



The Smiths

by Rachel Horn Photos by Rideout Photography

There is a stretch of highway 62 in Lawrenceburg where drivers pass an unassuming, once-upon-a-time grocery store that, at first glance, has seen livelier days. However, anyone who has had the pleasure of peaking in the door since 2009 knows all the better. Inside you will find Matthew and Karine Maynard, modern day blacksmiths extraordinaire. Anvil and all.

You won't find the husband and wife team forging crested shields for battle or crafting common hand tools when you step inside their studio. Both the large and small-scale masterpieces the two of them shape day in and day out from the grocer-turned-metal shop are more remarkable, to say the least.

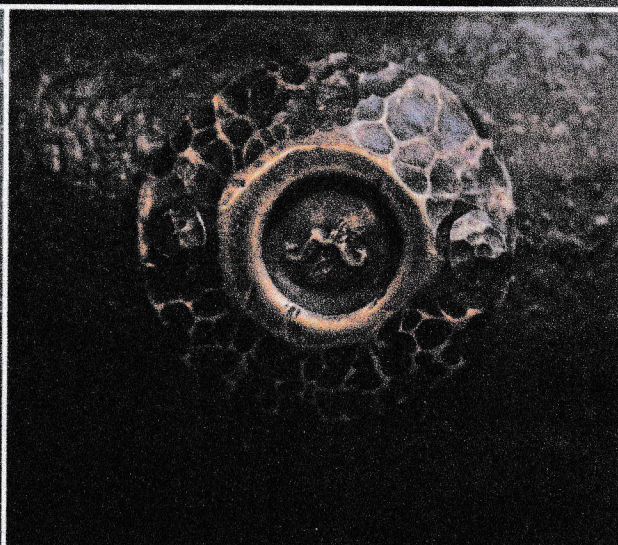
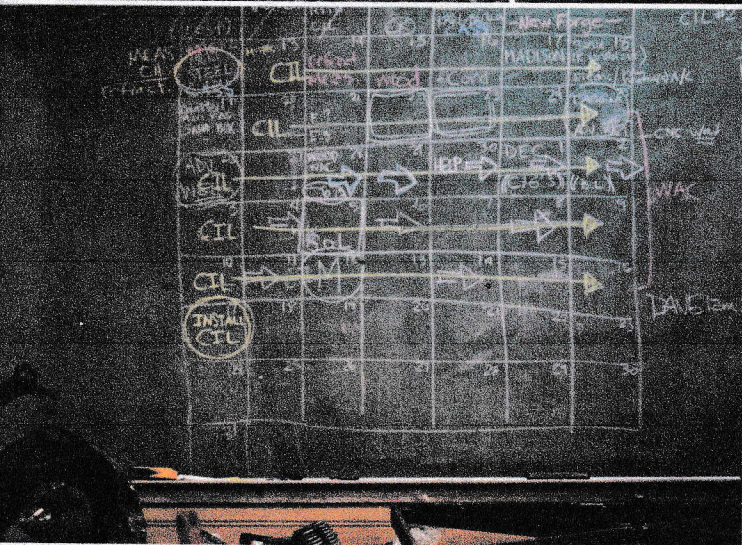
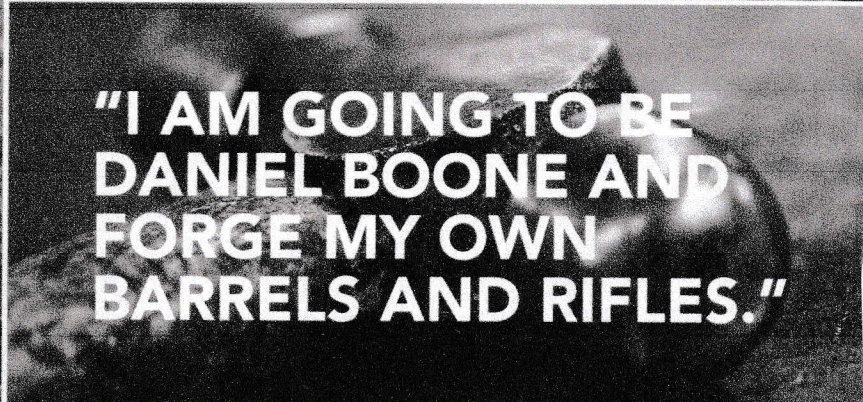
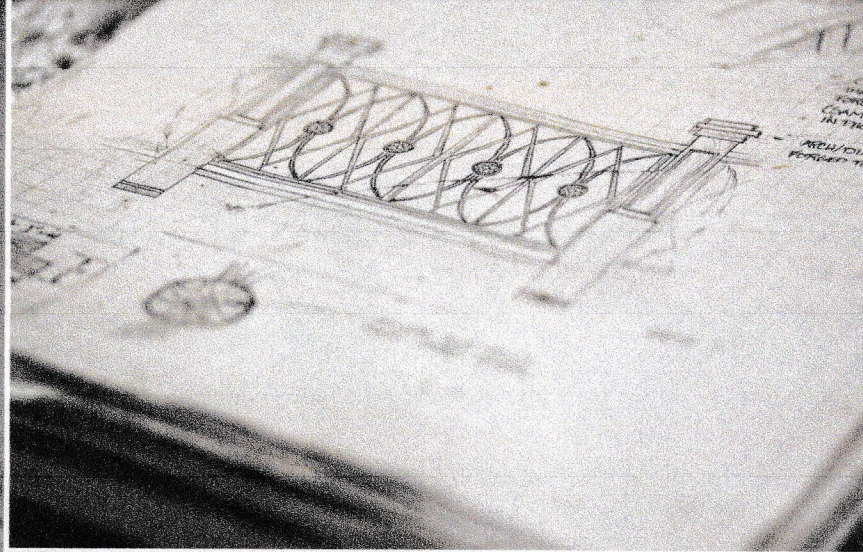
The pair met in the most customary of fashions – a chance introduction from a mutual glassblowing friend at Burning Man in the Black Rock Desert of Nevada (remember the fall '12 issue of STORY? Yeah, same place). Matthew was a blacksmith from Eastern Kentucky who had grown up pouring over the pages of

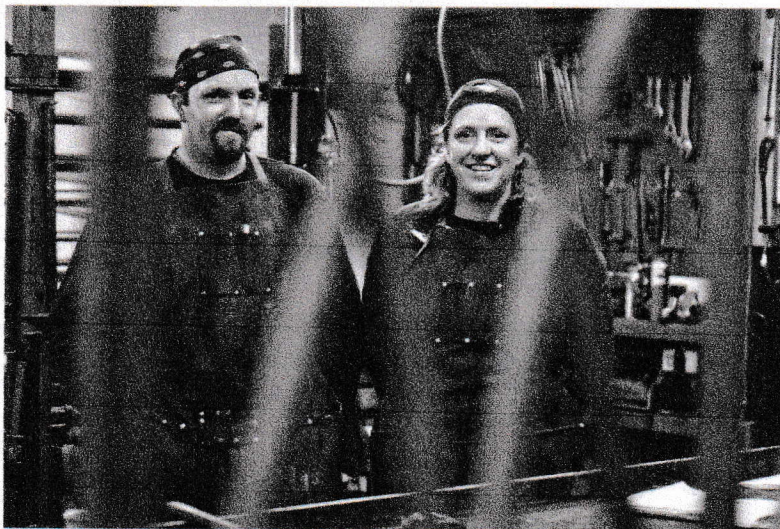
the Foxfire Series of books at his grandfather's house. "As a kid in Eastern Kentucky, I would sit there and in my mind thought, 'I am going to be Daniel Boone and forge my own barrels and rifles.'" Maynard's grandfather set up a makeshift forge for him at age 12, and he has been in the game ever since.

Karine, from Hudson, Wis., was a recent grad and artist skilled in painting, small metals and jewelry making. This chance meeting kindled the best friend status the two continue to boast today, as well as a pretty fantastic collaboration of artistic minds.

In 2004, Karine left dairy land for bluegrass and joined forces with her now husband. "So with Matt's tool and dye mind and my formal arts training, that's the merge," explained Karine. "I just said, 'What you're doing is art,' and for the longest time I don't think he believed me. He never called himself an artist, I called him an artist."

With this "merge," the two have produced striking pieces on every scale – from candlestick holders to custom tables and furniture, bourbon barrel bar stools and an "art car" called The





Contraption (designed for Burning Man). However, the bread and butter of the Maynard operation – their railings.

Each railing commission is a unique, never before, never again design made to the client's specifications. "We use our handwriting, but our client's vision," Karine explains. "We get inspiration from meeting them, seeing their location and other elements in the home." Once the vision is sketched out, the real fun begins.

To truly understand the uniqueness of the Maynards' work, a visit to their shop should be in the cards. All of their work starts in raw bar stock. They cut, forge and draw out each piece by hand before design and assembly can even begin. This is a long process indeed. Matthew sticks a taper from a current project in the forge and shows me just how much attention each piece receives. The key to keeping their cool with each step

of every heavily loved project, Karine explains, is a little calming music (Ben Sollee, The Pixies) and not getting ahead of themselves. "Every one [taper] is the only one. If you think of it like I am on number 8 of 360, you would just be overwhelmed and sit down."

As they pull out albums and photos of past work with the same loving pride as a parent with a wallet full of baby pictures, the pair can chat about each project adoringly. Be it the delicately designed garden handrails to elaborately awe-inspiring "kinetic sculptures" involving a ship's wheel. Whatever project is in the works, that is their favorite of all time.

The inspiring work of the Maynards has not gone unnoticed. In 2012, Matthew received the Al Smith Fellowship from the Kentucky Arts Council. Their work was not only featured in, but also made the cover of *IronWork Today III*, an international book on blacksmithing.

Their talents and scale have outgrown the old grocery that they currently call home. Their new shop is being constructed as I type this and is set to be fully functioning in early 2013.

When Matthew and Karine aren't smithing (or sleeping), they always gladly find themselves in another project. They recently remodeled their farmhouse (on the same lot as their shop) from top to bottom. "We always work together, we DIY as much as we can," said Karine. "We are kind of creating our story in our home."

The Maynards host an open studio day every November (along with glassblowing friend, Chad Balster from GlassWorks in

Louisville) for the public to experience the shop of a blacksmith firsthand. You can also find their work displayed at Completely Kentucky in Frankfort and the Kentucky Museum of Art & Craft in Louisville.

Their art is tangible and huge. Beautiful and surely a labor of love. These pages can't contain the talent and personality these smiths bring to our home state. ■

→ For more about this titanium twosome (metal humor), check out MaynardStudios.com or Karine's personal blog, StayAtHomeWelder.blogspot.com.