

# Hurley Conklin Award

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.

## *This year's recipients:*

### **Thomas R. Beaton**

Donated by  
New Jersey Decoy  
Collectors Association

### **Robert Beloff**

Donated by  
Ocean County Parks  
& Recreation

### **Paul N. Smith**

Donated by  
New Jersey Decoy  
Collectors Association

### **William de Rouville, Sr.**

Donated by  
Ocean County Parks  
& Recreation

## **Thomas R. Beaton** as told to German Georgieff

Tom Beaton is the 3rd generation boat builder to own Beaton Boatworks located on Barnegat Bay in West Mantoloking. The boat works has a history of meeting the needs of both Barnegat Bay clammers and duck hunters plus the wealthy summer people that enjoyed racing on the shallow bay.

“My grandfather, David, emigrated from Scotland in 1925. He was a boat builder and he came here for more opportunity and a better life, which he said he did get,” said Tom Beaton. “He had friends here already so he came over first and brought the family over once he was settled.”

David Beaton started work at Morton Johnson Boatworks of Bay Head. In 1928 David Beaton started his own boat building business with partners in Bay Head, but that broke up in the 1930s. Then he went to Mantoloking in 1937 and built David Beaton and Sons Boatworks.

He had six sons and he put them all to work. They built all the buildings themselves. The oldest building still standing is the carpentry shop built in 1937, said Tom. “It’s on cedar pilings -- they drove the cedar into the ground, put a string around it and framed up the building. This was way before building codes,” he noted. “They started to build boats -- skiffs and then sailboats.”

According to Tom’s late father Lochlan, a 1993 Hurley Conklin awardee, everything was done by hand at first -- there were no power tools as there were no poles in place to carry electricity to the shops. They had an automobile gasoline engine to run the big bandsaw. Later, a wealthy client paid to have the poles put in.

Beaton Boatworks made approximately 200 sailing sneakboxes (duck boats) that were not just employed by baymen and duck hunters but also young sailors, particularly young women who joined in local racing derbies.

Wooden boat building was the main business until the late 1960s when fiberglass came on the scene and seemed to be a kind of miracle material, explained Tom. “My father realized at the time that we would have to change the business and started to make it more of a boat yard and marina-type operation. That seemed to



*Photo Credit: Awardee's Family*

work -- we had lots of winter storage and dockage (fees). We never gave up building boats but we didn't depend on it. We did it in the winter -- we built sneakboxes and a few A-cats, plus a bunch of row boats."

Tom was eager to follow in the family business.

"I'll be here 50 years next year," he said. "I used to come here after school and scrub boats, we didn't have a power wash -- we had a brush. We'd rub it in the sand and scrub the boat (to remove barnacles). We didn't have a travel hitch -- we had just one lift. I liked it once I started working. It's nice in the fall around here -- we're always a little more casual, low key. Plus, I was helping my father and we had a good relationship. --It's a nice way of life."

On the other hand, running the business doesn't leave much time for doing traditional boat building work. "I always say you're more tired running your computer and doing paperwork than you are doing physical work in the yard. "I'm always hoping I can do more building -- I've got all my tools sitting over there...but we don't have the help.

"I have a son who likes the business. He graduated college and is going for his MBA. I don't encourage or discourage -- he's only 22 so he has to figure out what he wants to do. I want to build a double-ender when my son is home more."

Although Beaton skimmed over the importance of the Boatworks in the resurgence of A-cat sailing on Barnegat Bay, his legacy is well noted.

Catboats, with a shallow draft and wide hull, were traditionally used as work boats on the bay, employed as fishing boats, charters and even in the salt hay industry. Baymen might sometimes race them to the harbor when work was done. Then in the early 1900s yachting architects reconfigured the workhorse into a sleek design to add to the sport of sailboat racing. Historically, the first A-cat was commissioned by a Philadelphia judge in 1922 to compete in the Toms River Yacht Club Challenge Cup. The *Mary Ann* and other early A-cats such as the *Lotus* in 1925 and *Spy* in 1924 were built at the Morton Johnson boat works, where David Beaton first learned his trade.

By the 1980s some of the early A-cats were ready for the scrap heap unless a boat works could be found to do the heavy restorations. Tom Beaton was able to restore both the *Lotus* and the *Spy* at his boat works. Then, in 1993 the boat works built a new A-cat to ply the Barnegat Bay -- *Ghost*.

"The problem now is getting the materials. We get our cedar, when we can get it, out of Virginia. And you have to be a pretty wealthy guy to pay for a wooden boat these days," said Tom. "But we do a lot of repairs. So we're still here."

*Editors Note: The Beaton family is credited with modifying the design of the duck boat to prevent its bow from submerging when sailing with the wind. Most of the Barnegat Bay yacht clubs used the Beaton duck boats. Currently, that tradition is celebrated at the annual World Championship Duck Boat Race at the Mantoloking Yacht Club, which is held every August. Tom Beaton is the official duck boat evaluator for the race.*

## Robert Beloff

by German Georgieff

Robert Beloff was born in 1941 in the Pinewald section of Berkeley Township, in the hospital that was previously the Royal Pines Hotel. His parents lived on New Bridge Road, in the Nugentown section of Little Egg Harbor. The road was later renamed Nugentown Rd. Off of that road is Beloff Drive, named after his family. His grandfather worked for the Tuckerton Railroad. His father was a bricklayer, doing union work when available, and working for himself at other times.

Bob had plenty of hunting opportunities within walking distance of his home while growing up. He hunted rabbits on the old Frasier peach orchard where Pinelands High School now stands. He remembered there being a still out there, operated by some men from Hammonton, until it was discovered by the revenuers and they busted it up. He hunted ducks in the Otis cranberry bogs behind the present school site. He remembered there being an artesian well feeding the reservoir but he's not sure what happened to it. His favorite wood duck pond was off of Bridge Rd., which was unnamed back then. Houses built on either side of the pond ended his hunting there.

During summers while in high school Bob worked for Rands U-Drive Boats, on Seven Bridges Road. He would handle the rentals and clean the boats when they returned. Each boat had a bait board but nobody seemed to use them, instead cutting the bait atop the engine box. A constant challenge was trying to slow the boats down as they rushed back, usually ignoring him and slamming into the dock. The job was worse when a summer thunderstorm would bring close to 50 boats back at the same time. He'd no sooner tie one off when another was right behind it. He remembers seeing all 53 boats go out most weekends, and 20 or so on weekdays, all coming back full of fluke, many of them undersized. And that didn't include the private boats docked at the marina. He thinks all of this is the reason we have so many regulations today. In any case, Hurricane Sandy destroyed Rands, and it was never re-built.

One unique Pine Barrens tradition Bob used to make extra money doing was what locals called "pineballing", which was the gathering of pine cones for the florist trade. He picked cones in the pygmy pines along Route 539, where the dwarf trees had cones within easy reach. A buyer would come along every so often to collect his cones.

Another source of income for Bob was trapping. He used to trap muskrat on the salt meadows at the end to Mill Creek Road in Manahawkin. It was a dirt road back then, and he could drive all the way to the meadows. The Beach Haven West lagoon community put an end to trapping on that marsh. While living in an apartment in West Creek he trapped the meadows behind them, where the Cox family used to cut salt hay. That land is now part of Forsythe Refuge and can't be trapped. He jokes how he hates the refuge for the limitations it placed on traditional activities while his wife loves it for all the land it's protected from development. He does agree that building has ruined much of the way life used to be in the region. While muskrats were always his main quarry, he also trapped fox, raccoon and mink. He recalls taking several mink where Seacrest Nursing Home now is located. He eventually worked on construction of that nursing home for Joe Palermo.

Bob trapped right up to the early 1960s, when union brickwork began taking up more of his time. Tending a trapline was time consuming, and he didn't miss hauling a heavy burlap bag full of wet muskrats off the meadows. Overall, however, he did enjoy trapping. If duck season was in, he'd bring his shotgun along while tending his traps and jump shoot ducks out on the meadows if the opportunity presented itself. He claims money can't be made trapping anymore.



*Photo Credit: Awardee's Family*

*Continued on page 15*

Too much of the meadows have been lost to either development or the refuge.

He did clam a few times with his neighbor, Bill Driscoll, although he never considered himself very good at it. He said Bill would catch 2,500 while he caught 250 during the same time. He did enjoy doing it however.

A favorite pastime of Bob's was rabbit hunting with his beagles. He hunted the woods around Amasa Landing and the old farm where Atlantis Golf Course now is. He hunted the woods around his present house in Parkertown too, until building eventually put an end to that. More than once, when a hound ran off chasing a deer, he had to use the old hunter's trick of leaving his hunting coat behind, coming back in the morning to find the lost dog curled up on it.

It's been twenty years since Bob last hunted rabbits, and his hounds are all gone. He's spent his years since doing side work and helping his wife breed Labrador Retrievers. Their pups have always earned praise from buyers, but that is starting to be too much work. While they still have a few dogs, they don't know if they will produce any more litters. Considering all the growth in the surrounding area, Parkertown is still relatively peaceful. Bob now enjoys the quiet, his time with his family and his memories of what has been a wonderful area to grow up and live in.

---

---

## **Paul N. Smith**

as told to German Georgieff

Boat Carpenter Paul Smith is one of the few artisans left with the skills to work on wooden boats. Smith was fitting trim to the edge of a boat hull when this interview took place at Beaton Boatworks. His career at Beaton Boatworks in Mantoloking began in 1963 when he was 18 years old. He was born in New York City during World War II in 1944. His family moved to South Jersey in 1950 and he attended the Bay Head Elementary School and Point Pleasant High School where he was friends with Tom Beaton's older siblings.

He was primed to go on to college at Rutgers University but suddenly his father died and his mother fell ill, and so he started work at Beaton's in the spring of 1963. "I had a couple of other jobs and I thought all this was temporary, but one year led into another and here I am." That was sixty years ago.

"You learn the business a little bit at a time," he said. "Once I was here awhile and got into all the aspects of it I really enjoyed it," Smith said. "We built mainly small sailboats and when I started there was five or six people working on boats. Now I'm the only carpenter here. Now the marina is the dominant part of the business."

Working on wooden boats requires a jack-of-all-trades ability. "Some things are a real challenge, some things you may only do once -- things that are particular to the design. Some of the boats we made 15 or 20 years ago, the pieces were standard so it was almost a production line. But then we had class racing boats where everything had to be made to certain specifications."

"During the summer, when it's slow, marina customers come in with all kinds of requests. I've made caskets for cats, old wooden water tanks for toilets -- nothing I'd put on a resume. But if you can make something as complicated as a wooden boat you can probably handle it. Last year I made a bunch of Adirondack chairs."

The last wooden boat he made from scratch was a little 10-foot lapstrake pulling boat or dingy. "It was a replica of an early 1906 boat. They had the original in pieces that came on a trailer so I had to redraw the plans and patterns for it. It was small but very fancy."



*Photo Credit: Awardee's Family*

“But we don’t do too many wooden boats anymore -- we don’t have the people who can do it. Tom [Beaton] can do it but he has to do the office stuff.”

Besides the lack of skilled labor, getting wood to restore old boats is difficult. “Getting wood of all kinds is terrible and if you can find it, it’s expensive. It’s like restoring an old house, restoring a wooden boat is more work than making a new one,” he said. “I live in a house built in 1893 so I know all about that.”

At 78 years old, Smith is starting to slow down a bit, he said. “I enjoy doing it but my knees are shot. If I can stand up and not climb a ladder -- great. It’s just a function of age. If my health stays good, I’ll continue to work part-time.”

“It’s a job, there’s nothing too exciting about it. I was fortunate in growing up around here at the tail end of the traditional ways. If someone has a boat now they just roar up and down the bay with the radio going full-blast. They’re not doing what we enjoyed doing on the bay -- fishing, clamming, just being out there and seeing what’s out there. Well, times change.”

---

---

## William de Rouville, Sr.

by German Georgieff

Bill de Rouville’s destiny was set early in life. He grew up in Brick and his father, Matthew, was an avid boater. As early as Bill can remember, he was sanding, painting or otherwise working on boats. Most of his childhood memories were filled with sailing and fishing on the northern end of the bay or going out the Manasquan Inlet to catch bluefish.

He always seemed to have a boat of his own under some stage of repair or restoration. Some of them would have been considered basket cases, but he enjoyed the work and the challenge. He’d often spend the summer working on a boat and only have it ready to go into the water by Labor Day, just in time for him to go back to school. One boat was a 25 foot sailboat he bought from Beaton’s Boat Yard. It was in such bad shape when he got it that it was close to being busted up and discarded. He worked on it for about two years, finally getting it into the water. He had a lot of fun sailing it and learned quite a deal during the restoration project.

Around the time Bill graduated from high school he approached Lochlan “Lolly” Beaton for a job but they didn’t need any help at the time. A friend told him of a man in Toms River who was looking for workers. So he came down to the Toms River Boat Works and met Lance Chambeau, who hired him. He was attending University of Rhode Island at the time, following in his father’s footsteps studying engineering. But after several summers working at the boatworks, he decided that was the career path he wanted to follow, rather than one in engineering. He has never regretted that decision.

After working for him for a number of years, Chambeau gave Bill the opportunity to lease the repair shop from him, which he established as his own business about 1987. However, the boat works was eventually sold to some local businessmen, who had other plans for the property. So in 1997 he moved his business, setting up shop in Lanoka Harbor, again under a lease arrangement. He was at that location for about seven years, doing a lot of restoration work. It was here where he built the *Witch* in 2002, one of the new A-Cat boats. Unlike Beaton’s, however, which has had a long family tradition of boat building, it has never been a major part of Bill’s work. His focus has been more on the repair and restoration end of the business.



Photo Credit: Awardee’s Family

Bill stated that leased shops have always been a risky proposition. Owners' plans change and properties are sold, and that is exactly what happened to the Lanoka Harbor shop. So in 2004, he moved back to the Toms River, obtaining a long-term lease at his present location in Bayville. His business has thrived there for 19 years now. Like most businesses, Bill has had to adapt to changing times. As recent as 10-15 years ago, a large part of his work was major restoration on wooden boats, such as reframing, replanking, rebuilding cabins, etc. But now it's more minor repairs and maintenance work, such as painting and varnishing, but still mostly on wooden or traditional boats. His is one of the few yards still doing that work. The biggest part of his work has been on the A-Cats. They are still regularly raced, and raced hard, often requiring a repair after a collision or other mishap.

One especially satisfying aspect of the job is working with owners of the Cats, tweaking them for faster speed or better handling, all within the rules and guidelines of the class. And since the races take place virtually within sight of Bill's shop, he enjoys viewing how they perform after any modifications.

One of his favorite restoration projects was on the *Whitecap*, for Tuckerton Seaport. *Whitecap* is a 33-foot sloop built by Morton Johnson in Point Pleasant in 1924, which was damaged by Hurricane Sandy in 2012. The restoration was exacting, as it involved several historic organizations which were involved in setting up the guidelines, requiring it to be restored to its exact original appearance. He found it an extremely satisfying project.

Bill says that while business is still good, it is sometimes challenging to get an owner onboard with the actual amount of work a boat brought to him may require. Another challenge has been the increasingly unfriendly business environment in the state. The work can also be physically demanding, and sometimes even dangerous. Once, a large boat fell on him, breaking his back, leg and several ribs. As soon as he left the hospital, six days later, he was back at the boatyard checking on things. So, after 48 years in the business, he is getting closer to retiring. Despite that, the business isn't expected to end with him. Bill's son, Bill Jr., works on the boats with him, and his niece Sherri manages the office. So while building and working on wooden boats may be a dying tradition, it's not dead quite yet.

# Hurley Conklin Award Winners

- 1986** Sam Hunt
- 1987** Pete Wilbur
- 1988** Turney Smith
- 1989** Randall Cranmer, Ray Kennedy, Hayes Parker, Roger West, Carl Hewitt
- 1990** Jack Cervetto, Elmer Mott, Ed Hazelton Sr., John Petzak, George Heinrichs, Joe Reid, Joe Smith
- 1991** Weldon Parker, Charles E. Hankins, Fred Kalm, Bob Rutter Sr., Bob Rutter, Rocky Wyckoff, Bob Leek, Eppie Falkenburg, Ed Heinrichs, Bert Courtney, Fred Bahr
- 1992** Melvin Parker, Joe Sprague, Paul Steinhauer, Capt. Percy Giddes, Emil Parker, Somers Headley, Capt. Chet Holman, Tom Nickerson, Capt. Owen Ridgeway, Joe Inman, Dick McKandless, Capt. Ken Wilson Sr., Milton Cranmer, Capt. Steve "Sparky" Dickerson, Otto Froriep Sr., Nathaniel Boone Driscoll, Allen Tonneson
- 1993** Capt. Lew Broome, Peter Oliver Bahr, Bert Cranmer, Bill Cranmer, Capt. Dick Clineman, Paul Lafferty, Lachlan Beaton, Capt. Calvin Wilson, Martin Bob Chadwick, Elliott Giles, Ernie Cranmer, Perry Inman, Charlie Richards
- 1994** Capt. Dellwin Sooy, Robert D. Conti, Lorna Chadwick Shinn, Dave "Cricket" Winton, Winston Newman, Carolyn Chadwick, Capt. Ken Allen, Ed Brown, Enoch Jablonski, Walt Ludlow, Cliff Lashley, Capt. Herb Schoenberg
- 1995** Phil Hart, Gurney Hart, Walter "Shorty" Hart, Paul D. "Pete" McLain, Cliff Frazee, Gladys Eayre, Herschel Abbott, Eldora Abbott, Leah "Sis" Horner Marr, Russell Bowen, John Cavileer
- 1996** Horace Cavileer, Milt Heinzer, Major Leek, Don Maxwell, Jack Parsons, Mason Price, Maurice "Merce" Ridgeway, Edward J. Smith, Arthur "Oppie" Speck, Stella S. Wegst
- 1997** Reeves O. "Slim" Hornby, Norman Dupont, Joe Forsyth, Capt. Paul Bonnell, Herlan "Blue" Cornelius, Florence Cavileer, Marion Speck, Stanley Conklin, John Marvin Inman
- 1998** Bill de Freitas III, Harry de Freitas, Alston Allen, William Jenks, Charles Paul, Kenneth Holman
- 1999** Bob Gaskill, Gus Heinrichs, Harry Shourds, Edna Marshall, Herb Bell, Jack Scheimreif, Harry Rogers
- 2000** Ken Maxwell, Edward Ahearn, Janice Sherwood, John Lafferty, Sam Leifried, Elwood Harvey
- 2001** Steven Potter, Benny Allen, Enoch Pharo, John Chadwick, Dave Paul, Sr., Bob Wilson
- 2002** Bub Johnson, Gary Giberson, Ross Wilson, Jim Hutchinson
- 2003** Ronald M. Bozarth, Nelson Holloway, Richard Crema, Richard Beckley
- 2004** Ray Nyman, Edwin P. Thompson
- 2005** Capt. John Larson, Henry Althouse, William Shoemaker, William Godfrey
- 2006** Richard W. Matthews, John "Jack" Vanaman
- 2007** Alvin Shourds, John Scott Rutherford
- 2008** Capt. Bob Fricke
- 2009** Jim Leek, Malcolm Robinson, Captain Phil Anderson
- 2010** John R. Holloway, George Mathis Sr., Carl Tarnow
- 2011** Albert Gabriel, Capt. Michael "Mickey" King, Halvor "Sonny" Skie, Capt. George Svelling
- 2012** Anthony A. Schairer, Capt. John "Jack Jr." Kennel
- 2013** John M. Chadwick, Don Cramer, George Mikuletzky, Dale Parsons, Wanda Parsons
- 2014** Ron "Poss" Hammell, Ray Huber Jr., John Joseph Maxwell
- 2015** Fred Lesser, George Mathis, Jr., Newt Sterling, Joe "Spike" Mott
- 2016** Captain Joel E. Mick, Steve C. Frazee
- 2017** John Passuth, Ed McCay
- 2018** J.P. Hand, Dave Rhodes, Arthur J. Birdsall
- 2019** Dick Jessen, Joe Rizzo, Bill Simonsen
- 2020** Lewis "Spike" Wells, Raymond Huber, III
- 2021** Kris Anderson, Clarence Fennimore
- 2022** Will Russell Hammerstrom, William Skeie
- 2023** Thomas R. Beaton, Robert Beloff, Paul N. Smith, William de Rouville, Sr.