



# Blacksmiths of Central Texas

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## April / May 2007

The Prez says "Wow!"

OK, take one fantastic demonstrator, add an outstanding apprentice, blend with wonderful weather, toss with tasty food, mix in an exciting auction, and what do you get? A recipe for a great Bluebonnet Workshop! If you missed it -- you missed it! Dorothy and Jake really forged their hearts out. It was hard to get them to take a break, wasn't it. The auction was also a great success, raising \$5,898.

Thank you to everyone – volunteers, auction donors, auction bidders, cleanup crew, etc., etc. – who made this such a great weekend. A special thank you to the Balcones Forge officers and board members who put in many hours and many miles to pull off another successful workshop. Thank you to all!

Our April 28th meeting will be at Mission Espada in San Antonio. This is the oldest mission in Texas, where Native Americans were taught blacksmithing, along with other vocational skills. If you want to see a working colonial Spanish forge, don't miss this meeting. The National Park Service appreciates what we have done there in helping build this forge and is planning a special tour just for Balcones Forge. (Google "Mission Espada" for some interesting history.)

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** The May meeting will not be on the last Saturday as usual. Mark your calendar two weeks earlier -- May 12 at the Pioneer Museum in Fredericksburg. May 12 is Founders Day and everyone turns out for the celebration. The museum is in the middle of a big fundraising and expansion project and have asked us to help with our presence. We have invited the Houston Area Blacksmith Association to join us. Bring your hammer – this will be a hands-on meeting with several forges set up around the grounds. If you have a portable forge and/or anvil, put it in the truck, along with the whole family for a fun day.

Forging ahead, Rudy

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



DID YOU PAY YOUR TAXES ON TIME?



Tom Lupton made this great piece for the auction.  
Photo by Harry Cabluck.

## SECRETARY'S REPORT

Well, the Dorothy Stiegler workshop we'd all been waiting anxiously for finally arrived. It was great, just as we suspected it would be! We had around 68 attendees, although a couple more than that signed up, but didn't make it.

Dorothy brought her apprentice, Jake Hill, with her for the demo. Jake was quite a capable, hardworking and very amiable young man. The two worked great together and gave us some good examples of how smoothly a blacksmith and striker can work together, along with the many other things they did as a team. Over the course of the demo, we got to see examples of forge welding, leaf making, joinery using rectangular rivets, bronze forging and joinery, flower making, a variety of baskets, decorative handles using angle iron, and a chili pepper out of tubing. We were also shown the important things to keep in mind when working with steel and bronze together. Dorothy showed us techniques to make all of the above easier and more efficient and she gave us great tips on working with bronze, the use of rectangular rivets for locking together pieces without movement, finishing work, wording contracts and deciding whether or not a customer is a good risk, special tongs, chisels and punches, proper length hammer handles, and many other tidbits. Dorothy is one of the best demonstrators to see as she is prepared, funny, has great tips, is a great blacksmith (of course) and she can run through a workshop without missing a beat. You don't even realize how long you've been sitting watching.

We also got to meet Dorothy's daughters, Lindsey and Tyana, who attended the demo. This is one of the most interesting and personable families I've met and we really enjoyed them. For those of you who weren't able to attend the demo, did you know that Dorothy has around 75

tarantulas from all over the world (and...yes...they are alive!)? That's along with all the other critters she and her daughters take care of.

The auction was very successful. We had loads of great auction items and folks in a buying mood. After the auction, Dorothy presented a slide show of some fabulous railings they made for a large, really fancy house. She explained special techniques and jigs they had to come up with, dealing with code issues, and adding dimension to the outside of the railing which added to the "wow" factor and to keep from catching women's clothing as they passed it. We finally presented Dorothy and Jake with some Texas/Balcones Forge gifts to take back to California.

The Jamin' House Cafe provided another very tasty meal and we topped that off with some really good carrot cake, made by chef Robert Pacini of Happy Belly Bakery. Michelle Collin-Stoke, member Michael Collin's mom, and her husband did a great job of managing the coffee and snacks. New member Mark Kirchoff brought in loads of bison sausage, bison salame and pork ribs, which had been iced down from a BBQ the night before. We got to munch on those goodies during lunch and into the afternoon. Thanks also goes out to those who helped prep the shop on Friday and who stayed to clean up Sunday afternoon. Special kudos to Scott Pyle and George Craig, who transported the bleachers. Thanks a bunch John, Carolyn and Ruth for hosting us Friday and Saturday night visitors. And finally, it was great to see Harvey and Helen, as well as Alan Lee, after their recent health scares.

See you at the April meeting in San Antonio!

Sue Murray - Balcones Forge Secretary

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## APRIL MEETING INFO

No details yet, but the N.P.S. said they would be glad to have us on the 28th.

There will be some open demo or show-n-tell time in the AM if anyone has something. The trade item is "Something cool to go in Ruth's new house." (I know she already has one new T.P. roller holder from Sue)

Directions to Mission Espada: From IH35, take Loop410 south past IH37. Take the Roosevelt exit to the right to Espada Rd. Turn left over 410 and the mission is dead ahead. If anyone gets lost, my cell is 210-710-2919.

We will tour one of the other nearby missions in the afternoon, so bring your camera.

Jerry Achterburg, April Host.

## NEW T-SHIRTS AND CAPS

We have a new crop of T-shirts and caps with some very popular colors. Large sizes too. Get some at the next meeting -- just \$10 each.

## ZILKER BLACKSMITH SHOP GATE PANELS

How are your panels coming? If you would like to make a panel, see Rudy Billings.

## COFFEE, ANYONE?

Not only did we have coffee and fixin's at the Bluebonnet Workshop, but Michelle Collins-Stokes has agreed to continue providing this special treat at each of our meetings. Be sure to convey your appreciation.

Also, don't forget to contribute to the kitty.

Thanks.



Mr. Charlie Stolte and Harvey Wise visiting at Charlie's place near Taylor.



Smokey Thompson keeps up with the action at the auction.



Harvey Wise and Don Tuff wait patiently for the dinner to begin.

Photos by Helen Wise

## **WHEN IS THE TRADE ITEM NOT A TRADE ITEM? APRIL 2007**

The assignment is to make something cool for Ruth Carter's new house and, of course Ruth gets to take everything home. No other rules apply.

Jerry Achterburg, April Host

## **FROM THE CBA**

We mourn the loss of CBA Member and Author Dona Meilach on January 10, 2007

The California Blacksmith Association and the blacksmith community worldwide will miss Dona Meilach the author of many coffee table books featuring the work of many of our members.

Starting in the late 70's Dona chronicled the renaissance of blacksmithing.

Decorative and Sculptural Ironwork: Tools, Techniques, Inspiration, which was released in an updated edition in 1999 is one of the best books of it's type available. As the title suggests it is a unique combination of technical information and inspiring photos of some great work. It features a variety of rare treats including a photo essay showing E.A. Chase making one of his signature belt buckles. Her later books concentrated on high quality full color photos of some of the finest work being done today. Her last book Ironwork: Dynamic Details was published just before her death and is available from Schiffer Publishing.

Dona's influence didn't end with the blacksmithing world. She was a prolific author of cook books and books about many different crafts. At the time of her death Amazon.com had listings for more than 150 of her books.

## **ANVILS FOR SALE**

The premium quality German made ERNST REFFLINGHAUS ANVIL is now available in the U.S.A. through the Shady Grove Blacksmith Shop, Grand Island, Nebraska.

The Refflinghaus family has been producing premium anvils in the same location since 1886. There are over 100 sizes and styles available ranging in size from 77lb. to 1250lb. One of their most popular anvils in both Europe and the US is the double horn anvil with upsetting block and side shelf. Their anvil face is guaranteed hard at RC59.

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## **GET PUBLISHED**

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# Forging in Fredericksburg

## FOUNDERS DAY CELEBRATION, MAY 12<sup>TH</sup>

Balcones Forge will be pounding iron at the Pioneer Museum on May 12<sup>th</sup>. As part of the annual Founders Day Celebration, we have been asked to show up in force and put on a big show for the visitors!!

Bring a portable coal forge or an anvil if you have one available. If not, bring your hammer and plan to use it! We hope to have several forges going on the grounds of the Museum, as well as operating the Blacksmith Shop.

This is our Balcones meeting for the month of May, as well as our public service for the Museum. Our meeting will start at 9:30 and the Museum visitors will be allowed in at 10:00. We will forge until five o'clock. The Museum will provide lunches and drinks in the administration building, but past experience says "Bring a cooler. It's hot by May 12<sup>th</sup>!!"

### Check List:

1. Bring a **Coal Forge**. We will have coal available.
2. Bring an **Anvil**. We can run two or three anvils from a single coal forge.
3. Bring a **friend**. This is a great opportunity to show your friends what Balcones Forge is all about!!!!

Accommodations: If you plan to stay over or make a family weekend out of this, there are many great Bed and Breakfast accommodations available around Fredericksburg and about fifteen miles away in Comfort.

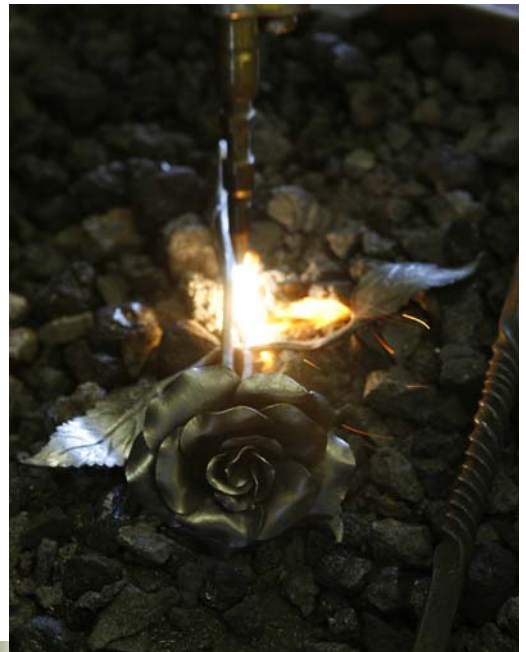


Fredericksburg is located about 65 NW of San Antonio. Take I-10 West about 40 mi. and go north on hwy 87 at the Comfort exit. It is 22 miles to Fredericksburg from the exit.

From Austin the distance is about 75 miles. You take Hwy 71 W to 290 W heading to Johnson City. Keep on 290 all the way. 290 becomes our Main Street. Museum is located at Main and San Antonio Street.

[www.pioneermuseum.com](http://www.pioneermuseum.com)

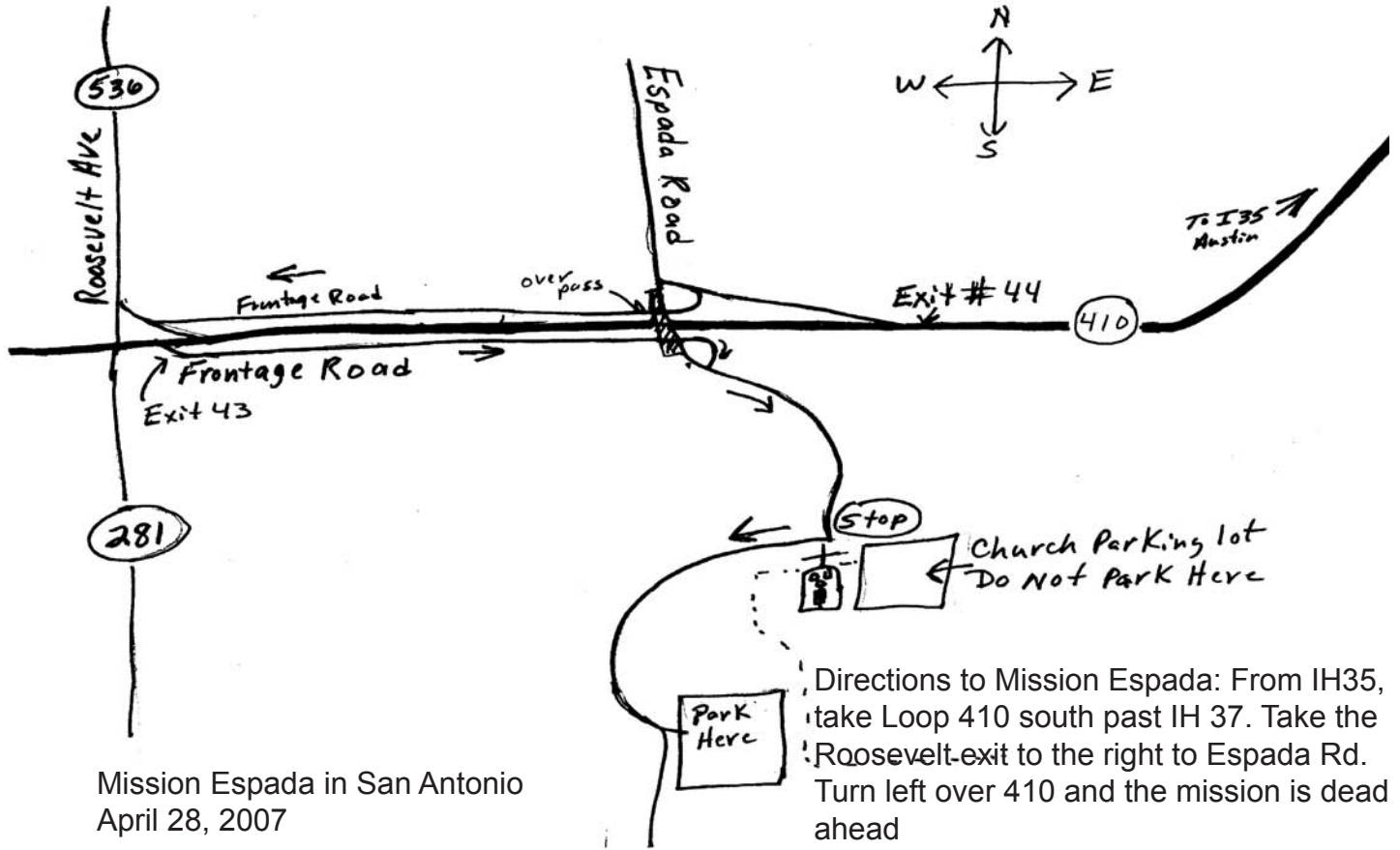
Map to the May 12th meeting.



Scenes from the demo by Dorothy Stiegler and Jake Hill last month in Marble Falls.

Photos by Harry Cabluck





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