



# Blacksmiths of Central Texas

President's Corner

April 2010

## Reaching Out

### *Bring Someone to Blacksmithing*

April is Demo month! This is the biggest event of our year and always a real treat for everybody. It is also the perfect time to introduce a friend to the crazy awesome world of blacksmithing! Maybe you aren't yet flashy enough at the anvil to show your friends all the excitement and drama of fancy forging, but I guarantee that Gordon Williams is! Anyone who watches Gordon forge hot iron knows exactly why blacksmithing gets folks fired up!

Drag a few friends to the big demo. This will be the best show in town! The next thing you know, those friends will all be hanging out in your shop, asking for forging advice! Remember, somebody did you the favor of introducing you to forging. You can go back now and buy 'em a beer, but a better way to repay the favor would be to pass it on. (And if you still want to buy 'em a beer, well, that's a good idea too!)

See you at the Big Demo!

John Crouchet  
President



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## **BALCONES FORGE MEETING OF MARCH 27, 2010**

The meeting at Zilker Gardens was a well attended affair. The meeting was started by recognizing member Mary Jo Emrick for the fine work and article in the Anvil's Ring (ABANA's main magazine). Also recognized was Daniel Smith, his biography and work is also featured in Anvil's Ring. Daniel teaches at the Austin Waldorf School.

Dave Koenig's article on forging wrought iron was discussed.

Balcones Forge member Budd Paris is undergoing very serious health issues. Bud has no health insurance; any financial assistance would be greatly appreciated.

Discussion followed of Gordon William's demo in April. Anyone wishing to attend the dinner needs to contact Rudy Billings soon so we will have an accurate head count for the caterer.

Don't forget the ABANA Conference in Memphis from June 2 - 5. Early registration has been extended so sign up, attend, learn, grow and enjoy!

NOTE: The May meeting will be held on May 15 in San Marcos near the courthouse in conjunction with the Texas Natural Swing Music Festival. Members can show and sell their wares.

Renowned Austin metal smith Louis Huerra Sr. died recently. He helped craft the Zilker Garden gates and other noteworthy local ironworks.

The delinquent book list grows longer and longer and Joe's infinite patience is surely growing shorter. My words, not his! Come on and turn 'em in so others can enjoy.

The trade item for March was a touch mark and several nice items were traded.

Iron in the Hat netted \$65.00

Following the general meeting, the Balcones Board met to hear a presentation by Sue Girtten requesting financial assistance for the Akins High School Art Metal Program. As part of the presentation she showed some of the student's work. No vote was taken but the Board asked for a specific plan to include: a list of students, materials list, transportation costs and a viewing of student projects associated with the program. While it could very well be a worthwhile project, the Board felt the need for a more detailed plan.

Sue also said she would demonstrate how to enamel copper at a future date.

Here's looking forward to Gordon Williams, sunny weather, John & Carolyn's shop and companionship in April.

Jim Elliot, Secretary.



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# THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE

*I am following the river  
Through the cradle of the civil war  
I'm going to Graceland.*

*"Graceland", Paul Simon*

Coming up in Memphis, Tennessee on June 2 through 5 is the biggest blacksmithing show in America! The Artist-Blacksmith's Association of North America National Conference will feature seminars, demonstrations, slide shows, round-table discussions, and hands-on teaching stations. For four days, you can dive into a river of blacksmithing!

Tailgaters will be selling all manner of blacksmithing tools, forges, anvils, jigs, blowers, books, and "old junk". Professional blacksmithing vendors will show working powerhammers, bending machines, forges, tools, hammers, t-shirts, and anvils; tons of anvils! Everywhere you turn will be anvils!

Are you a brainy computer geek sort of blacksmith? Don't miss the CAD seminar! Into wrought iron photography –or wish you were? Check out the Photography seminar! Thinking about making blacksmithing a business as well as a hobby? Make it down to the "Business of Craft" roundtable! Maybe you would just like to be able to make a presentation drawing to show a prospective customer. Get on down to "Freehand Drawing for Blacksmiths".

How about some right-now, hands-on blacksmithing instruction on basic stuff for beginners and almost-beginners? Head for the "Green Coal" tents. A little more advanced? They have that, too! Really advanced? Okay, hotshot, check out the Masters Class!

How tough is it to grab on to all this stuff? Glad you asked! Get online at [www.abana.org](http://www.abana.org) and you can sign up right now for only 235 bucks until April 31<sup>st</sup>. After that date, add another 30 smackers. Bringing the spouse? Add another 45 bucks, if they're worth it! But remember, that's money you could have spent on tools!!!

## Gettin' There

It's not hard to get to Memphis from Central Texas. Taking it easy, it's about a twelve to fourteen hour drive, if you aren't stopping for tourist attractions. Or, for those like me with limited time off from the old job, it's a fast flight from San Antonio (cheaper) or from Austin (maybe more convenient). The Memphis airport is about fifteen miles from the Agricenter where the Conference is held. Flights are cheap if you get online early and book from Expedia, Orbitz, or one of the other web based ticket sellers.

Hotels abound within a two mile range of the Agricenter. Or, if you are into camping on site or taking the trusty RV, call the Agricenter RV Park Manager, Mark Hoggard, at 901-355-1977.

Food is available from on-site vendors or world-o-restaurants-ville is about a mile away. Don't worry, you won't starve! The big Memphis-style barbeque dinner is Saturday night. (Okay, I'm from Texas. I'm not really expecting to be impressed by Tennessee barbeque, if you know what I mean. If you are just going for the barbeque, you might as well stay home.)

*Continued next page*

This will be my fifth National conference since I joined ABANA in the 1980's. Every one has been wonderful and I learned things I never expected every time. My big regret? I missed the very first conference I could have attended because I was a beginner and just didn't understand what was happening!

Think it over. The next National Conference will be in 2012 in South Dakota. No kidding. South Dakota. That's a bit further than Memphis, but I will be there!

John Crouchet

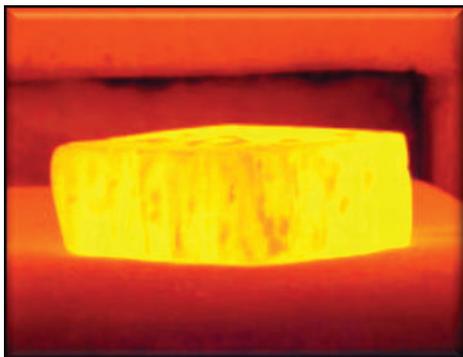
## DUES ARE MORE EXPENSIVE

The Balcones Forge membership runs from January through December, which means if you haven't paid lately, you'll be missing out. It's that privilege thing again. \$20 covers you and your entire family. **Dues increased to \$20 April 1st.** See Rudy at the next meeting, or send to:

Balcones Forge, 1906 Rampart Circle, Austin, TX 78727  
Remember to make your check out to "Balcones Forge"

Becoming a blacksmith is a journey. Likewise, you may find yourself on a journey because of it. Who knew this path of rusty iron would one day allow me meet a country star. Here is a quick look down this path.

- Email received
- Person wants to turn chunk of fallen World Trade Center into crosses
- What an honor in itself!
- Turns out person is road manager for singer
- Manager wants to present cross to singer
- Invites me to meet singer at San Antonio Rodeo



Tall, ain't he? While I don't get all excited about meeting celebrities, it was a pleasure to meet Toby Keith because of what he does to honor and support our troops. Talented guy also – written all but one of his many hits. And no, he's not wearing my cross in the picture. By the way, look for a cross made from WTC iron in the auction at the Spring Workshop.

- Rudy L. Billings



Mario Baggiolini photo

# Leaf Napkin Ring ~ CBA Level I

December 2008

by Mario Baggiolini, Sonora

## Processes

Taper, fuller, spread, chisel, swage, bend, twist.

## Tools Required

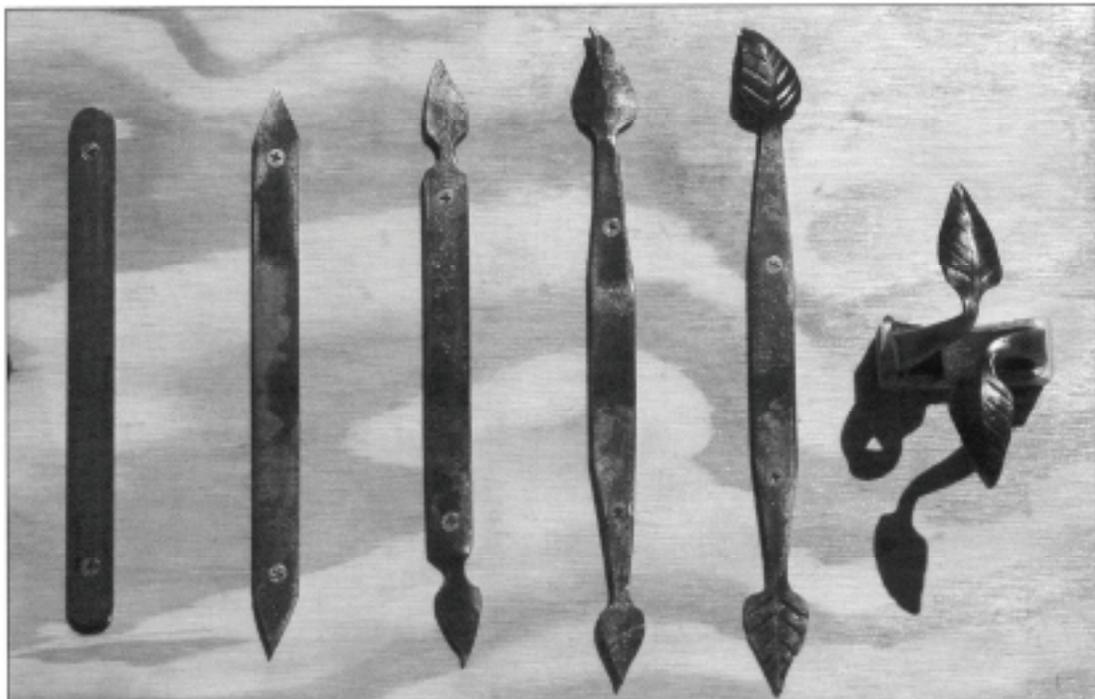
Hammer, tongs, scrolling tongs, small chisel,  $\frac{3}{8}$ " spring fuller,  $1\frac{1}{8}$ " mandrel, rounding hammer, 16-ounce ball peen hammer, block of wood.

## Material

$\frac{1}{2}$ " x  $\frac{1}{8}$ " x  $5\frac{3}{4}$ " (or similar) flat stock.

## Procedure

1. Radius the ends of the material to prevent *fish lips*.
2. Forge short points on each end.
3. Fuller back about  $\frac{3}{4}$ " and down to about  $\frac{3}{8}$ " to  $\frac{1}{4}$ " neck at each end.
4. Draw a long taper approximately  $1\frac{3}{8}$ " long, back from the fullered ends. The blank should be about  $7\frac{7}{8}$ " long, overall.
5. With the rounding hammer, spread the leaves to a pleasing form.
6. Chisel veins into the leaves for some texture (*or not*).
7. With a ball peen, hammer on the backside of the leaf against a block of wood.
8. Over a mandrel or horn, hammer the center section into a ring approximately  $1\frac{1}{8}$ " in diameter.
9. With scrolling tongs, twist the leaves so that they are perpendicular to the ring.
10. Wire brush and hot wax. (*Do not use nut oils*). ♣

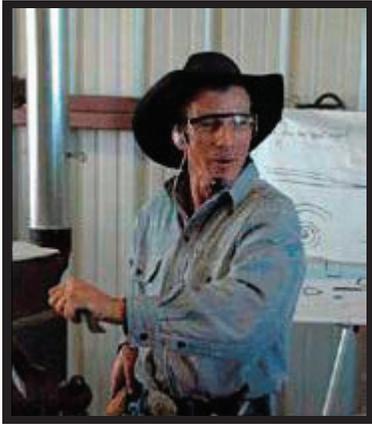


Eden Sanders photo

# Balcones Forge Spring Workshop

featuring

## GORDON WILLIAMS



April 24-25, 2010

Marble Falls, Texas

**BALCONES FORGE** is pleased to bring everyone's favorite cowboy blacksmith **GORDON WILLIAMS** to central Texas for our 10th annual two-day demonstration. A dynamic demonstrator for many ABANA chapters across the country, Gordon has been blacksmithing since 1990. He is the resident instructor for the Blacksmithing classes at Pieh Tool Company in Camp Verde, Arizona. If you were lucky enough to be one of Gordon's students or saw his demonstration here in 2008, then you know how dynamic and knowledgeable he is. You'll come away with very practical blacksmithing techniques that will expand your skills and creativity.

The Balcones Forge Workshop will present a delicious BBQ dinner Saturday night, catered by our friends **ArtZ Rib House** from Austin. Dinner will be followed by our famous annual **Balcones Forge Auction!** Donate and bid on fantastic blacksmithing tools or maybe Gordon's latest creation!

**Times: Saturday:** 9:00–Noon – Morning Demo  
Noon–1:00 – Lunch: Since Marble Falls is about 20 minutes away, it is recommended to bring a sack lunch or order a Schlotzsky's sandwich for \$5. Drinks provided by Balcones Forge.  
1:00–5:00 – Afternoon Demo  
6:00 – Delicious ArtZ BBQ dinner, only \$15  
7:15 – If you do not attend the dinner, please join us at this time for the fantastic auction

**Sunday:** 9:00–1:00+ – Demo

Our hosts are John and Carolyn Crouchet at their beautiful Sycamore Creek Ranch. **Directions: From Austin:** Hwy 71 northwest to Hwy 281. **From San Antonio:** Hwy 281 north to Marble Falls. Cross the Colorado River into Marble Falls, count 5 stoplights and turn right (east) at Ranch Road 1431. Check your odometer and go 5.6 miles to our gate. As you head out of Marble Falls on 1431, you will notice that you are on a winding, two lane blacktop road with no shoulders. At the top of a long, winding hill, the road changes and suddenly has shoulders. Go fifty yards further and turn left into our driveway between the red reflectors. (Look for the "Anvil" signs.) At our gate, you will see a large oak tree to the left and a small sign to the right that says, "Sycamore Creek Ranch, 5828 East Ranch Road 1431". If the gate is open, just drive on in. If the gate is closed, then there are cattle in this pasture, so please close the gate behind yourself once you enter. Continue on down our driveway for one mile, crossing 4 cattle guards before you see the big metal shop on your left. Welcome! Lost? Call John at 830-798-3710.

### For more info contact:

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

**Rudy Billings**, 512-461-7375 or Rudy@BalconesForge.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

# Balcones Forge Auction

Donor Name \_\_\_\_\_

Item \_\_\_\_\_

Description \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your donation!**

Winning Bidder \_\_\_\_\_

Winning Bid \$ \_\_\_\_\_





WWW.BALCONESFORGE.ORG



## A BIG HAMMER

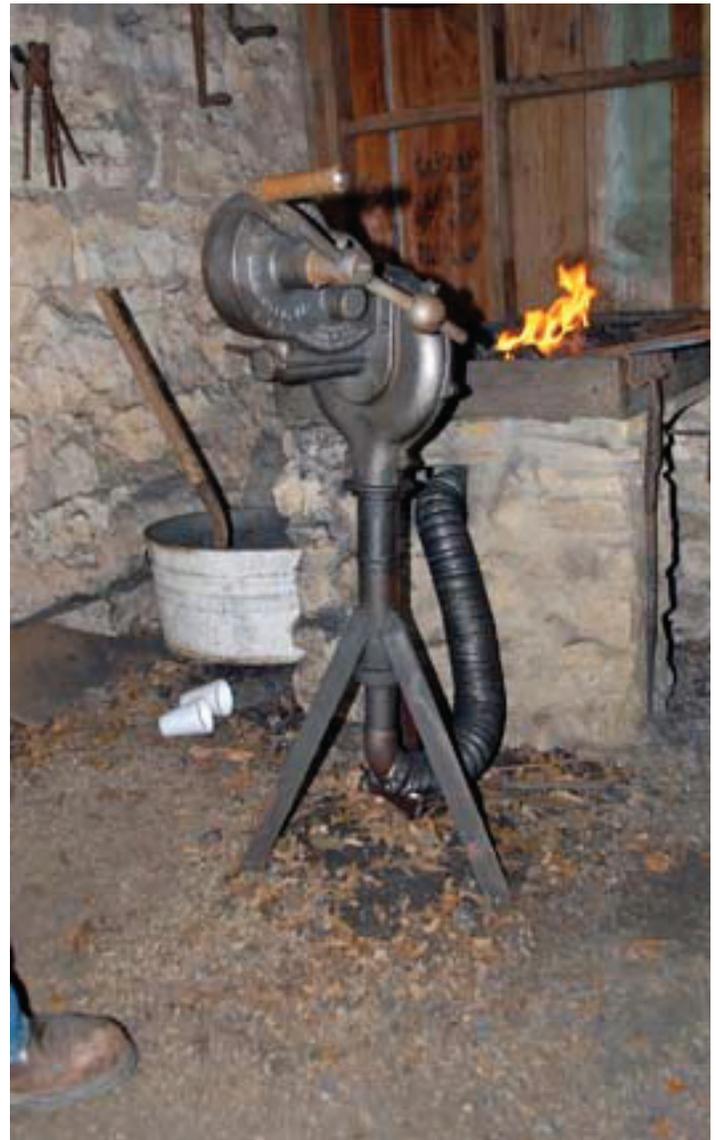
Recently I found myself in Pittsburg as part of the dreaded “real job”. If you do not know, your editor is actually in show biz; I am the Technical Director of the Austin Lyric Opera. While in Steel City to load in our production of CARMEN at the Pittsburgh Opera, I had the chance to explore some of the sights associated with the city’s iron history. The hammer in the picture sits at Station Square which, like many of the areas along the river used to be a steel plant. Can you imagine how the earth shook when this hammer hit the anvil?

The other device is a restored Bessemer vessel. OK class, do we all know the importance of Mr. Bessemer’s invention? That is correct, it allowed the easy making of steel (as opposed to iron).

Pittsburgh is a facinating town for those interested in iron history. I passed over the “Hot Metal Bridge” on my way to the South Side Works (where there is now a Hoffbrauhaus)

Vince Herod, Editor





Balcones Forge has restored several forges around Central Texas. Above, long time member Gary Hilton demonstrates at the Pioneer Museum in Fredericksburg as part of their week long celebration in March. The blower was resored by Tom Lupton. Many members helped demo through out the week in an effort lead by our President, John Crouchet.

Photos by Gerald Pollard



Scenes from the  
March 27 meeting.

Photos by Gerald Pollard



# Balcones Forge Spring Workshop

featuring **Gordon Williams - April 24-25**

Please print clearly

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

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

Current Member ..... \$45 \_\_\_\_\_  
\$50 at the door

2010 Membership if unpaid . \$20 \_\_\_\_\_

Non-member ..... \$65 \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I wish to become a BF member

Saturday Evening Meal... \$15 \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*Please register by April 1\*\***

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

Return Service Requested

Vincent Herod  
Spotted Dog Forge  
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Paige, TX 78659-4922