



*John Holloway judging Fish Decoys, 1999.
Photo Credit: Ocean County Parks*

JOHN R. HOLLOWAY:

Old Time Barnegat Bay Decoy & Gunning Show **MICHAEL T. MANGUM** *HALL OF FAME*

by Grove Conrad & Michael T. Mangum

John Holloway has been an integral part of this Show since it's 1983 beginning; it is fitting that this Hall of Fame (HOF) award follows the Michael T. Mangum's inaugural HOF award at last year's show. Holloway's name was already in the running when Mangum, the namesake of the award and founder of the show, insisted Holloway be the next to be inducted into the Hall of Fame.

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 essential essence of the show. He advocated for the Fish Decoy Contest and was a judge for many years. He made the original fish decoy judging stick and it became a yearly ritual as John would bring it from home and unveil it before the judging. 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 450,000 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, Jeff & Mike would travel to the Philadelphia Maritime Museum to the Workshop on the water. One October day Curator Roger Allen asked the 3 of them to help sail the museums small craft fleet down the Delaware River from Pyne Point to winter headquarters in Philadelphia. As it turned out, it was mischief night and the group barely got back to Pyne Point to leave the City before 133 fire calls were put in that night.

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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. For many years, John refused the Hurley Conklin award because of the "Conklin Curse." He believed if you got the award you wouldn't live long.

Show founder Mike Mangum recounted, "According to John Holloway, if you were given a Hurley Conklin Award, it was a death sentence. You were going to be gone in a year or two as soon as you got this award. He didn't take into account that most of these people were in their 80s and 90s. But according to John, it was the Conklin curse and he refused to take the Conklin award for many, many years. Finally, he got old enough where I guess it didn't matter so he took the Conklin award. He's still here but he questioned the impact on his mother's death. She was in her 90s."

Finally, Holloway agreed to accept the time-honored Conklin Award in 2010 and has beaten the odds to enter into the 2016 the New Jersey Decoy Collectors Hall of Fame and has earned the ultimate prize, this year's *The Old Time Barnegat Bay Decoy and Gunning Show Hall of Fame Award*. We are proud to induct Mr. John R. Holloway into the class of 2025.



Holloway receiving a plaque at the 1995 Decoy Show
with Commissioner John P. Kelly .
Photo Credit: Ocean County Parks

New Jersey Ducks Unlimited Waterfowl Party
Saturday, September 27 at the Red Men Lodge
143 Main Street, Tuckerton
Doors Open at 5 PM - Dinner Starts at 6 PM
For Tickets and More Information Contact:
Ben Lines BLINES@Ducks.org at 262-442-3473