



Blacksmiths of Central Texas

President's Corner

March 2011

Greetings!



Well, the year is off to a good start! The first two meetings of the year have to be right up there among the top.

It was a nice long drive to Bryan for the Lee brother's demo, but worth every minute of the trip. Steephollow Forgeworks was way more than I ever expected, but so was the demo. These guys have really paid attention to detail and don't miss a trick. They worked on separate pieces, one working and describing his piece while the other piece was reheating. They passed the focus back and forth like the pendulum of a well-oiled clock, turning out several very nice pieces. One of my favorites was Jeff's miniature Stetson hat that would make any G.I Joe turn cowboy in a heartbeat. It's on my to-do list.

HABA was there, as well as LAMA and a few folks from East Texas, well over a hundred people, and lunch was outstanding. Several people participated in the trade item competition, which was a trade hawk from a ball peen hammer. It was quite a collection of really nice looking hawks. Very impressive!

I just can't say enough about the effort everybody put forth to put this event on and it was one of the best we have ever had. I will be hard to top.

This month's meeting will be back at Zilker Botanical Center in Austin. This is always a fun event and the good chance for you new guys to get in the forge and try your hand at hammering. I'm sure mentoring will again be available for those in need of it.

April 2nd & 3rd is our event of the year, the Bluebonnet Workshop. Do not miss this one! Folks have been working all year getting everything ready for Brian Brazeal. If you haven't seen him work, you will be amazed and even if you have seen him before, you will still be amazed.

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This hard hitting master smith has learned from masters and is now coming to the Sycamore Creek Ranch to show you his stuff. All you gotta do is show up and watch (just don't stand too close).

We spared no expense putting this event together, so now we need to catch up, right? No big deal, just bring all your extra tools, books, hardware, make something cool, and put it in the big auction. Then be sure to bring some money to buy all this cool stuff. Simple!

It's going to be a busy spring and summer – get ready. See ya'll at the ranch.

Jerry Achterberg
Balcones Forge President

Meeting Date is March 26 @ 9:30 am

SECRETARY'S REPORT



Balcones Forge and Houston Area Blacksmiths Hold Historic Joint Meeting

On March 19, Balcones Forge held a historic first joint meeting with the blacksmiths of the Houston Area Blacksmiths Association in Bryan, Texas, at Steephollow Forgeworks. The meeting was hosted by the Alan and Jeff Lee along with Alan's son,

Carlton Lee, all professional blacksmiths who are members of Balcones Forge and HABA.

Before the start of the day's blacksmithing, a resolution was read honoring recently deceased blacksmith Verl Underwood, followed by the traditional ringing of the anvil. As many of you know, Verl was a long time member of the North Texas Blacksmiths Association and one of the original founders of Texas Ironfest.

The Lee brothers treated us to a wonderfully entertaining and instructive double demo, featuring two blacksmiths working on separate projects at the same time. This unusual format kept the all-day demo interesting and action packed as Jeff and Alan showed off the numerous skills and tricks of the trade that they have picked up through years of dedicated efforts at learning the blacksmith's craft. Veterans of many blacksmithing classes, schools, conferences, and demos, they had a lot to show and tell and carefully gave credit to the instructors, demonstrators and friends who had helped them along the way.

Parts of the ongoing demonstration included hammer and anvil work, with a special feature being Jeff's fancy forging of a bear head in iron, in between his forgings of hooks and more "normal" blacksmithed objects. Meanwhile, Alan spent more time operating the Big Blu power hammer, with occasional trips over to the five hundred pound Nazel hammer for some "big hits".

The sound system was great. Both demonstrators could be clearly heard throughout the large shop, even by deaf old blacksmiths, of which there were many!

In addition to the exciting demo, members enjoyed seeing the Lee's professional work displayed around the shop, as well as the fine selection of tomahawks forged by Balcones and HABA members for the "trade item" of the month. James John-

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son of Anyang USA was out front with a beautiful new power hammer for everyone to “test drive” and many blacksmiths took him up on the offer.

At lunch time, spectators were treated to a fine catered barbecue lunch and the chance to catch up with old friends and new ones. Although this meeting was a long drive away for most of our members, it was very well attended and members who made the long drive proclaimed it was well worth it! We are hoping the Lee family tries it again next year and we will all invite ourselves!

Respectfully submitted,
John Crouchet
Secretary



BALCONES BOARD

The seven members of the Balcones Board are:

Jerry Achterberg
Rudy Billings
John Crouchet
Jim Elliott
Vince Herod
Tom Lupton
Jerry Whitley

Please send any suggestions for meeting or workshop ideas to any member of the Board.

The list of Officers is on the front cover.

THE BF FACEBOOK PAGE

Hey, all you social butterflies -- Balcones Forge has a Facebook page. Now there is another way to connect with your fellow blacksmiths. Last count -- 55 people like the site. Check it out next time you log on.

Rudy

BUY - SELL - TRADE

Balcones Forge has a new web page. You now have a marketplace where you can buy or sell blacksmithing equipment. Check it out.

NEW ADDRESS

Please make note of the new e-mail address for Vice President Jerry Whitley:

jerry.whitley@ymail.com

TRADE ITEM

Something Botanical or Organic -- be creative!
Remember -- to take one, ya gotta make one.



Photos by
Gerald Pollard

BRIAN BRAZEAL AND A SAMPLE OF HIS WORK





**TRADE HAWKS
FROM THE
FEBRUARY
MEETING.
THE WINNER IS IN
THE CENTER.**



Photos by
Vince Herod



MONTHLY MEETING INFO

March 26 - 9:30 AM

Zilker Blacksmith Shop

Zilker Botanical Garden - Austin, Texas

Spring comes early here in Texas. And after our extreme winter, it will be a welcome event. Another event that happens this time of year is the annual **Zilker Garden Fest**. This two-day event is a fun time with lots of hammer time for us blacksmiths. On Saturday morning, we will have our normal monthly meeting, then adjourn for forging and flora. Bring the family and take a tour of the beautiful gardens, check out the dinosaur tracks, or relax by the Japanese Garden. Oh, and did I mention food! (Go to ZilkerGarden.org for more Fest info.)

We will need volunteers for both Saturday and Sunday. Festival hours are from 10-5 both days. Please contact Rudy (Rudy@BalconesForge.org / 512-461-7375) if you would like to participate. It doesn't matter if you've never picked up a hammer, we'll help you get started. Come out for an hour or stay both days. It will be fun!

Entry and parking are free for volunteers. Please use the Stratford Drive gate by the volunteer parking lot. Inform the ticket takers you are a volunteer for the blacksmith shop. In the parking area, there will be golf carts to help with your heavy tools, so bring what you need.

2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin, TX

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



Alan Lee

SCENES FROM THE FEBRUARY MEETING

Photos by Vince Herod





Jeff Lee



Welcome to Marble Falls!

Coming up at beginning of next month is our annual Balcones Forge Bluebonnet Demo. This year's demo will continue our tradition of bringing the finest blacksmiths in America to Central Texas. Our special guest demonstrator this year is Brian Brazeal, a renowned expert on hand forging!

In the week before the big Demo, Brian will be teaching a series of workshops covering hand forging techniques and tool making techniques. These classes are already filled!

All this activity will bring a lot of Balcones Forge members and their families to Marble Falls and out to Sycamore Creek Ranch for the workshops and Demo. Fortunately, Marble Falls is filled with interesting things to do and excellent places to eat! You will find excellent opportunities for shopping antiques, clothing, and a surprising amount of artwork. You may even notice sculptures placed throughout the downtown area. Check out Old Main Street for lots of small, interesting shops. Located right on the shores of Lake Marble Falls, we also have a wonderful public park with room to roam, places to fish, and even canoe rentals!

Ready to eat? Of course there is the famous Bluebonnet Cafe, home of the greatest pies in Texas! On weekends, the line to get in to the Bluebonnet is fairly long. A good thing to remember is that the Bluebonnet is also a great place for a big breakfast and the line is a lot shorter!

For a good steak or fancy burgers, try River City Grill or Chili's, both right on the lake. You can even sit out on the deck overlooking the water and have a cold drink and dinner.

For Marble's best seafood, try Dock's on RR 1431, right near the intersection with Hwy 281. More in the mood for Mexican food? Janie's is a local favorite right next to the firehouse and the big pink Super Taco on Hwy 281 is where local folks love to eat enchiladas at lunch and tacos or huevos rancheros at breakfast.

My favorite lunch spot? The Noon Spoon Cafe, one block east of Hwy 281 on Broadway (Which is secretly just Eighth Street with a fancy name). You will find a variety of healthy, tasty sandwiches, super soups, great salads, cobblers, and even Jennifer's dynamite triple chocolate cake with strawberries and caramel sauce!

DEMO DATES ARE APRIL 2 & 3
REGISTRATION FORM ON PAGE 12

Life on the Ranch

Take extra care driving on the ranch this year. We have a lot of cattle with new calves that often choose to stand in the road and have no idea what a car is! Watch out for black calves sleeping on the warm road at night, too! Just take it slow and easy.

In addition, we are undergoing some extensive work on the ranch roads. Watch out for big equipment doing road work. The crew is not used to seeing people on these roads and they will NOT be watching for you!

We will be delighted to see you when you show up. We can accommodate a few folks who want to plug in their travel trailers or RV's at the shop. Please call ahead to arrange this.

There is plenty of room for anyone who wishes to camp out. There will be port a-potties by the shop. We are currently under a county-wide burn ban, so there can be no campfires if the ban is in effect. If you burn down the ranch, that is NOT a good thing!

PLEASE DO NOT BRING YOUR DOG!

We have free ranging chickens all around the house and shop area. Dogs and chickens are not compatible.

You may, however bring your children! Kids can have a great time at the ranch. Watch out for things that bite, stick, or sting. Spring is rattlesnake time! Supervise your kids around the shop, too. It's a dangerous place!

Friday Night Dinner

If you are around on Friday evening, plan to come to our house for dinner. My lovely wife Carolyn will make taco fixings for everybody and we will have chips and dips and who knows what else. Guitar players and other music makers will take over the front porch, so bring your instrument! Bring a side dish or dessert, if you wish! If you know you are coming, please drop me an email so we can get a rough head count ahead of time. If you just show up, you are still very welcome! We will shut down fairly early so Brian can get some sleep before the big Demo on Saturday morning!

Looking forward to another really great time!

John and Carolyn Crouchet
Sycamore Creek Ranch
5828 East Ranch Road 1431
Marble Falls, Texas 78654
830-798-3710
john@texaswroughtiron.com

Balcones Forge Bluebonnet Demo

featuring

BRIAN BRAZEAL



April 2-3, 2011



Marble Falls, Texas

BALCONES FORGE is honored to bring blacksmith **BRIAN BRAZEAL** back to Texas for our 11th annual two-day demonstration. This continues our tradition of bringing the world's most outstanding blacksmith to Central Texas! By forging nearly every day for over twenty-five years, Brian has perfected traditional blacksmithing techniques to become a renowned meticulous hand forger. Working entirely with hand hammers, Brian builds "forged to finish" ironwork emphasizing clean work and hammer control. He has become known for his "tools to make tools", his fine hot collaring work, and his unique techniques at the anvil. Don't miss this exciting exhibition of hot forged hammer work at its finest!

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 Brian'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

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

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

Hotel Accommodations:

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

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

Best Western, 1403 N Hwy 281, 830-693-5122

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

La Quinta Inn, 501 W. FM 2147, 830-798-2020

See the latest newsletter or website (www.BalconesForge.org) for Registration Form.

PLEASE HELP US BY REGISTERING EARLY!!! REMEMBER TO BRING A FRIEND!

SPRING BREAK CELEBRATION AT THE PIONEER MUSEUM

Once again, Balcones Forge Blacksmiths will forge hot iron for the patrons of the Pioneer Museum in Fredericksburg! As part of the Museum's annual Spring Break Celebration, we will operate the Blacksmith Shop on Saturday, March 12 and from Monday, March 14 through Saturday, March 19. The Museum is closed on Sundays.

Celebration plans include a return of the Lakota Sioux Indians, buffalo soldiers, tomahawk throwing Mountain men, a real chuck wagon cook, rope-makers, soap-makers, weavers, spinners, singing cowboys, and, of course, real blacksmiths! This is an interesting family event, filled with fun, educational opportunities for both kids and grownups.

Volunteer blacksmiths from Balcones Forge will include John Crouchet and Sue Murray on Saturday, March 12, Aaron Tilton and Wayne Byrd on Monday, March 14 and Aaron Tilton on Tuesday, March 15. If you want to volunteer to help Aaron on Tuesday, please let us know. Operating the blacksmith shop is always easier with some help!

On Wednesday, March 16, David Walden and Leah Adams have volunteered to be blacksmiths-in-residence and on Thursday, March 17, Gary Hilton will be working alone. Gary is a long-time Balcones member and volunteer at the Museum. That is Gary's picture you see on the Museum's advertisements for Spring Break Celebration! If you want to volunteer to help Gary, you could receive a great lesson in forge welding chain at the anvil -- one of Gary's specialties and something most of us don't know much about!

Friday, March 18, Balcones Vice President Jerry Whitley will be working with Leah Adams, who has graciously volunteered to do a second day's duty. Finally, on Saturday, March 19, Rudy Billings will be working alone. He could also use some help with the Saturday Museum crowd.

Special thanks to all our volunteers. This is a great service that Balcones Forge supplies every year to the Pioneer Museum. We educate ourselves and the public at the same time. For those of you who have never worked at the Pioneer Museum, it is a great experience! We work in a nice little blacksmith shop, complete with a stone and wood coal forge with hand cranked blower and all the necessary tongs and tools, all made by members of Balcones Forge and donated to the Museum. Coal, iron, and tools are all supplied. All you need to bring is your favorite hammer! This is a great opportunity for beginners to learn by helping an experienced blacksmith all day!

To volunteer, just pick the day you can help us and contact John Crouchet at 830-798-3710 or email john@texaswroughtiron.com.

Balcones Forge Bluebonnet Demo

featuring **Brian Brazeal - April 2-3**

Please print clearly

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Yes, I prefer a hard-copy of the monthly newsletter mailed to me. I have added \$5 to the normal \$20 annual membership fee.

Current Member \$40 _____

2011 Membership if unpaid. \$20 _____

\$25 if the monthly newsletter is mailed

Non-member \$60 _____

Yes, I wish to become a BF member

Saturday Evening Meal... \$15 _____

Total _____

****Please register by March 15****

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

