A REAL RENAISSANCE MAN
Interview with Jim Hrisoulas

The name of Jim Hrisoulas first came to my attention when I received a letter from ABANA member, Paul Smyth of Henderson, Nevada, suggesting an interview with Jim for The Hammer's Blow. Then came a copy of the newsletter from the Mississippi Forge Council with a letter about a visit to the Hrisoulas shop. So with that in mind, I placed a call to Jim at his Salamander Armoury in Las Vegas, Nevada. This article includes bits from all three sources of information.

To start with, Jim Hrisoulas, a 15 year member of ABANA, is the author of three books: "The Complete Bladesmith", "The Master Bladesmith", and the soon to be released - "The Pattern Welded Blade". He also has a video out on forge welding blades.

Jim is well versed in history from Viking times to the Victorian age. He can discuss the difference between the 7th and 8th century method the Vikings used in forge welding sword blades. And the changes that occurred in European weapon making after the 1st Crusade. Every century had a different technique, some with a welded cutting edge only and some with a pattern welded core. He knows and can duplicate them all.

Jim has contacts in the great museums around the world, and he has sample bits of historic ironwork of his own. His personal collection of armor and weapons includes authentic medieval armor, swords, helmets, chain mail, Malaysian krises, and many other examples of the craftsmanship of a blacksmith-armorer.

Jim started iron working about 24 years ago in a local California metal shop. He says he started out with a knife because it looked easy. He went back to making ornamental iron, but was doing pattern welding for things like trivets. Now that is a fancy trivet! After a time in the service, Jim was back at metal working. There was an old cemetery fence from about 1875 piled up to be discarded --1200 feet of it-- and with the help of everybody he knew, Jim was able to salvage it. That wrought iron fence is still his source of supply for pattern welded blades, wrought iron and leaf springs. He says that he has about 1,000 pounds of that fence left.

Jim's preference is making pre-1900 type sword and knife blades, but not folding knives.
RENDEZVOUS IRON

"I would never have tried blacksmithing without my entry into rendezvous, which is the historical recreation of the fur trapping era prior to 1840. This date is usually fairly consistent because the demand for beaver pelts ended in Europe when the craze for silk top hats began. At the same time fur trading companies realized that they could establish Indian trading posts, offering the chance for both Indian and Mountainman trappers to trade in their peltry for store bought goods.

On the rendezvous trail, the demand for blacksmithed items centers around cooking gear, such as squirrel cookers and fire iron sets. There was also a demand for the production of high carbon steels for flint and steel fire making sets."

-- Chuck Hamsa
Lafayette, Louisiana

EDITORIAL:
We struck it rich when we asked for Rendezvous, Reenactment, and Renaissance material to include in this newsletter. We got more than we can even publish! Isn't that great? Many of you sent basically the same things for camp cooking. So I have shuffled it around and combined most of it to show what the general output is on cooking-iron.

Letters were received from Ron West (Baxter, IA), Gerald Rieskamp (Rochelle, IL), Franklyn Garlyn (Lyons, IL), Jim Enloe (Green Bay, WI), Daven Edmondson (Ventura, CA), Berkley Tack (Ranier, OR), Bob Tuftee (Bethendorf, IA), Phil Burchnell (Forest Park, IL), Gary Schuler (Madison, WI), and a few that I have probably left out.

Some of the material has been passed on to Robert Owings, Editor of the Anvil's Ring. Some of it will be used here later and some will be used in chapter newsletters.

So thank you to the many people that have contributed, not only the R.R, and R stuff, but also the small bits and suggestions. Your response is great! Keep it up.

-- Jim Ryan, Editor

The Hammer's Blow

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New Trip Hammers - Bob Tuftee reports that at a gov't auction at the Rock Island Arsenal, there were six 100 lb Little Giant trip hammers for sale, still in the boxes, never unpacked! They didn't go cheap.

Next Issue Deadline:
April 1, 1994 (No foolin')

Address all editorially related material to: Jim Ryan
569 S. Grandview Ave
Dubuque, Iowa 52033
**Book Reviews**

by Jim Ryan

In keeping with the theme of rendezvous and reenactments, here are a couple of catalogs that pertain to the subject.

**UPPER MISSISSIPPI VALLEY MERCANTILE CO. Catalog**

Catalog #5 has a hundred pages and a thousand items. It's full of items fit for Civil War reenactors and buccskinner alike.

Bob Tuftee, the owner, is a blacksmith himself and includes iron work for encampments right along with an extensive list of other things: personal items, camp accessories, cookware, furniture, military accoutrements, shelters, uniforms and insignias, common clothing, women's patterns, leather goods, fire arms and accessories, edged weapons, books, as well as odds & ends. What a selection! The odds & ends section intrigued me with its confederate money and Illinois currency, sewing kits and military braid, snuff and tender boxes, hardtack and jerky, Civil War tokens and confederate stamps. Unusual stuff that is fun to peruse.

If you are into rendezvous or reenactments, you should write to them for this catalog. The cost is $3.00 and is well worth it.

Upper Mississippi Valley Mercantile Company
1607 Washington St
Davenport, IA 52804

phone (319) 322-0896

Purveyor of Wares & Provisions
From the Past

**BIG HAMMER, RIGHT?**

Richard Evans of Boston, Massachusetts sends in a small bit from "Science" magazine.

Sandia National Labs has to figure out the destruction of 1000 tons of nuclear weapons components. They can take some parts out, but the carcass is an aluminum casing filled with electronic parts all potted in epoxy and impossible to disassemble or saw up. One solution, dip the stuff in liquid nitrogen to make it brittle and run it through a 500 lb trip hammer! Then the pieces can be sorted for the $11,000 per ton salvage. Also, it "sanitizes" any military secrets in about 20 seconds. POW!

**COLONIAL GOODS FOR LIVING HISTORY Catalog**

Besides clothing, patterns, and books, this catalog has 18th century toys and coloring books for children of all ages, music books and cassettes, tin and glass ware, pottery and more. This company puts out a monthly newsletter that lists upcoming rendezvous, battle reenactments, medieval gatherings, pow-wows, and museum exhibits. A must for interested people. The catalog is free and they will send you a free copy of the newsletter if you tell them you are an ABANA member. To sweeten the pot, the call is free too. What a deal!

Smoke & Fire Company
PO Box 166
Grand Rapids, OH 43522
1-800-766-5334
RON WEST of Baxter, Iowa

Ron makes a lot of these knives to sell at rendezvous. The material is 1/4" truck leaf springs about 15" - 18" long and 3" or so wide. Size can vary as you try them out. The knives weigh a couple of pounds when they are finished.

1 - Anneal the truck springs.

2 - Cut out the knife pattern, drill holes for handle & thong.

3 - Make a long handled tool to fit handle holes and bolt the knife handle to the tool. This makes it easy to handle in the trip hammer and heat treating.

4 - Heat knife and put an edge on it with a trip hammer, holding it by the long tool bolted to the handle.

5 - Reheat and anneal again. Be sure that the knives are flat in the ashes or the blades may get a slight bend in them. If you have to straighten them on the anvil, use a brass or similar hammer.

6 - Clean up, do minor grinding on edge to shape desired. For a throwing knife, the point is sharp, but not the edges as much.

7 - Heat treat by reheating the blade & dipping one inch of the edge into the oil. Turn over and do the other edge - one heat will do both edges. Ron got 30 gals.of used french fry oil from a drive-in. Works fine and makes the shop smell nice too.

8 - Let blade cool. This treatment hardens the edges and allows the center to be softer which takes the stress off throwing.

9 - The handle is two strips of belly leather, held on with rubber cement. It takes the strain better than epoxy. Hold the leather between two boards and clamp until the glue dries. Finish with either cutler rivets or harness rivets.

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SHOP TIPS & TOOLS

Test For Magnetism
H. Tim Reynolds of Lexington, KY
(Condensed from the newsletter of the Northwest Ohio Blacksmith chapter of ABANA.)

How do you test for critical temperature of a piece of hot metal without burning your finger or loosing the magnet since it sticks to a hot piece of steel?

I purchased a small magnet from Radio Shack and hung it by a wire from the corner of the workbench. I hold the steel to be tested over to the magnet, and if it sticks, I simply pull the hot metal away without burning my hand, reheat it and try again. Simple and cheap!

Note: If the magnet is at or above the critical temperature, it will not stick to the hot metal. If it is below the critical temperature, the magnet will be attracted to the steel and stick.
**ADJUSTABLE TRIVET**
Berkley Tack of Ranier, OR

This trivet can be used with a single upright or with a set of cooking irons. It can be raised or lowered with a poker, swung to the side -- an infinite adjustment. Great for a coffee pot or general cooking.

1 - Take a 24" piece of 1/2" square. Roll a 1/2" eye at one end, using a 1/2" round as a mandrel. Extra heat helps for such a tight roll.

2 - Draw a taper at the other end and roll up a little to start a scroll.

3 - At 6" from the eye, make a right angle bend. Then curve the remaining end into a scroll.

4 - Slip the eye over a 1/2" round piece held upright in a vise and bend until it hangs square.

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**STRIKER or STEEL**
Gary Schluter of Madison, WI

A personal item carried by almost everyone at Rendezvous. Prior to the invention of matches, fire was made by striking the steel against flint to create sparks. Strikers can be made in various styles of any high carbon steel; from scrap files, springs, hay rake tines, etc. The smith will have to do "trial and error" until he finds the correct oil hardening temperature to produce a good shower of sparks when the steel is struck against the flint. Hardening is the key, not too hard, not too soft.

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**French Style**

**Patch knife/striker. Back of blade is striker face.**

**Colonial Style**

**Mexican Style "Chispa"**

**WINTER 1993/94**
Franklyn Garland of Lyons, IL

This knife is made out of an old file --recycled. Some folks forge the blade first, then the handle. I find the shorter, smaller, forged handle easier to hold for forging the blade. But sometimes, depending on the maker, it's easier to forge the blade with the handle half finished. Complete the handle when the blade is finished.

6 - Forge the point.

7 - Curve into cutting edge.

8 - Pack (thin out) edge. Blade will straighten, and also widen, as edge is forged.

9 - Anneal entire piece in wood ashes, lime, or sand. After annealing, clean up the profile and grind the cutting edge. DO NOT grind cutting edge any thinner than approx 1 mm.

HEAT TREAT: For best durability, heat treat as follows.

Using acetylene torch, "paint" the cutting edge with flame until non-magnetic. Note: magnet will not stick -- it's a full orange color.

Quench in light oil.

Clean off all excess oil and temper in a household oven at 450 degrees for 30 minutes.

Grind and hone to final edge.
A wire brush finish looks good.

CHAPTER CHALLENGE
David Hutchison of Cordova, MD says that the Mid-Atlantic Smiths Association has a challenge for all other ABANA Chapters. They feel that a special push for membership in ABANA will help all concerned. A special drawing will be held at their conference for ABANA members only. Last year the Southern Ohio Forge & Anvil did the same thing. Their question: What is YOUR chapter doing? Write a note to The Hammer's Blow. Let's hear from every chapter.
BETTY LAMPS  
Gary Schluter of Madison, WI

At rendezvous today, most people prefer an enclosed style lantern of wood or pierced tin. However, there were many other forms of lighting devices which were created by blacksmiths. The "Betty" lamp held grease into which a number (three in this case) of wicks were pushed. The small brass chain (shown in the photo - coiled in the cup) was a pick tool which was used to adjust the wicks.

The cup portion of grease lamos often doubled to catch any dripping grease

Bending, twisting, folding, hammering,  
the beauty of the patterns starts to form.  
Layers upon layers, successfully married to each other  
until tens, and hundreds, make one.

Achievement has come, a beautiful blade  
by blackened hands is made.  
The strength of one thousand, the power of one  
-- the bladesmith's work is done.

Damascus  
poetry by David Tuthill of Bozeman, MT

WINTER 1993/94
Packers small camp kit

Squirrel cooker

Musket tool

Pot trivet

Cavalry picket pin

Packers lead ladle

Screw driver

Trammels

Making bar locks for skewer adjustment, and upright hooks. Wrap drawn end of hook (1) around ½ upright (2).

1

2

3/16"x 1 1/4"

3/16"x 3/4"

3/16"x 1"

1/4" Round
COOKING UTENSILS
Gary Schluter of Madison, Wisconsin

Long handled cooking utensils are a must when cooking over an open fire.

The four most common items, historically, are the fork, spatual, spoon, and skimmer. (Similar to a ladle but pierced for draining.) The most authentic stock to start with is a flat stock which is flattened more at the handle end, hooked at the top, and tapered or rounded in the center towards the functional end.

The forks are always of a single piece split to form two tines. Other utensils can be made of brass, or iron; riveted, brazed, or forge welded to the handle.

Most antique household and kitchen iron work shows fine craftsmanship, usually decorated with stamping, chisel work, file work, or piercing. Spatula ends in themselves are quite decorative. Try to avoid ever using a modern looking square or rectangle. Tulip shapes are most common.

3/16" x 1/2" stock is a good start for handles.

Be sure to finish any kitchen item with cooking oil rather than a possible toxic paint, oil or wax that would be ingested.

DESIGN & MARKETING TIPS

Photo Magic
Tony Vanagas (taken from the Upper Midwest Blacksmith Association newsletter)

Another thought I had is to try to take photos of what I make and use a background that is a 1" grid. Once again, not a new idea -- look at the photos in the Dixie Gun Works catalog. Editor, Paul Sperbeck adds, "Nice idea with the grid, Tony. I think I'll steal that also . . . it really helps those of us that lack drafting skills to duplicate projects later."

Silhouette Solutions
Pat McCarthy of Washington, MO

You can get a lot of ideas from woodworking books, then figure out how to make them out of iron. There are several packets of silhouette patterns available in woodworking magazines that adapt easily to weathervanes and the like.

Touchmark Registry
Andy Quittner, Corpus Christi TX

You might want to think about registering your touchmark with the Federal Patent & Trade Mark office. Some states have a similar registry for brand marks. The cost should be under $40.
**Events & Announcements**

**Apr 30-May 1** OZARK BLACKSMITH CONFERENCE  
The Blacksmiths Association of Missouri will be holding their annual conference in Potosi, Missouri at the Lyon's Fairgrounds. Main demonstrators will be Jim Wallace (TN) - surprise demo, Russell O'Dell (TN) - metal spinning, Hank Knickmeyer (MO) - pattern welded materials, and a host of BAM chapter members demonstrating basic techniques. For more information, contact Stan Winkler (314) 883-7670.

**May 7, 8** NORTHERN BLACKSMITH CONFERENCE  
The Guild of Metalsmiths will hold their conference in Bemidji, Minnesota at the Beltrami County Fairgrounds. Demonstrators will be Doug Wilson (MN), Bill Fiorini (WI), Paul Hubler (IN). For more information, contact: Keith Johnson (218) 751-9433.

**JUN 15-19** ABANA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
"Fire & Fusion" is the theme of the 1994 biennial conference to be held at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri -- hosted by the Blacksmiths Association of Missouri (BAM). Registration packets will be mailed to all ABANA members around the end of March. If you know a non-ABANA member who needs a packet, have them send a post card with their request to: ABANA Conference '94, PO Box 453, Valley Park, Missouri 63088.

**Sep 16-18** EISENFEST  
This is the first festival of its kind in the United States. It is not just a craft fair, it is an all metal festival, full of iron work and related items. Eisenfest will be held in the Amana Colonies --top tourist destination in Iowa. Display and sales space is available and additional free space if you will demonstrate. Blacksmiths, copper smiths, tin smiths, farriers, etc. are all welcome. For information, write to EISENFEST, PO Box 193, Amana, Iowa 52203 or call: (319) 622-3100.

**THE FORGERY - SCHOOL OF BLACKSMITHING**  
Announces the re-opening of their new facility at a new location with instructor, Robb Gunter. For information & class schedules write: The Forgery, 13 Irmaha Rd, Tijeras, New Mexico 97059 or call (505) 281-8080.

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**Classifieds**

**FOR SALE**

The following (> ) items can be purchased through George Martin 3001 Highview Rd - Morongo Valley, CA 92256 - phone: (310) 829-0079 or (619) 363-9238.

- Blacksmith tong blanks - rough die forged from titanium aircraft alloy. Half the weight and twice the strength of iron. Complete with instructions for finish forging by you. $78 plus shipping.
- Welder - Airco Dipstick 160, up to 240 amps DC straight & reverse polarity, AC stick and MIG wire welder, complete with MIG gun, large wire drum $400. FOB Los Angeles, CA.
- High frequency generator - Miller, converts your buzz box to a TIG welder. On a cart, with foot switch & TIG nozzle. Comes with all hoses $250. FOB Los Angeles.

- 250 lb Moloch power hammer - fair to good condition, flat dies, 5 HP 3 phase motor, needs minor repair and partial assembly, weighs 6,800 lbs. $2500 David Mudge - 15227 Mansfield Rd - Bogalusa, LA 70427 - ph: (504) 735-0049

- 500 lb Little Giant power hammer, 250 lb Murray power hammer, 25 lb Little Giant power hammer, 500 lb Fischer anvil. All in good condition. Ron Bishop - 6801 Merritt - Ypsilanti, MI 48197 - phone: (313) 483-5909.

**Blacksmiths' Gazette** - This fine publication is being reactivated by Fred Holder and will be published monthly starting in early 1994. For a subscription, send $30 to Fred Holder - PO Box 1131 - Stanwood, WA 98292 - phone: (206) 387-0349.

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**WANTED**

Do you make blacksmithing Jewelry? Mary Brandenburg of 299 Granada Rd - West Palm Beach, FL - 33401 would like to compile a list of any person or group who markets blacksmith jewelry. Many smiths in Florida collect blacksmithing jewelry such as lapel pins, charms, and belt buckles. We will publish the list in The Hammer's Blow, so call Mary and let everyone know! (407) 640-0445.

**Apprenticeship situation wanted** - A.A. degree in Natural Resources Management and 2 months blacksmithing experience. References available. Stephen Eise - PO Box 2534 - Glenn Ellyn, IL 60138 or phone: (708) 858-9373.

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**QUERY** (refer to sketch on right)  
I am trying to research a mark on a pair of andirons. It may be a maker's mark or a guild mark. The letters and dots are raised and the background is depressed. Anyone with information, please contact:  
E. J. Smith - PO Box 546 - Camden, ME 04834

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ABANA
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME ___________________________ PHONE ( )

ADDRESS (Street)____________________ (POBox)________________

CITY _____________________ STATE _______ ZIP _______

Indicate type of membership applying for: □ NEW MEMBER? □ RENEWAL MEMBER?
□ REGULAR MEMBERSHIP $35.00 □ FULLTIME STUDENT $30.00
□ SENIOR CITIZEN (65+) $30.00 □ CONTRIBUTORY MEMBER $100.00
□ OVERSEAS AIRMAIL $70.00 □ PUBLIC LIBRARY $25.00
□ OVERSEAS SURFACE MAIL $50.00

I ______________________ hereby apply for membership in the Artist-Blacksmiths' Association of North America and enclose $ _______ as my annual membership dues for one year (subscription included).

□ CHECK OR MONEY ORDER ENCLOSED (WRITTEN ON U.S. BANKS ONLY)
□ VISA □ MASTERCARD

CARD NUMBER _________________________
EXP. DATE (REQUIRED) ______

Send to: ABANA, P.O. Box 1181, Nashville, IN 47448 ☎ Or phone with VISA/MasterCard by calling (812) 988-6919