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To: HABA Distribution List

Re: The January 17th Meeting Of The Proposed Houston Area Blacksmiths' Association (HABA)

### **SUMMARY**

HABA met at the Tudor Forge on January 17, 1998. It was a perfect day. Twenty seven people attended and six were new members and guests. There was a lot to see and do.

Three forges were going at one time including an out-of-the box new gas forge.

The Show-and-Tell table was loaded with pieces Dave Koenig made at the Penland School of Crafts. Jim Wheeler showed an all steel, beautifully filed wood chisel. Tim Cowden had a traditionally made wall sconce. Vance Burns brought the latest book on power hammers and a print of anvil smiths at work. There was also a rumor that Gary Hilton was showing selected people his work on a chicken leg. I understand the color was right but the leg needed to gain a little weight.

Dave Koenig demonstrated two different flower forms he is developing. Dave Redden fired up his new gas forge and made a knife from a railroad spike. Larry Hoff had his forge going and created a pencil holder.

The business meeting was most productive. The group decided to talk with the Texas Artists Blacksmith's Association (TABA) for the purpose of HABA becoming a sub-chapter of TABA. Lee Webb reviewed the content of the draft HABA bylaws that Dave Redden, Jim Wheeler, Dave Koenig and he are in the process of revising. HABA officers were appointed and affirmed by the group. They are: Dave Koenig, President; Larry Newbern, Vice President; Larry Hoff, Treasurer, and Sharon Heathcock, Secretary. In addition, Reynolds Cushman volunteered to become the editor of the HABA Letter and Larry Newbern volunteered to become the 'Forge Master', the person responsible to see there is a forge and someone is available at each meeting.

The HABA Hat was passed and collected a total of \$40. The balance on hand as of January 17, 1997 is \$236.21. There was no Raffle at this meeting but two pieces were donated for the next raffle, a candle extinguisher from Dave Koenig and the Show-and-Tell wall sconce from Tim Cowden.

Some members also took part in a sculpture installation at Tudor Forge. Dave Koenig created a 15 feet long piece of kinetic sculpture at Penland. A pole was erected and the sculpture was placed on the pole.

The February and March meetings will be held at the Tudor Forge. The April meeting is tentatively scheduled for The Brozos Forge. In February we will all have an opportunity to make a tool from spring steel. In March Bill Bastas from Austin will be our first guest demonstrator for 1998.

Be sure to check out the COMING EVENTS and FOR SALE sections below.

## **BUSINESS MEETING**

Dave Koenig opened the business meeting about 10:30.

The first order of business was to make sure there were no questions about the last HABA Letter. Gary Hilton had a question about who did what for the Heiner Zimmermann workshop. The December letter made it sound like HABA did the whole thing.

HABA did not sponsor the workshop. The Heiner Zimmermann workshop was a collaborative effort among Kip Coe of the Coe Forge and Bill Epps and Alan Flashing from the Dallas area and HABA. In the heat of getting the letter out, I simply did not recognize all the work of Kip, Bill and Alan. Thanks for the question Gary and I hope this correction properly recognizes all the work of Kip, Bill and Alan to make the Heiner Zimmermann workshop so successful.

Larry Hoff gave the financial report. Cash on hand was \$254. However there were receipts not yet paid for the HABA Letter and consumables. Dave and Larry will sit down and generate a year-end report for the January HABA Letter.

(The year-end HABA report is as follows. Closing balance at the end of 1997 is \$196.21. Cash received at the January meeting is \$40. Cash on hand January 17 is \$236.21.)

There are three big issues facing HABA that need to be addressed. One is the liability issue. HABA needs to incorporate itself or affiliate itself with another Texas blacksmithing organization in the State of Texas that is non-profit. The second issue is bylaws. To become incorporated or to become affiliated with another organization, HABA needs to have a set of bylaws that describes how it will operate. The third issue is that of officers. Officers need to be in place to run HABA in accordance with its bylaws.

There was immediate consensus that HABA needed to address the liability issue. Forming a HABA non-profit Texas corporation is an option. The resources for this option did not seem at hand and the option to become affiliated with TABA seemed probable.

HABA becoming affiliated as a subchapter of TABA generated some discussion. Some of these questions and answers are as follows:

What happens to HABA funds if HABA goes out of existence? If there is any money left, it would probably go to TABA.

What happens to TABA funds if TABA goes out of existence? If there is any money left, it would probably go to another Texas non-profit or ABANA.

Does TABA need to pay taxes and if they do are they paid? I understand that TABA does not need to pay taxes but needs to file a tax report to the state. Andy Quitner, TABA Governor, is checking to be sure that the required tax reports are in order.

Dave Koenig informed the group that he was thinking about running for President of TABA. TABA Elections are held in April. There was general support and encouragement to run. But first there were questions like:

What would you do as President of TABA? I would like to improve communications within and without the organization. I think there is an opportunity to form several TABA sub-chapters around the state. If we can make HABA work as a mixed-member sub-chapter of TABA, the same kind of organization might be used by other prospective sub-chapters. I would like each TABA sub-chapter represented in TABA's governing body, the officers and directors.

How can you manage a TABA organization with sub-chapters spread all over the state? I think of TABA as a miniature of ABANA. The sub-chapters pretty much manage their own business and communications are kept alive via e-mail and representation on TABA's governing body.

Homer Gilbert suggested that we get in contact with the Alabama Forge Council. They manage many sub-chapters and could probably give us some ideas about managing sub-chapters. Good idea Homer!

Can HABA get a TABA officer to come and talk to us? I think that is very possible and will find out.

Are you sure you understand what a non-profit organization can and cannot do especially as it relates to liability and management of funds? The issue about liability seems to be understood better than the management of funds. These are the kinds of questions that HABA needs to get resolved before we would agree to become a TABA sub-chapter.

How would TABA and HABA work together if HABA became a sub-chapter? Exactly how the two groups would work together is not spelled out in the TABA by-laws. I would like to see some kind of memorandum of understanding between TABA and HABA. Maybe the issues I am thinking about relating to membership, money, cooperation and expectations need to be included in the HABA by-laws. I will draft something up and get the HABA officers to review it. What we come up with will be shared with everyone.

Lee Webb then reviewed the draft HABA by-laws as they exist today. Lee Webb, Jim Wheeler, Dave Redden and Dave Koenig are in the process of reviewing the original draft. A number of issues were raised by this ad hoc committee and at the January HABA meeting.

Some of these by-law issues include:

Make clear the family membership in HABA.

Place a minimum age limit on members.

Address how a tie vote is broken among the officers.

Make clear how the officers are elected...majority of voting members.

Make it clear that the term of office for officers is two years.

Clarify how officers are nominated.

Establish a way to amend the by-laws.

When is a quorum required to conduct business and how many people constitute a quorum.

Dave Koenig will revise the bylaws and circulate them for more comment among the ad hoc by-law committee and the HABA officers. When they are satisfied, the by-laws will be circulated for comment among the membership.

The third big issue has to do with appointing officers. Officers would be appointed until October 1998 at which time elections will be conducted. After some discussion, Larry Newbern agreed to become the Vice President of HABA and Sharon Heathcock agreed to become the HABA Secretary. Dave Koenig and Larry Hoff were reaffirmed as President and Treasurer.

A request went out for two people to take on the responsibilities of Forge Master and HABA Editor. Larry Newbern volunteered for the Forge Master's job and Reynolds Cushman volunteered for the HABA Editor's job.

The primary responsibility of the Forge Master is to make sure there is a forge and person available at every meeting in order to make the forging experience available to anyone who would like to try. At each meeting we usually have people who have little or no experience at a forge. The Forge Master's job is to provide this experience to anyone who has the interest.

The HABA Editor's job will be to put together a monthly letter to members and get it distributed. Reynolds will be relying on the officers and members to provide him with ideas and material for the letter. Since Reynolds has a writing background, we are all looking forward to an informative and useful newsletter.

In the December HABA Letter there was a suggestion to conduct two workshops during 1998, to bring in two demonstrators from outside the HABA organization and to develop a schedule of meeting locations and topics. The group agreed that HABA should pursue these objectives.

## **SCULPTURE INSTALATION**

After the business meeting the group took on the challenge of erecting a pole. The 16 feet long pole was to serve as a base for a 15 feet long kinetic sculpture. The pole was erected in a pre-dug hole in a matter of minutes. It was plumbed, tamped and braced in a few more.

Then a decision was made to install the sculpture. After a bump on the head and a trip over a brace the piece was safely in place. The next time, scaffolding and a plan will be incorporated for such a task.

The sculpture needs a name. What should we call it?

## **SPECIAL THANKS**

A very special thanks need to go out to Larry Newbern and Sharon Heathcock for accepting the added responsibility of managing the future development of HABA as an officer.

A very special thanks to Reynolds Cushman for picking up the HABA Editor's job and to Larry Newbern for picking up the Forge Master's job.

A very special thanks to Lee Webb, Jim Wheeler and Dave Redden for serving on the ad hoc committee to develop the HABA bylaws.

And a very special thanks to everyone present at the January meeting. A tremendous amount of work got done in the form of decisions to create the HABA organization and plan 1998.

A special thanks to Dave Redden and Larry Hoff for bringing their forges and demonstrating.

And a final special thanks to Byrom Wehner for the supply of doughnuts...that must have been good because they did not last long.

## **NEXT MEETINGS**

The next two meetings will be held at the Tudor Forge February 21 and March 21, 1998. The April meeting is tentatively scheduled for the Brazos Forge, Larry Newbern's shop in Needville. Here are some meeting details:

### **February Meeting**

In response to your request at the last meeting, Mr. Gary Evensen, Vice President of TABA will attend the February 21 HABA meeting. This is an opportunity to ask all the questions you ever wanted to ask about TABA. I am sure this will be good exchange of information.

Please bring your forges, any resource information you would like to share, something for the raffle if you have it and an extra anvil and stand. The February meeting will focus on making some useful tools from spring steel. If we can get four or five forges and maybe ten or so anvils, there should be plenty of opportunity for everyone to walk away from this meeting with a new tool.

There will be a camp stew for lunch. The cost will be the usual \$2.00. I think we have plenty of food available for the stew so there is no need to bring any food for the pot this time.

## March Meeting

Mark your calendar for this one! Bill Bastas, one of the founders of Belcones Forge, smithing and metal working instructor at the Austin Community College and recent 'Artist Blacksmith in Residence' at the National Iron Museum in Memphis will be the first of our two guest demonstrators for 1998.

Bill's planned demonstrations will have something for everyone. His program will start off with the fundamentals: building, maintaining and cleaning the fire to create the best heat and hammer skills. The hammer skills will be those taught by Uri Hofi of Israel. Bill then plans to move on to forging shapes. To start he will make a few nails and hooks. This will be followed by a forged snail form from wrought iron that will include a forge weld. There will also be a pair of tongs and a spoon or two.

These demonstrations will give all of us an opportunity to not only listen to what Bill is saying but to observe the application of his words. Bill also plans a few surprises for all of us. This will be good!

Funds for this demonstration are provided by HABA and donations from smiths like you...to coin a phrase.

**Please remember to bring a pair of safety glasses with side shields to all HABA meetings.**

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.

## COMING EVENTS

1. February 28 and March 1, 1998, Texas Independence Day Celebration, Washington on the Brazos State Park. Call the park for more information, 409-878-2214.
2. March 7, 1998, Heritage Days, Jesse Jones County Park. Call 281-446-8588 for more information.

3. March 28 -29, 1998, the National Ornamental Metal Museum of Memphis, TN and the River Bluff Forge Council present *Forging on the River V*. The demonstrators are: Alice James of Deattle, WA, Toby Hickman of Petaluma, CA and Paul HJubler of Minneapolis, MN. Contact Doug Learn for more information: 3037 East Glengarry Rd., Memphis, TN 38128; Phone 901-358-1192; or [cjfdlearn@pop.mindspring.com](mailto:cjfdlearn@pop.mindspring.com)

4. The University of Texas of the Permian Basin is in the process of putting together a prospectus for the Metal Arts 98 show. If you would like to receive a show prospectus please forward your physical address to:

Christopher John Stanley:  
Assistant Professor of Fine Art: Design/Sculpture/Ceramics/Art History  
The University of Texas of the Permian Basin  
4901 East University  
Odessa, Texas 79762-0001  
(915) 552-2287 (2289) = kiln room

[stanley\\_c@utpb.edu](mailto:stanley_c@utpb.edu)

## **FOR SALE**

1. Gary Hobbs of Tomball, TX, 281-351-9456, would like to sell the contents of a blacksmith shop in one sale transaction. Included are items like: a 50 lb Little Giant, an ironworker, drill press with bits, grinder, bender, swage block with top tools, 150 - 200 tongs and other hand tools. Note: there is no anvil, cone mandrel or forge. The asking price is \$5000.00

## **ODDS AND ENDS**

Paton Saints

A few patron saints representing Blacksmiths.

St. Dunstan is the saint of British smiths. Born in 910 AD near Glastonbury. Also a story about Dunstan holding the devils nose with red hot tongs.

Some smiths preferred St. Clement as their patron saint. Day of St. Clement is Nov. 23. It was celebrated by exploding the anvil and parades. He was related to the story of King Alfred and "Father of all Craftsmen". Charles Dickens referred to Old Clem in "Great Expectations".

St. Martin, patron saint of all who travel on horseback, has horseshoe as emblem. In middle ages it was the custom to have an extra horseshoe made to protect the traveller. It was to hang at home to ensure protection of St. Martin.

Teeth

NEW YORK (AP) Scientist have found what is apparently the earliest known dental implant: a wrought-iron tooth in a man who lived about 1,900 years ago in what is now France.

X-rays showed a perfect fit in the tooth socket in the upper right jaw. The false tooth was apparently jammed into place more than a year before the man died, researchers said.

The discovery, in a Gallo-Roman cemetery south of Paris, is reported by French researchers in a recent issue of the journal Nature. At the time of the dental work, France was ruled by the Romans and called Gaul.

Ancient Etruscans in northern Italy were known to have made partial dentures, crowns and simple bridges as early as 2,500 years ago, but experts said the French finding appears to be the oldest known dental implant.

"This would be a startling thing if it is true," said Dr. Malvin E. Ring, a retired professor of dental history at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He said he could not fully evaluate the report without more details than the brief Nature paper gives.

Ring said a jaw fragment from about 1,400 years ago, found in Honduras, showed that Mayans used pieces of shell as dental implants.

The French researchers said whoever made the iron implant used his patients original tooth as a model and probably installed the implant soon after their original was lost.

Tool Handles by Don Plummer

I usually make many of the handles for my blacksmithing tools. Although I have tried many woods I believe only hickory or white ash suitable. And as far as hickory is concerned, I prefer it to the ash for hammer things and I think the Shagbark hickory is the better variety. I like the white ash best for the long handled tools.

Any other woods such as oak, maple, dogwood, locust, etc. will eventually cause problems. They are either too stiff and there is no spring, the head will eventually collapse under the pressures of pounding, grain will constantly curl up, it will break suddenly or it splits easily.

I like to get the wood from about an 8-10" tree. In this instance the younger, more rapid growing tree is best. I have gone up to 16" and the handles still seem to be okay but it gets more difficult to work with a larger tree. I cut the tree into two size boles (segments): One for hammer type stuff at about 20" and the other for handled tools like shovels, rakes, etc. at about 6'. Then, I split these up with a froe and club or wedges into handle sized splits. About 3" square for the 6' boles and 2" square for the hammer type tools (includes, flatters, cut-offs, fullers, etc.) Do not use any of the pith. Use that to throw on your outdoor grill to add some excellent flavor. One tree will give you dozens of each size. Throw these pieces in a dark dry place to dry for the next year or ten.

When I need a new handle I shape it on a shaving horse but you could use a good solid bench vise also. Something about waist height. Not nearly as much traditional fun, however. I also do a little shaping for the head with a big wood rasp. Somehow that seems a little like cheating but it is

rapid and accurate. I also have a 1x42 belt sander that I sometime use for getting the head to shape quickly. That is definitely cheating.

I always finish the handle with a spokeshave. I agree, as someone just mentioned, never sandpaper. The spokeshave leave nice little longitudinal ridges that help the grip. To finish I rub in a bit of linseed oil with my hands. Occasionally, and for no really good reason, I stain it first. Just to get a little darker color. Hickory is almost bone white when dried. Takes me about an hour to do a handle from raw stock. When I mount the head I put a wood wedge in lengthwise (running with the hammer)

and a soft steel wedge cross-wise. To put in the wood wedge I saw down to a depth just short of the bottom of the hammer. I have been making the wood wedges out of locust but I suspect something else might be a bit better. But we are really talking nits here.

It is a lot of work getting the tree, cutting it up and splitting but once done it is likely you will have enough handle material for the rest of your life. Other than firewood, hickory is not much used. (Except, of course, for handles). I get most of my hickory from developers clearing for housing. I always offer them 10-20 bucks if I can have the tree and (so far) they have always said "Just take it". One time one developer asked me to make a handle for a fiberglass handled hammer of his that just broke. I have plenty of hickory handled tools that are still going strong after 25 years. It appears they will easily outlast my arm.

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