

# Master Horner

## PROFILES

This is the eighth in a series of articles on those members of the Honourable Company of Horners who have achieved the status of Master Horner. Currently there are nine members who have attained this status and each one has played an integral role in the Guild, whether it is in their demonstrated artisan skills, leadership abilities, or being instrumental in the growth and development of our organization. Profiles of all the Masters are featured on the Guild's website, with the exception of Ron Ehlert, who will be featured in the January 2011 issue of *The Horn Book*.

John Proud | Roland Cadle | John Kiselica  
Lee Larkin | Art DeCamp | Joe Becker  
Willy Frankfort | Erv Tszanz | Ron Ehlert

In accordance with the Guild's Standing Rules, for anyone to become a Master Horner, an individual must "demonstrate a superlative level of ability in carving, heating and pressing, turning, engraving, and integrating woods and metals with cow horn by presenting three horn objects that demonstrate his or her ability to the Awards Committee for evaluation," plus give "an original written and oral presentation to the HCH at an annual meeting or to another accredited organization on some aspect of horn working or its history." Needless to say, this is a high standard that has been met by only a few members and each has played a vital role in making the HCH what it is today. ■

# Joe Becker

## Master Horner

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When you first meet Joe Becker, your initial impression is that he is a rather quiet, reserved individual, but the more you talk with him the more you come to the realization that he is anything but that. And once you get to know him and see his work, you realize that this quiet, reserved individual is quite an accomplished artisan who specializes in horn work and is very knowledgeable and talented in all facets. His attention to detail, desire to produce the very best and always exceed a customer's expectations are his hallmarks. Select any original article made of horn, whether it's a powder horn, comb, broach, blowing horn, etc and Joe Becker will amaze you by replicating a contemporary piece that will truly astound you.

He has always lived in Pennsylvania and currently resides in Sandy Valley.

Following school he started a small business with a partner that specialized in seal coating and painting public and private roadways and parking lots and currently owns and operates a towing business that services central Pennsylvania. Thanks to his father who had made a couple of flintlock rifles and horns, Joe was initiated into horn work at age 21, about the same time he started his first business. He initially made a flintlock rifle and realized he needed a powder horn, so he made one and the rest is history.

As Joe's interest in horn work continued to grow, he heard about the Honourable Company of Horners and joined the Guild in 2003 as a "Freeman," served on the Education Committee and in 2005 he quickly attained the rank of "Journeyman." His skills as both a businessman and artisan were quickly recognized by the Guild and he was elected to the post of Guildmaster in 2008, the youngest to ever serve in this position.

During his tenure he oversaw a growth in

membership, an improved financial status, closer ties with the NMLRA, and major changes to the Guild's website and *The Horn Book*. In addition, he attained his "Masters" rating at the 2009 annual meeting, the highest level awarded by the Guild.

Joe likes all types of horn work, but especially likes to make engraved powder horns, hair broaches and anything that requires carving or lathe work. Although Joe is partial to "southern banded horns," his specialty is a fully engraved powder horn. His goal from the outset is to fully customize a horn to meet someone's requirements and apply the many

ideas he has to his work. He stated that "he likes the challenge of taking an idea and trying to figure out how to apply it to a horn. My favorite part about making a horn is when someone gives me an idea of what they would like and then when I give them the finished product, you can tell

that it exceeds their expectations. I especially like when I can see the look on their face as they see one of my horns for the first time. The look on a satisfied customer's face is priceless as they hold their horn in their hands and study it over." Other horns he specializes in are the Masonic and the European style horns.

Joe has worked on several key projects, but his favorite by far is the Narnia Horn he made for the Disney Studios. Joe's task was to recreate Queen Susan's horn to be auctioned off the day before the premier of "The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian." The purpose of the auction was to raise money for The Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network. All they had at that time was the prop and wanted Joe to make a duplicate of it. Since they couldn't send the prop, Joe was sent only a



picture of the Narnia Horn and, as expected, his creation far exceeded the prop and their expectations!

Needless to say, it was a time intensive project that took about three months to complete. Joe stated he wanted to craft something as beautiful and accurate as possible. It was a definite challenge, and as you can see in the photograph above, he achieved his goal!

When asked about the collections he has visited and found most interesting, he responded that Jim Dressler's collection was by far the best he has seen. He also added that any horn objects made by John Kiselica have a way of piquing his interest!

Joe has won many awards at Dixon's for his horn work which includes several Judges' Choice Awards, two Best Creative Awards, and one Best of Show. In addition he has also won several first and second place ribbons at the HCH Annual Meetings. His talents also extend into the area of building flintlock rifles as he has also won numerous awards at Dixon's in this area.

Joe Becker is indeed an artisan of the highest caliber, a credit to the Honourable Company of Horners, and one who possesses a rare combination of humility, enthusiasm, passion, and a willingness to share his knowledge and skills of horn working. His business acumen and dedication to the Guild recently resulted in significant cost savings and improvements in the printing and mailing of *The Horn Book*. He always stands ready to support and help the Guild – he is definitely an invaluable asset to the Honourable Company of Horners.

To learn more of Joe's work, you may contact him by phone at (814) 590-7107, by e-mail at [hornmaker1@yahoo.com] or go to his website at [www.hornmaker.com](http://www.hornmaker.com). ■

