



**Bighorn Forge, Inc.**

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Dear ABANA Members, ABANA Board, and ABANA Editors,

Based on content found in the “Anvil’s Ring” and “Hammer’s Blow” that promote the use of modern metalworking processes to produce a project in its entirety, sometimes using catalogue parts, or to produce a jig, I must object to this content in the magazines of an organization designated to be for and about forging processes, and the art and craft thereof.

Article II in the ABANA by-laws states under “Purposes and Objectives”: “The Association is organized exclusively for educational purposes, including, but not limited to, the following: to encourage and facilitate the training of blacksmiths; to disseminate information about sources of material and equipment; to expose the art of blacksmithing to the public; to serve as a center of information about blacksmithing for the general public, architects, interior designers, and other interested groups....”

All aspects of modern processes, (or fabrication) can be learned within 20 minutes of just about anywhere in the USA. *I am not stating that it is wrong to use modern fabrication methods in the home shop or workshop.* Rather I am stating that to promote the use and the products used or made in this manner in a *blacksmith’s* organization is wrong. Referring back to Article II, I do not believe the intent of the wording “but not limited to...” refers to exploring metalwork outside of forging. So please do not use that phrase as an open ended statement for an excuse to stray from the charter.

Please do not write back and challenge the use of power hammers, electric blowers, oxy-acetylene, gas forges, etc. as these do not directly effect the *process*...which is what this all boils down to...*process.*

We must continue to focus on forging process, i.e. the nine forging fundamentals: *drawing down, upsetting, twisting, bending, punching, drifting, cutting, joints and forge welding.* There are also the aspects of forging high carbon steel, annealing, hardening and tempering. Beyond the processes, there are the aspects of style, current and what has come before. Further, there are the fine points of design, i.e. historically, aesthetically, and structurally.

Whether forging iron, steel, bronze or stainless, it is forging process that defines a blacksmith. It is that sound process that the late Francis Whitaker witnessed as lacking way back in the 1990’s. It is process that separates a blacksmith from a fabricator. It is process that this organization was built upon.

A blacksmith cannot be defined by material, end product or tools, otherwise we'd see articles written by farriers, tanners, jewelers, and more.

Let's look at it another way. I teach forging. I am primarily a blacksmith, but I do occasionally use a MIG or TIG welder, angle grinders, belt sanders, and a lathe in my shop. But I would never teach the latter as *forging process*...neither should ABANA.

The National Ornamental and Miscellaneous Metals Association (NOMMA) is a fine organization, that is focused on all aspects of forming metal, as well as promoting the professional aspects of running a decorative and ornamental metals shop, whether it be a blacksmith shop, fab shop, or something in-between. So there already is an all inclusive organization...we don't need another one.

Don't get me wrong, I truly enjoy non-forged metal sculpture. Many large sculptural works are breathtaking. However, do non-forged sculptures belong in the Anvil's Ring? To be fair, they do not. Yes, this is a bold statement, but simply because an individual who once was a prominent blacksmith, does not mean ABANA needs to include everything they make in the AR or HB. The line has to be drawn somewhere.

Because of this trend, ABANA is losing or has already lost many fine smiths; smiths who once led, and who could once again lead this organization. Let's either adhere to ABANA's charter, or redefine what ABANA truly has become. Otherwise, where will it stop? Will we see articles on machining in the future? Never say never, as I never thought I'd see the day where we are presently.

If "all forms of metalwork accepted" is the new normal, then we need a new organization that will lead those who wish to learn sound forging processes, and at all levels of forging experience, and promote sound forging workmanship. At the very least, there needs to be a distinction between what is forged and what is not. The publications should demand that the processes are spelled out, as not to deceive the reader, i.e. 90% fabricated, 10% forged. Or start a sister organization called the "Artist Metalworkers Association of North America." However, I joined the "Artist **Blacksmiths** Association of North America." Let's defend "Article II."

Though we may differ in our opinions, I respect all who have responded to my original statements. This discussion could and should be healthy for ABANA.

One last word...let's promote not only sound forging processes, but also sound design and execution.

Sincerely,  
Dan Nauman  
Kewaskum, WI