

The man this award is intended to honor.

Roy "Pa" Keeler

To those of us that were privileged enough to have known him there is the responsibility of keeping his spirit alive.

In doing this we may pass on to others what we received from Roy and to impart, in some small measure, what it truly means to be a friend.



Man of History:

Roy Keeler of Eaton Rapids was an authority on Michigan's outdoor history.

He was also instrumental in starting the black powder hunting season.

Roy passed away February 5, 1998 at age 80.

Roy “Pa” Keeler

To his friends and even those who knew him from afar, Keeler was a living history book of Michigan’s outdoor heritage.

From trapping to furs to traditional black powder rifles, Keeler was the source of historical outdoor information.

Pa was a historian, a walking encyclopedia. He was always there to help in any way, whether it was beginners or young kids. He was more than happy to share his knowledge.

Pa’s passion was old time firearms. He hunted all kinds of game with black powder guns and was the person most responsible for convincing the state to add a black powder deer season in December. When the first black powder hunt was held in 1975 about 8500 hunters joined in the hunt Keeler created.

Pa was extremely respected for his shooting skills and few blackpowder shoots happened without him.

He was a lifetime member of many shooting and gun-history groups including the Ohio Gun Collectors Association, the Michigan Antique Arms Association, the Eaton Rapids Conservation Club and the 3 Fires Muzzle Loaders Club. He also belonged to the Chief Okemos Sportsman Club, Michigan Schutzen Society, National Muzzleloading Rifle Association, Michigan State Muzzleloading Association and the American Single Shot Rifle Association.

He made a big impression on anyone that met him. If you met “Pa” once the next time you met him he would treat you like a long lost friend. Roy was always more interested in what you had to say than he was in trying to tell you anything about himself. He had a wealth of information and a willingness to share everything he had.

He was a tough old mountain man that was born 100 years later than he should have been. However this was fortunate for the rest of us because he was able to teach so many so much, not only about black powder shooting but about life in general.

Pa Keeler set a standard for the rest of us to try and live up to, and in doing so, made the world a better place to live.



HARRY HAUCH
THE KEELER SOCIETY
1999

A very happy and surprised Harry Hauch became the first recipient of the Spirit of Roy Keeler Award at the State Shoot this year. He received a traveling trophy built by Wayne Lamson along with a handsome silver pin to keep as his own. Harry has always been in Black Powder Sports and a very good competitor. Willing to help others learn the sport, lending a hand at the club shoots and donating prizes.

Harry's address is 1236 W. John Beers, Stevensville, MI. 49127.

Phone 269-429-2688



BILL SHELLHORN
THE KEELER SOCIETY
2000

The 2000 recipient for the Spirit of Roy Keeler Award was none other than our very own store keeper Bill Shellhorn. How many of has pawed through his tables of goodie at the gun shows, rushed to the traveling trailer store for a box of balls to finish that important match, or made a special trip to his home store, Ye Ole Blackpowder Shoppe in Auburn, Michigan, just to see the latest in black powder rifles and shooting supplies. He has always donated generously to club shoots and has been a good competitor. He and his store have helped to keep our sport alive and flourishing through the many years and we look forward to many more.

Bill's address is 309 Frances Ct., Auburn, MI.
Phone 989-662-4227



ROBERT A. ELKA
THE KEELER SOCIETY
2001

Bob has been studying, building, and shooting muzzle loading firearms since he learned how to walk. (That has been a few years).

He is a competitor that enjoys the challenge of keeping them all in the center of the target, which he does with a very annoying regularity. He is also a builder of top quality firearms that are of the highest order.

However most of all Bob is a people person. He has never let his shooting or building get in the way of just stopping what he is doing and carrying on a 5 minute, or 5 hour, conversation with a person with a question about the sport.

During Bob's 60 odd years connected with the black powder sports he has amassed a great amount of information and knowledge however he is always searching for, and finding, more.

With all this being said it is very fitting that Bob A. Elka was selected as a member of the Pa Keeler Society and the principals on which the society was founded could not be better exemplified.

Bob resides at 9346 Oak Road in Willis, MI. 48191.
Phone 734-461-1882.



CLYDE CARR
THE KEELER SOCIETY
2002

Clyde Carr is known as Mr. Shot Gun to many people. Clyde along with Roy Keeler was the one that was involved in having a separate weekend for the shotgun championships.

Clyde still is on the shotgun committee and is very active and along with his wife Betty takes care of registration and scoring even though he doesn't shoot anymore due to eye problems.

Clyde is always promoting the sport of shooting whether it be shotgun or rifle. He has donated a lot of time and gratuities to other clubs. He was involved in getting a shotgun program at the Ionia club. He donated and built a trap house for the Grand Valley Cap n Ballers Muzzle Loading Club™. He has helped the Lansing Muzzle Loading Gun get their shotgun program started.

Clyde resides at 602 W. State Road, Hastings, MI. 49058.
Phone 616-945-4950



HARRY FOSTER
THE KEELER SOCIETY
2002

Harry's name has been used by a multitude of people over the years. The same could be said of quite a few individuals however what sets Harry apart from the rest of us is the manner in which his name is used. More than one argument has been settled over the years when someone simply says "Harry said" and whatever follows is taken for fact.

He has the rare quality of looking at any given problem that is presented, weighing both sides of the issue, and then making a decision that is in the best interest of the people affected, and the black powder shooting sports in general.

Always fair, honest, above board, and to the point. Harry has a way about him that allows him to set things straight without ruffling too many feathers.

Got a question? "Go see Harry".

Got a problem? "Go see Harry".

Want to spend a very enjoyable afternoon just talking to a real nice guy? "Go see Harry".

Harry resides at 55 W. Preuss Road in Manistee, MI. 49660.

Phone 231-723-9016



CHUCK LANGWORTHY
THE KEELER SOCIETY
2003

Chuck was real pleased about the award and could not believe that he has won something of this magnitude. He started the Lansing Muzzleloading Gun Club back 50 plus years ago with about 6 others. Over the years he has been active in the NSSA and is a member of the Michigan Gun Collectors. He is also a life member of the NMLRA, his card is so old that people think it is a stone tablet. His life number is in the 400's.

He has always had a help others attitude. His son Scott remembers having to lug around a tool box that contained everything needed to repair just about any problem a shooter could have. Many times he would stop shooting and help another shooter get back to shooting and never finish his own match. He has been building muzzleloaders for 50 or 60 years and helping others with building their own. He is a master gun smith, modern or muzzleloader. He builds a muzzleloader that can shoot. He has donated rifles and pistols to the NMLRA. Although he does not shoot anymore, he is still very active in the sport. He will soon be 82 years young in February.

After speaking with him about the award, he made it very clear that there are many others that are more qualified to receive this award and great thought should be given to people in all divisions of the sport.

Chuck resides at 721 E. Harris Street, Lansing, MI. 48906-3334.



BERNARD TRANTHOM THE KEELER SOCIETY 2004

Countless people have come to Bernie over the years and if it wasn't for his input they would never have started shotgun and some of them even say they owe their success to the knowledge he shared with them.

In the evenings as the sun sets, folks will settle around the camp fire for the night, Tranthom's camp site is filled with friends young and old, just waiting to hear a story or two from Bernie.

They just soak it up. It is so inspiring and so heartwarming to see how people of all ages, many are kids who are just getting started in the sport, respond to his childhood stories, and stories of past shoots. Bernie and his wife Marian enjoy all of the interesting people they meet and the friendships that form even with teenagers, who value his wisdom so much.

Bernie has supported the sport of muzzle loading and helped new shooters for many years get started by offering the use of his gun and knowledge.

His wife Marian said "it was so fun to see the look of surprise on his face. I am so proud of him, not just for his shooting, but for his dedication to something he loves so much and his ability to share that enthusiasm with others."

Bernie enjoys the sport and will continue to do it as long as he is able.

Bernard Trantham – 22275 69th St. South Haven, MI 49090

Phone 269-637-2951



WAYNE LAMSON THE KEELER SOCIETY 2005

Bob Elka on the right is presenting Wayne Lamson with the Keeler Society Award at the Michigan State Rifle Championship Award Ceremony at Columbiaville in July 2005.

Wayne has held day long clinics for children to shoot his bench gun at the Beaverton Shoot for many years, trying to pass on the love of black powder to our younger generation.

He has been in our sport since the early 60's and has been a formidable contender at all aspects of the sport. He has always been there to help out a fellow shooter.

Wayne has been active at all levels, home club, State and Nationals. He has had a major role in the development of the Beaverton Club.

He has held many offices at the State Level and been Chief Range Officer many times. Nationally, he reworked the Range Rules for the NMLRA which was no small feat, as well as other activities through the years.

He has championed our sport with his great articles in the Muzzle Blast and magazines outside our sport.

Wayne has approached our sport with a humor all his own that he shares with all of us. Wayne resides at 404 S. Ross St., Beaverton, MI. 48612.

Phone 989-435-9190



RON FERNWALT
THE KEELER SOCIETY
2006

Ron was voted into the Roy Keeler Society in 2006 as the result of countless years of dedicated effort to promote and expand our black powder shooting sports.

Ron's main interest is in the shot gun shooting sports and a list of all he has done for our sport is never ending. He has been instrumental in running herd on our Michigan State Muzzle Loading Shot Gun Championships as well as the shot gun matches at his home club of The Grand Valley Cap & Ballers.

If not for Ron, and his efforts, our sport would be greatly diminished. It is doubtful that a more deserving person could ever be given the honor of being called "A Member of The Roy Keeler Society"

Ron is one of those rare individuals that exemplify the old saying "What You See Is What You Get". There is no hidden agenda to figure out, no secret plan behind his motive. It's just good Ol' Ron doing the work of ten people to make our sport better for the rest of us.

Ron and his wife Bonnie live at 16808 Peach Ridge, Kent City, MI. 49330
Phone 616-675-7454



JOE "Doc" VALENTIN THE KEELER SOCIETY 2007

Joe was voted into the Roy Keeler Society in 2007. If there ever was a person that tried to avoid the spotlight it has to be Joe Valentin.

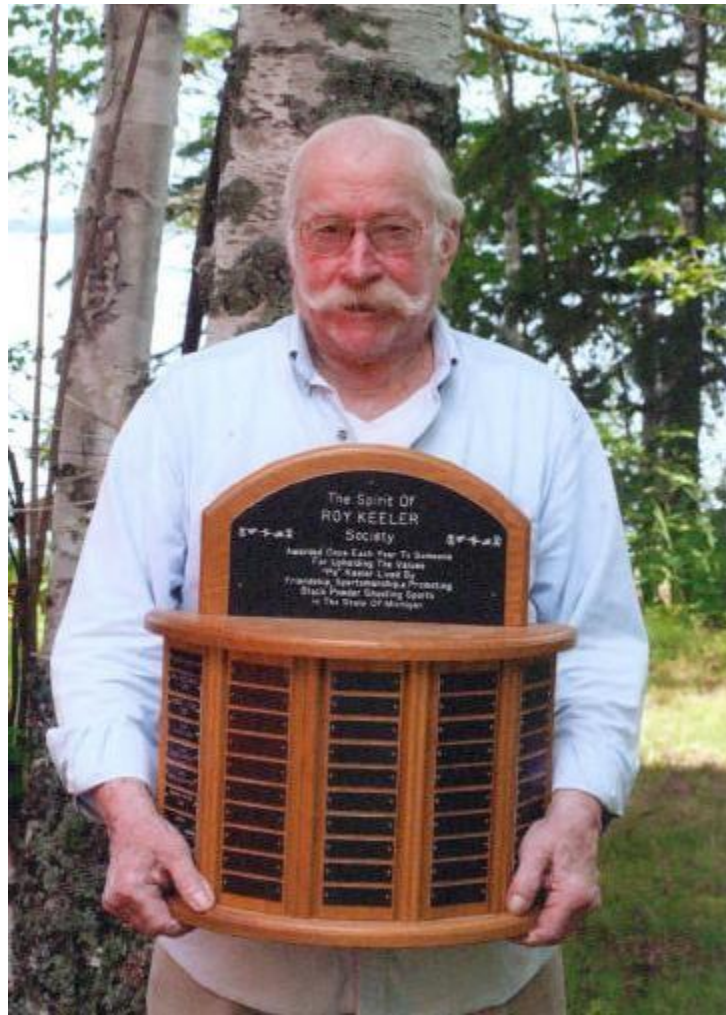
He was instrumental in the formation of the Spirit of Roy Keeler Society and has been making the silver "Keeler Beaver" lapel pins that are awarded to each year's recipient.

His artistic talent and attention to detail are evident in all his black powder related creations. His dedication to the sport is evident by his enthusiastic involvement behind the scenes as well as his annual hosting of the Jerry Boyer Memorial Match that is held each year in Marlette Michigan.

While Joe could never be considered a "Fierce Competitor" he is no stranger to the winners circle. If he gets beat he will congratulate the person that beats him, and if he wins the match he will be more than happy to give you another chance to beat him next week.

Joe was gracious enough to forego earlier nomination into this prestigious society to keep it from looking like just another "Good Ol' Boys" society. Thanks for being so considerate Doctor Joe, and Congratulations on your nomination and selection into the ranks.

Joe Valentin
6732 W. Marlette
Marlette, MI 48453
989-635-2049



COTTON VOLRATH THE KEELER SOCIETY 2008

Cotton has been involved in Muzzle Loading for well over 40 years. He and Pa Keeler were two of a kind. Cotton was an iron worker and traveled all over. He was one of the earliest primitive shooters around. He was very instrumental in the Tobacco River club located in Beaverton in the 1960's and 1970's.

He is very knowledgeable and well versed on muzzle loading. He has a lot of books and a great story teller that will keep people in tears laughing.

He moved to the Upper Peninsula and was the spear head of putting together the Upper Peninsula State Shoot.

He supplies the North West Council with their beads and is very much into the Indian and primitive artifacts.

Cotton is a laid back person that gets the job done.

Congratulations Cotton, you very much deserved the award.



SCOTT LANGWORTHY THE KEELER SOCIETY 2009

Scott Langworthy isn't one of those guys that needs' to be in the spotlight in order to find satisfaction in the Black Powder shooting sports. In fact Scott is one of those guys that shies away from the spotlight and would sooner work behind the scenes doing whatever no one else wants to do.

Not so many years ago our State Association had trouble finding someone to score the targets that get shot in competition at our State Championships. It was an annual topic of discussion at our meetings and an almost constant source of problems. Scott stepped up to take on the task of assembling a crew of people to score all of our targets and relieve our association of the nagging problem. Scott gathered a group of extremely capable people to aid in the task of scoring targets, the problem went away, and the scoring crew has a good time working together. Through good health, bad health, and economic difficulty Scott has persisted and his efforts go on behind the scenes letting the rest of us shoot our targets.

These are the qualities that the Keeler Society was built around and it does a person good to see this prestigious award presented to a person like Scott Langworthy.

When he received the award, at this summer's State Shoot, Scott's comment was that there are many more people that are more deserving than he is. His comment stands as testimony that the Keeper Society is doing what it was intended to do. When someone is selected that says; "It's about time I was recognized for all that I've been doing." I'd say we are doing something wrong. Congratulations Scott and thanks for giving the rest of us something to aspire to.

Scott Langworthy -300 Hodge - Lansing MI 48910 - 517-394-0140



DENNIS NEELY
THE KEELER SOCIETY
2010

Our Society took a big step forward this year when Dennis Neely was added to our roster. Dennis is a professional writer for several publications but most notably for Woods & Water News.

If you ever have time to sit and talk to this man you'll need two things before you get started. One of them is some spare time because when you get him started talking about the future of our sport his passion for it will become quite evident. The other thing you'll need is an open mind because Dennis sees things on a broader spectrum than the rest of us do. He leaves no stone unturned and no aspect of our sport is overlooked in his thoughtful consideration of each topic.

People like Dennis elevate our sport to a higher level and for that we are happy to add him to our roster. His first statement was that he wasn't worthy of the honor but I think the qualifications should be left up to the Spirit of Roy Keeler and I know that this put a smile on Pa's face. Welcome to the Society Dennis and congratulations on your selection.

Dennis Neely 517-592-8762



GUY R. SMITH
THE KEELER SOCIETY
2011

I have known Guy Smith for nearly Fifty years now. It all started back in the early sixties, when we would compete against each other at matches around the state. In the early days, back in 1961 the Wyandotte Muzzle Loading Club. Started to hold the so called Michigan State Muzzle Loading matches. By the early 70's the Wyandotte club lost their shooting range. By 1973 the Wyandotte Club no longer existed. Many of the shooters from that group joined up with the Washtenaw Club. We sponsored the State Shoot in 1973 at Washtenaw. I was in charge of the Washtenaw muzzle Loaders at the time. By that time the State shoot had grown to the point. That we realized that we had to get more clubs involved in putting on a state shoot. So the winter of 1973-74 I contacted six individuals from around the state. Those individuals where Guy Smith, George Booth's Mysner, Clyde Carr, Max Schofield, Billy Killian. We met at the Lansing Muzzle Loading Club. Guy Smith was our first chairman. Guy did a great job in getting the state shoot going. Guy has been involved in muzzle loading for many years now. He was chief range officer for 26 years at Friendship. Now that's dedication. Guy has traveled around the county, going to all the clubs that were putting on Territorial matches. Guy has always been a very competitive shooter. His name appears on most of the State trophies. You might say Dick and his family have spent a life time promoting the sport of Muzzle Loading.



RANDY L. MACINNES
THE KEELER SOCIETY
2012

Randy MacInnes has spent almost a lifetime in muzzle-loading. He is, of course, the son of the well-known Jerry MacInnes, a former MSMLA member. Randy has retired from a successful career as a designer for a company that constructs shopping malls. Ask Randy about the elephant. He is a member of the Columbiaville club and competes both locally and nationally, principally in the bench rifle and slug gun disciplines. He also worked with the NMLRA in organizing the celebration of the organization's 75th anniversary. He manned their booth at several SHOT Shows. Paying his and Shelly's room and travel expenses out of his own pocket. He has encouraged his son and daughter in-law, Mike and Erin, to continue shooting and watched their children enjoy muzzle-loading shooting. He has been President of the MSMLA several times; stepping up last year to do the job when no one else would take the position. He is a very organized and enthusiastic individual who can get the job done efficiently and well. Knowledgeable as to rules and regulations, both in competitive shooting and organizations, he is fair and firm. He doesn't hesitate to help people, sometimes before they know they need help, or to correct problems. He has loaned his bench and rifle to Junior shooters so that they could shoot the aggregate. Jerry would be proud, as the Society is, to see him as a member.



ART POMRANKY THE KEELER SOCIETY 2013

This year's award for 2013 went to Art Pomranky, Now Art is not new to Muzzle Loading. Art and his family have been around the sport for 55 years, now that sounds like a long time, but Art still gets around to some of the shoots around the state. Art was one of the founders of the Midland Pine River Muzzle Loading Club and the Midland Antique Gun Show, Art was chairman of that show for two years.

Art is now a member of the Northwest Counsel and Art and his family are very talented musicians, they play country and Bluegrass around camp fires of many of the shoots in the state. Most people know him for his antiques and collector of muzzle loading guns and Fur trade artifacts and this is where Pa Keeler fits in, they were very good friends, so it was easy to have Art as part and a new member of the Keeler Society.

Welcome Art Pomranky



DAVID MADDOX THE KEELER SOCIETY 2014

When I first met David was at Columbiaville at the state shoot. This individual appeared to me to know what he was doing as far as running the range and being up to date on procedures, NMLRA rules etc. As time went on I got to know David better and I have worked with him on the sponsors for the state rifle matches, state shoot schedule, newsletter and he is a good communicator on letting you know what is going on.

David also has helped me at Grand Valley Cap N Ballers when our club hosted the NMLRA Territorial. He supplied the match labels etc. and never charged our club for them along with guidance on how to run the event.

David is a NMLRA, NRA member and also a CCW instructor and a safety instructor, a field rep and puts CCW classes on at his local club and turns the profit over to the club. David made a trip from the east side of the state to Grand Valley to put on a safety class for new shooters at our Lady's Rifle Frolic.

At different times if I had a question on a NMLRA rule or anything in the sport of muzzle loading I have called him during an event to get his opinion or answer on a situation or a problem.

David had a NMLRA class on the Saturday of the MSMLA Shotgun Championships and he made a trip to Gun River to set in on the shotgun membership meeting and had something going on Sunday and left that evening to get back home for the event, now that is dedication.

The saying is that when one shoot is over, you start working on the one for next year. This is a true fact as there was a misunderstanding in the cross stick matches from a competitor and he was on it right away and explained what the NMLRA rules are. There was an error in the record holders in the state shoot schedule and he was on that right away also and got a hold of the people that were in charge and got it corrected for the records. A copy of this has been sent to me for the program for 2014.

He has helped different folks out in their shooting skills all the way to the paper work that needs to be done for an event. If you have trouble getting a hold of the right person or don't know who to get a hold of at the nationals, just call Dave, he will either do it, get you the person you need to talk to and phone number or call and find out for you who you need to get in touch with.

One person cannot achieve these goals alone, he needs the most important person in his life to support him, his wife Marty, same reason I have and had in achieving my goals, my wife Bonnie.

David, I know has achieved more goals and has been helpful to other people and clubs so they can achieve the goals they are after.



ANSON MORGAN
THE KEELER SOCIETY
2015

Each year a new person is selected to join the ranks of the Roy Keeler Society. The person selected is chosen by existing members of the society and the fact that Anson Morgan was chosen proves that the system is working very well.

The criteria for being selected is quite simple and that is to find a person that helps fellow enthusiasts of the black powder shooting sports without trying to become the center of attention. This describes Anson to a T.

Anson is always there to offer advice or to help with any problem that might arise. He's not the guy out in front of the crowd trying to impress everyone with his vast knowledge. In fact he's quite often quite well hidden in the crowd. However if he should be asked for help there is nothing Anson wouldn't do to help anyone he meets.

The world would be a better place if more people were like Anson. Having him join our ranks is both fitting and proper because if anyone ever represented the qualities that Pa Keeler exemplified it is Anson Morgan.

We're sure Pa is grinning from ear to ear.



IRA THUMMA
THE KEELER SOCIETY
2016

Ira is a kind of guy that is hard to understand how anyone so quiet could be so full of knowledge. Over the years it has become easier to understand. Ira listens and then he comments. He is no longer the quiet individual we once knew. He has gained most of his knowledge from doing and listening (he also knew Pa Keeler, so he knew what Pa's expectation were). Ira has built many black powder firearms and the actions that work them. He keeps playing the gun that he is working with until it gets to where he wants it. He doesn't get discouraged. He may stop for a while and think things thru, but he will get it. Ira also has the knowledge to help you with most anything firearm related. Whether it is powder charge, powder grade, bullet design, barrel problems or action problems. It really doesn't seem to matter if he is in the middle of a match or not, he will listen to you to see if he can help. Ira is known to work with young people to teach them the proper way to load (safely) and be very patient with them to shoot a good target. Ira mentored a young man on how to shoot a flint lock rifle that he loaned him. He assisted a different fellow with a lock problem and answered another young club members questions. He is known to do the same thing at Friendship, both on the line and in the evening behind Gun Makers Hall. Another instance was a fellow shooter was having a problem with fit of his bench gun. He kind of looked things over and said a few words, and he disappeared. Here he comes back with a rasp, some files and sand paper and he fixed it on the spot. That's the kind of guy he is. Ira and his wife Sue live at 3841 W. Chippewa in Shepard, MI.



WES O'DELL THE KEELER SOCIETY 2017

“He’s always there for you,” is a common description of Wes O’Dell’s commitment to the muzzle loading community. Our 2017 inductee into the Spirit of Roy Keeler Society is a past president, director and certified range officer of the MSMLA and the Columbiaville Sportsman Club. He’s served those organizations in other capacities, too.

Wes usually works in the background, making sure the simplest of tasks are completed, before, during and after the smoke clears. Yet when asked, he gives credit to those around him saying, “I was very fortunate to have good people volunteer to help.”

Like Pa Keeler, Wes is a flintlock shooter. He acquired his first muzzleloading rifle in 1965. His next rifle was a .54-caliber Hawken he built from parts purchased from Pa. He once shot a 50-4X in the cross-stick match of the Keeler Aggregate. He asked Roy to sign the target, and it hangs in his workshop.

Although Wes admits he doesn’t shoot that much now, he was a strong competitor from heavy bench to cross-sticks to offhand rifle to pistol to primitive—well, in every match he entered “he was there.” The MSMLA state knife throwing match is named in his honor. He holds numerous state records, some which will never be broken, only equaled.

And Wes went beyond saying he wanted to see more young people involved. He carried a .32-caliber rifle, range rod, shooting box and all the supplies to the shoots he attended, making it available to any youngster who wanted to shoot, but didn’t have a rifle. That’s keeping the spirit of Roy Keeler alive.



ERIC HOSKINSON
THE KEELER SOCIETY
2018

Eric has been a person that works behind the scenes and most of us do not realize what he does. Yes, he is known as the computer guy. He has the program that keeps all of our scores in line and has a backup for several years back. He keeps the scores for the State Association and his home club, Grand Valley Cap N Ballers™.

This is his 27th year as the state computer guy. He has developed and handles the web sites for both the State Association and Grand Valley. There you will find the current state shoot schedule, scores from years past, newsletters and other information that is useful by other clubs and club members.

Eric is a member of the MSMLA Board of Directors, NMLRA, MSMLA and the Grand Valley Cap N Ballers™. Eric always finds time to see that his kids are involved and participate in the appropriate matches. Although his wife does not participate, she supports him 100% and you will see her in the background.

Eric and his wife Sue reside at 4526 Edgemont Dr. SW, Wyoming, MI 49519



JIM BROTHERTON THE KEELER SOCIETY 2019

You can always rely on Jim Brotherton. Whatever the task, he gets it done, even when you don't know it needs to be done! Jim Brotherton is the 2019 inductee into the Spirit of Roy Keeler Society.

Jim grew up in the black powder shooting sports, starting out in 1977 at the age of nine. He began with a youth-size .32 caliber percussion rifle, built by his father, J. B. Brotherton. In high school J. B. built a .45 caliber longrifle that Jim still shoots today.

Brotherton is a member of the Lansing Muzzle Loading Gun Club. Along with other volunteers, he oversees the maintenance of the club's fine facilities in Laingsburg, Michigan. As a new shooter, Jim shot in the LMLGC Monte Heiser Youth Shoot. He's chaired the event for the last ten years.

As a director and current vice president of the Michigan State Muzzle Loading Association, Jim shares a deep passion for the preservation of our treasured muzzleloading heritage. And when the chips are down, "I'll take care of it, don't worry about it" are the first words spoken by Jim Brotherton.

"I met Pa Keeler when I was just a young kid, first into muzzleloading," Brotherton says. "It's his big moustache that always stuck out to me. As I got older, his generosity is what I remember. I'm pleased that I can say that I've met him, that I knew him and that I witnessed some of the contributions that he made to the sport." The Spirit of Roy Keeler Society is pleased that Jim Brotherton will carry on the valued principles Roy Keeler lived by!



RUTH PALMER THE KEELER SOCIETY 2020

The members of the Spirit of Roy Keeler Society are proud to welcome Ruth Palmer as the 2020 inductee! “A wonderful person,” “someone you need to know,” and “a true friend,” all describe Ruth.

Ruth has been involved with a number of clubs around Michigan since she fired her first black powder shot in 1978. She and her late husband, Marv, belonged to Saginaw Field & Stream, Tobacco River, Pine River, and Ruth is a life member at the Manistee Muzzle Loading Club. In the early days, there were not a lot of women shooting, so she shot the men’s matches. “I used to shoot with ‘Pa,’” she said. “He was a great guy, a wonderful person.”

She and Marv started in archery, then met a man from the Pine River Long Riflemen who introduced them to muzzleloading. They traveled to the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association in Friendship, Indiana, where Marv purchased a barrel, stock and parts to build her first rifle. Her first MSMLA State Shoot was at Ionia.

Marv and Ruth owned and operated Palmer Knives. Marv made the French trade knives and Ruth sewed clothing for living historians or wove sashes, leg ties and powder horn straps. Talking with Ruth, it’s obvious the people involved in the black powder shooting sports are important to her, as are the young people or newcomers to the sport. She always has a smile on her face, and like Pa, Ruth is quick to stop and help a fellow shooter in need.

A respected competitor, Ruth recently donated her MSMLA medals back to the association. Guiding the next generation is her passion. She mentored her own children, then her grandchildren and now the friends her grandchildren bring to the shoots. She shot alongside her youngest granddaughter at the 2020 MSMLA Rifle and Pistol Championship. Like Roy Keeler, Ruth personifies sportsmanship, friendship and a deep devotion to preserving our rich American shooting heritage.



JOHN CLARK THE KEELER SOCIETY 2021

A quiet, behind the scenes worker with a long history of muzzle loading excellence characterizes the 2021 inductee into the Spirit of Roy Keeler Society: John Clark. Like Roy Keeler, John was a formidable competitor on the rifle line or at the trap range.

John attended his first shoot at Columbiaville in 1972. “I was such a greenhorn,” he said after telling that he arrived with a .58-caliber, Zouave musket and Minie balls; he had no idea the event was round ball only. “Max Schofield went around and found round balls for the Zouave.”

In 1973 John joined the Lansing Muzzle Loading Gun Club, and he’s been a life member there ever since. He’s also a life member of the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association and the National Rifle Association. He served twelve years on the MSMLA board of directors, which included terms as vice president.

An accomplished black powder gunsmith, John built two guns for the MSMLA state raffle: a rifle and the first shotgun ever offered—plus a shotgun raffled at LMLGC. He’s outfitted his children and grandchildren with custom muzzleloaders, passing on the muzzleloading tradition.

Behind the scenes, John has maintained club grounds, scored shoots and undertaken countless tasks with a smile on his face and dedication in his heart. When he saw the condition of target storage in the MSMLA trailer, he built and donated the racks that are still in use today.

“Keeler Society membership is the highest honor in muzzleloading as far as I’m concerned,” John said. “It’s amazing to be counted in with so many great people, a shock, really.”

“John wants to see shooters happy and enjoy the sport,” a Keeler member said, which sums up Roy Keeler’s devotion to America’s black powder shooting heritage. Congratulations John!



ALAN PICHAN THE KEELER SOCIETY 2022

Quiet, unassuming and always willing to help anyone with a question or a problem best describes Alan Pichan, the Spirit of Roy Keeler Society inductee for 2022. Alan is honest, hardworking and displays a deep dedication for promoting the black powder shooting sports, just like Roy “Pa” Keeler.

After his discharge from military service in the early ‘70s, Alan attended shoots in Brownstown Township. His mentor was Ray Bakszyk. “I had a musket, an 1863 Remington Zouave .58-caliber percussion Civil War rifle. I thought a musket with a Minie ball would be less complicated. After that first shoot, Ray said, ‘You need to shoot round balls in that thing. Here, try these.’” Almost a half century later, Alan shares his time, talents and equipment with newcomers to the muzzle loading hobby.

Alan built his first flintlock, a southern mountain rifle in .40-caliber, from a kit. “I like a plain rifle,” he says. Over a decade ago, he started shooting North-South Skirmish Association matches with a .58-caliber Whitney percussion musket. He shoots at N-SSA sponsored events around Michigan and travels twice a year to the N-SSA home range in Winchester, VA.

Giving back to the sport he loves is important to Alan. He’s currently a member of the Michigan State Muzzle Loading Association’s board of directors. He is a past secretary of the organization and is the long-time Primitive Coordinator for the MSMLA’s State Rifle and Pistol Championship. In addition, Alan is a leading salesman of tickets for the MSMLA State Rifle raffle.

“I met Pa a couple of times and got out to his shop,” Alan said. He remembers stories of Pa at shoots around the state. He chuckled as he recalled how Roy thought his wife, Grace, passed out at Beaverton, MI. “Pa came up to her and asked, ‘Are you okay?’ Grace said, ‘Just resting.’ It was hot. He had a canteen to give her a drink.”

In his own soft-spoken manner, Alan Pichan exemplifies the character qualities and ethical values Roy Keeler lived by. Alan, welcome to the Spirit of Roy Keeler Society!



LYLE MCGREGOR THE KEELER SOCIETY 2023

Driven by a passionate devotion to preserving and promoting the black powder shooting sports best describes Lyle McGregor, the 2023 inductee into The Spirit of Roy Keeler Society. Many folks around Michigan know Lyle as a Michigan State Muzzle Loading Association board member and officer, a National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association field representative or perhaps as “the fellow sitting at the picnic table” selling raffle tickets for the MSMLA state gun.

At age twelve, Lyle shot his brother’s Thompson-Center Renegade. His first muzzle loader was a .44-caliber, percussion Kentucky pistol kit from Richland Arms. He’s been a modern gunsmith for over forty years, and in that capacity he met Bill Shellhorn and Pa Keeler at the Midland Gun Show.

“In 1999 I stopped to see Bill at his store,” Lyle recalled. “He asked me to go with him to the Finger Nipper Shoot at the Houghton Lake Sportsmen’s Club. I grabbed a state shoot schedule there and started shooting around at the clubs near me.”

Elected to the MSMLA board of directors in 2008, Lyle has served six years as the association’s president, starting in 2010. He was elected to his third term at the MSMLA State Rifle and Pistol Championship in July.

Over the last twenty years, Lyle has handcrafted upwards of thirty muzzle loaders, both rifles and smoothbores. He is a three-time builder of the MSMLA state gun, including an outstanding 24-gauge, smooth-bored Virginia fowler for the 2023 raffle. He’s sold raffle tickets for the last fourteen years, and during that time made countless trips to club shoots to display the state gun.

Treading in Roy Keeler’s footsteps, Lyle goes out of his way to assist clubs, help new shooters or to introduce modern competitors to the black powder shooting sports. Like Pa Keeler, Lyle McGregor is committed to preserving America’s great muzzle loading traditions. Congratulations, Lyle!



DENNIS PRIDDY THE KEELER SOCIETY 2024

A consistent competitor in both line and primitive matches, Dennis Priddy, the 2024 inductee into the Spirit of Roy Keeler Society, is also known as a premier builder of black powder arms. And beyond introducing his children and grandchildren, Dennis has ushered many first-time participants into the black powder shooting sports—shades of Roy “Pa” Keeler.

“There was a pawn shop where I got off the school bus. They had a French pistol on display,” Dennis said. “I saved my money and bought a CVA kit. I carved flowers in the wood, and I engraved the brass with a cold chisel. I didn’t understand the proper way. It was hideous, but I still have that pistol.”

Clyde Carr (2002) started Dennis shooting at Ionia, Michigan “using that pistol.” In 1973, Dennis began building muzzleloaders in earnest. That first longrifle was a .40-caliber, flintlock, iron-mounted, southern mountain rifle. As his craftsmanship grew, so did his reputation.

About 2011, he needed “a competition smoothbore,” so he set about crafting a 1750-era .28-gauge, American-walnut-stocked, French fowler with “simple architecture.” Simple evolved into ornate carvings, elegant engravings and silver-wire inlays. Known as “Dennis Priddy’s Fowler,” the arm was exhibited at ArtPrize® 2013, a world-class art competition held in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Over the years he has mentored many shooters and craftsmen, modified or repaired muzzleloaders to fit eager newcomers or built custom longrifles for old-timers. Dennis is an active, 50-year member of the Grand Valley Cap ‘n Ballers™, but he also shares his talents with other organizations. He is a regular demonstrator at the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association’s Gunmaker’s Hall, the Kalamazoo Living History Show and displays his craftsmanship at the Contemporary Longrifle Association events.

Many of his rifles and fowlers have graced the covers of black powder magazines, along with feature stories detailing each creation. And he is quick to credit Roy Keeler for encouraging the development of his gun building skills. “Pa and I were pretty good friends,” he said. “He inspired so many young people. Being older and wiser, he had a way of knowing what we would do in the future.”

The Spirit of Roy Keeler Society is proud to welcome Dennis Priddy. Congratulations!