

JAN/FEB/MARCH 2018

MEMBER

Spotlight

Raymond A. Kowalski



Welcome to my "Membership Spotlight". Most people call me Ray. I have been married to Kim for a very long time, quickly approaching our 38th anniversary. Kim and I live on a couple of acres in the middle of nowhere. Allegheny Township, but with a New Kensington address. We are about 30 minutes north of Pittsburgh. We have two married girls (Missy and Mandy) which most of you have watched them grow up at the shows. Missy (and Nate) have blessed us with two grandchildren that also frequent the shows. Both girls and their families live within minutes of us and they are a big part of our recently retired lives. Kim and I both retired from over 40 years each with a steel mill (where we met)! I just turned 61, and I have been a member of the PTA also for a very long time (not sure exactly when I became a member). I got a letter from the PGC dated May 3, 1991 that said that the Taxidermy Examination Board has certified me to be eligible for a Taxidermy Permit. All this makes me an "old-timer"!

My taxidermy business has always been "part time", but that does not mean that I was not passionate about taxidermy. My passion and love of this art does not stop there. I also feel that strong about the PTA. I have been involved in a lot of the conventions and competitions. I have been on the board of directors in many capacities, with being President in 2008. The PTA has given me much, and I still feel that there is much to give back.

I compete as often as possible. I won numerous awards with the highlight in the year 1997 when I won "Best in the World - Freeze-dry" with a Small Lifesize Mammal (a squirrel). The next biggest emotional high was when I was asked to judge at the Worlds show. I have judged different times at the Worlds show as well as different times for our association.

Living on a couple of acres in the middle of nowhere has allowed us to have some interesting "pets". What better reference can you get than a live animal that are up close and personal? We have had cats (still do), a dog, chinchillas, a love bird, grey squirrel, flying squirrel, may different ducks, chickens, pheasants, quail, peafowl, a grouse, a skunk, a Koi pond and deer. All that required special permits and inspections were legally kept up with. What a learning opportunity!!! Currently we are slowing things down and now only have 3 cats and the Koi pond. Remember when I told you that we recently retired?

I love to do educational presentations concerning taxidermy to many organizations, especially the Boy Scouts, of which I AM an Eagle Scout. I am very active at our church in Lower Burrell. I am a member of the Knights of Columbus of which I am also an officer.

Many thanks to the PTA for the opportunity to be surrounded by the talent & friendships that they have offered our family.

Like most taxidermists, I enjoy hunting, fishing and going to camp especially with family. Our camp is in Newmansville (which is around Tionesta). Kim and I are truly blessed to be so close to our family. I thank God often for this gift from Him.

Even though I am retired from the mill, I still have my "part time" taxidermy business going. Maybe it will turn into more than part time? I also like to mention another part time job. My brother had a Hops farm in the state of Indiana. He needed a Sales Manager; and appointed me. It was a lot of fun traveling to different micro-breweries and collaborating with my brother for a couple of years. That business is in the process of being sold, so that chapter of my life comes to an end, unless another 'beer' business comes along and makes an offer! Another passion of mine is to cook. I took many culinary courses and practice often. How about calling me Chef Ray? A friend of mine already has my cooking slogan: "Go Gourmet with Ray"!!! Has a nice ring to it. Hmmm

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