



Balcones Forge Dispatch

President's Corner

August 2018



Greetings!

Welcome to our "too hot to hammer" season once again. This year we are taking a shot at an August meeting in the form of a toolbox building workshop at John and Carolyn Crouchet's Sycamore Creek Ranch

just east of Marble Falls. John has a nice toolbox donated by Dave Guerrero that he is using for a pattern and Sue and Randy have volunteered to cut all the wood. Ya just can beat a deal like that! You will to drill and assemble your toolbox, take it home and finish it to your liking. Sand it, paint it, add your name and the name of your forge, whatever. Then bring it back to the October meeting at Jerry and Marsha Whitley's place for show-n-tell. A prize will be given for the best. If you plan to build a toolbox, you must let John know so that he can reserve your kit! Don't forget!

Also, don't forget to make your trade item drill bit.

September takes us back to Serbin, TX for another Wendish Festival. The food alone is worth the trip. Please note: this meeting is on the 23rd and it is on Sunday. This is open forge and demo so bring forge and anvil, a table to show your stuff, and make something cool to donate to the silent auction.

Please be aware of the heat and all the fires that are already burning. And just like your congressman and your neighbor's dog: Fire is your friend until you turn your back.

Meeting Date is August 25

See ya'll at the ranch.

Jerry Achterberg – Pres. Balcones Forge



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SECRETARY'S REPORT

For our first taste of Texas summer sunshine, the Balcones Forge meeting took place on the banks of Geronimo Creek at the Seguin Outdoor



Learning Center (SOLC), the host for the South Texas Cowboy Gathering & Western Music Festival in hopes of securing funds to enhance their facility as explained by volunteer Sharon Bettis.

A physical education instructor from Seguin named Irma Lewis had a strong desire and background in developing this outdoor education for children from kindergarten to the 12th grade. An initial donation of a 23 acre tract by Carla Blumberg in 1995 has since grown to 115 acres. SOLC offers 6 weeks of summer camp to include activities such as fishing, archery, canoeing, a ropes course, and creative instruction while volunteer instructors enforce teamwork and trust, problem solving in the core routine of nature connection SOLC was named the Outstanding Education Program in the state of Texas, 1997 - two short years after the opening.

The blacksmith group led by Jerry Achterberg and Jerry Whitley warranted immediate attention with voluminous clouds of black smoke from our forge pots. Thomas Leining, Aaron & Shane Tilton were already in full swing when I arrived with late comers Sue & Randy Howeter along with J. Alex Ruiz arrived to set up shop. The crowd was somewhat thin that early in the day because most revelers were saving up for the steak BBQ dinner and music festival planned later that evening in the grand

pavilion.

Nevertheless, questions and comments from the onlookers was specific to blacksmithing of which a great many had countless and happy memories of grandpas out back in the smithy always needing someone to crank on the blower.

The competition item for this event was a Potato Smasher of whom Jerry Achterberg, Jerry Whitley and myself were fortunate enough to complete the challenge. Sharon Bettis selected judges and a gentleman named Drew announced the winner - well, the way he did it declared all three implements as winners. Jerry Whitley's blue ribbon was for originality, mine was for functionality, and Jerry Achterberg's potato smasher was for its antique authenticity. We three blacksmithasters were introduced to the crowd each displaying our work. Unfortunately, media coverage was somewhat lacking, so the only pictures of these items will be available for viewing in the Balcones Forge Dispatch. I would like to encourage more participants in our forged competition segment. The basic blacksmith skills are renewed, reviewed and utilized because something so simple can be challenging and this only makes a blacksmith get better at the craft. Needless to say, it is rewarding to accomplish (sometimes crudely) the task, but it is a learning experience.

Tim Tellander
Balcones Forge Secretary

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AUGUST TRADE ITEM

The trade item for the August meeting is “a drill, auger, or boring bit”. Flat, spiral, sharp cornered, anything that can be used to put a hole in a piece of wood. Early boring bits were concaved, round tipped “spoon” bits that made a nice round bottomed hole once you got it started. Spade bits were somewhat easier to center and start with a sharp point. The auger bit, with it’s screw tip, pulled itself into the wood and the twisted lands helped to remove the wood shavings. Make one of your choice, but make it sharp because you must be able to put a hole in a piece of wood using a hand drill and your creation.

Jerry Achterberg

SECRETARY’S REPORT #2

The annual Texas Folklife Festival was set to begin Friday, Saturday, and Sunday (6/8, 6/9, 6/10) and Jerry Achterberg received an invitation for Balcones Forge to set up and demonstrate at the first Salado Texas History celebration. Upon notification of the invite, Jerry offered the option for our blacksmiths to participate in either, or both opportunities. Having never visited Salado, I immediately accepted and put out feelers for someone to go with me. Sue Howeter accepted and we were off to forge on a Saturday.

My research revealed that the village of Salado was celebrating the rich history of that part of Texas between Waco and Austin on the Salado Creek. The clear running spring fed bubbling creek was a favorite native Indian camping site thousands of years before the Spanish arrived, evidenced by archaeological discoveries in and around the area. The word ‘Salado’ means ‘salty’ in Spanish but the creek is pure and clean, so the imposed slang term (Salado) was used to identify the ribbon of fresh water, and in Spanish means that a string of negative events is considered to bad luck. It’s inconceivable not to visualize what hardships these explorers endured while trying to overtake and occupy this bountiful area from the original inhabitants. Inevitably the area was resettled in 1860 and many historically important sites and buildings are still standing. Some eight flour and grist mills were in operation at one time, but only one remains open for visitation in this historical town that has a population of 1500 people today. Interesting, of course is a cave on the creek that folklore de-

notes caches of gold hidden within it’s dark rocky walls. Some well known individuals such as Sam Bass, George Custer, Robert E. Lee, Sam Houston, Stephen F. Austin, Jim Bowie, and Tim Tellander have visited this spring fed cave that the famous Stage Coach Inn piped water from to supply pioneers traveling on the Chisolm Trail. The first coeducational college in Texas was established by Colonel S.C. Robertson and the crumbling rock walls and chimney remain on a high hill overlooking Salado Creek. I was so impressed with the small part of Salado that we passed through on our way to the blacksmith demonstration, that my wife & I returned the next weekend for a leisurely visit.

Sue and I took a stand under some very tall Oak and Cedar Elm trees for our blacksmithing demonstration for the day. We experienced surprising degrees of interest in our forges, tools and processes and interest in purchases by the crowd was more than we expected, and we were quite pleased. Because there was only the two of us, little time was awarded for browsing other tents which offered handmade and pioneer products, but when we left the area about 3pm, we noticed scores of vendors scattered on the front half of the square. Hopefully, we will have an opportunity to return next year.

Tim Tellander
Balcones Forge Secretary

Building the Box

The True Tale of How We Arrived at This Month's Project

by John Crouchet

I am the lucky owner of two really nice wooden toolboxes, built by **Dave and Elise Guerrero** for the annual Balcones auction. I used these boxes to carry heavy blacksmithing tools for some jobs I was doing at the time. The boxes did their job and continue to attract compliments from those who see them.

The design of these robust boxes is reminiscent of old wooden farrier boxes and "journeyman" boxes used by traveling smiths in the past. They carry a heavy load of tools in a fairly compact space, while still keeping everything within quick reach for a working blacksmith.

We have chosen to build these boxes for our August meeting project. Every Balcones member who comes to the meeting on August 25th should be able to complete a box and take it home. **There is no charge for the box, but you must be a Balcones Forge member.** If your dues are not paid, you may pay them at the meeting. (Membership is \$20 per year.)

Of course, there are not enough hours in a regular meeting to build an entire box from scratch, so members **Sue and Randy Howerter** have volunteered to cut out all the box pieces in their woodshop before the meeting. **That is a big job!** I have volunteered to drill all the large holes for the inside tool rack. (Not such a big job!)

When you arrive at the meeting, you will start assembling your box by sanding the parts, then drilling the screw holes with a hand drill so that the screws do not split the wood. Next, you will glue and screw the boxes together.

Once your box is assembled, it is ready to take home. You may dress up your new tool box as you desire. There are lots of options. At our October meeting, we plan a competition and prize for **Best Embellished Toolbox!**

All parts for the boxes will be provided, including glue and screws.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

You must text or email me to reserve a box kit for the meeting. We need to know in advance how many kits to build. If you are bringing a friend who plans to join Balcones Forge at this meeting, please let me know, so I can add to the box count. Drop me an email at jac@sycamorecreekranch.net or a text at 830-798-3710. Include your name. I will add you to the list.

We still need several members to volunteer to bring electric hand sanders and cordless drills and drivers. If you can help with these, please note that in your text or email.

The August Meeting

Date: Saturday, August 25th

Time: Starts 9:30 am

Where: Sycamore Creek Ranch

5828 East FM 1431

Marble Falls, TX 78654

Our green front gate is located on Ranch Road 1431. It will be unlocked or open. Just follow the anvil signs down our very long gravel driveway.

Planning a good summer meeting is difficult. The weather is hot and nobody wants to light a forge and add to the heat. Holding a no-forges meeting in my newly insulated shop sounded like a good idea. I hope you like our solution and will make an effort to come to the meeting and bring a friend. If we can get a good turnout for this meeting, maybe we can think up something similar - and just as interesting - next summer! Special thanks to those who helped bring this summer meeting together: Dave and Elise Guerrero, Randy and Sue Howerter, Jerry Achterberg, Laura Armstrong, and Rudy Billings.



Photos by John Crouchet



WWW.BALCONESFORGE.ORG



HOW TO GET TO THE AUGUST MEETING

Use your GPS and go to Marble Falls. It is about an hour from San Antonio and a little less from Austin. Once you are in the beautiful little town of Marble Falls, drive on down Highway 281 for about five stoplights until you get to the intersection of Highway 281 and Ranch Road 1431. This is the biggest intersection in town.

Turn east toward Lago Vista and go five and a quarter miles to our ranch gate. We are located on a long straight spot in the road and you will turn left into our driveway. Watch for the anvil signs. (If your GPS tries to take you down County Road 341, it is lying to you. Our front gate is at 5828 on East FM 1431. It is NOT off of CR 341.)

We have a green double gate. There is a 3 foot by 3 foot white sign to the right of the gate that says "Sycamore Creek Ranch." There is a big oak tree on the left.

The gate is unlocked. Drive in and proceed one and one quarter miles down the driveway to our house. Drive slowly and watch out for cattle. You will cross four cattle guards. Do not turn left or right. You will see our stone house and the big tan metal shop building to your left shortly after you cross the fourth cattle guard.

If you get lost, call me: John Crouchet, 830-798-3710.



Sue & Randy Howerter
Delivering wooden parts for Balcones
Forge tool box meeting.

John Crouchet

Ruth Carter

All doing more than their
share to prepare for the
August meeting.





Jerry Achterberg

Potato smashers from the Cowboy Gathering

Jerry Whitley

Tim Tellendar





Tom Leining received his Lifetime Achievement Award from President Achterberg at the Hye Founder's Day event.

Congrats to our newest Lifetime Member!

Helping Out and Pitching In

by John Crouchet

Blacksmith gatherings always get scarce in the summer when the temperature gets in the triple digits. Even if you love forging, it's hard to see your hot iron with sweat pouring in your eyes!

A lot of Balcones Forge members have recently asked about the next meeting and, even better, they have asked what they can do to help the group. Here are some things **YOU** can do to help Balcones Forge:

Meetings

SHOW UP - The biggest thing you can possibly do to help with our meetings is just to **show up**. That may mean a long drive each way because Balcones Forge holds meetings as far south as Devine (almost in Mexico!), as far north as Marble Falls (practically in Canada!) and even as far east as Bryan/College Station which, as you know, is part of Louisiana! Still, we need a group to have a meeting and you can always make the effort to be part of that group.

BRING A FRIEND - Every organization needs new members. That is how we survive and grow. These old blacksmiths running our Balcones meetings are just waiting for someone to show up with fresh new ideas and energy. When you head to a meeting, always try to bring someone along. You will be doing them (and us) a big favor.

OFFER TO HOST A MEETING - Balcones is always looking for new venues for our meetings. If you have a shop, or access to a shop, or just an idea for an interesting place to meet, we are always on the lookout for a good spot. One of our unique strengths as a blacksmith association is that we try to move our meetings from place to place each month so that you get to see how different blacksmiths set up their shop, how they run it, and what they do there.

BRING SOMETHING FOR “IRON IN THE HAT” - Iron in the Hat is an old blacksmithing tradition. At the end of many of our meetings, we hold a little auction to sell off spare forging tools, forged work, blacksmith books and such that members brought to the meeting. These do not need to be big, important items! Most shops have a few old duplicate forging tools laying around. Bring us one and we will sell it off to a new blacksmith who needs that tool! Make us a hook or a door latch or a steak-turning fork! Bring us an old metal-work book. Or, just bring a few extra bucks to buy that stuff. We only make a few dollars from these little auctions, but that money piles up over time.

JUST TAKE OUT THE TRASH! - Whether it is a regular meeting or our annual Bluebonnet Demo, there are plain old jobs that need to be done. If you have a place to put it, offer to take away some of the trash after the meeting. Each year, Bluebonnet generates about sixteen to twenty large bags of garbage. That's a lot of garbage! Please don't leave the meeting host holding the bag (literally). Maybe help clean up and sweep the floor after a meeting. And remember to thank whoever went to the trouble to host that meeting. (Thank their husband or wife, too, because you know that meeting did not happen without lots of cooperation!)

Organization

Beyond meetings, there is lot you can do to help Balcones Forge function.

VOLUNTEER - To run this organization takes work. A lot of work! Always offer to pitch in. If we are setting up tables, grab a table. No one gets paid for running Balcones Forge. It falls to each of us to do our part. Sometimes it falls on the same members time after time. Don't let that happen.

HELP PRE-STAGE A MEETING - Different meetings require different jobs. Our upcoming **tool box building meeting** requires a lot of pre-meeting wood work to get all the parts cut and ready for the members. **Randy and Sue Howerter** stepped up and volunteered to do that work for us. **Dave and Elise Guerrero** provided the original design (as well as building and donating the original boxes to our previous auctions!).

Based on the growing pile of Kaowool and forge bodies accumulating in my shop, I expect Balcones to host a big **Gas Forge Building Workshop** soon. Workshop meetings get a lot done, but they require a lot of advance work. Put your hand up. Volunteer to help cut those forge bodies to size, or help gather the parts (lots of parts) that we will need.

PUBLICITY - To survive, Balcones always needs to get the word out! If you have talents with computers or ideas for publicity, please offer to help **Laura Armstrong** and **Rudy Billings** let the world know! Balcones needs those skills and lot of us older blacksmiths just don't have them.

WRITE AN ARTICLE FOR THE NEWSLETTER - If you have a way with words, or even if you don't, consider writing an article for the newsletter. Our life-long editor, **Vince Herod**, with continuous help from his wife, **Jennifer**, is always on the lookout for interesting information for the Balcones Forge Dispatch! Write something long or short. Write about something you just learned about blacksmithing, about forge burners, or about tools, equipment, forging techniques, or even the cool blacksmithing book you just read. This is a group full of people who care a lot about blacksmithing. We are always interested in hearing something more about it. If your writing ability is a bit rough, don't worry. Yours will not be the first article that Jennifer has cleaned up! Include pictures if you can. Send newsletter contributions to spotteddogforge@yahoo.com.

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Making the Tool to Make 5/16" Twisted Handles

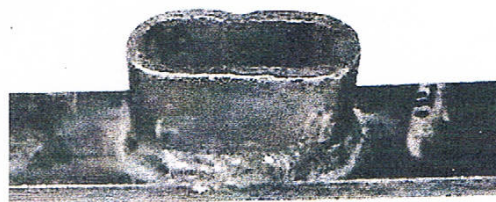
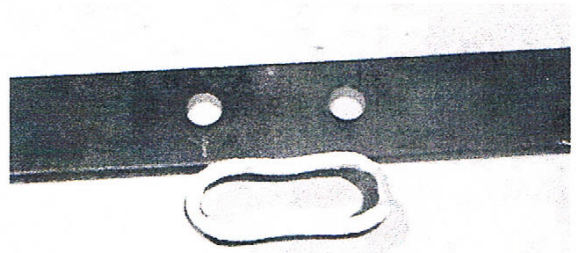
Ron Nichols

Materials:

1" diameter schedule 40 black pipe 1" long
1/4 x 16" flat bar

Put the pipe in your vise and mash it to an oval where a 5/16" round bar will slide through the pipe on each end of the oval (center will be a bit tighter).

Find center on the flat bar and measure over 1/2" from center and center punch, then measure from that point 1 1/16" (back across center point) and center punch again. Drill two 11/32" holes over those punch marks, then place the flat pipe over the two holes.



Make sure you can see the whole holes in the flat bar through the piece of pipe, then weld around the outside. File any sharp corners if needed.

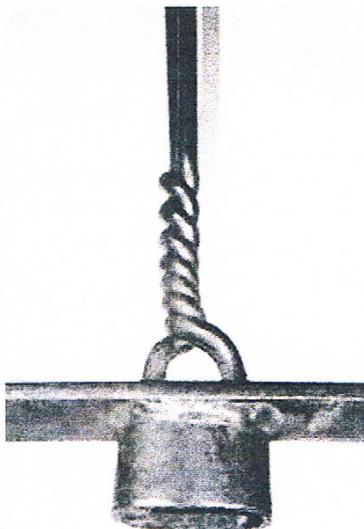
How To Make a Twisted Handle for tools

Ron Nichols too

Material:

5/16 x 24" round bar (5/16" is a lot more comfortable than 1/4")

Find center and bend the round bar around a 1" bar. Cut or grind to make sure they are the same length, then lightly grind the ends of the bars so they will slide into the twisting tool.

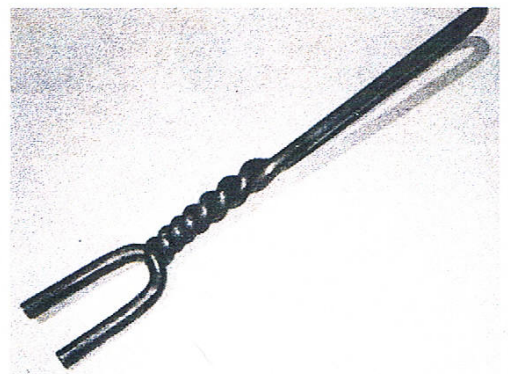
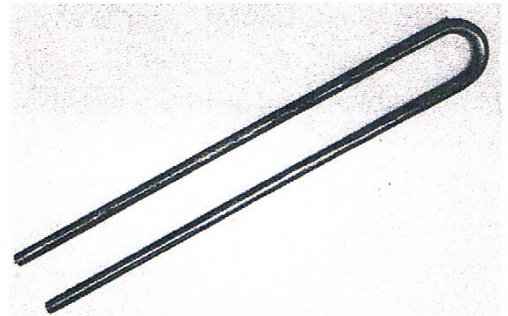


Heat piece in forge then clamp handle part in vise (about 5-6").

Quickly slide the twisting tool (pipe side up) over the end of the bars so that the bars are at the top of the welded pipe and start twisting. I find when you are trying to slide the twisting tool over the bar, it helps to hold the tool at an angle and catch one bar, then drop down and catch the other bar.

The straight (untwisted) bar then gets wrapped around your tool and welded only to the front side of your tool (do NOT weld all the way around or it will break!).

Because you are welding to tool steel, tack weld it first then heat till you see a light color, then weld.





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