



Introducing Master Horner **Walter Mabry**

One quality that has always impressed me about those Guild members achieving the status of Master Horner is the dedication they have to sharing their knowledge, time, skill and experience with others. No question is insignificant, goes unexplained, or warrants a short, curt answer.

This is especially true when interacting with the younger generation, where each one is treated as a potential new horner. Master Horners are indeed special artisans and teachers who are a highly respected class of individuals.

Master Horner Walter Mabry is one such individual. He hails from the small town of Golden Meadow, Louisiana, later moving to the New Orleans area where he received his formal school education. Following graduation from high school, Walt attended the University of Southern Mississippi, majoring in Architectural Design with minors in Mathematics and Art. He went on to join the Marine Corps and was assigned to Quantico, Virginia as an artist and illustrator. Following his service, he returned to Mississippi where he worked for the state's Department of Transportation and retired as the Supervisor in the Right of Way Division. He and his wife Beverly, currently live in Jackson, Mississippi.

Walt's path to becoming a Master started at the age of 8 when he

bought a barrel and lock for \$2.50 to build a muzzleloading rifle, of which he had only seen in pictures. Wood for the stock came from his uncle, and with his father's help, six months later Walt had his first muzzleloader. Once verified that it was safe to shoot, he realized a powder horn was needed, so he and his father took a trip to a local New Orleans slaughter house where they got two big potato sacks of horns! Walt selected one and made his first powder horn which he still has today. Side-note: A few years back, Guild members were asked to bring the first powder horn they had ever made for a display at Dixon's. Walt told me that "I took mine, but when I got to Dixon's, I was too embarrassed to put it in the display!" That certainly wouldn't be the case today!

In 1973, Walt joined the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association and started shooting at a local muzzle loading club. It didn't take long for his talents to be discovered and he started building powder horns as prizes for the state shoots, which he still supports to this day.

His interest in horn work pretty much runs the gamut, but is mostly focused on the commercial horns of the Pennsylvania shops of the 18th and 19th centuries. Thus, when asked about his favorite style of powder horns, it came as no surprise that his favorites are the Philadelphia and York County screw-tips, although he is quite intrigued with the Tansel family style horns. Walt stated that "When doing research for my Master's certification, I learned much in researching the genealogy of the Tansel family and the evolution of their designs and motifs. This has increased my interest in learning more of the early horn makers and their skills and techniques."

His horn work is flawless as evidenced by his having won many ribbons at the Gun Makers Fair at Dixon's, as well as his skill in making flintlock rifles.

There are three powder horn collections that have caught Walt's attention. When he attended his first HCH Meeting, held at Colonial Williamsburg, he was

demonstrated his horn work at the following events: *Bicentennial of The Battle of New Orleans, Andrew Jackson's Triumphant March Through Natchez and Grand Ball, 100th Year of National Park Service at Cumberland Gap, and the Raid on Martin Station* as well as numerous other events in Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee.

In addition to being a member of the Honourable Company of Horners, Walt is a life member of the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association, the National Rifle Association, the Kentucky Rifle Association, the Contemporary Longrifle Association, as well as local muzzleloading clubs. He is also a Fellow in the Craftsmen's Guild of Mississippi, Inc. of which he has been a member for 20 years and served on the jurying committee for new members.

As always, a heartfelt congratulations to Walt Mabry for achieving the well earned title of Master! - wec ■



truly inspired with their collection. It was the first time he had ever seen that many original horns in one place. Then during the HCH Meeting in Franklin, Indiana, he was truly inspired by Jim Dressler's personal collection. And just last year in 2017, he visited the Deerfield collection, which he stated is magnificent.

Of interest to most members who actively pursue horn work is an individual's work shop, especially those of the Masters. Descriptions run from being a 'dirty, crowded cave' to being able 'to eat off the floor.' Walt's description of his shop is somewhat twofold: "My shop is wherever I can work. My space is limited. The lathes are in my garage where most of the heavy work is accomplished. I do my drawings and scrimshaw in what used to be our living room." Side-note: Now, how many guys would even venture a suggestion, much less actually do that, to their better half?!

Walt is quite active. His work has been featured in *Muzzle Blast Magazine*, *The Horn Book*, and *The Clarion Ledger* a local newspaper. Plus, he has

