

THE HABA LETTER

March - May 2003 Edition

An apology is in order for HABA Members who rely on the hard copy of *The HABA Letter* to keep up with HABA events. No HABA Letter was mailed since the February Edition. Abbreviated letters should keep everyone informed until later in the year when David Bailey becomes the new Editor.

Notice to 2002/2003 HABA Members

It is time to renew your HABA membership. HABA is changing its present membership year from June through May to January through December. So, you have a renewal option. Choice one is to renew your HABA membership for \$10 to cover June 2003 through December 2003.

Choice two is to renew your HABA membership for \$25 to cover June 2003 through December 2004. That is a year and a half of membership for just \$25...a savings of \$15.

Please renew your membership by completing the attached HABA Membership Renewal Form and send it to James Porter, 1925 Anchor Way, Dickenson, TX 77539.

WORDS FROM THE PREZ

2003 is stacking up as another very busy year for HABA.

The March Meeting

The March meeting hosted by Lincoln Electric Company was well attended. This was the result of Ed Malmgren introducing us to Tom Angelino, Lincoln's district manager and his very patient and

understanding staff. From conversations with attendees, every one came away with new insights and welding knowledge. We wish to thank Harry Harris of Texas Welders Supply Company (TWSCO) for his help and guidance. If you have a question about welding, ask Harry. His knowledge and expertise is well known around town. Harry has also very

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graciously extended a 10% discount to all HABA members on purchases at any TWSCO store.

Spring Hammerfest at Oldenburg

Our spring 2003 edition of Hammerfest in Oldenburg, TX had more changes and improvements. Our new treasurer, James Porter, chaired this event. James is also in charge of memberships. A big thanks goes to James Porter, Dave Koenig, Larry Hoff, Tee Hines and Jim Wheeler who helped setting up and James Porter, Jim Wheeler, Charles and Sharon Heathcock, and Reynolds Cushman who helped to take down the event site.

A Special Thanks is extended to Kenny and Susan Hall who again were our hosts. We had about 12 forges set up and operating thanks to Frank Walters, Dave Koenig, James, Cathy and Richard Porter, Steve Blankinship (HABA Librarian) and his family, Arlie Beckendorf, Les Cook, Jim Wheeler, Charles and Sharon Heathcock, A. J. 'pink flamingo' Garrett, Bob and Cathy Collier, Richard Boswell, and Vince, Kathy and daughter Shay Lusco.

At Oldenburg, Bob and Cathy Collier made a special donation to HABA, a beautifully framed print of

Norman Rockwell's *The Horseshoe Contest*. This print will find a new home...details to follow soon. A Big Thanks to Bob and Cathy!!!!

Another note from Oldenburg was that by the end of the weekend, both of HABA's treadle hammers were sold. Jeff and Alan Lee bought the 'good looking' one (thanks to Frank Walters' pinstripe paint job). Richard Wegner bought the unpainted hammer. Jeff and Alan, and Richard thank you very much. HABA appreciates your business. These are wonderful machines

May Tool Making Workshop.

HABA's May Treadle Hammer/Fly Press tool workshop was hosted by Robert Killbuck and led by John Crouchet. John demonstrated the fly press at Tudor Forge last year and inspired a number of members to acquire fly presses (screw press). We felt with John's guidance and knowledge, tooling for both machines could be incorporated into a single workshop.

The philosophy of the day was to learn how to make your own tools and make tools that could be used at the anvil, treadle hammer, and fly press.

There were a total of 19 folks who participated. Twelve sets of treadle hammer and 9 sets of fly press/treadle hammer tools were made. HABA ended

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up with 1 set of each and these are already sold. Everyone came away with a minimum of 9 tools. It was a very busy weekend made successful by the hard work of everyone, John Crouchet, Brian Bateman, Charles Williams, Larry Hoff, Vance Burns, Robert Killbuck, David Leyendecker, Dick Max, Charles Heathcock, Reynolds Cushman, Jeff Lee and his son Jason, Steve Green, Ray Kellow, Tony Ahuero, and James Porter.

Demonstration at Gary Job Corp Center

May also presented HABA with a new opportunity for outreach to the community. Dave Koenig and I were invited by Jarrell Lambert to demonstrate at the Gary Job Corps in San Marcos. It looks like this opened up the door for Jarrell to get some blacksmithing equipment and expand the welding shop curriculum at Gary. It was worth the trip to see these young men and women get wrapped up in blacksmithing.

Jarrell discovered HABA at the 2003 April Hammerfest. We also got him acquainted with the resources of Balcones Forge.

June Workshop for ASM

On June 07, HABA was asked to host the ASM, (The former American Society for Metals) Chairman's Appreciation Meeting. Led by Lee Oates, Larry Hoff, Jim Wheeler, Frank Walters, Charles and Sharon Heathcock, Richard Boswell, Dave Koenig and Les Cook coached twelve metallurgists to make ten letter

openers and two knife blades out of damascus steel.

Richard Wilson, President of ASM Houston attended the January HABA knife making workshop. Richard made a blade and was so impressed with the process that he asked HABA to host the Chairman's Appreciation Meeting. It was a success! Richard found HABA via HABA's web site.

Another Big Thanks goes to Robert Killbuck for hosting the event and cooking the BBQ.

Thanks to Others

If I have failed to recognize anyone who needs a Big Thanks for their contribution to HABA this year, please accept my apology. Let me know and I will get you the acknowledgement you deserve.

As you can see, this year is a very eventful one so far and there is more to come!

Call for Volunteers

HABA meetings and workshops are all made possible by the work of HABA members and some non-members who usually become members. During the last year HABA increased its membership from about 100 to about a 150. That is a substantial increase. HABA's membership passing the word about HABA, public demonstrations and

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HABA's web site all can take some credit for the increase.

Dave Koenig who is the newsletter's editor is swamped with his obligations to ABANA. The lateness and lack of letters is just one example of HABA's need for more folks to be involved in running HABA. David Bailey offered to take on the editor's job but that will not take place until the fall. David also knows that his editorship may be limited.

To maintain the aggressive and vibrant programs from year to year, help is needed. Please step up and get involved in some piece of work. There is a lot to do and the more we can spread the load the easier it is on everyone.

For example, HABA makes water and soft drinks available at every meeting. The job of making sure water and soda is available at every meeting is open. There are also jobs open to setup and tear down Hammerfest at Oldenburg for example. The October event this Fall, if a few things come together, will be a big event requiring a lot more help than usual.

As you know the old smiths had help in their shops. They were not lazy. They knew that to put out the best product, they needed additional hands, eyes, talents. HABA does too. If you can put your hand up to help somewhere, please give me a call and we will talk.

Les Cook, HABA President

SUMMARY OF UPCOMING EVENTS

June 21-22

The Rusty Anvil Rendezvous

Traders Village is welcoming HABA members to setup June 21 and 22 to demonstrate and sell to the public. Traders Village is a weekend market that attracts thousands of people. This will be HABA's June meeting. Traders Village is located at the intersection of Eldridge Parkway and West Road about three miles south of Hwy. 290.

There are more details below.

July 12

Please note the July meeting date is the SECOND weekend of the month. The July HABA meeting will take advantage

of another opportunity offered to HABA. The Houston Center for Contemporary Craft is having a *Gathering of the Guilds*. On July 10 through 12 about 12 craft organizations like HABA from around Houston will be demonstrating and promoting their organizations from 11 AM - 3PM.

In addition HABA is invited to be on live TV, FOX 26, July 10 or 11 at 5:30 AM to help promote the Gathering of the Guilds and the art and craft of blacksmithing. All HABA members are welcome. Stay tuned for more details. Contact Dave Koenig for more information at Tudorforge@cs.com or 281-855-2869.

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August 16

The August meeting will be HABA's annual planning meeting. Like last year it will be held indoors and out of the elements. In addition to planning HABA's future a couple of smithing videos will be on the agenda. The meeting location is the Bear Creek Public Library located about a mile west of Hwy 6 on Clay road. It is next to a Harris County Court House Annex on the south side of Clay....can't mess it.

September 20

On September 20 HABA is having Gas Forge Making Workshop. We will build forges from kits, and demonstrate how to use these and other commercial forges safely at their maximum capacities! The workshop will be hosted by C&M Sales, 3565 S. Loop 336 East Conroe, TX. Contact Richard Boswell at

rsboswell@mindspring.com or at 281-356-5205 in the evenings.

October 3-5

This fall's Hammerfest at Oldenburg, TX will really be special! Kirsten Skiles and Bill Fiorini of LaCrosse, WI will be in Houston visiting family during Hammerfest and offered to demonstrate for us. Bill is known for his damascus work and knives and Kirsten is known for her beautiful high relief chasing. Together they also collaborate on more traditional ironwork. Examples of their work can be seen on their web site: http://home.centurytel.net/Fiorini_and_Skiles.

As soon as we have an agenda and receive biographies on Bill and Kirsten we will get it all on the HABA web site, www.habairon.org, and in *The HABA Letter*.

ASM MEETING THANK YOU NOTE

Below is part of an e-mail from Richard Wilson, to Les Cook. The workshop was Richard's last piece of work before passing the ASM presidency on to his successor.

...I have had MANY e-mails congratulating me on the idea, and thanking me for the opportunity. In fact I just got one from Bob Koester who was asking how he could get the

membership card so he could frame it and put it in his office.

I really appreciate what you guys did both for everyone from ASM who was there, and for me personally. You all seem like a special breed of guys that I find I really enjoy being around. So....you'll see more of me. Richard Wilson

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June 21-22, HABA MEETING *Rusty Anvil Rendezvous*

Our HABA meeting for June will be at Traders Village on Saturday June 21. Bring yourself and your gear, demonstrate the art, and make stuff for the next HABA sale! If Saturday is not enough we can be there on Sunday! *Frank Walters at 713-896-7566 or cell 281-731-0337 will be leading the event and has demonstrated there many times.*

WHEN & WHERE:

Saturday & Sunday, June 21 and 22, 2003:

Traders Village is in northwest Houston, located at the intersection of Eldridge Parkway and West Road about three miles south of Hwy. 290.

The schedule looks like this:

- **Saturday 8:00:** Sign in and setup.

Go through north gate (tell gatekeeper you are with the Blacksmiths).

Drive to the southwest corner of Red Roof pavilion, go through chain link fence to unload, park outside chain link. We will be setting up under cover at Traders Village on concrete, under the BIG Red roof.

- **Monthly meeting at 9:00 am.**

- **Start demos and sale at 9:30.** Go as long as you want.

Power and water on site, and we are under cover(shade)

We want as many smiths as we can get, please bring items to sell, and something for the HABA sales table.

If you don't want to demonstrate, come out and answer questions from onlookers.

- **Sunday 9:00:** Anyone can return Sunday for more.

What to Bring

Chairs

Bring safety glasses with side shields. This is a requirement!

It might be very hot or wet so dress appropriately for the day and the work.

If you do not have a forge and tools, please come anyway. There will be plenty of room at some forge during the workshop and someone to lend you a hand if you need it.

You do not have to be a member to attend our

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meetings! Bring a Guest!

Bring your Membership Dues if you want to work at a forge and are not a current Member!

ABOUT THE EVENT

Rusty Anvil Rendezvous is our regular get together with a theme and purpose. First, we love to meet and make stuff. Second, we will be practicing the art of demonstrating blacksmith methods to the public. If you are reading this you already know that hammer and anvil skills are improved with practice, and watching the really good ones goes a long way in our education. HABA represents a collection of experienced and novice blacksmiths. Some do it for the fun of it as a hobby. Others like to make items people will buy. The professionals will do commission work.

Blacksmithing is a bit of a lost art for what was once an essential technical trade and skill. Yet it has been rebirthing during the past 20 years due to the contributions of great people and organizations such as ABANA that tells us about those great people and their art and craft. HABA is an Affiliate of ABANA and some of our members such

CELEBRATE LIFE

This is to let you know of the passing of Carl Jennings, friend of all of us and long

as Dave Koenig are very active in this worldwide organization.

So what is "demonstrating"?

Demonstrating is showing the public how ironworking is performed. It is an educational opportunity coming and going.

It can be done as a one man show, or a group event. Team work is effective when you can help by taking turns between the forge and the public interface. Do your homework and educate the public.

It can be done recklessly or professionally with safe practices. Obviously, we must not be reckless because someone can get hurt. The blacksmith must know how to practice and perform his work safely for himself and those around him.

Several links on this website provide useful information about demonstrating. One of these is from ABANA with [guidelines for how to demonstrate](#). A good summary of [shop safety](#) can be found at the Appalachian Blacksmiths Association site. Refresh yourself on these good tips. Keep Safety first and last for yourself and the rest of us.

time CBA and ABANA member. Carl was an icon and this short note does not

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do justice to the man that he was. He would like us to each cut fresh flowers and put them in a vase on our table and celebrate his life rather than morn his death. I will return with memorial specifics when I have them available for you. Meantime would you do the honor of passing this on to those who knew Carl and remember him today.

Best Regards,
Dorothy Stiegler

(I had the pleasure of escorting Carl around the ABANA Conference last year

for half a day. Carl was in a wheel chair at that time and most interested in everything that was happening...maybe having a ball is a better way to put it. I personally did not know Carl except through his work in *The Anvil's Ring* and seeing him at conferences.

What impressed me most that day was the way people responded to his presence. They went out of their way to come over and visit or just say hi. It was obvious he was greatly admired and loved and now is being mourned. Ed.)

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN CROUCHET

By Reynolds Cushman

In March 2002 HABA conducted a treadle hammer building workshop and successfully completed 30, Clay Spencer styled #80 hammers. A little over one year later HABA followed up on the that successful event with a 2-day workshop on tool making for treadle hammer (TH) and fly press (FP) at the shop of Robert Killbuck, outside Magnolia, Texas.

John Crouchet (Crew-Shay) was gracious enough to venture away from his comfortable ranch near Marble Falls, Texas to join and lead HABA members as they forged, welded and ground some 200 plus tools.

Crouchet began the workshop with general comments about the use, misuse and general misconceptions surrounding THs and FPs. He has a 30-year background in metals, specifically precious metals, having worked as a

diamond expert and jewelry manufacturer in Austin. As FPs are commonly used in the making of jewelry, Crouchet has long been familiar with the finer points of using a FP.

In the late 70s Crouchet first saw blacksmithing done at the Texas Renaissance Festival while Joe P

Pehoski of Salado was set up forging hinges there. "I thought all hinges came from the hardware store," he chuckled. He said he became intrigued but didn't actually pick up a hammer until about six years ago when he enrolled in blacksmithing classes at Austin Community College, where he met his boss Larry Crawford. The teacher-student relationship developed and the 53-year-old Crouchet now puts in 3 to 4 days a week in Crawford's Hammerfest Forge in

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Marble Falls.

Crawford, keep in mind, has several decades of forging experience and is a self-proclaimed traditionalist Crouchet noted. He would prefer to forge everything on the anvil if he had his choice and efficiency was not an object. But for a shop facing deadlines and labor constraints, efficiency is critical. And Crawford and Crouchet know using the right tool is a must to remain competitive.

But using a TH is not always the tool of choice Crouchet quickly added. For producing components such as leaves and tenons the FP is unrivaled in its ability to make a smith more efficient, he said. "I talk to people about FPs and they tell me FPs are expensive. But the fact is they are cheap. For what it does it's probably the cheapest thing in your shop."

Crouchet is accustomed to long hours over a jeweler's bench, and he has transferred that same work ethic into blacksmithing. Years of experience making a living grading and setting fine diamonds has made him keenly aware of productivity, as well as creativity. And he drives home his message about FPs.

Staring over bifocal glasses, the salt and pepper-haired Crouchet made his point. "If you are doing professional work, the FP will pay for itself the first week," he said. "The issue of FP over TH comes up all the time," he added. Some smiths mistakenly believe that a treadle hammer is all they need to become efficient in

their shop. He explained that a TH is not a substitute for a FP, and a FP is not a substitute for a TH. "They are not interchangeable and they do not replace each other," he emphasized. Each of these tools is uniquely suited to execute certain forging functions with superiority over other options. **Crouchet pointed out that a noticeable difference is that the FP has no percussion and that there are no double strikes. A FP will also drive a stamp deeper than a TH, he added.**

Control of a treadle hammer is also an issue confronting every user. Crouchet gave the example of forging a seedpod on a TH versus forging it on a FP. "On a TH you will cut through a seedpod sooner or later," forcing the smith to scrap that item and lose valuable time. "We never run a vein on a treadle," he quipped. Another benefit to FP use is the skill requirement. The skill necessary to successfully complete work is less on a FP when compared to a TH. "A chimpanzee can do it on a fly press," he grinned.

"Larry likes to do (veining and stamping) on a TH, so if he could find an excuse, he would," Crouchet said with a laugh." But again, using the right tool sometimes leads one to give up a favorite way in favor of the way that will put dollars in your pocket quicker. "If you are a little guy (in a one or two-man shop) and you are not efficient, you are out of business. That is just how it is," Crouchet stated.

Crouchet summed up his discussion of tools in one statement. "If you are trying

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to make a living at forging, the FP is the way to go.”

While Hammerfest Forge does primarily architectural items such as balconies, rails and courtyard gates, Crouchet manages to stick to smaller jobs in his own forge, with his trusty assistant Ruth.

To continue the FP over TH debate, or to get his full name so you can include him in your will, please contact John via email at jac@sycamorecreekranch.net or for those who can't type while yelling, at 830-798-3710.

Houston Area Blacksmith's Association Inc.

HABA FAMILY RENEWAL FORM 2003/4

Please fill out the renewal form below and send it with a check in the amount of \$10 for a six month Membership renewal or \$25 for an eighteen month Membership renewal.

Please make a check out to HABA and send the form and check to:

**James Porter, Treasurer, 1925 Anchor Way, Dickinson, TX
77539**

Name: _____

Address _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Home Phone No.: _____

Work Phone No.: _____

E-Mail Address: _____ @ _____

Please Check One:

_____ Yes, I would prefer to receive *The HABA Letter* through the U. S. Mail.

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_____ Yes, I will retrieve *The HABA Letter* from the internet at www.habairon.org .

Your membership is appreciated and important to HABA.

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COAL FOR SALE

COAL: Sewell Seam Surface Mined,
Hand cleaned and loaded, Fayette
County, WV, near the town of
Thurmond.

Quality Analyses From Central Testing,
Inc., Summersville, WV
TU: 14,870 As Received (AR) @ 2.55%
Moisture 15,259 Dry
Sulfur: 0.67% AR, 0.68% Dry
Ash: 1.5 to 2.5% Dry
Size: Hand Picked Lump and slack

Shipment: 50 pound containers, pallets
of varying weights, or by the truckload.

Call or E-mail for pricing.

Tim Keeney,
Beury Mountain Carbon
P.O. Box 187
Hico, WV 25854-0187

Phone 304-575-2961 or 304-438-7275
E-mail: t_a_keeney@hotmail.com
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Art by Frank Walters.