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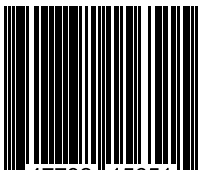
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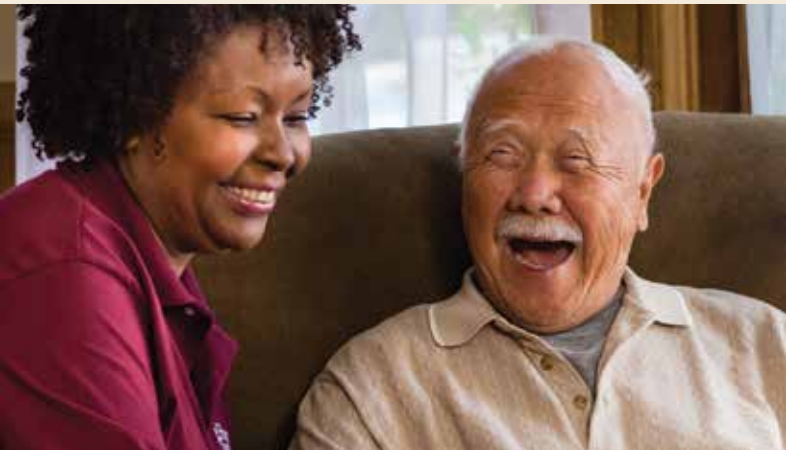
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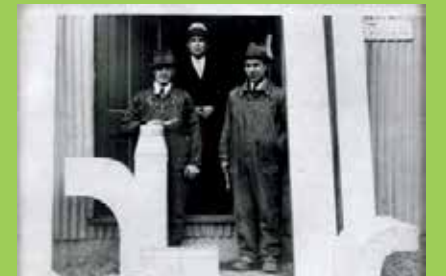
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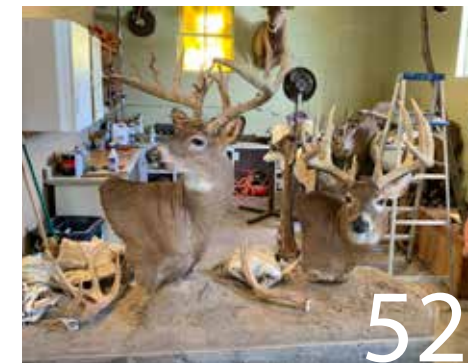
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Nearly every month that we plan an issue of Shore Monthly, I wonder worry how it will all come together. Do these articles belong together? Do they fit our theme well? Will readers enjoy this collection of stories, find new ways to immerse themselves in Eastern Shore culture, learn something fascinating, or enjoy the art in the pages? Or, will they pick up the magazine, thumb through a few pages, and toss it aside?

And yet, each month, as writers file their articles and photographers submit their photos, something unexpected takes shape. While the pieces we assign always fit the theme we had in mind for the issue, each edition takes on a character of its own that we never could plan.

This month, there was no doubt that a hunting guide/call maker, taxidermists, and wood duck box building would fit our hunting theme, but I was particularly warmed by the themes that emerged — family, friendship, conservation, art and joy.

We hope as you enjoy the many regional offerings this season — maybe the Sultana Downrigging Festival in Chestertown or Waterfowl Festival in Easton — and as you prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving, these themes also emerge in your lives.

At Shore Monthly, we are thankful for your faithful readership, kind words, and thoughtful ideas; the writers, photographers, and advertisers who fill these pages; for our colleagues here at the magazine; and for the space to tell the stories of the Eastern Shore.

Sarah Ensor
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EASY-LIVING, CASUAL ELEGANCE

SHORE MONTHLY

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Look who's on the sidelines! University of Maryland Shore Regional Health orthopedist Dr. Jason Jancosko isn't just caring for Eastern Shore residents in the usual places. His medical expertise, including injury prevention, extends to many local fields. He and his colleague, Dr. Richard Mason, volunteer their time as team physicians for schools in Caroline, Dorchester, Queen Anne's and Talbot counties. That's a lot of time spent ensuring one goal: that young athletes are safe and well. After all, a healthy community is definitely a winning one!

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Autumn

AT THE BISTRO

Story by Katie Willis | Photos by Caroline J. Phillips

While fall in St. Michaels is always a magical time of year, it's really the locals and the local businesses that make it so special. One such restaurant is Bistro St. Michaels, owned by Doug Stewart, who also owns Stewart's Catering.

Stewart of St. Michaels said when he took ownership of the restaurant, his goal was to really hone in on the local flare, including using fresh, local ingredients in the dishes and local liquor crafted just down the street at Lyon Distilling.

Bistro St. Michaels created several locally inspired cocktails that are perfect for crisp fall weather, as well as incorporating a little spice and a lot of variety into your palate.

One such fall-inspired beverage is the "Rumsky" Old Fashioned – a mixture using four whiskeys and Lyon Distilling's Rock and Rum, all mixed and settled into

an oak barrel, which was lovingly given to Bistro St. Michaels by Lyon Distilling owner Jaime Windon after it was used to craft some of their specialty whiskey.

The house-made "Rumsky" has a smoky, yet floral flavor, thanks to the barrel, as well as the infusion of hibiscus flowers. Bistro mixologist Marie Cabeceiras said the mix of whiskey and rum, the edible flowers and the smoky oak barrel give the "Rumsky" a different flavor each time it's poured.

Cabeceiras creates the "Rumsky" Old Fashioned by first muddling sugar, oranges and Luxardo maraschino cherries, before adding ice and the "Rumsky." The floral, smoky flavor, mixed with the fresh fruit, makes this the perfect fall drink for sitting outside around a bonfire, wrapped in a blanket, or perched at Bistro St. Michaels newly remodeled





bar area.

Stewart, who also is the executive chef of Bistro St. Michaels, said, “We tend to move to the beat of our own drum here.”

Nowhere is this more evident than with the Tetanus Shot, a play off the popular Rusty Nail. This drink is *special*, and perfect for any season.

Cabeceiras said she starts by steeping rosemary and fennel seeds and later adding in clover honey, to create a signature, specialty mix. She said she uses guests’ favorite everyday scotch, puts it in a shaker with ice, adds a touch of lemon simple syrup and serves it chilled, in a rocks glass with ice.

It. Is. *Amazing*. It’s got an aggressive name, but the taste is light, mostly reminiscent of a chilled tea with a kick. It gives you this feeling that you’re drinking something good for you, and the care with each piece of this cocktail was crafted is evident.

Cabeceiras said Stewart is a huge fan of using local, fresh ingredients to add a unique flare to their cocktail list. With this in mind, try the house-made, garden-infused vodka in the Bistro Bloody Mary. It’s like packing your tastebuds with your entire backyard garden all at once.

Cabeceiras said they start by infusing vodka with poblano peppers, dill, red and green peppers, carrots, onions, garlic cloves and a Bay leaf.

Once the flavors are good and melded together, piecing together their version of the Bloody Mary can begin.

It’s got the typical Old Bay rim, but its garnishes are truly unique, much like the garden-packed flavor. Garnished with the quintessential lemon, lime, celery and green olive, it also comes with a chili pepper and a roasted sliver of sweet potato. You’ve got to be brave to dive into that chili pepper, sure, but what really is unique about this Bloody Mary, is the vodka doesn’t overpower the veggies. It’s got a strong veggie flavor, perfectly seasoned and just spicy enough. Again, you can’t help but feel you’ve really done something good for yourself by ordering this. It’s that fresh, and it’s that colorful, and it’s that delicious.

If spice isn’t your thing, there’s the Bistro Red Ruby Martini, a perfect compliment to one of the Bistro’s seasonal seafood dishes, and also inspired by local ingredients.

Cabeceiras said she starts with your favorite vodka in an iced shaker, then adds Agave Arts and Juicing Co.’s fresh, cold-pressed ruby red grapefruit juice. It is sweet and refreshing for those still warm-ish fall days. The juice is cold-pressed just across the street.

Stewart said any one of these cocktails is perfect as an addition to any of the locally inspired fall dishes on the menu, including coq au vin, short rib bourguignon and the Bistro’s hearty gumbo. He said his favorite fall legume is mushrooms, so keep an eye out for specials.

Stewart credits the success of the restaurant to the team in place there, as well as to all the moving parts that go into making the business thrive.

“There are a lot of moving parts that go on behind the scenes here, a lot. The team here is great. I’m fortunate and grateful for that,” Stewart said. 🍷



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By: Ryan Helfenbein

During dinner my 6-year-old daughter asked me about my day at work. Before I could give a response my 13-year-old piped up to explain to her that Dad probably had meetings in Easton and Annapolis today. He was then cut off by my 10-year-old saying that Dad most likely drove around all day in his car and talked to families on the phone. But then my daughter retook control of the table and followed up on her question with “Dad, did you help people today and

make their families feel better?” It was amazing! Now granted, it was not stated in the most elegant of ways, but she got it. My 6 year old little girl knew my role as an undertaker and even though the other two simply explained what they see me do, my daughter was the one who was able to put it all together and define the role of an undertaker today: To help families heal.

To many, the role of an undertaker is based solely around the deceased. But in reality, the career has morphed into a grief counseling, legal and financial advising, family supporting, short term event organizing, all-inclusive helper. All with an understanding that this “job duty” is during a time of intense emotion, with only one chance to get it right. There are no do overs for undertakers. While an undertaker does have some focus on the deceased, there is much concentration on those left behind and what will be beneficial to them in order to help them heal through this difficult time.

A typical day in the life of an undertaker has been filmed, written and blogged about more times that I care to mention. But none truly depict the internal emotions that are absorbed by undertakers on a daily basis each and every time a family is assisted with a loss. I feel confident in saying that any undertaker today could share experiences that have affected them personally of families they have worked with. This is especially true when young individuals, tragedies and friends of the community pass away. Undertakers often absorb the grief of not only what



Ask the Undertaker

that one family is experiencing, but the grief multiple families have experienced time and time again, throughout their career. Because of this, when large tragedies occur in our nation, out of area undertakers often call upon the local funeral homes to offer their assistance. It is common that only a few funeral homes assist that given community resulting in even fewer undertakers to aid the multiple families affected. This in turn is a tremendous amount of heartache for a small handful of undertakers to cope with at one given time. A good example of this is 9/11. Undertakers from all over the nation came together to expedite the process of identifying individuals lost and assist in supporting those families left behind. One of my retired business partners was involved in that process and to this day still talks about the impact it had on him.

Now, I know I pick on my fellow dark suited night owls quite often, but in reality, most that choose the path of undertaking are truly special people. They put their own lives on hold for that of their community. They step away from their own family during Thanksgiving dinner to care for another down the street. And they sacrifice their own child's first Christmas to assist a family in their last. As my father has always said to my brothers and me, “we can sacrifice our time together for that family's final moment with their loved one”. All in all, neighborhood family undertakers were put here for a reason. They are here for you and me when life throws us the most challenging curve ball of all. No matter what day, hour or holiday it might be. So, during a time of Thanksgiving, I'd like to give thanks to my fellow Undertakers for the personal sacrifices they take in order to help our communities heal. Even though we do drive around a lot, take multiple calls at all hours and have meetings at different locations, we ultimately aid the deceased and focus on ways to help families heal.



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PROFILES

I'LL BE YOUR GUIDE

Inside the life of guide and caller Sean Mann

Story by Reen Waterman | Photos by Caroline J. Phillips

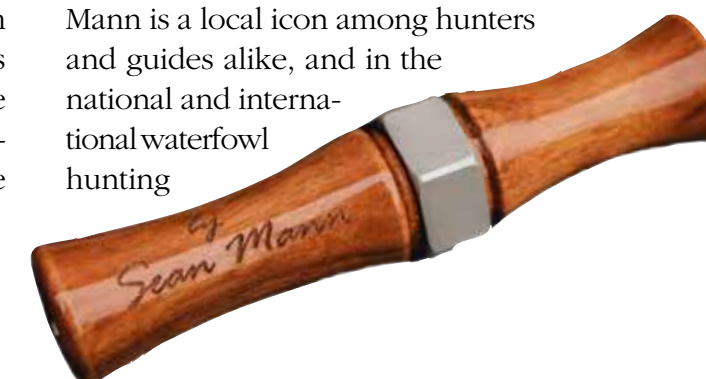
The soul-stirring vocalizations of Canada geese announcing their return from the north is a harmonious rhythm of nature that coincides with the fall grain harvest. Guided by an unerring internal guidance system, gigantic flocks of Canada, blue, snow, and speckled geese joyously honk and cackle as they arrive at their wintering grounds on the Eastern Shore.

Growing up on a farm on the Wye River in the 1970s, it was not uncommon to see 10,000 geese land on the river in a single afternoon. It still amazes me how such a cacophony of individual birds sounding their cry of welcome could blend into a perfect symphony of celebration. If wild geese

are the orchestra of autumn, then Sean Mann is undisputed maestro of those drawn here to pursue these wonders of nature.

I've been friends with Mann since we attended high school together, and he is genuinely optimistic with unbridled energy and a contagious sense of humor. Using the same tenacity he displayed on the lacrosse field, Mann parlayed his passion for waterfowl hunting into a successful career spanning 34 years.

A native Eastern Shoreman, Mann is a local icon among hunters and guides alike, and in the national and international waterfowl hunting



industries. While Mann is proud of the contests he has won and the titles he holds (including World Goose Calling Champion), he is even prouder of numerous others who have won contests using his calls.

He is as happy to win a contest as he is to see another competitor outdo him.

“If you are going to compete in a calling contest, you want to be competing against others who are also bringing their A game. You can’t win every contest, but you can do your best ... and can heartily congratulate whomever does win,” Mann said.

Devoted family man, convivial host, and vibrant storyteller, Mann is also highly skilled in the ways of his craft. Mann’s knowledge of waterfowl habits and biology benefits hunters, naturalists and photographers who work with him.

Mann is busy guiding hunts in the fall and winter, and he spends the rest of the year at Sean Mann Outdoors making and selling high quality waterfowl calls.

“I was five years old when my dad first took me hunting,” Mann said. “I was the youngest of five sons and to be invited to hunt was an acknowledgement that I could be trusted with this family tradition. It was like being invited to ‘sit at the big boys table.’

“When I was seven years old, Dad let me shoot a .410, handing me only one shell at a time, because with only one shot I had to make it count. On one hunt, while dad was snoozing, I called in and harvested my first goose on my own — I was hooked.”

For Mann and his family, as it is for many on the Shore, hunting has been a tradition for generations, a way for family members to spend time together both enjoying nature and putting food on the table.

“It has been a way of passing along life lessons and wisdom from generation to generation,” he said. “My father taught me firearms safety and the serious nature of using a gun to take an animal’s life.”

When Mann was a child, his father opened The Gun Shop across from the Tidewater Inn.

“As a student, I would beg to go to the shop after school. If my homework was done, I could stay until closing. I wiped down the counter and all the guns. If no customers were there, my dad was a captive audience to answer all my questions on guns and hunting. When guides and customers were there, I listened with rapt attention to all their stories, insights, and calling. I was hungry to learn all I could and stored every bit of information away as the most valuable of treasures,” Mann said.

The Eastern Shoreman is Mann’s signature call, and he has always been fascinated with Canada geese. (My dad did a lot of things well, but calling geese was not one of them — until he started using the Eastern Shoreman.)

When his father would drive him around the area looking at geese in the fields, Mann would hold a tape recorder out the window to record the sounds they made.

“To me, the sound of a goose is music to my ear. Just as musicians can pick up a guitar and play it for hours all alone, long after hunting season is over, I can sit on my back porch and blow one of my calls and be lost in total reverie.”

Mann reflects on his family history, as well as the future of hunting.

“My dad would never have dreamed of going hunting and not involving the boys. I am stunned at the numbers of men I see hunting without their children,” Mann said. “The number of hunters is declining nationally because of this detachment of hunting parent from uninvited child. For whatever reason, these parents are missing out on one of the greatest opportunities to influence their child by teaching them so much of which hunting involves—ethics, sportsmanship, camaraderie, confidence, and much more. Parents need to involve their children in hunting, and I can guarantee they will be glad they did. They will grow closer to their children and make lifetime memories.” 🍷



Sean Mann is a skilled hunting guide, World Goose Calling Champion, and designer and maker of high-quality calls.

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STAGE LEFT

SOÑDER

Story by Raymond Cummings | Photos by Caroline J. Phillips

On a Sunday afternoon in early August, Foxy's Harbor Grille is a sociable cacophony: laughter, chatter, drink orders, and televised sports blur into an atmospheric din as thick as Saint Michaels' baby blue skies are clear. Glance outside, and a postcard-perfect view of the Miles River gazes affably back at you.

Singer, multi-instrumentalist, and Saint Michaels native Sean F. Schultz, 50, is wholly in his element here. This is where he works, where he performs, where he knows or is related to most passersby. Impish and friendly, he's someone who, after five or ten minutes, you feel that you've known for years. Over the summer, he

self-released *So Far*, the latest release from Soñder, the name he's recorded under since 2014's *The Mind's Eye*. This alias wasn't chosen arbitrarily.

"I found the word in *The Dictionary of Obscured Sorrows*. [Sonder] means the realization that other people have lives different than yours — it's the exact opposite of Narkissos," he explains, referring to his 1990s post-punk band. "I thought that was bold, because ... at the time, back in the day, I was narcissistic. I just had a chip on my shoulder. Over time I realized that if you help others, that karma, the vibration of the universe, comes back and benefits you."

As befits his life experience

— catching Johnny Cash, Black Sabbath, and The Police live in concert as a child, Narkissos' local success, a brief sojourn to Spain to perform at *La Fabrica de la Luz*, a stint managing a record

store — Schultz is a consummate musical polymath. While *So Far* showcases a blend of hard rock and industrial flavors reminiscent of Nine Inch Nails, Flying Saucer Attack, and Filter, ambient film soundtrack fare, Christmas carols,

space rock, experimental noise, and sonic collages crowd the other corners of the burgeoning, largely self-produced discography available on his Bandcamp page. Filtered, frizzled, or plain, there's a calm centeredness to

Schultz's vocals, which register as one more instrument amidst or somewhat subsumed by shoegazing waves of guitar on aspirational anthem "One Day," the jangling, floaty "Rewind," or "Patience," a fuzzy, radio-friendly confection

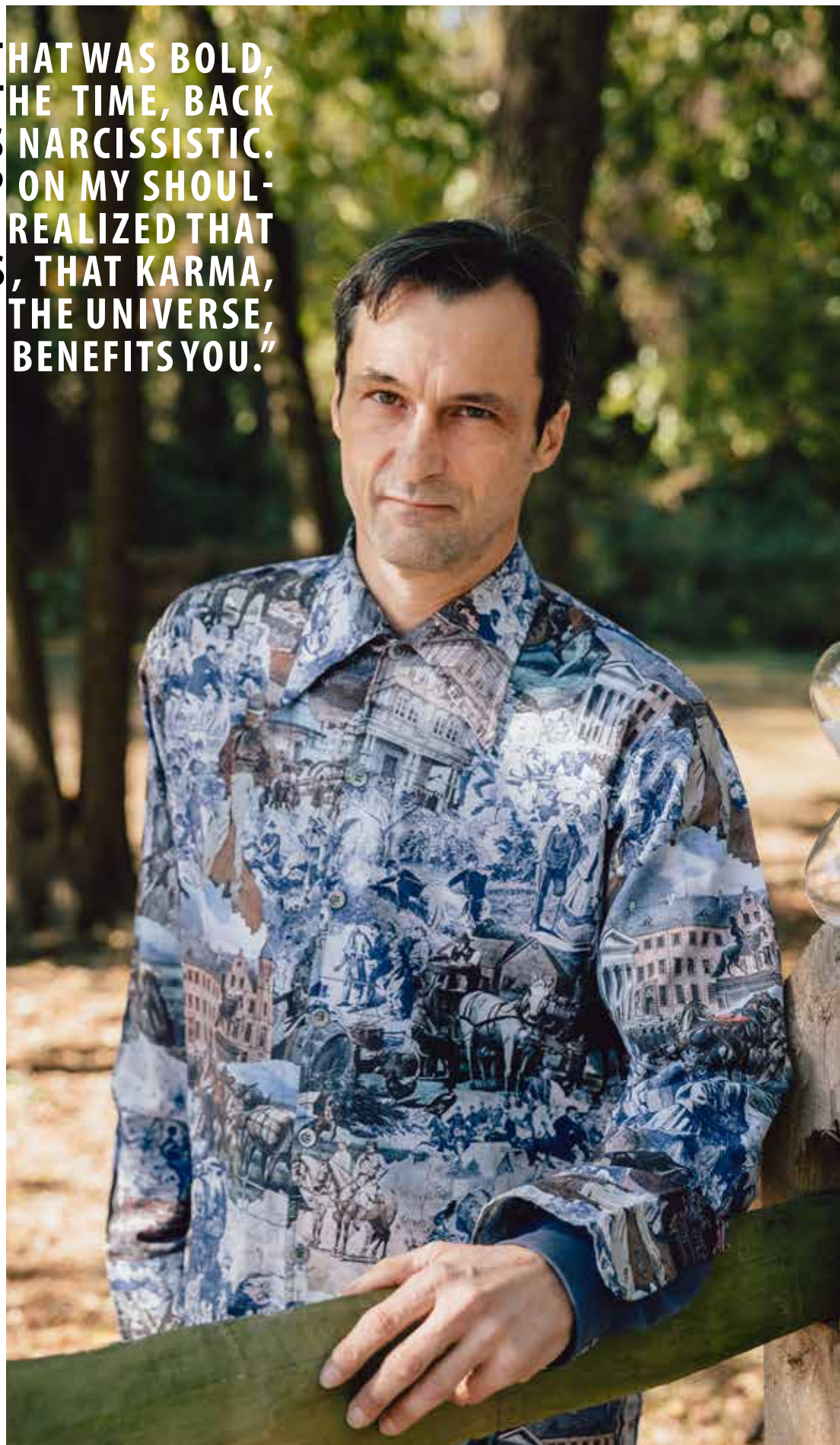


“ I THOUGHT THAT WAS BOLD, BECAUSE ... AT THE TIME, BACK IN THE DAY, I WAS NARCISSISTIC. I JUST HAD A CHIP ON MY SHOULDER. OVER TIME I REALIZED THAT IF YOU HELP OTHERS, THAT KARMA, THE VIBRATION OF THE UNIVERSE, COMES BACK AND BENEFITS YOU.”

that handily synthesizes late 20th century pop-punk, R.E.M.'s "The End of The World As We Know It (And I Feel Fine)," and Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start The Fire."

Yet his enthusiasm for his music, the larger music world, and musicians in general — Schultz proposed to his wife by convincing Dinosaur Jr. bassist Lou Barlow, "wonderful, soft-spoken, a little shy," to write the question on a t-shirt — pales in comparison to his excitement over his daughter's piano prowess.

"She has to practice an hour a day, seven days a week. I mean, I feel sorry for my daughter. When I first started seeing her play, and the other students, I questioned myself — am I doing the right thing? To torture her like that. She has five or six songs that she's written at nine, and they're really good," he beams, proud. "Just last month, she did a recital at the Peabody, playing on a Grand Steinway. Nine years old. A hundred people in the room, on the Peabody stage, playing a \$150,000 Steinway. My daughter. *Nine*. I was in tears. To see my daughter on stage, at nine? I didn't touch the drums until I was 10!" **S**



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Old Easton

SCAVENGER HUNT

Take trip down the charming streets of Easton and keep your eyes peeled for these novel feats of architecture. Find them all and you may find yourself the winner of a \$100 Gift Certificate to The Inn and Spa at the Chesapeake Bay Beach Club.

By Jennifer Martella | Photos by Caroline J. Phillips

HEARTHBEAT

SITE 1:
Brick arches and stone
create a lively rhythm
and texture of materials



SITE 2:
Elegant large windows
with leaded glass transoms
and frames painted in the
corporate color highlight
this landmark institution



I have loved scavenger hunts ever since my sixth birthday celebration. My mother invited neighborhood playmates to my birthday party. After we finished cake and ice cream, my very creative mother surprised us with a game. She had hidden ten clues around our backyard — in the shrubbery, under flowerpots, and in other hiding spots that were just challenging enough for six-year-olds to discover without tiring of the game.

Then, we were off as a team and soon peals of delight were heard when one of us found each clue. My mother was amused by how competitive six-year olds could be. When all the clues had been found, I handed out prizes to each of my guests. Perhaps that scavenger hunt instilled in me a love of mysteries and

solving puzzles — to this day I am an avid fan of PBS' Masterpiece Mystery and the New York Times puzzles.

When I moved to the Eastern Shore and established my architectural practice, I was captivated by the rich architectural details in the residential and commercial buildings throughout downtown Easton. Because this issue of Shore Monthly is focused on hunting, I thought it would be fun for readers to participate in a scavenger hunt of architectural and design details found throughout downtown Easton. The finds are all within the irregular boundaries of Federal Street, North West Street, North and South Harrison Street to Earle Street, Goldsborough Street to Aurora Street, and Aurora Street to Dover Street and back to Washington Street.

The contest runs through the end of November. Participants can drop off completed entry forms from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday at the Bullitt House, 102 W. Dover St., or from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday at Piazza Italian Market, 23 TalbotTown Shopping Center.

At the end of the month, Shore Monthly Editor Sarah Ensor will draw the winning form from the container of correct entries. Shore Monthly will contact the winner of the prize, a \$100 gift certificate to The Inn and Spa at the Chesapeake Bay Beach Club, and arrange for the winner's picture to be taken for publication in an upcoming issue.

The entry form in the magazine has a close-up picture of the detail's location, a brief clue about the location and a blank line for the participant to print the street address or building name where the clue is located to verify they found and identified it correctly. Because the contest runs through the month of November, readers have plenty of time to enjoy the fall weather and search for clues. Take a break at Easton's shops and restaurants (especially our new ice cream shops). All of the clues can be seen from city sidewalks. Please respect the homeowners, and do not trespass onto their properties.

In the words of Sherlock Holmes, "The Game is on!" Happy hunting. [S](#)



SITE 3:

OK, here is your “Who’s buried in Grant’s Tomb?” clue. Now you’re off and running but suspend your search for delicious pie and ice cream!



SITE 4:

How much is that doggie in the window? He may be sold when you find this shop but another doggie will take his place!

SITE 5:
This black-and-white sculpture of a backward, standing ride on a donkey.



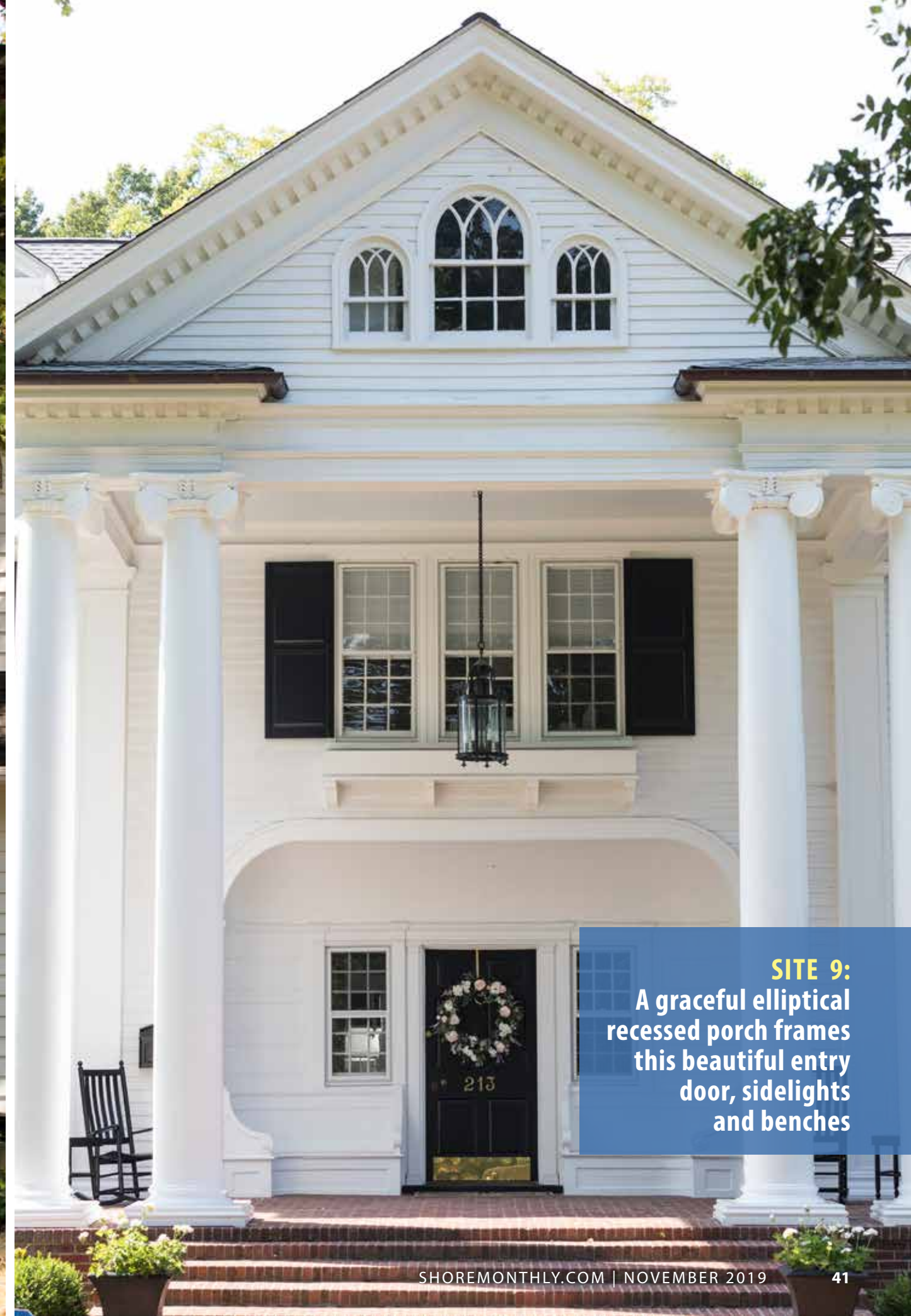
SITE 6:
Very creative custom
wood trim that
protects to block the
sun at each side of
this dormer window



SITE 7:
Many of Easton's
historic buildings
have turrets but you
can actually stay
overnight in two
suites in this turret!



SITE 8:
A charming example
of a Dutch Colonial
entry door and porch



SITE 9:
A graceful elliptical
recessed porch frames
this beautiful entry
door, sidelights
and benches



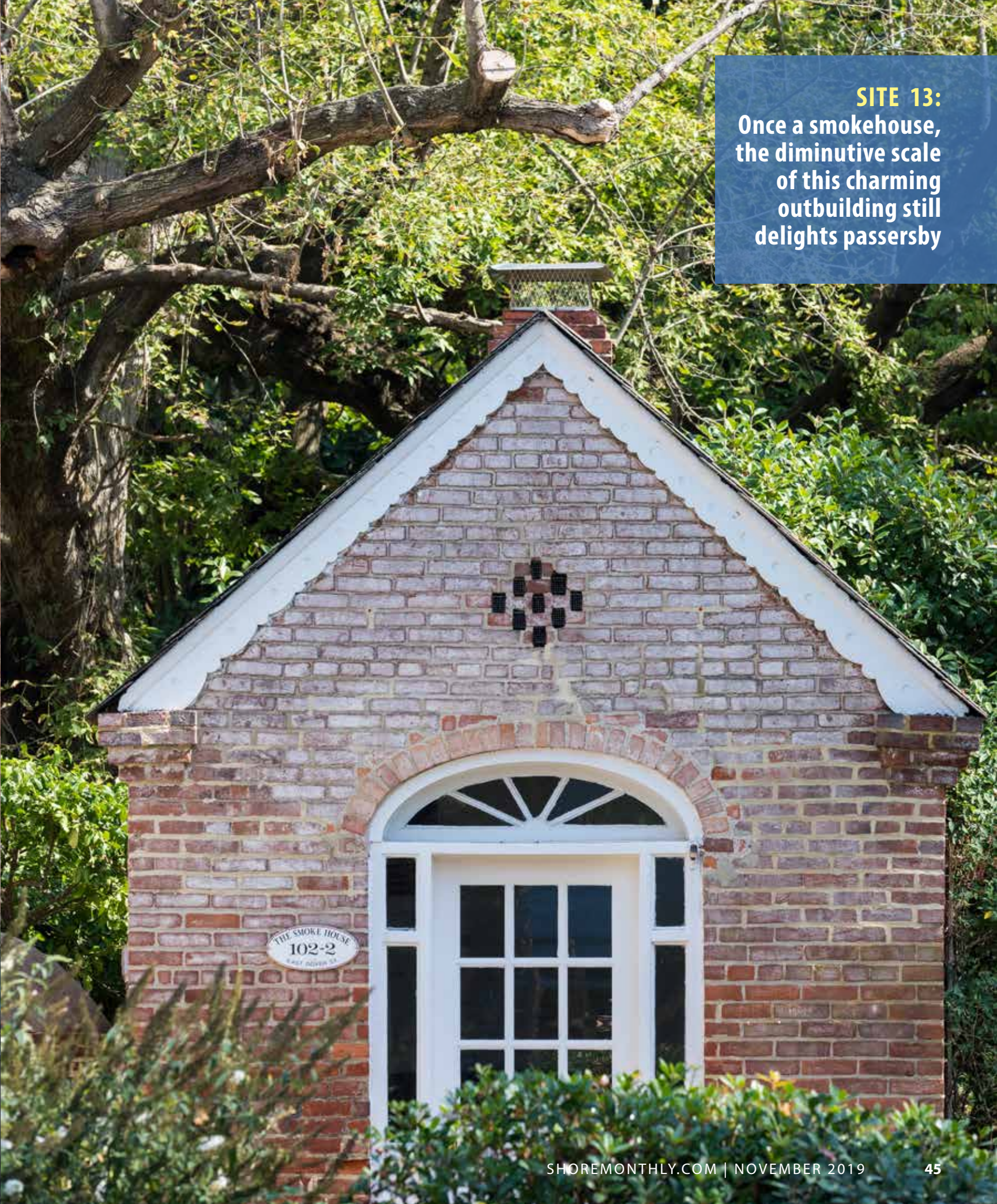
SITE 10:
This keyhole window and exuberant Queen Anne detailing have inspired many Plein Air award-winning painters.



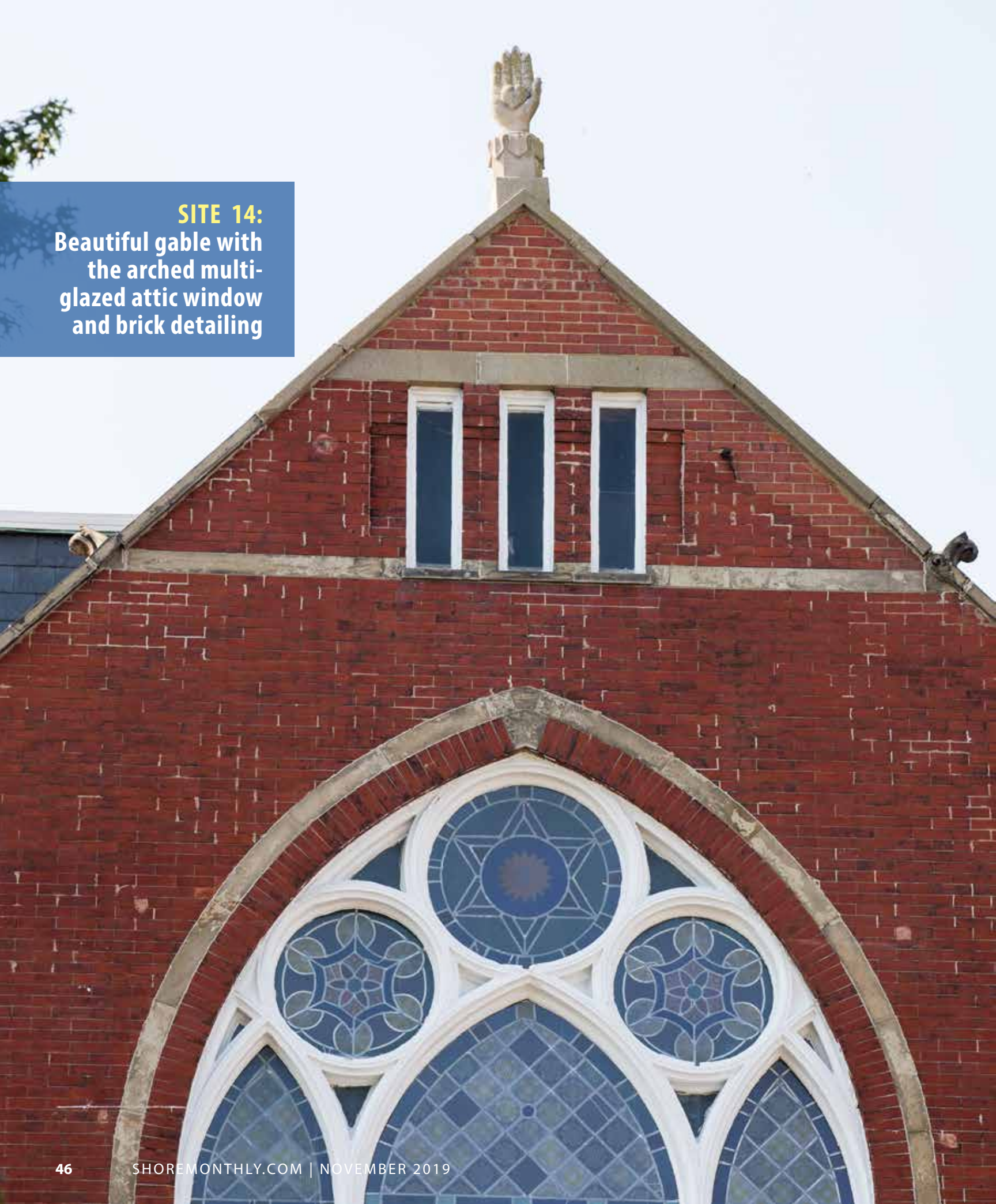
SITE 11:
The Gothic arches could remind one of hands held together in prayer



SITE 12:
One of Easton's
most distinguished
entrances with its
delicate fanlight
transom and
wood moldings



SITE 13:
Once a smokehouse,
the diminutive scale
of this charming
outbuilding still
delights passersby



SITE 14:
Beautiful gable with
the arched multi-
glazed attic window
and brick detailing



SITE 15:
Downtown's only
Tudor style building
has been meticulously
restored to create a
delightful streetscape



SITE 16:
This cupola and beef
cow weathervane is a
fitting symbol of the
delicious barbeque
offered here

Old Easton

SCAVENGER HUNT

CHECKLIST

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|--|---|---|---|
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The Hills have hides

Hill & Sons Taxidermy discuss working with family, and the ins and outs of an ins and out trade

Story and photos by John Griep



Sitting in his taxidermy shop with son Cody, 22, and surrounded by completed mounts, a shipment of hides and skulls from Africa awaiting attention, and the tools of his trade, Anthony Hill is explaining his passion for his chosen profession.

“There’s a lot to it. I sometimes think you’ve got to love to do this. It’s a lot of work.”

He began doing taxidermy work

when he was 18 and has been running his business, Hill & Sons Taxidermy, since 2000.

“I’d go to taxidermy shops and wouldn’t leave,” Hill said about his start in the field. “I didn’t realize it was work involved in it.”

“That’s how we got started,” he said. “Not wanting to wait on your own stuff, and we started doing our own stuff and then friends and family wanted (us to do work), and it just

kept growing and growing.

“Cody’s been doing it with me since he was ... old enough to walk. He’s been doing it all his life. My other son Hunter, he’s been doing it since he was about 9, and he’s 14 now. All three of us do it full-time and then when we’re busy, both our wives work in the shop part-time during the busy deer season months. It’s a family business.”

The Hills note that the first step in a quality mount is choosing a good specimen and taking proper care of the trophy animal.

Father and son emphasize the main steps a hunter needs to take — freezing the animal and keeping it clean and dry.

“Just wrap it up and get it in the freezer,” Cody said. “If you’re even thinking about getting it mounted, just freeze it. Cape it out and freeze it.”

“If you’re not sure you can get it to me the day of harvest, it needs to be frozen,” Anthony adds.

To a certain extent, the Hills have separated the shop’s workload. Anthony primarily handles mammals and exotics, while Cody concentrates on birds.

For mammals, such as the various deer hunted by many on the Eastern Shore, Anthony offers these tips:

“The biggest thing is ... as soon as the animal is killed, keeping it dry and getting it properly caped out. The biggest problem is they’re never caped out right ... they’re not giving me enough hide (for the chest)

“Another mistake guys make, the deer gets wet or in dirt or mud and they think ‘oh it’s dirty so we want to wash it.’ So the worst thing you could ever do is wet them because that

causes bacteria to grow and causes what we call ‘slipping’ and that’s when the hair actually pulls out of the follicle.”

“The biggest thing with the birds is just keeping them dry,” Cody says. “When you put them in the freezer, make sure they’re wrapped up and not destroying the feathers because once you pull the feather apart it doesn’t like to go back together.”

“It’s good to tuck the head beneath the wing so the head doesn’t get freezer burn,” his father adds. “That slows the process down.”

Younger son Hunter prepares most of the deer hides, separating the hide from the deer and the horns and taking measurements so his father knows what mannequin to order.

“He’ll do what they call ‘the fleshing.’ He’ll start removing as much red meat as he can possibly remove off of it ...” Anthony says.

The hide is then salted inside and out and hung up for four to 24 hours, depending on the temperature. Finally, it goes into the freezer.

Once a significant quantity of hides are built up, the Hills start tanning them.

They take pride in the fact that the whole process, including the tanning, is done in their shop.

“We tan most things in house here. When we go to tan them, we’ll wash them thoroughly and degrease them,” Anthony said.

The hides are pickled for several days to open up the fibers, with the pH monitored to maintain the proper level. The citric acid used in the pickling is then neutralized with baking soda.

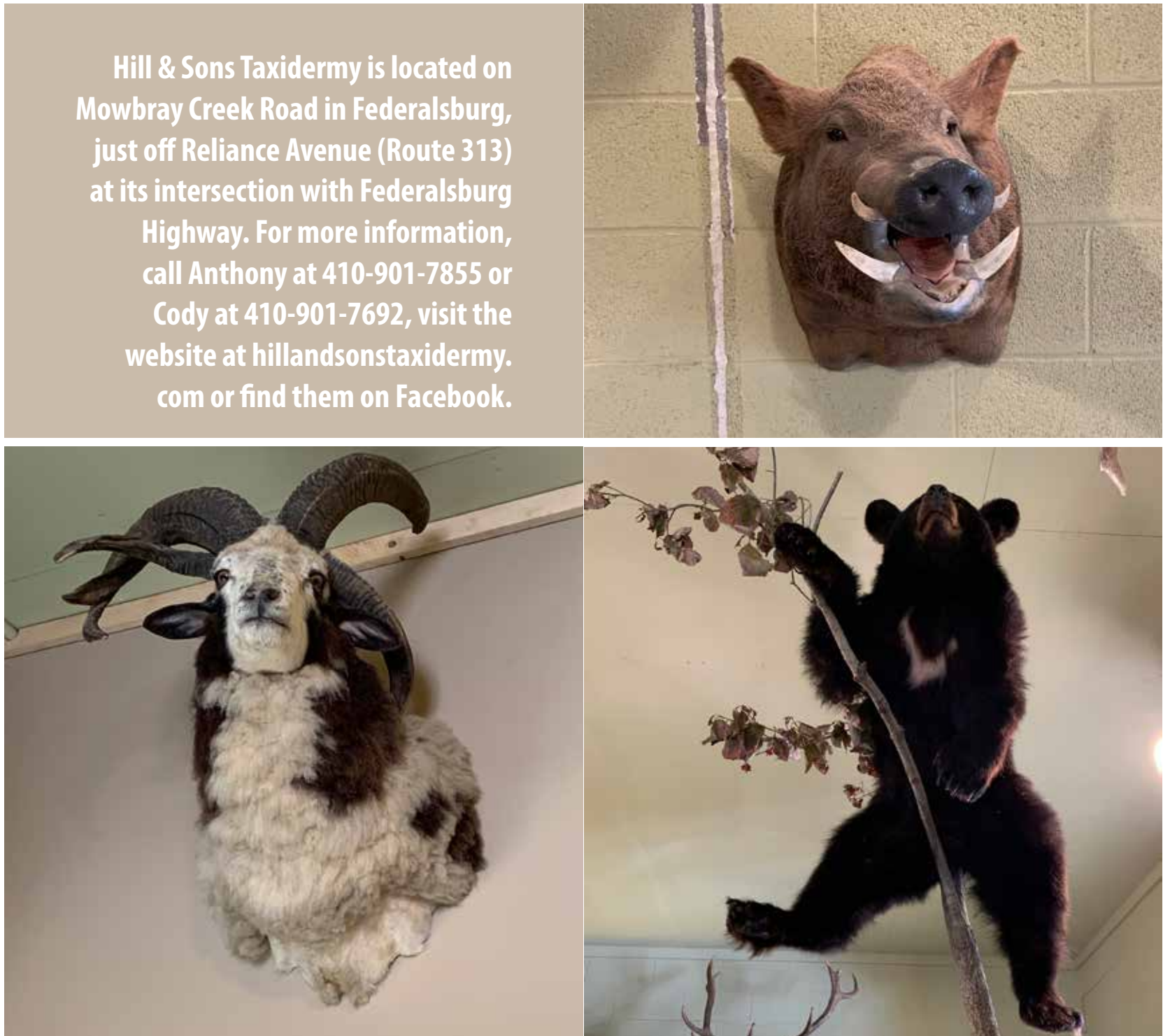
After pickling, the hide will have a “raise,” the fibers will be open, Anthony continues.

The hide is hand dried and tumbled, then shaved to bring out details and make the hide thinner and more pliable for the tanning oil.

Once the hide is ready, the mannequin is prepared, and they make sure the hide fits.

“And then that’s where the art kicks in,” Anthony said. “You go from a process into the art. That’s when you start setting the eyes, doing all the detail on the nose, making sure nobody can see any stitches, the proper location for the horns, the proper location for the ear butts. That’s when it becomes an art.”

After the mount is put together and glued, it dries for two to four weeks.



“After that occurs, I call it putting on the makeup,” Anthony said. “Then you’ve got to go and put all the natural tones back into the ears, around the eyes, tear ducts, inside the nostrils, the veins, the bottom of the mouth, the thin parts of the mouth get the pink natural (color) ...”

With birds, Cody skins the animal out, cuts out most of the flesh by hand and then removes all the fat.

“I have to get everything off,” Cody said. “The fat on a

bird will turn into a liquid. It will run through.”

“It will soil the feathers,” his father adds. “If it’s not properly cleaned and the feathers get soiled, it’s trash.”

The bird is then washed in cold water to remove blood and in hot water to clean it, then put in an odorless gasoline. As the bird sits in a wire rack, the water drains to the bottom. The feathers are then blown out.

“Getting a bird dry, it’s all about the plume at the bottom

of the feathers,” Cody said.

The feet are injected with an epoxy and a wire is inserted if the bird will be mounted in a standing position.

Cody then cleans and paints the artificial heads, measures and builds necks out of foam and cotton, and tests to make sure everything looks right before putting the bird on the mannequin.

If the bird will be mounted as if flying, he has to wire the wing bones.

The feathers are then shaped up.

“Shaping them up is an art of its own,” Cody said. “The major thing with a bird is once you lose a feather, you don’t get it back.”

After the animals are prepared, the Hills work on building bases and adding vegetation for some mounts.

“You’ve got to be part carpenter in this,” Anthony said. “You’ve just got to know how to do everything. An artist, a chemist, and then people bring you challenges.”

Asked his most difficult challenge, he points to a Merino ram mounted on the wall.

“The thing that most taxidermists don’t like to do. See that sheep up there with wool. A lot of guys don’t like wool. Wool does exactly the opposite of what a taxidermist wants to happen when you put it on the mannequin. They’ll actually rot right off the wall if you don’t pay attention to them, get mildew, mold, a lot of guys don’t like them.

Another challenge was when the business began working with exotic animals.

“The hardest thing I’ve ever faced, when I first started getting into African animals, some of the hides were sooo thick, they were really hard to cut and break down.

That first exotic was a gemsbuck, with a hide that was an inch thick.

“That gemsbuck, that first one (taught me a lot). And then some of the wool animals taught me you’ve got to be real careful with them. They’ve got to be darn near dry when you close them up because if not think about what it does, it’s wool, it won’t let moisture out, it does its job.”

Hill then brings the conversation full circle.

“The hardest thing for me, it irritates me when something’s not properly taken care of.

“If we had any good advice to give to a person, if you’re not sure, find somebody and ask somebody, like a butcher or a taxidermist. The right way to care for the hide and preserve it until you can get it to us. There’s a lot of mistakes made.”


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CONSTRUCTED FOR CONSERVATION

PAY IT BACK

Four Walls and a Roof for Wood Ducks

Story and photos by Kate Livie



The wood duck is a splendid bird. Navigating a waterway, its head gently bobs in rhythm with its paddling feet. The drake has plumage so flashy, iridescent and distinctive that its Latin name, *Aix sponsa*, roughly translates to “waterfowl in a wedding dress.”

Wood ducks fly in squadrons of 4 or 5, bodies hurtling forward at great speed like tiny fighter jets. When at rest, which seems infrequent, they roost in the limbs and hollows of trees in swampy bottoms, overlooking their drowned domain.

For all of these reasons, and their deliciousness besides, wood ducks are among the most prized trophies for waterfowlers. Their swiftness, their beauty, their maddening inaccessibility deep in the hearts of marshy forests make them a difficult but rewarding bird to hunt. But many of these qualities also made them vulnerable.

Especially the loss of their flooded bottom habitat, which we humans have deemed useless, unproductive land unless remedied by the destructive forces of ditching, draining and logging, caused ornithologist George Bird Grinnell to write in 1901 that wood ducks “are becoming very scarce and are likely to be exterminated before long.”

At 14, I didn’t know any of this backstory. I just knew that for several months after the onset of true fall, my father, Scott Livie, alongside some of his

closest and handiest hunting companions, as well as my sister and me, gathered to build wood duck boxes. Following plans, we assembled about 20 of these roughly two-foot tall, one-foot wide cedar boxes. They had a round hole in the front about the size of a cat door and a gently sloping roof that shed water. There were piles of sawdust when the boxes were complete, and a pile of stout wooden posts, about 15” high, that would elevate the boxes securely above the soft bottom of our stream’s forested banks.

When my father, an avid waterfowler, purchased our property on a tributary of Morgan Creek in Kent County, he saw few wood ducks but a lot of potential. It had 30 acres of sloping hillsides and stream oxbows, covered in stands of old oaks, beeches, sweet gum and black gum — excellent wood duck habitat, at least in theory. So, my father decided try what a growing number of conservation-minded hunters with the right sort of habitat were also doing. He gathered a team of like-minded friends, acquired plans and some cedar, and set to making his own wood duck nesting boxes over the course of a few weekends.

From the outset, conservation and waterfowling may seem at odds. The very act of killing isn’t conserving — it’s reducing. But modern sport hunting, far removed from its pre-1917 Migratory Bird Treaty Act commercial hunting days, is really about restraint.

Bag limits are low, as are the days each year for duck season, and stringently enforced.

Moratoriums may be established on certain species once their populations decline, sometimes for years on end. It makes sense from a sport-hunting perspective that if you love hunting a kind of bird, you do what you can to make sure there will be plenty to pursue for years to come. For my father, who loved the challenge and skill of hunting wood ducks, tucked out of sight in the underbrush of a marshy Chesapeake wetland, it was the embodiment of the strong, conservation-minded hunting ethics he’d known and practiced his entire life.


He was in good company. The same year my father sent away for plans and constructed our nesting boxes, another Kent County landowner, Cliff Brown, noticed three dilapidated wood duck boxes on his property. Intrigued, he started on tinker on the design, improving and refining. Eventually, he reached out to Maryland’s Department of Natural Resources to build more, laying the foundation for what would ultimately become the Maryland Wood Duck Initiative.

Launched in 1994, to date this entirely volunteer-powered effort has seen more than a hundred organizations working together to build, install and monitor 1,800 wood duck nesting boxes statewide. Unsurprisingly, one of the earliest partners was Ducks

Unlimited, representing committed conservation hunters like my dad. The state’s wood duck population, in turn, has stabilized as the duck boxes have proliferated, all thanks to the passionate grassroots efforts of conservation organizations and property owners across Maryland.

My father died in 2006, before he really got to see the impact of his 20-odd wood duck boxes. In fact, in his last days, he was still scheming about ways to attract more birds and improve their habitat on our land, describing the buttonbush shrubs he wanted to plant along the streambed so the wood duck hens would have a place to safely rear their fledglings. Although he didn’t live to see it, his efforts weren’t in vain.

Today, my home overlooks that same property, and my father’s wood duck boxes stand sentinel above that bottomland. From my deck, I can count at least four boxes — silvered with age now, but still warm and dry inside for the families of nesting wood ducks that return every year.

Dozens of them roost in the limbs of the beeches that overhand the stream, startling into swift, brilliant flight at the least disturbance. In the fall, scores of wood ducks prog for wild rice on the low banks. A technicolor miracle, our brightly-feathered little population thrives — a testament to the efforts of just one conservation hunter among many, building boxes of cedar and hope on a little tributary of Morgan Creek. 



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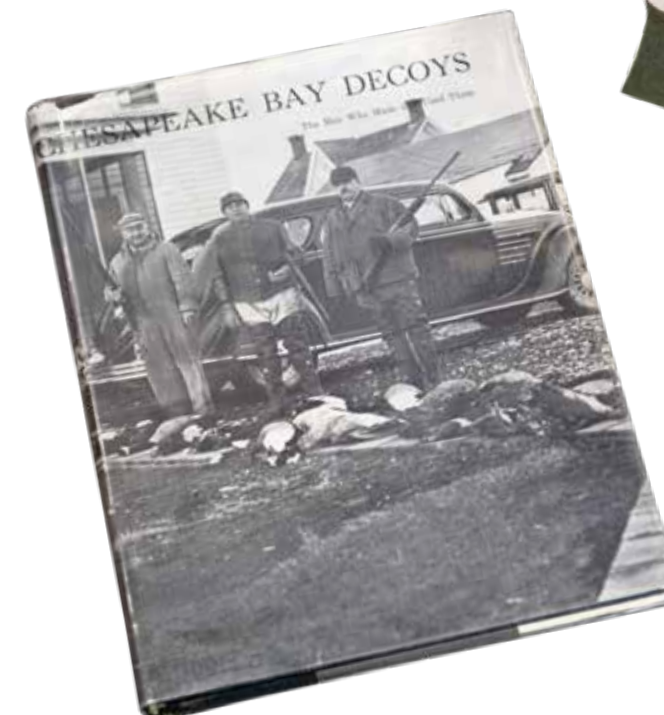
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DEER SOCKS

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THROUGH THE LENS

Photo by Brandon Dudrow



Photo by Cindy Steedman



Photo by Lori R. Bramble

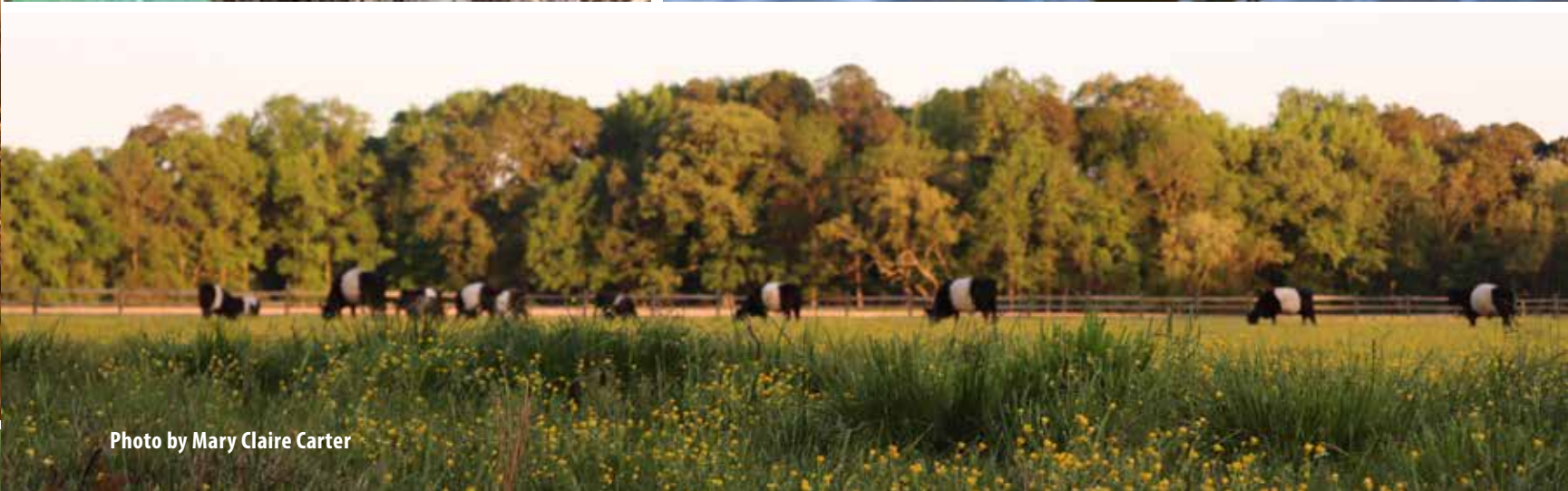


Photo by Mary Claire Carter



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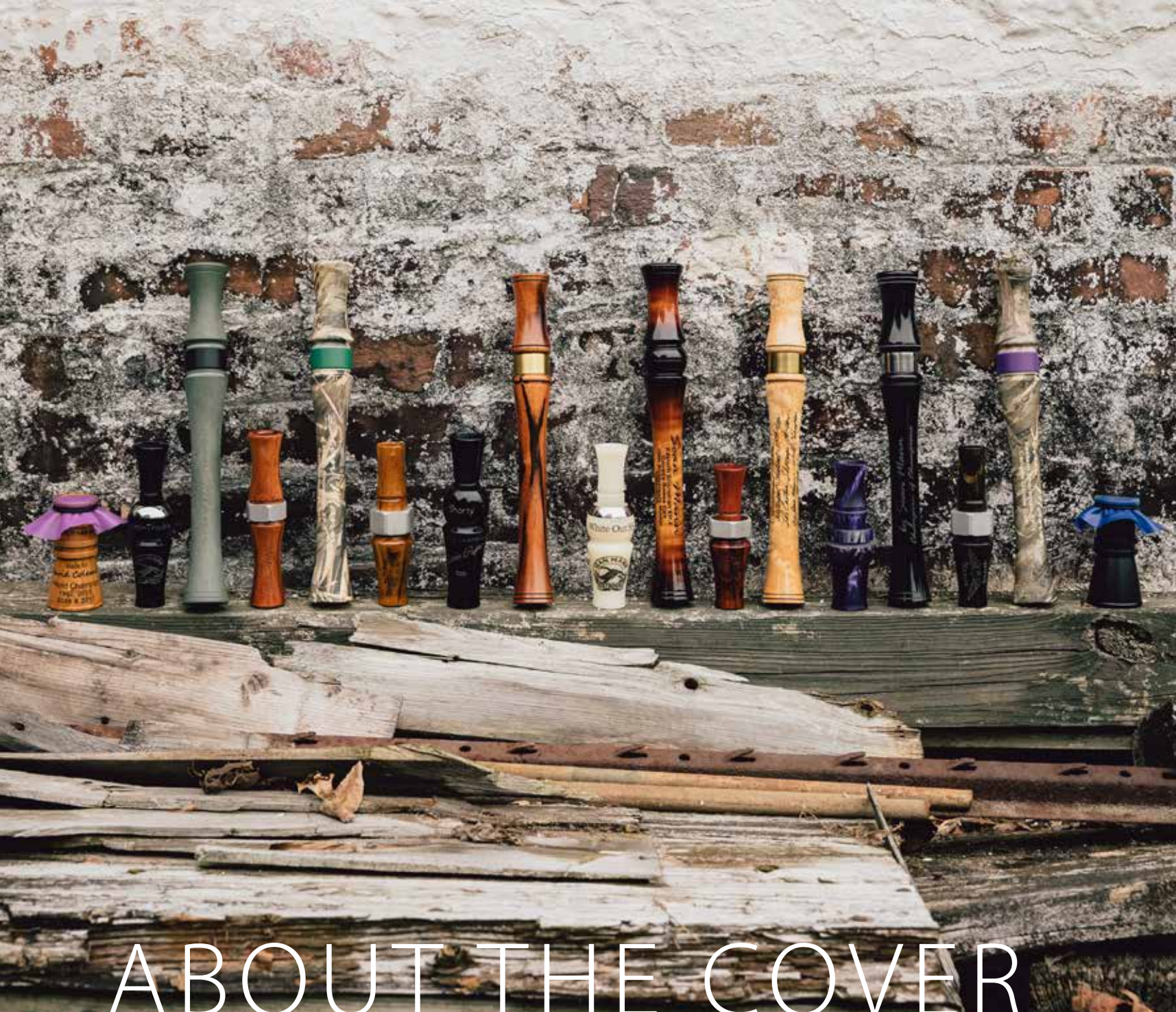
Photo by Ursula Gardener



Photo by Nicole Valeri Repass



Photo by Lori R. Bramble



ABOUT THE COVER

Sean Mann, champion goose caller, makes and sells waterfowl calls, as well as guiding hunts in the fall and winter. Visit www.SeanMannOutdoors.com to read more about his journey from novice to World Champion Goose Caller, learn tips for waterfowl hunting, and purchase his award-winning calls.

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NOVEMBER 8-10
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NOVEMBER 2019

November 1
First Weekend, Easton

November 2
Swamp Donkey Newgrass Concert, Avalon Theatre, Easton

November 2
Annual Christmas Bazaar, Old Wye Church, Wye Mills

November 2
Oyster Jam, Phillips Wharf, Tilghman Island

November 2-3
Holiday Sip and Shop, Talbot County Ag & Educational Center, Easton

November 5-7
Annual Decoy Tailgate Show, Talbot County Community Center, Easton

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November 8-9
Session American Concert, Stoltz Listening Room, Easton

November 8-10
Waterfowl Festival, Easton

November 9
8th Annual Brew & Oyster Brawl, Tidewater Inn, Easton

November 9
Second Saturday Art Night Out, St. Michaels

November 9
Model Boat Show, Oxford Community Center

November 9-10
52nd Annual Antique Show and Sale, Oxford Firehouse

November 9-10
Christmas at the Peake Holiday Craft Show, Chesapeake College, Wye Mills

November 15
Wild & Scenic Film Festival, Avalon Theatre, Easton

November 15
Hogslop String Band, Stoltz Listening Room, Easton

November 16
Mark Wade Trio Concert, Stoltz Listening Room, Easton

November 23
Thanksgiving Parade of Classic Cars, St. Michaels

November 23
Robbie Schaefer Solo, Stoltz Listening Room, Easton

November 30
XPD's Dance Party, Avalon Theatre, Easton

November 30
Carols By Candlelight, Tidewater Inn, Easton

November 30-December 1
Festival of Trees, Tidewater Inn, Easton

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