Chesapeake Quarterly

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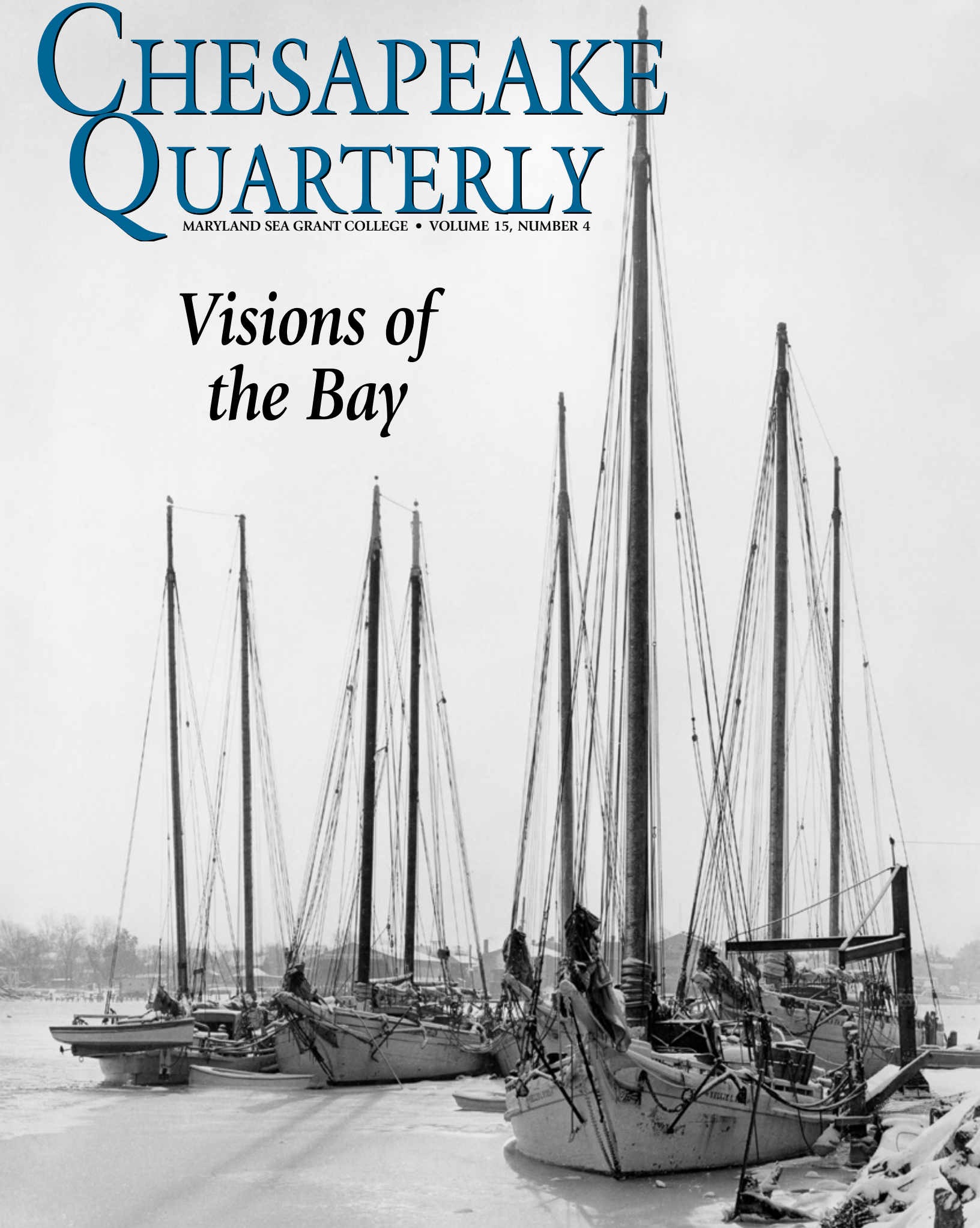
Visions of the Bay



contents

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Cover photo: *This image of skipjacks in winter rafted together in Annapolis Harbor became a famous and popular poster for Marion E. Warren.*

Five Photographers Focus on the Chesapeake

Stories by Michael W. Fincham

Who created the most memorable photographs of the Chesapeake? Everybody who visits the Bay with a smart phone or point-and-shoot camera is a photographer, but only a few of us produce pictures that the rest of us still love to look at years later.

Aubrey Bodine gave us images of the Bay that last. And so did Marion E. Warren and Robert de Gast, two photographers who, like Bodine, gave us the Chesapeake Bay in classic black and white. And among living photographers, David Harp and Jay Fleming are giving us the contemporary Bay in color images that will outlast their working lives.

How did they do it? These photographers all made major professional commitments at some point in their careers to focus their technical and artistic skills on the Chesapeake Bay. All produced memorable photographs and gathered them in books. Four of them published several books featuring the Bay. The fifth, Jay Fleming, put out his first book earlier this year.

In their work, each of these photographers has helped us see the Bay — at least a piece of it, at least for a moment in time — through a unique, personal vision. Each captured original images that illuminate something essential about the estuary, about the birds and fish and plants that live there, about the people who venture out on its waters for profit, personal adventure, or inspiration in the presence of nature.

Marine scientists, of course, also venture out on the Chesapeake for research, and their work also helps us "see" the estuary — by helping us understand it. They work in disciplines that reveal essential elements of the ecosystem, including food webs, life cycles of fish and birds, the movement of water masses, the recurrence of seasonal weather patterns, and the impacts of global climate changes. Their research findings are usually the focus of our magazine, *Chesapeake Quarterly*, where we try to explain the science that is helping us "see" the invisible forces, natural and human, that are shaping and altering the estuary.

Photographers of the Chesapeake, on the other hand, are giving us the visible estuary, but in vivid pieces. When their work is exceptional, when it focuses often and over time on this region, their images add up, they help the rest of us see and understand the ecosystem at an emotional level. When we see the beauty and drama of our Bay and the multiplicity of ways men and women and birds and fish and water and weather all interact, we *feel* the connection — and the importance of preserving such a place. That's why a science program like Maryland Sea Grant has — since it began 40 years ago — frequently featured the work of photographers like these in our publications and films.

As they set about their work, each of these Bay photographers — Bodine, de Gast, Warren, Harp, and Fleming — brought more than expensive cameras and excellent lenses to the scene he was working. Each brought a way of thinking that became his way of seeing his subject. That way of thinking included technical knowledge of cameras and lenses and of all the steps of processing and preparing and presenting photographs to the world. But it also included his experience of life and his ideas about art and beauty and nature and the significance of what was before him.

These photographers brought different experiences to bear on their work on the Chesapeake. Three of them were born in the region, two migrated here from elsewhere, two began their professional lives at newspapers, two got some early training in the military, two are sons of photographers.

As a result, their work captures the Bay in very different ways. Art historians talk about two kinds of photographers: the romantics who focus on self-expression, and the realists who focus on exploring the world in front of them. The Baltimore pictorial photographer A. Aubrey Bodine, for example, was clearly working in the romantic, self-expressive tradition where the true subject of a picture is the artist's sensibility; his ideas about art or nature are more important than the reality of the scene in front of him. The romantic photographer is present in every picture, calling attention to the art in his presentation.

Working in the realistic, documentary tradition, on the other hand, photographers like Robert de Gast set a different goal: revealing the details of the scene in front of them. There is always self-expression and artfulness in the way the realists create images that attract our interest, but their true goal is to focus our attention on the Bay rather than on themselves and their ideas about art.

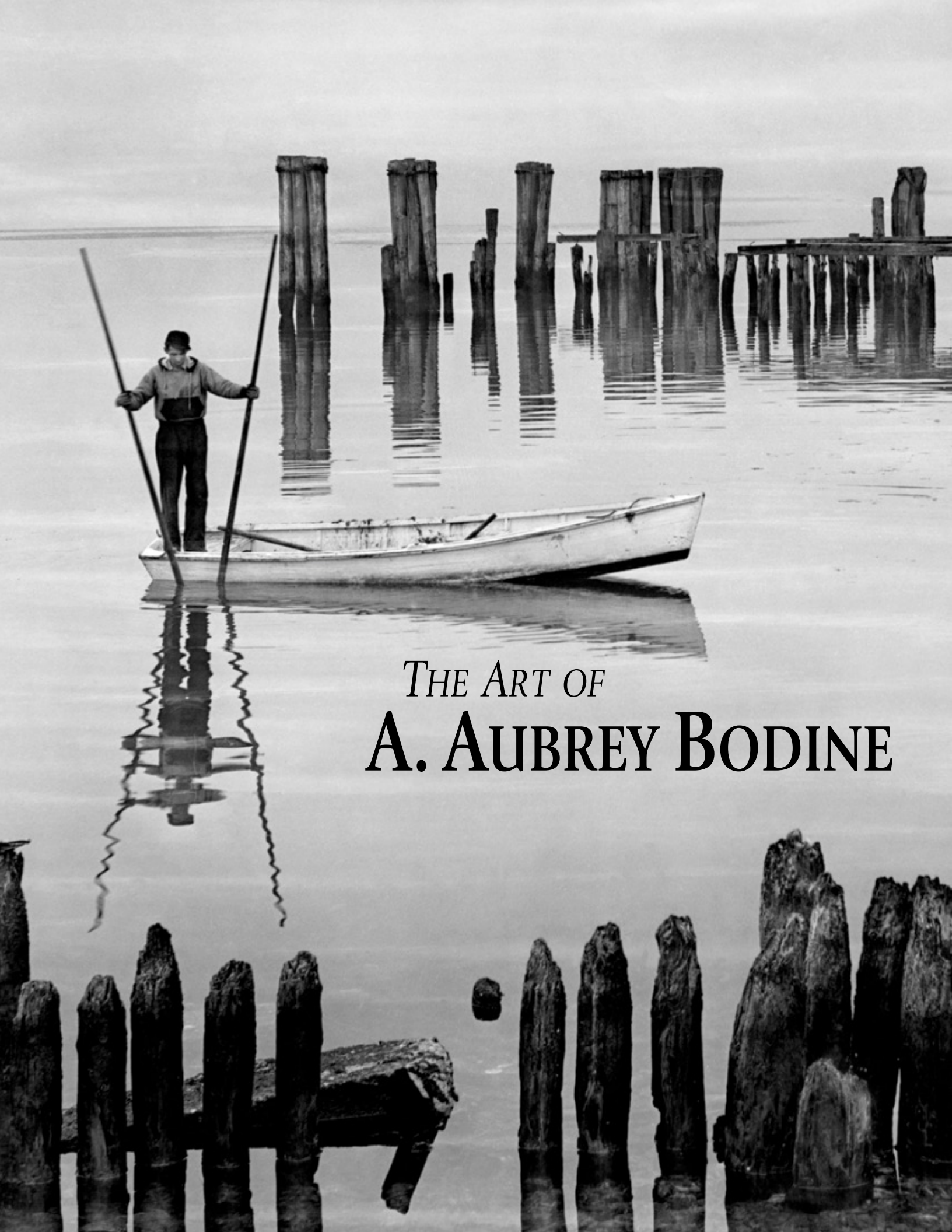
Every realist is a bit of a romantic — and vice versa. And both kinds have given us and — are still giving us — memorable visions of the Chesapeake.

— *fincham@mdsg.umd.edu*

A. Aubrey Bodine, *working with his Linhof 5"x7" view camera and tripod, gets ready to make another photograph of Baltimore Harbor.*
PHOTO BY AXEL BAHNSEN

More Bay Photography

In this issue of our magazine, we are able to feature only a few of the talented photographers who have worked or are currently working on the Chesapeake Bay. On our website, however, you can find memorable imagery from a number of excellent photographers that Maryland Sea Grant has been fortunate enough to work with over the years. **Skip Brown,** for example, created striking black-and-white images of the Chesapeake fisheries as a new graduate starting on a professional career. He continues to take color photos for us. **Michael Eversmier** and **Nick Caloyianis** have brought us beautiful images of the underwater world of Chesapeake Bay. See examples of these photographers' work at **www.chesapeakequarterly.net.**



The Art of
A. Aubrey Bodine

In 1948, a news photographer from the *Baltimore Sun* was visiting Tilghman Island on Maryland's Eastern Shore when he saw a solitary waterman standing in the stern of a skiff and probing the nearby shallows with a set of small hand tongs. The waterman was Bill Page and he was busy "nippering" for oysters, picking out and pulling up large oysters one at a time. The water was so clear he could easily see the oysters he wanted to pluck from the shallows.

The photographer was A. Aubrey Bodine and he could easily see the picture he wanted to pluck from the scene. In front of him was an unusual oystering technique. Off to the side was a cluster of decaying pilings poking up from the shallows like sentinels standing at attention. For the picture he wanted, however, for the picture he saw in his head, he had to put the two scenes together.

When Bodine asked Bill Page to move his skiff and go oystering among those scenic pilings, the watermen told the photographer, "Ain't no oysters there." The photographer persisted, the waterman finally complied, and the stark and striking photograph that resulted is still found in books and museums and magazines like this one.

Bodine was clearly working in a romantic, expressive tradition. The image he saw in his head with its shapes and lines, its tones and textures, was more important than the actual scenes he saw in front of him. Bodine always said his job wasn't to *take* pictures, but to *make* pictures — and in most cases he wanted to make a picture that looked like an artist's painting. And to do that he was always ready to reshape any scene he found in the field and to restructure any image he took into the darkroom.

To set up this famous photograph, *A. Aubrey Bodine got a waterman to move his skiff into position and pretend he was catching oysters (left). The 1948 photograph, "Choptank Oyster Dredgers," (above) won awards in nine countries, including the U.S., where it beat out 50,000 entries to win first place in the Popular Photography national contest.*

It was an unusual approach to find in a newspaper photographer, especially one with little academic background. Bodine was only 14 when he left school in 1920 to take a job as an errand boy and later as an advertising photographer at the *Baltimore Sun*. When he was 18, he joined the Photographic Club of Baltimore, an organization that sponsored local exhibitions and popularized the ideas of a movement known as pictorialism. Its key idea: a photograph could be more than a simple, mechanical record of reality; it could present an artist's personal interpretation of reality. It could be a piece of art.

Consorting with Baltimore pictorialists proved a formative experience for Bodine. With little formal training in art or photography, he eagerly absorbed their ideas and began experimenting with their techniques. A photographer, according to one of the movement leaders, could be "a painter who uses his camera instead of the brush." Some of Bodine's photographs would imitate paintings by American artists like George Bellows, Winslow Homer, and even Edward Hopper. When he was only 19, Bodine won a statewide contest, and had two photographs accepted for exhibit in the New York salon of the Photographic Pictorialists of America.

He was launched as an art photographer but not yet as a news photographer. And he faced a dilemma: as a romantic pictorialist he wanted each photograph to stand as a piece of art; as a photo journalist, however, he would be expected to produce straightforward, unaltered records of the events he covered.

It was a dilemma Bodine began solving after landing a staff job as a news photographer at age 21. His long-term solution would combine luck, initiative, and talent. It was his luck to work for the *Baltimore Sun* during an era when the paper ran a popular Sunday-only "Brown Section" that featured large, sepia-colored scenes of life around Maryland. On his own initiative, Bodine kept entering national photographic contests and there his talent with art photos won major awards.

The result: the public kept responding to his artful images, his photographic reputation kept growing, and his clout kept increasing in the hallways of the *Sun* building. In 1946, when the newspaper started the Sunday *Sun Magazine,* Bodine had another weekly outlet for artful, full-page images from around the

High, billowing clouds *create dramatic depth and interest in many Bodine photographs. In the image he called "Study in Motion" (top) the men haul-seining for fish in the shallows of the Chesapeake are outlined against a sky that may have come from elsewhere. He would photograph clouds in New England, expose one of these cloud negatives — and then double print a Chesapeake scene over it. In the artfully composed "Snapper Trapper," (bottom) a waterman lowers a trap for snapping turtles, his work exactly framed by two cypress trees, each exactly framed by a crown of billowing clouds.*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY A. AUBREY BODINE • COPYRIGHT © JENNIFER B. BODINE • COURTESY OF WWW.AAUBREYBODINE.COM

state. In time, sentimental images by A. Aubrey Bodine became as popular in the *Sun* as satirical essays and reports from H.L. Mencken.

To create his art, Bodine drove into the field with a trunk full of odd tools. In addition to his 5" x 7" box camera and his tripod, he brought a machete to clear away brush, a ladder to get higher angles, a shovel to dig out lower angles, a bee smoker to diffuse the light, a parasol to reflect flash, and a roll of white toilet paper to wrap around and soften the light from his flash bulbs.

When he walked into his darkroom to work on his images of the Chesapeake Bay, he carried other tools: images of New England skies and Nova Scotia skies piled high with dramatic, billowing clouds that he had photographed on vacation trips. With careful printing he used these far northern skies to give depth to his photos of the flat, low-lying landscapes and waterscapes of the Chesapeake. His darkroom repertoire also included adding suns behind the mist, raindrops on water surfaces, snow in the air, an osprey in the sky — whatever enhanced mood or sharpened composition or transformed a photograph into his idea of fine art.

Bodine worked for the *Baltimore Sun* for 50 years and published five popular books, all featuring photographs of the Bay. On October 28, 1970, while busy in the darkroom (where else?), he collapsed with a stroke. He died later that day at Johns Hopkins University Hospital. He was only 64 years old.

His art made him Maryland's most famous photographer but Bodine would have trouble landing — or keeping — a staff job today. "I look at him as a pictorialist, not a journalist," says David Harp, the award-winning photographer who once worked for Bodine's old newspaper and now works for the *Bay Journal*. His compositions were "superb," but according to Harp, "He did things he would be fired for if he worked at any modern newspaper."

All those techniques he tried in the field and the darkroom would no longer count as journalism, but in Bodine's hands they helped elevate his best photography into art. And that, after all, was the driving dream of those early Baltimore pictorialists who inspired an eager but untutored young man determined to break into photography.

The Documentary Eye of Robert de Gast

The year A. Aubrey Bodine died, a little-known photographer named Robert de Gast published *The Oystermen of the Chesapeake,* an unusual book created with an approach, style, and vision that would prove more influential with future Bay photographers than Bodine's more famous and artful images.

De Gast didn't work in the romantic, pictorial mode of Bodine, but in the realistic documentary tradition of modern photography. Starting in the fall of 1967, de Gast set out to observe oystermen through an entire working season, joining them as they began fitting out their boats and following their work lives through the fall and the 1968 winter harvesting season.

He wanted to capture in detail the labor that went into that harvest in elemental black-and-white images — with none of the attractions of color, no romanticizing of the scene, no "merely pretty pictures." These he threw out, showing us instead a gritty world of cold mornings, hard work, winter ice, makeshift gear, men huddled over meals in a cabin, watermen as working stiffs rather than folk icons of a disappearing culture.

There is mastery in de Gast's approach, however, a classic mastery of composition, one of those elements that make certain photos stand out immediately and stick in the mind over the years. Composition is the art of arranging the parts of an image, of creating an order out of chaos, an order that leads

Two kinds of oystering: *a patent tonger with his hydraulic rig is perfectly framed in front of three skipjacks dredging for oysters under sail in this photograph by Robert de Gast, another master of composition.*

the eye to the true subject of the photo and focuses the mind on the possible meanings of the image. That's easier to do when you work like Bodine did, rearranging a scene in the field or restructuring a negative in the darkroom. It's more difficult to do when a photographer is climbing around a workboat busy with watermen hauling up oysters. De Gast in those conditions never staged a scene, never posed a waterman.

Whenever he went out with oystermen on their skipjacks and tong boats, he carried four cameras hanging from straps slung across his body, and each Nikon 35 mm single-lens reflex camera carried a different lens. In documentary shooting, the readiness is all, and his approach let him react smoothly to the work rhythm on the boats. There would be no time wasted screwing and unscrewing lenses. He could quickly frame, compose, and shoot, switching from camera to camera, from wide angle to medium to telephoto as needed — ready to catch on film the images he was seeing in his head.

Photographers say they *make* pictures, and de Gast said he always saw the shot before he pressed the button. Aboard a working oyster boat, all the picture *making* — all the thinking about framing and aperture and shutter speed, all the moving and shifting and camera switching — has to happen fast. The watermen are hauling and culling, the boats are turning, and the weather and the light are changing. The right moment is there — and then it is gone.

De Gast, who was fascinated with the Chesapeake Bay, was not a native. He was born and raised in the Netherlands and moved with his family to Queens Village in New York City where he went to high school and trade school. To improve his English skills he worked on a ranch in Oklahoma. To improve his photography skills he enlisted in the Army and trained as a photographer with the Signal Corps. After his discharge he worked for a while with the photographer Marion E. Warren before launching a career as a commercial photographer around Baltimore and Annapolis. That's where he fell in love with sailing.

From his work with oystermen over the winter of 1967-1968, de Gast would bring back more than 6,000 photographs

Watermen watch *an oyster dredge hit the deck (opposite). A skipjack is loaded down during shell-moving season (left). An oyster buyer records a day's catch (above top). Four skipjacks raft up to sell their oysters to a buyboat (above bottom).* PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY MARITIME MUSEUM

to process, print on contact sheets, and then examine slowly, eye pressed to a magnifying loupe. Out of this work came 165 images that de Gast and designer David Ashton arranged into a book with an unusual but brilliantly chosen horizontal shape and spacious layout; together they combined to reflect the wide, flat expanses of the Chesapeake. In the back of the book, de Gast provided a concise, cleanly written essay on the oyster fishery and the men and boats that worked it.

Oysters would never again be as abundant as they were during that winter, and neither would oystermen. The oyster reefs had been dwindling for decades, ravaged by diseases called MSX and Dermo and reduced by historic overharvesting and by the contemporary ongoing dredging and tonging that de Gast documented so faithfully and so artfully. Some watermen would go out of business.

De Gast's book on oystermen would suffer a similar fate. It was one of the first offerings of the International Marine Publishing Company, a new enterprise launched by Roger C. Taylor, the former editor-in-chief of the Naval Institute Press. The new company, however, could print only three thousand copies. Sales would go slowly. The book would go out of print.

But its reputation would grow with the years — at least among those lucky enough to find a copy. It's the book that inspired David Harp (see p.12) when he began to focus his color photography on the Bay. It's the book that Chesapeake Bay author Tom Horton called "a work of genius, one of the finest books on the Bay ever done." The work continues to draw admirers. "I don't think it has ever been surpassed," said Pete Lesher, chief curator for the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, and one of the last people to interview Robert de Gast before he passed away in January 2016.

His work, however, will not pass away. In 2017, the public will be able to see some of de Gast's photographs displayed at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in St. Michael's, Maryland, in an exhibit that Lesher is organizing. The museum will become the final archive for images from *The Oystermen of the Chesapeake,* the little-known book that remains a collector's item among Bay photographers.

Bringing Back the Bay with Marion E. Warren

Like Robert de Gast, Marion E. Warren was not a native of the Chesapeake region. He was born in Montana in a town that no longer exists, and raised around St. Louis, Missouri, where he started his career doing commercial, advertising, medical, and news photography.

When he eventually landed in the Chesapeake region as a young photographer, Warren would begin a long-term documentary exploration of its places, its people, and its history. In his later years his work would be driven by a strong sense of environmental mission.

What brought Warren to the region was World War II. Like de Gast he received some of his training and experience in photography through military service. Drafted into the U.S. Navy, he served with a photographic unit that was assigned to the Pentagon. That meant a lot of portraits of a lot of colonels and generals. The leader of Warren's unit, oddly enough, was Edward Steichen, the famous photographer and art theorist. Once a proponent of the pictorialist approach favored by A. Aubrey Bodine, Steichen by WWII had switched to "straight photography," the style that Warren would work in.

After his Pentagon experience, Warren moved across the Potomac to work as a traditional portrait photographer for the Harris and Ewing Studio in Washington, D.C. The largest photographic studio in the country, the company had dozens of staff photographers and dozens more on call as freelancers. That meant a lot of portraits of politicians and bureaucrats. In 1947, Warren decided to start his own studio and moved to Annapolis, the Colonial,

red-bricked Chesapeake shore town where he would make his home for the next 60 years.

To build his photographic career, Warren became a jack-of-many-trades and a master of most of them. He still did portrait photography but he also specialized in architectural, corporate, and magazine photography. Thanks to his Annapolis location, he could also serve, in effect, as the photographer for the state of Maryland's Department of Information.

As a transplant to the state, Warren carried the zeal of the convert and spent years soaking up the history of Maryland. With his daughter Mame he produced a series of books stuffed with vintage photographs they collected, showing bygone times around Annapolis and Baltimore and some of the rural regions across the state.

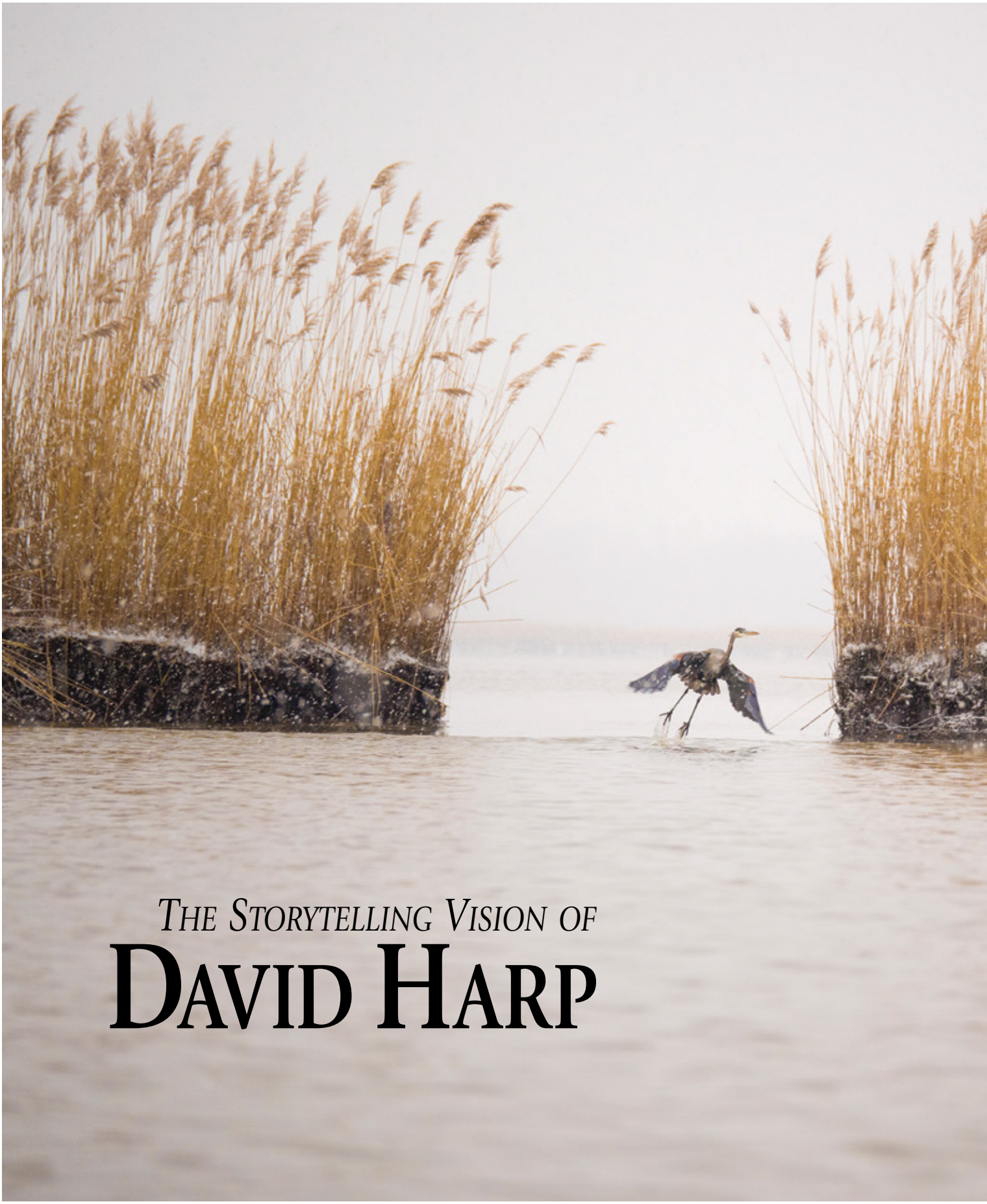
During his long career, Warren began to worry that a healthy Chesapeake Bay might become a bygone memory. He saw the Bay show signs of decline: disappearing seagrass beds, deteriorating water quality, and slumping harvests of oysters and blue crabs and striped bass. His response at age 64 was to organize a decade-long project to document the varieties of human life around the Chesapeake Bay.

At an age when many people retire, he launched a last personal odyssey, hauling his box camera and tripod and tape recorder around the Bay and up many of the tributaries, determined to capture images and record oral histories of the people who knew the Chesapeake before it began to change. The result was *Bringing Back the Bay,* a 300-page book developed by Marion and Mame Warren and designed to stand as testimony and evidence for bringing back the estuary he saw when he first arrived.

Through the decades his Chesapeake Bay images, scenic and wonderfully composed, were enlarged into beautiful prints and large posters still coveted as keepsakes. What often distinguishes Warren's books on the Bay, however, is the naturalness of the people in front of his camera. He clearly brought to his Bay explorations the people skills he learned as a portrait photographer and the friendly, kindly personality that put everybody at ease. Unlike A. Aubrey Bodine, he seldom posed his subjects because he wanted them to relax back into their natural lives and customary behaviors.

He was not focused on their placement in an artful composition. As he told a *Bay Times* reporter, he was after something else: "I realized that capturing life is the most vital thing photography can do — documenting the real life of people, their real existence. No other art can do it."

On marshy, isolated Smith Island, *a crabber waits for the first peeler run of 1965, surrounded by his baskets and shedding floats (opposite). Near Annapolis, a rockfish party celebrates during the Chesapeake Bay Fishing Fair in the early 1950s. Most of these big fish were well over the legal size limit at the time (above).* PHOTOS COURTESY OF MAME WARREN



The Storytelling Vision of David Harp

It would be his favorite image in his fifth book. On a snowy Maryland morning, David Harp sat in the front of a kayak, gliding up the Choptank River, scanning the shore ahead, holding his camera at the ready. Tom Horton, his writer-collaborator, sat in the back, busy with paddling. In the soft gray distance Harp spotted a great blue heron standing on stick-like legs in the shallows along the shore.

The heron may have been stalking fish or planning his day or thinking about heading farther south for warmer weather — but poised there in a meditative moment this particular heron had now taken center stage in Harp's world.

The heron had stationed himself in an odd gap, a break in the tall brown marsh grasses that lined the shore. That's where erosion had cut a channel, opening a window in a wall of grass. And outlined in the window stood the heron.

A perfect scene, but not a perfect moment, at least not yet, not for a photographer as savvy as Harp. Squinting through the viewfinder of his camera, he began forming an image in his mind, framing it through the lens, and locking focus on the heron. Horton paddled slowly, aiming straight at the gap. The heron waited, Harp waited. And then the heron made up its mind, flapping its wings and lurching suddenly upwards. Harp hit the button — and hit the jackpot: out of the scene and the moment, he now had a perfect shot (left).

Perfect shots of Chesapeake Bay scenes may look like luck — but they aren't. They are usually the payoffs from purposeful planning and from years of visiting and revisiting the edges and islands and rivers of this estuary. "You can go to the same place 100 times and it is never the same. The more you get out there, the more chances you have of seeing something significant in the same place," says Harp. "It sounds a little mystical, but I think you can almost will a photograph to be better — just by being out there."

The other key, of course, is what you bring to the moment: the commitment to the craft, to mastering technology and technique, to applying them with talent to topics that matter. "Your whole life experience as a photographer," says Harp, "comes into being every time you press the shutter."

The life experience Dave Harp brings to this wintry morning on the Choptank River began way up the watershed, up in Hagerstown. That's where he grew up, the son of a newspaper photographer, that's where he bought his first camera by saving up butter coupons, that's where he decided he liked what he saw of his father's line of work, liked it enough to take a job on his father's paper as soon as he graduated college.

From there he went to the *Baltimore Sun,* Aubrey Bodine's old newspaper. For Harp's last decade there he had his dream job, working as the staff photographer for the Sunday *Sun Magazine,* a redesigned version of the magazine that once helped make Bodine famous. That's when Harp started making photographs around the Chesapeake Bay. "I saw the light," he says. "I saw this is what I wanted to do."

The man who helped him see the light was Tom Horton, an

Eastern Shore native and the *Sun's* longtime environmental writer. The two began a friendship and working alliance, and over the last quarter century they have produced five books focused on the Chesapeake, each one featuring Horton's essays and Harp's photographs.

This approach speaks to the vision Harp has followed ever since he bought his first camera: using photographs for storytelling. The books carry history, science, analysis, and several recurring messages: Here's the beauty and the life found in this estuary. Here's how we can more kindly connect with this place. The analysis comes from the essays, the emotion comes from the imagery.

And the imagery can be stunning. Harp's decades of work have made him the best-known Chesapeake photographer since A. Aubrey Bodine and Marion E. Warren. While those masters worked in black and white, Harp works in a world that comes in colors, in shades and saturations that can shift with the time of day and the season of the year. "Color is content to me," says Harp. "It's part of the photograph, an important part. It's that warmth of the sun in early morning, or it's that blue fog."

Through his handling of color and composition, Harp can create images infused with emotion. His goal, he says, is to communicate the feeling he had when he made the photograph. A Harp landscape gives us more than a picture of a place: it gives us a thinking, feeling person connecting with a place that means something to him. In his best work he creates meditative images: they move us to contemplate and care about the scene he saw.

It was his fifth book, *Choptank Odyssey,* that had Harp and Horton tracking that heron. Their hope was that the essays and images, taken together, would add up to a larger story of a river worth saving.

But sometimes a great picture of a passing moment tells a story all by itself.

Look again at Harp's heron, focus as carefully as he did. What made the picture so perfect? For Harp, it was the

gap, the window in the grass wall. It outlined the heron and focused the eye. Now focus the mind on what might have made the gap: Could it be erosion? Or rising water levels? These forces have been altering marshes all around the Chesapeake.

Focus next on that wall of brown grass: the tall grass is clearly *Phragmities*, but could it be the non-native version that has been spreading through the region in recent decades, pushing out native plants along the shorelines of many rivers?

A heron in the gap in the grass. Just a passing moment. But a moment so artfully captured can tell a larger story about a changing estuary.

A blood moon rises *over a waterman's home and workboat on Smith Island (opposite). Morris Goodwin Marsh (above top) is a crab scraper featured in* Beautiful Swimmers, *the 1976 book by William Warner, and in* Beautiful Swimmers Revisited, *the 2015 film with videography by David Harp. Gravestones recall past lives on now-deserted Holland Island (above bottom).*

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DAVID HARP, WWW.CHESAPEAKEPHOTOS.COM

Working the Water with Jay Fleming

He would leave Annapolis at midnight to meet the menhaden boats. It was a three-hour drive to Reedville, Virginia — all high-speed, four-lane highways through Southern Maryland and over the Potomac River Bridge, then mostly two-lane roads that run east through the dark towns down to the tail end of the Northern Neck of Virginia.

Menhaden boats throw off their docking lines at four in the morning, and they weren't likely to wait for a photographer. Omega Protein, the Houston-based company that runs a fishing fleet out of Reedville, seldom lets photographers ride along on their vessels.

Fleming, however, was a photographer with a mission: he was committing three years of his life to photographing all the ways men and women harvest seafood out of the Chesapeake Bay. "I'm just trying to create an accurate portrait of what's going on in the Chesapeake Bay," he says. His approach is objective observation, creating images that carry no advocacy, no message. "I'm not trying to convey my opinions through my work." Taking sides about fishing controversies could, he admits, limit his access.

To cover the many forms of Bay fishing, Fleming would have to win access to all kinds of netting, dredging, tonging, trapping, and potting work. He wanted to photograph 20 different commercial-harvesting techniques, including five ways of catching crabs, five ways of hauling up oysters, and six ways of netting finfish. That meant a lot of midnight rides to meet up with watermen on predawn docks along both sides of the Bay.

His neutral stance helped him get on all those boats, including Omega's menhaden boat at Reedville. "Obviously it's a controversial fishery," says Fleming, and his photographs certainly show multitudes of fish trapped in huge nets. But his first focus — as in all his fishing photographs — is clearly on the hard, heaving, human work that goes into this form of commercial fishing.

Fleming, like a lot of the watermen he photographs, was

While nippering for oysters, *Doug Morris uses small tongs to pluck a large oyster out of the shallows of Broad Creek near Neavitt, Maryland (left). Fish potting is one of the ways watermen like Ricky Rice catch channel catfish and blue catfish in the Potomac River (above).*

A gill net *anchored in the Potomac River snags a rockfish headed upriver to spawn (left top). A purse seining net is hoisted by the Omega Protein boat,* F/V Tangier Island, *in preparation for vacuuming menhaden into large coolers (left bottom). Using bank traps, Andrew Benton and Patrick Arby are hoping to land some peeler crabs in the shallows around Deal Island, Maryland (opposite).*

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JAY FLEMING, WWW.JAYFLEMINGPHOTOGRAPHY.COM

born into the profession he practices. He's the son of Kevin Fleming, a wildlife photographer who worked with *National Geographic* and published a number of books on his own, including several focused on Delaware Bay. After graduating with a degree in economics, Jay Fleming set out to duplicate his father's success but with a focus on photographing the Chesapeake Bay. For a number of years he worked as a contract photographer with Maryland's seafood marketing program. With those genes and that kind of job, it was natural for him to focus his talents on the fishing industries of the Bay.

So it's no surprise he was able to publish his first book earlier this year, *Working the Water,* when he was only 29 years old. The book, beautifully designed and printed, features 280 pages of vivid images, including striking angles he managed to shoot from underwater.

Most of the book's readers will find there are more ways of fishing the Bay than they imagined. And that Fleming has captured them all in images that are clearly and deeply suffused with empathy — a key quality in most great photography. In Fleming's case, it's deep empathy for all the gritty human work that goes into every kind of harvesting.

Photographs, prints, posters, and books are available from the following sources:

The best place to find **A. Aubrey Bodine's** images is www.aaubreybodine.com, an excellent website managed by Jennifer Bodine and Richard Orban.

The final archive for **Robert de Gast's** Chesapeake Bay imagery about oystermen, lighthouses, and sailing is the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, where curator Pete Lesher is organizing an exhibit scheduled for 2017.

Marion E. Warren donated his photographs to the Maryland State Archives in Annapolis.

David W. Harp makes his work available through his website: www.chesapeakephotos.com. His five books coauthored with Tom Horton can be found online and in many bookstores.

Jay Fleming sells his book, calendar, and prints through www.jayflemingphotography.com

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Boynton Receives 2016 Mathias Medal


DAVID HARP

Walter Boynton was awarded the Mathias Medal on December 2 to recognize his groundbreaking research showing that excess nutrients degraded the Chesapeake Bay's water quality and habitats.

The medal is given jointly by Maryland Sea Grant, Virginia Sea Grant, and the Chesapeake Research Consortium to recognize outstanding researchers whose work informed environmental policy to improve the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. The award is named for the late U.S. Senator Charles "Mac" Mathias of Maryland, who championed efforts to clean up the Bay. Boynton is only the seventh recipient of the Mathias Medal since it was established in 1989.

Boynton spent his career as an estuarine ecologist at the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory, now part of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES).

His foundational research has offered new insights into how the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem works and why it has declined, insights that challenged conventional wisdom. He coauthored one of the first scientific papers, still widely cited, that implicated excess nitrogen washing into the Chesapeake from farms, parking lots, and other human sources as a key cause of the eutrophication process that creates low-oxygen "dead zones" in the Bay. Low oxygen and excess nutrients have stressed fish populations and killed vast swaths of native seagrasses.

Research by Boynton and his colleagues established that nutrient loading from a range of geographically distributed (non-point) sources was harming water quality. His research also revealed the ecological consequences of the declining acreage of seagrasses covering the estuary's bottom.

Boynton's studies have formed a critical part of the foundation of scientific knowledge that continues to inform efforts to improve the Bay's ecosystem. He worked persistently for years to persuade natural resource managers and policy makers to monitor nutrients in the Chesapeake and to take bold actions to reduce them.

Eventually leaders responded with a series of management plans now credited with lowering the amounts of nutrients in parts of the estuary's vast watershed. Boynton helped to design the Chesapeake Bay Program's monitoring effort, which began in 1984, is still operating, and is considered one of the best in the world. He recently published findings detailing how long-term management practices to reduce nutrients can lead directly to improvements in the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem, as measured by higher abundance of seagrasses, clearer water, and smaller blooms of algae.

— Jeffrey Brainard

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