



New York Outdoors

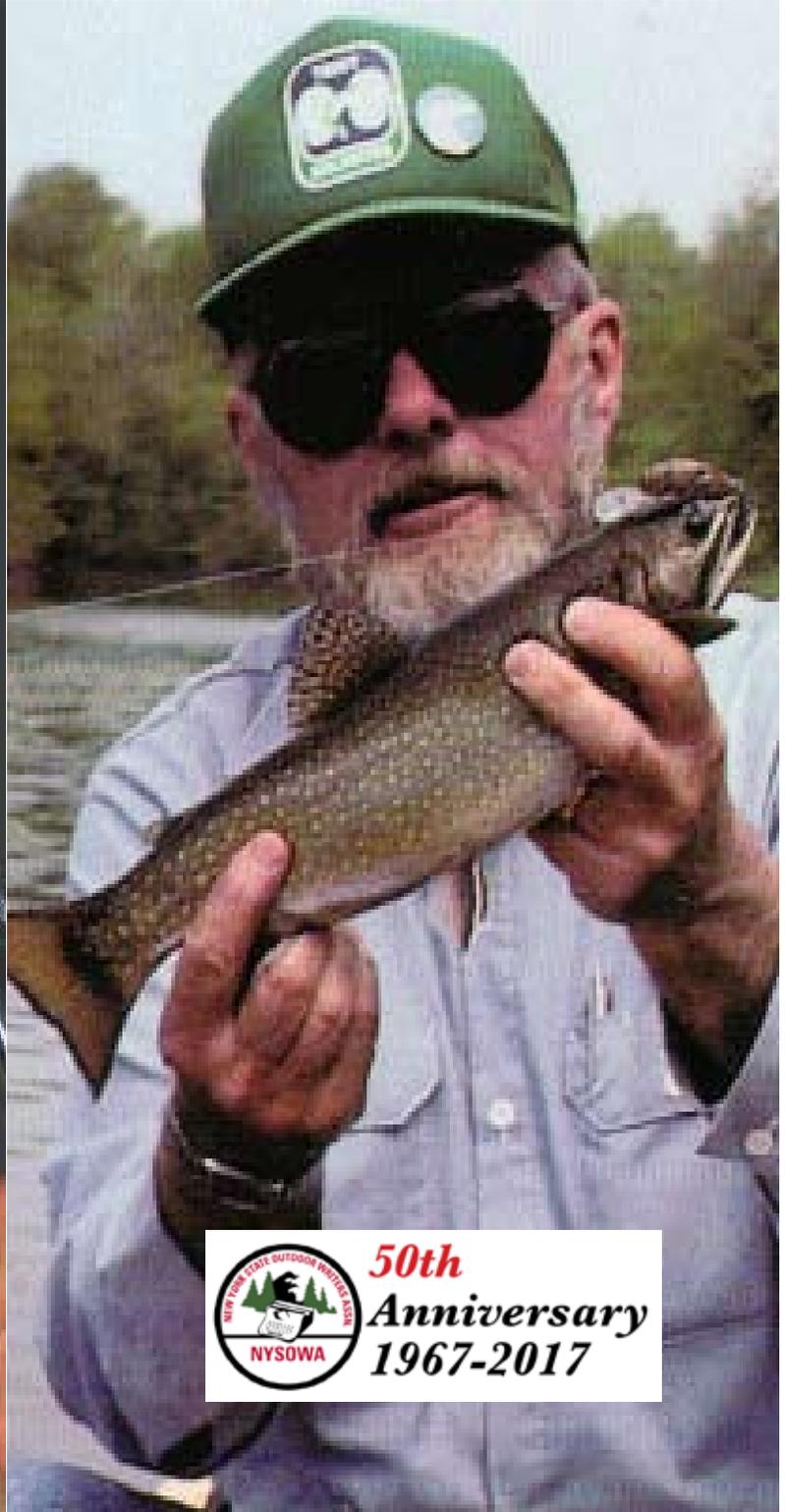


www.nysowa.org

New York State Outdoor Writers Association

2017 Special Edition

**Two NYSOWA Pioneers:
Bill Hiltz, Sr., (left) and
M. Paul Keesler**



**50th
Anniversary
1967-2017**

NYSOWA ... A Wonderful Journey

By Bill Hilts Sr.

NYSOWA was formed by two guys who loved the outdoors with a passion and truly enjoyed telling the story about that love with the printed and spoken word to all who would read, watch or listen. This all started in the early 1960's but it wasn't until about 1966 when those two guys got together and decided to form the New York State Outdoor Writers Association. I'm sure glad we did!

Hans Paller worked for the State Health Department in the North Country, out of Massena, NY and I worked for the New York Power Authority in Niagara Falls, NY.

We both were members of the Outdoor Writers Association of America, but did not know each other. Actually we were both working at about the same time on contacting New York State OWAA members to see if there was any interest.

Someone contacted me and told me what Hans was doing so I contacted him. We chatted on the phone about an hour and we developed a plan. Remember, this was before computers and the internet. Everything had to be done by phone or mail.

I was an administrator at the Power Authority at the time and the NYPA Vice President of Community Relations John Lenney was a good friend so I contacted him. I told John what we were trying to do, so he gave us the green light. NYPA picked up all the mailing and printing costs to get us going. That really helped and then the ball started to roll.

Hans held a couple of gatherings in New York City, which I did not attend. The meeting in Oriskany was a good one. We had several gatherings following that session and I remember one that Hans and I were the only two people there. Then things got a little better and people started showing up. But, it wasn't until Joe DeFalco's conference at the Paramount in Parksville (Catskills) that we really had a great conference which I believe made NYSOWA. Joe was vice president at the time and he arranged for most everything to be sponsored which resulted in a well attended, fun-filled conference.

From that point on, members were standing in line to sponsor conferences in their part of the state. Take a look at the history of our conferences in our directory and every part of New York State has been covered, from Long Island to Niagara and from Chautauqua to Lake Placid. And we have all learned from those fun-filled, information-packed sessions.

Finally, I must give my very good friend John Lenney a lusty tip of the sportsman's cap for the fine support that he and NYPA has given our organization over the years. They initiated our Duck Decoy trophy idea for the Excellence in Craft Program. Then there was the truly fine conference they sponsored at Stamford in 1982. That too was a great one!

We can be proud of NYSOWA. It is a fine organization with a long line of fine leaders who stepped up and took over the helm and kept us on an even keel. I am proud to be a Founding Member of NYSOWA and equally proud to be a Life Member of such a fine group of accomplished journalists. Keep up the truly great work.



President's Report

By Mike Joyner

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO US

Welcome fellow members to what now appears to be our summer weather. It hasn't been the coldest spring or coolest summer that I can recall but it impresses me as having a lot more rain than we normally have. With my obsession with wild turkeys, the concern over brooding success is certain an open question. Wet weather can have a detrimental impact on spring broods, cold wet weather has a catastrophic impact. Casual observations, anecdotal opinions have been mixed from glimpses of poults nearly the size of chickens, six to ten at a time with their momma hen to seeing similar numbers but a third of the size. An educated guess would be a second or third nesting attempt. The good news is that broods are spotted around the state with some frequency.

From the same perspective of Cortland County's seven valleys we are seeing decent numbers of deer, with fawns in tow. A nice surprise this year is the return of cottontail rabbits seen regularly. Ruffed grouse are still not seen as often as I might like. It has been a number of years to see the upward spiraling of rising woodcock in the late evenings on our place during fall migration.

My neighbors this past winter and winters far back as I have lived here are diligent in their pursuit of Wiley E. Coyote and extended family. It is a lengthy season from post muzzleloader season to late March. It closes out shortly before giving fisherman their due with the opening day of trout season. Some argue that the season might better serve us by forgoing the current regulations in favor of a 365/24/7 format. Frankly that would leave me exhausted in short order.

It is a surprise despite all the efforts, the year after year success of their small army that you would ever hear the barks and howls of adult yote's or the yips of the pups in the later days of spring and early summer. The coyote numbers here locally are kept in check.

There are common complaints amongst hunters and landowners in my area about the impact of Fishers accompanied by deercam photos to substantiate their presence. We observe an adolescent pair of Fishers on our property, but not that often. With fox, raccoons, bald eagles, hawks and falcons patrolling our hillsides, it is a complex question to answer as to which predatory species or combination thereof is significantly impacting small game populations in particular.

My thoughts shift to loss of habitat, change of land use that qualifies as a major factor, major concern. The presence of small game (or not) or their returning in numbers might be viewed as a barometer in the highly scientific discussions conducted at the local diner or tail gate lean-to's found wherever two back county roads meet.

50 Years of excellence

In honor of our 50th anniversary celebration our conference committee has put forth a sincere request for all of us

to share what this milestone means to us, our impressions of our experiences as a NYSOWA member or sponsor member. We encourage each of you to comment in your writings where most appropriate.

I became a member during the writing of my first book in 2005 at the recommendation of J. Michael Kelly whom I hold in high regard. In exploring what NYSOWA means to me personally, what has me so fond of our group, coveting my time as a member could be easily attributed at first glance to the great times to be had at our spring and fall safaris. Upon closer examination it is the time spent with quality people that I am most drawn to. From the board of directors and committee members I interact with on a frequent basis, to each of the members and sponsors I have had the privilege to meet and on occasion spend time with, it is an improved quality of life experience. Surrounding one's self with smarter, more creative folks is a path to higher learning that I have found. The endearing qualities to craft grand stories of our times in the Empire State's vast forests and mountains, world class fisheries, our love of the outdoors are a common bond that we all share. We do well around campfires and hunting camps. It is my honor and to my greater benefit to associate with such creative professionals that I share so much in common, that exemplify the guiding principles put forth so many years ago by the founders of our great organization.

I am happy to report that great efforts are being applied and excellent progress is being made in the planning and organizing of day trips and events for our 50th anniversary celebration held in Lake George this October. Schedules and event details are included in this newsletter. There are plenty of activities and scenic outings planned that I will save for Dan Ladd and the conference committee to roll out. Truly they deserve the credit for bringing it all together.

I am pleased to announce that Nationally Renowned Outdoor Author, Writer, TV Show Host Jim Zumbo has graciously agreed to travel from afar and join us as our featured speaker at our awards dinner. We hope that you may share your experiences, remembrances of grand times during the span of 50 years, and to honor those members that have passed. We invite all of you to join us for a great weekend to commemorate 50 years of outdoor writing and photography excellence.



VP Northern Region

by Dan Ladd

IT ALL STARTED IN PLATTSBURGH

For this, our 50th Anniversary, of which I am honored to co-chair this very special fall conference with Ed Noonan, all NYSOWA members are encouraged to reflect on their time with the organization. There will be ample opportunities for this throughout the conference in Warren County in October, but we who contribute to the quarterly newsletter are also offering a few anecdotes.

One of my fondest memories was my very first NYSOWA event, which was the 2006 Fall Conference held in Plattsburgh, my college alma-mater. I had joined NYSOWA a year earlier at the encouragement of Ed and found out a few days before the conference that he was not attending. I asked Ed what he had gotten me into, but he encouraged me to go to the conference and that I'd be fine.

I showed up on Friday night and after a brief trip down college memory lane, made my way to the American Legion hall where that night's dinner was being held. There, in the parking lot, I spotted Melody and Frank Tenny who were looking at me awful funny as I followed them into the facility. Melody turned around and asked me if I was there for the outdoor writers. When I told her that I was, she replied, "It's a great group of people."

I soon found out how right she was.

Two guys in particular made me feel welcome that night: Leo Maloney and Bob McNitt. I recognized both of their names from the long-gone *New York Sportsman* magazine. Then I spotted Will Elliott, who I knew as a regular columnist with *New York Outdoor News*, a brand new publication at the time coincidentally edited by Steve Piatt, who along with his wife Paula, were chairing the Plattsburgh conference.

The next morning I met Steve and Larry Becker quite early for a fall turkey hunt. Larry was the current president of the state chapter of the NWTF and I had more fun being around Larry and Steve than trying to find turkeys. What I remember most about that morning was carpooling back to Plattsburgh in a car full of characters, including Bill Hollister, who held court all the way back with story after story.

Bill's voice rang quite familiar with me that morning and it would take me a few years to realize why. I was about 15 when I attended a turkey hunting seminar Bill had given in Glens Falls. Once I put two-and-two together, it all made sense and I have always been proud to have made the acquaintance of Bill.

From there, the good times for me with NYSOWA just continued to roll. My first Safari was in 2007 in Canton where I killed my first spring turkey and caught walleye on the St. Lawrence River with

Mike Kelly and Rod Cochran out of Mike Seymour's boat. I remember playing

guitar on the porch at Basswood Lodge and sitting up there late one night with Leo, drinking wine and telling ghost stories. Since that Safari, I've fallen in love with the Thousand Islands region and return there with my wife, Adrienne on occasion.

The memories continue to pile up. Like getting caught in a thunderstorm with Ed at the 2010 Safari in Clayton, and bagging another spring turkey on Grindstone Island, also in Clayton in 2015. Bill Hollister and I hunted deer out near Niagara Falls in 2012 when I spotted and photographed a piebald buck. And the trophy walleye I pulled out of Lake Erie at the Chautauqua conference last fall is hard to beat. Then, there's that rafting trip a bunch of us took at Letchworth State Park in 2011.

I'm proud to have been able to showcase my own region to fellow NYSOWA members. Fulton County is a stone's throw for me and we've had two memorable Safaris at Pecks Lake and an all-out conference in Fulton County. In Washington County, where I live, I'm sure Bill Hiltz Jr. won't let me forget the day at the 2013 Safari when I left him stranded on Lake Lauderdale with a dead trolling motor battery. Leo and I were on our way back from turkey hunting when I spotted Bill and Sandy and thought it would make for a nice photo. Little did we know why Billy was so enthusiastically waving at us.

Along with the good times and the friendships has come some very professional relationships. Being an outdoor writer is something I truly enjoy and I always tell people what a great part-time job I have. I've been lucky to have a solid hometown writing gig at *The Chronicle* in Glens Falls, but I've also been very fortunate to have other opportunities come my way through my association with NYSOWA.

And so it is that we shall come to the Lake George, region where it all started in 1967, to celebrate this milestone anniversary. My cherished Adirondacks will be surreal this time of year and I'm confident that all who attend will make many more fond memories. For those who can't make it, we will miss you. Please know that you, and all who came before over the course of these 50 years, will be there in spirit.



VP Southeastern Region

by Charles Witek III

NYSOWA EVENT ON LONG ISLAND?

I have been working with some other NYSOWA members, investigating the possibility of holding our 2018 annual meeting here on Long Island. Since joining NYSOWA, safaris and annual meetings have given Theresa and I to make valued friendships, to experience areas of the state we had never enjoyed

before and to catch fish that are not found anywhere near our Long Island home.



years ago, shortly after I took the reins as outdoors writer for The Post-Standard from the award-winning and well-respected, J. Michael Kelly.

*Fall Conference at Old Forge – I'll always remember the Thursday night happy hour/gathering session when then-DEC Commissioner Joe Martens appeared before our group and expounded about how he wanted a healthy, open line of communication between his department and the outdoors writers. Knowing he was going to be there, I assembled a bunch of recent emails beforehand from one of his PR staffers that proved the exact opposite was taking place – that in fact Gov. Andrew Cuomo had instituted a far-reaching “gag order” on DEC staff that covered even the most basic fish and wildlife questions. I raised my hand, read the emails containing the comments – and sparked a spirited discussion on an issue that remains unresolved to this day between NYSOWA and the DEC. The important thing to note is the NYSOWA conference provided a forum for the much-needed discussion and writers back then – and to this day – continue to share experiences and techniques in dealing with this problem.

*A Fall Conference at Lake Placid – As we were pairing up for our outdoor outings, I chose to go fishing with local guide Elizabeth Lee, who had just recently secured her DEC guide license. She took me out in a rowboat on a small, nearby private lake. After casting and casting various lures, I was able to catch and release an impressive 24-inch landlocked-Atlantic salmon. I really enjoyed that excursion as the fish turned out largest caught by any other writer

My involvement with the New York State Outdoor Writers Association began nearly 10

VP Western/Central Region

by David Figura

GREAT NYSOWA MEMORIES

during that conference. The outing also resulted in much discussion between the Harvard-educated Lee and myself – resulting later in her decision to become an outdoors columnist herself. Today her column, “Living with Wilderness,” runs in the Plattsburgh Press-Republican. And yes, she's now a member of NYSOWA.

Any good writer knows the key to his or her success – along with possessing the basic tools of good writing – is the constant generating of story ideas. Good story ideas.

The 2016 Fall Conference held at the Peek 'n Peak Ski Resort in Western New York near Chautauqua Lake/Lake Erie is a great example of what NYSOWA has done for me.

I came back from that gathering and within several weeks wrote stories about an eye-opening deer antler museum; muskie fishing on Chautauqua Lake; the local Bigfoot Festival (I found out it was one of two that take place in the state each year); why the smallmouth bass in Lake Erie are so big; the DEC's innovative telemetry tagging system to follow the movement and annual spawning migrations of walleye on Lake Erie – and the presence of bilingual (English, Native American signs) on state roadways in various locations across the state.

The latter idea came as I was driving home along eastward on Route 86 and passed by the Seneca Nation Casino.

I'd like to congratulate NYSOWA on its 50th anniversary. With great regret, I won't at this year's Fall Conference in Lake George because my daughter is getting married that weekend down in New Orleans.

I'll be there in spirit, though, and have no doubt that all who attend will find it a useful and fun experience.

What NYSOWA Means to Me

Reflecting back on the last 36 years as an active member (and over 30 years as a supporting member), I realize that the group has been an important part of my growth as a writer and as a promotions person for Niagara County. NYSOWA is a close-knit group of media specialists and corporate PR gurus that work together to share the outdoors with the rest of the state and beyond. The Empire State is a magnificent outdoor playground and attending conferences has allowed me to experience much of what the state has to offer— from the 1000 Isles to Plattsburgh; from Chautauqua to the Catskills; from the Adirondacks to the Hudson Valley. More importantly, it's allowed me to meet some amazing people in the outdoor industry — individuals who have become mentors and friends. Many of those people are no longer with us but their memories live on in the things we do every day. When we hosted the Outdoor Writers Association of America conference in 1991 in Niagara Falls, we had a committee of 20 NYSOWA members who worked hard to not only make it happen, but hosted NYSOWA hospitality room for the conference. It's those kinds of memories that have made the biggest impact ... and continue to make. Like with any organization, you get out of it what you put into it. I think this organization has been a group that has been able to give back so much more. For me, it's also been a great group to send quality time with my dad, Bill, Sr. We have been able to share time outside and write about it, making it more of a family adventure through the years. I just can't believe the time has gone by so quickly!



-Bill Hills, Jr.



In the 30 years that I have been a NYSOWA member the organization has meant a lot to me, both professionally and personally.

Professionally it has helped me become a more successful writer by the things I have learned and the contacts that I have made. The newsletters, seminars, and the people I have met have all helped my development as a writer. The people that I became familiar with became sources of information for my writings and often these people become contacts that led me to other assignments.

On a personal basis NYSOWA has been an important part of my life. I enjoyed the activities

and conferences and belonging to a prestigious professional organization has opened many doors for me. However, the one thing that stands out has been the enjoyment of spending time with people that I got to know better. We have shared good times at NYSOWA events and continued to enjoy outdoor activities together throughout the year. It is safe to say that many of the members of NYSOWA have become my closest friends.

-Leo Maloney



I guess one of the major benefits for me would be the many contacts made since I joined in 1996. A simple phone call or e-mail would help me write a story. Or, if I needed a specific photo, all I had to do is reach out to our members. My day job is outdoor recreation with a tourism agency and what better way to promote my region then to enlist the help of outdoor writers. On a personal level, I cherish the friendships that have come from being involved with NYSOWA.

-Chris Kenyon

I joined NYSOWA in 1985 after starting to write in 1984. I was sponsored by Bob Peel and became good friends with him. Sue and I were a little lost at the first few conferences we attended, but we soon found ourselves taken under the wings of charter member Pete Fershtman and his lovely wife Ruth, and by Ed Feldmann and Myrna with her ever present raffle tickets. They and others made us feel more a part of the organization. I met Leo Makoney and Carol, and his good friend who also became mine, Michael Seymour. I had Mike and Leo up to our lodge on the Nushagak River in Alaska for a week of salmon fishing. The following year, I invited the very popular Scott Samson, who said he had absolutely the best time of his life. The greatest thing about NYSOWA for me is the people I have met, and the friends I have made. I feel blessed to know them.



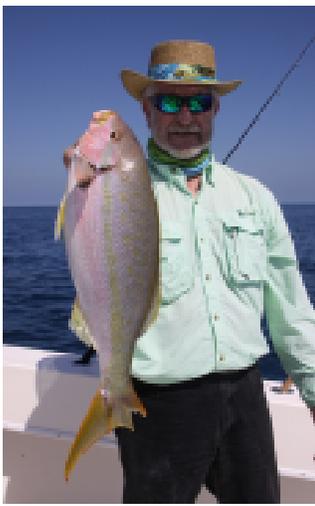
-Leon Archer



Attending the NYSOWA Conferences and Safaris has broadened my knowledge of the state and allowed me to enjoy outdoor recreational opportunities throughout New York. This, in turn, has led to not only great adventures but also excellent story material. In addition, the friends and professional contacts I've made through the organization have enriched my life, socially and professionally. The conferences have not only offered outdoor experiences but also provided informative seminars and programs, some of which have also led to articles I have sold. I have

benefitted from the Excellence in Craft writing and photo awards programs in multiple ways. By occasionally receiving awards, I have taken pleasure and pride in recognition of my work. As the chair of the EIC program, I have found meaningful purpose for some of the time I now have as a retiree from full-time writing by administering the program and raising its professionalism.

-Glenn Sapir



From my early join date back in 1985, thanks to my sponsor – Bill Hitts, Sr., NYSOWA provided a trail to learn how writers, editors, publishers, book authors, photographers and outdoor industry representatives can work together to promote an understanding of conservation and adventure in the outdoors. With hunting, fishing, hiking, camping and ecology in my peak interest, I learned about how the exciting use of specific gear-oriented terminology and colorful expression could form unique and more complete outdoor stories. This was important to effectively connect our oldsters and youngsters with fun, survival, ethics and the heritage of their forefathers. NYSOWA allows our membership to network with others in the outdoor world, meeting new outdoor writer friends and following our passion for fun and adventure in the outdoors with others, and at the same time, make a reasonable income in support of traditions and outdoor resources. It's fun!

-Dave Barus

I guess you could say I was born into the NYSOWA when my parents, Paul and Janice Keesler, founded the NEW YORK SPORTSMAN MAGAZINE in 1972. I grew up tagging along to conferences and outings sponsored by NYSOWA. Through the many contacts my mom and dad made, the Keesler family enjoyed vacations that included camping, fishing and touring throughout New York State. I remember as a seven-year-old ice fishing for pike and as a fifteen year old landing the biggest Muskie I'd ever seen. Those adventures, on the St Lawrence River, were compliments of Allen and Susan Benas, owners of the Thousand Island Inn.

As an adult, I guess you could say NYSOWA inherited me, when both my parents passed away, my mom in 1987 and my dad in 2005. NYSOWA has gone to great lengths to keep their memory alive through the Janice Keesler Memorial Photo Contest and the M. Paul Keesler Outdoor Citizen Award. I have had the honor of chairing the photo contest for the past several years and the pleasure of presenting the esteemed recipients with the Citizen Award.



-Bridget Keesler



I joined NYSOWA in 2005 at the suggestion of Ed Noonan, who sponsored me. I'd been writing pretty regularly for about three years, but was in the very early stages of authoring my first book. What I was really looking for when I attended my first NYSOWA conference in 2006 was book publishing advice, which I eventually got from Dennis April. Later, it would be me who would offer that same advice to other aspiring authors.

What NYSOWA has meant to me is friendships on both the personal and professional levels. Yes, there's been those great times at conferences and safaris, but it's been much more than that. I've enjoyed turkey hunting with Ed Noonan, camping with Leo and Carol Maloney and running into a fellow NYSOWA members at one function or another.

Another great aspect of being part of this organization is the manner in which it's taken me all over New York State and beyond. For all of this, I'm eternally grateful.

-Dan Ladd



I first became associated with the NYSOWA in the mid 1970s through Paul Keesler. I had taken an ad in his Mid-York Sportsman magazine promoting my hotel's package fishing trips. I was also President of the Chamber of Commerce and invited Paul, Janice, Paul, Jr. & Bridget to Clayton to visit, camp, fish and do a story about Clayton in the magazine. We quickly became good friends, the 1000 Islands and Clayton quickly becoming one of their favorite vacation areas and Paul was anxious to help us promote the area.

At Paul's suggestion the Chamber began hosting guided fishing trips for member writers from across the state during the week following the opening day of the bass season to promote the coming summer season. As a result, NYSOWA became an important part of mine and Clayton's life and our annual business plan well before I became a member. Over the years Clayton has

hosted eight Conferences and Safaris.

I had never done any writing before, but in the early 1980s Paul asked me to write a "center fold" story on Wellesley Island State Park and the region in general. In looking back to "B.C.," before computers, I'm sure it was an editor's nightmare correcting grammatical errors and spelling and I wish I had kept a copy to reflect back on in my later years as a writer. No ego trip here. Even today I don't consider myself a "good" writer, especially in the shadow of so many members I have known down through the years. Back then my guess is that a sophomore in a high school English class could have composed a better article.

Becoming qualified for membership, I joined NYSOWA in 1984. After learning how helpful my membership was in allowing me to get to know writers on a personal basis through conferences and hosting familiarization tours to our region I joined OWAA and POWA and we expanded our promotional efforts. New acquaintances in POWA and OWAA led to both new writer and publisher friends and for me, story assignments from several regional publications in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York. In short, membership was an invaluable tool to me, my business and Clayton.

Over the years Clayton and the 1000 Islands Region have hosted several prominent writers from throughout the Northeast, many as a result of my affiliation in those organizations. As we celebrate our 50th Anniversary, many of the friends we made back in the 70's and 80's, some Association founders, are now gone and deeply missed. The rest of us have experienced dramatic changes in the outdoor writing field with outlets for our stories drying up, lifestyle and attitude changes and the challenges of the internet. While I don't write anywhere near as much as I did 20 or 30 years ago, NYSOWA is still an important part of Susan's and my lives just by gathering so many of our friends and acquaintances together at least once a year to renew friendships and reminisce. Happy Anniversary NYSOWA!

-Al Benas

I have benefited numerous ways from being a member of NYSOWA. The main one has been meeting so many wonderful people along the way. Writers who work in our great outdoors are special people and it is reflected in their personalities. I have benefited more than most because I have been a member from the start. We have had some very unique personalities in our group, to mention just a few I can think of C. Bill Colby, Ben Conger, Ed Feldmann, Art Flick Jr., Shaw Hanesian, Dick Jennings, Dick Nelson and so many more. Because they chose to become a part of our group, we all benefited.

At our gatherings, we had fun, learned how to be better journalists, established contacts that lasted a lifetime. We had workshops to sharpen our skills and most of all, we made many new friends. In the beginning it was a real struggle to keep the group going, but we were determined and because of it, look what we have today.

Being a Founding Member it gives me great joy to look around and see what a truly fine group is carrying on the great traditions of NYSOWA.

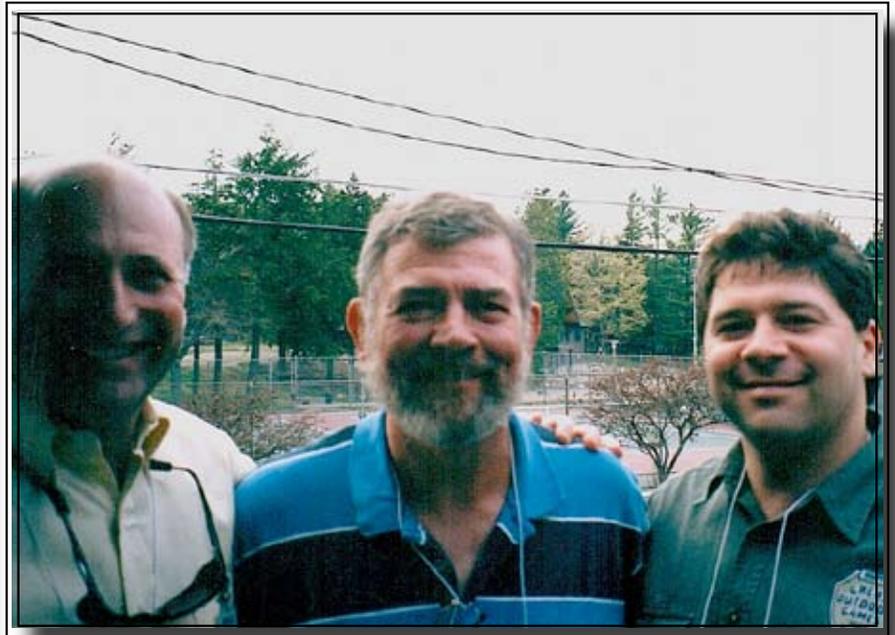


-Bill Hills, Sr.

NYSOWA 50th Anniversary Scrapbook 1967-2017



NYSOWA 50th Anniversary Scrapbook 1967-2017



NYSOWA 50th Anniversary Scrapbook 1967-2017



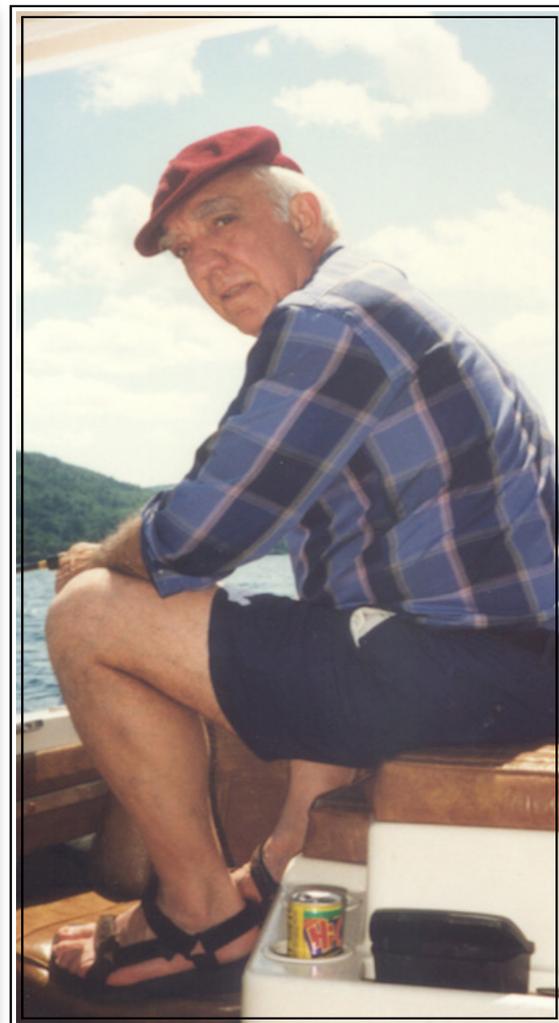
NEW YORK OUTDOORS

Summer 1992

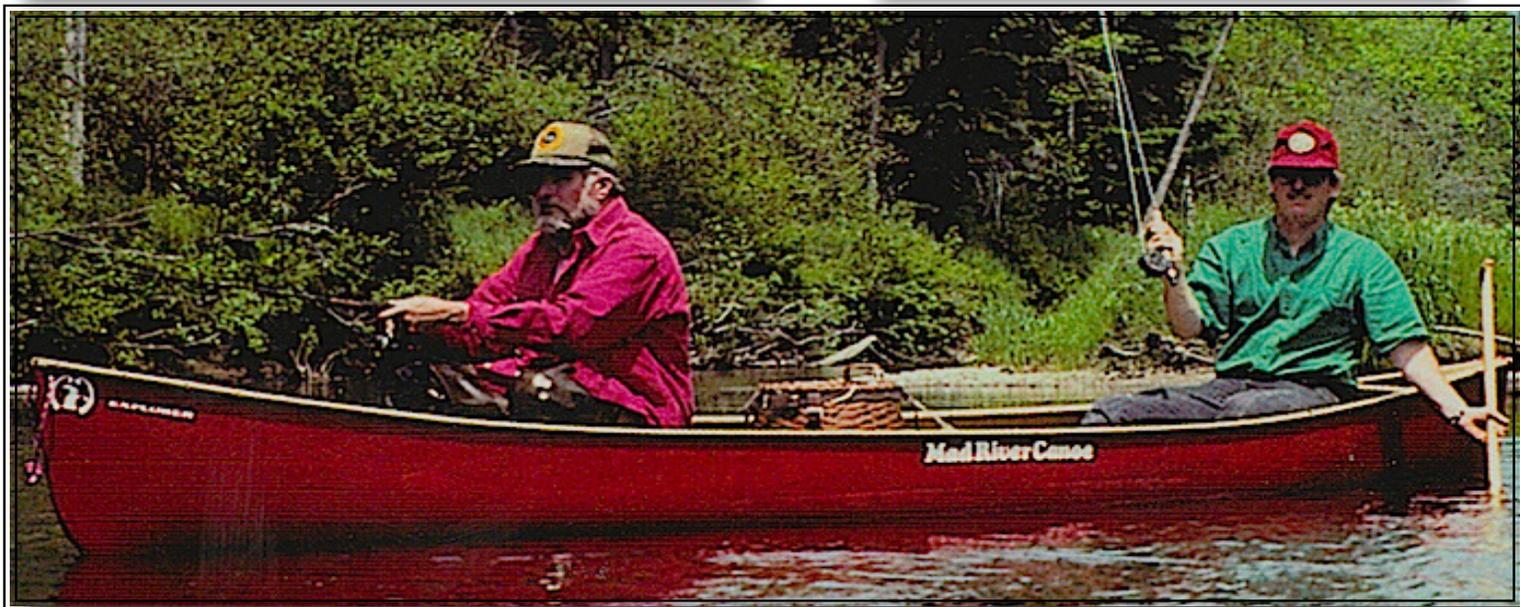
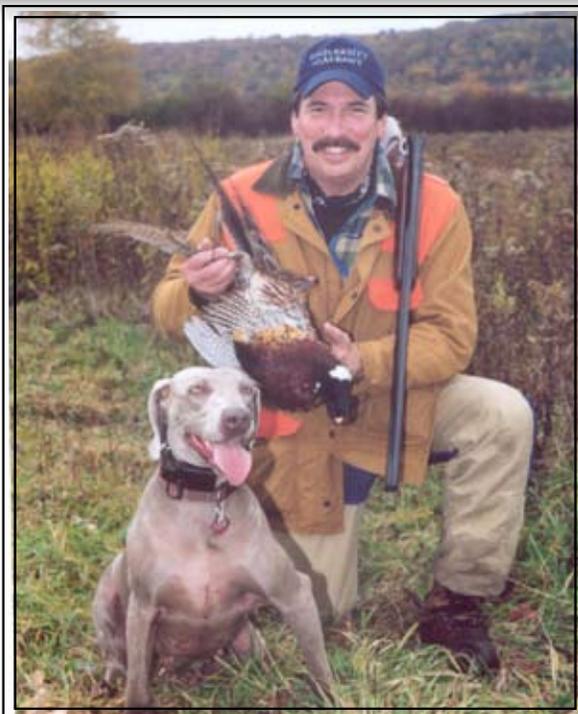
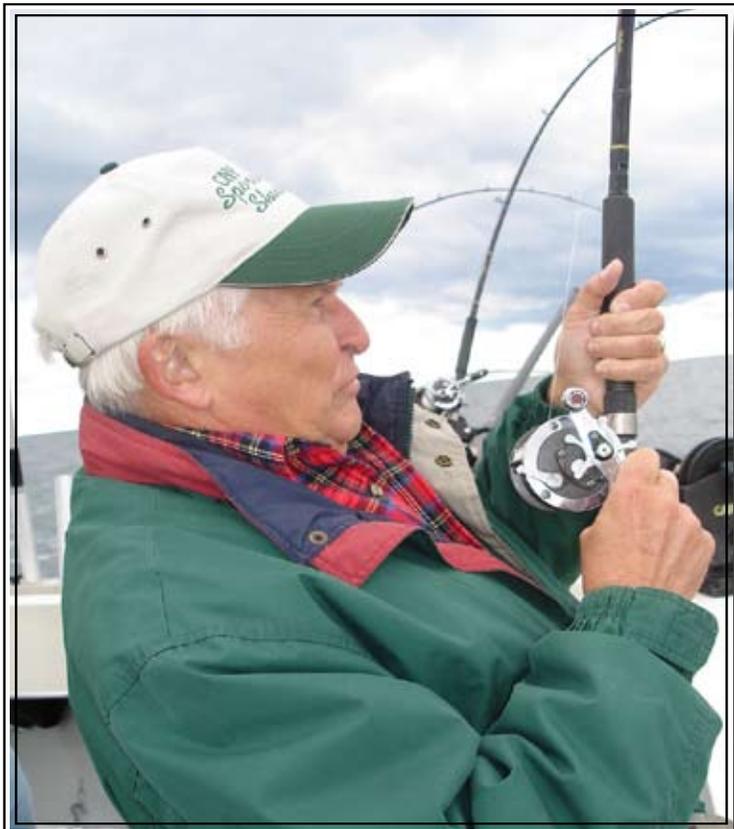
Published by the New York State Outdoor Writers Association



Dick Habes, past president of the New York State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (left) helps to hoist a beautiful 21 pound wild turkey taken by Ed Noonan at the spring NYSOWA Conference in Rochester. Ed's the one on the right.



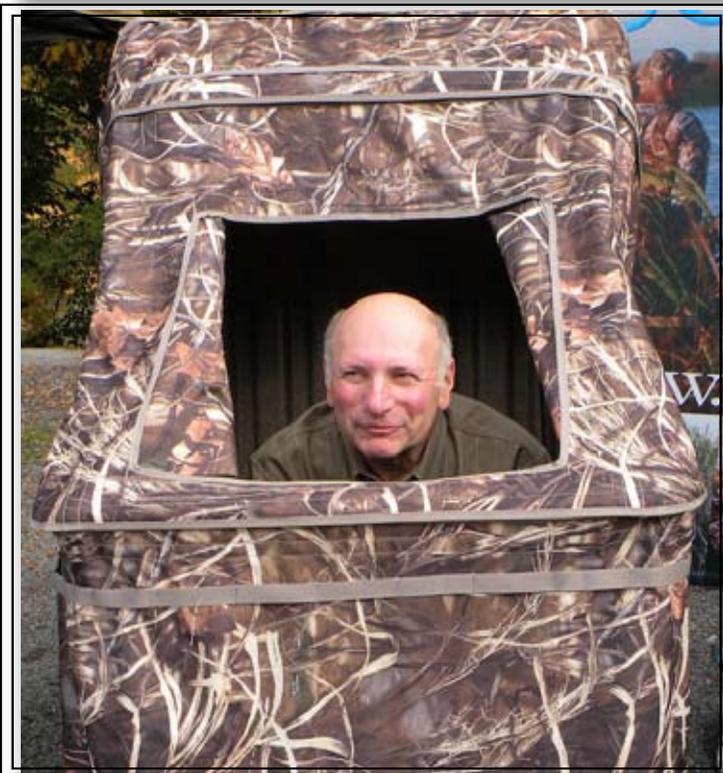
NYSOWA 50th Anniversary Scrapbook 1967-2017



NYSOWA 50th Anniversary Scrapbook 1967-2017



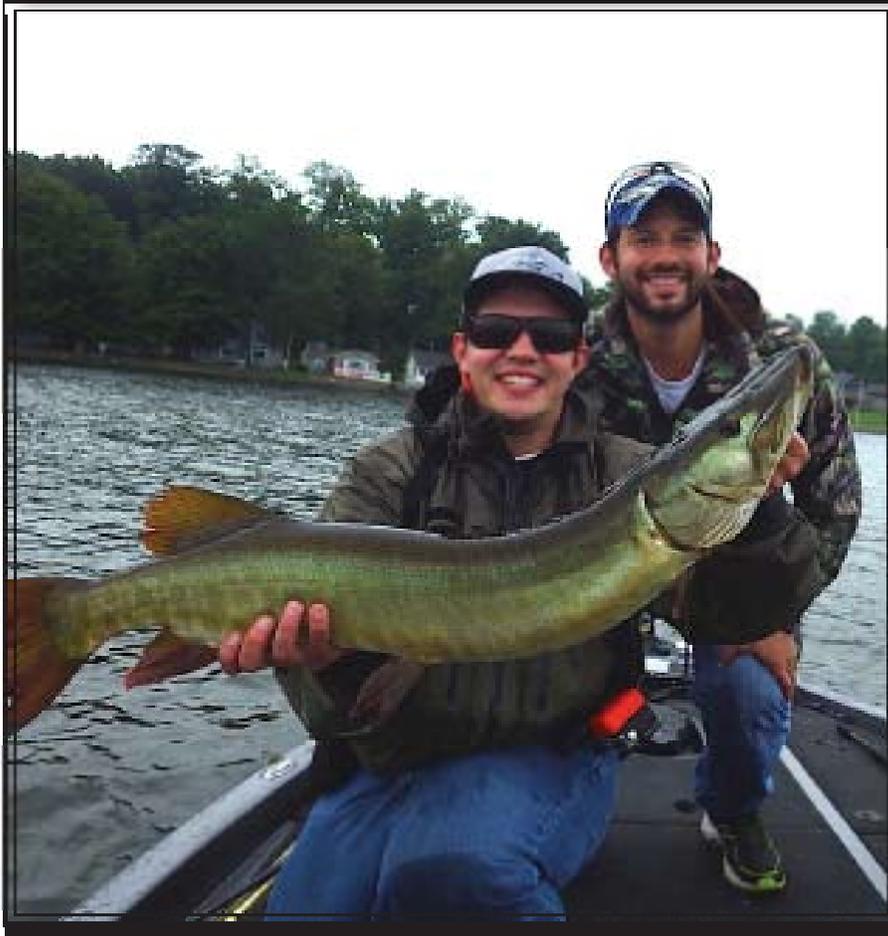
NYSOWA 50th Anniversary Scrapbook 1967-2017



NYSOWA 50th Anniversary Scrapbook 1967-2017



NYSOWA 50th Anniversary Scrapbook 1967-2017



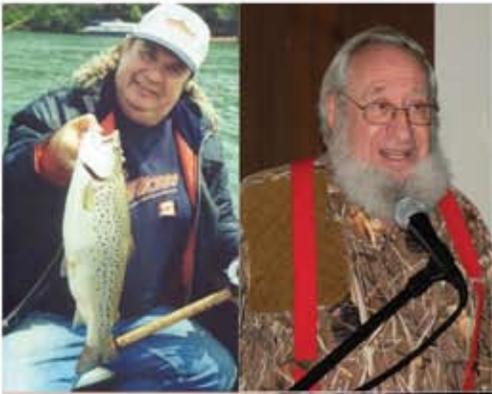
NYSOWA 50th Anniversary Scrapbook 1967-2017



NYSOWA 50th Anniversary Scrapbook 1967-2017



Thanks for the memories



Supporting Members make New York their business



This montage of NYSOWA memories is on display at the Wildlife Sports and Educational Museum in Fulton County.