Bugeye TENNISON Joins CMM Fleet

The Calvert Marine Museum recently acquired the bugeye WM. B. TENNISON from the J.C. Lore Co. It seems rather appropriate the Museum, based at the Solomons bugeye capital of the world, should have in its possession a vessel of this type. During their prime, the shipbuilders of Solomons produced more bugeyes than any other community on the Bay. As a result, the vessel’s development was greatly influenced by this local group of boat builders.

The TENNISON is a Chesapeake Bay bugeye sailing craft which was built in 1899 at Crabb Island, Maryland. Her hull is constructed of nine logs called “chunk;” as opposed to the frame and plank type construction which developed later. The TENNISON is one of the oldest surviving chunk bugeyes on the Bay.

According to M. V. Brewington, author of *Chesapeake Bay Log Canoes and Bugeyes*, Chesapeake Bay bugeyes were the crowning achievements and developments of the primitive log dugout canoes. The bugeyes were known for their purity of design, speed, and seaworthiness. From the time of their conception, about 1865, these log canoes have seldom ventured beyond the Capes of the Chesapeake.

Initially, the TENNISON was powered by sail, as were all the bugeyes, and was engaged in coasting trade as well as the oyster industry. Her original rig included two masts, three sails, and four pairs of oyster dredges which were used to scrape the Chesapeake oyster bars.

The TENNISON was converted in 1911 to a power vessel after having the sail rig removed. A new larger cabin was added aft and the vessel became an oyster buy boat. The sole purpose of a buy boat was to travel between the oyster bars, purchase shellfish from the workboats, return to the oyster house and subsequently make deliveries to metropolitan markets of Washington, Baltimore, Norfolk, etc. Of course, the use of oyster buy boats greatly reduced the need for oystermen to travel to wholesale markets to sell their catch. However, the benefits gained by this practice were practically negated due to the fact that the captains of the buy boats would purchase the oysters from the oystermen at reduced rates. In effect, buy boats reduced the oystermen’s income.

In June 1976, the TENNISON passed a rigid survey and received Coast Guard approval to carry as many as forty-nine passengers. As a result of this approval, she became the oldest Coast Guard licensed passenger carrying vessel in the Fifth Coast Guard District, the Chesapeake Bay area. Her survival is a tribute to the builders, B. P. and R. L. Miles, and to former owners, including Mr. Alton Kersey, who maintained her in an excellent condition.

During the upcoming summer season, the CMM plans to involve the TENNISON in a variety of activities. These endeavors will include her use as a tour boat as well as for educational estuarine field programs.

In the past, the Museum has received requests from various groups for boat trips on the Chesapeake Bay in order to view the Cliffs of Calvert, and also for trips on the Patuxent River for historical purposes. In cases such as these, the TENNISON will provide the desired transportation to get these activities afloat.

Chesapeake “Chessie,” Myth or Monster

During the past nine months, nearly thirty people have claimed to have witnessed the appearance of the Chesapeake Bay’s own version of the Loch Ness monster “Nessie.” Most of the reports have been localized around the mouths of the Rappahannock, Potomac, and Patuxent rivers.

Over fifty years ago, however, Helen Kay compiled what is believed to be the first documented report of “Chessie’s” activities. At the time, Helen was a counselor at a children’s camp on the Patuxent River. There had been several days of

(Cont’d on Page 2)
tumultuous rains and when they finally abated, she decided to venture down to the river to check on the boats and dock. Unfortunately, the river had risen to such a level Helen was not able to reach the dock. She could see the swollen, murky river and witnessed what proved to be an event more terrifying than she could have imagined.

"Surely, these were dragons? They were as close to anything resembling dragons that I had seen outside of a children's fairy tale book. No forked tail, but three rounded heads erect, bodies looped twice, arched back, three monsters were heading towards the Chesapeake, where everything else on the river had gone - out to sea."

"Chessie" has taken on a variety of sizes and shapes. In general, it is described as being ten to thirty-six feet in length, eighteen inches in diameter, snake-like, devoid of fins, grey colored, and able of attaining surface or near surface speeds up to seven miles per hour. On various occasions the creature has been spotted singly or in groups of up to five individuals. Most of the sightings have been restricted to its aquatic environment, but in one case "Chessie" reportedly became landbound and left eighteen-inch tracks on a field in Maryland as proof.

Despite the numerous reporting, one by a vessel captain and the others by landlubbers, "Chessie" has managed to avoid being captured on film as well as avoiding the various pound nets, gill nets, seines, etc., in the Bay and its tributaries. Not only has this creature avoided the aforementioned means of exposure, but has gone so far as to camouflage itself and/or maneuver around the ubiquitous watermen, sailors, and sportfishermen who work in and around the Bay daily.

Among those who have spent endless hours on the Chesapeake Bay, the Patuxent and Potomac rivers, are the members of the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory's research fleet. Over the past fifty years no one onboard any of the vessels has reported anything out of the ordinary which resembles "Chessie."

Recently the CMM, along with a few local citizens, gained national press coverage through a story written for the "New York Times." Among those interviewed were Dr. Joseph Cooney and CMM's own director, Dr. Ralph Eshelman.

Dr. Cooney, director of CBL, believes the existence of this type of animal is "highly unlikely" but doesn't "doubt that the people reporting these sightings actually saw something." In reality, they probably saw "a porpoise or some otters, or it may have been a judgemental illusion."

The case against "Chessie" gained added impetus from Dr. Eshelman, who commented that the sightings were either porpoises or large rays. Since he has witnessed rather large groups of rays with their tails raised, stirring up a boil in the water, Eshelman does not rule out this occurrence as a possible explanation. Even though there is an apparent lack of evidence for its existence, the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences maintains an ongoing file of reported "Chessie" sightings. Dr. John Merriner, of VIMS' Department of Ichthyology, has managed to amass an impressive collection of newsclippings, letters, memos, etc., dealing with the phenomenon. The Institute also requested and conducted an aerial reconnaissance by several dozen menhaden fleet spotter planes. Needless to say, the search failed in producing any conclusive evidence for or against the creature's existence. However, VIMS maintains an open-minded attitude toward the matter by "encouraging detailed observation and notes of such a sighting, and requests that observers get a photo, if possible. "Whatever the creature is, it should not be molested," contends Merriner.

Thus far, "Chessie" has avoided any close scrutiny, but as concluded by Dr. Merriner, it could actually be any one or a number of the following phenomena: pound net poles; an oar fish; trees or stumps; common watersnakes; an escaped anaconda; an alligator (caiman) porpoises; sea turtles; loons or other diving birds; river otters; sting rays; waves; optical illusions; and last, but certainly not least, "Chessie!"

Indeed the only way to solve this enigma is through careful, factual, documented information objectively obtained by the witness. If anyone is fortunate to be the lucky contactee in such a sighting, feel free to contact the Fisheries Division Office at the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences at (804) 642-2111, extensions 268 or 269, or the CMM.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

It's hard to believe another year has passed, but without a doubt, 1978 was the most successful year yet at CMM. Certainly, the highlight was the grand opening and dedication of the Drum Point Lighthouse. The lighthouse has come to be the most popular attraction at the Museum.

The Patuxent River Appreciation Days festival was highly successful, and many participants believed it was the most successful event ever held in Calvert County. This festival was the result of outstanding community support and participation.

Behind the scenes, our maritime collections are now housed in their new quarters. The new Library and Archives facility was recently completed in the lower level, and is now open to the public. The North Annex (formerly the Smith property) was renovated and turned over to the education department. Perhaps our most outstanding exhibit "Fossils of Calvert Cliffs" is finally nearing completion with a projected opening in May.

Thanks to the Calvert County Government, the Museum initiated two very important projects. The first aspect dealt with the hiring of a professional planning and architectural firm, Cambridge Seven Associates, of Massachusetts, to prepare a master plan for CMM. The other project, which is presently in the planning stages, involves the installation of a Halon gas fire prevention system. Both projects are extremely important for the safety of the Museum's constantly growing collections of artifacts, as well as for continued physical expansion and growth.

Museum attendance increased over one hundred percent, since 1977, to nearly 50,000 visitors. This was the largest percentage increase in attendance of any tourist attraction monitored by the State of Maryland. The Museum members, friends, volunteers, and staff should be proud of their accomplishments. To each and every one of you a warm felt "THANKS." With your continued support, 1979 can be as successful.

NOTICE

Tom Wisner's Chesapeake Born album is now available at the Ship's Store. If you enjoyed Tom's slide-tape program in the "Life of the Waterman" exhibit, you'll want to have his record.
SPRING CALENDAR AND PROGRAM SCHEDULE

APRIL 2 THE SKY TONIGHT. Visit the Planetarium at Calvert Senior High School. Mr. Phillips will include information on the use of stars for navigation in his presentation. Meet at Calvert Senior High School at 7:45 p.m.

21 SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION. A guided tour of the new maritime exhibit in the Museum of History and Technology in the morning. Lunch at your own expense (brown bag or cafeteria). A guided tour of the paleontology exhibits in the Museum of Natural History in the afternoon. Cost is $5.50 for members and $6.50 for non-members. Paid reservation is required by April 15th. Call 326-4162 for complete information.

24 AMERICAN SHIPCARVER’S GUILD EXHIBIT. Celebrate the First Anniversary of the John Olsen Chapter while viewing the accomplishments of their work. Exhibits will include the 6-foot wing-span American Bald Eagle carving. Lower level CMM.

MAY 5 OCEAN CITY PELAGIC TRIP. Sailing from Ocean City to Baltimore Canyon and the outer continental shelf. During last year’s trips 7 species of whales were seen: also several species of Oceanic birds, terns, shearwaters, and other interesting sea birds. Cost: $40.00 a person. Hours: 6 a.m. to 7(9) p.m. Contact Dr. Estelman, 326-3719, for information and reservations. These trips sell out very quickly, are “first come/first served” and paid in advance, with no preferential treatment.

8 SHIP SHAPE. An illustrated lecture on the construction of today’s super-ships by Mr. Richard Fracalossi of Bethlehem Steel.

18 PREVIEW. Fossils of Calvert Cliffs. For members only. See CMM’s newest exhibit.

19-27 LADY KATIE CRUISES. Spaces still available for one day, overnight, and 3-day trips. $45.00 a day. Reservations required. Pick up registration from the Ship’s Store or phone 326-4162 for open dates before making your reservation. Space is going fast... plan ahead.

22 THE INCREDIBLE CRAB. Book review of Beautiful Swimmers; slide show on life of the crab; movie on catching and picking crabs. Leader is Doug Ritchie and others. Crab cake recipe and samples. $1.00 for members and $2.00 non-members.

29-31 SMITH ISLAND. A field trip including bird watching, marsh and estuarine study, and the opportunity to visit the unique towns of Ewell, Tylertown, and Rhodes Point. Cost of the 3-day trip is $45.00 members and $50.00 non-members (includes car and boat transportation, lodging, food, and guide). Trip limited to 20 persons. Paid reservation required by May 10.

JUNE 11 UNCERTAIN FUTURE OF THE PATUXENT RIVER. Dr. Robert Ulanowicz, associate professor theoretical ecological systems analyst of the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory, will talk about future ecological change and development within the Patuxent River basin and what this means to society.

9-17 LADY KATIE CRUISES. See May 19-27 for complete information.

PREVIEW OF SUMMER

JULY 11 WEEKLY WEDNESDAY SESSIONS, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

AUG. 15 Will include nautical skills and crafts, estuarine biology and paleontology field trips. Watch local newspapers and the next issue of Bugeye Times for specific schedule. Registration is required, Fee $5.00 members and $7.50 for non-members.

JULY 16-27 ESTUARINE STUDIES. A pilot program for 8-12 graders in cooperation with the Calvert County Board of Education. A hands-on field oriented learning experience. For further information contact Dot Ordwein, 326-4162.

All programs begin at the Museum at 7:45 p.m. unless otherwise noted. All programs are free to members and $1.00 to non-members unless otherwise noted. For additional information call D. Ordwein, 326-4162.

REGISTRATION FORM

☐ Smithsonian Institution Tour ☐ Smith Island Field Trip ☐ Weekly Wednesdays ☐ Ocean City Pelagic Trip
$5.50 members $45.00 members $5.00 members $40.00 a person
$6.50 non-members $50.00 non-members

Number of participants

__ $________ Total amount enclosed

Make checks payable to: Programs, Calvert Marine Museum, Solomons, Md. 20688.

NAME Phone

ADDRESS

Books and materials are moved into the new Library and Archives prior to its opening in March.

On behalf of CMM, James H. Buys, chairman of the Museum Committee, accepts a Certificate of Appreciation from the Maryland Economic and Community Development Advisory Commission chairman, Jay Jacobs.
CMM Staff Gets New Blood

At the top of the list is CMM's new exhibit designer, Bette Houseman. Bette has been working at the Museum since last summer and has now secured a permanent position. Thanks to the opening of Thomas Johnson Bridge, new faces are frequenting Calvert County, and Bette is among the newcomers. Among the jobs facing her are the completion of our new “Fossils of Calvert Cliffs” exhibit and the design and construction of our youth oriented “Discovery Room.”

Also bringing new talent and ideas is Tim Mihursky. Presently, Tim is finishing his undergraduate work at Moravian College, in Bethlehem, Pa., as an intern on a field study program set up with CMM through the college. Since he is an art major, Tim’s work includes photographic and graphic arts jobs performed within the Museum, literary work (e.g., compiling the spring newsletter), and also aiding Bette in exhibit and display work.

Walt Glockler recently began his work at CMM serving as the night watchman. Living on the top floor of the North Annex, Walt is able to keep a close watch on all activities. During the upcoming summer months, Walt will be conducting a sailing class aboard the Museum’s bateau MARIE THERESA. He is an avid sailor and owns his own sailboat. Walt’s previous teaching experiences include a boat safety course conducted by the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Another new face involved in CMM activities is Patti Leppard, a student at the University of Maryland. She is currently working on her master’s thesis which deals with estuarine education. This fall, Patti will conduct classes, using the Museum’s facilities and the TENNISON, to teach children estuarine field ecology.

A portion of the 15-foot Miocene Calvert Sea mural and seascape floor habitat in the nearly completed “Fossils of Calvert Cliffs” exhibit scheduled to open in May.

ACQUISITIONS

BEN EVANS: skipjack pictures
FRANK BLOOD: 1938 wooden yacht
C&P TELEPHONE COMMUNITY RELATIONS TEAM: financial donation
BRUCE PHILIPSON: c. 1900 steam lauch POCAHONTAS
DR. ALBERT ESCH: c. 1906 bateau MARIE THERESA
REV. W. PLUMMER: book, Old Bay Line 1840-1940
CALVERT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY: book, Rivers of the Eastern Shore
MARGARET MEYER: kerosene lamp with chimney
JAMES MARGE: whale vertebra
MICKEY EVANS: dredge marker
MAY COLE: books on seamanship
SANDY ROBERTS: fossil sperm whale tooth
JAMES A. CHAMBERS: medical school notes and drawing instruments from Dr. Chambers c. 1890
MAUDE O’BERRY: tin-lined oyster shipping container
MEMBERSHIP ACQUISITION FUND: L. Ishan oil painting of bug-eye J.D.C. HANNA; L. Vosburn watercolors of lumber schooner, sloop, bugeye, and Tilghman Island canoe

INTRA-MUSEUM LOANS

PATUXENT RIVER PARK: Loan of shipbuilding adz and hand ax from CMM
MARYLAND SCIENCE CENTER: Donation of fossil bones from CMM
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION: Loan of fossils to CMM for new “Fossils of Calvert Cliffs” exhibit
RADCLIFFE MARITIME MUSEUM: Donation of photographs from CMM
BATH MARINE MUSEUM: Loan of 6 volume set of “Merchant Sail” to CMM
MARINERS MUSEUM: Donation of photographs of commercial shipbuilding in South America from CMM

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

COMMISSIONERS OF CALVERT COUNTY: For continued support of CMM
C&P TELEPHONE: Assistance in lowering and raising flag pole for annual painting and maintenance
MR. BRAATZ of HARRY LUNDEBERG SCHOOL OF SEAMANSHIP: Assistance in lifting and towing log canoe
DR. JOSEPH COONEY, CHESAPEAKE BIOLOGICAL LABORATORY: Assistance of research vessel to tow MARIE THERESA to CMM

CALVERT MARINE MUSEUM
Solomons, Maryland 20688
Tel: 301-326-3719
A Quarterly Newsletter for Members of the Calvert Marine Museum

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35
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