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The Saltfork Craftsmen Artist-Blacksmith Association, a non-profit organization of amateur and professional artist and craftsmen, publishes this newsletter monthly. Our purposes are the sharing of knowledge, education and to promote a more general appreciation of the fine craftsmanship everywhere. We are a chapter of the Artist-Blacksmith Association of North America.

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Visit our Saltfork Craftsmen Website:
www.saltforkcraftsmen.org



DECEMBER 2006

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December

NE Regional meeting (Dec. 9, 2006) open
South/Central meeting (Dec.16, 2006) The meeting will be hosted by Larry Morefield at his shop in Medicine Park. Larry has chosen anything for Christmas as the trade item. Lunch will be provided. Side dishes or deserts welcome. Come to Medicine Park out in the Wichita Mountains NW of Lawton and follow the anvils.

NW Regional meeting (Dec.23, 2006) open

“Happy New Year”

January

NE Regional meeting (Jan 13, 2007)

South/Central meeting (Jan 20, 2007) hosted by JC Banks, Altus, Ok.

NW Regional meeting (Jan 27, 2007)

February

NE Regional meeting (Feb 10, 2007)

South/Central meeting (Feb 17, 2007) hosted by Terry Jenkins, Blanchard, Ok.

NW Regional meeting (Feb 24, 2007)

March

NE Regional meeting (March 10, 2007) meeting will be hosted by Dan Cowart.

South/Central meeting (March 17, 2007) hosted by Gerald Franklin.

NW regional meeting (March 24, 2007) meeting will be hosted by Ron Lehenbauer at his shop is Waukomis. Ron has chosen a candleholder at the trade item. Lunch will be provided but help out with a side dish of some kind.

2007 DEMO REQUEST

2006 is almost over and it is time to start working up the demo calendar for 2007. If you know of or plan to participate in any of the many celebrations that take place around the state next year, please drop me a email or call with the information so I can put it in our newsletter. You may not get anyone to come help but there are

always some of us that will come by and shout encouragement.

➤ Pawnee Bill Ranch Museum events:

The Wild West Show dates are June 16, 23, and 30th. We have set the date for Heritage Skills on October 13. We also have a blacksmithing workshop tentatively planned for May 12. I think that Brandon can teach this class on May 12, but we would love to have an additional person as well depending on the class size. The Centennial Wild West Show is anticipated to be a pretty big event –your group’s involvement with our demonstrations on the hill is so important to us! We couldn’t do it without you guys.

Thanks again for all you do.

ERIN

➤ Norman Medieval Faire

Mark you calendars now for the Medieval Faire. Steven Knisely has been demonstrating at this event for several years and is again the one to contact if you would like to help. Last year Donovan’s keep came and helped out and they kept forges going throughout the day for the many visitors to observe the type of blacksmithing that would have taken place during that time period. If you have never been, it is an experience. There is something going on all around you as well as an open market area to brose through.

The dates for the Medieval Faire are March 30-April 1 2007.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

There will be a Board of Directors meeting in Perry on Sunday afternoon Dec. 10th. Plan on meeting at 2:30 P.M. Jim has arranged for us to use the Ditch Witch Heritage Center meeting room (The Anvil Room). All Saltfork members are welcome (encouraged) to attend this meeting. The main item on the agenda is to discuss the 2006 Conference and begin planning for the 2007 Conference.

The Heritage Center is located at 227 6th Street. That’s about 100 feet South of the SE Corner of the Perry downtown square and is on the East side of the Street. Look for the dark brick building facing East with the Blacksmith Shop sign above the windows.

The board would appreciate any input you may have to help us improve the 2007 Conference.

There has been some discussion among some of the members about not hosting a conference in 2007 but instead having some workshops around the state during the year instead. Perhaps hosting a conference only every other year. If you have an opinion on this subject, come to the meeting or let one of the board members know so we can pass on what the majority of the members want to see this club do. This club is made up of over 200 individuals and we need to address the wants and needs of the membership. Whether or not you attended this years Conference your input to the Board is important; let one of the Saltfork Board members hear from you; phone, email, or write.

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* Advanced Blacksmithing with Gordon Williams
Thanks Amy Pieh

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CLUB MEMBER KEEP BUSY WITH A VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES

❖ DEMO FOR THE VETERANS

By Gerald Franklin

On November 10, I did another demo at the Lawton/Fort Sill Veterans Center in Lawton, OK. I set up on one of the patio areas convenient to one of the major entrances so that the residents could come and go at will. We had a small group who watched up close and personal. The weather was cool and blustery, however, and this kept many of the residents indoors. They were able to watch much of the demo from inside a covered/glassed in porch area. The demo items were very simple but quick, as the idea was to expose the folks to a variety of forging techniques in a short time. We started with a couple of leaf key fobs and then progressed to a serving fork forged from a piece of 3/16 X 1" strap. Again, I left a few leaf key fobs with the recreation staff to be used as Bingo prizes in the future. I invited the staff to bring some residents to one of our South/Central meetings. Hopefully it will work out that some of the vets can come to see us do our thing at a meeting sometime soon.

This was a unique event for me since it was not necessarily a public event, but was held at the facility specifically for the residents of the center. In case you are not familiar with this Veterans Center, it is relatively new and houses about 200 veterans under the care of the Veterans Administration. Many of them have health conditions that will not allow them to travel to a demo outside the facility.

WAGON CAMP

Each year Medicine Park host a wagon camp and this year they had beautiful weather for the visitors and campers alike. Larry Morfield is a member of our club but also one of the main planners for the activities that take place in the town of Medicine Park. Anytime there is something going on you can bet your bottom dollar that Larry will be in the middle of it.

As many of you know Larry has been building wagons. A couple of years ago he built himself a traveling Blacksmith wagon and has taken it to several of the surrounding town to their celebrations and has been demonstrating blacksmith

techniques practiced during the early settlement of the area.

Now he has built a peddlers wagon for his wife to work out of. During the recent Wagon Camp not only were they hawking their wares but using it as a backdrop for one of their melodramas that take place in the park at each of their events.



As you can see here they were using the platform to perform some picking and singing for the crowds.

Not sure what he is trying to sell her but I don't think she is buying his claims.



Larry even gets into the action by telling some camp tales. Larry is a very



accomplished blacksmith as well as wagon builder. We look forward to seeing what his next wagon will be.

The pictures for this article were provided by the Photographer in Medicine Park and the web site that they maintain. If you are interested in seeing what is going on the Medicine Park check out their website.

S/C REGIONAL MEETING

Bill and Diana Davis hosted the meeting in the South/Central region. We lucked out with the weather. The weekend turned out to be very nice with only a slight breeze. There were about 30 members and guest. Gerald Franklin came with his forge and Jerry Cathy had is trailer with is trail-gating items. I know there were several



satisfied customers leaving his trailer to place items in their trucks during the day.



Charlie Groom came and started working on the forge in the shop. He even used the power hammer quite a bit.

We weren't sure what he was making for a while.

We don't even know if Charlie knew. After several trip between the forge and hammer he produce a really nice Ads from a used hammer.



He cut the claw from the hammer and drew out the head. Nice item.

NW REGIONAL MEETING

Tom Nelson hosted the meeting at his shop that is located in the small town of Douglas. It is east of Waukomis and if you blink you will miss it. Even with the stop sign in the middle of town.

Tom had a good weekend for his meeting. It was a little breezy but it wasn't too cold.

There weren't a lot at the meeting but those that came were treated to several of us giving short demos.

Tom gave a demo to show how he had made some runners for a kids sled that a lady had brought by and asked him to try to fix.



The next one at the forge was Steven Knisley. He was asked to show how to make a flint striker. He used a tooth from a rake. He



said any kind of high carbon steal would work.

He also had a medieval style that he uses to light his pipe.



Ron Lehenbauer also took a turn at the forge and showed how to make the buffalo head on the RR spike.

Tom's meeting was a good opportunity to pickup coal. He has a skid steer that he uses to load up the containers and then life them onto your trailer or truck bed.

TRADE ITEMS

One of the things that we like to do at our meeting is have a trade item. The host of the meeting chooses an item and anyone that wants to tries to

make an item that meets the host's requirements. Most times this is done before the meeting but some times members wait until they get to the meeting to make their item. At the South/Central meeting the trade item was a flower. There were several nice examples.



At the NW Regional meeting the items was anything with a rivet. Here again there were several items presented.



Everyone that brought or made an item took someone else's home.

The trade item practice was borrowed from one of the other ABANA affiliate groups and encourages members to try something that they might not ordinarily try to make. I know for myself there are several failed attempts at tongs tossed over in the corner before I was satisfied with the final pair. I plan to try again and see if I can make another pair.

HOW DO I MAKE THAT?

Each month I try to put some "How To's" in the back of the newsletter. If there is a particular thing that you would like to see in that section, let

me know. I now have permission to reprint blueprints from I-Forge Iron and also from the Blacksmith Journal web sites.

I Forge Iron is a good resource for all type of Blacksmithing information. The site has several hundred blue prints that have been submitted by blacksmith from all around the world, not just the USA. On Tuesday nights they have a open forum where you can participate in the review of a new blueprint. The blacksmith is there telling you each step in the process and you have the opportunity to ask questions or make comments at the end of the presentation.

Our members have submitted several of their ideas to the blueprint section and Gerald Franklin has submitted two of his short stories.

I forge iron has a lot of offer so go check out their site at Iforgeiron.com

Below you will find a decal to display on your truck or toolbox. The administrator of I-Forge Iron sent these to us. Thanks Glen...

OKLAHOMA CUSTOM KNIFE SHOW

Often when someone finds out that one of us does blacksmithing the first thing they ask is “do you shoe horses” or “do you make knives”, and while more of us are inclined to try our hand at making knives than shoeing horses, most of us are not quite accomplished enough to call ourselves blade smiths.

On the weekend of November 4th and 5th several members of Saltfork Craftsman got together with several other men and women who have definitely earned the right to call themselves by that title.

On that weekend, the Oklahoma Custom Knife Show was held in Oklahoma City.



Chuck Bennett from Dalhart Tx.



Ray Kirk and Dawnavan Crawford had tables there along with several of the best bladesmiths from Oklahoma and the surrounding states.

One of the gentlemen there had recently returned from Sweden where he was the first American to ever win in any class of their national competition. It was a great opportunity for those of

November 2006

us who occasionally try to hammer out a workable blade to talk and learn from some true master of the crafts.
Steven Knisely



The knife show was also a great place to pick up supplies. There were several vendors with a wide variety of materials for the handles or to customize sheaths with. There was also a vendor selling tooling from anvils to blade clamps for holding the blade blanks while filing.

There was also a display of some of the smallest knives that I have ever seen. Some were not over 1.5 inches long from the tip of the blade to the end of the handle.

One of the largest knives was at Dawnavan Crawford table. It had to be close to 20 inches long.

Blade smithing is an exacting art, especially for those that forge out their blades. They talked about working for hours forging a blade just to have it break during the heat-treating and tempering stage. Those that do the pattern-welded blades, Damascus, face even more challenges. They can work for several days and find a flaw while filing the blades. All that work is for not.

I have watched several members make knives and I have a great respect for their talent and patience shown during their work. But after attending this knife show I can see that the rewards are well worth the effort to learn the craft. There are a lot of knife makers out there in the world but it takes a very talented and dedicated individual to pursue the title of Blade smith.

Diana Davis

Charcoal Making for the Blacksmith

By Mike Kiirk

I decided to make some charcoal after attending a recent hammer-in at Bill Wiggins' shop in North Carolina. Charcoal was used at the outside forging station and was well-received by those blacksmiths doing the forging demonstrations. I saw Dr. Jim Batson and Richard Williams, a blacksmith at Dollywood, both forge their versions of the squirrel-tail knife from a small file while using the charcoal, and both were well-pleased with the results.

All of the charcoal was made by David Burnette, the blacksmith at the local community college. The charcoal he made was by the distillation method. The wood that he used was leftover scraps from his sawmill operation. The distillation, or direct, method involves setting the wood on fire and damping down the amount of air in order to char the wood.

In the old days, the wood was stacked in piles in a depression in the ground, and covered with dirt and sod. As the wood burned, holes were opened and closed to regulate air flow to the fire and to allow the various gases to burn off so the wood could char.

Making your own charcoal is a very simple and fool-proof project. The items that you need are:

- 55 gallon drum
- 1 12"-square steel plate
- 3 bricks
- Some wood material to use as your fuel

For the wood, you can use either hardwood or softwood (i.e., pine). I've tried both and they work equally well. The pine I used consisted of five-inch scraps of 2x4's from a construction project. The hardwood was scrap pieces of flooring from a molding company.

The first thing I did was cut a hole in the drum about 10" square (it will later be covered with the 12" square plate during the charcoal-making process). Then, turn the drum over and cut out one end. When you are through, the drum will have a 10" hole in the top and an open end at the bottom. A word of caution: be extremely careful when cutting your drum. Make sure that there is no flammable material in the drum when you cut it. The safest way is to use a skill-saw, as you shouldn't have any sparks with it. Now you are ready to make your charcoal.

The Charcoal-Making Process

Now you need to start a fire just like you would on a camping trip. Make it small, because once it gets to burning, you are going to set your drum over it. After you turn your drum over, place the three bricks at three locations around the fire so that you can set your drum on them to keep it off the ground to allow the air to flow to the fire. All you need to do now is keep putting your wood scraps into the drum until you have it filled up.

Let the wood burn and watch the smoke as it comes out of the hole on top of the drum. It will tell you what is happening inside as the wood goes through the charcoal process. The first thing you notice is white smoke (mostly water vapor) burning off. Next the smoke will become blue-gray, from the phenols and alcohols burning off. As the fire burns inside and when all the above substances have burned off, the smoke will become clear and you will see waves of heat. When this happens, remove the three bricks from the bottom of the drum and place the square plate over the hole on the top.



Place dirt around the bottom of the drum and on top so that all the air to the fire is cut off completely. If you don't, the fire will continue to smolder and burn up your charcoal.

Let your drum sit overnight. The next day, turn it over and you should have about half a drum of charcoal to use for your next blacksmithing project. I think that you will find that it burns cleanly and has little smoke, while producing plenty of heat. It tends to burn faster than coal, but you won't be covered up with the usual black soot and grit.



At a recent blacksmith demo that Jimmy Hyde and I did in Fayetteville, GA, when things got slow on Sunday during the Taste of Fayetteville, we thought about cooking BBQ on our forge and competing with the local restaurants. Who knows, maybe "Blacksmithing and BBQ" could be just the money-making idea that makes me rich!



Dr. Jim Batson forging a squirrel-tail knife using charcoal.

RING PROJECT 2008 AND BEYOND

2006 ABANA Conference, Seattle, Washington

Fellow Blacksmiths, for those of you who could not attend, it was a great conference.

This gathering of the tribe was of special interest to me since there was the "Ring of Fire" project, otherwise known as the Affiliate Ring Project. I had entered a ring representing my affiliate group, Central Minnesota Blacksmiths (CMB). This wasn't the first time for me, I entered a ring for La Crosse in 2002. La Crosse was special too, since this project was to honor my grandfather, Francis Whitaker. I haven't always been a blacksmith, my first beginners workshop was during the spring of 2000, shortly after Francis passed.

I had only the fundamental skills by 2002, and was excited that I could possibly put something worthy forward. Starting with an idea that would use traditional techniques and be a fitting tribute. For sure there were processes I had not mastered, so I asked one of my CMB buddies, Ken Zitur if he could teach me how to do this ring and showed him my sketch. Ken agreed, and we spent several evenings that winter together, Ken teaching and me learning. First we had some tooling to make, my design used half oval collars and so I made a set of punches. Next, the design called for a scrolled element with penny ends, which Ken told me I would need a "Snub Starter" if I wanted the penny to look right. So the snub starter was next. Well, to make a long story short, Ken taught me how to do all the tooling and forging process needed to completed the design.

This was a learning experience of the best kind, one on one, with a good friend and mentor.

My completed ring was for me a first, and it was included in the 2002 Ring Project. Al Butlak from The New York State Designer Blacksmiths was the drive wheel for this project, and I will always remember this first project for me. Many of you may have seen some not so traditional work on the grille, but the fact is that the Ring Project happened.

I was so excited about the possibilities for the future of the Ring Project that I stuck my hand up and volunteered to help out in any way that I could, just to see this project continue on into the future.

When I heard that there was not going to be a Ring Project for the 2004 conference in Richmond Kentucky I was disappointed to say the least. So I made up my mind to volunteer whatever I could, and spent a good deal of time with Tom Clark prior to the opening of the 2006 conference discussing the future of "The Ring Project"

You have to understand that Tom Clark, and many others over the years have made the Ring Project what it is today. And if it weren't for guys like Michael Bendele, Joe Bonifas and Joel Sanderson there might not have been a 2006 Ring Project. As I spent more time talking to Tom Clark, I began to remember how I got going on my first ring, and what a wonderful learning experience it had been for me. Then all of a sudden, Tom tells me, "The Ring Project is about one thing and one thing only.....educational opportunity!"

The alarms in my brain went off big time and I felt the excitement in Tom's voice. That's when I told Tom about La Crosse, I had raised up my arm and was willing to move the feet to do whatever I could do to so that someone else might have the opportunity to experience what I had. A chance to learn new skills, make a contribution to the future of blacksmithing, and in some small way, show my appreciation for the time my friend Ken Zitun had spent teaching me.

So friends, off I went checking in with the group from the Northeast Blacksmiths Association advance crew who were in Seattle not just to attend the conference, but to scope out what it takes to organize such an event. I questioned "will the 2008 conference have a ring project?" and their answer was a resounding yes. So with the encouragement of Don Kemper, Tom Clark and a few others, the ABANA 2008 Ring Project will happen. I know that Tom, Don and others will be my mentors and along with you the affiliate members New Paltz, New York will have the best Ring Project ever. If you want to get out the pencil now and sharpen it up, here is the one of best teaching opportunities we have, take time to share with each other and feel free to contact me as the project comes together.

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