

RAY HARM, WOOD HANNAH,
AND THE REBIRTH OF AMERICAN WILDLIFE ART

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American wildlife art evolved gradually as the frontier moved westward and the nation grew from a mercantile economy to an industrial superpower. In the seventeenth century, Mark Catesby published didactic portraits of birds he discovered along the eastern seaboard in a work entitled *Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and the Bahama Islands*.¹ From 1808 to 1813 Alexander Wilson expanded this enterprise with his publication, *American Ornithology*.

From 1827 to 1838 the value of wildlife art reached a new height when John James Audubon published *Birds of America*. Audubon marketed this work by selling subscriptions for \$1,000. *Birds of America* consisted of 435 hand-colored intaglio prints which were made in England and distributed in five installments. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Currier and Ives entered this marketplace by publishing the wildlife paintings of Arthur F. Tait. Currier and Ives were able to market their prints with slogans like "the cheapest and most popular pictures in the world" because they mass-produced lithographs in assembly lines and later because the new technology of chromolithography made it possible for printers to produce colored prints mechanically. Of course, Currier and Ives also published subjects other than wildlife. Including these other subjects, Currier and Ives published more than seven thousand editions, many

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1 Didactic portraits are illustrations intended to show viewers what a particular species looks like.

in lots of several hundred thousand, and they sold individual prints for as little as twenty cents each.²

Though new methods and technologies enabled publishers like Currier and Ives to make prints affordable for most Americans, they also had a paradoxical, debilitating effect. Lower prices caused market saturation and this, in turn, caused the chromolithograph publishing industry to collapse altogether. After Currier and Ives shut down in 1907, the wildlife-art print market remained depressed until the 1960s when Ray Harm and Wood Hannah joined forces in Kentucky and formed Ray Harm Wildlife Art, Incorporated. Their enterprise was the basis for a rebirth of American wildlife art. The purpose of this article is to tell their story.

Ray Harm Wildlife Art was established in 1962 to publish the paintings of Ray Harm in a series of print editions which were to be called "The Ray Harm Collection." The idea of forming the company was conceived by Wood Hannah (1904-1989). A native of Girard, Pennsylvania, Hannah moved to Louisville in the mid 1930s during the depth of the Great Depression. For twenty years Hannah supported himself and his family as an investment broker. In 1954 he extended himself by founding Hannah Motors, an Oldsmobile dealership that profited handsomely during the postwar boom years of big cars and cheap gas. He later became president and owner of the Kentucky Concrete Pipe Company and, as an investor, he held shares of various other companies. Hannah was well connected politically. He was the fiscal agent for the Kentucky state treasury and a board member of the University of Kentucky, Cumberland College, and Transylvania University. Ironically, Hannah possessed no experience in publishing.

Hannah's collaborator, Ray Harm (1926-), was a native West Virginian who possessed a great deal of homespun talent. The son of two musicians, Raymond K. Auville and Lida Lewis, Harm was named Raymond K. Auville, Jr., at birth. Even at an early age, Ray expressed himself artistically through skillful paintings and drawings of

2 Peter Marzio, *The Democratic Art: Pictures for a 19th-Century America* (Boston: David R Godine, 1979), 61.

Appalachian wildlife as well as through music. In 1940 at age fourteen, he left home after his parents divorced and went west to become a cowboy. For five years, he worked on various dude ranches and in rodeos and wild-west shows. In 1943, after his mother married William F. Harm, Ray legally adopted his surname.

In 1944 Harm enlisted in the navy and served in the South Pacific as a radio operator. After the war, Harm used the GI Bill to attend the Cooper School of Commercial Art in Cleveland, Ohio. There he met Carmella Capretta, a fellow art student, whom he married in 1950. Ray and Carmella Harm raised three children, Barbara Jo, Linda, and Ray, Jr., nicknamed "Hap," in a six-room log house which Harm built himself in Geauga County, east of Cleveland. Although Harm tried to support his family by making a living as an artist, he was forced to work as a truck driver, horse trainer, and ditchdigger also because painting simply was not profitable enough to make ends meet. After struggling from hand-to-mouth for eight to nine years, Harm finally decided to move to New Mexico where he had been offered the job of foreman on a ranch near Magdalena. Harm was on the verge of moving there with his family when he received what would turn out to be the break of a lifetime.

In the fall of 1961 Harm had mailed two bird paintings to Mrs. William Coit, a customer in Florida. There they were seen by Dr. Frank G. Dickey, then president of the University of Kentucky, and Wood Hannah. Both Dickey and Hannah were impressed.³ But Hannah was so impressed that he made a trip all the way to Harm's log house in Geauga County to meet Harm the next spring. During a follow-up phone call from Florida, Hannah commissioned twenty watercolors of Kentucky birds.⁴ From their first acquaintance, Hannah took a liking to Harm:

The Harm-Hannah business relationship began Hannah said, "Because Ray was having a struggle and I didn't see any reason a

3 William C. Blizzard, "Our 20th Century Audubon," *West Virginia Gazette-Mail*, 23 January 1966, p. 3m.

4 *Ibid.*

fellow with that much talent had to struggle so hard. I came away more interested in Ray and what he stood for than his work."⁵

In fact, Hannah had taken such a liking to Harm that Harm and his family were never to live from hand-to-mouth again.

When, during a phone call to inquire how his commissioned paintings were coming, Hannah was informed by Harm that he was about to accept the ranching job in New Mexico, Hannah asked Harm, "Do you want to be an artist, or not?" Although Harm said "yes," he explained that he could not support his family as a painter. Hannah responded by saying that if Harm drove to Louisville, he believed he could help him establish himself as an artist. Unsure but hopeful about what Hannah had in mind, Harm drove to Kentucky several weeks later.⁶

True to his word, Hannah immediately took Harm to Lexington to be appointed as the first Herman L. Donovan Artist-in-Residence at the University of Kentucky. To Harm's surprise, the residency carried with it a stipend that equaled his entire 1962 earnings of \$3,000. Next, Hannah took Harm to Frankfort to meet Governor Bert T. Combs. During Combs's administration, the Kentucky Department of Parks had become a national model of excellence. After Hannah succeeded in convincing Governor Combs to appoint Harm as the official naturalist and lecturer for Kentucky's park system at an annual stipend of \$5,000, Hannah proposed that the parks department reproduce Harm's paintings to decorate the rooms of the guest lodges in the state's twenty-one parks. Although Governor Combs turned Hannah down even after Hannah had made an impassioned plea, a gubernatorial aide who asked, "If you think it's such a good idea, why don't you try it yourself?" made Hannah see an entirely new possibility.⁷

Instead of limiting exposure to guests at lodges in state parks, Hannah envisioned a plan to distribute reproductions privately in

5 Charles E. Teeple, "Hannah and Harm Hope to Make Kentucky Center of Wildlife Art," *Louisville Times*, 10 May 1968.

6 Ray Harm interview with author, 27 October 1989.

7 *Ibid.*



Ray Harm and Wood Hannah, 1968

The Courier-Journal

order to help Harm sell his paintings. Instead of seeing publishing simply as a means to promote sales of paintings, Hannah began to see reproductions as commodities which might exceed the potential commercial value of paintings altogether. In order to test his idea, Hannah commissioned (at his own expense) a marketing firm to conduct an independent feasibility study not long after he returned to Louisville. Although the firm recommended against proceeding, Hannah decided to go with his instinct.⁸

In the summer of 1962 Hannah met with his friends Carl Fischer, Sr., president of Fischer Packing Company, and Herman Kessler, president and owner of Standard Printing Company, and formed the company that would not only bear Ray Harm's name but that would also catalyze the rebirth of American wildlife art. Hannah, Fischer, and Kessler formed Ray Harm Wildlife Art Incorporated with an initial investment of \$319,500. Of this, Harm was given a twenty percent share. He was also provided a cottage on Lake Cumberland where his family could reside while he established himself as artist-in-residence at the University of Kentucky and naturalist and lecturer at parks throughout the state.

While Fischer and Kessler invested in Ray Harm Wildlife Art because Wood Hannah was a friend and a successful businessman who recommended it as a sound investment, Kessler also undoubtedly invested with an eye toward profitable printing contracts for Standard Printing Company. From the onset, the founders of the company intended to publish "The Ray Harm Collection" at affordable prices. They intended to do so by using photo-offset lithography, a technology that had emerged during the first half of the twentieth century and that had long since replaced chromolithography and other printing technologies.

Although Standard Printing Company was capable of printing photolithographs, it did not have the capability of making its own color separations or plates. Consequently, it had to bid this work out to other printers. Knowing at first of no American printer that could

8 David Usher, president, The Greenwich Workshop, telephone interview, 16 October 1990.

produce separations or plates that came close to matching Harm's original paintings, Standard solicited bids from printers in Japan as well as the Netherlands. Although Standard initially subcontracted a printer in Amsterdam to make color separations and plates for a series of proofs, it subsequently subcontracted the firm of Stevenson Photo Color Company in Cincinnati when Stevenson said it could duplicate an original painting as closely as the foreign printers by making additional plates called "touch" or "kiss" plates. Located in Cincinnati, a center of printing even long before Audubon, Stevenson also appealed to Standard and to Hannah because its proximity would invariably result in cost savings and convenience. According to Harm, Hannah gave the Stevenson company a blank check to prove the claim, which it did by using as many as twelve or thirteen plates in the printing process.⁹

The next order of business was to incorporate the company. After the state granted Ray Harm Wildlife Art its articles of incorporation on 20 November 1962, Hannah began the business of merchandising Harm's prints.¹⁰ He began, strange though it may seem, in Florida where he was first introduced to Harm's artwork.

Hannah owned a home in Vero Beach, and he recognized that Florida was not only a winter haven for affluent "snow birds" but also an outlet to markets throughout the rest of the country. Although Hannah's initial merchandising methods were simple, they were, nevertheless, very effective. Hannah would simply introduce himself to people who looked like prospective customers as if he were on the lot of Hannah Motors, explain his product, and then attempt to make a sale.

In the early 1960s, two women were strolling down a street in Palm Beach, feeling the warm winter sun and listening to the ocean breeze rattle the royal palms when they . . . noticed an Olds 88 with Kentucky license plates and . . . a friendly stranger from Louisville.

9 The Stevenson Photo Color Company was founded in 1926 as a specialty printer. Jack Carmichael, production manager, Stevenson Photo Color Company, telephone interview, 15 January 1990.

10 Pat McLean, Corporation Records, Department of Secretary of State, Frankfort, Kentucky, telephone interview, 3 December 1991.

Wood Hannah, Sr., was . . . a businessman, but he was also a sort of super salesman, one of those who could talk a bear out of its honey. He had something to sell the women.

"You ladies like birds?" he asked.

He knew they liked birds. Almost everybody likes birds. The women had gone south with the birds to get out of the cold.

"Sure, we like birds," they said.

"Well, you'll be interested to see what I have," he said, plucking a number of Ray Harm wildlife [photo-] lithographic [proofing] prints from . . . the trunk of his car. . . . The women immediately liked his work and began digging in their purses.¹¹

Once Hannah made a sale, he would obtain the customer's name and address not only in order to have the print mailed from Louisville but also to build a company mailing list.

Taking Harm along with him, Hannah also made promotional tours throughout Florida. Following the presentation of paintings and preliminary proofing prints to service clubs, home and garden clubs, and other civic organizations, the two would collect names and addresses for their mailing list and take orders. Although it did not play as important a role as it would after Ray Harm Wildlife Art was well established, conservation also entered into their marketing strategy. For example, Hannah arranged for Harm to speak at various conservation club meetings since conservationists were also prospective customers.

During the winter of 1962-1963, Harm conducted a considerable amount of fieldwork in Florida in order to build up his portfolio. Meanwhile in Louisville, Herman Kessler established offices for the company at Standard Printing Company in order to process orders and distribute the photolithographs.¹²

11 Kelly Cocanougher, "Cornering the Market," *Louisville Times*, 26 September 1977. Bracketed material within this quote was provided by Ray Harm.

12 Because Herman Kessler was not initially enthusiastic about housing the offices of Ray Harm Wildlife Art at Standard Printing Company, Hannah agreed to pay Standard for this service. Once orders started coming in, however, Kessler became more enthusiastic. Harm interview with author, 27 October 1989.



Eagle and Osprey, 1964

Ray Harm

In the spring of 1963, Harm rejoined his family on a farm which he rented near Berea, gateway to the Appalachian Mountains, where he had been born, while Hannah returned to Louisville. With orders from Florida in hand and the means of production and distribution in place, Ray Harm Wildlife Art released an introductory portfolio of four prints in August 1963. Because it was the symbol of the nation, *Bald Eagle (family)* was designated as the first print in the folio. It was published in an edition of one thousand unsigned and unnumbered photolithographs, each of which measured twenty-three by twenty-nine inches and sold for \$30.00.¹³

In order to launch "The Ray Harm Collection" in Kentucky, Hannah focused media attention on the prints through his friend, Barry Bingham, owner of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*. The newspaper introduced Kentuckians to Harm's story and his art in its Sunday magazine. Hannah extended this showmanship by

¹³ Ruth M. Pollard, *The Official Price Guide to Collector Prints* (5th ed.; Orlando, Florida: House of Collectibles, Inc., 1984), 252.

ceremoniously presenting *Bald Eagle* prints to Governor Combs and University of Kentucky's president, John Dickey. In order to get national publicity, Hannah presented the original painting from which the prints were made to President John F. Kennedy. Hannah accomplished this through connections he had made as finance committee chairman for Kennedy's 1960 presidential campaign in Kentucky. As a consequence of these efforts, the business of Ray Harm Wildlife Art boomed.¹⁴

Once launched, Hannah and his partners did not waste any time publishing their next print. Realizing that sales of *Bald Eagle* prints were fueled by the synergy of symbolism and patriotism and that Kentuckians were highly loyal to their state, Hannah and his partners chose Kentucky's official state bird as the subject of their second print. In order to expand distribution, *Cardinal*, as it was simply named, was published in 1963 in an edition of five thousand unsigned, unnumbered photolithographs and sold for \$10.00, one-third the price of a *Bald Eagle* print. To keep costs in line with pricing, *Cardinal* was printed on smaller sheets of paper which measured sixteen inches by twenty inches.¹⁵

Ray Harm Wildlife Art hit its stride with *Cardinal*. Beginning in 1965, the company published a string of eleven other Ray Harm paintings, all in editions of five thousand unsigned, unnumbered sixteen-by-twenty-inch photolithographs which sold for \$10.00 each.¹⁶ In addition to mail-order sales processed through the office at Standard Printing Company, Ray Harm Wildlife Art also developed a network of retail dealers during these years. Ironically, Ray Harm Wildlife Art dealerships developed not by design but out of independent enterprise. As the Ray Harm prints caught on, independent retail dealers sought to stock them in their own stores. These dealers were then structured into bona fide Ray Harm Wildlife Art dealerships by Wood Hannah.¹⁷

14 Various Ray Harm interviews with author, 1989-1997.

15 Pollard, *Official Price Guide*, 252.

16 *Ibid.*, 251-55.

17 Various Ray Harm interviews with author, 1989-1997.

In order to keep up with production, it was imperative that Ray devote himself to painting. Among his many distractions, however, were collectors who increasingly asked him to autograph their prints. It was when autograph seekers turned from novelty to nuisance that Harm and Hannah stumbled across a practice that, after they systematically integrated it with numbering, became a hallmark of wildlife-art publishing and, as will be explained, added value for collectors. In order to fend off bothersome collectors who wanted autographs, Hannah and Harm decided to charge a fee.¹⁸ Much to their surprise, the demand for autographed photolithographs exceeded the demand for the unsigned ones, even though they sold signed ones for \$20.00 (as opposed to \$10.00 for the unsigned ones).

The practice of numbering wildlife-art prints had actually begun in the 1920s when Derrydale Press adopted it not from wildlife-art publishing per se but, presumably, from *peintre-gravure* printmakers, such as Joseph Pennell in the United States and James A.B. Whistler in England, who had revived printing as an art in itself around the turn of the century. At the time that Ray Harm Wildlife Art was founded in 1962, just as in Pennell and Whistler's day, print numbering consisted of penciling onto a print a fraction in which the inventory number of an individual print was written above the number of the total edition.

Unlike *peintre-gravure* printmakers who numbered prints according to the sequence they were pulled from the printing plate in order to equate quality with value, publishers of wildlife art skewed the purpose of numbering prints during the second quarter of the twentieth century by publishing both unnumbered and numbered photomechanical prints of the same painting and by numbering photomechanical prints, even though it made no difference whether a print produced by this technology was numbered 1/999 or 998/999.¹⁹ Consequently, wildlife-art prints produced in the

18 Ray Harm interview with author, 27 October 1989.

19 Patricia B. Bailey, "A Closer Look at Limited Edition Prints," *Art Today*, Winter 1986-87, p. 53.



Bald Eagle (family), 1963

Ray Harm

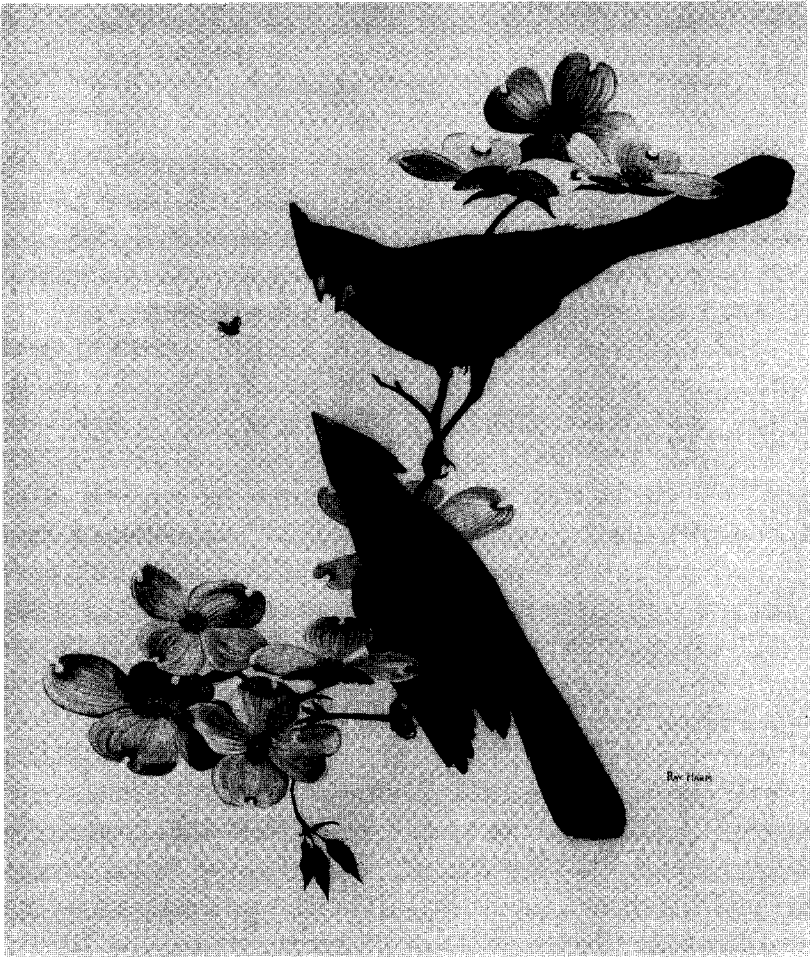
twentieth century before Ray Harm Wildlife Art was founded in 1962 were relatively valueless.

Interestingly, Ray Harm Wildlife Art published its first numbered as well as signed photolithograph, *Eagle and Osprey*, in December 1964 in order to stay ahead of would-be competitors, even though Hannah and Harm faced no real organized competition during these early years. It is of additional interest that the company contracted with Stevenson Photo Color to print *Eagle and Osprey*, even though Herman Kessler, Standard Printing Company president, was one of its three investors. To focus attention on signed and numbered prints and to heighten the perception of increased value, Harm and Hannah wanted to publish *Eagle and Osprey* as an exceptionally large photolithograph. Because Standard Printing Company was incapable of printing larger photolithographs, Kessler had no choice but to go with Stevenson. Published in an edition of five hundred, *Eagle and Osprey* measured 43¼ inches by 30¼ inches. By comparison, the dimensions of *Bald Eagle* were 23 inches by 29 inches.

In order to help collectors distinguish between signed, numbered photolithographs and unsigned, unnumbered ones and in order to establish an even larger market, Ray Harm Wildlife Art began publishing unsigned, unnumbered photolithographs on small 16-by-20-inch sheets which Hannah merchandised as “decorator prints.” In addition, instead of merely relying upon numbering as an adaptation from *peintre-gravure*, or “fine art” printmakers as they referred to themselves, Wood Hannah developed a merchandising strategy that gave numbering an entirely new meaning and value altogether.

Drawing from his over twenty years of experience as an investment broker, Hannah promoted numbered photolithographs, or “collector prints” as he called them, not as an outgrowth of fine-art printmaking but rather as a commodity that was a good economic investment:

For some 25 years my occupation was investment counseling—stocks and bonds. That was years ago. But it is evident to today’s investment counselors, as well as to those who have funds for investment, that under today’s conditions, a specific choice is difficult. It is even difficult to decide the form of investment—whether it should be high-grade corporate bonds that currently can be purchased to yield around 10% or sound municipal bonds that can be purchased to yield around 7% tax-free or selected



Cardinal, 1963

Ray Harm

stocks, even at current depressed prices. Sound investment counseling, it seems to me, should include at least two, or perhaps all three of these categories.

Furthermore, with so much being said and written about the subject these days, I think it is timely to say that art as an investment is worthy of the prudent investor's consideration. Although I profess no broad knowledge of art, and am certainly no expert on art as an investment, I do know this—That—we are developing an

ever-widening national interest in wildlife art. And that when we produce and market a print and label it a "collector print" [that is, a signed and numbered photolithograph], it is, or will soon become just that — a "collector print."²⁰

Of course, numbering itself did not necessarily make "collector" or numbered photolithographs a good economic investment. Rather, it was demand, triggered, in part, by numbering but shaped and fulfilled mostly by his enterprise that enabled Hannah to successfully promote numbered photolithographs as a good investment.

Fundamental to this enterprise was Hannah's ability to develop appreciation among collectors of the correlation between limiting by numbering editions of photolithographs and value or, in other words, the economic principle of supply and demand. The premise of this correlation was twofold: 1) numbering limited the economy of scale of photomechanical printing technology and 2) photolithographs that had been purchased on the retail market could be sold again at even higher prices on the so-called secondary or resale market once all the photolithographs in a particular retail edition were sold out. Put more simply, limiting by numbering editions of photolithographs enriched value if demand could be created that exceeded supply.

As explained previously, one way that Hannah had already created demand was to surround the publication of signed, limited-edition photolithographs with the fanfare of political endorsements and media attention. By 1965 Hannah reached a new height through a Machiavellian scheme. In that year, Hannah began polling his dealers about inquiries, offers, or even sales to people who were willing to pay more than the retail price for a print from an edition which was sold out. Hannah then fed this information back through dealers to collectors to establish the concept of secondary market resale value in the minds of the public. As will be seen, this strategy mushroomed after Hannah reincorporated Ray Harm Wildlife Art under the name Frame House Gallery in 1969 to accommodate other artists and

²⁰ Wood Hannah, "Letter from the President," *Frame House Gallery Newsletter*, Winter 1970, p. 1.

especially in the 1970s when publishers of magazines and price guides began listing retail and secondary market prices.²¹

Hannah's next tactic was to issue a certificate with each numbered photolithograph which certified that a public accountant had canceled it by defacing its printing plate so that no further photolithographs could be printed and that the edition was indeed limited. Hannah did this even though "the task of making new negatives and printing plates is not so difficult that there is any real deterrence."²²

Having thus established new economic meaning and value for wildlife-art prints for collecting, framing, and display through the enterprise of publishing signed, limited-edition photolithographs, Wood Hannah next used his skill as a salesman to increase name recognition in the general public and to institutionalize investor confidence by using his connections with Kentucky businessmen and politicians and by merchandising the signed, limited-edition photolithographs in ways that both shaped and represented the new, pluralistic ecological ideology of environmentalism.

In 1965, for example, Ray Harm was memorialized in the hearts and minds of thousands of University of Kentucky alumni when Hannah donated a Ray Harm Wildlife Art edition of prints to the Alumni Association to be used for fund-raising. As mentioned earlier, Hannah was on the board of the university. The edition that Hannah donated featured an image of a wildcat, the school's mascot. He also donated the painting. As a consequence of these and other enterprising practices and tactics, the media throughout the southeast began hailing Harm with plaudits such as "our 20th Century Audubon"²³ and the "wildlife artist of the century."²⁴ To enlarge the confidence of investors Hannah could not possibly have done any better than arrange a series of articles in *The Kentucky Banker*, a

21 Various Ray Harm interviews with author, 1989-1997.

22 Ralph Mayer, *Dictionary of Art Terms and Techniques* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1969), 216-17.

23 Blizzard, "Our 20th Century Audubon," 2m.

24 "Wildlife Artist of the Century—Ray Harm," *Holiday Inn*, November 1968, p. 6.

trade journal published monthly by the Kentucky Bankers Association. This excerpt is typical:

More than 100 (nearly one-third) heads of banks have their own private collections ranging from a couple (with great hopes for more), to complete sets. More than 1,500 prints have been accounted for in the banking field of Kentucky, and it is estimated that this number would be doubled and perhaps tripled if reports were made on collections of all personnel.

From a financial standpoint, Ray Harm prints are real blue chip items. At the opening of the Bank of Paducah's Ray Harm Wildlife Art Gallery, the local paper observed that "Prices on Ray Harm's prints are flying higher than the birds he paints." Collections have increased as much as 500% upward with some individual prints increasing as much as 2,000% upward. The value of the collections of Kentucky's bankers is beyond estimate, since many of them are early prints and autographed by the artist . . . *Kentucky Banker's* recent "wildlife painting survey" gave Ray Harm the undisputed crown of royalty among wildlife artists. Although there were bankers fortunate enough to own and display early Audubons . . . some as far back as 1827 . . . and numerous other beautiful nature paintings, it was Ray Harm who emerged first in popularity, a fact due not only to his genius but to the availability of his work.²⁵

As a consequence of these and other business practices and tactics, the company flourished to the point where it required over eighty full-time employees to keep up with orders and where they had outgrown the company's makeshift offices at Standard Printing.

To accommodate this growth and to expand even further, Ray Harm Wildlife Art built its own new facility in Louisville in 1967. In addition to containing mail-order and wholesale operations, this facility contained a retail gallery. To retrofit the gallery with framing equipment Wood Hannah purchased another gallery called Frame House Gallery for its assets and, as will be seen, for something much more important, its name. In addition, Hannah also hired the gallery's manager, Dorothy Murrel, to manage the retail operations at the new Ray Harm Wildlife Art headquarters. In this same year, Ray Harm also took advantage of his prosperity and built the house of his family's

²⁵ "Kentucky Banking Decor has Strong 'Ray Harm' Influence," *The Kentucky Banker*, July 1968, pp. 7-8.

dreams on a 300-acre site adjacent to Bernheim Forest, the state's arboretum and research forest located near Bardstown.²⁶

As Ray Harm Wildlife Art prospered in the late 1960s, so too did the ideology of environmentalism. The most salient characteristic of environmentalism, at least as far as the rebirth of American wildlife art is concerned, was the emergence of non-consumptive imagery — imagery that portrayed wildlife not as game to be hunted or consumed but rather as the basis for recreation, such as bird-watching. Being a field naturalist as well as an artist, Harm's propensity and love for the out-of-doors led him to urge Hannah to use prints in some way to help promote public interest in this ideological milieu. Toward that end, Hannah and Harm together developed an innovative tactic which promoted and helped such organizations as the National Audubon Society, while it simultaneously heightened name recognition for Ray Harm Wildlife Art.

To promote the National Audubon Society in Kentucky and to help it attract more members, Hannah began arranging speaking engagements for Harm throughout the state in 1967. After a formal presentation about the aesthetics and ethics of wildlife art and environmentalism, Harm offered a complimentary photolithograph to anyone who would become a National Audubon Society member. In addition, he offered to autograph it on the spot.²⁷ In this way, Harm not only increased National Audubon Society membership in the state from 217 to over 8,000, but he also advanced environmentalism and, of course, market penetration for his prints.²⁸

As a consequence of this integration of art with the enterprise of publishing and the ideology of environmentalism, the thirty-three different photolithographs that Ray Harm Wildlife Art published between 1963 and 1969 appreciated from a total retail value of \$675.00 to an estimated \$7,000 on the secondary market.²⁹ In

26 Various Ray Harm interviews with author, 1989-1997.

27 Ibid.

28 Charles H. Collison, "Kentucky's Artist-Conservationist (And the Birth of an Audubon Movement)," *Audubon Magazine*, January/February 1968, p. 44.

29 "Wildlife Artist of the Century—Ray Harm," 8.

addition, the distribution network grew to include some one hundred dealers nationwide.³⁰ Ironically, this threshold not only caused the metamorphosis of Ray Harm Wildlife Art into a new, even larger enterprise but also its demise.

Realizing that additional effort was needed for their publishing enterprise to grow any more, Wood Hannah introduced a bold new plan in 1968. Among other changes, this plan called for expansion of the product line through the addition of new artists, re-capitalization, and a corporate name change. After Kessler and Fischer approved his plan, Hannah broke it to Harm by explaining that "instead of being a solo musician, he could be the conductor of an entire symphony."³¹ This plan was formalized on 1 April 1969 when Ray Harm Wildlife Art was reincorporated under the name of the retail gallery that Hannah had purchased two years earlier, Frame House Gallery.³²

Although the reincorporation permitted public trading of Ray Harm Wildlife Art stock on the New York Stock Exchange, in reality the company remained tightly controlled, at least for the time being. With respect to new artists, the company added Guy Coheleach, Don Richard Eckelberry, and Charles Harper to its roster in 1969 along with Richard Evans Younger in 1972 and Charles Frace in 1973.³³ Of the many strategies and tactics that Hannah used to advance Frame House Gallery, perhaps the most progressive were to publish signed, limited-edition photolithographs to promote the politics of ecological ideology and to publish a newsletter that continued to shape retail supply and demand and secondary market value.

In 1969 Frame House Gallery donated its signed, limited-edition photolithographs to the National Audubon Society to help it raise money to preserve a wildlife sanctuary near Naples, Florida, known as Corkscrew Swamp. In addition, Frame House Gallery subsequently donated photolithographs to help the National Audubon Society solicit new members in Florida, Tennessee, North Carolina,

30 Teeple, "Hannah and Harm."

31 Ray Harm interview with author, 27 October 1989.

32 McLean interview.

33 "Of Birds and Bankers," *The Kentucky Banker*, November 1971, pp. 4-5.

Michigan, and Ohio.³⁴ In 1973 it even collaborated with the Fund for Animals, one of several radical animal-rights organizations which had sprung up during the environmental movement.³⁵

In order to inform its dealers about its environmental activities and in order to merchandise new photolithographs, Frame House Gallery began publishing the newsletter *Collector Prints* shortly after it was formed in 1969. In one volume, under the heading "Public Service, 'The Challenge of Art and the Artist,'" Wood Hannah articulated the correlation between Frame House Gallery and ecological ideology.

One of the stated concepts of Frame House Gallery is "to broaden appreciation of art in general and wildlife art in particular; to increase membership in and support such conservation groups as National Audubon Society and National Wildlife Federation; to contribute to the promotion, preservation and, possibly, the establishment of wildlife sanctuaries."

The artists, personnel, dealers and stockholders take pride in the fact that from our beginning, a very few years ago, these causes have been served.

It is difficult to assess in dollars and cents the sum total of our work. This report summarizes the major efforts, through which thousands of new members have joined local and national conservation organizations; specific sanctuaries have received large donations and other worthwhile causes have been served.

Of far greater value than the dollars and cents figures, however, is the fact that thousands of people who, at best, had only a casual interest in our environment are now active and devoted conservationists.

We have accomplished much. But I like to feel that it is only the beginning of our contribution to a better America and a better world.³⁶

In addition, Hannah used *Collector Prints* to promote new signed, limited-edition photolithographs as well as secondary market prices

34 Ibid.

35 Ray Harm interview with author, 27 October 1989.

36 Wood Hannah, "Public Service: 'The Challenge of Art and Artists,'" *Collector Prints*, April 1974, p. 22.

and instructions under headings such as "PURCHASE AND SALE OF 'COLLECTOR ITEM' PRINTS," "TO SELL A 'COLLECTOR ITEM' PRINT," and "TO BUY A 'COLLECTOR ITEM' PRINT."³⁷

As a consequence of these and other enterprising activities, Frame House Gallery hit \$2.6 million in annual sales by 1973. Another and even more important consequence of the enterprising publishing activities initiated by Wood Hannah and his associates were take-over offers from large corporations, including The Franklin Mint, Royal Crown Cola, and the Leo Burnett Company.³⁸ Yet another consequence of their enterprise was the emergence of competitors who not only emulated Hannah, Harm, and their associates, but who also developed their own publishing companies and markets and who helped establish a national infrastructure which published signed, limited-edition photolithographs that contained consumptive sporting imagery and imagery that went beyond sport and natural history to a variety of ecological ideologies. Incredible though it may seem, along with Ray Harm Wildlife Art and Frame House Gallery, this infrastructure subsequently published over three billion signed, limited-edition photolithographs that had an estimated retail market value in excess of \$600 billion.³⁹

Today, though Frame House Gallery still exists under new ownership, it has long since been marginalized by competitors who jumped on the wildlife-art publishing bandwagon and who took its potential to even greater heights. Early competitors included Wild Wings, founded by William Webster in 1967; Mill Pond Press, founded by Robert Lewin in 1972; and The Greenwich Workshop, founded in 1972 by David Usher. Before launching his company, Usher traveled to Louisville to consult Wood Hannah. Today, the Greenwich Workshop is an acknowledged industry leader. Significant later

37 *Ibid.*, 3.

38 Kelly Cocanougher, "Cornering the Market." Frame House Gallery net income reached \$541,247 in 1973.

39 David J. Wagner, "The Material Culture of SLELWAPs: Signed Limited Edition Wildlife Art Photolithographs" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1992), 242. Consumptive sporting imagery is imagery which portrays wildlife as targets for sportsmen.

arrivals include American Masters Foundation and Hadley House, not to mention such conservation groups as Ducks Unlimited which publishes wildlife-art photolithographs to fund its conservation initiatives. Though retail sales have suffered in recent years from over-saturation, photolithographs remain the centerpiece of America's wildlife-art economy today.⁴⁰

A fascinating aspect of this economy is the so-called secondary or, in other words, resale market. As explained earlier, it is the secondary market that determines resale value. While this aspect of wildlife art deserves further study, the secondary market is extremely complex and the resale value of wildlife art photolithographs is exceedingly difficult to determine; the secondary market value, therefore, must be the subject for another article.

Wood Hannah, who died in 1989, is survived by his wife Marie and several grandchildren, one of whom is named Wood Hannah III. Ray Harm resides in Sonoita, Arizona, where he ranches and paints. The relationship between Ray Harm and Kentucky lives on at Pine Mountain State Park near Pineville. There at the convention center, a complete collection of Ray Harm prints, which was acquired by the State of Kentucky, is framed and displayed for the public to enjoy. The fact that Harm's son Ray, Jr. ("Hap") is the chief ranger at the park makes this tribute all the more special.

40 Ibid.