



Smiths Like a Girl

An old craft moves toward equality

OHIO The clanging is about to start at Doug Lockhart's forge in Logan, a short ride up into the Hocking Hills from Cincinnati. Lockhart, a 53-year-old blacksmith, has a heavy beard and forearms that would do Popeye proud, and today he's showing how to transform a railroad spike into a knife that will sell for \$175. He runs regular workshops here, passing on the craft that he learned as a young man—albeit with one big adjustment.

"Women make the best students," Lockhart says. "You give a man a hammer, and he'll do what a man does: He'll wind up and smash as hard as he can." He demonstrates with his ball-peen—*clang!* "The piece is going to end up ruined and back in the fire."

It's good, then, that the co-owner of the business is Lockhart's daughter, Danielle Russell. A slight, soft-spoken woman who turns 22 this month, she has been training for seven years and has become a capable smith—though that's not the only thing she does here. "I feed the chickens, goats, and draft horses," she says. "I'm also building a web presence for us."

Lockhart, meanwhile, is finishing up his knife. He plunges the glowing blade into a barrel of mucky water (a blacksmith never flushes out the trough), sending up an angry hiss of steam. "There's a little piece of everything I've worked on in that water," he says.

Danielle then takes up the hammer, spraying sparks with every strike. "A woman uses her body and focuses her strength; she'll feel her way through the iron," Lockhart says. "When I say someone swings like a girl, it's the best compliment I can offer." —JOHN SCOTT LEWINSKI

Splash Decisions

A Spanish court solves irrigation disputes the (very) old-fashioned way

SPAIN It's Thursday morning, just before noon, and the crowd in the center of Valencia's Plaza de la Virgen is already quite large. Near the 13th-century Apostles Gate, onlookers huddle around a circular fenced-in area containing eight leather chairs. When the clock strikes 12, a nearby door opens. Eight men in short black robes, led by a bailiff with a brass pike, make their way to the chairs and sit.

"Claimants from the Quart Aqueduct," calls out the bailiff in Valencian, the local language. He surveys the crowd for a moment, then repeats the cry. "Claimants from the Quart Aqueduct!" When no one steps forward, he calls claimants on the next case.

The Tribunal de les Aigües de la Vega de València—Valencia's Water Tribunal—is said to be the world's oldest active court of law. Having started under Muslim rule in the 10th century, the tribunal has survived the Christian Reconquista, the Spanish Civil War, and, most recently, the internet. It meets here weekly to settle disputes involving irrigation, water distribution, and canal maintenance.

Along with being a prized cultural asset—the tribunal is on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list—this remains an important judicial body, able to quickly and definitively settle conflicts that might otherwise get ugly. "Although simple and based on old customs, it works well," says court officer María José Olmos Rodrigo. "So why change it?"

Which isn't to say that the docket is always full. Today, with no claimants in sight, the adjudicators leave in under two minutes—which is just as well, as rain's starting to fall on the plaza. —MARGARITA GOKUN SILVER

