

# Rocky Forge News

Volume 6, issue 6 – June, 2007

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## IBA Direction

*By David Childress, Vice President IBA Board of Directors*

I attended the IBA Annual Conference the first of June. With Clifton Ralph demonstrating there were many skilled smiths attending. These people are the ones that can pick up a hammer and make truly impressive things. With all of these skilled individuals in attendance a newspaper reporter asked John Wendell, President of the IBA, if any of our members were under 50. While there are younger smiths unless the “Old Guard “stop dying off there are not enough young members to maintain the IBA.” Last year John Steppe was named Blacksmith of the Year for his efforts to bring young people into the craft of blacksmithing. But he seems to be the only one effectively doing something toward the goal of getting more, especially young, people involved in blacksmithing.

I intend to make creating more smiths and raising awareness of blacksmithing a priority of the IBA. Rocky Forge received an Email from a lady in Alaska about blacksmithing projects for her daughter in 4-H and a Google search turned up a couple of our newsletters where I talked about John Steppe’s efforts and little else. Is it any wonder that the public thinks there are no blacksmiths anymore?

I do not think that anyone is effectively expanding the craft of blacksmithing. Most people do not think that there are any Blacksmiths in the world and no one is showing otherwise. If something is not done they may come to be right.

Someone has been spreading the “Fact” that the IBA only has about 200 members now. I do not think that this is correct, but that is the trend. The one thing that I want to do during my term on the board is reverse this trend. I am not much of a smith but it is important to me. At a satellite group meeting recently subject came up of how important these meetings are to the members. Several stories were told of spouses pushing members out the door to keep the member from driving the spouse crazy because the meeting was being missed. The Satellite group will survive because the meetings are important to their members. The role of the IBA

needs to [be] creating new members. 4-H, Demonstrations at festivals, beginners classes, regular articles in the news, these create new members. The only single more important item to the perpetuation of our craft is that steel leaf for a little girl at some event.

## Meetings:

*Note from Ted Stout*

The Rocky Forge group is entering a busy time of the year, everyone wants a part of our time as a group and each of us have personal commitments that keep us busy. I will not be available for the June meeting so I suggest we have our meeting postponed until the weekend of June 16th and meet at Independence for their "Heritage Festival". That is Saturday June 16th and we should be set up before 9:00. Food can be bought on site or bring your own. This year they will be celebrating 175 years of history for the town of Independence. The theme will be "Let Freedom Ring" so bring any bells you may want to ring. Also, they are promoting red, white and blue and will be honoring all those who have lost their lives during past conflicts.

Our July meeting will be at the Illiana Show grounds on July 20, 21 and 22nd, please plan to attend. It is fun to have so many smiths represented and pounding away on hot metal. Several of our group will be camping, so plan to join in on the fun. I hope to see a good turnout to support the Illiana group, they work so hard to put on a good show. Next year we should have our own building to work under.

July 7 and 8th will be a conference sponsored by the RSMA at the Fort Harrison State Park on the east side of Indianapolis. It is hosted by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. The featured demonstrator will be Bill Fiorini of Desoto, Wisconsin. He is an excellent demonstrator. Let me know if you are interested in attending or joining the group.

We are scheduled to demonstrate at the Indiana State Fair on August 14th and 15th so mark your

calendars and let David C. or Ted know so the schedule can be made out.

After all this and with the summer heat really in full swing lets take August off and have a regular meeting in September.

Hope to see all of you during these busy times. Remember it's not what the Rocky Forge can do for you, but what you can do for the Rocky Forge group. Let's work to keep our club healthy, and continue to learn the art of blacksmithing.

Ted

## Smoke and Noise

### Articles from e-mail and the Internet

*Compiled by David Childress*

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From: Rae Kurtz  
To: rocky@rockyforge.org  
Date: Thu, 31 May 2007 22:04:41 EDT  
Subject: Question

Dear Sir,

I was wondering if a 4-H curriculum was ever developed. In two of your newsletters it is mentioned that John Steppe was doing work with a local 4-H organization and that a curriculum was possibly available.

My 14 year old daughter, Natalie, is interested in Blacksmithing. We living in Alaska, she has access to a forge and she has been multiple times to ABANA with her Grandparents, William and Monti. She would like to do her 4-H project this year focused on Blacksmithing. I was unable to tell from the newsletter if John was just demonstrating or if the young people were using the forge and producing smithed projects. I would like additional information on what was completed.

Thank You,

RaeEllen L Kurzendoerfer

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From John Steppe  
Date Jun 7, 2007 10:57 AM  
Subject Blacksmithing websites

For those of you who don't have this information. These are some good website with information relating to Blacksmithing. If you find any on your

own, please forward the link to me to share with everyone.

Useful websites:

[www.sofasounds.com](http://www.sofasounds.com)  
[www.iforgeiron.com](http://www.iforgeiron.com)  
[www.anvilfire.com](http://www.anvilfire.com)  
[www.anvilfire.com/iforge/tutors.htm](http://www.anvilfire.com/iforge/tutors.htm)  
[www.blacksmithchic.com](http://www.blacksmithchic.com)  
[www.keenjunk.com/bsj.htm](http://www.keenjunk.com/bsj.htm)  
[www.metalwebnews.com/howto](http://www.metalwebnews.com/howto)  
[www.indianablacksmithing.org](http://www.indianablacksmithing.org)  
[www.abana.org](http://www.abana.org)

John Steppe

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From: Rich Maynard <rich@maynard.org.uk>  
Date: May 17, 2007 7:28 PM  
Subject: [TheForge] Tents

Hi,

I am due to do some demos at a festival this summer. I shall be put in my own little tent (marquee).

I was thinking of taking an anvil, coke forge and some hand tools - no welder, and probably no grinders either. The organisers have asked me what size tent I want - what shall I tell them? Will my simple bottom draught forge be ok running in a tent?

I know some of you have lots of experience of doing outdoor demos and I'd like to tap into that if possible.

Thanks,

Rich M.

Richard Maynard  
Artist Blacksmith  
The Forge, Much Hadham, Hertfordshire SG10 6BS  
[rich@maynard.org.uk](mailto:rich@maynard.org.uk)

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From plumdon@aol.com  
Date: May 17, 2007  
RE: Tents

A tent would be quite nice but here are a few other items from the check list I check before heading out to demo.

## Demonstration Check List

Anvil/Vise bench	Forge	Adjust Wrench
Old Towel	Anvil	Blower
Hammers (2)	Steel Stock	Vise
Tongs	Handwipes	Cut-off hardy
Coke (Breeze)	Fuller	Gloves
Wrench	Coal	Vise grips (2)
Disposal towels	Newspaper	Chisel
Lighter/matches	Hack saw	Rake
Slit punch	Poker	Center punch
Shovel	Round punch	Water can
Tape measure	Water bucket	Pocket Knife
Bending fork	Files	Chalk in holder
Wire Brush	Pliers	Needlenose tongs
Dimple hammer	Screw Driver	Portable drill

## Item to Make &amp; Materials Required

S-Hooks: ¼" Square

Cat Hooks: and punching demo 1/8 x 1", 3/16" x 1"

Elephant hooks: ½" round,

Hatchet for marks

Snake ½" Square

Nails 5/16 rod, Tom Clark nail header.

Wire spool bolts best

Leaves: 5/16, 3/8 & ½" round

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From: Paul

Date: Apr 11, 2007 9:07 PM

Subject: [TheForge] Guild System Titles

Since there's nothing else going on here, I figure now would be a good time to ask.

Since there doesn't seem to be a formal guild system for blacksmiths anymore, How might we "experienced beginners" rank ourselves?

Are we forever doomed to be "Apprentices"?

At what point might we become a "Journeyman"?

Better still, what qualifications might be required of someone to acquire the title of "Master"?

Sorry if this was discussed in the past. I didn't bother to search the archives, as I thought it may generate some interesting discussion.

Thanks,

Paul N.

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From: Jerry Frost

Date: Apr 12, 2007 2:08 AM

Subject Re: Guild System Titles

Paul:

Don't wait till there's nothing else going on to ask a question! It's not like we're paying by the message. <grin>

It's a good question too and comes up every now and then.

While you're right about there not being a real guild anymore, there is still a union representing blacksmiths though I don't recall which one it is. If you're looking for the "real" qualifications, they may be the ones to ask.

If on the other hand you're wondering what to tell people or how to "rank" yourself I think there's some common sense criteria to compare. (Of course there has never been a real consensus on this list so. . .)

In the old days (good is a matter of perspective) an apprentice was little more than an indentured servant. You'd do all the grunt work, cleaning, hauling, packing, fetch and carry, whatever the smith needed. Depending on what the shop's main focus was an apprentice would eventually work up to doing some basic smithing functions like: striking, straightening, nail making, etc. After a while the "master" (I'll get to what a "master" smith is in a bit) MIGHT let you borrow, maybe RENT you a hammer and sell you some scrap to practice on. If he's generous he'll let you sift through the ashes for useable coal for your fire.

Eventually the apprentice would have made a enough basic tools and learned enough to start drawing some of the "master" smith's business away. At which point the "master" smith was most likely to send you down the road to find your own market. Thus making you a Journeyman.

Master smith: A master is the owner of the shop. We discussed this at length a few years ago and nobody could come up with a set of qualifications for "master smith" other than owning his/her own business. We all agreed there were and are people who'd qualify on anybody's list as Master smiths we just couldn't agree on what those qualifications should be. I have my own idea of what a master "anything" is but I won't bore you with it. <grin>

In these modern times you have it a LOT better than in the "good" old days. While blacksmithing is no longer an industrial trade you won't have to worry about selling yourself into servitude to learn the trade. With a little research you can get a set price for courses with guaranteed curricula from people with credentials.

Okay, your basic question is where do you stand in the skills level of the blacksmith's craft.

Have you lit a few fires, deformed some steel, iron, etc.? Really have the bug? = Novice, beginner, newby, etc.

Can you do all the basic skills somewhat reliably? Made a few tools, christmas gifts, drawn the neighborhood kids with a fire and the ringing of the anvil? = Level 1. (whatever you wish to call it)

You can do all the basic stuff reliably and repeatably. You can make a set of four somethings and have them all come out with enough differences they have personality but are obviously a matching set. You can take a commission from somebody who want three more toasting forks (or whatever) just like THIS one and make him spend a few minutes picking his original from the set. (okay, I can't do this very well.<grin>) = Intermediate, practitioner, journeyman, etc.

You can reproduce damned near anything and make it look easy. = Expert.

Of course that's just my opinion.

I could be wrong. <grin>

Frosty

If it ain't forged, it ain't real.

Wrought iron is.

The FrostWorks

Meadow Lakes, AK.

From: Mike Spencer

Date: Apr 12, 2007 2:48 AM

Subject: Re: Guild System Titles

Gee, Frosty, you have a pretty cynical view of apprenticeship. Where did you have that experience? Apprenticed in Elbonia did you? Or Lower Slobovia? :-)

I'm sure there were circumstances where that (or worse) was true but it certainly wasn't universal. The Germans have long had a very formalized apprenticeship system. I think much the same is true in France. Undoubtedly there were deviations out in the boonies of both countries.

Here in Nova Scotia apprenticeship wasn't formalized but was recognized. I met Arch McKnight about 1970 when he was in his 70s and master of the shop in Milton, NS. He apprenticed with Freeland Minard in Barss Corner. I met Freeland about the same time and he was in his 90s. I don't know how many years Arch spent with Freeland but when he left, he was able to go into the "lumber woods" and take responsibility for horse and ox shoeing, wagons, bobsleds, harness and other logging gear many miles from the nearest settlement. And he spoke of Mr. Minard with great respect and affection.

An elderly German smith (whose name I forget) who demonstrated at one of the early ABANA cons did two apprenticeships. At his first one, he was given a hammer, anvil and a block of lead, told to hammer it out into 1/4" (I suppose that was probably 8mm) stock. When there was some other task he was called to do it or help with it, presumably including scut work as well as just holding or lifting. But whenever there was no other assignment, it was back to the anvil and the lead.

At the end of the day, the master looked over the resulting work, put it into a ladle and melted it down. Same assignment the next day. That went on for a year. The notion was that after a year of that, he should know how to use a hammer.

Maybe a little alt Preussisch for our tastes but not just stupid exploitation or abuse.

There are other yarns but it's getting late.

- Mike

From: Grover Richardson  
 Date: Apr 12, 2007 9:45 AM  
 Subject: RE: Guild System Titles

One blacksmith that I knew, I asked about his "Master" status, i.e. where did he get it. He said that if you expect to make things and people to pay for them, you need the Master title. If you have a lesser title they expect to pay Kmart prices, for the exact same work. He was/is successful as a blacksmith last I heard.

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From: George Pacheco  
 Sent: Thursday, April 12, 2007 9:31 AM  
 Subject: Re: Guild System Titles

Since I work Iron for my own pleasure, and not to hold bragging rights, titles are not valid. BUT... For someone trying to make a living at it, a graded system of experience/ability levels would be a good thing. Sort of lets prospective employers know your level of expertise BEFORE hiring you.

Once hired, you can let your light shine and by doing exemplary work, earn more notches in your hammer.

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From: "xlch58@swbell.net"  
 Date: Apr 12, 2007 9:51 AM  
 Subject: Re: Guild System Titles

We really need an archive set up. This was discussed in heated detail about three or four years ago as I recall. Some people were even able to supply the ranks and skills required for each. Overall, it was not that popular a notion as I recall. To be useful it has to be overseen and administered by someone. In the USA, the only organizations that might be able to fill the bill were ABANA and NOMMA maybe. People here get their panties in a bunch over allowing the ABANA board to administer the lunch menu at a conference, so I can't see them much more excited about ABANA judging their skill levels. ABANA did set up a journeyman program, with skill levels required that can be seen here:  
<http://www.abana.org/resources/education/journeyman/index.shtml>

So that at least could help you judge whether you have earned the journeyman title.

Charles

## Skills Expected For the Employment of a Journeyman

*From the ABANA site: Incidentally ABANA only lists 5 members as Journeymen*

Blacksmithing Standards developed by the Appalachian Blacksmiths Association, an ABANA Affiliate, and registered with the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training, United States Department of Labor.

1. Drawing Out: Draw a bar to a point or dress an edge or point a tool.
2. Upsetting: Upset to at least 1-1/2 times the diameter or width of a bar on the end and in the middle.
3. Bending: Make a ring out of bar stock or flat stock; forge a square corner right angle bend in square stock.
4. Drifting: Make a drift and use it to smooth, shape or enlarge a hole.
6. Mortise and Tenon: Make an assembly from at least two separate pieces using this technique.
7. Collaring: Make an assembly from at least two separate pieces using this technique.
8. Scroll Work: Make two different types of scrolls.
9. Splitting: Split a bar with a hot cut in the middle or at the end of the bar.
10. Fullering, Grooving, Veining, Set Hammering: Show examples of each or if used as an intermediate technique, describe how and why the techniques are used.
11. Riveting: Make two assemblies from at least two separate pieces for each assembly using hot riveting and cold riveting (pop riveting is not acceptable).
12. Forge Welding: Show at least three different techniques.
13. Arc Welding, Brazing, Soldering, Oxyacetylene Torch Welding: Show an example of each.
14. Hot Rasping, Filing: Hot rasp the torch cut end of a bar to reasonable straightness and evenness; show a workpiece which has been filed to a

- smooth, flat surface; describe the types, care and use of files.
15. Sinking, Raising, Metal Spinning: Make or show a hemispherical or hollow object made from flat sheet using any one technique.
  16. Grinding: Know how to use a body grinder (portable grinder), pedestal grinder, belt grinder, sharpening stones and abrasive papers; know the types of abrasives and how they are graded and classified; show an edge tool that you have sharpened.
  17. Drilling, Tapping, Die Work and Threads: Drill and tap a hole, thread the end of a bar with a die; know the common thread classifications; know the common drill size classifications and the care and use of twist drills.
  18. Heat Treating, Hardening, Tempering, Annealing, Case Hardening: Know how to properly anneal, harden and temper carbon tool steel; know how to case harden mild steel, know the colors for tempering; make or show a tool you have made that has been heat treated that will cut or forge mild steel without breaking or deformation on the working end.
  19. Heading: Head two bolts, one square headed and one hex headed; head a nail; head a rivet.
  20. Cutting and Shearing: Know how to use the hot cut, cold cut, hacksaw, tinsnips, bench or floor shear; know how to use the oxyacetylene torch for cutting and demonstrate each technique.
  21. Swaging: Swage a tenon or make the end of a square bar round using a swage.
  22. Twisting: Show two different twists in a square bar.
  23. Shop Safety: Know first aid techniques for cuts, burns, abrasion and other shop related injuries; describe methods of hearing, sight and body protection and why they are necessary; know power tool and machinery safety including welding equipment safety.
  24. Basic Metallurgy: Know the properties and use of wrought iron, mild steel, carbon and tool steels and their classifications, cast-iron, brass, copper, aluminum; know sheet and plate gauging for ferrous and non-ferrous metals.
  25. Fire and Fuel: Know the constituents of good shop coal; know the different types of coal fires and fire maintenance.
  26. Jigs and Dies: Make both a jig and a die for doing repetitive production work and show examples of work produced with them.
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- From: Paul  
Date: Apr 12, 2007 10:17 AM  
Subject: Re: Guild System Titles
- Thanks for the web link. It's very close to what I was looking for. At least I can use it as a punch list for those days when I feel like simply building a skill that I don't have. Just a quick once-over it, and there are only a few things there that I haven't at least tried, but a few that I don't have equipment for (floor shear, arc-welder...)
- I agree that we could use a searchable archive. Unfortunately the "mailman" mailing list doesn't seem to directly support it. I could probably look into writing one, but I'm much more interested in acquiring some of the skills on that journeyman list.
- \*\*Paul N.**

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## 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](mailto:trollkeep@gmail.com), or e-mail directly to [rocky@rockyforge.org](mailto:rocky@rockyforge.org).