



Balcones Forge Dispatch

President's Corner

October 2017



Greetings!

According to Wikipedia: Critique is a method of disciplined, systematic study of a written or oral discourse. Although critique is commonly understood as fault finding and negative judgment, it can also involve

merit recognition, and in the philosophical tradition it also means a methodical practice of doubt.

If a smith that is well known to you asks for you to critique his or her work, they are looking for an honest opinion, not just a compliment. They are wanting feedback weather it's good or bad. There are many factors that make a forged item unacceptable that are in some cases easily correctable. If it's a copy or reproduction, it should closely resemble the original. A cooking utensil should be of a size that fits the hand and feels good in the hand, and have the proper finish. Some pieces will even hurt your eye if negative space areas are ignored. These are things that should be pointed out while critiquing an item as well as how to correct them.

If you ask a seasoned smith what he thinks of your work, be prepared for an honest answer. There is no negative feedback! Even if everything he has to say is bad, it is meant to be used to improve your work. Compliments are for spouses, friends and kids who are expecting kind words, not for those who truly want to improve their work. Do not ask the question if you know you are not going to like the answer, but if you value my opinion I will be more than happy to give it.



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Meeting Date is Oct 21

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TRADE ITEM

See President's Message for details!



SECRETARY'S REPORT JUNE 2017

The Balcones Forge meeting for June 24, 2017 was held at the blacksmith shop of Tom Leining in Wimberly, Texas. This was of special interest to me because it

was about knife making and the collaboration in which Tom aspired others in completing. Tom had already forged the Bowie knife from a farrier's rasp and did an excellent job profiling the shape as well as a splendid job grinding it with an angle grinder. FYI -- there were no knife makers grinders in that shop, and when he brought it to me for heat treating and tempering, there was no need for me to do anything else. This reminds me of the book entitled "THE \$50 KNIFE SHOP" by Goddard and although I haven't read it, Tom Leining is proof that basic blacksmithing is the fundamental element in making a functional knife. The beautiful handmade sheath was made by Dave Guerrero which means that Tom spent a lot of travel time going from shop to shop in order to demonstrate the final touch by forging the 'D' handle guard in front of a crowd, explaining each step while utilizing very basic tools like a hammer, punch, and chisel - oh, he did use a drill press but only to save time for the benefit of onlookers. Always, something humorous happens, like when Tom's drift went sailing through the air and he hollered out "Don't catch my drift - it's hot!" and then immediately commented "Catch my drift?" There must be hundreds of these everyday say-

ings that have come from blacksmiths. Included in the collaborative group was Jerry Achterberg who provided the epee wood for handle material. The finished piece was a fine example of a quality, handmade Bowie of which Tom generously donated for the 'Iron in The Hat' auction. Thank you Tom, for a memorable demonstration!

While Tom was doing his thing with the D guard, he also inserted a 6x3 inch piece of steel into the forge which was good and hot and ready to be forged on his newly acquired 250 pound power hammer. Ben Rath and Sue Howerter took turns showing us how to use this magnificent beauty. Thanks to Ben & Sue for the additional demo.

Jerry Achterberg indicated there was no July meeting and that August was open to suggestions. Ruth Carter mentioned a tour of the steel mill / foundry in Seguin and Mary Jo Emerick suggested a tour of the Austin Community College blacksmith shop. We are still open for suggestions, and as Jerry pointed out, if anyone would like to demo something they are proud of doing, please contact him. Vince Herod also encouraged the group to submit articles about anything you do and he will publish it in the Balcones Forge Dispatch.

The trade item (an 18 year old Balcones Forge tradition as pointed out by Jerry) for today was a spoon of which 6 were submitted. Some big for beans and stew and some small for applying flux for forge welding. I liked them all but was especially impressed with the fine details intricately hammered into those small and very useful tools. Thanks again to Tom for hosting our June meeting and thanks to everyone for attending.

Tim Tellander
Balcones Forge Secretary

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President's Message CONTINUED

Thanks to all who showed up in Serbin for the Wendish Festival. There were plenty of forges and anvils and items to show and no lack of food, music, or beer. Tim Tellander won the trade item competition with a beautiful kitchen knife that he donated to the silent auction, which was quickly snatched up by Wayne Byrd for \$100.00. Thanks to both you guys.

Next meeting: Cactus Juice stabilizing resin demo at Turn Tex Woodworks in San Marcos on October 21th. Owner Curtis Seibeck will host and the trade item will be a pair knife scales (handles) or a single piece of handle material for a hidden tang knife. Thank you Peter Garza for setting this up.

Happy hammering!

Jerry Achterberg
Balcones Forge President



photos by Tim Tellander

OCTOBER 2017 MEETING INFO

Cactus Juice stabilizing resin demo at Turn Tex Woodworks in San Marcos, October 21, 2017

For the October Balcones Forge will be meeting at Turn Tex Woodworks, Curtis Siebeck's shop in San Marcos. Curtis is the maker of Cactus Juice, as stabilizing resin and Alumilite, a casting resin. Cactus Juice is used by wood turners and knife makers to harden and stabilize wood. Stabilized wood is said to avoid cracks and other imperfections that are caused by the natural expansion and contraction of untreated wood scales. Curtis has agreed to host our October meeting to demonstrate the use of a vacuum chamber and the Cactus Juice resin. I'm sure we'll also be discussing Alumilite. It is used to make castings with things like punky wood or pine cones and other porous materials to make some cool designs for knife scales. We will meet at Curtis' shop at the address below on October 21, 2017.

Turn Tex Woodworks
531 Hunter Ridge
San Marcos, TX 78666
www.turntex.com

Trade item will be a pair of knife scales (handles) or a whole handle (hidden tang) out of any suitable handle material; wood, bone, antler.

Peter Garza



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photos by Vince Herod

SECRETARY'S REPORT SEPTEMBER 2017

The Bulverde Jubilee blacksmith demo by Balcones Forge members was held Saturday, Sept 16 and was hosted by Peter Garza on his property in the downtown area. This was our first time at this particular spot and it gave us the best advantage for the parade viewing of floats, bands, firetrucks, horses and my particular favorite which was a two-story tall HEB shopping cart in full detail, and powered by what sounded like a 454 Corvette engine. Of special interest among our demonstrators, Peter displayed the antiques Modern power hammer restored to original working condition and powered by an off set belt driven engine. Peter and other blacksmiths, such as Laura Armstrong gave it a whirl. Our location was across the road from the north end of the Bulverde airport runway, and more than once were we surprised by the approach of a silent, softly gliding airplane while landing. The crowd was somewhat lacking, mainly because this was our first time in this spot, but I'm confident future events will see more traffic. Nevertheless, most everyone was able to sell a few blacksmith pieces. Thanks to Peter & Elsa Garza for hosting this years event.

Sunday, September 24 was another kickoff for the Wendish Settlement in Serbin, Texas. Although the news media had shown videos and reported significant flood damage in the area around the nearby town of LaGrange, the only remaining images were of downed trees along the banks of the Colorado River. The downtown area appeared beautiful as ever and the outlying farms and ranches unaffected by the recent heavy rains. After forge and anvil setup was completed, Jerry Achterberg called the meeting to order. Main topics included our next meeting (10/21) in San Marcos at Turn Tex Wood Works, home of the cactus juice stabilizing product for wood knife handles. Jerry pointed out that the November meeting at the Blanco Buggy Barn had been cancelled, and we are looking for another venue and date. Important to mention that Daniel Smith, Blacksmith

instructor at the Austin Waldorf School forwarded news about utilizing the Balcones Forge donation for hammers, tongs, safety equipment, and propane. Daniel again said, Thank you to Balcones Forge and members.

The three participants for todays donation item (a kitchen tool), included myself in first place , Jerry Achterberg 2nd place and Tom Leining 3rd. These items were donated to Wendish Festival in order to raise money for future events. In the show and tell portion, Jerry Achterberg presented his undeniably beautiful hand crafted coat rack. His explanation of forming the seven pegs and the jig making, such as the bucking bar for rivet setting was described in verbal detail by Jerry, who complimented John Crochet by following the details outlined by John in the article he wrote entitled "Big Jobs Out of Little Jobs." I referred back to the July, August, September Balcones Forge Dispatch and reread his article. It made a lot more sense to me now, especially after hearing Jerry re describe the various steps to completion. The last step about 'always make test pieces' demonstrates Jerry Achterberg's blacksmithing talent and amazes me that he actually followed someone else's directions (just teasing you, Jerry). The coat rack is a blacksmith work of art and the background antiqued copper backing that Jerry made by cutting copper pipe in half, heating it a flattening with a hammer, then quenching says a lot about Jerry's ingenuity. Our participating blacksmith demonstrators did very well today in selling some of their wares. The crowd was plentiful, and we answered lots of questions about our forged pieces.

If anyone has some ideas for a November meeting, please share your thoughts and ideas. As Jerry has mentioned before, if you have or do something that would be of interest to our members, and want to demonstrate it, we would certainly be interested, and it does not have to involve fire, anvil, or hammer.

Thanks,

Tim Tellander
Balcones Forge Secretary



Above photos at Bulverde Jubilee by Tim Tellander Below at Serbin by Vince Herod



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The 2018 Bluebonnet Demo

hosted by Balcones Forge

Saturday, April 7, 2018

(April 7 is the week after Easter)

Brett Moten of [Infinity Forge](#) in Reno, Nevada, will be our featured demonstrator at our 2018 Bluebonnet Demo.

Prior to Saturday's demo on April 7, 2018, we'll have two days of hands-on teaching classes the preceding Thursday and Friday (April 5 & 6).

You may already be familiar with some of Brett's work: recall the rocking chair he made completely with traditional joinery — created in collaboration with Tim Cisneros — as pictured here on the cover of *The Anvil's Ring* Winter 2013 issue:



When asked to be our featured demonstrator, Brett's prompt reply was an enthusiastic "That sounds like fun! Love Austin."

In addition to being a fantastic human being, Brett is a talented instructor/teacher who holds open forges each Wednesday at his shop in Reno, Nevada.

Brett is a cooperative person -- in the most literal sense -- in that he "inspires mutual assistance in working towards a common goal."

Brett enjoys designing collaborative pieces in which other 'smiths contribute forged elements for the final sculpture.

No firm details yet, but it's hoped that for next year's Bluebonnet Demo, we can

emulate the multi-station, collaborative format of this past year's demo. It was a new approach for Balcones Forge and a quite successful one.



I finally finished and installed a fire screen/cover that I have been working on from time to time for a year between other jobs. I got it installed on Thursday and the client is very happy with it. (I warned them before I started that it would be very very slow!)

This is actually an iron box, filled with KaoWool insulation like we use for gas forges. The insulation is held in place by internal iron struts, TIG welded into place. There is a hidden locking mechanism at the center bottom. This screen is outdoors on a patio, so it can be locked in place to prevent access through the double-sided fireplace into the house.

The handles are twisted iron baskets. The back plates are 1/8" copper with temper colors, cold riveted. The box is painted with flat black high-heat enamel. The whole thing weighs fifty-one pounds.

John Crouchet

Hammertime - Securing

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Devcon H2 Hold Epoxy

Randy Stoltz, Hot Iron Sparkle July/August/September 2009

Devcon makes a flexible, waterproof, shock- and vibration-resistant epoxy that is very useful in the shop. This epoxy will even set up under water. I came across it at Burke Brothers Hardware when I was looking for an epoxy to set some anchor bolts in concrete for a machine that vibrated a lot. Regular lead anchors work loose, and most epoxies that set up hard cannot withstand constant vibration.

Additionally, I had a hammer with an odd-shaped eye that was loose. Rather than making a new handle from scratch, I set the handle in the hammer head using this epoxy. Using epoxy also eliminates the need for wedges in the handle, and the epoxy absorbs some of the vibration and shock when hammering.

To Put A Handle In a Hammer Head Using Epoxy

1. Cut or sand the top of the handle so that it fits very loosely in the socket of the hammer head.
2. If you want to apply epoxy to the top of the handle, as done to commercial hammers, you need to cut the top of the handle so that it sits about $\frac{1}{8}$ " below the top of the head.
3. Mix the epoxy, and apply it liberally around the top and sides of the handle eye.
4. Insert the handle into the hammer head. Make sure there are no voids or gaps. You can use a putty knife to force epoxy into any voids and to smooth the epoxy on the top of the handle.
5. Make sure the handle is straight. Let the epoxy cure for 24 hours. I clamp the handle upright in a vise with soft jaws so that the epoxy on top flows into the socket and does not glue my hammer to the workbench. ♣



Using Sikabond Construction Adhesive

from John Barron at Oktoberfest

At Oktoberfest, John Barron mentioned that he uses Sikabond Adhesive to glue hammer heads to their handles. It remains slightly flexible, to resist the shock of hammering. If you need to remove the handle from the hammer, you can do that by heating the hammer to 300°F or so in a home oven. This loosens the adhesive.

Note. Use *Sikabond*, not the similarly-titled Sikaflex. ♣

Editor's Note. I asked Sika Technical Services about using Sikabond for hammer attachment. I received a rather terse response "...our Sikabond was not designed for those applications." You're on your own if you try it.

Hammertime - Securing

Remedy for Loose Wedges: WONDERLOK 'EM

Brent Bailey, from his website www.brentbaileyforge.com

About a year ago I came across an article titled *The Axe Manual*. A product called Swell & Lock was used on the axe handle prior to fitting the axe head. I thought it might be interesting to try on loose handles and wedges, so I did. The results were not quite what I had hoped, so I tried another product, WONDERLOK 'EM. The verdict: this stuff is amazing.

Following is the process I used.

Reset or tighten up loose wedges and handles in your hammer or axe. Put the tool – hammer or axe – upright in the vise. Apply WONDERLOK 'EM on the top of the eye. It will penetrate and seep in quickly. Apply once more and let it dry for about ten minutes. Now your tool is ready to use. ♣



Affixing Hammer Handles

Wilbur Gaedtko, Illinois Valley Blacksmiths The Tuyere, 1986

Here are some steps for affixing hammer handles to the heads so that they fit and stay tight

1. Use a sharp draw knife to shape the handle to fit the hammer head. Important as some forged hammer heads have weird eye dimensions.
2. Saw a slot in the handle to a depth equal to three-quarters of the hammer-head hole.
3. Now you are ready to drive the handle down into the head. Upend the whole thing over the leg vise with the jaws opened wide enough for the handle to extend through the hammer head.
4. Using a hacksaw with the blade repositioned a half-turn, cut off the excess handle material above the hammer head. Don't cut too closely or you will leave ugly saw marks on the head.
5. Drive a wooden wedge into the saw kerf.
6. Drive an iron wedge into the handle crosswise to the wooden wedge.
7. Soak hammer head assembly in antifreeze for two days. The wood will expand and not dry out.

This article also appeared in the Blacksmith Organization of Arkansas Voice, February 2017. ♣



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