

Rocky Forge News

Volume 5, issue 12 – December, 2006

This is the last newsletter of the year and I really intended to get it out last week at this time. Better late than never.

Help! I have several really neat and helpful things for you, but I am pretty sure I need proper permissions to publish them for your perusal. I do not even know enough to know what is needed when and how to get these permissions. If someone knows and is willing to teach me or even better does not object to doing this it will help make this a better newsletter. David Childress

Meetings

December

There will be no December meeting. We are urging all members to attend the IBA meeting hosted by Chaz Kizer Dec. 9 in Batesville IN. We will attempt to arrange car pooling for anyone so desiring. I have heard that Chaz has a truly impressive shop and that seeing the shop may be worth the trip in itself. More concrete information in the next newsletter.

January

I have not been told what the January agenda will be. However when I asked Shane when he was going to show us what he learned at his Sun Foundation Tong making class his response was "whenever Ted schedules it". This is a suggestion if no other decision has been made.

IBA Membership

You do not need to renew your IBA membership till June when you register for the conference.

It is IBA board nomination time. If you want to run for the Board and maybe make a difference in what effect the IBA has on the world it is time to inform the Election Committee. There are two board members whose term is expiring and I heard a rumor that there may be another position open also. Last year there were seventy-odd votes cast. With

300 members seventy votes should not be enough to win a position on the board. If you do not have time or inclination to be a decision maker at least vote in March.

That said I, David Childress, will try again to join the IBA board. I think that I should at least lose with seventy-odd votes to prove that at least it is a "large" handful of people who decide IBA policy.

For those with full long range schedules the IBA is returning to the Indiana State Fair August 8-19, 2007. There seems to be a lot of misinformation about the way that this event works. No one is expected to demonstrate for more than a few hours. Nothing impressive has to be created. All equipment, except hand tools, is provided. Crafts can be sold and the Concessions Board is asking for 8%. You do not "have" to give any portion of sales to the IBA. You do not have to sell anything. You can make and give away your product. What is wanted is for the lay public to see a Smith doing something and questions being answered.

Smoke and Noise

Collected by David Childress

INVITATION TO BID

The Artist-Blacksmith's Association of North America, Inc. ("ABANA") is soliciting bids from interested concerns and individuals for a 2007/2008 CENTRAL OFFICE ADMINISTRATION.

This is a one-year service contract, subject to performance review and possible extension. Bids will be accepted until 6:00 p.m. EST., January 15, 2007.

Knowledge of blacksmithing skills and terms is highly desirable for this position. ABANA is a non-profit, educational, equal-opportunity corporation established to encourage and facilitate the training of blacksmiths and to expose the art of blacksmithing to the general public. There are three separate 1-year service contracts up for bid:

Webmaster – maintain and update existing ABANA website ("http://www.abana.org") This position requires approximately 6-8 hours / week.

Central Office Administrator – telephone support and administrative duties in support of the organization, as well as maintaining the ABANA membership database. This position requires at least 30 hours per week and many times requires full-time effort.

Conference Coordinator – is the primary point of contact and organization in support of ABANA's biennial conference. This is a two-year contract. Off years (2007) require approximately 25 hours of focused effort each week. Conference years (2008) require full-time work including long-working hours during the actual Conference (June 25 – 28, 2008). The conference coordinator will also be required to spend approximately 2 full weeks at the conference site and will include time both before and after the conference.

ABANA views the Conference Coordinator and Central Office Administrator as two separate positions, consequently please do not submit proposals that contemplate combining the positions. However, the Webmaster position can probably be combined with one of the positions if desired by the applicant. The employee hired to fill the Central Office Administrator position shall provide to the ABANA Secretary reports such as; bi-weekly goals and projects list, time studies, and supplies expense reports. The employee shall be paid a monthly salary on the last working day of every month by the ABANA Treasurer. To receive a detailed job description of all duties and functions required for these positions, please contact:

Eric A. Ryser
ABANA Secretary
510 Thurston
Manhattan, KS 66502
redbeans21@hotmail.com
Subject: ABANA Bids

DVD Library

From: "rog781" <rog781@means.net>
To: blacksmitheditors@yahoo.com
Date: Mon, 04 Dec 2006 22:36:36 -0000
Subject: Blacksmith Video library

The Upper Midwest Blacksmiths Assoc. has a DVD library consisting of over 120 Blacksmith DVD-Rs. Each are over 5 hours long and are available to your members at no extra charge. Cost is \$5 each plus \$2 shipping per order. These DVDs go out on permanent loan no need to return them. The listing is at <http://www.umbaonline.org/>.

If you would post a small add in your newsletter and send a request to the librarian I would send out one or two free ones as payment and you could check out the quality.

Ralph Sproul, NE Editor and BAM could give references for the library. Also if anyone in your group is interested in trading Blacksmith video we could work out a deal. I can convert your video to DVD-R at no charge.

Thank you for your time.

Roger R Degner
Franklin, MN
UMBA/guild of metalsmiths/ABANA/NC ABANA

Trade Secrets

On Nov 25, 2006, at 11:22 AM, "schade@acegroup.cc" wrote:

I was wondering what kinds of things that we talk about here every day might have been considered "trade secrets" at some time. Are there still trade secrets? Would we know if there were?

Bob

Interesting question.

It seems like originally trade secrets were secret to protect your income, and keep your family fed. In medieval times, the guilds jealously protected trade secrets, because live was very tough- if you managed to scabble up from being a peasant who worked the lords land at his pleasure, you wanted to stay that way. So you regulated the amount of people

who had the knowledge to compete with you. Similar motives were present later on, like in machine shops in the early part of the 20th century- a laborer made a dollar a day, a machinist made 3 or 4 times that- so you don't go giving away your meal ticket. I think blacksmiths had some similar secrets- particularly weapons and armorers, tool makers, and some farriers. Some of these trade secrets were formula's or techniques, that could actually be copied, but most were the result of years of practice. Even if somebody knows your secret damascus recipe, or how Fisher poured molten iron anvil bases onto steel tops, that doesn't mean they can repeat it without similar experience as you have. I have often found that people who are actually capable of copying some of the more complicated, desirable processes, are skilled enough by the time they get there that they have their own creative agenda. I do know a few Mokeme-Gane guys, and some knife guys, who still have a few trade secrets- processes or tricks they have developed over many years, that they ain't telling.

Ries Niemi
Industrial Artist
["http://www.riesniemi.com/"](http://www.riesniemi.com/)

and what about the potters. To my knowledge, those guys have nothing but secrets!

I had a good friend in school who years later became a potter, and when I asked a few casual questions about glazes you would have thought I wanted to see the Pope's nipples.

We were both painters and print makers then, and had exchanged paint and ink formulas for years, but potting was a different story.

Chris
Chris Worsley <cpworsley@cox.net>

Well, if you go back to the Middle Ages, the Bakers Guilds had the secret of baking bread wrapped up so tight that to the day we only have about 5 recipes that we know they used :-)

And, I suspect that things like wootz steel are still not entirely understood because they were kept as trade secrets and the owners died out.

If you notice, people are still working out how to make it properly.

Medieval goldsmiths were a pretty tight mouthed group, too, from what I hear. Apparently, they had the secret of the double lung bellows (the ones historical shops use today) for over 100 years before the blacksmiths got them, towards the end of the Italian Renaissance.

One of the things that makes my SCA hobby so fascinating, is either figuring some of this stuff out, or watching other people figuring it out in their fields of interest.

--
Saint Phlip

Heat it up
Hit it hard
Repent as necessary.

Has anyone seen my temper?
I seem to have misplaced it at Stalag XXXV....

On 11/25/06 4:42 PM, "David E. Smucker" wrote:

works, great, but if things go wrong you have tons of scrap and very upset customers to deal with. So you might get close to having the trade secrets but not the depth to deal with the problems. I am sure that things are similar in many other fields or companies.

Many "trade secrets" are simply that vast difference between knowing what to do and knowing how to do it.

After all, blacksmithing is "only" hitting hot metal with a hammer, no?

How many times has each one of us had one of those darn-why-the-heck-didn't-I-think-of-doing-it-that-way moments upon watching another smith easily do something he'd been struggling with?

Ancient Chinese Secrets 'R' us, eh? :)

John Husvar <jhusvar@sbcglobal.net>

I've certainly experienced that "You wanna steal what?" look from blacksmiths and metalworkers, more often than not. It seems to be less common now, but I can hold up my end of shop talk better, biasing the results ...still...

Lots of smiths play it like a game, trying to extract more valuable info from one in exchange for common knowledge or even deliberate misdirection. Historically, it has handicapped the craft's development and was almost it's demise.

We are part of an aberrant subculture that bares our methodology on request...and sometimes whether one wants to hear it or not.

Outside of an academic context...sharing knowledge is commonly considered naive...(that's us)

pete fels