In the years following World War II, the M. M. Davis & Son, Inc., shipyard of Solomons, Maryland, earned a reputation for constructing a small cabin cruiser with the trade name “Cruis-Along.” Company president George H. Townsend, who bought the shipyard after Clarence Davis died in 1936, recognized the pent-up postwar consumer demand of a growing American middle class and planned a dependable, versatile, and moderately priced boat. Capitalizing on manufacturing techniques mastered during the war years, the Davis yard filled a market niche with its mass-produced, plywood Cruis-Along model.

**Origins of the Cruis-Along**

During the Depression era leading up to the war, Townsend, headquartered in New York, and his Solomons management team of vice president G. Gunther Wallen and general superintendent J. Barnes Lusby were desperate to find ways to make the shipyard profitable. Several boatbuilding and repair contracts kept the shipyard afloat as the war in Europe loomed, but it was difficult to keep production costs low enough to attract new customers. Specializing in custom boatbuilding, the Davis yard found itself in financial difficulty in 1939 as war fears caused the demand for custom yachts to dry up. The management team had to consider an alternative to custom building with its high labor costs.

In 1939, Wallen and Lusby designed and built a twenty-six-foot plywood power cruiser they named the “Davis 26.” In a letter to his father-in-law, George Townsend, Wallen described his plan to produce “a little 26 foot boat of plywood, sleeping four people with galley, icebox, and toilet giving a cruising speed of 15 mph.” Townsend approved. Wallen underwrote the cost of the boat and was so confident about its prospects as a stock cruiser that he advertised it as available for inspection. Two months later, however, Wallen wrote to Townsend that he had not interested anyone in buying a Davis 26 and so had no immediate plans to build more of the model. Townsend agreed that, given the lack of demand, it would be unwise to construct more plywood cruisers at that time.

Although the Davis 26 was not put into production, it may have provided conceptual inspiration for the later Cruis-Along. A pencil sketch in the CMM archives of another cruiser may provide a direct link to the Cruis-Along. This 1939 sketch, depicting plan and profile views of a twenty-foot cabin cruiser, was saved in a scrapbook containing M.

Continued on page 6
Oakville Elementary Otter Partners

The Calvert Marine Museum is delighted to welcome Oakville Elementary as our St. Mary’s County elementary school partner. Oakville has adopted the otter as their official school mascot, and their students are planning to raise funds to help support the otter upkeep. We look forward to exploring more ways to make this partnership mutually beneficial.

Birthday Party Delight

Did you know that the museum offers wonderful birthday parties exclusively for members? We offer six different birthday themes for children age 3 to 8. So next time you’re trying to figure out that perfect birthday for your child, think CMM. Information is on the museum web site under educational programs for families or call 410-326-2042, ext.41, to reserve your birthday party today!

- Mermaid Mysteries — Ages 3–6
- Diggin’ Up The Past — Ages 5 & up
- Pirate Adventures — Ages 5-8
- Fins & Tails — Ages 3-6
- Outrageous Otters — Ages 3 & up
- Lighthouse Tea Party — Ages 4-8

WHAT’S IN THOSE WHITE BOXES?

To encourage a more “hands on” experience for visitors in the exhibition building, we have initiated a new public program. Starting November 3, and continuing on the first Saturday of the month thereafter, guided tours of the maritime hall will be conducted by trained docents with special emphasis on the contents of those mysterious white boxes that have appeared in the maritime hall in recent months. The boxes contain numerous items and artifacts representing the age of exploration of the bay, the War of 1812, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century settlements, shipbuilding in Solomons, and World War II mementos. Items from the boxes, such as Indian arrowheads, half-foot-long oyster shells, a grog cup from Commodore Barney’s flotilla, ships’ blocks, and other interesting artifacts will be passed around for close examination and an explanation of their relationship to the period. This should have particular appeal to families with school-age children.

The forty-five-minute tour will be part of the regular museum admission and will be offered on Saturday afternoons between 1:00 and 4:00 p.m. No advance registration is required, but there will be a sign-up sheet at the admissions desk.

For further information call 410-326-2042, ext. 41, or check the web site www.calvertmarinemuseum.com.
FROM THE CMM DEVELOPMENT OFFICE . . .

ENJOY A NIGHT OF ELEGANCE AT THE Bugeye Ball

On Saturday, October 3, the Calvert Marine Museum hosts its annual Bugeye Ball. Enjoy an evening of fine food, entertainment, a silent auction, and dancing within the exhibit halls of the museum. Tickets are $50 per person. Auction items include a stay in a Cayman Islands home, a selection of jewelry from G&H Jewelers, overnight accommodations at local hotels and inns, and framed artwork. Blue Wind Gourmet will prepare a delectable menu for the evening.

This year’s ball proceeds help support the historic Cove Point Lighthouse. Tickets can be purchased by calling 410-326-2042, ext. 6, 7, 8, or 46.

PREPARE TO PLAY AT CMMS’ HOLIDAY BASKET BINGO EXTRAVAGANZA

Over $11,000 worth in Longaberger prizes and $1,100 worth of Vera Bradley prizes will be up for grabs at CMMS’ annual Holiday Basket Bingo Extravaganza on Sunday, November 11, at the Calvert County Fairgrounds. Doors open at 11:00 a.m.; early birds begin at 12:30 p.m.; regular games begin at 1:00 p.m. Products featured include Longaberger’s 2007 Holiday Campaign. King Tutt for prizes will also be played! Special basket drawings will be held for CMMS members, all pre-paid ticket holders, and Basket Bingo Buddies’ card holders. New for this bingo, all regular game prizes will be filled with Longaberger and Vera Bradley products.

Tickets are $20 each and include a regular book of 20 games. Special books of five games are $5 each. Early bird book of four games are $3 each. To pre-order tickets, please contact Melissa Carnes at 410-326-2042, ext. 17. Ticket sales are nonrefundable, and all people in the building must have a paid admission. Due to limited seating, no one under the age of 6 will be permitted inside the building.

Waterside concerts heated up the Solomons summer, attracting thousands to CMM to see the legendary Doobie Brothers in June and country artist Sara Evans in July. The Doobie Brothers show left the audience reminiscing of days gone by as they rocked the night with hits like Black Water and China Grove. Sara Evans fans braved a vicious thunderstorm, and were rewarded with a high-energy performance, including No Place That Far and Born to Fly.

Waterside 2007 Sponsors

Ralph’s Dodge-Jeep & Cumberland & Erly, LLC; Bozick Distributors – Coors, Coors Light, & Killian’s; G&H Jewelers; DirectMail.com; 98 Star FM; Mom’s in the Kitchen Catering; Southern Maryland Newspapers; Bay Weekly; Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative; Quick Connections; Comcast; All American Harley Davidson; Marrick Homes-Oyster Bay; The Harbours at Solomons Island; Roy Rogers; The McNelis Group, LLC; and Holiday Inn Select Solomons. For more information, call 410-326-2042, ext.16, 17, 18, or 46, or visit www.calvertmarinemuseum.com
PATUXENT RIVER APPRECIATION DAYS
RETURN FOR THE 30th YEAR

On Saturday, October 6, and Sunday, October 7, the Patuxent River Appreciation Days (PRAD) celebration returns featuring old-time favorites such as a craft fair, live music, local food specialties, children’s games, free boat rides, the “SnakePoole” with native and exotic reptiles, and much more. Don’t miss Blue Sky Puppet Theatre’s presentation of “Lights Out on the Bunny Brothers” on Saturday at 11:00 a.m. in the museum auditorium. In the “Green Village” on the museum grounds, the theme is People for the Patuxent. Join the movement and pin on your button, get your picture taken with the life-size cutout of Senator Bernie Fowler, and participate in family activities and workshops geared to helping all of us be better stewards of our environment. The annual Sunday PRAD Parade will take place along Solomons Island Road beginning at 2:00. The museum is free during these two days.

Friday evening, October 5, the museum will introduce First Free Friday, a new initiative that will keep the museum open and free to the public from 5:00 until 8:00 p.m. on the first Friday of the month. This evening, in keeping with the PRAD theme, we will show Preacher for the Patuxent at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium. This documentary, featuring former state senator Bernie Fowler, is a testament to the work he has done to preserve this great resource and is a tremendous inspiration for all of us. Senator Fowler will be on hand to answer questions. There will also be representatives from environmental groups available to explain how anyone can get involved in the effort to clean up the river. (Sherrod Sturrock)

SUPPORT FOR COVE POINT LIGHTHOUSE

Several projects are under way to help save the Cove Point Lighthouse, the oldest continuously operating lighthouse in Maryland, and since 2000 under the care of the Calvert Marine Museum. Although the United States Coast Guard operates this active aid-to-navigation (the light itself that is housed in the tower), the museum performs site maintenance, including restoration projects on the light station’s outbuildings, as well as management of access to the site through tours and other activities. Much work has been done to improve the light station since 2000, but a great deal of work remains.

An item on the development office page in this issue describes one effort to raise the funds necessary for the work — the Bugeye Ball on October 13. Donors to the ball have already provided significant support. In addition, proceeds from the Gretchen Wilson concert were designated for Cove Point. A further effort is the recent mailing to members of an appeal for funds set out in an attractive folder and accompanying letter offering several contribution levels and unique gifts and special opportunities. One of the incentives is a DVD of the program that is shown to visitors in the converted fog bell building. If you have not received this appeal, make a call to the development office on 410-326-2042, ext. 16, 17, or 18.

Other sources of funds are being sought. The Southern Maryland Heritage Area Consortium, for example, recently announced that a grant of $59,000 will be awarded in fiscal year 2008 to support the repair and restoration of the interior of the masonry lighthouse tower. Funding from many sources will help the restoration of this important site.
CRADLE OF INVASION: The End of an Era

The tenth and final Cradle of Invasion event took place on August 11, the most beautiful day of the month. During the day, over a thousand visitors experienced “Marching Through Time” from 1812 to the present. The United States Marine Corps Historical Company set up displays and demonstrations on the grounds and gave lecture/demonstrations in the auditorium throughout the day; CMM’s maritime history curator, Richard Dodds, offered his WWII tour of Solomons; there were two very moving Recollection Round Tables moderated by Jack Green of the Naval Historical Center; and there was a special WWII Tennison cruise narrated by veteran Frank King. In the lobby, a photography exhibit of “Solomons Yesterday and Today,” put together by Tom and Sandy Younger and the exhibits department, was especially appropriate to the event and very meaningful to the older visitors. The day ended with the dedication of “On Watch,” described on page 8. (Sherrod Sturrock)

CMM REPRESENTED AT A SYMPOSIUM IN SWEDEN

This past August, the museum’s assistant curator of paleontology, Yasemin Tulu, went to Uppsala, Sweden, to take part in the 40th Anniversary Symposium on Early Vertebrates/Lower Vertebrates, held at the Uppsala University. She reports: “The conference was well attended with a little over a hundred people from all over the world. The majority of the scientists were from Europe, but delegates also hailed from Canada, the U.S., Australia, and China. I represented the Calvert Marine Museum with a talk on the problems of fossil shark systematics with highlights from my doctoral research that focuses on fossil sharks from the Cretaceous of Montana. Paleontology in Sweden has a rich and varied history that was the focus for a few talks, but most of the papers presented were on new fossil finds, fossil relationships, and new ways of studying fossils. The conference was followed by a post conference trip to the island of Gotland with visits to fossil localities. It is a marvelous place with a great history going back to the time of the Vikings – well worth a visit.”
Cruis-Along – the First Generation

(Continued from page 1)

M. Davis & Son memorabilia from World War II and the first years of Cruis-Along production. The sketch incorporates several features of the first Cruis-Along model line, including its approximate size and cabin accommodations.

Any plan to build a stock cruiser was deferred due to the developments of World War II when the Davis yard, like much of American industry, shifted to support wartime production demands. Although renowned for its custom-designed and custom-built yachts, the shipyard developed production-line manufacturing techniques to fulfill boat orders from the U.S. Army Transportation Corps during the war. It also modernized its infrastructure with the installation of rail lines and electric cranes. These innovations helped increase worker productivity, lowered production costs, and paved the way for post-war mass production of a stock cruiser.

First Cruis-Along

After Wallen left the shipyard in 1940, George Townsend kept alive the dream of manufacturing a plywood stock cruiser. Already a successful businessman when he assumed ownership of the shipyard in 1937, Townsend was also a former three-term president of the American Power Boat Association and two-time winner of the Gold Cup Motor Boat Classic. Closely involved in the affairs of his shipyard, Townsend’s experience with powerboats and boat racing combined with Barnes Lusby’s thirty years of boatbuilding expertise to produce a successful cruiser model.

The pre-war dream for a viable plywood stock cruiser became a reality in early 1945. According to the June 1945 issue of Yachting magazine, Townsend planned “a little postwar cruiser that should have a tremendous appeal for the man of modest means who wants to get afloat in something more commodious than an open boat.” Further, it reported the Davis yard had already produced a twenty-foot prototype with a roomy cockpit and accommodations for two in its cabin. This boat was steered with a tiller and her inboard motor could push her at ten to eleven knots. The January 1946 issue of Motor Boating magazine reported that America’s Cup yachtsman Sherman Hoyt and Townsend had conducted extensive test runs of the prototype at Essex, Connecticut.

Cruis-Along 1946 models

The Cruis-Along was debuted in Yachting magazine’s January 1946 Boat Show issue. It stated: “The object of the builders is to provide a sound but simple craft, inexpensive to buy, operate, and maintain.” The magazine cautioned: “There are no frills; all the builders are offering are certain essentials put together with good workmanship and sensible engineering.” It concluded: “She is no ‘luxury yacht’ nor is she a ‘speed pill,’ but she should appeal to a lot of yachtsmen with Spartan tastes and slim pocketbooks, which is to say, a very large number of people.” With some modifications based on test runs of the prototype, including upgrading to a more powerful engine, Townsend’s yard commenced full production of its twenty-foot Cruis-Along model in March 1946. Yachting magazine’s “Boats for a Budget” article in its May 1946 issue gave a positive review to the little cruiser. At under $2,000, the boat was described as “a fine example of the economy of plywood construction, moderate power, and simplicity of finish.”

The 1946 Cruis-Along hull, deck, bulkheads, and cabin top were constructed of plywood that made her a lightweight craft, weighing only 1,500 pounds — a factor in trailering. Her sturdy hull was constructed of three-eighths-
inch waterproof plywood fastened with bronze screws to white oak frames. Two full-length berths, marine toilet, sink, stove, and icebox added to the comfort of her cabin. The Economy Model, equipped with a Gray sixteen-horsepower motor, had a speed of fourteen miles per hour and cost $1,980. It could be upgraded to a twenty-five-horsepower Kermath Sea Cub engine to achieve sixteen miles per hour for an additional $100. For $2,140, the Speed Model had the same hull, but was equipped with a Gray Phantom forty-five-horsepower motor that could speed to twenty miles per hour. (Townsend’s interest in boat speed is evident in these offerings.)

*Motor Boating* magazine called the Cruis-Along a “smart little sedan cruiser,” while *Rudder* magazine stated “this little craft has a remarkably large cabin.” The *Calvert Independent* newspaper reported that the boat’s twenty-foot length was divided into eight feet of cabin, eight feet of cockpit, and four feet of forward deck. With a beam of six-feet, nine-inches, the Cruis-Along had a draft of eighteen inches.

Demand was good for the Cruis-Along boat in its first year of manufacture, but the yard had difficulty procuring all of the materials needed in a timely manner. In May 1946, *Boating Industry* magazine reported the production of Cruis-Alongs was being held up due to a postwar shortage of certain materials. In his “message to boat lovers” printed in the 1947 Cruis-Along brochure, Townsend stated: “despite shortages of materials which have allowed us to fill but a fraction of the demand, I am happy to say there are over three hundred of these boats in the hands of enthusiastic owners.” Attesting to the productivity of the shipyard, these boats had been constructed and delivered to their owners in only nine months. An early distributor of Cruis-Along, Bob Eagan of Bay State Boat Company of Cambridge, Massachusetts, told the *Boston Globe* that Davis was one of the few builders ready for the post-war demand for small cruisers.

### Cruis-Along 1947 model

Recognizing the popularity of its 1946 model, Townsend and his team made only a few small changes to the 1947 Cruis-Along model. The 1946 cabin plan was retained intact, while a steering seat at the helm and a wide seat aft were added to increase cockpit comfort. Optional equipment available in the 1947 model included a folding windshield and combined shade awning and cockpit cover. Due to popularity of demand, the Economy Model was dropped and only the faster, forty-five-horsepower four-cylinder Gray Phantom engine was offered in 1947.

The 1947 Cruis-Along advertisement touted the boat as “the lowest priced complete cruiser.” Its brochure explained: “In order to achieve the low price of the Cruis-Along it is necessary to build these boats on a production line that precludes individual changes.” Thus, all were painted with white hull and cabin while the cabin top and deck were green. The brochure also cautioned the prospective buyer: “Our production will be limited, so we respectfully suggest that you order promptly.” In the first days of the 1947 National Motor Boat Show, held in New York’s Grand Central Palace, M. M. Davis & Son, Inc., set a record by having 500 orders, amounting to over one million dollars, placed for its Cruis-Along. Dealers and distributors across the country recognized the popularity of an affordable cruiser to the post-war consumer, and the Davis yard built and shipped around 500 of their popular model in 1947.

* * * * *

In the space of a few short years, George Townsend, his management team, and workforce had established a strong foothold for M. M. Davis & Son, Inc., in the market for moderately priced family cruisers. The years that followed would bring enlarged facilities and more staff to increase productivity; an expansion of its product offering with the addition of new and improved models; and continued promotion of the Cruis-Along fleet that led to increased demand for the boats.

Sources: this article has been developed from correspondence and other items in the CMM archives and from periodicals in the museum’s library. Photographs are from the CMM collections. A copy of the article with specific citations is available upon request to the editor.
DEDICATION OF WWII STATUE “ON WATCH”  
A Tribute to Veterans

On the afternoon of August 11, at the end of the Cradle of Invasion day at CMM, nearly 300 people gathered on the tip of the Dowell Peninsula on the site of the former Naval Amphibious Training Base to dedicate the WWII statue “On Watch.” The statue is the work of Maryland sculptor Toby Mendez, known locally for his “Tonger,” the centerpiece of Annmarie Garden. It was a truly moving ceremony, led by Rear Admiral Tim Heeley, who is not only a member of the CMM Board of Governors and an active serviceman, but also the son of a World War II veteran. The Patuxent River Naval Air Station provided a chaplain and color guard, and museum interpreter Tom Lewis lofted his fine tenor voice to lead the National Anthem and Navy Hymn. There were several impressive speakers, dignitaries, and elected officials, but the real stars of the show were the World War II veterans, who turned out in large numbers. The most moving moment was when Admiral Heeley invited them up to help unveil the statue. The picture here only shows the first few rows; they were standing four and five deep, numbering almost fifty. Once they had all made their way to the front, the crowd broke into spontaneous applause—a resounding recognition of the sacrifice and commitment of these men and women to the cause of freedom in the world. Special thanks for the success of the day and the dedication are given to our many volunteers who helped make it possible: Sandy and Tom Younger, Vernon Garner, Margaret Stamper, Brenda Hollweger, Frank King, Anne Harrison, Emmy Brown, Tess VanOrden, Shirley Mihursky, Margaret and Ned Clarke, David Harry, and Jack Williams. (Sherrod Sturrock)