

John's dogs were top notch. He competed in Lake Placid as part of the ESPN Great Outdoor Games (precursor to the SRS of today). Throughout the years John would have numerous QAA/MH dogs whom were all trained by John himself. He and his wife Karen also became reputable breeders of Labrador Retrievers with the moniker of "Blackbird's Blu Moon." His last Blu Moon dog, "Moon," tragically lost an eye to a snake bite at an early age. When Moon II lost his eye, John proclaimed that he would have that dog at the Master National one day. On the day John passed away, Moon earned his seventh Master Pass, having titled earlier in the summer of 2017 and qualified for the 2018 MAI.

As John's retriever skill and interests grew, so did his leadership in the sport. In 2004 John gathered together thirteen Minnesota retriever clubs for an informal winter meeting to form a coalition that would collaborate to advance the sport. Those clubs began to work together to sponsor AKC judges' seminars, brainstorm ideas on how to develop our properties, share announcements of handler seminars and coordinate the calendar. In 2007 the Greater Minnesota Hunt Test Association was incorporated. Today the GMHTA includes nearly all the AKC, UKC and NAHRA retriever hunt test clubs in Minnesota as well as clubs in Iowa, Wisconsin and South Dakota.

The Master National Retriever Club (MNRC) also became very important to John. He served in many different positions and eventually as President of the MNRC in 2012, where he presided over the largest National Hunt Test event ever held to that point. In 2016, the Master Amateur Retriever Club was formed and John again answered the call to lead, eagerly accepting the post of Vice President of the Central region. In 2017, he served as the Chief Marshal for the Inaugural Master Amateur Invitational in Cairo, GA.

John was long respected as a judge of retriever hunt tests. The AKC indicates 86 judging assignments across our Nation; in addition, John judged the 2006 MNRC event. More than a few handlers recall not only his dedication to upholding the standards of the sport, but more importantly, his boundless enthusiasm, wit, and kindness. As the retriever hunt test sport expanded, John was sought out to help guide the Retriever Hunt Test Advisory Committee (RHTAC).

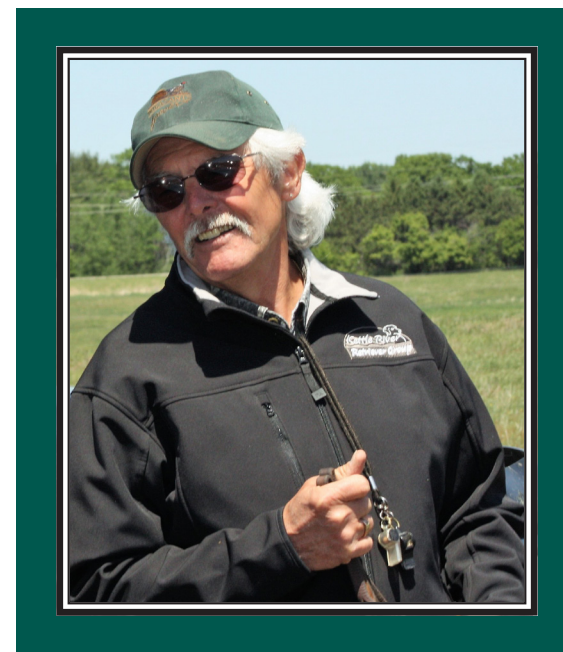
John was extremely dedicated to the MNRC, the MARC, and all of his local clubs in Minnesota, and his training groups both in Minnesota and in Georgia. He was encouraging and supportive of handlers and trainers, regardless if they were professional or amateur. He was dedicated to his local Pheasants Forever chapter, especially the youth activities that chapter supported. He was a mentor to many. He was an all around retriever/hunting enthusiast.

Above all else however, John was devoted to his family, his wife Karen of 34 years, two sons and three grandsons and extended family.

John will always be honored for his devotion to our sport and his friendship to all, counsel to many, and attitude of service to our sport will be sorely missed. The shock of white hair, the wry smile, and dry sense humor will not be replaced. We can only hope there are hunt tests in heaven, and that John is still offering kind and sage advice and calling "dog to the line."



## JOHN O. BLACKBIRD MEMORIAL AWARD



**John O. Blackbird**

**May 19, 1947 – September 9, 2017**

The retriever world lost a leader, a friend, a mentor and a staunch advocate with the unexpected passing of John Blackbird on September 9, 2017.

John got his first retriever in the early 90's and the Lake Country Retriever Club of Prior Lake, Minnesota was the home club in those days. His passion for the sport of retriever hunt tests quickly developed. When he retired from Ford and moved to Mora, Minnesota he became a member of Central Minnesota Retriever Club near St. Cloud, Minnesota where he would assume the duties as both field trial and hunt test chair for several years. He remained the CMRC Hunt Test Secretary for the remainder of his life. John would also become a member of the Hennepin County Amateur Retriever Club, a charter member of the Hinckley Retriever Club, and a Life Member at the Minnesota Iron Range Retriever Club. Although John was a member in five separate clubs, he ALWAYS made an effort to work and support each club in all of their events, regardless if it was a field trial or hunt test, in whatever capacity necessary. John was also a founding member of the ownership group, the Kettle River Retriever Group, which has purchased and developed property near Hinckley, Minnesota dedicated to retriever training and testing/trialing.

## Purpose

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The purpose of the John Blackbird Memorial Award is twofold. First, it is to honor, celebrate and perpetuate the life lived, the accomplishments, the lasting influence and legacy of John Blackbird.

Secondly, it is to honor a recipient who has demonstrated through their own work and efforts, that they too have made significant contributions to the retriever hunt test program through training and handling retrievers **AS AN AMATEUR**, working and judging local hunt tests, being a leader in local and perhaps regional or national clubs, and mentoring and supporting others in the retriever games.

The award will be presented at the Master Amateur Retriever Club Invitational. The award may reflect the work a person does to work within or for the MARC and MAI, or the effort to bring a dog to a national event. But this award isn't just about one event. This memorial/award is to recognize those folks out there that are cut from similar cloth as John Blackbird. An individual who not only shows up to an event and makes an impact, but also makes an impact on the retriever world throughout the years wherever they go. A person who is dedicated to the local clubs at the grassroots level, being a "worker bee" when needed or being a chair or secretary, someone who is a mentor to others, a person who trains and handles their own dogs to the highest levels. The nominee does not need to be a member of the Master Amateur Retriever Club.

The work the individual does at the local level is perhaps even more important than what happens on the national stage. No person gets to the national without going through a number of local weekend tests. What people do in their own backyard is crucial to their future success regardless of what stage or venue it may be.

## Criteria

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Please consider these criteria when making a nomination for this award. All of these criteria need to be met for an individual to be nominated.

- An Amateur
- Need not be a member of the Master Amateur Retriever Club
- Active in the retriever hunt test program as a handler.
- Active in their local club(s) as a dedicated and reliable worker at events, serve in positions such as club officer, board member, event committee chairperson, secretary or committee member.
- Active as an retriever hunt test judge
- Through their individual efforts made numerous and long lasting impacts for the betterment of the retriever sports/clubs/events.
- Other qualities, characteristics, and personality deemed appropriate.

## How to Nominate

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Any person(s), regardless of MARC membership, can nominate an individual for this award. Multiple parties may nominate an individual, and/or a club or group of clubs may submit a nomination.

Complete the nomination form which can be found on the MARC website at [www.masteramateur.com](http://www.masteramateur.com) or contact any member of the Master Amateur Board of Directors.

The nomination shall include the name of the nominee, the nominee's address, phone number and list the nominee's home clubs. Also included shall be a narrative of the accomplishments, leadership positions, and other evidence, which supports the work, character, and lasting impact the nominee has had on the retriever community.

The person(s) making the nomination must include their own personal contact information so the selection committee may reach out to them for further questions or details.

Nominations are due no later than January 1st.

Nominations will be submitted to the chairman of the John Blackbird Memorial Committee as appointed by the Master Amateur Board of Directors.

After all nominations have been received the MARC Board of Directors and/or special committee will review the nominations and supporting evidence, and may also make separate inquiries vetting the nominees, to determine the recipient of the award.



## Award

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The recipient will be announced at the Handlers' Meeting/Opening Ceremonies of each Master Amateur Invitational.

There will be a perpetual plaque to be displayed at each MAI that will list the recipients.

An individual award will also be presented to the recipient.

The award recipient need not be present to receive the award.