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John Tanner Calls

By Gale Mulcahy

I recently had the opportunity to meet John Tanner, a South Carolina native and creator of John Tanner Calls. John was born and raised in the Indiantown Community of Williamsburg County SC, which is located on Black Mingo Creek. The community derived its name from the old Mingo Indian Village which stood in the forks of Mingo Creek and Indiantown Swamp, which is only a short distance from John's woodworking shop. This was also a popular gathering spot for various tribes from throughout the state to hunt and fish during the winter and trade their wares/goods.

John grew up hunting and fishing on his family's property, where he lives today. He was an IT Professional for Wellman, Inc. in Johnsonville, SC when he retired in 2006. John actually began making turkey calls in 2003 when he was helping the discoverers of ancient cypress with their PR and Marketing strategy.

When he came home and told his wife, Elaine, of his decision to start making calls, she just about rolled over laughing because his reputation as a carpenter was such that he couldn't even drive a nail straight.

He spent the next three years teaching himself how to make turkey calls, so when he retired he took a hobby and turned it into a "full-time occupation". He started creating duck calls about three



years ago, with his duck calls appearing on the cover of the 2014 Sporting Classics Holiday Collection Catalog.

Johns' calls are truly works of art which he creates out of walnut, pecan, cherry, mahogany, black cherry and ancient cypress.

Yes, you read that right, ancient cypress. Interesting story...an acquaintance of John was talking with the owner of a local sand mining operation in the Johnsonville area when he noticed a piece of wood that had been recovered from the bottom of a sand mine approximately 35' below ground level. Realizing that the wood possibly was still workable it spiked their interest and they set out to identify and age the wood.

It was later identified by professionals as being Bald Cypress and the current tree that John is working with was carbon dated by the University of Georgia Radio Carbon Dating Lab as being greater than 55,100 years before present.

All calls that John produces from the ancient cypress, and in particular this tree, come with an authenticated copy of the carbon dating certificate.

Being a hunter himself, he's always thinking about ways to make things easier for himself and others while in the woods.

Two of his latest creations are a call that he refers

to as the 'Crystal Clucker' which is a round pot call and features a frosted crystal sounding surface with a wood striker that works in wet or dry conditions. The call and striker are attached to a lanyard with a stop button that is hung around the neck and is adjustable up or down to be used or moved out of the way.

The neat feature of this arrangement is that while sitting in the woods calling a turkey, the call can



.....continued on page 6



simply be dropped when you need to grab your gun and you do not lose it. Should you need to get up and move you can push the stop button and adjust the call upwards so it does not dangle while you're walking. This prevents losing your call or your striker when you jump up to retrieve your turkey. With this arrangement you will never lose your call or striker again while in hot pursuit!

The neat thing about the Wet or Dry Striker is it will work on all sounding surfaces in totally saturated wet conditions or completely dry conditions. The Wet or Dry Striker is a 'must have' for every turkey hunter who hunts in wet conditions!

Johns' latest accomplishment and exciting venture has been an invitation, in the spring of this year, from Arkansas State University, Mountain Home Division to create and present a turkey call to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia.

The school's Chancellor, Dr. Robin Meyers, and an adjunct professor at the Law School there, Jim Carrol, learned that Justice Scalia is an avid turkey hunter, and that he had hunted in 39 of the 48 states that have hunts; That 39 did not include Arkansas.

The two used that fact as an opportunity to lure Scalia to become the guest speaker at a campus event.

They spotted Tanner's turkey calls online, knew one would make the perfect gift for the Justice when he visited, along with a hunting trip, and asked Tanner to come present it, or at least be present when it was presented. "At first I wasn't going to go, Tanner said. "But then I thought I might never get a chance to hand over one of my turkey calls to a Supreme Court Justice, so I better take this opportunity."

The rest is now history. The event was called "A Fireside Chat with U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia."

If you are interested in any of Johns work you can visit his website at: www.johntannercalls.com.

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John's truck carries a small sign with his name and telephone number. He often receives calls as he's driving, from others on the road, who read his sign and want to purchase his hand-made calls.

