

Beginnings of the Vermont Farriers Association

It was in 2004 that Bruce Matthews finally acted on an idea that he'd been kicking around for awhile. At that time, the only continuing education available to farriers who lived in Vermont, was to travel to either Meader Supply Corp or Horseshoes Plus (both around 3 to 4 hours for most Vermont farriers) for clinicians that they brought in. Bruce wanted to start a farriers association in Vermont so that we didn't have to travel as far for clinics.

Bruce contacted Wayne Brockney of Meader Supply Corp who was Vice President at that time. Wayne kindly gave Bruce a donation to purchase stamps, envelopes and make copies of an invitation letter to any Vermont farriers to attend an organizational meeting to be held in Rutland at Seward's Family Restaurant. Wayne also gave Bruce a list of Vermont farriers as well as some farriers from New Hampshire that expressed interest.

And so, a group of 35 plus, not only Vermont farriers but also some from New Hampshire, attended the first informal meeting. From that meeting, we met again and decided to move forward with establishing an association!

By complete mutual agreement of the farriers in attendance, Bruce Matthews was voted in as president of our newly formed Vermont Farriers Association. Ken Norman was voted vice president with his wife, Eli-Anita, voted in as secretary. Anthony Peduto took the position of our first treasurer and Diane Saunders became the Member At Large. How exciting! Our first board of officers!

Then the real work started of developing a Constitution as well as By-Laws. Fortunately we didn't have to re-invent the wheel as we asked already established farrier associations if we could use theirs as a basis and then did so.

In September 2006, we as an association were ready to ask the American Farriers Association to be a chapter and were granted recognition as Chapter 64 in Region 5! By that time we also become a 501(c) 3, non-profit association. That application was a lot of work to submit. We had help with that from

William Miller, Esq. of Langrock, Wool and Sperry.

Fortunately, in the early years, Diane Saunders was a member of Bristol Rescue Squad and we were able to hold our beginning meetings at their squad building as well as many of our initial clinics and lectures. That helped out greatly since there was no cost to the newly formed association for the use of the building.

Our very first clinic was in October 2004! Rick Banker of Paul Smiths, NY was graciously our (free) clinician and helped us with our forging skills as well as those who braved working on a horse under his guidance.

From those humble beginnings, we have had notable clinicians such as Michael Savoldi, Grant Moon, Craig Trnka, Chris Gregory, John Blombach, Allie Hayes, Mitch Taylor, Dr. Tracy Turner, Bob Pethick, Bob Skradizo, Michael Wildenstein, Esco Buff, Ben Mangan, Dr. Robert Ange and many other notable clinicians in the farrier world.

Our charter members in the beginning were:

Wayne Albert, Phil Armitage, Rick Banker, Seth Butler, Don Chandler, Marcel Cyr, Scott Doner, Debbie Frederick, Steve Hazen, Dave Hendee, Fran Jurga, Bruce Matthews, Susan Mellen, Jeff Myrick, Ken and Eli-Anita Norman, Anthony Peduto, Danny Reynolds, Diane Saunders, Mark Schneider, George Spear, Sarah Thrasher, Vermont Large Animal Clinic and Todd Wheeler.

Many of the charter members are still shoeing horses although a number of them have retired and a few others have moved on to different opportunities in their lives. We certainly appreciate the help from all of them in getting Vermont Farriers Association started with one man's vision and continuing that vision with a few minor changes down the road to keep up with the changing times.

The following is a note from past president and original organizer, Bruce Matthews:

How many remember the beginning of their Farrier Association?

In 2004 I had a dream of forming a Vermont Farriers Association. I gathered all of the farriers that I could contact and we met at Seward's restaurant in Rutland, Vermont to discuss forming the Vermont Farriers Association. In 2006, after much debate between Tom Trosin and myself, Vermont Farriers Association was granted as a chapter of the American Farrier's Association. We became Chapter 64 in region 5. Here it is 2019; 15 years later and we are still going strong. I had the honor of serving as the first President and during that year I watched all board members and charter members reveal their many individual talents in building our association. We have had many awesome clinicians during those years come to Vermont. From those humble beginnings, we have had such notable clinicians now as: Rick Burton, Michael Savoldi, Grant Moon, Craig Trnka, Chris Gregory, John Blombach, Allie Hayes, Mitch Taylor, Dr. Tracy Turner, Bob Pethick, Bob Skradizo, Michael Wildenstein, Esco Buff, Dr. Robert Ange and many others in the farrier world. We've had many notable farriers go through our yearly (now bi-yearly) AFA certification program. A new, younger group of board members run the Vermont Farriers Association now. It is exciting for me to watch them excel and continue to move the association forward. Our longest guiding member, still giving her years of experience, is Diane Saunders of Bristol, Vermont. Diane has continued every year for all 15 years of our existence to share with each board her knowledge and skills in keeping a working, well-funded treasury, setting up for and contacting clinicians, and organizing refreshments at events. I remember Diane bringing refreshments along with "hot Joe" to drink. Ken Norman has been there all these years with his willingness to serve and share his knowledge. Ken has served as President and given unselfishly all these years. Mark Schneider, also a past President, has given his time and skills not only as a farrier but as a world-class farrier and shoemaker; sharing his skills and helping others achieve their certifications. Other members each added from their specific expertise to the

continued growth of Vermont Farriers Association. Mike Givney (past President) from New York, now of Tennessee and from New Hampshire, Meader's Supply and Horseshoe's Plus, both contributing members; and Scott Button, who started out going through our certification programs and working his way to CJF and now an AFA tester, has been very active in certifications. I watched Scott not only work full time as a farrier but manage his time to take pictures and mountain climb and spend valuable time with his family. Jim Smith CJF who also has given his time to aid and assist in certifications also as an AFA tester as well as Region 5 rep.

We differed from some chapters in the respect that I wanted the doors open to all hoof care professionals, farriers, barefooters and veterinarians. We learned and shared much information from all these individuals and in the process our mindsets were expanded in all directions.

How many of you remember the beginning and growth of your associations?