

**"If a child can be taught to view the earth as a scientist does,
then why not as an artist does?"**

Tom Wisner: *"The experience of connection is the essence of teaching about the Bay, and connection comes through contact. Learning is about putting yourself into relation with all things of nature that pique your interest and listening with all senses alive within and without: with imagery, with touch, with emotion and with thought—all awakening to the great silence.*

When kids are young and in love with the earth and its animals—the arts can help children express their love for the earth—help them to project themselves into the life of another creature and have true empathy for another part of creation. The arts do that better than any other form of education.

To draw and sing the blue crab—is to become the blue crab.

Children need to see someone model that kind of deep involvement. Children need to engage deeply with the natural world and its creatures, beginning with their own 'home place.' And then they need to engage in art-making to express their experiences of those connections.

I tell them, 'Become the thing you love!'"



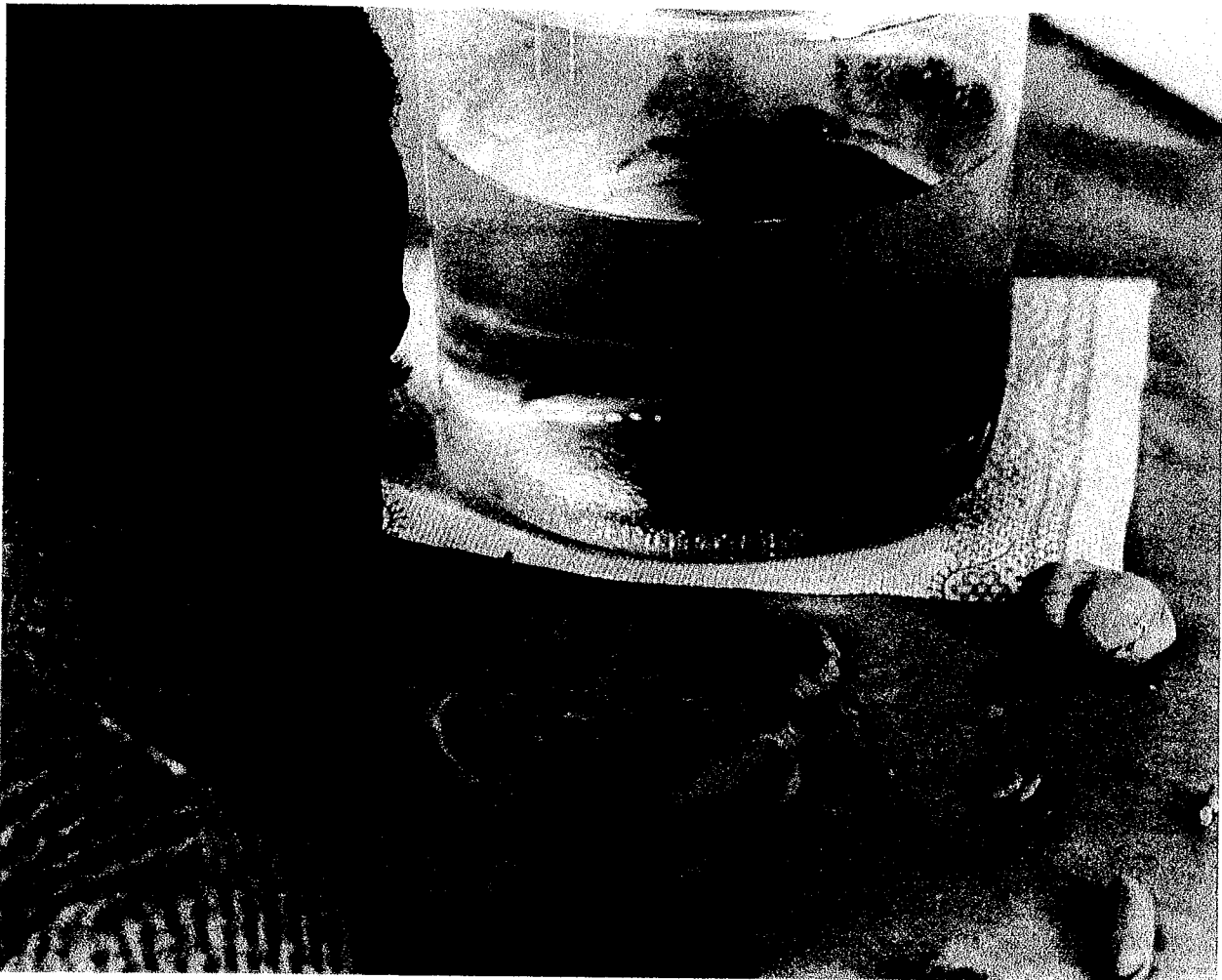
"I believe art is our principle way of connecting with different life forms. Art is a way of learning about the voice of nature.

The arts can also carry the revelations and complexities of science to children. One way of connecting science and art is through 'naming.' Kids would say, 'What's that?' And I would ask them, 'What would you call it?' So they'd look really closely and they'd name a blue crab, 'Ten legged paddle swimmer,' or a Nereid worm, 'Many foot worm.'"

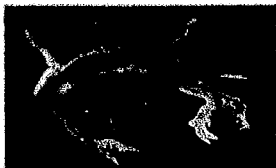
—Tom Wisner

Draw them! Paint them!
Mold them in clay!

Try to show their many parts,
Their actions!
Their beauty!



Tom engaged childrens' imaginations through what he called "hands-on," "hearts-on," "minds-on," "eyes-on" ways of learning. Direct contact with Chesapeake creatures and waters was essential and so were the arts. He used painting, photography, collage-making, modeling with clay, dancing, role-playing, puppetry, poetry, storytelling and lots of singing.



Dedicated to the songs of waters all over the world. May we learn to listen and hear, cherish and share them with our children. And to the voices of children, may the songs you sing give you strength, hope and joy.

Introduction

“Sunshine over a deep blue sea...A turtle called Susquehanna...I’m made of water, flowing water...Chesapeake Born...”

This collection of songs by Tom Wisner, the “Bard of the Chesapeake,” are the living, streaming echoes of a unique, lifelong dedication and creative act of service—Tom’s deep commitment to environmental education and awareness that he shared through music.

Like all great artists, Tom was drawn to a few central themes: the natural wonder of the Chesapeake Bay, the mystery of our own unity within the life web of nature, the flowing water of generations, and our vital connections with the natural world.

A man of enormous artistic integrity and awareness, Tom heard music in every breath and movement of nature, in every feather, stone, and leaf, in the softness of water’s touch, in the flight of the great blue heron...in the soaring fish hawk’s wing.

Tom’s calling was elemental. His commitment was to awaken a deeper awareness of our personal responsibility to the common good of all living beings and living systems of our Earth. He left every audience with a heightened personal consciousness of their awesome power to continue, or not, the life-giving story of the Chesapeake Bay.

When he worked with children he always began from a place of connection, engaging their imaginations and instilling awe and wonder. As he said, “I want to move children’s hearts to learn...that they are participants in the mystery of creation...and the health of the Bay. I want them to make the Bay a friend for life!”

About his own songs he said, “My songs are the result of a lifetime of thinking and teaching about a relationship to this land and its waters. Singing together creates a living, vital sense of community. My songs are celebrations encouraging all to join!”

It is our hope that singing and sharing these songs, especially with children, will deepen everyone’s connection to Chesapeake life, ways, and rhythms, and will be indeed...a celebration!

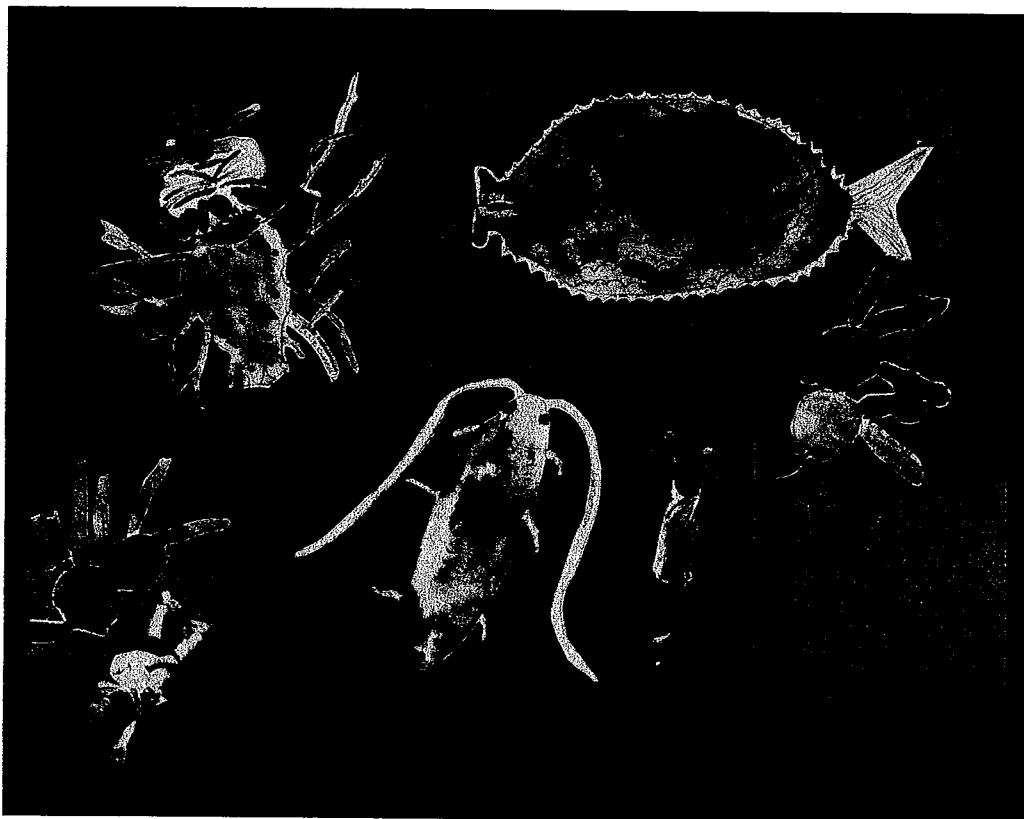


Gratitude and thanks to the circle and community of many, whose friendship, care and creativity infuse this work. Special thanks to Joan Clement (CHESTORY/CHEARS) and to the Calvert Marine Museum, Jim Fox, Sara Leeland, Mary Ellen and Walter Boynton (see Acknowledgements page 55).

Over the years, Tom worked with many different educators. Betty Brady, a gifted, insightful and energetic 5th grade teacher at Hollywood Elementary School in St. Mary's County, welcomed Tom to her classroom many times. The following are her recollections:

"Tom Wisner used the power of fun to educate us. For decades he demonstrated that schoolwork can be fun, that the arts can be naturally and effectively woven back into curricular content, inviting receptivity and interactive learning. He included singing, dancing, drawing and painting, composing, writing, sculpting, and performing. These songs are a place to begin. They give us joy and unity so that we sing them again and again, sooner or later internalizing what we sing. Saying the words gives a joyous renewal to an awareness of our innate connections to Earth, an affirmation of our oneness with nature.

Tom's wisdom was reuniting the arts with the earth sciences. Doing that is a gift, especially for the lives that children lead in classrooms. In joy and fun, learning is natural and simple, deep, effective and contagious. The creative arts have the power to level our differences. They provide a common emotive language where continuing dialogue with self and others helps extrapolate significant meanings. This music, these words, are just a beginning. Follow them...through all the art forms."



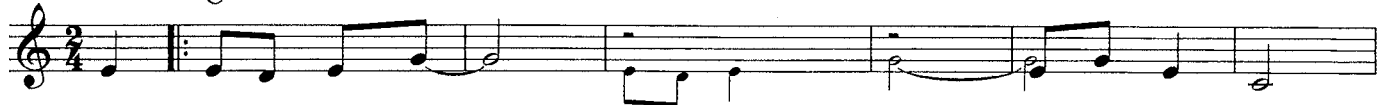
Chesapeake Born

Words and Music by
TOM WISNER

Chorus*

Swing ♩ = 110

C



I'm Ches - a - peake born, (Ches - a - peake born,) Ches - a - peake free,

* Chorus is sung in call-and-response style.

G7



(Ches - a - peake free,) I'm Ches - a - peake bound, (Ches - a - peake bound,)

C



flow - in' with ease. (Flow - in' with ease.) I'm Ches - a - peake born.



(Ches - a - peake born,) And bound to thee. (bound to

G

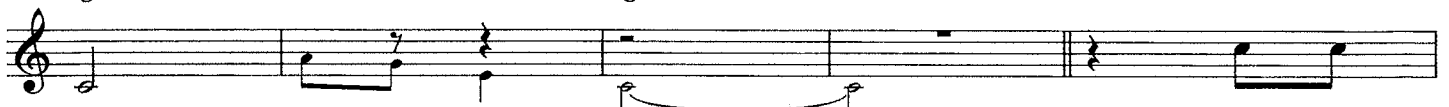


thee,) In - deed I am ('deed I am,) I'm Ches - a - peake

C

C

Verse



free. (Ches - a - peake free.) 1. I'm the
2., 3. See additional lyrics

F G C

son _____ of the rain, _____ broth - er of the

Am F

wind. _____ I fol - low on the wa - ter _____ I got to -

G C

bac - co _____ on _____ my chin, and I've seen _____ for - ty years of

G C

sun - shine, wind, and rain. _____ If I

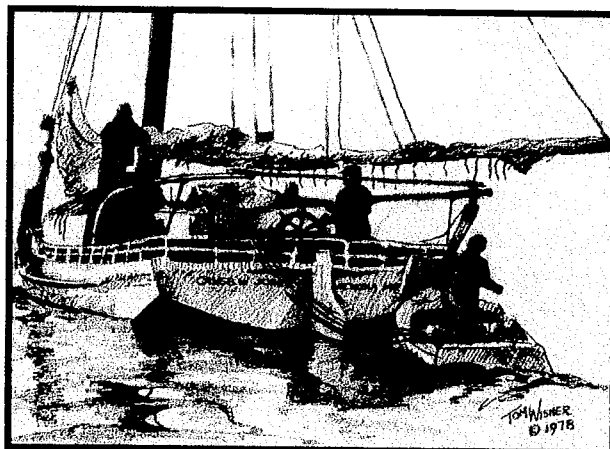
Am G C

had the chance _____ I'd do it _____ all a - gain. _____ 'Cause I'm

Additional Lyrics

2. She's the Mother of the waters, and the people of this land;
 forty river children reach to take her by the hand,
 and flow through Maryland and Virginia to the sea.
 She's Atlantic born, Atlantic bound and free.
Chorus

3. I hear your song so clearly and I know that down inside,
 the mother of these waters is a-flowing deep and wide.
 Sons and daughters of the water's life within,
 gentle voices blending with the wind.
Chorus



Crabs

Words and Music by
JIM RASIN and TOM WISNER

Verse

♩ = 120



1. Crabs live in the Ches - a - peake Bay, and oth - er plac - es
2. (See additional lyrics)



too. We are glad this ver - y great day to show a crab to



you. Watch him eat, can you see what he's do - in'?



Watch his mouth, count the parts that are mov - in'. Watch him swim,



watch him walk, what would he say if he could talk?

Additional Lyrics

2. Crabs are good in nature's plan,
but always wear a frown.
They eat trash and so they help man,
to keep pollution down.

Chorus

3. Crabs are mean and angry guys,
so keep your hands well back.
If you see him looking cross-eyed,
he'll probably attack!

Chorus

4. Crabs are neat to watch real close
with all their different feet.
All my friends are ready to boast
that crabs are good to eat.

Chorus



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Tom Wisner Biography

Tom Wisner (1930–2010)

Tom Wisner was a songwriter, musician, artist, photographer, poet, storyteller, puppeteer, environmental interpreter, and collector of oral history. Blending all of these gifts, he was also an exceptional environmental educator, synthesizing science and the arts in innovative ways.

He was born and grew up in the Anacostia section of Washington, D.C. There he rode steamboats to Mt. Vernon and Colonial Beach and sometimes camped with his father on the Virginia side of the Potomac River. Summers, he often visited with his mother's relatives on the Upper James River in Virginia. All of these experiences cultivated for him, a deep bond with waters.

He was part of the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. Afterwards he earned a B.A. in science and did graduate work at Cornell University in biology and ecology. He was a National Park Service Naturalist at Sequoia National Park in the 1960's. He became Maryland's first environmental educator under the direction of Dr. L. Eugene Cronin, at the Chesapeake Biological Lab in Solomons, Maryland.

Ahead of his time, he discovered the power of the arts for conveying the complexities of science, and inspiring awareness and concern for the Bay. In 1978 Tom left the Lab and created a traveling "Chesapeake Classroom" which he continued for over thirty years. Using the arts, and modeling empathy and imagination, he enabled children to connect deeply to the Chesapeake Bay.

He won many awards including the "Maryland Governor's Citation" (by Gov. Harry Hughes), the "National Commission on the Out-of Doors Award" for national impact of regional education work, "Excellence in Teaching Award" from the University of Maryland, and "Outstanding Marine Educator of the Year Award" (Middle Atlantic Marine Education Assoc.), to name a few. For his music he was awarded a "Parents' Choice Award" and the World Folk Music Association's "John Denver Award." Tom's music, including his song, "Chesapeake Born" was featured in the National Geographic Special: "Chesapeake Borne" and in the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's film, "Living on the Edge." His earlier recordings are part of the Smithsonian Archive. In 1999 he co-founded with Sara Leeland, "CHESTORY": the Center for the Story of the Chesapeake. Its purpose is to bring the artist in everyone to express their role in the ongoing story of Chesapeake life and culture, and to bring communities into deeper relationship with Chesapeake river lands.

He spent a great part of his life devoted to raising awareness of the importance and uniqueness of the Chesapeake Bay and its more than forty tributary rivers and streams. For Tom, water was source, inspiration and teacher. To him, learning deeply about one's own "place" was the path to understanding the "whole." Focusing on the "watershed" meant honoring the importance of all species living there, and including all "voices," especially those of the waters themselves. For him "holistic education" meant understanding that all things connect, and that honoring these "connections," is essential for preserving the planet and the human spirit.

What Are Songs For?

"You better watch the songs you sing...they will make you who you are!"

—Tom Wisner

"My songs are the result of a lifetime of thinking and teaching about a relationship to this land and its waters. I have a deep, steady and ongoing commitment to writing songs to celebrate the life of the Bay and her rivers.

Making songs is a way of seeking truth. In seeking my own truth, I have created symbols that represent life...not necessarily the way it is...but certainly the way I would like it to be. The ideal songs would sing of a balance between our life and the life of the Bay so that one would not bring destruction to the other. Such a song would have to be ever changing.

How are the beliefs and values about our relationship with the great community of life expressed in the lyrics of our songs? If you really want to know what a culture values and believes in, then go into schools and listen to what children are singing. Songs help us to form and sustain our values. They are a fine measure of who we are and where we are going.

There is a great sense of community created from singing together. It strengthens our hopes. What if all we had to do would be to cherish the planet and creation?

We are one with the earth. We are nourished in body and soul...made and re-made daily by a complex of miracles played out between ourselves and the soil, water, and air of the planet.

Ecology is not a subject. It is a new vision of reality! The way WE choose to shape our landscape will both reflect its shape, and shape the nature of ourselves. We live in a time when we are called to begin to create ways of thinking that are more in tune with our sense of unity within a greater story or song." —Tom Wisner

*"You shine out like a beacon,
from the truth you're bound to live
and the beauty of all you've tried to give.
Songs of vision, songs of peace
Who will listen, who will speak?
Who will stand and sing?"*

—"Stand and Sing," song for Tom Wisner,
by Teresa Whitaker and Frank Schwartz

Contributor Biographies

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Jim Fox of Lion and Fox Recording Studios, Washington DC, is a master sound engineer. He worked with Tom on many of his albums and projects. He mastered the CD that accompanies this songbook and has been an invaluable co-creator of this project from the beginning. (fox@lionfox.com)

Kathleen W. Glaser was Principal of Hollywood Elementary School, where she worked with Tom Wisner for many years to bring meaningful and exciting environmental education and learning into children's lives. She is a recipient of the Washington Post Distinguished Leadership Award, and is a co-founder of the Chesapeake Public Charter School in Southern Maryland. She now serves as a Center for Courage and Renewal facilitator. She remains dedicated to children, schools and the environment. (kwglaser@yahoo.com)

Michael S. Glaser is a Professor Emeritus at St. Mary's College of Maryland where he often worked with Tom, and helped present Tom's work to a variety of audiences. Glaser served as a Maryland State Arts Council poet-in-the-schools for over 20 years, and serves on the Board of Directors of the Maryland Humanities Council, as well as the Maryland State Department of Education's Arts Advisory Committee. He served as Poet Laureate of Maryland from August 2004 through August 2009. (msglaser@smcm.edu)

Frank Schwartz a native of Baltimore, is a musician and singer songwriter who plays guitar, bass, old-time banjo and the mandolin. He is also fluent in sign language. On his own and also with his wife Teresa, he has recorded albums of original songs, most recently, "Finding Home." They are also co-creators of "Finding Home Publishing Company." He has long supported Tom's music, and his guitar, banjo and bass, (as well as his soulful voice) are part of many of Tom's recordings. (www.frankschwartz.com and ftzj@cox.net)

Teresa Whitaker was born in Kentucky. She is a singer, songwriter, and storyteller who offers school residencies and teacher workshops. She performs in schools, libraries, universities, hospitals, and at festivals and conferences. She also does extensive work with parents and lullabies. She collaborated and performed with Tom Wisner for many years, and her songs and voice can be heard on all of Tom's albums. She and her husband Frank travel and perform together. In addition to their own songs, they are carrying forward the legacy of Tom's music and environmental work and are available for workshops. They have two children. (www.teresawhitaker.com and ftzj@cox.net)

Mark Wisner was born on the banks of the Susquehanna River. His childhood years were spent chasing blue crab and striped bass from a 12 ft. skiff on Coles Creek. Mark attended Mike Cohen's Trailside Country School, where he learned to play and sing the simple rhythms of traditional music. His songs, "Spring Lightning and Thunder" and "Susquehanna Down," are on the album "Chesapeake Born" with his father Tom Wisner. Susquehanna Down is a tribute to the simple strength and beauty of the Chesapeake. He commercial fishes for salmon in Prince William Sound, Alaska where he lives with his wife of 22 years, Margarete, and his five children.

Acknowledgments and Donors

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Our gratitude extends also to the many individuals and organizations that have, over time, made financial and other contributions to Tom's work and this songbook. Included among them are:

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