

Traditional design and plenty of good wood are combined in Capt. John's Fast Scows

By Bill Stair

BERLIN, MD: — Eighty-one-year-old Capt. John Elliot, keeps busy the year round at his Ocean City Blvd. shop building the Chincoteague Scow, which has been traditional for a variety of uses since the turn of the century.

His present boat is 22' l.o.a. with a 5½' beam at the bottom and 7½' at the top. The sides have a 20-degree flare and the transom is raked at 15 degrees.

The most noticeable feature of the Chincoteague Scow is the square bow and generous amount of tuck which starts to sweep upwards about one third aft of the bow.

The bottom is 5-ply ¼" marine plywood; the sides 5-ply mahogany. All framing is No. 1 mahogany except the inside keel and keelsons. The 6" x 2½" inside keel is white oak and the chines one-piece 4" x 1¼" mahogany. The chines run the entire length of the boat following the tuck lines and are anchored into a 2" x 12" bow piece with bolts.

The samson post is anchored to a 2" x 4" length of white oak. Two smaller keelsons run from the transom about half way up the tuck lines parallel to the main keel. Three knees support the

transom and are bolted to the keel and keelsons. The outside keel or worm strip, as Capt. John calls it, is 1" x ¼" white oak.

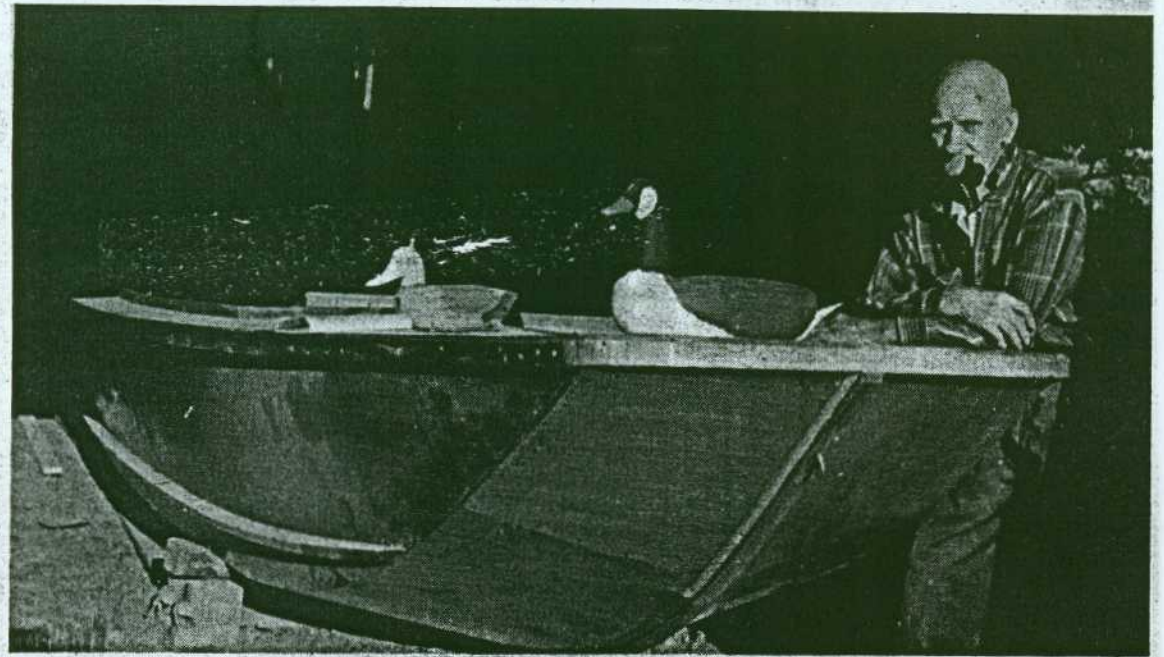
DEADRISE BOTTOM

The bottom is deadrise from stem to stern with 12" to 14" amidship flattening out to 3" at the transom. Spray rails start at the transom and extend about one third up the tuck where they flare into the hull. The cockpit combing is solid mahogany and is raised about 2" above deck level.

The bottom is double fiberglassed with five coats of resin, the sides single covered.

Just aft of amidships is a motor control console which can be operated from either a seated or standing position. The frames are glued with No. 800 sealer fastened with Monel metal nails. Resorcinol glue is used for splicing the plywood.

The lines of the boat are from the design of Bill Wimber of Chincoteague, Va., who started building the boats about the turn of the century when the gasoline motor became available. They rode easily on protected water, provided a stable work platform and storage area due to the rectangular design. The older boats were used for oystering,



CAPT. JOHN rests on a partially completed boat. The decoys are a fill-in between boat projects. Both his fast scows and decoys are popular with sportsmen. Scow design has persisted through the years because it provides speed with relatively low power, riding the waves instead of splitting them.

—Photos by Bill Stair

clamming and fishing and were built up to 35' in length. Today they are used mostly for gunning and fishing.

A few other builders still lay up a scow now and again but they are never wider than 4' because they do not like to cut and splice an extra plywood panel, but Capt. John finds plenty of uses for the left-over piece, so prefers a wider-beamed boat.

Asked how many he has built, he says he can't recall all of them but does recall building 20 for one customer.

"I just keep building one after the other and somebody always

comes along and buys them," he said.

While his plywood boats are well constructed and he has adapted to modern materials, he still yearns for the feel of traditional white cedar which he can't get anymore.

To satisfy this yen, he bought an ancient log cabin of prime seasoned white cedar and thus fashions duck decoys from the log between boatbuilding projects.

