

The Solutions Forum



Solutions in metalworking

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Strong man uses powerful tools

You would think that breaking a 1000 year-old Viking record would be cause to boast, but not for strong man Gregg Ernst of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. Gregg, a renowned marine and metal workshop operator, proudly represented Canada in the 1992 World



Strongest Man competition in Iceland where he established a new world record for carrying the 410 pound "Husafelt Stone" for a full 70 meters. The feat has made Gregg an Icelandic living legend, as the Husafelt Stone tradition has survived countless generations and is based on a Viking saga. The last record of 60 meters was set nearly a millennium ago.

When Gregg is not setting records lifting heavy objects like cars and stones, he runs Thomas Walters and Sons, a marine



and general metal workshop and forge. Arguably the most famous blacksmith shop in Eastern Canada, Gregg bought the shop in 1996 after selling the dairy business portion of his farm where he always did his own welding. Taking over the shop, Gregg had to learn from the best and work as an apprentice to Vernon

Walters, grandson of the original owner who started the business back in 1876.

Over the course of its history, Thomas Walters and Sons did iron work on over 400 tall ships including the *Rose*, *Bounty* and Schooner *Bluenose* and *Bluenose II*. The original *Bluenose*, which was undefeated in all its competitive sailing history, has been depicted on the Canadian dime for many years. To this day, Gregg continues with traditional tall ship ironwork, bringing old-fashioned craftsmanship into the new millennium.

Never truly content with the power and performance of the grinders he used, Gregg was introduced to the Walter BIG 6 (6") by Rick Turner of Nova Industrial. This grinder offers a powerful 12A motor and electronics that guarantee a constant spindle speed even under load. He is truly devoted to his BIG 6 grinder since it gives him the power he needs and he adds that it's a "...compact grinder with big grinder power..." and "...you can push on it a little."

And when Gregg "pushes" on something a little, that says a lot. Gregg weighs more than 300 lbs. and currently holds the world record for the most weight ever lifted by a man in the back-lift style. He established the record in 1993 with a lift of 5340 lbs. The record still stands today.

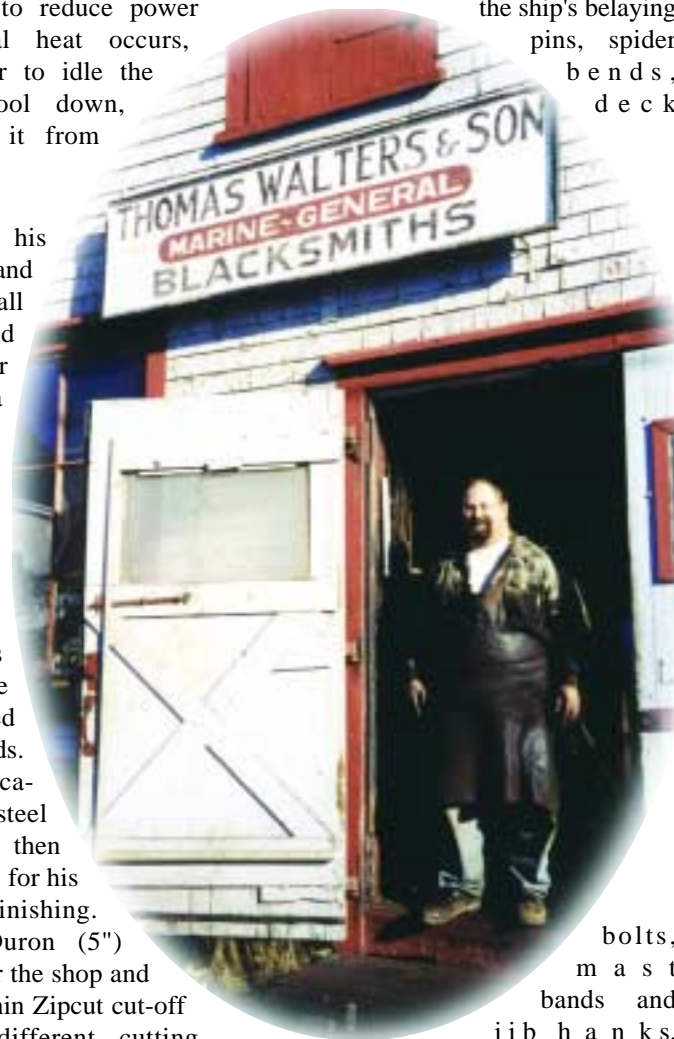
Just in case Gregg pushes a little too much, BIG 6 comes with a special feature called POWERGUARD™. This feature matches a temperature sensor with electronics in order to reduce power when above normal heat occurs, allowing the operator to idle the grinder for fast cool down, therefore protecting it from burnout.

Gregg typically uses his grinders to cut, grind and finish such pieces as tall ship anchors, rails and shackles. The Walter system of matching a power tool with the best-suited abrasive for the required application answers his daily needs. He grinds his forged ironwork with Double-X grin-ding wheels because an aggressive removal rate is needed to reduce heavy welds. For smoother applications he prefers Allsteel grinding wheels, and then Enduro-Flex flap discs for his blending and finishing. Recently, a new Duron (5") grinder was bought for the shop and he uses it with extra thin Zipcut cut-off wheels for many different cutting applications.

Gregg always greets his customers with a big smile whether they come in with a large order for anchors or simply to get a few pieces of angle iron cut up. Even if work as a blacksmith has become somewhat of a rare art form, Thomas Walters & Sons has the expertise to make hard-to-get traditional tools and do plenty of custom work.

The shop also does other general metal and marine metal work including

the fabrication of anchors and marlin spikes. Gregg recently did ironwork on the *Picton Castle*, a tall ship currently sailing around the world. He worked on the ship's belaying pins, spider bends, deck



bolts,
m a s t
bands and
jib h a n k s.

Gregg's business is located in the picturesque town of Lunenburg located on the south shore on Nova Scotia. Lunenburg was founded in 1753 and the entire town is a national heritage site and major tourist attraction. It is also a preferred filming location and touts such titles as "Simon Birch" and "Two if by the Sea". Incidentally, Gregg will soon be doing some iron restoration work on the same *Bounty* that was depicted in the film classic "Mutiny on the Bounty" starring Marlon Brando.