

PDCA Announces Winner of 2010 Ralph Campbell Award

Dear Members,

Last night, the Potomac Decoy Collectors Association held its annual end of the year holiday party. During the celebration, I had the honor of presenting the 2010 Ralph Campbell Memorial Award for Goodwill and Ambassadorship in the Decoy Collecting Community. This is a very special and fitting tribute named for one of our most beloved founding members. Ralph's wife, Barbara, was in attendance and joined me as I presented the plaque to Ray Whetzel.

We received nominations from members literally across the country, which was wonderful, and I want to thank everyone who took the time to submit a nomination. Please know that once someone is nominated, they are nominated in perpetuity and will continue to be considered for the award in subsequent years.

I want to thank Tom East for chairing the awards committee, which included Chris Worch, Larry Myers, Jim Trimble and me. This group had the daunting task of sorting through a number of very compelling nominations, nearly all of which were deserving of this unique honor. When all was said and done, however, the committee came to a swift and unanimous decision.

Many years ago, when our club was first taking off and adding new members very quickly, I can distinctly remember who our 50th member was. It was Ray. In the years since, as I came to know Ray better, I came to respect him not just for his artistic talent – but for his warmth, his great sense of humor, his generous spirit, and for being such a wonderful role model. Above all, Ray is in every sense of the word, a gentleman.

Ray has won countless awards in dozens of competitions over more than four decades. But I think the ultimate sign of respect that an artist can achieve is when other artists recognize his great talent. We all know the work of the legendary Art LaMay – and many of our members even have LaMay's pictures hanging on our walls. But not everyone knows that hanging on LaMay's walls is a Ray Whetzel original.

Ray has inspired, encouraged and mentored not one but two generations of carvers. In fact, two of our members who are world class, world champion carvers in their own right, Mark Finisecy and Bruce Eppard, have benefitted immensely from their friendship and association with Ray. And for those who fear that decoy making is a dying art, thanks in part to Ray's mentorship, it is alive and well in the newest generation of carvers, evidenced by young champions Spencer and Clay Tinkham, both Ray's protégés.

When you look at the criteria that the awards committee put together – active and longstanding member of the decoy collecting and carving community; service to clubs and museums; shares freely of his knowledge; adheres to the spirit and principles of our code of ethics; contributes to learning and scholarship; recruits and mentors new

carvers and collectors; and embodies Ralph's spirit of friendship and humility – Ray checks every box.

As we gathered to celebrate the end of another great year of collecting and club fellowship, I felt that Ralph was there with us. Through the award that we bestow in his name, his spirit and memory will live on.

Ray, you truly deserve this award. Members, please join me in congratulating Ray!

Merry Christmas and a very Happy 2011 to all!

Chad Tragakis