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January 3, 1999

To: HABA Distribution List

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

Happy New Year!

We are going to start 1999 with two great meetings in January and February. First the January meeting on the 16th at Tudor forge will feature the smithing skills of Kip Coe.

The February HABA meeting on February 6 will feature demonstrations by **Bob Bergman** and **Nana Showalter** from Blanchardville, Wisconsin. (NOTE: The February meeting will be early!)

Yes you are reading this correctly! Bob and Nana will be demonstrating for us. Bob gave me a call yesterday and wanted to know if he could demonstrate his KA-75 Air Hammer for us. The HABA officers all said yes. And, Triple-S Steel in Houston most graciously agreed to host this meeting for HABA.

There will be no charge for this demonstration...yes, you are reading this correctly too...no charge!

Smiths across Texas and Louisiana are all cordially invited to attend and at no charge!

For more details see THE NEXT HABA MEETING section on page 8.

Call, e-mail or write Dave Koenig at the number or addresses above for additional information about the February meeting.

ANVIL BUYING TIPS

Andy V., Eventide Forge, Freehold, NJ

Introduction

The anvil is the centerpiece of any blacksmith's shop. Having a good quality anvil in proper working order is essential to the long term success and happiness of the blacksmith. Therefore the process of buying an anvil

is a vital component in provisioning a shop with the right and proper tooling. This article is intended primarily for those not yet experienced enough to know just how critical a purchase this is, and to give them a few basic pointers that, if followed, could possibly save them some considerable trouble and aggravation.

How Much Iron?

The first question that may come to mind is "how big should my anvil be?" The answer is "it depends". So, let's see what this depends upon. Here I'm assuming the buyer is looking at either a London pattern or German pattern anvil.

The size of your work will dictate, more than anything, what size anvil you will require. For the beginner, my suggestion is to select an anvil of 150 pounds or less. This is based on the fact that the work a new smith is going to be doing is very likely to be of smaller proportions. Also a 150# anvil is very versatile in that you will be able to do work ranging in size from PDS (Pretty Darned Small) to that of respectable proportions. I say with no uncertainty that trying to do certain operations on small work with a 500# anvil is simply not going to happen. In this case, less is more.

Another consideration as to weight revolves around mobility. You WILL move your anvil. Maybe not much and maybe not often, but you will. Anvils of 150# and smaller are a LOT easier to haul around the shop (or around town for that matter) than larger specimens. If it turns out that you move your anvil frequently, doing so with a 250 pounder is going to get real old real fast.

Interrogating the Suspect

Once you locate a prospect, the first thing you want to check is the external appearance. The main consideration should be the surface condition. The working surfaces of the anvil (face and horn, primarily) should have no major mars. What does "major" mean? That's up to the individual and as you become more experienced, you will be able to tell for yourself more clearly.

Look for any bits of the flat working face that have chipped away rather than those that are WORN away. Worn areas are generally smooth as opposed to broken areas that are places where pieces are chipped from the anvil. This may indicate abuse or low quality. Anything larger than, say, 1/4" (~6mm) along the plane or 1/8" (~3mm) deep and with sharp concave corners I would be careful of. This is a VERY broad statement and you must take it with a grain of salt because when it comes to anvils, there are few hard and fast rules.

Suffice it to say that chips larger than this should be repaired if you are going to be able to use the full face of the anvil and do so without concern as to safety or causing further damage. An otherwise good anvil with some serious chips in the working face may still be a good buy and as such are very much worth having repaired. Remember that this tool should last a lifetime.

Any gentle sway in the working surface may be acceptable unless it becomes excessive. Inspect the surface for cracks, especially around the edges. Any long or very deep cracks may indicate something is amiss with the tool. Again, the more experience you get using anvils and paying attention to them as living tools, the better you will get at knowing which cracks are serious and which are not.

If the anvil passes visual inspection, then you go to the really important test, liveliness. This is a simple test and you should bring a hammer with you in case the seller doesn't have one handy. Hold the hammer loosely in your hand and from a height of about 6" (15cm) let it drop to the working face while keeping a loose grip. Allow the hammer to do what it will, that is, if it wants to bounce let it. A "live" anvil will be indicated if the hammer rebounds off the face of the anvil at least 4 or 5 times, each time attaining at least half the height it did the previous bounce. If the anvil is "dead" the hammer will bounce perhaps twice and not very high, that is, it will lose all its energy very quickly.

Check the entire face of the anvil for liveliness. It is possible to have dead spots, which often indicate places where the steel face has separated from the rest of the anvil. It may not be visible, but you should be able to discover any such major problems by testing.

What you are looking for is a lot of bounce, a lively anvil. Dead anvils are pretty unpleasant to work on. They make you work much harder than you really have to and should be avoided if possible. Generally speaking, a live anvil will ring whereas a dead anvil will only produce a "thud" in the area that is dead, or possibly even over the entire face. Note that an anvil that rings COULD be dead. The bounce test is the only way to really know. Some very live anvils also go THUD, so do not judge by sound because you might be deceived.

Some people test by dropping a ball bearing on the face. I don't care for this method for two reasons. First and foremost, using a hammer connects you to the anvil. Despite the flimsy grip, you CAN get a feel for the nature of the anvil. Also, you can always give a few moderate raps to the face with a firmer grip.

Second, ball bearings are usually harder than the anvil face so you will get no good reading on facial hardness with them. If you dent the surface with a hammer, whose face should always be softer than that of the anvil, then you KNOW you have a soft faced anvil and might consider passing on that particular specimen.

What flavor?

Regarding materials: the finest anvils are made of wrought iron with a hard steel face welded to them on top. They were made like this for centuries and in my opinion is the pinnacle of desirability.

The next best grade would be solid forged tool steel (Pedinghaus for example). These are also fine working anvils, if well made. The biggest problem is that of excessive ringing. They tend to produce the loudest, most shrill ring I've ever heard. For this reason alone I will not have one, but that's only my personal preference. I like being able to hear and hope not to be deaf at 50, which is only 10 years away for me.

Next would be a cast steel anvil (Refflinghaus and Kohlsua are examples). Again, the bounce test will tell you if you have an anvil worth buying. The biggest problem with anvils of this type is softness in the face. If the anvil is live but the face dents with each blow that strikes it directly, you may find that you'll have a pretty beat up anvil in short order.

Then we come into cast iron with steel faces. The only acceptable one I've ever seen is one that was made by Fisher Norris in Trenton NJ. They are live anvils that sound dead, i.e., they do not ring very loud at all. Other than Fishers, I've yet to see a steel-faced cast iron anvil that I liked.

The lowest quality anvils are cast iron with no steel face, or one that is very soft. If this is all you can find or afford, then test it and go on from there as best you can, but if you can wait and perhaps save pennies or keep on searching, I would hold out for something better. It's worth it.

How Much?

Bear in mind that an anvil should, in theory, last you a lifetime and way beyond. Bear in mind that it is the cornerstone of your smithy. Bear in mind that good tools are worth paying for and that though many people moan about prices, it doesn't mean that they are correct to do so.

So how much should you pay? That depends on you, to a large extent, and while there are no hard and fast rules, I can give some guidance here.

In the northeast USA anvils are relatively plentiful. In fact, I'd bet there are more here per capita, than anywhere else in the world so pricing is correspondingly lower, generally speaking. I pay anywhere from \$0.75 to \$2.50 per pound. Price depends on the seller, the market, and of course, the anvil in question.

Take any anvil you can get for free. Hard, fast rule #1.

In the Midwest and the West, prices tend to be higher largely because there aren't as many anvils floating around. It seems that \$3.00 to \$3.50 per pound is closer to the norm in those areas.

Anyhow, that's the art of anvil buying in a nutshell. Experience is really the only way to get to know a good anvil from a bad one. With these few guidelines in hand, you should be able to find something serviceable at a fair price.

Also bear in mind that anvils may be repaired, so if you find something a bit damaged but in otherwise good shape, you might consider buying it, use it as long as you must and then one day have the dings and dents filled with the appropriate materials and reground. I just spent this past weekend repairing 6 old wrought iron anvils. They came out beautifully and should be good for another 100+ years of service.

THE HABA MEETING NOTES

OCTOBER MEETING NOTES

By Jim Wheeler

The October HABA meeting was held at the Brazos Forge on October 17, 1998 in Needville, southwest of Houston. Larry and Charlotte Newbern hosted the meeting. This was the weekend of devastating floods in the Hill Country and Houston area. The rains held off however until after the meeting.

The meeting got started about 9:30. A total of fifteen people attended the meeting including three children and two new members, Charles Cadiff and Dave Wise. Charles and Dave, HABA welcomes you and hopes to see you at many future meetings.

There was no formal business meeting and no Raffle. The HABA Hat brought in a total of \$24. Larry and Charlotte provided a tremendous lunch of 'sandwiches'. What a spread!...four kinds of bread, several different kinds of sliced meat, spreads, lettuce, tomatoes, pickles, onions, relish, cheese, chips and dessert! No wonder so many made the trip to Needville on a damp day!

The meeting broke up about 3:00. (I stayed over for a couple of hours to get some one-on-one instruction on forge welding. I finally got it!)

Larry Newbern began the meeting by showing us a fireplace screen he was building. Larry planned to demonstrate forging a element of the screen as part of the meeting but could not. The client needed to make some design decisions before he can proceed.

The screen is two arch shaped doors in a frame. Because the fireplace opening was not symmetrical the doors could not be symmetrical. Larry uses stainless screen in this kind of screen application but the customer wanted to have bronze. The bronze screen was actually more expensive than stainless steel and will develop a rich black patina.

Larry's next demonstration was to show us how to make a branding iron. He's made more than just a few of these.

There is more to making a branding iron than one might think. For example, avoid small enclosed elements in the design. Small enclosed elements end up being just a patch of scar tissue when the brand heals. A similar thing can happen when two lines in a design intersect. Too much metal at one point applies too much heat that in turn blurs the design. It is better to have a small gap at intersections. Fire branding is seldom done on animals any longer. Chemical brands are used instead and are more economical.

Larry uses one quarter to three eighths inch thick by one inch or so flat bar stock to form the brand of his irons. The contact end of the brand is forged to a taper because the old irons were constructed that way.

Handles for branding iron can be done in at least three ways: a tang inserted into a wooden handle; a socket with a piece of wood inserted into the socket; and an iron handle that is connected directly to the brand.

The next demonstration was forging a set of tongs. Rather than try to describe how to make a tong here as Larry demonstrated, let me refer you a couple of resources that provide a clear explanation and a few helpful drawings. The resources are two smithing books: the first is *A Blacksmithing Primer – A Course in Basic and Intermediate Blacksmithing* by Randy McDaniel and the second is *Practical Projects for the Blacksmith* by Ted Tucker. I understand that Dave Koenig will have each of these books available on the Show-N-Tell table. . These are good books.

Larry was also in the process of replacing a clutch lining on the drive pulley of his Moloch power hammer. He explained how the mechanism works and then used his smaller 25 pound power hammer to demonstrate how it works. The power hammer was used to forge the tongs.

Other people got into the demonstrating act too. Frank Walters forged a new oval cross-section handle for a Tiger Blower. The blower was a product of the HABA swap-meet this summer. A chrome ball from a trailer hitch will be added to the end of the handle latter to serve as a counterweight.

Kerry Philips forged a nicely twisted and drawn lyre-shaped bail that she thought would some day be used as a handle on an oak jewelry box. There is a problem of using iron hardware on oak. The tannic acid in the oak, especially of the oak is a little green or wet, attacks the iron and leaves a blue-black stain on the oak.

Tim Cowden and his daughter also got in a little forge time. Tim forged a leaf.

David Wise showed up with some medieval armor he made. He showed us a helmet and a semi-gauntlet. This equipment is used during fighting demonstrations like at the Renaissance Festival. David did a wonderful job on the pieces and worked all

of it cold out of 1095 steel. Then he heat treated his work.

David came to the meeting wanting to learn more about forging iron and I am sure he picked up a lot of useful ideas and that we will see more of him at future meetings. In addition he managed to purchase a Peter Wright anvil from Larry Newbern.

NOVEMBER MEETING NOTES

The November meeting was held at Tudor Forge. There was a small crowd of eight at this meeting including three officers. There was an informative business meeting where some decisions were made and some ideas for 1999 were raised.

Icicle Demonstration

Things got underway about 9:30. Dave Koenig demonstrated how to forge an aluminum icicle to use as Christmas ornaments. One icicle was about 5 inches long and another was about 12 inches long. The icicles were made from a piece of five-eighths square rod. The type of aluminum used is not known. Whatever it was, it forged very well.

An icicle is quite easy to make and looks rather nice depending upon how it is finished. The forging is a simple round taper from a square rod. Create a round taper that is most pleasing to you.

The icicles are forged with a hook at the top. The hook is started over the edge of the anvil with half face blows at the large end of the round taper. The first notch is about a third of the way through the square stock. The stock is turned a quarter of a turn and again struck with half-face blows to about a third of the way through the stock. This piece of stock is drawn out using half-face blows for about an inch long and a quarter inch square..

The icicle is then separated from the parent bar at the end of the quarter inch at tang formed for the hook. The hook is than drawn out to the desired specification from the quarter inch tang created with the half-face blows. The result is a pleasing S-type hook that connects to one side of the icicle. The effect is a piece of broken icicle hanging by a hook.

We tried to texture one icicle with a spring fuller to create the effect of ripples in the surface. We had marginal success. The second icicle was forged with a large flat forging hammer that created relatively straight lines running the length of the piece. The hammer face was very smooth and the anvil top had many small pits. The effect of the alternating smooth and textured surfaces added a wonderful effect to the finished piece.

When the forging is complete the surface can be finished in a number ways. The simplest is to sand the high points with fine-grit sandpaper. Finish the sanding with as fine a grit as desired and leave the dark oxidation in the low spots untouched.

Another way is to use several different grades of Scotch Pads. The effect is similar to the sanding technique except there are many fewer dark oxidation areas.

The piece that was forged with a smooth hammer probably reflected the light best. The alternating textured and smooth surfaces really shined with the fine-grit Scotch Pads.

Each icicle is then finished with a coat of paste wax.

Post Vise Repair

Jim Wheeler brought a post vise to the meeting that was bent. It looked like someone put something in the jaws and then tightened-up until both jaws were bent outward. I cannot believe that would be possible but that is what the condition of the vise would suggest.

The task was to straighten out each 'leg' of the vise until the jaws would align properly.

The job was really pretty simple. After examining each 'leg' of the vise, it seemed that all we had to do was make sure that the back-side of each 'leg' laid flat on the anvil and the jaws would align. Sure enough, we heated each vise 'leg' to a red heat, laid the 'leg' on the anvil back-side to the anvil and gently struck the high spots with a wide face 12 pound hammer. Each leg was laying flat after a few blows.

When the legs were connected, the jaws did not align because of a twist. This was not a problem either. Because there was still enough heat left in the last 'leg' and the whole vise was placed in another vise. A short piece of two inch round stock was put into the screw eye of the hot 'leg' and twisted. The jaws became parallel again in a matter of seconds.

The vise was then allowed to air cool.

Show-N-Tell

John Forsman passed around a picture of a fence he recently completed. The top of the fence was a series of arcs. Larry Newbern and Gary Evensen provided John with the benefit of their experience. The result was a beautiful piece of work.

Larry Hoff showed us the most recent example of his 'courting' candle-holder. I think this is the third one I can remember. Larry is showing us what we all know...a little practice makes a big difference in execution. He is getting pretty darn good at it!

Jim Wheeler let us see the two bolt cutter heads he is in the process of making from a leaf spring. As usual the work is beautiful. The next step for Jim is to harden the two heads and temper them for strength and a durable cutting edge. (Special Update: Jim completed the bolt cutter project. The heads are beautiful and functional. Be sure to take a look at them at the January meeting Show-N-Tell table.)

The Business meeting covered the following topics.

1. HABA should pursue incorporation as a Texan Non-profit Corporation. If anything develops that would facilitate HABA becoming a sub-chapter of TABA, the TABA option would be considered at that time. HABA needs to reduce its liability sooner rather than later. The pathforward is to prepare the paperwork and have a lawyer look it over for completeness. Dave Koenig will begin the process.
2. There will not be a December HABA meeting because of the Christmas holiday. A suggestion was made to publish the next newsletter before the January meeting.
3. Kari Phillips volunteered to create a Christmas post card. The purpose of the card is to inform HABA members that there would be no December meeting, to announce the January 16, meeting at the Tudor Forge and to wish everyone a Happy Holiday Season.
4. Important HABA issues for 1999 include:
 - Getting incorporated as a Texas Non-Profit Corporation
 - Thinking about organizing a show/exhibit of hand forged items that can be displayed in public places...like a library or bank. This show could be the work of only HABA members, the work of smiths in Texas or a sampling of various forged items from a number of sources.
 - Communicating more with the other Texas smithing organizations and LAMA in order to see how the groups can work more closely together. Some issues to discuss are: sharing local demonstrator resources; coordinating workshop dates; assistance in advertising workshops including area colleges; creating a traveling exhibit of hand-forged metal work; etc.
 - Thinking about scheduling a two-day workshop featuring a nationally or internationally known smith.
5. The HABA coffers at the end of November contain \$ 438.50. Unpaid expenses include the postage and reproduction of the September HABA Letter.

The meeting broke up about 3:30

NEXT HABA MEETINGS

SATURDAY, JANUARY 16, 1999

The January HABA meeting will be held at the Tudor Forge on January 16, 1998. Things will get underway about 9:00.

Kip Coe will be the featured demonstrator for this meeting. He says to bring your forge too!

Kip's been busy forging all kinds of things. In October and November Bill Epps and Kip spent some time entertaining people and working hard at the Texas Renaissance Festival.

Kip plans to demonstrate a number of things like: a miniature wizard head; a railroad spike knife blade that looks like it has more than one spike of material in it; carbon and Damascus steel blade making tricks, forging techniques for stainless steel

and many things that will arise during the course of his demonstration.

Kip has a lot of experience working with steel so bring your problem pieces and questions. Maybe together we can find some solutions.

Lunch will feature a Camp Stew! For those interested, a camp stew will be prepared for lunch. It will not be necessary to bring anything except \$3.00 to enjoy whatever delicacy is served!

Please remember to bring your safety glasses with side shields, a forge if you have one and something for the Show-N-Tell table. The Show-N-Tell table is always a fun catalyst for conversation and questions.

DIRECTIONS TO TUDOR FORGE

Take 249 NW from Houston. Travel through the towns of Tomball, Decker Prairie and Pinehurst. At Pinehurst, 249 changes to 1774. Stay on 1774. About three miles ahead on 1774 look for a Texaco station on the west side of the road. One half mile past the Texaco station, turn left or west on Tudor Way. You will find the forge about a mile down the road.

From the intersection of 1488 and 1774 in Magnolia, go south on 1774 about 4 miles. Look for Tudor Way just after the Country Jamboree building. If you see the Texaco station you went too far.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1999

EXTRA SPECIAL MEETING NOTICE!

Triple-S Steel of Houston will host the February HABA meeting featuring demonstrations by Bob Bergman and Nana Showalter. All you will need to enjoy this meeting is to show-up with something to take copious notes and an inquisitive mind. I suppose you better transfer some money from savings to the ol'checking account before coming too.

For those of you who have never been to Triple-S Steel, the temptation to purchase all kinds of metal working tools and steel for new projects will be pretty enticing. That is to say nothing about the temptation you will experience when you see Bob demonstrate his KA-75 air hammer. I know some of you saw the demo tape for this machine and have your appetite wetted. Bob also mentioned that he has a couple hammers ready to be shipped from the Postville Blacksmith Shop. So, be prepared!

All kidding aside, the February meeting at Triple-S Steel will be a great opportunity to not only learn more about smithing from two of the best smiths around but an opportunity to purchase steel, tools, decorative steel forgings, ornamental iron and aluminum castings and maybe even a new power hammer.

For those of you who want to get more acquainted with the work of Bob Bergman, I flipped through the last few copies of *The Anvil's Ring* and found the following references:

- Summer 97, page 30, Fireplace Screen for Frank Lloyd Wright Home photo.
- Fall 97, pages 43&44, article and pictures of the Crane Gates for the International Crane Foundation of Baraboo, WI.
- Spring 1998, pages 23 and 24, article, picture and ad for the KA-75 Air Hammer.
- Summer 1998, article by Bob titled *ABANA Journeyman Program*.

For Nana I found only one reference. I know both Bob and Nana have more references in *The Anvil's Ring* but I am not organized enough to locate them right now.

- Spring 1994, page 28, Sculpture titled *Moon Over Isis*

The February HABA Meeting will begin at 9 AM on February 6, 1999. The meeting location is Triple-S Steel Supply Company located just North of the 610 Loop North between the Hardy Toll Road and Interstate 59. The address is 6000 Jensen Drive, Houston, TX. The agenda for the meeting is still being determined.

Call, e-mail or write Dave Koenig at the number or addresses above for additional information about the February meeting.

DIRECTIONS TO TRIPLE-S STEEL SUPPLY COMPANY

Going East on Loop 610 North from U.S Highway 290, exit to the right at an exit marked with Jensen Drive, and Hardy Road. This exit is right before you go by the Hardy Toll Road. Continue straight ahead after exiting at the Jensen/Hardy exit. The road will take you under Loop 610 and onto Kelley Street. About a half mile down the road Kelley intersects with Jensen Drive. Triple-S is at the intersection of Jensen and Kelley.

Going South on Interstate 59 before Loop 610, exit at Kelley drive. Kelley is the exit just before Loop 610. Go right on Kelly drive about a quarter mile to the intersection of Kelly and Jensen. Turn right on Jensen and than right into the Triple-S parking lot. Triple-S is at the intersection of Jensen and Kelley.

Going North on highway 59 from downtown Houston, exit to the right at the Collingsworth , Cavalcade and Kelley exit.. This exit is just before you get to the 610 Loop. This now gets a little tricky. You have to stay on the 59 access road around the 610/59 interchange. The route to Kelley Street is marked pretty well. Just do not get back on the freeway or make any turns. After a mile or so you will come to a light at Kelley Street. Turn left on Kelley and proceed about a quarter mile to Jensen Drive. Turn right on Jensen and than right into the Triple-S parking lot. Triple-S is at the intersection of Jensen and Kelley.

Going East on Loop 610 North, exit at Hirsch Road. Just continue on the access road. It will curve to the right and to the intersection with Kelley Street. Turn left on Kelley and proceed about a quarter mile to Jensen Drive. Turn right on Jensen and than right into the Triple-S parking lot. Triple-S is at the intersection of Jensen and Kelley.

POT POURI

TREE BARK TEXTURE

A Note From Fon Stonum

The tree bark texture I used on my vine pot rack is done with E60xx welding rods.

E6010 or Lincoln P5+ is my rod of choice. This is a "fast freeze" electrode that is easy to run with a real cold looking bead. I start at the base and run along the length of the limb until you get to the point where a smooth bark would take over. Just run bead after bead at a cold heat setting and knock the BB's off with a slag hammer or wire wheel as you go. Overlap the beads by 25%. Don't weave the rod or make too big of a bead. (Although sometimes real wide beads look good...)

You can get creative and build up and grind off a knot and then weld around it to look like a cut off limb would. Run all the beads starting from the same end, or it will look funny. The smooth bark is just drawn out round stock.

When you get to the point where smooth bark takes over you can use a gas torch to blend in the bark into a transition that is not so abrupt as a weld bead end.

There are no secrets here, just imagination.

WEB SITES OF INTEREST

From Dave Mudge

<http://www.wild.net/~lama/>LAMA
<http://www.eatel.net/~copsmith/>Buddy Holmes
<http://www.boonewroughtiron.com/home.html>Mike Boone
<http://www.abana.org/>ABANA
<http://www.webpak.net/~rreil/theforge/scrapbook.htm>
<http://members.aol.com/heathsatow/metlinks.htm>
<http://www.mindspring.com/~wgray1>
<http://www.mcs.net/~franklyn/elektric/anvil.html>
<http://home.att.net/~fulwood/Contacts.htm>
<http://home.att.net/~fulwood/Donnie.htm>
<http://www.gactr.uga.edu/forges/forgeweb.html>
http://wuarchive.wustl.edu/edu/arts/metal/AM_res.html
<http://www.flash.net/~dwwilson/ntba/>North Texas ABA
<http://www.bham.net/afc/index.html>Alabama FC
<http://www.Angele.DE/ifgs/>
<http://www.baba.org.uk/index.html>British ABA
<http://www.seanet.com/~neilwin/scrapbin.htm>
<http://www.anvilfire.com/>
<http://www.history.org/>Colonial Williamsburg
<http://www.denninger.com/>

<http://www.artmetal.com/>ArtMetal Village
<http://www.blacksmithsjournal.com/>Blacksmith's Journal
<http://members.aol.com/fusionwork/index.htm>
<http://www.village-blacksmith.com/cbg/cbg.html>

NOMEX GLOVES

By Dave Koenig

Late this summer, Frank Walters gave me a pair of Nomex gloves. These gloves are the thin single layer knit kind. He asked that I use them and let everyone know what I think about them. Yes, he gave me a "pair" of gloves and each glove fits each hand equally well. For some people this gift is equivalent to two pairs of gloves.

I guess most of you now know that I use two gloves to forge. Some of you are probably saying: Why? The answer is really quite simple. I do not want to get burned.

Like most things having to do with smithing and a lot of other things, there is more than one way to do the same thing. In my case I started out using two gloves from day one. I did not know that "using a glove on the hammer hand was not necessary. The reasons are: The hammer hand does not handle hot iron. The hammer hand does not get close to the fire. The hammer hand develops blisters if a glove is worn."

Well when I heard that a glove was not necessary on the hammer hand the first time I said well let me give that this a try. I will not use a glove on my hammer hand and see what happens. I am pretty curious and am willing to give new things a try.

Well, the initial feeling I had forging with only one glove can only be described as nakedness! Something was missing. I had to watch out and not get caught. What a distraction at first! I really had to make sure I did not bank the fire with my bare hand. I am in the habit of banking the fire with my gloved hands without even thinking about it.

I seemed to be getting along pretty good with my bare hand. I caught myself reaching for fire a couple of times but had plenty of warning that kept me from rearranging the coals. My bare hand did get a little warm as I touched some black iron but no burn. I continued merrily along until the unimaginable happened! I started to get blisters on my hammer hand!

Then I wondered. How gullible I can really be to think that I would not get blisters hammering with a bare hand! If I get blisters with a gloved hand what in the world would made me think that I would not get blisters on an un-gloved hand.

Well, the result of this experiment is that I continue to wear a glove on each hand while forging. I continue to bank the fire with both hands and I manage to ruin good leather gloves because I grab hot iron that makes the leather stiff as a board....but I do not get burned and the blisters on my hammer hand are more a function of the time I spend at the forge than whether or not I have a glove on my hammer hand or not.

With that introduction, here is my assessment of the Nomex gloves.

- Each Nomex glove works equally well on either hand.
- The Nomex glove is a lot thinner than leather gloves and does not provide the thermal protection of unlined leather gloves.
- Nomex is a lot cooler to use when the sweat is running onto your glove(s).
- It is possible to use the Nomex gloves to bank the fire but the heat from the fire is a lot warmer on the hands.
- Nomex gloves find the smallest little slivers on your work.
- Nomex gloves allow you to grip the hammer or any other tool a lot better than leather gloves when your hands are wet from sweat.

In summary, a pair of thin Nomex gloves is my first choice of forging gloves right after unlined leather gloves!

Tongs And.....

From Jim Wheeler's October Meeting Notes

Here are some methods of holding iron in the fire without using tongs:

- Use vise grips or pliers with pipe handle extensions.
- Fasten a piece to a long bar with a tack weld.
- Wrap wire or use a hose clamp to hold a piece together.
- Pressure fit a piece in a slit at the end of a bar.

- Fit the piece into the end of an iron pipe and wedge it in tightly.

SPECIAL THANKS

To Frank Walters for providing the Nomex gloves in the 'glove comparison study'.

To Larry and Charlotte Newbern for hosting a great October meeting.

To Jim Wheeler for providing the October meeting notes.

To Kari and Michael Phillips for creating and mailing the HABA Christmas Card.

To everyone who contributed to HABA's success during 1998 with his or her time, talent, attendance and donations.

COMING EVENTS

1. The East Texas Blacksmith Alliance meets the second Saturday of each month at the Heritage Village Museum in Woodville, TX. The Museum is on the north side of highway 190 on the West Side of Woodville. You cannot miss it. For more information, call 409-283-2272.
2. The North Texas Blacksmiths Association. has a couple of events coming-up:
 - a. NTBA 10th Anniversary, February 13, 1999, Ole Village Blacksmith, 701 South Main Street, Grapevine, TX, Phone 817-329-5297. Bill Fiorini will be the guest demonstrator.
 - b. April 10-11, 1999, Dancing Hammers, Blacksmith Junction, Old Mill Mountain, Canton, TX, Phone 972-878-5921. Doug Hendrickson will be the guest demonstrator.

Visit NTBA Web Site: <http://www.flash.net/~dwwilson/ntba/>
3. The Bacones Forge, a sub-chapter of the Texas Artists Blacksmith Association, meets the last Saturday of the month. Call Gary Evensen, 512-266-2430, for more information.
4. Pat Cheatham, Concho Forge of San Angelo, TX is organizing a Repousse Tooling Workshop for April 29-30 and May 1, 1999. Wendel Broussard, a nationally known Texas repousse smith, will lead the workshop. Pat is trying to get a feel for the number of people he can expect. This workshop is intended to be 'hands-on'. Space will be limited to 10 or 12 people. So, if you have an interest in exploring this facet of blacksmithing, this is an opportunity not to be missed. Talk to Pat about the program, the tools you may need to bring and most importantly, get your name on the list. Pat's number is: 915-949-0419. His e-mail address is: cforge@wcc.wcc.net.

FOR SALE

Looking for some good forging coal? Call Robert Robinett, 409-721-6199. The cost is \$150 per ton or \$15.00 per hundred pounds bagged. (I think this coal is great!)

WANTED

Bill Bastas is looking for a supply of Bois D'Arc or Osage Orange as it is known in some parts. If you know of anyone knocking down a tree or of someone who has some for sale, Bill would appreciate a call at 512-447-9091.