

Master Horner PROFILES

This is the 15th article in a series on those members of the Honourable Company of Horners who have achieved the status of Master Horner. Featured in this article is Master Horner Rick Sheets whose profile will also be added to the Guild's Website at www.hornguild.org along with the other Masters. Currently there are 15 members who have attained this status and each one's contributions have been integral to the growth and development of our Guild. The 15 Master Horners include:

John Proud | Lee Larkin | Willy Frankfort
Roland Cadle | Art DeCamp | Erv Tschanz
John Kiselica | Joe Becker | Carl Dumke
John DeWald | Ed Long | Walter Mabry
Rex Riddick | Tim Sanner | Rick Sheets

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 less than 4% of the Guild's membership. Each one has played a vital role through their demonstrated artisan skills and leadership abilities in making the HCH what it is today. ■

Introducing Master Horner Rick Sheets

Rick Sheets brings to the ranks of the Masters an intense interest in educating the public of all ages about the multiple aspects of horn work. His dedication is evident through his research, enthusiasm and his abundance of patience.

No question goes unanswered, no question too trite, no question unenthusiastically answered - even when asked the same question hundreds of times at an event. As with all the Masters, he is indeed a talented and devoted Ambassador for the Honourable Company of Horners.

Born in Southern California, Rick grew up in Redlands, a historic town famous for its early 20th Century Arts and Crafts (Craftsman) style architecture and orange groves and industry. In 1968 his father, who worked for the phone company, was transferred to the regional headquarters for General Telephone located in Durham, NC. Durham was chosen as a compromise location as his dad's family was in Tennessee and his mom's family was in Virginia.

Rick has a rather comprehensive technical background. The majority of his professional years were spent selling and merchandising telephone switching gear to independent telephone companies and the corrections market. His computer skills later led him to establish his own company, JW Web Solutions, which specializes in the design and management of custom websites - a skill from which the Guild would later realize as an asset and from



Pictures provided by Lappegard Photography

which it would greatly benefit.

His journey to becoming a Master Horner originated when he met Jeff Bibb at the 2009 Gunmakers' Fair at Dixon's. Rick was enamored with Jeff's work, horns and bags. Most importantly, a spark was lit in Rick due to the manner in which Jeff interacted with the public. All this prompted Rick to join the Guild and this new sphere of interest soon evolved into a passion. He stated that "my interest in horn work continued to grow thanks to Guild members Bill Carter and Don Fererro who helped me with the technical aspects of horn work and turning, and Clint Byers who provided guidance in further refining my work."

It wasn't long before he became involved with the Guild's Website and was eventually asked to become its Webmaster in May 2010. About this same time, Rick went to The Museum of the Appalachia in Norris, Tennessee for a few days of demonstrating horn work with Billy Griner. Rick stated that "it was an eye opening experience in that I realized the public is hungry for good public history demonstrations. So I have been making horns for almost 10 years and much of that doing historic demonstrations, and for me that is just as

meaningful as making pretty horns for collectors. Seeing a love of history being sparked in a school kid's eye is the best."

Not one to slow down, Rick submitted his five horn items for advancement to Journeyman in 2013, but suffered a setback. It was suggested he make one new object and submit it next year, his response was that he would be a better hornworker by next year and that he would submit five new projects! As he predicted, Rick attained Journeyman status in 2014, two years later in 2016 he became the Publication's Committee Chief and in 2019 attained his ultimate goal of becoming a Master Horner!

Rick's greatest interest in horn work is primarily powder horns, beakers, spoons, hornbooks and other accouterments that attract his interest through research. Currently, the Saint Louis style of bison powder horns have his attention. As he said: "I like it all!"

There are two collections which he has found most interesting. In October 2018 he went to Fort Pitt in Pittsburgh to "see their collection (with additional horns from Jay Hopkins' collection) and to hear Art DeCamp, Alan Gutches and Michael Burke speak. I also have been fortunate to hear Jay Hopkins presentation at Avoca in Altavista, Virginia. He had the choicest pieces from his

Horn Accouterments



collection there and it was a thrill to be able to handle them."

When asked about his favorite style of powder horn, he replied: "I like engraved F&I War powder horns the best, but Tansels are right up

there too. I think if someone could only have one powder horn, an early Philadelphia style is the way to go."

Rick has undertaken several projects, but when asked about those that had special meaning, he replied: "I try to make a tribute engraved powder horn for a veteran every year and surprise them with the horn and a certificate from my Sons of the American Revolution Chapter (Col. Stephen Trigg). While, I am not a veteran, I do want them to know how much they mean to the average person." When asked about other projects he said: "Recently, I had the honor of making an official gift for Diana Gabaldon, the author of the Outlander series of books. She was gracious in giving her time to fundraise for the North Carolina historic sites mentioned in her book. I made a horn flask with a Highlander and Alamance Battleground theme as appreciation for her efforts."

Ninety percent of Rick's horn work is done on his 'Dick Toone' shaving horse, since most of his handwork is done at historic sites. He said that "I have a romantic notion that doing work on grounds walked by historic figures like Thomas

Jefferson adds something to my art. Maybe it does not make a real difference, but it is satisfying to me and gives me time to reflect on how lucky I am to be an American."

As for his shop, "My shop is my garage and it changes as I have my tool box and lathe on wheels. Many of my go-to tools are on baker's racks (also on wheels). I like the ability to move stuff around."

In addition to being a member of the Honourable Company of Horners, Rick also has membership in the NMLRA, the NRA (Life Member) and the Lafayette Longrifles.

During Rick's time in the Guild, he has contributed immensely to the advancement of horn work through presentations, demonstrating his craft at events and through his tireless efforts and contributions to the Honourable Company of Horners.

Rick Sheets is indeed a welcomed new member to **"The Masters!" Congratulations!**

You can see more of Rick's work at his website:

www.patriothorns.com, by phone: (919) 321-8394,

or by email: ricksheets1@yahoo.com. ■

