

A Brief History Of LAMA

by Dave Mudge

My father was a welder, fabricator, carpenter, plumber, mechanic, Chief Boatswain Mate and Town Marshall as well as a Jack-of-all-trades. He taught me well, as did I with my children. I was however always fascinated with metal and the things that metal could do. I was hypnotized by the process of arc welding and the joining of metal pieces, bending nails into shapes and melting lead tire weights to make bullets for muzzle loader rifles. I became a jeweler and had my own little business. All the while I was intrigued by the idea of blacksmithing although there was little information available on the subject. This was long before the internet or even personal computers. I found what I could at the local library and became even more intrigued by the thought of forging heavy pieces of iron. With jewelry, I was forging but very tiny pieces of soft metal, brass, silver, even an occasional gold piece. Pursuing blacksmithing, I built a shed to use as a shop. I already had a welding machine and oxy-acetylene rig and many hand tools. I made a crude anvil from a piece of rail road track and started experimenting. I made some crude furniture and lamps and went to a craft show where someone asked if I was an ABANA member. I said, "what's ABANA?" he said, "You'll find out." and he was gone. Well I did find out and was excited to realize that there were people around the country that had the same interests as I. I joined ABANA right away. I attended my first ABANA conference in Birmingham at the Sloss steel foundry in 1988. It changed my life.

In the summer of 1991, my daughter Naomi, took a break from her college studies in Arizona where she lived with her mom and step dad, and came to spend some time with us. She was intrigued with what I was doing and started working with me. I asked her to help form a club or group of other local folks that were interested in blacksmithing. We got a list of names from Jim Jenkins (if I remember correctly) from when someone had tried to start a similar group. Naomi drafted a letter and we sent a copy to all the names on the list announcing a meeting at my new shop. LAMA was borne. We wanted to include all metal workers and types of metal work so we called it Louisiana Metalsmiths' Association. LA for Louisiana, M for metalsmiths, A for association. LAMA

In November of 1991 we published our first newsletter, the LAMAGRAM. I was the president, Chris Marks (master bladesmith) was the vice-president, Stuart Dyer was the secretary/treasurer, Ed Lancaster was the auctioneer and Kella Simonin was the newsletter editor. Volume 1, Issue 1 gives a report on the October meeting as follows:

[The October LAMA meeting was held October 26, 1991, in Covington, LA. It was held in conjunction with the Scarecrow Festival and provided an opportunity to demonstrate the many aspects of metalsmithing represented by the members of our association. Chris Marks set up his forge and demonstrated forging techniques, including the making of iron spoons. Chuck Simonin set up his propane gas forge which Roc Paul used throughout the day. David Mudge and Vickie Moore displayed their work. They were joined by Wayne Morgan who placed several of his fountains in the area, including a beautiful one directly in front of the court house which featured large blue herons. These attractive displays gathered large crowds to the area throughout the day. The LAMA members present declared the meeting a resounding success.](#)

The help of Gordon Ryder, Fred Durio, and Ed Lancaster as well as many others helped to make that a successful meeting and public demonstration. Public demonstrations and education is part of what LAMA is supposed to do in order to fulfill our obligation to our charter and maintain our 501c3 non profit status.

The next LAMA meeting was at Bill Ludwig's bronze foundry near Hammond. I remember it well. It was a hoot. Over 75 people attended that meeting and Ed Lancaster raised \$200 in the auction. Bill arranged a bronze pour for us. It was very exciting. The LAMAGRAM included a map to Ludwig's place. There was no GPS or Google back then. Bill has since passed away. We miss him.

Soon after that LAMA was blessed with lots of book reviews by Chuck Hamsa for which we were very grateful. By the way dues were \$10.00 back then. In May of 1992 the LAMA meeting was held in conjunction with The Mississippi Forge Council's conference in Vicksburg, MS at Grady Holley's Forge. Demonstrators were Jerry Hoffman editor of "The Blacksmith's Journal", Benny Crevitt, Leonard Landrum, Bob Heath, Grady Holley and Mike Roberts. I experienced my first anvil shoot thanks to Col. Tim Ryan and I met Tom Clark for the first time.

LAMA's next public demonstration was the Madisonville Wooden Boat Festival on September 26 & 27, 1992. The festival was rained out on Saturday but we had a great time on Sunday. It was a great success. In April of 2003 LAMA had

another public demonstration at "Art In The Park" in the Bogue Falaya Park in Covington. In the following years LAMA participated in Art In The Park several times and had a great time. LAMA has done many public demonstrations and continues to do so We have had meetings at many of the member's facilities as well as the LSU Art Department and Baton Rouge Rural Life place. We have had meetings at Gretna Greens Blacksmith shop and Acadian Village in Lafayette. We have had meetings with other Blacksmith groups.

We have had a book library and a video library. We have had tee shirts and stickers. We have had newsletters from time to time. We have had many variations on a web site, (all of them good). We have had many members join and later fade away. We have had members pass on to that big forge in the sky and we have members that have been here since the beginning. It would be nice to see a lot of new members to bring in new ideas and energy into the club. LAMA has been an official ABANA Chapter for 22 years and with your help and participation we can go another 22 years.