

# THE ENGRAVER

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF THE FIREARMS ENGRAVERS GUILD OF AMERICA



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OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER 2011

# THE ENGRAVER

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Front Cover: Knife engraving by FEGA Master Engraver C. J. Cai

Original photo by Yi Lin Hu Photo.  
[www.yilinh.com](http://www.yilinh.com)



Back Cover: E.C. Prudhomme, author of *E.C. Prudhomme's Gun Engraving Review*, receiving a FEGA honorary lifetime membership in his workshop 1985. Presenting it to him is Ben Lane and Ron Smith.



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## A MESSAGE FROM GUILD PRESIDENT MARTY RABENO

**J** must start off by thanking all of you that have taken the time to call and e-mail me with your kind words and support with my taking over as president. Likewise your understanding of my explanation of the events and support of our position with the ACGG is gratifying to the BOD and myself. Thank you very much.

It has been a busy past few months behind the scenes here for the Board of Directors. We have been conducting FEGA business for 30 plus years. It obviously is not the same world it was 30 years ago.

It is amazing how though the course of conducting business in the best most efficient way for our guild and officers, things can get very convoluted and confusing over a period of time. We have shifted around job duties over the years to best utilize the talents of our BOD as new people were elected and also try and keep up to speed with changing conditions and guild needs. This has resulted in some holes and duplication of job responsibilities and some that actually are not needed anymore.

The main item we have been focusing on recently is reassessing the various job duties and position descriptions of our board members. It has become time to reassess, update and refine our BOD duties in order to make us more efficient and enable us to best handle the challenges that we will be facing in the next few years. This actually was not an easy thing to do, as we first off had to define exactly what each of us was in fact doing, or should be doing. Then of course we have to prioritize this list, add to and then bundle them into our different BOD positions while trying to even out the workload. We have accomplished this

and our various elected officials will now be handling these duties as we have laid out for us.

There is still much more reorganizing work to do. Our position of Administrative Assistant is an important organizational core of our guild. Our AA is pretty much our “front person” with any e-mails and phone calls from members and the general public while also being responsible for organizing, maintaining and distributing much of our important records and information. This job is presently being held by Cherrie Courville. We are still defining the job responsibilities of our AA and plan on making these duties as workable and as efficient as possible.

Not being able to totally let Rex off the hook, I am pleased to announce that he will continue to be serving our Guild as our official FEGA Web Master. This is an appointed position. Rex has already begun working on upgrading and redoing our web site. Little by little over the next few months, you will be seeing some improvements and changes as he gets a handle on things. It’s good to have him still working for us in our corner. As you can see, our BOD is an active one. FEGA cannot function without the involvement of our BOD and our members.

With our last issue of the Engraver you received a members survey that I hope you have sent it back to us for evaluation. We have already received a survey back from our show exhibitors and the results were very interesting and encouraging. We are anxious to see what returns we get with the member survey that you should have all filled out and returned by now.

Our upcoming Annual Meeting/Exhibition in January promises to be an interesting one. This is the first time that we will be having our exhibition coinciding with the annual meeting of “The Wild Sheep Foundation”. They are a group of individuals that take their wild sheep hunting very seriously. They seem very receptive to having us in Reno at the same time as their annual convention.

As always there will be on display the latest and greatest engravings our members have to inspire us. It is hoped that we will be seeing many new faces attending our annual show and hopefully we will be making new friends and some new clients. Make sure that you come along and join us. Ω





A SIMPLE BARREL HOLDER  
 ARTICLE & PHOTOS BY SANDY POPOVICH

**R**ecently I started to engrave my Remington XP 100. It has a 12 inch barrel that I turned from a blank. To accommodate the length of the barrel I had to change everything around in my engraving area. I was planning on doing that for some time but just hadn't gotten round to it. Then I had to figure out how to hold the barrel while engraving it. I remembered something that Marty Rabeno had said about using a carpenter's clamp to hold long objects for engraving. Hanging on a cross beam in the shop was carpenter's clamp. I cleaned off the dust and began to wonder how this was going to work. I did not remember what Marty said about how he held anything in the clamp. So this is what I came up with. (Figure 1)



I then drilled a hole in the stationary clamp and made a brass center for it also. (Figure 3)

A hole was drilled in the top of the sliding clamp and threaded to accept an 8-32 screw. By

putting a set screw in the clamp you can lock the clamp screw. This keeps it from backing out when you rotate the barrel or long objects. The nice thing about these clamps is you can get them in just about any length.

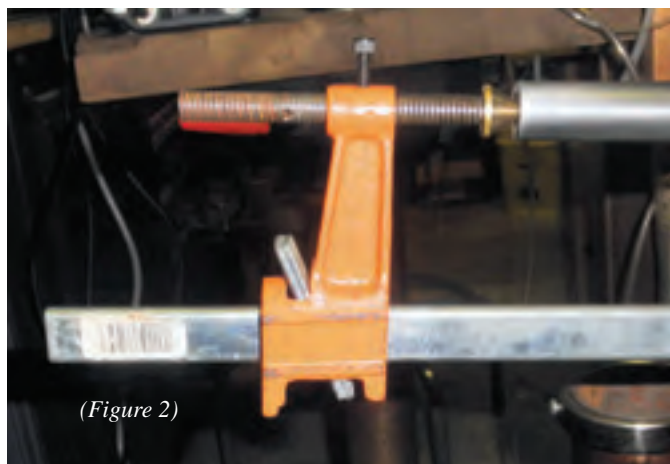
Holding the action was not going to be as straight forward as the barrel. For years I have been using Action Mandrels for truing the face and reshaping the rear bridge on actions. A Light bulb turned on. I was ecstatic about my idea. Then I realized I didn't have a mandrel that would fit the XP. So onto the lathe and a short time later with the XP action on the new mandrel I had this arrangement. (Figure 4)



(Figure 1)

I removed the wooden handle and swivel foot from the clamp screw and took it out of the sliding clamp. I then drilled a hole in the nose end of the clamp screw to accept a brass center (Figure 2)

I had a great time building these two fixtures. I hope you can use the idea. Marty thanks for planting the seed. Ω



(Figure 2)



(Figure 4)





**FEGA WANTS YOU**  
**ARTICLE BY MARTY RABENO**

**B**oard of Directors positions that will be voted on this coming January at our Annual Meeting

As a little bit of advance notice and a reminder, don't forget that our get together in Reno this January is also our annual membership business meeting in addition to our exhibition. As always we will be voting for members of our BOD directors. It is important that our board consists of individuals that will actively work on our behalf as a guild and as individual engravers while promoting our art. Listed below are the positions that we will be electing this year along with a brief description/overview of the duties and responsibilities that go along with each position. Please look these over and give serious thought to whom you feel might do a good job representing us. Perhaps it would be a present member of the board or someone totally new. Or if you are interested then get someone to nominate you. In either case be reminded that there can be no nominations from the podium. All nominations and seconds must come from the membership floor at the meeting. The person nominated must also be present to either accept or decline the nomination.

**FEGA President presently held by Marty Rabeno**

The President is responsible for overseeing all BOD members and to act as a liaison between various sub committees, administration assistant, web master and editor. The position is to provide leadership and direction for the rest of the board as well as regular communications and an exchange of ideas. Plus act as a liaison with others guilds and organizations.

**Director Blue presently held by Andrew Biggs**

Director BLUE is responsible the FEGA MASTER Engravers Certification. Since this is only an administrative position it is not necessary that the director be a FEGA Master Engraver. Director Blue cannot vote in the judging.

- General duties include making certain that all applicants are aware of the FEGA process for certification and that all rules/procedures are followed.
- Oversee the judging of all applicants and make sure the rules are followed.
- Liaise with the show committee for time and location of judging.
- Liaise with all applicants as to the correct time and location of the judging
- Announce new FEGA Mater Engravers and present certificates at the general meeting or banquet.
- Inform the editor of the new FEGA Master Engravers names so they can be published in the Engraver magazine.
- Inform the AA as to the new FEGA Master Engraver names so they can be entered into the data base.
- Inform Brownells so that their financial award can be given to the new FEGA Master Engravers.

**Vice President Blue presently held by Tim Wells**

- Oversee the annual award activities including times and location
- Contact various sponsors for existing awards and possible new ones

- Ensure that awards or checks are received from the sponsor
- Ensure awards or checks are given to the winners
- Oversee thank you letters
- Provide a list of winners to the editor for the Engraver Magazine

**Director Red duties presently held by Kevin Monahan**

- Oversee annual seminars and videos. This includes:
  - Secure presenters for the seminars
  - Coordinate times and location of seminars
  - Coordinate with GRS for equipment needed
  - Coordinate with the video person to set up, film and deliver on time.
  - Coordinate Power Point presentations
  - Make Power Point presentations if needed
  - Research various seminar topics with the help from the BOD
  - Publish seminar schedule in the Engraver and web sites
  - Review seminar DVD before releasing
  - Design and publish seminar "pre-order" form for the Engraver
  - Oversee the seminars on Monday
  - Review seminars and make notes/adjustments as needed for next year with input from President and BOD
  - Coordinate pre-order DVD production and shipping
  - Write an article for the Engraver magazine promoting the seminar DVD's

**Secretary duties presently held by Diane Scalese**

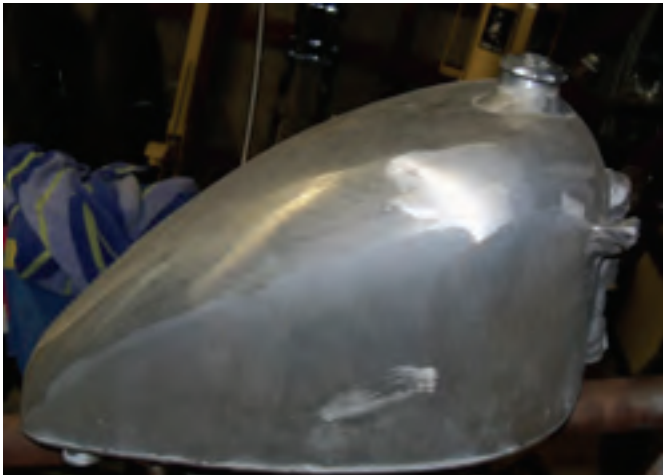
- Print and provide all handouts and forms for the show table
- Print and provide schedules, minutes and membership list for the general meeting
- Print and provide schedules, minutes and agenda for the BOD meetings
- Oversee the membership roster and update as needed.
- Send out renewal notices when needed.
- Provide lists for the joint show for registration
- Provide member list for annual meeting registration
- Maintaining a complete set of records
- Update new member packets and letters as needed
- Update and coordinate renewal member items as needed
- Monitor orders and member renewals
- Coordinate each year to get treasurer report, minutes of the general, BOD and joint meeting and archive them
- Oversee the provisions and set up of the social
- NOTE: Much of this is accomplished with the assistance of the AA.

As you can see, our BOD is an active one. FEGA cannot function without the involvement of our BOD and our members. I look forward to seeing you in January at our meeting. Ω



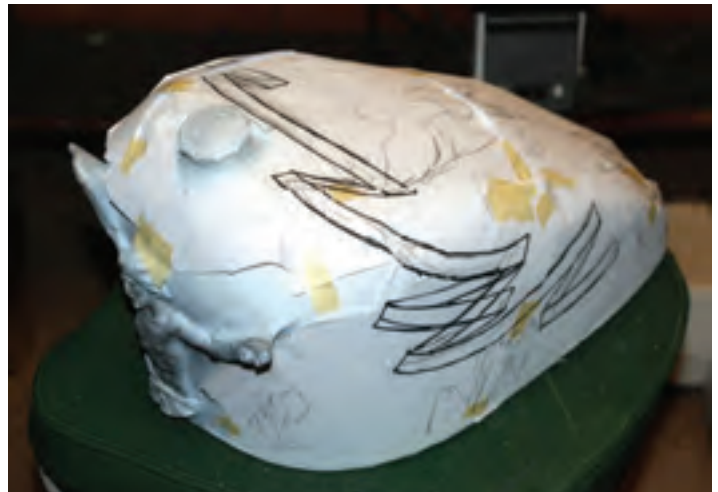
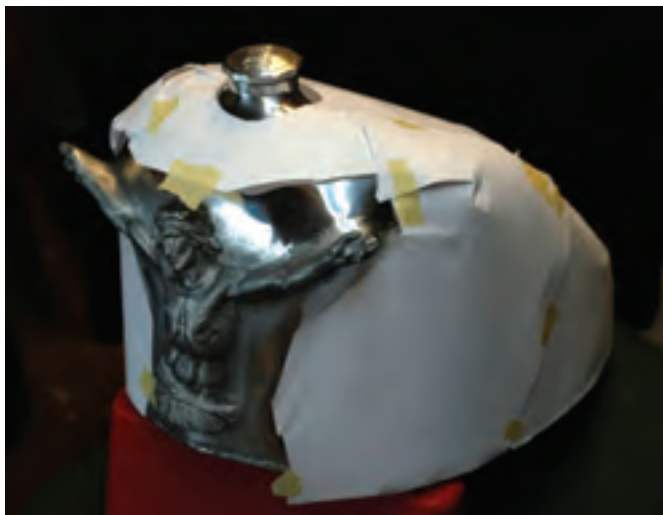
ANGELS AND DEMONS  
 ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY OTTO CARTER & GERALD EWING

**J** was born and raised in Abilene, Texas. I currently live 20 miles south of Abilene out in the country in Callahan County. I've been an artist all of my life (50 years so far). While attending Abilene Christian University I apprenticed as a sign painter under Ellison Edwards. After earning my Bachelors of Fine Arts degree, studying under sculpture teacher Arthur Williams and painting teacher Ted Rose, I continued in the sign business for several years.



As a gun enthusiast, I had seen James B. Meek's book "The Art of Engraving" in Brownell's catalogue. I bought it as a reference for scroll design. I was amazed at the engravings I saw in it and couldn't imagine how anyone could engrave such beauty into metal. I thought that someday I would like to learn that. I also knew from experience in the sign business that it helps to apprentice or go to school to learn a skill properly and not have to unlearn bad habits.

In 2002 I was able to go to the GRS school and take a basic engraving class under Mike Dubber. I immediately knew that I wanted to become an engraver. I wanted to learn the mechanics of the art; the tool sharpening, cutting techniques etc. I knew that my



skills would develop quickly as I could see that I was using many design and layout concepts learned from my skills as a sign artist.



Originally I just wanted to engrave firearms. Over the years I have engraved a variety of firearms but I'm probably most noted for engraving Bond Arms derringers. After engraving firearms for several years I got a request to engrave some motorcycle parts for a local chopper builder. I have to admit I wasn't enamoured with the idea at first. But once I got into it, it got into my blood quickly. I've been a motorcyclist for 40 years. I have customized many motorcycles over the years doing custom paint jobs and pin striping. I really enjoyed the look and feel of





it would even be cooler and more mysterious and nostalgic if it were in Latin. I knew that I wanted it to have a classical feel to it.

The tank was somewhat pitted and rough. I thought that would go well with the old look I wanted. In keeping with the angels and demons theme I also thought about a good vs. evil theme tying in with it. That made me think of the famous Raphael artwork of Michael the Archangel defeating Satan. Then I borrowed bits and pieces from other classics to complete the theme. I wanted lots of scrollwork working through all of the elements. The welded seam at the bottom of the tank was rough and irregular. Instead of trying to fight it or fix it, I decided to work with it by turning it into a vine. With thorns and leaves attached. Even though the tank had pits in it, it had been sanded and polished smooth.

the deeply engraved aluminum. Until recently most of the motorcycle engraving I did was scrollwork, lettering, and the occasional logo, or skulls or flames. I've never done any elaborate relief work until I took on this tank project.

Steven Bates contacted me about engraving a tank for his chopper build. At first I was reluctant, as I know most tanks are made of sheet metal. He informed me that this was a tank that he had custom cast out of aluminum. It was 1/4" thick and had a crucifix cast into the front of it. He was looking for an angels and demons theme. Steven lives in Ft. Worth and I live outside of Abilene, Texas. So we met half way. When I got the tank I had a feeling I was going to do something special, but I didn't know what. My best ideas for a project seem to come to me when I'm not thinking about it. One of the first things I thought about was a banner wrapping around it with a scripture. Maybe a scripture having to do with an apocalyptic theme. I settled on Rev. 20:10. I also figured that



I sanded it with 400 grit sandpaper and painted it with a white enamel primer. That is a good base upon which to draw. It also accepts acetone transfers well. The lettering was the biggest challenge for layout, as I had to make the length of it fit the winding banner shape. I drew some base lines for the text on the tank and made tracings of them to scan into the computer. I imported those shapes into the CorelDraw! program and converted them to vector lines. I then set the type to the shapes of the vector lines. It took several attempts rearranging the letters to get them to come out to the right length. I then printed the lettering onto paper (in reverse) so I could make photocopies of them for doing an acetone transfer. Once I transferred the text onto the tank I drew the banners around the text. I figured that would be easier than trying to make the text fit onto the banner. I also did an acetone transfer of the Raphael figure in the middle of the tank.





All of the other figures were hand drawn. I like to draw with a red Sharpie and then refine the drawing with a black Sharpie. The scrollwork was first roughly drawn using vine charcoal then gone over with a Sharpie.



Work holding was challenging. I didn't attempt to try to hold it in any kind of vise. On something this large I treated it like doing a stone sculpture and set it on sand bags on my engraving pedestal. It wasn't ideal but I made it







work. Another problem I had to deal with was the noise factor. I used the Lindsay Nitro G20 for the majority of the carving. And that big tool banging away on this metal drum of a tank was deafening. I taped some rags to the bottom of it and also filled the tank with rope to dampen it. It helped some but I still resorted to wearing earplugs.

I outlined most of the shapes with a large onglette. Removing the background was an enormous task. The Nitro was the perfect tool for it. I used a large onglette and a flat for most of that. It wore my finger out. I ended up having to wrap tape around the graver to pad it. My finger was literally bleeding. I also used diamond Dremel bits to texture the background. In carving the figures I like to rough them out with a flat graver in my Lindsay Palm Control AirGraver and then go over them with a liner to smooth and shape them. Then I sand them and it gives it a nice shaded look. The liner really smoothes and levels the material.

Usually I'm not one to keep up with hours. It's just not my thing. But I knew that everyone would want to know, so I made it a point to keep up with them. Design and prep work took 18 hours. Carving took 192 hours. For a total of 210 hours. I worked on it every day, logging in 10-12 hours a day. Then one day when I was almost finished with it, I hit a snag on one of the figures

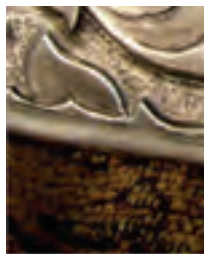


*Photo courtesy of Gerald Ewing*



*All Photos on this page  
courtesy of Gerald Ewing*

and set it aside and took about a 2-week break from it. I had some more jobs that I need to get started on but promised myself I wouldn't start them until I finished this tank. I got back to work on it and 2 days later I was finished with it. I've done some other parts on the bike as well. The knucklehead engine is fully engraved, as are several other parts. And as of this writing I still have a few more small parts to engrave. I am anxious to see the finished chopper. More pictures of it can be seen on my website <http://www.ottocarter.com/godspeed.htm> Ω









MY VISIT TO THE BERETTA ENGRAVING SHOP  
ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY HORA SIERTSEMA

In the last Issue of the Engraver I mentioned that I had the privilege to meet Mr. Peter Horn, Vice president of Beretta USA on Sunday, during the exhibition of FEGA in Reno. After he had introduced me to Mr. Robert Lee he invited me to visit Beretta in Gardone, Val Trompia, Italy to meet up with Luca Casari, head of the Beretta engraving department. Now I knew my wife had some plans to visit the famous cities of Tuscany like Florence, Pisa, Siena etc. So I told Peter about that and he promised me to arrange a visit as soon as I was certain about my travel schedule.

At home, I first Google'd Gardone. Not in Tuscany exactly but roughly in the middle between Venice and Milano, half an hour drive north of Brescia and some 3 and a half hours from Florence. Mid February Melanka and I had decided to take 2 weeks off in late May - early June.

We planned that I could visit Beretta on our way back home. So if Peter could get an appointment for me it all would come together. By email we informed Peter about our schedule and plans.

In the meantime, another group was planning for a visit to Val Trompia as well. This trip, now known on several internet forums as "Chris DeCamillis's Italian Trip", was scheduled for more or less the same time frame. As a Dutchman and husband it was not an option

for me to join in as this trip of ours was also our vacation.

On Friday 27th of May, we left for our 2 weeks off heading for Belgium and France for the first day. On the 5th day of our journey and after a beautiful trip through lavender fields in the province of Provence we entered Italy. Over the next few days we discovered the ancient cities of Tuscany. If ever there is a possibility to make this trip to Italy you should visit these cities with their world famous treasures. The leaning tower, the birth of Venus, the David, the Palio, The Medici legacy and so much, much more. But enough about that because I would like to tell you about Beretta. After a week we left for Venice. That is a story in its own and a "must see" as well.

Late in the afternoon on the 9th of June we checked in in our Hotel in Brescia near Val Trompia. Tired from the trip to Venice we turned in early after a quick pizza in the hotel restaurant.

Peter had organized that I could ask for Mr. Jarno Antonelli, marketing manager, to visit Beretta. At the reception of the heavily guarded mansion of Beretta I was welcomed by the receptionist who speaks absolutely no English. As my Italian is not much better we used all our means to communicate. As soon he discovered that I was looking for Mr. Antonelli he picked up the phone and handed it straight to me. I talked to Mr. Antonelli and he explained that he was occupied but would send his associate Dr. Ssa Chiara Pivato. After some time Mrs. Pivato joined me in the lobby. We had an chat about Beretta and then she called for Mr. Luca Casari. As Meastri Incisori (Master Engraver) he is head

of the engraving department for Beretta employing some 15 top engravers. Furthermore he's a teacher at the company school of engraving.

We discussed our mutual interest in engraving and Mrs. Pivato handed over a heavy catalog showing lots of firearms that Mr. Casari had worked on. A present, so she told me. Mr. Casari told me he's an engraver for over 25 years, of which 15 with the company. He now has followed in to the footsteps of the legendary master engraver Mr. Giulio Timpini who had retired somewhere in 2006.



The Beretta Master Engraver, Luca Casari





The author with Luca Casari

As a break in the discussion we visited the closed and private collection of Beretta firearms. We entered a room literally packed with cabinets displaying all known models of Beretta ranging from the early 16th century up to the latest model with some of the world's finest specimens in firearms. I could have spent days, studying these master pieces. Even Mr. Casari was impressed as he had entered the room just for the 3rd time in his life.

One side of the room is reserved for "arms of defense" as the other side and middle area is occupied for hunting and sports guns. I do not know if they were in the correct area displayed but in the middle of the room there were the original and unused Beretta dueling pistols of Napoleon that he got as a present from his wife. Napoleon was an important customer.

The Beretta Company has a history of nearly 500 years with a Beretta family member at its head, uninterrupted, for 15 generations. The sixteenth is now 13 years old and a talent for the future.

What all started with the production of barrels for a customer in Venice in 1526 is now the company that is supplying for over 35 years, state of the art M9 handguns to the Navy Seals in the USA.

Val Trompia north from Brescia started in early times as the center of the world for iron and weapons. The Romans ordered their spears and swords from the region and many rulers followed the trail into the mountains to purchase their means of power.

Back to my meeting with Luca Casari. He was more than happy to show me his workshop when I ask for that. It is located a few kilometers from the HQ. After another security check I was invited to the Engraving studio of Beretta.

Mr. Casari showed me his office and work shop what is surprisingly small and tidy. Nothing like what I have seen from many engravers on the internet when they show their den. It consists of a small bench with a robust vise and a bright lamp in front of the window for daylight. The canvasses are held with some lead slabs and a cloth at a height that demands standing up during chiseling. Luca demonstrates the common techniques he uses to engrave. In fact nothing special as I soon discover. With some modeling clay and chalk powder he draws the design directly onto the metal and starts to hammer away. Nothing like a microscope or high tech camera devise, only glasses, loupe and visor. As I watch the master I realize it all comes down to the absolute skill of a master and not the tools at all. This is really disappointing! I was expecting and hoping to discover the top-secret tools and machines!

When I ask him about the use of air tools it takes some time for him to understand what I mean. Then he says that

the only tools he uses are chisel and hammer and burins. He explains that it takes 5 years practicing under strict guidance of a Master to become an engraver for Beretta. He leads me to the room next to his studio. Here Beretta maintains a company engraving school. There are 2 students working on gun pieces in the same setup as the master. The 2 men show me the book that I got as a present. For them it is their school book from which they have to copy several master pieces. Easily 500 hours per piece they clarify.

Luca explains that most engravers that are Beretta trained are now working for themselves outside the company and do commissions for Beretta. Amongst these Master Engravers that are generally located in the Brescia area, is Creative Art, the very group of engraving masters that I have met and learned to admire during the Grand Masters Weekend 2010 in Emporia.

At 12 h. I leave the Beretta company as time is money and work has to continue. My respect for Beretta, Mr. Casari and for the works that Beretta presented to me has multiplied many times since I met this highly secured world.

A little bit confused I return to Melanka who has taken the bus to Brescia center. Later in the afternoon we visit the Arms museum that is located in a castle high up a hill overlooking the ancient Roman city of Brescia. Ω

Some Internet links:

The Beretta company: <http://www.beretta.com/>  
See Luca Casari at work: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOZZtSu0VqE&feature=related>



28TH FIREARMS ENGRAVERS AND GUNMAKERS EXHIBITION  
 ARTICLE BY EXHIBITION COORDINATOR, JAN BILLEB

**J**anuary 20-21-22 Reno/Sparks 2012  
 Exciting plans are shaping up for the 28th joint exhibition of FEGA and ACGG at John Ascuaga's Nugget in Reno/Sparks in January. The dates of January 20-21-22 overlap the "Sheep Show," the annual convention of the Wild Sheep Foundation (formerly FNAWS) – and for a very good reason. The Wild Sheep Foundation is excited to work with our organizations to promote the Exhibition and also to encourage you to attend their show.

The Sheep Show left Reno for a period of time after having been located at the Grand Sierra property for nearly two decades, moving the show to various cities. The return to Reno in 2011 generated a 43% net increase in their event, and convinced them that the Foundation's return to their original home was the right decision. They are doing an aggressive marketing campaign with Midway USA as a sponsor, and support from Reno retailers including Cabela's, Scheel's and Sportsmen's Warehouse.

The last two years we've had great support from Cabela's in promoting the Exhibition, and for 2012 the other two outdoor retailers have also agreed to have large signs in their stores encouraging people to check out the show at the Nugget.

We are doing complimentary cooperative ads in the Engraver, Gunmaker and the Wild Sheep publications to share with all members what each show has to offer. Check out the ad in this issue and make plans to visit the "Sheep Show." You'll get a \$5 discount with your badge. And "Sheep Show" people will be receiving the same \$5 discount to attend our exhibition. With "the largest mountain hunting and conservation convention in the world," there should be more than a few people who appreciate fine guns.

The Nugget has been outstanding in helping us partner with the "Sheep Show" and is working on a shuttle plan the "Sheep Show." We'll let you know when the schedule is worked out. But, if it doesn't work into your schedule, hop on the free airport shuttle and ask them to drop you off at the Convention Center!

October 1st is an important date to remember. Make your plans now to display and enjoy the opportunity of a new crowd of potential customers, but mail those reservations by October 1st. If you haven't received exhibitor information, contact Patti Murry, [exhibition@acgg.org](mailto:exhibition@acgg.org) or (507) 645-8811. Too late for October 1st? The final deadline is October 31st, but it does cost a few more dollars at that date.

**Other important dates to note:**

December 19th: Hotel room reservations need to be made by December 19th to be included in the room block rate and get the \$6 food coupon per day. Since the Nugget allows 24 hour cancellations, you don't have to worry about losing a deposit. You can book online at [www.FEGA.com](http://www.FEGA.com) or [www.ACGG.org](http://www.ACGG.org) or by calling the Nugget at 1 (800) 648-1177. Be sure to give them reservation code GFIRE12.

January 10th: To help us plan, please make your banquet reservation by January 10th. You can use the form available online at [www.FEGA.com](http://www.FEGA.com) or call Patti at (507) 645-8811. Cost is \$47 per person and there will be 8 people at a table. This will be a sit down dinner and the Nugget guarantees it will be much better than 2011!

Plus, think about contacting Sandy Popovich with an auction donation. Forms are available on the website. We've counted all these years on the generous donations of members for the auction to generate funds to pay the show operating expenses. Let's make the 2012 the best auction yet.

You've read and heard about the great time other members have, meeting each other, sharing ideas, and displaying their work. There really is nothing else like being able to meet face-to-face, get acquainted and see fine quality engraved work, be able to hold it, examine it, photograph it, and ask questions of the artist. This is the year you need to attend. Don't miss this 28th Firearms Engravers & Gunmakers Exhibition. Ω







SOME GUN JEWELRY  
ARTICLE & PHOTOS BY CHRIS MALOUF

**I**t is always the best clients who seek us out with a unique vision that is to become reality. These concepts draw on our past experiences as well as take us into new and challenging territory. In many ways, these projects can define the course of our business and open new avenues for creative opportunity. This is where custom engraving is always most rewarding. I contemplated the submission of this project, for publication, for some time as it was not specifically a firearm or knife. An article on jewelry in the Firearms Guild's "The Engraver"? What makes this particular piece unique and pertinent to firearms is the complete process, from concept to engraving, in which it was created. This client wanted a men's wedding band that was fabricated by a gunsmith and engraved in a style representative of some of the engraved firearms in his collection. Photos of works in his collection were submitted and I began the task of transforming one of the engraving styles, which would best accommodate selective gold inlay, to a ring. The 80 plus hours of engraving time invested in this 12mm wide, surgical grade,



stainless steel ring include 31 individual inlays of 22k gold as well as a relieved and dot punched background using a #0 punch. The ring is also complimented with a set of matching cuff links and custom fabricated, Argentium with 24k gold inlay, tuxedo shirt studs. I chose Argentium for the shirt studs as the material's hardness is much more suitable for the gold inlay process and fabrication time



was substantially less than required for steel. The 11/32" squares also maintain an almost indistinguishable color from polished, surgical stainless. It all makes for the ultimate in custom engraved jewelry for the discriminating firearms enthusiast. Ω



It is my intention to write a series of articles relating to the art and design side of engraving. This being the first one, I better make a few things absolutely clear:

Very few things are absolutely clear in art. It is subjective, while at the same time heavily influenced and guided by principles that over time were established as a foundation to be used to create a design that has a good chance of appealing to the masses. I have no intention of being edgy or trendy. I'll do my best to hit the basics and let you tweak your own pieces to suit your taste and that of your client.

This is completely my opinion and you are welcome to tell your friends that I am off my rocker. I live in Northern Utah; I will never hear it anyway. Winter is coming and the article can at least be useful as a fire starter.

I'm not too worried about semantics. If you want to use different terminology go for it. I will avoid the word "rule" and stick more with words like "principles and strong suggestions".

Well here we go. We've all heard the term "flow" and it's a good one. You could also substitute words like direction and movement. These describe a feeling that a design gives the viewer. Some designs move around a lot and when the elements are connected in a harmonious and flowing way, it creates a feeling of grace and elegance. Understand that not all good designs need to be moving all over the place but for those that do swirl around a lot, let's examine what goes into it.

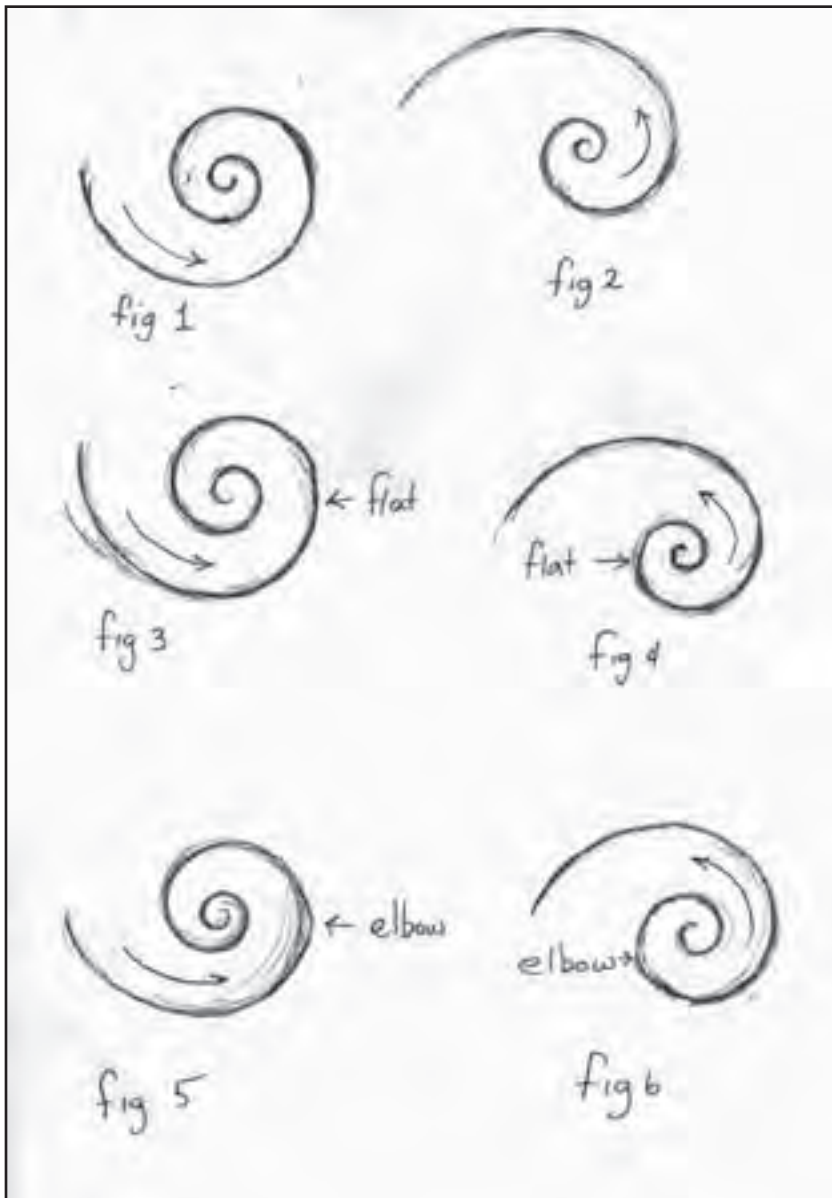
The basic structure of most ornamental designs is the scroll backbone. This establishes the underlying foundation of the scrolls. I strongly suggest you draw in the backbones before worrying about leaves and flowers. The scroll backbone is the outline of the scroll or you may want to think of it as the stem that curls around and has leaves,

flowers, and ornamental elements coming off of it. Good backbones are smooth and either wind around tighter, or, unwind at a consistent rate. Fig. 1 winds around tighter and tighter as it moves into the center of the scroll. Fig. 2 unwinds as it moves out from the center. Be careful that it doesn't straighten out or slow down the rate of winding and unwinding. This results in a flat spot in the backbone. Figs. 3 and 4 illustrate flat spots in the scrolls. Another condition to watch for is ever lurking elbow. This is where the scroll backbone pokes out a bit. Figs. 5 and 6 show a couple of elbows.

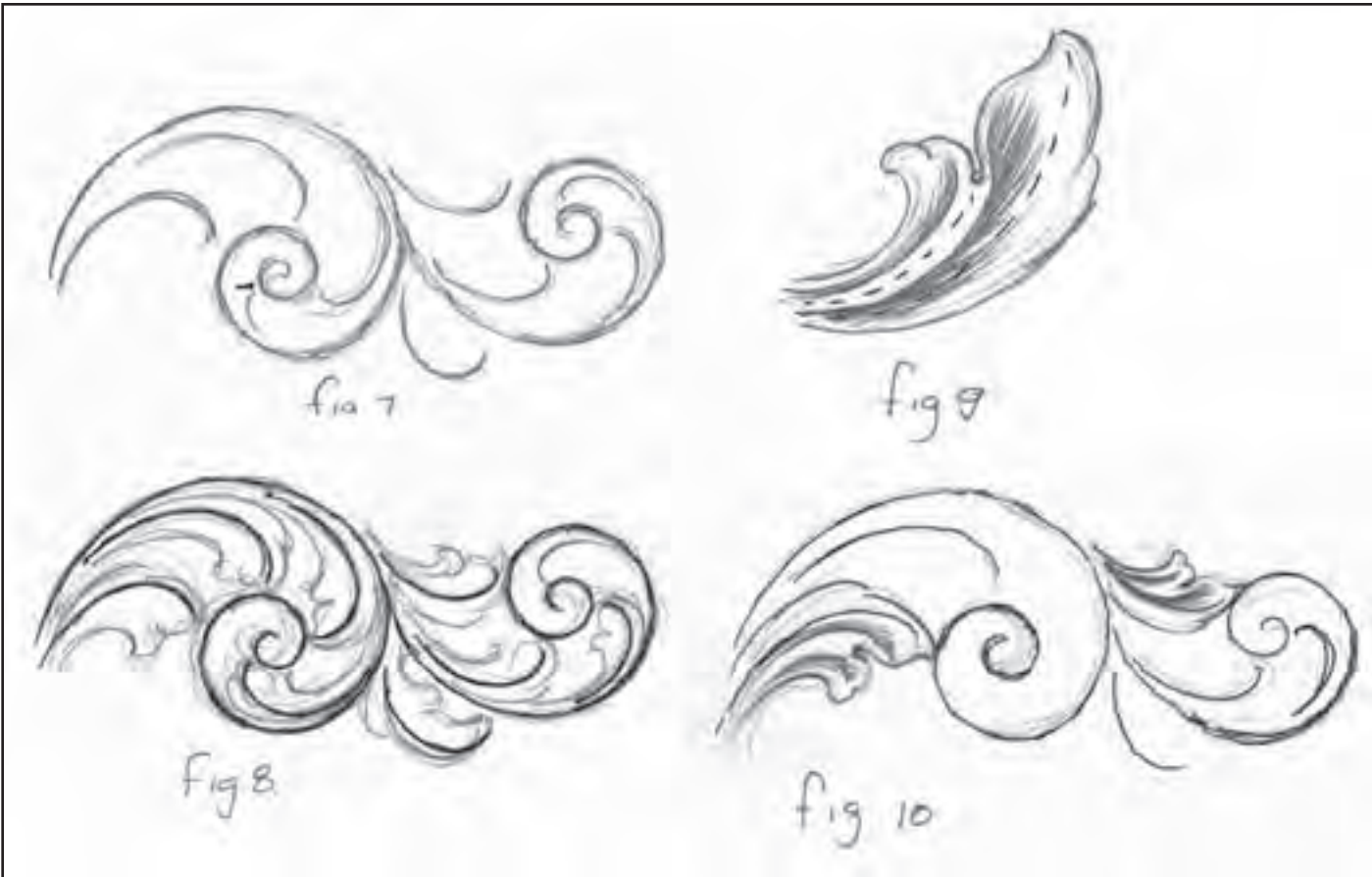
It may be helpful to think about backbones not only as they pertain to scrolls, but also as they apply to the leaves. Fig. 7 shows a bunch of backbones for leaves drawn in two scrolls. Notice that the backbones begin parallel to the main backbone and then gradually begin their curl. This shape maintains the flow established by the scroll backbones. Use these backbones to help draw in the leaves. Fig. 8 shows leaves drawn in using the backbones. These backbones are guidelines and usually are not cut. Their purpose is as a guide in drawing to keep the right curve or flow.

With simple leaves they generally fall in about the center of the leaf and in more complex leaves it may be necessary to draw in more than one backbone. When more than one backbone is used they are typically closer at the base of the leaf and slightly farther apart as they move away from the base and towards the outer tip of the leaf. Fig. 9 is an example of a more complex leaf using two backbones to help draw the leaf. One backbone goes down the center of the bigger section of the leaf and another backbone is drawn in to help determine the curve of the fold in the leaf. Fig. 10 shows a couple of leaves drawn in the scroll following the guidelines established by the backbones.

This concept in Fig. 11 can be applied to ribbons, banners, and all kinds of elements that you may choose to use in a design. Ω









**W**inding down the 30th anniversary of FEGA, Andrew asked me to write something about being involved in FEGA since the beginning. The first thing that came to mind was I must be getting OLD!!! I still remember being called the “young kid” that would follow Rabeno around..... Oh, and Marty had hair then... My, how time flies!

Annual Meeting Tulsa Oklahoma April 3-4, 1982



Ron & Liz Smith



Jere & Ben Shostle  
1984 Guild Show Las Vegas

form an engraving guild and he was the Treasurer. The first “official” show/meeting was going to be held in conjunction with the Tulsa Gun Show. I signed up in a heartbeat and became a Charter Member. I soon received my first newsletter as well. Back



Norma Evans, Ben & Kay Lane  
Safari Club Booth, 1984

Let’s set the “way back machine” to late 1981 when I made a phone call to Ray Viramontez to order some engraving supplies. He mentioned that a group of people had gotten together to

then they were mimeograph copies, not even done with a Xerox machine! In the newsletter there was a note from Sid Bell wanting to share room expenses at Tulsa. I was lucky enough to be the first to call him. For those that don’t know the name, Sid was very well known for his silver wildlife art in the 70s and 80s and was sold all over the world through places like Abercrombie and Fitch, Griffin and Howe, Remington and others. I was delighted and somewhat intimidated that I could even meet this person let alone share a room with him. For some reason I figured for his fame in the silversmith world that Sid would probably fly in to Tulsa in a fancy plane. Instead he drove from upstate New York in a VW Rabbit with the passenger seat removed so he could sleep on that side. It was from then on that I was to find out that this group of engravers were not only a unique bunch of characters but also people that would become longtime friends. Sid kept me up to the wee hours of the night telling me stories and giving me tips on engraving. He showed me an alternate way to inlay gold wire which I still use today.



Robert Evans, Tommy Kaye  
1983

a large group. In fact, I almost think at the time dinner included about 50% of the FEGA membership... or in other words 20 of us.

There were no seminars, banquets, Thursday evening socials or anything like that but the hotel lounge ended up hosting all of these events in an unofficial capacity. I was a wide-eyed novice that could barely cut a line in metal



J.J. Roberts, circa 1975

surrounded by all those people I had only read about or seen pictures of their engraving. It didn’t take me long to figure



Unknown lady & Rachel Wells  
1985 FEGA Show



George Shenwood  
at his table 1985





out that if I supplied these people with their favorite beverage I may learn a few things and make a few friends. I've told this story 100s of times and will repeat it again, one of the most basic tips that I learned in engraving was drawn on the back of a cocktail napkin during those sessions. I was having problems drawing good looking scrolls and Ray Viramontez grabbed a napkin and a pen and drew a simple scroll backbone. He then told me to think of the scroll like a spiral staircase. You are at the top and looking down. After that, the light went on for me.

Somewhere along the show as I was wondering around in awe another fellow from upstate New York must have felt sorry for me and introduced himself. That fellow was Marty Rabeno. Where did those 30 years go Marty????

Over the years I was able to meet so many others just like this. To paraphrase Marty "we became friends first and then built a guild". I was able to meet SO many new friends over the years. Some are still here, some have passed like Ben Shostle, Frank Hendricks, Ralph Bone and Terry Wallace. There are so many still around that it would be impossible to name them all and I would hate to forget anyone. (I'm getting in to the habit of forgetting more now).

What has changed a lot in the last 30 years is the quality of the engraving overall. Guns that won contests back then might have a hard time even getting much of a vote now. Yes, there were some real nice ones back then but they were few and far between. I think everyone getting together and sharing thoughts and ideas has really made American engraving a force to be reckoned with now. There were so many (just like now) willing to share and show a beginner like me.

The move from Tulsa to Las Vegas was our next move and for a few years we bounced around here and there connecting with other shows and then we finally connected with ACGG to hold a joint show. We still did some moving around for some time between Las Vegas and Reno but soon settled down a bit in Reno. It was at that time that President Ben Shostle started the "members social" in his room. At the time it was held on a Friday night as the hours were different. Having this



Guiseppe Forte 1985 FEGA Show

social was a way to welcome in the new members into the guild in a more informal way. I always liked this idea and I decided to do it again when I was President as well.

Ben was one of those fellows you will never forget. The best way to describe him was "lovable but gruff". He appeared to have an outward appearance of a tough guy but he had a heart of gold and would do just about anything for you. He had a unique style of engraving that you either loved or hated but he sure could cut it fast! I still remember someone asking him what kind of tools he used to do the engraving and he commented that he would use a chainsaw to do it if it would work. He lived life in a unique way as well. I can still remember him coming into the show

in the morning with a cigarette in one hand and a glass of Crown Royal in the other and leaving the show the same way.



Marty Rabeno

In 1988 we went from doing informal seminars to actually doing a video of them. We were blessed to have Frank Hendricks do one of these. Frank

came into the show with a full work station full of tools and set up for the whole show. He was one of those amazing people that probably forgot more about engraving than many of us will ever know. He had the ability to explain some of the most difficult tasks in a way even I could understand. He was soft spoken and had a tremendous dry sense of humor. I'm not sure what was more interesting... Learning engraving from him or listening to him tell a humorous story at dinner. Frank just used a large magnifier and hammer and chisel but trust me, this was all he needed to do some of the finest work I had seen. At the same time, Frank wasn't afraid to

Annual Meeting Tulsa Oklahoma April 3-4, 1982



Sid Bell & Ray Viramontez

Annual Meeting Tulsa Oklahoma April 3-4, 1982



Michael Dubber



Dan Hiem 1985 FEGA Show

use different things for engraving either. I remember back then he was using a 120 degree graver with a full length heel. His use of multi-color gold inlay and other techniques were amazing.

Another interesting thing about the “early years” was a bit of twist on the “tool wars”. The use

of power assisted engraving was just taking hold in the late 70s and early 80s and there seemed to be quite a bit of controversy on whether it was “real” engraving or not. You basically had three types of engravers. The



Terry Wallace conducting a Seminar 1985 FEGA Show

closet” and said that was all he used. I won’t mention his name but I think he has his name on the Engraver’s Choice plaque more times than anyone else and likes Model A trucks!

After that, it seemed like the rest of the engravers admitted to having one, or using one, on a regular basis. In today’s engraving world, what tool you use to remove the metal isn’t even an issue. In the past few years the award winning guns have been done by hammer and chisel or with the several brands of power assisted equipment and nobody really cares.

Another one of those soft spoken engravers from the Southwest that seemed to tutor me on a regular basis was Ralph Bone. I’m not sure I ever saw the man without a cowboy hat on and a smile on his face. Ralph was always willing to show what he knew to whoever would ask. I remember him showing me how to inlay gold with air assisted tools way back when and I haven’t done it by hand since. He also came up with inlaying soft iron wire in stainless steel and then bluing the gun so the wire would be black. It was a pretty nice look. Besides talking engraving, Ralph and I would trade gunsmithing stories as well. Ralph was a Federal ammunition sales rep at one time and also quite a good gunsmith and knife maker. I found out that he used some of the tool my father made for the gunsmithing industry.



Don Glaser demonstrating equipment 1986



E.C. Prudhomme signing a copy of the “American Engraver” 1982 Tulsa

hammer and chisel only engraver that thought the assisted engraving was like doing it with a computer, the power assisted only engraver who argued that it didn’t make any difference and the people that had both but didn’t admit they had ANY power assisted equipment. The latter group seemed to outnumber the first two. I remember talking to many engravers and they all seemed to sidestep the subject. It was still

considered somewhat taboo to use anything but a hammer and chisel. It wasn’t that they were really trying to hide anything from their fellow engravers as much as they were keeping a real low profile on this for their customers. This seemed to stay this way for few years until one of the engravers that won the Engraver’s Choice competition “came out of the

I suppose my oldest connection to the engraving world would have to be Ray Phillips. Actually the connection between Ray and I go back to a few years before I was even born! Ray was one of those many gunsmiths out there in the world at the time and would purchase front sight ramps from my father. In the late 70s I found out he made the NgraveR brand of tools and placed and order for one. It’s a small world sometimes. If it weren’t for the NgraveR tool I think I would have probably given up on engraving as my hammer and chisel work was caveman quality at best. Ray is still coming to FEGA and sharing all kinds of tips and hints and also quite

a few funny stories! You can usually find Ray located right next to John Barraclough. If you are an engraver, chances are John either taught you or taught the person that taught you! I think Mr. John has more slick little tips for engraving than I will ever remember. I am still using some little inlay punches he showed more than 20 years ago.



Ran Nolf FEGA Show 1999



Sam Alfano circa 1985





Frank Hendricks at his engraving bench 1987



Sam & Wilma Welch 1987



Robert Swartley 1998



Bill Rankin & Jim Blair



Rex Pedersen 1993



Dan Bratcher (standing) Bob Strossin and Ron Smith 1988



Barracklough demonstrating at his table 1989 Show



Shannon & Eric Gold 1997



Sam Welch & Terry Wallace  
FEGA Show 1988



Norma and Robert Evans, Oregon City, Oregon, with their "Gun Engraving Display" June 2003 at Vegas



Manny Gonzalez 2003



Eugene Plante 1997

In the last 30 years a lot of things have changed in FEGA but one thing that has stayed the same is a great group of people will to share and help the art progress. A lot of the faces are gone now but a lot of new ones have surfaced. I have mentioned but just a few that have touched my life and I apologize to those I didn't mention. You know who you are and trust me, there are many! I hope along the way perhaps I have been able to inspire or help a fellow engraver myself. If it is only one, I guess I did my job. Ω



*Lee Griffiths engraved knife*



*Sam Welch "shape shifting scroll" aluminium guitar inlay*

*Note: a casting is available on FEGA web site of this piece*







We have 3 speakers lined up for the Monday seminars in Reno.

#### **Flush Gold Inlay With a HS Rotary Handpiece.**

Bob Evans will be speaking about, and showing, his techniques of flush inlaying using a high speed rotary handpiece. Now a few years ago this would have been considered heresy to even have considered doing inlays this way. So now's your chance to see how it's done.

#### **Movement In Design.**

Lee Griffiths will discuss and demonstrate flow, or movement in a design. Drawing the backbones of scrolls and all other main movement elements like leaf fold backbones and how they affect the flow. Included in all this will be banners, inorganic elements in a design and an open Q&A regarding art, design, and layout.

#### **Basic Metal Carving.**

Andrew Biggs will be giving a seminar about basic metal carving. This will cover the concepts of the design and the effect of light and shadow on the finished work. Andrew will also show and discuss the tools he uses and the process of carving from start to finish. Plus a few things to aid the process.

## **Firearms Engravers & Gunmakers Exhibition**

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Entries are now invited for the 2012 FEGA scholarship program. Applications must be in by April 1st 2012. We will have two scholarships available. Each scholarship will be \$300. We will award one for a beginner class and one for an intermediate/advanced class. Applicants must 16 years of age or over and a member of FEGA. The money will be paid to the school of instruction after proof of attendance has been submitted. The class to be attended must teach techniques applicable to firearms engraving. The schools that will be accepted must be schools or individuals with a track record of teaching and be approved by the FEGA board of directors. In other words you can't take the three hundred and split it with your neighbor and say you've taken an engraving class. You will also be required to write a short half page article with two photos of what you learned during the class.

#### **The application must consist of sending in the following information:**

- Applicants name, address, city, state, zip, and phone number
- Class, instructor, and school
- A statement describing your interest in firearms engraving and why you are applying for the scholarship.
- If applying for an intermediate/ advanced class list past classes taken, experience, and/or photos of work.

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720-979-9202  
[dcengraving@yahoo.com](mailto:dcengraving@yahoo.com)



AROUND THE TRAPS  
FEGA MEMBERS WORK

Joe Mason



Mark Thomas



Joanne Ryall (UK)



Denny Lytle



Roger Henrichs

Joe Mason





If you wish to have photos of your work on these pages  
e-mail them to the editor [biggschristchurch@xtra.co.nz](mailto:biggschristchurch@xtra.co.nz).



Mike Morgan



Joe Mason



Mike Morgan



Weldon Lister



John Barraclough




Weldon Lister




Holland & Holland by Phil Coggan  
In-progress photo showing custom made PalmControl  
graver extension. "As far as I'm concerned, the Lindsay  
PalmControl AirGraver is worth every penny."  
Phil Coggan, United Kingdom




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Carl Bleile, North Bend, Ohio



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