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July 9, 1998

To: HABA Distribution List

Re: The June Meeting Of The Proposed Houston Area Blacksmiths' Association (HABA)

THE JUNE HABA MEETING

By Jim Wheeler

The June meeting of the Houston Area Blacksmith's Association was held on the 20th of the month at Frank Walters' Stafford Cabinet Co. in far west-northwest Houston. It was a warm, muggy Saturday morning just a day before the beginning of summer. Twelve people braved the heat and attended. Instead of a regular meeting it was primarily a workshop for presentation on the assembly and operation for a small gas-fired forge like the one demonstrated by Bill Bastas earlier this year at the March meeting.

It was also an opportunity for those who had previously ordered the forge components, to pick up the kits. Accordingly, there was no formal business discussed and no Raffle. The HABA Hat however brought in \$28.00 and Larry Hoff, HABA's Treasurer, brought us up to date on the finances. Because of the extremely warm weather we had been (and are) having, the meeting was a short one that was fairly well over by noon. No one cared to hang around in the large metal building that Frank said would become an oven by one o'clock (Solar-powered, heat treat furnace?).

Those who brought parts kit had Frank to thank for the chance to do so. It was he who had ordered the materials in bulk quantity, put them up in individual packages and made them available virtually at cost while donating a good deal of his won time and effort to boot. All the kits were organized and set out on a table very professionally. It was obvious to even a casual observer that someone had put some work into the project. Evidently everyone who ordered one picked up his or her kit.....there were none left unclaimed.

Frank had planned, he said, to actually assemble one of the forges but due to constraints of the heat and of a therefore shorter meeting, decided against it. Instead he gave us a step-by-step explanation of how to build one of the little infernos as well as details about its operation. Several people seemed to be taking notes and it would be really nice if these could be worked into a written set of instructions to later be printed in the newsletter...any volunteers???

Frank spoke for about three quarters of an hour fielding question as he went along. Then he took a short break for some cold drinks provided by HABA and to enjoy the fresh doughnuts brought by Byrom Wehner. Then Frank finished his talk. Either he was adept at impromptu speaking or else he prepared his comments in advance. His presentation was concise and well organized.

There was no forging done at the meeting but our host did light off his own version of the gas forge. An interesting accessory he added to it was an electronic pyrometer, which, although it was 'on-the-fritz' would normally allow him to

accurately gauge the temperature for heat treating and/or forging. (I made a mental note to ask him about the device, yet forgot to do so.)

Byrom Wehner not only contributed the always welcome doughnuts, in addition he provided his copy of a new book about anvils titled *Anvils In America* for the Show-and Tell table. I leafed through it only briefly but it appeared to be the definitive testament of the subject...the first and only book ever devoted to anvils as far as I know. Although it is expensive (it is privately published by the author) it is a nice volume...hard cover with quality paper that will last...and is sure to become a classic reference. Byrom said it cost \$60 plus shipping and handling.

There were only 1500 copies in the first printing and the first 1000 will be signed by the author, Richard A. Postman and recorded by number. Byrom's is number 468 (I believe) and Dave Koenig has number 764. Since it looks likely the first edition will quickly be sold out, it is to be hoped that a second printing will be done.

Two other books that were on the Show-And Tell table were *Iron Age Primitives* and *Antler and Iron II*, both written by Gene Chapman. These dealt with knives and other cutting tools and were provided by Frank Walters. They are available from Centaur Forge. Centaur Forge's new 1998-1999 catalog is out, by the way, along with its new prices on many items.

Sharon Heathcock, HABA's Secretary, informed me that the coal arrived as ordered by the East Texas Blacksmith Alliance. It is supposed to sell for \$15.00 per one hundred pounds and there is not supposed to be a minimum order requirement. Buyers must provide their own bags or other container for the coal and must go after it themselves. For more information about purchasing coal from the East Texas Blacksmith Alliance, contact Robert Robinette at 409-721-6199.

THE JULY MEETING

Sharon and Charles Heathcock will host the July HABA meeting at their forge on July 18, 1998 in Dobbin Texas. Things will get underway about 9:00 in the morning. Bring your forge if you would like and your safety glasses with side shields.

Should you need to get in contact with Sharon or Charles, here is their telephone number, 409-597-4847.

John Soares will be demonstrating different kinds of forge welding. John is good. So, if you have any questions about forge welding, here is an opportunity to see it done right and maybe even get in a little practice. Learning is a whole lot easier when there is someone on-hand to provide some coaching.

Charles said to remind everyone that there will be a plasma cutter available for you to try. The cutter can cut up to three eighths inch thick material. So, if you have some cutting you would like to get done, the opportunity is staring you in the face at the July 18 meeting.

Now if neither of these two opportunities get you excited about the July meeting, this one will. There will be plenty of home-cooked BBQ served-up for lunch. Sharon's mom is doing the cooking. You just know this will be some of the best food you've had in a long time. The cost of this delicious lunch will be what you throw into the HABA Hat.

DIRECTIONS TO THE HEATHCOCK FORGE

From the North side of Houston, go North on interstate 45 to Conroe. At Conroe go West on state highway 105 about 20 miles. You will go by beautiful Lake Conroe and the town of Montgomery. (Montgomery is loaded with small shops.) About five miles West of Montgomery you will come to the town of Dobbin. There is not much to see in Dobbin while passing through on 105 so you need to pay attention about now. There will be a caution light. Slow down because you will be making a left hand turn. Continue up the hill past the caution light to Mount Miriah Road. Turn left on Mount Miriah and go South. The Heathcock Forge will be at the second house on your left. You will not be able to miss it. Sharon will have signs out, the dogs will be barking and there will be a lot of other cars trying to get into the driveway!

From the West side of Houston, go Northwest on state highway 249 through Tomball, Decker Prairie and Pinehurst. This should all sound familiar because it is the way to Tudor Forge. When 249 ends at Pinehurst, continue Northwest past the turn to Tudor forge on FM 1774 all the way to Magnolia. FM 1774 will "T" into FM 1488 in downtown Magnolia. Go right at the 'T' across the tracks and turn immediately to the left and continue Northwest on 1774. The turn to the right and then back to the left takes place within 50 yards.

Continue Northwest on 1774 two miles or so to the first road on the right, FM1486. Turn right on FM 1486 and go North about eleven miles. When you come to the tracks again slow down. Just across the tracks you will see Hoffarts' Grocery and Texaco station. Turn left on Mount Miriah Road and go about three quarters of a mile. Again, Sharon will have signs out,

the dogs will be barking and there will be a lot of other cars trying to get into the driveway!

A NOTE FROM THE PREZ

By Dave Koenig

The July meeting at Sharon and Charles Heathcock's Forge is going to be a good one. The welding demonstrations will be really good because I saw John do these welds before. If you have even a hint of interest in forge welding, don't miss this meeting if you can help it. You will even have the opportunity to get the feel of a plasma cutter!

Speaking of missing things, I will have to miss this meeting because of a work commitment. I am afraid the busy days of retirement are being interrupted with the opportunity to create some dollars.

I plan to have the August HABA meeting at the Tudor Forge. One of the things I will demonstrate is forging aluminum. I have to admit to a real prejudice against forged aluminum...until I saw it demonstrated at the ABANA Conference in Asheville, NC last month and I gave it a try. Forging aluminum is not like forging steel. I think it has a place and is certainly worth giving a try.

ABANA Conference

The ABANA Conference was a veritable feast for the forging senses. Imagine trying to open your mouth to take a drink of water from Niagra Falls. That's about what it felt like. There was so much going on that any individual could take-in only a small fraction of what was happening.

The conference was held on the campus of the University of North Carolina – Asheville. The campus is beautiful. The weather was good. Local attractions for the families abounded including the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Twelve forging stations were going steady each of the three conference days. About any kind of smithing was taking place that you can think of.

There were four galleries open on campus filled with things members made. What a sight this was. The quality of work increased dramatically from what I remember at my last ABANA Conference eight years ago.

There were special events scheduled during the days and evenings. And, there were full days of activities scheduled for the families.

Two parking lots were filled with vendors and smiths selling about every kind of smithing tool and book you ever saw or could imagine.

Twelve hundred smiths registered for the conference from all over the world.

Two fund raising auctions were held on campus. The main auction raised over \$70,000. ABANA managed to raise about a \$100,000 from this one event.

That was the waterfall of activities!

Everyone attending the conference had a number of hard choices to make...should I see this or should I see that...should I continue this unique conversation over the dinner table or try to make it to the evening demonstration. Everyone's experience was different and if you would hear three people talk about the conference you might begin to wonder if they were all talking about the same conference.

When the planned events were winding down in the evening, the pace began to slow. The volume of information exchanged however, did not seem to slow a bit. At eleven o'clock at night there were still groups of people talking all over the campus. And the best part was that you felt welcome in any one of them.

Special Thanks

I would like to extend a very special thanks to all the people who are picking up the slack my absence is creating and making sure HABA's business gets done.

To Frank Walters for putting together the June Gas Forge meeting. Six or seven people now have the knowledge and

materials to build their own forge. You know it is pretty remarkable. Bill Bastas showed us his new forge design in March and eight new forges should be ready to go shortly if not already. Thanks Frank.

To Jim Wheeler who put together the meeting minutes on a moment's notice. Well done Jim.

To Sharon and Charles Heathcock for opening their shop for the July meeting and lining up a John Soares to demonstrate. Thank you Sharon and Charles. I sure wish I could make the meeting.

To Reynolds Cushman for editing this HABA letter and getting it into the mail. This HABA letter was intended to be a one pager. It looks like we will have to shoot for a one page letter next month. Thanks Reynolds.