

The First Annual Martha's Vineyard Medal Award

Recipients

Born and raised in Philadelphia, PA, **Ray Ellis** attended the Philadelphia Museum School of Art. Putting his art on the back-burner while he served in the Coast Guard for four years during World War II, followed by opening an advertising agency in New Jersey and New York, Ellis painted only in his spare time. His work was impressive enough, though, that he was elected into the American Watercolor Society shortly thereafter and by 1969 was devoting all of his time to his art. He spent a few years living in South Carolina before settling on Martha's Vineyard in 1989. After publishing fifteen books that showcase his appreciation for particular subjects—including gardens, moonlight, and American coastlines—and three straight years (1998-2001) of creating commissioned Christmas cards for the White House, Ellis continues to paint today on Martha's Vineyard where he maintains a permanent residence and studio. His books, such as *Martha's Vineyard: An Affectionate Memoir*, *Coastal Images of America*, and *Fishing the Vineyard*, each reflect what has come to be known as innately "Martha's Vineyard." Ellis proudly accentuates the finer aspects of Vineyard life that he has clearly come to embrace. While his work is displayed in museums, galleries and private collections across the globe, Ellis has undoubtedly left his mark in an impressive way on the small island of Martha's Vineyard.

A great interest in maritime history is undoubtedly important for any person living on Martha's Vineyard—**Tom Hale** is no exception. That interest, when paired with an innate ability to manipulate material with one's hands would lead Hale to a career in meticulous

model-building that has enhanced the understanding of maritime history on the Island. After graduating from Harvard University with a degree in architecture, Hale made his first trip to Martha's Vineyard in 1948. Years later, he would buy the Martha's Vineyard Shipyard, and reconfigure the building to accommodate recreational boaters. In addition to his hands-on influence on the island in terms of nautical life, Hale has also assisted the cultural aspect of the island history through his work with many organizations; the National Maritime Historical Association, Nautical Research Guild, National Association of Boat builders and Repairers, and Martha's Vineyard Museum, which published his book, *The Ghost of the Grasshopper, the Seagirt Saga of Two Families*. Arguably, his most impressive mark on Vineyard life is being one of the founders of the Sail Martha's Vineyard program, that teaches schoolchildren to sail, instilling a lifelong love of sailing. In retirement, Hale, who lives in Vineyard Haven with his wife Margie, continues to pursue his nautical interests with the construction of model boats that have particular historical significance to him, including the old Islander.

Born in Charleston, West Virginia, to a family full of teachers, **Della Hardman** learned early on to appreciate education. She attended West Virginia State College where she earned a Bachelor's degree in Education in 1943 then headed north to attend Boston University where she took her Masters in Education in 1945. Hardman no doubt valued the iconic importance of history and learning, which she fostered throughout her education. She pursued this love for learning throughout her life and earning her doctorate from Kent State University in 1994 at the age of 72.. She taught art first for Boston Public Schools, and then migrated back home where she lectured in art at West Virginia State College. Throughout the course of her

life, Hardman served actively with many different groups, including as the chairperson of the board of trustees of the Charleston Art Gallery and being a member of the National Art Education Association (NAEA) and the National Association of Art Administrators.

Hardman was recognized as the Alumna of the Year by her alma mater, West Virginia State College; as the Outstanding Art Educator by the NAEA; and was named commissioner of the West Virginia Arts and Humanities Council by Governor John D. Rockefeller, among other honors. Added to her resume at 72 years of age was the title of “columnist”: Hardman accepted the request to write a column in the *Vineyard Gazette*, following in the footsteps of famed Harlem Renaissance author Dorothy West. Hardman’s writings brought a renewed vitality to the African American community on Martha’s Vineyard, and she played a pivotal role in maintaining the African American history that is intrinsic to the town of Oak Bluffs.

Hardman passed away in December of 2005, after having filed her last *Vineyard Gazette* column.

John Walter published his first newspaper for his family at age six, and from that point on, he never ceased to impress with his journalistic prowess as he traversed the world reporting with a quick wit and observant eye. Beginning his career as editor of the *Daily Northwestern* at his alma mater, Northwestern University, Walter dominated the journalistic world by pioneering such newspapers as the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, *USA Today*, and the *Pacific Daily News* (Guam). Taking a particular interest in American history and culture, Walter became enamored with the small island of Martha’s Vineyard where he spent the last six years of his life. Walter came to the Vineyard to as editor and publisher of the *Vineyard*

Gazette. Following his tenure at the *Gazette*, Walter, along with his wife Jan Pogue, began a private publishing company called Vineyard Stories—since 2005 the company has produced a dozen well received Vineyard books.

Following the retirement of long-time *Dukes County Intelligencer* editor, Art Railton, Walter took over the role of editor of the quarterly journal published by the Martha's Vineyard Museum. On the day before his death on September 12, 2008, he submitted a detailed story budget and rough texts for Volume 50, No. 2, the November edition of the *Intelligencer*. In a note accompanying that material, he described it as “a tentative version of the issue, just in case I don't feel like working at all when I get back.”