



# THE HABA LETTER

The Newsletter of the Houston Area Blacksmith's Association Inc. (HABA)

HABA Web Site: [www.habairon.org](http://www.habairon.org)

September/October 2000 Edition

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## Next HABA Meeting –

**Washington on the Brazos State Park,  
Barrington Farm – November 11 - 12  
All Smiths Invited!**

## THE HABA LETTER CONTENTS

**November HABA Meeting** – Page 2.  
**September Meeting Summary** – Page 3.  
**October Meeting Summary.-** Page 4.  
**Future HABA Meetings** – Page 7.  
    December– Page 7.  
    January– Page7.  
    February- Page 7.

**Business Issues** – Page 7.  
    Finances – Page 7.  
    Board Meeting – Page 7.

**What I Learned at Flagstaff** – Page 8.  
**Coming Events** – Page 10.  
**The Fine Print** - Page 10.  
**To Make Life Simpler.-** Page 10.

## NOVEMBER HABA MEETING - NOVEMBER 11-12, 2000

The November HABA meeting will be very special. It will be held at Washington on the Brazos State Park – Barrington Living History Farm.

The purpose of this meeting is to build farm tools for Barrington Farm. Shackles for farm equipment, harrow teeth for a new harrow, repair work on some fence hardware around the Anson Jones Home and maybe a few more small items are on the agenda right now. I am sure there will be enough work to keep everyone as busy as they would like to be.

Any blacksmith is invited to come to the park and work. Camping will be made available in the park Friday and Saturday nights. All the work done for Barrington Farm will be done in public.

### What to Bring

If you plan on camping, bring whatever you need to make yourself comfortable. Camping space will be made available just south of the Barrinton Farm parking lot. Note: there are no showers available at the park.

Bring a forge, hand tools, fuel, miscellaneous stock etc. to do some forging. The harrow teeth will be made out of  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch coil springs and maybe old railroad spikes. If you have any stock like this please bring it along. We might need it. The spring stock may be used for the shackles too.

Bring a striking hammer if you have one. I am sure this meeting will give a number of us the opportunity to practice our striking skills.

Please do not forget to bring your safety glasses with side shields.

Because this meeting will involve some production blacksmithing in public, we will all need to be thinking about the public's safety as we work. If you bring a forge, think about bringing some rope and stakes to keep the public farther from the anvil than is customary. We will all need to figure out the best way to get the work done, provide access to the public and make sure the risk of personal injury is minimized.

Since you will be getting hungry at the park, here are the food options: 1. The park has a place to eat near the Visitor's Center. 2. Pack a lunch and snacks. 3. Drive to a restaurant outside of the park.

### Park Information

- If you have any questions about the park and its services, call Barrington Farm at 936-878-2213.

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### Directions to the Park

- From 610 in Houston take 290 to highway 6 and go to Navisota. At Navisota go west on 105 about 10 miles. There will be signs directing you to the park. The park is a mile south of 105 in the town of Washington, TX. If you are coming from the west on 290, take 105 east from Brenham. There will be plenty of signs directing you to the park.

See you at Barrington Farm!

## SEPTEMBER HABA MEETING SUMMARY



James Ryan of Arlington, TX came to Tudor Forge in September to demonstrate and lead a hands-on workshop. Well, the hands-on part never took shape because James just kept everyone's focus on his work all day.



With James arrival in Houston also came the first real cool front of the fall. The day was close to perfect. This meeting was also the lowest attended one of the year and a big surprise for everyone there. The thirteen who came were not disappointed.

James started his demonstration about 9:30 or so with a warm-up demonstration of a leaf. It is something he does whenever he starts forging. It's easy to do and gets him focused for the work ahead.

His first demonstration piece was a meat skewer. The forging was basic. He drew out a point, twisted the shank to help keep the food from falling off and forged a clean hook type finial.

The second demonstration was a tool or towel rack that gets screwed to a wall. The finials were beautiful flower

forms. A really interesting part of this demonstration was the way James bent the ends of the bar to make the two 90° bends for mounting. He heated the bar about four inches from the end and clamped the cool part in a vise. While holding the finial with a tong he pounded the bar over the vise. The result was two 90° bends with one heat and a few hammer strikes.

(I remember someone else demonstrating this technique but had completely forgotten about it. It just goes to show that some people need to see something more than once to make it stick in their heads.)



The third demonstration was forging a ladle with a copper cup. The relatively thin copper plate stock was formed over a stump. In the process of forging the thin copper sheet it became work hardened and very stiff. The steel handle was forged and riveted to the cup. The ladle was beautiful, functional and simple in design.

Towards the end of the afternoon James was starting his final planned demonstration, the making a meat fork. He was asked to entertain some ideas from the group for a very unique handle. He said OK.

The concept was to forge a long pig tail on the end of a bar...a foot long or more. Two holes were punched below the pig tail about 2 inches apart. The area between the two punched holes was twisted one turn. The pigtail was passed through the first hole, then through the second and laid in the twist.

Well the exercise was a success because we all learned something new and realized that it would be better to make the twist between the two punched holes after the pigtail is threaded. With a longer pigtail and another punched hole or two the pigtail could easily become the third tine on a meat fork.

James managed to get packed up and on the road again about 5 PM. The fork handle exercise gave him some new ideas and said he would have a finished product using the pigtail and punched hole idea ready for the IronFest Auction.

Speaking of IronFest, on May 31, 2000 at the IronFest site, James Ryan, Bill Epps and others who would like to teach, will offer hands-on workshops free of charge to people signed up for the full IronFest Conference. For those of you who would like to help-out or attend the workshop, please get in touch with Bill Epps. Bill's number is: 972-285-1004.

Four or five people came up to me after James' demonstration and told me how much they liked the way James taught.

HABA hopes to bring in smiths from other parts of Texas a couple times a year to pique our interest by giving us some new ways to look the art and craft of blacksmithing.

James, you did a great job. We appreciate you and your family making the trip to Houston and hope to see more often.

## OCTOBER HABA MEETING SUMMARY

The October meeting was HABA's second Hammerfest event at Oldenburg this year. The weather tried hard to dampen everything exposed to the sky and succeeded. Hammerfest was cold and wet Saturday and Sunday. It was the first HABA function to be rained-upon. I do not want to say rained-out because everyone who came had a good time in spite of the inclement weather conditions.

Here are some highlights of the October Hammerfest:



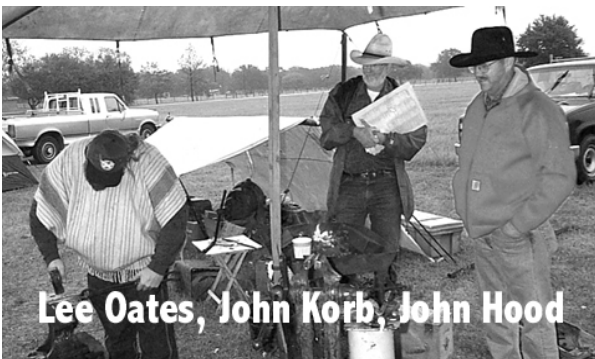
A.J. Garrett set up his 'iron aviary' on Wednesday. Cars stopped to check it out and people made purchases whether the sun was shining or the cold rain was falling. A.J. also built a new iron Hammerfest sign and Bob Collier got a sign painter to paint the lettering. It is a great sign that will be used for a long time. Thanks a lot A.J. and Bob.

Frank Walters picked up most of the load again to stake out the site, set-up the auction tables, designed and printed flyers, erected the portable shower and made signs announcing the blacksmith site and auction. (There was a problem with the signs however. Before the cold rain, the

signs could not be pounded into the ground!) Frank, all of your work is most appreciated.

Nelson Randermann took the flyers Frank designed and printed and distributed them along his milk route from Victoria to Brenham. Nelson also donated two cases of milk to Hammerfest. Nelson, thank you for your contributions to HABA. (That chocolate milk really hit the spot.)

Charles and Sharon Heathcock and Lee Oates teamed-up to provide a gathering/meeting place complete with a warm fire, coffee, other refreshments and several meals. Your hospitality and generosity warmed everyone. Thank you very much.



The people who brought forges to this Hammerfest were Larry Newbern, Frank Walters, Charles and Sharon Heathcock, Larry Hoff, Jim Wheeler, Tom Lundquist and Dave Koenig. Not all of these got lit due to the rain and lack of cover.

Late Saturday morning the HABA Board of Directors had a quarterly meeting. All HABA members and visitors were welcome to attend. See the Business Section of *The HABA Letter* for more details.

There were smiths and HABA members we know who stopped by Oldenburg to see what was going on. Some of their names are: Rick Dawdy, Charles Stolte, Eddie Harrison, Joe Bautista, 'Cowboy' the new smith for George Ranch, John Korb, John Hood of New Mexico who is moving to Texas, and several I cannot remember.

It is important to note that there were return customers and for the weather, many people who stopped by in the cold rain to watch and learn more about the art and craft of blacksmithing.

In addition to promoting the art and craft of blacksmithing, Hammerfest is an opportunity to raise some money for HABA through an auction. This Hammerfest, items from 'blowers to vises' showed up from a number of different people to be sold at the auction. Well, as you might guess, the auction did not take place due to the lack of potential buyers. All of the auction items donated to the auction are safely tucked away. These items will

come out of storage at the February HABA meeting that will take place at C&S Forge in Dobbin, TX. The bright side of this postponement is that all of us will have more time to make things for the auction. (There are four post vises, one blower, a blacksmith box and many smaller items ready to be sold.)



The February HABA meeting will be at Charles and Sharon Heathcock's shop. The featured demonstrator is Lee Oates, a professional knife maker. Lee will be demonstrating and leading some kind of knife making workshop. Last January, Lee led a workshop making knives from railroad spikes. Lee drew a very big crowd HABA and at the end of the day there were 22 knives finished and almost that many sheaths.

Late Saturday afternoon a few of us packed our wet forges, tents, shoes and clothes and headed home to dry out. Most of the smiths braved the rain Saturday night too and pulled up stakes late Sunday morning.

In spite of the cold rain and for some of us an abbreviated stay in Oldenburg, the October Hammerfest has to fall into the success column. The smiths who showed up to demonstrate and sell and visit obviously enjoyed themselves. The Heathcocks and Oates helped that a lot with a warm fire and food!

The shoppers who stopped by did not seem to mind the weather. There were not as many shoppers as we could get on a sunny day but we all came together. There were many good conversations about blacksmithing from the visitors and among the smiths. For example, some of us can now split a half inch square bar three ways to make a Dutch oven lid lifter thanks to Larry Newbern. Others can texture large leaves after watching Frank Walters. And those who saw Lee Oates pull a blade out of a railroad spike saw a whole different use for a railroad spike.

All of this 'winter type' fun would not be possible without an invitation from Kenny and Susan Hall to come to Oldenburg, promote blacksmithing and sell whatever we want. Their hospitality is as warm as it gets. Lights, electricity, water are available to make the site more enjoyable and camping easy. In the mornings there is hot coffee, juice and milk to get the day started. And, on Saturday night there is dinner with the Hall family and friends.

For the hospitality and selling opportunity the Hall family extends to all blacksmiths, HABA on behalf of everyone coming to Hammerfest says thank you for opening your Oldenburg home once again. We appreciate all you do for us. Oldenburg is definitely the place to be come rain, wind snow or shine.

## FUTURE HABA MEETINGS

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### DECEMBER HABA MEETING.

As is the custom, no HABA meeting is planned for the month of December.

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### JANUARY HABA MEETING – JANUARY 20, 2001

The January 2001 HABA Meeting will take place at a new location, Lark Heat Treating Incorporated. The Address is 6440 Mayard, Houston, TX. This is a couple blocks south of Frank Walter's shop. The meeting will start about 9:00 AM on January 20.

Mr. Frank Clark agreed to take us through his commercial heat treating operations. This is an opportunity for all of us to get a much better understanding of how steel alloys can be manipulated with heat to change their characteristics.

### FEBRUARY HABA MEETING –FEBRUARY 17, 2001.

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The February 2001 HABA Meeting will take place at C&S Forge in Dobbin, TX. Lee Oates, professional knife maker, will conduct another one of his blade smithing workshops. If you came to his workshop at Tudor Forge last January, you will most likely want to make plans for this one too.

The 'rain day' for the Oldenburg Auction will be February 17 too! Bring something to sell. **Remember, up to 50% of the auction price may be returned to the person donating the auction item.**

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## BUSINESS ISSUES

### HABA FINANCES

The cash balance of HABA's bank account as of September 29 was. \$1916.11.

The HABA coffers took a hit of \$70 because of the low turn out for the James Ryan Demonstration in September. There is an estimated \$150 worth of outstanding expenses incurred at Oldenburg for advertising and toilet rentals. There was no income generated at Oldenburg in October.

Cash on hand is \$90: \$40 from hat sales, \$40 for two new memberships and a \$10 donation.

### HABA BOARD MEETING

The HABA Board of Directors met with HABA members and a few visitors at Oldenburg, TX October 13, 2000. The meeting was called to order by Dave Koenig, President.

Larry Hoff, Treasurer, indicated that HABA funds totaled right at \$1900 and that there were two new memberships received. HABA's membership is now at 45 members.

Larry Hoff and Dave Koenig met with a bookkeeper to review how HABA was keeping its books. The result of this meeting was a confirmation that our bookkeeping methodology was appropriate. Additional accounts need to be set-up to account for taxes. We were told that any tax accountant should have no problem filing HABA income tax.

Speaking of taxes, Larry Newbern, Vice President, suggested that HABA consider Charlotte Newbern to file HABA's taxes.

Dave Koenig suggested that HABA does not try to become 501 ( c ) 3 tax exempt corporation at this time. The primary reason is to learn how to run a Texas non-profit first. A second reason is that there is no real need to become tax exempt unless someone wanted to give HABA a lot of money and wanted to deduct that donation from their income taxes. A motion was made to not pursue a 501 ( c ) 3 designation at this time and the vote was unanimous.

IronFest, the five -state blacksmithing conference is developing well. Cash funds were received from ABANA, TABA and NTBA. HABA will guarantee one national demonstrator from funds set aside as a result of the Oldenburg Auctions. The goal is to build a fund of \$1500 to be used in the event a national demonstrator needs to be paid and there are no funds available because of a major loss caused by inclement weather for example. The probability of HABA using these funds for IronFest is remote for two reasons. One, every indication is that IronFest will be successful if the weather cooperates. Two, IronFest is considering purchasing weather insurance. HABA's IronFest fund is now about \$1000.

If HABA's IronFest demonstrator fund is not used for IronFest, it will be used to bring a nationally known blacksmith to the Houston area toward the end of 2001. HABA members were invited to start thinking about who they would like to see.

There was a short discussion about how HABA might support the East Texas Blacksmiths Alliance. Because of the distance between Houston and Woodville and the fact that there are no active local members in the Woodville area, no new ideas came forward.

After a review of upcoming HABA meeting venues, the meeting was adjourned.

## **What I Learned Going to Flagstaff**

By Jack Parks – Dakota Artist Blacksmith Association

Part 2 of 3

*This is Part two of a three-part article about the ABANA Conference in Flagstaff, AZ July 2000. Pictures are added by Dave Koenig*

The antique power hammer and junkyard hammer displays were of interest to me and I believe to most others. I didn't know that there was that big of a variety of old hammers. The junkyard hammers were a little more professional than was expected. The builders went all out in their research and execution of their designs. You will hear the name Mark Krause a lot in the upcoming months. His rendition of a Nazel self-contained air hammer will interest lots of people.

I must admit that I didn't get around to any of the other dedicated sites so I can't comment on them. I did hear that the Italian, Angelo Bartolucci, was worth watching.



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Robert Kurz, an industrial smith from Youngstown Ohio, made a sculptural Bow and Arrow to be

mounted in a stone. He used the big power hammer in the super site. The use of a movable jawed porter bar was new to me and will find a place amongst my other new tools soon. It had a clamping system made up of angle irons and wing nuts welded onto the end of a pipe for a handle. The wing nuts were big enough to be tightened with a hammer. Robert had a very straightforward commonsense demo.

Lorelei Sims did an interesting demo using hollow pipe and square tubing. It wasn't much for trick gizmos. It was all technique. There is no substitute for experience I guess. This has much value for that massive look without the weight. She suggested plugging the tubing with newspaper or something to prevent the hot gasses from heating the handle end of the project piece, which I never would have thought of. There isn't much else I can say. You just had to be there. She did say that she was burned once -----but got over him.

Dorothy and Ty Steigler showed their floral forms and enameling. They are another parent- child combo that does my heart good. Dorothy's approach to developing a pattern for flowers is a good one.

She goes to the dried flower store and buys three flowers all the same. One stays untouched. One gets taken apart and the third gets taken apart and ironed out flat. That third one becomes the pattern for cutting out the metal. She also told about stacking up the pieces using the square peg, round hole technique to prevent turning of the pieces. Ty showed her method of enameling the finished flowers for that more complete lifelike look. It was a method using a torch (Henrob) to heat the enamel and fuse it to the metal. It is too detailed to go into here but not above anybody being able to do it. Nice demo!

Chad Gunter did a nice demo showing his Decorative Ornamentation. He does a nice scroll with leaves attached. An article could be done on Chad alone and perhaps will be at a later date. The main thing that I learned was to rivet the two pieces together before forge welding. That is not cheating. Exact placement is possible and it all blends in.

For a flux he uses equal parts EZ Weld, Sure Weld, and Borax. Chad builds two scrolls actually; one is the pattern to be followed by the one with the leaves welded on. The naked scroll is easier to follow. More will follow.

Steve Yusko did a program on texturing metal. This is all new to me but will probably find a place in my repertoire. Steve used various bits of rusty metal, rebar, diamond plate and such to create texture on his sculpture. These were hammered over the metal pieces to impart the texture until the desired result was obtained. One is only limited by ones' own imagination here.

Next I went to see Leigh and Justin Morrel in their production forging program. Too much information was offered to include it all here. This is another parent-child combo that really works. His basic message is that everything should be on wheels so that the shop can be set up for each job. Eliminate unnecessary steps as much as possible.

They do catalog sales of patio furniture and do many pieces of the same thing. Careful attention and elimination of wasted movement can offer competitive prices offered to the client. They used a nice little pipe-bending jig that had a levered arm on it to hold the work piece up tight to the form. They also set up a stool in front of the trip hammer with the gas forge within easy reach on one side and the vise on the other side. Several operations could be accomplished without getting up. Nice if that's the kind of work you do.

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**COMING EVENTS 2000**

**FREE FRANK TURLEY WEEKEND MINI-CONFERENCE- NOVEMBER 11- 12, 2000**

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For more information contact Chuck Robinson, 607-798-0060 and [corbin@datastar.net](mailto:corbin@datastar.net).

#### **THE FINE PRINT**

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### **TO MAKE LIFE SIMPLER**

1. Pick the right tool for the job.
2. Avoid the use of a metal ladder for electrical welding or near energized electrical lines.
3. Keep your work area clean.
4. Tag gas and water lines so they can be turned off quickly in an emergency.