



Blacksmiths of Central Texas

President's Corner

March 2010

A BIG MONTH FOR PUBLIC DEMOS

March is set to be a big month for public blacksmithing demonstrations. Balcones Forge will be forging iron for the Pioneer Museum, the Rockdale forge, and the 53rd Zilker Gardens Festival.

Public service is nothing new to Balcones Forge. We have a long, proud tradition of representing Blacksmithing in Central Texas. At our own expense, we built (or rebuilt) blacksmith shops for the Pioneer Museum in Fredericksburg, Mission Espada in San Antonio for the National Park Service, the forge in Zilker Gardens for the City of Austin, and most recently, we lent a hand to the forge at the beautiful Rockdale Railroad Depot. Balcones members have built forges, tongs, nail headers, forge tools, and slack tubs. And we donated it all, free of charge. Then we came back and ran those forges for the public!

A lot of fine blacksmiths volunteered a tremendous amount of work to make that all happen. Some of those folks are still working with us today. Some have moved away, some have passed on to better places. We are pleased and proud to carry on that tradition now, sharing the history and fascination of iron forging with others.

A lot of you have volunteered your time this month to help run those forges. It is a good thing you are doing and it means a lot to the public, to us, and to the organizations we are helping. Thank you, each and every one. We literally could not do it without you!

This year, April is more about us and less about the public. We have plans for a terrific Bluebonnet Demo with everybody's favorite cowboy blacksmith, Gordon Williams. This is a great opportunity to learn a lot in just two days from a real master at the art! If you have friends who are interested in getting a real dose of forging at its finest, invite them along! We guarantee an impressive show!

Vittles will be provided by none other than Artz Ribs, our favorite blacksmith restaurant! *(continued on page 2)*



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PRESIDENT'S CORNER *Continued*

I want to urge you to call or email Rudy Billings now to sign up for the Bluebonnet Demo (rudy@balconesforge.org). We need to get a good head count so that we can plan ahead for enough meals.

For those who may not be familiar with our famous yearly demos, this is a mighty big party! Each year we bring in the finest blacksmiths in America --or the world --and put on a two-day seminar/demonstration of blacksmithing skills. After a full day of fancy forging and blacksmith tricks, we have a big dinner Saturday evening, followed by our Balcones Forge Annual Auction. This is always a lot of fun and also our big fund raiser for the next year. Then, Sunday morning, we start again with more forging until about lunch time when we finally give it up and go home, tired but happy! It's going to be a great time. Don't miss it!

John Crouchet

ABANA BOARD ELECTIONS

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 pas-

sion 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!

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.

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

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NEXT BALCONES FORGE MEETING MARCH 27-28 - 9:00 AM

Zilker Blacksmith Shop, Zilker Botanical Garden, 512 Barton Springs Road, Austin, Texas 78704

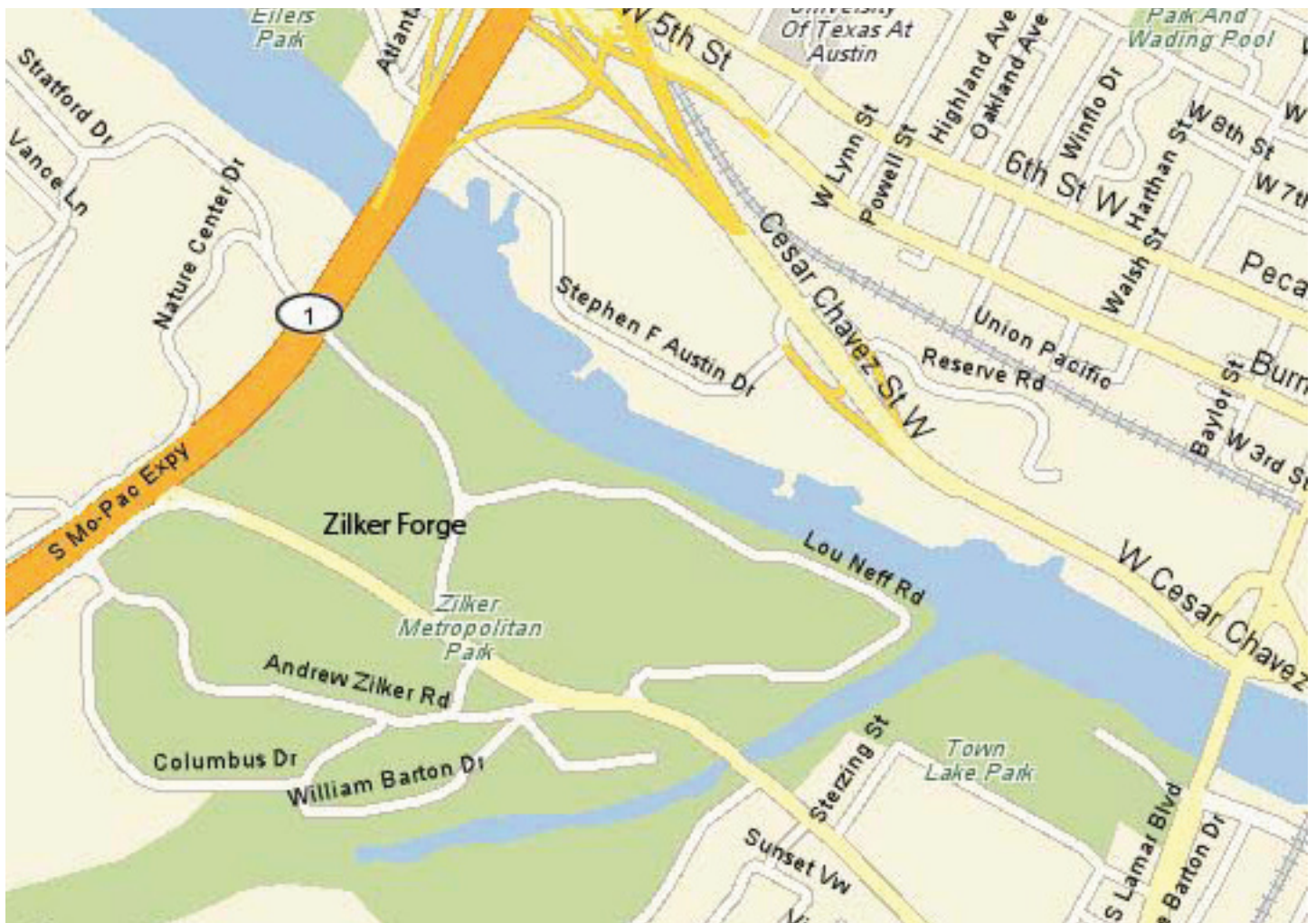
We have coordinated our meeting with the Zilker Garden Festival, their annual two-day event. Plan to come either or both days, bring your hammer and join in the fun. Besides blacksmithing fun, there will be flower and plant vendors, garden things, music and food. Blacksmiths only need to tell the parking attendant and the ticket takers that you are blacksmiths to get in the parking area and past the gate. This will work for both days.

Trade Item



A Decorative Punch

Create a punch that can be used for adding some flair to your hot iron. Maybe a leaf, heart, or a fancy squiggle. Usually made from high-carbon steel, a coil spring from an old car makes a good punch.



“HOMEMADE” FORGE BUILDING

by Jim Schmidt

Since last spring, I have been volunteering at American Youthworks in Austin, teaching basic blacksmithing. My students and I have recently constructed to a “kitchen sink” forge to replace our great old forge that was stolen in December. The old forge had a ¼ hp electric blower on it that I bought at the Bluebonnet Auction last March.

The forge we built consists of a cast-iron double kitchen sink that I bought at Habitat Restore for \$10 and a frame welded together by one of the students from an angle-iron bookshelf. The plans for this apparatus were from a 1941 Popular Mechanics and even included a sheet metal hood layout that I cut out of a six-inch diameter, six foot long stove pipe. We laid fire bricks and fire clay to make the bowl shallower and able to take a good heat since the sink was too deep and porcelainized. We are using an old, small vacuum cleaner in reverse for a blower. It's attached to a T-pipe welded to the sink drain with a flue-type valve to regulate the air. We added casters so we can move the forge inside when not in use. The last week in January, we fired up the forge and it works really well.

If anyone would like to volunteer to help teach or donate steel, tools, coal or coke, please contact Jim Schmidt at 512-968-1336 (or jimsch9999@aol.com) or Parc Smith, 512-423-2887 at American Youthworks.

American Youthworks is a nonprofit organization that teaches high school dropouts academic and vocational skills so they can get their GED and provides help with college expenses for those who complete the projects. The students earn money by doing projects for local agencies. The blacksmithing program is new.



Think About Giving

Our annual Balcones Forge Bluebonnet Demo and Auction is coming up in April. As you know, we don't ask for much money from our members all year, even though we have continuing expenses to run our organization and make the donations and educational gifts that we make each year.

How do we do it? Well, you know that our dues are pretty low. We don't pass the hat. Nobody reaches in your pocket at every meeting. No, folks, we make an effort to keep Balcones really affordable for everyone. We do that by making our operating money at the big Bluebonnet Demo each year. Here is how that works:

No, Balcones Forge does not get rich on your entry tickets to the big demo! In fact, ticket prices usually don't even cover all the expenses of bringing the demonstrator and running the show! (It's mighty expensive to fly in a famous demonstrator and set up a big show and dinner.) Is it the big price for that great dinner? No again, Grasshopper! The dinner price may not even cover the whole cost of setting up and putting on the dinner!

THEN WHERE DOES THE DARN MONEY COME FROM???????

Well, pardners, here's the secret: The money comes from the big old Balcones Forge Auction after dinner. Yep. That's it. It's Auction money or nothing! Think about it. We run all year off of that hit. We pay for the Free Summer Demo off that money. We donate to ABANA. We help out schools and public venues and do our charitable giving off of that money. And we make that money by auctioning off items YOU donate. It's pretty simple. **NO DONATIONS, NO MONEY.**

So what do we need? You guessed it, **AUCTION ITEMS!!!!** Get going! Make something we can sell. Tongs, hammers, chisels, tools, nail headers, tool boxes, anything you can think of that blacksmiths would buy. And look around your shop. What have you got that you can donate? Got an extra anvil? How about a spare blower or tools or some big old cool iron? Make a scroll jig or a nice hardy tool. Just DO SOMETHING. This is where we all pull together, folks.

Make it happen. Thanks. John Crouchet, President

DUES ARE DUE

The Balcones Forge membership runs from January through December, which means if you haven't paid lately, you'll be missing out. It's that privilege thing again. \$15 (until April) covers you and your entire family. **Dues increase to \$20 April 1st.** See Rudy at the next meeting, or send to:

Balcones Forge, 1906 Rampart Circle, Austin, TX 78727

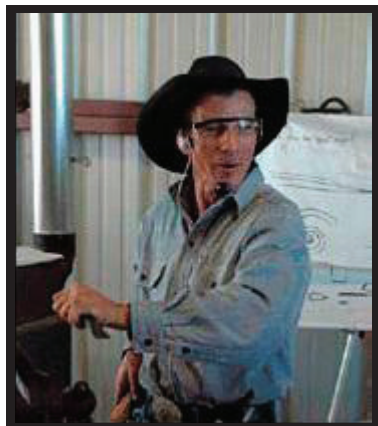
Remember to make your check out to "Balcones Forge."

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

Balcones Forge Spring Workshop

featuring

GORDON WILLIAMS



April 24-25, 2010

Marble Falls, Texas

BALCONES FORGE is pleased to bring everyone's favorite cowboy blacksmith **GORDON WILLIAMS** to central Texas for our 10th annual two-day demonstration. A dynamic demonstrator for many ABANA chapters across the country, Gordon has been blacksmithing since 1990. He is the resident instructor for the Blacksmithing classes at Pieh Tool Company in Camp Verde, Arizona. If you were lucky enough to be one of Gordon's students or saw his demonstration here in 2008, then you know how dynamic and knowledgeable he is. You'll come away with very practical blacksmithing techniques that will expand your skills and creativity.

The Balcones Forge Workshop will present a delicious BBQ dinner Saturday night, catered by our friends **ArtZ Rib House** from Austin. Dinner will be followed by our famous annual **Balcones Forge Auction!** Donate and bid on fantastic blacksmithing tools or maybe Gordon's latest creation!

Times: Saturday: 9:00–Noon – Morning Demo
Noon–1:00 – Lunch: Since Marble Falls is about 20 minutes away, it is recommended to bring a sack lunch or order a Schlotzsky's sandwich for \$5. Drinks provided by Balcones Forge.
1:00–5:00 – Afternoon Demo
6:00 – Delicious ArtZ BBQ dinner, only \$15
7:15 – If you do not attend the dinner, please join us at this time for the fantastic auction
Sunday: 9:00–1:00+ – Demo

Our hosts are John and Carolyn Crouchet at their beautiful Sycamore Creek Ranch. **Directions: From Austin:** Hwy 71 northwest to Hwy 281. **From San Antonio:** Hwy 281 north to Marble Falls. Cross the Colorado River into Marble Falls, count 5 stoplights and turn right (east) at Ranch Road 1431. Check your odometer and go 5.6 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, crossing 4 cattle guards before you see the big metal shop on your left. Welcome! Lost? Call John at 830-798-3710.

For more info contact:

John Crouchet, 830-798-3710 or John@TexasWroughtIron.com

Rudy Billings, 512-461-7375 or Rudy@BalconesForge.com

Jerry Achterberg 210-661-3293 or treefarm@swbell.net

Hotel Accommodations:

Hampton Inn on the Lake, 704 First St., 830-798-1895

Quality Inn, 1206 Hwy 281, 830-693-7531

Best Western, 1403 Hwy 281, 830-693-5122, 800-528-1234

Hill Country Inn, 1101 Hwy 281, 830-693-3637

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

ABANA Conference News

February 2010 - Vol. 2 Issue 1

Notice: Call for 2010 Conference Gallery Submissions!

2010 ABANA Conference will host an open to the public Gallery event in conjunction with the Memphis conference. This is your call for Gallery submissions. The conference Gallery will host an opening reception, inviting the public to an evening event and the opportunity to meet the artists.

We invite you to consider donating your Gallery items for the conference auction. Funds raised by the conference auction go to support the mission of your association and are gratefully accepted.

Please be sure to indicate whether your Gallery item is for "Display Only", "Auction Item", or "For Sale by Artist". Please Contact Steve Williamson for Gallery Submissions

Not attending the 2010 Conference? Well there is still a way for you to display your item(s) in the Gallery and/or donate an item for the Auction. Contact Steve Williamson to find out how! Is the piece you want to display in the Gallery work that is too big to ship or a project that has been installed? We will have an area setup for poster size display, it's simple to do and all you need are high resolution digital images to send to a large format printer. Contact Williamson to find out how!

Gallery Submissions Coordinator

Steve Williamson
3434 Pulaski Hwy
Columbia, TN 38401

H: 931-381-7910
Cell: 931-374-1190
sslw2@aol.com

**Gallery Open to Public
"Green Coal" Forges
Memphis Style Banquet
Top Demonstrators
Tailgate Heaven
Vendors for the Craft
Lectures & Workshops**

"We will preserve a meaningful bond with the past. We will serve the needs of the present, and we will forge a bridge to the future. Function and creativity is our purpose. Our task is great and so is our joy."

Dimitri Gerakaris, 1973



**Agricenter
International**

**Memphis
Tennessee**

June 2-5 2010

Log on ABANA.org website and sign-up for Constant Contact emails, email address in the box at the bottom of the home page, click on "Get ABANA Email". You will receive periodic ABANA 2010 Conference News.

The ABANA 2010 Conference will be held at the Agricenter International in Memphis, TN. Located at 7777 Walnut Grove Road, from I-240, on the east side of Memphis, take Exit 13 and drive east on Walnut Grove Road approximately 4.2 miles to Farm Road and turn south, go .1 mile.



Artist-Blacksmith's Association of North America, Inc.
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February 1, 2010

To: All ABANA Affiliate Presidents

Subject: Future Direction of the Association

Fellow Presidents, the Artist Blacksmith's Association of North America, Inc. has some 83 Affiliate groups in North America and several foreign countries as an international presence.

As most of you are aware, the Association has struggled forward over the last several years.

Beginning with the Anvil Shooting controversy, then the Seattle Conference that did not go as expected, then the canceled 2008 New York Conference, the Association has struggled to maintain membership numbers to support the mission.

Over the last couple of years there has been a complete turnover of the Board of Directors and those who stepped forward are part of the current makeup of the Association leadership that have endeavored to turn the tide towards a more favorable future for ABANA.

Here are just a few items I'd like to point out that exemplify the efforts of your ABANA Board of Directors since 2007:

- Sent boxes of past editions of the Anvil's Ring to Affiliates, saving hundreds \$ in storage costs.
- Created the "Members Only Discount Program, giving members discounts from Vendors.
- Introduced an affordable Health Insurance Program for members to choose coverage needed.
- Reduced the membership dues for two year membership, saving money out of your pocket.
- Consolidate the mailing of the Anvil's Ring with the Hammer's Blow to reduce costs
- Continued to make improvements to the publication content and added new articles.
- Planned & will Host with Affiliate support the 2010 ABANA Conference in Memphis June 2-5.
- Introduced bulk purchasing of memberships for the Affiliates to buy at a reduced fee & resell.
- Created a new class of membership for Educational Institutions, with several student benefits.
- Created the "ABANA Blacksmith Heritage Award" to recognize those who strive to increase the "Public Knowledge and Awareness of the Craft".
- Introduced 8 new Affiliate organizations to the ABANA family network of groups.
- Revised the ABANA Bylaws, adding term limits, clarified articles and general improvements.
- Created, analyzed, and compiled results of the first ever ABANA Membership Survey.
- Began to revitalize the Journeyman Program with the goal of creating a complete and comprehensive educational program for Blacksmiths of all interest levels.
- Contracted with a "Professional Management" firm to oversee operations of Central Office.
- Instituted a new "Official" membership mass communication tool called Constant Contact.

This is just the short list of accomplishments your ABANA Board of Directors have completed for the benefit of the membership. There have been several additional areas where regular time and effort have been spent, such as “regular” Affiliate messages from your Board of Directors. The Association website has been maintained on a more regular basis, calendar items get posted, announcements for the benefit of the membership get posted, emails to the Board of Directors get answered and the level of service from your Central Office staff has been improved.

So, where do we go from here? This is my personal request to you for input for the future direction of the Association. Here are just a few questions I’m asking of the Affiliate Presidents:

- What can the Association do to better serve the needs of the Affiliate group?
- What is the role that the Affiliate group would like to see ABANA fill?
- What “Educational Programming” does the Affiliate group want ABANA to develop?
- How can we accomplish our “common goals” working together to benefit all Blacksmiths?

These are my four “Big” questions, but I’m sure that you too will have some ideas of your own and I’d like to hear any suggestions, solutions to problems, advice, comments, general criticisms, rants, raves, pet peeves.....etc.

In closing, please be on the lookout for an Affiliate Survey, soon to be completed by Peyton Anderson the 2010 Affiliate Relations Committee Chair. Your input for this survey will help your Association leadership identify important baseline information about your Affiliate group. If you or a representative of your Affiliate group will be attending the 2010 Conference in Memphis, we will be hosting a round table discussion with the ABANA Board & the Affiliates Leadership. Please consider attending this event

Feel free to call me at any time, email or write to me.

Sincerely,



Rome H. Hutchings, President
Artist Blacksmith’s Association of North America
Chairman, ABANA Member Services Division
The Prairie Forge
13633 Ferman Ave NW
Clearwater, MN 55320
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(763) 878-1720 Fax
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ABANA Central Office
15754 Widewater Drive,
Dumfries, VA 22025-1212
Phone: 703-680-1632
Fax: 703-680-6222
abana@abana.org



President John Crouchet starts the meeting with a few announcements

Scenes from the February Meeting

Did you make a trade item?





Hot as a forge!



Photos by
Jerry Whitley

Balcones Forge Spring Workshop

featuring **Gordon Williams - April 24-25**

Please print clearly

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Yes, I prefer the electronic version of the BF newsletter. (Members will be notified by email when the latest newsletter has been posted.)

Current Member \$45 _____
\$50 at the door

2010 Membership if unpaid. \$20 _____

Non-member \$65 _____

Yes, I wish to become a BF member

Saturday Evening Meal... \$15 _____

Total _____

****Please register by April 1****

Make check payable to **Balcones Forge.**

Send to Rudy Billings,

1906 Rampart Circle, Austin, TX 78727

PLEASE READ AND COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING RELEASE FORM: FORM MUST BE SIGNED AND DATED BY EACH MEMBER, GUEST AND PARENT OR GUARDIAN OF ANY MINOR IN ATTENDANCE.

In consideration of the Balcones Forge Blacksmith Association providing demonstrators and making these demonstrations available and granting permission to enter the area of said demonstration, I, individually and as parent or guardian of the minor child attending such demonstration, hereby waive all claims for damage and/or loss to my person or property, or the person or property of such minor child, which may be caused by an act, or failure to act of the Balcones Forge Blacksmith Association, its officers, directors, agents or employees and the hosts and demonstrators. I understand that there are inherent dangers in blacksmithing and I assume all risk of all dangerous conditions in and about such demonstration and waive any and all specific notice of the existence of such conditions. By signing this waiver, I acknowledge that I have read and understand this waiver.

X

Date

Return Service Requested

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