

Report from the Southwest

Jerry Wolfe

Dr E. Charlton Prather (affectionately know as Skeeter) will be our demonstrator in February. Some folks may not be aware so I will give a little historical information. Skeeter has an honorary Doctor of Metal Art degree bestowed by FABAs as one of the formative fathers of our chapter, which dates back to May 18, 1985. Dr Prather also is an MD (medical doctor) and has many honors from his career in infectious medicine with the state of Florida, retiring over 20 years ago. Dr Prather has been very influential in the area of Epidemiology. (Google that one !!!) One honor of note is the Florida Medical Health building named the "Prather Building" in Tallahassee. Skeeter has been very active for many years in all aspects of the FABAs chapter. Skeeter tells me his history with blacksmiths dates back to his childhood when he worked in a blacksmith shop in Jasper FL, earning 5 cents per week. I'm sure he became very familiar with many techniques of our forefather blacksmiths. Which child of our 21st century would even "stoop over" to pick up a nickel today?

ALSO: This is planning time for the rest of the year. I am looking for ideas and demonstrators for the rest of the year. In April we will have Susan Dunsmoor doing a demo concerning sculptures with aluminum. There has been a number of requests over the months for "knife making" and Damascus steel; so I'm trying to accommodate those requests in future months. I'm looking for some variety of locations to host the meetings, so if you are willing to provide a location, please let me know. What about Koreshan State Park in Estero / Ft Myers – how many will be willing to travel there? <http://www.floridastateparks.org/koreshan/>. Please send me your ideas or volunteer to host a meeting (fourth Saturday of the month).

Bulletin from the Home Front

Steve Bloom

Well guys – still no contributions (and still no feedback from anyone on what you might want to see in the newsletter or what special classes you might like to be available. – HELLO...anyone out there??)

Since no one has contributed squat, you'll just have to put up with a report on my recent activities (and the reason this issue is a bit late). In 1984, I finished the roof on the first wing on my house (27' x 36)'. By 1987, there was a roof on the second wing, most of which was in the same plane and measured 22' x 24'. The roof was a plywood deck overlaying 2x8 PT rafters, covered with a layer of 30 lb tar paper, and finished with galvanized 5-V-Crimp metal roofing (mostly 2' x 14' sheets, so they overlapped approximately 13' from the lower edge). Well, it's been 20+ years and the combined effects of rain, oxygen, acidic oak leaves and pine needles converted a shiny surface to a fine collection of rust patches, i.e., it was time to do it again. Being a smith (and cheap - or is that redundant?), I was going to do it myself (the ratio of material costs to having it done professionally is approximately 5 times). So you're asking - why is he bothering us with this? Because smithing is involved.

The roof metal was scheduled to become wall surfaces on a new shed, so I didn't want to crush the ridges when pulling the roofing nails. I also had to pull 2000 nails, so efficiency was also a goal.

The solution was modified 2 lb framing hammers (which were lying in my spare hammer drawer). A 'U' shaped piece of 1/2" round stock was arc-welded at the base of the claw (to provide better leverage and to transfer the crush force to the sides of the ridges from the ridge



tops. The hammers were run up to 1600F, oil quenched, and tempered at 600F for an hour. That makes them resilient but softer than a normal hammer. Extra long handles were welded, and we were good to go. The process consisted of slipping the claws of the modified hammer around a nail head, whacking the face with a normal 2 lb framing hammer, and popping the nail free. It took two of us approximately 6 hours to strip the 1500 ft² oof and there was no little bits of s h r a p n e l generated.

The next problem was getting 22' and 27' pieces of 3' wide, 26 gauge galvalume roofing up on the roof. The solution was a ramp made out



of scrap planks from an old deck and a trolley. The trolley consisted of a piece of plywood, a chunk of angle-iron, and wheels made from an old boat roller (cut in half) and two pieces of pipe with a circle of steel welded on one end. Each wheel had a small diameter than ran on the top of the ramp and a larger diameter than ran to the outside of the ramp and kept the trolley from running off the ramp. A couple of pulleys and a lawn tractor completed the rig. We typically loaded 4 sheets onto the trolley, had one person on the tractor, one safety person on the ground, and two on the roof. The tractor was slowly backed, the trolley rolled up the ramp and sheets were pushed up onto the roof (with a bit of help from the folks on the roof to keep the ends of the sheet from digging in).

With the exception of one corner of the roof deck that needed replacing (2' x 4'), the original roof and tar layer were fine. We dropped a second layer of paper, squared up the first panel in the middle of the roof, and installed the replacement 1500 ft² with stainless pan head screws and neoprene washers. Total time was two days with five folks lending a hand. Cost was about \$1500 - with a savings of \$6000 over having pro's do it. Of course, there was the cost of beer and feeding everyone....

Send me something or next time it's the 57mm cannon rebuild!