

BLACKSMITHS' ASSOCIATION
OF
MISSOURI
NEWSLETTER JULY 1986
VOLUME 3 NUMBER 3



Chapter of Artist-Blacksmiths' Association of North America



One of a pair of entrance grilles designed by Jerry Hoffman for Lost Valley Lake Resort in Gerald, Mo. The grilles were forged during a very merry and educational week, under the guidance of Dr. Francis Whitaker, by BAM members Don Asbee, Steve Austin, Clarissa Gyorgy, Doug Hendrickson, Jerry Hoffman, Grady Holley, Walt Hull, Bob Patrick and Stan Winkler, with part-time help from Jon Gilmore, Dan Kesel, John Murray and Craig Newmann. Another 10 BAM members came to watch and 3 new members joined. This was by far our most exciting group activity yet. Hooray for us!

Welcome to the thickest BAM newsletter yet, seven pages full of original material. This is an active summer for Missouri blacksmiths. Our Francis workshop went wonderfully. Working cooperatively during the day and hanging out and being silly together in the evenings was about as fun and growthful a week as a group of smiths could have. We are very appreciative that Francis and Portia spend so much of their time, energies and resources, travelling around the country, encouraging younger smiths. I was impressed at how well they both did at remembering all our names. This was my first time meeting Francis and Portia and I understand why they receive so much respect. It is not just that Francis is a superb blacksmith and Portia skilled at a variety of handcrafts, it's also their qualities of dignity mixed with comfortable informality. Thank you, Whitakers.

The folks at Lost Valley Lake were very good to us. When we needed clamps or a ladder, all we had to do was ask, and the things were brought to us within minutes. We also got full use of the sauna, pool and boating facilities, very refreshing after a hot day at the forge. We are also very pleased with how they mounted the grilles. They do look great. If you are in the area, they're worth a drive to go see. Also, while you are there, take a tour of the resort and tell them those blacksmiths sent you. Lost Valley Lake Resort, Rt. 1, Owensville, Mo., 65066, 314-764-2121. And three cheers for BAM's own Jerry Hoffman who not only designed the beautiful pieces we made, but also got Lost Valley interested in supporting the project. Bob Patrick was the one who had the good idea two years ago, of inviting Francis to do a workshop with us.

And so on to BAM business:

Elections- Please mail in your nominations for President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer or come to the July meeting in Lesterville and do it in person. Mail-in nominations should be sent to the editors.

Newsletter Editorship- Grady and I are still into the job and are willing to put out a couple more issues, but we are looking for someone to take it on. Keep it in mind.

Grady and I were lucky this issue. We had quite a bit of help from other folks. Florence Akey did a very good job transcribing the talk by Francis off of a tape. She put hours into it and we are very grateful. Ann Shrader, who lives with us here at Sandhill, did the calligraphy and cartoon of the Francis bear for the same article. Doug Hendrickson wrote both the report on the workshop and the invite to his place for the July meeting. The nice, clear technical drawings are by Jerry Hoffman. All that help made it much easier for your editors. We were able to focus on compiling the new membership list and other organizational stuff. Thank you to Bernie Tappel for printing up the address labels we use to send you your newsletter.

We're getting very excited about the ABANA conference in August. I am particularly looking forward to seeing other women smiths and getting together with other newsletter editors. Several BAM members are planning on going.

Check the outside cover on where to get more information on it.
Hope to see you in Lesterville and Flagstaff.

Clarissa

A new righthander since I broke my left arm two weeks ago.

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It will be the policy of this newsletter to print anything pertaining to working metals. Letters to the Editor welcome; as are suggestions for making this newsletter suit you better. The purpose of this newsletter is to keep the membership informed, and also to serve their educational needs.

As an educational organization, BAM welcomes the use of newsletter material by any other organization, if you will only give credit.

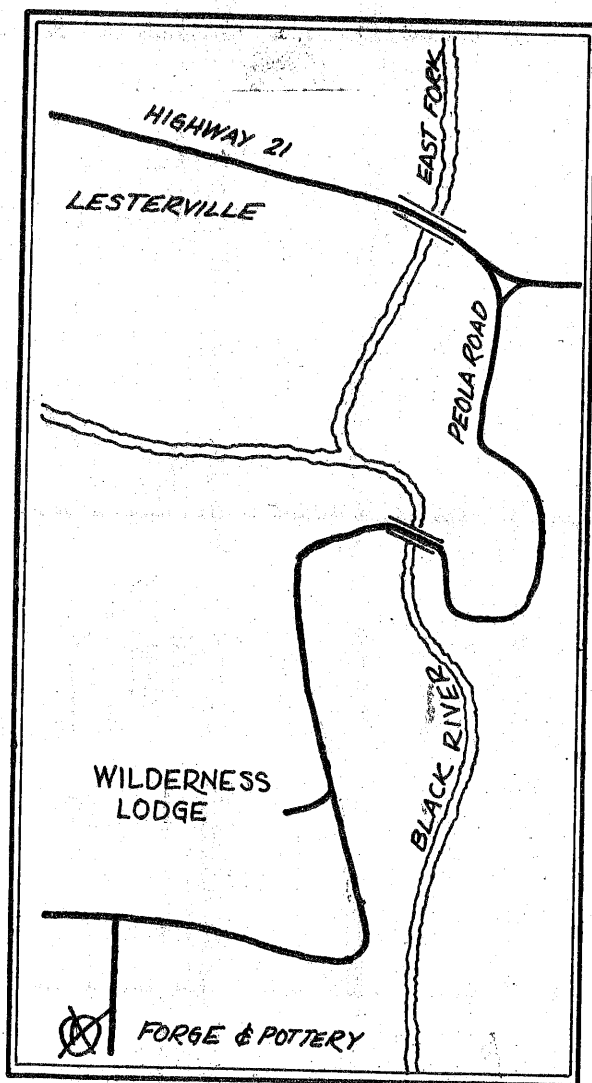
The Next Get-together!
BAM meeting XIII

The July 19th B.A.M. meeting will be at Doug and Bonnie Hendrickson's Peola Valley Forge in Lesterville. The trade item will be a device for squeezing toothpaste tubes. Since there is no historical presedent we will all really have to think. You folks that blow off the trades give this one a shot.

The subject of this meeting is ANIMAL HEADS, (I'll have two forges going) slides of the workshop and photography. I'll have everything set up for photography shooting small iron ware, bring some work and we'll photograph it.

Everyone come, familys and all, we have a place on the Black River to camp and we'll do a float trip on Sunday.

We are 3 miles off State 21 on Peola Road. Just follow the signs.



A warm welcome to these new members who have joined us in the last two months:

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And a special thank you to these new members, our parents, without whom we wouldn't be the newsletter editors we are today:

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In early May B.A.M. met at Lost Valley Lake Resort with Francis Whitaker for a week long workshop. The project was a pair of iron grills mounted in wooden frames which were installed on either side of the entrance to Lost Valley Lake. B.A.M.'s steering committee for this workshop, Jerry Hoffmann who did the design work, Rich Gentry who funded the project, his staff and many others all did their homework. Everything was in order and B.A.M.'s Smiths were prepared to work. I have never participated in a workshop of this scale so I have nothing to compare it with, but I can't imagine that it could have run smoother. We did have a few of the inevitable -- booboos that develop when ten people work together -- still a hole in the wrong place or a scroll backwards does not a disaster make.

The purpose of a workshop like this is many fold and much of the value derived from it could not have been planned or predicted. For example, when we had trouble with one particularly difficult corner weld, even the best of B.A.M.'s Smiths were temporarily stumped. Francis spent part of several days thinking and working and solved the problem by developing a technique that is unique to this project. Watching him and other smiths tackle this problem was very educational and I am sure each who tried would have solved it but Francis' answer was truly elegant. The chance to double strike with each other or Francis or just to be a helper put you in a position to see how problems in smithing are dealt with by others. Everyone had something to teach everyone else if you had the eyes to see it, so in a sense Francis wasn't the only teacher present. Tech talk abounded, no meal, break or trip to town was free from discussions of tools, sources, techniques and materials. It was all quite wonderful.

This workshop was a total entity, it began, developed and ended. No article can reproduce it but the following is a list of the high points for this writer.

Never assume anything.
Joan Asbee's picnic.
Francis' welding demos.
Stan Winkler's sense of order
in the final stages of
assembly.
Don Asbee's tennons.
An occassional beer.
Free breakfasts
Measure and do it again.
Cheese Fuller and the swedge
blocks nightly music.
Verify all dimensions on the
sight.

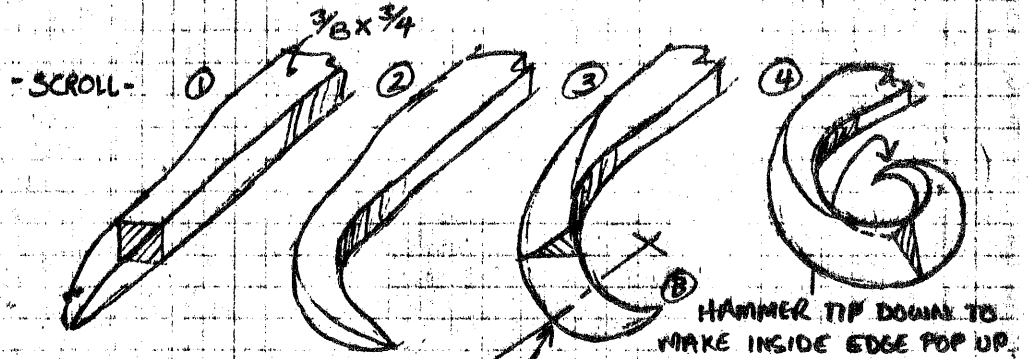
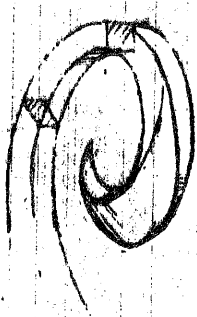
Clarissa Gyorgy's spaghetti
and all the home made food
she and Grady brought.
Attention to detail in all things.
Winky in general.
Jerry Hoffmann's sense of design.
Nothing is almost straight, it is
or it aint.
Don Asbee's smithing magician.
Portia's apple swans.
Bob Patrick's bending tool and
Francis' bending tools.
Safety.
Asbee's cab service.

Trash masher Patrick's morning dance.
 Walt Hull's cook out.
 Francis' slides of New Zealand's iron.
 Mondo Condo.
 Francis' banquet at the HOME PLATE Resturant.
 Sauna, pool, trick dives and underwater races.
 Steve Austin, Walt Hull and Grady Holley 's collars.
 The chance for me to work so closely with everyone was my
 personal high.

Let's do it again sometime.

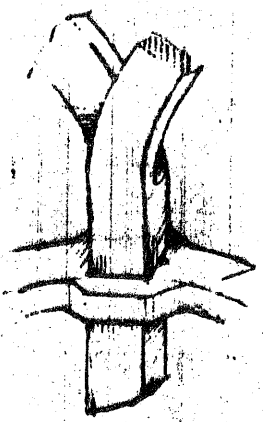
Sincerely,

Doug
 Doug Hendrickson



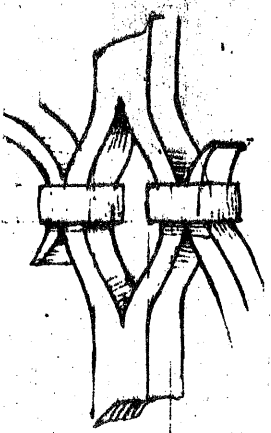
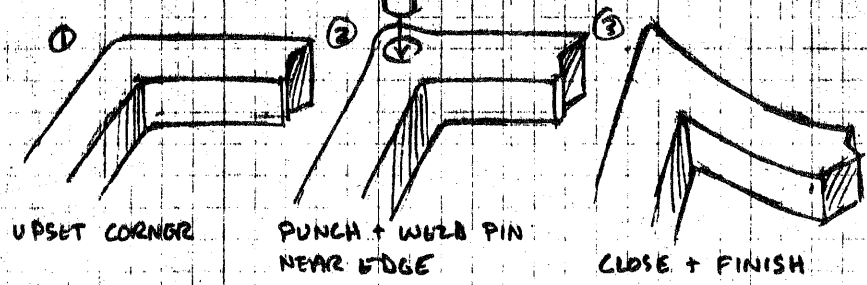
LVL/WHITAKER
 WORKSHOP NOTES
 DESIGN BY
 JERRY HOFFMANN

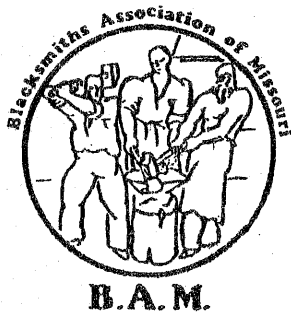
① SCROLL W/ OUT OF SQUARE
 BLOWS TO MAKE IRON
 SPIRAL AWAY FROM HAMMER



- SCROLL TO BALUSTER WELD -

"WHITAKER SHARP CORNER"





A Polar Bar with Francis



During the workshop at Lost Valley, Francis took time after lunch one day to answer some questions for us. He gathered us together and handed out Polar Bars (ice cream sandwiches). He is such a clear speaker, that we were able to transcribe this for you here with almost no editing.

Sit down--don't be scared. Sit in the front row.

John has some questions: How to get more done in the course of a day?

You have to have your shop organized so you know where every thing is. You have to have good tools. You have to have a good supply of steel and a good rack. You have to have good working conditions and a good layout table if you're talking about a job like this.

What I do on any job like that; if I'm not sure, like that scroll, I make a test piece. I measure the length of the piece that I'm making the test piece on and I write it down. Then I can go back and say it takes so much material to make this test piece and that is a reference thing.

Question: Do you keep that as a notebook then, or do you just do it for each job?

I can go back thirty years. If somebody sees a picture of a candelabra they want, then I've got every piece listed and I have all my time listed on it and the weight of the material, then you translate that for inflation and you know what it costs.

When I start on a job like that, I would have every single piece listed before I cut any of them. When I cut them, I would cut them all. Then I would forge them all and then I would either forge weld them together or I would fit them together. That way you can do all your forging at one time and you get a better picture of what you are doing. You don't wind up having eight collars when you need sixteen, because you've taken it all off the full size drawing and listed it.

You go to the shear once or to the cut-off saw once and cut up everything. If it's real complicated you can number it, even if you stamp it with numbers, number your parts. If I'd done that the first time we wouldn't have had the mix up on the length on some of those scrolls. If you find yourself running back to the forge and to the steel rack and to the shear half a dozen times, you're not going to get as much work done as if you had everything organized.

And if I'm a tyrant about tools, I'm a tyrant about tools, because tools are what enable you to do the work. If your tools are not good, your work isn't going to be good. It's just that simple. (Otto) Schmirler has a wonderful book on tools. Maybe some of you have it.

But you have to look at these things closely. When somebody comes into my shop to work with me, half the time I'll say, "You need a magnifying glass to look at this and see the difference between what you're doing and what I'm doing." Sometimes it's that fine a point. To go back to the bending fork: sure you've got a bending fork, but it's not the way it should be and the way it should be makes a difference in how your work turns out.

Next question, how to proceed through a long project? I think I've covered that. If you've got any questions about the first two items?

Question: On this job, would it have been better to put the layout table nearer the center of the shop?

To go back on forging those scrolls or any other scrolls, if you will mark on the layout table the various stages you go through: the first taper, the first curve, the finish curve; then you can go back and you can forge another piece just like the first piece, because you've got a pattern to go by. If you don't, if you go ahead and make the whole piece and you start the next one, you don't remember or you have no guide to know 'Just how much did I taper it, how long did it get, how thick was it?', or the curve before you start to flatten it and scroll it around. You have to be systematic and accurate.

My layout table is as far away from my forge as this one is, because I added onto the shop, it wasn't big enough. But I have back where the layout table is, a fifty pound bench anvil and I've got a vise bolted right on the end of the table, so I can work there very efficiently.

Modern versus traditional methods: The methods we're using on this gate are what's been used since 1850. You can use some of the modern techniques. My rule is: I'll use all the modern things I can as long as it does not influence my design. If you can use the cutoff saw and the arc welder and the acetylene torch for specific reasons and it doesn't influence your design and you turn out good work, go ahead and use them.

So often you see things designed you can't make with traditional methods. So if you want to go into fabricating, go into fabricating. If you want to be an ornamental artist blacksmith then design your work so you can do it with the forge and the anvil and the collar and the tenon and the rivet and the forge weld. As you can see and I can see, going around the country, there is no limit what you can do using the traditional methods. You are limited by your own imagination and your own ability. You look at the people like Eric Moebius, or Tom Joyce, or [Gerakaris] Dimitri or our friend over here in the orange shirt [Jerry Hoffman], he's come up with an original design. He uses traditional methods.

Business Practices? I hope you noticed when the little gal at the restaurant brought that extra sandwich out and gave it to John and said, "That's my mistake." You pay for your own mistakes. Don't try to charge the customer for your mistakes. Pay for them yourself.

Until you get better than I am, you'll always have something that's learning time, making test pieces, making mistakes. You'll never get rid of the fact that you don't know it all and you never will. So maybe half your time, when you start in, will be learning time. Mine is a very small percentage. Like that big curved railing, I spent a whole day working out ideas, working out the problems. This goes back to the beginning question. If you don't work out the problems before you start the job, they are going to come up and trip you from behind. You've got to work them all out and that means all of them. You have to study your work and figure 'How am I going to make this, how am I going to put it together, am I going to leave those little horseshoe things on the shaft or am I going to leave them off?'. That's why at Yellin's we had a written contest when we got all the pieces made. We had a written exam to see who could say which piece goes first, which comes second, which comes third, what the sequence of putting things together is. If you're making all your parts and it's hard, with a dozen people making different parts, if you make all your parts, you have a picture of how it goes together. You save yourself a lot of time that way.

Question: How many people were working at Yellin's when you were apprenticing there?

Two Hundred. He had them all working to a degree you can't get now-a-days. Because I was one of the young apprentices, I was told, I wasn't asked, to come in half an hour early, clean out the forges, and when I learned to build a fire without a lot of smoke, I was allowed to build the fire, get the tools ready for the job, have the drawing there, know which tongs or some of the tools we had to get from the stockroom, go to the stockroom. That was an extra half-hour. Then when the smith came in, hit the time clock, and came to the forge, everything was there. He worked eight hours a day for eight hours pay. You can't get that any more. I averaged six productive hours.

I think maybe I've told you, I've told it so many times, about one of the top men in Daniel's Construction Company, with 45,000 employees, figures four and a half hours, productive hours, per man. That's three and a half hours down the drain. A lot of this goes back to starting off right. If you start off on the wrong foot, you're in for trouble.

I've found, again modern versus traditional methods, I can make a forged tenon and riveted railing as economically as someone can do it with the arc welder and it's better. Because most of the ones you see, they don't grind, chip the slag off, they don't take the berries off. Where the rail warps where it's welded, they don't straighten out the welding, the warpage. Mine is straight and true, just like that railing I showed you from New Zealand.

Business practices: Oh, There's so many things to learn! I imagine you have lots of problems in business practices. You know it's so hard for a small shop with two or five employees. You have to have a bookkeeper to keep track of everything. Your overhead now is, with Social Security, and Unemployment Insurance, medical care and paid holidays and paid coffee breaks. It drove me crazy, I gave it up, I refused. I took the same kind of oath You're going to take, to hell with all the red tape and all the non-productive stuff that you have to do. For instance, Worker's Comp. I believe in. ~~I believe workers should be protected.~~ My insurance company said, "We can't handle this anymore, you'll have to go to the state compensation fund." So I went to the state. About a year later I got a notice that said, "All directors of all corporations must now be on the payroll at the rate of \$13,500 a year minimum." Portia's a director. A very good friend of ours who runs a restaurant, is a director. He never comes near the shop except to buy something. But I had to carry him on the payroll at \$13,500 a year and Portia the same way. I could see our Workers Comp. going from \$400 to about \$1500 a year, absolutely no reason. So this is what your are up against. If you can work by yourself or if you can work out a partnership, you can avoid a lot of all that red tape.

You have to buy your material efficiently. I buy mine five ton at a time, minimum, because I get a better price than I do on 2000 pounds or 1000 pounds or 500 pounds. The money I save will pay for the freight.

Then I have enough in my steel racks so almost any job I do, I can pull it right out of the rack. Make a note of it on the want list and when it gets up to 5000 pounds, order another batch. Once you get there it's easy to keep your stock up. I'll admit it takes quite a bit of capital to do it in the first place. Buy your fasteners in bulk, buy your rivets in bulk. I buy welding compound in hundred pound drums, because I have to pay a hundred pounds minimum to UPS. Any of those things you can buy efficiently, buy them. Sure it takes capital, but once you have them, they are paid for.

Advertisement and publicity: I've advertised, I think, about six times during my career. Your best advertising is your work and your customer relationship. One of the best ways I've found to get good public relations, if someone comes in with a job like that, and you don't know what it's going to cost because you've never done one quite like it before, you figure out your material and you figure out your time, I do that and then I add ten percent. I give the person a guaranteed top price. 'Your gates will not cost over \$2400.' If you can't estimate within ten percent you haven't had enough experience. If you tell someone, "Your gates will be \$2400," and you do it for \$2320, they'll never forget they got a first class job for less. Don't ever ask anybody for more money. Swallow your mistakes. The more you swallow the less you will like them. The better estimator you'll become.

On a big job, you should get a down payment, a progress payment, twenty-five percent, thirty-three percent and final payment within thirty days. I don't worry about that any more because the people I deal with say, "Mr. Whitaker, will you do this and send me a bill?" The only people I have problems with are the locals. When somebody comes from out of town and says, "Will you take my out of town check from Kansas City?" I say, "I'll be delighted. The only checks I'm afraid of are the locals." And that's the truth.

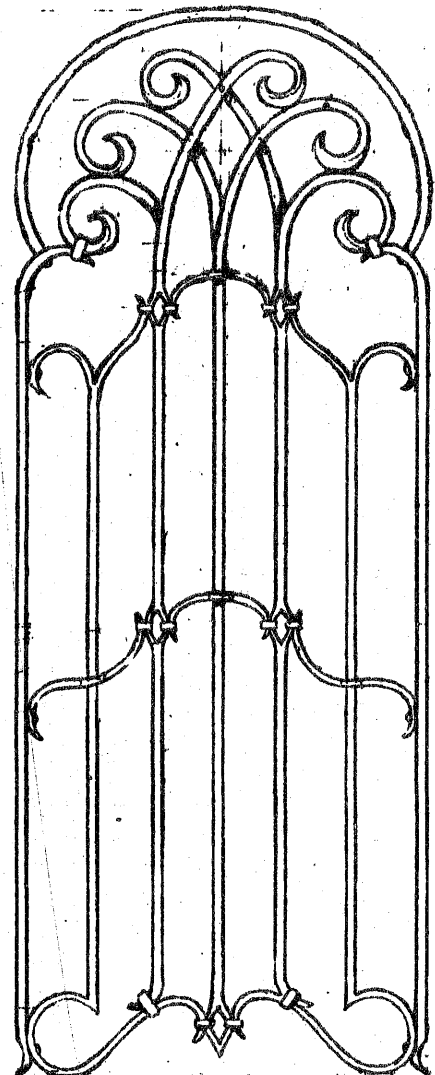
Money and Art: There's plenty of money for good craftsmanship and good artistry. I was talking to one of my friends and I said, "I just can't imagine anyone paying \$10,000 for that fifteen foot railing." And she said, "Why not? People pay \$25,000 for a painting to hang on the wall. Why shouldn't they have a good example of good craftsmanship?"

There's lots of room at the bottom for poor work, poor design. The top is very, very lonely. If you can get to the top, you can command your own price. In between, it's a struggle. The better work you do and the more you apply yourself, the more you learn from your mistakes. The better you organize your shop, the better tools you have, the better craftsman you'll be and people will appreciate it.

The quality is where the market is. All the years I've been doing this kind of work, there's always been enough people who will pay the price for quality and appreciate it. That's my advice. I think the architectural field is the best. When they see something ready-made hanging in your shop- I have very little to show- if they see a lot of things hanging on your wall, they expect a ready-made price. If you have just a few pieces to show the quality of work you do and good photographs, you get a different clientele, people who are looking for quality and don't know where to get it.

Let's finish the job.

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BLACKSMITHS' ASSOCIATION OF MISSOURI Membership List, page 3

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Jackie Printy
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Dan Whitmore
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St. Louis, Mo. 63136
314-869-9992

Stanley Winkler
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314-883-2887

Paul Zimmerman Jr.
Rt.2 Box 402
Barnett, Mo. 65011
314-378-4318



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Address: _____

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Are you Full-time Smith Part-time Smith

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Suggestions for BAM _____

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Grady Holley

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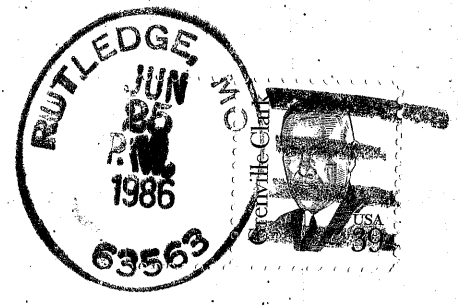
Rutledge, Mo. 63563

Birmingham Blacksmithing Festival
 October 26 - November 1
 For information, contact:
 Paige McWilliams
 Stoss Furnaces National Historic Landmark
 P.O. Box 11781
 Birmingham, Al. 35202
 205-324-1911

ABANA Conference August 13-17
 Flagstaff, Az.
 For information, contact:
 Bill Callaway
 3646 W. Lawrence Lane
 Phoenix, Az. 85021

Up-Coming Events

BLACKSMITHS' ASSN
 of
MISSOURI
 Rutledge Mo 63563



Address Correction Requested

LLOYD GASTREICH
 3122 OSCEOLA

ST. LOUIS MO

63111