



Balcones Forge Dispatch

President's Corner

November 2017



Greetings!

Thank you Curtis Seebeck of Turn Tex Woodworks in San Marcos for hosting the October meeting! What a show. Curtis, being a master wood turner and pin maker, saw the need to stabilize his pin blanks to keep

them from shrinking and cracking. He came up with his non-toxic Cactus Juice Stabilizing Solution. He even came up with a clear vacuum chamber that works with most vacuum pumps and then demonstrated how to use it. Part II was Alumilite Casting Resin. Curtis took two pieces of (ugly in my opinion) twisted, gnarly wood and turned them into two unbelievably beautiful blocks, suitable for knife scales, which he then donated along with a gallon of Cactus Juice for the December auction. I can't say enough about this top notch demo. Go to www.turntex.com or call 512-738-0775 for more info.

Tim Tellander volunteered to host the November meeting and demo as well. Tim is a world class custom knifemaker whose work is starting to get a lot of attention around the country. The meeting will be held at Tim's shop in Bulverde on November 18th, starting at 9:30a.

The trade item will be: "a knife made from a horseshoe". Everybody should have a horseshoe, so no excuses, let's all make one. Like Vince says: Ya gotta make one to take one.

Meeting Date is Nov 18

President's Message continued on page 3.



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TRADE ITEM

A knife made from a horseshoe.



SECRETARY'S REPORT OCT 2017

The October meeting for Balcones Forge was held in San Marcos, Texas at Turn Tex Woodworks. The owner and primary employee is Curtis Seebeck, also

known as 'mesquite man' and started this company in 2006. Turn Tex is the leading authority and pioneer in the field of stabilizing and casting and is in the forefront of this industry with other innovations. He holds symposiums and teaches classes on stabilizing and casting around the country.

Today, Curtis focused our attention on the cactus juice stabilization (vacuum process) and alumilite casting resins (pressure technique) techniques. Other stabilizing products such as polyester and epoxy are costly and can turn brittle. The cactus juice is a DIY stabilizing resin designed to make wood harder and prevent movement such as expansion in warm weather or contraction in cold weather. Any porous wood, except oily woods like coco bola and rosewood, can be stabilized by displacing the air pockets with the cactus juice formula. Four basic steps to accomplishing the process are hereby shortened by me, but first and very important is to dry the wood. Placing the wood in a vacuum chamber until the wood stops bubbling is the second step and thirdly, letting the wood soak twice as long as one applied the vacuum. The final step is baking the wood blanks in an oven until

cured (approx 1 hour).

The Alumilite casting process utilizes a urethane resin and the curing process takes less than 45 minutes. The technique today utilized a piece of wood that was gnarly and misshaped. The blue dyed alumilite was poured into a casting mold along with the wood, then pressurized at 80-110 pounds. The resulting cast which can be seen below was elegant and beautiful. Also, the photos depict knife handles made via this same process.

Both complete systems are available for purchase at Turn Tex, and considerable concern for safety was emphasized by Curtis. Utilization of higher quality hardware is quite important and a quick glance at their website has everything one needs to get started. Complete instructions are enclosed, or a review of articles which demonstrate the process are available on line. I purposefully did not try to list the steps for each process for fear of leaving something out or mistyping something.

Looking forward to displaying some completed knives utilizing stabilized wood for handles at the November 18 forge meeting in my shop. Everyone is encouraged to bring along some of their fine knives from their personal collection for viewing, selling, or trading. If you have an unfinished knife that needs some tweaking, or general advice, I'm sure you'll find someone that has encountered similar problems and is willing to give you their two-cents worth of advice toward completing the project.

Tim Tellander
Balcones Forge Secretary

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President's Message CONTINUED

Jerry and Marsha Whitley are once again hosting the December Memorial Meeting again. This is another all day (and evening) event with lots of food and fellowship as well as demos and a big auction. It's time to start working on your auction items or looking for that special item to donate. This meeting takes place in Devine on December 16th. Bring your favorite beverage, chair, and tent or camper if you plan to spend the night. Call Jerry at 210-288-3961.

See ya'll at Tim's Fart Fanner Forge on the 18th.

Jerry Achterberg
Balcones Forge President

NOVEMBER MEETING INFORMATION

Start making you plans to meet with us for our November meeting.

Hopefully, everyone knows by now that the Buggy Barn in Bulverde cancelled their event. Tim Tellander has been kind enough to open his forge located in Bulverde, to the group and host the meeting. The "Trade Item" will be a knife made from a horseshoe.

With us entering the holiday season coming upon us, the meeting will be held on Saturday, November 18th and will start at 9:30. The address is: 28428 Bonn Mountain, San Antonio, Texas, 78260.

Time to fire up the forge, and get-er-done!

We are looking forward to seeing everyone there,

Jerry Whitley
Balcones Forge
Vice President



WWW.BALCONESFORGE.ORG



Top photos by Tim Tellander

Bottom photos by Vince Herod

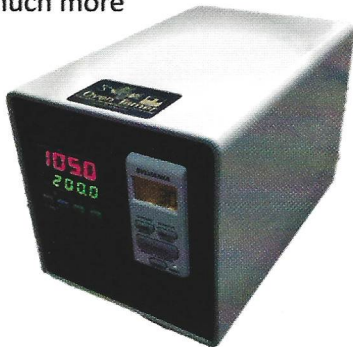


Everything You Need to Start
STABILIZING Today!

Vacuum Stabilizing

Stabilizing is impregnating wood and other porous material with an acrylic resin. This is done by removing the air in the wood with vacuum and displacing it with Cactus Juice Stabilizing Resin. Once impregnated, the material is placed in an oven to cure. TurnTex Woodworks offers the supplies you need to start stabilizing, including:

- Cactus Juice Stabilizing Resin
- Vacuum Stabilizing Chambers
- Oven Tamer Precision Temperature Controllers
- DIY Parts for DIY vacuum chambers, and much more



Oven Tamer Precision Controllers

The Oven Tamer Precision Temperature Controllers uses precision PID control to maintain the temperature within 1°F +/- of the set point. The large digital display shows both your set point and the temperature inside the oven at a glance. The included alligator clip temperature sensor makes it easy to move the Oven Tamer from one oven to another if you use more than one oven. Oven Tamers start at \$129.

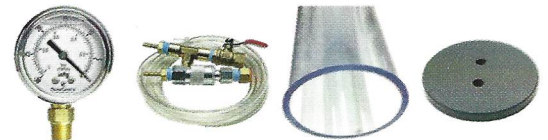
Dyes



Dyes are available as singles from our website, starting at \$5.75 each.



DIY Vacuum Chamber Supplies



Visit our website for a full line of DIY supplies to build your own vacuum chamber! We offer vacuum fittings, gauges, PVC, and more!

What Do You Need to Start Stabilizing?

- Cactus Juice Stabilizing Resin*
- Material for Stabilizing**
- Vacuum Chamber
- Oil filled rotary vane vacuum pump
- Convection toaster oven
- Oven thermometer

* Cactus Juice must be kept below 85° F at all times, and has a shelf life of 12 months once activated, and 3 years unactivated.

** Material must be below 10% moisture content and for best results needs to be 0%. Oily material does not stabilize well.



**Cactus Juice
Stabilizing Resin**

The Original and #1 DIY stabilizing resin!

AVAILABLE AT

TurnTex
Woodworks
www.TurnTex.com
(512) 738-0775

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO Vacuum Stabilizing with



Cactus Juice Stabilizing Resin

The Original and #1 DIY stabilizing resin!

1 Place your material to be stabilized in the vacuum chamber and cover with

Use clear Cactus Juice for a natural look or add dyes for a bit of flair.

Apply vacuum to remove the air.

Keep the vacuum running as long as you see bubbles coming to the top. It is not uncommon to pull vacuum with the pump running for 6 hours or more.



2 Release the vacuum and let wood soak in Cactus Juice at least twice as long as you applied vacuum. Dense woods like walnut or redwood may require up to a week of soaking for maximum resin penetration.

3 Remove your wood from the Cactus Juice and cure by wrapping your blanks individually in aluminum foil and baking at 190-200° F (87-93° C) until cured, usually a minimum of 1 hour for a 3/4 inch blank, or more for thicker materials.

What Is Cactus Juice?

Cactus Juice is a resin that hardens soft, punky, or spalted woods into solid stock for just about any woodturning application!

Cactus Juice is easy to use, doesn't significantly change the color of most woods and it's **non-toxic and non-flammable**.

Best of all, unused Cactus Juice can be stored and used again, and everything cleans up with warm soap and water!

Cactus Juice has been used to stabilize and harden all sorts of materials for turning, including:

- Soft and spalted woods,
- Cactus and other fibrous materials,
- Fabrics,
- Seed pods from trees,
- Stone and more!

Be sure to ask us about the most exotic things stabilized and turned using Cactus Juice Resin!

Why Stabilize Wood?

- ✓ Increases density and hardness,
- ✓ Reduces the risk warping and cracking,
- ✓ Adds integral color when dyeing.

How Big Can You Go?

When using Cactus Juice Stabilizing Resin, your only limits are the size of your vacuum chamber and your imagination! From pen blanks to call blanks, to boards and even bowl blanks; Cactus Juice Stabilizing Resin can help you make turnable stock from soft, or overly-spalted wood, pine cones, antler and more!



Everything you need to start stabilizing is available from

Dyes can be added to Cactus Juice to color your stabilized custom wood creations!



Turn  Tex
Woodworks
www.TurnTex.com

(512) 738-0775



Cactus Juice comes in a variety of convenient sizes, from one pint to one gallon. Vacuum chambers available in 4-inch, 6-inch, and 8-inch diameter models.

Learn more about Cactus Juice at www.turntex.com/help-center/cactus-juice-stabilizing-resource

The 2018 Bluebonnet Demo

hosted by Balcones Forge

Saturday, April 7, 2018

(April 7 is the week after Easter)

Brett Moten of [Infinity Forge](#) in Reno, Nevada, will be our featured demonstrator at our 2018 Bluebonnet Demo.

Prior to Saturday's demo on April 7, 2018, we'll have two days of hands-on teaching classes the preceding Thursday and Friday (April 5 & 6).

You may already be familiar with some of Brett's work: recall the rocking chair he made completely with traditional joinery — created in collaboration with Tim Cisneros — as pictured here on the cover of *The Anvil's Ring* Winter 2013 issue:



When asked to be our featured demonstrator, Brett's prompt reply was an enthusiastic "That sounds like fun! Love Austin."

In addition to being a fantastic human being, Brett is a talented instructor/teacher who holds open forges each Wednesday at his shop in Reno, Nevada.

Brett is a cooperative person -- in the most literal sense -- in that he "inspires mutual assistance in working towards a common goal."

Brett enjoys designing collaborative pieces in which other 'smiths contribute forged elements for the final sculpture.

No firm details yet, but it's hoped that for next year's Bluebonnet Demo, we can

emulate the multi-station, collaborative format of this past year's demo. It was a new approach for Balcones Forge and a quite successful one.

ANOTHER KNIFE MAKING CLASS

This is the final product from the patch knife class offered by our own Tim Teller. The cost of the one day class is \$100 including sheath. Utilizes hay rake tine (1095 high carbon steel).

Arrange a day for you and Tim while you attend this month's meeting.



The Home Blacksmith

by Ryan Ridgway, D.V.M.

Published by Lumina Media/Hobby Farms 2016

Review by Beth Holmberg, San Diego

This book is the most recent in the line of teach-yourself-blacksmithing guides. It includes general information – shop setup, terminology, techniques, steel basics – how-to projects, tips and tricks and suggestions for selling your wares. The design is a visually dense blend of boxed details, sidebars and lots of exciting pictures of glowing steel and flying scale.

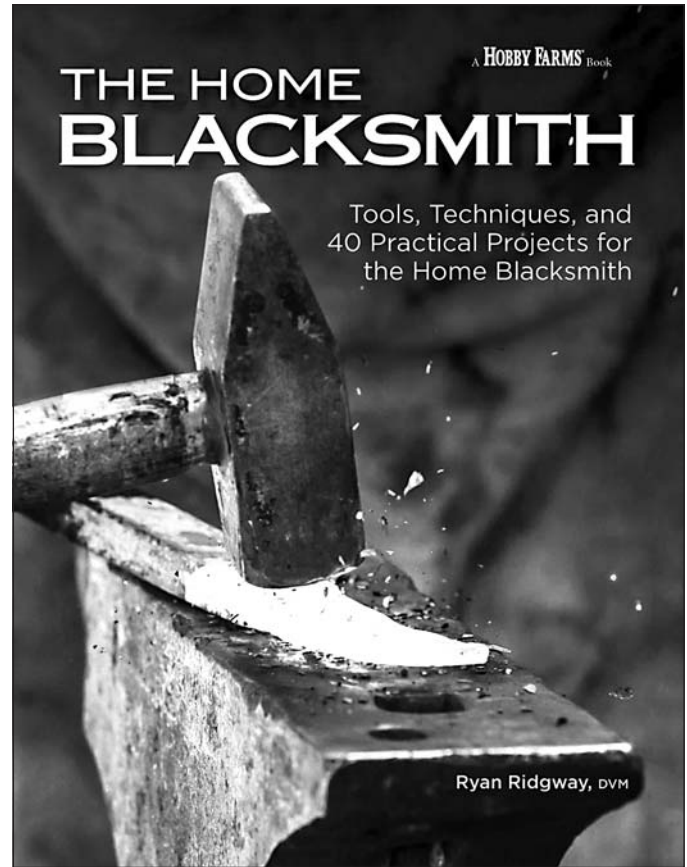
The overall attitude is a great one: recycle, use what ya' got, and don't obsess about having the perfect tools before you start forging. Ridgway advocates the use of charcoal for fuel, re-worked ball peen hammers for lots of tooling and a simple block of steel for a first anvil. Bravo! He even includes notes on making your own charcoal and a diagram of the basic construction of homemade box bellows.

There are some great ideas in here. Use different handle shapes on your fire tools for quick identification. Round your hammer edges and flatten the handles for better control and fewer hammer marks. Demonstrating at fairs and markets brings in customers, but makes it harder to handle sales and prevent theft. On-line selling requires fantastic photos. A big machine nut is a perfect 60° gauge for the bevel on a cold chisel. There are boxed tips and *did you know?* features scattered throughout. Most of these are useful, but some are factually wrong or misleading.

More than half the book consists of instructions for about 40 small projects of tools, hardware and household items. Each has a list of materials and tools, numbered steps and numbered photos. Unfortunately, there some problems here that could derail those trying to self-teach from the book. Instructions don't indicate which part of the project you are working on, and the pretty pictures don't always match either the steps or the final product.

To test the how-tos, I tried a project I've never done: a pair of shears made from an old rasp – cool idea! The measurements given in Step 1 did not match the accompanying photo. Step 2 was flat-out confusing. I consulted with three other Old Town San Diego blacksmiths, and none of us could decipher what should happen from the pictures and text. I came up with my own approach, based on the photo of the final product, instead. After three-and-a-half steps of four numbered steps, I had the handles forged. Step 4 finished with making the blades flat and grinding *as you see on any pair of scissors*. This resulted in two blades that slide past each other, but they can cut in only a single spot! Other books explain the need for curved blades on shears. That is left out here. I felt that the instructions just stopped teaching once I had the handles, leaving me on my own at the crucial point.

So, who should get this book? Blacksmiths with good basic skills might enjoy some of the tips and tricks and find some interesting project ideas, especially if they don't need detailed instructions. But I wouldn't recommend it to someone trying to learn on their own. *The Home Blacksmith* is published by a magazine devoted to hobbyist farming, and it fits that model. It is full of pretty pictures and projects designed more for dreaming than for doing. It's a great dip-in for the armchair enthusiast and ironwork fan who wants a bit more understanding, provided he doesn't try to teach himself to blacksmith! ♣



Coal Forge Air Gate and Micro-Switch

James Allcorn

Some years ago I built an air gate for my coal forge after seeing my first one in use at a Saltfork Conference.

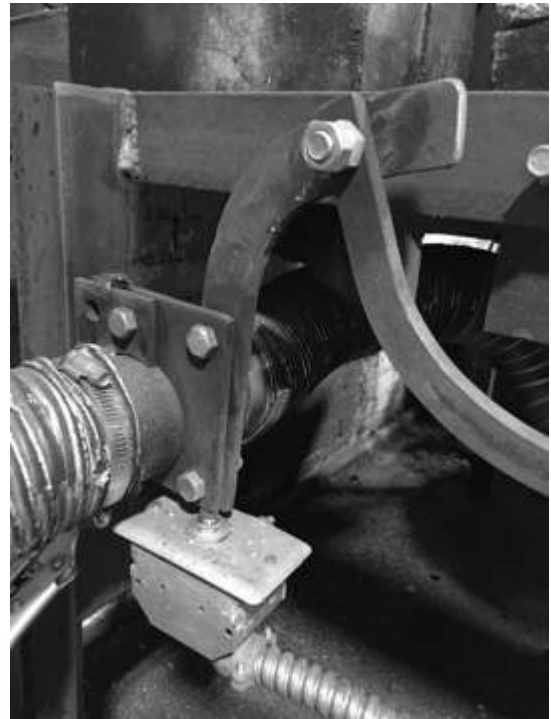
The blower was salvaged from an old clothes dryer and puts out a large volume of air at good pressure. But I wasn't happy with the fact that the blower ran continuously unless switched off.

I came up with the idea to equip my air gate with a momentary off push button switch (SPST NC, meaning that when the switch is at rest the contacts are closed and current flows. Pushing the button opens the contacts and current stops.)

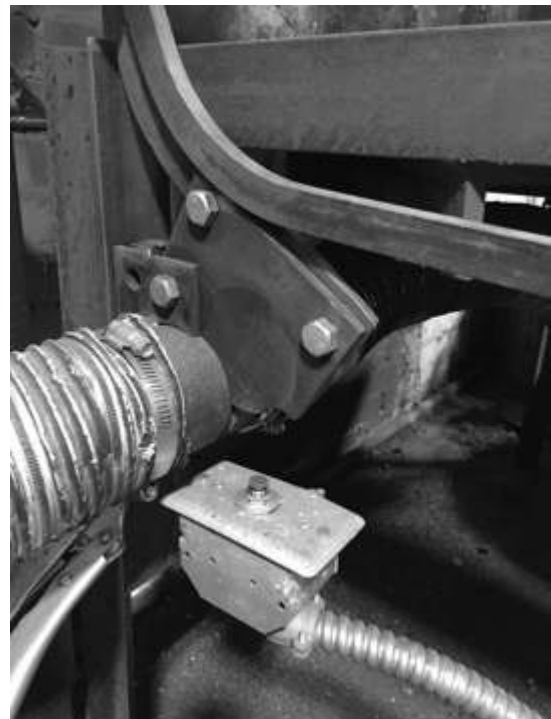
After a bit of experimentation with the position of the switch and the help of a pair of old locking pliers I was in business.

To operate, I just pull the air lever a bit and the switch disengages, the motor starts and air flows regulated by the gate valve.

Returning the lever to the off position engages the switch and the motor stops. As a safety note, all electrical wiring is encased in metal conduit.



Air Gate Closed and Fan Switch in "OFF" posi-



Air Gate Open and Fan Switch in "ON" position.
Airflow is Adjusted by Gate Position.

Reprinted from the June 2016 Newsletter of the Saltfork Craftsmen Artist-Blacksmith Association



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