



Balcones Forge Dispatch

President's Corner

January 2016



Greetings and Happy New Year!!

I hope everybody had a good Christmas. I sure some of you even got coal on Christmas morning and were glad to have it. As for myself, I start leaving the Centaur catalog laying on the kitchen table in early November.

The December Memorial meeting great, just as expected. The Whitleys put on a wonderful event with plenty of food and fellowship. All the demonstrators kept the crowd entertained in Jerry's recently renovated smithy while Jerry and Marsha kept all the visitors supplied with after dinner snacks and adult beverages as well as a nice place to kick back around the campfire and listen to Ben and his guitar. Good job on all the branding irons! Sue, Tim and Robin got to take home prizes. The auction brought in over \$2000. Thanks to all!

We just have a few more days before the January meeting on the 9th in Marble Falls at John Crouchet's Sycamore creek ranch. William Bastas is teaching a one-day workshop on Operating & Managing a coal forge, as well as forging with coal. The workshop was announced at the December meeting and only a couple of slots are still open. The cost is \$125.00 for the workshop. The rest of the membership will be observing the workshop, sharing some show-n-tell items, or taking part in our monthly current event discussion. Hopefully we can talk John into starting another fire in the shop for a few more member demos.

The January trade item is a "flint striker", commonly known as a strike-a-light. You saw Shane Tilton start the fire at the last meeting, he made it look easy. We will have ten coal forges to light with flint & steel. First fire wins a prize.

President's message continued on page 2.

Meeting Date is January 9

WWW.BALCONESFORGE.ORG

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President's message continued.

You may also want to start on your February Competition Trade item which is a "vessel" of some type. A bottle, a bowl, or a basin. Whatever you like, just some kind of vessel that will hold water or even your favorite beverage. Remember, a competition trade item you get to keep, so make it nice.

Lastly, I want to thank Aaron Tilton for taking over the mailing of the BFD. This will be a big help. I'm sure he will let Shane help if he will ask politely.

See ya'll in Marble Falls..

Jerry Achterberg
President Balcones Forge



SECRETARY'S REPORT

The December Balcones Forge meeting occurred at the Rustyk Forge in Devine, Texas hosted by Jerry & Marsha Whitley. President Jerry Achterberg opened the meeting regarding future forge meeting dates.

January 9 will be the demo and participant workshop by instructor William Bastas in Marble Falls at John Crochet's Bluebonnet forge. Ten workshop slots are allotted for interested blacksmiths and enrollment to be done through Jerry Achterberg. Those 10 folks need to be at the workshop

noted. Balcones Forge, it's officers, members, contributors, editors and writers specifically disclaim any responsibility, or liability for any damage, or injury as a result of the use of any information published in the newsletter or demonstrated at a meeting or conference. Every effort is made to insure the accuracy and safety of information provided but the use by our members and readers of any information published herein or provided at meetings is solely at the user's own risk.

by 8am.

William will demonstrate proper management of fire in a coal forge as well as the making of tools for the forge. The next meeting will be February 20 at the forge of Jeff and Alan Lee in Bryan, Texas. Will Frary will be doing a demo on the 20th, and Lyle Winn will be doing a class for interested blacksmiths a day or two before the demo by Frary. Contact Alan Lee if you are interested in participating.

The competition item for today's meeting was a branding iron. Jeff Lee and Tom Leining were the judges. First place was won by Sue Howerter, second place Tim Tellander and third place by Robin Rheam. The knowledgeable James Honig was helpful in pointing out the significance of letter or number spacing to produce a quality and useful brand. An example of a notable comment by James was not to do a complete circle in a brand because the resulting scarring can cut off blood circulation to the branded area and cause infection or blow fly infestation to the livestock.

A solemn moment followed by the reading of names of recently deceased loved ones or friends and ringing of the anvil in their honor.

After the superb lunch provided by our gracious hosts (Jerry & Marsha), attention at the forge regained everyone's attention. Shane Tilton lit the first forge fire by using his own flint and handmade striker.

Our first demonstrator was Alan Lee who demonstrated scroll making and the consistency necessary in making several hundred matching scrolls. To accomplish this task in a recent job that Jeff and Alan undertook for a client was the making of a die that uniformly produced the same exact scroll time after time. James Honig served as fireman for Alan who demonstrated the sometimes

necessary straightening and tweaking for a beautiful handmade scroll. Alan then demonstrated the making of a belt buckle by using flat bar to forge a horse head and then shaping the punched hole into a rectangle for belt insertion. This over simplified explanation by me does not come close to identifying the blacksmithing techniques utilized and so artfully demonstrated by Alan. Being physically present while the work is hammered out, listening, and observing the skills necessary to create an object is vital to the development and improvement in all of us. That's why I think it is important to attend these demos and I am so proud to see so many people in attendance. I always try to get a good close spot to watch and occasionally hear an under the breath 'oops!'

The second demonstration was by Matt Pohorelsky who forged a humming bird from iron, as opposed to bronze medium preferred by Dorothy Stiegler. Matt so correctly identified the problem we all so frequently face and that is not having the proper size or proper steel, but as he so explained and proficiently demonstrated, it's being able to overcome those obstacles and forge your piece out of whatever you have that will result in a piece you can be proud of. Observing Matt's carefully aimed hammer blows was beauty in motion and the skill to move that steel was incredible to watch. The resulting humming bird and set of wings was beautiful. Alan Lee served as fireman for Matt.

Our third demonstrator was George Graham. The forging of a scorpion was accomplished by using a lag bolt flattened out and then skillfully forged into the fire-dart creature most all of us have painfully experienced. Everyone ever stung by one can recall the time and place. My most embarrassing moment was while cutting firewood on the side of a country road by the Cibolo creek while my two young sons help load it into the truck. The first sting was just above my boot strap inside my britches and the second sting a little higher up, and not wanting to endure another, down came my britches -- of course, that's when the deserted road produced 2 cars that beep-beeped their way by me. Thankfully, I didn't know them. But getting back to George, I am so amazed of how a giant of

a man with such a powerful hammer blow can so consistently forge such delicate and thin objects from steel. I have several objects he has forged and trying to replicate his technique is very hard to do. Now what also made being physically present for this particular forge demo meaningful, was when he was finished, George passed around a coffee can full of forged scorpions so that everyone present could take one home.

The following auction was another success which netted about \$3000 for Balcones Forge. If you plan on attending one of the Balcones Forge meetings, please remember to bring an item. It can be as simple as a ball peen needing a handle -- from what I have seen, everything sells and the benefits serve to benefit everyone interested in seeing the Blacksmith tradition continue.

The evening settled in with several of us sitting around a campfire (wood provided by George Graham), while listening to Ben Rath picking on his guitar and singing a few songs.

A wonderful day spent with wonderful friends.

Submitted by
Tim Tellander
Balcones Forge, Secretary

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Photos by Jerry Whitley



Driving Directions for January 2016 meeting and workshop

The January meeting is at the usual location: John Crouchet's Sycamore Creek Ranch, outside Marble Falls. Lost? Need directions? Call John's cell phone at 830-798-3710.

From Austin, Take Hwy 71 and go north and west. You will pass through Bee Caves, over the Pedernales River, through Spicewood, over Double Horn Creek, and eventually come to the turnoff to the right to Marble Falls at Hwy 281. Depending on where you start from, it'll be about 60 miles. If you start from Vince's place in Bastrop, it'll be twice that!

From San Antonio, Take Hwy 281 North all the way to Marble Falls.

When you cross the Colorado River into Marble Falls, begin counting stoplights. The fifth stoplight you come to will be Ranch Road 1431. This is the biggest intersection in town. Turn right (east) onto Ranch Road 1431. (Check your odometer. You will go 5.6 more 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. You will cross four (count 'em...FOUR) cattleguards before you see the big metal shop on your left.

Okay, for you folks who want to come in from somewhere up north: Just take Hwy 29 from Georgetown (or wherever you get on it) and head to Burnet. At Burnet, take Hwy 281 south to Marble Falls. In the middle of Marble, turn left (east) onto Ranch Road 1431 and head for our gate.

See you there!



LEARN HOW TO MAKE YOUR LITTLE GIANT POWER HAMMER WORK HARDER THAN EVER!

Please join us for the 23rd annual Little Giant Rebuilding Seminar! Although we did pass ownership of Little Giant to our machinist Roger Rice in 2013, Sid Suedmeier will continue teaching the rebuilding class at his shop at 420 4th Corso in Nebraska City.

We carry on the tradition of our good friend Fred Caylor of teaching how to make Little Giants run well and hit hard. The 2 ½ day class is a hands-on format. You will help transform a 25 LB Little Giant hammer from functional but sloppy condition into a well tuned, quiet, hard working hammer. Sid Suedmeier, former owner of Little Giant, will share all his knowledge and experience gained from working with Fred and from 24 years of repairing and rebuilding Little Giants.

An old style 25 LB Little Giant will be rebuilt during the class, and a new style machine will be on hand to demonstrate proper assembly and adjustment of both styles.

The class is held in Sid's shop in historical Nebraska City, Nebraska. The city has a wide variety of cafes, outlets (including Pendleton Woolen Mills), antique and gift shops, orchards, wineries and museums.

IF YOU HAVE A LITTLE GIANT, THIS CLASS IS FOR YOU!

No experience is required to attend this class. Past classes have been comprised of students, retirees, artists, welders, doctors, farriers ... anyone who wants to learn will benefit from this class. We approach the rebuilding process using tools that can be found in the average home workshop.

If you are in the market to buy a power hammer, this class will make you an educated shopper. If you already own a Little Giant, or any other brand of power hammer, this class will teach you how to get the best performance possible.

The class costs \$95, refundable up to 7 days prior to the class; advance registration is required. We limit each class to 25 participants. The classes start at 9 AM sharp on Friday, and usually end by Saturday evening. The schedule runs Sunday until noon in case we encounter any exceptional problems in rebuilding, and to answer remaining questions.

When we receive your registration, we will send you a city map, along with travel and hotel information. Airports are located in Omaha (45 miles north), Lincoln (50 miles west) and Kansas City (125 miles south).

March 11-13, 2016 REGISTRATION

Name: _____
 Business name: _____
 Address: _____
 Telephone: _____
 Email address: _____

PAYMENT

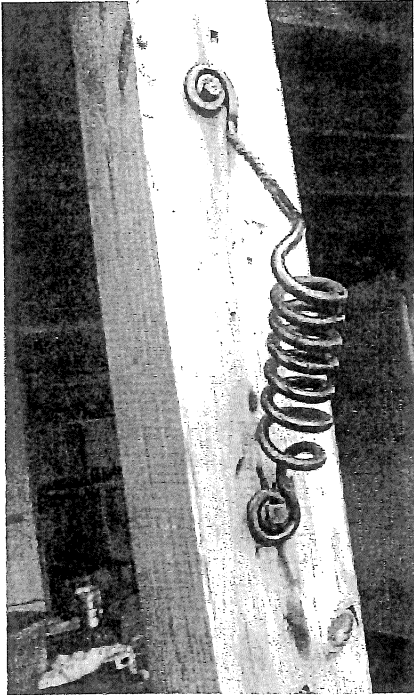
Check enclosed
 Visa
 MasterCard
 Discover
 American Express
 Number: _____
 Expiration Date: _____

POWER HAMMER INFO

Brand: _____
 Size: _____
 Serial Number: _____

Please call or email if you have any questions, or prefer to register by phone. You can reach us at 402.873.6605 or SidShop@windstream.net. Suedmeier Enterprises, 420 4th Corso, Nebraska City, NE 68410.

An added bonus this year will be a discounted price on the Little Giant Rebuilding DVD set that we had filmed several years ago. Regular price is \$95; it will be offered to class members for \$50. One set per class member.



Rave that Flag! by Jim Hovanec

At the Burton, Ohio, Blacksmith Shop we noticed a nifty flag holder mounted to the building. We learned that it was made by Western Reserve member, Jim Hovanec. This item is easy to make, a great gift and a variation on a common item. Anne Hovanec pointed out that it works especially well when it is windy: the "spring" design allows for movement and it is less likely to come loose from the side of a building. It is made from 36" of 1/4" round stock.

Tip—Check the angle in your vise using a piece of plate or a board then adjust. You can also add a design of your choice to the top and bottom.

