

Geoff Vine-Goldeneye Decoy Pair

Stop me if you've heard this one; a Cheesehead from Wisconsin who's a Jersey guy wannabe starts carving Delaware River decoys up there in the frozen tundra and one year he decides to take some of his decoys and fly to the Garden State to compete at the Tuckerton Decoy Festival, and the dude ends up winning a bunch of ribbons for his birds! Wasn't that the storyline for National Velvet? No? I guess that one was about a little girl and the Kentucky Derby, but here's the deal: the story about the Cheesehead is

true, his name is Geoff Vine.

We wrote about Geoff back in FFTB #10 so if the name sounds familiar you could have heard it here. Geoff's one of those guys who just gets the beauty of the classic New Jersey decoys of the past and he has the good sense to realize that just because he lives 823 miles away is no excuse why he can't do a perfectly good job of carving them. Geoff is one of the very few people that I've ever known to come away absolutely rapturous after meeting and having his picture taken with



George Strunk. Yeah, the kid has a Jersey thing going and it's bad!

The good news is that Geoff Vine a very good carver who is learning by looking at the styles and techniques of the very best. Here in the 21st century when carvers e-mail me examples of what they're describing as we talk long distance on our cell phone for pennies a minute, there's really no reason why someone outside a given geography can't effectively compete with the best as long as they have talent, and Geoff does. What's most interesting to me is the amount of personal effort he puts into studying the best carvers he can get to meet and then using their advice to improve his own technique. Best of all, what comes out of his workshop manages to stand up very well in its class without looking like its just a copy of someone else's style.

Last year Geoff did pretty well at Tuckerton winning blue ribbons for his Green Wing Teal Hen as well as for his Bluebill Hen. This year he kicked things up a notch by winning Best of Show in the Delaware River class for his the Goldeneyes shown here and 2nd Best of Show for his Bufflehead Hen. Most gratifying of all according to Geoff was that he ribboned with every decoy he brought to the show, winning fifteen ribbons for the seven decoys that he managed to tote all the way from Wisconsin. Anyone who's ever been to New Jersey knows that we don't exactly welcome strangers with open arms, unless we're trying to figure out if they're packing heat, so kudos to Geoff.

"The high point of the trip to Tuckerton for me was getting to meet and buy decoys from guys like Clarence Fenimore, Jamie Hand, and George Strunk," Geoff noted. "I'd never met Matt Geiss in person so that was a thrill too." As you might have guessed, Geoff is planning his next trip to Tuckerton with all of the intent and precision of a second Normandy invasion. If you're interested in a classic Delaware River style decoy that's used to the cold give Geoff a call at (608)-850-3554 or e-mail him at geoff@gvinedecoys.com Either way you'll get to know someone fairly new to carving who has all the enthusiasm of someone making his fortune off of our hobby. Who knows, maybe someday he will! □