



Patric Schneider

Nick Brumder, a blacksmith who lives in Georgetown, will give Themis a new look before she is put back on top of the courthouse dome when the restoration is finished.

## *Tending to Themis, blacksmith finds satisfaction of the soul*

By **BEN TROLLINGER**

The birds have been tough on the goddess of divine justice. The wind, too.

But the old girl is still holding strong, according to Georgetown blacksmith Nick Brumder.

"She's taken a beating, but she's held up remarkably well," he said.

Mr. Brumder, 52, began the restoration work this week on Themis, the 96-year-old copper statue that kept watch over the city from its perch atop the Williamson County courthouse.

In March, workers removed the statue, which weighs about 250 pounds, from the courthouse dome and hosed off the green streaks caused by years of accumulated bird droppings.

Themis, the Greek goddess who wields the scales of justice in one hand and a sword in the other, found a home on display at the Williamson

County Historical Museum. On Wednesday, she was trucked over to Brumder Ornamental Iron on Industrial Park Circle.

Mr. Brumder — whose vast, cluttered blacksmith shop almost resembles Vulcan's forge — will reinforce the statue's structure and iron out the wrinkles and rips caused by wind and, apparently, a pellet gun.

"That's not unusual for statues in Texas," said Mr. Brumder, a native of Milwaukee.

It's the workmanship that went into the statue that fascinates Mr. Brumder, who repaired it once before in 2002.

"It's a great study in the medium," he said. "It's wonderful doing restoration work because I learn a lot thinking about how they did this."

Having studied under some of the world's greatest blacksmiths — such as Francis Whitaker and Vaclav Yaros — Mr. Brumder is a keen observer of the craft.

Judging from the technique, he believes that whoever made Themis also might have had a hand in the construction of the Statue of Liberty. It's just a wild hunch, but if the spark in his eyes is any indication, he seems close to convinced.

"I'm just making that up, really — I think that's who did it, but I haven't done the research," he said. "Wouldn't that be amazing?"

Mainly, Mr. Brumder, who moved his business to Georgetown in 1986 from Colorado, forges scrolling iron hand railings. Occasionally, the devout Catholic works on more personal projects such as iron crosses or monuments for cemeteries, or ornamental work for churches.

He began dabbling with metal as a teenager and said he is still just as captivated with the medium as he was then.

"The material itself is obdurate. It's so responsive," he said. "The art of it is very soul-satisfying."