

Some Thoughts of Doug Hendrickson

I first met Doug at the Penland School of Craft in 1998. He taught the two-month long fall blacksmith concentration class.

Doug's teaching and blacksmithing skills were in full view at Penland. His teaching style was a bit different from other teachers. A class or two started at midnight for example. One project required the smiths to collaborate with another student in the metals, fiber, clay, or glass classes to create a 'cup'...a vessel to drink wine out of at Doug's residence prior to dinner one evening.

About Halloween, Doug suddenly interrupted the daily class routine. The task was to build a pumpkin catapult from what we could find around campus. A catapult was field tested later in the day and then dismantled before it hurt someone!

Then there was a "bones" project...a pickup sticks game played with forged chicken bones dumped from an iron cup. Bones was the most hotly contested game on campus!

Exercises like these augmented the long hours in the shop working on individual projects. There also were the regular class critiques of finished work and Doug's constant presence in the shop for solicited and unsolicited guidance on design and process problems.



Doug constantly promoted the craft through his production line of iron products for the home, commissions, demonstrations and volunteer work with BAM and ABANA. As a result, he always knew what was going on in the blacksmithing community. Doug managed to give me and many others a new way of looking at all things related to blacksmithing whether it had to do with forging or organizing a smithing event.

Marilyn and I visited with Doug and Bonnie last July. Doug used only his chair by then but you would never know it unless you looked at him. He was Doug. His disease was an issue he faced head-on and in a way most of us can only hope to do when it is our turn.

The day before we arrived all of his work from the ABANA Conference arrived in his basement. It was sitting all over the place. We looked at it together and he gave me permission to take some pictures. I said I would do it in the morning when there would be a little natural light.

The next morning I left the camper and went down to the basement. I spent some time just looking at this body of work I never saw before. Some elements I recognized from his experimenting at Penland. It was not long after I arrived in the basement when I heard Bonnie and Doug stirring up stairs. A few minutes later I heard Doug at the basement door and he scooted in.

When I got to one of his pieces for a picture, he said to wait. He had me put some rocks into a vessel first. A white stone needed to rest on the top of the reddish ones. He told me it was his favorite piece. I asked him why. His answer was: "It's so serene".



He said it, his answer was more than a reply to my question.

Marilyn and I left Doug and Bonnie's place in the woods with very heavy hearts. Both of them were never far away in our thoughts. We will cherish the memories and continue to enjoy Doug's art. I sure miss him.

Dave Koenig