



Balcones Forge Dispatch

President's Corner

April 2022

Greetings,

First off I would like to thank all the Balcones Members who took time out of their week to staff the Forge at the Pioneer Museum in Fredericksburg the week of spring break. It looked like a y'all had a great time demoing for the kids.

Our next meeting will be April 9 at 0900 at Folkfest in New Braunfels. This will be an open forge for all Balcones Members. If you are not a current member in good standing (paid this year's dues) then you can sign up at the event. The Folkfest will still be going on the 10th (Sunday) and there will be a few members there demoing for the public.

Look forward to seeing y'all soon. Keep forging.

John Meyer, President

Meeting is on April 9

Museum of Texas Handmade Furniture
1370 Churchill Drive
New Braunfels, TX 78130

Meeting starts at 9am



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VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We just finished up with the March meeting in Fredericksburg. We had a decent turn out. At the start of the meeting the upcoming ABANA conference scheduled for May 11-14 in Denton Texas was discussed. It was brought to our attention that registration numbers are low and if they don't get the numbers they need by April second there is a chance of the conference being canceled . This would be a very sad thing so if you are going register now . On that note if you are going Balcones will have a table set up we could use volunteers for. Ideally we have at least 2 at the table per shift. The more volunteers we have the shorter the shifts would need to be Contact John Meyer for more info.

The April Meeting will be at the Museum of Handmade Furniture in New Braunfels. Balcones members get in free. We will start at 9:00a.m. We will have 4 forges going so come on out and make something don't forget your safety glasses.

Aaron Tilton, Vice President, Balcones Forge

BALCONES FORGE MEETING SCHEDULE

April 9 – New Braunfels Folk Fest

May 14 – San Marcos, ??

June ?? - ????

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From the President's Anvil

It is with a great deal of sadness that I write today to announce the cancellation of the ABANA Conference scheduled for the North Texas Fair & Rodeo in Denton Texas May 11-14.

After many months of planning and building a conference that would have put ABANA back to having premier conference events and after a long hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have failed to get enough pre-registrations to indicate that we will, in the end, be able to pay for such an event.

At current, we have only booked 128 registrations and 53 spouse/child registrations bringing us to just under \$52,000 in receipts. This is only a small uptick of registrations from March 11 when I sent you the last message. With the break-even point of \$130,000 we cannot reasonably assume that the balance will be forthcoming.

It's hard to tell the reasons for lagging registrations. Perhaps people are still anxious about the latest variant of COVID-19 or concerned about rising inflation and the price of travel, both gas prices and airline tickets. Or, perhaps the events of the past two years have changed the way people interact.

Whatever the cause, ABANA will endeavor in the near future to ascertain why and adjust to the desires of its members and supporters.

In the interim, we will be refunding everyone who has registered, with the exception of those who paid for 2022 miniature anvils; those will be shipped free of charge.

Your comments would be helpful. Please direct them to me president@abana.org Together we will adjust and find a path for the future of ABANA.

Lastly, my heartfelt thanks go to the North Texas Blacksmith's Association, the cooperating ABANA affiliates, and their members and the entire 2022 Working Committee for their tireless work planning what would have been an outstanding national conference with smiths from around the world.

Leigh Morrell,
ABANA President

ABANA Conference Cancelled

MARCH BALCONES MEETING REPORT

Balcones Forge meeting at Pioneer Museum in Fredericksburg called to order by Vice President Aaron Tilton. Initial topic of discussion was anticipating whether or not the ABANA Conference scheduled for May 11 – 14 would actually occur. A representative from North Texas Blacksmith Association was present to encourage enlistment of demonstrators to enroll and attend the ABANA event because only 150 demonstrators are currently signed up and they need 200 – 300 more in order to make the event happen. He emphasized the importance of signing up without delay or the conference will have to be abandoned!

Because the conference seems to be in limbo, the request from ABANA for use of Balcones 10 forging stations was of great importance and logistic consideration a primary concern. Shipping the tonnage there and back is still undecided because rates are fluctuating due to gas prices, when do the forges have to be there, who will load it up here and who will unload it once it gets there, and the reverse when the stations are returned to us. Certain members of Balcones have volunteered to transport the equipment, but certainly do not want to absorb the cost of doing so and ABANA has not offered full details about what costs it will cover – again, these are undetermined due to the possibility of event cancellation.

Another important concern addressed was my suggestion to sell 5 forging stations based on two reasons. Our current location and use of free square footage has recently been reduced by 50%, leaving 5 fully functioning forge stations. Secondly, the possibility of a master blacksmith (Mark Asberry for example) doing a demonstration for Balcones is unlikely, albeit not impossible. Future events would certainly be practical by allowing 2 blacksmiths to each of the 5 remaining forging stations. Attendance like we were initially experiencing at the Blue Bonnet dropped from hundreds to 32 at the last demo in Marble Falls. Another influencing fact, is that the Lee Brothers discontinued their event all together. This gives Balcones ample opportunity to take up the slack, but due to Covid constrictions, attendance might be undesirable for obvious reasons.

With that suggestion being on the table, John Meyer has selected me to head a committee along with Ric Dawdy and Jerry Whitley to make a decision about whether to sell or not. North Texas Blacksmith Association pointed out that they utilize storing 4 forging stations on a trailer and take them to wherever an event is going to occur. The trailer is stored at one of the members available space. Also, the storage at a members shop for that particular blacksmith to use at their discretion and to bring it to the next meeting for the group to use was mentioned. A drawback about our stations, is the fact that the anvils would require a mechanical lift in and out of transport vehicle or trailer.

After those two very important issues were discussed, I helped Frank Lilly get the forge fire going and he told me that his most prized blacksmith gift (a clinker) was given to him by the great Francis Whitaker (former apprentice of Samuel Yellin). After we ran everyone out of the shop with a heavy dense sampling of smoke, Frank presented what he called his Aristotle piece that represented earth, fire, wind and water which were all necessary in forming his final unique object. (see photos) The 20 X 6 inch piece of metal had a 4 inch hole in one end that was cut, then forged into a flame and scroll. Considerable hammer and chisel precision was needed to give the flame an authenticity and the scroll resembled a gastropod fossil he had found. To obtain the perfect 45 degree bends, a half thickness indentation was cut on the backside of the fold with a hacksaw and then reheated to complete the correct angle. The finished object is a one of a kind book holder – very unique and functional. Prior to his explanation of how he had made the piece, Frank caught me off guard to assist in flattening a round piece of re-bar and we both took turns pounding out this project. His purpose was to demonstrate how to not only use the flexing of the elbow to swing the hammer, but also how to use a shoulder motion thereby not overusing just the arm. Secondly, to avoid bending ones back for prolonged periods of time was to space your feet similar to the position assumed prior to starting a race and bending your knees would lower the upper body closer to the anvil.

I have seen a lot of blacksmiths at work forging a piece of hot metal, but to have so many factors explained was very informative and appreciated.

Lance Jensen was unable to attend today's demonstration, so I jotted down a few notes and posted some photos. Hope to see you at the next Balcones Forge meeting, Tim Tellander.

Thanks to Tim for filling in and sending a report!

Vince Herod, Editor



F. P. Lilly was the featured demonstrator at the March meeting of Balcones Forge.

Pictures by Tim Tellander.

ANNOUNCING THE 2022 ABANA RAFFLE

Back by popular demand, thanks to our President, Leigh Morrell and several very generous sponsors we have created an outstanding raffle with 11 must have items for every shop. Why not think about adding that needed piece of equipment to your shop.

Whether you win or not, we hope you will support our sponsors.

Prizes and Sponsors are:

- 1st prize
Anyang 68 power hammer
- 2nd prize
Big Blue Hydraulic Press
- 3rd prize
Blacksmith Supply #6 Fly Press
- 4th prize
Brodbeck Ironworks, Grinder Package
- 5th prize
ABANA purchased, Induction Forge, used at the 2021 Iron to Art
- 6th prize
Mid Atlantic Smiths Assoc NEB style Coal Forge
- 7th prize
Holland Anvils, Swage Block
- 8th prize
Forge-Aprons, Custom Forge Apron
- 9th prize
Steel Stamps, Personal Steel Touchmark
- 10th prize
Steel Stamps, Personal Steel Touchmark
- 11th prize
Steel Stamps, Personal Steel Touchmark

Hurry, we will only be selling 6000 tickets!

Drawing to be held at the Village Blacksmith Shop 221 North Street Goshen CT 06756
May 1, 2022 at 7:00 p.m., winner need not be present.

All items are FOB sponsors location. Winners are responsible for all applicable taxes.

Only \$10 per ticket. Look on the ABANA website!

W W W . B A L C O N E S F O R G E . O R G

PIONEER MUSEUM REPORT

Balcones Forge hosted the Pioneer Museum Blacksmith shop for the Spring week break, March 14th through March 19th with our forge meeting being held on March 19th. F.P. Lilly was one of the demonstrators on Saturday. We were able to have two smiths in the shop each day. I was in the forge on Tuesday with Matt.

We had a great deal of interest in what we were doing, and the Ninja swords, made from duplex nails, were a hit with all the children. Other smiths demonstrated traditional nail making using ¼ inch stock.

Matt did a demonstration making a spoon from a piece of rebar. He enlisted one of the kids from the crowd to help with the blower and together they finished a nicely shaped spoon. One of the Texas Rangers needed a new flint striker which Matt made for him from scrap metal found in the forge He was happy with the finished striker.

The Pioneer Museum folks took great care of the demonstrators, and the experience was great. I look forward to being part of this event next year.

Lance Jensen, Secretary, Balcones Forge

