



Blacksmiths of Central Texas

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November 2007



THE PREZ SAYS:

If you have ever thought about making a career of blacksmithing, you should have been at our last meeting, hosted by Bob Pheil. Bob creates outstanding ironwork, sometimes incorporating beautiful mesquite into pieces such as beds and coffee tables. He must be doing something right, as he has enough work to carry him through to 2009. And the really amazing part is that Bob is willing to share his knowledge, welcoming your calls -- especially regarding questions about pricing. Thanks Bob for a great meeting.

Also at the meeting, Balcones Forge held its annual board meeting and election. Aaron Tilton and Tom Lupton were elected to the Board, replacing the expired terms of Sue Murray and Harvey Wise. After lunch, the Board appointed Tom Lupton as Secretary, and Jerry Achterberg as Vice President. John Crouchet remains as Board member, Smokey Thompson remains Treasurer, Vince Herod as Editor, and me, your President. It is an honor to serve such an outstanding organization.

The volunteers who oversee two very important volunteer positions have graciously renewed their commitments. Michele Collins-Stokes (and crew) will continue as Coffee and Refreshment Hostess, and Jaylon Loyd as Librarian. Since Tom Lupton has a new position as Secretary, we need a volunteer to take over t-shirt/cap sales. Anyone?

Thanks to all volunteers, Board members, and Officers for your commitment and dedication. You make it fun for all. Here's to another successful year!

Rudy

BALCONES FORGE LIFE MEMBERS

At the July demonstration the Balcones Forge Board of Directors agreed unanimously to award the very first Life Memberships to two men who have been instrumental in making the organization into what the members enjoy today.

Mr. Charles Stolte of Taylor, Texas and Mr. Neil Hastings of Austin, Texas.

Without a doubt, the world of blacksmithing continues because those who have come before want to be certain the knowledge is passed along to future generations. These two gentlemen have certainly done their part to keep blacksmithing alive and well in Central Texas.

Please join the Board in congratulating both Neil and Charlie.



Neil Hastings *photo by Jerry Achterberg*



Charlie Stolte *photo by Harry Cabluck*

MEETING INFO

Join Balcones Forge on Saturday November the 24th for what will be another fine meeting. Jim Schmidt will be hosting the meeting at a great Austin treasure, Pioneer Farms.

Come on out at our usual starting time of 9:30am and have a look at the way it was done way back when.

At press time the details of the meeting have not been released but you can count on a tour of the Farm and a chance to experience how our forefathers worked at the anvil.

How to get in touch with folks at the Farm:

10621 Pioneer Farms Drive
Austin, Texas 78754
Phone: 512.837.1215
Fax: 512.837.4503
Email: farminfo@pioneerfarms.org

And be sure to check out their website at:

www.pioneerfarms.org

TRADE ITEM

Our host for the November 24th meeting, Jim Schmidt, has come up with a great trade item. Create something that is either totally non-ferrous, or a combination of non-ferrous and ferrous. So dig out that copper, bronze, aluminum, zinc, lead, etc., and pound out something unique. Have fun.

Remember, you gotta make one to take one!

DIRECTIONS TO PIONEER FARMS

Driving South on I-35

Take the Braker Lane Exit. Turn left at the stop light. Go straight until you reach Dessau Road. Turn left onto Dessau road and get into the immediate right-hand lane. Turn right onto Braker Lane (Pioneer Crossing Neighborhood). Go straight until the first road on the right. Turn right onto Pioneer Farms Drive. GO STRAIGHT, do not turn left. Pioneer Farms Drive dead-ends at the Pioneer Farms parking lot.

Driving North on I-35

Take the Braker Lane Exit. Turn right at the stop light. Go straight until you reach Dessau Road. Turn left onto Dessau road and get into the immediate right-hand lane. Turn right onto Braker Lane (Pioneer Crossing Neighborhood). Go straight until the first road on the right. Turn right onto Pioneer Farms Drive. GO STRAIGHT, do not turn left. Pioneer Farms Drive dead-ends at the Pioneer Farms parking lot.

A WORD TO THE WISE

The Balcones Forge Board has chosen an award-winning blacksmith to be our demonstrator for the 2008 Bluebonnet Workshop on March 29-30.

More info to come, but that is a busy time of year in Marble Falls, so you just might want to get your lodging reservations taken care of soon. It is bluebonnet time, wedding time, and a myriad of events all take place in this beautiful community by the lake at the end of March.

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SECRETARY'S REPORT

The meeting for October, 2007 was held on Saturday the 27th at Bob Pheil's newly expanded shop on Post Oak Road in Llano situated in the beautiful central Texas Hill Country.

Bob's shop is a model for anyone who wants to do mixed media manufacturing; in this case furniture made from aged mesquite and forged mild steel. Last year when we met there the shop had only enough enclosed space for his forge work. This year a renovation has added hundreds of square feet of space for wood working, drying mesquite and storage. He will soon add another building in the back of his shop to kiln dry the rare mesquite planks he uses as table tops and benches. His artistry is truly an inspiration to us all and we applaud his expertise and his business model which has so obviously made him a rare success in this business.

You could not have asked for a better fall day for a blacksmith meeting. The morning quickly warmed up from the 30's and, with help from Bob's gas forge, in a couple of hours the shop was comfortable enough inside to allow the bay doors to be opened. There is nothing like an early fall day in the Hill Country of Texas to get your blacksmithing juices flowing!

Early on there was a demonstration on how to gun-blue your work. It appears, however, that gun bluing turns out more black than blue. Gun blacking just doesn't have the exotic ring that gun bluing does even though, if done properly, it will add depth and beauty to your work. Remember to wear protective rubber or plastic gloves as the chemicals used in this process are fairly potent. It is also necessary to provide yourself with adequate ventilation and eye protection.

Bob demonstrated how to put a pleasing texture on a chair or table leg by running it through the power hammer dies while angling the work piece to the right, then to the left and then straight through all the while rotating the piece under the hammer. He said that this could be done as well with a round-

ing hammer on the anvil; it would just take more time. We wondered why his 25lb little giant was so quiet. He pointed out how he had mounted his power hammers on 2 foot thick slabs of concrete. This had the effect of making them much more efficient and quieter than when they were mounted on wood. Bob showed us how he mortises out the bottom of the mesquite wood he uses for the table and bench tops to accept the piece of flat steel onto which the legs are welded. His technique of wrapping the leg runners with the tapered ends of the stretchers was information we could all use to make attractive and effective leg braces for tables and chairs. The finishes that he uses on the mesquite include linseed oil mixed fifty/fifty with polyurethane followed by multiple coats of wax for interior use, and McCloskey's spar varnish for exterior application. Next we were shown how to upset the end of a table leg to make a foot on it without using a hammer. Bob does this by using an acetylene torch to heat the very end of the leg and then while holding the leg in both hands at 90 degrees to the face of the anvil, striking the anvil with the heated end, causing it to flare into a foot. The last trick of the trade that Bob shared with us was his technique of stretching the wire on fireplace screen frames.

The trade item was a pair of scrolling tongs and three fine examples were traded giving a hint of the collective talent in our group. Bob informed us that making tongs out of coil spring produces a very strong and tough tool. He also advised us against quenching coil spring material in water which makes the steel too brittle to use as tooling.

Here's a quote from Bob: "You're going to need some time to make scrolling tongs because it's going to take you an hour." right, Bob, how about 3 or 4 hours or more for us mortals. Hopefully next month more members will have time to spend a few hours at their forges to demonstrate their expertise by making a trade item.

And speaking of expertise, Charlie Stolte arrived after we had begun the meeting. It was as if a breath of fresh air had blown in from the East. We

were very glad and relieved to see him able to make an appearance. At the end of the meeting he thanked the Board of Directors for having awarded him a lifetime membership in Balcones Forge. He expressed how much being in this group, and previously in TABA has meant to him. It was a special time and his words moved us all. Also, our esteemed president, Rudy Billings presented Jerry Achterberg with a beautiful bronze Frederick cross in appreciation of Jerry having shown him how to make these crosses which has resulted in sales across the country for Rudy. Not bad, not bad at all.

Special thanks to Michael Collins for providing donuts and coffee to the group. Blacksmith fuel: caffeine and donuts, the worlds policemen just don't know how it's properly done!

Lunch, although late by any scale of when lunch should occur, was very good with most members visiting Inman's barbecue restaurant. There the board meeting was held and yours truly was drafted into the Secretarial position. Rudy Billings was re-elected as president for another year which promises to be as glorious as the last under his direction.

Tom Lupton
Balcones Forge Secretary

BALCONES FORGE ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

10/27/2007

Location: October Monthly Meeting at Bob Pheil's Shop. Time: 1:00 PM

Board Members Present:
Rudy Billings-President
John Crouchet- board member
Jerry Achterberg -board member
Vince Herod-Editor
Tom Lupton-board member

Yearly elections were held after the regular meeting where Arron Tilton and Tom Lupton were elected to the board. Rudy Billings was re-elected as president, Jerry Achterberg was elected as vice-president, and Tom Lupton was elected as Secretary.

Officers for the Oct. 2007 through Oct 2008 year will be:

President – Rudy Billings

Vice-President – Jerry Achterberg

Secretary – Tom Lupton

Treasurer – Steve Thompson

During the Board Meeting a discussion was held on action to take in securing a place for our auction and a caterer for the coming March, 2008 Bluebonnet Demonstration. John Crouchet agreed to make calls in this regard. Also discussed was whether or not to get someone else to sell tee-shirts and hats so Tom Lupton would not be acting as Secretary and tee-shirt salesman as well. No decision was made at the meeting regarding this item.

Rudy Billings reported that Jaylon Loyd has agreed to continue as Librarian and Michael Collins agreed to be in charge of the coffee bar.

There was no Treasurer's report as the treasurer, Steve Thompson, was unable to come to the meeting.

Submitted by Tom Lupton, Secretary

DECEMBER MEETING

If any of y'all out there have a great idea for the December meeting please let Rudy or any of the Officers know right away.

What do YOU want to do in December?

PIONEER FARMS RULES:

- # Children must be properly supervised by adults at all times.
- # Walk carefully. Paths and surfaces are rough and uneven.
- # Do not touch or feed any livestock. Animals are unpredictable.
- # Hooves, horns, wings, claws and teeth can hurt you.
- # Beware of fire ants, bees, poison ivy, stinging nettles and thorns.
- # Do not enter livestock pastures or stalls at any time.
- # Do not climb on or reach through any fences or stalls.
- # Do not remove natural elements or artifacts from the premises.
- # Do not sit on, climb upon or touch displayed artifacts and antiques.
- # Do not litter.
- # Do not smoke, eat or drink in any buildings.
- # Do not smoke on the museum grounds.
- # Do not climb on structures, fences, wagons or farm machinery.
- # Do not wander off the pathways.
- # Do not bring pets onto the grounds.

VIOLATORS MAY BE ASKED TO LEAVE THE MUSEUM.

Pioneer Farms is a weapon-free, drug-free zone. Violators will be prosecuted.

MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2008

So, which month would you like to host a meeting? Come on, show off the hard work you put into building your shop, or all the fantastic equipment you have. Besides, it's a great reason to clean up the place -- you just might find that tool you've been missing. Contact Vice President, Jerry Achterberg (treefarm@swbell.net). We have most of next year open at this time, so get your spot early.

CAPS FOR KIDS

Centaur Forge is collecting caps and hats to distribute to kids at MD Anderson who are going through treatment and have lost their hair. Please donate your NEW caps. (You really don't need 47 caps!) Bring to any meeting and we will deliver them to Centaur Forge for this worthy project.

INTERESTING BLACKSMITHING SITES

www.anvilfire.com/iForge

www.danielsmithblacksmith.com

www.blacksmithsjournal.com/

SUPER QUENCH HELP NEEDED

For those of you who attended Rob Gunter's demonstration a few years back, I have a question. Did you use his formula for Super Quench? Well I did and it worked just as promised.

A few years have gone by and now one of the ingredients is not available. The recipe calls for a 32 ounce bottle of blue Dawn dishwashing liquid and the local HEB doesn't seem to carry that size anymore.

Has anyone had success with the new Concentrated Dawn? If so please pass the information along so the updated formula can be shared in the newsletter.

PLEASE SEND YOUR SUPER QUENCH RESULTS TO THE EDITOR!



This is how Bob creates the upset leg for the bench.



Photos by Jerry Achterberg and Vince Herod



Tom Lupton demonstrates "blueing"



Great detail on this table!

October Trade Items.





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