

Rocky Forge News

Volume 12, Issue 3 – March 2013

Next Meeting (3/9/13)

The next meeting of the Rocky Forge metal smiths will be on March 9th, at Ted's shop. Per your request, there will not be a sit-down meeting, and we will have coffee and doughnuts with a social time. At some point after 8:30 you can light the forges and we will have an open forge all day. The dear weatherman is saying we should have temperatures upward of 50 degrees. I assume he meant West Point and not Florida. Plan on bringing your tools, coal and metal for some real forging.

For lunch we will have ham sandwiches, so bring a covered dish to share or whatever else sounds good with a ham sandwich. Also, bring your iron-in-the-hat items. At this time I do not know if Dan Michael is bringing coal, I hope so.

For the April meeting we will be traveling to the Camp Rotary Boy Scout jamboree to help the Scouts earn their metalworking merit badge. Again, I trust Dan Michael will be at the meeting to let you all know the details. (Since there will be no meeting time he can tell it at lunch.)

Two weeks ago I went out south of the warehouse barn to get a tool from the Attica shop buckets stored under the tarp. I discovered a disaster; many of the buckets were full of water. A whole day was spent draining the water and bringing the buckets inside to dry off the hundreds of tools. In the process a certain amount of sorting was done. Last Saturday, instead of going to the Rural Smiths at Conner Prairie, Dominick and I sorted the tools, wire wheeled some of them and oiled all of them to prevent further rusting. After lunch we ventured outside in what seemed like incredibly cold, damp conditions and added plastic to cover some of the equipment under the large tarp. The main tarp is disintegrating. My thanks to Dominick for volunteering his precious time for this effort and for missing the annual Conner Prairie event.

Hope to see "all" of you on Saturday, it could be one of those memorable forging days. Ted

An Afternoon of Fun in the Shop (3/17/2013)

On March 17, 51 years ago, Carol and Ted were married and by golly it did last. On that date this year, which is a Sunday, we are planning an afternoon (anytime after three o'clock will be fine) of fun in the shop with both Rocky Forge and Illiana Antique Power members with a pitch in dinner at 6:00. Carol and I will furnish the dinnerware and drinks (if you want soft drinks, bring your own). This will be lots of time to enjoy snacks, socialize and savor a pitch in meal. At 4:00 we will be showing a video that KJ has provided and it shows life in Norway back in the 1930's or 40's. It is a really neat showing of how hard the work of everyday life was back then. It lasts about 45 minutes. We hope to see a good crowd.

Ted and Carol

HAPPY BIRTHDAY ABANA

Toward the end of the 1800's we saw the evolution of the gas powered internal combustion engine. It was that and other events that made huge changes to world industry, creating automobiles and historic changes to the farming industry. These changes had a subtle effect on the employment of "blacksmiths". The blacksmithing community started a slow decline that accelerated into the 1920's and 30's. During World War 2 many of the blacksmith shops were sold as scrap with no other foreseeable use for all that heavy metal equipment. There was a great decline from the 1940's to the 70's in the "art of blacksmithing". Trying to keep the trade alive, Alex Bealer published a book in 1969 called "The Art of Blacksmithing". The book was a huge success and has been frequently reprinted, even to this current date. His book helped foster a resurgence of blacksmithing with hobbyist studying and learning the art all over the country and in many places overseas.



A group of about 47 hobby blacksmiths and some who were trying to eke out a living by exercising the trade got together in Lumpkin, Georgia on March 17th, 1973, to trade ideas, talk about blacksmithing and do demonstrations. The group included many of our now famous blacksmithing leaders of today. Since then, many of those leaders have passed on leaving further advancement of the trade to their younger counterparts.

For me, it is interesting that I too began blacksmithing in 1973 and used my first book as a reference to learn. You guessed it, the book was "The Art of Blacksmithing" by Alex Bealer. For me, living in a rural area in west-central, Indiana there were no blacksmithing schools and not many peers I could call on to help. As many of you have done, I started with a forge made from a brake drum and used a section of railroad iron as my anvil. It is pretty amazing when I think back on what was made on that limited equipment, most of which I gave away.

That group of individuals who met in Georgia in 1973 formed an organization they called "Artist Blacksmiths of North America" starting with about 47 members. Today that organization "ABANA" has thousands of members and is still growing.

ABANA was less than 10 years old when Alex Bealer died of heart attack while putting a shingle roof on a log cabin he was building. He had been using his favorite tool, a froe, when the fatal incident occurred. Mr. Bealer would tell you a whole story about why that was his favorite tool and when you hear it you too would want to treasure the froe. As the result of his demise the ABANA officers in 1982 decided to honor Alex Bealer by awarding a copy of his most favored tool to those who were outstanding in the promotion of blacksmithing. The "Alex Bealer Award" has been given to some of our most treasured individuals who have made significant steps teaching, demonstrating, purveying tools and being there when needed to help spread the word of "The Art of Blacksmithing". For those of you who have never seen the coveted Alex Bealer Award, it is worth trying to get a glimpse of it because it is a work of art with outstanding workmanship in blacksmithing, woodworking and engraving. Congratulations to all

who have received the award, you earned it and deserve it.

An outstanding member of the 1973 blacksmithing community was Frank Turley, who had what may have been the first official "School of Blacksmithing" for the resurgence of the trade. He still runs the school yet today. It has been said that, "had Mr. Turley passed away before Alex Bealer", Mr. Bealer would have received the coveted "Frank Turley" award.

Another individual who gave tremendous effort to the formation and advancement of ABANA was Dimitri Gerakaris. Because Alex Bealer published his book he was in the limelight of the press for his contributions, Dimitri Gerakaris was the strong organizer and promoter of the organization. He deserves much of the credit for the success of ABANA.

All of these men deserved our heartfelt thanks and congratulations for saving the "Art of Blacksmithing". Be sure to register for the birthday event in Georgia for the March 15-17, 2013 at the Westville Village Museum near Lumpkin, Georgia, and buy tickets for a raffle of Alex Bealer's anvil. Go on line to the ABANA web site for more information.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY ABANA

Ted

Interesting Web Sites

The Ganoksin Project: Jewelry Manufacturing Methods and Techniques <http://www.ganoksin.com/>
Making a Chasing or Forming Tool:
http://www.ganoksin.com/borisat/nenam/chasing_forming_tool.htm

Contacts

Forgemaster: Ted Stout (stout8525@tds.net, 765-572-2467 home).

Newsletter Editor: Dominick Andrisani (andrisan@purdue.edu, 765-463-4975 home).

Web Site: <http://www.rockyforge.org/> (previous newsletters can be found here).

Dates to Remember

March 17, 2013: An Afternoon of Fun in the Shop at Ted and Carol's

April 13, 2013: Rocky Forge meeting

IBA Conference: Tipton, IN, May 31-June 2, 2013