

# THE WILDFOWLER

MARCH 2021

A PUBLICATION OF THE ATLANTIC WILDFOWL HERITAGE MUSEUM AND THE BACK BAY WILDFOWL GUILD

## *Back Bay Wildfowl Guild Memories* *Archeology Dig*

On February 1, 2021, in the face of below freezing temperatures and single digit windchill, Allison M. Conner, began her quest for artifacts left on the deWitt Cottage property by previous occupants. Allison is an investigator, an examiner of history and archaeologist for James River Institute for Archaeology, Inc. (JRIA). JRIA was hired by the City of Virginia Beach historic planner Mark Reed, in response to our application for a permit to build and reconstruct a gazebo that was part of the dewitt property in 1920. Because the DeWitt cottage rests on historic property, care must be taken to preserve and protect any artifacts that may exist on the property.



So JRIA was sent to search the property and ensure that our construction project would not destroy any historic artifacts.

lady. Allison's work did recover some culturally significant artifacts.

The Principal Investigator for the project was JRIA Senior Researcher Matthew R. Laird, Ph.D., RPA. The archaeological fieldwork was conducted by Project Archaeologist Allison M. Conner, M.A., RPA. Dr. Laird conducted the documentary research for the project and authored the final report with contributions from Ms. Conner. The artifacts recovered in the course of testing were processed by Barry Phelps, cataloged by Sherrie Beaver, and photographed by Meghan West.



Allison worked the better part of two weeks digging 17 Shovel Test Holes (each 30 inches wide and 3.5 ft deep), by hand, with a shovel and then she dug three additional test holes that measured 30 inches by 30 inches and three and a half to four feet deep. She was very methodical and thorough. She was quite the tenacious young



JRIA was established by Nicholas M. (Nick) Lucchetti, M.A. in 1986. Dr. Laird worked with him as Principal Investigator in the '90s, and has been a partner since 2002. They are a small (12 employees) cultural resource management firm based in Williamsburg, VA. They do archaeological and historic research projects for a wide variety of clients, including government agencies, municipalities (like Virginia Beach), architectural and engineering firms, developers, preservation organizations, and private landowners. They focus primarily on Virginia, but have also worked in Maryland, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

If you would like some more information about this archeological dig, below is a link to the Draft Report:

[JRIA deWitt Cottage report \(draft 2-17-21\).pdf](#)



Hity deWitt on the beach in front of the deWitt Cottage, ca. 1915

This deWitt family photograph, with the house in the background, shows a wooden gazebo and a set of stairs leading down to the beach from the original wooden boardwalk. Katrine deWitt recalled that the family ate “many a meal outside in a summer house on stilts,” while the barefoot children got splinters from the wooden boardwalk (Barrow 198?: 7). It is unlikely that this gazebo structure outlived the wooden boardwalk, which was replaced by the concrete seawall and boardwalk in 1927.





### *Upcoming Guild Events:*

03/01, 08, 15, 22, 29, 2021: de Witt Garden Club

10:00 am, at the museum

Meets every Monday

Bring your work gloves and tools

03/16/2021: Board Meeting

7:00 pm Virtual

04/05, 12, 19, 26, 2021: de Witt Garden Club

10:00 am, at the museum

Meets every Monday

Bring your work gloves and tools

04/20/2021: Board Meeting

7:00 pm Virtual



**Be Safe Remember to  
Wear your Masks!**



### **FROM THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR**

We were hopeful back in November and December that we were going to be able to have a Dine Out for deWitt program this year. But, now with the limited supply of vaccine and the slow rollout, it does not appear that indoor dining is going to be an option for us prior to May. So, we are going to cancel our Spring Celebration at the Lucky Oyster. Hopefully we can get in a couple of dine outs as restrictions for the coronavirus are lifted.

If you read the main article in our newsletter you are aware that we are going to be constructing an outdoor gazebo on the deWitt cottage grounds. It is a historically significant structure in that the deWitt family had a similar structure on the property during the 1920s. On February 24th we were granted a letter of appropriateness from the Virginia Beach Historic Review Board allowing us to proceed in obtaining our building permit. We are now in the process of securing bids to allow us to begin construction of the gazebo. We are hopeful that we will be able to break ground on this structure soon.

Now that there is a significant retreat in the number of Coronavirus cases in our state and our city The Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum will reopen on Thursday April 1, 2021. The Spring operating hours will be Wednesday through Sunday 10 AM to 5:00 PM. On Memorial Day the museum will begin being open seven days a week 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM until Labor Day.





# DECOYS WANTED

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## COLLECTOR'S SHELF

### Delon Lee Dudley 1860-1942

Lee Dudley was one of twins (Lee & Leonard). The twins grew up on The West Farm on Morse Point in Knotts Island, NC. Sadly, Lee was never close to his twin brother Leonard.

Lee was small in stature, but very wiry and strong. Lee's occupations consisted of a little farming, market hunting and trapping. But his full time job was carving decoys. This is the reason Lee is the most famous North Carolina and Back Bay decoy carver.

The Dudley name is synonymous with quality due to the exquisite style and form of his decoys. Some duck hunters regarded the Dudley decoys as being too small and structurally flawed because their small physical size did not show up in the open waters and the necks of the decoys were prone to breakage. Yet Lee furnished more decoys to the local hunting club and guides than any other carver.



I believe that Lee Dudley was a true artist and that he expressed his talent through his carvings. He honed his carving skills through his experience of making decoys all year round unlike many decoy carvers back in the day who only made decoys prior to hunting season. Many carvers did not have the time to add the details such as bill carving and tail carving and raised neck shelves to their decoys.


Lee provided decoys to many hunting clubs including the Dudley Island, Pocahontas, Pellitory Gunning, Corey, Back Bay Gunning and North End Clubs.

I am a private, local collector of the Dudley decoys. I have been collecting for over forty years and I am a supporter of The Atlantic Heritage Wildfowl Museum.


I am offering to pay \$5,000. Up to \$50,000. For any good, original condition Dudley decoy.

Please contact Mark Cromwell 757-509-2525 or 757-721-2746. Thank you



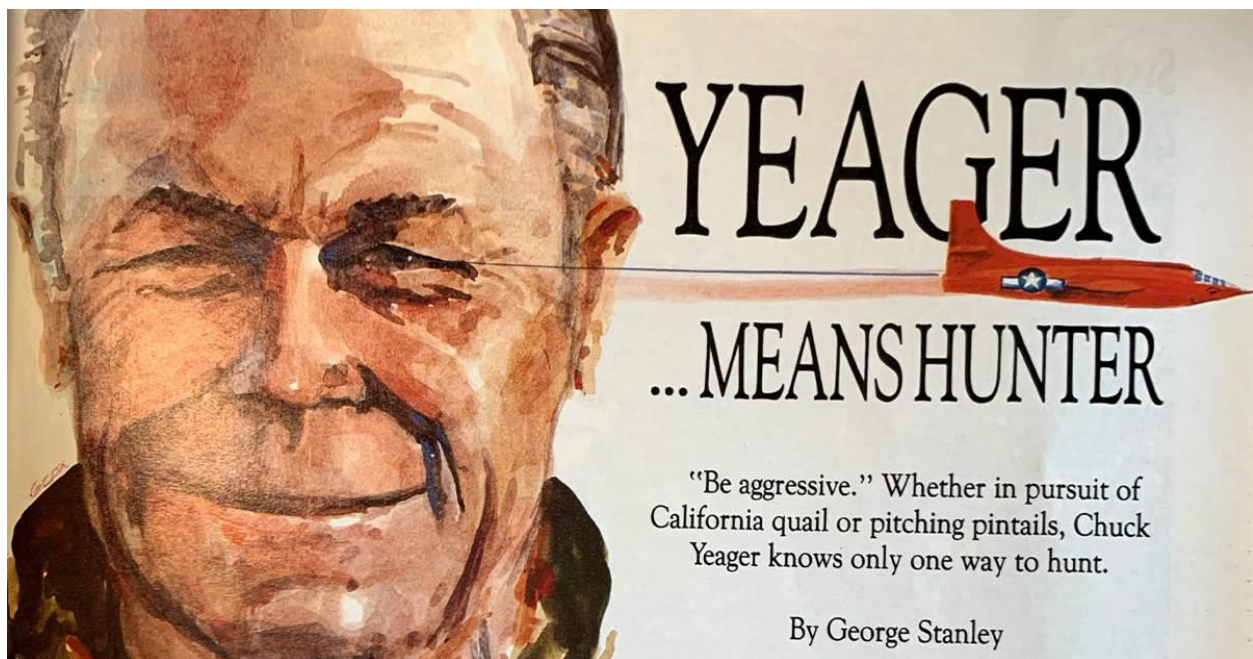


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## In Honor of General Chuck Yeager

**Lifelong hunter, outdoorsman, test pilot, war hero**  
(February 13, 1923 to December 7, 2020)



*This story about Chuck Yeager the conservationist was originally published in Ducks Unlimited magazine in 1987 as part of a special issue commemorating the organization's 50th anniversary.*

On the small side of average in physical stature, Yeager's status among men is intimidating. Many have compared his charisma with that of John Wayne, but Yeager fired bullets where Wayne shot blanks. Still a teenager in World War II, Yeager shot down five German planes on a single mission, four on another. Shot down himself over Nazi-occupied France, he made his way toward neutral Spain with aid from the French





underground, then ended up carrying a badly wounded American navigator over the Pyrenees Mountains to safety. Once back in England, Yeager protested a mandatory return stateside so vehemently that his request to go back to battle was personally heard and approved by Supreme Allied Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower. Later in 1944, Yeager attacked and destroyed a newly developed German jet fighter that could fly much faster than his propeller-driven P-51 Mustang. He still feels today that "a superior pilot will beat superior technology." But match a pilot of Yeager's skill with top-flight technology and you've set the state for some legendary stuff.

Yeager's name became legend among pilots on October 14, 1947. Shortly after eight that morning, he coolly pushed the X-1 rocket plane past Mach 1, the speed of sound, vanquishing a "barrier" that many pilots and engineers thought would obliterate any flyer who ventured too near. A hunter since childhood, Yeager figured that if natural forces allowed a bullet to travel faster than sound, they would allow a bullet-shaped airplane to do it as well. Once Yeager brushed aside the sound barrier, manned space travel became a possibility rather than a dream.

Yeager remained the world's fastest human for most of the next decade, competing with other top research test pilots to set higher and higher speed records. Upon raising the record to Mach 2.4 in 1953, in a flight that nearly killed him, Yeager was described by Newsweek as "the man of the supersonic age. He is today's pioneer and tomorrow's legend." For the most part, however, the legend of Chuck Yeager stayed confined within the fighter pilot fraternity until Tom Wolfe's 1979 bestseller, *The Right Stuff*. Though Yeager's story was told in one chapter, his presence dominated the book. He was, as Wolfe described, the top of the pyramid, the pilot other fighter jocks strove to emulate—"the most righteous of all the possessors of the right stuff." In the movie version of Wolfe's book, Sam Shepard portrayed Yeager. Barbara Hershey played his wife, Glennis. The movie paved the way for a 1985 autobiography that became a number-one bestseller. A film based on Yeager is in the works. Even so, when Chuck crams into the cab of an old pickup with you and another 200-plus pounder, you realize that he's not likely to be featured soon on "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous." In fact, as you head to a get-together with the owners of the Red Ranch Duck Club where you'll hunt in the morning, Yeager talks as if he's still sweating to support a wife and four kids on lieutenant's wages.



"I religiously change my oil every 3,000 miles. Oil's cheap," he says, in an accent as thick as the woods outside Hamlin, West Virginia—the remote Appalachian mining town where he grew up the son of a gas driller. He talks as if there were no books or movies about his life, no television commercials, no speaking engagements at \$20,000 a pop; as if he hadn't made it all the way to general, from private, in his 35-year Air Force career. The changes, it appears, haven't changed him.

You pull up to the house trailer that serves as Bob Petersen's hunting headquarters. Yeager hops out, introduces himself to Petersen, then grabs a handle on a crateload of Dungeness crabs and helps carry it inside. The trailer is full of duck hunters with their wives and adult children. Chuck shakes hands, smiles at cameras, and tells jokes. He finds it highly amusing when Herb Jensen, who flew bombers over Germany in World War II, tosses a crab shell towards a trash bag and lands it short—smack in a dish of seafood sauce. "No wonder you guys were dropping bombs on friendlies over there," Yeager says. He calls everyone by their first names and expects



them to do the same. He's quite good at remembering names of persons he's just met. "Only common ones," he'll say later. "I can pick up the common ones. If it's an uncommon name, I won't even try. I have a limited mental capacity and I've gotten to the point where if it's not something that affects my longevity, I don't much give a damn." Moderation in drinking and a good night's rest, he's decided, are longevity enhancing. Two beers and 10 p.m. are enough. Back at the motel, you say goodnight and head to your rooms. "I'll be out here at 5:15," Yeager says. "Standing at attention."

The plates on Yeager's Chevy Blazer read "Bell X-1." An open pack of chewing gum lies by the stick—Beemans, the same brand he ritually borrowed from flight engineer Jack Ridley in the movie *"The Right Stuff."* "They still make it in Canada," Chuck says, offering a stick. Out at the marshes, in the dark of predawn, you split up in teams, then head for the blinds. Yeager wades toward a pit with Jensen, a Sacramento attorney. "How do you tell a lawyer from a rattlesnake?" Chuck asks. "How?" Jensen grumbles. "Lay them end-to-end on a highway. When you come back, the rattlesnake will have skid marks in front of it."

Despite the low clouds and haze, it's light enough at legal time for Jensen and Yeager to begin filling their limits. Yeager's eyesight is still 20/10, same as in the mid-forties, when he could spot German war planes at distances of 50 miles and more. He has no problem sighting in the ducks but appreciates help in identifying them on the wing. "I've always been more of a quail hunter than a duck hunter," he says. Flocks of pintails skim through the sky with the grace of rowing crews gliding across calm waters. Now and again, in the distance, a large flock funnels slowly down to a rice field like a swarm of honeybees returning to a hive. But it is mostly small clusters of mallards and wigeon that answer Jensen's call and circle within range.

Yeager hasn't fired his Model 12 in 30 years, since he gave it to his oldest son, Donald. He borrowed back the weathered Winchester specifically for this duck hunting trip after he and his son successfully bagged elk with muzzleloaders near Donald's Colorado home.

Chasing fast-flying valley quail has kept Chuck's bird's eye sharp. He and Jensen waste just three shells between them in collecting two five-duck limits before 9 a.m. "In the military, we were never really privileged to the luxury that sportsmen have," Chuck says after a plucking party outside the club trailer. "You'd just grab a gun and walk up the side of a mountain. That was hunting." Over the years, Yeager has managed to hunt and fish on many mountains: from the Appalachians of his boyhood to the German Alps to the California Sierras to the Himalayas of Pakistan to the Alaskan Rockies. Yet he has never before hunted ducks in the foggy bottomlands of California's Central Valley—waterfowl mecca of the Pacific Flyway—though he lives only 40 minutes' drive up the road. Most of the valley's prime waterfowling areas are leased or owned by private clubs. "Basically, I hunt on public lands," Chuck says. "Hell, it's good hunting. But the reason I'm successful is I work damn hard at it. I don't hunt along the roads; I go up the side of the mountain—that's where the game is." Chuck gets together with family and friends in several states every year to pursue elk, deer, turkey, geese and quail. He still backpacks into the High Sierras after golden trout each summer, hiking an average of 13 to 15 miles per day.

But he says his richest outdoor experiences came during the mid-fifties, while serving as a squadron commander in West Germany. "The best hunting in the world, by far, is in Germany," he says. "They've been hunting there for 2,000 years and their hunting is as good now as it ever was." Tremendously impressed by the German system of game management, Yeager immersed himself in "beautiful hunting traditions that have been passed down over hundreds over years." In time, he became one of few foreigners allowed to lead a German driven shoot as a "Jägermeister." "In its original spelling, Yeager is spelled Jäger, and means hunter," Chuck says. "The Jägers have great respect for their animals."

**To be continued:**



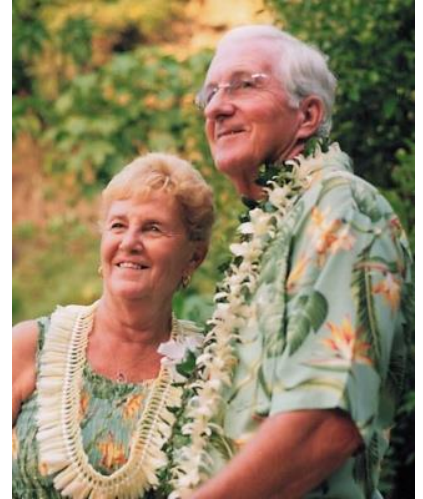
## Rita Jean Brandtner

Rita J. Brandtner passed away on Saturday, February 6, 2021 at the age of 80. Born March 23, 1940 to the late Frank and Mary Thomas in Lincoln Park, Michigan. Rita was the beloved wife of Allan (Al) Brandtner, Sr. They enjoyed over 63 years of marriage and were blessed to have an everlasting love.

In addition to her loving husband, Rita is survived by her children Allan (Al B) Brandtner Jr. (Jude Rodriguez), Dolores Nickerson (Bob Nickerson); daughter-in-law, Meg Brandtner; granddaughters, Madison Mau (Nathan Mau), Alexis Rakestraw (Clay Rakestraw); nephew, Frank Thomas (Rhonda Thomas) and many extended family members and friends.

Rita is predeceased by her son, Brian Brandtner; her brother, Frank Thomas & sister-in-law, Dianne Thomas; and sister in law, Linda Wegkamp.

Rita was a proud Navy wife, where Al & Rita enjoyed raising their 3 children in various duty stations in California, Japan, Illinois, Hawaii, Rhode Island and Virginia, where they decided they would be their place of retirement. Their favorite was Hawaii, where they enjoyed numerous vacations over the years as a couple or with family and friends. To celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary, Al and Rita renewed their vows on their favorite island, Kauai, at the Fern Grotto, surrounded by their children, loved ones and their beautiful granddaughters.



As her children grew up, Rita started a successful career at Sears, starting in the catalog department and eventually retiring as a manager of the hardware department. After retiring from Sears, she pursued her passion for travel by becoming a travel agent for CI Travel. Rita and Al were able to enjoy many travel adventures over the years.

Rita was a proud “Nana” to her granddaughters, and was overjoyed when each of them came into her life. Much like her own mother, Christmas was her favorite time of the year, where she enjoyed spoiling her husband, children, and grandchildren, no matter the age. Meanwhile, Al enjoyed spoiling Rita with jewelry during any holiday or special occasion.



All who knew and loved her will dearly miss Rita.

Al and Rita have been members of the Back Bay Wildfowl Guild for more than 30 years.

Pictured to the left Jamie Champe sharing a war story with Al and Rita at our 2016 Fall Barbeque.







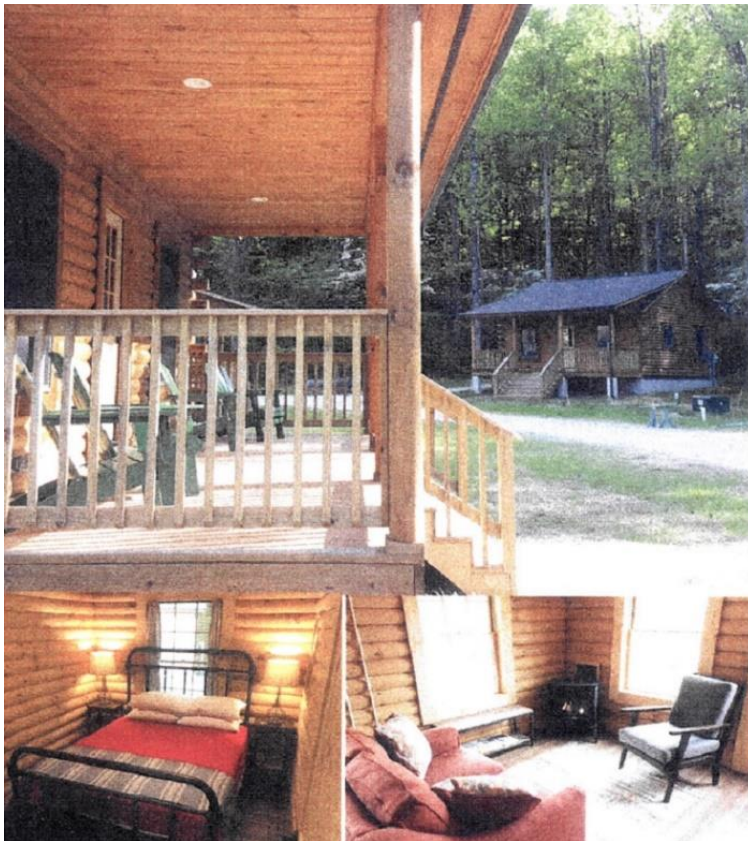
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## BACK BAY WILDFOWL GUILD

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Jeff Tinkham      Phil Davenport  
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### MUSEUM CARVERS

Monday      Elaine Polizos  
Tuesday:      Open  
Wednesday:      Roy Carlson & Ed Morrison  
Thursday:      Open  
"The Boathouse Boys" Carving Club:      Al, Jamie, John, Pete  
Friday:      Susan Moritz  
Saturday:      Open  
Sunday:      Open

**Carvers are not demonstrating due to Covid-19**

## MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS

Tuesday:      OPEN  
Wednesday:      OPEN  
Thursday:      OPEN  
Friday:      OPEN  
Saturday:      OPEN  
Sunday:      OPEN

Museum Grounds: Jacky & Tom Richards, Martha Davenport

### MUSEUM STAFF

Lynn Hightower, Director      Joe Leo, Operations Mgr.

### MUSEUM CONTACT INFORMATION

ATLANTIC WILDFOWL HERITAGE MUSEUM  
1113 Atlantic Avenue  
Virginia Beach, VA 23451

Telephone: 757.437.8432  
Facsimile: 757.437.9055  
Website: [www.awhm.org](http://www.awhm.org)  
Email: [director@atwildfowl.org](mailto:director@atwildfowl.org)

*Please understand that we depend on every dollar to operate the museum. If you have not yet paid your 2021 dues, please give serious consideration to sending them into the museum right away. Beginning January 1, 2021, Membership cards will have an expiration date. Each member will receive an invoice from the museum director requesting payment of their annual dues after the expiration date. Memberships run for 12 consecutive months from the date annual dues are paid.*

## 2021 DUES

\$35/YR INDIVIDUAL  
\$100/YR BRONZE  
\$500/YR GOLD

\$50/FAMILY  
\$200/YR SILVER  
\$1,000/YR PRESIDENTS CIRCLE



## BACK BAY WILDFOWL GUILD 2021 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

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TELEPHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_ [CELL] \_\_\_\_\_

*January 1, 2021 kicked off our Annual Membership Campaign. Each member is encouraged to find one new member to join the Back Bay Wildfowl Guild. Our very existence depends on growing the membership of the Guild. Please encourage everyone you know to become a member!*

***Please pass this newsletter on to any potential new member!***

