

Fresh from the Bench... Part #36 in a Series

by Rod Taylor

Jerry Talton - Core Sound Style Pintail Drake Decoy

If you use the words "Down East" to anyone above the Mason-Dixon Line, they'll think you're talking about the Maine woods. To those from the Old South, however, "Down East" refers to the Core Sound area near the Outer Banks of North Carolina. At the dawn of the 20th century this magnificent flyway was a favorite winter hunting ground of the ultra rich of New York and Philadelphia, and they shipped their decoys to the local hunting lodges by the gross via railcar. Jerry Talton, a born and bred Tarheel explains the result: "Due to the influence of the 'Swells' (called 'Sports' up North) and their rigs, the local Core Sound decoys came to resemble a cross between Delaware River and Eastern Shore of Maryland style with a hint of local character thrown in for added measure."

The thirty-eight year old Talton may be the only person we've ever heard of who came to decoy carving via surfboard making. "I had always had a keen sense of history," Talton explains, "One Christmas my brother



received a decoy as a gift and I thought, 'That's nothing but a surfboard with a head on it!' I picked up a copy of Jack Dudley's book, *Carteret Waterfowl Heritage*, and found out I was living smack dab in one of the country's richest areas for decoy carving."

Talton lives in tiny Stella, NC with his wife Amie and two daughters where he makes his living as a maintenance engineer, while operating his own swimming pool maintenance business during the summer. Jerry manages to carve between forty and fifty decoys a year and cites Pete Peterson, Curt Salter, Jamie Hand, and the late Chuck May

as his carving mentors. "His Mitchell Fulcher style Pintail drake (pictured) is the finest I've ever seen outside of the original," Pete Peterson observes. For the uninitiated, Mitchell Fulcher is considered the cream of North Carolina's old-time Core Sound decoy carvers. The hollow carved, oversized Pintail measures 16 ½ inches long by 6 ½ inches wide by 4 ½ inches high, and comes with a lead pad weight.

"Old Core Sound decoys were carved out of driftwood or pieces from old shipwrecks," Talton notes. Wood from those sources being less than reliable these days, Jerry prefers to use clear pine or juniper when he can get it. He paints exclusively in artist's tube oils after priming his decoys with Rustoleum. His favorite decoys are his Ruddy Ducks although he also carves a number of diving ducks because that's primarily what he uses in his own rig of over 150 decoys.

You can order directly from Jerry Talton at (252)-725-4434 or via e-mail at amie_talton@yahoo.com for

P.G. Ross Jr. - Eastern Shore Goldeneye Drake

The renowned Virginia gentleman carver and hunting guide Grayson Chesser tells everyone he introduces fellow guide P.G. Ross to that the initials stand for "Pretty Good." "His daddy wanted to name him 'Extremely Excellent,' but his mama just said 'Naw, he's Pretty Good.'" It's a sign of the great affection Paige Guy Ross, Jr. holds for Chesser that he still laughs when he hears the joke.

Quite possibly the most educated hunting guide



around, Ross has a B.S. degree from Virginia Tech and an M.S. from Auburn. He makes his living working as a marine biology researcher for the College of William and Mary studying oyster restoration and shark habitats. Ross grew up hunting Virginia's Eastern Shore with his grandfather and father 35 years ago when he was eight and started carving at age fifteen with his granddad. Thanks to his job with the college, as well as his extremely under-