



Balcones Forge Dispatch

President's Corner

Jul/Aug/Sep 2017



Greetings!

Although I have not heard of any serious loss of property or injury due to Harvey, I know that everybody in the Houston area and along the coast has had some sort of property damage. Balcones Forge is always here

to help in any way we can whenever we can. Please let us know if you need assistance. Also please note this does not apply to Helen Wise because of her many years of anguish that she spent with Harvey. He meant well.

I have been asked several times "Who is a master smith or what is it that makes a blacksmith a master. The following was printed in the winter 2016 edition of The Hammer's Blow, which is an ABANA publication: The title "master" can mean different things, depending upon the country and time-period. In many circumstances, being a master meant that you were the owner of the establishment, or the household. Based on that definition, a master blacksmith did not necessarily infer that the individual was a fine craftsman; he may simply have been the owner of his business.

However the term master blacksmith meant something very different in 19th century Germany (and some other countries). That title was the culmination of having served an apprenticeship, followed by serving as a journeyman. Eventually, the journeyman would forge a "masterpiece" to prove his mastery of the craft. It was judged by a guild, and if they approved, then, and only then, could he open his own shop and take on an apprentice.

Official

Meeting Date is Sep 24

President's Message continued on page 3.



Officers

President
Jerry Achterberg
treefarm@swbell.net
210/661-3293

Vice-President
Jerry Whitley
jerry.whitley@ymail.com
210/288-3961

Treasurer
Peter Garza
pgarza@gmail.com

Secretary
Tim Tellander
ttellander@gtvc.com
830/980-2903



Editor

Vince Herod
spotteddogforge@yahoo.com
512/253-6045

TRADE ITEM

See President's Message for details!



SECRETARY'S REPORT

At the last Board of Directors meeting, a major topic of discussion was how to better Balcones Forge support for our community and our members.

Rudy nominated a former BF member

named Kamber Sokulsky for a \$500 donation because of recent unfortunate health care concerns which has prevented her from working, as well as incurring many bills associated with her chemotherapy treatment. Upon hearing of the BF donation, Cheryl Craig gave an additional \$500, as well. Kamber was a BF member that left before I joined, but the unselfish devotion to developing workshops and being a very active member was recognized and mentioned by those that did work with her. High praise was given to her abilities as a very talented blacksmith and is a product of Austin Community

College. She currently lives in Longmont, Colorado and is owner of Black Fire Forge & Elegant Metal Designs. Kamber is on the board of directors for Rocky Mountain Smiths, Artist-BS Guild for Colorado, and holds a chair for the states annual conference. Kamber's response, "Thank you SO much!!! I have lost so much time off work and still has not been able to do any metal work."

Our second nomination by John Crochet was Daniel Smith who is a blacksmith teacher at the Waldorf School in Austin for the last 16 years. Daniel

started metal working in 2001 with a MFA in Blacksmithing from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. In addition to the Waldorf responsibility, he teaches welding and blacksmithing at Austin Community College for the past 5 years. John pointed out that the Waldorf is giving the students a high quality academic education as well as an integrated artistic and practical education, and the practical part is what 95% of USA students don't get anymore. Since John has worked with Daniel at the school, he pointed out that the smithy at the Waldorf is not large or well equipped, and a lot of the equipment is Daniel's personal property that is being used by the students. The motion to donate \$500 to Daniel Smith was quickly seconded and passed. Daniel indicated through his thank you for the \$500 donation, that he had intended to buy some new forges for his class, and this would help out greatly.

Hope everyone is geared up for the Bulverde Jubilee (9/16) as well as the Wendish Festival (9/24). Bulverde is in close proximity to a lot of us and the turnout of onlookers keeps growing. The Serbin event is attended by a lot of country folk that know what blacksmithing is all about and appreciate quality blacksmith work. Considerable numbers of Balcones Forge members do quite well at both events, and I am grateful for the invitations to return.

Tim Tellander

Secretary Balcones Forge

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President's Message CONTINUED

Note also that today, the term "masterpiece" has a different meaning. According to the American Dictionary, a masterpiece is, 1. An outstanding work of art or craft. 2. The greatest work of an artist or craftsman.

Upcoming events: September 16th the Bulverde Jubilee in downtown Bulverde. Peter Garza is hosting and will have Moder trip hammer, set up and working. Peter won this hammer at the Comal Forge auction last October. That alone is worth the trip. Bring your forge and anvil and join us in this open forge event.

The monthly meeting will be on **Sunday**, September 24th in Serbin, TX at the Wendish Festival. The competition trade item will be a kitchen utensil made of steel or iron and some nonferrous metal such as copper or brass, however, John, you may use gold or silver if you like. Here is the kicker, there is a prize for the best, but we would like to donate all trade items to the Wendish auction. This is also an open forge event and we need several forges and anvils as well as your show-n-tell items.

Serbin also has one of the best "painted churches" in Texas. Stop in and see it if you get a chance.

See ya'll in Serbin

Jerry Achterberg
Balcones Forge President

BULVERDE JUBILEE – SEPTEMBER 16, 2017

If you have blacksmith items to see or simply want to join in on forging demonstrations at the Bulverde Jubilee Saturday September 16th we will be setup at the corner of Bulverde Road and Cougar Bend across from the street from the airport runway. We will be a prime location at the entrance to downtown Bulverde coming from 281 on Hwy 1863/Bulverde Road. My wife Elsa will be setup with her antiques and collectables next to our tent. We will be featuring the 1904 Morder Sales power hammer that came out of the Comal County Blacksmith shop. I simply had to scrape a lot of tallow grease and am using a modern four stroke engine and flat belt for mobile power. I invite all BF members to come out and try the old power hammer and work on your favorite demo item for the public. I will be out there no later than 8:00 am to setup and the Jubilee parade is at 11:00.

Peter Garza

KNIFE CLASS

Did you know our own Tim Tellander teaches classes??

Below is an example of the knife bladesmith students will make in this 2 day workshop. Cost is \$300 and all materials furnished.

Six & one-half inches of high carbon (1084) steel will be forged in a coal/coke forge and then edge quenched and heat treated in a gas forge.

After the blade is sharpened, testing is done on a 2x4 block of wood.

The subsequent grinding and handle attachment and peened pins (brass or nickel silver) is the final step before hand sanding and polishing.

My contact information:

Tim Tellander
28428 Bonn Mountain
San Antonio, TX 78260
Home: 830-980-2903

email: ttellander@gvtc.com (preferred point of contact)



OCTOBER 2017 MEETING INFO

Cactus Juice stabilizing resin demo at Turn Tex Woodworks in San Marcos, October 21, 2017

For the October Balcones Forge will be meeting at Turn Tex Woodworks, Curtis Siebeck's shop in San Marcos. Curtis is the maker of Cactus Juice, as stabilizing resin and Alumilite, a casting resin. Cactus Juice is used by wood turners and knife makers to harden and stabilize wood. Stabilized wood is said to avoid cracks and other imperfections that are caused by the natural expansion and contraction of untreated wood scales. Curtis has agreed to host our October meeting to demonstrate the use of a vacuum chamber and the Cactus Juice resin. I'm sure we'll also be discussing Alumilite. It is used to make castings with things like punky wood or pine cones and other porous materials to make some cool designs for knife scales. We will meet at Curtis' shop at the address below on October 21, 2017.

Turn Tex Woodworks
531 Hunter Ridge
San Marcos, TX 78666
www.turntex.com

Trade item will be a pair of knife scales (handles) or a whole handle (hidden tang) out of any suitable handle material; wood, bone, antler.

Peter Garza

SAVE THE DATE

The Bluebonnet Demo for 2018 will be on April 7.

The demonstrator is

??????????????

Stay tuned for the answer!

BRINGING ART TO THE MASSES

OR

BRINGING ART TO WHERE THE MASSES GO...

I was recently commissioned to create original artwork in rooms which practically all conference attendees at a downtown Austin hotel will visit.

The artful objects: trash cans. The location: the conference room bathrooms.

Yes, bathrooms!

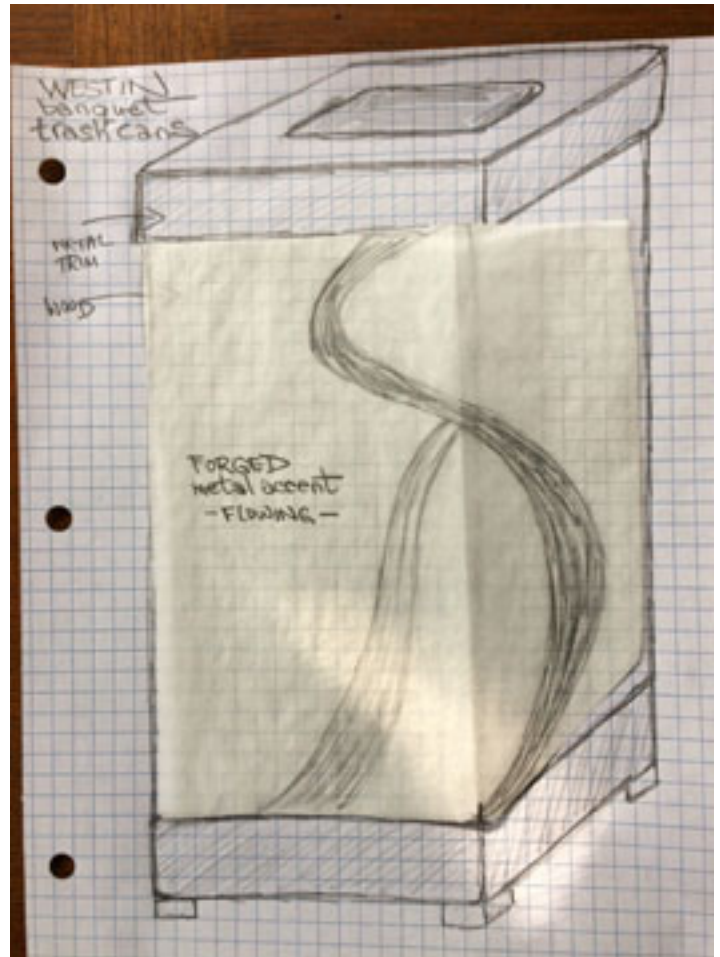
Initially slightly dejected that my forging efforts would be in such tucked-away locales, I reframed my thinking: I would bring artistic merit to a ubiquitous and functional object. And my work would be seen by hundreds of conference attendees daily!

Metal straps wrap around the stained and sealed plywood boxes, attached via glued-in rivets. The forged metal accents were made using 5/8" square bar and the art dies on my 25-lb. Little Giant. Nesting inside each box is a steel cage around which a plastic trash bag can be tied, allowing for easy change-out of the inner liner by housekeeping staff.

As I was delivering the trash cans, a passerby in the hotel lobby commented that they were sculptural. "Yes!," I enthusiastically replied. Someone had already noticed. Mission accomplished.

Happy forging! -

Laura Armstrong





SEPTEMBER MEETING INFO

September 24th, 2017.....Sunday, Sunday, Sunday!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Wendish Fest

Open Forge so bring your anvil and/or forge, along with your favorite hammer, a project, or just some questions to try to stump some of the seasoned blacksmiths. They love sharing their knowledge.

Serbin, Texas

<http://texaswendish.org/2017/08/29th-annual-wendish-fest-on-september-24/>

One of the advantages of ABANA membership is the two fantastic publications that are part of belonging to the organization. President Achterberg suggests these two pages from the Spring 2012 HAMMER'S BLOW as an example of the information available to members. Sorry that the scan did not come out clearer.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM

The photographs on the opposite page are frames from video. The flux used is anhydrous borax.

The bar was heated to a near welding temperature (high orange/yellow) before the flux was applied.

I find that there is a degradation of the flux in the forge environment over time. The flux turns hard and crusty looking on the bar.

If the flux is applied too early, it can be degraded by the time the bar reaches welding temperature. The degraded flux will interfere with a successful weld, blocking the two surfaces from bonding. It is best to apply the flux when the pieces are close to a welding heat.

The bars must be wet with flux as you place the bars together on the surface of the anvil.

Forge welding can take place within a range of temperatures, from a very low orange up to bright yellow for steel.

My experience leads me to believe that if the two parts are of an unequal heat, they *may* not weld—even though both

were within the forge welding temperature range.

I like both sides of the weld to look wet with flux and be at the same temperature when I go to weld. If any bar looks to be at a different temperature or if it looks crusty, I brush, re-flux and re-heat the bar and then have another go.

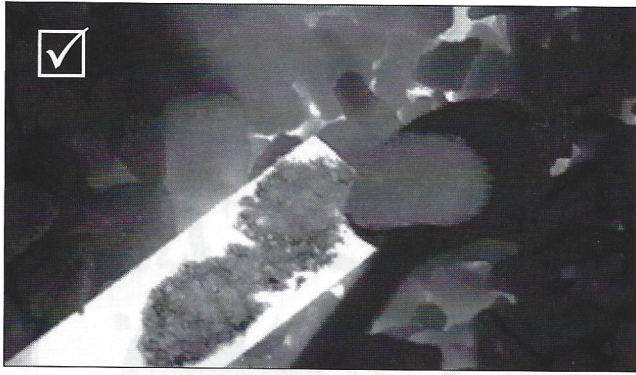
Spending your time on one side of the weld will leave the other side to be chilled by the heat sink effect of the anvils surface.

Try to get to the second side of the weld quite quickly, without compromising the weld.

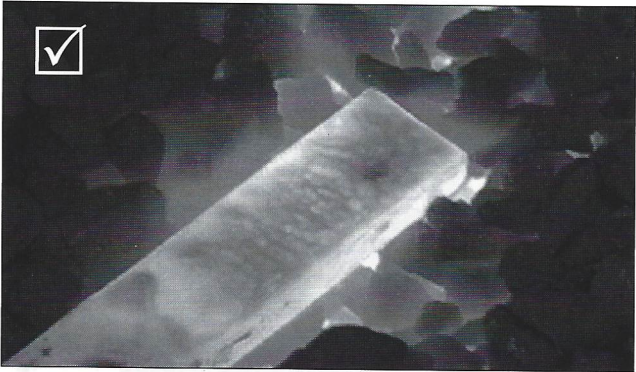
Once the bar is dry of flux, crusty looking or at too low of a heat, you are no longer welding. If you continue to hit the bar now, all you are achieving is drawing out the bar. If you have more to weld, brush, re-heat and re-flux and have another go.

A common mistake is to hit the weld area too many times, thus drawing down and thinning the area. Good preparation and proper blows help the blacksmith form the weld without thinning the area

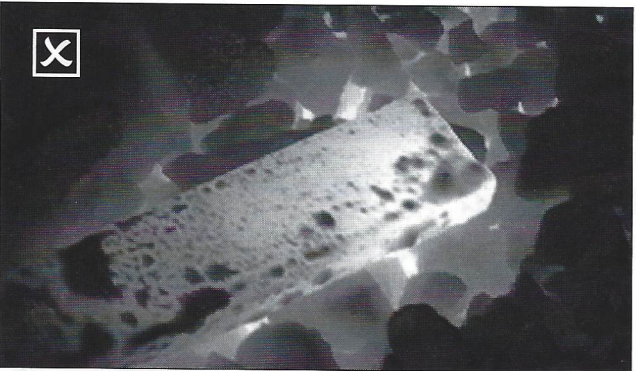
NATIONAL CURRICULUM



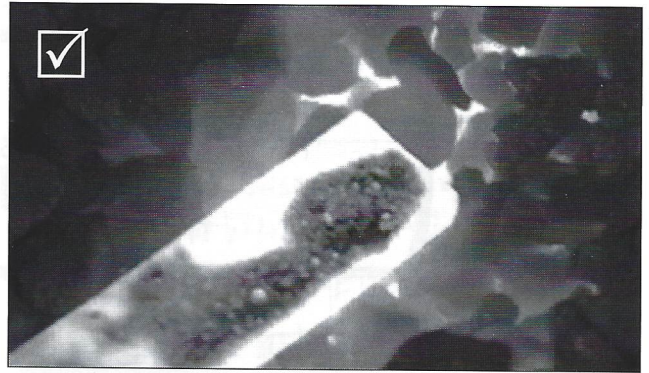
Flux applied to a bar



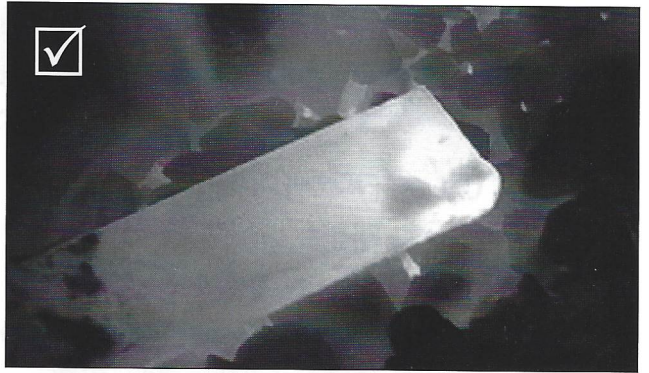
Molten flux running on bar



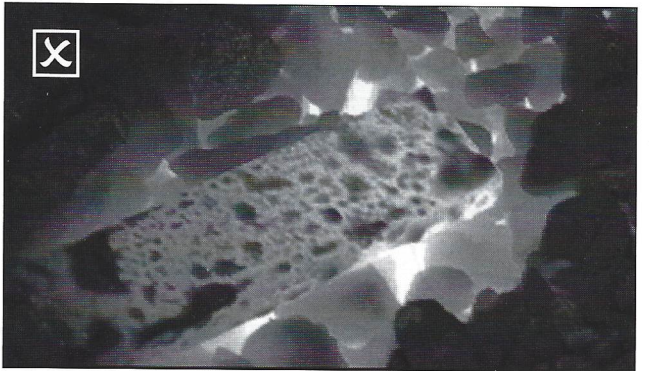
The same bar left exposed to air for a short time. The crusty surface forms if the bar is left in the fire too long



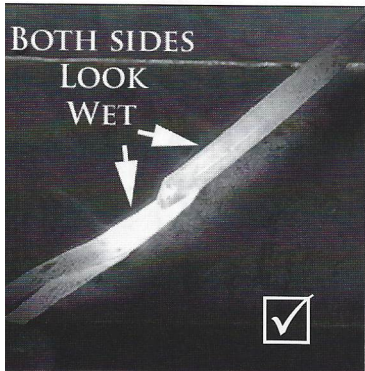
Flux starting to melt



Bar withdrawn from fire at a forge welding temperature some time later, and looking wet with flux



All the wet flux has gone and the scale will prevent a weld from taking place, no matter how hard you hit



BOTH SIDES
LOOK
WET



A nice even heat on both parts. Both parts look wet with flux

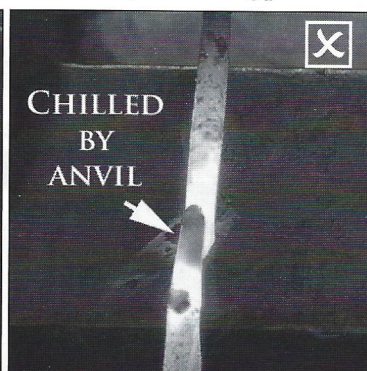


NICE
HEAT



TOO
COLD

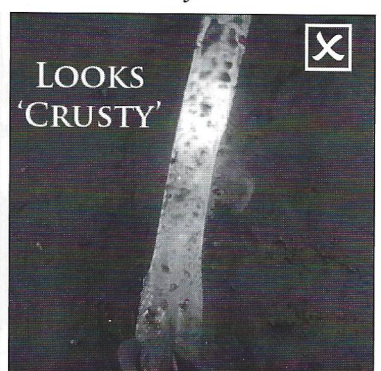
Both parts look wet, but one side is too cold to weld



CHILLED
BY
ANVIL



Weld not turned quickly enough to weld the 2nd side



LOOKS
'CRUSTY'



Anytime the bar looks crusty, it will not weld

Big Jobs Out of Little Jobs

How to Approach Larger Work

With the weather finally cooling off, I am headed back to the shop, like most of you. I am trying hard to remember what jobs I have promised to do and where I left the parts for those jobs, all extremely overdue at this point!

As I separate the parts, however, there is one important thing I always remind myself:

There are no big jobs.

That's right. Everything is a small job. Even the largest blacksmithing job I ever worked on was just a series of small jobs. I try to remember that and I try not to be intimidated by the "big" jobs ahead of me.

Something that we might all consider "a fair sized piece of work", like a set of courtyard gates, is only a collection of frames, scrolls, crossbars, hinges, and latches. None of those are frightening or impossible, one at a time. The trick is just to break it down into that one-at-a-time. Here is how I start:

1. **List the major steps to completion.** This is an exercise in thinking. Consider how the work must progress in order to maintain a piece that is level, square, and true, start to finish. Write it all down. Start filling it in, adding steps as you go. Properly prepared, this document will absolutely lead you through your job.
2. **Build frames first.** Anything that needs a frame, such as gates, pot racks, doorways, fireplace screens, etc. will need the frame built **first** because the rest of the construction needs that frame in place in order to remain true, square, and level. Take the time to insure the frame corners are truly square, the lengths of frame members are exact, and the frame sits level in any direction. Measure across the diagonals of the frame to make sure. If the diagonal measurements from corner to corner are not identical, something is wrong and out of square. Stop now and correct any problem because it will only cause you more and more grief as the job progresses.
3. **Build jigs.** Any large job is likely to have repeating elements, such as scrolls or curves. Take the time **at the start** to build a jig for each of those elements and you will save a lot of time and effort, as well as insuring that your elements will match well visually and, best of all, will fit inside the frame as they are supposed to!
4. Next, I would usually begin to **make the elements** from those shiny new jigs, working out any problems as I go. I always make a few extra of each element because iron is cheap and screw ups are expensive!

5. I next take my new elements and begin to **fit them to the frame**, modifying anything that needs filing, tweaking, or twisting as I go. When you see a problem, fix it early to insure that the work stays true as you build. This is the stage where I weld, rivet, attach, and screw things together, always continually checking the frame and my original plans to make sure I am where I am supposed to be.
6. **Build and fit the hardware.** This is the point at which I make the handles, hinges, latches, etc. for the project. You might wonder why I did not do this step right after building the frame. Experience has taught me (the hard way) that those handles, hinges, etc. will be in the way during all that previous construction. They prevent the frame from lying flat on my fabrication table and they are always in the way when I need to rivet or weld. Just hold off and do them later. You will be glad you did. A note: Hinges are always last. They must hang true in order to keep the gate (or door) square to it's opening. That means absolutely straight and level. I like to set up the gate on blocks inside its actual opening, making certain that it is level and happy, with room to swing and side supports ready to go. Then I carefully clamp my finished hinges in place and lightly tack weld them to the frame. Next, I — very carefully — take the gate back to my shop to make the final attachment of the hinges to the frame. The last thing I do is to file or cut away the tack welds.
7. **Finish out.** Construction is finished. Now is the time to honor all that hard work by doing an excellent job on finishing. Dorothy Stiegler taught me that finishing will occupy about one third of your construction time. I like to keep mine simple. Frankly, I have never had good luck with any outdoor finish except good old enamel, carefully applied with a good primer. I like to use dark metal colors such as black or a bronze brownish color or something similar. Brighter colors just seem to draw attention to the paint, rather than the ironwork. For interiors, my favorite (and my clients' favorite) is still a waxed finish over clear satin acrylic with a carefully wire wheeled base. If I am putting temper colors over the interior piece, I use the wax finish over a gloss acrylic so that the colors are not muted.
8. **Congratulations!** You are done!

I keep my blacksmithing books close at hand while I work because I don't know nearly as much as my clients think I do. Mark Aspery's series will answer a lot of questions as you go.

Always make test pieces. **ALWAYS** make test pieces. You are **NOT** saving time by skipping the test pieces. My scrap bucket is full of embarrassingly poor test pieces that saved me from revealing my bad work in public. I build the test piece, fix what I screwed up, build another, fix the screwups on that one, etc., etc., until one finally emerges that I am willing to show to the public. As far as they know, that excellent final piece is how all my work looks! Then I quickly build the others while I still remember exactly how I built the first one!

That is most of what I know. It has served me well. May it do you good.

John Crouchet



ABANA

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 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

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

BALCONES FORGE
 CENTRAL TEXAS BLACKSMITHS
 Vincent Herod
 Spotted Dog Forge
 166 Granite Road
 Paige, TX 78659-4922