

The Chesapeake... Living Waters, Still Life

The call of the Chesapeake Bay captivated Mike Price on first encounter more than 20 years ago, beckoning this adventurer and denizen of the world to adopt the Bay's legendary Eastern Shore as his permanent home.

Price's work in 1983-1984 as director and cinematographer for the film, ***Chesapeake: Great Shellfish Bay***, unveiled to him both the treasures and troubles of the fabled region. Aired on public television stations throughout the U.S., the 52-minute independent documentary about the Bay's wildlife focused on the natural beauty that prevailed even as the toll of human habitation and industry continued to rise. Reflecting on the project, Price recalls:

The Bay was dying for many reasons. Siltation from agricultural run-off was depleting its waters of oxygen. And over-harvesting of fish and shellfish remained a problem in spite of long-standing regulations on gear and cull size. But instead of making a bleak documentary about the dying, that focused only on the negative, I felt the best way to help people understand was to remind them of the good. So I chose to make a documentary about the wildlife that live in and on the water, and what seems to be thriving. Like the ospreys that have come back from the brink – not too many years since the DDT ban in 1972, they had started multiplying again. Also, herons and blue crabs were coming back. At the same time, we also talked about what wasn't doing so well, and why not.

Crafted with a balance of gentle education and optimism, Price's first film about the Chesapeake became the overture to a substantial body of later films and still photographs that reflect his deep affection for the region he calls home. He subsequently provided wildlife cinematography for the National Geographic Society film, ***Chesapeake Borne***, and for ***America's Wild Horses***, a film in the PBS Television *Nature* series. In addition to his trademark wildlife films, Price developed and produced films for numerous community and public-service organizations, as well as private industry, on the Eastern Shore.

Price's collection of photographs includes hundreds of images shot in tandem with his film projects in Maryland and Virginia. Since his retirement from filmmaking in 1995, Price has focused his camera lens fully on celebrating the richness of the Chesapeake, in all its subtleties and splendor. His photos are an evocative invitation to the dance of light on water and wings on air that mirrors its soul.