ABANA NEEDS YOU – PART 2

Just two short months ago I made a request in my first President’s Message – “ABANA needs you.” Well, here I go again. Instead of talking about the Affiliates, I want to talk about is what it’s like to be a member of the ABANA Board and, in doing that, hopefully get you to think about running. Before I talk about some of the good points, I want to tell you straight off that it is not an easy job. Decisions had been made in the past that caused much controversy, e.g., anvil shooting. The opinions on that issue alone would make anyone’s head spin. Another decision that has come down the pike has grown into a rather animated discussion – the 2008 Conference. I will address that topic in my next President’s Message.

So far, my sales pitch has not been promising – you will work hard and you will have to endure much criticism. So why should you sign up to run for the Board? ABANA is at a pivotal juncture where things are changing. Dave Koeing who chaired the 2004 Richmond Kentucky ABANA Conference said this:

“ABANA needs a brand new vision. … ABANA needs to be an organization of a hundred and fifty thousand members and not an organization of five thousand members and falling. To grow the membership and the status of the craft in the world, ABANA needs to talk to the world. ABANA needs to create a new vision for itself and it needs to create a new vision for the craft!”

So if you want to be a part of this vision for the craft … for blacksmithing … for metalworking – whether you are a hobbyist or professional, please take the plunge and run for blacksmithing … for metalworking – whether you are a new vision for the craft …

ABANA President

Clare Yellin

Since 1925 • Brasstown, North Carolina

INSTRUCTORS FOR 2007

Tony Holliday
Ron Howard
Walt Hull
Susan Hutchinson
Rick Jay
Matt Jenkins
Ronn Johnson
Robert S. Jordan
Arian Kresco
Mitchell Latsch
Susan Madacsi
Doug Merkel
Tom SAEFRESH
Fred Mikkelson
Jae Miller
Jeff Mohr
Lou Mueller
Zachary Noble
Charley Orlando
Chuck Patrick
Howard Pohn
Greg Price
William Rogers
David Smucker
Clay Spencer
Kenneth Thomas
Bob Trudt
David Tucurance
Alwin Wagner
Lyle Wheeler
Steve Williamson
Chris Witterstein
Don Witzler
DEAR EDITOR,

I wrote the following in a poetry class I took last fall, about a door handle my husband Tom made several years ago. Photo of the door handle is on the right.

Kitty Latane, Pepin, Wisconsin

A DOOR HANDLE FOR ST. MARK’S CHURCH

The smith applies the hammer with
The full force of power and thought,
The angle and placement of each blow
Calculated to create the desired form
In fast seconds between the time
The softened metal leaves the fire
And the temperature falls to hardness.

The steel is returned to the fire and heated
Again, hammered again, heated again,
And hammered again in repetitive cycles.
Bolstered by faith that the chosen bar
Can be compressed, pinched, stretched,
Chiseled, modeled, stamped and filed
Into the figure of a saint.

Catherine H. Latane
Nov. 2006

DEAR EDITOR,

I would like to inform the ABANA membership of a unique opportunity.

The American College of the Building Arts in Charleston, SC, offers a four-year, bachelor of applied science degree in six traditional building trades, including forged architectural ironwork. One of the foundation elements of the education we offer is an 8- to 10-week internship for three successive summer semesters. Last summer we sent students to established ironwork businesses in New Jersey, greater Washington, DC, and Iowa.

Each year, as the total enrollment increases, we will be looking for additional companies to host one or more of our students. If you are the owner of an established business, large or small, who might be willing to act as a host company for one of our students, please contact Lance Crowe, Director of Student Career Development (Ironwork Program) at the numbers below. If you would like further information about the programs at the ACBA see our web site: www.buildingartscollege.us. Our address is: American College of the Building Arts, 1362 McMillan Ave, Suite 102, North Charleston, SC 29405. Or contact Lance Crowe or me directly about the ironwork curriculum.

Many thanks,
Jay T. Close
Professor of Forged Architectural Ironwork
843/577-5245 ext. 1008
crow@buildingartscollege.us.

DEAR EDITOR,

Here in western North Carolina we get the news and other media a bit later than most, so forgive me if you have heard all this Continued on page 6

KAS Direct Building & Decorating Source
4415 Granite Drive, Suite 600
Rocklin, CA 95677 916.624.2888

Got Doors?

Free the artist in you!

Frame your masterpiece with the highest quality door frame kit worthy of your iron work. Now you can offer your clients iron doors... we supply the door kit, you supply the scroll work.
You will increase your product line and your bottom line by selling a door that cost you less to make!

High Quality Door Kit includes:
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• Oversize sealed ball bearing door hinges
• Pre-hung with adjustable jambs for installation ease
• Mounting tabs for easy installation
• Swing-away "easy to open" glass frame
• Sandblasted & primed for rust protection

KAS Iron Door Kit

Arched tops available too!

www.KASdirect.com
dh@kasinc.net
up a lot of ash that the next time you get your forge
5. Actually doing all of these things will save
8 years of our car and you will have reduced
3. If you take long breaks, do not bank the
2. I can work more efficiently by preparing
4. When you shut down the coal forge for
An Inconvenient Truth," and it scared
This will be a gas only class, no coal fires. Of
could be used to lower your carbon
The life out of me. If you have not seen it you
1. I can work more efficiently by preparing
when looking at our environmental standards
more than 100 ABANA members. This should
be submitted with a photograph and can
dediate statement to the ABANA Central
Office, PO Box 3425, Knoxville, TN 37927,
and maybe you should tell your friends to see it
The film inspired me to write this letter as
I wish I could have gone with you. I wish I were
being thrown into it. You could invest in a way to
soak it up. You could invest in a way to lower
I am worried about cracking your fire pot,
I am worried about cracking your fire pot,
Coal forge is a very large country
and Bulapa is a small village in the remote
Co2 emissions?"
they could be made anything out of
any piece of scrap. Indeed, the Congolese
smelted in a way that is very resourceful
and innovative people I have ever met. I still
bank the coals in it. You could invest in a way to
When the local blacksmiths sitting under
they are sitting under
I am worried about cracking your fire pot,
local blacksmiths sitting under
soil is the thing
are sitting under
natural gas (a small thatched covered hut),
puffing a charcoal fire with their bellows. Their
a lot more hammer time when you won't have
to play with a coal fire, clean it up, carry in coal, etc.
It will be lit and go on, or as the guy selling Ronco kitchen
devices might say, set it and forget it boot off.
We will be doing projects that include forge welding.
Each student will use a two-burner propane forge of
my design. Andy Chambers has agreed to help me build
forge and he will be my assistant this year. See his web
site at: http://artcreationcom.com. If you would like to
purchase one of these forges, I suggest contact either
me or Andy prior to the class (save on shipping). Cost for
a forge is $495, includes the forge itself as well
having anvils cast in H13, currently the "Colonial" pattern,
about 100 pounds for $475. I will be adding two sizes of
double horn anvils to the inventory, hopefully by this
summer. Contact me or Touchstone for more information.
Early registration is suggested to ensure your space.
Jymn Hoffman, Ambridge, Pennsylvania Phone: 724/251-9310. E-mail jymnhoffman@verizon.net
Continued on page 8

Avani’s Ring • Spring 2007
ACCURACY. 
. . . the number one reason to own a Smithin’ Magician top and bottom tool guide. Make tenons, shoulders, grooves or cut all the way through. Order on-line at www.blacksmithsjournal.com or call 573-237-6882, twenty-four hours. $52.95 kit. $57 assembled plus S/H. Die blanks or machined dies available.

**PREVIEWS & NOTES**

HOFMAN AT TOUCHSTONE
Just a preliminary note to let you and ABANA members know that I will be teaching at Touchstone, July 23 - 27, 2006. Web site is http://www.touchstonecrafts.com. This will be a gas only class, no coal fires. Of course there will be a lot more hammer time when you won’t have to play with a coal fire, clean it up, carry in coal, etc. It will be lit and go on, or as the guy selling Ronco kitchen devices might say, set it and forget it boot off.
We will be doing projects that include forge welding. Each student will use a two-burner propane forge of my design. Andy Chambers has agreed to help me build forge and he will be my assistant this year. See his web site at: http://artcreationcom.com. If you would like to purchase one of these forges, I suggest contact either me or Andy prior to the class (save on shipping). Cost for a forge is $495, includes the forge itself as well having anvils cast in H13, currently the "Colonial" pattern, about 100 pounds for $475. I will be adding two sizes of double horn anvils to the inventory, hopefully by this summer. Contact me or Touchstone for more information. Early registration is suggested to ensure your space. Jymn Hoffman, Ambridge, Pennsylvania Phone: 724/251-9310. E-mail jymnhoffman@verizon.net

Kim Thomas
Kirsten Skiles
Bob Rupert
Glenn Horr
Holly Fisher
Jymn Hoffman
Dave Olson
Bill Fiorini
Bob Rupert
Ray Rybar, Jr.
Richard Sheppard
Kirsten Skiles
Kim Thomas
Nigel Tudor

Explore new ideas and new techniques in an amazing environment, and study with some of the very best at Touchstone. For a brochure and more information, call or visit our web site: www.touchstonecrafts.com or call 1.800.721.0177

Continued on page 8
There has not been a period in history which has more greatly affected our definition of blacksmithing than the industrial revolution. The introduction of new equipment and machinery, changes in architectural styles, and innovations in architectural materials have reduced the once-bustling forge to essentially one-person operations where knowledge of traditional ironworking methods and techniques have been lost or significantly minimized. Iron has changed to steel, the arc welder has replaced the anvil, and the importance of design has suffered. Iron has been lessened. The surfaces, textures and overall feel of ironwork is now less organic, and has less of a hand-made quality to it. All of these changes have occurred in a relatively short period of time from the late 1800’s until now -- not much more than a lifetime, in fact.

As part of this dedication, he helped found ABANA, demonstrated nationally, started the Campbell Folk Art School in North Carolina, and ABANA, demonstrated nationally, started the Campbell Folk Art School in North Carolina, and the latter part of his life to keeping the historic traditions of this art form alive. Not a bad start! This laid the foundation for the craft, traditional methods and techniques, the arc welder has replaced the anvil, and the importance of design in ironwork.

Francis Whitaker's life extended itself through this period of our history. Francis Whitaker, his years in Germany, Aspen, and Carbondale. Interesting and inspirational. A must-have.

My Life as an Artist Blacksmith

Francis Whitaker in his own words; documents his time with Samuel Yellin, and Julius Schramm. His career as he learned about the history of the craft, traditional methods and techniques, and the importance of design in ironwork. He experienced, first hand, the value of education as it was passed down from master to apprentice. Later during WW2, he taught welding to women, then started his own architectural ironworking business which subsequently led him from Carmel, CA to Aspen, Colorado, and finally Carbondale, CO. Throughout his life he witnessed this push towards the obsolescence of his chosen career, as he learned it, and it led him to the conclusion that he should dedicate the latter part of his life to keeping the historic traditions of this art form alive.

THE START OF CAMPBELL FOLK ART SCHOOL and COLORADO ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCHOOL

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School in North Carolina, taught two week-long workshops in Australia in 2000 and has demonstrated at many regional and national events. Traditional methods of the artist-blacksmith are his specialty. We are very excited about his return to Colorado!

If you are interested in taking this class or any other class it is important to find out about all the possibilities for financial aid. There are a whole host of places to look such as The Francis Whitaker Foundation, Rocky Mountain Smiths (your local chapter), and ABANA all offer the opportunity for class funding – all you have to do is apply. Here is the contact information for these organizations:

1. The Francis Whitaker Foundation
   Write to: The Francis Whitaker Foundation
   In care of CRMS
   1493 106 rd, Carbondale, CO 81623
   Or email to: www.fwbef@crms.org

2. Rocky Mountain Smiths
   Call: Eric Harmon at 303-989-2694 or Dan Nibbelink at 970-532-4387
   Or Write: Eric Harmon, 2270 S. Ellis Ct., Lakewood, CO 80228

3. ABANA
   Call the ABANA central office at 865-546-7733

Chosen to teach the class whose philosophy and work is exceptionally excellent. This class gives the individual both the time and proper instruction to gain a higher level of understanding of traditional techniques and joinery while still allowing for personal creativity. Dorothy Stiegler spoke of her experience teaching the class: “The basics never change, just the approach to those basics. This class allows one-on-one consistent interaction with a Master for a week. Each student’s project took on new dimensions as they allowed themselves to push the limits of their forging ability, knowing they could complete the skills with remarkable accuracy and take their work to the next level.” Clay Spencer, and Dan Nau- man have also instructed the class. All of these smiths remember Francis’s words, “It takes a lifetime to become a master blacksmith. After 20 years, you may think you’re a master. But when you look back 20 years later, you’ll realize you were just crossing the threshold.” Dan wrote, “I have adopted Francis’s unwavering philosophy to help the students develop the fundamentals needed to produce fine workmanship. This philosophy is often unpopular in today’s society. In this throwaway world we live in, it is often difficult to break through the barriers of instant gratification. As the saying goes, “The life so short, the trade so long to learn,” applies directly to forging, and to think otherwise you are only kidding yourself.”

What I teach these young folks is not my idea of design. What I try to do is give them the knowledge to express themselves. F. Whitaker

Another invaluable aspect of the class is having the opportunity to work in Francis’s shop, using his tools, seeing all the wonderful pieces of his work and studying the numerous step-by-step examples which he left for his students. You could spend the week in there just documenting what is around you. One student, Jonathan White, who now runs his own business in Carbondale, CO, was lucky enough to have started his blacksmithing career at CRMS. He wrote about taking the Masters Class: “I want to keep learning through my career and I think annual training is really important.” The time which is spent with the other students who are taking the class is so rewarding. Being able to share ideas with others is a luxury most people don’t normally have these days. You can learn about other people’s shops and businesses and make new friends, too. The ongoing dialogue which occurs throughout the week really helps reinforce and clarify one’s thoughts and desires about one’s own work.

This year’s instructor for the Masters Class will be Tal Harris. Tal resides in Waxhaw, North Carolina, with his wife and chief ironwork designer Kim, and their two boys. He began blacksmithing in 1980 while attending Appalachian State University. Further studies include attending a 6-week program at Frank Turley’s School in Santa Fe in 1982, several classes at the John C. Campbell Folk Art School, and individual instruction with Francis Whitaker. Tal teaches regularly at the Campbell Folk Art School in North Carolina, taught two week-long workshops in Australia in 2000 and has demonstrated at many regional and national events. Traditional methods of the artist-blacksmith are his specialty. We are very excited about his return to Colorado!

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3. ABANA
   Call the ABANA central office at 865-546-7733
Australians love blacksmithing, and the Hot Iron Muster 2006 was an event not to be missed.

**OPENING DAY**

The opening day began with a demonstration by Brent Bailey, who creates beautiful, functional, and decorative objects. Brent took a simple piece of metal and demonstrated his skill in forging it into a unique and beautiful object. His demonstration included shaping, cutting, and welding, and the final result was a stunning piece of art that showcased the potential of blacksmithing.

**THE WORKSHOP CONTINUES**

During the workshop, Brent demonstrated how to forge a billet into a knife handle. He used a variety of tools, including hammers, tongs, and chisels, to shape and refine the metal. His attention to detail and precision was evident in the final product.

**OTHER HIGHLIGHTS**

The event featured a range of other blacksmithing demonstrations and workshops. Visitors were able to see blacksmiths of all ages and skill levels working at their crafts. The atmosphere was buzzing with excitement and energy, and the smell of hot metal filled the air.

**END OF WEEK**

The end of the week came all too quickly, but the experience was unforgettable. For the blacksmiths and visitors alike, the Hot Iron Muster 2006 was a transformative event that showcased the art and craft of blacksmithing.
A well-orchestrated design collaboration by James DeMartis, Sag Harbour, New York

As I was hired to replace the existing wooden balcony and stair rails with one of metal—a rail design more in keeping with the original architecture of the house, while also reflecting the sensibility of the client and architect. My client knew he wanted metal but was open to input on the choice of metals and exact design. I suggested wrought metal for the spindles and bronze for the sub and cap rails. Once the material choices were established, I asked my client and his architect for their design direction as I set about preparing several samples of possible spindle forgings.

A couple of weeks later I met with my client; he, armed with a pile of pages torn from design magazines and me, with arms full of wrought iron. We sorted through the ideas and inspirations we had both collected and set our design collaboration in motion. We mixed and matched, borrowed and invented new combinations, and eventually arrived at a final design that was at once traditional and contemporary and tailored perfectly to the space.

THE PROCESS

Now it was time to get to work. I chose to offset the spindles to both increase the functionality of the narrow stairway and also define the stair as the boldest statement once inside the home. I salvaged the original wooden handrail to use as my template for the semi-circular stair.

Once the rail template was established, I farmed out the bronze 2 1/4-inch cap rail bending to a much larger shop, one better equipped to handle the general bending. I tweaked it on site using my oxyacetylene torch and Hossfeld bender. Then back at my studio, I conformed the shape of the sub rail channel to the cap rail using the torch and a series of clamps and spacer blocks. Once the bronze was bent to shape, I set out to erase all dings, nicks, and scratches on the surface of the bronze using a combination of grinders, sanding drums, files, sanding blocks, and heaps of elbow grease to ready the bronze for patina.

The spindles were forged from one-inch square mild steel. I forged the chamfers using my Kuhn 90-lb. ram air hammer while heating the stock in eight-inch sections in my coal forge. Drawing the numerous bars in and out of the forge was labor intensive and inefficient (note to self: when repeatedly heating long sections of material, invest in a gas forge.) But I managed to get the job done nevertheless, as I did all the final hammering and straightening on a 325-lb. cast Fischer anvil using the face of a seven-lb. ball pein hammer.

FORMING THE DIAMOND SHAPES

The diamonds were formed using a hot cut to slit the stock; the diamond shape taking form by upsetting the split section (five inches long) on a second anvil on the floor. I then finish-shaped the diamonds with a final heat on the Fischer face while keeping a close eye on their consistency and straightness. The opposing direction

Once heating the split section was complete, I moved the stock to the Fischer anvil on the floor, where I straightened the top edge by removing the excess using the face of my seven-lb. ball pein hammer.
twists were done next in the leg vise using the oxyacetylene torch for more precise heat control and my largest monkey wrench for twisting leverage. After all the forging was complete, I cut the stock to length in my Dake/Johnson horizontal band saw (an overseas import, but a true cut nonetheless). Next came the squaring and sanding of the spindle ends on the vertical/horizontal six-inch belt sander. Following this, I spent some time hand filing a slight bevel at the ends to lend a hand finish to the cuts. Next came readying the spindles and rails for installation. I set up a jig in my drill press and drilled a 1/4-inch hole three quarters of an inch deep at each end for the balcony spindles. I tapped a thread into the top end to receive the sub rail and added a second smaller hole at the base for a set screw. This made installation of the balcony rail a snap. I secured hanger bolts into the floor at approximately four-inch spacing, then set the spindles loosely onto the protruding end of the bolts. I then sent machine screws through the sub rail and affixed the spindles in kind while anchoring each end to the wall. Last, the cap rail was attached with flat-head machine screws captured from the countersunk underside holes at 18-inch intervals in the sub rail. The Semi-Circular Stair Rail

The semi-circular stair rail posed more vexing challenges. The patina had been applied in advance (fortunately it was summer and the sun helped to bake in each application of the finish and sear in the oil and wax). The iron spindles were wire brushed and degreased, then darkened with selenious acid (gun glue) and sealed with three coats of tung oil and three coats of paste wax. The bronze was likewise darkened and sealed with wax. I chose to keep the material clean and smooth apart from the forgings and opted to tig weld the stringer offset instead of forging the right-angle return. I drew the diamond stringer flange shape and fixed it to my local water jet cutting shop. I cleaned up the kerf and shaped the contour using a one-inch hand-held belt sander. The offset was plug-welded from the backside of the flange with the mig, keeping intersections clean and avoiding added file time. Each spindle was temporarily installed on the stringer then scribed in place and custom cut to length at the appropriate height. The Triton Super Jaws portable vise stand held each spindle fast as I hand cut, using a portable and very accurate and easy-to-use Milwaukee band saw. I had pre-drilled and tapped the top ends of each spindle extra deep in advance to retain the threading after the on-site cuts. Some fussing and cajoling ensued but a hand grinder, file, and my trusty Super Jaws were equal to the task. The compound curve in the final assembly proved challenging, but I ultimately wrestled it into submission. The landing cap rail was tig-welded on site, ground, filed, sanded, and patinated in place. By employing all of the tools, sources, materials and chemicals at my disposal, I was able to complete this project on time and on budget. The job was done and the new railing transformed the space in just the way my client and I had hoped. 

SOME FUSING AND CAJOLING ENSUED BUT A HAND GRINDER, FILE AND MY TRUSTY SUPER JAWS WERE EQUAL TO THE TASK. THE COMPOUND CURVE IN THE FINAL ASSEMBLY PROVED CHALLENGING, BUT I ULTIMATELY WRESTLED IT INTO SUBMISSION.
ANVIL’S RING | Spring 2007
The Greening of Blacksmithing
By M. Anna Fariello © 2007
Visiting associate professor and project leader, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, North Carolina

Quite possibly the first forge fueled by methane reclamation in the US, the Jackson County Green Energy Park in western North Carolina has had its blacksmith forge up and running since its public opening in October 2006. Metalsmith William S. Rogers has been working at the park to determine the needs of the blacksmithing program, design its facility, and work through the many obstacles that occur whenever a project attempts to accomplish something completely new. A professional smith for almost 30 years and a long-time member of ABANA, Rogers explained, “You can’t know how to do this. Instead, it’s a matter of applying experience and know-how to a unique situation. I began with a natural gas forge and modified it to create a methane-fired prototype.” He tested the forge, made adjustments, and tested it again until he achieved the desired results.

In terms of desired results, Rogers said, “For long-term efficiency and fuel economy, the goal is to get the maximum BTUs from the flame.” When a smith initially fires up a forge—with coal, natural gas, or methane—the flame, without added air, burns in a reducing atmosphere. “At the start, there is more fuel than oxygen,” he explained as he demonstrated the initial lighting of the forge. “The flame climbs out of the forge seeking oxygen. That makes it hard on forge components, increasing corrosion and wearing them out faster than necessary.”

The goal, he explained, is to create a hotter flame. A blower increases the air available to the flame. Historically, these were made from a variety of materials, from animal bladders to today’s electric units. Adding oxygen, a smith watches the flame to “read” it. “This particular style of forge has the ability to regulate any or all of the three burners individually, allowing the smith to run one burner or all three at the same time to heat a long piece of metal evenly.”

After methane was piped to the forge, Rogers lit the first test flame just weeks before the park’s opening. The initial test firing revealed that the forge could not yield enough heat with the amount of methane that flowed to it. The first adjustment he made was to enlarge the gas orifice. Then the testing began again. After enlarging all three burner ports, a second gas-to-air ratio test revealed that there was too much gas relative to the air in the system. Having too much gas turned out to be advantageous, allowing him to increase the blower size and provide additional heat.

Once the fuel begins to burn, the smith continues to add oxygen to create a hotter flame. A blower increases the air available to the flame. Historically, these were made from a variety of materials, from animal bladders to today’s electric units. Adding oxygen, a smith watches the flame to “read” its condition. “An oxidizing flame means that the fuel-to-air ratio is too low. There is too much oxygen for the amount of fuel available. This atmosphere is hard on forge components, increasing corrosion and wearing them out before their time. This type of flame is also likely to blow out, with not enough fuel to maintain a steady heat.”

To work steel hot, a smithy likes to be able to achieve 2000 degrees Fahrenheit, visible as white hot. Rogers’ first attempts got the metal up to a dull orange. Constant adjustments aimed to achieve an optimum fuel-to-air ratio, one that yields the maximum amount of heat. The goal is fuel efficiency and a complete burn, so that there isn’t any unburned gas going into the atmosphere.

**Drawing from Experience**

The Green Energy Park benefited from Rogers’ years of experience running his own William S. Rogers Metals studio. He had the forging experience to make adjustments to the methane system as needed. He also had the teaching experience to explain his actions as he moved through the process. He has been teaching blacksmithing for almost as long as he has been doing it. With an art education and metal degree from Middle Tennessee State University, he began his career in his home state of Tennessee. While still in his twenties, he assisted master smith Francis Whitaker in setting up a blacksmithing studio for the Appalachian Center for Crafts in Smithville, Tennessee. For several years afterward, Rogers taught an evening blacksmithing course at the Appalachian Center. Before leaving the state, the Tennessee Arts Commission awarded him a state-level Artist Fellowship. Moving to Virginia in the mid-1980s, he developed a metals design studio for the Science Museum of Virginia, was a consultant to a studio renovation at the Hand Workshop, and helped the West Virginia Youth Museum improve its smithy.

William Rogers moved to western North Carolina after almost twenty years in Virginia. In Virginia he was selected to participate in the Arts-in-Education programs for both the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Virginia Commission for the Arts. He completed a year-long commission to restore over 200 feet of historic graveyard fencing for the Reynolds Homestead in Critz, Virginia, and was named a master craftsman by the Virginia Folklife Program. In his Virginia studio, he used coal exclusively.

“Another time I didn’t use coal as a fuel was for a one-semester course I taught at the University of Panama. There, they didn’t have much of anything in the way of studio equipment, so I had to improvise. I locked down a hammerhead in a vise to serve as an anvil and used an oxy-acetylene torch as fuel.” Aside from this experience in making do, Rogers explained that he’s had the good fortune to work in a number of very well equipped regional studios. He demonstrated at the Penland School of Crafts and teaches annually at the John C. Campbell Folk School and the Appalachian Center for Crafts. “All three studios are different. There is a lot to know about studio setup, safety, and maintenance, especially in a teaching situation.”
Rogers drew on his past, but also conferred with a number of other experienced smiths. Ken Mankel, designer and owner of the Mankel forge, helped clarify issues regarding natural and methane gas. Dan Milspaugh, metals professor at the University of North Carolina Asheville, shared his gas forge design. Leo Sauder, a Virginia smith working in the pre-industrial bloomery technique, talked with him about metallurgy. All in all, he tapped as many knowledgeable resources as possible. For the Green Energy Park, Rogers created a controlled prototype, testing and refining it, only to test it again. After rebuilding the prototype, the process begins again, with testing and further refinement until all the bugs are worked out. Using this process he re-worked a traditional gas forge system to utilize an earth-friendly fuel.

At the October opening, state and local dignitaries stood with Green Energy Park Director Timm Muth in celebration. Muth’s knowing smile acknowledged the fact that Jackson County would hold the title of “first” in terms of its methane-fired blacksmithing facility. The project has since received attention from the Environmental Protection Agency, which named the park the Landfill Program Project of the Year. Located in Dillsboro, North Carolina, the Jackson County Green Energy Park may serve as a model for other methane conversion projects nationally.

“GREEN” ENERGY

The “green” in the Green Energy Park refers to the goal of utilizing gases that typically build up underground in community landfills. An end product of decomposition, methane is a potent greenhouse gas. Because landfill gases cannot be allowed to flow freely into the atmosphere without environmental consequence, methane is usually burned off in a flare. An “eternal flame” marks most landfills where methane emissions are burned off until they are exhausted. Nationwide, innovative communities are experimenting with converting methane for use as a renewable fuel. An added advantage to methane use is that it burns clean. Its airborne by-products are water vapor and carbon dioxide.

Much of the Green Energy Park’s infrastructure is not visible to public eye. Holes drilled into the landfill divert methane into pipes that go to a pumping station. A pump provides a steady flow of gas to serve Green Energy Park clients. The Jackson County blacksmithing forge is the first studio in a planned artisan Village, which will eventually include studios for ceramics as well as a greenhouse complex. The smithy is available for tenant use as well as classes taught in cooperation with the local community college. Beside the blacksmithing facility is a bio-diesel production plant, Smoky Mountains Biofuels, Inc., a company that sells biodiesel to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and local municipalities. North Carolina is attempting to break ground in the green energy field. The state’s Lt. Governor, Beverly Perdue, recently proposed that North Carolina could become the first state in the Union to be nearly energy independent by creating a “green” economy. The Green Energy Park’s blacksmithing facility is one of the first steps along the way.

If any ABANA members know of other types of “green” blacksmithing facilities, please contact William at wingedgriffinstudios@hotmail.com or call 828-293-3777. His work can be seen at www.rogersmetals.com.

Why Mess with Methane?

By Timm Muth, Project Manager

By tapping into the energy of the adjacent landfill, the Jackson County Green Energy Park (JCEP) encourages economic development in the local community, provides environmental protection, and offers unique educational opportunities. The project was built specifically to assist journeymen blacksmiths and tenants to transition into full-time businesses. This county-led effort helps tenants to reduce their initial start-up costs and long-term energy costs, but that’s just the start. Artisans, greenhouse growers, and biofuel producers gain the prestige of participating in a project that directly impacts local air quality. And the JCEP, in turn, promotes heritage arts—like blacksmithing—that have been an embedded part of Appalachian culture. Once completed, the park will have created 15 to 20 new jobs, a sizable investment in an area that is culturally rich but economically strapped.

Two important health benefits result from using landfill gas in a forge. One is personal; methane is an extremely clean-burning fuel, and is much safer for a smith’s lungs than coal smoke. The second reason is of more public concern; methane is a potent greenhouse gas, with 27 times the environmental impact of carbon dioxide. The JCEP will prevent 222 tons of methane from entering the atmosphere each year, reducing local air pollution and providing environmental benefits equal to removing 916 vehicles off the road, or planting 1,305 acres of forest, or preventing the use of 11,104 barrels of oil, or displacing the use of 521,870 gallons of gas.

While the landfill gas for the project is essentially free, it is a limited resource with a maximum heat rate of one to one and a half million BTUs per hour. While this amount of gas can provide the heat needed for any use on site, it cannot sustain all of the gas users at the same time. At the JCEP, this “limitation” is just another opportunity for innovation and experimentation. The blacksmith studio shares a building with Smoky Mountain Biofuels, a producer of vegetable oil-based biodiesel. The biodiesel process uses hot water to heat the vegetable oil and drive the biodiesel reaction.

Like all artisans at the JCEP, tenant smiths will be selected by a juried committee and offered studio space for up to three years. Applicants will be judged based on technical skills, business experience, need, and the ability to help meet the project goals. Residents are expected to not only hone their crafts, but to develop their people skills as well. Public tours, local festivals, and other community events will be a routine part of life at the JCEP as being a part of the local community is essential for good business.

To contact the Jackson County Green Energy Park, write to Timm Muth at tmuth@jacksonNC.org or call 828-431-0377.

Anvil’s Ring | Spring 2007

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To contact the Jackson County Green Energy Park, write to Timm Muth at tmuth@jacksonNC.org or call 828-431-0377.
I have been a blacksmith now for close to seven years. I am 25 years old; my career began after enrolling in an ornamental forging class at the Ultimo Tafe Institute. Having enjoyed both metalwork and art during school, smithing seemed the natural progression, and I soon entered an apprenticeship. The workshop was the old railway workshop’s blacksmithing bays in Sydney. It’s a heritage-listed building with the majority of tooling left intact. We had two 200s and a 700-watt Massey, as well as every tong, swage, bolster, pad and die you could imagine – walls of them – so it was a real playground.

The focus of the work was largely ornamental, encompassing hand-forged traditional and contemporary scrollwork, restorations, tooling, furniture and sculpture. We also had a small foundry, casting mainly bronze and aluminium art, and a large cupola for the big cast iron jobs. I think I must have had one of the most diverse and intense tuitions available to an ornamental smith. Regrettfully, the business closed soon after I left. Opportunities to learn in an environment such as I experienced are rare.

The apprenticeship was accompanied by industrial forging and theory lessons through Tafe, taught by the renowned smith Lindsay Cole. His enthusiastic and patient approach, backed by a lifetime of knowledge, has seen many apprentices through their time and, as a result, is a keystone in the Australian blacksmithing community.

After attending the latest -- and my first -- ABANA conference, I returned home with a mind awash with styles, techniques and designs. Dorothy Stiegler and Francisco Gazitua were among the most inspiring of the demonstrators whom I had the pleasure of witnessing over the weekend. It seems that Australian forged art is still in its infancy, and relies heavily on overseas influence. This, I think, is largely due to the lack of any serious arts-based metalworking facility. Additionally, the distance between smithies doesn’t lend itself to much skill sharing. This is why ABANA has become such a valuable resource for us remote Aussies. Every publication of The Anvil’s Ring and the Hammer’s Blow provides welcome news on techniques and styles, helpful tips and inspiration.

Feeling enlightened, I dove into few projects of my own, mainly for galleries and private residences. Hopefully, they will add to the Australian contribution of the ABANA gallery. I’m not sure if they are of the usual ABANA calibre, but I am proud of my work and of the smithing tradition. My works are currently being exhibited in galleries around Brisbane, and the response has been fantastic! I’m working as a full-time blacksmith/tradesman and also demonstrating whenever possible; the extra money made from the sculptures goes on tooling to set up my own smithie.
They used to say that blacksmithing was the king of all crafts, because the blacksmith made the tools for all the other crafts. Still today, a blacksmith will typically forge his own chisels, tongs, hammers and even build large power tools. In an age of global warming and overused resources, Cameron Stoker of Santa Fe has added to toolmaking the idea of creating his own fuel. Cameron runs a one-man blacksmith shop where he creates forged ironwork for private customers—when he is not busy inventing some new contraption or gadget. Here are a few pictures:

CAMERON RUNS A ONE-MAN BLACKSMITH SHOP WHERE HE CREATES FORGED IRONWORK FOR PRIVATE CUSTOMERS—WHEN HE IS NOT BUSY INVENTING SOME NEW CONTRAPTION OR GADGET.

"THANKS FOR EATING FRIED FOODS—YOUR OBESITY FUELS MY SHOP"
Technically it’s called trans-esterification and its goal is to replace the glycerin molecule of triglycerides with a methyl group from the alcohol leaving what is known as fatty acid methyl ester, e.g. biodiesel.

Every liter of used cooking oil requires about 220ml of methanol (flammable & toxic - be careful) and 7.5-10 g of lye (caustic!). It’s heat-ed to 55° C and mixed for several hours. When the mix settles, there is biodiesel on top and about 10-15% byproduct on the bottom.

The biodiesel is washed and dried. The byproduct is about 2/3 crude glycerin, and 1/3 unreacted methanol, and some soap, depending on how wet the oil was to start with. To remediate the byproduct, I use a simple still to boil the methanol out and catch the vapor in a condenser for reuse. After distilling out the methanol, there are a lot of things you can do with the crude glycerin - it’s fairly non-toxic at this point. It composes well, some people feed it to cows or anaerobic methane gas digesters (biogas) it can be used as antifreeze in crude systems, you can make soap from it, it can sit in a landfill or you can burn it in a special burner to heat your biodiesel when making the next batch.

The water from washing the biodiesel also needs to be cleaned up. It has soap and a small amount of methanol in it picked up from the biodiesel. I add a little acid to it to break up the soap into salt and fatty acid. The fats float up to the top and I pour them back in the pot with the next batch of oil. The salt and small amount of methanol stay in the water used to irrigate (the plants are doing fine). Microbes in soil apparently break down the methanol very fast. Salt is a fertilizer nearly as important to plants as potassium.

| Cameron Stoker, Stoker Forge, cameron@stokerforge.com | www.stokerforge.com |

THE BEST PLACES TO START FOR BIODIESEL INFO:

- http://www.biodieselcommunity.org
- http://biodiesel.info pop.co
- and a couple auf Deutsch that may be good (not sure but I’ve seen them referred to more than once)
- http://www.fmso.de
- http://www.fatty-fuels.de
It had been several years since our family’s last hunting dog had passed on. We had always enjoyed having a dog around the house, but I had removed the front chain link fence from our yard to facilitate easier access to the front and backyards for mowing and landscaping. This excuse for not getting another dog worked for a number of years until my daughter e-mailed me some pictures of some German shorthair pointer puppies. My son and daughter explained that since they were both off to school and we were empty nesters, we needed a puppy. Well, I soon found myself traveling to the other end of the state to pick up our new puppy.

On the way home I decided that the need for a new fence could double as an opportunity to advertise my ironwork. The design had to include a silhouette of both our dog and the shop cat, and incorporate a wide range of ironwork representative of the products I produce. The fence also needed to have a gate on either side of the house for access to the backyard. I included hand-forged scrollwork, hand-forged grapevines, and hand-forged pickets, as well as pickets and baskets purchased from a supplier. I also included a supplied rail cap and my standard gate lock purchased from a supplier from Europe and finished it off with a nice powder coat.

I am happy to say that not only does our new German shorthair named Chester like the fence, but I have had many compliments on the work from neighbors and customers as well.
NEW WORKS

Oleg Bonkovsky, L’viv, Ukraine
Iron Candle Stick - Detail.

Iron Candle Stick. 170 - 190cm. First in a series.

Iron Candle Stick - Detail.

Oleg Bonkovsky, L’viv, Ukraine
Iron Candle Stick 170 - 190cm. Second in a series.
Hugh Colley, Salt Lake City, Utah
Fireplace screen hardware. 6 1/2" x 9 1/2" long. Forged steel.

Gerald Biresch, Lincoln, Montana
Photo credit: McMillan Studio, Great Falls, MT

6' high. Stem is 3/16 cold rolled. Leaves: 22 gauge flat.
Beard is .023 mig wire.
Coated with black walnut, Watco Danish Oil.
Breon Gilleran, Baltimore, Maryland

Breon Gilleran completed an MFA in Sculpture at the University of Maryland. As a graduate student, Breon worked with a variety of materials and tools, including the large, rarely used Johnson Brothers trench forge. Using the forge, she discovered she could easily bend steel rod into imposing organic forms, hammering the hot surfaces and shaping forms intuitively to stand on the floor or hang from the wall.

Breon continued her discovery of blacksmithing as a way of making sculpture, studying with Meagan Crowley at Peters Valley Craft Center in 2003 and 2004. She says that Meagan’s approach was a revelation in the fact that she translated her training as a metalsmith into the creation of steel forms in the blacksmith shop, utilizing traditional forming techniques including the power hammer.

In 2005 Breon had solo shows of her work at Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania, and the Library Gallery at Montpelier Center for the Arts in Laurel, Maryland. In 2006 she was selected as a semi-finalist for the Trawick Prize: the Bethesda Contemporary Arts Awards. A review of her work was published in Sculpture Magazine in June, 2006. Her upcoming 2007 exhibition schedule includes “intervene/activate,” a new exhibition in the Union Gallery juried by Donald Russell on the campus of the University of Maryland, College Park, and another, titled “Critics’ Picks,” with Irving Sandler and Eleanor Heartney, curators, in Baltimore. She will be serving an artist’s residency at the Santa Fe Art Institute in June, 2007.

Breon’s studio is located at Area 405 in the Station North Arts District, downtown Baltimore, where she has a small forge and is always looking to learn new techniques. She also belongs to the Blacksmith Guild of Central Maryland and serves on the board of the Washington Sculptors Group. She teaches part time in the art department at Goucher College. For further information, visit her website, www.breongilleran.net.

*Nine Patch* cast iron 36” h x 36” w x 1” d

*Laminae 5* forged steel, plaster 36” h x 36” w x 12” d

*Phenotype II* forged steel 96” h x 36” w x 36” d
All stock has been forged throughout. All joinery is traditional – forge welds, mortise and tenons, forged nails and rivets. No commercial rivets were used since those have more material in the heads than is typically seen on old rivets. Dragon feet on two of the tripods were forged in open dies. Parts of the arms on the two sconces were forged in closed dies. Piercing was done with chisels and punches, except for the stylized dragon heads below the candle cups on the adjustable tabletop candleholder which were drilled and cut with a jeweler’s saw. Chasing was done at a low heat so tools could be hand held. Forge welded parts were pickled in vinegar to remove traces of flux and parts to be filed were first pickled to remove scale, which is hard on files. The finish on most pieces is an oil and beeswax mixture containing red and black iron oxide.
SELECTED WORKS
Tom Latané

Oak chest with iron hardware 11 1/4" x 14 3/4" x 9 3/4" tall.

Carved cherry wood box with lock and key, 8 1/2" x 6" x 4" tall.

Carved cherry wood box with lock and key, 8 1/2" x 6" x 4" tall.

Spike candle holder, 10" tall.

Tabletop candle holder with feet, 20" tall.

ALL METAL ON THESE PROJECTS IS MILD STEEL.
John Gehl, West Bend, Wisconsin

John Gehl is a fourth-generation metalworker. His great-grandfather emigrated from Luxemburg, and established a blacksmith shop in America. His family has been in the farm and construction equipment business for nearly 150 years. While he has had a long-time interest in blacksmithing, it was not until he retired from the machinery manufacturing business that he found the time to devote to it. Guy Geary, a prominent artist blacksmith from Dunedin, New Zealand, further sparked his interest. He also had additional training at the John C Campbell Folk School.

His materials are generally scrap steel, although occasionally new. Shapes and textures, as well as nature, inspire his creations. All of his works are given special care and attention to enhance the surface textures. He has a well-equipped shop, utilizing both coal and propane forges, as well as a fly press and a power hammer.

His shop and studio is in Manitowish Waters, in Wisconsin’s beautiful Northwoods country, where he creates his works. All of his pieces are private commissions, displayed in the homes of his patrons.

Whoosh. 10" h x 3" in diameter. Formed of highly polished rusted steel plate, finished with a light coat of acrylic clear spray. Mounted on a wood base.

Door Knocker. 8 inches high, is rusted light-gauge steel, cut and shaped, with a forged knocker. The piece is buffed and finished with beeswax.

“I hope that I am remembered for my sculpture, but I am certain that future generations of blacksmiths will be glad for my anvils.”

from “The Making of a Modern Anvil,” The Anvil’s Ring, Fall 2000

Russell C Jaqua
1947–2006

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<th>Weight</th>
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**Dona Meilach Remembered**

By Eden Sanders and other California Blacksmiths

What the people who knew her remember most about Dona is her sense of humor and her 30-year, enthusiastic interest in fine contemporary blacksmithing. She became friends with blacksmiths throughout California, the US & Canada and the world because she genuinely loved the craft and the people in it.

Michael Bondi attributes the revival of blacksmithing “as much to her first book, Decorative and Sculptural Ironwork: Tools, Techniques & Inspiration for Modern Blacksmithing, printed in 1977, as to the blacksmiths of that period. She received thousands of photos from hundreds of blacksmiths and she treated everyone with fairness. My brother Stephen was one of her consultants and he was impressed with her ability to accept criticism gracefully.” “That first book,” recalls E. A. Chase, “put together through her enthusiasm, curiosity and innocence, was a collection of work that inspired and had a radical effect on artist-blacksmiths in the United States.”

Richard Schrader remembers going through photos with Stephen Bondi for her 2002 book, Fireplace Accessories, and the amount of energy Dona had: “After about eight hours with her, I would become exhausted, she was just so busy, and the way she and her husband Mel would banter and joke with each other is one of my most delightful memories. Her biggest pet peeve was receiving non-printable photos of great work.” Richard also remembered her as a great peddler, sitting at a table in the late ’70s with her books for sale.

“I was one of about 150 in attendance at Dona’s photo workshop at the 2000 ABANA Conference in Flagstaff. She offered the workshop because fewer than one third of the 3000 photos she received for the 2000 book, The Contemporary Blacksmith, were unusable mostly due to poor photo quality. She hated having to omit many really wonderful pieces from the final cut due to bad photos. We all learned a lot that day.”

Dona published five beautiful books on modern blacksmithing. At the urging of Norm Larson, Dona, with Schiffer Publishers, reprinted her first book at the end of the ’90s. That second printing started a chain-reaction resulting in the last four books on modern blacksmithing, published in 2000, 2001, 2002 and December, 2006, just weeks before her death. Blacksmiths everywhere have good reason to miss her, but through her books, her generous Acknowledgements, and that inimitable energy of hers which rubbed off on her many blacksmithing friends, she will never really be far away.

The following is how she began her acknowledgments for her first book on blacksmithing:

“IF I were to write a sequel to this book, it would most likely be titled ‘Blacksmiths I Have Met: How Great and Interesting They Are.’ When I began the research for this project, I knew a modern chapter to blacksmithing was unfolding; but I never anticipated the zest, quality, and quantity of the response I received.

The warmth (both from the forges and from those working them), invitations to visit, to photograph, to talk about smithing from people in unsuspecting corners and crannies of the country has been an unforgettable experience.”

Dona wrote 86 books including cookbooks and books about various crafts. Her daughter Susan said, “She referred to those in the trade as ‘her blacksmiths’ and felt an incredible affinity to those whom she worked with on the books. Her files were filled with letters from ironworkers, one who wrote: ‘I picked up your first ironwork book in the ’70s and it changed my life’ It meant a lot to our family that several California blacksmiths attended her memorial service. Dona was not only my mother, but my best friend. My father is now in New Mexico and adapting. Like her, he has a positive attitude about life.”

Some contributions to the blacksmithing world by Dona Melach
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David Norrie has been blacksmithing for over 30 years and is well renown for his craftsmanship as well as his unique style. His primary focus is creating functional architectural art work ranging from sculpture to furniture to gates and railings.

Norrie is a self-taught blacksmith and his initial introduction to the craft began in 1973 with a three-year internship at the Black Creek Pioneer Village located outside of Toronto, Canada.

In 1976 Norrie opened his first studio in Tottenham, Ontario, located 30 minutes from Toronto. His primary goal at the time was to finesse the basic blacksmithing skills he had learned and spent the next two years doing historical ironwork related to museums and restoration.

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**FOUR RAILINGS**

David Norrie, St. Berthoud, Colorado

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**THIS IS AN IRON RAILING, 60" LONG WITH THAT IS A FREE-FORM DESIGN BASED ON LAYERING STEEL BARS WITH OVERSIZED RIVETS SO THEY ARE USED AS A DECORATIVE DETAIL, NOT JUST TO HOLD STEEL TOGETHER.**

9" section on the second floor, curved both horizontally and vertically. A tricky shape to bend.
David Norrie

Traditional iron railing with a bronze handrail and gilded leaves. 125" long

Railing on the second floor with a large oval opening to the lobby.

Iron and bronze balcony railing in a lawyer’s office. The handrail is cherry.

David went to his first ABANA conference in 1978. While in New York, he realized for the first time that blacksmithing was an art form and rededicated himself to the profession.

From 1990 to 1992, David was on the Board of Directors of ABANA.

In 1995 he moved to Jackson, Wyoming, under an O1 United States Work Visa which is granted to those working in the arts and humanities fields. David is the first artist recognized by the United States government for “blacksmithing as his medium.”

In 2001 Norrie relocated to Boulder, Colorado, and has continued to hold shop in his current studio space. He has three full-time employees.

David has demonstrated his blacksmithing skills and techniques all over the United States, Canada, and England. His work has been commissioned in varied locations throughout North America from West Palm Beach, Florida, to San Mateo, California, to Canada.
that form the handrails. The nine separate chains are joined by thick wire. The chains are secured by wedges into timbers in the floors of the two stone bridge houses on opposite banks of the stream.

THE MONASTERY

Another iron chain bridge built by Thangtong Gyalpo stood near the confluence of the Wang Chhu and the Paro Chhu at Chhuzom. Nearby there stands a monastery named Tamchhog Gompa, privately owned by the descendants of Thangtong Gyalpo. The red soil in the vicinity contains low-grade ore which long since sustained smelting in this area. This bridge was washed away in 1969, though several meters of its chains are preserved as a relic within the monastery. Visiting pilgrims are told that Thangtong Gyalpo’s powers were such that he welded the chain links together over his upper leg, requiring no anvil for the purpose.

The thanka paintings and statues of Thangtong Gyalpo, the Seventh Karmapa, Chodrak Gyatso, and the Seventh Karmapa, Chodrak Gyatso, depict him as a “Tantric Yogi” or “Rishi” (sage) with cascading hair, long beard and top knot, seated in the lotus position on a deerskin. In his left hand he holds the vase with the “Elixir of Life,” symbolizing his life-prolonging power from the Indian liturgy, especially among the practitioners of Tantra. They preferred iron as a conductor as well as the source of lightning. Saddles, stirrups, bridles, harness fittings, and tracery cases were also lavished with extraordinary detail — including gilding and settings of coral, lapis and turquoise — which were used by high-ranking government officials, monastic dignitaries, and the nobility in Lhasa.

The Monastery

At Nyangodruk, between the Yarlung Valley and Lhasa, in Tibet, stood what may have been Thangtong Gyalpo’s longest bridge, which utilized five massive stone supports measuring up to 15 meters in diameter, with a span of between 150 to 250 meters.

For one of his most famous bridges which crossed the Tsangpo River at Chonvori in central Tibet, Thangtong Gyalpo went to western Bhutan between 1433 and 1444 where he gathered and smelted the necessary ore. Thangtong Gyalpo and 18 blacksmiths from five villages near Paro forged 7,000 chain links which were then transported in 1,400 loads across the border into Tibet.

Other Projects

Thangtong Gyalpo’s achievements were numerous and varied. In addition to smelting and forging iron, he also cast images of Buddhist deities and built the “chorten”-shaped Dumtse Lhakhang in Paro, Bhutan, and constructed over 100 boat ferries. To finance his extensive bridge building it is said that he organized a touring operatic and dance troupe. He was an important “Terton” (text discoverer) of the Nyingma lin-
Blacksmith Supply
Modern Tools for the Modern Blacksmith

By Ben Bradshaw, Alex Bealer Blacksmith Guild of Georgia

Floyd Daniel

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S

you’ve been blacksmithing for the past 30 years or so, sometime or another you have probably crossed paths with Floyd Daniel. He was one of the founding members of the Artist Blacksmiths’ Association of North America (ABANA) and had been a participant in several blacksmith guilds across the country, either as an officer or a member. I had the privilege of visiting Mr. Floyd and his loving wife, Mrs. Cordelia at their home in Madison, Georgia, in June of 2003.

Mr. Floyd lived in Madison all his life. He was raised from the age of five in the home in which he and Mrs. Cordelia lived. At the time, the home, built in 1923, was a part of his father’s farm. This is where his interest in guns and blacksmithing began. Floyd’s father had a blacksmith shop located on the farm. The shop was simple — it consisted of a forge, anvil, drill press and a vise. Floyd often spent time in the shop with his father and later on his own. As time went by, his career distance him from the farm life he once knew. He did not know until later in life how much that small blacksmith shop meant to him and how that early exposure to blacksmithing would change his life.

Floyd worked as an office manager for a furniture company there in Madison, Georgia, and retired in 1975 after 19 years with the company. Floyd’s father had a blacksmith shop located on the farm. The shop was simple — it consisted of a forge, anvil, drill press and a vise. Floyd often spent time in the shop with his father and later on his own. As time went by, his career distance him from the farm life he once knew. He did not know until later in life how much that small blacksmith shop meant to him and how that early exposure to blacksmithing would change his life.

In March of 1973 Celestine Sibley, a columnist for the Atlanta Journal, wrote an article about a group of blacksmiths who were gathering in Westville, Georgia. Floyd decided to go and take part. It was there that Floyd developed friendships that have grown through the years. The following is a recollection by one of those friends, Dimitri Gerakaris of Canaan, New Hampshire, from that March meeting in Westville, Georgia.

Dimitri went on to say it made him feel even more thankful that fateful day in Lumpkin, when he proposed the formation of a group to he called the Artist Blacksmiths’ Association of North America: ‘Floyd was quick to reach into the dark recesses of his pocket and extract a five-dollar bill into daylight to become a founding member — I attach a copy of the page from my original ABANA notebook recording that very deed. And in later years, when Floyd purchased from an exhibition a cotton boll study of the gateway I made for the W.C. Bradley Corporation in Columbus, he did not put it on his wall, but most graciously donated it to the museum in Madison. This generosity is the true measure of the man I have enjoyed knowing these past thirty-four years.

Anyone who had ever entered Mr. Floyd’s home learned quickly that it was more than a home; it was a museum of his life. There were hand-forged pieces of iron work from some of the most noted blacksmiths in the world; he could tell you the story behind each piece. On the wall of it was more than a home; it was a museum of his life. There were hand-forged pieces of iron work from some of the most noted blacksmiths in the world; he could tell you the story behind each piece. On the wall of this generosity is the true measure of the man I have enjoyed knowing these past thirty-four years.

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The John C. Campbell Folk School is proud to announce plans for an annex for the historic Francis Whitaker Blacksmith Shop. The old milking barn that is now the blacksmith studio at the school will have a new neighbor in 2008 when timber frames from all over gather at the school for an old-fashioned barn raising.

The school has known for some time that the blacksmithing program would eventually outgrow the Francis Whitaker shop — dedicated to Francis in 1993 in recognition of his two decades of teaching and demonstrating at the school. We knew that there had to be a way to expand without losing the existing structure which symbolizes the legacy of the “Dean of American Blacksmiths,” who devoted his life to keeping the art of blacksmithing alive in this country.

The solution came in part with an offer from the International Timber Framers Guild, and member Charles Judd, a professional timber framer who teaches at the Folk School. His classes have built several small structures on the campus.

The need for the expansion as well, Charles made the relationship between the Guild and the Folk School possible. He wanted to see a larger timber-framed building constructed on the campus, one that would be a legacy for the school and to the craftspeople who made it. A few years in the making, the plan calls for a Guild rendezvous at the site in June 2008, when close to 80 timber framers will do a traditional barn raising, similar to those seen in Amish country. In preparation for the event, the Folk School will host Guild classes staged on the building site. The frame will then be stood up in sections known as “bents” with levers, ropes, pike poles, and plain old human effort.

An agreement was made between the two parties in a December meeting at the school that included Charles, Guild president Joel McCarty, School Director Jan Davidson, resident blacksmith Paul Garrett, and architect Don Ihrig. The timing was perfect, and the school was grateful for the offer from the Guild. The Guild only does a limited number of these events, and only for not-for-profit organizations like the JCCFS. The existing shop is functional, but there is a definite need to spread out a bit for comfort and safety’s sake.

The new addition will be located right behind the existing shop and will be connected via a short vestibule. The design will include a clerestory roof line, housing an air-conditioned classroom which will allow natural light to pass through into the spaces below; it will also have full handicap accessibility. The two existing silos will frame a beautiful timbered entrance gable and house full restrooms and some storage. There will be a room for the school’s growing library of books and publications, a center for technical, safety, and design information, and resources to aid students in finding organizations, as well as other smiths in their areas, and also help in locating scholarships.

The size of the new building is tentatively at 9,000 square feet. The design will include a short vestibule. The plan will open up more room, and will be brough up to modern standards of comfort while retaining its historic charm. It will be completely rewired, re-plumbed, and fitted with a sprinkler system. It will have improved ventilation and energy-efficient windows. The plan will open up more room, and provide the space and equipment to accommodate an increasing variety of classes.

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The size of the new building is tentatively at about 2,500 square feet.

The old shop will receive extensive renovations to reverse decades of wear and damage, and will be brought up to modern standards of comfort while retaining its historic charm. It will be completely rewired, re-plumbed, and fitted with a sprinkler system. It will have improved ventilation and energy-efficient windows. The plan will open up more room, and provide the space and equipment to accommodate an increasing variety of classes.

At the same time, the Folk School is committed to respecting the values of traditional blacksmithing which have made the program the most popular of some 50 program areas offered, and have helped spur the tremendous growth in smithing across the country as well. The project will most likely be accomplished in three main phases: the raising of the timber frame and roof, the finishing and occupying of the annex, and the subsequent renovation of the Francis Whitaker building.

Fundraising
Fundraising for the project officially began when long-time instructor Lou Mueller donated his honorarium for the class that he taught here in 1993 in recognition of his two decades of teaching and demonstrating at the school, dedicated to the spread of knowledge and education of blacksmithing. Already there are groups across the country planning fundraising and auctions to help out with the effort. Any ideas or sources that you know of to help out with donations and publicity will be greatly welcomed. Together our community can see that this goal is achieved.

Although the full architectural plans are not yet finalized, early estimates for the amount of capital needed to realize this project are at $500,000. We have a long way to go but have confidence that the school, which has had a positive effect on so many lives, will be able to raise the amount needed to ensure the program’s health well into the new century.

Donations are currently being accepted and are held in a restricted, interest-bearing fund set up specifically for the project. No amount is too large or too small, and can include gifts of cash, stock, or materials. The Folk School is a 501(c)(3) organization, so all contributions are tax deductible.

Donations of $500 or more will be recognized with a plaque in the new building, and opportunities to name the new spaces will be developed as soon as plans are finalized.

Please contact Susi Hall, Development Manager, at susi@folkschool.org or at 828/837-2775 ext.118 to contribute or to discuss making a gift, and by all means contact me at pdg66@hotmail.com, or 828-835-8441 with ideas to assist with the project. Thanks, and happy forgiving.

Paul Garrett, Resident Artist for the Blacksmithing Program, Brasstown, North Carolina.
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