

Timeline: 2011 – 2016



Clam dinner with two grandfathers: Walter Hines also grandfather to the granddaughters, Devlin, M'lyn, Madison, Harris, Diane Cook mother of the granddaughters, Mike Moorman on left side of table
(August 2011)



Breakfast with blueberries on the deck at Pine Point
(August 2012)



Another cocktail hour in Pine Point Mason, Mike, Madison, Devlin, Thelma, Cindy, Howard, and birthday boy Mark
(05 August 2015)



At Chateau Morrisette celebrating their 66th anniversary
(April 2016)



Sister-in-law Ruth Meador, Olen, Lottie, Howard, and Thelma on porch of the Farm House
(June 2015)



Son-in-law Jonathan Lubin, Cindy Howard, and Thelma after dinner in the King Cottage
(July 2016)



Howard enjoying ice cream at Len Libby's in Scarborough ME
(July 2016)

Howard King Jr.



16 November 1923 – 20 January 2017

Ice Carvings

Cold Storage Art

It's free only if you're invited, and really it's no lunch, now elaborate ice settings for shrimp, anchovies and celery have replaced the eggs and salami which spoke public poverty

By Bill Woolsey

SOME time between the two Roosevelts, Teddy and Franklin Delano, that noble and democratic institution, the free lunch, disappeared from the nation's saloons. Then the saloons vanished too.

When the noble institution reappeared (the saloon, as it used to be, never really came back) it was behind closed, not swinging, doors. It was still free—provided you were invited to the party—but it wasn't a lunch anymore. It became a buffet and a symbol of private prestige rather than public poverty. Shrimp, anchovies, oysters and stuffed celery replaced the hard-boiled eggs and salami. In short, the free lunch succumbed to glamor.

Now glamor probably means nothing to an anchovy but it means a lot to a hostess. To achieve it, party-givers dress up their hors d'oeuvres like a Hollywood actress on a personal appearance tour and serve them in a setting resembling the first act finale of a Ziegfeld musical. In the process, the canape crunching crowd has spawned a new art form, ice sculpture.

The current social season in Nashville is the first, so we learned the other day, in which party-givers here have been able to commission a resident ice sculptor, several of whose chilly masterpieces have already appeared on buffet tables at the Belle Meade Country club or in private homes, serving as catafalques for shrimp and radishes, as punch bowls or simply as decorations.

INTRIGUED by the technical problems involved both in the execution and in the use of ice carvings, we spent a recent morning in a cold storage room at a Nashville ice plant watching the sculptor, a 26-year-old Cornell graduate named Howard Perley King Jr., turn a 300-pound block of ice into a swan-shaped punch bowl for a wedding reception.

King wore a jacket, gloves and storm rubbers as a protection against the 28-degree chill in the room. He told us, while chipping at the ice with a multi-pronged pick, that he produced his first sculpture for a private club at Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla., and that since coming to the Belle Meade Country club to serve as its steward he has filled orders for shoes, ships, swans, horses, parrots, cornucopias and turkeys.

He can finish a carving in less than two hours, King said, but he seldom works at one continuously. The room at the ice plant, which has been his only studio in Nashville, gets as cold as a pump handle on a January

Howard P. King Jr. puts finishing touches on an ice turkey and cornucopia

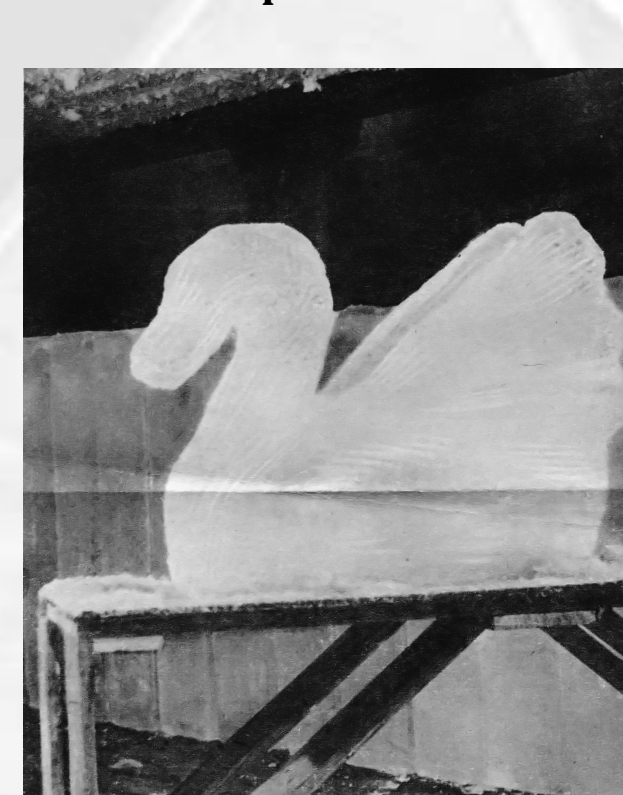


Outline of a swan is chipped on both sides of block



Ice shaver gives a feathered effect to the carving

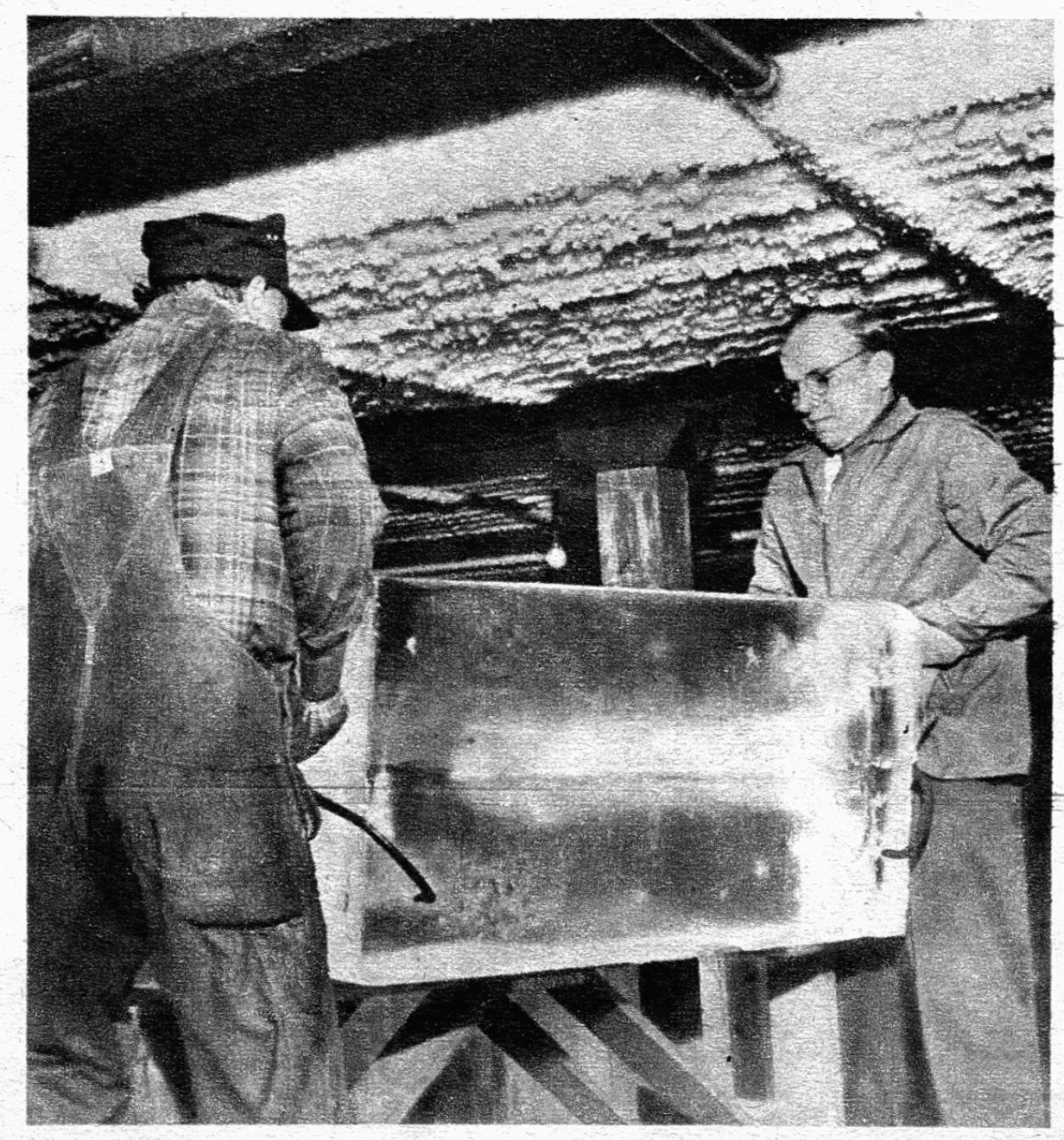
A table set up with an ice cornucopia as decoration



Depression between swan's wings will be used for punch



McCutcheon marvels at swan King made in two hours



George McCutcheon helps King hoist 300-pound block

THE NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN MAGAZINE, NOV. 27, 1949



Thanksgiving turkey in ice
(ca. 1948)



Numeral 50 for father- and mother-in-law Taylor & Myrt Thomas' anniversary
(1960)



Easter bunny on the buffet line in the dining room at the Continuing Education Center on the Virginia Tech campus
(Spring, ca. 1972)



Letters "VT" for Virginia Tech
(ca. 1972)



Gobbler and cornucopia ice carvings for Virginia Restaurant Association competition
(ca. 1972)



Easter bunny with Howard and Robert
(1980)



Retirement dinner basket
(1989)

morning and he has found that he does better work if he takes two or three sessions to turn out a piece. He tried to work without gloves at first, he told us, but he kept barking his knuckles on the rough ice and his hands got numb.

KING sometimes completes a carving days or weeks before it will be used. The plant allows him to keep his art on ice until it is needed, an arrangement that has been satisfactory on all occasions but one. The exception came about after he had completed carving a huge shoe with a bow on the vamp. The day before he intended delivering the sculpture, a peddler came into the plant, needing a little more shaved ice to fill an order, chipped off the bow. King had to carve a new shoe.

King is a native of Bloomfield, N. J., where ice sculpture is, we presume, as much of a novelty as it is in Nashville. Nashville's innocence of this art form was breached very spectacularly more than a decade ago when a Negro preacher conducted a service in Ryman auditorium with the stage filled by angels, saints, prophets and candleholders made of ice.

The preacher was peculiarly grateful to ice for this reason: Ice saved his daughter's life when, after an insect bite, she swelled up like a tent in a high wind and burned with a raging fever. The father packed her in ice and reduced the fever and swelling. Once a year after that he preached a sermon extolling ice in his own words and in quotations from the Bible.

Promoters persuaded him one year to transfer the sermon to Ryman auditorium and hired a Memphis man to produce the ice sculpture with which he was surrounded. Five tons of ice were brought to the Ryman, according to a Nashville ice plant executive who helped stage the event and whose recollection it is that the sermon was preached in mid-summer.

Occasions like this one, when ice sculpture is demanded on a wholesale scale, are few here and social arbiters seemed content to throw their parties without even one piece of glacial statuary until King's arrival.

His first work locally was a quartet of rabbits, carved for the Easter season at the Belle Meade club and intended only

as ornaments, not as biers for seafood. The rabbits lasted most of one afternoon and brought King to the attention of club patrons. Although the ice carver's textbook, written by a Chicago chef, lists 22 required tools, King uses only the pronged ice shaver, a wood chisel and occasionally a soldering iron to melt holes in a design or to smooth rough surfaces.

He points out that he is still learning the art and for that reason has not attempted any of the elaborate carvings suggested by drawings in the Chicago man's book.

"I notice, however, that none of the fellow's carvings photographed for the book are as complicated as those he only writes about," King told us.

He has, on the other hand, overcome any timidity he may once have felt about hollow ice carvings stemming from an unfortunate experience in Florida. "The soft core of a swan punch bowl (it was one of the first he ever carved) gave way and spilled punch all over the floor."

King explained to us that the water is agitated while ice is being frozen so that what might be called the impurities collect in the core of the block. Sometimes he can prevail upon employees to remove the cloudy water in the core and fill the void with distilled water. This makes a hard, clear block of ice, one that an ice sculptor begins to work on with something of the rapture experienced by a sculptor of limestone who moves on to a block of Carrara marble.

KING charges \$20 for a piece of sculpture (thacked from a block of ice that costs him

\$1.80) but he throws in such extra attentions as delivery of the art work, assistance in arranging hors d'oeuvres, preparing drainage facilities under the buffet table to draw off and hold water from the melting sculpture. King prefers buckets or kettles large enough to hold as much water as will melt away during the time the piece is on display but on a few occasions the only available containers have been small and had to be emptied while guests milled around the buffet. King tries to be inconspicuous about this but it definitely takes the edge off the glamor of ice sculpture.

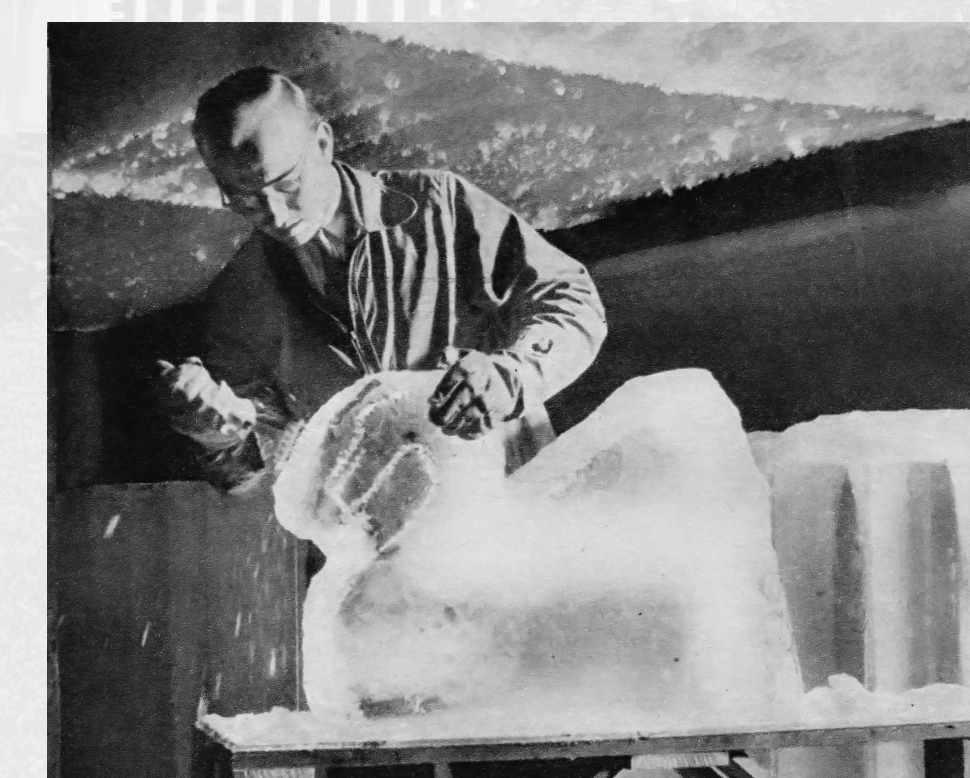
When one of his pieces is on display King likes to linger somewhere near by, not only to accept whatever compliments come his way but also to watch guests' reactions to his art.

He can predict pretty accurately now what they will do and say. "First they give a kind of yip and say, 'Is it really made out of ice?' and then they touch it."

A male guest at a recent party surprised King, however. He didn't say a word, just went over and rested his forehead on the ice sculpture.

"I guess he had a headache," King said. "Once the party is over, a hostess with 100 pounds of ice melting on her dining room table has something of a problem. After five hours the carving ceases to be recognizable. Even if the party ends while the sculpture is still in good shape, few homes are equipped with enough cold storage space to keep the mass of ice frozen for use again.

"Mostly they just carry the piece out on the lawn and let it melt away," King said. ***



King works fast, lops off a quarter of the block before shaping a swan



The Ryman auditorium stage during the "ice sermon" there some years ago