

FINDING AID

Steve Dunn

Date: 01-15-02

Location: Island Fishing and Hunting

Interviewer: Shelly Drummond

Summary: Tour of Island Hunting and Fishing's goose and duck picking facilities.

Topics: Goose hunting, goose picking, duck hunting, duck picking, picking machines, hand pickers on Kent Island, goose season, fishing and hunting supplies, waterfowl hunting regulations and licensing, Wilson Roe, Carvel Hall knives,

Take Home: Specialized machinery for goose and duck picking, specialized equipment in general for hunting, fishing, and professional watermen.

Summary:

Steve Dunn, his mother Linda and his nephew Lewis Bennett all work at Island Fishing and Hunting on Kent Island where they sell hunting and fishing supplies and process meat for hunters. This year the moratorium on goose hunting was lifted but the last hand pickers on the island quit after the moratorium went into effect. Since they were elderly at the time, none of them resumed picking this year. Island Fishing and hunting has one of the few picking machines designed just for geese, it was built in 30's for a hunting camp. The unique machinery used for picking waterfowl needs documenting as well as the hand picking. The machines are connected to giant bags that catch the feathers which they sell to a man who comes around in the spring. Picking styles depend on the type of bird, and Island Hunting and Fishing takes great pride in being able to pick several species and make a profit. Snow geese are the most labor intensive and require a dipping method similar to the hand picking techniques of the past.

Documentation:

Digital Video: MDV

Digital photos: GP

The video footage is medium quality, with some of the picking machine footage being high quality. This was the first video interview I ever did and the inside lighting was not appropriate. There is footage of the bird being gutted which may be offensive to the viewer.

The digital photos are very high quality. Content is very high quality if you're not squeamish about dead birds.

Field Notes

Background: 01-09-02

Island Hunting and Fishing

Island Fishing and Hunting

East 40 A Rt. 50 East

Kent Island, MD

Interview with Linda (Dunn?) Mother of Steve Dunn owner

410-643-4224

www.islandfishingandhunting.com

Sells crabbing, fishing and hunting supplies- Butchers deer, Duck and goose picking. Linda is the one who logs in the geese- But as she says, they only get logged if the hunter wants them picked. They have no way of knowing how many geese were killed on each liscense. She logs in goose, liscense number and how want to receive bird- frozen, bagged- sets birds aside for the 'boys in back' to pick.

IFH have been picking for three years. Prior to that there was an older black man on the island who picked but he quit after the goose season was dropped six years ago. He was elderly and probably didn't pick up again this year when the season opened.

While women used to do the picking today it is done by young guys- college kids who are currently out on break. It takes 8 minutes total to pick a goose but longer to set and bleed. First they saw off wings with a band saw. Picking machine does 90% of feathers. Then the boys clean off the rest of the bird.

The timing is semi-regular. Don't come on Saturdays- that is too busy. During the week, they have a lot of birds in the morning, usually around 10:00 but sometimes earlier. Then it slows down and they don't get busy again until around 5:00. It takes the hunters around 15 minutes to get their two birds.

Her son does a lot of the picking. If hunters don't get a bird picked, it is because they are breasting them. Most people don't pick a bird themselves.

The other day a woman and her son came in with a goose they had tried to pick themselves. They had taken off the head, both wings and one foot then gave up. They said there were feathers all over the yard. At first she thought she wouldn't be able to get the bird picked because they have to have something- a foot or a head- to hold on to but her son was able to do it.

They are the only place to get geese picked near the western shore. People bring there geese from Alexandria, Fredricksburgh. There are some people picking at game farms- where they hunt partridge and all, but no one regularly picking geese and ducks. This year there is a new place just down the road but until then, they were it.

Oyster Knives- The old wooden handled knives made by local company- Carvel Hall, since 1895. For years they were out of business, back in business, now they are supposedly moved to Mexico or somewhere where the labor is cheap. They didn't make

any knives last year. The store has been out of oyster knives in general since before x-mas but the salesman who sells all the knives on the eastern shore came through yesterday. That's where I got mine. The clam knife looking short blade type is for Carolina oysters (Chincoteagues)- the longer blade is what the Eastern Shore uses. The one I got had a plastic handle. Like the crab knives, they are going to a one piece but people don't like them. They are expensive too, and what with all the paper, you are likely to throw them away. She went to Walmart and got a pack of four paring knives then sharpened them up some to shape them right. They worked great.

Wilson Roe is a man that sells the store items made "to make waterman's lives easier" Wilson Roe from Dogwood Harbor. "He is a sweet man, we always tell him no hurry but he rushes up in his truck everytime." They sell his dip nets- including the knotted kind and a stainless steel I think but the steel is smaller than Fitzhughs. He sells what they call a push net- which is bigger and too heavy to dip but they push it along somehow. He also makes culling hammers and a foot switch for tonging- I'm not sure what that does- he sells it with and without wires.