

Tita deGavre grew up on an island off the southern coast of England near Chichester. A self-proclaimed country girl, she remembers hearing people say, "If you can see the smoke from your neighbor's chimney, you're getting too close." The rural Eastern Shore of Virginia with its historic homes and waterfront suited her. She first fell in love with the Maryland Eastern Shore while her late husband, Colonel deGavre, was stationed in Washington D.C. Not having any luck finding an affordable home on the water, an acquaintance suggested Mrs. deGavre look further south across the Maryland and Virginia line. "Nobody'd ever heard of it. In those days, it wasn't even on some of the maps," Mrs. deGavre exclaimed.

Col. and Mrs. deGavre bought land on Deep Creek in 1952. The couple was attracted to the property because of its historic home, "Ohio." "I just love the



Restored 18<sup>th</sup> century house, Ohio, on Deep Creek Plantation

house," beamed Mrs. deGavre. The oldest section of the home was built in 1755. A wing was added in 1812. "It was a wreck when we bought it," remarked Mrs. deGavre, "and together we restored it, made it into a home." One of the reasons they purchased the property was because the 18th century home actually had a new roof and basic plumbing. Nevertheless, at least one of the rooms

had no floors and was full of hay. Little by little, the house came to life through the couple's hard work and ingenuity. Mrs. deGavre taught herself to wallpaper and reminisced that her husband, "turned out to be a marvelous carpenter."

Mrs. deGavre and her sons, Timothy and David, donated

a conservation easement on Deep Creek Plantation in 2004 to the Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust. Deep Creek Plantation is 63 acres with 1500 feet of waterfront along Deep Creek. In addition to the historic home, the property boasts pristine marsh, forest, and farmland. Mrs. deGavre donated the conservation easement because, *"I really love it. I want to preserve it for the future generations. More of America is becoming paved over and I'm a country girl. I want it to stay country."*

For Mrs. deGavre, the historic home remains her passion. However, she was also a masterful gardener and is an avid bird watcher. "My garden was my life at one time," Mrs. deGavre recalled. She grew both ornamentals and vegetables. In the past, she had as many as 72 different roses. To plan her garden, Mrs. deGavre would lay out the pattern with string then head upstairs and view it from above. Col. and Mrs. deGavre also raised chickens, ducks, geese, and peacocks. The Colonel was a waterfowl carver and shared her passion for birds. Mrs. deGavre, now 101, watches the birds through the window across from her chair. "If I come back in another life, I'd like to be a bird."



Tita deGavre