

Barrier Islands Center film to air on WHRO **SHORE DECOY CARVERS**

'Spirit of the Bird' made in conjunction with Islands Center

By **Connie Morrison**
Staff Writer

MACHIPONGO — A film that documents bird hunting and decoy carving heritage on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, both of which have deep roots on the barrier islands, will be shown next week.

"Spirit of the Bird," a documentary collaboration between the Barrier Islands Center and Academy Award-nominated filmmaker Jim Spione, will make its television premiere on March 13 at 8 p.m. on public television station WHRO.

"Some of the guides and carvers honed their craft on the barrier islands," Sally Dickinson, the center's education director.

Dickinson is one of a handful of local residents who will make the trip to the WHRO studio in Norfolk during the airing to staff the phone bank as part of the station's Explore and Grow fund-raising event.

Local carver Grayson Chesser, who is featured in the film, was initially skeptical that Spione would be able to favorably represent the hunting way of life.

"It's kind of scary when you've got a guy doing a film on hunting that you know is probably a vegetarian," said Chesser, a member of the Accomack County Board of Supervisors.

Despite those initial misgivings, he said Spione

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GRAYSON CHESSER
Decoy carver

asked the right questions and managed to capture the rich heritage of hunting and carving traditions, and did so in a way that would help others to understand it.

"He touched on universal themes like family, the nature of man, and our relationship with nature," said Chesser.

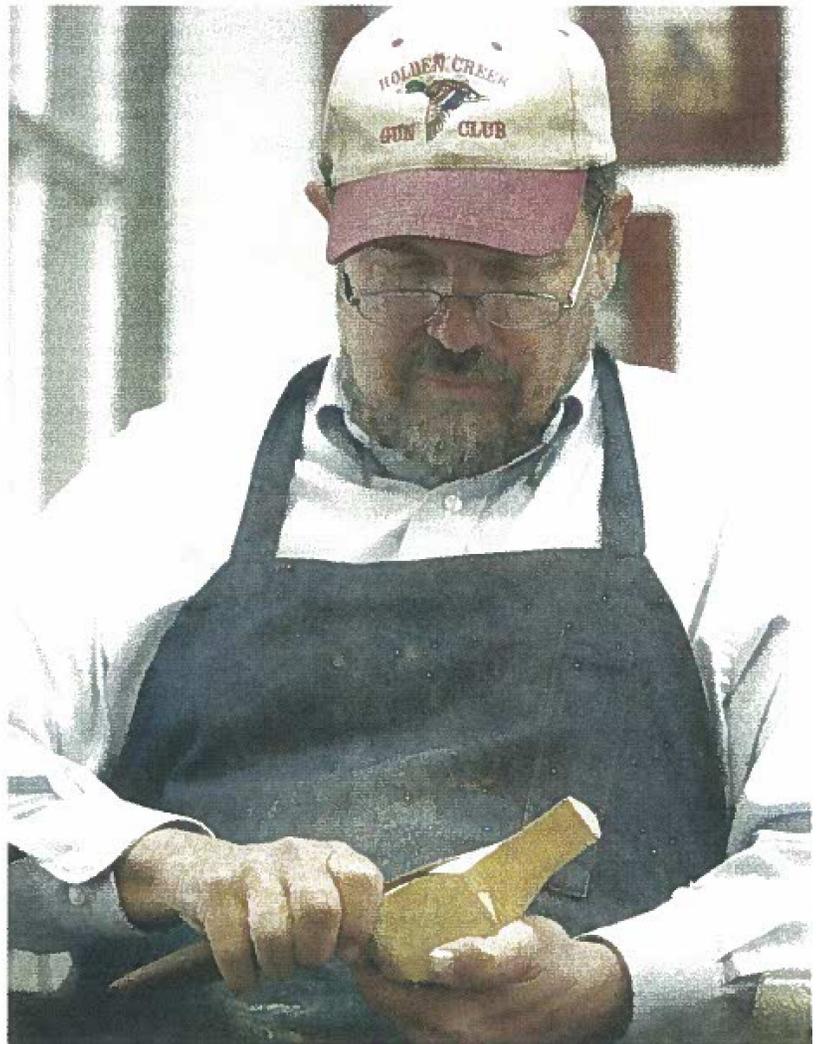
The film's airing on WHRO is an opportunity to acquaint a larger audience with the history and culture of waterfowl art.

Chesser calls decoy carving "some of the finest art ever produced on the Eastern Shore."

"Spirit of the Bird" is the second of three films illuminating barrier island life. The first, "Our Island Home," was released in 2008.

Dickinson says the Barrier Island Center and Spione have agreed to make a third film to explore the islands' seafood and fishing history.

"It's important to capture while there are still people around who experienced it," said Dickinson.



Grayson Chesser of Jenkins Bridge, a decoy carver and hunt club operator, is included in "Spirit of the Bird," a documentary collaboration between the Barrier Islands Center and Academy Award-nominated filmmaker Jim Spione. It will be shown Wednesday at 8 p.m. on WHRO. JAY DIEM IMAGE