

PDCA Announces Winner of 2011 Ralph Campbell Award

Dear Members,

This week, the Potomac Decoy Collectors Association held its annual end of the year holiday party. During the celebration, I had the honor of presenting the 2011 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 our founding president Tom East.

Once again, we received nominations from PDCA 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.

As we all know, the reason we have a PDCA, and the reason we've had nearly 15 years of fun and fellowship, is because back in 1997, Tom had the idea that collectors like him, like all of us, would enjoy getting together to talk about and celebrate decoys.

He served as our club's first president, for more than 12 years, and helped establish so many wonderful and important things that continue to be highlights for our club today. Tom presided over the first grants our club was able to make to decoy museums and related institutions; he worked with John Pluge and other members to organize our decoy brand identification effort, which resulted in a book that continues to be an invaluable reference guide for collectors around the country; and when I suggested that our club establish a code of ethics for our collecting community, Tom was the first in line to support the effort.

He has encouraged – and continues to encourage – many new and beginning collectors, helping them get started, steering them in the right direction, and recruiting them to join PDCA. On more than one occasion, Tom has given away one of his own decoys to help get a new collector started. He readily offers his opinion and advice to collectors when asked, and always treats everyone with the same respect – whether they have been collecting for 40 years or just a few days.

Tom has written and contributed numerous pieces to *Hunting & Fishing Collectibles Magazine* and he often writes and submits articles for the PDCA's *Potomac Flyer*. And in addition to the pieces he has personally authored, Tom has helped make some valuable connections between scholars, collectors, authors and content experts, which have helped produce a number of excellent articles in various publications.

Let me turn for a moment to Jim Trimble and Ray Whetzel – two wonderful gentlemen whom I personally consider to be both friends and role models. They truly embody the spirit of the Ralph Campbell Award and are such worthy recipients of the honor that bears his name.

As special as this honor was for Jim and for Ray, I think it may be even more so for Tom. They say that the best part of collecting decoys is that we make so many good friends in the process. As many of you know, Tom and Ralph were incredibly close friends for many years, and it was decoys that brought them together in the first place. They shared so many experiences, as hunters, as fishermen, as collectors, and at social events.

I want to close by sharing an excerpt that was contained in one of the nominations for Tom that the Awards Committee received:

Tom and Ralph were “buddies” in every sense of the word. Having known both men well, one of the reasons for their friendship was that they shared so many of the same traits. Ralph was, and Tom is, a great story teller (we can only assume they were all true). But the traits they share are also the traits that have made both successful in business and in life – warmth, honesty, fairness, good humor and humility.

I couldn't have said it any better than that.

I want to thank the members of the awards committee, which this year included Chris Worch, Larry Myers, Jim Trimble, Ray Whetzel and myself. 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 unanimous decision.

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

Tom, thank you for all that you've done for decoy collecting and especially for the PDCA. You truly deserve this award. Members, please join me in congratulating Tom!

Merry Christmas and a very Happy 2012 to all!

Chad Tragakis