

Decoy Show Hall of Fame Awardee: John Holloway

By Grove Conrad

John Holloway has been an integral part of this 43rd Show since it's 1983 beginning; it is fitting that this Hall of Fame (HOF) award follows Mike Mangum's inaugural HOF award at last year's show.

In 1983, Mr. Mangum enlisted John to develop the original contest rules and from that initial show Mr. Holloway has not only been on the show committee but served as a contest judge, supervised countless head whittling events and has donated his original carvings for awards and raffles. John was the author of the Barnegat Bay & Delaware River Decoy Contests, the essence of the show. John rarely ever missed a show meeting and did whatever was necessary to continually improve the show.

John always promoted the idea of adding as many facets to the show as possible to attract a wider audience including families. Show coordinator Mike Mangum listened to that advice and the show grew exponentially. The show was always intended to be more than just decoys. At its peak, the show was attracting over 40,000 visitors and 600 vendors at Tip Seaman County Park, Pinelands High School & Middle School, the Tuckerton First Aid Building and the Tuckerton Seaport.

John Holloway was born in Haddonfield, New Jersey in September 1935, almost to the day ninety years ago. As a young man he spent considerable time at his father's Parkertown house doing those "gunning" things boys do along the bay learning from old fashioned baymen such as Harlan Price, Bill Thomas and Pete Peterson. During those early years in Parkertown, hanging out at Jay Parker's shop and watching Parker make all manner of decoys and whimsical carvings would be a beginning for 70 years of John producing some of New Jersey's finest folk-art. Besides being a world class decoy carver John along with his nephew Jeff Holloway began building sneakboxes.



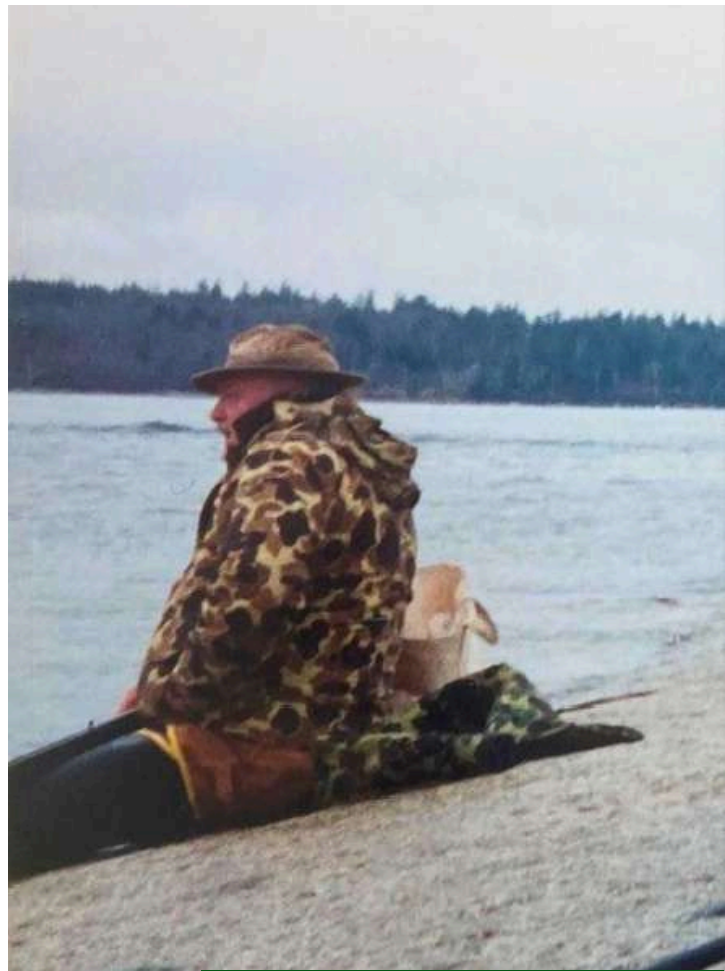
John Holloway receiving a Decoy Show carving award.
Photo credit: Ocean County.

Holloway's Ecoley Mortuary College degree led to a state mortician's license then funeral director for Jeffries and Keats of Atlantic City. There, in Atlantic City, he met Ruth Sheppard, the nurse daughter of Atlantic City's well-known Doctor Sheppard – they would marry and produce son Bret and daughter Robin. Following his AC years, John opened his own funeral home along the Delaware in Florence NJ. Being in the business of dying, most of the clients never returned. So, John sold the business and returned to the Parkertown of his youth and there became a full-time bayman and maker of award-winning decoys.

His Burton Drive shop not only produced decoys, and all manner of bird carvings but also showcased his signature bird trees. He built a shop and raised finches, along with the attendant mice, and installed an old barber's chair where he sat while the chips flew. From that old barber's chair he, like Jay Parker before him, gave impromptu lessons and his skill sets were passed on to a score of present-day decoy carvers. According to Holloway: "I had no secrets and shared what I did."

During those "Barber Chair" years fellow Barnegat Bay decoy makers Tom Rider, Jim West and Herb Miller became friendly competition and from these friendships developed a unique Jersey "school-of-style"; whereupon countless ribbons and honors were gathered by all four men.

In 2010, Holloway agreed to accept the time-honored Hurley Conklin Award and in 2016 entered the New Jersey Decoy Collectors' Hall of Fame. This year, the committee and staff of the Old Time Barnegat Bay Decoy and Gunning Show was honored to award Mr. Holloway the Michael T. Mangum Hall of Fame Award.



John Holloway. Photo credit: Grove Conrad.



Loon decoy by John Holloway.
Photo credit: Guyette & Deeter.