

# THE HOT IRON SPARKLE

\* Newsletter of the North Carolina ABANA \*

www.ncabana.org

Volume 28 Number 3



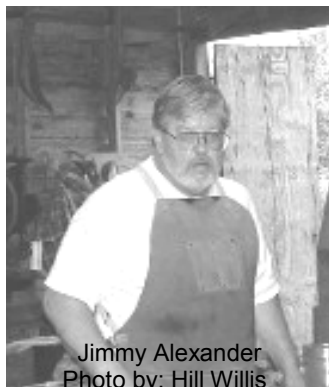
3rd. Quarter 2010 – July/Aug/Sept



## Clay Spencer And The New Clay Spencer Blacksmith Shop At The John C. Campbell Folk School

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## A Message from Our President



Jimmy Alexander  
Photo by: Hill Willis



**Cindy Alexander**

### **PRESIDENT'S LETTER** written by the 1<sup>st</sup> lady/acting president

The chapter held our 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter meeting at the Dixie Classic Fairgrounds in Winston -Salem. The Triad area group hosted an excellent day for about 45 of us. Billy Phelps entertained the crowd with his expertise in blacksmithing. Marshall cooked barbeque and all were well fed. Thanks guys for being great hosts! We have decided that our annual 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter meeting will be held at the Dixie Classic fairgrounds so we'll be back next year!

We have started planning our SBA conference in Madison, GA for next May 19-21. The NC chapter is in charge of it this time and I need your help. There will be two main forging stations with the third forging station being run by our chapter. We will call it the Jimmy Alexander, Bert Smith Forging Station. I will need volunteers to run blacksmith classes (1 ½ to 2 hr. classes) thru our station. Please look at your calendar and mark the days down and let me know. I know we have a lot of talent out there so please let's make Jimmy proud and fill the demonstrator slots. This is a great family conference so plan to come.

The theme for this conference is our family flower so we will have to make a petal. The exact dimensions haven't been set yet. I will be calling on some of you to assist with our portion of the project.

Our 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter meeting will be held at Jimmy's shop on 540 Foster St. in Durham. Robert Timberlake will demonstrate in the morning. After lunch (provided) we will have a tag sale of Jimmy's stuff (and there is lots of it)! Look for the list in the newsletter. Hope to see all of you there.

Forge safely,  
Cindy

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Submissions to the HOT IRON SPARKLE can be made to:

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## EDITOR'S NOTES

Dear Readers,

This issue features Clay Spencer and the Clay Spencer Blacksmith Shop at the John C. Campbell Folk School. Please check out Randy Stoltz's photographs and the interview I did with Clay at the school (starting on page 26). I learned a lot and you will too. Don't forget that the Folk School still needs your help in paying for the new facility. See page 25.

The time for the annual Dixie Classic Fair and the North Carolina State Fair is fast approaching. NC ABANA is in charge of the Madison Conference in May of next year. Cindy and Robert Timberlake will need all the help you can offer. Of particular need are members to demonstrate at the Jimmy Alexander Forging Station (see Cindy's President Letter on the previous page). It is important for the enjoyment of the attendees and, of course, for our image that this conference be a success.

Several of us NC ABANA members attended a meeting of the Blacksmithing Guild of Virginia.(article starting on page 23). They are a small group but are able to afford outside blacksmiths to come in and demonstrate. For at least one chapter meeting a year I would like to see that we, also, bring in someone from outside our area to demonstrate. I think it important we see other ways of doing things. I learned a bit of how they finance these demonstrations, so and I have an idea to propose: Our Iron-In-The-Hat proceeds are wholly dedicated to our scholarship fund. However, we don't seem to have many takers for these scholarships so this money tends to accumulate in the bank. I would like to propose that we limit scholarships to two per year (more than I recall we have given in any year). As long as we always have the funds to support these two scholarships I propose we set aside the remainder for outside demonstrators. What do you think?

Since the last issue we have established a method of communicating among ourselves by email. An email message written to our Google Group goes out to all members who have joined our group. Ninety-eight NC ABANA members have joined, which represents about half of the members with active email accounts. There has been a fair amount of interesting activity and it is hoped that the other half of NC ABANA members joins in. If you want to join, please send me an email requesting that I add you to the group.

Marty Lyon, Editor

## SECRETARY'S REPORT

Since we had a quorum of board members at the chapter meeting at Winston Salem, on June 21, 2010, we held a board meeting.

Cindy Alexander announced the Jimmy Alexander Forging Station at the Madison Conference. We will need demonstrators from our chapter for three sessions (twice on Friday, and once on Saturday). Entry prices for the conference will be the same as the last conference, \$50 for the weekend in advance and \$60 at the door.

There will be a special construction project consisting of a big flower (Mums). There will be a large center and each of the chapter affiliates of SBA will make a petal. It is hoped this will be auctioned for \$8,000 to \$10,000.

I brought up that the chapter needs to try to add at least two Regional Groups, one in the Ashville area and one at the eastern coast of the state. I suggested that our Vice President aggressively pursue this. We are underrepresented in these areas of the state.

I also recommended that the Treasurer prepare a more detailed statement of our finances so we know where the money is coming from, where it goes, and plan for new things.

Respectively Submitted,

Marty Lyon, Secretary NC ABANA

## Regional Group Meetings

### Triad Area Blacksmiths – Marshall Swarington

The Triad Area Blacksmiths have been lucky to continue the second quarter much like the first quarter. We have continued to work one on one with the new members. Starting in August, our Tuesday meeting will return to demonstrations and basic instructions. We will have open forges after the demonstrations are finished. The Saturday meetings will be a mix of everything from open forges, demonstrations, Iron in the Hat, and a short business meeting. So if you are in the area, you need help with a project, or want to hang out, please drop by the Blacksmith Shop at the Dixie Classic Fair grounds.

We have been invited back to the Honeybee Festival this September. Our September Saturday meeting will be held at the festival in Kernersville. The date is September 18, 2010 from 10 AM to 6 PM. Make plans to be there and bring stuff to show and sell.

I want to thank Andy Phillips for bringing some new hammers to the Saturday meeting to test. I think they got a good work out.

Since we have spoken about September, let me mention October also. The Dixie Classic Fair is October 1 through 10. If you would like to work in the shop, let me know who and when and I will have your name added to work list. I will then give you instructions for parking and entering.

We want to thank the State Chapter for letting us host the second quarter meeting. We hope everybody had a good time. Thanks Lenny and Billy for the demonstrations. Triad Area Blacksmiths will be the ongoing host for the second quarter meeting. If you have any suggestions to make it better, please let us know.

### Southern Foothills Blacksmiths – Randy Calhoun

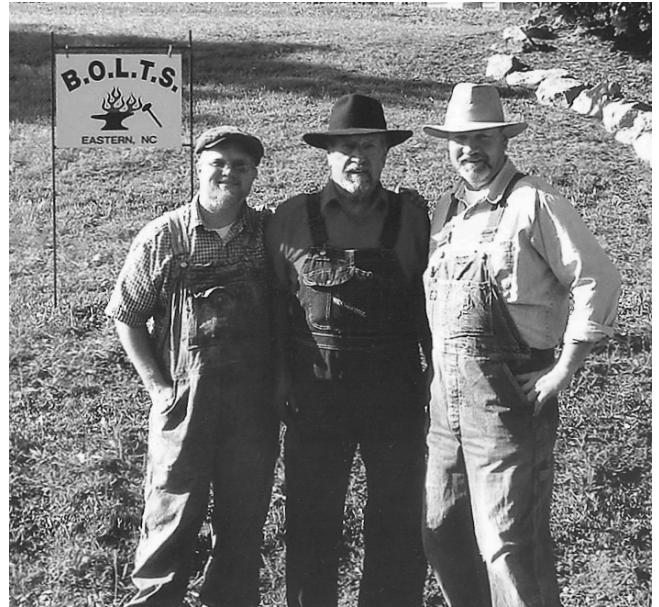
The Southern Foothills Blacksmiths met at Steve Barringer's shop in Mooresville, NC on May 9th, 2010. We had great meeting that included several knifemakers. This prompted Robert Silver to demonstrate the forging of a blacksmith knife. Ray Clontz brought some coil spring to use as the knife material and we used Steve's power hammers to flatten the blade and draw out the tang/handle. This is a great project for wanting to get a better understanding of the forged blade. The new comers seemed to have a great time and we hope they become regulars. As always, we appreciate Steve allowing us to invade his space.



## B.O.L.T.S. Blacksmith Guild – Amos Tucker

### B.O.L.T.S. At “The Got To Be NC Festival”

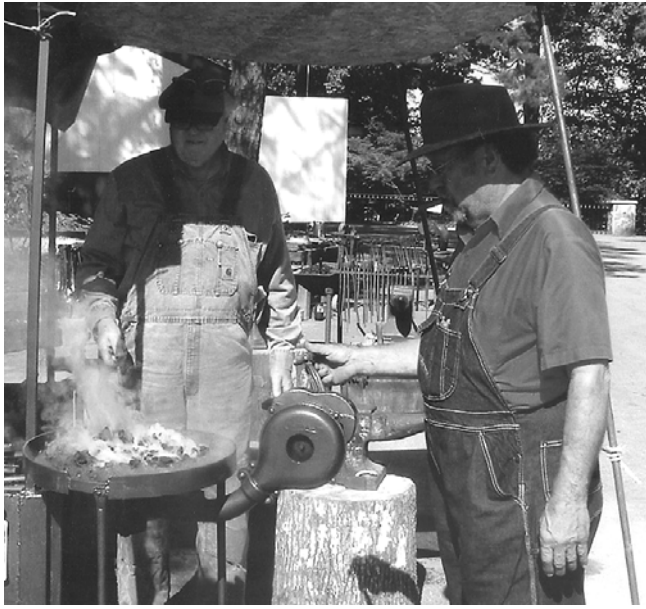
Back in May, during the “Got To Be NC Festival”, members of the B.O.L.T.S. guild set up and demonstrated blacksmithing to a great crowd. Members Charles “Andy” Anderson, his wife Tanya, Andy Wilkins, Ronnie Caudle, John Sykes and myself endured pouring rain and humid weather while showing interested passersby and tractor enthusiasts the art and allure of our ancient and intricate craft. A special thanks needs to go out to Chris Hewwett of Wilson for taking time off from work at NC State to come help us unload on Thursday and another thanks to Kirt Jarrett of Goldsboro for providing the coal we used. We also would like to thank Don Dillon and Eric Campbell for coming by and helping demonstrate.



There were several inspiring moments during the three days we gathered together. One was when the Commissioner Of Agriculture, Steve Troxler, stopped by and thanked us for being there and invited us back next year. Another was when Randy Stoltz and Marty Lyon came by and commented on what a nice showing we were making for ABANA and invited us to their Triangle Guild meetings which we all are looking forward to. Also, the church service Sunday morning was one of the best I have ever attended. You should have seen us in our overalls and neckties, it took us back a hundred years. Next year every NC ABANA member should attend this service in overalls and neckties.

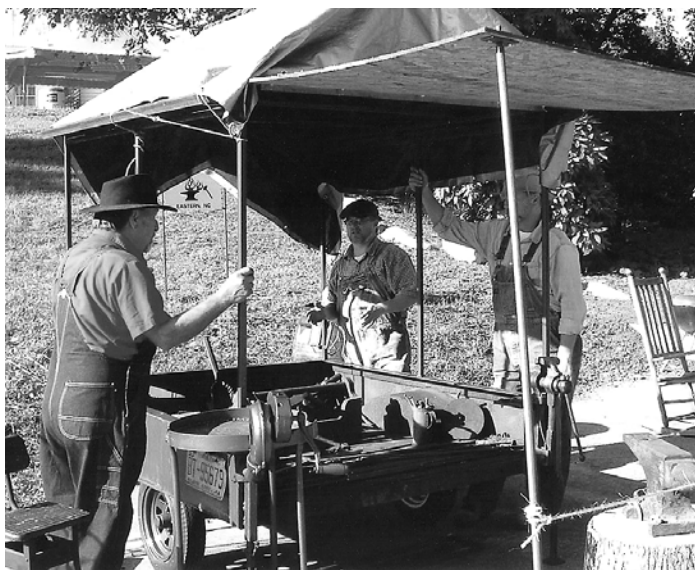
The highlight of the entire show though was when an assertive but kind lady in her overalls came down the hill to where we were and asked us to come eat Sunday dinner with her. This was “maw”, the mountain woman from Alabama that cooks over her open fire at the Village of Yester year during the fair in October. Maw is quite the character, spinning tales from the fire, quicker than most can keep up with, about her life, her struggles, and her family long gone, all the while tending to pots of vegetables and pans of chicken. This seemingly frail and soft spoken grandma like figure will quickly set you straight as to how things are in her roped off area. This we learned





as we were “initiated” into her group Sunday by a short question and answer ceremony ending with the crack of a bullwhip. You respect maw, not because you have to but because you want to and not because you want some of those fine vittles she serves up. No, you respect maw and you listen to her because she is the quintessential mother or grandmother we all knew in our youth. She knows best, and you know this from the stories she tells of her life and the few friends she lets into it. I can’t wait until October to see her again.

(The B.O.L.T.S. guild is planning on making maw some cooking utensils, I’m sure she would appreciate anything any other guild would make for her. Who knows, you might get a meal out of it.)



### B.O.L.T.S. Group attends the Mid West Tool Collectors Association Meeting

MWTCA (Mid West Tool Collectors Association) is an organization where it's members meet to buy, sale, trade, and discuss old tools. Seven members of the B.O.L.T.S. guild found their way to Raleigh for this year's annual meeting at Ed Hobbs' house on Saturday, July 24th . While sporting our new name tags Andy Anderson had provided, showing our call letters and signature fire on the anvil emblem, we were able to educate the mostly wooding working gender of the meet about blacksmithing, our guild, and ABANA. This was well received thanks partly to the program that followed.

The program featured Peter Ross and Bill Anderson demonstrating how to attach wooden handles onto metal tools such as draw knives and chisels. Bill had turned handles for the demo and Peter forged tapered bars close to the tapers of the tool's tang and use it rather than the tang of the tools to heat up and burn a tapered hole into the handle. Peter also showed two ways to hold the handles onto the draw knives he had forged at home. One was to peen a washer on the end of a drawknife's handle and the other was to clinch over the end of the tang and embed it into the wood.

There were over three hundred people in attendance and over thirty dealers set up to sell. Several blacksmithing tools were there. I personally saw three leg vises, four anvils and a cache of tongs, hardies and swage tools which most of the group did not know what they were. My "big find" was a set of line shaft brackets and pulleys that I plan to run wood working equipment with. Kirt Jarrett scored a nice tenon cutter and spoke pointer to be used in his wagon wheel making. Andy Anderson was able to find three old wooden planes in very nice shape for only \$20.00. He plans to use them in the wood working section of his newly built shop at Historic Waynesborough Village in Goldboro.

A lunch of pulled pork barbecue with chicken and all the fixins was included in the \$20.00 ticket price and was followed by an auction with almost 100 lots.

If you are not familiar with "Mid-West" then you should look into joining, it is a great way to find those old tools we all long for and a great way to learn about how they were used and when . You can find info at [www.mwtca.org](http://www.mwtca.org) .



## Brasstown Blacksmiths – Paul Garrett

### Clay Spencer Blacksmith Shop Now Open Brasstown, NC

Clay Spencer Blacksmith Shop Now Open  
Brasstown, NC

The new blacksmith shop at the Folk School is now open and we held the first class there this week with Judy Berger from Pennsylvania teaching beginning blacksmithing during Intergenerational Week.

We had one last push to get moved in during the week of July 12<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>, and managed to get it accomplished thanks to some volunteer labor, and determination. There was a lot to do including the re-fabrication of some tables and racks, also the cleaning and maintenance of some tools and equipment before they were relocated. Dozens of small jobs to numerous to mention, but all important were preformed.

The Spencer shop looks great, and everything is working as planned. The new layout is very efficient, and there is room for everyone, as well as easy access to the major equipment such as power hammers and the like. The ventilation is much improved, and there is now a restroom inside as well as drinking fountains. Everything had to be just right, and we kept going until it was.



*Come and see us soon, but meanwhile,  
enjoy these photos.*



## Triangle Blacksmith Guild – Randy Stoltz

### Meeting June 5, 2010

The June meeting of the Triangle Blacksmiths Guild was held at Marian and Eric Campbell's shop in Raleigh, NC. Despite the heat, approximately 25 members and guest attend this meeting and workshop on making tongs. After firing up his portable ammo can forge, Eric demonstrated making tongs from ½ inch round stock. Following the demonstration, the forge was opened up to anyone who wanted to make a pair of tongs. A second forge was also fired up and a number of people hammered out tongs. Eric found the ½ inch round stock, already cut to length, at a Durham scrapyard and graciously donated it for this meeting. We took a break for a lunch with hotdogs, chips, cold drinks, and some great desserts. Following lunch, we continued forging tongs, riveting them together, and discussing the various types of tong. The meeting wrapped up later that afternoon.



### Meeting August 7, 2010

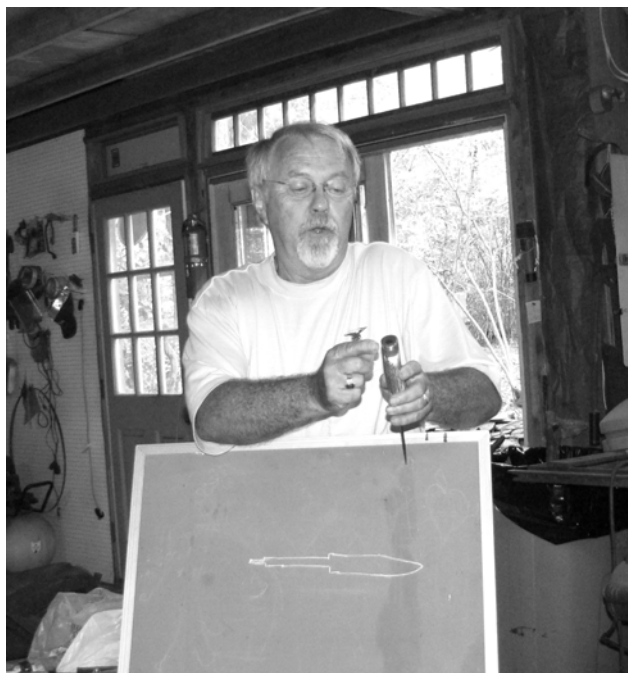
The August meeting of the Triangle Blacksmiths Guild was held at Don Jone's shop in Raleigh, NC. Approximately 30 members and guest attended this meeting and workshop on making knives. Don Jone's Tapestry Gardens, where his blacksmith shop is located, is filled with interesting sculptures and artwork making it a great place to hold a meeting. To start this meeting, Dan Ritchie and myself showed how to finish knives by putting on blade guards, handles, and end caps. Dan discussed the various types of tangs and the different ways the handles were secured using pins, two part threaded pins, and epoxy. We discussed ways to make, fit, and finish blade guards and butt caps using both hand and power tools. Different types of materials used for handles and blade guards were on display along with various blades. There was a lot of interest and question on this part of our meeting as this was the first time we had focused on finishing knives in addition to forging blades.

Next we moved out to the forge where Lucas House did a very interesting demonstration on forging aluminum. Lucas talked about the differences in forging steel and aluminum and how the aluminum quickly go from solid to liquid when overheated. He also noted the usefulness of this strong but lightweight metal that does not rust. Lucas used an infrared thermometer to check the temperature of the aluminum block and when the forging temperature was right, he took the material to the power hammer and showed how it worked. Lucas became interested in forging aluminum because he is working on a large gate where the weight of steel would have been excessive. This part of the meeting had nothing to do with knife making but it was such an interesting topic that we added it the agenda anyway.

With the forge still ready to go, we got back to the knife making with Don Covalt showing how to forge weld steel cable to make a patterned steel knife. Forge welding the 1 inch steel choker cable into a solid billet required heating, fluxing, and striking as you would expect. However to keep the cable from splaying and fraying, you need to rotate it in the direction of the twist as you strike it. It may also be necessary to heat the cable and clamp it in a vise to twist and tighten the strands as you work it. Note that not all cable can be forge welded as one piece of cable we tried to forge resisted all attempts to weld it.

This small strand cable had an outer jacket with a twist that was opposite of the inner cable and splayed in all directions when we tried to forge it. Following Donnie's demonstration we fired up a second forge and opened up both forges to anyone who wanted to give it a try. There was plenty of interest and quite a few people tried forge welding cable (donated by Donnie Covalt).

We took a break for lunch where there were giant submarine sandwiches, chips, cold drinks, watermelon, and some seriously chocolate brownies for dessert. Following lunch more people worked on forge welding the steel cable and the meeting continued well on into the afternoon. For an August meeting we had the coolest temperatures of the week and plenty of shade to keep us comfortable at Tapestry Gardens.



## Second Quarter 2010 Chapter Meeting

**Dixie Fairgrounds, Winston Salem, NC – June 21, 2010**

*My thanks to Brian Nalley for many of the photos in this article*

We really have to give a lot of credit to Marshall Swaringen and his folks at the Triad Area Blacksmiths group. NC ABANA basically started with this group 28 years ago and they keep going strong. Besides being extremely active with multiple meetings each month, they really focus on bringing their younger and beginner blacksmiths along. There are always green coal activities - as there was in the afternoon of our Second Quarter Chapter meeting. The Triad Area Blacksmiths have hosted this early summer meeting as long as I have been a member of NC ABANA. They are blessed with beautiful facilities at the Dixie Fairgrounds: a great forging area, great spectator viewing, and lots of area to hold activities.



*When Billy Speaks People Listen - Raptly*

At this meeting Billy Phelps demonstrated finishing touches rather than constructing an entire piece. He partially constructed a candlestick holder and concentrated on the fine details that turn an ordinary steel object into a great piece of work. It's always great to attend a Billy Phelps event, his humorous, running, commentary, is filled with much information for the Blacksmith who is there to learn.

When Billy finished, Lenny Moore took over and made a fork. This is a project every blacksmith needs to master. Though appearing simple, there is the matter of careful splitting of the steel to make the tines identical and of the correct shape to look good and to be useful. Finish work in the handle is also important to make a product that you can enjoy, give away with pride, or sell.

We thank the Triad Area Blacksmiths for hosting another great chapter meeting.



*Example of Candlestick Holder of*

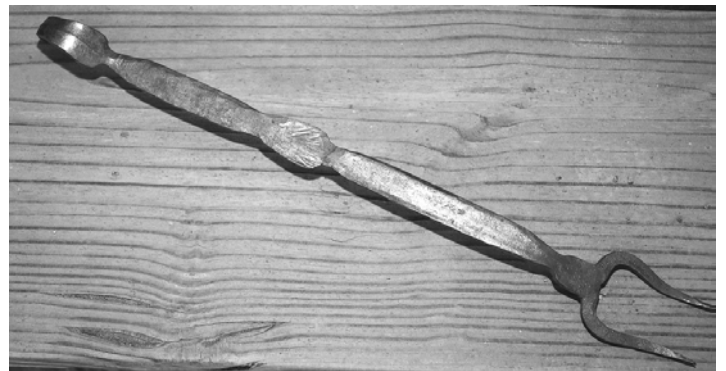
*Billy Illustrating a Point* →





*Lenny Moore At The Anvil Making His Fork*

*Billy thinks we all should be able to make drawings like this before starting a work – Right! All it takes is a little drawing skill like Billy's*



*Lenny's Demonstration Project*



*Iron-In-The-Hat*



*Green Coal – Watch and Learn*



← *Billy Phelps*

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** We were fortunate to have two guests at the chapter meeting in Winston Salem. Both are with the Winston Salem Journal: Reporter Paul Garber and photographer Lauren Carroll. Their article which appeared in their newspaper on June 27, 2010 follows:

## Blacksmiths Put On A Fiery Demonstration

By Paul Garber

Photographs by Lauren Carroll

WINSTON SALEM JOURNAL

Published: June 27, 2010

Sparks fly when Billy Phelps strikes a Y-shaped piece of hot, glowing orange steel with a hammer. It cools to dark gray as he smooths out the edges with the help of an anvil before reburying it in a tall fire of burning coals.

It's the first step in forging the steel into an ornate three-legged candlestick holder, and a crowd wrapped around the blacksmith shop at the Dixie Classic Fairgrounds watches as he sketches variations on what blacksmiths could do to make the candlestick holders with different designs.

"What I'm trying to do here is to give y'all some ideas to go home and play with," Phelps said.

Phelps, of Woodlawn, Va., is no stranger to blacksmith demonstrations -- he has even given them at The Smithsonian Institution in Washington. But yesterday, he was displaying his craft here as part of an annual meeting of the Triad Chapter of the N.C. Artist-Blacksmiths Association. About 35 blacksmiths and aspiring blacksmiths attended.



Marshall Swaringen of Advance, the chapter's president, said that the demonstrations are a way for current artists to learn new techniques and to introduce the art to a new generation.

"We're trying to expand this dying art, which is no longer dying," he said.

The Industrial Revolution nearly wiped out the craft in the early 20th century as machines took over work that once was done exclusively by hand. But blacksmithing has made a comeback in recent decades, prompted by a disposable society's interest in making something lasting, Swaringen said.

"If you create something and it lasts forever, it's fulfilling," Swaringen said.

He pointed to a hook on one of the beams at the shop. It's a small piece of metalwork that's easy to overlook but includes a lot of craftsmanship, Swaringen said. The blacksmith who made it tapered the edge of the steel into a hook, bent the end over so the tip wouldn't be sharp, added a design of twisted steel at the middle for a bit of decorative flair, then made a flat top at the end with a hole so that it could be hung.



Swaringen said that when he was a child, if his family's tractor broke down, it would sometimes be up to him to get it running again until it could be repaired. He would sometimes use an acetylene torch to weld little pieces of his own.

That experience taught him about the value of being able to make your own tools. It's a lesson that he still uses today in his gun-dealer business, in which he sometimes has to make his own parts to restore antiques.

"If you get a broken old shotgun, you're not going to be able to find a firing pin for it," he said.

Andy Phillips was among those watching Phelps' demonstration. Phillips, of Morganton, is a full-time blacksmith who has been in the craft for about 10 years.

Among the things he makes are steel-headed sledgehammers, which he sells to customers all over the world. Some of them were being used in yesterday's demonstrations at the fairgrounds.

"It's nice to make a tool and then come watch people use it," he said.

## Upcoming Chapter Meeting – Jimmy Alexander’s Shop

**Durham, NC – September 25, 2010, 9:00 AM**

Robert Timberlake will be demonstrating during the morning. After lunch, we will be holding a tag sale to dispose of much of Jimmy’s equipment in the shop. There will be lots for sale. A sample of just some of the equipment follows:

<b>Panasonic Dip pulse Mig welder</b>	<b>Various angle grinders</b>	<b>Victor regulator</b>
<b>Panasonic Tig star welder</b>	<b>Air grinders</b>	<b>Various welding rods</b>
<b>Battery powdered drill</b>	<b>Swage block</b>	<b>Welding screen</b>
<b>Hand drills</b>	<b>Hardy Hole Cone</b>	<b>Various welding shields speedglas electric shield</b>
<b>Craftsman pneumatic 3/8 ratchet wrench</b>	<b>Misc. tongs and hammers</b>	<b>Safety harness (2)</b>
	<b>Hot cut punch set</b>	<b>Metal (lots)</b>
	<b>Victor torch set...no tanks</b>	<b>Steel and aluminum I beams</b>

### Directions to The Meeting: (540 Foster Street, Durham - 919-302-1401)

From Raleigh:

Take I-40 west and take the Highway 147 (Durham Expressway) exit .

Follow Highway 147 and take the Duke Street Exit.

On Duke Street go through 3 stoplights and turn right on Corporation Drive.

At the first stoplight turn right onto Foster Street

The shop is in the middle of the big gray warehouse at the corner of Corporation and Foster.

From I-85 (north or south):

Take the Gregson St. exit off I-85

Go 10 blocks and turn Left onto Trinity Street.

At the third stoplight turn right onto Foster Street.

The shop is three blocks down on the left at the corner of Corporation and Foster.

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## Blacksmith Auction at the J. C. Campbell Folk School

**November 6, 2010 at the John C Campbell Folk School Blacksmith Shop**

Some of the old equipment from the Francis Whitaker Blacksmith Shop that will not be used in the new Clay Spencer Blacksmith Shop will be auctioned off at the school.

Please contact Paul Garrett (828-835-8441, pdg86@hotmail.com) or Clay Spencer (256-498-1498, clay@tirehammer.com) if you any questions.

The following is a tentative list of items. Other items may be added or deleted from this list. All items are used, sold as is, you should inspect before you bid, there will be no refunds:

1 ENCO 7’ x 12" bandsaw, 1 hp, 120 volt motor, horizontal or vertical, lube pump

1 24" diameter Buffalo blower, pulley, no motor

1 Delta Industrial 2 speed vertical bandsaw, cat no.28-348, 16 amps, 120 volts

Bench grinder, TBD

2 Welding carts for Oxy-acetylene, 20" between wheels

Vises, number and size TBD

Anvils, number and size TBD

Tongs, number and size TBD

2 Dayton blowers, mod 4C329, 3" wide x 12 1/2" diameter wheel, no motors

1 Enameling Kiln, no control, 120 volts, large

1 Blower with motor

NC Tools gas forges, 2 burner and 3 burner, propane, number TBD

Student forges, 32" square with 3" air pipe, air gates, Laurel

Machine and Foundry firepots, clinker breaker and ash dump, stainless steel side draft hood, 6' galvanized double wall flue pipe, number TBD

Gas forges built at Folk School, about 5" wide x 4" high x 16" long inside, 3 burner with hose and gas regulator, hard fire brick and kaowool with metal stand, number TBD

1 Instructor forge 3' x 4' with blower, air gate, Laurel machine and Foundry firepot, clinker breaker and ash dump, no hood or flue pipe

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## Announcing the Francis Whitaker Blacksmith Scholarship

Two \$700 scholarships will be available for the Traditional Joinery Projects class at the John C. Campbell Folk School, November 7 - 12, 2010 taught by Clay Spencer.

This scholarship is for intermediate and advanced students who have a solid foundation in basics, can manage a coal fire and forge weld.

Interested blacksmiths should supply the following information and mail it to Clay Spencer at 73 Penniston Private Drive, Somerville, AL 35670. Contact Clay at 256-558-3658 or [clay@otelco.net](mailto:clay@otelco.net) if you have any questions:

1. Name, address, e-mail and phone number
2. Describe your blacksmithing experience, how many years, classes taken, jobs, kind of work you do, how many hours you blacksmith in an average month.
3. Goals for your blacksmithing career, what you wish to do as a blacksmith
4. Make a scale drawing of a proposed project (your original drawing not copied from another source), Should show 2 or 3 views with stock sizes and specify proposed joinery. Include a cut list for the stock. This does not have to be the project actually made in the class.
5. Describe your participation in the blacksmithing community: teaching, demonstrating, craft shows, writing articles, belonging to and attending local groups, attending conferences
6. Explain why you need a scholarship to attend a class
7. Do you sell blacksmithing items you make? What type items? How do you sell?
8. Include at least 3, no more than 5, photos of some of your work.

The completed application should be mailed no later than September 30, 2010.

Successful applicants will be notified by October 15, 2010. The money will be paid directly to the Folk School. You will be responsible for all other costs such as fuel fee, materials, transportation, etc.

You are requested to write a 2 page article explaining some of the blacksmithing techniques used in making your project, (include some photos or sketches) and send it to your state organization.



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This is the third newspaper article, we are featuring, that recently appeared about blacksmiths and their families in North Carolina. This article appeared in the Raleigh News and Observer on July 23, 2010

## Blacksmith Shares His Craft

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY ANDREW KENNEY – NEWS AND OBSERVER STAFF WRITER



*Amos Tucker stokes a fire in his forge at the Tobacco Farm Life Museum in Kenly*

KENLY -- In a wooden blacksmith shop, canvas belts whir overhead, connecting machines twice the age of the blacksmith. Amos Tucker heats steel rods in a forge first built in the late 1920s, then hammers their red-hot tips on a nearly ancient anvil.

Dozens of antique wrenches, tongs and other tools line the building's wooden walls, which are part of the Tobacco Farm Life Museum in Kenly. A taxidermied fox seems to watch as Tucker shapes a piece of metal with a power hammer built in 1917.

Since age 15, "I just was captivated by antique tools - the mechanics, the sound it makes, the smell of the wood shavings and coal smoke" he said.

After getting hooked on the "The Woodwright's Shop with Roy Underhill," a PBS show featuring antique tools, Tucker began to collect his own tools almost 30 years ago. It started with wrenches and tongs, but in the late 1990s, he bought a set of larger tools and machines from Claude Hinnant, a neighbor in Wilson County.

### **Antique tools**

"It wasn't antique when he started," said Tucker, now 44. When Hinnant died, Tucker took the forge and anvil to the funeral to honor him.



Though Hinnant didn't teach Tucker blacksmithing, the equipment was a gateway to a small, well-forged community. Tucker, a full-time machinist, slowly added to his collection and used his modern equipment and abilities to repair the hulking old machines.

"I could afford the broken ones," he said. It took him about 100 hours of work to rebuild the power hammer. Teachers and mentors at the John C. Campbell Folk School, meanwhile, taught Tucker the art of the blacksmith, a craft that eventually evolved into professions like welding and machining.

Now, Tucker and other modern-day blacksmiths meet as guilds and brotherhoods, swapping techniques, talk and tools. The North Carolina branch of the Artist Blacksmith Association of North America boasts 228 members, who practice everything from horseshoeing to blade smithing.

"Most of us just love to create and make things for fun and some small profit," Marty Lyon, secretary of the state ABANA, wrote in an e-mail message. Part of the appeal might be the heat of the fire, the strike of the hammer or the feel of the metal, he said.

Often, a blacksmith's greatest lessons come from other smiths, who are eager to share their craft, Lyon said. As they progress, blacksmiths can repair or make parts for many metal objects; craft furniture, utensils and fixtures; forge tools; and make art.

Golden tobacco leaves, molded of steel, are one of the most frequent products of the historical shop, which the Tobacco Farm Life Museum added to its Kenly campus about five years ago.

The building is meant to evoke a blacksmith's shop circa 1920, when the craft began to evolve into its modern forms.

### **Careful, detailed work**

Tucker's drill press weighs 400 pounds and dates to the 1880s. It's far slower than a modern machine, he said, but bores polished, gleaming holes. A modern machine, Tucker said, leaves "ugly, tore-out" marks.

Some of the equipment illustrates a transition into a new age of industry. Tucked in a corner, an electric motor from 1923 runs the yards-long canvas belts that transfer energy across the room to some of the machines.

Visitors are often enchanted by the blacksmith's patient, steady hand. He waits for his metal to glow red-hot, then hammers it until it grows cool and repeats the cycle.

Often, the finesse of the work isn't obvious until a finely detailed metal leaf emerges from hammer blows and steel.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** I came across this really interesting article about Trena McNabb, Tommy's wife, in the Winston Salem Journal. So you guys, when you have finished reading it please pass this on to your significant other so they can also enjoy this inspiring article.

## Bethania Homeowner Planted By The Pound

By David Bare

Photograph by Lauren Carroll

WINSTON SALEM JOURNAL

Published: July 9, 2010



There are plenty of reasons one would want to avoid mowing grass.

There's the noise, the fumes and the consumption of gasoline.

Trena McNabb reminded me of all of these as we looked at her wildflower meadow.

**She has her own reasons, too.** The endless marching in circles to the accomplishment of absolutely nothing is a big one. "I don't like repetitive actions," she said. "I just think that grass is a total waste of time, energy and resources."

Then there are the coneflowers, the goldenrod, the ironweed, the butterfly weed, the black-eyed Susans, the butterflies and the goldfinches.

All of these played in painterly fashion in McNabb's meadow, about an acre of reclaimed land that is sweetly sandwiched between her house and the wide, gurgling, cliff-lined waters of Muddy Creek. It's a fine place to garden.

When Trena and her husband, Tommy, moved to their Bethania home in 1993, the land below them had been cleared to run a sewer line to Tobbacoville, following along the creek. The city of Winston Salem then planted and maintained the area, using the standard techniques and equipment used to stabilize roadbanks and maintain them to avoid erosion. This includes using massive equipment and planting lespedeza, a member of the pea family commonly employed for such purposes and often spreading to the exclusion of most other plants.

McNabb bargained with the city for her to maintain the field along the sewer line. The city was happy to take the property off the mowing schedule, and McNabb was happy to keep the mowers out.

She started her meadow by spraying the imported vegetation with an herbicide.

"I was eager to get seeds out and started planting by the pound that autumn." Butterfly weed and coneflowers started popping up the next spring -- but so did weeds and lespedeza. "I should have spent another year getting after the weeds," McNabb said.

The lespedeza has been a perennial problem. McNabb has even fashioned a special device to deal with it.

"I took a one-and-a-half-inch paint brush and attached it to a long stick so that I can paint herbicide on the plant," she said.

The meadow is a constantly changing palette of flower colors. The rosy mauve of purple coneflowers dominated on my visit along with bright orange and yellow daylilies. Butterfly weed was fading and black-eyed Susan's were just beginning. Soon to come are two species of ironweed, Joe Pye weed and such rarities as Schweinitz sunflower and Georgia Aster.

"The ironweed is so fabulous," she said describing the multiple, midnight-purple flowers, a favorite of both bees and butterflies. The Schweinitz sunflowers were a gift from Emily Allen and Ken Bridle, fellow wildflower enthusiasts.

Lewis David Von Schweinitz (1780-1834) was an ordained Moravian deacon and considered one of the founders of mycology, the study of fungi, in North America.

The Schweinitz sunflower, a rare inhabitant of the equally rare Piedmont prairie habitat, was named in his honor. Schweinitz may well have wandered this land during his time at Salem.

McNabb has been successful raising the plant form from seed. She divides it and spreads it around the property. She also gathers seed when ripe and spreads it the same way. She has accomplished a fairly even distribution of wildflowers across the meadow with this technique. She has also experimented with "live stakes." These are branches of silky dogwood that are hammered into the ground where they take root and help stabilize the stream bank.

McNabb said that she has been an artist since she left high school. At one time she was holding what were essentially two full-time jobs, as art director for AT& T and as a painter doing corporate contracts. Her husband, Tom, is a professional photographer and blacksmith. They have been married 20 years.

McNabb's interest in wildlife and botany figures heavily into her painting as well, often incorporating preserved plant specimens among the multiple layers of painting and drawing that make up her canvas.

Her work, which is deeply infused with her love of nature, demands careful attention, only revealing its myriad intricacies and inter-dependencies after careful study.

The North Carolina Native Plant Society has been an integral partner as McNabb created her wildflower meadow. "I don't think I would even be here without the native plant society," she said. "They make plants available through trade and their plant auctions. They are always willing to give you tips and good advice. And they tell you, 'No, you are not insane, this is a wonderful project.'"

**Information on** the North Carolina Native Plant Society can be found at [www.ncwildflower.org](http://www.ncwildflower.org).

McNabb's source for live stakes is Foggy Mountain Nursery, 336-384-3764 or [www.foggymtn.com](http://www.foggymtn.com).

McNabb uses an herbicide called Aqua Star. It does not contain the harmful detergents. It can be found at Green Resource, 336-855-6363 or 1-800-225-8061.

McNabb has ordered seed from Shooting Star Nursery, 502-867-7979 or [www.shootingstarnursery.com](http://www.shootingstarnursery.com). She's also ordered from Prairie Moon Nursery, 1-866-417-8156 or [www.prairiemoon.com](http://www.prairiemoon.com). Plants come from Meadowbrook Nursery, 828-738-8300 or [www.we-du.com](http://www.we-du.com).

You can visit McNabb's website and see more of her work at [www.tmcnabb.com](http://www.tmcnabb.com).

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## ATTENTION PLEASE!!

I want to let you know that IF YOU MOVE, THE POST OFFICE WILL NOT FORWARD YOUR NEWSLETTER TO YOUR NEW ADDRESS EVEN IF YOU FILL OUT A CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM. Let me repeat that: **IF YOU MOVE, THE POST OFFICE WILL NOT FORWARD YOUR NEWS-LETTER TO YOUR NEW ADDRESS IF YOU FILL OUT A CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM.**

**If you don't wish to miss a newsletter, mail me the form on page 41, send me email, call me on the phone, or program the GPS in your carrier pigeon to get me your new address.**

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This newspaper article is about Jeff Bridgers, a young blacksmith who volunteers at Poplar Grove Plantation in Wilmington, NC. The article, by Associated Press reporter Amanda Lucci was published on July 10, 2010 in the Wilmington Star News and on July 18, 2010 in the Raleigh News and Observer.

## Black Heat Forge Owner Brings Metal Pieces To Life

By Amanda Lucci - The Associated Press

Photograph by Mike Spencer, Wilmington Star News

Published July 10, 2010 in the Wilmington Star News

Published July 18, 2018 in the Raleigh News and Observer



WILMINGTON -- On a 97-degree Thursday in Wilmington when most people were taking refuge in their air-conditioned homes, Jeff Bridgers stood determinedly in front of an Industrial Revolution-era furnace in the blacksmith hut at Poplar Grove Plantation.

He twirled a long, thin piece of steel around in the furnace until it glowed bright yellow, then hammered and tapered the softened metal to a precise point. He did this as many times as it took to get it right, hammering, twisting and curving until he forged the perfect embellished S-hook.

"There's not a lot of people that do this," Bridgers said as he cranked the manual furnace, heating the steel to his desired temperature of 1,500 degrees. "People don't really know what it is anymore," he said. "I could probably make a horseshoe, but I wouldn't be able to fit it to a horse. ... Horseshoers are called farriers, and I'm not a farrier. I do ornamental iron work. Some people call it art - I would definitely call it art."

Bridgers first became interested in smithing five years ago, when he began to appreciate the detail in hand-forged work, such as iron gates, he passed on the street. He received his welding degree from Cape Fear Community College around that time and took a job at a crane factory before embarking on his own blacksmithing business, called Black Heat Forge, in the summer of 2008.

"I would sit there and weld all day long and I would be like, 'Man, this is monotonous.' It's not what I wanted to go to school for. I wanted to go to school to learn how to make decorative metal stuff," he said. "That's when I discovered blacksmithing. Just getting a raw piece of metal - a straight, boring piece of metal - and taking it and turning it into life."

As passionate as he is, Bridgers is finding it difficult to make a life out of his craft - he is already considering going back to school in the fall to become a paramedic. Other blacksmiths in town have full-time jobs, too, Bridgers said, but his goal is to get enough custom work to make smithing his biggest commitment.

"I have a wife and a house and things like that," he said. "She's very supportive, but I feel the need to pick it up a notch and keep going. It's just going to be hard to line up enough jobs to where I feel comfortable enough."

### Expanding the business

Bridgers invested in modern smithing equipment like a propane forge, and he does custom jobs out of his home studio in Wilmington. He volunteers in the more traditional blacksmith shop at Poplar Grove during the week, making smaller pieces like S-hooks for tourists or school field trips. He will sometimes show and sell his work at local art fairs and gift shops. But when it comes to really making a name for himself as a blacksmith and selling large, custom, hand-forged pieces, Bridgers struggles - and the economy hasn't helped.

Recently, Bridgers attempted to market himself to local contractors and architects around Wilmington, but their business seems to be hurting even more than his, he said. Membership in the North Carolina chapter of the Artist-Blacksmith's Association of North America has actually doubled over the last five years. Even so, Bridgers has been hard-pressed to find an architect that will give him the time of day, let alone a job. "I feel like the real estate and the housing and the building community, they're so wrapped up in just throwing stuff together and so used to ... stuff that can be made in no time flat, and they just totally forget about something unique," he said. "They think the time isn't worth it, and it really is. People feel connected with hand-forged iron work."

### A custom handrail

But when downtown Wilmington resident Mary Margaret Konz was in the market for a custom handrail for her loft bedroom, a quote from Bridgers only increased her excitement.

"I had already interviewed quite a few welders, and I'd been getting quotes for like two or three years, and I just didn't like the work I had seen. It looked manufactured," said Konz, who had built a sleeping loft in her small studio condo but needed a handrail on the stairs leading up to and around the area.

After going through three different drawings, Bridgers and Konz settled on a French-style design with very few straight lines. Bridgers spent 40 hours over four weeks constructing the piece and installed it in mid-June.

"I wanted something that was a timeless piece, and I also wanted something that was unique. You cannot find this at Home Depot or Lowe's," Konz said. "For this particular piece, in this space, it's basically a piece of art in my home. ... It's so beautiful, it took my breath away."

Word-of-mouth has been the best form of marketing so far, said Bridgers, who was recommended to design custom iron work for the new Crow Hill restaurant.

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## Sampson County History Museum Is Looking For Blacksmith Demonstrators

The Sampson County History Museum in Clinton, NC is looking for blacksmiths who would be interested in volunteering to do blacksmithing in our new blacksmith shop. We will have a Grand Opening for shop and a Craft Demonstration Day on October 9, 2009. The Craft Day will be at the museum premises from 10:00am - 4:00 pm with other local artists demonstrating their unique in quilting, Indian beadwork and dream catchers, soap making, candle making, crocheting, knitting, and others. Thanks for your help. Please contact David & Jeannie King. Telephone 910-590-0007, schm@intrstar.net.

## Iron Fest at the Yesterday School of Blacksmithing

By Marty Lyon

One of our neighboring ABANA affiliates, the Blacksmithing Guild of Virginia held an Iron Fest on June 19 (there was a notice of this event in the last "The Hot Iron Sparkle"). The event was held at the Yesterday School of Blacksmithing in Amelia Virginia. At least seven NC ABANA members attended: Randy Calhoun, Randy Stoltz, Randy Marshburn, Donny Covalt, Jim Kennady, Kent Flowers, and myself. If I missed someone please let me know and kindly accept my apology for the oversight.

The meeting was excellent. Mike Tanner who runs the Yesterday School of Blacksmithing (the school building is on his property along with his home) and Peyton Anderson, President of the guild were excellent hosts. Lunch was great and



*Yesterday School of Blacksmithing Building*



*Mike Tanner (left) Peyton Anderson (right)*

the weather was beautiful. The best part of the meeting, however, was the demonstration by Randy McDaniel. Randy made a colonial shutter-dog and then a fanciful horses-head hook. But it wasn't what he forged that made the demonstration great – it was what he said. He talked constantly while he worked, giving advice and tips galore. He covered many, many topics. I really would like to see NC ABANA have him as a demonstrator at one of our meetings.

We have excellent demonstrators at our meetings, some of which are actually on the demonstrator circuit such as Tal Harris, Peter

Ross, and Jerry Darnell. Others like Doug Merkel teach. But, for at least one chapter meeting of the year it would be good to call in a blacksmith who we do not normally see. This would be to acquire other ideas and knowledge. I think this would also bring more people to our chapter meetings.

While NCABANA covers all but a small part of North Carolina, Virginia goes in a different direction. They actually have seven separate ABANA affiliates. This results in smaller groups that are more localized, rather than spread out as we are.

To get someone like Randy down to demonstrate is not inexpensive. Besides, the well-earned fee, transportation and lodging are additional expenses. Yet, the meeting was free to all comers – AND, their member dues are ZERO. I think understanding how they can afford such expenses may be of interest to us as alternates to financing.

First of all, their newsletter is on-line so costs nearly nothing - no printing or mailing expenses. I think this works for a small group, where, most likely, all members know each other. We are spread out over a large

geographical area with many more members, so the newsletter, if good, tends to be the adhesive that holds the group together. Our newsletter consumes a large part of the dues you pay. I would never suggest we do an on-line newsletter, as many of our members do not have computers.

Second, all of their Iron-In-The-Hat proceeds go to paying their chapter expenses, like demonstrators. They applauded our use of Iron-In-The-Hat for scholarships, but I think we could use some of that money for chapter expenses. Our scholarship fund builds up because of the number of members applying is rather low. I have more to say about this in my Editor's notes earlier in this issue.



*Randy McDaniel - Demonstrator*

Thirdly, they hold a silent auction, whose proceeds go to the chapter. The pieces made by the demonstrators go into this auction, as well as other items offered by their members. The horse's head hammer made by Dan Boone, at one of their meetings, went for over \$300.



*Dan Boone's Demo Piece at the Silent Auction*



*Peyton Anderson Does Iron-In-The-Hat*



*Donny Covalt and Randy Marshburn*



*Lots of Stuff For Sale*



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## From Clay Spencer – 2010 ABANA Conference in Memphis

I was very happy to see ABANA get back on track and put on a successful conference. Co-chairs Lance Davis and Dave Hutchinson did a great job. It was close to us and one of the best features was camping less than 100 yards from the demo tents. The setup crew included many of the ones who worked at the last several conferences and then some of them put the 3 ring projects together. There were 3 demo tents and a large teaching station site. Everything ran pretty smoothly starting with demonstrations on Wednesday night (and on other nights, also). There were some very good demonstrators with only one from outside the states.

Apparently the conference made some money for ABANA with 934 attending, (probably 150 "comped"), I heard a comment that they were "in the black" before the iron in the hat and the auction. The board members did most of the work rather than hiring a college to do it as we used to do when I was on the board. Iron in the hat brought in \$11900 which was nearly 50% higher than the previous record of \$8000 (thanks partly to a tire hammer). Another advantage of this site was a large air conditioned space (with restrooms) which accommodated the gallery, auction, registration, affiliates, ABANA, book sellers and tool vendors. Rapid City was there trying to work up some enthusiasm for the 2012 conference.

The tail gating was fair, a little above average for an ABANA conference. The one thing that was not up to par was the food. There was only one small food vendor in the building, but several restaurants were only a few miles in either direction and a farmer's market with steakhouse was on site. Those of us who camp didn't have a problem.

I was disappointed that few attended from AFC, AAC, NC-ABANA, SC and Georgia.

There was a wedding before the auction, after the Memphis style bar-be-que. Col. Anthony Goodrum, AFC's auctioneer, did an excellent job on the auction for a total of \$56,231. The fabulous lock and key made by the Patient Order of the Meticulous Metalsmiths went for \$21,500. ABANA board is hoping final figures will show a profit of nearly \$90,000.

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## The John C. Campbell Folk School Needs Financial Help

While it is true that the new Clay Spencer Blacksmith Shop is complete enough for classes to be held within it, the building is by no means paid for. They are not even close. The school had to borrow at least \$200,000 to complete construction (I could not get the exact figure). This is about a third of the total cost. It is true that the project was started under much better financial times, and if proposed today, it most likely would not have been attempted. However, the reality is that the building is complete and it is magnificent.

I traveled to Brasstown to get the interview with Clay Spencer and to see the facility. Boy, was I impressed. Not only is it spacious, it now has bathrooms (imagine that) and a library / classroom / meeting room. There are so many wonderful details. I expect it will be featured on the next edition of "Timber Framers Gone Wild". The blacksmiths and other craftspeople were no slouches either. In the parlance of the younger generation, "That place is sure COOL".

The "**Buy a Beam for Jimmy**" project had netted \$2125 as of August 4, according to Reed Caldwell at the Folk School. This is enough to "buy" a plaque with Jimmy's name to be attached.

So please contribute to the "Buy a Beam Project". On the "memo line" of your check please put Jimmy Alexander Buy A Beam Fund to avoid your contribution going to the school's general fund. Mail contributions to:

Jimmy Alexander Buy a Beam Fund  
Attention: Reed Caldwell, Development Manager  
John C. Campbell Folk School  
1 Folk School Road  
Brasstown, NC 28902

## Clay Spencer Interview – by Marty Lyon

### Photographs by Randy Stoltz

Thanks to Anna Shearouse, archivist of the John C. Campbell Folk School for additional information

The John C. Campbell Folk School bestowed a great honor on Clay Spencer by naming the new blacksmith shop after him. This honor is richly deserved because of the great service Clay has done in his twenty-four year association with the Folk School. I thought it was important that we also honored Clay by getting to know him better. I also had the desire to see the newly completed facility. Randy Stoltz came to the school with me; he had never been to the school and was anxious to check it out. Randy was an enormous help to me by being the photographer, allowing me to concentrate on the interview with Clay.

Previously, I don't think I had said much more than "hello" to Clay so I was a little nervous in anticipation. Of course, I had no reason for nervousness; we hit it off just fine from the start. He is quite easy to talk to. He is soft spoken and is a genuinely nice person. He seems to be in awe of the honors that have been bestowed on him. I did find that Clay is quietly assertive. You can see that when he wants something to happen he can be very persuasive. Obviously, this is why he was able to make so many things happen at the school.



*Clay Spencer - Blacksmith*

He is an Aeronautical Engineer with many years experience in design and management. He worked on the Space Shuttle and the Saturn rocket programs for NASA at the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. Getting back down to earth, he loved tinkering and building. As a child at his grandfather's farm, he dismantled the farm's cream separator. His family did not meet that with enthusiasm. "That was not a good day". He made a gasoline powered lawnmower from an engine his uncle gave him and the spiral blade from a manual, reel, type mower. The first rotary mower he ever saw was one he made from an article he found in Poplar Science. It worked, but in retrospect, he always figured he was lucky it didn't break and cut off a foot.

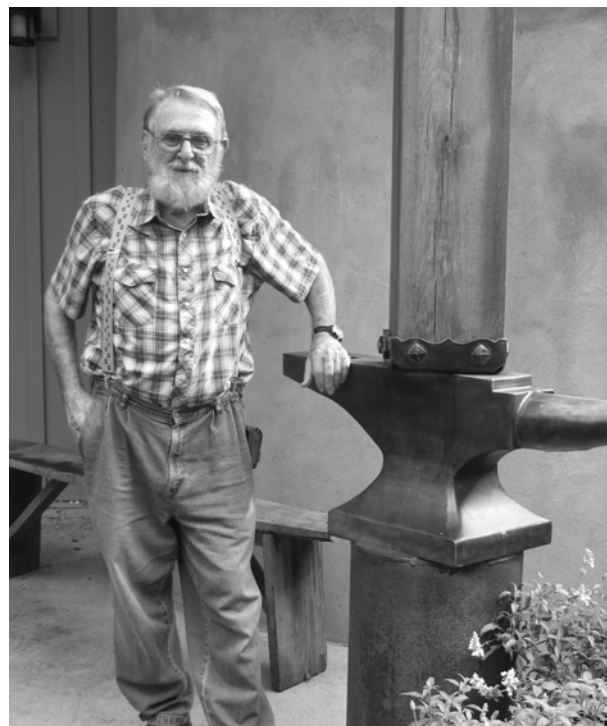
Much of Clay's blacksmithing history is entwined with the John C. Campbell Folk School, Francis Whitaker, and treadle and tire hammer workshops. We get to know a bit about Francis in this article because he was a large, perhaps larger than life, figure in Clay's past.

Except for a ten-year period in his adult life, when Clay forsook blacksmithing for white water canoeing, he had a forge. After a day's work and weekends were spent in his shop. He sketched blacksmithing projects during NASA meetings.

In January 1987, the year before he retired from NASA, he took classes from Jim Batson of the Alabama Forge Council. These classes were after work on Friday nights from 6 PM until midnight (when most of us would have other things on our minds besides pounding steel). Two months later, in March, Jim came to the Folk School to teach a tool making class. Clay came along with him. This was his first time at the Folk School as a student. After that, Clay spent all of his vacations at the Folk School taking classes.



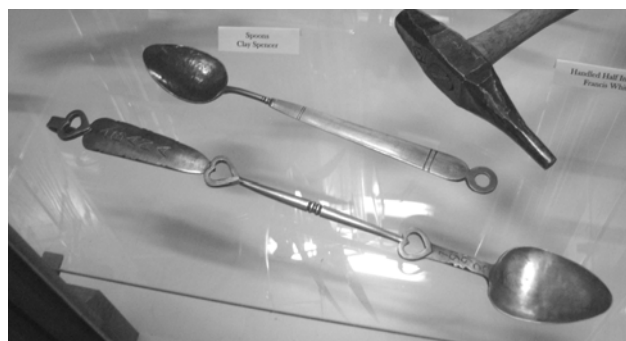
*Clay Spencer Blacksmith Shop*



*Clay Outside The Front Entrance*

He laughs about taking a class with Walt Scadden during this first year. He made a three-legged table with some twists in the stretchers. Walt looked at it and said, "No, no, no! You can't build that, it's too boring, and we would all fall asleep. You've got to do something with flowers and vines and leaves". Because he was a student, Clay remade his table. Don't think that would happen today.

In 1988, after taking classes at the Folk School for only one year, Clay took an early retirement from NASA (he was 57 at the time). In the same year, he decided to take his first class with Francis Whitaker. Clay told me he felt some trepidation because Francis had a well-deserved reputation for being mean. "He chewed me out and cussed me when I didn't do something right. He didn't like people with beards, and I had a full beard. He also didn't like people to wear long sleeves; he wanted them to tolerate the pain of the hot iron hitting their arms. Of course, I wore long sleeves. The first thing he ever said to me was, 'Are you beyond help?' I stammered, 'No, Sir.' But, it took me a long time to realize what he meant by that. His teaching style was for students to ask him a question. Then, he would ring the bell calling the class together, and answer the question. If he forged an example, he would add his touché mark to it and give it to the student".



*Clay's Work On Display At The Folk School  
Cowboy To The Left, Spoons Above*

Also in 1988, again after only one year at the Folk School, Clay was asked to teach his first blacksmithing course. This began his long teaching career at the school, which extends to this day. The Folk School catalog shows that Clay will be teaching two one-week classes, one in November the other next April.

His association with treadle / tire hammers began in 1987. He refined an ABANA swingarm treadle hammer design by adding the ability to use hardy tools, and by putting a slider in the hammer head so it could be raised up and down (facilitated by adding a turnbuckle to adjust the head height). He built the hammer and brought it to the school to use in class. Francis Whitaker thought it was Rube Goldberg. It took Francis a couple of years to warm to the device, but eventually he asked Clay to build one for his new shop in Carbondale, Colorado.



*Clay and I Talking Outside the Francis Whitaker Blacksmith Shop*



*Table Made By Clay On Display In Keith House*



*Looking Over The Pickets – Second Floor Of The Clay Spencer Blacksmith Shop*

In 1990, he took the hammer to the ABANA conference in Alfred, New York. The device was a hit and Clay instantly was in demand to hold treadle hammer workshops. This became a new career for him. In 1998, he added the inline or roller blade treadle hammer workshops. Finally, came the tire hammer workshops. So far, 324 tire hammers and over 800 swing arm and inline treadle hammers have been built in workshops. There are also workshops to build tools for the hammers. In a three-day class about 1000 individual tools can be made from about 30 different designs.

Clay met Bert Smith in the early 1990s when he took a class with Peter Ross at the school. They became close friends and their wives also became close friends.

In April of 1992 Francis wanted to retire so he asked Clay to take over his classes. To make the transition, Francis said, "You be my assistant

this class and I will be your assistant the next class”.

The first part of that worked just fine, but not the second. Clay says, “There is only one alpha dog in the pack and that always had to be Francis.” After three days, Francis told Clay he was on his own. At the same time, Francis recommenced that Clay sit on the Folk School’s board of directors. Clay was duly elected. He sat on the board from 1991 to 1994 as an honorary member and as an official member from 1994 to 2002

Francis had always tried to improve the shop and make improvements around the rest of the school. When the school built the new dining hall, Francis and his students made the incredible chandeliers. After Francis left, Clay and Bert Smith took on these repairs and improvements. One of the major changes to the blacksmith shop was the addition of the forge blowers. Forging stations on one side got them one year and the other stations got them the next. After Francis passed on, they replaced the dirt floor with the current brick floor. They also added the side-draft hoods to the forges.

The school held haphazard workweeks when there were no classes. Clay, now on the board, used his management experience to match people’s skills to the tasks at hand and only invited those people who they could depend upon to truly help. Clay and Bert instituted a blacksmith workweek along the same lines that continues to this day. Blacksmiths are invited to come and work for nothing but food. Apparently, the food is pretty good because there are plenty of workers. Peter Ross’s mother taught cooking at the school and would hold her workweek at the same time



*Student At New Double Forging Station – Clay Spencer Blacksmith Shop*



*Tire Hammer Picket - On Railing, Second Floor of Clay Spencer Blacksmith Shop*

the blacksmiths held theirs. She always had orders for the blacksmiths to make utensils, tools for the hearth, and hooks and things. In return, she made breakfast for the smiths.

The blacksmith workweeks Clay organized did as much for the school as for the blacksmith shop. You cannot walk very far on the campus without seeing where the blacksmiths left their marks. There are the major projects like the red railing to the dining hall, the fireplace screen in the Keith House, the bell tower by the dining hall, and the sign welcoming you to the campus. But there are many more projects: signs all over the school, railings, gates, hinges, door knockers, cooking utensils, even cooper roofs.

Along with Clay’s activities at the Folk School he served three terms on the ABANA board of directors. For ten years he edited “Bituminous Bits” the newsletter of the Alabama Forge Council. In 1994 Clay was awarded the first Joe Humble Editor’s Award for the best ABANA affiliate newsletter.

When Clay was diagnosed with prostate cancer he resigned from the ABANA board. In 1997 ABANA honored him with the Alex Bealer Award, the most significant and

prestigious award ABANA presents. ABANA also gave him lifetime membership. Clay limited his activities while dealing with cancer. The red railing to the dining hall was built during some of this period and Clay credits Bert Smith for its construction and later maintenance.

Clay, today, nearly 79 years old, is healthy and still very active, teaching at the Folk School, leading tire hammer workshops, and demonstrating. He makes 4 to 6 tire hammers a year to “support my habit”. He goes out to the shop every day making tools.

Some quotes from Clay:

“The honor of having the blacksmith shop named after me is the biggest and most tremendous honor I have ever received”

“Blacksmithing is the most rewarding thing I have ever done in my life. Blacksmithing has been wonderful to me.”

“When I first started blacksmithing, I wanted to know how to do everything”

“My blacksmithing has been an amazing career, as far as not what I make, but being able to demonstrate, teach, and to lead workshops. That part has been so great for me being able to help other people, and I’m probably as well known a blacksmith in this country as anybody from all the demonstrations and workshops I have done”

“Blacksmithing has been such a blessing to me in my retirement to have something that is so much fun, so enjoyable. It’s been great. I’ve got so many friends. I go to conferences mainly to see my friends.”

What do you tell someone just starting out in blacksmithing? “Take classes, you can read books, and do it yourself and never get there, compared to taking some classes.”

“I’m surprised at what I am able to do at my age. I must think it’s fun”.



*Clay Reminiscing In Front Of The Building Where He Had So Many Fond Memories  
You Can See The New Clay Spencer Blacksmith Shop In the Right Background*

## ON FRANCIS WHITAKER:

Talking to Clay revealed quite a lot about Francis Whitaker so I thought I would include some of the interesting stuff. Let me first say that it might appear this article is critical of Francis. People did fear him and he obviously had quite an ego. However, I do not mean any disrespect to his memory - he was a truly great person, blacksmith, and teacher. He may not have had the patience of a Clay Spencer, but people came back time and again to take his classes.

You have to admire anyone who freely gives of themselves to teach by passing on the secrets they discovered in their own careers so their students could be successful. Francis did not need come to the Folk School to teach two, two week classes a year as well as being on the school's board of directors. He obviously did it as a service to blacksmithing and to blacksmiths. You will find he was a staunch environmentalist and political activist being on the city councils of Carmel, California and Aspen, Colorado

He won ABANA's 1986 Alex Bealer Award. National recognition came to him in 1997, when the National Endowment of the Arts named him a National Heritage Fellow

It's a little too long for this article (after all this is about Clay

Spencer) but the New York Times ran Francis' obituary when he died in 1999. I strongly recommend it too you. You can find it on the web at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/10/31/nyregion/francis-whitaker-blacksmith-dies-at-92.html>. The 200 man shop referred to is Samuel Yellin's blacksmith shop in Philadelphia, PA

### On to some of the things I learned from Clay about Francis Whitaker:

Francis hated for you to use the welder, insisting you use traditional joinery (mortis and tenon) and forge welding.

Francis first came to the Folk School in the middle 1970s. He first taught at the small Oscar Cantrell shop where students had to bring their own forges. Only one blacksmith, Paul Garrett, the resident blacksmith of the school, now uses this small space.

The "Francis Whitaker Blacksmith Shop" was dedicated to him in 1993. The sign outside this shop was built the next year in 1994. It was built during a blacksmith workweek.

Francis and his wife Portia had vanity license plates: "Meow 1" and "Meow 2". No, they did not have cats; they considered themselves to be "old cats". If you look closely at the sign for the Francis Whitaker Blacksmith Shop, you will see at the bottom of the two rails, near the ground, two cats.

Francis' father was an architectural reviewer and got Francis his one-year job with Samuel Yellin. Francis moved on to apprentice in Berlin.

According to Clay, "Francis was not mean to you as long as you did just what he told you to do. If you screwed something up, Francis would go up to his forge, ring the bell, and say, 'Look what this dummy did', but with stronger language. In his book, Francis said that there might always be a better way to do



*Clay By "Francis Whitaker Blacksmith Shop Sign" Built At Clay's Blacksmith Workweek In 1994*

something, but in his classes the better way was his way because he had already made all the mistakes. He had already figured out all the dumb ways. Francis could not stand for anybody not doing his best work. He had a hard time with people not trying.”

Clay related one instance where Francis corrected a student and went back a half hour later to find the student was doing the same mistakes. “As far as Francis was concerned, if you did not do something the way he taught, you might as well not be there. From that time on, Francis did not stop at the student’s forge or speak to him. He shunned him.” When one student fouled up a project, Francis had a dunce cap made for him that he had to wear to the dining hall.

Francis did not like short hammers like Hoffi’s “rock on a stick”. He wanted you to use the whole, long, hammer handle with your hand at the end. “One time he saw someone choking up on the hammer handle. The next day the guy came in to find that Francis had wrapped barbed wire around the handle forcing him to hold the hammer at the end of the handle. Another time, he threatened to cut most of the handle off the hammer when a student choked up. The student said, ‘Go ahead, it’s your hammer.’”

One year Francis used one of the three silos behind the shop to illustrate how to build a spiral staircase. Today, two of these silos are incorporated into the Clay Spencer Blacksmith Shop, and, indeed, one contains a spiral staircase – the only way to reach the second floor.

## ON THE SCHOOL AND THE BLACKSMITH SHOP:

The school owns 400 acres of land.

“The Francis Whitaker Blacksmith Shop had been a deserted dairy barn built around 1931. Walls were made of slip-form concrete, a new process by a Dutch engineer. The building was overgrown with vines with a concrete floor with a gutter. Use your imagination to figure out what the gutters were for. Francis liked a dirt floor so that replaced the concrete floor. The vices and anvils were lined up such that you could stretch a string down them and they would all line up. That was Francis.”

On the origins of the new building: Clay started telling the administration that they needed more space in the blacksmith shop as there was so much equipment it was getting dangerous to work in there. About 6 years ago Charles Judd of the Timber Framers Guild was teaching at the Folk School (he still teaches at the school). The guild was looking for a project in the area so he proposed that they build a timber framed structure for the school. After several years of pushing and prodding the school they made a project of the new blacksmith shop. They did not charge for their time – they are a volunteer organization. What they produced was just magnificent.

Starting in 1991, and finished in 1993, Francis led three workshops to build the chandeliers for the dining hall. The next year the blacksmiths built the sign for the Francis Whitaker Blacksmith Shop. The red railing was started the next year and finished in 1997.

The school used to have a triangle to call people to meals. Clay thought a school should have a school bell so he bought one. On Thanksgiving it was stolen which led to the construction of the bell tower with the bell up 20 feet in the air. This is Clay’s favorite project. Matt Jenkins designed it and it compliments the red railing.





**ON BERT SMITH:**

The red railing was chiefly Bert’s project. Bert encouraged people to put different twists in the pickets. It was his idea to incorporate the ovals in the railing and to put the logos of each class within the ovals. Bert made the wooden logos. Some of the resident craft people made the logos representing their classes.

Bert would spend a couple of days of each workweek maintaining the projects the blacksmiths had done for the school. If he had been alive today he would have painted the red railing (it needed it). We, and the school, sure miss Bert.

Bert Smith was a musician, playing the bass and the tuba. He was always in a band. I could never quite pin Clay down to what type of music Bert played. If you would like to comment on this please do so.



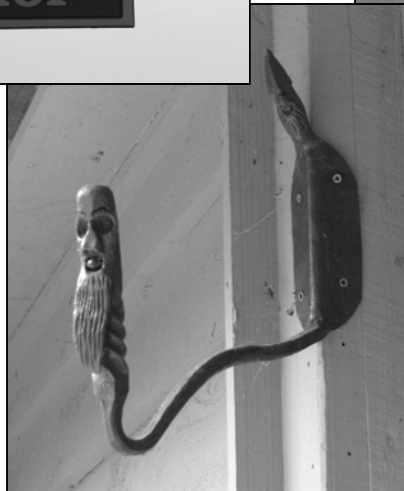
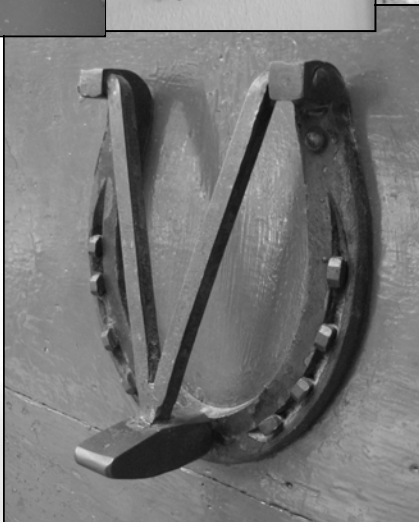
*The Red Railing – Clay Credits Bert Smith For Much Of Its Existence And Maintenance*

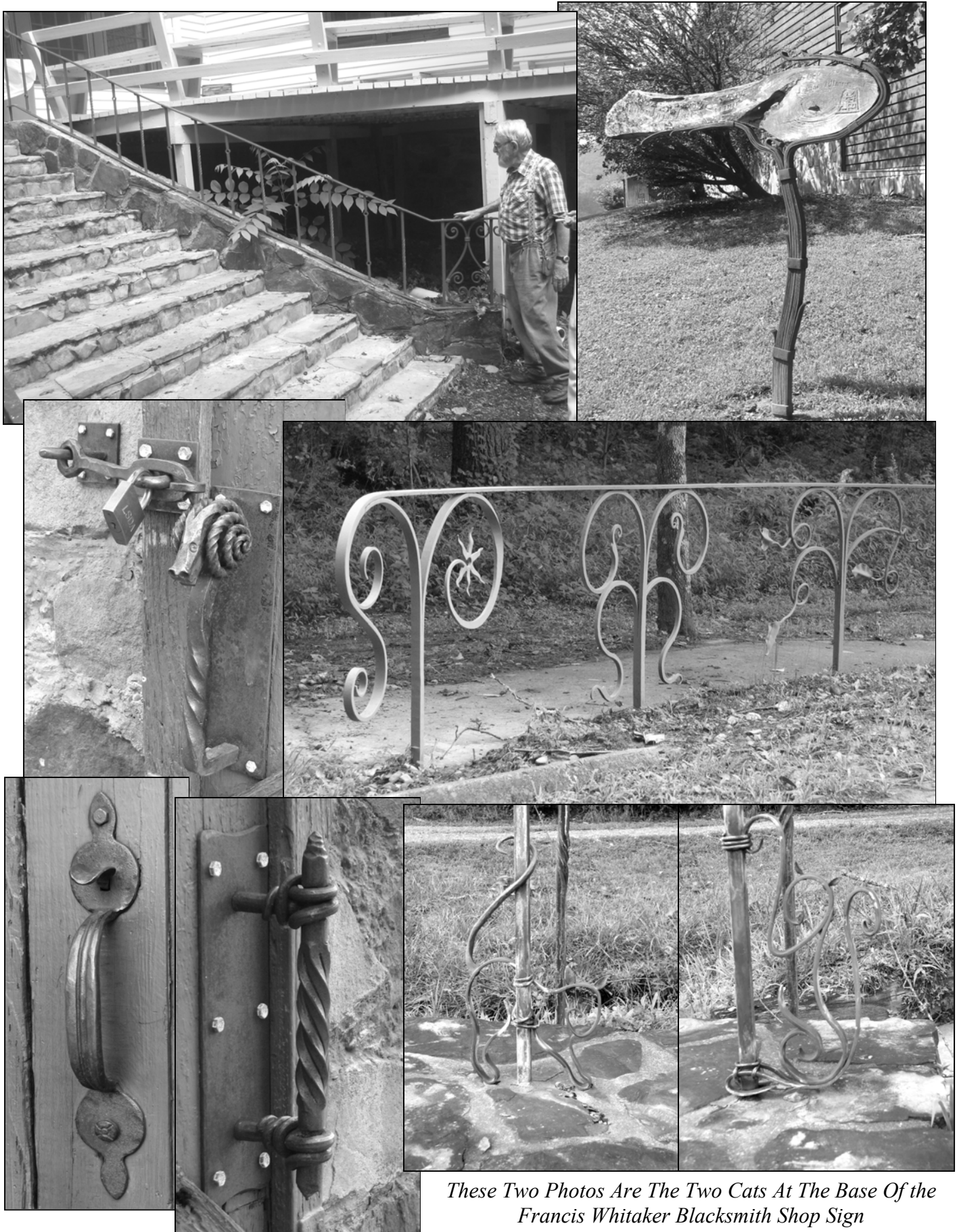


# Blacksmiths Making Their Presence Known At The John C. Campbell Folk School



*Every Where You Look On Campus Of The John C. Campbell Folk School You Can See Where The Blacksmith Contributed To The School And To The Art Of Blacksmithing*





*These Two Photos Are The Two Cats At The Base Of the Francis Whitaker Blacksmith Shop Sign*

## October Is The Season For State Fairs

**Make Your Plans Now To Demonstrate At The Dixie Fair In Winston Salem  
Or  
The NC State Fair In Raleigh**

Itching to demonstrate blacksmithing? It is time to scratch that itch. We need NC ABANA members, like you, who are willing to share their love of the craft with the public. This is an excellent opportunity for YOU to spread the joys of blacksmithing. Any experience level is welcome. So, take your pick, either the Dixie Classic Fair or the North Carolina State Fair. Better yet, pick both.

**DIXIE  
CLASSIC  
FAIR**

**October 1 to October 10, 2010**

**Dixie Classic Fairgrounds, Winston Salem, NC**

**Contact Marshall Swaringen at (336) 998-7827 OR  
marshall@swaringen.com**



**Demonstrators as well as people to  
work in the sales area are needed.**

**Please contact:**

**Al Andrews at (919) 851-6271. Please  
call in the evening**

**Or**

**Parks Low at (919) 772-4111 or  
P.Lowjr@att.net**

## Rules for the Operation of Heritage Forge during the NC State Fair

[Adopted by the Board of Directors on March 24, 2001]

[Revised by the Board of Directors on July 30, 2004 Revisions are underlined]

1. The Board of Directors and the President of the Chapter shall appoint a member to be responsible for the management of the shop for each year of the State Fair. The management of the State Fair shall be given a letter signed by the President designating a Shop Manager for the year.
2. It shall be the responsibility of the Shop Manager to insure that the shop is in good repair, tools are available, sufficient coal is available, and the shop and surrounding area is clean and ready to open on the first day of the State Fair.
3. It shall be the responsibility of the Shop Manager to seek out members of the chapter for the daily demonstrations. In the demonstration area only members in good standing may demonstrate. The Shop Manager shall set up a schedule of demonstrators as to time and date. Any changes to this schedule shall be made no less than 24 hours in advance. Members should not assume that they may show up at any time and other scheduled demonstrators will step aside. Those who assume this will be asked to leave.
4. The Shop Manager will provide to the demonstrators a gate pass, truck pass, and a parking pass for the days on which they are scheduled to work.
5. All displays of work shall be shown to the Shop Manager prior to the State Fair where practical. It is the responsibility of the Shop Manager to only judge whether the work submitted for display or sale is the product of the member's shop. The Shop Manager shall make no judgements on the quality of the work submitted.
6. No photographs or drawings will be displayed without the prior approval of the Shop Manager. If they are approved, the Shop Manager will designate where they will be displayed. Any written materials to be given to the public shall be approved in advance by the Shop Manager.
7. All members who have work in the shop for sale or display areas shall be required to work for at least one full day during the State Fair or if they do not work then they will be assess an additional 10% on their sales.
8. Sale of items made by the membership in their own shop or at the State Fair shall be sold only in the display/sales area. All items offered for sale must be labeled by the seller prior to being made available for sale (at time of drop off), with their name and price of the item. Members are responsible to get their items to and from the fair at their expense. There are to be no other sales made in any other area of the shop or in the immediate area outside of the shop. All sales are to be made at the cashier's location. Under no circumstances shall any member take any money for the sale of any item displayed in the shop. The Shop Manager shall designate the cashier. Items made in the course of demonstrations can be given as a gift to individuals watching the demonstration or taken to the sales area to be sold.
9. All sales are subject to have 10% (20% for those members who do not work at least one full day) PLUS the current sales tax percentage of the total sale price deducted when final payment is made to the member who made the item. The current Sales Tax percentage is to be collected and paid after the State Fair. The State Chapter shall receive 10% to 20% (see above). Members who bring items for sale are urged to adjust their prices to take into account the percentage that will be deducted.
10. The cashier shall keep a log of each sale. Each item sold shall be written down with the purchase price, number sold, and the maker of the item noted. At the end of the State Fair and within one week following the State Fair, each member having sales in the shop shall be paid for those items sold and receive a list of items. At the same time NC Sales Tax collected shall be paid to the NC Department of Revenue. To insure the safety of money collected the cashier and shop manager shall maintain a bank account for the purpose of daily deposits and for the final disbursement to close out the shop books for the year. All other times of the year, this account shall be maintained with enough money to keep the account active until the next year and to provide money for needed expenditures for the maintenance of the shop. [See minutes of the February Board of Directors meeting, paragraph #4.]
11. The cashier shall keep records of individual sales and daily sales for the shop, and total sales for the whole State Fair. Copies of these records shall be given to the Shop Manager and the Chapter President. Under no circumstances should individual sales records be made public or to the general membership of the Chapter. The original handwritten records of the cashier shall be made available for an audit if requested by the Shop Manager or the President of the Chapter.
12. There shall be no alcoholic beverages or any intoxicating agent consumed at the State Fair by any member of the Chapter. Individuals who violate this rule shall be asked to leave, and take all of their tools and display items that they may have brought with them.

(The Board adopted a resolution appropriating \$200 to be used by Al Andrews and the State Fair Blacksmith Shop committee for the purpose of maintaining an account at the State Employees Credit Union. The account will be used as a source of funds for the necessary upkeep of the shop and as a temporary depository for the sales income during the operation of the State Fair. Board meeting 2/24/2001)

# Blacksmith's Exchange

Have something for sale, or looking for something? This is just the place to look.

Send your "for sale" or "looking for" requests to Marty Lyon (at the address or email address on the back cover). Please include your name and phone number

## Wanting to Purchase a 25# Little Giant

NC ABANA'S BOLTS group is looking for the small Little Giant to take to events to use for demonstrations. Any style or condition - we will refurbish. Call Amos Tucker at 252-289-7317

## For Sale – Antique Forge

I have an antique forge with some tools- it appears to still work. It is from the Champion Blower and Forge Company, Lancaster , Pa. I was told it is about 100 yrs. old. I also have a few blacksmith tools to go with it. I am interested in selling it. I live in Florence, S.C. E-mail me if you are interested in it. I bought it for my brother who has done some blacksmithing, but he has become disabled from cancer and is unable to use it. Thanks Martha Smith - memarmarsc@vahoo.com

## For Sale - Looking To Sell As A Complete Set Up:

Large Hay-Budden Anvil	Sheet metal anvil	Post vise	Propane forge on stand	a lot of tongs
Gattis Williams		New Bern, NC		252-637-7348

If Interested, I will be happy to email pictures

## Ray Clontz Tire Hammer Plans by Clay Spencer

Ray Clontz Tire Hammer Plans, \$30, including postage to US and Canadian addresses. Send check or money order, e-mail me for cost to other countries

Tire Hammers for sale, 50 lb. hammer head, approx. 250 blows per minute, 1 hp motor, 6" diameter anvil, 700 lbs., 2 ft. square base, Contact me for price/availability. Reasonable delivery if I am headed to your area..

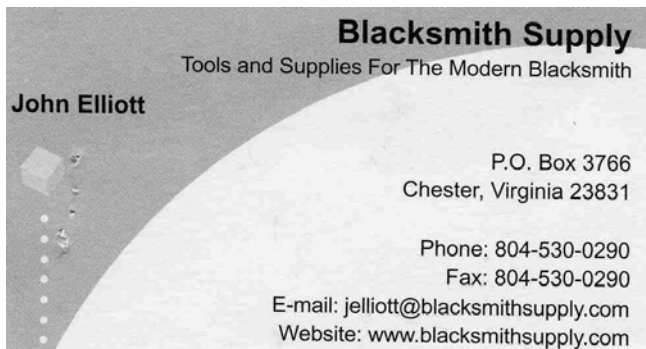
Beverly Shear blades sharpened, \$35 + postage. Blades must be removed from shear, extra cost for deep nicks or blades previously sharpened at angle.

Clay Spencer, 73 Penniston Private Drive, Somerville, AL 35670, 256-498-1498, cell 256-558-3658, clay@tirehammer.com

## For Sale

### Blacksmithing/ Knifemaking/ Forging POWER HAMMER - 50# Little Giant

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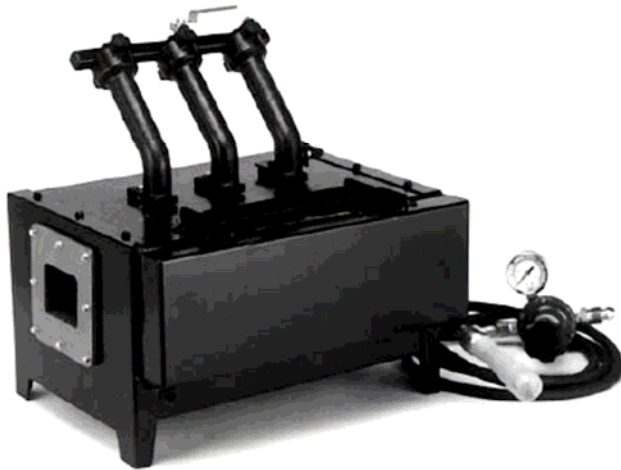
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I have roughly 15 tons of Sewell Vein pea stoker washed coal from the Green Valley Mine. 15.5 BTU, 1.25-2% ash. I sell it in 50 lb. bags for \$10.00 and no charge for the bags-you pick up. Whatever bulk load the buyer wants, my front end loader bucket holds 400 lbs. \$10.00 loading fee (or I can furnish shovels). I prefer not to make deliveries. I should have a consistent supply for several years. References available. Fred Pugh 5332 NC87N Pittsboro, N.C. 919 542 4164

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### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NORTH CAROLINA CHAPTER OF ABANA

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

ABANA Member?: Yes No

Blacksmithing Experience: \_\_\_\_\_

DUES: \$25.00 per year (within USA)  
\$35.00 per year (outside USA)

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: NC ABANA

REMIT TO: Marty Lyon  
220 Fearrington Post  
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If you are renewing your membership and your address and phone number have not changed, you do not need to use this form.

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If you are a member in good standing of the NC Chapter of ABANA, the book you select will be mailed to you as soon as it is available. You may keep it for up to 30 days and then you must mail it back to the librarian. A return address label will be included when the book is mailed to you. All books must be returned in the condition they were received in or you may be charged for the damages. You may have ONE book (Code BK) or up to THREE Hot Iron Sparkles (Code HIS) or THREE magazines (Code MAG) at any one time. A new copy of this form will be sent with each book.

## Chapter Calendar 2010

<b>January</b>	☞ <u>Regional Meetings</u>
<b>February</b>	☞ <u>Regional Meetings</u>
<b>March</b>	☞ <u>Regional Meetings</u> ☞ <u>1<sup>st</sup> QUARTER CHAPTER MEETING</u> <b>March 20</b> AT 9:30 A.M. DEAN CURFMAN'S, OAK HILL IRON WORKS MORGANTON, NC
<b>April</b>	☞ <u>Regional Meetings</u>
<b>May</b>	☞ <u>Regional Meetings</u>
<b>June</b>	☞ <u>Regional Meetings</u> ☞ <u>2<sup>nd</sup> QUARTER CHAPTER MEETING</u> <b>June 26</b> AT 9:00 A.M. DIXIE FAIRGROUNDS WINSTON SALEM, NC
<b>July</b>	☞ <u>Regional Meetings</u>
<b>August</b>	☞ <u>Regional Meetings</u>
<b>September</b>	☞ <u>Regional Meetings</u> ☞ <u>3<sup>rd</sup> QUARTER CHAPTER MEETING</u> <b>September 25</b> , AT 9:30 A.M. Jimmy Alexander's Shop Durham, NC
<b>October</b>	☞ <u>Regional Meetings</u> ☞ <u>Dixie Classic FAIR OCTOBER 2 – OCTOBER 11</u> ☞ <u>NORTH CAROLINA STATE FAIR OCTOBER 15 - 25</u>
<b>November</b>	☞ <u>Regional Meetings</u> ☞ <u>BONUS MEETING</u> <b>November 6</b> at 9:30 a.m. J.C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, NC
<b>December</b>	☞ <u>Regional Meetings</u> ☞ <u>4<sup>th</sup> QUARTER CHAPTER MEETING</u> ☞ <b>Date and Time TBD</b> ☞ Peter Ross's Shop, Siler City, NC

## Regions

See map on bottom of the page for approximate locations of each region within North Carolina

(1)

**Western North Carolina Blacksmiths**  
Steve Kayne Candler, NC  
(828) 667-8868  
2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday evening, each month  
(2)

(3)

**Triad Area Blacksmiths**  
Marshall Swaringen Advance, NC  
(336) 998-7827  
1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday 6:30PM for demos  
3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday, 9AM for business  
and all day forging  
Dixie Fairgrounds, Winston Salem, NC  
(3)

(4)

**Grand Buzzard's Nest**  
Tal Harris Waxhaw, NC  
(704) 843-5586  
Last Saturday, even # months  
(4)

(5)

**Southern Foothills Blacksmiths**  
Steve Barringer Mooresville, NC  
(704) 660-1560  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday, each month  
(5)

(6)

**Triangle Blacksmith Guild**  
Randy Stoltz Cary, NC  
(919) 481-9263  
1<sup>st</sup> Saturday, even # months  
(6)

(7)

**Brasstown Blacksmiths**  
Paul Garrett Brasstown, NC  
(828) 835-8441  
3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday, even # months  
Noon to 4PM

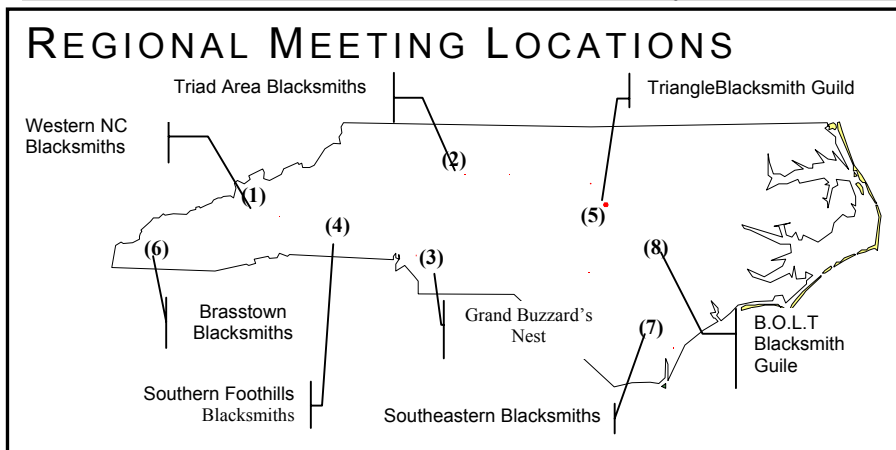
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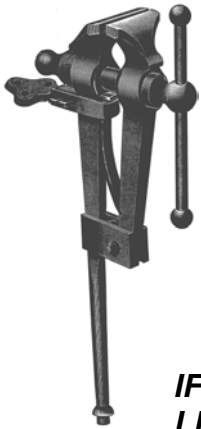
**Southeastern Blacksmiths**  
Richard Coley Wilmington, NC  
(910) 547-3131  
Quarterly Meetings

(8)

**B.O.L.T. Blacksmith Guild**  
Amos Tucker Kenly, NC  
(252) – 289-7317  
1st Sat or Sun. Even # months

Note: Any member is welcome at each of the Regional meetings. Call host to confirm date, time and location.





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gngdunn@gmail.com

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919 / 642-0098  
northcarolina.abana@gmail.com

**Treasurer**

**Parks Low**  
8108 Deermeadow Drive  
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**PLEASE WELCOME THESE NEW MEMBERS**

Allen E. Weatherford	Morganton	NC
Bill Auld	Raleigh	NC
Chris Dietz	Hedgeville	WV
Chris Towles	Pfafftwon	NC
Donald W. (Don) Adams	Raleigh	NC
Gene Sizemore	Liberty	NC
Joshua Snead	Apex	NC
Kevin E. Lawrie, Sr.	Carolina Beach	NC
Matt Balent	Charlotte	NC
Phillip D. Jones	Raleigh	NC
Steve Watkins	Charlotte	NC
Tom Jones	Banner Elk	NC
William Sears	Greensboro	NC

**Don't Forget**

**2010, 3rd Quarter Chapter Meeting**

**September 25 - 9:30 AM**

**Jimmy Alexander's Shop, Durham, NC**

