

June 2019

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# THE FORGE FIRE

The Newsletter of the Indiana Blacksmithing Association, Inc.

**An Affiliate Of The Artists-Blacksmiths' Association of North America, Inc.**

IBA is a Not For Profit Indiana Corporation recognized by the IRS under section 501(c)(3)

9:30 AM is the regular meeting time for IBA Hammer-Ins  
with beginner training available at 9:00 AM.

**PLEASE MAKE SURE TO ASK FOR HELP!**

**If you would like an IBA membership application form,  
please contact Farrel Wells, Membership Secretary  
(765) 768-6235.**

BULK LOTS ARE AVAILABLE TO DEMONSTRATORS,  
SHOPS, SHOWS AND OTHERS WILLING TO MAKE THEM AVAILABLE.  
WE APPRECIATE YOUR HELP.

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**More nearby resources and organizations for blacksmiths:**

**Rural Smiths of Mid-America:**  
Meetings are on the first Saturday of each month  
Call Ron Gill  
317-374-8323 for details

## IBA MEETING SCHEDULE

Check the latest *Forge Fire* for monthly IBA revisions.

**NO HAMMER INS CURRENTLY  
SCHEDULED**



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## Editors Message

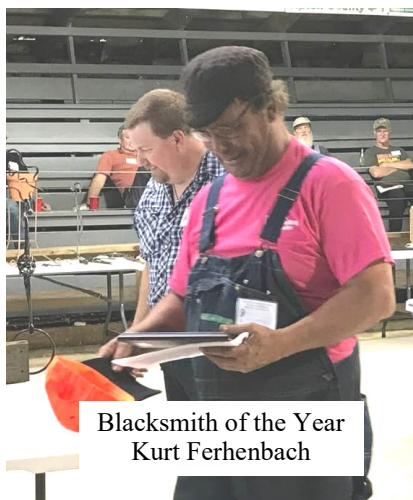
This year's IBA Conference was phenomenal. Mark Aspery held everyone's attention with his demonstrations. He started early by demonstrating tong making with Steve King on Friday night. Brad Weaver followed on Friday night with poz tongs. This year's iron in the hat was chock full of well made items. I heard that we sold somewhere in the neighborhood of 2360 tickets. Likewise the auction highlighted the skill and talents of our IBA members.

After the conference I received this message from Allison Bohorfoush:

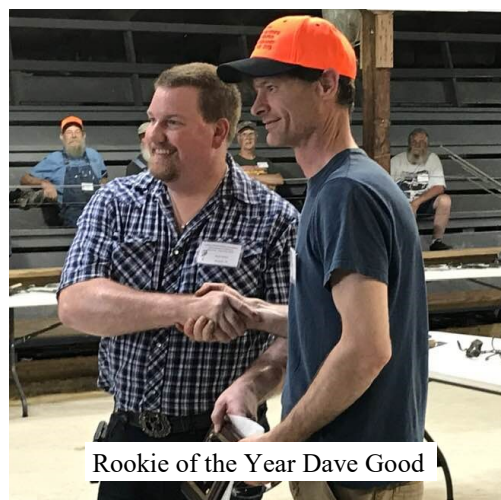
"I LOVE YOU GUYS!! Might not always feel like a well oiled machine when you're doing it, but yours is one of the most cohesive and agreeable groups to work with. Please let the guys know I really appreciate them".

That is quite a statement from someone who works with many different blacksmithing groups across the country. Allison's comments pretty well sum up the conference. We had a lot of people working to make it a success and it was a success at every level.

Congratulations to the award winners. See page 4 for a list of awards and the winners. I do find it fitting that the IBA named the Blacksmith of the Year award in honor of Clifton Ralph and the first recipient was Clifton's long time friend Kurt Ferhenbach.



Blacksmith of the Year  
Kurt Ferhenbach



Rookie of the Year Dave Good

## Festival Event Blacksmith Wanted

The Leesville, Indiana Community Center (Bedford area) is looking for a blacksmith for their local history event on Saturday, September 14<sup>th</sup>. If you are interested contact Chris Brooks at (812)569-1253. This is an event put on as the Leesville Community Center to try to bring our community together by exploring our past. Any help is greatly appreciated.

IBA website: [www.indianablacksmithing.org](http://www.indianablacksmithing.org) IBA Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/groups/IndianaBlacksmithingAssociation/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/IndianaBlacksmithingAssociation/)

## Dates to Remember

October 11-12  
UMRBC  
(Pontiac)

## IBA Satellite Groups and News

### 1) Sutton-Terock Memorial Blacksmith Shop

Meet: 2nd Saturday at 9 AM  
 Contacts: Fred Oden (574) 223-3508  
 Dennis Todd (574) 542-4886

### 2) Jennings County Historical Society Blacksmith Shop

Meet: 2nd Saturday at 9 AM  
 Contact: Ray Sease (812) 522-7722

### 3) Wabash Valley Blacksmith Shop

Meet: 2nd Saturday at 9 AM  
 Contacts: Doug Moreland (217) 284-3457  
 Max Hoopengartner (812) 249-8303

### 4) Fall Creek Blacksmith Shop

Meet: 4th Saturday at 9 AM  
 Contacts: Gary Phillips (260) 251-4670

### 5) Maumee Valley Blacksmiths

Meet: 2nd Saturday  
 Contacts: Clint Casey (260) 627-6270  
 Mark Thomas (260) 758 2332

### 6) St. Joe Valley Forgers

Meet: 4th Saturday at 9 AM  
 Contacts: Bill Conyers (574) 277-8729  
 John Latowski (574) 344-1730

### 7) Rocky Forge Blacksmith Guild

Meet: 2nd Saturday at 9 AM  
 Contacts: Ted Stout (765) 572-2467

### 8) Meteorite Mashers

Meet:  
 Contacts: Mike Mills (812) 633-4273  
 Steve King (812) 797-0059  
 Jeff Reinhardt 812-949-7163

### 9) Whitewater Valley Blacksmiths

Meet: 2nd Saturday  
 Contact: Keith Hicks (765) 914-6584

### 10) Bunkum Valley Metalsmiths

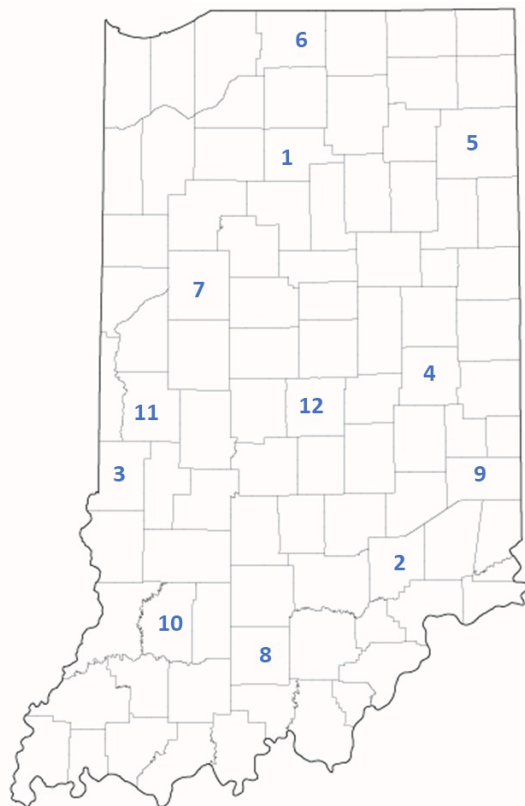
Meet: 1st Saturday  
 Contacts: Jim Malone (812) 725-3311  
 Terry Byers (812) 275-7150  
 Carol Baker (317) 809-0314

### 11) Covered Bridge Blacksmith Guild

Meet: 1st Saturday  
 Contact: John Bennett (812) 877-7274

### 12) Satellite 13

Meet: 4th Saturday  
 Contact: Darrin Burch (317) 607-3170  
 Doug Wilson (317) 439-7684



### Jennings County Historical Society Blacksmith Shop

The Jennings County Historical Society Blacksmiths met May 11 at Vernon with John Cummins showing his fire making abilities by starting the fire with only two sticks( but both were matches). Broadus Thompson was first on the anvil with his brother, Angus as striker. Kenny Dettmer made a wall hanging gun mounting hook. Bill Newman took a piece of round wrought iron, squared it on the big hammer, and made a traditional cross. Nathan Pelvor, with Angus Thompson as striker, took some round stainless, upset it and proceeded to make a tool for the power hammer. Alex Spellman split some square stock, twisted it and made a door pull for a chicken coop.

See you at the conference or here next meeting. Those of you who wish to contribute to the tool box be sure to get it to someone who is going to be there. Preferably you !

Have a great time! Paul Bray

## IBA Satellite Groups and News (continued)

### Meteorite Mashers

This month we met at Jason Bowman's shop in Elizabeth Indiana. Jason is a long time smith, who recently moved to Indiana from Kentucky and who has joined our group. He bought a defunct machine and welding shop and has moved his blacksmith operation into that shop. He was gracious enough to host a meeting after attending one meeting of the meteorite Mashers. Jason demonstrated on his 250# Little giant making tong blanks. Several of Jason's friends from the Ky side attended and we grow the Meteorite Masher yet more. There was much guarded talk of wall hook entries for the do at home contest at Tipton, with most not revealing exactly what is being entered.



Our next meeting will be held at Dave Kunkler's shop in Branchville.

## IBA Conference Award Winners:

Clifton Ralph IBA Blacksmith of the Year:  
IBA Rookie of the Year:  
Paul Moffett IBA Service Award:

Kurt Ferhenbach  
David Good  
Farrel Wells

Gallery Awards

1<sup>st</sup>  
2<sup>nd</sup>  
3<sup>rd</sup>

John Bennett  
Dave Wells  
Nathan Pevlar

Done at Home Wall Hook

Youth

1<sup>st</sup>  
2<sup>nd</sup>

Uriah Graham  
Opal Graham

Beginner

1<sup>st</sup>  
2<sup>nd</sup>  
3<sup>rd</sup>

Jeff Endicott  
Michael Pavan  
Jason Melis

Open

1<sup>st</sup>  
2<sup>nd</sup>  
3<sup>rd</sup>

David Kunkler  
John Cummins  
John Bennett

Forging Contest

1<sup>st</sup>  
2<sup>nd</sup>  
3<sup>rd</sup>

Nathan Pevlar / Alex Spellman  
Steve King / Darren Bender-Beauregard  
Phoebe Graham / Isaiah Jenkins

## **Travel Workbench**

**By Steve Alford, Athens, Alabama**

I built this workbench to take to workshops, classes, and demonstrations. It made it's debut at the copper rose class taught by Bob Taylor at Athens Forge in November 2017. Since then it's been to the lock class last March and a couple of public demonstrations.

When I started thinking about this workbench I wanted something that would break down to be easy to move, but sturdy enough to work on without burning up energy chasing my bench around. It needed to assemble without nuts and bolts I've spent too much time looking for dropped hardware in grass or gravel, or fumbling with nuts and washers in the cold and rain! I wanted a vise and a useable work surface without being too big to be easy to move.

In the end I settled on using wedges to hold the table together, based loosely on an old trestle table design. That trestle table fit together so tightly that we never took it apart again! For this workbench I can tap the wedges in with my fist to make it solid, and usually work them loose the same way, without needing a hammer. It may be a little light, but a post vise and bench anvil add enough weight to keep it from going anywhere.



This 4-page article re-printed from the November-December 2018 edition of Bituminous Bits, The Journal of the Alabama Forge Council.

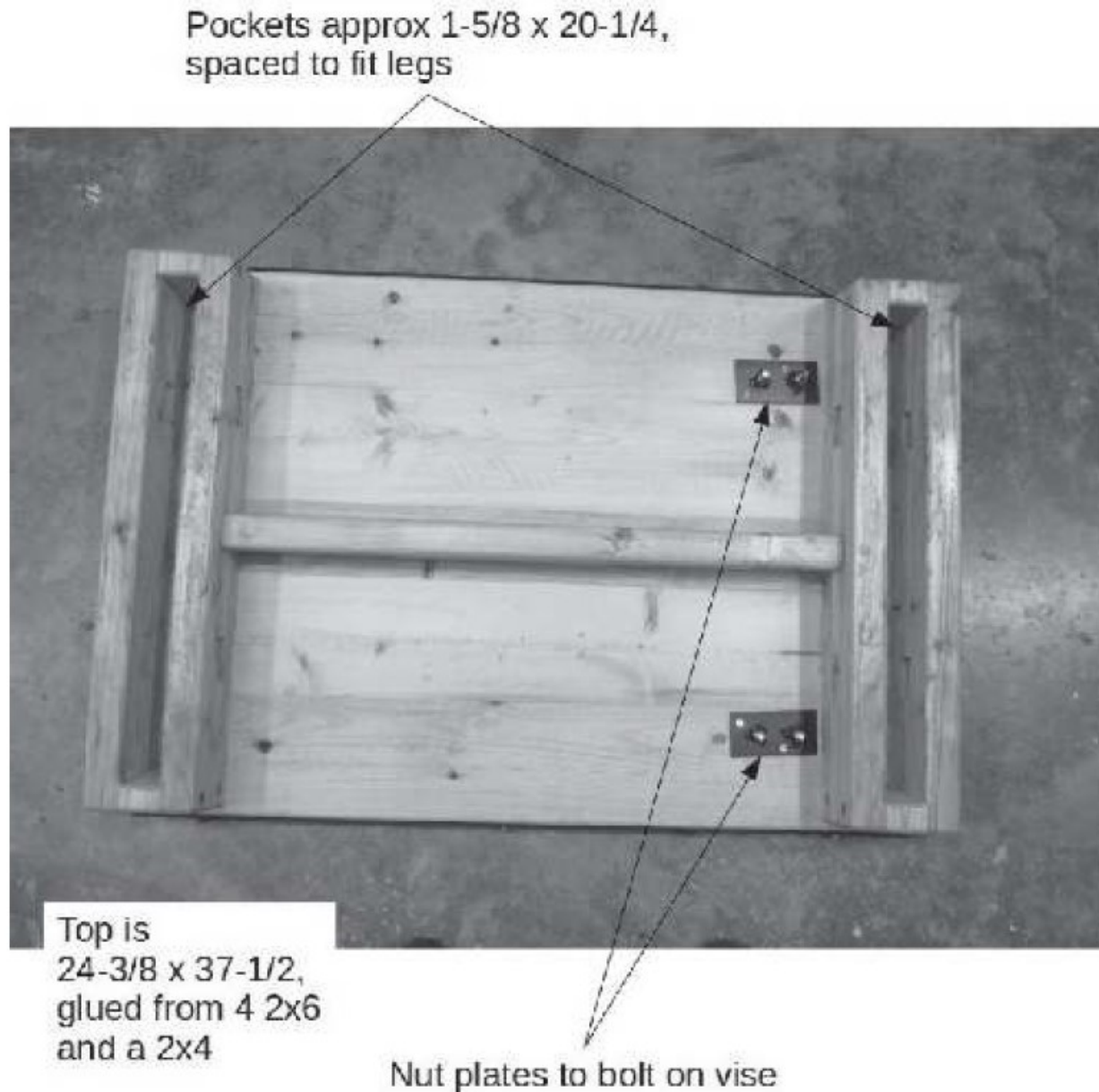


These pictures show the assembly sequence: Set the stretcher between the legs, then set the top on and tap in the wedges. Only the two wedges in the legs are really necessary for stability. Gravity would hold the top in place, but using wedges there, too, means two people can pick the bench up by the top and move it when we need to make more room in a class.

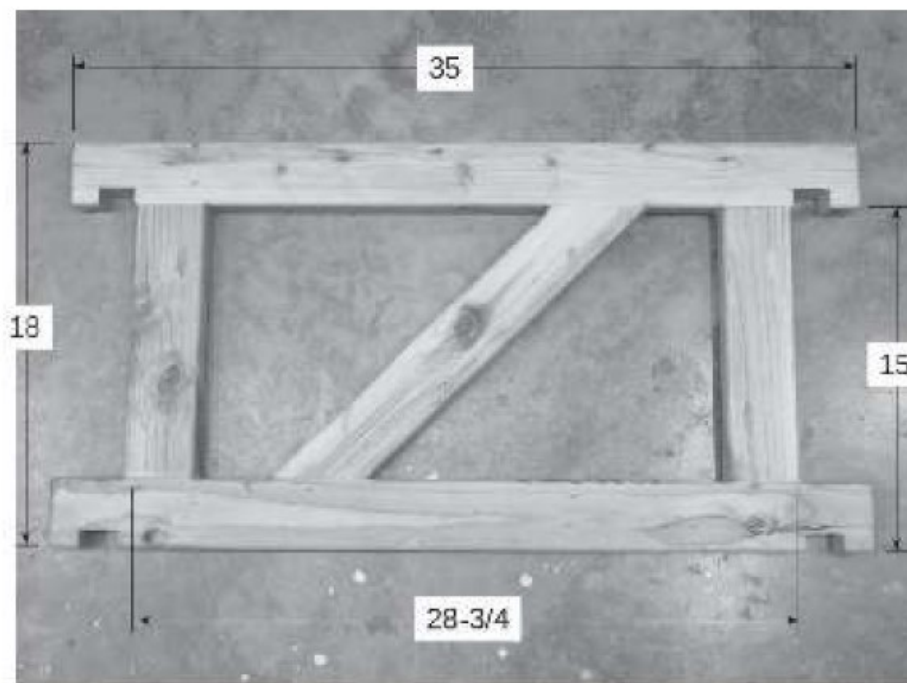
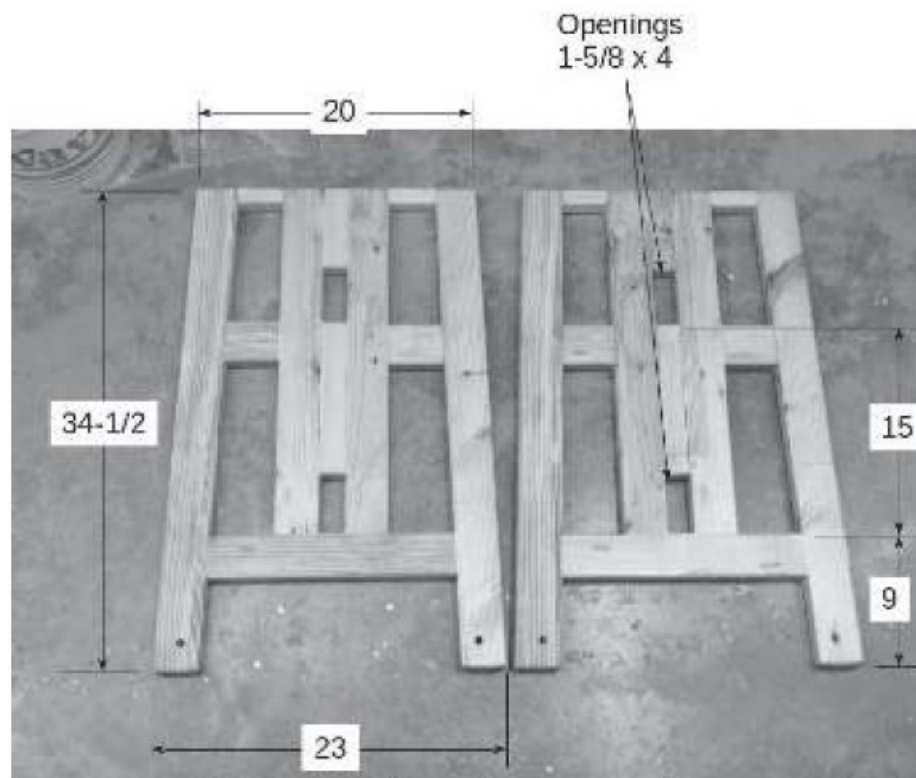


This 4-page article re-printed from the November-December 2018 edition of Bituminous Bits, The Journal of the Alabama Forge Council.

These pictures show enough dimensions to give an idea of the size and the joinery. The construction reflects my woodworking background 2x4s ripped down to 3 inches to get nice square corners, legs angled out, pocket screws and doweled joinery, and all the edges rounded off with a router. If I were making another I might think about some simpler joinery to make it go together faster.



This 4-page article re-printed from the November-December 2018 edition of Bituminous Bits, The Journal of the Alabama Forge Council.



Notches are 3/4 deep by 1-5/8 wide

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## Right or Left Handed Tongs

By Steve Alford, Athens, Alabama

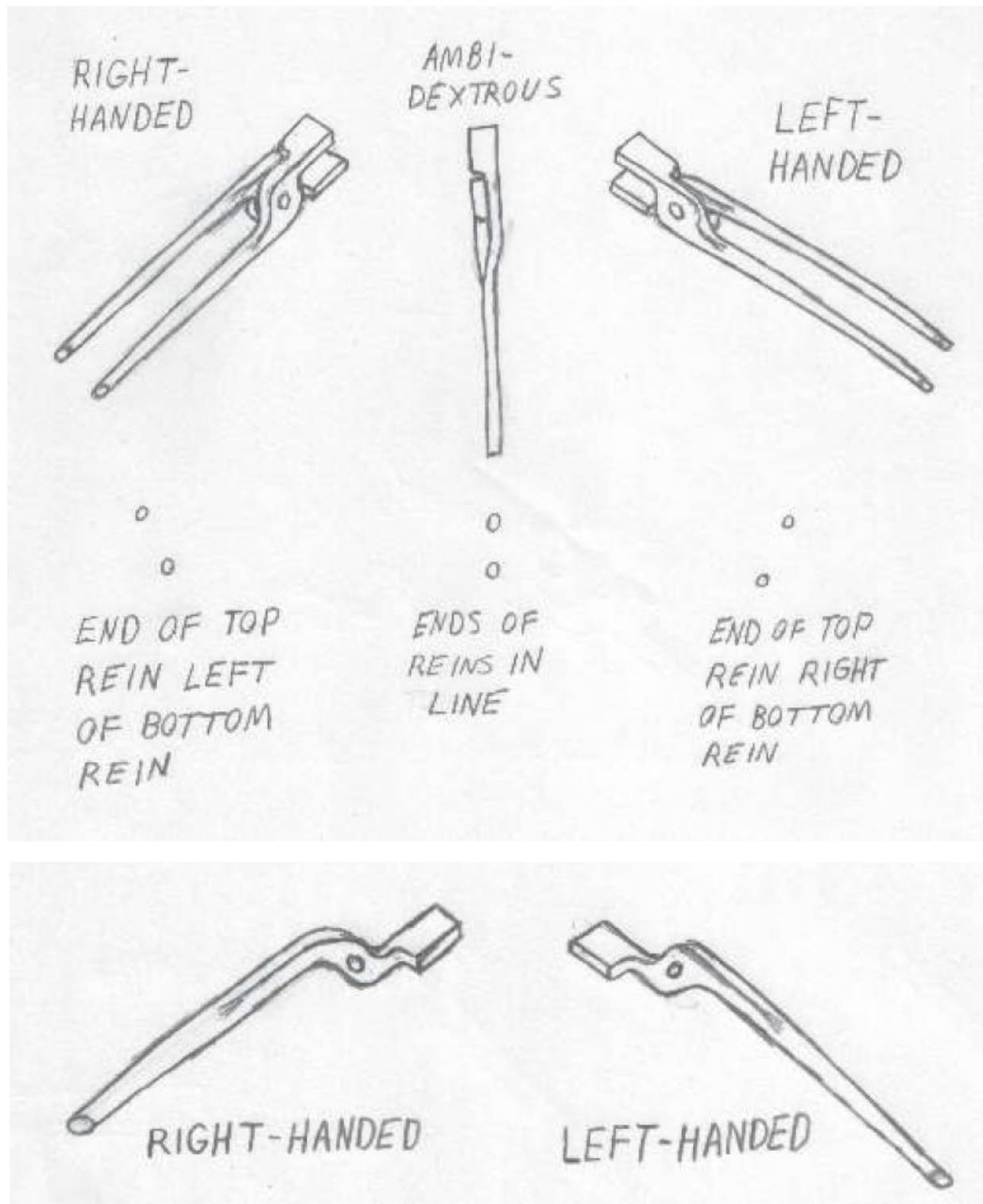
During Al Stephens' demonstration of the classic 3step tong making method, there was a discussion between Al, Dr. Jim Batson, and Clay Spencer about whether tongs really are left handed or right handed, and which way to turn the bar to make them left or right handed. I thought about that for a while, and despite feeling a bit like the fool rushing in where anyone with good sense might fear to tread, I'm going to write this about that.

I'll start with a disclaimer: I'm lefthanded, and my most used pair of tongs is right handed. Left, right, or ambi may not matter to a lot of smiths, but sometimes which way to turn the bar while forging tongs becomes a matter of debate, and this article might help understanding. When I say "righthanded" tongs, I really mean tongs that are most comfortable for a righthanded smith, that is, tongs that are most comfortable when held in the left hand. And lefthanded tongs would be those that are most comfortable in the right hand, like for a lefthanded smith. I figured out that there must be such a difference when I noticed that some of my homemade tongs were easier to use than others. At the time I wasn't paying much attention to which way I turned the bar when I made tongs, I just turned both sides the same way, so they'd fit together. Dr. Jim described the problem by saying "they won't drop correctly".

The top sketch on the next page shows what I call right and lefthanded tongs. Righthanded tongs have the boss that goes with the top rein on the left, and left handed tongs have the boss that goes with the top rein on the right. When I hold a pair of tongs in my left hand, and try to let go of something by dropping the bottom rein, if I'm using righthanded tongs it's easy to grip the top rein with my thumb against my palm and let the bottom rein fall away. But if I'm using lefthanded tongs, gripping the top rein against my palm also tends to push the bottom rein into my palm, and it just doesn't drop as easily. It's not impossible to use, maybe not even very difficult, but I do notice. In the middle of the picture I try to show ambidextrous" tongs, where the reins are bent so the ends line up. These work better than righthanded tongs for me – I'm left handed – but not as comfortably as the left handed tongs I've made.

Maybe a lot of smiths never notice any difference because it really isn't a serious problem. I have a lot of right handed tongs that I use all the time. My most used pair, in fact, is a pair of small wolf jaws from Blacksmith Supply. And that may be another reason why many smiths never notice: All of the bought tongs I've ever looked at are either right handed or ambi, and most smiths are right handed. I have a couple of Al's tongs, which have the reins bent to the ambi configuration, and several bought tongs with ambi reins that also work well.

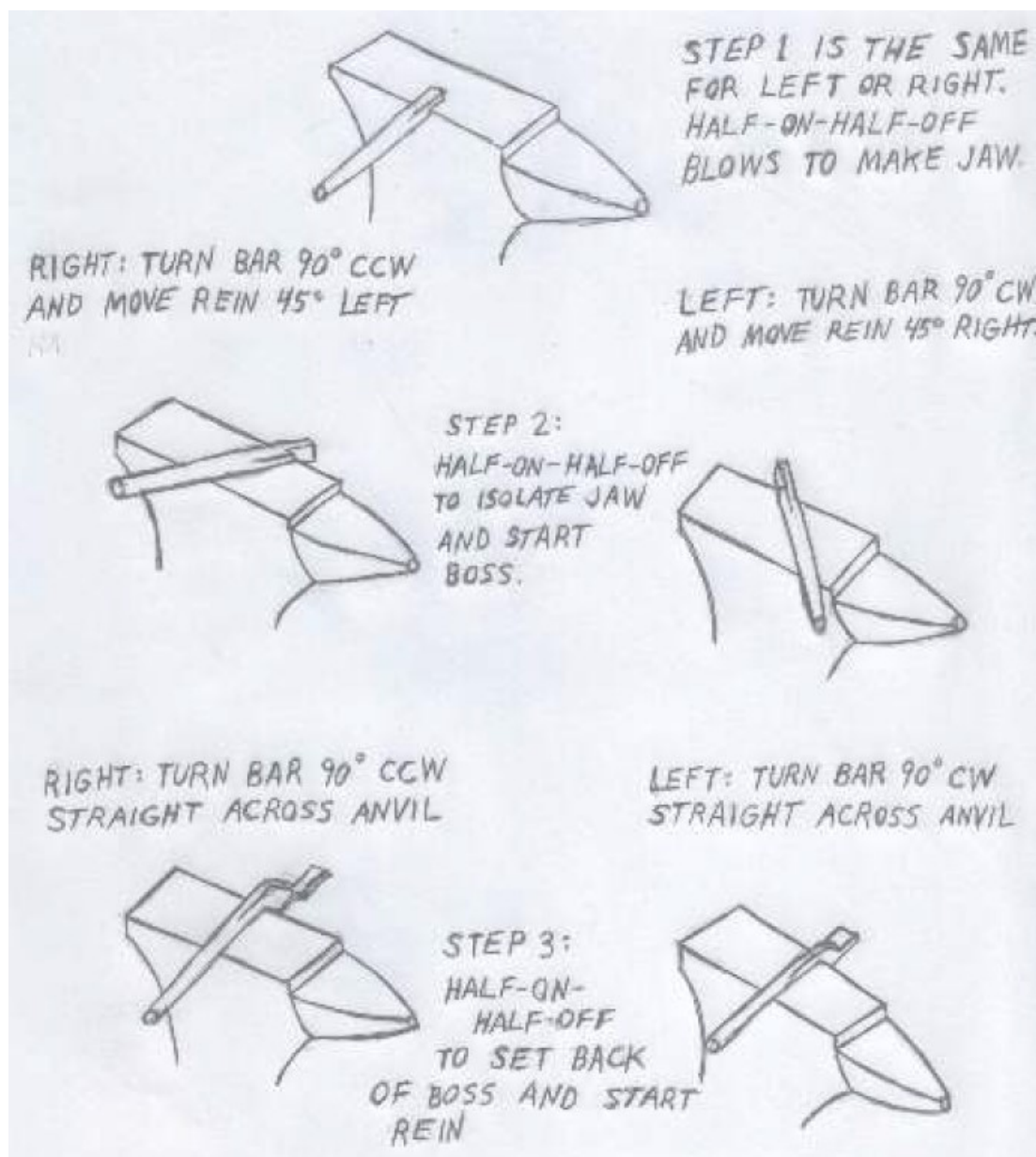
The bottom sketch on the facing page shows one side of a set of righthanded tongs next to one side of a set of lefthanded ones. Mirror images. This is why every tong-making Demonstration emphasizes making both sides the same, not a right and a left. If you flip the left over and try to fit it to the right, when you put the bosses together the jaws won't line up!



This 3-page article re-printed from the January-February 2019 edition of Bituminous Bits, The Journal of the Alabama Forge Council.

Editor's note: The author describes tong "handedness" based on the user's typical hammer hand. A right handed person who holds their hammer in their right hand and tongs in their left hand would use "right handed" tongs. This convention is not universal. Mark Aspery describes tong "handedness" based on the hand holding the tongs, so a right handed person holding tongs in their left hand would use "left handed tongs". I can agree with either convention, so be clear if you are asked to make tongs for someone.

The sketch below shows the three steps to forging one side of a pair of tongs, as described in the article on page 12. The steps for righthanded tongs are shown on the left – because a righthanded smith holds the tongs in his left hand – and the steps for left handed tongs are on the right. Notice that for righthanded tongs the bar always turns counterclockwise and the rein moves to the left in the second step. For lefthanded tongs, the bar turns clockwise and the rein swings to the right. Another way to think about is that a righthanded smith making righthanded tongs, or a lefthanded smith making lefthanded tongs, always turns the bar away.





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A few  
IBA Conference  
photos

