



Ross Smoker

Age: 41.

Current residence: Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania.

Personal: Married to Sue, with two dogs, Chane and Zigar.

Occupation: Woodworking foreman at Allenwood Federal Prison.

About the piece: Common mergansers are abundant in our area in late winter, so you need a couple mergy gunners in your rig. I always carve what I see a lot of. There's nothing like good reference.

First big win/Most memorable win: My first big win was at Havre de Grace in lifesize floating with an oldsquaw. That bird also took a blue ribbon at the Worlds. My most memorable win was best of show for a green-winged teal at the R. B. Smoker Antique Decoy Contest, held in conjunction with the Susquehanna Ducks Unlimited Banquet.

Dream carving: A dream carving for me would be any decoy that wins the Worlds or the IWCA Championship. I would also like to try my hand at an African kingfisher some time.

Do to unwind: Hunting, fishing, motorcycling, and watching cartoons.

Favorite carving by another artist: Keith Mueller's emerald toucanets would have to be my favorite decorative piece. Every time I looked at it I saw something different and I had to appreciate all the creativity and hard work



Common mergansers, open traditional hunting decoys (pairs), first in species, first in diving ducks, first best of show.

that went into it. There are a lot of decoys that I admire: in particular, Rich Smoker's black duck for its form and detail; Tom Christie's gadwalls, because they were simply done and when you saw them on the water they really looked like gadwalls; and Gus Wilson's rockin' head merganser, for its innovation and form.

Favorite birding site: The Susquehanna River and around my home. Assateague Island Refuge in Virginia is another great place.

Favorite bird to carve/watch: Two favorite birds to carve would be the ring-necked duck and the gadwall. Gadwalls have a unique coloration and shape and ring-neckeds are just beautiful in their simplicity. I really enjoy watching a flock of ducks working a cornfield, geese when they commit to an area and vultures when they are soaring. You could say that I just like watching our feathered friends.

Artistic influences: R. B. Smoker, Rich Smoker, Keith Mueller, Tom Christie, Pete Palumbo, Grayson

Chesser and the birds themselves.

Favorite carving/painting technique: I like to use power carving to start and then mostly hand tools. There is something therapeutic about putting a knife to a piece of wood. I paint with acrylics and practice with oils (lots of practice).

Exhibitions/Collections: My birds can be found in rigs and private collections all over the country.

Motivation for carving: Camaraderie with fellow carvers is a great motivation. I also like the challenge of improving on every carving I do. Having a hobby that pays for my other hobbies is not bad either.

Upcoming projects: I am working on my next competition birds and a new rig for hunting on the river.