

# 2018 has been a banner year for collecting!

Welcome to the Fall issue of the Midwest Decoy Collectors Association club newsletter. With the economy humming along and so many quality decoys coming to market, it's no surprise that 2018 has been a good year for our hobby, displaying a vitality that we haven't seen in some time.

- Dealers in St. Charles reported robust sales both in the rooms and in the Mega Center
- Summer auctions showed strength across the board
- Smaller sporting collectibles auction houses smashed through previous sales records
- The continued growth of online sales has provided access for a large group of younger collectors

With all of this positive news out there, it's a perfect time to be engaged in this great hobby.

Inside this issue, you'll enjoy a celebration of collecting in a variety of forms.

Member News
Sneak Peek at the 2019 Show
Member Profile
Summer Auction Highlights
2019 Table Registration Form
Much more!



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### MIDWEST DECOY COLLECTORS ASSOCIATION

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#### WHO WE ARE

The Midwest Decoy Collectors Association is a nonprofit, educational organization incorporated under the laws of the State of Illinois. It invites membership to all persons. The purpose of Midwest Decoy Collectors is to foster the hobby of decoy collecting by attracting new collectors, seeking out and preserving old decoys, gathering data about carvers and their methods, and holding an annual show for decoy collectors and carvers.

### **OUR HISTORY**

The Midwest Decoy Collectors Association was started in 1966 by a small group of dedicated decoy collectors as a gathering in Ottawa, Illinois to reconnect, share stories and trade decoys. Since then, the Club has grown to nearly 800 enthusiasts from all over North America and from all walks of life. They write books on collecting, manage auction companies, publish collector magazines, carve world class decoys, calls and collectibles, provide appraisal services, and form a core network of knowledge on sporting collectibles and their history. That humble gathering of collectors in 1966 has grown to become the North American Vintage **Decoy and Sporting Collectibles Show** the largest show of its kind. The annual show features room-to-room trading, a tabled show and a major decoy auction in addition to a variety of networking events and educational activities including seminars, displays and carving demonstrations.

**DISPLAY ADVERTISING** is now being accepted in select issues of the MDCA newsletter. Contact Jeff Seregny at jseregny@gmail.com or 586-530-6586 for rates and availability.

www.midwestdecoy.org



2018 has been a great year for the collectors as many items became available and the various auctions and events all enjoyed strong interest. Our 2018 show shared this strength and the 2019 plans build on that success nicely.

Our key mission platforms, "discovery, preservation and celebration," will continue to drive the displays, activities and events in St. Charles. We are confident that every attendee will leave the show with an even greater appreciation for this great American folk art and its history.

Our 2019 event will allow us to integrate some previous displays as we focus on the Delta Marsh and Heron Lake connection. There is some very exciting effort taking place right now to document the history, recreate a special hunt, and use a unique rig of decoys to celebrate a special piece of North American water fowling and its rich history. This gives us a platform for more wonderful seminars and displays in St. Charles.

The addition of exhibits featuring one of today's outstanding contemporary decoy makers has been very well received, and we are pleased that the "Contemporary Corner" in 2019 will celebrate the great work of Wisconsin's Geoff Vine.

Our collaborations with the Callmakers, Ducks Unlimited and Delta Waterfowl are all accelerating as we learn from each other and find more synergy all the time. The perspective that each of these organizations brings to our mission has made us even better. You will be pleased with the progress you see this year and well into the future.

Pheasant Run Resort staff has continued to mature and develop, and the remodeling plans continue to march forward. The current focus is on the key facility upgrades to the mechanical structure as they get ready for a branding upgrade that will produce new room design packages. Each year the resort runs a year-end promotion which allows us to purchase gift cards at a substantial discount. These cards can be used to cover your on-site expenses. We will notify you when this information is released. In addition, we now have a show booking link which will allow easier online booking for all of us. This link will be communicated to you through our email system.

Our members continue to step up to support our efforts and broaden our reach. The Louisiana connection has produced a wonderful display with DU in Memphis. I encourage you to go visit before it ends in August 2019. Thank you for everyone's effort on this display.

Our transition to more digital communications has gone wonderfully thanks to Jeff Seregny's efforts to lead the content and Larry Osentoski's stewardship of the tools. We have developed a nice balance with content, distribution method and timing that is getting good member feedback. Both our website and Facebook presence are growing nicely.

Membership is growing again after struggling a bit and Matt Bryant's leadership is an important reason for this change. Thank you to Matt for stepping up to this critical role.

Be sure that your dues stay current, ask your friends to keep their memberships active, and make your 2019 table and hotel reservations now.

Enjoy your fall hunting and collecting activities! Exciting new items are coming available every day, so communicate your interests so that we can help your collecting!

Rick Rick Sandstrom

### **Member News**



As you've no doubt seen, in St.

Charles we introduced a redesigned Member Directory. By all accounts, this new, larger format directory met with a very positive response. This change allowed us to save significantly on both production and postage costs over prior years.

We know that having an up-to-date directory readily available throughout the year for networking and other collecting information is of great value to our members. With that in mind, rather than waiting until the show in April to distribute, we plan to mail the 2019 Member Directories to all members in good standing in early February. This means that to be included, we'll need your 2019 dues to be renewed by the January 1, 2019 due date. For those who choose to wait to renew their membership at the show, you'll receive your copy of the directory there.

So, please make sure that you are paid up for 2019 by the first of the year. You'll be receiving a dues reminder in the mail very soon.

# **Facebook Participation Continues to Rise**

Each month more members join our Members Only Facebook group. Here, over 150 club members share photos of their decoys, get expert help with identification and value, and buy and sell items in a secure environment where they know with whom

they are dealing. If you are not already participating, be sure to ask to join the "Midwest Decoy Collectors Association (Members Only)" Facebook group today!

### **New Members**

The MDCA continues to be the largest decoy and sporting collectibles group in North America. And we're growing! The diversity of interests continues to be strong, including all sorts of hunting and fishing related items from creels to calls; sporting art to shotgun shell boxes. Please welcome these new members who have joined since our last newsletter in July.

Ronald A Gorski, Fraser, MI Southwestern Ontario, Lake St. Clair & Michigan decoys

**Christopher Herbruck**, Bay Village, OH *Ohio decoys* 

**Laurie McPhee**, Warren, ME New England & Maritime decoys, American folk art, weathervanes, whirligigs, sporting art

**Tim Menzia**, Prospect Heights, IL *Duck decoys* 

**Pat Murphy,** Gatineau, Quebec, Canada Ontario/Quebec decoys and fishing tackle

**Dr. Ken Shea,** Mount Dona, FL Massachusetts, St. Lawrence River, Ontario, NJ, IL River, ducks, geese, brant, and especially shorebirds

**Neil J Zuehlke,** Hartland, WI Antique dealer with interests in sporting antiques; ice fishing decoys, duck decoys, advertising, and paintings

### Send Us Your Collecting Stories

We all agree that the "thrill of the hunt" for that next decoy to add to our collection is a big part of the enjoyment we get from collecting. The stories behind those exciting finds are often treasures in themselves, and we'd love to be able to share those stories with our members in future issues of the club newsletter. So please send us your best tales from your years of collecting. They can be about the ones you've successfully added or about the ones that got away. They



can be funny or just surprising. Please email your stories along with pictures (if available) to Jeff Seregny at jseregny@gmail.com, or you can mail them to Jeff at: 6699 Ferry Road, East Jordan, MI 49727.

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## MDCA Continues Collaboration with

# **Ducks Unlimited in Memphis**





In past issues we've reported on the continuing involvement of club members Jim Goodman and Bill Dodge with Ducks Unlimited, and their work to preserve and communicate the important history of waterfowling in America. In late August this relationship took another step forward with the opening of a display of vintage Louisiana decoys at DU's Waterfowling Heritage Center inside the beautiful Bass Pro Shops store at "The Pyramid" in Memphis, Tennessee.

Members Bruce Lowe and Brian Cheramie together loaned 44 decoys from their collections to create the exhibition "Vintage Louisiana Decoys: Hunting Lures of the Bayou." The exhibit explores the rich traditions of decoy carving along the bays and bayous of southeastern Louisiana. The decoys represent the carving traditions of the lower Mississippi River delta and include work by Reme Roussel, Jr., Adam Ansari, Mark McCool Whipple, Mark Frady and many more. Examples come from all of the seven regions in southeastern Louisiana identified in Brian's book,



"Louisiana Lures and Legends." The exhibit will run through August, 2019.

This is important work in that it exposes many potential collectors to our hobby in an environment that makes perfect sense. The facility attracts over two million visitors a year.

This relationship with DU has the potential to expand even further with decoy displays at the DU National Headquarters building as well as at future DU national conventions. We'll need all of our members' help to maximize this and other opportunities as they arise. Thanks to Jim and Bill for stewarding this important relationship, and to Bruce and Brian for lending their expertise and decoys to the Louisiana exhibit.







## **The 2019 Show Sneak Preview**

# NORTH AMERICAN Vintage Decoy & Sporting Collectibles Show

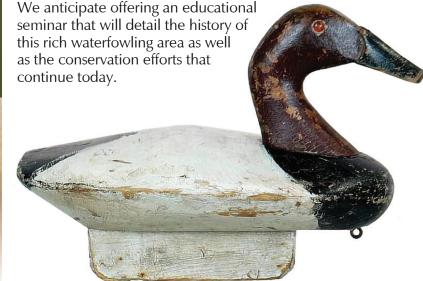
The displays, exhibits, and seminars are among the most popular events at the show in St. Charles each year. This year should be no different. Once again, your Board is assembling an interesting and educational collection of activities that is bound to have great appeal to show attendees. Here's just a quick glimpse at a few of the planned events.





## History of Heron Lake & Delta Marsh Decoys Comes Alive

Our 2019 Member Display will feature examples of the traditional Heron Lake decoys, like the ones that conservationist and General Mills founder James Ford Bell brought to Delta Marsh in the 1920's, and their later classic Delta Marsh canvasback decoy replacements. Bell was the catalyst for the creation of what would become the most ambitious waterfowl research facility in North America. The display will feature the work of area carvers such as Joe Marr and families like the Ducharmes, the Wards and the Chartrands. Pat Gregory and Steve Handevidt are pulling this display together.



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# **Geoff Vine to be our Featured Contemporary Carver**



Each year we celebrate today's masters who carry on the great folk art tradition that began in the 19th century. For 2019, we are thrilled to be able to exhibit the considerable talent of Wisconsin decoy maker Geoff Vine. Geoff has been a fixture in our "Contemporary Corner" in St. Charles for many years, generously demonstrating his decoy making abilities to appreciating attendees. It is certain to be a real treat to see a large exhibit of his great work.













# **Book Now!**

### It's not too early to make plans for next year's show!

- For room reservations call Pheasant Run at 630-584-6300
- For selling tables, print out the Table Reservation Form on the last page of this newsletter and send it with payment to Matt Bryant at the address provided.

# MEMBER PROFILE:

# Dr. Greg Golicz MICHIGAN "RENAISSANCE MAN"

### MICHIGAN "RENAISSANCE MAN" ADDS COLLECTING TO HIS MANY INTERESTS



When examining his background and varied interests, it is no surprise that Michigan native Greg Golicz eventually found himself smitten by decoys in a big way.



At an early age growing up in suburban Detroit, he developed a love for nature and the outdoors hunting and fishing with his father and brother. Chasing duck, pheasant, deer, partridge, and native fish was an every weekend activity for the Golicz men.

However, Greg's interests went well beyond his love for the outdoors. A self-described Renaissance man, he is naturally curious and has always had a thirst for knowledge and to experience different things. He has built houses and in the process learned to do everything from plumbing to electrical work. In medical school he chose emergency medicine over another specialty because of its variety and wide-ranging scope. While focused on pre-med studies, he used his college days to immerse himself into other areas that interested him including art and art history. He coupled this with a love for history, taking classes to bolster his understanding of the past and its implications for the future.

While his interest in so many areas related to the outdoors, art, and history would seem to have naturally led him to sporting collectibles, it didn't happen until many years later. In fact, Greg recalls how "stupid" he thought his brother's habit of collecting antique toys was. He just couldn't understand why he wanted that "junk."



Ben Schmidt Green Wing Teal Hen, Detroit, MI, 1940s

Early Otto Misch Canvasback, AJR Brand, Weale, MI, 1930s



Charles Pozzini hollow canvasback, Birmingham, MI, 1948

### The Ice Breaker

It wasn't until Greg reached his 50's that the decoy collecting fire was lit. As he tells it, he and his (now "ex") wife were sitting around feeling a little bored one Sunday in 2003, and decided to check out a local antique show in a nearby small town just to get out of the house. Having walked the show for a while, an old canvasback decoy caught Greg's eye. He thought it had great artistic form and would look neat on their mantel over the fireplace at home. So, he paid the dealer \$40, took it home, and placed it on the mantel where it sat for a couple of years. He enjoyed it there but never really had any interest in owning another one.

Then, in 2005 he noticed an ad in the local paper for a small decoy show not too far from his home. Reminded of the bird sitting on the mantel, he decided to check out the show to see if anyone might be able to tell him anything about his old decoy. While there he was directed to Dick Walters, an extremely knowledgeable Michigan collector and MDCA member who identified the decoy's maker as Stanley Alexander from the nearby Mt. Clemens area. Dick went on to tell Greg about Alexander and the history of his decoy making including the fact that the head on the bird had been made by Detroiter Nick Purdo, who also sold his well-carved heads to Ben Schmidt and other Michigan makers in the 50s and

60s. This experience opened up a whole new world to Greg, intersecting with his interests in the outdoors, art and history. To cap it all off, Walters told him the decoy was worth about \$120! Greg left the show thinking that this decoy thing was pretty interesting!

### **Interest Starts to Build**

Greg knew that if he was going to get more serious about collecting decoys he had a lot to learn to become comfortable enough to start dedicating hard-earned resources to it. He had no idea where to turn. As luck would have it, not much time had passed when he saw a truck driving around with a sign on it that read, "I buy old decoys!" He called the number and soon met local picker/collector Ron Welch who invited Greg to his boathouse on the Detroit River to see his collection. There Greg was introduced to Mason factory decoys and a variety of decoys by Michigan makers including Ben Schmidt, Tom Schroder, Oscar Peterson and Ralph Johnston. Ron shared his knowledge and Greg soon began to feel ready to start adding to his fledgling collection.

He soon found a nice Ben Schmidt Mallard hen on eBay and upon submitting the winning bid learned that the seller was a local guy who suggested that Greg could save postage by picking the decoy up. It turned out to be long-time collector Ken Cole who opened up his home to share his knowledge and remarkable collection with Greg. There he was able to handle some of the best known examples by Ben Schmidt, John Zachmann and many other Michigan makers. Ken recognized Greg's desire to learn and encouraged him to go to the upcoming show in Westlake, Ohio to meet more collectors and to handle more decoys. He jumped at the chance and was "blown away" by the experience of meeting so many knowledgeable collectors and seeing so many different decoys.



With his interest at full throttle now, he made plans to go to the St. Charles show the next month. He describes his stay as a "marathon" walking the rooms for 18 hours each day he was there, meeting collectors, talking with dealers, handling decoys and soaking it all in.

Through all of this he was learning a lot and becoming much more confident in his ability to judge good from bad.

### A Bump in the Road

By 2006, Greg felt ready to invest more for better decoys." Having become an admirer of Ben Schmidt's work, he was drawn to a listing on eBay of what was purported to be a Ben Schmidt goose in original paint. He carefully examined the description and photos, and saw that the seller appeared to be reputable based on his selling history. Greg's aggressive bidding won him this prize, and he was excited to share it with his growing group of collecting friends. Unfortunately, they unanimously agreed that is was not, in fact, a decoy by Ben Schmidt. Disappointed and angry, he told the seller that



he wanted to return it. The seller insisted the bird was made by Schmidt and refused to take it back. Greg felt genuinely cheated. This was the most he had spent on a decoy to this point, and this was a deeply disheartening experience.

Greg admits that this left him "gun shy," causing him to pull back from chasing better decoys for several years. It was during this time that he began collecting "lower end" Michigan decoys including those made by Detroit's Ralph Johnston. He would later interview Johnston's family and author an article that appeared in the Jan./Feb. 2009 issue of *Decoy Magazine*.



There is a silver lining to his disappointing "Schmidt" goose story. Greg eventually met Ron Snow, son of Walter Snow who made wonderful decoys in the Schmidt style, and asked him if he might have any idea who made his goose. Ron said excitedly, "I do! It was my dad!" Greg was pleased to learn the goose's true maker and still appreciates the decoy's beautiful lines and detailed carving. With the passage time, Greg has come to view this experience as part of the tuition one pays for one's decoy education.

### **Getting Help Along the Way**

Greg credits a number of collectors for helping him get started and for teaching him how to recognize specific makers' work. He recalls the difficulty he had in the beginning when he didn't know anything and didn't know anybody who could help. In addition to Michigan collectors Ken Cole, Len Carnaghi, Jim Marsh, and Dick Walters he counts long-time carver/ collector Bud Shell among those who were instrumental in his education. In addition to introducing Greg to a number of area collectors, he shared his knowledge and expertise freely. Greg eventually bought what is still his favorite decoy today from Bud, a very early Canvasback Drake made by Saginaw Bay area maker Otto



Misch. It is branded "AJR" and was part of a large rig owned by Detroit industrialist Arthur J. Rheaume. Greg has since acquired five other Misch diver decoys from this 1920s rig including three Bluebills, and two Redheads.

### **The Collection**

Greg's collection today reflects his overall focus on Michigan decoys made by many of the state's most admired craftsmen. In addition to the group by Otto Misch, it features work made by Ben Schmidt, Tom Schroeder, Miles Pirnie, Walter Struebing, Charles Pozzini, Jim Foote, Bill Finkle, as well as a wonderful grouping of high heads and "helmet" heads made by early carver Nate Quillen of Rockwood, Michigan.

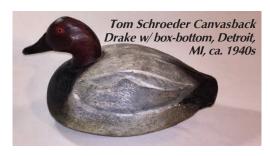
Greg smiles as he tells the story of finding two of these rare Quillen decoys. One day at work a friend told him that he had just seen a box of old decoys at a local moving sale. Never one to pass up a decoy opportunity, Greg ran over to the sale at lunch time to check it out. He quickly found the box with five dirty, grime-covered decoys in it. As he began pulling them out his pulse quickened. While the first one was a beaten up mess, the second was a good Back Bay model Mason Canvasback drake. Next was a nice hollow St. Clair Flats bird. Based on the familiar form and wing pattern, Greg was just certain that the last two decoys, coots with short bills and painted all black, were made by Quillen.

While he'd never seen or even read about a coot by this maker, to his eye these birds were undoubtedly by his hand. He paid \$90 for the four birds and took them home to clean them up for a better look. He then called Quillen expert Jim Marsh to get his opinion. Marsh

confirmed that Quillen never made a coot decoy, but upon closer inspection it was clear that the paint on these was not original and the bills had been crudely shaved down. They scraped just enough of the over paint off to see that underneath remained the strong original paint pattern of a Nate Quillen mallard drake. Thrilled with this find Greg sent them off to have the rest of the over paint removed and the bills restored which resulted a wonderful addition to his collection.

Like many of us, Greg's focus on Michigan decoys doesn't preclude him from chasing other artifacts that appeal to him. His collection also features a number of mini decoy carvings by a variety of makers, full size Ontario decoys, some early fish decoys, as well as some more contemporary pieces. A recent acquisition includes an original oil on canvas painting of a pair of Pintails by Michigan wildlife artist and decoy maker Jim Foote. Original work by this master is very tough to come by.





A pair of Canada Warbler carvings on a wood base by an unknown maker have flown into his collection recently as well. He found them in a small antique store that he wandered into while waiting for his girlfriend to arrive for a dinner date. They were up very on a high shelf, but he could tell that they were extremely well done. When he asked the store owner about the price, he replied, "It's \$150, but today everything is 50% off!" This beautiful piece now sits in a prominent place in Greg's house as he continues to search for the talented maker's identity.

Always anxious to add new pieces to his collection, there are several in particular that Greg would love to own. He has long admired the work of Tom Schroeder and the innovation he brought to decoy making, including his stabilizing "skirt bottom" design. In addition, he is lusting after

a rare tin-wing Canvasback or a low profile Goldeneye by Capt. John Schweikart of Strawberry Island in Lake St. Clair. Good, hollow-carved St. Clair Flats and Toronto School decoys are also on his wish list. Lastly, he is anxious to find that elusive mate to his Otto Misch "AJR" branded canvasback drake.

## **Preserving History for Future Generations**

Lucky for all of us, Greg's curiosity and interest in history has compelled him to write a number of articles about decoys and makers he admires. In addition to the earlier story on Ralph Johnston, he has authored or co-authored pieces on Michigan's Walter Struebing, Miley Smith, and his good friend Bud Shell. He and Bud also wrote a story about Ralph Malpage, the prolific London, Ontario maker, just prior to his death late last year. During one of his several visits to interview Ralph he asked him to make him a pair of hollow Old Squaw that Greg now counts among his favorites. We should all be grateful to Greg for his dedication to preserving the history of these talented men and the decoys they produced. You can reach Greg at ggolicz@comcast.net.











"Wide Marshes," 1920 Frank W. Benson (1862-1951) has been called the Dean of the American Sporting Print. By midlife, having won almost every award the art world had to offer, Benson turned his hand to etching. His first exhibition of prints sold out in a week. Thereafter, his etchings and drypoints of wildfowl and the sportsmen who sought them were in constant demand.

Now, one of the largest collections of Benson's prints is being offered for sale. Some are extremely rare. Many were obtained from Benson himself.

To discuss obtaining these prints directly from the collector's estate, please write to:

FrankWBensonTrust@gmail.com

# **2018: A Great Time for Collecting**

In case one has been hiding under a rock, it's hard not recognize that this summer was a very strong one for decoys with lots of opportunities for collectors to participate at every level. While the major auction houses fared remarkably well, even smaller, emerging auctioneers enjoyed record setting sales. Coupled with the robust sales reported by most dealers at the show in St. Charles, all of this suggests that it is certainly an exciting time to be a collector. Enjoy this brief look back at this summer's top sellers.

### **Guyette and Deeter**

Four lots sold for over \$100,000 while 52 lots sold for \$10,000 or more. The highlight was the sale of two oversized mallards by the Caines Brothers of Georgetown, South Carolina that sold for a combined \$1,144,600. Other top sellers included exceptional pieces by Wisconsin's Enoch Reindahl, Nathan Cobb, and Lothrop Holmes.









### **Copley Fine Art Auctions**

This sale featured a fine assortment of decoys including the final installment of the Donal O'Brien collection. The star of the sale was the Earnest-Gregory swimming, slot neck Canada goose by an unknown carver that sold for whopping \$810,000! In addition, decoys selling for over \$100,000 included important examples by Elmer Crowell, Charles Schoenheider, Sr., John Graham, Gus Wilson, Joe Lincoln, and the Ward Brothers.





### Auctioneers, Inc.

Owner Grant Cole reported that his July sale far exceeded his expectations, more that doubling his previous high-grossing auction. While an Oscar Peterson brown trout fish plaque tied for the top selling item, it was Frank Finney's folky, sitting cat, replicating an original by Oscar Peterson, that stole the show. Both pieces sold for just under \$10,000. This successful



sale also saw an excellent pair of hollow Mason Challenge Grade Mason Mallards sell for \$8,050.

Frank Finney "Peterson" Cat, \$9,755





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### Please send this completed form and your payment to:

### **Matt Bryant**

17114 Erskine Street Omaha, NE 68116 (785) 201-2923 matt.bryant@wilsonco.com

### Make check payable to:

Midwest Decoy Collectors Association

### 2019 MEGA CENTER EVENT EXHIBITOR TABLE REGISTRATION FORM

Primary table	holder:	
•		
, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,		
Email Address:		
	Dues are paid up through 2019 (Y/N)	
Person sharing	g table:	
Name:		
Address:		
	Dues are paid up through 2019 (Y/N)	
can pay your du If someone is sh standing. They	All exhibitors must be MDCA members in good stan- ues online at midwestdecory.org or by including your naring your table, they must either be a family member can join online at midwestdecoy.org or by including ang with this form.	r dues along with your table payment. ber, or be a MDCA member in good
	Checks should be made payable to the MDCA.	Amount
# (	of Table(s) @ \$75 each (\$100 each if after March 15)	\$
	Dues @ \$25 for one year or \$70 for 3 years	\$
	TOTAL PAYMENT INCLUDED	\$
Do you w	vant the same table location as last year?* (Y/N)	
Special requests	s:	
	*We cannot guarantee same table location but will try to ac	ccommodate all requests.

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