and DO levels increasing slightly only to decline towards summer. The reality is that there is a new Chesapeake Bay everyday, but especially in spring transition.

Originally when I planned to write a spring article for the Canvasback, I intended to present information on the spring season, springtime in the Chesapeake, and a biography of three birds ( Great Blue Heron, Belted Kingfisher, Osprey) that I associated with the Bay and spring. As I began to accumulate ideas and materials for the article, I soon realized this was far too much for one presentation, so I decided to stick with spring and the Bay and limit the narrative to the Great Blue Heron. All are worthy birds and now that I have the materials it will be easier to address a topic on each bird for future articles. I chose the Great Blue Heron (GBH) because it is a bird most people can identify, it is ubiquitous to the Bay year round, and a personal favorite of mine that I picked for my canoe company logo years ago. Although I always found GBHs year round, so many of my interactions seem to have occurred in the springtime Chesapeake and to have reawakened my desire to be out on the Bay. Sorry kingfishers and osprey, but your time will come.

GBHs are part of the avian tradition of the Chesapeake. Stalking in the 8,100 miles of shallow bay shoreline, this heron is found throughout

*Photo by Scott Moody*





*Photo by Scott Moody*



*Photo by Ralph Hockman*



the geographic Bay. It is a carnivorous piscivore (fish eater) known to supplement its diet with almost anything which could be considered Bay bounty. Food is taken alive. They are very sight oriented when it comes time to capture prey, avoid predators, and find a mate. All the nooks and crannies of Chesapeake Bay wetlands can become the immediate habitat of the bird at that moment. They nest in large conglomerates with other GBHs. Great Blue Heron numbers serve as an eco-indicator or barometer to the overall health of the Bay. They are also a part of Chesapeake Bay lore and have worked their way into our cultural traditions.

Native Americans called the Great Blue Heron "fishing long legs." Watching them searching the shoreline for food reveals just how accurate this name is. Taxonomically, *Ardea herodias* belong to a group of long-legged wading birds. The GBH is up to 46 inches long and has a wingspan of about 72 inches. It is noted for its long neck which is folded in during flight and its lengthy legs which hang out in flight. The anatomy of its neck allows it to strike out at its prey with incredible speed and its long yellow legs allow it to wade in somewhat deeper water. Its blackish pointed bill is about 5 ¼ - 6 ½ inches long and designed for spearing and grasping its prey. Slate blue dominates its posterior plumage and wings. Its belly is a light white coloring with streaks of brown throughout its neck. Many other colors can be found in its plumage and of special note is a blackish stripe backward from the eye and on its crest. During breeding all colors seem to be more pronounced, especially the crest. GBHs weigh between 4 ¾ - 5 ½ lbs. and they may live up to 20 years of age. Their call is a loud "gwoak" with extended croaking as they fly away.

For most of the year GBHs are solitary. Breeding season reveals a gregarious nature as they individually commit to a mate but nest in huge rookeries of their own kind. Some rookeries may number in the hundreds. Courtship contains aerial displays as well as dancing types of behavior. The pair bonded birds are generally monogamous for the season. Males actively defend the territory of the nest which females build. Nests are sloppy collections of medium-sized sticks which the male brings to his

mate. The nest is usually in a treetop. Normally 3-5 eggs are laid with incubation beginning with the first egg (asynchronous). Incubation takes anywhere from 14-35 days and the young are fledged and dispersed in 42-56 days. Siblicide (young killing other nest mates) is common. Young birds are fed through regurgitation of partially digested prey with the largest chick aggressively getting the most. The food is delivered into the young's mouth. Huge deposits of fecal whitewash are found in the rookery along with an incredible stench. I have found rookeries throughout the Bay. As a youngster, I visited Nanjemoy Creek off the Potomac River and was amazed at the nesting birds. Closer to home, a large rookery can be found on the eastern side of shoreline just below Conowingo Dam in Cecil County. But what was most memorable was a rookery I visited on Aberdeen Proving Grounds. The most interesting thing about the GBHs at this nesting spot was the positioning of an active bald eagle nest near its center. Could this have been an example of interspecies (between different species) cooperative behavior?

As generalized carnivores, GBHs will eat just about anything they can get in their mouths. Besides fish their diet can include frogs, salamanders, snakes, insects, small birds, mice, rats, muskrats, nutria, etc. Different strategies are employed by the herons as they pursue their prey with ambush predation appearing to be the dominant plan. GBHs will stand or crouch motionless, oftentimes "peering over" the water and their potential victim. Other times they may aggressively chase prey by foot stirring and scratching the bottom. They can hunt in 2-3 feet of water. Many times prey is pecked close to death by the heron's huge bill. This allows the heron to swallow its prey mostly whole. It is sometimes a study in perseverance to watch the intact prey slide down the expanding neck of the bird on its way to its gullet. My memories go back to watching a young bird trying to manipulate its large eel prey down its throat. The effort took a good 10-15 minutes but it finally became a reward. Another time at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in Dorchester County, Maryland, I witnessed a heron take on a rather large muskrat. It too was successful but it seemed quite an endeavor for the bird. Interestingly, someone caught this scenario



on film and the pictures were later displayed at the visitor center. Hunger can be a strong motivation. During another observation I saw a bald eagle swoop down and steal a large crappie from a GBH. Needless to say, the heron wasn't happy!

GBH numbers presently appear stable and sustainable. Originally they were hunted for food but this is no longer the case. At one time they were hunted for their feathers, but this too has passed although this historic pressure had a significant impact on their numbers. In the 1960s and 1970s, chemical contamination of the water and land by chemicals such as DDT impacted on the bird's reproductive health. Accumulating levels of pesticide contamination still occurs but it is better controlled as a threat today.

A side note on GBHs: During the last real winter in the Bay in 1977 when the Bay was iced south to Smith Island, I found 7 emaciated and thoroughly frozen dead GBHs. The birds appeared to be in good shape except for their crops. Their intact eyes frozen in place seemed to lack an understanding of their fate. Sorry to be anthropomorphic, but I don't know how else to describe that stare in the eyes of the dead birds which still bothers me to this day. The birds had taken their chances with the cold only to lose. Nature's rules of survivability and natural selection can be explained in one of three possibilities - adapt, migrate, or perish. Many creatures in 1977 fell to that harsh winter.

So what is it about those springtime GBHs on the Bay which bring me so much excitement? First, I guess it is the fact that they are still there after having survived the challenge of another winter. They will be ubiquitous throughout the bay until nesting and can be seen responding to the shifting patterns of the Bay and its impacts on their food sources. Their presence reveals the coming vitality of the Bay's warming waters. They are ready for the Bay's coming bounty. They have stuck it out and survived into a hopeful future time of abundance.

Secondly, I'm excited because their numbers suggest that the Bay is doing OK. Hopefully for all of us the Bay has made it for another year in a condition which can afford us and GBHs a chance for positive interaction with it. This is a chance to ultimately share in the coming abundance which spring suggests is on its way.

Finally, I think these springtime GBHs provide me with a connection to something much greater than myself. Something outside my cold-bounded cabin. Something which all the winter readings that I really enjoy cannot provide me. It is an excitement to the universal, the cosmic, and the great chain of being which is life. The GBH does not think these thoughts even if it thinks at all. It wants its next fish or its next mate. As a human, I am different than the heron and I can ask and consider my connectivity to a greater whole. The springtime Great Blue Heron serves as the catalyst of my excitement and pursuit of the awe provided by the great imponderables and my existence as a part of this Chesapeake Bay springtime community.

*Photo by Ralph Hockman*



#### **Note: GBH decoys**

Great Blue Herons as decoys range from primitive to fancy. Originally GBHs were used as confidence decoys to encourage other birds to drop into a closer range for the hunters. I have not seen this very often today. They do make beautiful collectible decoys as a form of folk art. They can be very crude in presentation or extremely ornate in design. I was lucky to acquire a full size heron carving in Chincoteague, Virginia. For years I had been taking my students to Bill's Restaurant in Chincoteague for dinner. Bill's had a wide range of dinner fare, especially seafood. I had always admired the heron carving in the front window. It was simple in design but caught in my mind the full essence of a GBH. After about 25 years of trips during which time I got to know the owner of the restaurant, I finally decided to ask her if she would consider selling me the bird. She told me based on my loyalty and business over the years she would let me have it on the condition that the local carver would make her another one. After the call to the carver, the bird was mine. I cannot tell you how gratified I was and still to this day, it sits in my study and brings memories of past trips and students.

Just two years ago in the youth art contest of the Havre de Grace Decoy Show, a young lady carver from Cecil County submitted a fancy 1/2 size GBH carving. It was an incredible entry and won the contest easily. I do not know how the carving could have been better and I really hope she continues carving. As far as I know, the bird is still on display at the museum.

#### **To conclude:**

Enjoy springtime out and about on the Chesapeake, be careful, and look for a Great Blue Heron to find what the experience can offer you!





## Marshall Lloyd "Doc" Purner

August 3, 1927 ~ February 22, 2022  
(age 94)

Marshall Lloyd "Doc" Purner, 94 of North East, MD, passed away with his loving family by his side, Tuesday, February 22, 2022 in the Upper Chesapeake Medical Center-UM, Bel Air, MD.

Born in North East, MD, on August 3, 1927, he was the son of the late Marshall W. and Martha (Meekins) Purner. He was the husband of the late Geneva Nancy (Davis) Purner who passed on January 31, 2004.

In 1945 he joined the U.S. Army serving in Germany and Korea, while in Korea he was wounded and received the Purple Heart. After discharge, he became a Police Officer working for the Louisville, KY, North East and Elkton, MD police departments.

He enjoyed hunting, fishing, and collecting decoys. Most of all he enjoyed playing music and spending time with his family.

He is survived by his children: Bruce Roberts (Brenda), Marshall Purner (Melinda), Michael Purner (Wanda), Karen Purner-Sandy and Jeffrey Purner (Lili); 8 grandchildren; 8 great grandchildren; and companion Mary Jane Culbertson.

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*Photo by Earl Blansfield*



# SHOTS

## From the Wild

**Are you a photography enthusiast who loves snapping pictures of the local wildlife?**

If so, submit your shots from the wild to [wildlifephotography@decoymuseum.com](mailto:wildlifephotography@decoymuseum.com).

Only high resolution photos will be accepted. (i.e. at least 2,500 pixels wide)



*Photo by Mike Vach*



*Photo by Ralph Hockman*



*Photo by Kyle Presnell*



*Photo by Steve Keller*





*Photo by Jerome Mitchener*



*Photo by Earl Blansfield*



*Photo by Steve Keller*



*Photo by Ralph Hockman*



*Photo by Ralph Hockman*



*Photo by Scott Krieger*



*Photo by Robin Bell*

*Photo by Scott Krieger*



# THE JOY OF PRIMARY SOURCES

By: C. John Sullivan, Jr.

Several recent decoy articles and books have relied heavily upon information available to all through internet search engines. The ability to research ancestry websites, census records, newspaper archives, and military records is a valuable tool with relatively easy access. For writers of the history of waterfowling, the inclusion of family genealogy records is an interesting aside, but is it really that important to consider, for example, the DNA makeup of a carver's ancestors when discussing this history? I will leave that question to be answered by future collectors. I have been extremely fortunate in my research to have had access to primary source material both in my collection and in institutions such as the Maryland Center for History and Culture. To hold and peruse the actual journals and archives of an historical gunning club or decoy maker's notes and logs is exciting to me. I hope that what I have shared with others is not only important to the history of waterfowling but gives readers a better understanding of this great heritage that we appreciate and enjoy.

I can vividly remember standing inside a decoy shed in East New Market, Maryland, with my dear friend the late Henry A. Fleckenstein. It was a hot August in 1976, and while being wary of numerous mosquitoes and wasps, Henry reached up on a shelf and began showing me a group of ancient decoys. They were different than others I had handled. Each decoy wore a cast iron flat ballast





STEAM YACHT  
**TECH**

OFF

Marion Moore.  
Aug 17<sup>th</sup>

1932

Capt. Wm. E. Moore  
Haverd Grace, etc.

Friend Billy

Just a few lines to let you know where we are, we are located at Osterville, Mass. on the south side of Cape Cod across the sound from Vineyard Haven we are up in Buzzards Bay with a party today, playing Golf then we may go home tonight or to Newport R.I. we don't know which we were over to Nantucket Island Friday Sat. and Sunday, last Sunday noon we were out sword fishing all day we only saw three sharks but no sword fish we generally go about 20 or 30 miles off shore looking for them. They are keeping me busy this year I have the large boat 55 ft called Aquila then we have a smaller open launch 35 ft called Aquila Minia then we have a sail racing boat 21 ft called Pelyriah also two racing shells 1 a single shell and the other a double oared shell also 2 canoes and 2 rowboats we have to take care of all these and we are 3 miles away from town and we have to go there for Gas, water and provisions also mail so you can see we have no spare time they will make up all these boats in an hour. I wish I am sending you my picture as a kape bod skipper. Hoping this may be feeling better I am as ever



weight inserted into its underside. The iron pads had raised lettering on each one. Some spelled E.L.B. and others, T.J.H. I asked Henry what the letters stood for, possibly a maker's initials, a club name, or the owner's name? If truth be told, he had no more idea than I did. He guessed, perhaps Edmund L. Bailey and Theodore J. Hanson. Both of the names were mere momentary guesses with no meaning at all. I had no idea on that hot August day if he made those names up on the spot or if he had some clue unbeknownst to me. A few months later, I rescued a group of 16 wooden biscuit boxes filled with Harford County Assessment records from 1896 and 1906. I can well recall the thrill when I reached into the very first box and pulled out the records of several ducking clubs on the Bush River Neck and the Gunpowder Neck. Those lands had been taken when the United States condemned them for the Military Reservations of Aberdeen Proving Ground and Edgewood Arsenal. Among the gunning club records were the properties of Edward L. Bartlett and Thomas J. Hayward, and there in my hands was the record of the 500 decoys they owned. That was primary source material that had been boxed up since 1896, and my eyes were the first to view it in 80 years. I shared that information in my writing and by word of mouth. It was never questioned and is factual from the very best source, the actual documents.

With those thoughts now refreshed in your mind, I would like to share a few glimpses of some other primary source material for which I find myself in the role of caretaker.





# Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

## Events 2022

### Waterfowling on the Susquehanna Flats

Sunday, March 27 • 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Author Michael Daley will discuss his recent book “Waterfowling on the Susquehanna Flats”. Mr. Daley’s well researched book and presentation considers from a historical perspective the decoys, their makers, and the hunting and hunters of the Upper Chesapeake Bay in particular Harford and Cecil Counties over the past 200 years. A moderated discussion will begin the program followed by audience questions. Bring your books for autographing by the author. Books will be available at the presentation. Refreshments will be provided. **Fee: \$15.00**

### 40th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival

April 29, 30 & May 1

This year’s festival will be held in the gym and auditorium of the former Havre de Grace High School (710 Congress Avenue). As of this writing, there are only a very limited amount of vendor spaces left. **Fee: \$10.00 (for the entire weekend)**

### Wildlife Photography

Sunday, October 16 • 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

This evening’s program will be a discussion between wildlife photographers Scott Moody, Joe Subolefsky, and the museum’s own Ralph Hockman about waterfowl photography in particular and wildlife photography in general. They will talk about their cameras, techniques, challenges, and ethics when it comes to “shooting” ducks, geese, swans, and other wildlife. These photographers will tell how their interests began and evolved to their present level of excellence as well as give a visual sampling of their work. Questions from the audience will be entertained. Refreshments will be served. **Fee: \$10.00**

### “The Outlaw Gunner”

Sunday, October 30 • 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Author Joe Walsh will discuss his recent book, “The Outlaw Gunner II”. The book is an expansion on his father’s book “The Outlaw Gunner”. Joe will speak about waterfowl hunting and market gunning; both legal and illegal. The various individuals and their techniques of hunting will be discussed as well as his father’s stories about the hunters. His discussion of the historic gunning efforts of so many former waterfowlers will hopefully bring a new vitality to many of the museum’s exhibits. The author will be open to questions from the audience and will be prepared to autograph your copy of his book. Copies of the book will be available for purchase. Refreshments will be provided. **Fee: \$15.00**

### Wetlands and Waterfowl

Monday, November 14 • 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

Local educators and naturalists, Tom Trafton and John Hughes will give a presentation on Chesapeake Bay wetlands and their value to waterfowl. A two-part discussion will first consider the definition of wetlands, their distribution and types, their overall significance to the Bay’s ecosystem, and special association to ducks, geese, and swans. Part II will examine specific case studies of individuals waterfowl and their interaction with various wetlands and their plant species. Audience participation will be encouraged and visuals will be used throughout the program. Refreshments will be provided. **Fee: \$10.00**

### An Evening with Photographer Jay Fleming

Sunday, December 4 • 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Jay spent three years documenting all aspects of the Bay’s rapidly changing seafood industry for his first book, “Working the Water”, released in the fall of 2016. In the fall of 2017, amidst other photography and video projects, Jay committed to his second book, Island Life. Jay, after 10 years of making trips to Smith and Tangier Islands - the two only inhabited offshore islands in the Chesapeake Bay - Jay developed an affinity for the environment and the island communities. Whether it’s a dramatic sunrise over the water or a fisherman hauling gear, the passion for his craft and for visual storytelling is obvious in every photograph. Jay’s talent is undeniable, his photography is not only beautiful but purposeful. Refreshments will be provided. **Fee: \$10.00**

### Gunning Clubs of the Northern Bay – Spesutie Island

Sunday, December 11 • 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Local author, historian, and collector C. John Sullivan Jr. will discuss two hunting clubs which were located on Spesutie Island near Aberdeen, Harford County, Maryland. He will tell of their history, traditions, and the men associated with them. A question and answer period will follow. Refreshments will be provided. **Fee: \$10.00**





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