

# *The Canvasback*

Summer 1997  
Vol. 7, No. 3

Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

\$3



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# Havre de Grace Decoy Museum



**can•vas•back** (kan'ves bak'), *n., pl. -backs, (esp. collectively) - back.* 1. A North American wild duck, the male of which has a whitish back and a reddish-brown head and neck. 2. A style of decoy made famous by carvers of the Susquehanna Flats region. 3. A quarterly publication of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

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## FROM THE EDITOR

This is the fifteenth issue of *The Canvasback* that I have served as editor. Every issue continues to challenge and interest me. I discuss with the different authors many months in advance article topics. Once the article is completed, it is like a present; I have waited in anticipation for the finished product.

All of these authors are dedicated volunteers. Some author's names you see once a year, others more frequently, but one thing remains constant is that they are all volunteers. These articles take many hours of research, thought, interviewing, writing, and editing. I rely on these volunteer authors to produce quality articles that the readers will enjoy.

Thanks go to all of the authors that have been published in *The Canvasback*. I appreciate all of the hard work and dedication you give to the magazine and to the Museum. I look forward to the many articles that are in the making and to any new authors that may be interested in becoming involved.

*Mary Jo Murphy*

## ON THE COVER

A decoy carved by Noble Mentzer, 1997 Duck Fair Honorary Chairman.

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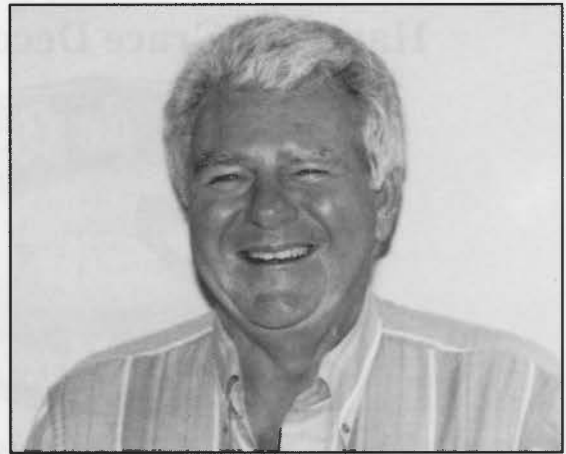
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*From  
the  
President*



Dear Museum Member,

This summer the Decoy Museum has been able to develop the event sponsorship program. The Museum was pleased to have J.M. Huber, Cleaning-Solutions Group-SherwinWilliams, Cytec, Mitchell-Smith Funeral Home, Hostetter Agency, Heckler & Koch, Sentman Distributors, and Pepsi as the 1997 Decoy, Wildlife Art & Sportsman Festival sponsors. Many thanks go to these companies, and the Museum looks forward to having them again as sponsors for the 1998 Festival.

Sponsorship of the special events at the Museum is very important and necessary. A working relationship between the Museum and the sponsors evolves. The sponsor is able to support the Museum at a chosen financial level, and the Museum is able to offer visibility in a variety of ways of to the sponsor. Companies help the Museum not only in a financial way, but also may have employees volunteer at the Festival and announce the sponsorship of the Festival in the companies newsletter.

The sponsors for the 1998 Decoy, Wildlife Art & Sportsman Festival are starting to be confirmed. As of this date, four new businesses have confirmed: Upper Chesapeake Health Care Systems, Harford Alarm, R. W. Sporting, and Wildfowl Carving and Collecting. If your company would like to be a sponsor for the 1998 Festival, please contact Mary Jo Murphy, Director at (410) 939-3739. She will send out a packet of information to you and answer any questions you may have.

*Allen J. Fair*  
President, Board of Directors

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



# 1997 Duck Fair Chairman Noble Mentzer

Mary Jo Murphy

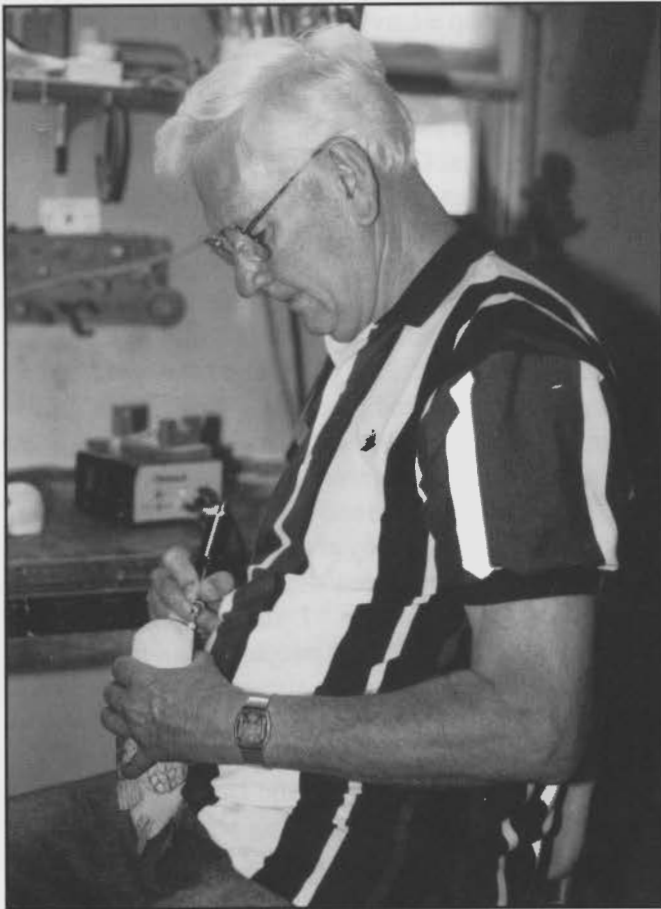
Noble Mentzer is the 1997 Duck fair Honorary Chairman. This honor recognizes the carver's dedication to the folk art of carving and the carver's support of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. Noble Mentzer is constantly improving his technique and carving skills by reading and sharing information with other carvers. Noble is also a Museum volunteer who gives tours to school groups and senior groups at the Decoy Museum. If you are lucky enough to have Noble talk to your group, he will amaze you with his imagination and ingenuity. Noble holds the attention of groups of all ages.

Noble was born in Elkton, Maryland in 1927, and in 1928, his parents and family moved to Havre de Grace and have remained here. "River rats for sure," Noble says. The large family, complete with seven children, lived on Otsego Street. Growing up during the Depression, Noble's

father and brothers relied on the shotgun to provide additional food for the table. Noble never had the desire to shoot waterfowl or wildlife. Instead, Boy Scouts, baseball, and softball filled his days. Noble joined the Navy, and in 1949, while on leave, he married his childhood sweetheart, Dorothy. Throughout the years, Noble served in both the Navy and Army, worked for the post office, and at Aberdeen Proving Ground.

Noble first started "piddling" with carving in 1972. He was at the ocean and bought a decoy kit to carve. Then he got more involved in carving in 1977. Cardiac problems sent Noble to the hospital three times and made him look for a stress relieving activity. His brother-in-law, Ben Danner, and a local barber, Joe Liberator, encouraged Noble to enroll in a carving class at Harford Community College. Noble says, "I have never found anything more enjoyable in my life than carving. When I found the hobby of carving, I just fell in love with it and cannot get enough of it."

The first decoy he carved was a red cardinal, and he cut himself so many times that it was blood red. When it was finished he didn't need to paint it! Now, Noble's carvings sometimes take months to complete. He enjoys spending time in his decoy workshop and painting the



*Noble Mentzer working a decoy body. Photo by M. Murphy.*



*A standing woodduck by Noble Mentzer. Photo by M. Murphy.*

carvings in the basement of his house. Noble has some good carving buddies, Ben Danner, Rich Swindel, and Barb Wachter. They inspire each other to develop their carving and painting skills. Noble has learned not only from his carving buddies but from such carvers as Bill Weaver, Jan Calvert, Pete Taylor, and Bill Veasey.

Noble first started carving ducks since they are common to Havre de Grace and the Chesapeake bay area. As time went on, he carved a robin, a cardinal, a puffin, and a loon. Noble has not just learned the techniques of carving but also educates himself about the many species, the wood, and the environment.

In many of the pieces Noble carves, he incorporates driftwood. Noble will spend days searching for the right piece of driftwood, dry it, and then design carvings to go with it. It places the birds in a natural type of setting. Noble says there are three exciting points about carving. The first is the challenge of laying out the pattern on the block of wood and cutting it out on a bandsaw. As he finishes it and starts doing the feathering, he tries to get as close to the detail of the bird as he can. The third and the final exciting point, according to Noble is painting. Noble says, "I do enjoy the challenge of mixing the paints and



*Noble holding a carved bird he shows during tours. Photo by M. Murphy.*

doing the color scheme as close as I can get it." Sometimes it takes him as long to paint the bird as it does to carve it. Some birds may have up to thirty coats of paint. Noble uses tiny brush strokes so as not to obliterate the burning lines and feathers. Noble usually has fifteen to twenty different carvings at different stages at one time. He enjoys picking up a carving for one day and working on another one the next time.

When asked where all of his carvings have found homes, Noble had a story to tell. "Every year in our family we have an annual Christmas tree judging contest. Dorothy and I have an artificial tree, which the children and grandchildren do not like. But for some reason, every year, we win the annual Christmas tree judging contest. When I carve a duck during the year, I will carve two others, they are placed under the Christmas tree with a note on the bottom of it; 2nd place annual Christmas tree judging contest and 2nd place tie annual Christmas tree judging contest. If they select the duck then we win the judging contest. For some reason we have won every year since the 1980's. So each one of the children have a set of ducks I have made. I enjoy giving to my family members and occasionally I sell a few ducks. When I do, I put the money back into the shop. I just enjoy the hobby of carving and the sharing with people. It is so much fun."

Noble's closing comment shows his strong commitment to the Museum and the art of carving, "I just love spending time with the people explaining the hobby. I have enjoyed walking through the Decoy Museum with the people and giving tours. It has been a real thrill for me." Well Noble, it is a thrill and a privilege to have someone so dedicated and enthusiastic be a part of the Decoy Museum.



*A robin carved by Noble Mentzer. Photo by M. Murphy.*



# Duck Fair



## 1997 Schedule of Activities

### Saturday, September 13

- 8:30 am Duck & Goose Calling Seminar  
9:00 am **DUCK FAIR OPENS**  
Children's activities-2nd fl museum  
Bake sale open  
Free raffle registration  
50/50 sales begin  
9:15 am Punt Gun Firing  
9:30 am Calling Championships  
10:00 am 1st Silent Auction Begins  
Live Auction Registration  
10:50 am Fair Honorary Chair Introduction  
11:00 am Honorary Chair Head Whittling  
12:00 1st Silent Auction Ends  
1:00 pm Live Auction Begins  
2nd Silent Auction Begins  
2:00 pm Live Auction Ends  
3:00 pm 2nd Silent Auction Ends  
3:50 pm Drawing of free raffle  
4:15 pm 50/50 sales close  
4:30 pm Drawing of 50/50  
4:45 pm Punt Gun Firing  
5:00 pm **DUCK FAIR CLOSSES**

### Sunday, September 14

- 10:00 am **DUCK FAIR OPENS**  
Children's activities-2nd fl museum  
Decoy Painting Tent - fun for kids  
Bake sale open  
Free raffle registration  
50/50 sales begin  
10:00 am 1st Silent Auction Begins  
10:30 am History Alive Program-2nd fl library  
11:00 am Open Head Whittling- cash prizes  
11:30 am History Alive Program-2nd fl library  
12:00 Retriever Demonstration  
1st Silent Auction Ends  
1:00 pm Retriever Demonstration  
2nd Silent Auction Begins  
1:30 pm History Alive Program-2nd fl library  
2:00 pm Retriever Demonstration  
2:30 pm History Alive Program-2nd fl library  
3:00 pm Retriever Demonstration  
2nd Silent Auction Ends  
3:10 pm Drawing of free raffle  
3:15 pm 50/50 sales close  
3:30 pm Drawing of 50/50  
4:00 pm **DUCK FAIR CLOSSES**

### Saturday Event Highlights

**The Upper Chesapeake Bay Goose Classic & Susquehanna Flats Regional Duck Classic:** Watch as duck and goose callers compete for a slot at the national calling competition. Free calling seminar at 8:30 a.m. Competitions begin at 9:30 a.m. Sponsored in part by MBNA/America, Heckler & Koch, & County Banking & Trust.

**Honorary Chair Decoy Head Whittling:** Join our Honorary Chairpeople as they issue carving challenges, exchange stories, and quickly whittle out duck heads. A great opportunity to catch a glimpse of the folk art of decoy carving.

**Live Auction:** Under the big tent. Preview starts at 10:00 a.m., bidder registration 10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., auction from 1:00 p.m. until 2:00 p.m.

### Sunday Event Highlights

**Legends of the Backwoods: From Market Hunter to Sportsman/Conservationist** (Lamar "Bucky" Jones, 1906 Market Game Hunter & J.J. Jones, 1996 Educator) Through the eyes of lawless market hunter Bucky Jones, see and hear about the scarcity of wildlife and habitat at the turn of the century and then learn, through his great grandson, J.J. Jones of the successful evolution of wildlife conservation during the 20th century. History Alive Programs - presented by Richard Pawling in the Museum's Library on the 2nd floor. Funded in part by a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust.

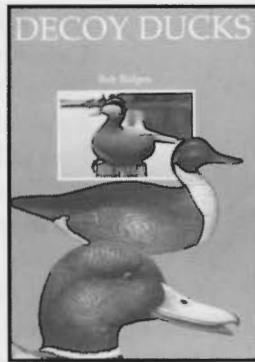
**The Decoy Painting Tent:** Join in the spirit of the Duck Fair by painting a miniature mallard or canvasback drake to take home. Originally set up for young visitors, this activity attracts young and old alike. \$5.00 materials fee charged.

**Retriever Demonstrations:** Members of the Maryland Retriever Club will introduce visitors to every hunter's best friend. Learn the hand signals and whistles that are used to communicate between the hunter and dog. Watch as the dogs demonstrate marked and blind retrieves. Demonstrations on the Museum's side lawn.

Book Review

# DECOY DUCKS

By Bob Ridges  
Reviewed by  
Bill Smart



The art of decoy making and waterfowl carving is considered by many to be a unique American folk art. Bob Ridges looks at this art form from a somewhat different perspective in that he is Britain's best known professional duck carver and teacher. Bob Ridges, in preparation for his book, came to America in an effort to study, document and learn the art from the more famous carvers in the mid-Atlantic and Southeastern regions. His travels took him to the eastern shore of Maryland, Havre de Grace, Delaware River, Chincoteague, and Louisiana. At each site, he befriended carvers, hunters, and artists. He visited the major museums featuring decoys and traveled to waterfowl shows and competitions. His research efforts combined with his own experience and talent led to a decoy publication that is full of basic information and pleasing pictures.

In his book, Bob Ridges chronicles his American travels to the shops of many renowned carvers including Madison Mitchell, Bob Litzenberg, Delbert Daisey, Paul Gibson, Bill Porterfield, Don Briddell, and Oliver Lawson. Here too, he recounts the conversations and stories that only carvers and hunters can tell. Useful information pertaining to collecting decoys, duck stamps, waterfowl prints, and hunting items is provided for the new collector. A section on decorative decoy making also provides some good tips for the beginner. A chapter covering the history of decoys in America and Europe rounds out his book.

Although published in 1988, this book is a good source of information. I would recommend it highly for the new decoy enthusiast as it contains a wealth of basic information and resources.

Decoy Ducks contains 191 pages and was published in 1988 by Gallery Books. It is available in the Decoy Museum gift shop for \$29.95.

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# AUCTION NEWS

## 1997 DECOY FESTIVAL AUCTION

This years' auction was another smashing success. Before adding on the buyer's premium, total sales from the 135 lots amounted to \$45,965, with over \$7,000 being raised for the Museum. For the 9th year Dave Hartzell donated his time and energy to be our auctioneer. He did a terrific job and wrapped up the bidding in under three hours. (Honestly Dave, the number of lots were down from last year)!

A special thanks goes out to everyone who contributed to the prosperity of this event, especially Charlie Bryan and Charlie Joiner for each donating a pair of decoys. Your generosity is sincerely appreciated by the Museum and its community.

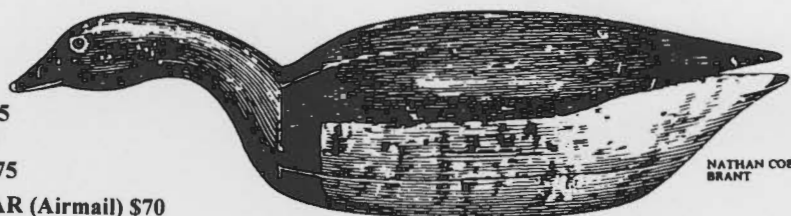
### Top 10 Lots of May 3, 1997 Auction

Description	Lot#	Price
Ronald Rue Collection	00	\$6,000
black duck sleeper by Bob Litzenberg	43	\$1,900
pr. canvasback sleepers by Bob Litzenberg	46	\$1,350
pr. mallards by Bob Litzenberg	41	\$1,175
pr. scaup sleepers by Bob Litzenberg	40	\$1,000
canvasback drake by Bob McGaw	121	\$925
pr. bufflehead sleepers by Bob Litzenberg	49	\$800
pr. green-winged teal by Bob Litzenberg	48	\$725
pr. ring-necks by Charlie Joiner	134	\$700
pr. canvasbacks by Charlie Joiner	109	\$625

## DECOY MAGAZINE

Profiles of classic and contemporary carvers  
Overviews of the various carving regions  
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# ROCK HALL RECOLLECTIONS

## PART ONE

### *The Decoy Making Legacy of Captains Jesse and Roger Urie*

Chad Tragakis

Rock Hall is one of those wonderful waterside villages that needs to be experienced in order to fully appreciate and understand its place in Maryland's rich waterfowling history. Like so many other communities that put decoy-making on the map of American Folk Art, one must visit. Simply reading about it is not enough. Its

geographical location and physical layout make it to this day, one of the Chesapeake Bay's centers of Atlantic Flyway waterfowl migration, and the seasonal hunting that accompanies it.

Living near the water he so loves, is the sole remaining member of a decoymaking dynasty, often and aptly re-



*Roger and Jesse pose with a recently completed canvasback decoy, and one of their many Chesapeake Bay retrievers. This photo was taken sometime in 1955, just after Roger's return from Korea. Roger Urie collection.*





*Canvasback drake decoy by the Uries, in original paint. Circa 1950's. Note the flatness to the breast and the thickness to the bill. Photo and decoy, collection of Chad Tragakis.*

ferred to as the Rock Hall School. Jesse Rogers Urie, or Roger as he is known, proudly continues the heritage of decoy-making, passed to him by his revered father Jesse Arthur Urie, (perhaps the most renowned of all Rock Hall makers), and fondly recalls the glorious legacy the two share.

That the Uries were and are such skilled decoy makers is not really surprising. One could say it's in their blood. Historical records indicate that Thomas Urie of Glasgow, Scotland (1725-1794), was the first Urie to settle in Kent County, in 1747. He too was an able craftsman and woodworker, making tobacco hogsheads and flour barrels for his thriving Eastern Shore community.

Some 150 years later, Jesse Arthur Urie was born to Arthur and Emma Martha Downey Urie on September 27, 1901. He was born and grew up in Rock Hall, in an area known as Biscuit Hill. Arthur, whose nickname was "Die," was a cook on a Chesapeake Bay police boat, the Annie Bee. Jesse grew up with a true love for all things outdoors, and never took the bounty of the Chesapeake for granted. While he had only an eighth grade education formally, his early life experiences, from working in a shipyard at age 14, to toiling in a Baltimore stove factory, taught him more than any university could. He held a variety of jobs over the years, and would do almost anything to make an honest day's living. Jesse worked as a waterman (oystering and fishing — trolling and seine hauling), served as a hunting guide, a fishing guide (later leading chartered parties on the many boats he owned over

the years), and made and repaired decoys. In his primary occupation as a carpenter, he earned fifteen dollars a week.

Jesse married Viola Helen Pletcer (b. 1908) of Baltimore on September 17, 1922. She gave birth to three children: Vernon Winifred in 1923, Viola Helen in 1924, and Jesse Rogers on November 9, 1932. Despite some hard times, Jesse and Viola managed to raise their three children living in relative comfort. Mrs. Urie recalls supplementing their groceries with the family garden, apple orchard, and regular takes from hunting and fishing. Years earlier, Jesse served in many capacities for George L. Rogers (for whom Roger is named), the President of Piston Saws. He served as caretaker of his estate, occasional chauffeur, and captain of his speedboat. Most people referred to Jesse respectfully as Captain Urie, or Captain Jesse. But because of his legendary story-telling, among some of his friends he was amiably titled, "Lying Jesse." In his gunning circle, he was playfully called, "Let 'Em Light Jesse." And because of his short but stocky stature, his nickname among waterman friends was "Pee-Wee."

Roger graduated from Rock Hall High School as Valedictorian in 1949. Like his father before him, he too earned the title of Captain from his work on the water. He still recalls his licensure trip to Baltimore in 1952, and his nervousness before taking the exam. On April 21, 1953, military duty called. Roger was drafted into the Army, and sent to Korea. He was stationed above Pusan with the Ninth Headquarters Company, outside of Seoul, where he

managed the Company's motor pool. His experience with boat motors and engines served him well there. To keep his mind on more pleasant things than war, Jesse sent him a box with baby food jars of paint, and John Glen miniature blanks to carve. While Roger realizes that his military service broadened his view of the world, he notes that some of his experiences taught him to better appreciate the small Maryland community he calls home.

He came back to Rock Hall on March 11, 1955. Upon his return, he attended Washington College, in

Chestertown, Maryland, for a time but found it was not for him. Roger worked several jobs at this time, including crabbing and making crab pots. After a year of working full time with his father's rapidly expanding decoy business, he began a career (1955-1965) in mechanical and electrical drawing and photography. He was employed by Wilson, Nuttall & Raymond, an engineering firm which specialized in the design and manufacture of off-road vehicles. By 1965, Urie decoys had become so popular, they warranted Roger's enthusiastic, full-time return to such endeavors.

In examining the Urie's place in the history of the Rock Hall School, one must introduce and discuss Captain John B. Glen (1876- 1951), its founder and dean, (and the single greatest influence on the work of both Uries), and August George Heinefield (1883-1952), Glen's first student. The lives and work of these four men are inextricably linked.

The Rock Hall School's origin dates back to around 1916, when Captain Glen began making waterfowl decoys for his own use. He soon began making decoys for local hunters, as well as for several of the many gunning clubs in the area. So famous did his hand-chopped decoys become, and so prolific was Glen's output, that he christened his property in the Neck area affectionately, "The Decoy Farm."

Throughout the 1920's and 1930's, The Decoy Farm was in full swing, supplying thousands of decoys to enthusiastic gunners up and down the Chesapeake Bay. Business was so good in fact, that around 1929, Glen enlisted the aide of local carpenter August Heinefield. Heinefield, who was born in Germany, emigrated with his family at the age of eleven to the Skinners Neck area (just outside of Rock Hall) by way of Baltimore. Though he never gunned, Heinefield aptly captured the essence of every species he made. His skills are clearly evident in his work, and since it required a different approach than standard carpentry, decoy-making was an

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- Sunday Auction at 1:00 pm

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enjoyable and relaxing hobby for Heinefield. Distinguishing features of his decoys are the prominent, upswept tails, and the very distinct “jaws” carved on the sides of the face. “He made a nice duck” Roger recalls, “He’d curve up the tail on the [top] side, and even on the [under] side. Not all the time, but most of the time he did it that way.” Roger still remembers August’s wife, a hearty, redheaded woman who hung wallpaper, and his son Charlie Heinefield, who later became the Mayor of Rock Hall.

It is not entirely clear on how Glen met Jesse Urie, and initiated him into the Rock Hall School. Roger and his mother, Viola, theorize that the two most likely met at Miller’s Store, a local hardware/general store, which was also a favorite gathering place for Rock Hall men. Besides socializing, local employers would often stop in to Miller’s with offers of day work, and occasionally, more steady employment. In any case, Jesse began regular visits to The Decoy Farm, prior to Glen’s moving next door to the Urie’s on South Hawthorne Avenue, in 1943. Jesse’s first duties for Glen were priming and painting bodies, and carving heads, which admittedly, Glen was getting too old to do. Roger remembers his father pulling him into decoy making around this time. “Daddy said, ‘you go over and watch him and see how he does this stuff,’ so I’d go over after school and I’d learn all this stuff,” he recalls. Although Glen didn’t ask him to come on board full time for two more years, an eleven year old Roger was enthusiastically learning “the painting side of things,” as he calls it, from a true master.

Throughout the mid to late 1940’s, a sort of decoy-making cooperative was formed between Glen, Heinefield and the Uries. Under Glen’s direction, each man would produce decoys wholly or in part, and then paint them either wholly or in part. Roger recalls that while he and his father worked closely with Glen, Heinefield was, “more or less a drop-off man. You’d be over at Mr. Johnny Glen’s shop, and he would come in and drop off a full duck that he’d made.” Roger was not sure if Heinefield ever carved separate heads or bodies for Glen like he and his father had. He does remember, “seeing a lot of [Heinefield’s] ducks come in that were unpainted. Then of course Mr. Johnny would paint it, and later on I would paint it. A lot of the ducks that were first made by Daddy and I [for Glen] were painted by me, and I used to paint just like Mr. Johnny Glen. I painted Mr. Johnny’s ducks that were made by him too. That’s just the way it was.” It is important to note that because of this, there are many legitimate Rock Hall School decoys which, while made under Glen’s direction, must really be credited to all four men, or (if possible to discern) at least to those who contributed to the bird.



*Roger (on right) poses with Walter Joiner, Charlie “Speed” Joiner’s brother, in Korea, June 27, 1954. Roger Urie collection.*

Over the years, Glen and Jesse developed an incredible friendship, and Roger has many wonderful memories of Glen who was truly like an uncle to him. He vividly remembers gathering peaches together, and riding in his old green Pontiac. “I loved the old devil. He was a big tall man with a humped back,” he recalls, explaining Glen’s nickname of “Hump.” “He was a great fellow for choppin’ ducks. Daddy and I, we put the power on it. You know, bust it and split it, four times and you’d almost have the duck done. But when he’d chop a duck he’d sit there, and he’d pick that thing, pit, pit, pit, pit, pit, you know, little chops. When he got done, it looked like he’d spokeshaved it or something. And when he put the spokeshave on his ducks, you didn’t have much work to do. He’d almost done it all with the hatchet. So I’d like to get hold of one of his to work on. That’s the way he started us, you know, he’d get us to sand up and spokeshave his chopped ducks.”

Fishing, whether vocational or avocational, was a passion they all shared, and the three spent hours together on the water. Roger recalls, “Every time [Glen] would get a big fish out there he’d holler, ‘Come on Henry Aldrich,’ and he’d wind that thing in. Every night he’d be working [on decoys] when we’d come home, or when Daddy’d come home from fishing. We’d show [the fish] to him you know, and he’d come over and look at ‘em. One time he came out and looked at the fish, and he just had on his BVDs with his old bare tail hangin’ out. He didn’t know about that, turned around, went home, and we just had to laugh!”

John Glen’s passing on October 28, 1951, marked a very emotional time for the Uries. It also marked the beginning of a new era for the Rock Hall School. For



Roger and Jessie after a successful day of goose hunting, circa 1950's. Roger Urie collection.



years, Jesse had grown physically weary of the strains of carpentry. Decoy making, while by no means easy work was much less strenuous on him — and he had known for some time that the day would come when he would take over Glen's business and operations.

While the Uries worked for Glen up until the time of his death, they would regularly make and sell decoys on their own. Roger recalls one of the earliest such endeavors. "The first time we made some decoys [on our own] was right after the war (1945). We'd go down to Love Point, and we went into a pier there. We got some of these old navy rafts, that were made out of balsa wood, all put together all different ways. Well, Daddy didn't know too much about balsa wood, but I'd been making model airplanes for years — since I was about nine or something like that. And so I knew how to sand it up." With that balsa wood, it was actually Roger Urie, not Jesse, who made the first decoy without Glen. Roger distinctly remembers that decoy — a goldeneye drake: "I remember Dad saying that that was the very first Urie duck . . . I made the first Urie decoy, 'cause I made the complete duck. Whereas [before]; Dad had been making heads for Mr. Johnny, or maybe I'd chop out bodies for Mr. Johnny, or I'd do some painting. But as for the first [whole] duck that was it."

The first commercial order the Uries filled without Glen also utilized balsa wood. Roger remembers: "The first ones we made, we didn't make ducks. The first birds we made were geese. Filled the whole front porch up with 'em." These decoys were crafted for two dentists, a Dr. Schumann and a Dr. Parker. Roger recalls, "the way Dad got in with them was, they had rented an island right off Rock Hall, and he would guide for them."

I asked Roger to recount a typical afternoon of decoy making. While much of the painting was done under their old mulberry tree, the woodwork was done in a small shop next to their home, which Jesse and Roger enlarged in 1950. First, they would prepare the previously seasoned wood. Using a two-man saw, the logs, poles or beams would be cut into fourteen inch blocks. He remembers: "You'd cut the blocks off fourteen inches or so, and you'd lay them down and get 'em as flat as you could, four inches thick. Didn't care if they had the cleats comin' out the side. Then you'd lay your pattern down on there, and band-sawed them. Then you went ahead and chopped 'em. You could chop about thirty of 'em a day, I guess, on a good day. Your arm would hurt like a son-of-a-gun the next day though, if you really went into it." All Urie decoy heads were hand carved from white pine. They were attached to the body with a 20 or 30 penny nail, straight down through the top of the head, and two 6 penny nails at the base of the neck — an area Roger refers to as the "apron." All three nails were countersunk, and the holes filled with putty, and in later years, with plastic wood.

While occasionally utilizing Glen's patterns, the Uries had predominantly been employing a set of decoy patterns Roger had developed in 1947. He recalls taking the best characteristics of the many decoys he had seen, and putting a few unique twists into the mix. These include two now famous Urie trademarks: a distinct flatness to the breast, and a thick, wide bill. Roger relates: "There's a lot of wood [at the breast] that we didn't take off- we didn't cut this off," he relates, pointing to one of his decoys. "That put more wood under the bottom of the duck and made it float a little higher." Urie birds also exhibit less roundness to the bottom. Roger explains, "When you sit that duck in the water, you had a little more meat under there — than if you sanded it off nice and round. And that kept that thing from getting ice on its bill. Everyone had their own way of doing it, just like you were an artist or something. But we had a reason for doing it." They also had a reason for carving such thick, sturdy bills. Roger states simply, "The thicker bill was to keep it from breaking off." Indeed it was, and as such, collectors encounter surprisingly few Urie decoys with broken bills. Roger recalls the added strength was vital since, "our boys down here were gunning in some rough water. From time to time, they walked on top of decoys [in their boats] from bow to stern."

*Author's Note: Part Two of this article will appear in the Fall 1997 issue of The Canvasback. Among the areas to be examined and discussed: The history of Urie decoy making and painting, repairing and repainting decoys, Rock Hall geese silhouettes, origins" of Urie miniatures, Jesse's legendary storytelling, and thought on the Urie legacy.*

## MUSEUM NEWS

### Kramers Donate Ward Brothers Decoys

The Museum is pleased to announce the donation of Ward Brother's decoys, artifacts, and ephemera from the collection of Dr. Morton and Carol Kramer of Baltimore, Maryland. Both Carol and Mort are well known in the decoy community for their devotion to the preservation and collection of Ward Decoys.

The Kramer's interest in the Crisfield carvers began in the 1960's when Mort was introduced to Lem and Steve by a mutual friend, Norris Pratt. Mort in turn introduced Carol, and soon she too came to share her husband's admiration for Lem and Steve's fine artistry. Many of Mort and Carol's fondest memories come from their monthly visits to the Eastern Shore, where they were treated like family by the Wards.

The spectacular selection of Ward Brother's decoys, decorative carvings, letters, carving tools, and photographs have been on loan to the Museum since 1994. The Kramer's decision to make the collectibles a donation is deeply appreciated by the Museum's Board of Directors, staff, and patrons.



*Dr. Morton and Carol Kramer at home with their collection.  
Photo by K. Martin.*



### New Museum Staff Member

Theresa Pospisil joined the Decoy Museum's staff in June. Theresa works at the front desk in the Museum; greeting visitors, assisting them in the gift shop, and answering many questions. Say hello to Theresa next time you visit the Decoy Museum.

### Raffle Winner

The raffle winner for the collection of sixteen decoys by all of the Honorary Chairmen went to Doris Lucas from Rising Sun, Maryland. This was the first time Doris had attended the Decoy, Wildlife Art & Sportsman Festival. She is pleased to share with The Canvasback readers a picture of the display, specially designed for the sixteen decoys and the print. Doris and her husband are now Decoy Museum members! Thanks go to all of the other ticket purchasers, and especially to all of the Honorary Chairmen that donated a decoy.

*This fine collection of decoys was raffled at this year's Festival.*



*Theresa Pospisil.  
Photo by K. Martin.*



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Blue Geese	\$50 ea
Brant	\$65 ea
Buffleheads	\$40 ea
Canvasbacks	\$40 ea
Cinnamon Teal	\$40 ea
Coots	\$40 ea
Gadwall	\$50 ea

<b>Oversize</b>	<b>Price</b>
Canvasbacks	\$50 ea
Red Heads	\$50 ea
Black Heads	\$50 ea

<b>Species</b>	<b>Price</b>
Green Wing Teal	\$40 ea
Goldeneyes	\$40 ea
Mallards	\$40 ea
Pintails	\$40 ea
Red Heads	\$40 ea
Ringnecks	\$40 ea
Ruddy Ducks	\$50 ea
Shovelers	\$40 ea
Snow Geese	\$65 ea

<b>Species</b>	<b>Price</b>
Common Mergansers	\$130pr
Red-Breasted Mergansers	\$130pr
Hooded Mergansers	\$150pr
Swan -Flat Bottom	\$350ea
Swan -With Keel	\$400ea
1/2 Swan	\$75 ea
Wood Ducks	\$350pr
Canada Goose	\$80 ea



# Sora Rails of the Patuxent River Wild Rice Marshes

Gregory D. Kearns  
Park Naturalist, Patuxent River Park

*Among the birds that live in the Chesapeake marshes, none is more elusive or retiring in disposition than the Sora Rail. It is a denizen of tall, dense aquatic growth, and its comings and goings are cloaked in mystery. Although the Sora is not uncommon, one must make a special effort to find it...*

John W. Taylor, Birds of the Chesapeake Bay

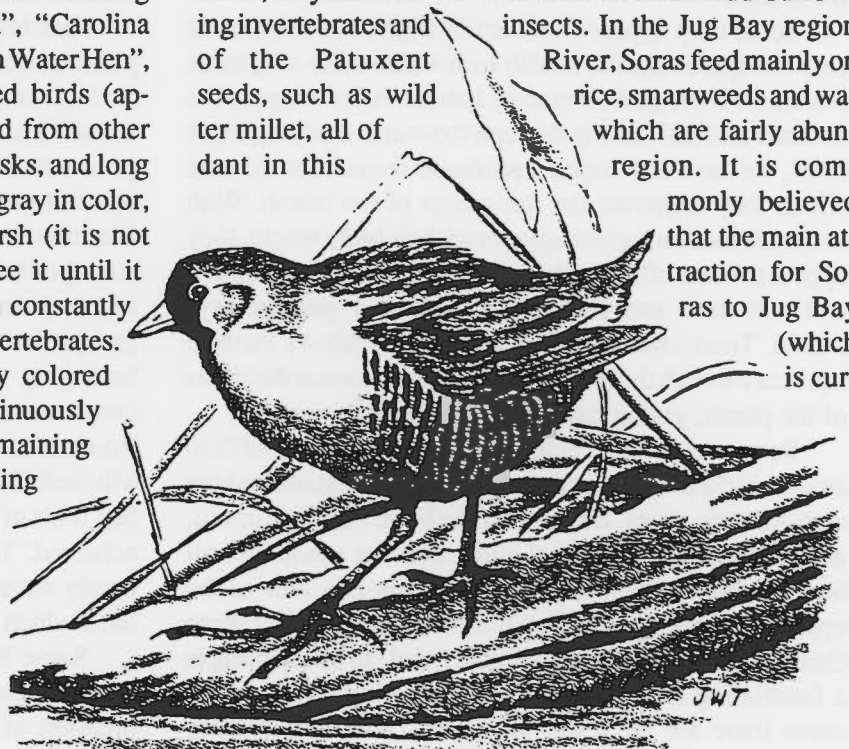
According to most bird field guides, the Sora Rail is the most widespread and abundant of the nine species of rail that regularly breed in North America (the other eight species being the Virginia, King, Clapper, Yellow, and Black Rails and the Common Moorhen, Purple Gallinule and the American Coot). However, due to their secretive nature, cryptic markings, and inaccessible habitat, these abundant and widespread birds are relatively unknown to most people. A typical response, after hearing a description of our research over the past nine years on Soras, is: "What kind of rail?" or "Sore what?"

The Sora Rail, known to scientists as *Porzana carolina*, is more colorfully known to local folk by the following regional names: "Ortolan", "Carolina rail", "Carolina crane", "Chickenbilled rail", "Little American WaterHen", and "Meadow Chicken". These robin-sized birds (approximately 9" in length), are distinguished from other rails by their short yellow bill, black face masks, and long greenish legs and toes. They are brown and gray in color, providing excellent camouflage in the marsh (it is not unusual to stare directly at one and not see it until it moves!). Chicken-like in manner, they are constantly pecking at the grounds for seeds or small invertebrates. Like all rails they have short tails, lightly colored underneath, that nervously and almost continuously flick up and down, perhaps as a means of remaining in visual contact with one another or signaling danger.

Soras take up temporary residence from mid-August to mid-November in the marshes of the upper Patuxent River in Maryland, particularly the Jug Bay region, as well as other large, freshwater and saltwater marshes along the Chesapeake Bay and farther south. The abundant supply of food (seeds and in-

vertebrates) and expansive marshy habitat in the upper Patuxent provide an excellent haven for Soras to rest and refuel along their migration to southern wintering grounds. They breed in almost every province of Canada and south to central California, Central Arizona, New Mexico, Kansas, and Maryland. Their wintering range extends from California to Texas and the Gulf Coast to Florida, and on the coastal plain from Virginia to Florida; they are also known to winter in the Bahamas, the Caribbean, Mexico, and in Central and South America.

Soras feed mainly on the seeds of marsh plants, making their mild-tasting meat a delicacy. In addition to seeds, they are also known to feast on small mud-burrowing invertebrates and insects. In the Jug Bay region of the Patuxent River, Soras feed mainly on rice, smartweeds and water millets, all of which are fairly abundant in this region. It is commonly believed that the main attraction for Soras to Jug Bay (which is cur-



rently and historically a high-density area for Soras) in late summer and fall is wild rice, which peaks in seed production at approximately the same time as the peak influx of Soras. This might also explain why these birds do not reappear at Jug Bay in large numbers during the Spring when rice and other seeds are not available.

The extensive range of the Sora Rail makes one appreciate the effort that must be involved in their migration, especially since they migrate at night. Prior to our research, only sixteen Soras had been recovered with U. S. Fish and Wildlife leg bands out of a total of over 1400 total banded. Because so little information on migration is available, it is difficult to determine the average length of migration. However, the majority of the sixteen recovered bands involve birds traveling between New England and the mid-Atlantic states (one case involved a bird originally banded in Ohio in 1972 and recovered two years later in Ontario!).

If you have the rare opportunity of observing a Sora in flight, it hardly seems possible that this bird is capable of migration, let alone moving from patch to patch within a single marsh. When flushed, they remain airborne for just a few seconds, then drop back into the marsh, as though their tired wings can barely propel their bodies and gangly legs. Outside of migration, they fly only when absolutely necessary, such as when chased, surprised or threatened, and this is only when there is no possibility of escape via the labyrinth of narrow tunnels through the dense reeds of the marsh.

Soras may appear awkward in flight, but one cannot help but appreciate the stealth with which these wily birds maneuver through their marshy habitat. After we spent the summer and fall flailing through the marsh studying these birds, we have developed a profound respect for the ease which they negotiate the intricacies of the marsh. With long toes measuring one-quarter of their body length, they appear to skate effortlessly over floating marsh vegetation and soft mud and dash through narrow passageways within. Their unusually thin body shape allows them to squeeze through these narrow openings between the stems of the plants, giving rise to the saying "thin as a rail".

Soras were hunted extensively from the late 1800's to around 1950 in marshes throughout New England and the mid-Atlantic states. Because of the large numbers of rail, and the presence of several gun clubs that catered to rail hunting, hunters would come to the Jug Bay area of the upper Patuxent River (often from far away) to hunt these elusive birds. The process (almost ritual) of rail hunting is a fascinating tradition that is disappearing probably because there are far fewer rails today and it is so labor intensive. The process involved a "pusher", who poled the



*A sora rail. Photo by Greg Kearns.*

hunter through the marsh on a high tide in specially adapted rail "skiffs" (modified canoes) designed to glide through the vegetation and penetrate the marsh interior. The gunner stood in front of the skiff, crouched in position to fire his shotgun when the pusher hollered expressions like "Mark left or right" which signaled that a rail was flushed within shooting range.

Rail hunting on the Patuxent was more than just a pastime, it contributed to the economy of the region during the late summer and fall. Perhaps more importantly, it was a tradition and cultural activity that people of several generations and ethnicities participated in. "Pushers" (with colorful names like Weepy Dyson, Fair Johnson, and the Bias brothers and so on) were typically local farmers with strong arms capable of propelling the skiffs, supplementing their incomes. Hunting was popular among many groups, most notable were the elite groups of wealthy men belonging to exclusive, often ethnically selective hunt clubs; members might include dignitaries such as Teddy Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Babe Ruth, and General Billy Mitchell. During the peak in popularity in rail hunting, the bag limit of 100 birds per day per person was commonly achieved. Today, Soras are still hunted but considered barely worth the effort; 25 rails per person per day is the limit which is nearly impossible to accomplish.

Some historical accounts of rail hunting along the Patuxent during the heyday of rail hunting paint an impression of Soras so abundant, that the marshes were practically exploding with them, like bees swarming a

hive. One story is that a gunner once killed 28 rails without changing position in the boat (enough to make four meals for a hungry person!). Accounts of more than 1,000 being shot in two or three days by two hunters are not uncommon.

Compared to those "good old days" when Jug Bay was swarming with Soras, there are considerably fewer. The exact cause of this decline has never been studied, but several explanations seem possible ranging from over-hunting to wetland habitat loss and general degradation.

The troubling and undocumented decline in the Sora population on the Patuxent is what piqued our interests in learning more about this bird. Unfortunately, there have been no systematic studies on the population status of Soras along that river, meaning we had to start from scratch. Our primary objective was to determine the relative abundance of the rails throughout the freshwater tidal marshes of the Patuxent River. We tried measuring abundance of Sora Rails using three different methods: trapping, mist netting and call response surveys. Much to our surprise, we caught more Soras in live traps than are reported in any other published report we could find. Using specially designed walk-in traps and digital micro-chip message repeaters that simulate several Sora calls, our success rate increased dramatically as the birds were attracted to these electronic vocalizations. These computerized repeaters are the key to our success, and they are similar to a tapeless answering machine with the Sora calls digitized onto the voice chips, and powered by batteries and a solar panel. They also have a timer that allows us to program them for the most opportune time to attract the birds. We believe that we are the first to use this type of equipment for ornithological research capturing birds. Our 1995 figures were exceptional, capturing, banding and collecting data (age, sex, bill, leg and toe length, weight and fat content used as an index of "migratory readiness") for a record number of 835 birds, bringing our total to over 1800 in three fall seasons. This is quite an accomplishment since only 1400 Soras have ever been banded in North American rail research. We also managed to recapture one of our banded birds from 1994, thirteen months later on its second migration through Jug Bay, and another returned in the Spring. By capturing banded birds, we learn more about their migration timing, route, and mortality rate. The rails were banded with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service aluminum numbered leg bands.

In addition to trapping, abundance was also measured indirectly by using a special technique known as call-response survey. This technique is especially useful in counting birds that are found in inaccessible habitats or are secretive in nature and aren't easily observed. The tech-

nique involves broadcasting a sound stimulus, such as a tape recorded call or sharp loud noise, such as a slap of a canoe paddle against the water, and counting the number of individuals responding in a given time. Using this technique, we surveyed approximately 100 stations over eight miles of Patuxent marsh weekly, from September through November, yielding information on abundance and distribution on Soras over time and different habitat types. In 1995, our project received national attention when we secured a grant from the National Biological Service (NBS) to study webless migratory game birds. This enabled us to purchase additional equipment and hire a research assistant. In 1996, we were hoping to receive another grant from NBS to expand our research using sophisticated radio telemetry equipment (attaching tiny transmitters to the birds) to track things such as their movements, length of stay, habitat use and other behaviors while at Jug Bay. Hopefully, we would also try to track the birds by airplane as they migrate out of the area to more southern marshes. No one has attempted this before with rails. We did not receive the grant from NBS, however, but Maryland Quail Unlimited stepped in and provided the funds and generous support for this unique research project, which would not have been possible without them. Funds were used not only for the purchase of transmitters, but also for the purchase of airplane time to track them and photograph the study area.

The project was a smashing success. The transmitters worked beautifully, and we accomplished all of our goals and then some, even attempting to track the birds to Florida by small plane, following their migration route. We plan to continue this preliminary work next fall on a larger scale if funding comes through as proposed.

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's Patuxent River Park/Jug Bay Natural Area, is the main sponsor of this project. The National Biological Service is also providing a research biologist to lend his expertise in telemetry and field research, as well as loaning several thousand dollars worth of equipment to the cause.

Studying birds like the Sora can provide indications of environmental decline. During the past two years, we have noticed a dramatic decrease of wild rice growing in the Patuxent marshes. Whether this is a temporary or permanent situation, it could have a detrimental effect on Soras as well as other bird species that depend on the wild rice as a fall food source. The rice is an integral part of the unique eco-system on the Patuxent River, and research such as this, supported by organizations like Quail Unlimited, demonstrates the value of preserving wetlands for the future.





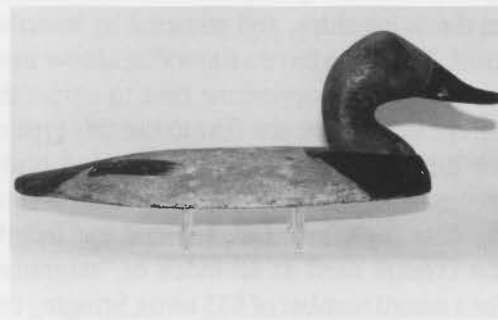
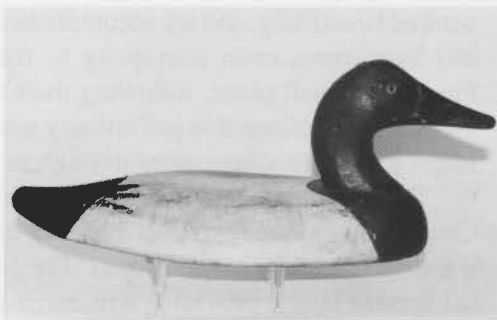
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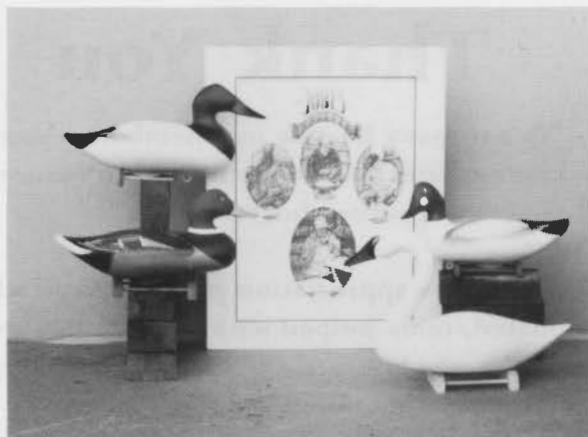
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# CALENDAR

## September

**6-7**

Currituck Wildlife Festival. Wildlife Art, decoys, photography, woodcarvers, old decoys and artifact displays, retriever demonstrations, auction, Duck & Goose and Swan calling contest. For more information contact Currituck Wildlife Guild, P.O. Box 91, Shawboro, N.C. 27973 or (919) 232-2962.

**13-14**

10th Annual Duck Fair. Free Admission, held on the grounds of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum and Bayou Condominium. Carvers, wildfowl artists, Duck & Goose Calling Contest, auction, raffles, food, carving demonstrations, children's decoy painting, retriever demonstrations, and "History Alive" programs. Call (410) 939-3739 for more information.

**20-21**

15th Annual Wings 'n Water Festival to be held at the Wetlands Institute in Stone Harbor, New Jersey. Call (609) 368-1211.

**27-28**

1997 Old Time Barnegat Bay Decoy & Gunning Show. Held at the Tip Seaman County Park, Pinelands Regional High School and Middle School, Tuckerton, NJ. Free admission. Rain or shine. Call (609) 971-3085.

## October

**11**

Decoy, Sporting Collectibles & Art Auction by the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. Held at the Havre de Grace Community Center. Preview on Friday, October 10th from 6pm - 8pm. Auction begins at 10am Saturday. Contact the Decoy Museum at (410) 939-3739. Still accepting consignments.

**12**

Frank & Frank Sporting Collectibles annual fall decoy auction to be held at the Taylor Pavillion in Belmar, New Jersey. Contact Frank & Frank at (908) 938-2988 or (908) 938-5544.

**18-19**

30th anniversary Upper Shore Decoy Show to be held at the school in North East, Maryland. Contact: The Upper Bay Museum, P.O. Box 275, North East, MD 21901 or (410) 287-2675.

**25**

Chestertown Wildlife Exhibition & Sale. Throughout Historic downtown Chestertown on Maryland's Eastern Shore. 9am-5pm. Artists, carvers, painters, music, duck & goose calling, slide programs, carving competitions, soup tasting, decoy identification. Call (410) 778-0416.

## November

**20-23**

Decoy and Wildfowl Carvers Association Wildfowl Arts Festival at the San Bernardino County Museum, San Bernardino, CA. For more information call Lydell Lambeth, (909) 793-9445.

## Thank You

to our many friends and members whose kindness and generosity helped to ensure a successful Yard Sale.

Our sincere appreciation goes out to all who donated items, helped with pricing, and arose in the wee hours of the morning to set up and man the Yard Sale tables.



# Havre de Grace Decoy Museum 1st Sporting Clay Event

Havre de Grace Decoy Museum's 1st Annual Sporting Clays Event was a complete success despite Mother Nature's attempts. Although winds in excess of 30 mph were present at times during the day, seventy (70) supporters arrived at Alexander's Sporting Farms April 19, 1997, to help raise funds for the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. What a splendid job they did! The HOA prize was a Browning Gold 12 gauge, and the attendance gun was a Browning BPS 12 gauge. The day's event provided a net income of \$5,142.00!

To keep the decoy collectors' interest, several past festival honorary chairmen participated in the shoot. These luminaries included Charlie Joiner of Chestertown, MD, Charlie Bryan of Middle River, MD, and Bill and Alan Schaubert of Chestertown, MD. A raffle was held for the pre-registrants and Charles Brown (of The Sinkbox fame) was picked as the winner to shoot the course with Charlie Joiner. Following the shoot, a short auction was held and the top two lots were a pair of sleeping Canvasbacks donated by Charlie Joiner (\$600) and a pair of Pintails donated by Charlie Bryan (\$525).

Event coordinator Michael Affleck attributed the success to many things, which included the event sponsors providing cash to purchase the outstanding prizes, the always willing decoy carvers that donated items for the live auction, the remarkable and accommodating personnel at Alexander's, and of course, the shooters who willingly supported the museum. Next year's event is scheduled for August 1, 1998 at the same location.



Charlie Bryan and friends returning to the clubhouse. Photo courtesy of Fred Gillotte, Jr.

## RESULTS

HOA	Bill Bailey, Jr.	Score: 50	Prize: Browning Gold 12g.
RU	Steve Lay	Score: 48	Prize: Case of shells

### Ladies Class:

JoAnn Peed	Prize: \$ 100.00
LuAnn Miller	Prize: Case of shells

### Lewis Class Winners:

Don Peed	Charles Bryan
Tom Gunn	Brian Scarbrough
Charles Brown	Jerry Donovan
Fred Gillotte, Jr.	Bob Moffett
Steve Gorham	Bill Ensor
Mike Parkhurst	Leonard Burcham

The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum would like to thank the following sponsors for their generosity:

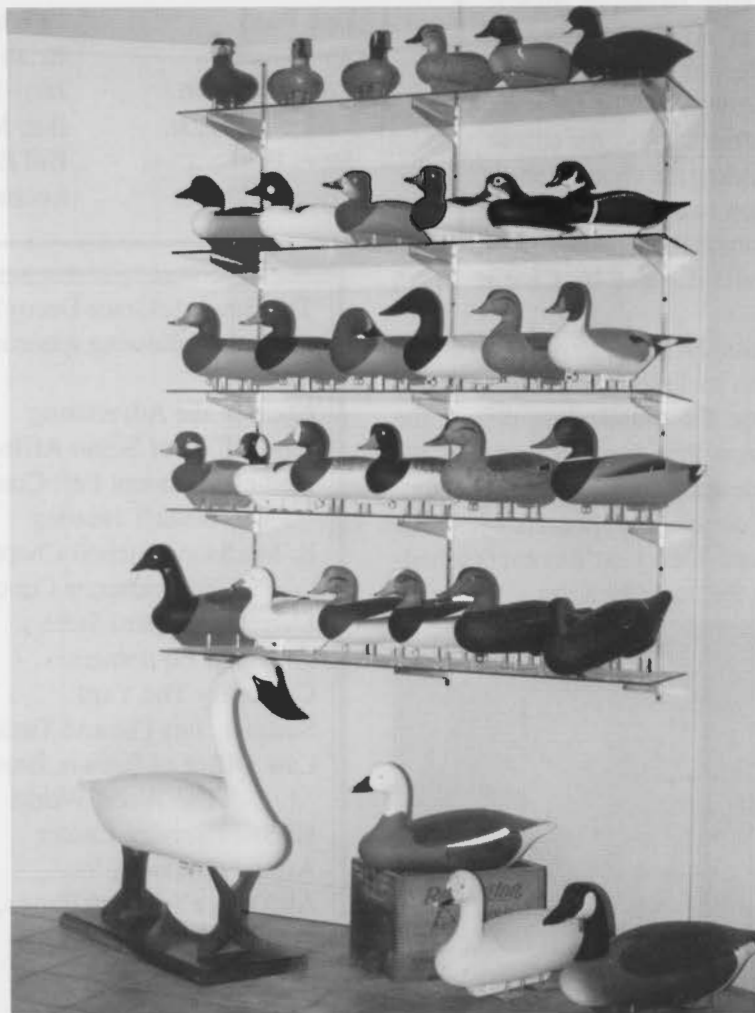
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# Decoys, Sporting Collectibles & Art AUCTION

Held at the Havre de Grace Community Center  
**Saturday, October 11, 1997**

*Antique & Contemporary Decoys, Decorative Birds, Wildlife Art & Collectibles*

Featuring a collection by Charlie Bryan.  
33 decoys, sold as a complete collection,  
including a rare **BLUE GOOSE, SEAGULL, & SWAN**



Previews: Fri. Oct. 10th, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m. & Sat. Oct. 11th, 8a.m. - 10 a.m.

Sale Begins Promptly at 10 a.m. Auction benefits the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

**For More Information call (410) 939-3739.**

Consignments Still Being Accepted.

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

A special thank you goes to all of the volunteers that made the 1997 Decoy, Wildlife Art & Sportsman Festival possible. Volunteers assisted the Board of Directors and staff in many areas including; ringing sales at the Museum's gift tables, selling raffle tickets, painting signs, distributing brochures, posting signs, working at the competitions, setting up tables, cleaning up, and much, much, more.



*Ed Watts helps paint new Festival signs.  
Photo by Ken Lay.*

# 1997 Decoy, Wildlife Art & Sportsman Festival The Atlantic Flyway Classic Carving Competition Winners

### DECORATIVE FLOATING

#### Best of Show - Novice

1st place	Canvasback	Walter Bram
2nd place	Gadwell	Melvin Vannaman, Jr.
3rd place	Widgeon	Walter Bram

#### Best of Show - Intermediate

1st place	Cin. Teal Hen	Charles Egbert
2nd place	Golden Eye	Larry Peck
3rd place	Grebe, Drake	Robert Gray

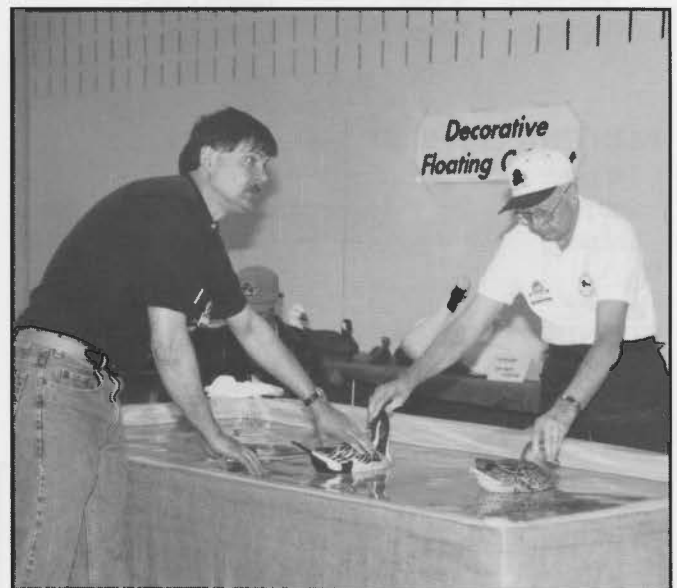
#### Best of Show - Open

1st place	Widgeon	Jason Lucio
2nd place	Canvasback	Phil Selzer
3rd place	Wood Duck	Jeff Beach

### DECORATIVE MINIATURE

#### Best of Show

1st place	Eagle	Jim Hageley
2nd place	Ross Goose	Jason Lucto
3rd place	Osprey	John L. Williams



*Judges float the entries at the 1997 Decoy Festival. Photo by Leo Heppner.*

### DECORATIVE LIFE SIZE, NON-FLOATING

#### Best of Show

1st place	Sora Rail	Sina Pat Kurman
2nd place	Indio Bunting	Jim Hazely
3rd place	Least Bittern	Jim Hazely

## DECORATIVE SLICK

### Best of Show

1st place	Ross Goose	Charles Prinz
2nd place	Gadwall	Thom Christie
3rd place	Ring Neck	Charles Prinz

## THE SUSQUEHANNA FRESH WATER & SALT-WATER FISH CARVING COMPETITION

### Best of Show

1st place	Rainbow Trout	Joseph Coppock
2nd place	Blue Fish	Joseph Coppock
3rd place	Yellow Perch	Edwin Darwin

## GUNNING DECOYS

### Best of Show

1st place	Old Squaw	Charles Prinz
2nd place	Mallard	Charles Prinz
3rd place	Crackling Goose	Mark Costilow

## YOUTH COMPETITION

### Best of Show

1st place	Bufflehead	Kristen Brown
2nd place	Scoter	James Lacy
3rd place	Wood Duck	James Lacy

## PAINTING CONTEST

1st place	Ed Itter
2nd place	Kevin Hammell
3rd place	Mary Larrimore

## GUNNING RIG COMPETITION

1st place	George Williams
2nd place	George R. Rout
3rd place	Sandy Allen



*Youth competition at the 1977 Decoy Festival. Photo by Leo Heppner.*



*1977 Decoy Festival first place winner. Photo by Leo Heppner.*



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### Announcing *The R. Madison Mitchell Chapter* Ducks Unlimited Annual Dinner

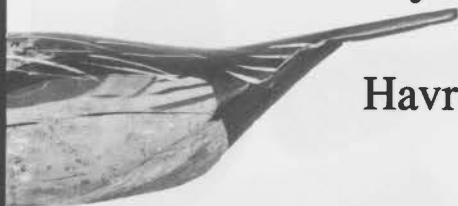
This dinner offers the discriminating decoy collector some of the finest offerings available from the northern and middle Chesapeake Bay areas. Each year unique and "first of" species are donated by carvers such as Charlie Joiner, Charlie Bryan, Jim & Charlie Pierce, Bill & Allan Schaubert, the entire Jobs family; Capt. Harry, Charles, Joey & Bobby, Mike Affleck, Ron Laber, Dave Walker, Bryon Bodt, Pat Vincenti, Steve Lay, Dan Carson and Johnny Clark (winner of the 1997 DU Maryland State Decoy Contest).

Please come and spend the evening with us and all of the carvers mentioned above at The Bayou Restaurant, Havre de Grace, MD on September 27, 1997. Full dinner with complimentary open bar before dinner is included. Tickets are \$50.00 per person and \$90.00 per couple. For ticket information, please contact Kevin Miller, ticket chairman, (410) 272-2378 or Michael Affleck, chapter chairman at (410) 557-6751 (evenings).

## Heads or tails, you will always win, if you become a member

of the

### Havre de Grace Decoy Museum



#### Membership Application

Membership in the Museum offers you significant benefits not available to the general public. Each member receives four issues of *The Canvasback* magazine free of charge. Additionally, members gain free entry to the Museum, notification of Museum events and a 10% discount in the Museum's Gift Shop.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Membership Level:

Student: \$15 \_\_\_\_\_

Individual: \$20 \_\_\_\_\_

Family: \$35 \_\_\_\_\_

Business: \$100 \_\_\_\_\_

Life Member: \$500 \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail this form with your check or money order to:

Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, Membership

P.O. Box 878

Havre de Grace, Maryland 21078



# EXHIBIT UPDATE

Kim Martin

## DU DECANTERS

The Museum's latest exhibit features an eye-catching collection of Ducks Unlimited decanters. Lester Wilson of Havre de Grace, Maryland is the owner of the collection and has generously allowed the Museum to display his prized possessions. Lester began collecting the decanters in 1975 and continued until the series was discontinued in 1992. Every year a species of waterfowl was represented in the decanter's design. Included in the series are: wood ducks, mallards, pintails, canvasbacks, ring-necks, widgeons, and redheads, just to name a few. The decanters will be on display through August 1997.

*1975 Ducks Unlimited decanter from the collection of Lester Wilson. Photo by K. Martin.*

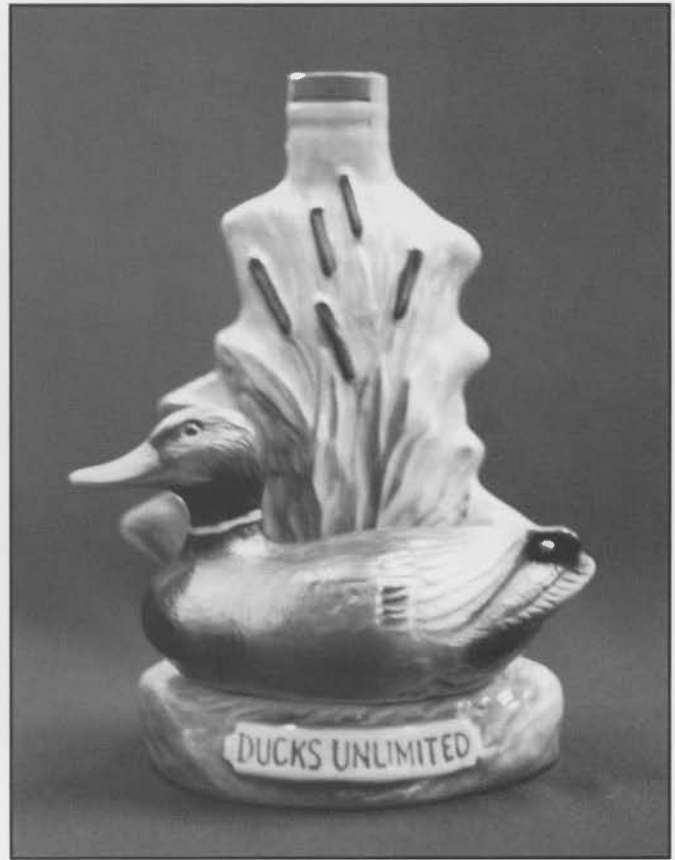
## DECORATIVE BIRD CARVINGS

There have been several changes made to the decorative bird carvings display located in the Museum's Main Gallery. The changes are in the form of a swap, artists replacing their carving on display with another of their creations. Carvers who have made a swap include Jeff Beach, who replaced his canvasback drake with a mallard drake and George Stram, who replaced his canvasback drake with a widgeon drake. Arthur "Whitey" Frank also promises to follow suit by replacing his canvasback drake with a surprise work in progress. All three of these decorative carvings will be on display until next spring.

## POTOMAC RIVER DECOYS

Many of you have enjoyed his articles in Decoy Magazine and soon you will have a chance to view treasures from his personal decoy collection. Author and collector, Jim Trimble of Alexandria, Virginia, has generously agreed to display highlights from his collection of Potomac River decoys in the Museum's Main gallery. The decoys of Albert Campbell, James "Corb" Reed, James Baines, Charles Herbert, T. F. Twiford, Albert Twiford, and William Wiley will be featured in this exhibit which will run from August through December, 1997.

*Pair of canvasback miniatures by Albert Campbell. Photo by K. Martin.*



# Tribute to the Litzenberg Family

Poem by Marshall Purnell, friend

## BILL AND I

WE'LL GO DOWN TO THE SHORE  
TODAY, MY BROTHER BILL AND I.

OFF HIGH POINT THERE, WHERE  
THE WIND IS FREE, WHERE THE  
RED HEADS AND CANVAS BACK  
FLY.

IT'LL BE GOOD TO BE WITH  
BILL AND MY HOME RIG OF  
DECOYS AND THE BUSHWACK  
BOAT WITH THE OLD BLOCK  
OARS THAT MAKE A SQUEAKEN'  
NOISE

THE TIDE IS IN AND THE  
WATERS DEEP WITH A GENTLY  
GUNNING WIND

THE SUN IS UP AND THE BIRDS  
WE WANT WILL SOON BE DARTING IN.

WE'LL SIT AND WATCH THE FIRST  
BIRDS IN AND WONDER AT THE  
SIGHT, CAUSE IT'S BEEN A FEW  
YEARS THAT BILL AND I HAVE SEEN  
SUCH A BEAUTIFUL FLIGHT.

THEN WE'LL SET THE OAR, LET  
JOHN DUCK GO AND GET READY  
TO MAKE THE SCULL, WHEN WE  
GET THERE IN THE DECOYS.

IT'LL BE A FREE FOR ALL  
THEN WE'LL PICK EM UP AND  
HEAD FOR HOME AS THE SUN SETS  
LOW IN THE SKY

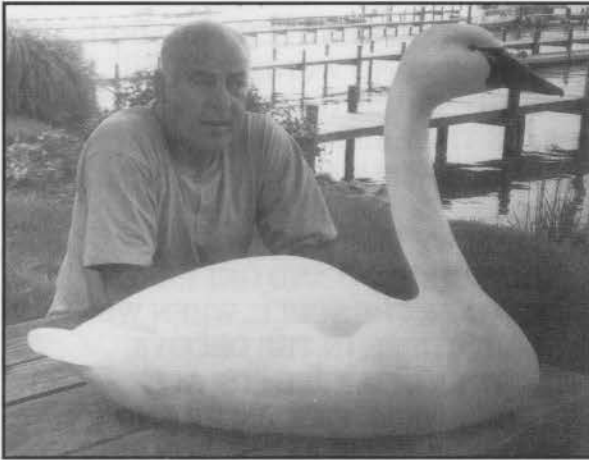
AND WE'LL DO THE SAME  
TOMORROW, MY BROTHER BILL  
AND I.



# In Memory of Robert F. Lord Jr.

## March 6, 1937-February 5, 1997

Ashley Gray, friend



I met Bobby Lord at the 1993 World's in Ocean City, Maryland. He was selling wood and using his computer brain, not a calculator, to figure the prices. We started talking about carving and he said he needed some help so I invited him up to my house in Myersville, Maryland. Bob came up the following Saturday and he tried to pay me but I refused the money. We had a good time carving that day. The next time he came up, a couple of weeks later, he spent the night. He brought a frozen rock fish about three feet long, a couple of chickens, a bottle of vodka and several real nice pieces of wood. He brought so much stuff he looked like he was moving in! In his deep voice he declared, "Well, if you won't take any money, the least I can do is help earn my keep."

Bobby was easy to teach. He'd say, "You only have to show me one time." He was right. He was intelligent, very intense and very focused. He was everything a good carver has to be. In a short time, Bobby's carving went from novice level to a level that was very refined. He started to win some ribbons and ultimately, Best of Show. We went to many shows together in New England, Ocean City; Maryland, Virginia Beach, and Louisiana.

Bobby and I talked about everything. He became my best friend. He was a great athlete. His drive off the golf tee would win a nod of approval from Tiger Woods. He played professional soccer for a time which caused him to suffer profound knee trouble. He had seven knee operations, four on the right knee. Bobby had the old fashioned operations. Arthroscopic surgery was not an option when he had to be put back together. Later, the arthritis in his knees pained him a great deal, but he was not one to complain.

He loved teaching math at Du Val High School. He loved to teach children who really wanted to learn. The children did not know it, but they were not just learning math. They were learning strength of character too, just like I did, and anybody else who knew him and spent time with him. They all loved him! The students, teachers, and staff, black, white, Asian, Indian, rich or poor. This was most apparent at his funeral. The school was closed that day so everybody could come to the funeral.

It is perhaps cruel to say, but the fact is that some people do not make any difference, but Bobby did. He made a big difference. He will be sorely missed, especially by his son Eric and me.

### CLASSIFIED

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

ANY INFORMATION regarding a carver named H. Robinson who lived in Havre de Grace, Maryland. Contact Fred McClintock, 12816 Holdridge Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20906 or call 301-946-9448

WANTED: Charles "Buck" Crawford miniatures. Contact Lou Nolan, 1123 Peshurst Lane, Penn Valley, PA or call (610) 664-5938.

NOTICE: \* Freen Decoy List \* New red list, Masons, Evans, Canada & East Coast decoys. Send SASE to: John Freimuth, 12123 S 71st Avenue, Palo Heights, IL 60463. (708) 361-4343.

ATTENTION VA, MD, & DC decoy collectors: The Potomac Decoy Collectors Association (PDCA) will hold its next meeting in mid-September. PDCA members meet once a month to socialize; examine decoys; exchange information on makers, history, care, and preservation; buy, sell, & trade decoys and related items; and just plain talk ducks! For more information please call Tom East at (703) 866-1735, or Chad Tragakis at (703) 768-2949.



# 1997•98 Maryland Duck Stamp Print



“Return To The Chesapeake” painted by Jim Taylor of Perry Hall, depicts a pair of majestic Canvasbacks gliding in over the bay at sunset. This marks the twenty-third year for this prestigious competition, and the highly collectable Maryland Duck Stamp and limited edition art print.

Print editions are limited to **1400 STANDARD** and **160 ARTIST'S PROOFS** reproduced in fade resistant inks on the finest acid-free paper. The image is 6-1/2" by 9" and the paper size is 12-1/2" by 14". All prints will be signed and numbered by the artist. Individual unique pencil or color remarques are available on either edition.

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1997•98 Maryland Duck Stamp Print Available from Fine Art Galleries and Picture Frame Shops Throughout Maryland including:

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Chesapeake Gallery  
North East 410-287-5300

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Columbia 1-800-672-9089

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