

## Master Horner PROFILES

Beginning with this issue,  
**The Horn Book** will feature the  
profile of a Master Horner in the  
Honourable Company of Horners.

In reviewing the history and associated growth of our organization, it becomes obvious that the success of the Guild was and is contingent on strong leadership and dedicated member support. It also became apparent that currently there are only six Master Horners in the Guild and each one has made major contributions in the development of our organization through serving as Guildmaster, holding various positions within the guild, giving presentations, writing articles for publication, and providing support whenever needed.

Yet, I feel few members realize what the requirements are to become a Master Horner, who these six Guild members are or know little about each of these talented artisans. So beginning with this issue, you will be introduced to each Master Horner. I hope you will enjoy this new addition to The Horn Book.

So what are the basic Master Horner requirements? In accordance with the Guild's Standing Rules, for an individual to advance to Master Horner, they 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," in addition to giving "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." Not an easy task by any means.

As previously mentioned there are only six Guild members who have attained the status of Master Horner: John Proud, Lee Larkin, Willy Frankfort, Roland Cadle, Art Decamp, and Irv Tschanz. Each one has played an integral role in the founding and development of our Guild and as such deserves recognition and our thanks for their contributions. ❖

# John Proud: Master Horner

I thought this series of articles was an excellent idea, until I tried to interview John, and found that getting any information was going to be difficult at best. Realizing that this article had to be completed this "year," I figured that I'd better start off with a few basic questions and maybe then he'd open up and expound a bit on his "yes" and "no" responses.

John is a native of New York, born in Buffalo and currently resides in Cortland. He graduated from Cornell University where he attained both a Bachelor's and Master's degree. His career was spent with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, retiring in 1996 as a Regional Wildlife Manager.

He acquired an interest in antiques and "anything old" at an early age and remembers visiting the Erie County Historical Society Museum in Buffalo where he was drawn to the display of powder horns. The displays

of early arms, accoutrements and Indian artifacts made a significant impression on him, which is still with him today. While in college during the 1960's, he literally picked up an old horn he found in a barn, which he still has, and his interest in powder horns began to grow. However, he didn't start making them until 1986 when he needed one to go with a rifle he had built for hunting and shooting competitions. Needless to say, his talents also extend to the building of muzzleloading firearms.

It seems only natural that John became a "charter member" of the HCH and attended the "pre-guild" meeting in Doylestown, Pennsylvania in 1996. His contributions to the Guild are numerous: Past Guildmaster (2003), given numerous presentations, author of "Horn Tips," discovered the Hartley prints at a small library in Saint Johnsville, New York, which ultimately led to the Hartley Project, one he is currently working on with other Guild members.

John likes to make everything out of horn, but since most people are familiar with powder horns, that is the main focus of his work. What interests him most is examining old pieces and trying to figure out how they were made. He has a special interest in turned horn work, e.g., screw tip powder horns, needle cases, whistles, ink horns, as well as flasks, boxes, medallions, whistles, seem rippers, waxers, bodkins, rulers, tape measures, shoe horns, horn books and knife handles.

When asked about his favorite style of powder horn, his response was the engraved French and Indian War horns and, of them, those made by horn workers that are known to have done several pieces. He noted that it is interesting to see the features that are carried over from one horn to another and what changed over time. Pictured (Photo 1) are two of his favorite horns he made.

Needless to say, John has achieved many accomplishments and won numerous awards which include several ribbons and a Best of the Show at Dixon's Gunmakers' Fair, and two Blue Ribbons and two Best of the Show at HCH meetings. In addition, he has donated his time and talents to several fund raisers such as making the 1758 horn for the HCH/CLA "When This You See, Remember Me" project, and the powder horn for the 2007 CLA auction. And last but not least, he was one of the first group of Guild members to attain Master Horner status in the HCH. For his Master's oral requirement John gave a very informative presentation entitled "Rufus A. Grider-Powder Horn Artist" and shown in Photo 2 are the horn objects he submitted for judging, truly works of art.

In the course of researching various horn artifacts, he has visited several horn collections, both large and small, the most notable include: Elkins and Davis College, Jim Dressler's personal collection, Fort Ticonderoga, Colonial Williamsburg, and Fort Johnson. The collections he considers

most interesting are the private collections, where the collector's share the information they have on the horns and the remembrances they have of collecting each piece. He feels indebted to several generous collectors who have shared their collections, knowledge and time.

You might be interested in knowing that John's shop used to be in a "spare" bedroom in the house. Just last year he decided to expand and put up a building in the backyard and relocated his shop. I personally think that his wife Carole issued an ultimatum with which he complied! The building is 14 x 28 feet. However, the shop occupies a 14x18 section and the remainder is storage. It includes a band saw, a combination belt/disc sander, lathe and a stump with a vise attached, plus about 30 feet of workbenches. It's a "cozy" shop and, unlike a few I have seen, is so clean you can eat off the floor.



Photo 1

In addition to being an HCH member, John is also a member of the Kentucky Rifle Association, NMLRA, NRA, and Burning of the Valley Military Association. His horn work has been featured in "The New York State Conservationist," "Muzzleloader," "Muzzle Blasts," and the Syracuse, NY "Post-Standard" newspaper. He lists "Muzzleloader" and the "Maine Antiques Digest" as his favorite publications.



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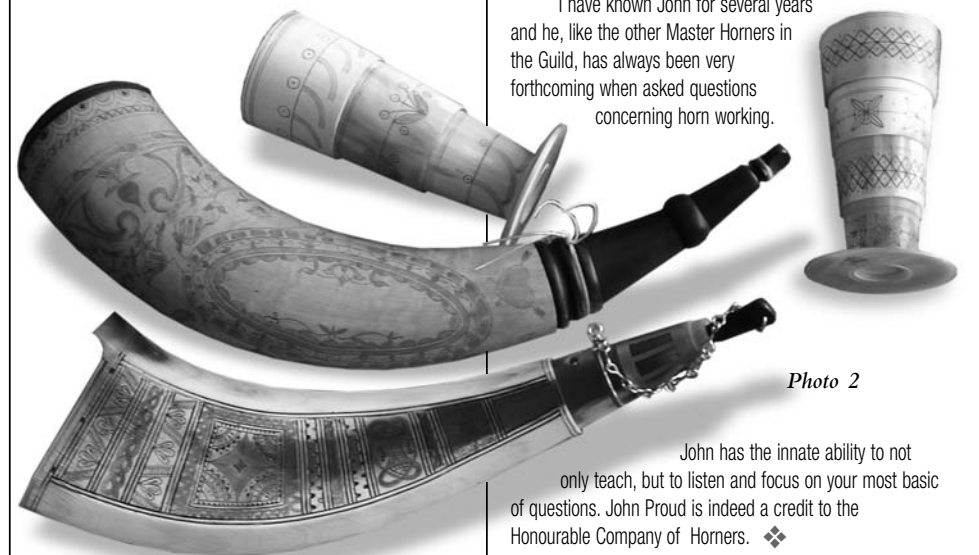


Photo 2

I have known John for several years and he, like the other Master Horners in the Guild, has always been very forthcoming when asked questions concerning horn working.

John has the innate ability to not only teach, but to listen and focus on your most basic of questions. John Proud is indeed a credit to the Honourable Company of Horners. ❖