

MENTOR RECOGNITION

My first time competing was 5 years ago at the Pennsylvania Show. I took 5 pieces and entered them in the amateur division. One of those pieces was a deer. I only took her to see where I was at with deer mounts and to learn. I never planned on pursuing deer or even shooting for my masters in them. I figured that I had nothing to lose and that I would leave the show having learned something from it. Lou Gagliano judged my deer that year and gave me a second place ribbon. His critique was so informative and he even gave me words of praise. I will never forget how he had me stick my finger in my deer's ear so that I could feel how the whole inner ear butt was pushed forward. He chuckled with a smile and said that it might be a problem. I never forgot his kind critique and kind words of encouragement.

Little did I know that this was just the beginning of his mentorship. Even though he wasn't the one judging, every year after that I asked him to look at my deer and give me a critique. He always picked one area and told me what I did wrong and how to fix it. As a matter of fact, one of his tips on how to fix an opened tear duct saved my show piece and got me a best of category. I honestly cannot thank him enough for his friendship, mentorship, and all of the advice that he has given me on my taxidermy journey. If not for his kind words on my first deer, I would have pursued the predator world to compete with instead of deer.

As helpful as Lou has been, he wasn't the only one to get me to where I am at today. About 3 years ago Vince Spellane was kind enough to offer a class on white tail for the PTA to auction off at the banquet. That year I took a doe to compete with and scored an

88. After that score, I decided that I needed to bid on his class to help me improve. As I was bidding, my wife just looked at me. I told her that I had no clue on how I could improve my deer and that it was time for me to take a class. Little did I know that along with learning techniques, I would also leave the class with another great friend and mentor. Vince was so patient and helpful as we worked on my piece. It took me over 5 hours to sculpt one ear butt and he had to finish it. Through the whole thing, he never rushed me or gave me a negative feeling. Vince is such a great teacher and has taught me so much. He helped me fill in all of the blanks that I was missing.



Jason and Lou



Vince and Jason

Winning Best of Category and having both Lou and Vince there was priceless. It took a lot of people to help get me where I am, but with the support and good critiques from Vince, Lou, and many others along the way, I have continued to grow. I am beyond thankful for Lou, Vince, and all of the other taxidermists that I have come in contact with over the past 5 years.

