



Balcones Forge Dispatch

President's Corner

August 2012



Greetings!

Please note: **NO August Meeting!!** It's too hot 'n too dry and there are already too many wild fires. Let's hope we don't have a repeat of last year's devastation.

The July meeting at the Agriculture Museum in Boerne rates right up there at the top. Joe Travieso and crew followed up Johnny Stout's June knife making demo with a forged Damascus billet demo using Joe's modified log splitter. This machine was used to weld and to pattern the billet. Quite remarkable!

The show-n-tell blades and the competition trammels were all outstanding. Thanks for participating.

September will take us back to Conservation Plaza in New Braunfels at the old Stahl Blacksmith shop. Don Tuff is our host and the trade item will be.....a fork.

October will be at Jerry Whitley's place in Devine for some more open forging. Along with the forges, Jerry will also heat up the pit and feed us. This will be an all day event for those who can stay, and you will need to make a trade "bottle opener". I'm sure you will need it.

I missed the "Young Smiths" at ABANA and at Alan & Jeff Lee's, but I've seen lot of pics and videos. Proud to have Kainon Baumer representing Balcones Forge. You guys look pretty awesome.

Special note: Our hearts and prayers go out to long time member, Rudy Billings who recently lost his mother. Rudy has been caring for her for the past several months, and he still took the time to keep up with his duties as Treasurer.

President's message continued on page 2



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President's message continued

Still looking for feedback. Let us know who and what you want to see. If we don't hear from you, we can only assume, and we don't want that to happen.

More next month. Stay cool!

Jerry Achterberg
President, Balcones Forge

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ALABAMA FORGE COUNCIL

The AFC 2012 Fall conference will be held September 7th, 8th & 9th; our Featured Demonstrators are Tal Harris and Allan Kress, Family programs by Allison Kress-Bohorfoush and Alabama Art Casting as well as a Green Coal class taught by Gary Cremeens from the Montgomery Forge. Also; a special demo by Wayne Coe on Sunday morning.

The Conference cost will be \$50 for AFC members and \$75 for non-members (includes 1 year AFC membership). If anyone wants to go ahead and preregister just send a check to Judd Clem for the pre-registration fee and he will take care of the rest. Judd's mailing address is:

111 Yorkshire Dr., Athens, Alabama 35613.

Anyone can also contact me with questions at:
e.m.forge@gmail.com.

This information and the registration form should be on our web-site by August 8th, 2012.

Raymond Head
President, AFC

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EDITOR'S SOAPBOX

Have you noticed that we still do not have a Secretary for our group? You might ask yourself "why is that"? Instead you should be asking, "why don't I step up and take on some of the responsibility"? APPARENTLY nobody asked themselves that question last month!

Balcones Forge is an organization the exists and relies on the strength of it's membership. Ain't nobody making any money off all this work. There is a handful of folks that have, year after year, put in the bulk of the effort to keep this group going. Well I can tell you that some of us are getting tired!!!!

ELECTIONS for the Board of Directors will be coming up in OCTOBER. I ask that all our members seriously consider what they want to see out of the group. Do you want any change or do you like what you see? Do you expect things to keep going all by itself?

If more folks come forward to do just a little bit, then it all gets done so much better. Send an article. Send a picture. Send an idea. PARTICIPATE.

By the way, the bulk of the Secretary gig is going to meetings and writing up an article for the newsletter. Sounds like fun.....



German blacksmith stamps

MEETING NOTES JULY 2012

The July meeting of Balcones Forge was held on the grounds of the Agricultural Museum in Boerne, Texas. President Jerry Achterberg got the meeting started just a few minutes after 9am with the well-equipped blacksmith shop serving as a backdrop. Over 17 members and many guests were in attendance.

The meeting began with a discussion of the upcoming meetings for our group. In August we will not meet due to the heat but in September we will be back in full swing with a meeting to be held in New Braunfels, hosted by Don Tuff, at Conservation Plaza on the 29th. In October we have two chances to get together; Vice President Jerry Whitley will host the official meeting at his home in Devine, Texas on the 27th. The week before on the 20th, we have been invited to participate once again in the Chisholm Trail Roundup in Georgetown. Jim Elliot has volunteered again to be the contact for the Georgetown event so be sure to let him know if you plan on setting up your gear. In November we will be meeting at Gary Hilton's shop just outside of Kerrville. At this time the December meeting is still open so please let Jerry Whitley know if you want to host or demonstrate.

If anyone is planning on attending the Hammer In at Johnny Stout's in September, you need to change your plans. Johnny had to change the dates to October 13 & 14.

Election. The October meeting in Devine will be the official annual meeting of Balcones Forge. The bylaws of our organization call for elections to the Board of Directors. The newly elected Board then selects the Officers from its ranks.

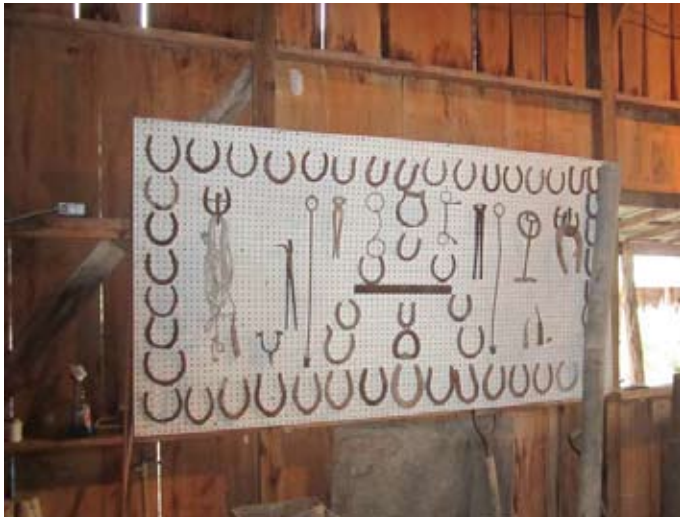
Trade items. Since we do not have a meeting in August you all have plenty of time to get working on your trade items. Remember, you are trading your work for another member's work; it will be hanging on their wall so give it your best effort! In September the trade item is a fork. For October you need to forge a bottle opener (which will likely be tested after the meeting). For November we will have another Competition Trade Item and our host has chosen a Goffering Iron as the challenge. No, it is not for smoothing out yard-dwelling rodents. It is used to iron the ruffles of your finest 18th century shirts; look it up!

Tom (the Blacksmith from Wimberley) Leining reminded us all of the danger of tennis elbow caused by the repeated hammering needed in our craft. An elastic band on your hammering arm is a helpful preventative. Putting rubber bands around your fingers and stretching (by opening & closing your fingers) is a good exercise to help keep your arm healthy.

The next portion of the meeting was a great show-n-tell with knives as the subject. Seven talented knife makers took the time to show us their work and explain the various details of how the knives were created. There seems to be a new interest in Balcones Forge regarding blades and this meeting was a great way to see what others are doing in the craft.

Here is a tip: If you are using wood you found in nature for the grips of your knife; you might want to microwave the pieces for a few seconds. Seems those tiny worms can appear later, like after you are done assembling your piece.

This article is continued on page 8.



Scenes from the July meeting

Photos by Vince Herod





Joe (above) and George (below) showed us how to make it look easy



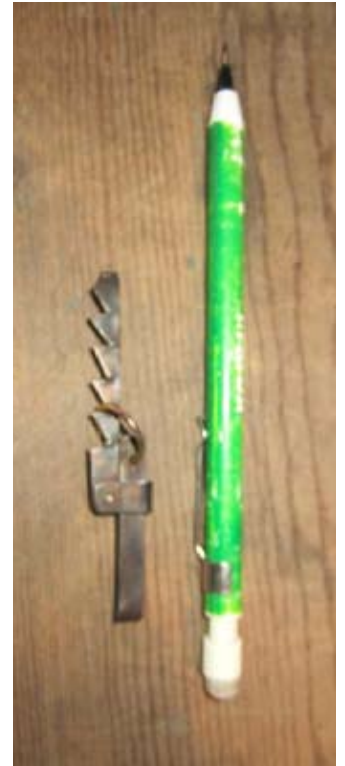


The competitors in the Trade Item Competition



Trade Item Competition WINNER!

Tom the Blacksmith from Wimberly





Arkansaw Toothpick



The main event of the meeting took place under a giant shade tree near the front of the museum. Joe Travieso and his assistant George (sorry but I did not catch his last name) showed us all how easy it is to weld up a Damascus billet. OK, it ain't easy, but they made it look easy!

Joe and George used the press that Joe created from a 22-ton log splitter. To see the article on how Joe built the machine, refer to the December 2010 edition of the Balcones Forge newsletter (it is on our website).

The steels used in the billet were 1095 and A203E. Just to show off a bit, the billet started with seven layers. That was four pieces of 1095 and three of A203E. The pieces were stacked and then tack welded on the ends. A rebar handle (approximately 1/2" x 4') was also welded to one end.

Joe says using the press cuts the job of creating the billet by half; two hours instead of the four it took using a power hammer. Joe recommends that any press that you use be at least 20 tons.

The billet was placed in Chile brand forge (built in San Marcos: www.chileforge.com) and allowed to heat through. The forge was set at 7.5 to 8 pounds of pressure. Anhydrous borax was used to flux between the layers. Joe recommends against using 20 Mule Team since the anti-clumping additive seems to have an adverse affect on the weld. Use a good amount of flux, re-heat and re-flux before pressing the billet together. Once the billet is solidly welded using the press, clean the surfaces well with a wire brush.

Be sure to put a sacrificial bottom in your forge (kiln shelving) since the flux is so corrosive.

The next step is to slightly draw out the billet. After that the team cut part way through, cleaned thoroughly, added flux and welded the first fold. Joe says to keep the billet short and fat during the folding process. Also be sure to clean the scale off the press dies between uses. The billet would get a total of six folds before it is ready to become a blade. Like the hosts of any good cooking show, Joe and George had a finished piece (approx 1/4" thick) ready.

The next step was to change dies on the press and add the ladder pattern to the blank. After that they showed how to put the etch on the piece using Ferric Fluoride which can be purchased at Radio Shack as Printed Circuit Board etchant. Windex (or ammonia) is used to neutralize the blade once it is etched. After rinsing the blade gets a light coating of 3-in-1 oil to prevent rusting.

The press dies were made from 4140. The welding temperature is 2350 degrees. Clay moves the same as steel. Use different colored layers of modeling clay to test patterns. Joe gets his steel from Admiral Steel. 800 to 1000 grit is final for polish before etching. Use the proper tempering for the high carbon steel in the billet; three cycles. A video of the demo may be available. Check with Joe for the details.

After the demonstration the esteemed panel of judges examined the trammels that were made for the trade item competition. Tom the-blacksmith-from Wimberley was declared the winner!

As the meeting was winding down, President Jerry showed a few folks his method for texturing a small cross. The secret is a modified small ballpein hammer.

Vince Herod, Editor (and very temporary Secretary)

BLACKSMITHING HISTORY by Alan Lee

There is no part of Texas without a history of blacksmithing. Henry Mayo is a surveyor in Bryan-College Station, Texas. His lifelong passion is history. In addition to being a volunteer at the Brazos Valley Museum of Natural History, he sends out a weekly e-mail, "This week in the Brazos Valley", about historic trivia in the Brazos Valley. Back in May he sent a copy of a news release about a new classroom at Texas A&M. The following excerpt is from the Dallas Morning News, May 7, 1904. The photo is a postcard, circa 1908, which sold on e-bay in 2008.

May 7, 1904 (108 years ago)

New Blacksmith Shop at A&M

College Station, Tex., May 7 – Step by step during the year the Agricultural and Mechanical College has been adding to its material equipment ... One of the most recent additions to the equipment of the institution is the new blacksmith shop. A large room, 30x60, has been provided, with concrete floor and twenty-eight anvils and forges have been installed. Electric fans supply the draft for the fires and for drawing off the smoke from the forges. Twenty-eight men are now accommodated at the same time. It is not the purpose of the school to turn our expert blacksmiths, but it is considered essential for the farmer as well as the mechanical engineer to know the general principles of forging and welding, so that he will know a good piece of work when he sees it and be able to turn his hand to it if occasion should require.

... Dallas Morning News, 9 May 1904, page 3



Of course I found this interesting because I grew up in Bryan-College Station. Can you imagine 28 students working away at their stations in a space half that of John Crouchet's shop? Apparently they had a forced draft system to handle smoke, but from the photo, it is difficult to understand how smoke was vented from the "BBQ pit top" style hood. It was stated that the floor was concrete and there does not seem to be any overhead ductwork. Does anyone have any ideas?

Blacksmithing History continued.

I also find it interesting that at the turn of the 20th century, at a state college, it was “considered essential” to “know the general principles of forging and welding” if you were studying agriculture or engineering. Seems hokey now, but blacksmithing was still viable information for a college education, 108 years ago. Does anyone else know of trivia about blacksmithing in your area? Is there a historian in your area? Tell us about it. Also, were you aware that the last remaining blacksmith shop in Kyle, Texas is now located in Brazos county. The entire contents were purchased, by one man, with the promise that it would be completely rebuilt, including the building. And so it is. I know this man well and could probably arrange a tour as part of a monthly meeting. It is really something to see. Anyone interested?

(YES. Editor)

As an aside, in 1979, one year after Jeff and I opened Lee Welding Co., A man named Kermit Peters (his son was in my high school class), who owned the last remaining blacksmith shop in Bryan, Texas, came to our shop and asked if we were interested in buying his equipment, as he was retiring and selling it all. In our infinite wisdom, we told him we could not imagine what we would do with all that old crap; including 2-25lb Little Giants, anvils, swage blocks, leg vises, cones, ceramic and brick forges, tire shrinkers, line belt system, post drills, hand tools, carbide generator, and on and on and on. Jeff and I were hip deep in the oil field at the time, and could not be bothered. We passed on everything.

Editor’s Note: My thanks to Alan Lee for another great article.

Schedule for NTBA

	<u>Friday</u>					
	Pavilion A	Pavilion B	Cafeteria			
7:30						
8:00						
8:30						
9:00						
9:30						
10:00						
10:30						
11:00						
11:30						
Noon				Arrive and Set Up		
1:00						
1:30						
2:00						
2:30						
3:00				Patrick Thaden - Sandcasting	Chuck Stone - Beginning Blacksmithing	
3:30						
4:00						
4:30						
5:00						
5:30						
6:00						
6:30						
7:00						
7:30						
8:00						
8:30						
9:00						
	<u>Saturday</u>					
	Pavilion A	Pavilion B	Cafeteria			
7:30			Breakfast			
8:00						
8:30						
9:00	Wade Allen - Articulations Authentic Show and Tell	Mark Herndon - Damascus	Greg Darnall - Engraving Basics			
9:30						
10:00						
10:30						
11:00						
11:30						

HammerFest 2012

Noon			Lunch
1:00	Robert Macpherson - Articulations Demo	Gordon Williams - Blacksmithing Basics	Ugo Seranno - Repousse Basics
1:30			
2:00			
2:30			
3:00	Open Forge	Open Forge	
3:30			
4:00			Dinner
4:30			
5:00			
5:30			
6:00			
6:30			
7:00			
7:30			
8:00			
8:30			
9:00			

Sunday

	Pavilion A	Pavilion B	Cafeteria
7:30			Breakfast
8:00			
8:30			
9:00	Robert Macpherson - Metal Forming Raising and Roping	Mark Herndon - Mokume Gane	Greg Darnall - Advanced Engraving
9:30			
10:00			
10:30			
11:00			
11:30			
Noon			Lunch
1:00	Kelly Kring - Forge Welding Tools	Gordon Williams - Blacksmithing Intermediate	Ugo Seranno - Repousse on Steel
1:30			
2:00			
2:30			
3:00	Open Forge	Open Forge	
3:30			
4:00			Dinner
4:30			
5:00			
5:30			

6:00	
6:30	
7:00	
7:30	
8:00	
8:30	
9:00	

Monday

	Pavilion A	Pavilion B	Cafeteria
7:30			Breakfast
8:00			
8:30			
9:00	Will Friary - Forging Leaves and Flowers		
9:30			
10:00			
10:30			
11:00			
11:30			
Noon	End		



Close up photo of the ladder pattern demoed at the July meeting



Students at Work In Blacksmith Shop.

A & M Blacksmith Shop circa 1904

Return Service Requested

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