



President's Message
Spring 2014

Connections and Blacksmithing's Loss

In 1974, I connected with the late Bill Gichner at our local steam show where he was doing a blacksmithing demo. He made a leaf and gave it to me. Then he helped me make one. That sparked my interest in blacksmithing, and created a friendship that lasted almost 30 years. Through Bill I made a lot of connections with blacksmiths from all across the country and even a few from around the world.

Bill hosted a hammer-in every January at his shop in Ocean View, Delaware. In the late 80s early 90s Bill started bringing in one demonstrator from west of the Mississippi. His event had grown to where he needed a program for Saturday night. Bill decided Toby Hickman would be a good one to bring in and I was elected to pick him up at the airport. I had a description of Toby so when I met him at the gate, I had no trouble picking him out of the crowd. I drove him around for the three days he was here and got to know him. When he left, I considered him a friend.

I would see Toby at the ABANA conferences and we'd talk. When I went to a California conference a few years back, Toby took me under his wing and made me feel right at home even though I did not know many people there. That had changed by the time I left. I was privileged to be able to take a power hammer class from Toby. He was a wealth of knowledge and a great teacher.

I called on Toby several times for his opinion and got it. I also got it a couple of times when I didn't request it! Toby was a great supporter of ABANA and blacksmithing.

I know my life was enriched by connecting with Toby. Those who met Toby, were touched by his commitment to teaching and willingness to pass on his knowledge. Toby won the Bealer Award in 2012 and it was well deserved.

The ABANA conference is August this year and I will miss that booming voice and firm handshake.

Conferences gives us a chance to make new connections from around the country, and around the world . . . connections that can last a lifetime.

Hope to connect with you in August!

David Hutchison