



A LOOK BACK and FORWARD

As far back as 2012 discussions were held by the Master National Retriever Club about an amateur division for the national event. That idea was included in concepts developed at a strategic initiative conference in early 2014 and that and other concepts were circulated to the member clubs for their input. In the spring of 2015 MNRC Vice President Jace Tramontin, with the approval of the Club President, formed an exploratory committee to discuss the idea of an amateur division of the MNRC. On the committee were former MNRC President, Dave Kress, MNRC Secretary Elain Goodner, MNRC Directors Keith Winch and Bob Swift, and Frank Prendergast and Bob Montler.

The committee began to reach a consensus in favor of an all amateur event and came to the conclusion that the best way to achieve that would be to form a new national club. Organizing documents were developed and presented to the AKC Performance Events Department. Following a positive response from the AKC the committee was tasked with appointing a Board of Directors for what would become the Master Amateur Retriever Club (MARC). The committee completed its mission and disbanded in December 2015 and a new national retriever club was a reality.

The Founding Board of Directors:

East Region – Bob Montler, VP; Frank Prendergast, Director.

Central Region – John Blackbird, VP; Ed Sullivan, Director

West Central Region – Paul McGinnis, VP; David Christianson, Director

West Region – Steve Elliott, VP; Laura Judd, Director.

Secretary-Treasurer, Dave Kress. President, Bob Swift.

In January 2016, MARC existed in name only. The club did not have a charter, final approval from AKC, any members, a communication portal to the retriever community, a process for identifying or recording qualifications for the proposed Invitational nor a bank account. But by February of 2016 we had, thanks to our partners at Entry Express and Retriever News, a functioning website, an email newsletter that goes to over 8,500 recipients and a process in place for identifying amateur handlers for the qualifying year beginning March 1, 2016.

More important we had final approval from AKC for the club and the annual Master Amateur Invitational. The MARC Board of Directors began planning for the Inaugural Invitational, reviewing the original Constitution and By-Laws and developing Policies & Procedures to guide the Board and its activities and establishing a base for the future.

In response to the community MARC instituted an individual membership program. What we heard from the community was a desire for greater engagement and communication on an individual level. The Charter Membership program was initiated at a per member cost of \$500. A target of 100 members was expected, 126 joined. As of January 2019 there are 584 members, including Annual, Charter, Lifetime, Club and Associates. [As this number will constantly change don't see a need to add a lot of detail.]

The response to the membership program is both gratifying and challenging. It has provided MARC with a solid financial footing. More important it has demonstrated a depth of support for our mission of supporting and promoting amateur involvement in the AKC Retriever Hunt Test program. The challenge is now to move that program forward and deliver on our mission.

The Inaugural Invitational was held in Cairo, GA beginning on Saturday, April 22, 2017. The 150 dogs entered and their amateur handlers established a new set of traditions for this annual event. Our friends and partners at Entry Express and Retriever News have been invaluable with advice and support in all communications efforts and in tracking our amateur handlers. Our corporate sponsors, especially our Charter sponsors Purina and Avery, have been especially generous. MARC will continue to expand our outreach to the broader retriever community. We are happy to welcome the PRTA (Professional Retriever Trainers Association) as a Charter member. MARC will look forward to expanding and strengthening its program by reaching out to other national clubs to seek out common ground and opportunities to the betterment of the Retriever Community.

The Board of Directors recognizes the broad support and individual effort that has allowed the club to advance. We appreciate that support and effort and look forward to expanding that base of support and working with all of our partners and members to advance our mission. We recognize that we owe our success to date to the support of AKC Performance Events and all of our partners.