

Rocky Forge News

Volume 6, issue 5 – May, 2007

I try to take life one day at a time. But recently several have ganged up on me all at once.

David Childress

If you have not heard there will not be an April ForgeFire and I am not sure when the May ForgeFire will be out. Gary Phillips, the ForgeFire editor has been in the hospital and has had an operation. He is home now and this is about all I know about his condition.

I would like to prevent such occurrences for our newsletter both because I am responsible and I do not like hospitals. If I could get some help, like a volunteer assistant, maybe even our newsletter can get out in a little more timely manner and there would be another viewpoint besides mine represented.

Meetings:

May 2007

Our next meeting May 12th will be at Ted's shop. Be sure to bring your square to the meeting as we will be putting the finishing touches on and assembly will begin. Gene is going to bring his TIG welder and start the process of assembly. If you do not have your square completed bring it anyway as we may be able to make something that day or let someone else have the square. I would really like to see all you guys have a representation on the sign, so do your best to fill in a square. Some of us have met to work on the sign between meeting times.

The June conference will be a little over two weeks after our meeting so we need to bust our fannies to get it ready for the show. If the weather permits you can use forges outside on that day. I have 5 set up in the drive between the two buildings. Carol will not be cooking us anything that day so let's bring a bag lunch, that seems to save us a lot of time.

Any volunteers to get the doughnuts?

Bring items for the iron-in-the-hat and any show and tell that you have made, we always enjoy them.

The past week has been a really rough time for me and my family. My older brother from near Crawfordsville passed away at the age of 72 from a massive heart attack. He will be greatly missed and only time will heal the loss.

Ted

IBA Conference

David Childress

The IBA conference is June 1-3, 2007 at the Tipton County Fairgrounds. I am embarrassed to say that I received the brochure for the conference and promptly lost it. I did not even notice who was demonstrating since I help with the Beginners Class and do not get to see any demonstrations, which is fine and my choice. The fact that I can not lay my hands on the conference information is indication of deeper problems in both the IBA and my life. All members should have received the official brochure and so not need an announcement here.

UMBA Conference

The 2007 Upper Midwest Regional Blacksmithing Conference will be held July 13-15 at Thresherman's Reunion Park, Pontiac, Illinois.

The demonstrator for Indiana Blacksmith Association is:

Charles R. "Bob" Becker of Oxford, Michigan.

Bob has been blacksmithing for 24 years. He has taken classes from several masters smiths including Francis Whitaker, Nol Putnam and Ed Grove. He has been demonstrating and teaching at ABANA, Touchtone, John C. Campbell Folk School, New England of School Metals and numerous Blacksmithing affiliates conferences since 1990. At his shop, The White Horse Forge, he has been commissioned to do railing, gates and other architectural forging but his favorite forging is of the horse's head. At the UMRBC this July 13-15 he will be demonstrating the use of traditional joinery in architectural and functional pieces of art. Bob will be building a sample grill at the conference this July. Please visit Bob's web site to view his work at <http://www.whitehorseforge.com/>

The demonstrator for Illinois Valley Blacksmith Association is:

Chris Winterstein from Bakersville NC.

Introducing Chris Winterstein for IVBA. Featured Blacksmith for the 2007 UMRBC. Scheduled for July 13-15, 2007 in Pontiac, IL at the Threshermans Reunion Park. Chris Winterstein, lead Blacksmith and proprietor at Dirt Circus Ironworks has been blacksmithing for over ten years. He began at the Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina, then moved to the National Ornamental Metals Museum in Memphis TN. Before returning to Western North Carolina in 2001, he worked as a journeyman with some of the top blacksmiths in the US, working on everything from Architectural Commissions to large scale public Sculpture, to restoration of historical Ironwork. He is a frequent demonstrator and teacher around the country. Chris recently finished his work as Studio Coordinator of the Iron Studio at the Penland School of Crafts, where he got the new studio up and running (twice).
<http://dirtcircusironworks.com/#Blacksmith>

The demonstrator for Upper Midwest Blacksmith Association is:

Lorelei Sims from Charleston, IL.

Lorelei Sims discovered blacksmithing after her formative years studying sculpture and metalsmithing at Eastern Illinois University. In 1993 she opened Five Points Blacksmith Shop and immediately realized she needed a lot more training! She found that with Elmer Roush in North Carolina and spent six months with him learning the basics. Today, Lorelei specializes in creating hand forged ironwork for just about anything under the sun - both in scope of projects and client location. Her work is commission for businesses and private homes throughout the United States. Public art installations can be viewed at the Omaha Botanical Gardens, Fordham University, Eastern Illinois University and the Illinois Log Cabin State Historical Site. Lorelei Sims' demonstration will feature traditional techniques, the use of modern equipment and some nifty tricks to show the audience what she has learned and developed in achieving these botanical forms. She will provide insight and how to capture the visual essence of flowers, leaves, tendrils and other organic forms.

Lorelei encourages and enjoys the spontaneous "on the spot" influence of the audience participating in her demonstration. Please come prepared to be part of her workshop at this year's conference. Information about her book and a portfolio of her work can be viewed at www.blacksmithchic.com

Sponsored by:

Indiana Blacksmithing Association,
Illinois Valley Blacksmithing Association and,
Upper Midwest Blacksmith Association
UMBA & the UMRBC gratefully acknowledge the "Visiting Artist Grant" provided by ABANA for this Conference. © 2006 Upper Midwest Regional Blacksmithing Conference

URL for this site - <http://umrbc.org>, Last updated 4/11/07. Webmaster David W. Wilson

Smoke and Noise

Items of interest

compiled by David Childress

Charcoal Forge

Tim Lively-Lively Knives-Handmade knives

I use to sell these as kits but I'm no longer offering these for sale. Why? I just don't enjoy making them on a commercial basis. I decided to leave the information here just as a guide for those interested in making one for themselves. All of the materials are usually in stock at your local Home Depot store.



The tuyere is 1" ID black pipe(not galvanized) and is 18 inches in length. It can be cut and threaded on both ends for free there when you buy the pipe. The oval tub is also available at Home Depot too but they seem to run out often and restock slowly. I used the 3.75 gallon size in the video but the larger

sizes are even nicer. The holes drilled in the tuyere are 1/4" on one inch centers. A piece of angle iron works great as a straight edge for scribing a line on the pipe. You can make the bracket that holds the tuyere to the tub out of 1/2" X 1/8" stock that Home Depot labels as "plain steel". You can see how to add the adobe and also see the forge in action in our knifemaking video.

There's an end cap on one end of the tuyere (right hand side in the photo) that provides a very easy clean out. The other end of the tuyere has a 1 x 1 1/2 inch coupling attached just for versatility.

Most forges of this type are designed for coal for blacksmithing with round designs and a central blast. This forge is specifically designed for a bladesmith using natural charcoal.



Here's the forge with the adobe in it and connected to a hand crank blower. It will need to sit until bone dry before its first fire. You have to provide the air supply as in blower, bellows or hair dryer etc. and the adobe filler. An excellent adobe for use as filler is made from 1/2 earthen clay and 1/2 sand with a couple handfuls of wood ashes added in.

A commercially available substitute for the clay might be fireplace mortar or refractory cement with varying results. Real adobe is better because it breathes. You can also use bendionite [bentonite] clay used as kitty litter as a substitute for the clay portion of the adobe mix. But be aware that there are two different kinds and sometimes it's not marked on the bag. Some of it works great and breaks down with water into a clay like you would expect but the other is treated with a sealer and it won't dissolve. My guess is that the treated cat litter is made to prevent dust in the litter box when kitty digs in it. I've also use clay from a pottery supply that worked well as a substitute for the earthen clay.

I tried using refractory cement from Rutland Fire Clay Company by itself without any sand and that wouldn't fully harden. In most cases, it is best to just substitute the clay portion and still use the sand in the mix too. Some smiths have used castable refractory cement with good results, however I have not yet tried this myself.



First fire! This forge will handle up to 15 inch over all length blades comfortably. It burns the natural charcoal lump very evenly with the horizontal row of holes in the tuyere. It works well for forging and heat treating high carbon steels. At the same time it burns the lump efficiently with little waste. I rarely burn more than 2 pounds of natural charcoal lump per hour for forging heats. Natural charcoal is easy to make and a renewable resource. It also provides many advantages for the bladesmith over other forge fuels. This forge makes efficient use of this fuel and lends itself well to those advantages. It can easily be constructed into a portable unit as well. This forge has been developed by me through many years of exploration as a professional knifemaker and bladesmith and I feel very confident that it will serve you well as a bladesmith too. It is my primary forge that I use day to day for over 95% of my work.

This forge is capable of producing excellent even heats for small things like arrowheads and guards by choking the amount of holes down with adobe but can also deliver the power you need for large bowies and everything in between. It makes an excellent forge for forging high carbon steels but if you intend on forge welding I would recommend building a ground forge dedicated for that task alone. That way you keep any flux and clinkers out of the forge you use for bladesmithing.

Since these photos of my forge were first taken, I've found a bench stand at Home Depot that works great for mounting the forge on. It's light weight and the legs fold up and its the perfect size. You can find this stand in the ladder section. The one in the photo below is from Home Depot's website but they had two different brands there that are identical. It was only \$35 too.



Thoughts on Demonstration

Subject: [[TheForge] Blacksmithing Demo, Projects

From: Mitch Widham <widha8d3@erau.edu>

Date: Apr 13, 2007 9:55 AM

Help.

I am a beginner Blacksmith, one and a half years experience. I have been asked to run the Blacksmith shop this weekend at a historical settlement, my 1st demo. Any suggestions on what to make or not to make, do or don'ts. I have been told that simple projects that can be completed in one or two heats are best, is this the prevailing thought. The event is a Folk Music fest at a pioneer arts settlement.

Mitch Widham

From: Robert J Hill <wskewinu@mac.com>

Date: Apr 13, 2007 10:28 AM

People love hand made nails and leaves!

Rob

From: Grover Richardson

Date: Apr 13, 2007 10:35 AM

Yes. I make pop top openers. Flat screw driver blade on one end, twist, and a flattened "whoop de doo" (scroll pliers scroll) on the other. Then bend it so that it will fit over the belt. You use it to start the pop top instead of the fingernail. Great gift for ladies in strollers, and that keeps the number of people begging to a minimum<G>. Ask to see their fingernails, make a positive comment about how they look, then show them yours (obviously yours are worse, you are working in an industrial

environment), then give them one so that their's won't turn into yours<G>.

This also gives you interface with the crowd instead of only a display.

About 5 minutes tops before they start to wander off.

Bring information for people who might wish to try smithing. Great way to spread the info about your local group. If they are out of state, they can get on the abana.org web page and find them.

Let us know how it turns out. It should be fun.

Make jokes. If you drop something, say that this is the only time that most people really know that you messed up, you dropped the piece<G>.

Before you pass something around, make a point of rubbing your hand all over it to show that it is cold. It also verifies that it actually is cold<G>.

From: Washington, Aubrey O.

Date: Apr 13, 2007 4:54 PM

Mitch,

Grover and Rob are both on target. I demo at medieval fairs, etc.

And I find that some folks wander off after a few minutes. But there a substantial number of folks who will watch for 30 minutes or more. I recently had 3 teenage girls that sat down and watched me work for 3 hours! They each got a rose for their time. My point is that I think it is okay to do a few projects that take 15 to 30 minutes because there are always a few people who want to see more than a nail.

Aubrey

From: Tod Estes

Date: Apr 14, 2007 3:54 PM

Keep it simple, Have fun, and talk to the people!

Nails, Leafs, Hooks. All fun easy and people can watch it in five min.

From: Lynn Emrich

Date: Apr 14, 2007 7:08 PM

Tod has the secret. Do something that you have done a lot, showing the steps. A constant stream of

pratter about what you are doing helps also. Been there, done that, got the tshirt.

Lynn

From: Tod Estes
Date: Apr 14, 2007 7:56 PM

That's right bout the patter, and a few really lame jokes doesn't hurt to break the ice, and get the people talking. I usually start with the leaf, then alternate between the nail and a drive in hook. drawing the stem of the leaf leads to a quick draw to finish a nail. A leaf with two punch holes and then turn the stem into a hook is another alternative. Just keeps ya fresh not doing the same 3 things all day. I always get the "Can you make a sword" question a few times so I will throw in a letter opener.

From: Mike Spencer
Date: Apr 14, 2007 8:50 PM

Another item that people will recognize is a screen door hook. Hook at one end, eye on the other and a twist in the middle, then another eye with a drive point to interlock with the one on the hook. Then yet another eye with rive point for the hook to go into. 3/16", 1/4" or 5/16" stock.

Or for a laugh, make one 3' long from 3/8" or even 1/2" stock. Then the patter is about using a big long one to hold a barn door open instead of closed. (In fact, I have a 3' long one from 1/4" square for my woodshed door so it won't slam shut in the wind and knock me down with an armload of wood.)

One of the very first things I leaned to make, way back when.

- Mike

From: Lynn Emrich
Date: Apr 15, 2007 9:52 AM

Your comment about "making a sword" reminded me why we always kept a box of duplex nails around. You don't even have to heat them. Just flatten and they look like a miniature sword!

Also using horse shoe nails you can make a quick and easy spoon with a fancy handle.

Lynn

From: Washington, Aubrey O.
Date: Apr 16, 2007 10:56 AM

Lynn,

I'm gonna steal you duplex nail mini sword idea! That's great.

A friend of mine keeps a small box with a rail road spike and a handful of coal. When someone asks him to make a knife, he offers to sell the box as a "do it yourself knife kit." So far no one has bought it.

Aubrey

From: Lance Davis
Date: Apr 16, 2007 12:49 PM

When making a sword from a nail , you need to file or grind the tip off , they get very sharp and you don't want angry mothers from kids that poke each other.

Lance

Announcements

The Rocky Forge News is available by E-mail and on our website (<http://www.rockyforge.org/>). If you wish to receive the newsletter via E-mail sent Dave Childress a note at trollkeep@gmail.com, or e-mail directly to rocky@rockyforge.org.