

The HCH Supports the NMLRA's 1 of 1000 Endowment Program

by Wm. E. Carter



Photo by Ross Thayer

The purpose of the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association's 1 of 1000 Endowment Program is to support the Association's long-term financial stability. The interest earned produces income for programs that help ensure the long-term viability of the NMLRA. Each participant who contributes \$1,000 receives a personalized certificate, a pin recognizing their contribution, and their name on the wall in the Education building at Friendship. Each member of the 1 of 1000 Endowment Program also has an opportunity to win a 1 of 1000 powder horn.

The Honourable Company of Horners was asked by the NMLRA nine years ago to be a part of the 1 of 1000 Endowment Program by providing the custom made powder horns. The impetus for this alliance is Bob Copner, who is a member of both the NMLRA and the HCH. It began with Ron Ehler, who had made a powder horn in 2006, but unexpectedly passed away before being able to complete the horn for 2007. Bob contacted HCH member Lee Larkin, who quickly completed a 2007 horn for the project. Lee also pitched the idea for supporting the NMLRA every year with a new horn to the HCH Executive Committee. It was a win-win situation for the HCH and the NMLRA and was immediately adopted by the HCH. Subsequently, powder horns were made by Frank Willis and Joe Becker in 2008; Willy Frankfort in 2009; Bob Albrecht in 2010; Mark Preston in 2011; John Kiselica in 2012; Roland Cadle and Art DeCamp in 2013; and John DeWald, Jr. in 2014. This year's HCH artisan, selected to make the 2015, 1 of 1000 NMLRA Endowment Program powder horn is Steve Vance.

Steve Vance is originally from Sacramento, California, but currently resides in Placerville, California. He's a highly decorated police officer; Steve's 34 year career in law enforcement started as a deputy sheriff, advanced to the Law Enforcement Division of the Attorney General's Office in Hawaii, and retired from Folsom Prison as a Captain. He can now devote more of his time to his muzzleloading interests, particularly horn work. Steve became involved in

muzzleloading in 1985, but it wasn't until the 1990s that he began making powder horns for friends and his craft evolved from there. His primary interest is in the French & Indian War period, particularly the "Lake George School" of powder horns, and engraved horns later produced by the Tansel family. He and his family still attend muzzleloading events sponsored by the Pacific Primitive Rendezvous Association, as well as many of the local black powder activities.

Steve enjoys researching and studying original powder horns and is fortunate that he has access to the Charles Hill Collection, which has been the primary catalyst inspiring his interest. The collection has 40 to 50 original horns ranging from the French & Indian War through the Revolutionary War period. Needless to say, having access to that many original horns in one place has been most helpful and rewarding.

Steve has been making powder horns for about twenty years, and states that, "I am self taught for the most part and owe much of my success to Ron Scott, one of the best gun builders in the world. Ron has inspired me to take on more challenging projects and helped develop me in the never ending quest of research. I consider the research I've done the singular most important factor in developing my skills. I enjoy sharing information and knowledge with other horn makers."

As you can see from the accompanying photograph, Steve's work is well researched and meticulously crafted. His goal is "to always have a satisfied customer" and is very committed to completing orders in a timely fashion. Once he commits to a delivery date he said that "he sticks to it." This is one reason why his work is so highly regarded and valued. Those ordering from Steve can expect delivery in approximately 4 to 6 weeks and you can rest assured that you will receive a treasured family keepsake.

In addition to being a member of the HCH, Steve is also a member of the NMLRA and the Contemporary Longrifle Association. Steve does not currently have a website, but you can contact him by phone (530) 626-0419 or via mail at 4251 Pleasant Ranch Road, Placerville, CA 95667. **MB**