

# Mitch

It was his hands that intrigued me most ~ large, strong, short-fingered. It was difficult to imagine him leaning over a desk with tweezers to create a tiny little sign for his model railroad.

I had first met R. Madison “Mitch” Mitchell, Jr. at the Havre de Grace Maritime Museum several years ago where I marveled at the 1/5<sup>th</sup> scale replicas of the *Lafayette* towboat and the *Lantern Queen* paddle wheeler. These unique models were not only detail perfect, but designed so that he could pilot them in the water under their own power.

This past year, he created a 1/5<sup>th</sup> scale model of the Concord Point Lighthouse for the Lighthouse Diner Restaurant on Route 40 ~ just because he could! Mitch shared that the real challenge with this project was calculating the 9-sided light.

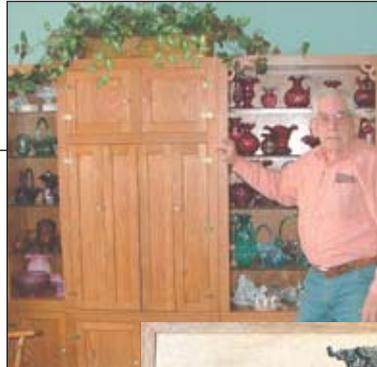
Then recently I learned of the beautiful outdoor train garden Mitch had created in years past, highlighted by the gorgeous foliage and flowers planted and cared for by his wife, Kit. I had heard stories of several summer Open Houses with as many as 300 people visiting. Mitch had even created a miniature railroad car to be used as

a unique lemonade stand for the kids! It's since been taken down and moved indoors.

*Now I knew I had to visit Mitch and learn a bit more.*

Sitting in the kitchen of his home, it was easy to see Mitch's handiwork everywhere — wonderful wall decorations, beautiful cabinetry, wood carved pictures and wooden rocking horses. Then he brought me a number of albums showing more of his projects including etched glass mirrors and trivets carved in Corian.®

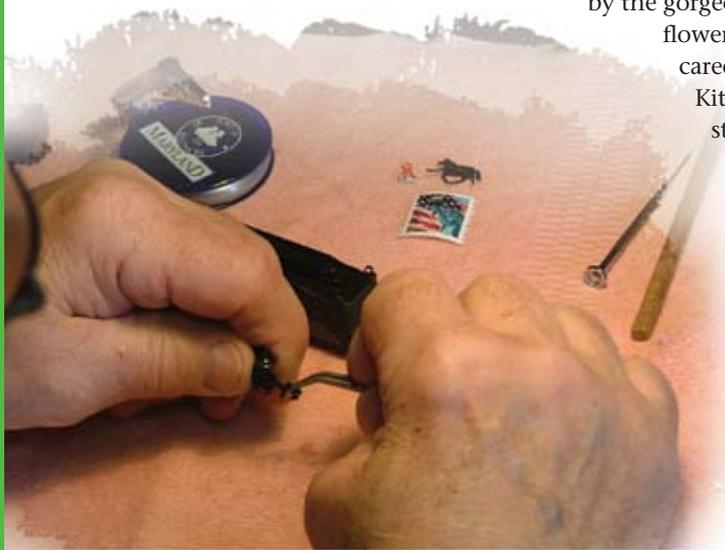
The variety of projects was astounding. His gift for carving and woodworking was obviously nurtured while sitting alongside his dad, famed decoy carver, R. Madison Mitchell. One main difference between Mitch and his dad was that Mitch didn't like making 20 of the same thing. That attitude led to the diverse projects shared with me during my visit.



Mitch stands next to one of the pieces he made for his wife Kit.



A wood carved picture created by Mitch



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Discussing his many projects from 1/5-scale models to rocking horses, it didn't take long to realize that Mitch enjoys each of the tasks needed to create his masterpieces. He loves the challenge of measuring and re-measuring, creating the drawings, and designing them so that he can actually get in them and take them on the water. The towboat took nine months for him to complete because he was still working full time. The *Lantern Queen* required about 5 months often working long days.

It also didn't take long to realize that Mitch immerses himself in his projects! When I ask "Kit," his delightful wife, if he was ever home, she rolled her eyes and grinned. Then she

graciously led me through her home to point out the wonderful cabinets and shelves that Mitch created especially for her. A payoff? Maybe. I like to think of it as 'good barter.' I think that's the way Kit sees it.

More than an hour later, we walked out to the 'Depot.' That's the shed where his model trains wait for his attention. No matter your age or interest, this shed's treasures will bring out the child in you. And if you're a model train buff, well, you could visit with Mitch for hours talking trains!

I noticed an old photo of Mitch's first train that his dad had given him for Christmas. This was the beginning of his love for model trains. He fondly recalled many delightful holidays sharing his love for the train with his dad. And much of the joy was recreated in the 'Depot.'

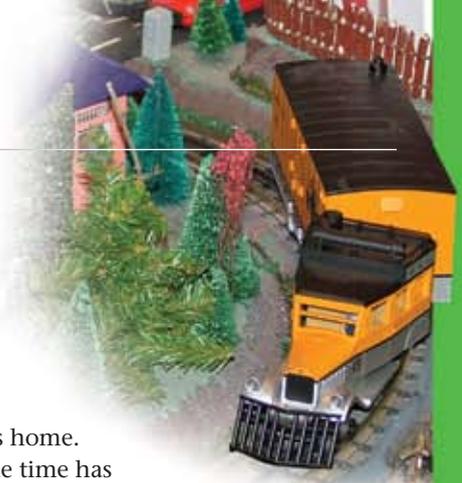
From G to N-scale, Mitch loves his trains. He can give you history of the trains, details of the models, and work the controls simultaneously. All the while he's truly enjoying himself! As the engine huffs, smoke stacks puff, and you're soon lost in another time.

Hours later, I'm preparing to leave

his home.

The time has gone quickly. As I say my goodbyes, once again I'm thankful for having the opportunity to meet another of the many wonderfully talented people that live in our community.

Mitch Mitchell is well known for his talents. He's even better known for being a great neighbor and an involved citizen. He lends a hand to his friends and neighbors in a dozen ways. He's owned a building company, retired as a building inspector for the county, and sits on several community boards today. There's so much that can be written about Mitch, but his talent for creating and inventing always make for delightful conversation. Be sure to look for the *Lantern Queen* or the *Lafayette* when you're visiting Havre de Grace. You never know where you'll see them next! 📍



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