2020 Hurley Conklin Awards

Presented at the Old Time Barnegat Bay Decoy & Gunning Show

September 26th and 27th, 2020

Presented to people who have lived in the Barnegat Bay tradition. This award has been named in honor of the last of the Great Old Time Barnegat Bay Carvers, Hurley Conklin (1913-1998).

For a more in-depth look at the featured artists, please see their full profiles with the provided links at the end of the article.

Lewis "Spike" Wells



Spike Wells.
Photo credit: Courtesy of O.C. Parks

This award is dedicated to Stanley Wells, Spike's brother and long-term partner.

Lewis Wells, or Spike as he is better known to virtually everyone, was born in Hammonton in 1951. Jersey Cedar is in his blood. His father operated a cedar mill, as did his grandfather, as did his great-grandfather. The mills operated by the first two generations were located in Tabernacle. One was a steam-powered mill, which were once common throughout the Pine Barrens. It is sometimes said that lightning only strikes once. Unfortunately, that was not true for Spike's grandfather and great-grandfather. Both lost mills to lightning-caused fires.

The mill Spike now operates on Route 206 in Shamong was established by his father in 1944. He first bought a used American #1 carriage mill (the type where the log is carried back and forth through a stationary circular blade). After setting the up the saw he milled the lumber to construct the building around it. Spike and his brother Stanley started helping their father in the woods and the mill in their

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mid-teens. They loaded the logs onto the sled, operated the Caterpillar which dragged it, loaded the logs again onto the truck, and eventually unloaded them at the mill. Spike's father felled the cedars and cut them to length, all with an axe. While chainsaws had come into use by this time many woodsmen still relied on their trusty axes. He still remembers the big chips flying off the log with each strike of the axe. His father's axe was kept razor sharp and Spike was forbidden to use it. He had two rules; no one could touch his axe and no one could touch his shotgun. He tried to keep his sons from operating the sawmill, due to the dangers involved, but they eventually began to run it on their own. They both demonstrated the caution and respect the equipment required, and his father relented and allowed them to continue to operate it.

Spikes parents never really had extra money to buy him the things he desired, so he earned and saved the money he needed for his first bicycle, dirt bike and other possessions. He feels he appreciated them more because he worked hard for them.

As Spike's father grew older he retired from regular work in the mill and ran a roadside produce stand, selling crops grown on the small fields they owned. Other than occasional help from their father, the brothers did the harvesting and ran the mill by themselves. Spike never worked another job, other than working in the blueberry and cranberry farms in season.

Spike attempted to relocate to upstate New York about 12 years ago after he began to have trouble obtaining cedar to mill here in the Pine Barrens. He found the laid-back atmosphere there similar to what he was used to and actually made the move. But the deal to sell his property in Shamong fell through and he returned back home, picking up where he left off.

Spike's brother Stanley passed away in 2018, after 50 years of the two of them working together. This has made the work harder for him. He has two children, both daughters. One is a nurse and the other a school bus driver. Both can use the saw but neither desires to earn a living with it. So Spike mostly works alone these days. In 2013 he stopped using his carriage saw and bought a Simplicity Sawmill. The Simplicity is a bandsaw mill, running off electricity rather than a gas engine and wasting far less wood with its narrow kerf blade. The saw also runs along the log, opposite of how his carriage saw operated, and is easier to handle.

Spike usually doesn't keep large amounts of lumber on hand, preferring to mill exactly what his customers require. He enjoys the custom aspect of the work, producing a product that can't be bought at the big box lumber stores. The majority of his lumber is cedar, but he occasionally mills oak for construction trailer beds. He had a shingle saw but couldn't compete with the cheaper shingles coming from out of state so he stopped cutting them. If a customer has a few boards that were not what they needed or had a claimed defect he just replaces them, no questions asked. He prizes his reputation, depending on word of mouth and repeat customers, and has never had a complaint.

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These days Spike works until he is tired, then stops, and gets help when he needs it. The mill work is just too dangerous to take chances. He rarely logs anymore, getting most of his logs from berry farmers expanding their fields. He'd rather be at the mill, in case a customer drops by. He never wanted to earn a great deal of money. He is happy just to pay his bills. He plans on doing the only work he knows and loves as long as he is physically able.

Ray Huber



Ray Huber.
Photo credit: Courtesy of O.C. Parks

Ray Huber was born in 1956 in Atlantic City. He not only shares a name with both his father and grandfather, but a career as a waterman with them. His grandfather, Ray Sr., worked for 48 years on a buoy tender for the state. He started at the age of 17, working out of the state's yard on Tuckerton Creek, where the Dockside Café in now located. The state later moved their yard to the Forked River. Most of his time was spent on the buoy tender Transit 3. The crew would spend up to a week at a time on the boat, covering the entire Jersey coast.

Ray's grandfather started taking him out on trips on the Transit 3 at a fairly young age, perhaps 8 or 10 years old, something that would never be allowed today. But much of what Ray knows about being safe on the water was learned from his grandfather on those trips. In those days there were no modern electronic navigation aids. Ray doesn't even remember seeing his grandfather use a chart as he marked the Intracoastal Waterway, including all its off-channels, from Sandy Hook to Cape May. It was all in his head. The state kept a small garvey at the marina in Forked river. Ray's grandfather would take him up and down the river, teaching him how to safely handle a boat. He not only taught young ray the right way to do things, but chewed him out if he did it the wrong way. Ray Huber Sr. was well known as a waterman in his time, even being mentioned in the writings of well-known New Jersey history author John T. Cunningham in the 60s.

Ray's grandfather wasn't the only other waterman in the family. Ray Sr.'s brother operated the steamer Miss Atlantic City, and his two sons were commercial fishermen out of Atlantic City as well. Ray's maternal grandfather was a pound fisherman off Long Beach Island and also worked as a

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fishmonger (someone who peddled fish). Ray's father, Ray Huber Jr., (and 2014 Hurley Conklin Award recipient) worked as a Coast Guardsman and a commercial clammer. He started young Ray clamming at about 12 years old out of Tuckerton Creek. His dad's first boat was a cedar garvey with a car engine in it. Around 1962 his father had another cedar plank garvey built by Tuckerton builder Pete Cranmer. Ray remembers his father pointing out there was only one knot in the entire boat, the diameter of his pinky finger.

Ray now considers the amount of clams in the bay back then amazing. He and his dad could easily put 400-500 clams in the boat in an hour. Sometimes it was much more than that. He'd count a hundred boats in the bay then, where he's lucky to see a handful clamming today. The clams only brought them $18.00 a thousand back then, but that was good money for the time. Unfortunately, the money clams bring in today has not kept up with inflation, part of the reason there are so few full time clammers left. When he first started he never had to leave Tuckerton Bay. By the time he was about 18 the clamming had started to die off in that water and he was boating up to West Creek where it was better.

Ray has since clammed in the Navesink River, Barnegat Bay, Great Bay, Little Bay, Reeds Bay, Absecon Bay, Lakes Bay, the Stone Harbor area and the Wildwoods. To be successful he had to go where the clams were. He did lease bottom for a time but found the return not worth the time he put into it. Most of his clamming has been on public waters. He started out treading clams, the way his father taught him. He tried tonging and raking but never took to it. When he had trouble finding the soft bottoms that were better for treading he took up scratch raking although, like each method of clamming, it took him a few years to get good at it. He now feels there are more high tides than there once were, making both treading and scratch raking harder. He might do better tonging or using a long rake from a boat but feels he's too old to take that up now.

Like most watermen, Ray has had a few close calls while on the bay. He's been injured several time while treading, having had foot surgery three times. Conch shells are a particular hazard to treaders, with the broken shells able to slice right through the rubber or neoprene footwear normally worn. One time he got his middle finger caught in the hydraulic steering cylinder of his outboard and it was nearly severed. He wrapped it up as best he could and rushed back to the dock and to the hospital.

Another time when he was moving the boat from Tuckerton to West Creek, where the clamming was better, a plank on the bottom popped and allowed water to rush in, throwing a section of the floorboard over his head and gouging the outboard. He can only imagine the outcome if it had hit him. The garvey started to quickly take on water and he sped to the nearest shore, which was Parkertown Beach, where he ran the boat up onto the shore. Someone on the beach had viewed the incident, and drove him up to West Creek, where his father was waiting for him. Bob Suralik Sr. later shaped and fitted a new plank to replace the damaged one.

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Ray's worst memory was when he and his father were run off the water by a thunder storm. They pulled into Burton's Dock in West Creek. As they climbed up onto the porch lightning struck the piling that Ray had just tied the boat to, showering them with smoldering splinters of piling wood. A larger piece was burning on the floor of the boat and Ray rushed down to toss it out. He never remembers being more terrified and has since developed a healthy respect for lightning. He's watched outer baymen stay out during it but he always gets off the water, figuring tomorrow's another day.

Like most Baymen, Ray has left wooden boats behind. In 1986, when the old garvey could not take any more, he bought a fiberglass KenCraft, which he still uses. It is a sturdy commercial style boat with a small pilothouse to get him out of the wind and spray.

Ray doesn't see a bright future for would-be clammers. The work is as hard as ever, but for less money and no benefits. Back when bigger outboards first came out, which helped push a heavier load and allowed you to move around the bay faster, you could pay it off in as little as a few weeks. It takes far longer to pay one off now. There are less clams in the bay and the smaller number of dealers to buy them means less competition, and less money for the clammers. Even if there were more clams in the bay, it might be difficult to sell them. They are just too many other food options today and clams are not part of the everyday diet as they once were. Everything seems to work against the commercial clammer today, competition, the market, even nature. Rays have become a big problem, which are a major predator of clams. He can hardly blame younger people for not taking up clamming as an occupation. Ray has one child, a daughter. He offered to help her get into clamming but she wasn't interested. The existing clammers are all up in age and there are few to replace them.

Ray does see seed clam showing up in new areas and in larger amounts here and there. The old timers used to say you needed a good hurricane every now and then to clean things out on the bay. Perhaps Sandy did just that. Ray's not sure but it's a degree of hope. In any case, he is still out on the bay, doing the only work he knows, and loves.

http://www.co.ocean.nj.us/ch/frmDecoyListing.aspx

Past Hurley Conklin Award Winners

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Last Name	First Name	Year Awarded	Birth Date	Date of Death	Story (pdf)
Abbott	Eldora	1995	1932	2003	http://bit.ly/1rpno7o
Abbott	Herschel	1995	1927	2011	http://bit.ly/1rpno7o
Ahearn	Edward	2000	1933		http://bit.ly/1pbzjSW
Allen	Ken	1994	1905	1996	http://bit.ly/1rpktM9
Allen	Alston	1998	1930		http://bit.ly/1pbzspI
Allen	Benjamin	2001	1917	2009	http://bit.ly/1pbzwFH
Althouse	Henry	2005	1935	2019	http://bit.ly/1pqG7v9
Anderson	Phil	2009	1944		http://bit.ly/1pqGmGO
Bahr	Fred	1991	1899	1991	http://bit.ly/1CtwzZt
Bahr	Peter	1993	1895		http://bit.ly/1rpejLL
Beaton	Lachlan	1993	1912	1997	https://bit.ly/3k6h9pj
Beckley	Richard	2003	1936	2020	http://bit.ly/1pbAfqB
Bell	Herb	1999	1912		http://bit.ly/1pbAjqm
Bennett	Herman	1992	1915	2001	http://bit.ly/1vnJMQj
Birdsall	Arthur J.	2018	1949		http://bit.ly/2NOVXrW
Bonnell	Paul	1997	1929		http://bit.ly/1uhkjtC
Bowen	Russell	1995	1923		http://bit.ly/1rpnw6M
Bozarth	Ronald	2003	1940		http://bit.ly/1uhjzot
Broome	Lew	1993	1903	1994	http://bit.ly/1rpeS8r
Brown	Ed	1994	c.1895-1904		http://bit.ly/1rpkxvg
Cavileer	Florence	1997	1913	2003	http://bit.ly/1uhktS0
Cavileer	Horace	1996	1918	1999	http://bit.ly/1uhkDIW
Cavileer	John	1995	1945		http://bit.ly/1rpnHPH
Cervetto	Jack	1990	1908	1995	http://bit.ly/Zs6pIA
Chadwick	Carolyn	1994	1923	2016	http://bit.ly/1rpkFuC
Chadwick	John	2001	1929		http://bit.ly/1uhlmtQ
Chadwick	John	2013	1946		http://bit.ly/1uZ3CSP
Chadwick	Martin	1993	1917	1998	http://bit.ly/1rpciPS
Chadwick Shinn	Lorna	1994			http://bit.ly/1rplovX
Clineman	Dick	1993	1911	1995	http://bit.ly/1rpe4Am
Conklin	Stanley	1997	1924	2005	http://bit.ly/1uhmnCa
Conti	Robert	1994	1912	2006	http://bit.ly/1oAQdul
Cornelius	Herlan	1997	1934	2016	http://bit.ly/1uhmIoi
Courtney	Bert	1991	1931	1996	http://bit.ly/1CtwF3h
Cramer	Don	2013	1938		http://bit.ly/1uZ4Jld
Cranmer	Bert	1993	1904	1994	http://bit.ly/1rpf8Eu
Cranmer	Ernie	1993	1914	1994	http://bit.ly/1rpdy5w
Cranmer	Milton	1992	1911	2004	http://bit.ly/1u3h5sD
Cranmer	Randall	1989	1918	1998	http://bit.ly/Zs58kV
Cranmer	William	1993	1917	2008	http://bit.ly/1rpf73w

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Crema	Richard	2003	1934		http://bit.ly/1uhneCG
de Freitas	Harry	1998			http://bit.ly/1uhnmSJ
de Freitas III	Bill	1998	1923		http://bit.ly/1uhnxxn
Dickerson	Steve	1992	1907	2000	http://bit.ly/1vnK9Kw
Driscoll	Nathaniel	1992	1911	1995	http://bit.ly/1u3hsDr
Dupont	Norman	1997	1928		http://bit.ly/1uhnVvH
Eayre	Gladys	1995	1924	2003	http://bit.ly/1rpnOdT
Falkingburg	Eppie	1991	1910	1995	http://bit.ly/1CtwHrN
Forsyth	Joe	1997	1905		http://bit.ly/1uhoeGU
Frazee	Cliff	1995	1921	1999	http://bit.ly/1rpo2lj
Frazee	Steve	2016	1948		http://bit.ly/2aZxU31
Fricke	Robert	2008	1941		http://bit.ly/Y2cKJy
Froriep Sr.	Otto	1992	1902	1995	http://bit.ly/1vnK5ul
Gabriel	Albert	2011	1931	2020	http://bit.ly/1uSU7Vd
Gaskill	Robert	1999	1923	2012	http://bit.ly/1v3pA70
Giberson	Gary	2002	1935		http://bit.ly/1uhus9P
Giddes	Percy	1992	1896	1994	http://bit.ly/1vnJFUX
Giles	Elliott	1993	1916	2012	http://bit.ly/1rpeLtv
Godfrey	William	2005	1919		http://bit.ly/Y25XQ4
Hammell	Ronald	2014	1951		http://bit.ly/Y2ErSf
Hand	James Perry	2018	1953		http://bit.ly/2NMlX7E
Hankins	Charles	1991	1925	2003	http://bit.ly/Zs7kst
Hart	Gurney	1995	1918	2003	http://bit.ly/1oANC3s
Hart	Phil	1995	1923	2018	http://bit.ly/1oANNf8
Hart	Walter	1995	1920	2008	http://bit.ly/1E0QOzv
Harvey	Elwood	2000	1920	2008	http://bit.ly/Y1lP5a
Hazelton, Sr.	Ed	1990	1914	2004	http://bit.ly/Zs8bcL
Headley	Somers	1992	1911		http://bit.ly/1vnJRDH
Heinrichs	Ed	1991	1908	1996	http://bit.ly/1CtwTr5
Heinrichs	George	1990	1923	1996	http://bit.ly/1CtqYT3
Heinrichs	Gus	1999	1931	2009	http://bit.ly/Y1mxzv
Heinzer	Milton	1996	1914	2008	http://bit.ly/Y1mJil
Hewitt	Carl	1989	1912	1991	
Holloway	John	2010	1935		http://bit.ly/Y1mXWC
Holloway	Nelson	2003	1920	2011	http://bit.ly/Y1n9VT
Holman	Chet	1992	1906	2000	http://bit.ly/1u3h4Vt
Holman	Kenneth	1998	1917	2002	http://bit.ly/Y1nqId
Hornby	Reeves	1997	1926	2011	http://bit.ly/Y1nzvf
Horner Marr	Leah	1995	1911	1995	http://bit.ly/1rpoOip
Huber III	Raymond	2020	1956		https://bit.ly/3mzzxce

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Huber Jr.	Ray	2014	1929	2017	http://bit.ly/Y2FkKw
Hunt	Sam	1986	1911	2004	http://bit.ly/1pGyGQC
Hutchinson	Jim	2002	1943		http://bit.ly/1vN7N74
Inman	Joe	1992	1907	1993	http://bit.ly/1vnK6yz
Inman	John	1997	1930	2013	http://bit.ly/Y1orQP
Inman	Perry	1993	1914	2004	http://bit.ly/1rpfdYQ
Jablonski	Enoch	1994	1910	1995	http://bit.ly/1rpkRdo
Jenks	William	1998	1928	2002	http://bit.ly/Y1oNXz
Jessen	Richard	2019	1942		http://bit.ly/2m4OloI
Johnson	George	2002	1933		http://bit.ly/Y1oXy5
Kalm	Fred	1991	1931		http://bit.ly/1CtwWDj
Kennedy	Ray	1989	1908	1996	http://bit.ly/1rpcMWa
Kennell Jr.	John	2012		2015	http://bit.ly/Y1pccm
King	Michael	2011	1905		http://bit.ly/Y1pOPn
Kurtz	Al	1992	1897		http://bit.ly/1u3hdrQ
Lafferty	John	2000	1939		http://bit.ly/Y1q3tQ
Lafferty	Paul	1993	1902	1995	http://bit.ly/1rpdGSw
Larson	John	2005	1933	2009	http://bit.ly/Y1qCnm
Lashley	Cliff	1994	1912		http://bit.ly/1rpkXlf
Leek	Bob	1991	1920	1991	http://bit.ly/1CtwZPv
Leek	Jim	2009	1948	2019	http://bit.ly/Y1r9FY
Leek	Major	1996	1932	2006	http://bit.ly/Y1rhFq
Leifried	Sam	2000	1912	2007	http://bit.ly/Y1rIPV
Lesser	Fred	2015	1937	2018	http://bit.ly/1h5EZRy
Ludlow	Walt	1994	1911	2000	http://bit.ly/1rpl0NW
Marshall	Edna	1999	1909	2003	http://bit.ly/Y1rSXC
Mathis	George	2015	1955		http://bit.ly/1NsA5YY
Mathis, Sr.	George	2010	1930		http://bit.ly/Y1rXL1
Matthews	Richard	2006	1949		http://bit.ly/Y1s4Gb
Maxwell	Don	1996	1927		http://bit.ly/Y1sjB8
Maxwell	John	2014	1955		http://bit.ly/Y2FVfl
Maxwell	Kenneth	2000	1934	2019	http://bit.ly/Y1sufG
McCay	Edward	2017			http://bit.ly/2fyrv2o
McKandless	Dick	1992	1915	1992	http://bit.ly/1u3hbR0
McLain	Paul	1995	1927	2014	http://bit.ly/1rvRw3w
Mick	Joel	2016	1947		http://bit.ly/2aeY9W4
Mikuletzky	George	2013	1941		http://bit.ly/1uZ5PgX
Mott	Elmer	1990	1912	1994	http://bit.ly/1CtreBj
Mott	Joe	2015	1939		http://bit.ly/1h5FATz
Newman	Winston	1994	1913		http://bit.ly/1rpmJmC

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Nickerson	Tom	1992	1918	2002	http://bit.ly/1vnJYPn
Nyman	Ray	2004	1936	2019	http://bit.ly/Y1tqkp
Parker	Hayes	1989	1898	1989	http://bit.ly/1qRMyIc
Parker	Weldon	1991	1918	2008	http://bit.ly/1Ctx6KT
Parker	Emil	1992	1914		http://bit.ly/1u3hBH1
Parker	Milvin	1992	1913		http://bit.ly/1vnJHfz
Parsons, Sr.	Dale	2013			http://bit.ly/1uZ6yyM
Parsons	John	1996	1927	2009	http://bit.ly/Y1ue90
Parsons	Wanda	2013	1927	2014	http://bit.ly/1uZ6yyM
Passuth	John	2017	1935		http://bit.ly/2fxhX7F
Paul, Sr.	Dave	2001	1938		http://bit.ly/Y1vuJg
Paul	Charles	1998	1933	2012	http://bit.ly/Y1uuVq
Petzak	John	1990	1918	1994	http://bit.ly/1Ctr11a
Pharo	Enoch	2001	1925	2009	http://bit.ly/Y1vKrq
Potter	Stephen	2001	1929		http://bit.ly/Y1vXLf
Price	Mason	1996	1935	2001	http://bit.ly/Y1w3Tp
Reid	Joe	1990	1910	1991	http://bit.ly/1CtrnEN
Rhodes	Dave	2018	1933	2019	http://bit.ly/2NKZw2o
Richards	Charlie	1993	1914		http://bit.ly/1rpdVgt
Ridgway	Owen	1992	1913	1994	http://bit.ly/1u3hmeX
Ridgway Jr.	Maurice	1996	1941	2018	http://bit.ly/Y1x5yy
Ridgway Speck	Marion	1997	1910	2001	http://bit.ly/Y1xnWk
Rizzo	Joe	2019	1958		http://bit.ly/2n4kP2k
Robinson	Malcolm	2009	1944		http://bit.ly/Y1xxg9
Rogers	John	1999	1927		http://bit.ly/Y1xIYT
Rutherford	John	2007	1955		http://bit.ly/Y1xWPJ
Rutter	Bob	1991	2015		http://bit.ly/1Ctx9Xa
Rutter, Sr.	Bob	1991	1925	2008	http://bit.ly/1CtxhGe
Schairer	Anthony	2012	1934	2017	http://bit.ly/Y1y8P2
Scheimreif	John	1999	1923	2010	http://bit.ly/Y2dbng
Schoenberg	Herb	1994	1913		http://bit.ly/1rpl68t
Sherwood	Janice	2000	1932	2006	http://bit.ly/Y1ykOe
Shoemaker	William	2005			http://bit.ly/Y1ypBv
Shourds	Alvin	2007	1926	2013	http://bit.ly/Y1yvJw
Shourds	Harry	1999	1930	2017	http://bit.ly/Y1yJ3p
Simonsen	Bill	2019	1928	2019	http://bit.ly/2lqhpql
Skeie	Halvor	2011	1934		http://bit.ly/Y1yQMh
Smith, Jr.	Edward	1996	1929		http://bit.ly/Y1zadY
Smith	Joe	1990	1919		
Smith	Turney	1988	1908	2001	http://bit.ly/1szv980