



howard county  
**BIRD CLUB**  
50th ANNIVERSARY • 1972 – 2022

# MEMBERS' MEMORIES

## Tom Strikwerda

I joined the chapter in September of 1981 when I moved from Blacksburg, Virginia to Columbia. I had finished graduate school and a postdoctoral position and began to take time to renew my interest in birds and birding. I hadn't been much of a birder before that, mostly visiting state parks in Michigan with my brother as college students in the 1960's. I saw a note in the *Columbia Flyer* that the bird club was meeting in a school nearby and walked over one evening. Got hooked and one thing led to another. Soon I was involved with various activities, and eventually elected to be a state director, then HCBC president.

One of the major tasks I accepted somewhere during that time was to coordinate the mailing of *Maryland Birdlife* (MDBL) after another chapter decided they couldn't continue the effort. How I got roped in I don't recall, but one of the key people in the mailing effort was Martha Chestem, a long-term, founding chapter member and a delightful person to work with. That was before the publisher took over the labeling and mailing role as happens now. Marty and I worked together to understand the obscure and obtuse US Postal Service regulations on how to bundle and label each issue to qualify for the bulk rate mailing, not an easy task and ever-changing besides. It was Marty's knowledge mostly, while I supplied the muscle to lug boxes and mailing trays. And I organized "stuffing and labeling" gatherings at a member's house every three months or so. What a job! I received the MDBL shipment, made calls to round up volunteers and a host, while Marty managed organizing the labels. Then, after the issue was labelled, I carted the bundles to the Baltimore main post office where I had to navigate the intricacies of the bulk mail facility. I dreaded that task since each time it seemed there was a different person to deal with, different procedure, complaints on how we did it, and a search of passageways to find the right person in the facility. When MOS shifted its bulk mail permit to the Columbia post office, life was better. Later, we switched from having to stuff the journal into envelopes and then label, to just labeling the issue, further easing our task. In my mind Howard County Bird Club's responsibility for mailing lasted longer than it probably did, but it certainly integrated me into the club. I was employed in Howard County but lived in Montgomery County (all but my first year in the chapter), so the periodic labelling parties were a great way for me to get to know other members.

One of the stalwarts of the labelling sessions, besides Marty Chestem, was Shiras Guion, chapter treasurer for some years, who opened her home repeatedly to host volunteers. Her husband, Bill, managed the MOS mailing list so they were a great duo to sort out discrepancies on the spot. The Solems also hosted many sessions as I recall. There were others as well, though I can't recall specific people. Anyway, I think these efforts revealed the strength, volunteerism and teamwork of the Howard County Bird Club. In some ways, I was sad when the labelling and mailing switched to the publisher because the sessions were a great way to get to know people and share stories about birds, birding, and life in general—but not lugging boxes and postal trays was a relief.

Thinking back over those years, I wish I could remember and once again thank all those who helped mail MDBL. Instead, I'll say it here: "Thank you, everyone!" Keep up the good work. The Howard County Bird Club continues today as a vibrant, strong chapter of MOS. Happy 50th Anniversary, HCBC!

Here is the video of Tom at the May 12, 2022 HCBC meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ruxk03MxnpM>