



NEWSLETTER

April 2009 Volume 2 Issue 4

* Interview with a Blacksmith * March Meeting * Editor's Note *

Blacksmith Interview: Several months ago I contacted this Blacksmith and she was kind enough to take time from her busy schedule and participate in my series. Her and her work are well known in all points of the compass receiving critical acclaim for the artistic value and fine craftsmanship. She may be best known to many through her terrific book **The Backyard Blacksmith**. And now....

Lorelei Sims

Five Points Blacksmith Shop

Charleston, Illinois

www.blacksmithchic.com

The Beginning:

Although I had known about blacksmiths and had some visual examples of the craft (via movies, books, art history, etc.), it wasn't until I was a senior in college, during a "Celebration of Arts" festival on campus, that I saw a smith in action - the fire, the anvil, his hammer at work, and the glorious hot metal he was banging on!

That event was also my first hands on experience. After the crowd left, I asked the demonstrator, Jobie Spencer, if I could try my hand at making a bracelet. It was the most awful thing I had/have ever created - burnt, too thin in some places, sharp edges, more fried than forged. But I loved the process of it and I still have that gnarly piece of "jewelry" to always remind me of the first time.

I always knew I wanted to try to make my living as an artist. My college courses and interests were focused on metals, sculpture, and metalsmithing (different than blacksmithing). Blacksmithing was the culmination of many things for me. It has provided the most direct connection of working with metal. There was a psychological attraction as well- the challenge of being a woman doing what was traditionally considered "man's work". I also felt connected to the physicality of blacksmithing - the power, control, dirt, and sweat did not deter me in the least.

Traditional vs. Modern:

Traditional methods do not need modern facilities or equipment. Coal forges, hammer and metal, hand tools to punch and drift and cut, and an anvil for shaping and drawing are the tools of a traditional smith. Before the advent of the power/mechanical hammer, blacksmith's had strikers to work larger stock. Before electricity, hand filing, hand cutting, and brush cleaning all served the same purposes. I would define modern "techniques" as the use of equipment to achieve the same processes, only quicker. Blacksmiths work hard and smart, the upgrades in the shops of yesteryear were the result of those craftspeople inventing tools to make their jobs easier.

Joinery is probably the best example of contrasting traditional and modern methods. Before welders were invented, there was braising, and before that, fire welding (forge welding) and cold connections (rivets). They all provide the same function: to join two or more pieces of metal together - but they all require their own systems to work and they have very different appearances. Personally, I think it is most beneficial for a smith to know how to do all of the processes well.



Sun Burst Railing – 9 feet long

Tools of the trade:

My hammer is an Elmer Rousch design. I apprenticed with him and he made me my first hammer. It is a 2-1/2 pounder, with a large face, slightly rounded on the edge, and a wide cross pie. He made me a lighter version, 1-1/4 pound, which I use now as my primary hammer. My anvil style is also influenced by Elmer. He studied in Germany and used a double bick anvil (commonly refer to as a double horned anvil). When I left my apprenticeship, I purchased a 250 # Peddinghaus.

Advice on the Smithy as a business:

Determine what kind of smithing you want to do and your market as well as you can before spending a lot of money on equipment. Purchase as many things as you need at auctions and tool sales. Take classes with instructors who parallel the kind of smithing you want to do. Take a basic accounting class or have a friend who understands the business end of a business. Get yourself a business partner or an office goddess that does everything for you so you can stay behind the anvil! Craft shows are a big asset in the beginning - they get you and your work out in the public a lot quicker. You need to develop a line of merchandise for these events in a broad price range. Prepare yourself to be a "Yaksmith" - people are interested in learning about the craft. Talking about what you do and why you do it not only educates others, but will provide you with a sense of satisfaction. There's a fine line between being knowledgeable and entertaining, or coming off sounding like a pompous ass.

What do you get out of being a Blacksmith?

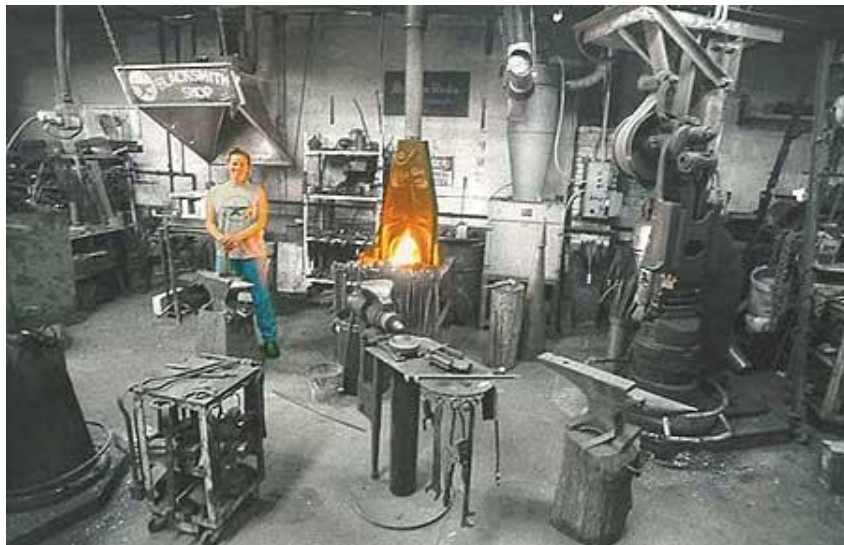
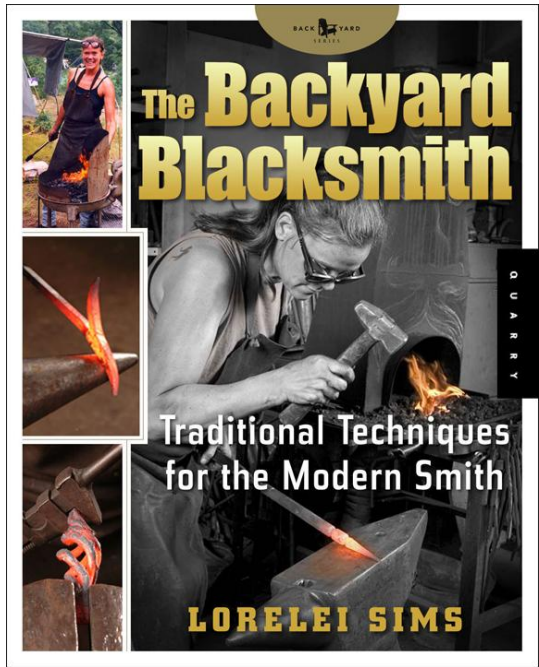
I have been fortunate to sustain a meager living at what I love to do. After 15 years, I get the same rush out of creating art, making others happy, and doing a job to the best of my abilities. The craft has centered me, empowered me, and challenges me everyday. Being in the business for myself is the most rewarding thing I know. The work I create are my children and my livelihood, my marriage.



Ryan's Tomahawk



Fireplace Screen 30" x 36"



Lorelei's Five Points Blacksmith Shop

March's Meeting was a good time by all. Our demonstrator was Randy Hodges, the pictures say it all!



**Top: Bob O., Tim and Eric
Left Mid: Randy Hodges
Right Mid & Left Bottom: Randy's turtle**



Randy Hodges working during the demonstration

Editor's Note: March has come and gone and we are well into April now. We have had two successful demonstrations this year and we hope to have many more. According to our website April 19th is going to be a work day for demo items. These days will be good days to share and learn some new techniques on making some items. It is also a good time to practice the items that you are thinking about making during the demo that are relatively fast to produce. During demonstrations the average attention span is only about 10-15 minutes so the faster you are able to show a finished item the more wow factor there is. You can also make blanks ahead of time so that they are in the demo box and make the demo go that much smoother. Well I hope that all those that individuals that are running the demos are writing up a storm and will give you the low down on the events in our May newsletter. ABANA is going to be having a **RING PROJECT** for the 2010 Memphis Conference. I have submitted a concept ring to the board and hope that some others will add their own ideas as well. This is a chance for our Guild to add to our Blacksmith community and also show off some of the tremendous talent that we have in our Guild. I have also proposed a RING PROJECT within TBG for each individual to showcase his or hers talents and the best part is that you will be able to update them when you have updated your talents. Of course both of these have to be approved by the board, so if your interest is piqued then see one of the Board of Directors or Officers for more info. Well hope to see you on the 19th. Happy hammering. [Vince](#)

Tidewater Blacksmiths Guild Mission Statement

“The Tidewater Blacksmiths Guild is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the craft of Blacksmithing and to increasing the public awareness of the history of Blacksmithing while at the same time demonstrating that in this world, things hand made still exist and remain objects of art”

2007 - 2009 TBG Officers:

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Tidewater Blacksmiths Guild meets every third Sunday of the month. Location of the meeting is posted on our website: <http://www.tidewaterblacksmiths.com> .

Demonstration Schedule: None scheduled

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www.blacksmithsupply.com

Yesteryear School of Blacksmithing, Crew, VA

<http://www.yesteryearschool.com>

Supporter of Blacksmith Guild of VA & ABANA

ABANA members receive discounts at www.Graingers.com

New England School of Metalwork 2009 Summer Session Instructor Workshop dates

Don Fogg – Mastering the Hamon May 1 -4

Clay Spencer – Forging Spike Novelties May 29 June 1

Elizabeth Brim – Sculptural Inflation June 5 – 8

Zack Noble – Hinged Outlook June 19 – 23

Rick Smith – Iron on the Wall July 10 – 14

James Batson – Forging Bell Dirks & Woodhead Bowies July 24 – 28

Peter Ross – Thinking Inside the Box August 7 – 11

Mark Asprey – Mastering the Fundamentals of Blacksmithing August 28 – September 1

Charley Orlando – Effective Forging Techniques September 11 – 14

Meagan Crowley – Foundations of Form September 25 – 28

Jonathan Nedbor – From Soup to Nuts October 9 – 13

Josh Dow & Lauren Holmgren – Cast Iron Sculpture October 23-26

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