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Presidents Message JAN 2009

2008 has been an experience. We've had our share of ups and downs. I would like to thank everyone for the opportunity to lead TBG and say thanks for all the help. The outgoing board members deserve a big round of applause for their service. Together we have accomplished a lot. We have our forge up and running again. We will have classes regularly in 2009. We have had regular demos and will have more in the future.

I want to welcome the new board. I'm sure we will accomplish many things and have fun doing it. We still have a lot of work ahead, but I'm sure this group can handle it. Anyone who has suggestions or ideas, feel free to contact one of us. I personally appreciate any input. I am always as close as a phone or computer. Send me your pictures let everyone see your work. The member's gallery has lots of room.

We have a lot of newer members who can use our help and advice. If you see someone struggling to do something jump in and help. We will be asking people to help with classes so contact Joe if you can help. Also some of our older members don't have their beginners yet, I know you're capable. (Hint!!)

May 2009 be the best year yet!

Travis

December Holiday Meeting:

Now on Annie (Roche), Bear (Short), Dianne (deBeixedon), Lemuel (Brown), Mike (Lambiase), on with you to guide the Guild a new! John Elliot was there with his truck full of goodies and good cheer of Blacksmith Supply you know my deer. New members and old mingled and jingled tidings of good cheer for all. That Paula and Steve made quite the pair, hosting us all, never minding the mess! Iron in the Hat had so many hand forged items the elves couldn't keep track of them all, so to all who forged and to all who contributed the other trinkets that blacksmiths snuggle down to dream about, THANK YOU ALL!!!! Wishing you all Happy New Year.



Joe's Happy!

Steve & Paula have a warm place for us to gather.





Overflow

That's what you call a fork!



Best Iron in the Hat Ever!



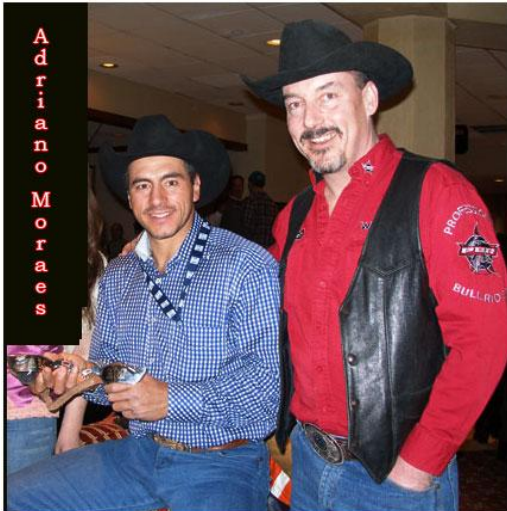
Oh the waiting

Not for All!



It was announced that we would be getting a generator to run our forges and equipment until we find a permanent home for TBG. Classes will be scheduled and of course our meetings will be announced. If you didn't attend this meeting you really did miss "The Best Iron in the Hat Ever", so far! Congratulations to our new board members and we all look forward to a year of forging and camaraderie.

Paul Kelleher, <http://www.cowboyblacksmith.com>, is a truly unique blacksmith who forges spurs that are, well as fine as a piece of jewelry. What's even more unique is that he is forging his beautiful work in that Great State of New Hampshire! I asked Paul how he became involved in Blacksmithing Spurs since N.H. isn't exactly known for having a large cowboy population and he related the following:



Paul presenting a Blanchard style pair of spurs to PBR Champ



John Wayne style spurs

I got hooked on making spurs when I was gifted a pair from my friend Joe. I put them on my boots and I was hooked-something clicked right away and it wasn't only the sound of the spurs. Having now become fascinated with spurs, while watching a Tom Selleck movie "Monte Walsh" I spotted a pair worn on his boots in the movie that I freeze framed the stills of-they were old, beautiful, and something I never saw before. A little internet research and I was introduced to McChesney, the "grandfather of the Texas spur". His work selling on eBay was way too expensive to buy so maybe I thought I could make a pair. Seeing what all of the old time spur makers did even back then only fueled my passion for wanting to know more

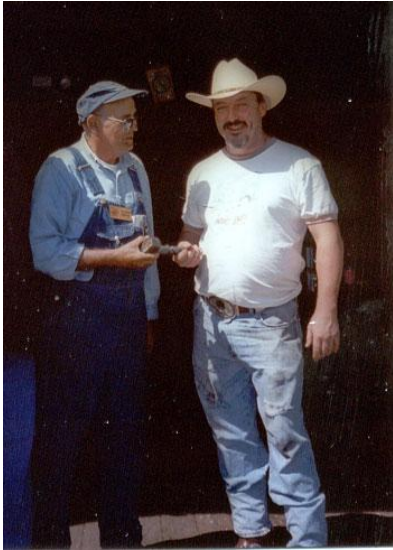
As luck would have it a woman at work got me into a great blacksmith apprenticeship (all free mind you) and I was off and running from my first lesson on-even made a forge from scrap yard metal and three days later pounding away in my own back yard. A video on how to make spurs by Bruce Cheaney jumped started the essentials and the rest was all self taught with loads of passion and drive-not to mention the thrill of actually succeeding in making a pair that were in their own right-first pair or not-good spurs! The parting words in the Cheaney video were "you can do whatever you set your mind to" and I heeded that advice well, though I admit it seemed a very daunting and overwhelming task in the beginning.

Heating a piece of found steel in the coals of my wood stove and splitting it down the middle on my concrete basement floor with an axe to make a spur was my first dive into blacksmithing-it worked and I was hooked! Forging "S" hooks at the anvil was my first "official" lesson and the reverse curve, symmetry, and techniques learned have applied themselves in countless ways since. Truly a valuable and insightful first lesson!

My passion and desire to know how to make a set of spurs after having been gifted a pair drove me to seek out a blacksmith apprenticeship, and one I am grateful to have been given the opportunity for. After having seen there is money to be had as a blacksmith, as well as feeling burnt out and a lack of appreciation at my former pottery job, it was an easy decision to make; become a full time blacksmith. Devoting 100% of my time to the craft resulted in skill levels and ideas at a rate no part time endeavor could accomplish.

My blacksmith instructor Clayton Shibles of NH is a fifth generation blacksmith and taught me "old school", I am grateful for that. A solid traditional foundation is integral to any serious blacksmith career.

However, both he and I see the merits in modern technology as they currently apply to our trade as blacksmiths. Surely had the Smiths of yesteryear possessed the technologies (such as electricity, welders and plasma cutters) as we have today they would have embraced them to some degree as well. Traditional methods are the foundation, modern methods merely another brick in the wall building upon what was laid down by traditional methods; one begat the other.



Clayton passes his hammer to me.



Wolf Spurs

My personal philosophy defining the difference between the two follows: Traditional methods of blacksmithing iron are indispensable and will always have a place in the craft. Blacksmithing is an ancient art and with few tools and materials much can be accomplished. Hand worked wrought iron has a look and feel no cold hand of technology can duplicate-however impressive it may be. The human eye and hand working in harmony with a sense of purpose and control coupled with the ever changing nuances of subjective change as work progresses is something no machine could ever duplicate! Truly a piece of oneself goes into hand worked iron. Effort, hardship, and determination win over the metal with perseverance and patience to create a one of a kind piece that impresses.

Time, efficiency, and money savings on the other hand, seem to be the impetus for modern methods of blacksmithing technology. They have a place, but one which only impresses in a technological sense of wonder. Machines like water jets can create what no human hand may, but the look is cold and calculated and has no soul. Welders and plasma cutters as tools are a huge advance in the field and have their place firmly entrenched with just cause. Modern tools and methods in the hands of a skilled craftsman with old school learned ways compliment the craft if used wisely and judiciously.

My favorite hammer is an older used tinsmith's hammer; it's 4 pounds, broken in, and fits my hand well. The better of my two anvils is about a 75 pounder I bought it used and it has a nice bounce. My welder, band saw, die grinder, and sanding belt are my most used tools, yet the hand files I swear by will always do a better job on the finer details of my work; the satisfaction of using time honored hand tools that work like a dream cannot be replaced by super efficient modern tools.

Go For IT!!! I was told that unless I was making gates and fences for high end clients there was little hope of a good paying career as a modern blacksmith. I am happy to prove that bit of advice wrong. My dream of becoming a spur maker with nothing but a desire and unbridled passion has come to fruition. I have since quit a good paying 21 year pottery career/job to pursue my own career in metal and it has been

quite successful and rewarding beyond compare! With unlimited imagination and a strong drive the sky's the limit-people will pay for quality custom work; it is very lacking in today's technologically mass produced and manufactured society. "You made that?" is a phrase that never gets old.

The satisfaction of pursuing time honored skills with a craft very old and humble provides a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment few other careers could provide. Muscle, sweat, and thought create works of art or utilitarian objects with only a hammer, heat, and steel. "If it's metal I can do it" is my favorite self proclaimed quote. Steel is durable, malleable, and beautiful in its own right. In the hands of a blacksmith it transcends its mere physical properties and transforms as if by magic into wonderful works of endearing art-worthy of praise and adoration. The creational and transformational opportunity it provides is only limited in as much as the imagination of the hand behind the hammer.

Seemingly small things like chancing to know now brother Joe the Cowboy Cop and a tip, from a friend at work, a Tom Selleck western I might enjoy was on TV that night turned into a good career with rewards immeasurable-go figure. I guess it was meant to be and when I look back at how fragile everything got started and how much I know now-I'm far less inclined these days to pass off even the smallest of things as trivial; I may never know where one path will take me, but the one I'm on is just fine with me.



Kelly spurs;
triple heart

End of the
Trail
belt buckle



Editor's Note: I think I might have to try and make a pair of spurs this year! The new year is here as I am writing this and I am really looking forward to doing some things at the forge throughout the year. I know that many of you have heard me talk about my front entrance railing and post; I will provide some pictures and a write up of what not to do! oops! I mean how masterfully I planed and executed the entire project when it's completed. I hope some of you will find the time to do the same. I know that I always enjoy hearing about how someone accomplished a project. I promise that I will not be an after the fact expert, because "All the experts come out after a job is done". We have 2 returning (Bear & Dianne) and 3 new (Annie, Lemuel & Mike) Board of Directors who will be guiding TBG for the next 2 years. Let us remember that they need our input and our assistance to make TBG an even better guild. Hear! Hear! I hope to see everyone at our January meeting, we are suppose to be electrically independent by then and our classes will be ready to begin. If you have been waiting, now is the time as everything is set. Contact Joe Gentile or Travis Covington for scheduling a class. If you have any ideas for a special class or have a particular area of skill that you would like to offer a class on contact the afore mentioned or one of the Officers or BOD. If you are good at something you can always give a demo at our meetings, if no one else does then that means that you will have to subject yourself to another demo by yours truly and I know that's sounds exciting. Keep this in mind; after you give your initial schpeel about what your going to be doing you kind of forget that you are doing a demo in front of who? The same guys you talk about Blacksmithing with anyway, they already know most of your faults so forge ahead and show off your

talents. We will all learn a thing or two; after all we all learn something new everyday. May we all have a healthy, wealthy and productive New Year!

Stupid is as Stupid Does: From Appalachian Area Chapter of ABANA Newsletter

It's something that we all agree that we should practice, but we don't always. When I experience a lapse of shop safety, I am reminded of a line from the movie *Forrest Gump*: "Stupid is as Stupid Does".

The incident happened to a member of our group who was working in my shop last winter. Bob (not his real name) was making a pot rack for his wife. He had made two very nice S hooks for hanging the pot rack but they were four inches short. Rather than take the time to make two more hooks, Bob decided it would be faster to cut the hooks in the middle and weld a 4" piece between the two forged ends.

The hooks were made of ½" round stock, and there were several options available for cutting them with a cutoff wheel mounted on a 4 ½" grinder. Using this method is pretty fast but creates huge amounts of sparks, so I offered him an apron to wear. He declined and cut the first hook without incident.

He cut the second hook in such a way that the sparks were directed at his stomach. Because it was cold he was wearing three layers; a T-shirt, a long-sleeved shirt and a shirt jacket. It was the shirt that caught fire. It didn't just smolder. There were actual flames! Bob very calmly put the grinder down and patted his tummy. Fortunately he was wearing gloves. He had a large hole in his shirt jacket **and** in his long-sleeved shirt. No damage to the T-shirt or to Bob, except, maybe his ego. I did not have a fire extinguisher in the shop that day. I do now!

If you don't think this can happen to you, I can tell you from personal experience that even fire retardant treated materials will be set a blaze if the grinding job is big enough and long enough. Ed.

Year in Review:



January 1st Meeting Blackwater



February -Tim demonstrates shoeing a mule



March a lot of standing around here.



April Tim doing another demo! Tack Hook

May Mike Tanner demonstrates



June Work Day shirts dirty



June Family Day-the shirts are cleaner



July more standing around!



August – Vince demonstrates a candlestick



September-Heritage Arts Meeting



October – Harvest Faire, Newport News



November – Keith Hicks demonstrates



Another look at our Holiday Meeting December 08



Jesse working on his first leaf & courting Candle



Bob receiving his plaque for being a Past BOD

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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Treasurer: Steve LaPaugh	(757) 877-5684	slapaugh@verizon.net
Secretary: Joe Gentile	(757) 965-6878	amx-ray@cox.net

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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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