



Balcones Forge Dispatch

President's Corner

July 2011



Greetings!

When folks come out in 100 plus degree weather and stand in a 110 plus degree smithy and watch somebody hit a piece of hot iron for three hours, he's got to be good! And that's pretty much the way it was at James Helm's shop in San Antonio. It was a good

turnout and it was especially good to see Jeff Lee walking upright and unassisted with his back looking better than most of ours. James had a cool homebuilt helving hammer and forging press that had a few of us drooling, and his hand hammering was top notch too. I don't know the details, but James does teach blacksmithing at his shop. You can contact James for more info. Great demo James!

Before you know it, fall will be here and it will be time to look for new board members to replace the ones that have served their time or just maybe gotten stagnant and aren't any fun anymore. We need new blood or perhaps just some new ideas. This is kind of a Master/ Apprenticeship program and some of the masters are getting tired. We have quite a few very talented people (and that doesn't mean just forging) in this group with better ideas that could step up and help out. This is your chance to guide this group where you think it should go. Please let me know if you are interested.

The July meeting will be in Austin at Zilker. The trade item is a "bodkin" or Roman armor piercing arrowhead. Everybody should be able to make one, give it a shot!

Hope to see you all in Austin.

Jerry Achterberg, Balcones Forge President

**Meeting Date is July 30
9:30 AM**



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SECRETARY'S REPORT



James Helm Hosts June Meeting
In San Antonio

The June meeting at James Helm's studio near downtown San Antonio was a well attended success. That is quite an accomplishment during the hottest months of the year, when most folk's idea of a good time does not include standing around a blistering hot forge!

Attending members were well rewarded for their efforts. James put on an interesting meeting and our old friends and fellow members, Allen and Jeff Lee showed up, miles from their home grounds of Bryan, Texas. Folks were especially glad to see Jeff mostly recovered from his recent back surgery. (You had us worried, Jeff!)

The trade item for this meeting was a draw knife, a two-handled knife used to remove bark from logs and do preliminary shaping for carving, especially on green wood. It was a common woodworking tool in pioneer days. Four good drawknives were submitted and judged by our elite judging team of Elise Guerrero and Sue Murray. The winning blacksmith was James Weaver and the prize was a book on the history of the legendary Texas Rangers (Real Rangers, not the baseball team!).

President Jerry Achterberg talked about tool safety and especially the potential hazards of drawknives. Because of the design of the tool, the user necessarily cuts toward himself, in the same manner as using a spokeshave. Keep in mind, a properly prepared drawknife is a very sharp instrument!

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Extra caution is needed when using any of these type tools! The July trade item will be a Bodkin or socketed arrowhead. Great force is applied to the arrow on impact. An arrow shaft which shatters on impact can be extremely dangerous.

Arron Tilton brought three bodkins which he had forged, to give members an idea of how this tool is forged before they attempt to make one for the July meeting. The July meeting will be held at Zilker Park in Austin, at the old Blacksmith Shop in the Zilker Botanical Gardens. The meeting will be an open forge, but, due to the current burn bans, extra (outside) forges will not be allowed.

The August meeting will be held at Conservation Plaza in New Braunfels, always a popular destination, with it's old-time general store, split log dog-trot style blacksmith shop, and close proximity to Cooper's Barbeque!

Member Tom Leining made a report following our previous discussion on buying forging coal out of Dallas. Once the facts were in, we would do just as well to continue buying coal from Centaur Forge and other local suppliers. Thanks, Tom!

Before the demonstration, James Helm gave a short shop tour. Other than the usual vises, forges, and anvils you might expect, James also uses three large hydraulic presses; two 42 ton presses and one smaller 14 ton press. In addition, he has an Appalachian Style, guided helve hammer with a hammer head of approximately 100 pounds. This unusual hammer is capable of a mighty blow! Most of this hammer was constructed from scrap obtained at Ashley Salvage in south San Antonio.

James hammers with a two and a half pound and a six pound cross peen hand hammer. He demonstrated his technique for forging socketed handles for hoes, rakes, knives and other implements of destruction! James prefers his knife sockets to be formed as an oval, rather than round to prevent the

knife from turning in your hand during use. James' work is on the internet at iforgeiron.com under the name of "StormCrow".

Thanks for a fine meeting, James!

Respectfully Submitted,
John Crouchet, Secretary

Special Thanks to Jerry Whitley for help with this month's report.

LEG VISE

Balcones Forge is on the look out for a leg vise to donate to the Waldorf School. Does anyone out there have an extra that could go to a good cause?

Please let one of the officers know if you do.

TRADE ITEM

The trade item for July is a Bodkin or Socketed Arrowhead.

Here is a web address you can use for research; it even has video:

<http://www.evado.co.uk/Hector%20Cole/index.html#>

There are plenty of styles so, as Jerry says on page one, give it a try! Remember, you gotta make one to take one

DRIVING DIRECTIONS TO THE ZILKER FORGE

The Zilker Blacksmith Shop

2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin, Texas

Located in Zilker Park just south of Town Lake and east of MoPac (Loop 1), Zilker Botanical Garden is easy to reach from both MoPac and I-35. Driving directions:

FROM MOPAC (LOOP 1):

take the exit for FM 2244 / Rollingwood, following the signs for Zilker Park. Watch for the dark green Zilker Botanical Garden signs. The garden is on the left at 2220 Barton Springs Drive.

FROM INTERSTATE 35:

take the Riverside Drive exit and go west. At Barton Springs Drive, turn left and follow it until you reach Zilker Botanical Garden on your right, just past Stratford Drive.

If they are collecting parking fees at the gate, tell them you are a blacksmith volunteer. If they don't shoot, you're home free.

LOOK FOR THE MAP ON THE LAST PAGE.





James C. Sorber Passed Away on 5 July 2011

James C. Sorber, noted builder, historian and collector died on July 5, 2011 of natural causes. He was 94 years old.

James was born April 18, 1917 in West Chester, PA and was the son of Joseph Sorber and Phoebe Bullock. He early on displayed an interest in collecting and wood working, the two activities that would consume the rest of his long and productive life, a life that was much focused on early American history.

He was a skilled enough wood worker at sixteen to be accepted into the Williamson Free Trade School and graduated Best in Class in 1937 as a cabinet maker. He spent the next years in various construction and cabinet making positions ending up finishing ship interiors for the Sun Shipyard in Chester, PA until drafted into the army.

During WWII James served in the Army Corps of Combat Engineers, 258th Division and was in Germany, France, and Holland. He commented that he built and blew up a lot of bridges.

After leaving the army James began his career as a building contractor of fine homes in the West Chester area and built many homes for the professional community. He also began restoring older homes of historical vintage. He joined the Chester County Historical Society and served on its Board of Directors for over thirty-five years. During that period he played a major role in growing the society, restoring its buildings, constructing displays and managing their resources. He installed the Period Rooms in CCHS.

Through in-depth study, travel and active participation James became an expert on American Colo-

rial Homes and their features and fixtures. He was a member of the Society of Architectural Historians and participated actively in that organization.

James' special efforts were devoted to American blacksmith forged items. His collections have been featured in many fine magazines. He became a nationally recognized authority on antiques and was a frequent lecturer at various museums, Colonial Williamsburg and historical societies.

James had one of the largest collections of fine blacksmith made items in private or museum collections and was an authority on that subject. In order to more fully appreciate and understand how blacksmiths worked he became a trained blacksmith studying under Donald Streeter one of the nation's finest Colonial blacksmiths. Pieces of his collection were frequently shown in various museums and James often lectured on historical blacksmithing and the items they made. The collection was featured in many articles and magazines and was the focus of the book "Colonial Wrought Iron - The Sorber Collection" published by Skipjack Press.

He actively supported today's blacksmithing community and was a member of the Artists Blacksmith Association of America (ABANA), the Pennsylvania Artists Blacksmith Association (PABA) and the Mid-Atlantic Blacksmiths Association (MASA). Pieces of his collection were frequently displayed at various local and national blacksmithing conferences and events.

His contributions to the knowledge and preservation of Colonial American historical objects and the crafts of that period are widely recognized and will be long remembered.

James is survived by his wife Sally (nee Miller) with whom he shared 22 years of travel, great adventure and many warm moments, as well as several nieces and nephews.

ARTIST-BLACKSMITH'S ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA

Subject:

2012 Publications Contracts Call for Proposals

It is that time again for ABANA to announce its annual bidding for our 2012 Publications contracts. Please look over the following opportunities in our upcoming year and forward this on to any interested parties that may also be interested.

ABANA is seeking bids for our publication needs for 2012. The following are open for bids. You are welcome to bid on individual parts of interest or the whole thing. When requesting additional information, please indicate what part(s) you are interested in bidding on.

Hammer's Blow Editor
Anvil's Ring Editor
Graphic Designer (for both publications)
Printing Services (for both publications)
Mailing Services (for both publications)

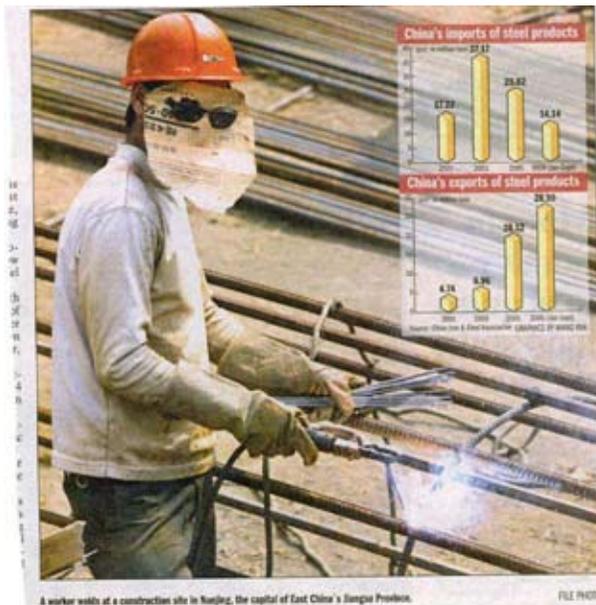
For serious inquiries from interested parties on format specifications, etc. please contact our Publications Chair :

Email: Linda Tanner
Cell Phone Number: 804-690-9642



James C. Sorber

Died Tuesday July 5, 2011 at age 94



A worker welds at a construction site in Nanjing, the capital of East China's Jiangsu Province.

FILE PHOTO

Safety First. Do NOT use the method of UV ray protection shown in this picture from China.



Scenes from the June meeting.

Photos by Gerald Pollard







WWW.BALCONESFORGE.ORG

FIG #1

Start with a piece of 1/4" x 1" flat bar, long enough to hold on to

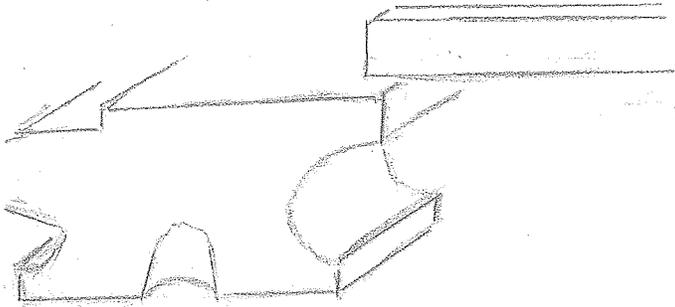
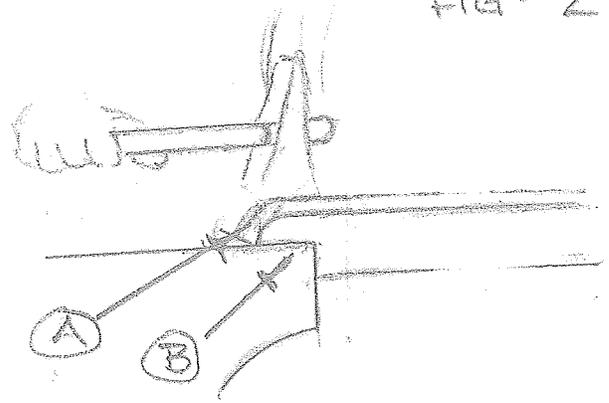
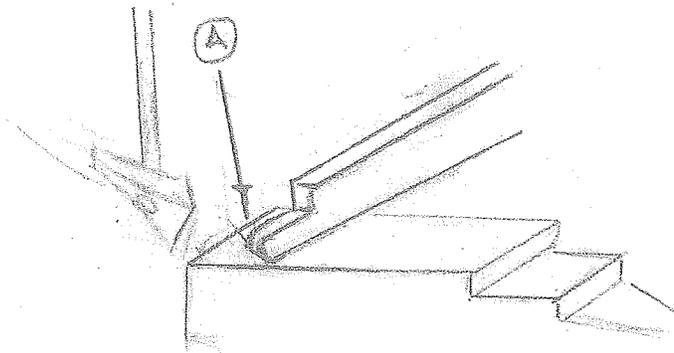


FIG #2



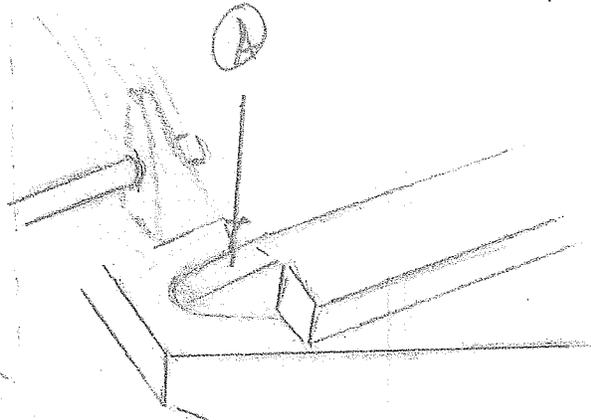
Set down about 1/8" back to start forming nose of Dolphin

FIG #3



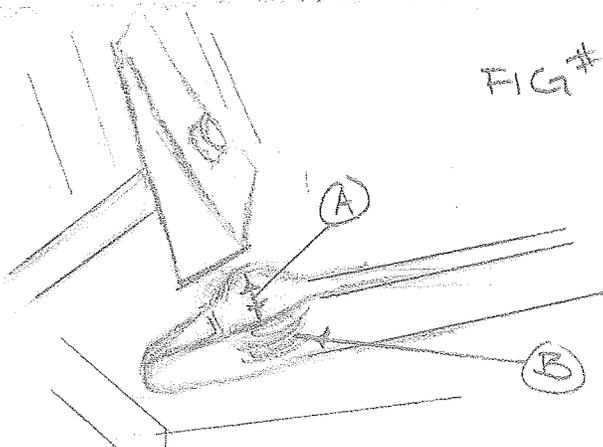
Round up and taper the nose, shaping with the hammer and file as needed

FIG #4



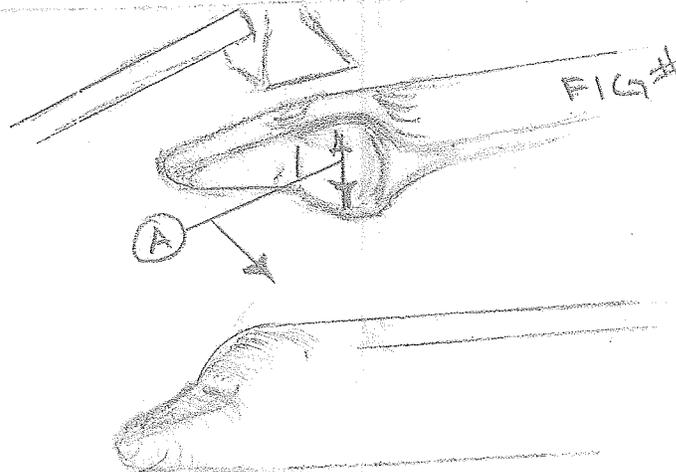
Refine and form the snout

FIG #5



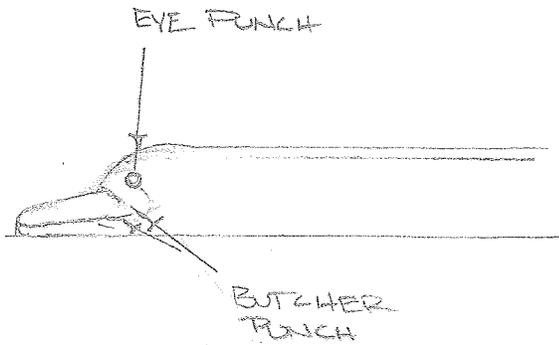
Drive the top corner into itself at a 45 degree angle, allow the sides to swell out

FIG #6



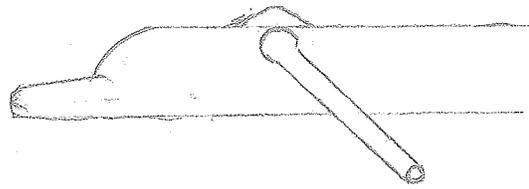
Lay flat on the anvil then flatten swells back out to the 1/4" thickness, this will generate the radius for the top of the head

FIG # 7



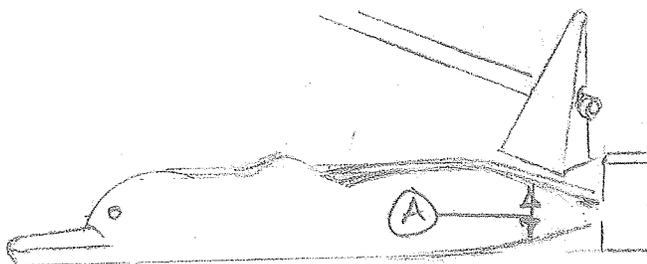
Make the eye using the eye punch, cut the line forming the mouth. Make a line at the back of the nose to form definition to the head

FIG # 8



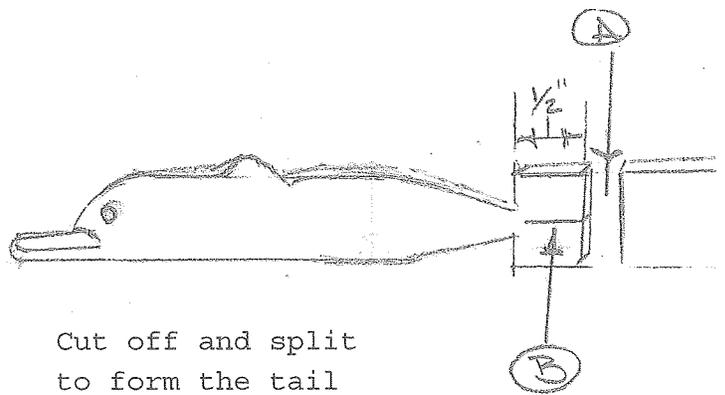
On the back side, use a ball punch to upset enough material to form the top fin

FIG # 9



Taper the body keeping the thickness even. Leave the part that will become the tail full size

FIG # 10



Cut off and split to form the tail

FIG # 11

Take a good heat, open up the split then shape the Dolphin's tail

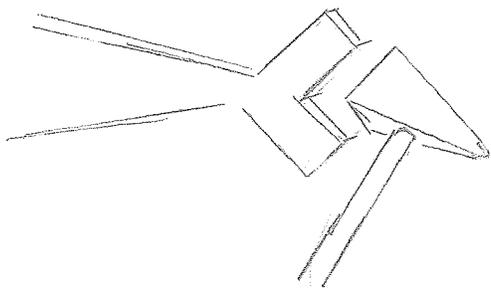
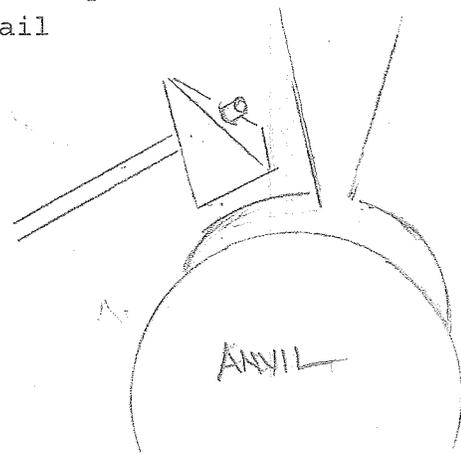
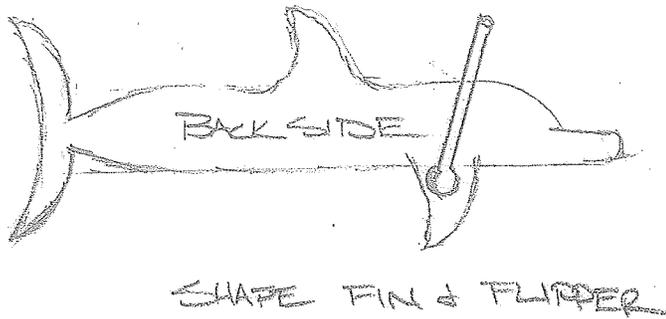


FIG # 12



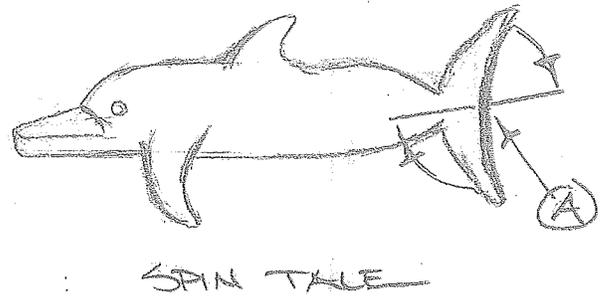
FIG# 13

Take a good heat then ball punch on the back side to form the flippers then finish shaping the top fin



FIG# 14

Take a good heat on the tail end of the body then twist the tail 90 degrees then back to the anvil to flatten out the twist. Wire brush and apply finish

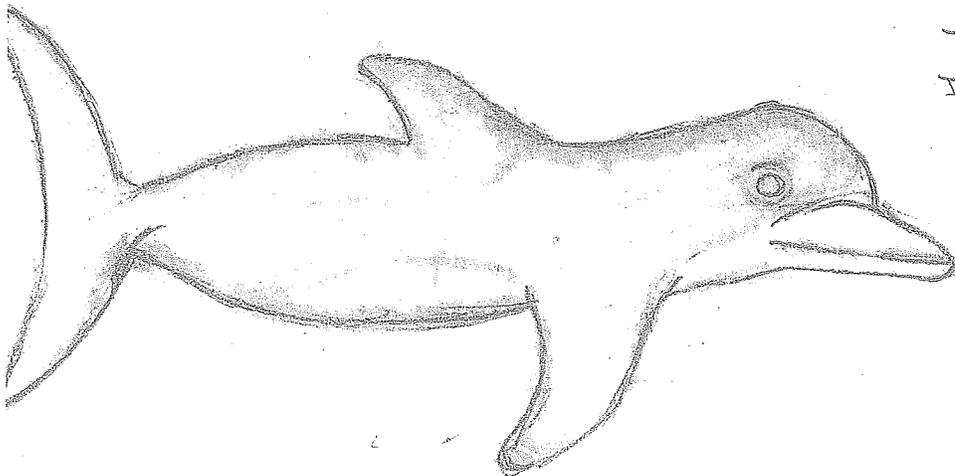


FLAT ONE SIDED DOLPHIN

DATE: 6-18-11

DESIGN BY: BILL EPPS

DRAWN BY: MARCO, GARCIA



MATERIAL NEEDED

1/4" X 1" FLAT STOCK

LONG ENOUGH TO HOLD ONTO

2 LB CROSS PEN HAMMER

ANVIL

BALL PUNCH AKA BLOB PUNCH

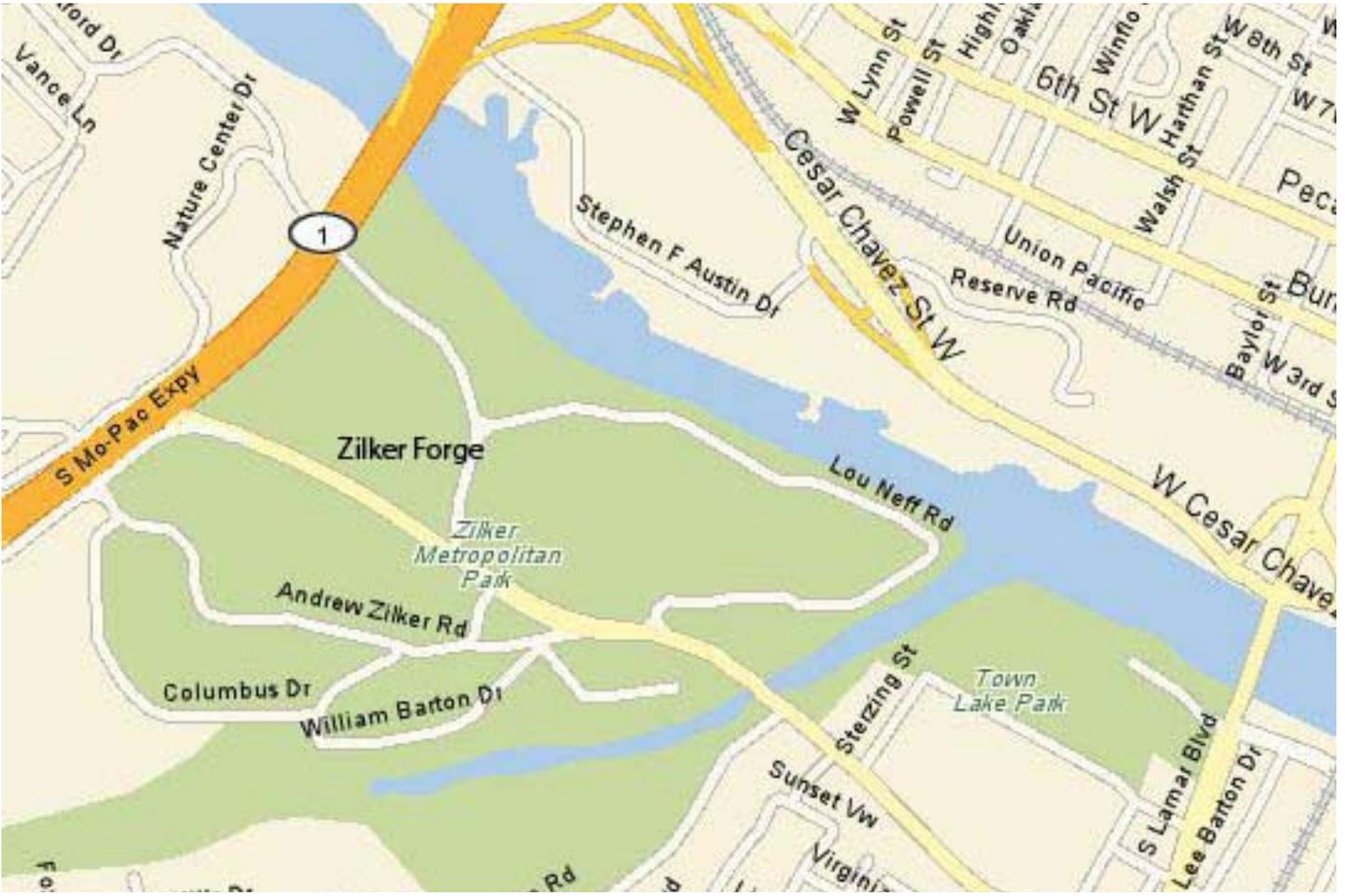
EYE PUNCH

HOT CUTTER

BUTCHER PUNCH

Try it just for fun!

Your friend, Bill Epps



Return Service Requested

Vincent Herod
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