



# Blacksmiths of Central Texas

President's Corner

June 2010

## Central Texas Blacksmiths

### Top of the Heap!

As you might have guessed, the national ABANA conference in Memphis was quite a show! When you bring together the best blacksmiths in America, some cool stuff is bound to happen. There were some great forging demonstrations, terrific new tools and fancy books for sale, and more blacksmithing going on than you could possibly take in over just four days. It was a blacksmithing overload!

The most interesting thing I found at the entire conference was the presentation of "Hydra City", a large forged sculpture by the Austin Metal Authority. These blacksmiths seriously rock! "Hydra City" involves a forged cityscape and a few awesome big dragon heads with a couple of surprises built in. Even in a gallery full of works by famous and going-to-be-famous blacksmiths, "Hydra City" was the obvious standout piece.

Austin Metal Authority did an intriguing visual presentation on the collaborative blacksmithing process that produced "Hydra City". I wish you could have all been there with me to see it. In fact, maybe you can! I am trying to arrange for Rebecca Frank, Colby Brinkman, Troy Defrates, Bradey Foster, and Haley Woodward to present "Hydra City" at our big Balcones Free Summer Demo on Saturday, July 31st. These folks are all alumni of the Austin Community College blacksmithing programs and should fit right in with our featured demonstrator, Dan Smith, who currently teaches at ACC.

*continued on page 2*



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## Meeting Day is June 26

## And Speaking of ACC...

I also attended a meeting of the presidents of ABANA affiliates from all over North America. I was reminded once again how very fortunate we are to have Austin Community College's outstanding blacksmithing program right here in our backyard!

Affiliate presidents from all over the country were complaining about how difficult it is to find blacksmithing instruction without traveling large distances and paying out serious amounts of money! There are good programs out there but they are not close and they are not cheap!

I just kept my mouth shut. (Okay, I'm not that kind of guy. I bragged just a little! ) Austin Community College's renowned programs are available all year around, weekdays or even weekends, as formal or informal classes, for beginners, intermediates, or professional level blacksmiths. This is just a wonderful resource and if you have not yet availed yourself of the opportunities at ACC, you need to get it in gear. Check it out online or just ask any of the many ACC alumni at our next meeting.

John Crouchet  
President



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## BALCONES FORGE MEETING

June 26 - 9:30 AM

Zilker Blacksmith Shop

We have a fun project planned where everyone can make and take home a nail header created from a railroad spike. If unfamiliar with a nail header, it is the tool that allows the blacksmith to make the popular square nails that both young and old find fascinating. If you have a few railroad spikes with "HC" stamped on the head, bring those high carbon spikes -- they make the best nail headers.

Zilker Botanical Garden, 2220 Barton Springs Drive, Austin.

Located in Zilker Park just south of Town Lake and east of MoPac (Loop 1), Zilker Botanical Garden is easy to reach from both MoPac and I-35.

### Driving directions:

#### FROM MOPAC (LOOP 1):

Take the exit for FM 2244 / Rollingwood, following the signs for Zilker Park. Watch for the dark green Zilker Botanical Garden signs. The garden is on the left at 2220 Barton Springs Drive.

#### FROM INTERSTATE 35:

Take the Riverside Drive exit and go west. At Barton Springs Drive, turn left and follow it along until you reach Zilker Botanical Garden on your right, just past Stratford Drive.

See you there!

## TRADE ITEM

Since we will be using railroad spikes for our nail header project, why not create something else from a railroad spike.

Remember, you gotta make one to take one!

## MEETING INFO

Meetings are open to everyone -- you do not have to be a member to attend.

Meetings are usually held on the last Saturday of each month, but subject to change.

Bring your safety glasses (required).

Other things to bring:

Hearing protection  
notepad  
camera  
folding chair/bleacher seat cushion  
drinking water  
returning library book/video  
"Iron in the Hat" auction item  
trade item



Austin Metal Authority's

HYDRA CITY

*photo by  
Jennifer Nichols*





Joe Anderson

*photos by Vince Herod*



The Thinker



Darryl Nelson and THE BEAR.

*bear photo by Jennifer Nichols*



Dan Boone the 7th



The famous Dan Boone dragon



Len Ledet  
Iron in the Hat



It wasn't all work!

## **GREETINGS FROM ABANA!**

The 2010 Annual Elections are currently accepting candidates for your Board of Directors. If you are interested in serving on the Board of Directors, the term of office is three years. We are seeking to fill five positions on the board with this election.

The duties of a Board Member require a minimum of one hour daily or four hours per week participating online in the discussion of Board business. Because much of the work accomplished by Board Members is done over the Internet, it is essential that candidates have computer equipment and skills necessary to participate in online discussions. Good organizational skills to manage the volume of information that directors receive is also essential.

REMEMBER, a seat on the Board of Directors is NOT limited to professional blacksmiths. A passion for the craft, strong desire to promote education and a willingness to go the extra mile so that others may benefit are the key ingredients!

This is an exciting time to be involved with your association; we are building for the future, adapting what has been learned from the past and forging stronger ties with the membership. With the ABANA Conference coming up in June 2010, we are working hard for the "Love of the Craft".

All you need to do to be a candidate is to get the signatures of 10 ABANA members in good standing, provide a Statement of Qualification/Interest that will be published in the Anvil's Ring. Also, please provide a "High" resolution digital portrait picture for the publication.

Board Members are required to attend the Board of Directors Annual Meeting, usually held in Memphis, Tennessee in off conference years. During a conference year, the Board of Directors Annual Meeting is held in the host city. The association provides a partial travel reimbursement and partial lodging reimbursement for the Board Members attending the Annual Meeting.

It is helpful to have a broad variety of skills and experience as a Board Member. In addition to describing your background in blacksmithing, please include in your Statement of Qualifications/Interest a description of any other skills and experience you have that might be helpful to ABANA. Examples of skills that might be helpful include a strong understanding of the current office technology products such as Microsoft Office or Open Office, business knowledge and experience, experience with budgeting, marketing, web design, database management and development, graphic design, non-profit governance, filings and compliance for 501(c)(3) non-profit associations.

Election Schedule to be published in the Anvil's Ring 2010 "Summer Edition"

Wednesday, September 15 Anvil's Ring Publication date.

Wednesday, September 21 Anvil's Ring in the mail. This mailing date starts a 30 day clock - per bylaws article XI.

Wednesday, September 29 Members receive Anvil's Ring (+/- 5 days).

Friday, October 22 Ballot Postmark deadline.

Thursday, October 28 Count ballots and notify election winners to make travel reservations.

Board Meeting on November 11-14. Starting on Thursday at 6 PM and continuing through Saturday not later than 9 PM Board Member departure for home on Sunday morning November 14.

There is much work to be done and we invite you to become involved with the future of your association.

In addition to the five Board of Directors positions we also are seeking candidates for the following:

ABANA Endowment Trust - Trustee

Off-Board Committee Members

*continued from previous page.*

If you are interested, please contact any board member, the ABANA Central Office or the Election and Nomination Chair:

George B. Matthews, Chairman  
Election and Nomination Committee  
PO Box 25  
Saluda, NC 28773  
Home: (828) 749-2346  
Cell: (828) 243-6579  
vlgsmithy828@msn.com

## **Did you know...?**

Centaur Forge, Staples, Blacksmiths Depot, Grainger, and Pieh Tool are just a few of the participants in the ABANA Member-Only Discount Program. Become a member -- it pays!

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

## **NATIONAL NEWS**

There is a lot happening at the Artist Blacksmith's Association of North America. Here are some things I learned at the National Conference in Memphis.

1. The next National Conference will be held in Rapid City, South Dakota in the middle of July, 2012. (The following week, Yellowstone Park will probably be full of blacksmiths and their families.)
2. The ABANA Board of Directors is considering setting up a separate membership category that will be very inexpensive. Persons choosing this new membership will not receive ABANA's quarterly glossy magazine "The Anvil's Ring" or the shop magazine "Hammer's Blow", but some of the articles may be available to them online.
3. More educational programs are coming. ABANA is working on program materials for young folks (like Boy Scouts) and other programs for adults.
4. A certification program for Journeyman Blacksmiths is in the works. Persons who wish to participate in this program will undergo a series of tests leading to a "Journeyman Blacksmith" certificate from the national organization. This may be particularly of interest to members who intend to be professional blacksmiths and need such credentials for their work.
5. Elections for the ABANA Board of Directors are coming up soon. To run for the Board of Directors, you must be a current ABANA member in good standing and send in a short biography/statement along with the signatures of ten other members in good standing.

John Crouchet

**APRIL 2010**  
**SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Gordon Williams, hat and all; what can you say? The guy started about sunrise, ate a quickie lunch, and was going strong come sunset. On Sunday George hogtied him to the truck for a trip to the airport. He even cleaned the shop area and raked the floor level.

What all did he demo? It would be easier to say he didn't demo a Samuel Yellin gate.....but almost anything else. An incomplete list follows as I could not keep up (he made me tired just watching): penny scroll, pepper, oak leaves, arrow head, arrow fletching, arrow, rope & rope swage, rasp snake, acorn & acorn swage, broom (yes a complete broom, straw and all), fireplace poker, birds, old cowboy (John Crouchet was his model), a rivet spacing method, swage for pepper leaves, forge welds, twists and on and on.....what a dynamic demonstrator!

Dinner on Saturday was served up by Sarah and a helper from Artz Rib House. A great meal.

The auction was lively with Rudy Billings on the stage as auctioneer. Thanks to Rudy and all the assistants. Many nice items were carried home.

It was good to see Harvey Wise with a big smile on his face. The Lee brothers were on either side of Harvey to keep him in line.....sort of!

Sue Girten presented her revised presentation to the Board. The Board was impressed enough to vote to fund the project. And speaking of impressed, the Lee brothers also heard the presentation and donated \$100 to the project. Mighty generous fellas; many thanks!

And speaking of generous, that rascal George Craig out bid everyone and bought a great pair of tongs made by Henry Stone and then quietly gave them to Gordon Williams. For once I am glad he outbid us. From all of us, thanks George! The auction brought in \$3,941 and t-shirts and caps added another \$350.

If you are interested in hosting a meeting, please let a Board member know.

Jim Elliot, Secretary.

**MAY 2010**  
**SECRETARY'S REPORT**

The May meeting was held on May 15, 2010 near the courthouse in San Marcos. Here are a few notes.....

There were three trade items at the May meeting. Aaron Tilton made off with Jerry Achterberg's beautiful pineapple twist fork. Jerry accepted Jim Schmidt's bumper hitch based flower and Jim got Aaron's "Gordon Williams old cowboy" fork.

Iron in the Hat. It was agreed that for the benefit of Balcones Forge, the striking hammer and large flatter be held back until the summer demo in July. Jerry Whitley created two CDs with recordings of demos by Gordon Williams and RC Hot Glass which were snapped up by John Crouchet & Jim Schmidt and added another \$35 to the bank account.

The June meeting will be held at the Zilker Blacksmith Shop on the 26th. We need railroad spike marked HC (high carbon) to be brought to the meeting. Anyone having such please let John Crouchet or Rudy Billings know ahead of time. Thanks!

The Summer Demo will be held on July 31st. This one day event is free to all and will be held at John Crouchet's shop in Marble Falls. The featured artist this year is Daniel Smith.

Please welcome Bill Miller as a new member to Balcones Forge.

Ruth Carter will be filling in for a while as I will be out of state for two months.

Jim Elliot, Secretary.



## Hammer Dressing?

*Is that anything like salad dressing?*

I was surprised to get a few questions lately concerning hammer dressing and I realized that several of my new blacksmithing friends have never had to “dress” a new hammer face before use. After due consideration, I guess I have to blame this problem on my friend William Bastas!

Bill Bastas makes the finest forging hammer available in the world today. He has given great thought to his hammer design and it really shows. I won't go into all the features of the Bastas hammer, but I will point out that it comes to each lucky recipient already “dressed” and ready to forge hot iron. Of course, being the discerning blacksmiths that we are, many of our Balcones Forge members have managed to acquire one of these fine quality hammers for ourselves. (Some of us even have a few more, but we won't go into that!)

We have been sheltered from the hard fact that regular forging hammers do not usually arrive with a fine, smooth, polished peen, already to go. No, most new hammers come with a sharp edge that will pound a nasty curved ding into anything you hit with it. To turn these hand clubs into good forging hammers will take some real time and care at the old belt sander.

The first thing to consider is that you want to reshape the hammer face into a smooth, shallow convex shape which will leave no edge marks as you forge. This is best accomplished by “slack-belt” grinding. The slack belt is that part of the belt sander face that is NOT backed up by a hard platen. When you press the workpiece into this area, the belt tends to smoothly curve back away from the pressure, giving a more rounded form to the work.

Work your new hammer slowly and carefully. It is important at all times to keep the hammer face cool, as heat will destroy the temper of the hammer head. Crisscross sanding directions, turning the head uniformly until you achieve that smooth, rounded edge that will blend easily as you forge. Keep touching the face with your hand from time to time to be certain it is not overheating. Most of all, do not hurry. This should be a slow, careful process. Once you have achieved the shape you want on a medium grit sanding belt, switch to a 3M polishing belt or take the hammer to a buffing machine to give it the beautiful, shiny face you need. I use a stiff six inch muslin buff, running at 1650 rpm, charged with Fabulustre compound. Any good metal polishing compound will do.

To keep your new hammer face in good shape, reserve it for forging hot iron only. It is not the proper tool for pounding chisels, beating on cold work, or driving stamps. Get yourself a nice brass hammer for that stuff. And the next time you see William Bastas at a Balcones Forge meeting, ask him how long the waiting list is for one of those fancy hammers!

John Crouchet

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN BLACKSMITHING CONFERENCE XX**  
**JULY 28- AUGUST 1, 2010**

Rocky Mountain Smiths is pleased to announce the Rocky Mountain Blacksmithing Conference XX, held at the Francis Whitaker Blacksmith School on the campus of the Colorado Rocky Mountain School in Carbondale, Colorado. Check-in begins Wednesday, July 28 at 1:00 P.M., with dinner at 5:30.

Demonstrations begin Thursday, July 29, at 8:00 A.M. and run through Saturday, July 1. Featured are demonstrations by well-known smiths, hands on forging clinics, a forging competition, a gallery and silent auction. The conference promises to be a sharing and inspirational experience, and we invite you to participate. Lodging and meals are available at the conference site and motels and camping are nearby. The Carbondale area boasts some of the finest summer activities in the state. There's ample time to socialize and enjoy the Colorado summer. Come early and stay late!

This years demonstrators include:

- \* **Wendel Broussard**
- \* Doug Wilson
- \* Randy McDaniel
- \* Steve Rollert

Conference Registration Questions/Problems  
Contact:

John and Janet Switzer  
P.O. Box 4, Beulah, CO 81023-0004  
Phone: (719) 485-2327  
Cell Phone: (303) 589-1767  
Email: [switz@mindspring.com](mailto:switz@mindspring.com)  
<http://www.rockymountainsmiths.org>

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*A blacksmith can create a 1" diameter hole in a 1/2" wide bar without any loss of stock. Ask that of any other type of metalworker.*

*-- Francis Whitaker*

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[http://www.coolestone.com/media/895/Anvils\\_Away/](http://www.coolestone.com/media/895/Anvils_Away/)

Watch the anvil fly! Submitted by Jerry Achterberg.



I have a friend in Caldwell who has a 25 # Moloch power hammer. He doesn't have time to restore the hammer and would like to sell for \$1000 firm. The Hammer appears to be in good shape but needs to be freed up and a motor installed.

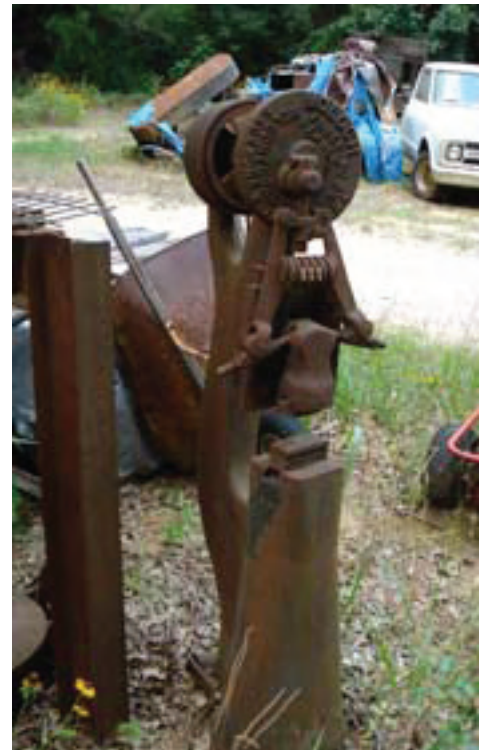
If anyone is interested they can contact me at:

[john.korb@southtexasoil.com](mailto:john.korb@southtexasoil.com)

979-540-0295.

Best regards

John Korb



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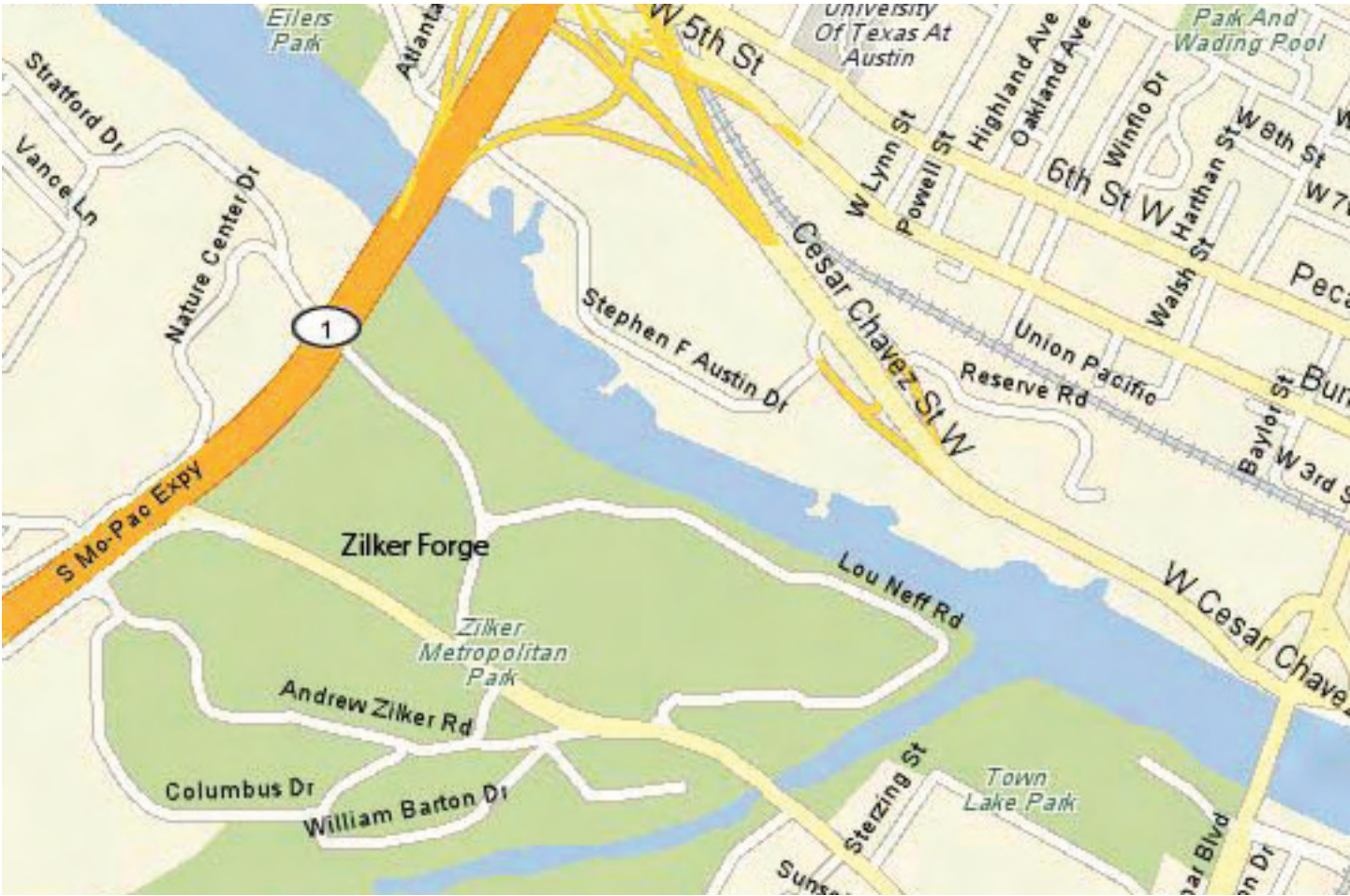
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Have you checked out the links on the Balcones Forge website lately? You could learn how to make a treadle torch or, if you have the time, read 106 years of Popular Mechanics. There is also a nice list of suppliers. And be sure to check out the websites of several members.

The website also has info about the "Next Meeting" that may be helpful for you.

<http://www.balconesforge.org/meetinginfo>

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



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Spotted Dog Forge  
166 Granite Road  
Paige, TX 78659-4922

Return Service Requested