

Michigan State Muzzle Loading Association Newsletter

SEPTEMBER/ OCTOBER 2026

The Beaverton Muzzle loading gun club has donated their ball dis charger to the MSMLA.

Thank you Beaverton for your fine donation.

FUN TYME AT THE RANGE

There were a total of 20 women that attended the Fun Tyme at the range held at Grand alley Cap N Ballers. That was more than twice what they had last year. There were a total of 7 new shooters which the Range Officer Roger Pierce assisted by Jackie Armstrong getting workers. A worker was assigned to each new shooter to show and help them in shooting their target.

President Jeff Terrell put on the safety meeting priot to the event.

A meal was furnished at lunch time by Grand Valley Cap N Ballers™ and then back to shooting with the afternoon ending up with Toma Hawk and Knife, Rolling Pin Toss and then the corn hole toss. Followed by the evening meal and then awards for all the competition.



Xandra Maze won the kids match at the Lansing Muzzle Loading gun this past fall shoot held on August 30, 2026

J & J

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2027 MICHIGAN RIFLE/PISTOL TERRITORIAL

I was notified by the NMLRA that Michigan needs a club that will put in the Michigan Rifle/Pistol territorial for 2027. The club that has had it in the past decided not to do it anymore.

If your club is interested get ahold of 1 of these 2 people;

Lonnie Dale Vermillia; 918-408-0465

Park Wood: Lonnie's assistant 816-698-9149

J & L Horrigan Ent.

Custom turned smooth bore barrels

Cell 269-845-0460

E-mail lehorrigan@hotmail.com

2027 MSMLA EVENT SCHEDULE

I know it is early but is time to be thinking about getting your shoot dates to me by the 1st of November.

I will be mailing out letters on the 1st of October for your dates.

Send a check of \$5.00 for each event listed to MSMLA, 16808 Peach Ridge, Kent City, Mi. 49330

You can sent them early if you like.



LUCY GRANGER

from Lake Village, Indiana won the Michigan State Muzzle Loading Association 25 Bird championship. This young lady just turned 13 years old this year and is doing an outstanding job. She is the only female that has won the 25championship. Our records go back to 2001 and only two other women placed in the top 5.

2nd went to Aaron Moystner and 3rd went to Kevin Price.

JUNIOR STATE SHOTGUN CHAMPIONSHIP

Ellie Granger

**LADY STATE SHOTGUN
CHAMPIONSHIP**

1ST PLACE Lucy Granger
2nd Place Ellie Granger
3rd Place Lacey Porter

**PERCUSSION SHOTGUN
CHAMPIONSHIP**

1ST DICK WADSWORTH
2ND JIMMY MATHIS
3RD JAN WHITE

FLINT SHOTGUN CHAMPIONSHIP

1st Jan White
2nd Kevin price

STATE SHOTGUN NOVICE CHAMPION
Ellie Granger

JUNIOR SHOTGUN NOVICE
ELLIE Granger

FLINT/PERCUSSION AGGREGATE
Jan White

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LARRY HORRIGAN
The Spirit of Roy Keeler Society
2026 Inductee

Roy "Pa" Keeler's legacy lives on,
thanks to the Michigan State Muzzle Loading
Association. The tall and unassuming gent

with the waxed, handlebar mustache and wry sense of humor left an indelible mark on the muzzle loading hobby.

Keeler's expertise did not go unnoticed. In 1995, Roy Keeler was the first inductee in the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association's Black Powder Hall of Fame. Following his death in 1998, the MSMLA established The Spirit of Roy Keeler Society, challenging members to carry on the principles and values displayed during his life. He was known for his honesty, integrity, sportsmanship, friendship, knowledge and deep passion for promoting and preserving the black powder shooting sports.

Each year black powder enthusiasts are asked to nominate outstanding Michigan residents who display Roy Keeler's character and values on and off the shooting range. Keeler Society members vote each spring on a new inductee and the formal announcement is made during the awards ceremony at the MSMLA's State Rifle and Pistol Championships.

Dennis Neely (2010) began the presentation by noting how appropriate it was to honor Roy Keeler during the nation's 250th Anniversary Celebration. He gave a brief introduction to the Keeler Society, which ended with an explanation of the nominating process.

"Each and every one of you here knows of an individual or individuals who exemplify Roy Keeler's life and values," he said. "Perhaps at your club or at a shoot you attend there is someone who goes above and beyond the norm when it comes to displaying honesty, integrity, friendship and sportsmanship. Please take the time to fill out a nominating petition, which can be found on the MSMLA web site (msmla.org)."

Dennis Priddy (2024) then spoke of an instance when he sought Roy Keeler's advice on a rifle he was building. "Roy wanted to make sure my copy was correct," Priddy said. "So he loaned me an original Harpers Ferry, half-stock rifle from his collection. Who would do that? That's the kind of guy Roy Keeler was."

Using that example, Priddy didn't mince words. "Larry Horrigan, please come forward," he said with a serious grin. Stunned, Larry Horrigan sat at the picnic table and lowered his head as those gathered erupted in enthusiastic applause.

"It's a real honor, Thank You," Larry Horrigan said as he accepted the plaque and silver beaver pin with shaking hands. "This is one of those times in life I'm speechless."

Nearly three decades after his passing, folks still ask, "Did you ever meet 'Pa' Keeler?" Perhaps a little background is important for those individuals who never met or knew Roy Keeler.

Roy Keeler was born in Eaton Rapids, Michigan, in 1917. He left school on the eve of the Great Depression to help his family. He was 10 years old at the time. Although he was not the oldest of his eight brothers, he displayed exceptional wisdom and leadership abilities. In time, they called him "Pa," a nickname that stuck. When Roy married Thelma, he affectionately called her "Ma."

His sage advice assisted countless black powder shooters. For 25 years he passed on his knowledge in the popular column, "Pa's Powder Horn," in the MUCC publication, *Michigan Out-Of-Doors*. He maintained Keeler's Trading Post beside his home in Eaton Rapids, and trailered his wares to black powder shooting events throughout Michigan. He also had a booth in the "Sheep Sheds" at the NMLRA's national matches,

held on the association's home grounds in Friendship, Indiana.

Pa Keeler loved the long, heavy flintlock bench guns and was a fierce competitor. He always had time to answer questions, and is remembered for the many instances where he abandoned a record-setting relay to help another shooter with their problems. He shared amusing tales around the campfire and more than once injected a few appropriate words that diffused a difficult situation.

"I had the honor of meeting Pa," Horrigan said later. "Grand Valley (Cap 'n Ballers™) used to have a muzzle loading gun show at Hastings. I remember talking with him, and he struck me as a real gentleman, a man of high character. At that point I hadn't started building guns yet. Pa left a mark on me, that's for sure.

"The traveling trophy is sitting in my great room. I had a visitor the other day. He brought up Pa's name. He's a shooter, and he saw the trophy. He read Pa's name and obviously he knew what the Keeler Society was all about.

"When Denny (Priddy) said Pa loaned him that Harpers Ferry half-stock, I had a suspicion of where he was going. I've based my whole career on copying original guns. And I've loaned my share to other builders," Horrigan said.

"I got into gun building by accident," Horrigan continued. "I visited Larry Young at Mackinaw City. He had just finished a copy of the 'Little Traverse Bay gun.' In 1978 State Police divers practiced diving in Little Traverse Bay. They found the remains of a gun, and realized it was an early piece. They donated the parts to the Mackinac State Historic Parks at Fort Michilimackinac. Larry built a copy of the gun based on those parts.

"Well, I wanted a copy of that gun, it's French, 1720s era to 1730s. No one would build that gun for me. Denny (Priddy), my trail partner, said, 'If you come up with the money for parts, you can build the gun in my shop.'

"'I've never built a gun before,' I said. His response was, 'You won't be able to say that again.' I still have that gun today. That was about 1992.

"A couple years later I found another French gun I liked. I asked Denny to build it. His response was 'You know how to do it, do it yourself.' At that point I realized I was cursed for life," Horrigan said with a laugh.

"Every gun I've built is based on an original gun. I'll show you the history and the photographs. I've never deviated from that, and I won't apologize for it."

In 2017 at the 36th Annual Midwest Rendezvous, Horrigan began the week with a maple slab, an original smoothbore musket barrel, a Davis American Colonial flintlock and a pile of parts and set to work. By the end of the week, he'd crafted a faithful copy of an original Committee of Safety musket, all with 18th-century tools, clothed in linen and leather, and complete with an ongoing exchange of historical answers to inquisitive onlooker's many questions. The first two shots from that musket on the last day of the rendezvous were both "10X."

"Because I'm from Michigan, my historical character has either been a voyageur or a coureur des bois, which was an unlicensed French trader," Horrigan added. "Well, you can't do a voyageur impression without a canoe, so I built a 21-foot voyageur canoe and hosted a number of trips on the Great Lakes. We've logged over a thousand miles on Big Water."

Horrigan presents his courier des bois persona at Nouvelle Annee, a re-enactment at Historic Fort Wayne, in Fort Wayne, Indiana. On a snowy January afternoon, he trades and communicates with the Miami natives seeking blankets without speaking a word. Those moments are pristine, knowing no bounds by time.

"I also shoot, copiously," Horrigan said with a laugh. "My first love has always been the French guns. I shoot smoothbores, fowlers, Northwest guns, fusils, matchlocks and wheellocks.

"I went to a shoot a few years back and pulled out the matchlock. The matchlocks were smoothbores and they had a rear sight. In a smoothbore-only shoot a rear sight is not allowed. So, I took it back to the truck, cased it and got out the wheellock, because they don't have a rear sight. I placed in the top three," Horrigan said.

Larry Horrigan hunts with the smoothbores he builds, and has taken a nice 8-point buck with the matchlock, a feat few modern hunters can claim.

"I got involved with history and historical research in the early 1980s," Horrigan continued. "I was among the first people in Michigan that did strictly French interpretation. I got involved with Fort St. Joseph in Niles (Michigan) and became a member of Support the Fort. I was president for three years and on the board of directors.

"That got me in with the archeologists, and gave me a chance to view, study and photograph the collections. I started doing lectures for them, too"

Horrigan demonstrates at the NMLRA's Gunmaker's Hall. "Denny (Priddy) encouraged me to work in the back (pavilion). When a new guy shows up, they wonder what he's about. I'd been making

barrels, so that first time I worked on a French barrel at the hall.

"Everyone wondered why I was going through so much effort to put the sighting flat on the barrel. Well, that's the way they were made. Now I own half a dozen original French barrels with sighting flats for reference," he said.

He is also a member of the Northwest Council at Manistee and is the current vice president of the Grand Valley Cap 'n Ballers™.

There is little doubt that Larry Horrigan reflects the principles, values and passion that Roy "Pa" Keeler displayed. The Spirit of Roy Keeler Society is proud to welcome Larry Horrigan!

Submitted by the members of The Spirit of Roy Keeler Society

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MANISTEE MUZZLE LOADING CLUB

Our club's new president, James Rozmarek, held his first Long Rifle Builders Class, Sept. 1st. It was geared for those wishing to build a traditional muzzleloader from a quality kit or assembled components. The class was well attended. It's assumed that some of our members will be kept busy over winter months with a new project.

Things are winding down for the year. September ends our shoot group meets or

matches. The last CPL class and MDOT Highway Cleanup of the year will also be held this month. The former Cast Bullet or Scheutzenbnd group has a classification change. It is now called the Rim Fire Rifle group open to all .22 rifles. Next shoot season, they will continue to meet the 2nd Sunday afternoon each month on the 50 yd. range.

In the following months, planning will be ongoing for next year's events, classes and range projects. We continue to collect cardboard to be cut for backers at the July



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Jeff Terrell - (616) 366-3404
Ron Fernwalt - (616) 836-5760
Larry Horrigan - (269) 845-0460

2027 MSMLA State Championships.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 19 SPORTING CLAYS (modern shotgun)
GRAND VALLEY CAP N BALLERS™

SEPTEMBER 18 HOWARD CITY HOWARD CITY
CONSERVATION CLUB

SEPTEMBER 19 .22 RIMFIRE RIFLE WOODS WALK
DETROIT SPORTSMAN CONGRESS

SEPTEMBER 19 GVCNB PISTOL CHAMPIONSHIP
GRAND VALLEY CAP N BALLERS

OCTOBER 3 - 4 MEAT SHOOT GRAND VALLEY
CAP N BALLERS™

OCTOBER 10 SPORTING CLAYS (modern shotgun)
GRAND VALLEY CAP N BALLERS™

OCTOBER 11 MEMORIAL SHOOT DETROIT
SPORTSMAN CONGRESS

OCTOBER 24 LEVER ACTION CENTER FIRE RIFLE
WOODS WALK DETROIT SPORTSMAN CONGRESS

OCTOBER 17 TURKEY SHOOT
BENZIE SPORTSMAN CLUB

OCTOBER 25, 25 TURKEY SHOOT
COLUMBIACVILLE SPORTSMAN CLUB

OCTOBER 24 SQUIRREL SHOOT
GRAND VALLEY CAP N BALLERS™

NOV 8 WOODS WALK DETROIT
SPORTSMAN CONGRESS

DEC 13 WOODS WALK DETROIT
SPORTSMAN CONGRESS

DECEMBER 31 "LAST BLAST OF THE YEAR"
BLUE WATER SPORTSMAN ASSN



At the 2017 Midwest Rendevouse Larry Horrigan dedicated a week to building a Musket by hand with 18th century tools.

DON'T FORGET

Modern Shotgun Sporting Clays and the GVCNB Pistol Championship held at Grand Valley Cap N Ballers™ on September 19th.

On October 3rd and 4th is the Meat Shoot and I have been told the prizes are 2 Sizzle Steaks, Bacon and Sausage for prizes. This includes Rifle, Traditional Archery and Shotgun.



The Keeler attendees at the 2026 MSMLA Rifle/Pistol championship were from Left to Right. Dave Maddox, Dennis Priddy, Jim Brotherton, Ron Fernwalt, Dennis Neely, Ruth Palmer, Eric Hoskinson and Ira Thumma.

Our new inductee in the center Larry Horrigan