



# Balcones Forge Dispatch

President's Corner

December 2017



Greetings!

You know winter is here when you go out to the forge and it actually feels good to start a fire. Looking for a few more days like that before Christmas to help set the mood.

Many thanks to Tim Tellander and all his demonstrators for hosting and hammering at the November meeting at his place in Bulverde. We had a great turnout that included many new folks and a few that we have not seen for some time, most of them were knifemakers or bladesmiths that came to see what Tim had to offer and to show off their blades as well. With this renews interest in bladesmithing we will be calling on our knifemakers to demo again in the coming year. Nicely done Tim.

December brings us back to Devine for Jerry and Marsha Whitley's Memorial meeting. This is another fun event that you will not want to miss. There will be plenty of food and lots of room to spread out and join in by hammering at one of the forging stations. Bring your favorite show-n-tell item or that quick piece that you want to demo and share with the group. There will be no trade item this year, but you are welcome to craft a piece for the auction or bring that tool that you are just using anymore. Also, bring some cash. This is a great place to pick up a bargain for the shop or to decorate the house. Bring a chair and a forge. Check with Jerry W at 210-288-3961 if you would like to bring a camper. This meeting is December 16th and will start at 9:00a, 30 minutes earlier than usual.

See ya'll in Devine!

## Meeting Date is Dec 16

Jerry Achterberg  
Balcones Forge President



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## SECRETARY'S REPORT NOV 2017

I would like to thank everyone that attended the Balcones Forge meeting

at my shop located in the Bulverde area. When



we first moved here, it was fairly rural so we had a few horses, dogs running loose and Borgfeld road was a gravel road with 3 cattle guards. As you saw, that is now being transformed into a 4 lane thoroughfare and surrounding ranches into subdivisions with the exception my little

plot with a tin barn and forge. A few gifts from the forge keeps the neighbors friendly and deaf to the anvil's ring.

This was my first time to host a Balcones Forge event and according to the feedback from a few people, it went OK, plus we were blessed with beautiful weather and a few blacksmiths who knew what they were doing. Thanks to Wayne Byrd and assistant Aaron Tilton for the forge welding of a farrier's rasp into a tomahawk. This particular rasp was a Heller brand with 1084 high carbon-steel insert for the cutting edge, when finished. The tomahawk eye was tweaked into shape with a tomahawk drift. Later, I will grind the profile and quench the predominantly 1095 steel in hot canola oil (130-179 degrees), then draw the temper with a handheld cutting torch to a dark straw color, then sharpen and install a handle.

Prior to our lunch break, we assembled the forged horseshoe knives that quite a few blacksmiths/ bladesmiths participated in. Because I am a member of the American Bladesmith Society and Tex-

as Knifemakers Guild, there were several bladesmiths present as well, and thank y'all for coming. I was pleasantly surprised to see so much original work (meaning one doesn't see this style blade on the internet image page) displayed on the swap table.

The most unique piece in my opinion, was the draw knife forged out by Jerry Achterberg. It also drew the attention of a guitar maker (Randy Howeter) who was successful in trading for that particular draw knife which he promises to use in whittling wooden tuning stems for his unique instruments.

After lunch, the steps of forging a farrier's rasp into a Bowie knife was presented. We utilized my coal/coke forge for the heat source, and bladesmith J. Alex Ruiz volunteered to do the hammer forging while I did the talking.

A little history about the Bowie knife is very interesting, both in its origin and legacy. The Bowie knife is named after Jim Bowie who was born in Kentucky around 1795. He and his brothers John and Rezin made their fortune in slave trading, purchasing heavily forested land which they developed into farm land, and consequent lumber sale. Jim's brother Rezin, wanted to have a fighting knife made for Jim, he met blacksmith James Black in Washington, Arkansas (then population 5000 / now 150). Black, a former silversmith from Pennsylvania, was given a wooden knife hand carved by Rezin. James Black forged two fighting knives and when Rezin saw them, chose the one of Black's design. Black, according to history made some of the finest knives used in the frontier, but because none of them were stamped with his mark or name, none can be identified today as a knife made by James Black.

An argument that started in 1825 between Bowie and Major Norris Wright ended with a duel in 1827. Witnessed by many, the Vidalia Sandbar fight became instant legend when Bowie was injured by

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pistol fire and when Norris attempted to end the fight by stabbing Bowie with a cane sword, Bowie grabbed the Major with one hand and with the other hand wielding the 'fighting knife' killed him. At a later date, Jim Bowie was attacked along the Natchez Trace, and he killed the three assailants with his knife which spread the heroic figure of folklore. Enhancing his legend was certainly not his intention, but saving his own life and reputation was of upmost importance as it would be for anyone, even today. Another duel took place in Natchez Under The Hill Bar where the two participants left wrists were tied together and fight to the death ensued. The duel was stopped when Bowie almost severed Jack Sturdivant's right arm -- again with his fighting knife. The requests from frontiersman to make me a knife like Bowies, (ie BOWIE KNIFE) flooded blacksmith shops throughout the south.

A modern era knife maker, the late Bo Randall said that he never had requests for a Bowie knife until after the Iron Mistress movie in 1951 where Alan Ladd played the Jim Bowie role, and then he numerous requests.

Even after the famous Jim Bowie died in the battle of the Alamo of 1836, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi enacted law in 1837 banning the carry of a Bowie knife. For those unfamiliar with current law, a bowie knife can now be carried openly in Texas as of 2017.

My research about which brand name farrier file revealed that the Heller and Save Edge brand is made of high quality 1095 carbon steel, and some other brands are case hardened steel. Written instructions for forging steel can (and is) boring to most individuals that learn from doing and participating in the lesson being taught, but that also depends on the skills of the instructor. Observing the forging technique can be enlightening if the blacksmith speaks intelligently of the hammer blows intent and the goal that he is attempting to attain.

There was an ABANA article I read several years ago that encourages the smith to talk to the crowd, tell a story, verbalize something that will hold their interest while one pounds away at the hot steel. At the demo of today, my attempt was to identify the

steps as J. Alex Ruiz forged on the farrier rasp, as well as add a few story lines about Jim Bowie and his legacy, the Bowie knife.

It was coincidental that Chris Amos had published in Blade Magazine the first part of forging a farrier rasp into a Bowie. Copies of his article were printed and handed out only after I contacted Chris to get permission to do so.

I had already forged and completed the Bowie knife and sheath by the time I discovered the well written and easy to follow instructions documented by Chris. One of the most difficult steps in the process is PATTERN SKETCH, because I do not follow my drawings when I forge due to shape my steel takes on during the drawing out portion. Inherently, a different and more desirable shape will evolve as I forge and I go from there and this is not unusual or wrong provided the new or different shape will make a desirable and proportionately balanced blade. ANNEALING by attaining a non-magnetic and then burying it in ashes, vermiculite, or lime to slow cool over a prolonged time period is a step that can be eliminated as taught to me by ABS Mastersmith Steve Dunn. However, because the rasp is brittle from the get-go, it must be annealed by heating the entire rasp to the transformation point of non-magnetic and allowing it to air cool, which takes less time. I demonstrated this to our crowd by cutting a nicholson file in half and after transformation, put one piece in lime x 24 hours, and the other half in a vise to air cool x 1 hour, or less, the day before our demo. During the demo, I hammered both pieces until they bent thus demonstrating equally annealed steel. This process may not be sufficient to manufactures-recommendations and standards, but it certainly works for knife making steel, including rasps and files. After the smith has forged the blade, the NORMALIZING step is very, very important and this is done by heating the blade to non-magnetic and air cooling it to a black heat (hot but no color visible). This is done 3 times in order to realign the molecular structure and carbon migration that occurs when the steel is being forged. It will prevent warping of the blade also, when it is quenched.

Profiling is the term I use instead of NOTCHED & CLEANED UP, to obtain the most desirable lines along the belly and spine as well as point and handle. This can be done with an angle grinder, but I use my knife grinding machines, being very critical to obtain desirability as well as intended function. Because the steel is still softer from the annealing process, the holes for application of handle material can be drilled to the makers choice and size of pins of which I use 1/8 inch due to future stress of which the Bowie might be expected to endure. I also use micarta or G10 so that the peening of the pins will not split the material, nor will accidentally dropping it cause it to crack.

Not covered in the Blade Magazine article is GRINDING THE BEVELS, which I do with 36 grit and advancing to 120 grit by grinding with spine down on the work rest. This process is the most difficult for me, but by decreasing the RPMs of the grinder, and taking my time and utilizing a 6 degree angle, will result in an appropriate and desirable flat grind. It is important not to get the edge too thin prior to quenching and I leave a 50 cent thickness of the cutting edge for the quench. The heat treatment begins with my preference which is to EDGE QUENCH, by heating the cutting edge with a rose bud until slightly hotter than non-magnetic, and vertically submerging the steel in hot (130-179 degrees) canola oil. Vet grade mineral oil, transmission fluid, or super quench oils may be used with equal results or a hardened blade. The quench to hardness, takes a few fractions of a second to occur, so it is important to fully submerge the fully heated blade all at once and without hesitation. Do not put it half way in the quench oil, put it all in, and do not pull it out until you've reached a slow count of 10, or a full 30 seconds as recommended by other bladesmiths. At this point, the blade is hardened, and the temper must be drawn within a few hours. Leaving a hardened blade in this state or "until you can get around to it" sometime the next day, will often times develop stress cracks. Therefore, let the blade air cool (tip up in a vise) being aware that this is a potentially dangerous position in a busy shop, then sand the blade until you see silver metal. I draw the temper (reducing the hardness) by using a .035 heating

tip on the oxy/acty rig, to a dark straw. Sometimes the thicker spine will develop some purple color as the straw color moves toward the thinner part of the blade edge.

The second way to bring the metal to a desired 56-58 rockwell hardness, is to heat in an oven at 425 degrees X 1 hour, let air cool and repeat.

At this point, prior to handle application, TESTING is done by sharpening the blade until it shaves and then utilize baton testing on a 2x4 which includes driving about 1/4 inch of the tip into wood and prying. Observing for edge retention, nicks, or edge deformation. It should still shave and ABS standards require that the 2x4 be chopped in half twice and still be able to clean cut a free hanging 1 inch sisal rope.

HANDLE APPLICATION is the final fundamental step, and the use of 2 part epoxy is recommended. Due to time restraints inn my 2 day class, I utilize a glue recommended by William Bastas E6000 Industrial Strength Adhesive because it takes 1.5 hours to dry. Careful handle application is very important as well as fit & finish. My final sanding of the blade is done with 600 grit to produce a satin finish.

The magical qualities that drew frontiersmen to a Bowie knife are still present today and I witness it countless times whenever I have a large Bowie knife on my presentation table for sale. Passersby cannot resist picking that Bowie knife up and give it a few swings through the air. The sight of their internal thrill evidenced by their big eyes, big smiles, and positive comments gives me a warm feeling also, especially if I sell a few.

Again, thanks to everyone that attended the blacksmith demo / bladesmith hammer-in, and wish you the best of luck in building your very own Bowie.

Tim Tellander  
Secretary, Balcones Forge



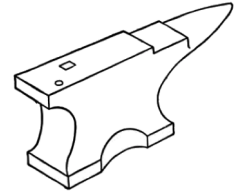
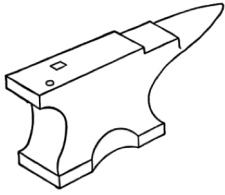


photo by Robin Ream



photo by Jerell Ruiz

# **6<sup>th</sup> Annual Rustyk Forge Demo & Memorial**



**Saturday, December 16, 2017**

**At: Jerry & Marsha Whitley's  
Rustyk Forge  
295 CR 663  
Devine, Texas 78016**

**We will light the forges at 9:00am  
This will be an all-day event with "Open Forge"  
Barbeque dinner around Noon  
(Donation to cover the dinner will be greatly appreciated)**

**I will be demonstrating the "Rubiks Twist Handle"**

**Jerry Achterberg will be talking about "Metal Finishes"**

**We will do some "Hydro-dipping"**

**If there is something that you want to see, hit up your favorite  
Blacksmith to show you how it is done.**

**We will not have a "Trade Item" but ask that you help support  
Balcones Forge and the Event by bringing something for the  
"Iron in the Hat" Auction.**

**Feel free to bring your "Tailgate" items to sell as well as  
some of your work for "Show & Tell"**

Fine Print – To participate in the "Open Forge", you must be a member and signed in on the sign in sheet.

We can get you signed up at the event with \$25.00 and a completed Registration Form.

I am sure that we can come up with a hammer or two, but if you plan to forge please try to bring your own tooling and stock.

Feel free to bring your anvil and forge.

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

# 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.

San Antonio - IH35 South - Laredo



N



CR669

CR663

CR6610

CR 664  
4 Way Stop

County Road 5710  
Blinking Light

Feed Store

DQ

High School

**HWY 173 - Exit #122**

← Hondo

Jourdanton →

**Having Trouble???**

**Call Marsha**

**210-288-9416**

ORG

W W W . B

X





**Directions to:**

**295 County Road 663, Devine, Texas 78016  
Marsha Whitley 210-288-3961**

**From San Antonio:**

**IH35 South to HWY 173 – Exit #122**

**Right – Through Devine to CR 5710**

**Yellow blinking Light**

**Right – Straight through 4-way stop to CR 663**

**Left – to where the pavement goes to the right.**

**Left- through the gap just past the mailboxes**

***(Don't go straight down the private rd.)***

**Cross the cattle guard and follow the road to the left.**

**Pass the next gate to the left and continue to the next  
cattle guard.**

**You will see the house off to the right from here.**

***Don't be afraid to call for assistance.***

***Trust me, you will not be the first.***

## WELCOME A NEW MEMBER

Balcones Forge welcomes new member, Deborah Tate. Deborah is a senior at New Braunfels H.S. and working to learn blacksmithing and earn a high school credit. She is the great granddaughter of long time Marion blacksmith, Kermit Wosnic. I visited this forge in the late 90's, sometime after Kermit passed away, with his widow, Dorothy. As we explored the shop, I found a ledger that had the names of several of my relatives that Kermit had done some type of work for. Dorothy was reluctant to sell any of his equipment thinking that someday one of her grandchildren would take an interest in blacksmithing.

While I was demonstrating at the Heritage Village in New Braunfels a couple of years ago, I made a nail for a young girl who said her great-grandfather was a blacksmith in Marion. I told her that I had visited the shop with Dorothy, but that would have been before she was born.

Last month I got a call from Deborah asking for a mentor and I agreed teach her, not knowing that we had connected in the past. It turns out that my great-grandfather was the blacksmith in Cibolo, just five miles to the west of Marion. Deborah is hoping to reopen Kermit's forge in the near future and set up her smithy there.

Jerry Achterberg



We are quickly approaching our 6th Annual Memorial and Demo.

I will be working on the barbeque all day Friday. If anyone would like to come out Friday evening, please feel free to do so.

For the memorial, if anyone has someone that they would like to add to the list, please send the names to me or Jerry Achterberg.

Some things you might want to bring:

- Lawn Chairs

- Tools and stock (if you plan to forge)

- Safety Glasses (everyone must have these)

- Hearing protection (highly recommended)

- Adult Beverages are welcome (please be responsible)

- Camping Gear (if you plan to spend the night)

- Anvil and / or Forge (if you can)

Bring something for "Iron in the Hat" to help support Balcones Forge and the event.

We look forward to seeing everyone here!

Jerry Whitley



Upper photo by Jerell Ruiz

Lower photo by Jerry Whitley



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# ABANA

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/PC: \_\_\_\_\_

Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Membership

- Regular .....\$55       Overseas .....\$65
- Student .....\$45       Contributing.....\$100
- Senior (65+)...\$50       Library .....\$45

\$5 discount for two year memberships and renewals

ABANA Chaper Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Application may also be made at the ABANA web site:

[www.abana.org](http://www.abana.org)

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

www url: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card Information

- Visa       Mastercard

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Card# \_\_\_\_\_

Submit check, money order (US banks only), or by credit card:

*Artist-Blacksmith's Association of North America, Inc.*  
 259 Muddy Fork Road  
 Jonesborough, Tennessee 37659

Phone: [423-913-1022](tel:423-913-1022), Fax: [423-913-1023](tel:423-913-1023)  
[centraloffice@abana.org](mailto:centraloffice@abana.org)

M E M B E R S H I P   A P P L I C A T I O N

Vincent Herod  
 Spotted Dog Forge  
 166 Granite Road  
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**BALCONES FORGE**  
 SPINNING BLACKSMITHS  
 CENTRAL TEXAS