



Blacksmiths of Central Texas

President's Corner

December 2010



Greetings and happy holidays! I am proud to serve as your new President in the coming year and glad to have Jerry Whitley as V.P. and the rest of the board behind us. Let's keep forging ahead!

I often look back at the old TABA and Balcones Forge mission statements to stay focused on why we exist and what we are trying to accomplish. Basically, we are the keepers of blacksmithing knowledge and it is our job to preserve it and pass it on to the next generation of blacksmiths as well as to educate the general public.

That's the fun part! It's very rewarding to watch the kids as you hammer out a nail and then hand it to them, or helping the beginning blacksmith with his first leaf, as Aaron and I did this evening at our Tuesday night get together. You can tell when they're hooked!

Most everybody in this group likes to share what they know with anybody that will listen or watch. Take every opportunity to learn what you can while you can before us old-timers forget what it was we were supposed to do in the first place. There is no better sense of accomplishment than to watch someone that you taught in the past as they take on a newcomer to teach them. Now you know you've done your job.

If you want to see something or need help with anything, just ask. It's what we're here for.

Thanks and hope to see ya'll in Boerne.
Jerry Achterberg
Balcones Forge President

Meeting Date is December 11



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SECRETARY'S REPORT



Minutes of the Meeting
Saturday, November 27
Rockdale Train Depot

Outgoing President John Crouchet called the meeting to order and gave a short introduction of the new President, Jerry Achterberg and his right-hand man and Vice President, Jerry Whitley.

President Achterberg took over and immediately began leading a discussion of upcoming meetings and events. The December meeting will be held on Saturday, December 11 at the Agricultural Museum in Boerne. The trade item is a Christmas ornament or something for the season. This is an interesting facility and should be a good location for future meetings. Bring your hammer and blacksmith tools to the December meeting. We will be making hardies for the Museum from sucker rod. If you do not know how to do this, it is a fine learning opportunity.

President Achterberg next discussed the possibility of having the January meeting at Traders Village in San Antonio. This is a very very large venue and another possibility for future meetings. We will discuss this further at the December meeting.

The annual Bluebonnet Demo will be held April 2nd and 3rd at Sycamore Creek Ranch in Marble Falls. Our demonstrator this year will be hammer master Brian Brazeal. More details will be announced at the December meeting.

The February meeting will be a joint meeting with the Houston Area Blacksmiths Association, to be held in Bryan, Texas at the Lee brothers' forge. This promises to be a marvelous event with lots of serious blacksmithing and fancy powerhammer demonstrations by Alan and Jeff Lee and Alan's son, Carlton. Mark your calendars because you will not want to miss this meeting. The trade item will be a tomahawk, forged from a ball pein hammer like the trade axes of the mid-1800's. You will get to keep your own tomahawk, but a prize will be awarded for the best hawk!

Following the future meetings discussion, the trade item was addressed. Only Jerry Achterberg and Aaron Tilton had forged striker knives. Aaron's was a fine grade "A" knife, but failed the flint striking test. After a short discussion, it was concluded that the striker portion of the tool must be tempered very hard and the blade much softer (less brittle). This presents a heat control problem and will require further experimentation.

Next, Bert Dockall (*Mr. Charlie's first cousin*) gave us a short history of the beautifully restored Rockdale Train depot. This depot is a labor of love by the Rockdale Historical Society, requiring many years of effort and dedication to rebuild the fine historical building that you see there today. The blacksmith shop was built later, in 2009. For a look at the depot and current events calendar, check out:

www.rockdaledepot.com

Respectfully submitted,

John Crouchet, Secretary

The big anvil, forge and Little Giant were all donated by Alcoa. Ed.

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WELL JUST "GRATE"!

I recently was awarded a job building a grate for a gentleman and his new stone fire pit. We talked and I named the type of material typically used for the job and mentioned it should last some 10 years. "Well, I'm 71, make me two," he replied. I liked his optimism!

Later, while working with the two expanded metal pieces I had cut to lay into the frame -- ya know, one for now, one for "down the road" -- I thought of how sharp the edges were. Since they would not be permanently mounted in a protective frame, that could be a problem. If you have ever worked with this handy material, you know how sharp those edges can be. You can grind and file and sand, but no matter what you do, there are always going to be edges that can slice and stab to the bone -- even if you are careful.

Then I was using my torch for something, and happened to place the flame on the end of one of those sharp daggers of the expanded metal. I noticed it quickly melted into a rather smooth ball. So, I attacked the other protruding barbs, and in short time all the edges were free of the usual sharpness. Try it next time.

I installed the fire grate and delivered the extra insert complete with safe, smooth edges to the pleased customer. Seems he was looking forward to many cool nights with his grandchildren -- and his 91st birthday.

Rudy Billings, Treasurer

THE BF FACEBOOK PAGE

Hey, all you social butterflies -- Balcones Forge has a Facebook page. Now there is another way to connect with your fellow blacksmiths. Last count -- 55 people like the site. Check it out next time you log on.

EDITOR'S SOAPBOX

The roster of the Balcones Board of Directors is now settled. The seven members of the Board are:

Jerry Achterberg
Rudy Billings
John Crouchet
Jim Elliott
Vince Herod
Tom Lupton
Jerry Whitley

Please send any suggestions for meeting or workshop ideas to any member of the Board.

The Secretary did not mention the excellent demonstration he gave on the fine art of filing at the November meeting. If you think there aren't any subtle secrets to filing a smooth joint in steel; you are certainly mistaken! Did you know that a golf ball makes a perfect file handle?

Vince Herod, Editor

TRADE ITEM INFO

As mentioned in the minutes, the trade item for December is a Christmas ornament or something for the Holiday season. You are only limited by your imagination and the short time until the meeting on December 11.

For the February meeting the format will be a bit different. There is a picture of a trade hawk on page 5 of this newsletter and that is what you need to make from a ball pien hammer. Everyone will keep their own trade hawk but all the items will be judged and a winner selected. What the prize and judging criteria might be is still a mystery.

A great reference book for the trade hawk is "Indian Trade Relics" by Lar Hothem. The book can be purchased from Amazon for under twenty dollars.

All together now.....you gotta make one to take one!

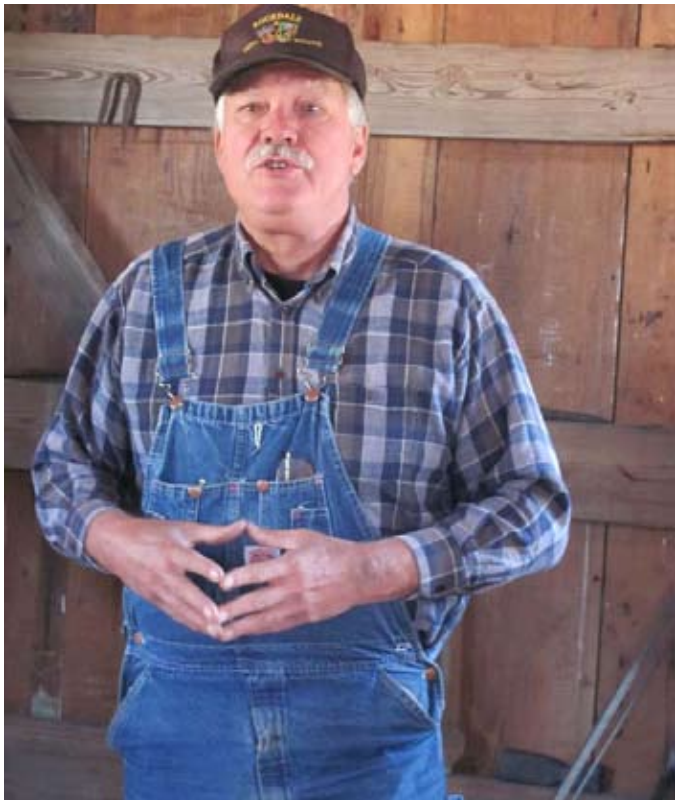


BLACKSMITH SHOP

REPLICA OF AN EARLY BLACKSMITH SHOP THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN FOUND IN THE ROCKDALE AREA AROUND THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY. THESE SMALL SHOPS WERE ESSENTIAL TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY. IT IS CONSTRUCTED WITH ANTIQUE BOARD AND BATTEN SIDING BY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF THE ROCKDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY IN 2009. ANTIQUE TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT HAVE BEEN DONATED BY FAMILIES OF FORMER LOCAL BLACKSMITHS.

FRANK DOCKALL CHARLES STOLTE
JOHN TIMMERMAN HARRISON LANHAM
JULIUS "BOSE" MOULTRY





MEETING INFO

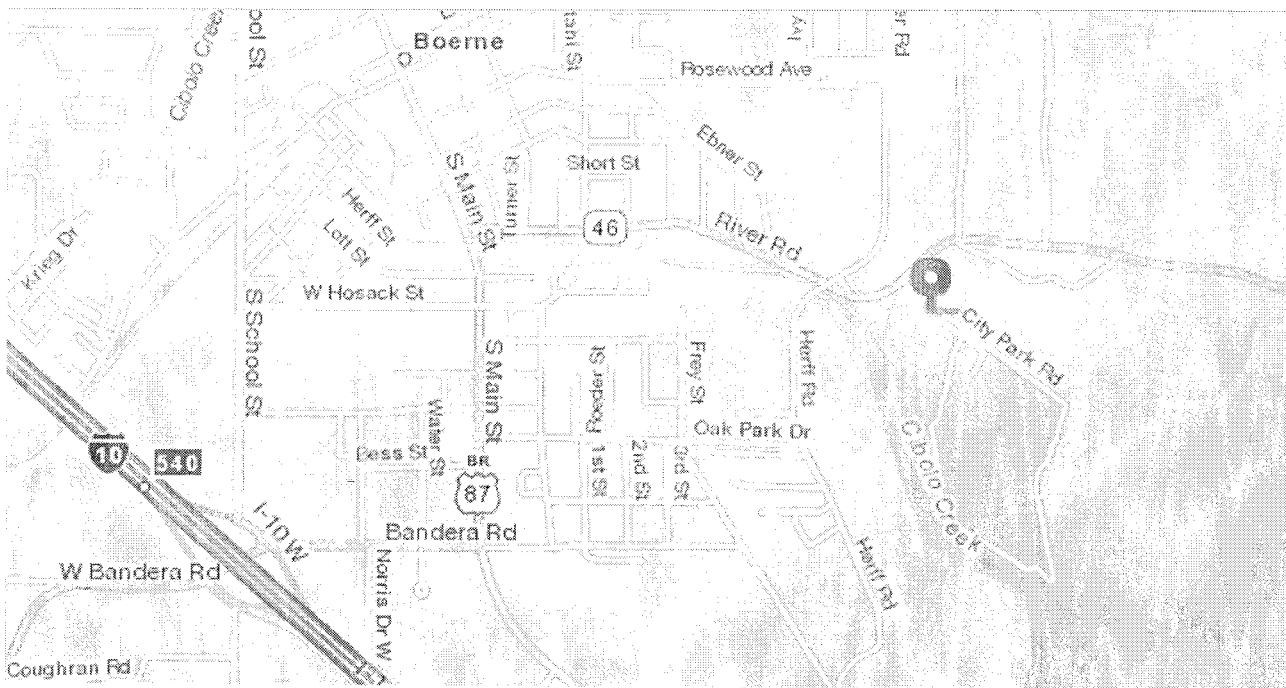
Joe Travieso will host the December meeting. Please note the early date of December 11. Come on out to the hill country and check out the museum. We will be firing up the forge and making hardies for the museums anvils. If you need or want to make one for your anvil, come on a give it a try.

Agricultural Heritage Museum
102 City Park Road
Boerne, TX 78006
(830) 249-6007

The museum is located at the corner of City Park Road & Hwy 46 (River Road) in Boerne City Park next to Kendall County Fair Grounds.

Check out the museum's website at:

www.agmuseum.us/museum/



TOOL GLOSSARY

DRILL PRESS: An upright machine useful for snatching flat, metal bar stock out of a user's hands so that it smacks the user in the chest and flings the freshly opened cold beer across the room, splattering it on the freshly painted part.

WIRE WHEEL: Cleans paint off bolts and throws them somewhere under the workbench at the speed of light. Also removes fingerprint whorls, hard-earned guitar calluses and fingernails in about the same time it takes the user to say, "Ow-wwch...."

ELECTRIC HAND DRILL: Normally used for spinning pop rivets in their holes until the user dies of old age. May also be used to drill through other subject material and into the palm of the hand.

PLIERS: Used to round off bolt heads. Also see VISE-GRIPS.

HACKSAW: One of a family of cutting tools built on the Ouija board principle. It transforms human energy into a crooked, unpredictable motion. The more attempts are made to influence its course, the more dismal the future becomes.

WISE-GRIPS: Also employed to round off bolt heads. If nothing else is available, they may also be used to transfer intense welding heat to the palm of the hand. Also see PLIERS.

OXYACETYLENE TORCH: Used almost exclusively for lighting various flammable objects in the shop. Also handy for igniting grease inside a wheel hub where the bearing race was.

HYDRAULIC FLOOR JACK: Used for raising or lowering an automobile. Correct operating procedure always includes trapping the jack handle firmly under a bumper.

EIGHT-FOOT LONG DOUGLAS FIR 2X4: Used to raise subject automobile instead of hydraulic-jack handle.

"ABANA'S GREATEST HIT'S" 2010 CONFERENCE DVD'S NOW ON SALE

We are proud to make available DVDs with high quality videos of 2010 Conference events and demonstrations.

For a brochure format with the table of contents listings of the 11 DVDs, check the website.

The order form is here and has prices for current ABANA members and for non-members. Individual DVDs contain up to 2 hours of content and are \$15 for members and \$22.50 for non-members. Sets are available for as little as \$12.73 per DVD.

You can call the Central Office with your choices and they will take care of the rest. Phone (703) 680-1632.

To make ordering easier and to ensure accuracy, an order form is available on the website.

You can print the blank form, fill it out then mail it in or send it by fax (703) 680-6222

Or you can fill out the form on your computer and print it out then mail or fax the completed form. You can also e-mail or electronically submit the filled out form.

Note that it is generally thought unsafe to email a credit card number. So you can send the form electronically and follow up with the credit card information over the phone.

Mailing Information:

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METALSMITHING APPRENTICESHIP OPPORTUNITY

JUNE 1, 2011 – MAY 31, 2013

The Metal Museum is seeking an experienced blacksmith interested in a two-year apprenticeship. For over twenty-five years, the Metal Museum has provided blacksmith artists with the opportunity to live and work at the Museum, to create a new body of work and to learn the art and business of blacksmithing. The apprentice program includes working on large- and small-scale private and public projects. Projects include railings for public buildings and private residences, sculpture, furniture, architectural objects and a variety of repairs and restorations.

By the end of two years, the apprentice will be competent in hand-forging techniques (including traditional joinery, tapering, riveting), able to operate power hammers, welders and other shop equipment, and able to design basic fencing, gates and hardware. The apprentice will be exposed to a wide variety of art and artisans, and will have the opportunity to meet and work with prominent blacksmiths from across the country.

In addition to a \$1000 per month stipend, the Museum provides health insurance, worker's compensation, paid and annual leave, onsite housing and studio space. Duties include working in the studio, conducting demonstrations for visitors, assisting with grounds events and maintenance, assisting with exhibition changes and other duties as assigned. The apprentice works under the supervision of the Shop Foreman and the Museum Director.

Accommodations

The Museum is located on 3.2 acres on the Mississippi River in a former merchant marine hospital. Apprentices are housed in the east side of a duplex that accommodates up to four people at a time – three rooms for extended stay residencies and one room for guests. There is the basement room with private bath and living area, the second floor south room with private bath and the second floor north room with shared bath and private porch. Rooms are assigned as available. All residents share the common areas, including the kitchen, dining room, living room and basement laundry facilities. There is also one short-term visitor guest room that shares a bath with the north room. Secured onsite parking is provided. No pets permitted.

Expectations

Applicants must have completed undergraduate work in metals or have comparable training. Also required are excellent "people" and communication skills, a good sense of humor, the ability to work under pressure and meet deadlines. Applicants must be authorized to work in the United States and must provide a photocopy of a valid driver's license. Please be advised that this position is physically demanding: it requires the ability to tolerate high temperatures, stand for long periods of time, frequently bend and stoop, and lift a minimum of 75 pounds.

The Metal Museum offers employment opportunities without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, veteran status, disability, genetic information, or age.

Applications

Applications must be received by January 14, 2011 with notification of acceptance by March 1, 2011. Applicants must submit a resume no longer than two pages in length, 20 images of recent work, three references, and a letter of intent no longer than two pages in length.

Please send applications or further inquiries to Carissa Hussong, The Metal Museum, 374 Metal Museum Drive, Memphis, TN, 38106, or to carissa@metalmuseum.org.

LOG SPLITTER OR KNIFE PRESS?

The following article is by Joe Travieso who will be our host for the December meeting. He passed his ABS knife test at Johnny Stout's last year and is going to use the press to pattern some Damascus.

OK Guys

I finished with my log splitter press. I have seen some other log splitters converted like this on you tube and felt it could work for me. I didn't put in a lot of measurements in this description because the press you start out with may be different from mine, but you can see what I did and can adjust to things suit your press.



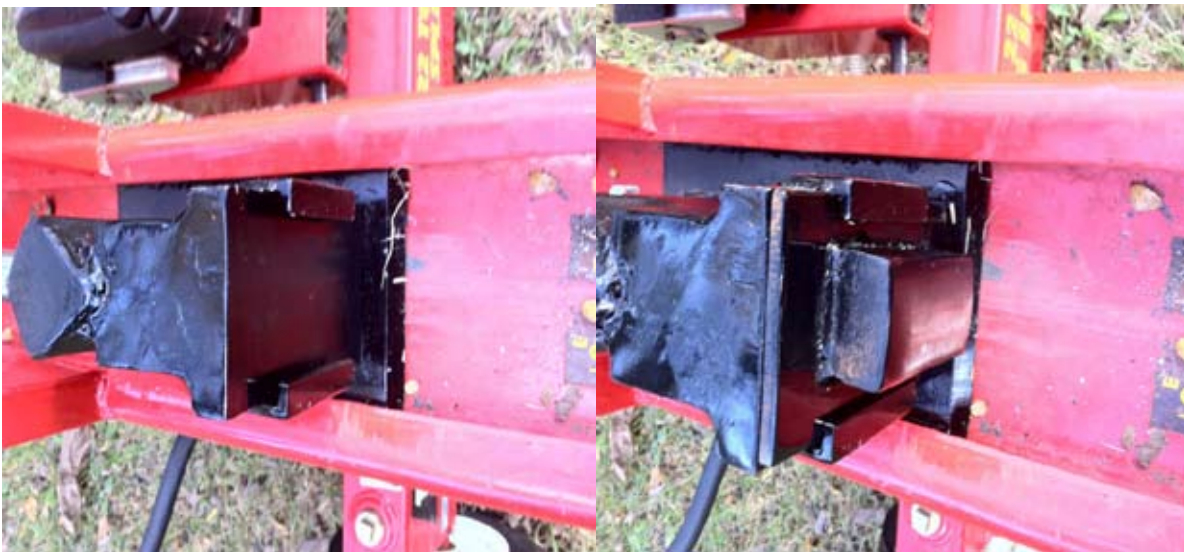
This is the splitter when I started. I only got to use it once to split logs. The first thing I did was to remove the ram and grind the edge of the wedge off. The wedge is an inch wide, so the flat is now about 1/2 inch across. I found some 1 inch plate at a salvage yard and a 4 inch square by 6 inch long solid steel stock that I used for the anvil. I cut the plate and welded it to the wedge



Now the ram is 3 inches wide. But I wanted the ram and the anvil to be the same size, so I added a 1x4 inch plate to the front. This way the die plates could all be cut the same size.



The next thing you need to do is attach the anvil. I did this by drilling two holes in the bottom of the base plate and into the anvil, then threading just the anvil. Now all you need is two 3/8 inch bolts and the base is complete. At this point I trimmed the plate and the anvil up to make everything even



Now all that's left to do is make some dies. I found some 2 inch 4142 round stock at a supply house here in town. They had some drops and I got 2 feet for \$35. I cut off 7 1/2 inches and used the press to square up the stock for flat dies, you can make these any size you want, my dies are 4 1/4 long X 1 3/4 thick X 2 1/4 inches wide. I welded the dies to some 3/8 inch plate, added some guide rails so I could change dies easily. I had to change the guide rails because the stock I used is too thin and I was afraid they would not hold, they may but I think in this case more is better.



The only hard part to all of this is the cutting and welding. I have a small welder and a metal cutting band saw so it took a while to get it done, but I have more time than money so it was worth it.



This weekend I'm going to put it to work making some W pattern Damascus.



DUES INFORMATION

The fiscal year for Balcones Forge runs from April 1 to March 31 so soon you will need to pay your dues for 2011. The Board has voted to adjust the dues. For 2011 the yearly membership will be \$20.00 if you choose the electronic newsletter and \$25.00 if you wish to receive a hard copy.

Please send your dues to:

Rudy Billings
Balcones Forge Treasurer
1906 Rampart Circle
Austin, TX 78727

Remember to make your check to:

“Balcones Forge”

Return Service Requested

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