

Rocky Forge News

Volume 7, issue 6 – June, 2008

On Growing Old

From: Mike Spencer
Date: May 5, 2008 5:28 PM
Subject: [OT] (Was: fire steels)

PS: older age sucks ass. Moved a couple largish stones into place on my creek dam and today I feel like I have a meat ax in my back.

Pay attention, Andy: The trick is not to do the impossible and stay young. The trick is to **stay old**.

- Mike

Maybe I am just feeling my age but I liked this one - DEC

Next Meeting

By Ted Stout

LOOK THE DATE HAS CHANGED: JUNE 7th will be the meeting day for this month. Ted and others will be attending a large Amish auction on the 14th so we have changed the date of our meeting to the 7th. Hope you can all make it on this date as we have some blacksmithing to catch up on. While we are hoping lets hope for a good day so we can have the forges going outside. If the weather permits I would like to see us make things for sale and work on the iron fence to put in the new building. We may need to restore a few more sections.

Think of some things we can make to sell at the Illiana show, like squirrel cookers, S hooks, camp equipment, crosses, etc.

We will meet at the usual time of 9:00 A.M. at Ted's shop. Coffee and doughnuts will be available after 8:30 (who wants to bring the doughnuts?).

Also, bring your forging tools and if you want, bring your own forge. I will have five or six forges available and some stock to forge. If you have a specific project in mind, bring your own stock.

Bring something for the iron in the hat drawing that will keep it the quality we like to see. Be sure it is something relating to blacksmithing.

Lunch will be a carry in of dishes to compliment ham and beans. Carol will be gone for the day so we will have a kettle of ham and beans.

Looking forward to seeing all of you on June 7th and hopefully the new date will not deter your presence.

Ted

Saved by the Safety Pin

At the recent BAM conference my wife Carol and I met up with Joe Goebel and his wife Barbara. Noticing our struggle with the identification badges, Barbara offered each of us a safety pin to secure the badge. I just slipped mine into my pocket fully intending to use it later. Little did I know at the time it would be a worth a lot to me.

During the evening's iron-in-the-hat drawing, administered by a gentleman named Len, a book entitled: "Most of the Best Tips Projects Ideas Patterns from ABANA Chapters Newsletters" presented by Arizona Artist Blacksmith Association was held up. Rather than draw a ticket for this prize Len says anyone with 2 nickels, 2 dimes, 3 pennies and a safety pin would win the book. Not expecting anyone to actually have a safety pin, they were all surprised when this guy from the IBA stepped forward and presented all the requested items.

Shortly after winning the book my number was called for a nice 1000 gram hammer donated by the Blacksmith Depot. I have been running a little short on hammers lately so it was a treat to win a "hammer".

BAM presented a real nice conference with outstanding demonstrators. The IBA was well represented by numerous members. It was good to see such a fine turnout from our state. Tom Clark was doing well after a very invasive surgery on Thursday, the first day of the conference. Our thoughts and prayers go to Tom and his family wishing him a speedy recovery. I am sure a card mailed to Tom at the Ozark School of Blacksmithing would be greatly appreciated.

Ted Stout

Smoke and Noise

Articles from e-mail and the Internet

Compiled by David Childress

So you can Know

From Mike Linn
Date May 14, 2008 12:19 AM
Subject [TheForge] Tie Rods

I just came back from doing some work at Arvin Meritor in Hopkinsville, KY. I found out they make tie rods for many automakers and that they make all the tie rods from 5160 steel... humm.. Sounds like a new source for known metal.

Mike

Getting rid of what you make

From: Cindy and James
Date: May 19, 2008 9:08 AM
Subject: [TheForge] marketing

It depends on who (whom ??) you choose to market to. Bill Epps is often quoted, "If it sells for \$25 or less and looks good in a double wide..." There is nothing wrong with that market if that is what you choose. I have given up most small items and basic starting price for ANYTHING is \$1000 and it goes up fast from there. It is all about how and to whom you market yourself, the quality of work that you can do as well as the scale or size of work you are capable of turning out.

Lots of guys and gals go to festivals and whatnot, do demos, sell little stuff and occasionally something large dollar-wise. It is a weekend hobby for them and interesting for the walkers-around at the event to see. Perfectly legitimate.

But I tried that and got the grief Andy talks about below. If I priced something at \$50, they wanted \$30. So I quit doing demos and quit making things specifically to sell in my shop, but I do have an open house 2 or 3 times a year for the public to come in and browse around (photos of work done and works in progress, and there are always experiments on how to do this or that that accumulate), and I tell them now that I am a commission only shop, and my price range as stated above if they ask. Sometimes they have to "think

about it", which they should if money is an object with them. Buying something expensive should not be an impulse buy for people without unlimited funds. But there are people who have "unlimited funds", and we (my wife and I) have chosen to target that market. It takes a while to work into, and we have to sometimes work with 3rd parties and pay them a commission or finders fee, but usually they get their money from the client in other ways and the client is happy that they provided another source for original artwork (ironwork in this case) that was not originally known to them, i.e. another option. If we do a good job, that person who referred us also gets a feather in their cap because they "found us".

Another thing, most people "want something" but very few know "what" they want when it comes to art or design. If you can incorporate a designer (female artist with a flair for design) into your business, your head will start to spin!

Here's something else to think about. If someone is building a new home in an exclusive area, chances are the home will cost \$400 to who knows what per square foot. Do the math. A railing or set of light fixtures, window panels, wine doors, etc. costing them \$5000 to \$50,000 each or in total may be significant but it is minor at the same time for homes costing from \$1.5 to \$10 million. And if done right it sets the home apart from the next big home down the street.

People who can afford a multi-million dollar home want to be set apart. In the Dallas-Ft Worth area there are roughly 70,000 households with net worth exceeding well over \$1,000,000 and that number will grow by 45,000 in the next 5 years. (Source of info, D Magazine.) If 10 percent of those 115,000 wealthy households decided to spend \$25,000 on some sort of ironwork or other type of art, that would be 11,500 commissions or purchases X \$25,000 = \$287 Million in gross sales.

I'm not saying that will happen or that I will be a part of that, but my point is that the MARKET is there! And in every major city and every small town, there are folks with money. I would rather target 10 clients at \$1000 each than try to sell 500 clients something for \$20 each.

Sort of long, but that's how I view the situation.
Everybody has their version.

James Allcorn

Paris, TX

Andy wrote:

And this goes right to the point I've been making for the past 25 years: people love and want art, but they do not want to pay for it. Art is not really essential in any immediate sense. If you do not have art you will not die the way you would if you didn't have water or food. Art is just one of those back burner things in most peoples' lives. We live in a time when depictions of Elvis on black velvet are at the budget limits of many folks. Even better-to-do folks often have to choose between a decent piece of art and the next installment in their child's \$150K college education. When pitted against these more basic and more immediate needs, the art will almost always lose out.

Then there are those with the mindset that an artist's time is not worth that much - after all, it's ONLY art. Add to that the tremendous general ignorance of people that has come about as a result of the technologies that have brought us so many mass produced miracles. For the most part, people have not the first clue of the difficulties in manufacturing art. Honest to God, many seem to think Jed Clampett pulls Picasos out of his ass every Wednesday morning at 10:00 as if he were a laying hen.

Trying to sell fine art to a world that is ignorant of such things is like trying to teach a pig to sing. I'm sure you know the rest of that story.

From: Peter Fels & Phoebe Palmer
Date: May 18, 2008 4:30 PM
Subject: Re: [TheForge] fire steels

Bad attitude!!!! grin.

Beyond the basic necessities...value becomes most amorphous.

This is to our advantage because we are compelled to make this stuff and need some way to feed ourselves.

Folks, by in large, are quite plastic RE values and tend to reflect the values of those they are around.

So, keep a straight face...sound sincere and very convinced that your work is of great value, which is only proportionate to their affirmed good taste and appreciation of it.

I smile brightly and phart discreetly...pete f

dan tull wrote:

That's what I have been saying for 15 yrs.

When I have to pay a plumber \$65/hr., and much worse at his job than me, I get on a soapbox. Trouble is, there is not the demand.

From: "David E. Smucker"

Lesson to be learned -- blacksmiths should charge as much for their work today as plumbers and electricians. It is the story of supply and demand.

Metal working history in America

From: "David E. Smucker"
Date: May 13, 2008 5:50 PM
Subject: Re: [TheForge] fire steels

While it is true that "steel" was valuable and somewhat scarce in the 1600 and 1700 even harder to come by would be any form of high carbon wire. So if "fire steels" in that time frame were steeled - then the high carbon steel was drawn down to a small form by hammer forging.

The invention of the slitting mill was I believe in 1752 and was the precursor to the rolling mill. It was first used on heavy hammer iron plate to produce iron bars. Later used to produce iron nail rod from hammer or rolled sheet. Drawing of wire followed, but when Eli Whitney was working on his invention of the cotton gin 1793 he had to make his own draw bench to draw high carbon wire because he could not purchase it. (At least in the then USA).

All of this is to say is that getting "small" section steel was a labor of love in the 1600's and first half of the 1700's. High carbon "blister" steel had been around for some time at this point and files made from this tool steel were very important in the manufacture of all types of equipment. Spring steel for clock making also drove technology in this time frame.

One of the most interesting parts about talking to the Williamsburg Blacksmiths at the BAM

conference was the discussion about the pay and role of craft workers in the colonial time period and early USA. By world standards they were highly paid. They did mostly repair and special work that earned them this high pay. Production work was imported from England and the continent were labor costs were much lower. Why the high pay - because in the Americas they could own land, and owning land was the route to wealth. In England there was no land for them to own, no route to wealth, a good supply of craftsman's so their earning were lower.

Dave

Try this and see if it works

From: Peter Hirst
Date: May 11, 2008 11:11 AM
Subject: Re: [TheForge] fire steels

I finally saw one that was made at the site and is used in their education program. There is a thin strip of steel, perhaps .010" set into the 1/4" striking edge. It is impossible to tell how deep the steel goes, as the insert is sealed by the iron at each end. I can tell you however, that it works, and that this particular steel has been used hundreds of times in demonstrations, with apparently plenty of steel left. I was able to duplicate the effect by forging 1/8" music wire almost flat, slightly tapered to one edge, and inserting it thick edge first into a slit in 3/8 square. Closing the slit -- no welding, holds the steel tight and forges the finished size to 1/4 x 1/2. The LH museum explains that they are reproducing a VERY early colonial period, when it was against British law for the colonists to make any finished goods of commercial value and therefore they were allotted no materials -- steel in particular -- in any quantity. They were expected to trade furs to England for virtually everything they needed. Iron had not yet been produced in the New World. The forge was almost exclusively a repair shop, and only a few necessities could be squeaked out around the law. The Williamsburg of today is of a much later period, by 125 years or more. Tariffs were in effect and imports were taxed, but the manufacture and trade in many crafts was well established. An all-steel striker would not have been the extravagance of the earlier period.

For your consideration

Billie Creek Village will sell hand made metalwork in their General Store. They do want a commission, but they handle the entire sales process. They are open every weekend and there are special event that bring many people to the village. The club needs to get involved in fund raising. This kind of sales benefits both Billie Creek and Rocky Forge. It would provide us with a steady outlet with little effort beyond making whatever we want to sell. I can handle getting things there and they will even mail proceeds back to the Guild.

Contact me if you want to consider trying this outlet.

David Childress

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.