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Blacksmiths of Central Texas

President's Corner...

July 2009

Greetings fellow blacksmiths! How does forging, BBQ and bluegrass sound? We've finally got the summer demo plan figured out. It will be July 25th at John Crouchet's in Marble Falls and William Bastas will be giving us a show again this year. We are always excited to have him demo for us because he's just downright full of enthusiasm, he's a great teacher and he always has something very cool and interesting to show us! This summer has been exceptionally hot, so he will forge in the morning. We will have a BBQ lunch and our summer auction too. We will also be having a presentation on the types of hearing damage that can be caused by noise generated from the various pieces of equipment specific to blacksmithing. If you had not heard, one of our members, who is a full-time smith, is currently unable to work at his craft due to tinnitus he is suffering and this can be very serious and life-altering. The presentation will not just be us telling folks to wear their hearing protection, but we will be getting some really good information on just what will happen to the parts of the ear under conditions we are likely to be working in while forging.

Now, if all that isn't enough, we will be topping the afternoon off with a six-piece traditional bluegrass band! They're going to be great, so come on out, get some new ideas from William, find out just what smithing can do to our hearing and how to protect yourself, snarf some good BBQ and stamp your feet to some good ole bluegrass! Don't forget to bring an auction item or plenty of dough to buy one or two that someone else has brought! Remember, this is how we are able to bring in a smith from across the country in the Spring! The summer demo is also free, so... c'mon out... we'll see you at John's!

Sue Murray, President

**MEETING DATE IS JULY 25
START TIME IS 9am**

MEETING INFO

The Balcones Forge Free Summer Demonstration

July 25.....start at 9am

As usual, the big event will be held at John and Carolyn's Sycamore Creek Ranch outside of Marble Falls, TX. Our demonstrator will be the one and only William Bastas. If you have never seen William demonstrate, you are in for a treat! If you've seen William demonstrate, you're still in for a treat! Williams' skill, knowledge and passion are exceptional. You will come away with both inspiration and knowledge to put to use in your shop.

Besides a great demonstration, you'll also be treated to a presentation by a prominent audiologist on how to prevent and treat hearing loss -- a very important topic for blacksmiths.

Don't forget the BBQ lunch, plus something entirely new -- music from a live bluegrass band. And of course, the auction where you can pick up all sorts of good items for your home, garden, or shop. Bring the whole family -- it's brought to you free of charge by Balcones Forge.

TRADE ITEM

No trade item for the July meeting. Instead, please create and donate items for our summer auction. The benefits of low dues, a great library, and free workshops are because of the success of our auctions throughout the year. So, start forging and uncluttering your shop, and bring to the next meeting.

Address: Sycamore Creek Ranch,
5828 E. FM 1431, Marble Falls

Check our website for directions or look at the map on page 8.

Rudy Billings, Treasurer

Forging Dragons

An article on Steve Williamson's methods of forging dragons.

by Dave Smucker

PART 2 CONTINUED FROM JUNE 2009 EDITION

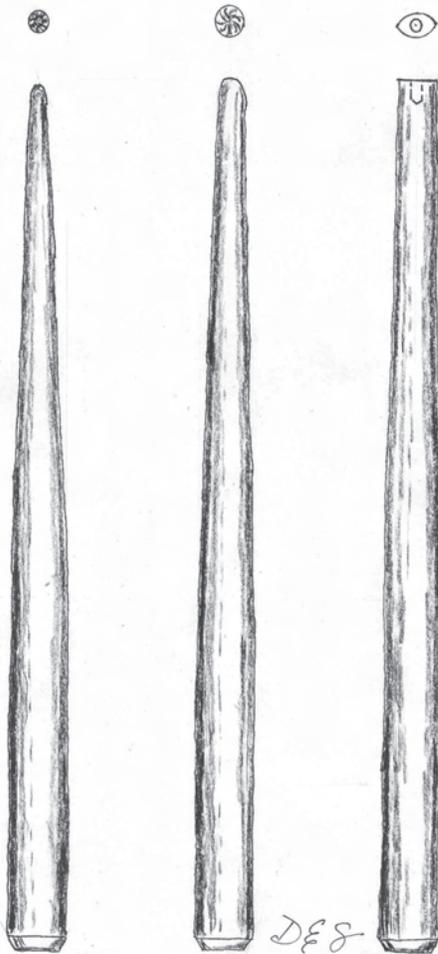
Now you are ready to forge the eyes themselves. To do this I highly recommend a vise anvil or detailing wedge. See the short article "For your toolbox" in this issue for details on how to make one if you don't already have this very useful detailing tool. You will also need three or four "punches" to form the eyes. Two to three simple punches and an eye punch. I suggest that you make these punches out of either 5160 (coil spring) material or W1 tool steel (water hardening drill rod). Both of these will work very well for these types of tools. You could use more expensive and exotic tool steels such as H13 or S7 but this is overkill. Save these tool steels for hot cuts, punches and other uses where you have long contact times with the hot steel.

To make the simple punches "long center punches", forge out the taper and then grind the end to the desired cross section and shape. I make my punches 9 to 11 inches in length. This length lets you hold them near the hot metal without your hand getting too hot. While I would heat treat these tools some folks just forge them, grind them and use them. I suggest that as minimum you at least normalize the tools after you finish forging them. To do this heat to just above the non-magnetic point (transition temperature) and let them air cool.

Making the eye punch itself is a little more complex than the socket punches. First I forge to the general shape of the punch and then touch it up by grinding to get the final eye shape cross-section. Now put the pupil in the end of the punch. To do this I like to drill the "hole" in the end of the eye punch. First you need to anneal the punch -- heat to just above the non magnetic point and then place in either wood ashes or vermiculite and let it slow cool overnight (or for at least several hours.) I have a metal garbage can filled with vermiculite for just

this purpose. You can find vermiculite at the garden supply store or the garden department of Home Depot etc. After annealing it is a simple matter to drill the hole in the end of the punch. Now finish by heat-treating the eye punch or at least normalize it. If you are using 5160 you will get fair hardness in the tool by the "air quench" of the normalizing.

You will need 3 to 4 punches for the eyes. The first ones form the eye socket while the last one is the "eye" punch itself. Make your punches from 9 to 11 inch long 5/8 to 7/8 dia. These are shown about half size.

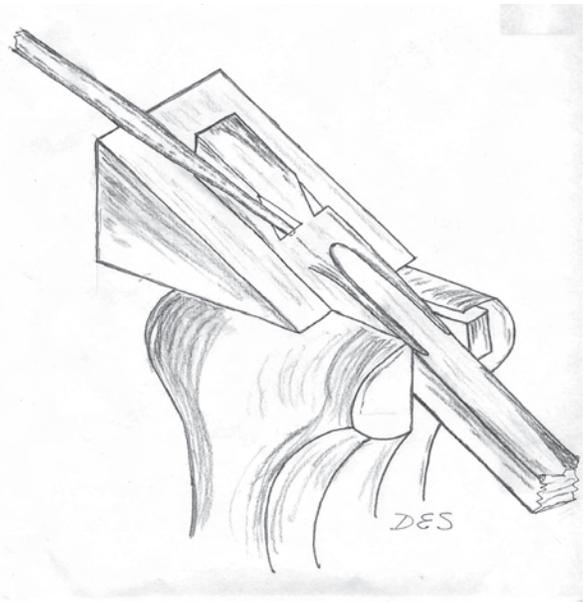


Rather than drilling the hole in the eye punch, you can forge it. It is just harder for me to get it placed where I want it doing it this way. To forge

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the hole, heat your punch, place it vertical in your vise and use a small center punch to drive the hole into the end of the hot punch. Now clean up the resulting upset by grinding and finish up the eye punch. Again I would heat treat the punch as the final step.

Now that you have your punches, heat the dragon's head and clamp it in the vise with the area below the horns clamped. The underside of the head should be resting on the detailing wedge. Start with the sharpest punch and set in the location of each eye. Steve likes to work by taking 3 hits on one side and then moving to 3 hits on the other eye. If needed, come back to the first eye and then to the second. This method of Steve's of alternating between one side and the other helps to keep things equal as the metal cools. It also helps minimize bending of the dragon's head at the neck area where it is clamped in the vise.

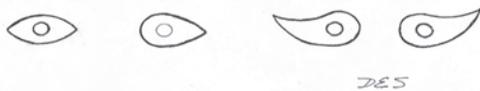


Starting to punch the first eye socket. Alternate from eye to eye with no more than 3 blows to one side at a time. Then move up to your next larger punch - finishing with the "eye punch".

Now proceed to the next punch and deepen and

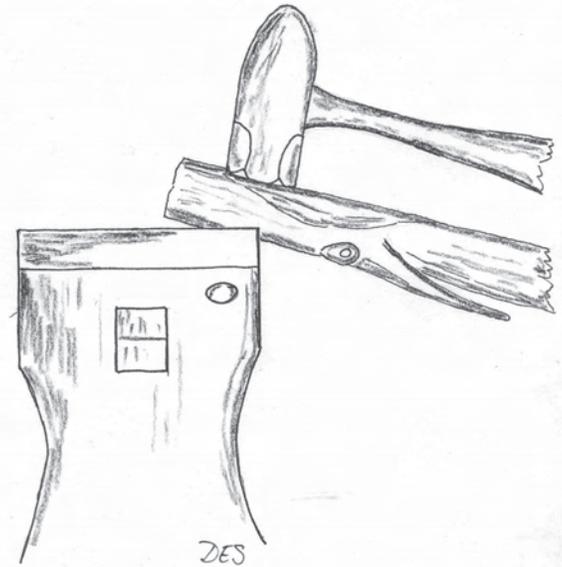
raise the eye socket. You may need to go back into the forge for another heat if your piece has cooled too much – remember to work it hot. Or if you like, you can reheat the area of the eye with a torch with the work held in the vise. If you do this try hard to get both eyes up to the same temperature so that they forge the same.

You are now ready for the last punch, the eye punch itself. The angle that you hold this punch can have quite an effect on the final look of the dragon. The eyes in a figure like this always seem to set much of the dragon's character. You can also experiment with different shapes to the eye punch including a tear drop cross section. If you use this type of eye make sure you turn the punch over as you move from eye to eye. For some eye shapes you will need a right and left punch.



Variation on eye punch shapes. Just some ideas for you to consider and play with. You can change the "face" of your dragon more by changing the eyes than almost anything else. We are all drawn to how the eyes on a figure look at us.

Next the nose !! Forging the nose is much like doing the eyes, first we set an area for the nose and then we punch in the nostrils. In setting the area for the nose we want to work across the full width of the head – rather than on each "corner" of the stock. Steve forges a step where he wants the finished nose to fall on the head. Heat your dragon and then place the nose area down on the sharp edge of your anvil and forge the step with half on half off blows to the underside or bottom of the head.

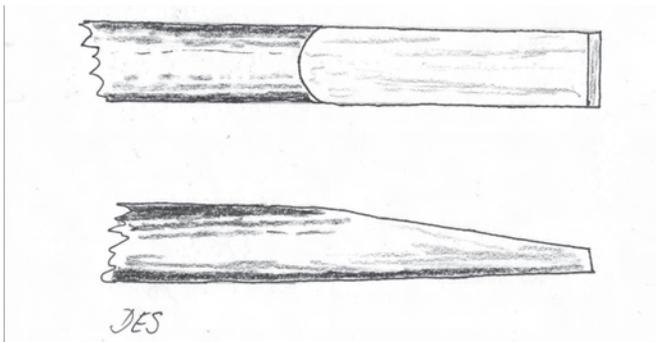


Setting the nose area. The top face of the stock is set against a sharp edge of your anvil. Again the half on half off hammer blows are directed to the underside of the head. The anvil forms the top.

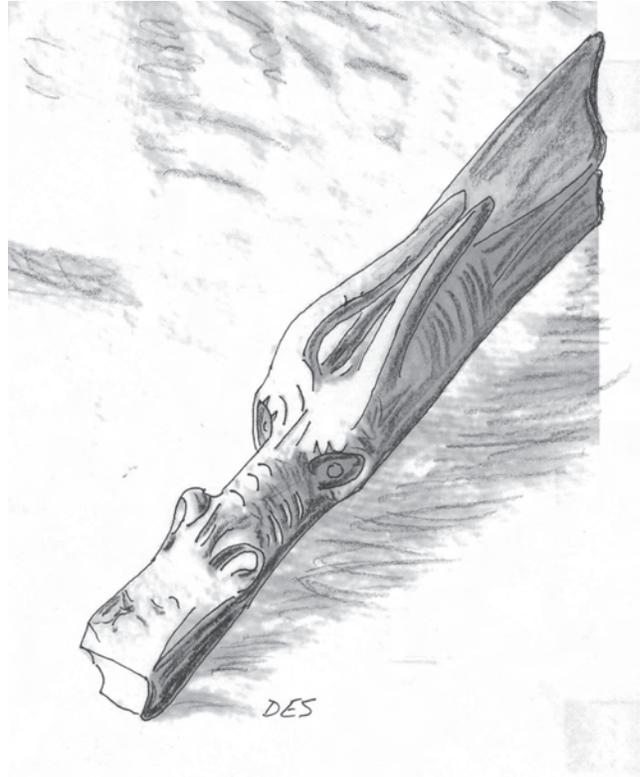
This procedure again lets us put the most visible side of the head against the anvil and bottom side takes the hammer blows. Also since the underside of the head has no fine details you can clean it up with the disk sander or you can file it.

Steve then deepens, upsets and raises the nose area some by using a "butcher" with the dragon held in the vise against the detailing wedge.

Now that you have a good sized step and have raised the area and better defined it with the butcher your are ready to punch the nostrils in the beast. Follow basically the same procedure that you did for the eyes (without the eye punch of course). Start with the smallest punch and work your way up alternating from side to side to keep it balanced. You can angle the punch to make the nostrils flare to the outside and also raise them by controlling the angle of your punch. This is one of the real advantages of working the head while holding it against a detailing wedge in your vise. It allows you to work around the head and gives you a solid surface to punch against.



At this point you head could look something like this.



Forge your butcher from tool steel, I like 5160 (coil spring) or W1 (water hardening drill rod) for making this tool. Like the punches I would make this tool 9 to 11 inches in length and from 5/8 to 7/8 diameter material.

Steve adds details to the eyebrows and nose at this time. With the eyes and nostrils in place you can take a small hot cut and / or other punches and add some more details to the face. Here is another place for you to add to your growing collection of punches. Some curved hot cuts come in handy here. They look like a range of wood carving gouges. You make them the same way you did the other punches for your dragon.

A top view of the head at this point. The stock forward of the nostrils will become the mouth and the "beaks" as Steve calls them.



You have now finished all of the head that Steve does at this point. From here he moves to the neck, body and tail. Then back to finish head, wings and talons.

Copyright 2002 by David E. Smucker

Side view of the partially finished Dragon's head. Note the underside that was forged by the half on half off hammer blow while forging the eye and nose sets. Steve has cleaned this area up a bit with the sanding disk.

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davesmucker@hotmail.com

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PHILIP SIMMONS, MASTER BLACKSMITH (1912 – 2009)

(Charleston , SC June 22, 2009) It is with deep sorrow that we announce that Philip Simmons, America 's premier blacksmith, died on June 22, 2009, at Bishop Gadsden Retirement Community. . Philip died peacefully. He was 97.

Born on June 9, 1912, on Daniel Island, South Carolina, Philip was reared by his grandparents. At age 8 he was sent to Charleston via ferry to live with his mother on Vernon Street . He was enrolled in the first class at Buist Elementary School (now Buist Academy). While walking to and from school, young Philip noticed the ironwork and became intrigued with it. The neighborhood was a Mecca for craftsmen who serviced the waterfront businesses. He began visiting the blacksmith shops, pipe fitters, shipwrights, coopers, and other craftsmen in the area. However, the sounds of the blacksmith shops interested him the most.

Philip Simmons apprenticed under the blacksmith Peter Simmons (no relation), who ran a busy shop at the foot of Calhoun Street . Here, Philip acquired the values and refined the talents that would sustain him throughout his long metal-working career.

Moving into the specialized field of ornamental iron beginning in 1938, Simmons fashioned more than five hundred decorative pieces of ornamental wrought iron: gates, fences, balconies, and window grills. The City of Charleston , from one end to the other, is truly decorated by his hand.

In 1982, the National Endowment for the Arts awarded him its National Heritage Fellowship, the highest honor that the United States can bestow on a traditional artist. This recognition was followed by a similar award from the South Carolina State Legislature. Simmons was inducted into the South Carolina Hall of Fame in Myrtle Beach , SC , on January 31, 1994. The Order of the Palmetto , the highest award given in the state, was presented to him by Governor David Beasley in 1998. In May of 2001, Philip Simmons received the Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Governor's Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Arts.

DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE!

There is still time to toss your hat in the ring and run for the ABANA board.

Here is an opportunity to have a say in the future of Blacksmithing. Each year five of the 15 board members are elected for a 3 year term. Serving on the board requires a few hours each month and participation in the annual meeting held in Memphis in November.

Running is easy. All you need is to be nominated by 10 fellow ABANA members.

We also need a brief candidate's statement and a recent photograph. Hurry up because time is running out. Contact the Central Office at 703-680-1632 for any assistance.

Doug Kluender, Elections Committee Chair
73 W. Holly St.
Phoenix AZ 85003
602-818-1230
dougKluender@msn.com

Balcones Forge Auction

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William Bastas will be one of the featured demonstrators at the July 2009 meeting of Balcones Forge. There is always something to be learned when William is at the anvil.

Please join Balcones Forge on July 25 for a great day of learning and fun.

Photo by Harry Cabluck



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