



*Jim Allen with highlights from his collection.
Photo Credit: Pat Johnson*

JIM ALLEN:

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

by Pat Johnson & Catherine McLearen

As in many institutions, we sometimes take for granted the history and men behind their inception. The Michael T. Mangum Hall of Fame Award was created to rectify that. Decoy collector Jim Allen of Tuckerton has rightly been given the award for his contributions to the Old Time Barnegat Bay Decoy and Gunning Show and perpetuating the traditions of the Barnegat Bay over the decades.

Allen is also a founding member of the New Jersey Decoy Collectors Association. Because of his expertise

he is a consultant for Copley Fine Art Auctions and he had his own business, Decoy Heritage.

The Old Time Barnegat Bay Decoy and Gunning Show started when Allen was secretary of the New Jersey Decoy Collectors Association and they wanted to use Ocean County's Tip Seaman Park for a buy, swap, sell. He asked Ocean County Parks and Recreation Naturalist Mike Mangum.

"Mike said, 'Why don't we just do a show?' and basically off it went. The Decoy Show from day one really put the stamp on the Tuckerton area," said Allen.

Mangum recounted that Allen had a bigger vision for the show and what it could be than other members of the Collectors Association. The Show, thought Mangum and Allen, should represent all facets of waterfowling and should be for a wider audience not only for the dedicated local collectors. This is the 43rd Decoy Show and Allen has been involved all along. Allen was on the Decoy Show Committee from the beginning. He did appraisals for a couple of years and he still sets up a table of the decoys he can part with. He also judges some of the decoy carving contests.

Allen's favorite contest to compete in was the Waterfowling contest which included rowing a Sneakbox onto Lake Pohatong and setting up a rig of decoys. "Jimmy and Shaun Mann partnered on that contest and they were the masters," Mangum recalled.

While advocating for new additions to the show each year to attract new people, Allen was also critical in convening the heavy hitting collectors to bring legitimacy and quality judging to the show, the likes of which included; Somers Headley, Doc Conover, and Johnny Hillman.

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“The very first decoy show I attended was at the Carlton House in 1969. My dad took me. Decoy carvers Lem Ward and Chris Sprague were there. Pam and Armand Carney started it. When the historic Carlton House burned down, the Carney’s moved the show to the Tuckerton Beach community center.

“It was a swap meet,” said Allen. They had them a couple of years and then it went away. We didn’t have another show until we started the Decoy Show.”

Allen has also served on the board of the Barnegat Bay Decoy and Baymens’ Museum (Tuckerton Seaport) from the very beginning. “The main reason it was started was to have a place to educate the kids on the way of the baymen; not just duck hunting, but clamming, oystering, fishing.”

The museum was started in 1991 and opened in 1993. It was an outgrowth of the Decoy Show and was built entirely by volunteers. The Museum was such a success that a bigger project was envisioned and the Tuckerton Seaport opened in 2000.

Allen was born August 25, 1954. He has deep family roots in Tuckerton and West Creek. His parents Elizabeth (Betty) and James Allen lived on Lakeside Drive. The old Allen homestead was on Main Street, Tuckerton. His Great Uncle Russell owned Horner’s Grocery and his Great Uncle Nelson had the adjoining garage.

It was a meeting in this very same garage (but now owned by Claude Stevens) that started Allen on his decoy-collecting trajectory. Decoy maker, early collector and duck hunter John Hillman would stop at the gas pumps to fill up his duck boat before heading out to bay.

“I couldn’t have been more than 16 or 17 when I met John Hillman. I had my hip boots on, and he started a conversation—‘You like duck hunting—know where there are any wooden decoys?’

“I said, ‘ –oh yeah, my dad has a bunch.’ He wrote his number down and I lost it.

“Than I was cleaning one of the old duck shanty’s on Middle Island and found a sack of wooden decoys. I was told I could have them because the guys didn’t want them. I could take them if I substituted cork ones. So I took them home.

“I had Mom look up his John’s number –I called him and he stopped by. He said, ‘ —Oh these are nice’—Course, I didn’t know anything. He offered me \$25 a piece and I just about fainted.

“I had five of them and, here’s the cool part, he said, ‘I’ll take four of them but you keep one. That started me collecting.

“Three years later we’re at the waterfowl show in Easton, Maryland. I’m sitting with John at his table and a guy walks up and John pulls out one of those black ducks.

“That was Russell Hurtz and he says, ‘I’ll take it. Well, he reaches in his pocket and out comes a roll of hundreds. He paid \$300 for it. The gentlemen goes away and Johnny turns to me and says, ‘So, Jim, did you learn anything?’”

John Hillman was to mentor Allen from the first day he sold him the black ducks by Captain Jesse Birdsall. “I’d be getting decoys and he’d say, ‘Keep this one and sell that one.’

“After he passed, his collection was sold for over \$5 million in 1996.”

Allen treasures a decoy from Hillman’s personal gunning rig. “John was a hunter. I took him duck hunting one day and he wanted to use all his old decoys to hunt over. I was afraid they’d get ruined by shot but he said ‘–don’t worry about it Jim, that’s what they are for.’”



*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