

Introducing Alberto Bonfiglioli to the Low Country S. C. Pipe Club

Let me introduce you all to Alberto Bonfiglioli:

- An excellent pipemaker
- A proud father and family man
- Founder of the Bonfiglioli Pipe Club
- Frequent traveler to U.S pipe shows
- Doctor of Pipes (bestowed in 2008 @ the Chicago Pipe Show)
- Friend to pipesmokers the world over
- A fun loving guy, and
- Self-proclaimed “Pipemaker to the World”.

I first came to know of him through on-line purchases this past year of two of his estate pipes and through his web site. Subsequent e-mail correspondence led to him agreeing to make me a fantastic bulldog pipe. All three pipes are great smokers. I hope to have an opportunity to meet Alberto in person in the future.



The top pipe is a Sandblasted Brandy made in 2016

The middle pipe is a sandblasted bent Dublin stamped “For Collectors”. It is 8.9 inches long and 3.5 inch bowl height.

The bottom pipe is a Desert Sandblast Bulldog.

The following information on Alberto’s background is from “Pipes and Tobacco’s” magazine articles (Spring 2003 and Spring 2016) and from his web site. Photo’s are from his web site (<http://www.bonfigliolipipe.it/>).

Alberto began his work with pipes in 1967, working in his father’s shop in Bologna, Italy repairing pipes. He graduated to making pipes in 1974 and when his father passed in 1978 he started using his own name on his pipes. In 1981, he lived in Alexandria, VA and worked for a local tobacconist. After a year he returned to Bologna to open his own shop. That one year in the United States resulted in his viewing us as his adopted homeland and he began annual visits to pipe shows in America. In 1995, Alberto began his web site and started marketing his pipes worldwide. Since, he annually has a booth at the Chicago show and frequently attended the Richmond and

Raleigh shows (and periodically others). Subsequently, the majority of his pipes are shipped to the United States.

Alberto's shop is located in downtown Bologna and occupies about 200 square feet. Included in that space is his pipe making equipment, his sales display cases and an area for his pipe smoking and card playing buddies. As you can imagine (and see from the following photo's), things are a bit cramped. He generally arrives at the shop early in the morning and makes pipes until his pipe club friends start arriving. He joins them for card playing and socializing until late in the afternoon and returns to pipe making until closing the shop @ 7:00 PM (often continuing to work after closing).



Front of Bonfiglioli's Shop



Bonfiglioli @ his display counter



Card playing area within the shop



Card playing area in front of the shop

The Bonfiglioli Pipe Club, in addition to regular meetings, visits other sites nearby as well as sponsors pipe smoking events. Club members also periodically vacation together (this I deduce by viewing the photo's displayed on his web site). It appears to be a very close knit group that celebrates birthdays and weddings together.

Alberto makes between 400-450 pipes per year. He ships all over the world and has donated pipes to numerous pipe clubs to be used in fund raising raffles. He makes about 25 Christmas Pipes each year which are generally sold out before they are

produced. He does a fair amount of custom making of pipes for his numerous friends. Web site photo's document the visit of friends to his shop from all over the globe. The following photos show the working area of the shop as well as Alberto at work.



The following photos are a representative sampling of the pipes Alberto has produced over the years.



Alberto seems to focus on classic shapes (a list of which is provided on his web site). His primary emphasis, however, is to offer affordable pipes that smoke very, very well. Personally, I enjoy his use of bowl sandblasting and rustication combined with an assortment of colored acrylic stems matched with his various wood stains. I am also very pleased with the great draw on all three of my "Bonfi" pipes. Pipe cleaners easily go through to

the bowl. As a new pipe, my latest acquisition produced the true taste of the tobacco on the first bowl. I'd highly recommend Alberto's pipes.



Bonfiglioli celebrated his 50th year of working with pipes in 2017, and has shown no signs of slowing down. That's good because both John Tufano and I are planning to ask him to make a pipe for each of us. I'm also hoping that Alberto chooses to attend either the Raleigh or Richmond Pipe show next year so that we can meet him. Wouldn't it be nice if he could also combine that with joining us at a special Pipe Club meeting in Little River, S.C.?

Rob Gerlach