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To: HABA Distribution List

Re: Some Thoughts for 1998 and the November 15 Meeting Of The Proposed Houston Area Blacksmiths' Association (HABA)

The very best of the Holiday Season to you and your families.

May your stockings be filled with all kinds of new forging tools and the new year filled with new work from your hands!

WHERE'VE YOU BEEN?

It is good to be writing another HABA letter. A three month absence is way too long. The time away was some of the most enjoyable in a very long time. It was also a lot of hard work.

For those of you who do not know, I spent the months of October and November at the Penland School of Crafts learning new ways to forge iron. The school however was a lot more than being able to forge 24 hours per day for two months. It was an opportunity to learn from a whole group of people who were a lot younger than most of us, had much more energy and were the most creative group I ever had the pleasure to be around. Creative energy was contagious.

The obvious questions are what did you learn and what did you make. Let me start with the latter question first.

About the second week I got into using the power equipment, welders, grinders, power hammers, a 13 ton hydraulic press, etc. (As you may recall my shop does not have one spark of electricity. So, the use of power was all new.) The results are a 15 feet long kinetic sculpture, a five feet tall piece of garden sculpture in a flower form, a two feet tall candle holder from an eight and one half inch piece of two and one half inch of round stock, three small tables, and many smaller pieces, from tools for potters, jewelers and glass blowers, to more garden sculpture for the school gardens.

Now for the first question, what did I learn. To say the least I learned a lot about forging and designing iron. I hope to share some of this with you at our future meetings. I learned how to listen a whole lot more closely to others. I learned a lot about creating pottery, glass, jewelry, designs in cloth and making books. And, I learned much more about what Dave Koenig can and cannot do. I would recommend a similar experience to anyone.

The Penland experience continues here in Houston. Since I returned I've been working on a series of Christmas tree ornaments. I am using the same size and shape of iron for each piece and creating some remarkably different forms.

I hope this will give you some kind of idea about what I was doing for the last three months. I am anxious to share as much as you are willing to listen to.

I've also been thinking a lot about the future of HABA.

WHAT ABOUT HABA?

HABA met nine times during 1997. (Speaking of meetings, there will not be a December meeting.) During this time we managed to accomplish a number of things. Here are a few that come to mind:

1. We all learned and shared more about forging iron since last February. What more could we ask. Learning and sharing what we know with each other is the primary reason we get together. I think it is very important for all of us to remind ourselves of this. I know I need a lot of reminding, especially when I start thinking of the organizational issues we need to resolve. There are many other reasons why we take the time to meet almost every month but learning and sharing information about forging iron is at the top of the list.

2. We managed to have a very successful two day workshop by a very talented artist blacksmith from Germany, Heiner Zimmermann. For those of us who attend other workshops, our workshop ranks right at the top of the list.

We have the opportunity to sponsor more workshops and have more guest demonstrators like Bill Epps.

3. We have places to meet regularly. The word about HABA is getting out and more people are getting interested in joining us. We have a monthly letter that keeps everyone within HABA on the same page. We even have our own Home Page in cyberspace. (Oops....this is maybe more than one reason....but you get the idea.)

So, looking back on 1997 I think we can all say that we had a year of work that was rewarded with new information, skills, experiences, an expanding network and the company of new friends.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Here are some of the issues that are on my agenda for HABA. Please keep in mind that these issues are *first* right after the objective of learning and sharing information about creating beautifully forged iron.

1. We need to take additional steps to mitigate the effects of a liability suit in the event someone is injured at one of our meetings.

So far we stressed the need for personal protection equipment during demonstrations. The need to bring and use safety glasses with side shields while demonstrating or watching demonstrations is very important. But we need to do more.

We need to do at least two things. First we need to get HABA under a corporate umbrella. That means we need to form our own non-profit Texas corporation or become a sub-chapter of the Texas Artists Blacksmiths' Association (TABA). Second we need to obtain liability insurance.

The easiest and most cost effective way to accomplish both objectives is to become a sub-chapter of TABA.

We talked about this issue at several meetings...including the very first one in February. I believe it is time to make a decision. I would like to decide at the January meeting whether or not we as HABA should approach TABA to become a sub-chapter.

I know that some of you do not think associating ourselves with TABA is a positive thing. There are concerns about how TABA functioned in the past and concerns about TABA running HABA's business. These concerns are important. They come from experiences.

I suggest that we focus much more on what we can do as HABA in the future than any bumps and bruises that should be pretty much healed. HABA is a new group and TABA is not the same as it was a few years ago.

Here are some advantages of associating ourselves with TABA that I can see:

- A. HABA can get under the corporate umbrella of a Texas non-profit organization, TABA.
- B. HABA members will be covered by TABA's liability insurance.
- C. HABA would incur no legal expenses to receive the benefits offered by a corporation.
- D. HABA would be able to take advantage of TABA's chapter status with ABANA. Advantages include access to ABANA learning resources like the ABANA teaching trailer that has ten forging stations. (What a weekend or two or three workshop this equipment would make possible!)
- E. HABA would have financial backing to sponsor weekend workshops.
- F. HABA would have at least one representative on TABA's Board of Directors.
- G. HABA members would have access to all TABA sponsored workshops.
- H. It is a whole lot easier to sever an association with TABA than it is to become associated.

Here are some of the disadvantages of associating ourselves with TABA:

- A. There will be additional communications between the HABA and TABA staffs.

B. There will probably be disagreements between the groups as time goes on. These will take additional time to resolve.

C. Fifty percent of HABA's membership needs to be TABA members. The TABA membership issue can probably be resolved with a once per year reconciliation of HABA membership. This means that once a year HABA obtains enough TABA memberships in the name of HABA to meet the 50 percent requirement.

Here is the advantage of creating a separate Texas non-profit corporation to manage HABA:

A. HABA would be its own boss.

Here are some of the disadvantages of creating a separate Texas non-profit corporation to manage HABA:

A. HABA would have to identify the expertise to create a Texas non-profit corporation.

B. HABA would have to find the financial resources to run a Texas non-profit corporation including insurance.

There are probably more issues that I do not see. I wish you would share the issues you see for and against this issue. If you can not make it to the January 17 meeting, please take a few minutes to give me a call or send me an e-mail. Those of us who will address this issue in January need to know what you have to say.

So, this issue, figuring out how to manage the liability issue is a big one ... It's a big step for HABA. But we need to take it. It will make the reason for our being together as a group, learning and sharing information about creating beautifully forged iron, a lot more fun.

See the ABANA 'Common Questions About Group Incorporation & Sub-Chapters' on the last page.

Once we get beyond the issue of associating with TABA or not, there is more administrative work regardless of which direction is chosen. This brings us to additional "What's Next ? issues.

2. We need to agree upon a set of by-laws to guide the people you want to lead HABA. I would like to have a small group of people review a draft set of by-laws. If you have an interest please let me know. I will sent you a draft copy to look over. We can do this in person, over the phone or via e-mail.

The results of this group's work will be made available to the entire HABA membership.

3. Once there is a set of by-laws, the next step will be to identify/elect HABA's governing body as per the by-laws.

I think we can get all of these issues resolved before March of 1998. We will just have to share some ideas and do it!

WHAT ABOUT FORGING IRON?

Here's what I am thinking about for 1998. I would sure like to hear what you have to say too.

A. Conduct two weekend workshops, one during May and one during October. I would like to see one of these workshops focused on a production smithing....what it takes to get started, the equipment, the skills to produce, the marketing, etc.

The other workshop I would like to be hands-on for every attendee. Getting the ABANA training trailer in this part of the country would be important. If we could get the ABANA training trailer, we should do it in cooperation with other organizations like LAMA, the East Texas Blacksmiths, the North Texas group, Belcones Forge or TABA.

B. Bring in at least two demonstrators from outside the Houston area for two different monthly meetings during the year.

C. Set up at least one forge at each monthly meeting for the sole purpose of hands-on use by people who do not have forges and would like to experience forging. This would require a 'forge master' to get people started and answer basic questions.

D. Create a 1998 schedule for monthly meetings and workshops that include, locations, demonstrators, topics, etc.....maybe even throw in a video or two at those locations that have power??????

WHAT ABOUT THE LAST MEETING?

It was really good! Here is a summary written by Jim Wheeler.

November's meeting of HABA was held in Decker Prairie, Texas at Coe's Forge on the usual third Saturday of the month. Despite some wretchedly cold and rainy weather all day, or perhaps because of it, thirteen people attended.

Arrivals began about 8:30 that morning and continued to trickle in for the next two hours or so. Some came from as far away as LaPorte and Austin. Everything took place indoors where all stayed adequately warm and dry due to a newly installed wood stove.

No formal business meeting was conducted.

Instead, the day's activities were impromptu demonstrations and discussions with much hands-on forging. It seemed like everyone had a chance to demonstrate. Kip Coe showed off his giant twister with the 15 hp motor and forged a jalapeno pepper. Paul Bonner and Charles Marino each forged a railroad spike knife. Charles with a little help also managed to get a striker hardened to the point it worked. Charles and Sharon Heathcock demonstrated how to create and use a 'rope edge' swage. And, Larry Hoff completed a hardy.

There was no raffle, but the coffee pot and the HABA Hat brought in \$35.00. Rather than breaking for lunch, a shorter meeting was held. The meeting broke up about 2:00.

SPECIAL THANKS

I would like to extend a very special thanks to Jim Wheeler. While I was gone he managed to pull together a monthly meeting, put together a news letter and compile notes for this letter. Well done sir!

Thank you Kip for hosting the November meeting, Gary Evensen for the drawings of Heiner Zimmermann's flower, Byrom Wehner and Sharon and Charles Heathcock for the coffee and doughnuts, and to everyone who contributed to the HABA Hat.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held at the Tudor Forge on January 17, 1998. Hopefully the weather will be on the warm side. If not, there is a wood stove to get rid of some chill. Bring a bite to eat.

If you are not able to attend the January meeting and have some ideas about our future, please give me a call and share them. I will pass them along at the January meeting.

Directions to the Tudor Forge:

Take 249 NW from Houston. Travel through the towns of Tomball, Decker Prairie and Pinehurst. After 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.

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Note: ABANA info on the other side.