

I Remember Jim Story



Jim Ballard's first gourd, first blue ribbon at 1999 Ohio Gourd Show

The Jim Story Committee thanks all of the AGS Chapters for helping to recognize the work of gourd growers who keep pushing the limits of what's possible with gourds. Some members never met or heard of Jim Story, and others knew him well. Jim died in 2005 at the age of 83, but his legend lives on. Jim constantly talked about and challenged gourders to try to do more and different things with gourds. Please read some of the recollections from a few of the people Jim had encountered. We hope these stories encourage you, too, to push the limits of what's possible with gourds and become champions for gourds as Jim did.

Jim Ballard, Indiana Gourd Society, member. To me Jim Story is a gourd guru, mentor, friend, and like a brother. I first met Jim at the Spring 1999 Indiana Gourd Society's state show in Kokomo IN. I had entered the first gourd I had ever grown, but I did not put it in the incorrect Class. While I didn't win one of the top 3 ribbons, I did receive a participant ribbon. I met Jim asked him for advice on entering gourds and our friendship began. Jim was the kind of person who would share his wisdom and knowledge about gourds and life.

That October Jim took my gourd to the Ohio state gourd show to enter it for me. On Saturday my friend Carl Abner and I drove over to the show in Mt. Gilead to see the competition. As we entered the building where the gourds were displayed I saw

Jim from a distance. He came towards me, almost running, and said "You took a first place! You won a blue ribbon!" I could not believe it. This is the kind of mentor and motivator Jim was.

Jim had a way about himself he could really inspire and motivate people when it came to gourds, ask people like Glen Burkhalter, Bill Fryhoffer, Bruce Barber, Carl Abner, John Stevens - the list goes on and on.

Here is a tidbit of information about Jim and his dear wife Jane. They were two of the founding members of

the Indiana Gourd Society around twenty one years ago (1992).

Karen Neimeyer, Indiana Gourd Society President. In 2003 Jim Story issued a show challenge: he would provide a weighted black gourd container for the next year's show competition. The recipient of the container had to sign a contract to complete and enter a black-and-white centerpiece using natural materials. Since Jim's gourds and arrangements were incredible, I decided that I wanted to enter that competition, signed a contract, received my weighted gourd container, and set about to collect materials. I went to a friend's woods and collected Canadian thistle, jimson weed, thorn tree (locust) twigs and more, then spray painted them black and white. Ten years later I am still enjoying the centerpiece that has been entered in the Indiana Gourd Society's annual show and the Boone County Fair Open Show. Additionally, it has been placed as part of multiple gourd displays and in my office at the library. The piece has special significance for me on two levels: 1) I have a container provided by the Jim Story Challenge and crafted by The Man Himself. 2) It contains small thorn branches. Thorntown was named by the Eel River tribe of the Miami and called Kawiakiungi or "place of thorns" because of the locust trees growing in the area.



Karen Neimeyer's Black & White Gourd Centerpiece. Jim Story grew and prepared the gourd vase and Karen accepted the challenge to create a dried flower arrangement in the vase.

Jim Story mentored and challenged Jim Ballard (and others) to grow the longest gourd in 2001. The winning gourd, shown here is a bit longer than Jim Story was tall!



Jim Story's Gourd hat photographed in 2000.

Larry Sherman, Ohio Gourd Society Member and AGS Secretary. Jim Story was an inspiration to all of us in Ohio. Jim is credited with the inspiration for our now legendary Gourd Hat Contest! This was Jim's baby. He single-handedly put this event together and to my knowledge we (Ohio Gourd Show) are the only show where the actual wearing of the hats is a competition! I have always thought this was a "signature" part of our show, and Jim should be given full credit for it. There are separate Men's and Women's gourd hat

contests that take place after the Sunday morning breakfast is finished. Only the most dedicated "gourd heads" (a term Jim was known to use to describe those who attended the Sunday morning gourd breakfast) participated in this event. Over the years I have won several blue ribbons for my gourd hats at this event.

If you have a story about Jim Story, please write to me, Terry Noxel, at noxelts@aol.com so that we can continue to learn about this influential gourd grower and artist.

If you would like to "meet" Jim and learn from him about growing gourds you can purchase a VHS tape or DVD video from the Indiana Gourd Society's Ways and Means Committee. Visit their web site for information about purchasing this Gourds From the Vine video.



Sam Martin modeling the gourd hat that his parents or grandparents made for him. Sam won the men's blue ribbon in 2010



Larry Sherman modeling his red ribbon-winning gourd hat in 2010

We welcome additional supporters. Chapters can send a check for \$20 to American Gourd Society, c/o Terry Noxel (Treasurer), 100 Barton Rd, Windsor, NY 13865

2013 Jim Story Award Supporters

Chapter		Chapter	
Alabama Gourd Society	Yes	Mississippi Gourd Society	Yes
Arizona Gourd Society	Yes	New Mexico Gourd Society	
California Gourd Society	Yes	New York State Gourd Society	Yes
Florida Gourd Society		North Carolina Gourd Society	Yes
Georgia Gourd Society		Ohio Gourd Society	Yes
Hawaii Gourd Society		Pennsylvania Gourd Society	Yes
Idaho Gourd Society	Yes	Show-Me Gourd Society	Yes
Illinois Gourd Society	Yes	South Carolina Gourd Society	Yes
Indiana Gourd Society	Yes	Tennessee Volunteer Gourd Society	Yes
Iowa Gourd Society	Yes	Texas Gourd Society	Yes
Kentucky Gourd Society	Yes	Virginia Lovers' Gourd Society	Yes
Louisiana Gourd Society		Washington Gourd Society	Yes
Michigan Gourd Society		Wisconsin Gourd Society	Yes