

BALCONES FORGE

Blacksmiths of Central Texas

April 2004

John Crouchet, President

Jerry Achterberg, Vice President

Vince Herod, Editor

Harvey Wise, Secretary

Gerald Pollard, Treasurer

President's Corner

Pay Your Debts!

For a lot of blacksmiths, it's time to pay up! No, I'm not talking about that maxed out Visa card. I'm talking about your knowledge debt. If you are like me, you learned to blacksmith by watching others and by more experienced blacksmiths generously sharing their knowledge with you. When I joined Balcones Forge (actually, back then, it was TABA), I knew next to nothing about blacksmithing, but I learned a lot over the next few years watching Bill Bastas and Jerry Achterberg and Charlie Stolte and Larry Crawford and lots of other blacksmiths who were generous with their knowledge. Now I am a working blacksmith and I owe those people a big debt. Of course, there is not much I can teach them in return, but I can teach the newcomers and I can pass on any tricks I may have stumbled on.

If you have metalworking skills, someone taught them to you (unless you invented them!). I want to urge you to get active in passing on those skills. Don't wait for someone to come beg you. Stand up and volunteer to show something to someone. I still remember my first blacksmithing meeting. I did not know anyone there and I didn't know much about what was going on, but I was admiring a beautifully forged

hummingbird that was on display. Charlie Stolte walked over and showed me step by step how he made that hummingbird. He even drew the steps on a napkin for me and then gave me his telephone number in case I had any questions about it. It's years later now and I still can't make a hummingbird like Charlie, but I try to have an attitude like his and willingly pass on what I know.

Our meeting this month is at Rick Dawdy's Middle School in San Antonio. We will have a hands-on project, making treadle torch bases and it will involve a lot of welding and grinding and assembly work. Even if you don't want or need a treadle torch, how about showing up just to help out? If you can MIG weld, come do some of it for us and while you're at it, teach someone else how to do it. Are you are a better than average grinder? Show somebody how you do it! Maybe you know a little something about fitting up parts. Pass it on! Let's help each other get down this road!

John Crouchet

Volunteers Needed for ABANA Conference

The ABANA directors have asked Balcones Forge to provide volunteers to help with the 2004 Conference in Kentucky this summer. Each volunteer will be asked to work for one

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half day at the conference. We need volunteers for the following jobs: **Gallery Host, Golf Cart Driver, or Demo Area Gate Host.**

If you are willing to volunteer, please email Bob Fredell, Head of Volunteers, at: fredell@sherbtel.net If you do not have email, simply telephone John Crouchet with your information at 830-798-3710 and John will pass it on to Bob Fredell. Here is the information Bob needs from you:

1. Your name
2. Your chapter (Balcones Forge)
3. Your email address
4. Your U.S. mail address
5. Your T-shirt size (**Volunteers will receive a "Conference Staff" T-shirt.**)
6. Your job preference: Gallery host, Golf cart driver, or Demo area gate host.

Once you email Bob, please email John Crouchet at jac@sycamorecreekranch.net or the Balcones Forge discussion group at <<mailto:members@balconesforge.org>>members@balconesforge.org so that we can keep track of how many volunteers Balcones Forge has provided.

This is an important event. Let's do our share to help out!

Current Volunteer List:

John Crouchet
Carolyn Crouchet
Ruth Carter
Helen Wise

Please join us in volunteering!

Join ABANA

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Help Balcones Win a Free Conference Registration

ABANA is offering a special deal to all ABANA Chapters. If we get ten new ABANA members (or membership renewals), Balcones Forge will receive a FREE registration for the 2004 ABANA Conference in Kentucky. Membership will cost you \$45.00 (Only \$35.00 for students)and, in addition to becoming an official ABANA member, you will receive the quarterly magazine "Anvil's Ring", as well as the quarterly shop journal "Hammer's Blow".

To join online, go to www.abana.org. To join over the telephone, call Lee Ann Mitchell at 706-310-1030. Either way, be sure to tell them that your membership should count toward the BALCONES FORGE 2004 FREE CONFERENCE REGISTRATION.

So far, we have had Scott Little and Rudy Billings sign up. Thank you Scott and Rudy. We need eight more new members to get the free registration!

Conference Deadline

The deadline for discount registration for the ABANA conference is on April 30. This is the last day to get the discount price of \$240.00.

Trade Item

The trade item for April is "mixed medium" or something made of iron or steel and something else....wood, stone, glass. This would include tools with wooden handles, or mix metals like iron or copper with bronze, copper, brass, silver, gold.....whatever.

Sue Murray – Librarian

Jerry Achterberg

For Sale

Wil Smith has some blacksmithing equipment for sale. 25# Little Giant power hammer, 150lbs Anvil, Treadle hammer and Beverly Shear.

You can view some of it online at:

<http://pbase.com/wilsm/blacksmith>

That's the big stuff... little stuff hasn't been gone through or posted on the site just yet

George Craig has some more coke for sale (NOT that kind!) in San Antonio. In fact he bought a shipment of 24 tons. This blacksmithing fuel is pre-sized and ready to be used in your forge. Cash and carry price is \$17 dollars per 100lbs. Bring your own container. George advises that a large tras can holds about 100lbs. Be sure to call before you show up. George can be reached at home at 210-695-2544 or e-mail at candgcraig@texas.net.

The Balcones Forge Library – A Status Report

For the April meeting, we have a copy of "Gas Burners for Forges, Furnaces & Kilns", by Michael Porter, added to the Balcones Forge library. We have three other exciting new books ordered, "The Magic of Italian Wrought Iron", "Italian Wrought Iron Beds & Bedroom Accessories", and "Italian Masters of Wrought Iron". We'll see if they arrive in time for the April meeting.

If you are interested in adding specific books, videos or CDs/DVDs to our library, e-mail me the name and author and I'll add it to our wish list.

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April Meeting Info

The **APRIL** meeting will be held at Rick Dawdy's middle school shop in northeast San Antonio. We plan to build **treadle torch** stands, known around John's shop as "the dragon."

The meeting starts at 9am.

You must have signed up in advance if you want to build a treadle torch. **Spaces are limited** and we will only prepare enough cut stock for those who have paid in advance. **YOU CANNOT PAY AT THE APRIL MEETING. WE MUST HAVE HAD ADVANCE NOTICE!**

27 people had signed up as of press time!

Please note: Ten dollars does not buy you a treadle torch stand. To receive your torch stand, you must attend the April meeting and help us build them!

Of course, all members and guests are welcome at the meeting. If you do not care to build a treadle torch for yourself, we can still use your help. This will be a very involved project and we will need people to weld, grind, run the drill press, bolt parts together, etc.

Once you have built a treadle torch stand, you will need a Weldit Gasaver valve to complete your torch. These usually cost around one hundred dollars each. We will be putting together a group order to see if we can get a discount on the price.

John Crouchet & Vince Herod

Book Report

Colonial Wrought Iron, the Sorber Collection,

By Don Plummer

James Sorber gathered the largest collection of American colonial wrought iron ever assembled. He named his collection the Blacksmith's Legacy Museum. It contains thousands of examples of the blacksmith's art, including hinges, thumb latches, locks, andirons, kitchen utensils, meat racks, cooking implements, blacksmithing tools, carpentry tools, farming and gardening tools, logging tools, Conestoga wagon hardware, and lighting and household items, all from the early days of America. This treasure has been photographed and assembled in book form by Don Plummer, ABANA member and one of the founders of the Mid-Atlantic Blacksmith's Association.

This extensive picture book is very well photographed in black and white. Color photography seldom adds much to a clear view of wrought iron and Don Plummer has made good use of the extensive light range of black and white film. Details and textures are clear and crisp throughout the book. Arranged in a plain and logical order, the collection clearly shows the German, Dutch and English influences in the American colonies. The craftsmanship of these pieces ranges from plain and serviceable to startlingly sophisticated.

Admittedly, this is not a book that will make your blood race. It is mostly a reference book, showing the wide scope of American colonial iron designs. As American blacksmiths, this is our heritage and it is both inspiring and instructional. When you are searching for a motif or design for a

piece of your own work, you might do well to peruse the ironwork of our past as a good starting place for the work of the future.

John Crouchet

Way Out West 19th Annual Blacksmith Fellowship

Everyone is invited to join hands across the anvil and learn how to make hardware for the home and garden at the 19th Annual Blacksmith Fellowship. Classes will be Thursday, April 29 (12 pm - 5 pm); Friday, 30th (9 am - 5 pm); and Saturday, May 1, 2004 (9 am - 4 pm). Activities will be at the Chicken Farm Art Center, 2505 Martin Luther King Blvd., in San Angelo, Texas. All levels of blacksmithing students are welcome.

Workshop demonstrators include Pat Cheatham, Wendell Barber, Randy Kiser, and Joe Jay. All workshops are hands-on forging.

Saturday is open to the public to enjoy all the artists at the Old Chicken Farm Art Center.

Contact:

Roger Allen 325-653-4936, or
allenclay@netzero.net
Pat Cheatham 325-947-0419, or
dpat.cheatham@verizon.net

An Eye-Opening Experience

This article comes from a fairly new member, Rudy Billings. See; writing an article doesn't hurt. Ed.

I believe in UFO's! You know, Unidentified Foreign Objects. How one found its way into my eye while working on my latest project, I'll never know. I didn't notice anything at the time, just a slight irritation that evening.

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Two days later things were worse. When I told my wife, Joyce I needed to go to the emergency room, she knew it was a crisis for I normally would have to be half-dead to go near a doctor.

The ER physician was professional and had the same type equipment as any ophthalmologist. "Wow, there it is!" was her response as she looked through one of those alien-looking gismos. After numbing with drops, she proceeded to use a scalpel to remove the object. With my good eye, I could see Joyce squirming in her chair across the room as the doctor tried to dig it out. No pain, but it seemed like it was taking a long time. She would change position or adjust the lighting and start excavating again. After several minutes of poking and prodding, she finally gave up, which was lucky for her. Much more and she would have been treating two patients, as Joyce was about to pass out. The doctor recommended I see one of those real eye doctors with better equipment and more expertise – but not in so many words.

The next morning I was at the eye specialist. After looking she said there was nothing in my eye – anymore. It seems the sliver of metal either washed away or dissolved. That's the good news! The bad news is iron plus moisture equals rust. According to the eye doctor, the rust ring that is left can be more detrimental, and if not removed, will spread just like any other rust spot. With the assistance of a miniature Dremel tool, she buffed the reddish-brown patch away much like removing fire scale from a Lorelei Sims flower – just a little more gently. After a few weeks of drops, everything was back to normal, except for a small scar on the cornea

which luckily does not cause a problem as it is out of my field of vision.

Believe me – I was wearing safety glasses when this occurred. I think I may have rubbed the object into my eye, or it may have ricocheted under the safety glasses. Even though this is just my hobby, I know the value of working safely. I can't have fun if I can't play.

Here's the bottom line. It may not be enough just to have safety glasses. Using a face shield is a must for many tasks. I use mine a lot more these days. Another tip. Even though I went to one of the best hospitals in Austin, I believe I would have been in better hands with an eye doctor. Next time I will call my ophthalmologist on their after-hours emergency number if needed.

I trust this helps if you ever have your own UFO experience. Hopefully, you never will! And just in case this story is reminisced in the presence of Joyce, please be prepared to catch her if you see her start to turn a light shade of green. Thanks!

Rudy L. Billings

House for Rent

This is from our Colorado bound member, Kamber. Ed.

Dear Balcones Family,
I am not sure I will have an opportunity to say goodbye before I leave, (I will probably miss this months' meeting...) as I have accepted a job up in Boulder, CO and will be leaving by the end of the month.

I am very emotional about leaving Austin and all my good friends and blacksmithing family behind. However.....

I have decided that no matter WHAT, I will retain my Balcones membership and will at LEAST attend the annual get together in Feb.

I will STILL be making some tongs (as promised!) for the little shop out in Fredricksburg, even if I have to mail those babies back to ya!

If any of ya'll make it to the Denver/Boulder area, know that you have a place to be welcomed to and a connection there. I am still planning to attend this year's ABANA conference and hope to see many familiar faces as well.

I will continue with keeping up with the Balcones chat, so anyone may contact me that way if need be. I am hoping that the wonderful world of technology will make it seem like i'm only an arms' reach away

Cheers to all! I will miss you VERY MUCH! Please don't consider me 'gone' as much as setting the record for long distance membership! ;)

Since I am moving on, the very awesome and cool house/studio that I have been renting will be available. Here is the scoop:

2 bedroom, 2 bath house with office space, hardwood floors, central air and heat, cute neighborhood, W/D hookups, new paint inside, fenced yard, front and back.

Shop in back, HUGE metal working studio/shop, natural light and well ventilated with lifting crane built in..... 220

volts all through out..... this shop was built RIGHT, let me tell ya.....

Currently two other lovely metals artists have been renting with me and would like to continue to do so if at all possible. There is more than enough room for three artists to share. In the past, there was a full time blacksmith/production shop being run in the back without any noise issues, despite having a power hammer there.

We have had no noise issues during our lease and doubt anyone would have any in the future. Its a fabulous location, just off 71/Ben White. The house is located just off Banister and Ben White and is unbelievably quiet. Re: the other two artists, each live close by and want to continue renting shop space only, but do not wish to rent the house. Both are mature, creative, and deeply respectful individuals, one a Balcones Forge member and the other not. Obviously, it would be ideal if whomever rents the front house, also has an interest in the metals studio.

If interested, please call: Peter Rehme (the landlord) @ 830-265-0123 Or e mail him at peter@rehme.net

or feel free to call me Kamber Sokulsky @ 512-779-8906, evenings preferred.

Or e mail me @ blackhawkforge@hotmail.com

Or talk to Kathryn Kowazote if you should see her at the next Balcones meeting!

It's a great opportunity for anyone needing to get started in a shop or just needs space. The girls are great, and Peter is a great guy

to rent from, so I want to help them as much as possible find the right person.

The lease begins June 1st, the length is negotiable with Peter.

Thanks all! Please pass on the word!

Kamber

ABANA 2004 Poster Contest

Dear HABA Members and Others Interested in Blacksmithing,

The 2004 ABANA Conference is swiftly approaching. There is a lot going on to get everything ready for the big event July 7 through 11, 2004 in Richmond KY. See www.abana.org for all the details.

One of the 'events' leading up to the conference is a poster contest. ABANA received 18 poster entries for the contest and you have an opportunity to see them and vote your choice. The winning poster will be printed and made available for sale. You do not have to be an ABANA Member to cast a vote. Even if you decide not to vote, seeing the entries is worth the time to look. To review the entries and cast a vote for your favorite go to:

<http://magichammer.freeservers.com/poster.htm>

Take Care,
Dave Koenig"

On the Web

Our esteemed president, John Crouchet, has written a nice little report....with photos...on the blacksmithing demonstrations given by Balcones Forge members recently during Spring Break Week at the Pioneer Museum in Fredricksburg. It's available on the club

website on the Calendar page (yes, I listed it there AFTER the event took place....sigh). Or you can go directly there with the following link:

<http://balconesforge.org/calendar/pioneer/pioneer2004.htm>

Say, that reminds me! Is anybody working up a report on Ms. Sims and the 2004 Winter Demo?

Some of you bladesmiths will be interested in this website which reveals some amazing traditional Nepalese smithing methods:

http://www.himalayan-imports.com/kami.html#master_kami

Scott Little

Coming Up...

**Balcones Forge Demonstrates
May 8th at the Pioneer Museum!**

Saturday, May 8th is Founders' Day at the Pioneer Museum in Fredricksburg. Traditionally, it is the biggest celebration of the year and this year one of the featured attractions is blacksmithing by **Balcones Forge!** We will be demonstrating old time blacksmithing to the adoring public in the Museum's old smithy.

If we have enough volunteers, we hope to set up additional coal forges on the Museum grounds and work with the kids or just show off making hooks or gee-gaws. If you have an appropriate old time costume, please wear it, but it is not required. You can show up and demonstrate for just a little

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while, for a few hours, or just help your blacksmithing friends out.

The Museum will be open to the public from ten until four. Balcones Forge will set up and begin firing up the coal forges about **nine o'clock**. This is a fine opportunity to do your first public demo! You will have lots of help and support from other blacksmiths and everybody should have a fine time. Demos do not need to be elaborate. If you can make a very simple hook or a nail, you can do this!

To sign up, call John Crouchet at 830-798-3710 or email me at:
jac@sycamorecreekranch.net.

Please come join me. We will show the fine folks in Fredricksburg a little about blacksmithing and we will have a good time hammering!

Upcoming Meetings

May Meeting: We will build tools for the Fredricksburg Pioneer Museum blacksmith shop at the May meeting. Location has not yet been determined.

June Meeting: the June meeting will be held at Wayne Kirkpatrick's shop in beautiful downtown Kingsland. The trade item will be a bug and the format will be "open mic" where several Balcones members will each do a short demo. Email me to sign up for one of the demos. (Keep it short and snappy!)

July Meeting: Bill Bastas is hosting our July meeting at the Austin Community College blacksmith shop on Grove Drive in Austin. The shop is

equipped with multiple power hammers and a world of good equipment. Bill will show us once again why he is known as an exciting demonstrator and a great teacher!

Meeting Directions

From Austin: Take I-35 South to Loop 410 South, go about 3/4 of a mile and take the Highway 78/Kirby exit. At the end of the exit ramp make a sharp right turn on to Interstate Drive and follow it until it runs into Highway 78. Turn right on Hwy 78 and drive east for 1/2 mile. Look for the school and turn right just after the football field. There should be plenty of parking next to the tennis courts.

Vincent Herod
Spotted Dog Forge
1707 Belford Drive
Austin, TX 78757

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