



Balcones Forge Dispatch

May 2014

MAY 17 - 9:00

“Swing on the Square”
in San Marcos



Officers

President

Matt Czosnek
mattczosnek@gmail.com
512/609-9724

Vice-President

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

Treasurer

Rudy Billings
Rudy@BalconesForge.org
512/461-7375

Secretary

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



Editor

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

Open Forge -- bring your entire forge or at least your favorite hammer. And don't forget to bring the whole family. We will be forging on the courthouse square in historic Downtown San Marcos. From the boot-tapping sounds of Western Swing (the official state music of Texas) and works of local artisans, to authentically Texan events and activities, this two-day festival revels in state pride and brings thousands of visitors to historic downtown San Marcos. Formerly the Texas Natural and Western Swing Festival, in 2014 the event will be bigger and better than ever, featuring more live music by dozens of Texas Swing legends and exciting activities for the entire family. The festival will now feature more local artists and genres, new exhibitions, and western-themed games.

<http://www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us/index.aspx?page=991>

APRIL SECRETARY'S REPORT

Activities started about 9am. Several Balcones blacksmith's set up tables and displayed some quality, handcrafted items. Several people set up open forges and the blacksmithing began. Many admirers with many questions as well as praises of the pieces on exhibit. Tom Leining arrived in a unique, antique model Ford - not sure if it was an A or T, but he did take a few of the ladies for a spin around the complex.

Dominic Shaw, a member of the board for the Pound House welcomed the crowd and urged anyone that wanted to put on a demonstration was more than welcome to do so. Jim Ferrell, the resident blacksmith fielded questions about the 1800's coal forge. The great granddaughter and great, great granddaughter were on hand to give tours of the home Dr. Pound had built. House filled with many artifacts that he used to provide medical care to area residents. The town of Dripping Springs was hosting their annual spring gala and the place was quite crowded with people having lots of fun. Balcones forge members displayed show & tell items that were representative of something 100 plus years old. Mr. Ferrell judged a pair of tongs made by Sue Murray as the winner. Rudy provided a small anvil as the prize. Really nice pair of tongs hand forged from spring steel.

Jerry Achterberg called a meeting to order and thanked everyone for the big turnout. Reminded any Balcones member to utilize the vast resources available from our library. He reemphasized the May 17 Texas Swingfest to be held in San Marcos.

Many thanks to Dominic and Jim for their hospitality and stories about Dripping Springs and the Pound House.

Tim Tellender, Secretary, Balcones Forge



Photos provided by Jerry Achterberg



The Balcones Forge Newsletter is written by the editor except as 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.



THE BALCONES FORGE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Matt Czosnek, President
Jerry Achterberg, Vice President
Rudy Billings, Treasurer
Tim Tellander, Secretary

John Crouchet
Jim Elliot
Vince Herod, Editor
Alan Lee
Jeff Lee
Jerry Whitley

SWAGE BLOCKS AND CONES

Gerald Franklin is the man you need to talk to if you need a block or cone. These are great items at a fair price! Check them out on the Saltfork website:

www.saltforkcraftsmen.org

Contact Gerald at:

blackbullforge@yahoo.com

580-467-8667

A GREAT DEAL

Balcones Forge has Mark Aspery Books!

All 3 volumes:

- I - Basic Blacksmithing
- II - Leafwork
- III - Joinery

\$50 each -- no tax, no shipping, normal price \$59

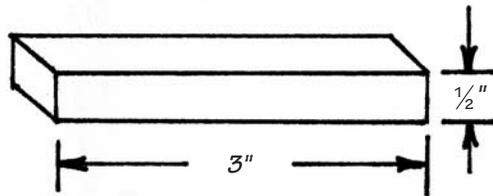
Send your requests to Rudy@BalconesForge.org

-- The Bronze Age --
returning
Spring 2015

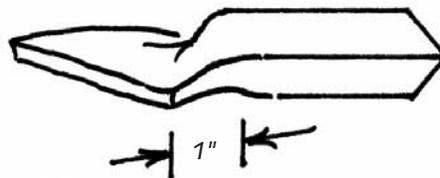
Dorothy's Hummingbird

*from Dorothy Stiegler's bronze-forging class at Adam's Forge earlier this year
notes edited by Mike Mumford*

To make a hummer we will see
Use one-half square
Three inches is fair
A nice little bird this will be



Let's first make the tail for fun
Hold the stock on the diamond
Step back one inch
Half face - a cinch
Spread wide and you're done



Spread a bit more with the pein
Axial blows will be seen
Just to suggest
Feathers is best
For a tail about one-eighth lean



Now no longer want a bar
We'll round using process S-O-R
The body we'll bend
While holding tail end
Gentle bend - don't go too far



Now to start the nose
Three-eighths back we goes
First make a step
Use plenty of pep
And be glad it doesn't have toes



Next forge end into a triangle
Keep faces plane don't let dangle
If chin goes down
Hey leaves a frown
Starts to look good gives a tingle



Dorothy's Hummingbird

Begin beak now to draw
From chin outward we saw
Keep top a smooth line
Then gee! All will be fine
People around begin to go "awww"



Round beak next - use S-O-R
A good long beak what we are
Wanting to see
Smooth curves will be
Best for it to reach far



Clean up and then
Wing next we will bend
To show life we gave
Wing a nice "S" wave
Weld or add with a pin ♣



Bronze Hummingbird

created by Dorothy

Photo by Pat Downing

HOW TO GIVE AN EFFECTIVE BLACKSMITHING DEMONSTRATION

I may not be a particularly good blacksmith but, without sounding conceited, I do a pretty good job when demonstrating for the public. I'm no expert, but I generally draw pretty good crowds, relative to the number of people walking by, and they often stay for extended periods of time. A certain amount of that is just the natural lure of blacksmithing itself, of course, but a lot of it is due to some techniques I use to give a compelling demonstration. Since I've seen others who, in my opinion, are less effective at it, I thought I'd pass along some of the theories I've developed. Much like most of life lessons I've learned, however, they might only work for me, so be forewarned. The underlying principle behind my demonstrations is that you need to mix entertainment and education, roughly equally. Very few people, even fellow blacksmiths, will be interested in a completely dry dissertation of an arcane topic punctuated with long silences and a lot of waiting for something to heat back up. If you don't want an audience, you might as well just stay at home and avoid wasting everyone's time. Similarly, if all you do is entertain the crowd but you don't tell them anything informative about blacksmithing, then there's really not much point lugging all that heavy equipment there and back; puppets, for example, would be a lot easier on the back.

Tip #1: Vary the length of your talking points

To fall back to the somewhat unfortunate analogy of the comedy club, you'll notice that comedians don't immediately launch into a joke that takes 10 minutes to get to the punch-line, they start with short bits and oneliners. When the audience first connects with you, you need something to draw them in quickly. This might be a quick tidbit about how hot the fire is, how long it takes to boil water when you quench, how few blacksmiths there are now and how it almost disappeared altogether in the '70s, things like that, a few sentences at most. Once you have their attention, you can delve into longer, more detailed topics.

Tip #2: Have some prememorized stories

Going back to the time of Homer (not Simpson, the Greek guy who wrote the Iliad and the Odyssey), storytellers have relied on having memorized a series of short stories and lines. Doing so allows you to talk on auto-pilot while the majority of their attention is on another task, which is handy when that other task is complex or, say, capable of burning you badly. In terms of informational topics, my personal go-to set includes the principles of heat treating, the history of the North American blacksmith, the history of blacksmithing in general, layered steel, forge welding and how it compares to other forms of welding (arc, gas, solid state, V), the properties of iron, steel and various alloys, how to get started in blacksmithing, the difference between blacksmithing and farriers, why words like 'blacksmith' and 'wrought iron' came to be and what they mean, how blacksmithing changed in the 19th and 20th centuries. In terms of stories, my personal go-to set includes: why blacksmiths tap the anvil, why people hang horseshoes outside of buildings, King Arthur and the blacksmith, Mr. Huntsman and the case of industrial espionage. Your list will be different, of course, but try to know them well enough you can tell them without having to think too much about them.

Tip #3: Don't stop talking for long

I've alluded to this already, but very few people are going to find staring into the fire waiting for something to happen again to be interesting. Most demonstrations are held in places where people have an abundance of choices for things to see and do, so if you aren't holding their attention, they'll move on. You can rail all you want about the attention span of people in today's society or you can just accept it and work with it.

Tip #4: Tailor your talking points to the audience

There is no point trying to tell a 6-year old about the formation pearlite, austenite, ferrite, cementite, martensite and bainite, and telling a story about King Arthur's court to a grizzled 80-year old farmer will generally get an equally poor response. Try to know something about a variety of topics and, if in doubt, keep throwing out tidbits until you get a reaction that tells you which one your current audience finds interesting. Blacksmithing is inherently interesting to most people, odds are you'll find something.

Tip #5: Use humour

I really don't want to overemphasize this point, because the last thing you want to do is trivialize the information you are presenting, but there is almost no better way to engage an audience than to sprinkle in some humour. You aren't trying to make them laugh out loud, by any means, you just need chuckles. This should be pretty easy, they aren't expecting humour from someone holding a hammer, so you don't have to be particularly funny to get a good reaction. Trust me, or ask anyone who has had to demonstrate beside me, you can get a laugh from some pretty weak material.

Tip #6: Make something real

People want to see something impressive, not somebody repetitively doing something that looks easy. Making nails and Shooks is easy and fast, but it trivializes what we really do. Remember, there is no law saying that you have to start something new and finish it before the crowd in front of you moves on. Take a project you wanted to work on anyway and make a part of it. Ideally, bring the project with you, or at least a part of it, so that you can explain how the part you are making fits into it. This will give the audience a much more realistic idea of what your work is, how long it takes and how much effort and skill

goes into it. It helps to become a great blacksmith, which unfortunately I can't tell you how to do or I'd be one myself.

Tip #7: Do something flashy

Fair or not, making a square corner or a diagonal passthrough, or any one of a dozen difficult tasks that only other blacksmiths would appreciate, won't get you many points with most people. Making sparks fly in a forge weld, doing a twist in the vice, hitting large stock with a heavy hammer, quenching steel in water, making a knot out of steel, these things have a wow factor that will keep your audience interested. I'm not suggesting you spend your entire demonstration pandering, by any means, but sometimes you need a little sizzle with your steak.

Tip #8: Be real

Other than skill and humour, people are most engaged by sincerity. You clearly enjoy blacksmithing, as evidenced by the fact that you got up early in the morning, packed hundreds of pounds of equipment into a vehicle, drove to the site and then unpack it again, all for the privilege of demonstrating for a limited number of people and getting paid either nothing or very little. If you can convey even a part of how much you enjoy blacksmithing, your audience will connect with you. Above all, you want that connection, an audience that is rooting for you will find your jokes funny, your stories interesting, your information compelling and your prices reasonable.

Dave Brandow



Tom Leining sure knows how to make an entrance.

photo by Jerry Achterberg

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

BALCONES FORGE
GENERAL TEXAS BLACKSMITHS