



Balcones Forge Dispatch

President's Corner

June 2011



Greetings, and welcome to summertime!

When they talk about blacksmithing being a dangerous endeavor, they especially mean during the summer as temperatures soar and everything in the shop is hot. The important thing to remember is to stay hydrated! Once you become dehydrated, it's too late! You can't just drink water (or beer for you Harvey) and expect to be OK when you cool off; it doesn't work that way. Dehydration is a serious condition that could cause permanent damage to your vital organs and even brain damage. (I don't consider the brain a vital organ; I've seen too many folks survive without one. That could explain why some of us act like we do.) So, take lots of breaks, cool off and keep the water bottle handy.

Back in the day, burns, blindness, broken bones and missing body parts were all considered part of being a blacksmith. They used hazardous chemicals and had little in the way of ventilation. Safety glasses and gloves were for the rich and no one ever thought of hearing protection. But it's no different than the technology of the today, if they had it they would of used it. We have no excuse. We have learned from their mistakes and we owe it to the blacksmiths of yesterday to use the safety equipment of today and always look out for the other guy. This too is part of being a blacksmith. Be safe and live long.

Hope to see you all in San Antonio at James Helms shop.

Jerry Achterberg
Balcones Forge President

**Meeting Date is June 25
9:30 am**



Officers

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SECRETARY'S REPORT



Balcones Forge Continues Tradition Of Service at Texas Western Swing Festival

Forging under the big live oaks on the San Marcos Courthouse Square has become a yearly tradition for Balcones Forge members. In conjunction with the annual Texas Natural and Western Swing Festival, we join the fun of old west shootouts, cowboy dog and horse tricks, Buffalo soldiers, and a wealth of old time Texas swing music.

This year's event drew a large crowd in spite of the hot sunny weather. Balcones Forge members set up anvils and forges in our usual shady location on the west side of the courthouse and proceeded to entertain and educate the public all day with various forging demonstrations. Our shade tent featured hundreds of hand forged knives, tomahawks, and other items for display and many of those were for sale to the public. Wayne Byrd and other members made a number of sales, accompanied by a careful explanation of how the items were forged.

The entire exhibit was enhanced by the fact that many of our members were dressed for the part in old-time cowboy gear. Visitors were obviously drawn to the sight of old time blacksmiths (like Jerry Achterberg, Aaron Tilton, and Jerry Whitley) forging red hot iron at the anvil. It is a big part of Texas history and it really draws the interest of the public.

In additions, lessons were learned by our members, as blacksmiths traded information on forging

various items and learned new techniques. Dave Guerrero and Rudy Billings alternated between demonstrating for the visitors and demonstrating for the blacksmiths.

Exhibitions of this nature have become a major part of the Balcones Forge program over the last several years. We now participate in public forging each year at the Pioneer Museum in Fredericksburg, at Mission Espada in San Antonio, at the annual Zilker Park Festival in Austin, at "Up the Chisholm Trail" celebrations in Georgetown, and at the restored Railroad Depot in Rockdale. These demonstrations not only educate the public about the role of blacksmiths and blacksmithing, they also serve to educate us, as we share with each other what we have learned from blacksmiths before us.

For those who wish to be more involved in these events, a good set of "pioneer clothing" is a big help. In addition to being historically correct, it helps to draw the crowds and make an obvious statement about the historical significance of this work. Luckily, here in Texas, "pioneer clothing" is mostly just plain old cowboy gear. Our cowboy heritage is alive and well here, and pioneer clothing is not much different from what some of us wear every day! Much of what you need may be hanging in your closet!

For additional western historical clothing choices, grab your trusty computer and look under "cowboy action shooters" and "historical reenactors". If you are around Fredericksburg, stop by Texas Jack's Wild West Outfitter, or just look them up on the internet. You will find a wealth of "real cowboy duds" for both men and women. As any really good teacher can tell you, part of teaching is putting on a good show!

John Crouchet,
Balcones Forge Secretary

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TRADE ITEM

This will be a "Non-Trade Trade Item"

- A Draw Knife made from a file or rasp -

Because of the effort in this month's item, you will get to keep your own creation. The winning draw knife or spoke shave will receive a book by Mike Cox called "Time of the Rangers" as well as the admiration of your fellow blacksmiths. So make it pretty!

EDITOR'S SOAPBOX



photo by Chuck Hamsa

I must admit to being quite surprised when I learned that I had been awarded a Life Membership by Balcones Forge. In the real world life I lead far too few people take the time to say "thank you". It is the appreciation for what can be learned and the fellowship that can be shared that makes the blacksmithing community so important to me.

To be included with Harvey Wise, John Crouchet, Neil Hastings and the late Mr. Charlie is high praise indeed and I thank you all.

Unfortunately a family obligation will cause me to miss the June meeting. Somebody take some pictures!

Many thanks, Vince Herod, Editor

LEG VISE

Balcones Forge is on the look out for a leg vise to donate to the Waldorf School. Does anyone out there have an extra that could go to a good cause?

Please let one of the officers know if you do.

A THANK YOU NOTE

Dear Members of Balcones Forge,

Brian, Lyle and I, wish to thank you so much for having us for the Bluebonnet demo and classes. It was lovely to put a face to some of the names Brian has spoken of often.

John and Carolyn Crouchet opened their beautiful home to us and we were made to feel welcome and "at home".

Dave and Elise Guerreo somehow managed to provide truly delicious meals as well as get in some forging with Brian and Lyle late into the night. We slept comfortably, ate contentedly and arrived safely to and from the event in the company of the affable Jim Elliot.

Brian and Sue Murray did some bartering for Brian's anvil that Sue had bought at auction in 2004 to raise funds for Brian's trip to Austria, and now he has it back. Thank you Sue!

Oh and many thanks to everyone that out bid us at the auction, really what a fun night!

I can't say enough about the fun and inviting members of Balcones Forge. You worked together like family and put on an excellent event. The truly fantastic support given for Brian, Lyle and myself, was lovely icing on the cake.

We look forward to seeing many of you again soon, thank you for everything.

Sincerely,

Karen, Brian and Lyle

DO YOU WANT TO BE ON TV?

From: Powderhouse Casting <casting@powderhouse.net>

Subject: CASTING for the BEST Blacksmith in the country for a new reality competition TV series!

To: casting@powderhouse.net

Date: Friday, June 17, 2011, 2:53 PM

ARE YOU THE BEST BLACKSMITH IN THE COUNTRY?

Powderhouse Productions and the Discovery Channel are casting a new reality-competition TV series called BEST IN THE BUSINESS that will highlight and celebrate the great American Worker!

We are on a mission to find the best of the BEST, and to bring some long overdue recognition to the workers that make this country so colorful and so great!

If you think you're the BEST BLACKSMITH around, have GREAT ENERGY, a REALLY FUN, DYNAMIC PERSONALITY and some MAD SKILLS, contact us about being a CONTESTANT ON THIS TELEVISION SERIES!

To apply to be a contestant go to: http://www.jotform.com/pow_casting/bizcasting

HERE'S WHAT WE'LL NEED FROM YOU:

- BRIEF WRITTEN BIO
- What is your line of work?
- How long have you been doing what you do?
- What is your special "trick" or mad skill?
- What sets you apart from other people in your profession?
- Info on your background and family
- What do you do for fun?

Address and all contact information

- PHOTOS:
- 2 photos of you, 2 photos of your workplace
- 5-MINUTE VIDEO (Maximum)
- Talk directly to the camera and introduce yourself.
- TELL US about your background and why you'd make a great contestant. Be colorful!
- SHOW US your skills!!! Let's see exactly what makes you the BEST in your business! Have fun and be creative!

***PLEASE DO NOT PUT ANY MUSIC IN YOUR VIDEO CONTESTANT ELIGIBILITY:**

- You must be at least 18 years old to compete.

*Please note: All submission information, including photos, videos, & written submissions will become the property Powderhouse Productions and may be used for broadcast. Potential contestants that are invited to be considered for the casting process will be required to meet other eligibility requirements and execute additional releases and rules as a condition of their participation.



Scenes from the May 2011 meeting

Photos by Vince Herod



WWW.BALCONESFORGE.ORG

ABOVE: June trade items

BELOW: Dave Guerrero's new hammer and portable vise



Blacksmith Belt Buckle

Hands On Fly Press Project

NWBA Spring Conference

Enumclaw, WA

2007



This was a hands on fly press project at a NWBA, 3 day spring blacksmith conference in Enumclaw, WA, 2007. P-6 and P-4 fly presses were used. I had been contacted last winter about a hands on demo and thought about various projects, the belt buckle seemed to be best using a minimum of tooling and giving participants a chance to use the press and something to take home. I cut out 18 buckle parts before my trusty import bandsaw, 20 + years broke. As luck would have it, days before the conference, Tom Richards, a friend from Oregon called and volunteered to show and tell his tooling for his fly press, a P-6, same as the one in my shop. The demo was scheduled for Saturday afternoon, so having arrived Friday, mid day gave us time to look over tooling and talk about fly presses. Tom has super tooling and being a millwright/machinist/blacksmith everything he makes is first class and inventive. The demos and hands on went well.

By Gene Chapman

Wear Safety Glasses

Blacksmith Belt Buckle

Blacksmith Conference Hands On Demo Project



1/8" X 2 1/2" X 2 3/4" mild steel, 1/8" copper rivets and 3 1/4" of copper ground wire.



Mark both ends at 3/4".



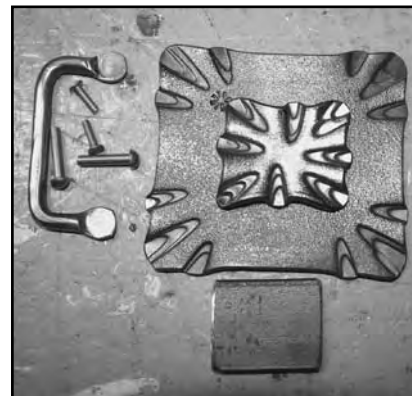
Bend both ends of wire 90 degrees.



About 1/4" is forged flat on the ends.



Buckle corners are fly press hot forged with tear drop shaped tool.



A small piece of 3/16 X 1 is hot forged using tear drop tool. Note: The smaller rivets were not used.

Wear Safety Glasses



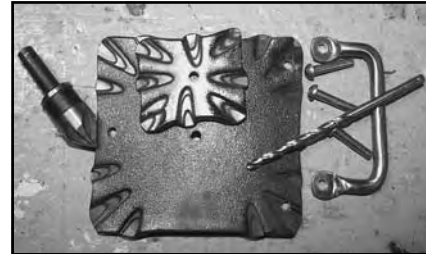
Buckle bending bottom tool made from 1/2" X 3" X 7" which was cold forged, about a 7" radius, with the fly press. A welded bottom piece of flatbar is for clamping in vise.



Buckle and center piece are bent hot in bottom tool by hammering lightly.



Parts shown before final assembly.



Drill belt pin hole, centerpiece holes and loop holes with a 1/8" drill bit. If the belt pin is soft soldered to the buckle, the hole is countersunk on the back.



I used top and bottom rivet sets on this buckle. Riveting was done with fly press.



This is a tool machined in a lathe used to lock the belt pin in the buckle. It has a .128" hole drilled in the end with a #30 drill bit. This gives some clearance for the 1/8" copper rivet. It's used in the fly press to lock the pin in place. This is done cold. The tool was made from automobile lug wrench and is heat treated. It's faster than soldering.

Rivets are available from Jay Cee Rivets,
<http://www.rivetsinstock.com/>
 Wear Safety Glasses



Here is the business end of the lock rivet tool and a test piece. It squishes a donut shaped valley around the rivet, locking it in place. This tool was made after the conference, and will replace soldering belt pins.



Although not part of the hands on project this is how I dish copper medallions for buckles. These are done with fly press using old trailer ball tool and dished bottom die. These old commercial upsetting dies were bought at a blacksmith conference years ago. Several layer of card stock in bottom die helps to prevent marring the forged medallion face.



Demo buckle along with five others blacksmith buckles.. Normally the belt slot is milled out but wanted the hands on project to be done with the fly press. The bottom right buckle has a hot stamped anvil on it. Copper medallions go well with forged buckles.

Wear Safety Glasses

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The usual blacksmith conference doings, BS, tailgate sales, barbecue, tool swapping, BS, counting the gold in your wallet, whineing and snivelling about tool prices, BS, seeing old friends again, Mikes killer steamed clams, blacksmith stories and tall tales, the first liar ain't got a chance.

The press demo began with some questions, the one most asked was what is the tonage of the machine. I don't have a clue. The spec sheet doesn't answer that question. All I know is the more the wheel weight, the more they squish. Tooling was shown and explained, mostly Tom's as I brought little. A quick demo forging of one belt buckle corners was all that was needed, with everyone lining up to forge buckles and the small deco piece.

Copper ground wire was bent and ends flattened for the belt loop. Copper rivets were provided. Drilling and riveting could be done at home, wonder how many buckles will actually be completed. I know how that goes, there are a bucket of projects partly finished in my shop.



Wear Safety Glasses

JUNE MEETING DIRECTIONS

To get to James Helms' shop: **925 W. Russell Place, San Antonio, TX 78212**

From downtown San Antonio (IH 35) take Hwy 281 N to E. Mulberry and turn west (left) to San Pedro. Turn south (left) on San Pedro and turn right on W. Russell Place. Three blocks down is 925 just before the railroad tracks. Park along the street, but not too close to the tracks.

James' # is 210-209-1549.

Check out James' blog entries at: www.helmforge.com

Saturday, June 25th , 9:30am.

If you want to see how you can create a fantastic shop by making a lot of your own equipment, such as power hammers and hydraulic presses, don't miss the June meeting at James' shop. You'll be impressed!

James does beautiful work, so you won't want to miss that either.

Come make it a day in San Antonio -- bring the whole family!

Google Maps and Mapquest are your directional friends.

Return Service Requested

