



Balcones Forge Dispatch

President's Corner

May/June 2019



Greetings!

Here we are again, its summer and as always, it's a dangerous time to be in the forge in Texas. Not only is it (usually) dry, its hot and getting hotter all the time. Please be careful in wooden structures and any type of

dry grass, keep the slack tub full, the fire extinguisher in working order and above all, stay hydrated! Heat exhaustion and heat stroke are very dangerous and some of the effects will stay with you for the rest of your life. Be safe!

Jerry Whitley will host the June meeting on the 29th at his Rystic Forge in Devine where Balcones Forge will team up with the San Antonio Reforge group. Reforge is a group of vets that are teaching vets to make knives. It just doesn't get any cooler than that except they do it for free. Our plan is to have an open forge and work with these vets one on one to show them some of the other beautiful items that can be made in a coal forge. Please bring a coal forge and anvil if you can and be ready to work with a vet. Jerry is going to bring in sandwiches so bring a chair plan to stay for a while.

The trade item is something made from a piece 6" piece of 1/2" square stock. Jerry will have some extra pieces and you can work on your trade item at the meeting if you like.

**Please note: No meeting for July or August
– too hot to hammer!**

The next meeting will be September 22nd in Serbin. This is the Wendish Festival and this will be a Sunday. This is also an open forge and we can expect lots of visitors. Bring something for show and tell, something to sell, and something to donate to the silent auction, as well as your forge and anvil.

President's Message continued on page 2.



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President's Message continued.

Meeting Date is Saturday June 29

Please remember to send your forging articles to Vince for the BFD and to bring something for the Iron-in-the-hat auctions. Also, the elders or the old-timers are here to help you. We have probably already made the mistake that you are about to make and sometimes a simple question is a real timesaver or can even prevent an injury or accident (sometimes they're the same).

Stay safe and cool! See ya'll in Devine.

Jerry Achterberg – Pres. Balcones Forge

210-842-3049
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ABANA NEEDS DEMONSTRATORS

We “at ABANA” are looking to update our registry of quality demonstrators and would like your input. If you, or anyone you know, would like to be placed on our Demonstrator list:

<https://abana.org/demonstrator-list/#!directory/map>

Its absolutely FREE of charge, all we ask is that you regularly keep us updated with your information.

All you have to do is fill out this form:

<https://abana.org/demonstrator-list/demonstrator-form/>

Thank you.

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Balcones Forge – June Meeting

Our friends at STAB (<https://www.facebook.com/stabhq/>) are now working with Veterans through an organization called Reforged (<https://www.reforged.org/>). In an effort to continue with our mission to share the blacksmith craft with others, we are inviting Reforged and their Veterans out to our June meeting.

Rustyk Forge
Saturday – June 29, 2019
295 County Road 663
Devine, Texas – 78016
9:30 until ????

This will be open forge time. A time for you to watch your mentor.
An opportunity to get your questions answered. A time for them show you how it is done.
This is a chance for you to share what you know with others.
An opportunity for us to give back to our Veterans.

Lunch will be available – BBQ Sandwich & 2 Sides = \$10.00

Things to Bring

*** Safety Glasses**

*** Hearing Protection**

Tools & Steel (if you have them)

Lawn Chair

Sun Screen

Drinks (we will have water)

* Trade Item *

Don't worry about working on a Trade Item. We will be making our trade items here at our open forge. We will have 6" of ½" barstock for your quick project.

Come show us how it is done!

I will have two forges and several anvils available. If you can bring forge and anvil(s) to help out, that would be great.

For those that have not been to a Balcones event before, know that we are a family organization, so don't be afraid to bring the spouse and the kids.

THIRTY YEARS OF TABA

By Andy Quitner

A couple of years ago, I took the opportunity to attend ABANA's fortieth anniversary celebration (dubbed the first convention) in Columbus, Georgia. Although I hadn't been around artistic metalwork for forty years I have been around a few, and have come to know many of the founders (and others) through the ten years I served on the ABANA Board of Directors and attending a number of biannual conferences. Columbus was a nice city to spend a couple of days, particularly since the weather was good, and the outdoor establishments on the main drag in the historic district were fun. Glasses were raised and my goal of visiting with old friends was exceeded, not to say the amount of good beer that was quaffed!!

More importantly, the importance of ABANA's 40th anniversary was brought home over discussion with a couple of old friends and fellow smiths – particularly Dick Quinell (from England) and Peter Happney. First, you might wonder why someone would cross the big pond to attend a short convention – or more like a reunion - in Columbus, Georgia. To understand one needs to look back, worldwide, and see what was happening in the blacksmithing art and craft world at the period of time when ABANA was founded. The aftermath of WWII brought a lot of growth and modernization. There was some, perhaps more so in Europe than here, preservation but the common speak was new, bigger and better --a fact that is more evident in the good old USA, but to varying degrees visible elsewhere. As a result, some crafts were literally on the brink of dying out. The death of craft was occurring, perhaps, even more so in Europe. The old Guild system persisted on “secrets.” Techniques were not freely exchanged but usually closely guarded. And as the older generation began dying off, the newer generation – then what is now called the baby boomers – was buried in other pursuits and not otherwise able, or disposed, to learn these secrets of the trades. Blacksmithing was certainly one of the trade crafts that were on the brink of dying out.

In the United States Alex Bealer was one of the central sparks that began a literal sea of change. Through a book and demonstrations at college campuses (e.g. Southern Illinois University) the spark was given. Others picked it up, including some who still practiced the old art/craft. As a result of this peaking interest a gathering in Lumpkin, Georgia (a few miles from Columbus) occurred on March 16, 1973. Some of the Lumpkin gathering (along with Bealer's Southern Illinois visit) was filmed by Charles Kuralt – who opined, in that film, that blacksmithing would die out – but thankfully he was wrong. The sharing of information and opportunity to learn, hands on, was infectious. At that Lumpkin gathering, some of the original ABANA founders talked

about an organization, some way to keep the flame burning. Dimitri Gerakaris and others hammered out the details, and shortly thereafter ABANA became official.

All this, however, does not explain why someone would come from England to attend the ABANA anniversary. But the formation of ABANA did much more than fan the fire of blacksmithing in the United States. The original gatherings – and the earlier work of Alex Bealer – much akin to the social times was based on sharing your knowledge and talents. People were willingly and freely teaching others their techniques and discoveries – their secrets. Such a free sharing of education and information has been a foundational tenet of ABANA from the very beginning – and continues to this day. In Europe this was pretty much a foreign idea, but as ABANA members travelled, and others came here – the fire caught – the benefit of free sharing (as opposed to guild secrets) began to take hold. As a result there was an insurgence of metal work in Europe – sparked in part by the formation of ABANA.

Philosophically speaking this has really worked. The free sharing of education, information and techniques has taken the blacksmithing art up on an ever upward, spiraling curve. Just look through old magazines from the 70's and 80's and compare to the work going on now. It is truly astounding how much it has progressed and improved. We have done a masterful job of lifting each other up – and people can still make a living at it. The old guild system kept secrets so that no one else could steal your technique and ostensibly your business wasn't needed.

ABANA, and its local affiliations, carry on these traditions and more. At the convention banquet the Alex Bealer Blacksmith Association, carried on the tradition with a new, heart-warming twist. The group put together a project – individuals built hand wrought canes – any way they wanted – but generally on a military theme (Columbus, Georgia is the home of Fort Benning). A group of soldiers who work with those injured in the current wars were invited to the banquet, and the canes (15, I believe) were given to them to assist in their important work. I must say the presentation was accompanied by a standing ovation and quite a few leaky eyes. It was quite a site. Heart and iron forged together.

Historically, in Texas, Blacksmithing followed a similar path, sparked by the same ideals. As far as I can tell the first gathering of Texas blacksmith enthusiasts occurred at the “Salado Smithery” (Joe Pehoski) in April 1982. Joe Pehoski put together several top notch demonstrations including Roy Bellows, Francis Whitaker, Jim Wallace, Albert Haberman, and Vaclav Jaros. Perry Cann (Red Lion Forge) also put up his shop for gatherings and demonstrations, as did Rick Ross at his Guadalupe Forge in Ingram, where an annual Hammerfest began in August 1982. Don and Debbie Morelock published a quarterly newsletter – “The Forge Review” which became the “Texas Forge

Review” in 1986. In those days, Texas membership meant subscribing to the Forge Review (at a whopping \$5.00/year).

In 1985, shortly after moving to Texas and the Austin area, I attended the fourth annual Hammerfest in Ingram. After that I attended a couple of the early gatherings meeting up with a few others that believed it was time to formally organize and become an ABANA chapter. In 1987 Perry Cann, Nick Brumder, Wayne Meadows, Byrom Wehner, Ellis Burges and Charlie Schultz began assisting Don Morelock, as he was ready to resign from publishing the newsletter. In the summer of 1987 they formally began discussions the advantages (and disadvantages) of forming an ABANA chapter.

Ellis Burges took over The Texas Forge Review in 1988 (with publishing help by Perry Cann). In April 1988, at Perry Cann’s Red Lion Forge the first officers of the soon to be formed Texas Artist Blacksmiths’ Association were elected: President – Alan Lewis; Vice President – Perry Cann; Secretary – Andy Quittner; Treasurer – Frank Lilly. It was at Perry Cann’s shop that I first met Dimitri Gerakaris (one of the ABANA founders), whose wisdom and encouragement gave the final push for formal organization. Shortly thereafter, sitting around my dining room table, the newly elected officers put together the founding documents for the Texas Artist Blacksmith Association (“TABA”). TABA was incorporated by the State of Texas on February 21, 1989. It’s been thirty years since Texas organized a formal blacksmithing organization. TABA may be gone – but out of that organization, and a bit of twisting ABANA’s arm to allow more than one chapter per state, came the North Texas Blacksmiths, Houston Area Blacksmiths, the Four Corners Iron Munchers, East Texas Blacksmith Alliance, the San Angelo Blacksmith Fellowship (which, informally, predated TABA), and Balcones Forge. We have all done our part and as a result blacksmithing is alive and well in the great state of Texas!! I know that in my lifetime, blacksmithing in Texas will not die out, but will continue to grow and rise – **but we do need organizational help from the younger generations. It doesn’t take a lot of work, but some is necessary. You will find that the effort is rewarding beyond what you would have thought. Please heed the call.**

Hammer on - Andy Quittner

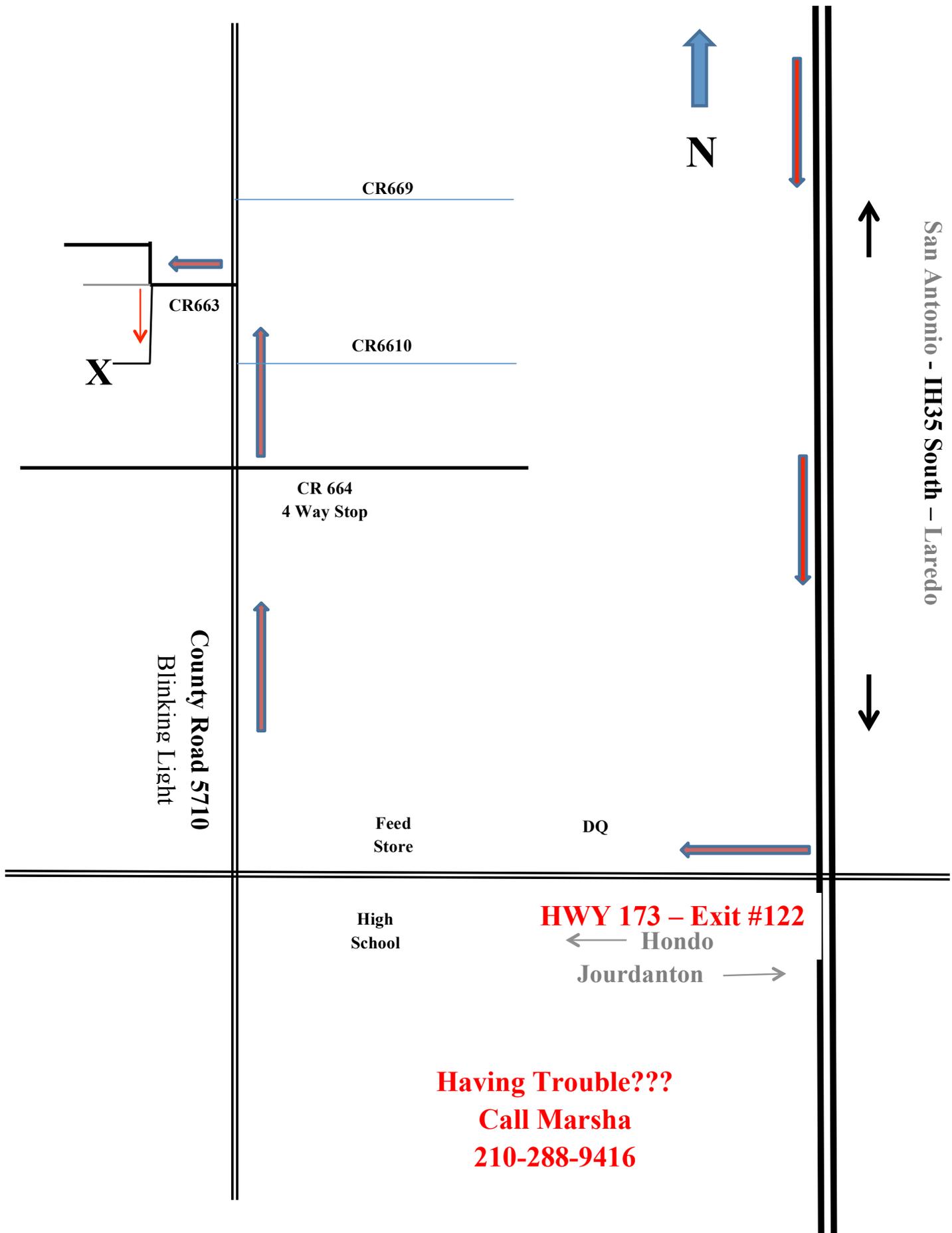


Early Registration is now open!

Register early, get a free T-shirt and save \$55.00!

ABANA 2020 Saratoga is on its way. It is THE blacksmithing get-together that you have been waiting for. We have a distinguished array of demonstrators in eight separate demo sites, a 20 forge teaching area, a youth teaching site, lectures, competitions, vendors, tailgating, family programs, members' gallery, auction and the Blacksmith's Arm Pub. There will be a Saturday night BBQ dinner, and coffee and donuts early mornings. Also there will be food available onsite all four days. Whether you are a novice, a part-time smith or a full time professional there will be something for everyone, including time to sit and share ideas, techniques, and learn from each others' experience. Even for those who are just curious about blacksmithing this is the place to see smithing at its best. You won't find a better place for all things blacksmith whether you come for just a single day or the entire four days.

WWW.BALCONESFORGE.ORG



Having Trouble???

Call Marsha

210-288-9416

HOW TO GET TO THE JUNE MEETING

Directions to:

295 County Road 663, Devine, Texas 78016
Marsha Whitley 210-288-3961

From San Antonio:

IH35 South to HWY 173 – Exit #122

Right – Through Devine to CR 5710

Yellow blinking Light

Right – Straight through 4-way stop to CR 663

Left – to where the pavement goes to the right.

Left- through the gap just past the mailboxes

(Don't go straight down the private rd.)

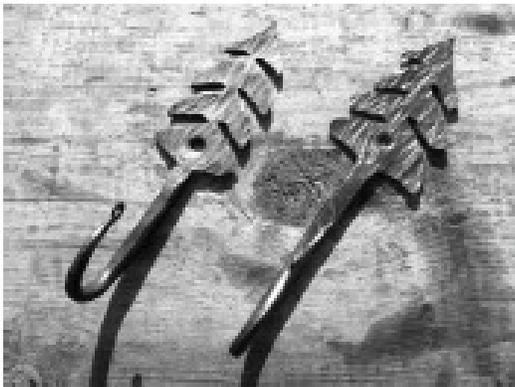
Cross the cattle guard and follow the road to the left.

**Pass the next gate to the left and continue to the next
cattle guard.**

You will see the house off to the right from here.

Don't be afraid to call for assistance.

Trust me, you will not be the first.

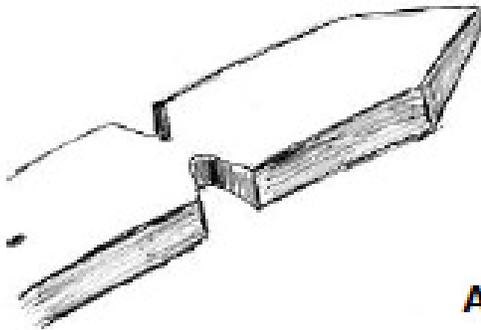


5 inches of 1/4"
x 1" Stock

Mark bar at 3
inches (for tree)
and 5 inches (2
inches for hook)

Tree Hook

By: Bill Clemens



A

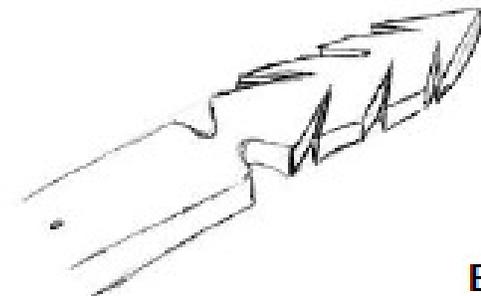
Photo A

Forge a short point on bar for top of tree. Keep thickness of point at about 1/8" thick.

Fuller at 3 inch mark to about 1/4 inch wide.

Photo B

Cool bar and mark cuts to form branches. Note spacing of cut increases from top to bottom of tree. Also as show the cuts are symmetric and about 1/4 inch short of center line of bar. One tree in picture was forged with staggered cuts, for a different look.



B

Photo C

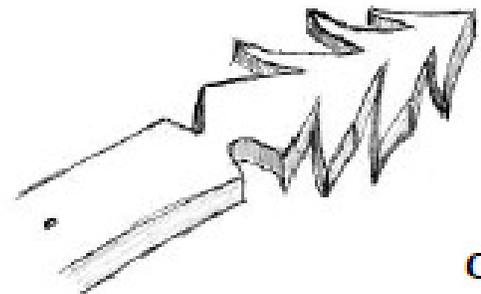
Finish cuts working only from one side and using cutting plate to protect anvil face.

Photo D

Use small cross pein hammer to forge tree. Start by fullering down the center of tree to help separate the branches.

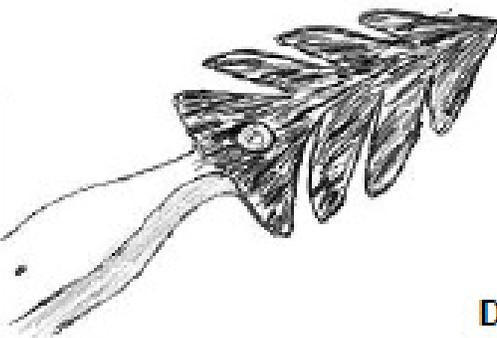
Use bull nose punch to make dimple and then punch mounting hole.

Cut bar at 5 inch mark and forge hook.



C

Bill Clemens is an ABANA Board Member and one of the organizers of this year's ABANA Conference in Rapid City, South Dakota. July 18-21. He is an excellent smith and has had work featured in the *Anvil's Ring*. At Jymm Hoffman's this fall, Bill attended the event and brought the "Angel Hook". This simple hook can be a great gift for those individuals that would appreciate a blacksmith item. Yes, you still have time to make that gift—no excuses!!!!



D

Infinitely Adjustable Vise Jaw Spacer

Michael Wollowski

In the photo below, you see an infinitely adjustable vise jaw spacer. I saw a vise jaw spacer that Clay Spencer made and wanted to build one for myself. His looked like a three dimensional cross and had six useable sizes. In the process of figuring out how to build it, I was wondering whether one could build one with more than six widths. After rejecting several designs, the idea of a circular wedge hit me. It provides infinitely many widths and affords extreme ease of adjustment: just turn the wedge to the desired size. Next, I had to solve the problem of how to hold it in the vise. Again, several ideas were rejected when the magnet occurred to me as the best option. It has several benefits: it moves with the vise jaws, it holds the spacer in its dialed-in position and when you are done with it, just place the magnet and wedge on the post.



The wedge is made from a 5" piece of $\frac{3}{4}$ " mild steel, forged into an 8" long wedge. The wedge tapers gradually to about $\frac{1}{16}$ " thick. When bending the wedge into a circle, it helps to bend the thick side first. The magnet is about 2" long and can be purchased at Harbor Freight.



Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip/PC: _____

Country: _____

Type of Membership

Regular\$55 Overseas\$65

Student\$45 Contributing.....\$100

Senior (65+)...\$50 Library\$45

\$5 discount for two year memberships and renewals

ABANA Chaper Affiliation: _____

Application may also be made at the ABANA web site:

www.abana.org

E-mail: _____

www url: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Credit Card Information _____

Visa Mastercard

Expiration Date: _____

Card# _____

Submit check, money order (US banks only), or by credit card: _____

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

