



Blacksmiths of Central Texas

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THE PREZ SAYS:

IMHO*, I like Harbor Freight. Really! It's the big boy's toy store. Sure, I'm aware that they have a Far Eastern quality, but they and other purveyors of cheaper tools have their place. I find myself buying less at Harbor "Fright" these days, but they did serve a purpose in my formative years.

First, it allowed me to experiment with tools that I might not have tried if it were not for the low price. Either I bought better quality when it failed, or it's on the shelf ready to use once again, maybe some time in the next decade. I also learned how to use -- and abuse -- tools before shelling out big bucks. I'm very happy that my good anvil wasn't around in the beginning.

Another possible benefit -- safety? Well, kind of. Since price = quality = power, take a bench grinder, for example. I probably escaped injury when the wire wheel stopped, rather than pulling me down to where my nose would have been against the proverbial grind stone. Anyway, you might look upon these tools in a different light. And it's OK if you don't agree -- no skin off my nose.

Hammer away,
Rudy

* - That's text-speak for "in my humble opinion." The small print: This is not necessarily an endorsement for Harbor Freight, Northern Tools, or JC Whitney. The preceding is not necessarily a good opinion. No animals were injured in the writing of this article. FWIW. (That's "for what it's worth.")



Scenes from the May meeting

photos by Jerry Achterberg



TRADE ITEM

The trade item for May has been selected by our host, Sue Murray.

Sue says.....wearable art!!! Here is a chance for you to be truly creative.

Remember, you gotta make one to take one!

SECRETARY'S REPORT

May 2008

The May 2008 meeting was held in conjunction with the Texas Natural and Swing Festival on May 17 in the Hays County courthouse square at 111 E. San Antonio Street in downtown San Marcos, Texas.

The San Marcos settlement, resettled in 1846 near San Marcos Springs after being abandoned in 1812 because of Indian raids and floods. It was destined to become the Hays county seat in 1848. The town, laid out in 1851 became a center for ginning and milling and was incorporated in 1877. Hays County is named after John Coffee Hays who was a Texas Ranger and veteran Officer of the Mexican- American War.

The Hays county courthouse built in 1908 by the Page Brothers Architects is the fourth courthouse that Hays County has had. Built in the Beaux-arts style with Elgin buff and gray brick with limestone stringcourses it features a copper dome, mosaic rotunda tiles and historic courtroom.

There was no blacksmithing demonstration at the May meeting, which was attended by about 15 members. Instead, people were invited to bring their forges, anvils and tools and use the opportunity to make things for themselves or for the public. Our group's tables of wares and anvils were set up on the West side of the square on the

grass between the street and the historic courthouse. The formal meeting of Balcones Forge took just a few minutes with announcements of future meetings and a discussion of employment opportunities for blacksmiths.

All around the courthouse were vendor's booths and stands where one could buy souvenirs, clothing and jewelry. On the East side were food booths and a stage with a Texas Swing Band playing which featured a 92-year drummer. Known as the Texas Drummer Boy, he tore the drums up playing a solo and ended by throwing a drumstick high in the air, catching it and doing a bow to the public. I heard someone say that they hoped that they were still vertical at 92! That would be nice.

Set up next to the anvils was a man with two wagons made in the late 1800's. One was a freighter and the other a chuck wagon. Early in the afternoon, he made two large cast iron Dutch ovens full of peach cobbler, which was given away to the public. Next to the wagons near where a couple of saddled horses grazed a cowboy gunfight was staged with black powder guns blazing away. I love the smell of black powder in the morning!

Only one forge was set up for about 4 or 5 anvils which demonstrated the need to have your forge as close to the anvil as possible. Rudy had to finish most of the nails that he made using a black heat. He suggested that next time the anvils should be in a circle around the forge instead of the way we did it in a more or less straight line.

All who attended said that they thoroughly enjoyed the day and would encourage everyone who did not come to attend next year.

Tom Lupton, Secretary

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BOOK REVIEW

I recently purchased a book by Mark Aspery called "The Skills of a Blacksmith Volume 1: Mastering the Fundamentals of Blacksmithing"

I thought this would be a good addition to the Balcones Forge library. It does present a different style than the Hofi technique. For example mark states that to make a taper you start at the end of the bar, while Hofi starts in the middle of the taper. The book has lots of pictures and is an easy read, meaning it is written like a blacksmith talks, lots of stories and metaphors. It has tool making, techniques and sample projects using everything you just learned including step by step pictures of what to do and what to look for.

To order, go to www.markaspery.net

He can also be found on www.youtube.com demonstrating some forge welding and tool making. Just type in his name on the search function.

Cheers,
Dan

Daniel Smith www.danielsmithblacksmith.com





Affiliate Letter May 2008

5/28/2008

To ABANA Affiliates and Affiliate Members,

Early this month about half of the ABANA Board members attended the BAM Ozark conference in Sedalia Missouri. We had a great time talking to all the great people there and taking in the whole conference experience. We heard lots of encouraging words and many helpful suggestions. Hopefully you too were able get out this spring and see some great blacksmithing.

ABANA News and Notes:

Just before the BAM Conference Tom Clark was presented the Bealer Award for outstanding contributions to ABANA and to blacksmithing. (For details see the News article on the ABANA home page.)

The ABANA Board of Directors election deadline for candidates is fast approaching. See the ABANA Board of directors page for details. (www.abana.org/business/abana_board.shtml) You can find the candidates statements from those who have tossed their hats in the ring at the ABANA web site main business page. (www.abana.org/business/index.shtml) Contact Jim Masterson (Jim@ABANA.org) for any information about the election, it is not too late, yet.

The revised bylaws will be up for a vote at the same time as the board election. Since the March edition of this letter they have undergone a final set of tweaks. The Bylaws committee respectfully requests that you reward their efforts with your attention and vote when the Summer Anvil's Ring appears in your mailbox. (See this 5/22/08 version at (www.abana.org/business/Proposed_bylaws.shtml).

As a service to affiliates the ABANA Demonstrator list has been updated and is available at this web page: (www.abana.org/downloads/demo_web.pdf). If you were at a conference lately and the demonstrator did a great job – look him/her up. If not on the list, let the ABANA office know of this omission and we will take it from there.

Thanks to the efforts of Peyton Anderson and others on the ABANA board, the members survey report is available for download. (See: www.abana.org/downloads/FINAL_ABANA_Survey_Analysis.pdf).

New ABANA Affiliate Groups

Clinch River Blacksmith Guild – Meets in the Knoxville, Tennessee Area.

Blacksmith Association of Taroudant (Morocco) – This group of about 40 smiths was put in touch with ABANA by Peace Corps volunteers. They are eager to make connections with the international community of artisans.

BeBale: The Israeli Blacksmith Association – with Amit Har-lev as president – invites all who are in that part of the world to look them up.

Rumors heard around the ABANA board:

The ABANA Conference committee has narrowed the list of cities being considered for the 2010 and 2012 conferences. The front-runner for 2010 is Memphis and for 2012 it is Rapid City, SD. Nothing final quite yet but that's the rumor.

Best Regards and please be in touch (pboulay@abana.org).

Paul Boulay
ABANA Affiliate Relations Board Member

MEETING INFO

June Meeting Directions and Lunch

Folks heading south on I-35 from Austin take exit 197 (York Creek) south of San Marcos. Head south on the access road (be careful, it's a two-way frontage) and just under the overpass (pass the metal and stone building at the corner), take a right and loop around to cross the overpass heading east. As you come off the overpass, swing left. At the stop sign (T), take a right and cross the low-water crossing, veering left onto York Creek Rd. Head east 1.3 miles until you get to the County Rd. marker 262 and a high-water signal light. Take a left across the bridge. As you come up to the "Doster's" green gate (arrow with the name "Tuff" should be pointing the way), swing left through the trees and you'll come to the Tuff's place. Go through the gate and there you are! Shop can be seen in the field to the right.

Coming from San Antonio, take the Watson Ln./ Old Bastrop Rd. exit. Stay on the two-way frontage road, heading north, through the four-way stop sign at the Antique/Fireworks barn. As you come down the hill, take a right, at the AVPO scrap yard, onto Old Bastrop Rd. At the "Y" with York Creek (yield sign), take a right onto York Creek Rd. Head east 1.3 miles until you get to the County Rd. marker 262 and a high-water signal light. Take a left across the bridge. As you come up to the "Doster's" green gate, swing left through the trees (arrow with name "Tuff" should be pointing the way) and you'll come to the Tuff's place. Go through the gate and there you are! Shop can be seen in the field to the right.

We are planning to pick up BBQ from Kipp's in San Marcos to feed folks at the farm for a nominal fee. We will provide the iced tea.

If you get lost, call Sue at 512-924-9030 and we'll get you there.

PUT ON YOUR THINKING CAP; THE ANSWER

A few folks came close to naming the three types of welding available to blacksmiths, but no one claimed the prize. The answer can be found on page 89 of A Blacksmith's Craft -- The Legacy of Francis Whitaker. The three types are hammer, containment, and fire welding. Better luck next time.

ATTENTION ABANA MEMBERS

Get 10%-50% off purchases from Grainger. That's right! You can get 46% off Milwaukee tools, or 28% off motors, just to name a few. See the ABANA website (www.ABANA.org) for more info. It pays to be a member!

STEEL AWAY

Do you have some steel laying around your shop you will never use and it's taking up valuable space? Give it a good home at Austin Community College. Their budget does not increase as fast as the price of steel. Your donation can make a big difference to this outstanding program. Drops are also welcome. William Bastas, Master Blacksmith and department head, will be grateful to hear from you and will even arrange pickup. Email him at wbastas@austincc.edu. One more thing: you can write off your donation.

TUDOR FORGE

Dave Keonig writes to let us know that Tudor Forge has a web site, (he says a small one!)

www.tudorforge.com.

"Never fall in love with your work. You can create another one even better".



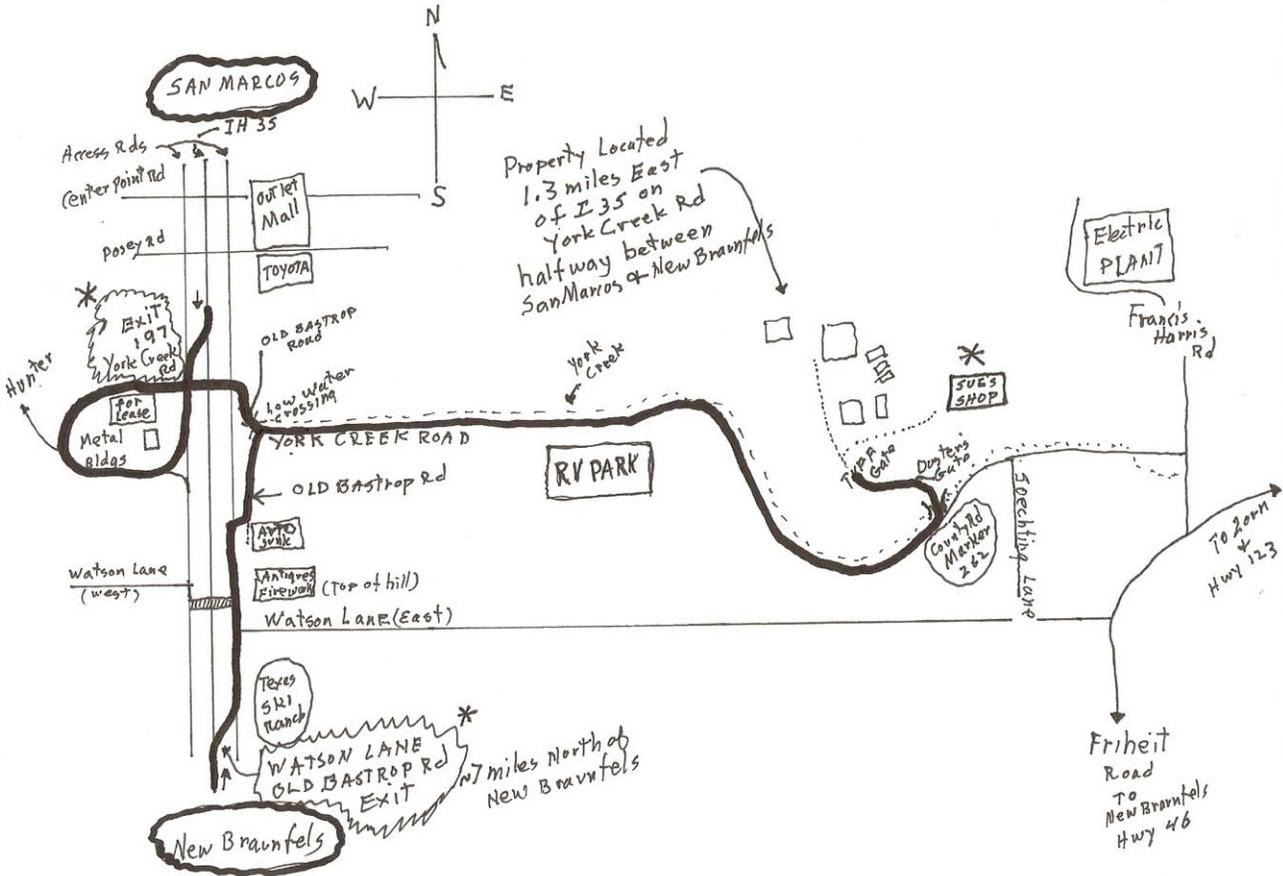
So, did y'all wonder what Sue was going to do with her prize from the big demo?
And who says cows do not appreciate advanced geometry?

Photo by Sue Murray

Icosidodecahedron (ball) Bling Wanted

Many of you worked on the icosidodecahedron at the Bluebonnet Workshop this spring. To dress it up, I've been hooking little things to it as I find something that might be good to add. So...if you have something laying around you think would be fun to attach, bring it along to the June meeting at my shop and I'll be glad to add it. To date, you can find the following ornaments gracing the big ole ball: a napkin ring, a flower, a snake pin, a small piece of honeycomb limestone and a cow hip bone! Yep...a hip bone. So...needless to say, it doesn't have to be metal...just has to hold up in the weather.

Sue



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