



Blacksmiths of Central Texas

Rudy Billings, President
rudy@redhotironworks.com - 512/461-7375
Jerry Achterberg, Vice-President
treefarm@swbell.net - 210/661-3293
Smokey Thompson, Treasurer
swthompson@aol.com - 512/694-9772
Tom Lupton, Secretary
tlupmach@peoplepc.net - 512/441-0000
Vince Herod, Editor
spotteddogforge@yahoo.com - 512/253-6045

March 2008



THE PREZ SAYS: The Big Event is Here!

This is it -- the demonstration of the year! The name Christopher Thomson may not be as well known as Dorothy Stiegler or Uri Hoffi, but his talent and skill are on the same level. You will not be disappointed. Make plans now to attend this informative workshop.

With life's busy schedule, we know it can be hard to attend both days, so your Board is offering the following: Saturday only - \$30 or Sunday only - \$15. Indicate your intentions and write in the correct amount on your registration form.

The dinner is always scrumptious, but if you can't make it, don't miss Christopher's presentation or your chance to bid in the auction. Come by at 7:15 and join in the fun.

Please help things run smoothly and on time by sending in your registration by March 20th. And you'll save \$5 by not having to register at the door.

If you have an auction item, or two, or three -- thanks! Please attach an auction form to each of your items. This really helps our volunteers. You'll find the form in this newsletter.

Please note that the Ramada Inn is now a Quality Inn. The new phone # is 800-733-5916.

OK, enough business! Let's have some fun at the Bluebonnet Workshop!

See you there. Rudy

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

Balcones Forge Bluebonnet Workshop

featuring

CHRISTOPHER THOMSON

March 29-30, 2008

Marble Falls, Texas



BALCONES FORGE is pleased to bring award-winning artist-blacksmith **Christopher Thomson** to Texas for its annual two-day demonstration. Christopher was one of Francis Whitaker's early students in the '60s.



Since then, he has established a successful business, creating all manner of furniture, home furnishings, architectural works, and sculpture. Discover how Christopher creates such beautiful ironwork.

The Balcones Workshop will be held March 29-30. That means **Bluebonnet Time** here in the **Texas Hill Country!** Plan to ride some of our scenic country back roads and enjoy the finest display of wildflowers in America! We are located right in the middle of Texas' best bluebonnet area!

The Balcones Forge Workshop will present a wonderful dinner on Saturday night, catered by our friends at **The Jamin' House**, the finest restaurant in Marble Falls.

Dinner will be followed by our famous annual **Balcones Auction!** Buy yourself a new (or old) blacksmithing hammer, maybe a forge or anvil, some smithing books, or maybe Christopher's latest creation! We will finish Saturday night with a slide presentation by Christopher, featuring his beautiful ironwork.

Times: Saturday: 9:00–Noon – Morning Demo
Noon–1:00 – Lunch: Drinks provided; bring a sack lunch or
there are numerous places to eat nearby
1:00–5:00 – Afternoon Demo
6:00 – Tasty catered dinner, only \$15
7:15 – If you do not attend the dinner, please join us at this time
for the Old Time Auction and Christopher's slide presentation

Sunday: 9:00–1:00 – Demo

Our host is Larry Crawford at his Hammerfest Forge, 2401 Commerce St. Directions: **From Burnet on Hwy 281**, State Street will be the second traffic light once you enter Marble Falls. You will turn left (East) onto State Street. **From San Antonio or South Austin**, when on Hwy 281 start counting traffic lights once you cross the Colorado River into town. State Street will be the eighth traffic light and you will turn right (East) onto State Street. **From North Austin - Ranch Road 1431**, you will turn right (North) onto Hwy 281. State Street will be the third traffic light once you are on Hwy 281. You will turn right (East) onto State Street. **Everybody:** Go one block to the end of State Street. Turn left and go twenty feet. Turn right into Larry's driveway. Lost? Call John Crouchet for directions at 830-798-3710. Web map: maps.citysearch.com/map/view/10195073

For more info contact:

Rudy Billings, 512-461-7375 or Rudy@RedHotIronWorks.com

John Crouchet, 830-798-3710 or John@TexasWroughtIron.com

Jerry Achterberg 210-661-3293 or treefarm@swbell.net

Hotel Accommodations:

Hampton Inn on the Lake, 704 First St., 830-798-1895

Quality Inn, 1206 Hwy 281, 830-693-7531

Best Western, 1403 Hwy 281, 830-693-5122, 800-528-1234

Hill Country Inn, 1101 Hwy 281, 830-693-3637

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

DUES ARE PAST DUE!

Balcones Forge runs on a fiscal year that coincides with the calendar year so everyone's 2007 dues expired on December 31st. Dues are still the bargain-basement price of only \$15.

If you want to **ONLY** pay your 2008 dues, please send the \$15 dollars to our Secretary, Tom Lupton at 110 Reveille Road, Austin, TX 78746.

If you want to pay your dues **AND** register for the fantastic Balcones Forge Bluebonnet Workshop then fill out the form on the last page of the newsletter and send in your check to Rudy. His info is on the form.

So you don't forget; send before midnight tomorrow!!!!!!!!!! Anybody else remember those commercials?

If you need to join or renew your ABANA membership there is a form in this edition. ABANA membership is not required but it is a great resource.

WE ARE ONLINE

Want to view this newsletter in living color? Go to

www.BalconesForge.org

and check out the Newsletter section.

ORDER YOURS NOW!

Balcones Forge Hooded Sweatshirts - Order Yours Now

We have decided to order hooded sweatshirts with the oh-so-popular Balcones Forge logo on them. They will be \$30 each and will come in black, navy, or dark green. Because these are more expen-

sive than the t-shirts, we will be taking orders prior to purchase. So, if you would like one of these swanky body-warmers...please e-mail Sue Murray, current t-shirt custodian, at suraiyam@earthlink.net or ask me to put you down for one at the next meeting. We would like to have orders by now so we can get the sweatshirts ordered while it's still a little cool out. Please let me know the number you want, the color(s) and the size(s). We don't need your money until they come in. We also have more t-shirts, caps and some women's tank tops on the way, so...look for them soon.

Sue - T-shirt Custodian

LEND A HAND

Our Bluebonnet Workshop always runs smoothly, thanks to the many folks who lend a hand. Come out on Friday (28th) around 1:00 to help prepare for the workshop. Come at noon and you'll see how much this group loves to eat and have fun. And of course, after the last hammer blow, we'll need to get our host's shop back in order for business on Monday morning.

Your help is greatly appreciated.

The Balcones Forge Newsletter is written by the editor except as noted. Balcones Forge, it's officers, members, contributors, editors and writers specifically disclaim any responsibility, or liability for any damage, or injury as a result of the use of any information published in the newsletter or demonstrated at a meeting or conference. Every effort is made to insure the accuracy and safety of information provided but the use by our members and readers of any information published herein or provided at meetings is solely at the user's own risk.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The February 2008 meeting was held at the Zilker Botanical Garden on Barton Springs Road in Austin, Texas.

Zilker Botanical Garden established by the City of Austin in 1962 covers several acres of the 351 acre Zilker Park. It is comprised of several theme gardens with paths between them, two of which lead to the blacksmith shop located approximately in the center of the garden. The blacksmith shop was actually an antique barn which was brought in and rebuilt on its present site. Prior to Balcones Forge's involvement it was hardly usable as a blacksmith shop. There was not enough workspace and few tools or even an operable forge. It did, though, have two anvils, one of which was in usable condition. Once renovations were begun the forge at the garden became the third blacksmith shop in Central Texas to be made functional by Balcones Forge. It is now very serviceable and, although small, is equipped with one of the very best side draft coal forges you would ever want to use. The shop is open on various weekends during the year with members of Balcones Forge demonstrating blacksmithing to the public.

Rudy Billings opened the meeting with several announcements:

Those of you who want to order a hooded sweat-shirt should call or e-mail Sue Murray or one of the officers to order one. They are \$30.00 apiece.

There was a get well card to sign for Harvey Wise who is recovering from stomach ulcers and a card for Jaylon Loyd who recently became a new father. Best of luck to Harvey and congratulations from us all to Jaylon.

Anyone interested was invited to come to the new blacksmith shop in Rockdale, Texas. Volunteers were invited to sell any forged items they had to offer and to demonstrate blacksmithing to the public during their Festival on March 1st.

John Crouchet announced the need for volunteers to come to the Pioneer Museum in Fredericksburg,

Texas on March 17th -22nd to demonstrate for the public during the week long festival. They are expanding the grounds to 6 acres and plan larger festivities in the future. It's a fun time for all and you are encouraged to contact John to volunteer.

John also announced that the Bluebonnet Festival at Larry Crawford's shop will cost \$5.00 more at the door and everyone is urged to get their registration in early if possible. There is a registration form online at the Balcones Forge website.

Rudy reminded us all that there are quite a few panel locations available for anyone who wants to make one for the security screen at Zilker Botanical Garden blacksmith shop. Call or e-mail Rudy to sign up for one.

Rudy showed us several tools made by his ancestors at the Billings Tool Company in the 1800's which had ties to the Spencer and Colt companies. If you find a tool that is stamped with the Billings name you know you have one from a company with a rich history.

Terry Ross demonstrated how to make a decorative flower in a spiral form out of one piece of tapered steel 12" long and 5/16 or 3/8" in diameter. The flowers petal shapes are hammered out between spaced fullers with a straight peen followed with a ball peen. The petal segments are done one at a time and bent into a spiral form at the fullers. The straight peen is used for forming the shape and the ball peen is used to spread it from the center to a rounded shape. He called the resultant form a variation of a "Russian Rose".

Shannon Cassady who works at Herrera Iron Works in Austin, Texas showed us how to make a very nice drawer pull out of flat bar. He fullered a pointed spear shape on each end and rounded the piece long ways by hammering it into a fullering tool. He bent two 90 degree angles on each end so the spear points became the attachment points and it assumed the familiar shape of a drawer or cabinet door pull. He placed pebbles on the anvil and used them as a texturing media by hammering the material into the pebbles.

Both Terry's and Shannon's demonstrations were very interesting and we thank them very much for their time and efforts.

We had 5 new members sign up at the meeting and we all welcome Joe, Ryan, David, Kirk, and Eldridge to our group.

Tom Lupton, Secretary

ONE MAN'S SCRAP

As you know, we are very lucky to have one of the best blacksmithing/metals training programs at our own Austin Community College. If you have not taken a course or two there, I would encourage you to do so. The blacksmithing program has outstanding instructors and is one of the best equipped facilities in the country.

But all this is useless without something to work with -- like a good supply of metal. William Bastas, our good friend and department head, is seeking your drops. It might be useless to you, but your scrap can make a big difference to the students. Contact William and he will arrange pick up. I bet he might even take new material off your hands as well as drops. Email him at wbastas@austinctc.edu. One more thing: you can write-off your donation also. Thanks.

Rudy Billings, President

PLEASE NOTE

It appears that the Ramada Inn in Marble Falls has been converted to a Quality Inn. The important thing is that the phone number has changed to 800-733-5916. The number on our flyer is for an auto repair shop and it seems they are not fond of all the calls about our blacksmithing event. I guess we will have to drop them off some donuts.

Anyway, please note the new number.

Rudy

AUCTION ITEMS NEEDED

Have you ever wondered just how it is that Balcones Forge can offer yearly memberships for a mere \$15 a year? Well come out to the demo this month and see our group in action! You see it is the annual auction on Saturday night that keeps this organization in the black.

Did you think your registration covers the cost of putting on the demo? Nope!

Did you think your yearly dues cover the costs of the newsletter? Just barely!

Do you think dues alone pay the Board's incredible salaries? We are all volunteers!

Our monthly Iron-in-the-Hat auctions raise a tiny bit each month but it is the auction at the yearly Big Demo that keeps us going strong.

What can you do? Well, it is easy. Make or bring ten or twelve items for the auction. OK, we will settle for one or two but make them something that is interesting to your fellow blacksmiths. Tools, books on the craft, forged items and anything a metal smith will need is welcomed.

Use the form found in this very edition of the newsletter to put with your auction items. Using the form will help the auction run smoothly.

And remember, if you can't bring something to donate to the cause, bring your checkbook! The faster and higher you bid, the sooner the auction is over and the happier the officers will be.

And one last thing, be kind to the auctioneer.

*Everyone's the blacksmith
of their own fate.*

- Hungarian Proverb-



Mr. Neil Hastings

photo by Jerry Achterberg

LIFETIME MEMBER

Wayne Byrd, Aaron Tilton, and Jerry Achterberg presented Neil Hastings with the Balcones Forge Lifetime Member award at his home in Austin on Saturday, Feb 23.

Neil has had ongoing health problems for the past three years which have kept him from the meetings. At present Neil is doing great and wishes to thank everyone at Balcones Forge for this award.

Neil is one of the founders of the Texas Artist/Blacksmith Association and Balcones Forge. He stayed active for many years and has been a big part in making these groups what they are today.

Neil is a retired Area Manager for Southwestern Bell and was a general contractor for many years. At 83 he has slowed a little but still gets around and always offers to help his friends in any way he can.

“Neil, thanks for everything and God bless!”

Jerry Achterberg, Vice President

BALCONES FORGE AUCTION

Donor _____

Item _____

Description _____

Thank you for your donation!

Winning Bidder _____

Winning Bid \$ _____

Balcones Forge Bluebonnet Workshop

featuring **Christopher Thomson - March 29-30**

Please print clearly

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Yes, I prefer the electronic version of the newsletter. (You will be notified by email when the latest newsletter has been posted.)

Current Member \$45 _____
\$50 at the door

2008 Membership if unpaid . \$15 _____

Non-member..... \$60 _____

Yes, I wish to become a BF member

Saturday Evening Meal ... \$15 _____

Total _____

Please register by March 15.

Make check payable to Balcones Forge.

Send to Rudy Billings,
1906 Rampart Circle, Austin, TX 78727

PLEASE READ AND COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING RELEASE FORM: FORM MUST BE SIGNED AND DATED BY EACH MEMBER, GUEST AND PARENT OR GUARDIAN OF ANY MINOR IN ATTENDANCE.

In consideration of the Balcones Forge Blacksmith Association providing demonstrators and making these demonstrations available and granting permission to enter the area of said demonstration, I, individually and as parent or guardian of the minor child attending such demonstration, hereby waive all claims for damage and/or loss to my person or property, or the person or property of such minor child, which may be caused by an act, or failure to act of the Balcones Forge Blacksmith Association, its officers, directors, agents or employees and the hosts and demonstrators. I understand that there are inherent dangers in blacksmithing and I assume all risk of all dangerous conditions in and about such demonstration and waive any and all specific notice of the existence of such conditions. By signing this waiver, I acknowledge that I have read and understand this waiver.

X _____

Date _____

PRESORTED
FIRST-CLASS MAIL
US POSTAGE PAID
AUSTIN TX
PERMIT NO. 45

Return Service Requested

Vincent Herod
Spotted Dog Forge
166 Granite Road
Paige, TX 78659-4922