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Sirloin Taste, Burger Budget

I've been reading your excellent magazine for several years now, and everything I know about knives and other edged tools I've learned from the pages of *BLADE*® every month. After a while, I became familiar with many fine knifemakers, suppliers and others in this vast family of people who appreciate knives.

I'm partially disabled and live in a very small town. I collect disability checks that keep my son and I sheltered and fed. Occasionally, there will be a few dollars left. Then I like to try and buy a knife for my extremely modest collection. Though I'd really like to be able to buy handmade or even some of the high-end factory knives, I'm more likely to buy a nice, real inexpensive knife from Ruko or Magnum, sometimes even a Meyerco or Camp USA. Each company offers fairly inexpensive but functional assortments of knives.

It's not as frustrating as it may seem to have sirloin taste on a hamburger budget. I've been lucky enough to actually buy or have given to me a few nice knives—mostly older-style English factory pieces. I even managed to buy a Spyderco once.

Anyway, *BLADE* gives me an eye on the world of knives, knifemakers and what's to come in the world of cutlery. And while I may never have the means or opportunity to actually obtain a knife like those featured in *BLADE*, I've learned to be happy just to read, learn and talk to others who are also interested in knives.

So thank you very much for your fine magazine—my link to the wide world of knives and other edged tools, the creators of these fantastic pieces, and last, but certainly not least, my teacher of metallurgy, Mr. Wayne Goddard.

Maybe someday a knife show will be held somewhere near where I live and I may even get the chance to meet some of the folks I know through the pages of *BLADE*. If not, well, there's a nice couple of Muela knives at the local sporting goods store that I've been studying—and, of course, *BLADE* every month.

If I'm talking to another knife collector, I usually test his knowledge to see what I can learn, but if he has no idea who

LETTER OF THE MONTH

I'm an old warrior, a patriotic American, and it may be incidental that I operate TOPS Knives Co. As I, too, still shake my head at the events unfolding since 9/11, I wonder how our great country can tell who the bad guys are. Most of us probably agree that terrorism in general is the "big, bad one."

Meanwhile, some of us in the free-er world are being set upon by a certain type of terrorist, not new, but scathingly old—the knockoff artist.

As a relative newcomer to the world of knives, I'm aware that many reputable knifemakers—handmade and factory—make a genuine effort to consult and have open dialogue if they think that they may be infringing to a major degree on another knifemaker's or knife company's style. This appears to be a general courtesy in the industry. "Let's face it," says Rob Simonich, a friend and a great knife guy, "there are just so many things you can do to a piece of steel with a point and handle on it."

Nonetheless, both makers and buyers are seeing an increasing number of knockoffs. However, some of the knockoffs have gone too far.

Recently, at a New York knife show, our friends at Strider Knives confronted an individual who, without Strider's permission, had made an exact copy of several of Strider's existing models, with the exact duplication of the "Strider" name on each one! When representatives of Strider confronted the individual, he responded that he was trying to show how well he could do work for Strider, which is total bull. The fact is that this individual and a few others have been flooding the market with their knives without any regard for Strider, TOPS or anyone else. Amazing how fast the bull flows when such a person is confronted by a real man, isn't it?

At TOPS, we, too, have seen an increase in the exact duplication of three of our

models. (As for the old saying, "Copying is the greatest form of flattery"—that's bull, too!) The knives are being brought into the USA, Canada and Europe, and stamped on the blade as "TOPS-Tactical OPS." As the exact duplicates surfaced, I started to contact the importers. As you would expect, they claimed total ignorance of the situation, followed by total denial to the distribution of the knives. After a short period—and after I notified Customs, the U.S. Department of Commerce and the FBI—the importers are now busy painting over the TOPS name on the offending knives.

It's of note that the country of origin of the knives seems invariably to be the same.

Realistically, how can a couple of makers of tactical folders and straight knives stem the tide of exact duplicate knives coming into America? What such makers have on their side in this present climate of worldwide tension and uncertainty is a grassroots movement of a growing number of hard-core Americans who are, in fact, reacting to the situation. We at TOPS can measure this in small part by the volume of calls we receive and the postings on the Internet cutlery forums that reflect these sentiments.

We at TOPS are most concerned that some unscrupulous individual would claim to be a TOPS dealer, sell knives at 20-times profit, imply that the knockoffs were covered by a TOPS warranty and were of the proper quality, and made to TOPS' exacting specifications.

All we at TOPS can do is advise the distributors and the buying public of the most important fact in these difficult times: "Your life may, indeed, depend upon your knife." If you buy one of the exact knockoff knives, it may fail you in a life-or-death situation. Buy a good knife from a reputable company or its authorized agent. If you find some incredible deal, remember: "If it seems too good to be true, it usually is."

Mike Fuller, TOPS Knives

Bill Moran, Bob Loveless, Bob Dozier or any of the other prominent knifemakers are, then I can only assume that he ought to do some reading, so I lend him a couple of *BLADE* magazines with the admonition

to read them and learn. I think that's pretty good advice for anyone.

Ted Young (address n/a)



cover cover story story

This issue's cover knife made by **R.W. "Ron" Clark** features a **Liquidmetal** blade. Ron was the first knifemaker to contact and cooperate with **Liquidmetal Technologies**, a California company marketing a metal that is non-magnetic, non-ferrous and, thus, rust resistant. Furthermore, company representatives claim that Liquidmetal has the potential to be cast into finished scalpels and knife blades with no grinding, forging or initial honing required.

The blade of Clark's Model 10 Camp/Hunter was not cast, and no molds have been made for casting knife blades. Instead, Clark profiled, cut, ground and satin finished the Liquidmetal blade from sheet stock. The knife also features dove-tailed 416 stainless bolsters, a stabilized-buckeye-burl handle and mosaic pins. The maker's list price: \$375.

"The casting properties are the most impressive aspect of LM1 [Liquidmetal]," Clark says. "I'd never heard of a metal that could be cast into sharpened scalpels and figured it was worth looking into, so I called the company and started researching it. Together with knifemaker **Trace Rinaldi**, I put this stuff through the paces."

To read more about Liquidmetal, see the related story on page 12. For more information on the cover knife, contact R.W. Clark, Dept. BL5, 1069 Golden Meadow, Corona, CA 92882 (909) 279-4394.

The cover knife photo is by **Bob Best**.

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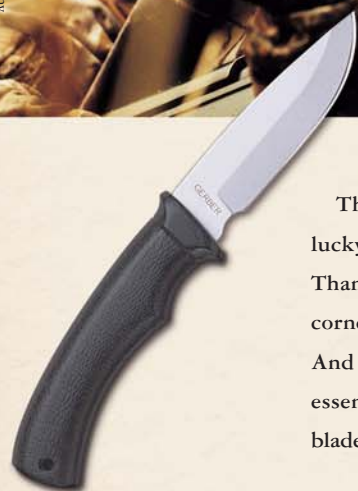
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Al Buck

■ By Steve Shackleford

Buck's Move: What, Where, When & Why

The announcement this past Jan. 14 by Buck Knives that it will move its entire knifemaking operation from El Cajon, California, to Post Falls, Idaho, was no bombshell to local and industry observers. There had been reports in local newspapers that the long-time manufacturer was considering a move to Idaho. Plus, previous moves by California-based knife companies to the business-friendly American Northwest—Benchmade and SOG Specialty Knives, to name two—already had set a precedent. The questions were less “if” than “when” and “why.” The “when” will be the first quarter of 2004. The “why” is a bit more involved.

“The simple truth is that we can continue to achieve and surpass our goals more effectively in Idaho than in California,” noted C.J. Buck, president and CEO of Buck Knives. “In Idaho, utility rates are 60 percent lower, workers comp costs are 40 percent less, and wages and benefits are 20-30 percent less. These major savings are hard to ignore in an increasingly competitive marketplace.” Savings on utilities and workers compensation alone could exceed half-a-million dollars annually, Buck added.

According to a company news release, Buck Knives achieved increases of 10 percent in sales revenue and 18 percent in units out the door in 2002. A key element in the increases, Buck said, is the concept of lean manufacturing. Basically, *lean manufacturing* relies on two key ingredients: pull and flow. “Pull means as you sell something you replace it, so the marketplace pulls inventory through the facility,” he explained. “That keeps us lean and responsive.” *Flow*, meanwhile, is the building of knives one at a time one process at a time in “bucket-brigade fashion,” as Buck

described it. The result is quality knives made at reduced costs in a minimum of time, adding further to the company’s response rate. Buck officials had hoped the concept would help prevent a move to a new location. However, the Golden State’s volatile energy situation and exorbitant overhead costs, plus elections this past November that installed California legislators which Buck said are unfriendly to business, pushed the manufacturer north to Idaho.



Buck Knives will move its entire knifemaking operation to Post Falls, Idaho, from El Cajon, California, in the first quarter of 2004. With a plaque of Blade Magazine Cutlery Hall-Of-Famer® Al Buck in the background, company president C.J. Buck holds the Family Favorites Collection, a set of four knives representing each generation of the Buck knifemaking family.

Where is Post Falls and why did Buck Knives choose it for its new home? The city is situated between Spokane, Washington, and Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, in the northwest corner of the state. Its cost of living alone is 30 percent below that of El Cajon and the surrounding San Diego area. Bend, Oregon, was also a finalist in the great move sweepstakes, but Buck officials chose Post Falls because it seemed more

business friendly over the long haul. “This was a business model to make us competitive for the next 10 years,” Buck observed.

What does the move mean for those who buy Buck knives? “We still need to manufacture thousands of knives and we certainly have no planned layoffs,” the company CEO maintained. “When the move takes place, we will encourage key personnel to relocate with the company.” About 25 percent of the manufacturer’s 250 employees are expected to make the move, employees whom Buck said are crucial to helping the company make the transition with no fall-off in production or quality. As for the employees left behind, the company was in the process of working on incentive plans during the transition, including severance and stay-on bonuses. Meanwhile, the move should result in anywhere from 150-200 new jobs in Post Falls, Buck noted.

As for the company’s 4 1/2-acre manufacturing plant and the 10 acres on which it sits in El Cajon, it was on the market as *BLADE*® was going to press. The asking price: \$9 million.

The move will end Buck Knives’ stay of three-and-a-half decades in El Cajon and will come two years after the company celebrated the centennial of the first knife made by Hoyt Buck.

The history of it all isn’t lost on C.J. Buck and, understandably, the move looms as the massive undertaking that it will be.

“Right now, it just looks like a whole lot of work,” he smiled, “but it’s also exciting.”

An entire industry will be watching to see how the move will play out and what the effects on one of its headline knife manufacturers will be.

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Splash

Liquidmetal



Liquidmetal, or LM1, seems to be a breakthrough blade material that could turn some heads. The metal starts as a liquid and has the potential to be cast into finished knife blades with no grinding, forging or initial honing required. This issue's cover knife comes from the hands of knifemaker R.W. "Ron" Clark and parades a satin-finished LM1 blade, dovetailed-416-stainless-steel bolsters, a stabilized-buckeye-burl handle and mosaic pins. His list price: \$375.

There's only one knifemaker using it. There's only one company known to produce it. The metal is said to be more than twice as strong as titanium. It is non-magnetic, non-ferrous and, thus, rust resistant, and hard enough to cut, cut, cut. Liquidmetal, or LM1, can be cast into sharp, finished knife blades with no grinding, forging or initial honing required. All that's needed are the molds, the technology, and a few handles and rivets to hold the finished

blades in place!

What *is* this stuff? According to published reports, Liquidmetal is just what its name implies—a liquid metal with a surprising lack of grain structure. When ordinary metals, including steel, cool after initial forging or heat-treating, they form grain structures, or crystals, where atoms are bonded together. The bonds are the metal's weak points, places where it could crack and rust.

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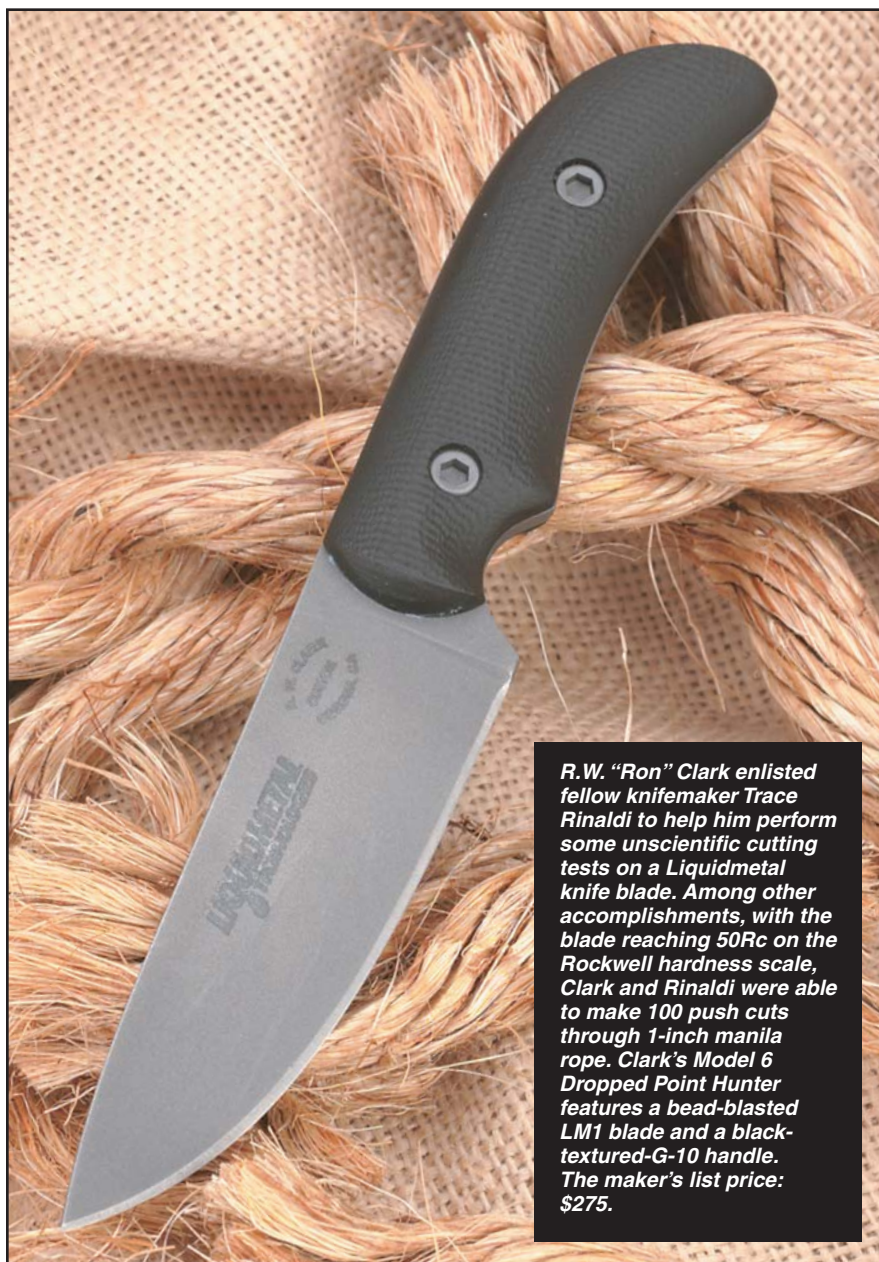
Discovered in 1992 by the California Institute of Technology, Liquidmetal is composed of titanium, copper, nickel, zirconium and beryllium, elements that don't bond together neatly into crystals. Even when cooled slowly, the elements remain jumbled, as in liquid or glass. According to the Lake Forest, California, company instrumental in bringing LM1 to the forefront, Liquidmetal Technologies claims that Liquidmetal can potentially be cast into scalpel-sharp blades.

Another key player is knifemaker R.W. "Ron" Clark, who read the published reports and initiated talks with Liquidmetal Technologies about making LM1 knife blades. "Right now, we're trying to measure the interest in the knife market. I met with Ron

who lives nearby me," says Jerry Croopnick, director of research and development at Liquidmetal Technologies. "He made up some knives with LM1 Liquidmetal blades, and we did some testing on edge-holding capabilities. It looks promising, and we're exploring where we can go from here."

Since pre-cast blades are not yet available from Liquidmetal Technologies, Clark cuts blade profiles from sheet stock, grinds them and applies a bead-blast or satin finish. This issue's cover knife is a Clark Model 10 Camp/Hunter, featuring a satin-finished LM1 blade, dovetailed 416 stainless bolsters, a stabilized-buckeye-burl handle and mosaic pins. His list price: \$375.

Clark is exultant. "Guaranteed, I'm the only maker using Liquidmetal blades," he



R.W. "Ron" Clark enlisted fellow knifemaker Trace Rinaldi to help him perform some unscientific cutting tests on a Liquidmetal knife blade. Among other accomplishments, with the blade reaching 50Rc on the Rockwell hardness scale, Clark and Rinaldi were able to make 100 push cuts through 1-inch manila rope. Clark's Model 6 Dropped Point Hunter features a bead-blasted LM1 blade and a black-textured-G-10 handle. The maker's list price: \$275.

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gushes. "The casting properties are the most impressive aspect of LM1. I'd never heard of a metal that could be cast into sharpened scalpels and figured it was worth looking into, so I called the company and started researching it.

"At first, the company resisted providing me with material but, after a lot of phone calls, I got my bars," Clark details. "Together with knifemaker Trace Rinaldi, I put this stuff through the paces. At 50 Rc [on the Rockwell hardness scale], we cut through 500 lineal feet of three-ply cardboard, made 100 push cuts through 1-inch

manila rope, chopped through a 2x4 four times and cut the sidewall out of a Goodyear truck tire. After cutting through the tire's steel belts, the blade edge was dulled, but it still shaved paper.

"I did another test Friday, cutting through 800 lineal feet of cardboard," Clark expounds. "The only reason I stopped is that I ran out of cardboard. The blade was still able to shave arm hairs."

Some Drawbacks

There are some drawbacks to Liquidmetal as a knife-blade material. To date, Liquid-

metal is only available in sheets that have to be ground like traditional steel blade stock, bars or billets. Liquidmetal Technologies has not manufactured blade molds or dies and has not committed to making them yet. Furthermore, the company is refraining from selling sheet stock to any knifemaker or knife manufacturer aside from Clark at this time.

"Clark doesn't have an exclusive with us but, because he's been cooperative and helpful, we'll let him get somewhat of a leg up on the knife industry while we're trying to develop a foothold," Croopnick offers. "We're expecting very big things out of this material, yet we're busy making other products, and we have substantial government contracts we're fulfilling."

To date, Croopnick says Liquidmetal Technologies has used LM1 to make, among other products, golf-club heads and cell-phone cases. "We have one contract to make a million-and-a-half cell-phone cases, and other contracts to make much more than that," he notes. "We have substantial government contracts, including one to build armor-penetrating missiles.

"I don't think we want [knife] people to contact us quite yet. We don't have the wherewithal to deal with orders now," he stresses. "Knifemakers might get turned off with us unable to fill their needs if they contact us too early. We certainly envision, if there is strong enough interest, pushing in

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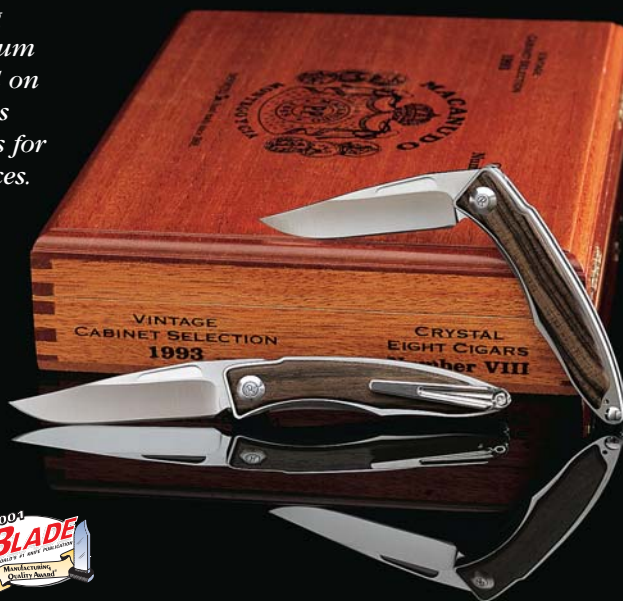
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the direction of marketing plates and eventually pre-cast blades to the knife industry."

Croopnick claims LM1 is a little heavier than titanium but two-and-a-half times stronger. He says it shrinks less than one-tenth of one-thousandth-of-an-inch and can be cast down to 1 micron, or 1/25,000th of an inch, which would make it possible to cast a scalpel or knife blade and have it come out of the mold sharp.

"It's an amorphous structure with no grains, crystals or atoms bonding to each other," he explains. "It is a true metallic glass. We could actually mold a blade shape that would just require finishing. We can almost injection-mold a finished blade like you would with plastic. We'd have to make a die, but once we had the die, we'd be able to kick out parts one after another."

Clark sees it this way: "LM1 blows all other non-magnetic blade materials out of the water. I would even say that the LM1 blade I have been carrying for several months would be equal to steels such as

**"Liquidmetal
blows all other
non-magnetic blade
materials out of
the water."**

—R.W. "Ron" Clark

440C or ATS-34, but that's just my opinion and it is not backed by any lab results."

"Temper"amental Steel

Heat restrictions prevent LM1 from being forged or heat treated. It must be handled like tempered steels. "The way the material is processed is similar to Talonite™. You don't heat treat or temper it. The way it comes from the factory is the way it is. You'll ruin the temper above 350-to-375-degrees Celsius," Clark informs. "Any higher, and Liquidmetal will crystallize and form grain boundaries, defeating the purpose of an amorphous material.

"You'd lose your temper working with other steels at that range, anyway, so, for the end user, it's no different than steel blades," Clark reasons. "The knifemaker, on the other hand, has to mill and machine LM1 carefully. When grinding and drilling, he has to be careful. It's a slow process. He uses the same belt speeds but less pressure and less time at the machine between cooling."

Because of the heat issue, Clark has chosen to hydra-cut blade lengths from each plate of LM1. "The blade won't get as hot as it would if I ground it traditionally," he says. "It will also speed up my production time, so I can get the finished knives to market for

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"Sharpening Liquidmetal is easy," knifemaker Ron Clark opines. "I'd compare it to honing cobalt-alloy steels. I use a ceramic sharpener in the shop, and that works. A Spyderco Sharpmaker [shown] or any of the Lansky diamond-and-ceramic systems will work." This version of Clark's Model 6 Dropped Point Hunter showcases a satin-finished Liquidmetal blade, a curly-pink-ivory handle and mosaic pins made by Barry Posner. Clark's list price: \$275.



Slicing a worn tire ready for recycling demonstrates the cutting ability of a Liquidmetal blade. In conducting their own unorthodox tests, knifemakers R.W. "Ron" Clark and Trace Rinaldi managed to cut the sidewall out of a Goodyear truck tire. After cutting through the tire's steel belts, the makers claim the blade edge was dulled but still shaved paper. The knife is Clark's Model 1 Small Dropped Point Hunter, incorporating a bead-blasted Liquidmetal blade and a red-textured-G10 handle. The maker's list price: \$225.

less.”

Liquidmetal is available to Clark only in 1/8-inch-thick plates. At that thickness, the resulting blades are best incorporated into everyday-carry folders, small fixed blades, hunting knives and utility-type knives for opening boxes, or cutting carpet and other abrasive materials, Clark says. “Once we’re looking at cast blades, then we can go thicker, to 3/16- or 1/4-of-an-inch and, in my opinion, LM1 will make an excellent field or camp-knife blade,” he notes.

In sheet form, Liquidmetal is approximately \$100 a pound and much more expensive than ATS-34, which Clark estimates to be closer to \$11 per pound, and CPM S90V, at approximately \$40 a pound. Rather, it is comparably priced to Talonite or Stellite™.

“Because I’m lowering my production time, it won’t raise the price of my knives too drastically,” Clark says. “With LM1 blades, my knife models that used to go for \$150 will be priced at \$225, still well under any knives I’ve built with other non-magnetic blades.

“Sharpening is easy. I’d compare honing LM1 to sharpening cobalt-alloy steels,” Clark relates. “I use a ceramic sharpener in the shop, and that works. A Spyderco Sharp-maker or any of the Lansky diamond-and-ceramic systems will work. I don’t think it’s fair to compare LM1 to CPM S30V or S90V at this time. Liquidmetal is still a non-magnetic material so, as far as toughness, it can’t compete with the Crucible super steels. In many cases it outperforms or is equal to ATS-34 or 154CM, which is phenomenal considering the material.”

It’s difficult for Clark to hide his enthusiasm for the metal that starts out as a liquid. “I’m chomping at the bit waiting for Liquidmetal Technologies to start making molds. The company is really excited about the knife industry,” he says assuredly. “I think it will give them name recognition with a household product, especially if we start getting into kitchen cutlery.”

“Making armor-plate penetrants or bullets for the government doesn’t give you much exposure,” Croopnick concurs. “But cell-phone cases, medical products and knives, things that the average person can relate to, result in public awareness. I don’t think anything is too small when you are a young company trying to build.”

Croopnick concludes, “I think once we get our feet wet, get some steel out there and gain a better understanding of the knife industry, we’ll jump in with both feet.”

For more information on LM1, contact Liquidmetal Technologies, attn: J. Croopnick, Dept. BL5, 25800 Commercenter Dr., Ste. 100, Lake Forest, CA 92630 (949) 206-8030; or, contact R.W. “Ron” Clark, Dept. BL5, 1069 Golden Meadow, Corona, CA 92882 (909) 279-4394.

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question & answer

question & answer

■ By Wayne Goddard
BLADE® field editor

Ball-Pein-Hammer Hawks

Whatever the steel, be sure it's heat treated correctly

1: I've started to make tomahawks from the steel in ball-pein hammers and have been wondering what kind of steel it is. The steel from the hammers is somewhat red-hard—that is, it's difficult to move under the forging hammer—but, other than that, it's not too difficult to forge and makes a good hawk. (Gib Guignard, Quartzsite, Arizona)

I've been unable to find a reliable source for the alloy content of the steel in modern-made ball-pein hammers. It might be anything from 1050 to 5160, or perhaps an alloy steel with manganese, silicon or nickel added for strength. I've been told that some hammers are made of 4140. However, I think there are many steels with more carbon that would make a more durable head. My experience is the same as yours, with some heads being hard to forge.

Unless you're starting with all the same brand of new hammer heads, you'll find some difference in the steel type as determined by the spark pattern and the way it works under the forging hammer, and in grinding and polishing. On two different occasions, I pushed too hard with my forging press when the temperature was too low, with the result being a cracked head. Some of the cheaper ball peins seem to be made of cast steel, which would most likely make them difficult to forge.

Once the head is forged to shape be sure to normalize it,

and then add an anneal cycle if you're going to do much hand work on it. The best way to judge the hardening temperature is with a *telescoping magnet*. Heat the hawk head slowly and uniformly until it no longer attracts the magnet. Wait just a little while and then quench it in oil. I believe it's best to edge quench a hawk head. It should be moved up and down slightly in the quench so as to not cause a stress riser at the hardening line. A throwing hawk should be more tough than hard, so a temper in the blue range would be a good starting point. By *starting point*, I mean the hawk should be tested for toughness and tempered at a somewhat higher temperature if it's found to be brittle.

When heat treating an item made of an unknown steel, it's best to think of it as a

new challenge. In other words, what worked as a tempering temperature one time may not work the next time.

Gene Martin forged his tomahawk from the steel of a 16-ounce ball-pein hammer. As for the haft-less hawk head (below), he rough forged it from the steel of a 24-ounce ball-pein hammer. Martin's address: Provision Forge, POB 396, Dept. BL5, Williams, OR 97544 (541) 846-6755 bladesmith@customknife.com www.customknife.com.



2: In the "Question & Answer" of the December *BLADE*®, you wrote that 154CM or ATS34 was 20-30 percent better at edge holding than 440C, and CPM S30V was 20-30 percent better at edge holding than 154CM or ATS34. Where does D-2 fit in the edge-holding equation—possibly around the S30V mark of 20-30 percent better than 154CM or ATS34, since D2 and S30V both have similar carbon contents? (Tom Hoats, Allentown, Pennsylvania)

When D-2 is heat treated correctly, my edge-holding tests showed no difference between it and properly heat-treated 154CM or ATS34. There are many poorly heat-treated knives and that makes it hard to get accurate test results. Unless I make the knives, have them properly heat treated, and then test them myself, I can't know for sure. Paul Bos does my heat treating on all high-alloy and stainless blades. I heat treat all my forged blades and damascus steel myself.

My opinion is that D-2 doesn't have as

good a reputation as it should because there are many badly heat-treated knives made from it. The inexperienced maker looking for a higher-alloyed steel than that of the saws, files or springs he's used will often try D-2. D-2 is readily available and, consequently, many D-2 blades are made and heat treated. The resulting knives often are finished and delivered with little or no testing to determine how they compare to the best that's being made. This takes great faith and leaves the user with a knife that may not perform up to its full potential. The maker should do his best to provide the end user with a knife blade of a steel that's reached its maximum capability. That may be only 15-20 percent of its full potential but, in my opinion, it should be done.

440C will hold an edge very well at a Rockwell hardness of 60-61 Rc, but is too brittle to make a serviceable knife for general use. At 56-58 Rc, 440C has sufficient toughness and good edge-holding ability. S30V has a lot more vanadium than D-2 and that would give it higher potential



Check with your state wildlife law enforcement agency concerning the legality of using antler material for knife parts. Wade Colter employs a mule-deer antler handle on his 52100 hunter. BladeGallery.com's list price: \$425. Colter's address: POB 2340, Dept. BL5, Colstrip, MT 59323 (406) 748-2010. (BladeGallery.com photo)



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question & answer

edge-holding ability. Vanadium carbides are the hardest carbides found in steel. Hardness has a lot to do with edge holding, because even the highest-alloyed steels don't hold an edge well unless put into service at a fairly high hardness (58 Rc and higher). Tests I did in the mid-'70s showed a reduction in edge holding of as much as 15-20 percent with each loss of two points on the Rockwell C scale.

3: When one first becomes a bladesmith and produces knives that are highly creative and unique with exceptional quality materials and workmanship, can that person expect to generate the same money for his/her knives as one who's recognized as an "old" ABS master smith? Also, where can I get my hands on some deer horns? I've been searching for over 40 years and can't find any. (Jon Vander Bloomen, Ashland, Wisconsin)

The value of any newly made knife is determined by a variety of factors. However, the most important are the design, materials and workmanship. We bladesmiths make our knives, lay them out at shows or post them on the Internet, then it's up to the customer to decide what they're worth. When a knife sells, it means to one person it was worth the asking price. When the sale isn't made, it might be that the customer doesn't see the value

because the design, materials and workmanship aren't to his/her liking.

My opinion is, if money is the prime consideration in the craftsman's mind, then his motivation is possibly wrong. It's not that any endeavor shouldn't be done in a businesslike manner; it's just that, when starting out, there's a lot to learn and many skills to be honed. The learning process takes a lot of time and, during this "dues-paying phase," it's not feasible to charge for all the time spent.

As a basic rule, I find that the new maker has no idea of what it really costs to make a knife. This leads him to sell his knives for less than what reality would dictate. Add this to his lack of finesse and he may be an "old" maker before he masters the craft to a degree where his prices can match those of an established ABS master smith.

Several years ago I overheard a new maker saying, "I'll be glad when I get my name well known. Then I can sell my knives for more [money]." It would seem that he thought the prices that established makers charge are based on their name recognition. My opinion is that it's more likely that the established makers price their work according to the time and materials, and a realistic shop rate. These things are learned only through experience and time. The new maker usually has no clue as to what it really costs to make knives on a professional level with no other means of financial support. I can say this from personal experience and the disasters that some of my knifemaker friends have gone through trying to get going on a full-time basis. It's not an easy road to become an

ABS master and professional. In my case, I'd never have made it without the financial support of my wife, Phyllis.

Following are three sources for antlers and antler parts: Powell Antler Shop, 7763 County Road 69.1, Dept. BL5, Trinidad, CO 81082 (719) 846-3587 fax (719) 846-4676 antlers1@powellantlershop.com; Boone Trading Co., POB 669, Dept. BL5, Brinnon, WA 98320 (800) 423-1945 www.boonetradings.com; and Moscow Hide and Fur, POB 8918, Dept. BL5, Moscow, ID 83843 (208) 882-0601 fax (208) 882-5715 CustomerService@hideandfur.com. By the way, Boone Trading Co. publishes a guide called "Working with Ivory and Bone" that gives cutting, sanding and polishing information that's very helpful for knifemakers and those who work with ivory and bone.

In Oregon, I buy from local hunters and find the antlers at yard sales, flea markets and the like. Antlers are regulated in Oregon and I must have a license to buy and use them for knife handles. Check with your state wildlife law enforcement agency concerning the legality of using antler parts. California, at least at one time, allowed only shed antlers to be used on items for sale.

Send your questions to **BLADE**, P.O. Box 789, Ooltewah, TN 37363-0789 e-mail blademagazine@krause.com. Include an SASE for a personal response from Mr. Goddard or e-mail him at wgoddard44@earthlink.net, including your full name and where you live. Due to the large volume of questions, please be patient in receiving your answer.

BLADE

When D-2 is heat treated correctly, the author's tests showed no difference in edge holding between it and properly heat-treated 154CM or ATS34. J.B. Moore's bone-handle trappers feature clip-point and spey blades of D-2. His address: 1710 N. Gillie, Dept. BL5, Stockton, TX 79735 (915) 336-2113. (Weyer photo)



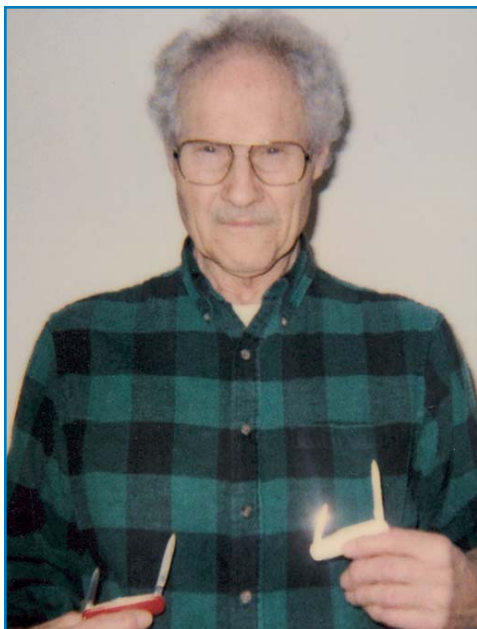


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—Bill Cantey, Charleston, South Carolina



*"On a Christmas morning about 35 years ago, there was a big box for me under the tree. I opened it and started taking out all the crumpled pieces of newspaper. When the box was finally empty, I found no present. I figured it was a big joke, since the box came from a member of our elk-hunting group, the 'Camp Creek Kids' as we called ourselves. One of the other guys called and asked if I had gotten a knife like the one he had received. I uncrumpled the pieces of newspaper and inside one was a red-handle **Victorinox Swiss Army knife, the Executive model**. I carried it every day until five years ago when a friend gave me its silver-colored twin, which I sometimes carry instead. The first one has had several new toothpicks and one new scissors spring installed. The metal shield came off about 10 years ago. The knife is still very usable and I keep the blades sharp."*

—Merle L. Spencer, Wheeler, Oregon

*"I carry a 705 Axis folder by **Benchmade** or a **David Boye** folder. For hiking, fishing and so on, I carry a **Bob Dozier fixed blade** in a horizontal sheath. Nothing replaces a straight knife for being easy to use and clean."*

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MASTER OF THE MINIATURE

Yvon Vachon's wizardry is illustrated here in his miniature reproductions of a tortoise-handle Hobson & Son horseman's knife made circa 1840-60 in Sheffield, England. The large knife is the original while the remaining minute folders are Vachon's creations. The knives were photographed on a drill press table. Yvon made several such arrays of knives in descending order of size in what he called his "Family Collections." (Fong knife photo)



Yvon Vachon
1955-2001

By Steve Shackleford



Some think Vachon's miniature reproduction of the Victorinox SwissChamp, including 16 folding blades/tools and even a miniature product box and product literature, is his piece de resistance. Each blade/tool opens and closes impeccably, each blade cuts and even the pen writes! (Fong photos)

He departed this world in October 2001 but the impact Yvon Vachon left is as sharp, if not sharper, than when he was making his incomparable miniature and micro-miniature knives and knife pistols.

"He did miniatures that nobody else would even attempt," said Earl Witsaman, a veteran maker of miniature knives in his own right. Such pieces included tiny automatics with mechanisms that worked impeccably, miniature repros of such multi-blades as the



sharp impact

A miniature reproduction of an Unwin & Rodgers knife pistol is an example of Vachon's ability to replicate tiny arms. Each of his knife pistols fires a tiny ball and he made each and every piece, from the blade, to the detonator, to the mini-balls—everything! (Les Ateliers photo)



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Victorinox SwissChamp model, and Lilliputian knife pistols that would fire minuscule mini-balls up to 150 feet. “You could hear the gun go *pow*,” noted knifemaker Jose DeBraga, Vachon’s close friend. “The bullets would actually go through multiple pieces of paper,” added Mike Mercer, another friend and fellow maker of miniatures.

With his mischievous smile and twinkling eyes, the French Canadian maker built miniature knives that defied convention. Not only did he make the smallest micro-miniatures around—collector Tom Guinn has one that’s only 7/32 of an inch long—but they also functioned properly and were true to scale.

“His knives weren’t just miniatures but miniatures to scale, even to the thickness of the blade,” DeBraga explained. “And the blades were heat treated and would cut.” Considered one of if not the best makers of miniature knives alive today, the fun-loving Jim Whitehead shakes his head when he talks about the scale of Vachon’s minis. “You could take a picture of one of his miniatures and if there was nothing to denote scale in the picture, you’d think you were looking at an average-size piece. I know for sure he had an alien shrinking ray in his shop,” Jim smiled.

Vachon’s microscopic automatics are the stuff of legend. “He was the first one I ever saw make a switchblade under 1 inch long. If I could do what he did with miniatures, I would kiss myself all over. He was a genius,”



An example of Vachon's miniature automatics is this Italian stiletto. According to Jim Whitehead, a master maker of miniatures in his own right, Yvon was the first to make an auto under 1 inch long. (Fong photo)



According to Mike Mercer, Vachon was the only maker he knew to incorporate bushings on the blade pivots of miniature folders. The result, Mike noted, were tiny folders that worked slick and smooth, just like their standard-size cousins. (Fong photo)

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sharp impact
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What are Yvon Vachon's miniature folders worth today? Collector Tom Guinn says they start at between \$1,800-\$2,000. According to collector Gordon Pivonka, among Vachon's many miniature creations were a samurai sword and a repro of a Michael Walker butterfly knife that contained 69 screws, each the size of a grain of rice. Here's another example of Vachon's mini-multi-blade mastery. (Fong photo)



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Whitehead observed.

"The mechanisms are what was fantastic about Yvon's work," DeBraga maintained. "I've never seen a miniature switchblade done so nicely, perfectly and accurately as his. I've seen other miniature switchblades but exact replicas like Yvon did? No. He was in the zone. The bar he established, I've yet to see someone reach it."

"He made miniature switchblades that were accurate down to a gnat's ass as far as the mechanisms and typical Italian-stiletto types," Guinn assessed. "I'd seen miniature switchblades before but not as fine and minute as what he was doing."

Mini-Multi Masterpieces

The wee multi-blades Vachon made were intricate beyond compare. From four-blade repro antiques up to pieces with 18 blades, the blades and tools on each one opened and closed immaculately and functioned superbly. "Yvon did what others hadn't attempted. The 18-blade miniature I hadn't seen before and don't expect to see anybody do again," Guinn observed. "His reproductions of Swiss Army knives were so right on that it was kind of scary, including the miniature reproductions of the product boxes. I know of three Swiss Army models he reproduced in miniature—the Climber, Craftsman and SwissChamp, the latter with [16 folding blades/tools], including a seamstress straight pin and a pen that actually writes. Nobody

ever did that!"

"The ballpoint pen in his miniature SwissChamp repro is almost as fine as a human hair and he actually wrote with it. I was speechless!" Whitehead recalled. "It was like somebody taking a human hair and drilling a hole in it, threading it and tapping it."

Vachon's penchant for achieving exact detail on his miniatures was mind-boggling. "His multi-blade folders were immaculate," Mercer said, "right down to the little magnifying glasses, sawteeth on the saw blades and the little tweezers." Mercer was particularly taken with the cross shield Yvon inlaid in the handle of one Swiss Army knife miniature.

"He told me that he made the cross and melted it into the handle, and then finished the handle down smooth with the cross still in there," Mercer explained. "You can look at it with a magnifying glass and you can't see the saw marks. I would have thought that he would've sawed it in there. When he finished the whole thing down, the plastic and the cross, it looked like he'd poured it in there."

Luckily for Mercer, Yvon was the sharing type and shared some of his knifemaking methods with him. "He gave me some insight on things and, after I tried them, it made my miniature folders better," Mike recalled. "For instance, I had never put bushings between the bolster and blade. Most miniatures just have the blade pinned. But he made these little bushings that were a thousandths or two thin. You couldn't hardly feel them when you picked them up. It made the miniature folders work so slick and smooth. He had a good mind for going into the deep parts of miniatures that most never even saw."

Vachon's knife pistols not only would shoot but contained blades that operated automatically as well. His YV3 Peavey Knife Pistol—the cover piece for the April 1997 *BLADE*®—is a case in point. One and one-eighth inches long closed, the 0.092 caliber pistol includes a trigger that conceals in the handle and appears when the hammer is moved. According to DeBraga, nobody had ever made such a mechanism before. The knife pistol includes 53 pieces in all, including the 440C blade, buffalo horn handle, bolsters, screws, detonator, steel rod to load the powder concealed in the handle, powder horn, lead pliers, two screwdrivers, funnel and powder measure. "It probably only took a grain of powder to load the thing," Witsaman said. "He even made the molds to cast the balls."

"He made his own cartridges and made the bullets himself. They were smaller than the smallest screws most miniature makers make for their knives," DeBraga added.

No Secret

There was no secret to Vachon's success other than that he was a very patient, talented man who worked extremely hard and was very passionate about knifemaking. He'd been fascinated with all things miniature and

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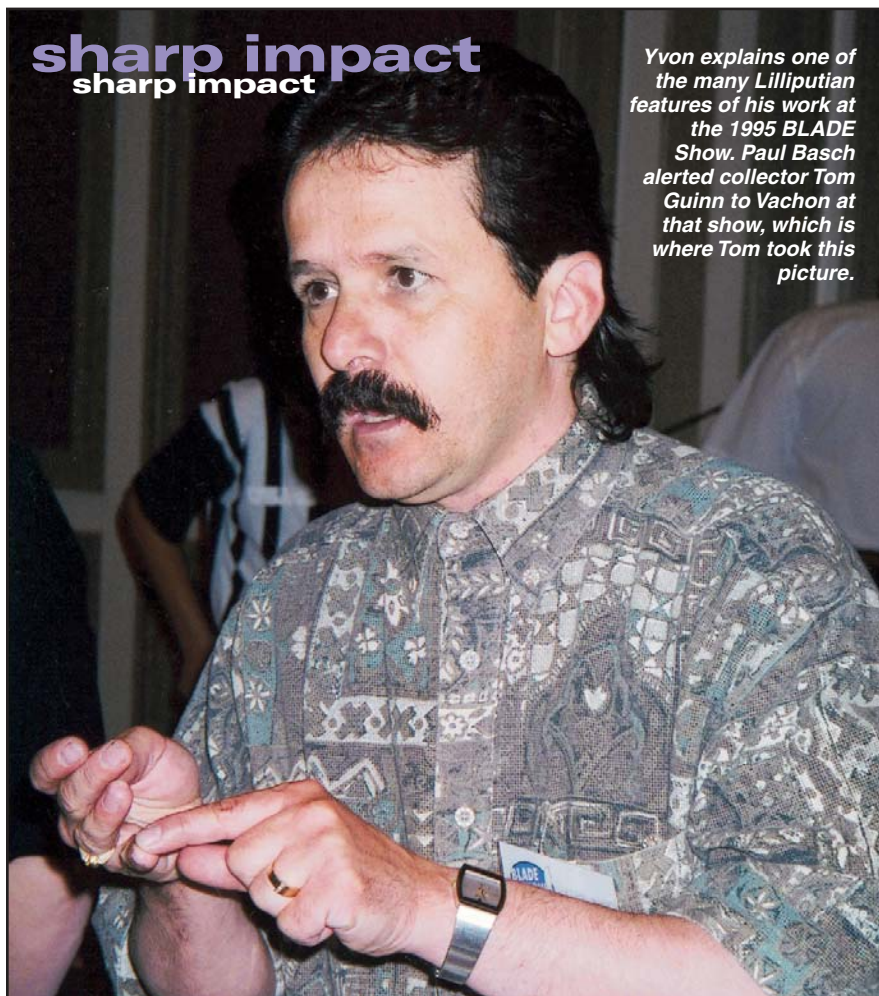
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Yvon explains one of the many Lilliputian features of his work at the 1995 BLADE Show. Paul Basch alerted collector Tom Guinn to Vachon at that show, which is where Tom took this picture.

finely detailed since his youth. Born in 1955 and one of 11 children, he completely dismantled and reassembled a pocket watch at the tender age of 9, a fascination for working on pocket watches that lasted the rest of his life. "He'd ask me if I had that fire and passion [for making miniature knives], and that's the one way he looked at it," Mercer observed. "That impressed me because no knifemaker had ever told me they had fire and passion for making knives. I guess you'd have to have that in order to create what he did."

Though he'd been making miniature knives since 1993, Vachon exploded on the knife scene at the '95 BLADE Show, which is where Paul Basch first alerted Guinn to Yvon's work. Vachon won all three awards for miniature knives at that BLADE Show, and his knifemaking career was off to the races.

"I don't know that he ever had anybody teach him how to make knives," noted Gordon Pivonka, a collector of miniatures. "He was a window installer by trade. He just decided he wanted to make knives and did it. I was thinking about that the other day that that was the most outstanding thing about him. He had nobody teach him. Apparently what he knew came from the inside. He was quite an amazing person as far as talent is

concerned."

As for Vachon's work ethic, knifemaker Joel Chamblin recalled the time when he and Yvon stayed at Tom and Gwen Guinn's house the weekend of a Solvang Custom Knife Show. "Yvon would have something new or not quite finished or not working right, so he'd get up at the kitchen counter and drag out his little box of knives and tools and sit there and work on them. One night he worked until three in the morning," Joel related.

That's not to say that Vachon didn't have his own little idiosyncrasies. One was that he would glue the miniature knife part on which he was working to his fingertip. Not only did that keep him from losing the part, he could feel exactly what was being abraded away when he hand sanded it. Another was that he painted the inside of his small 11x7-foot shop—floor, walls and ceiling—white so that it would make it easier for him to find a miniature part if he lost it. As he recalled in the April '97 *BLADE*: "I remember losing a piece and not finding it until a year-and-a-half later. I looked up one day and there it was stuck to the ceiling." You can imagine how anxious a miniature maker would be about losing knife parts. "I've heard stories that when he was working on real small pieces in his shop, he'd strip naked so that if

the tiny pieces slipped out of his hands, they couldn't get lost in his clothes," Pivonka said. "He was truly an amazing person, as all artists are."

Crucial to Vachon's success was his wife, Guylaine, and his brother-in-law, Michel Lessard. Since Yvon's command of English wasn't the best, Guylaine wrote all his press releases and Michel, who speaks fluent English, served as his interpreter. There was hardly a show at which Guylaine and Michel weren't at Yvon's table to help him communicate with his English-speaking customers.

As for Vachon's knifemaking tools, the majority were of the watchmaker variety and/or tools he reworked on his own, such as reshaped files to get into infinitesimal nooks and crannies. "He did most of his work by hand with a file," Guinn confided. "Many makers feel that if they can't do it on a milling machine or a lathe, they're not interested. Most of them won't take the time to do it by hand the way Vachon did."

A close professional friend of Yvon's, Mercer is the proud owner of some of Vachon's tools. "I wanted one of Yvon's hand tools and Guylaine—she's so sweet—she sent me two or three of his hand tools, the little screwdrivers with the turned spines worn where Yvon had used them," Mike noted. "I've got them in my basement on my work bench."

Only two years after exploding on the knife scene at the '95 BLADE Show, Vachon had his award-winning Peavey Knife Pistol make the cover of the April '97 BLADE®. Whenever he entered the custom knife competition at the BLADE Show, he invariably won every miniature knife award in sight.



addition to miniature knives and knife pistols, he also was into carving miniature smoking pipes and making tiny locks and padlocks. Witsaman said he would have become more involved in miniature arms—guns and crossbows—because he'd accomplished just about everything in miniature knives. DeBraga indicated that Yvon would still be concentrating on miniature knife mechanisms. Mercer said Vachon would have tackled something extremely elaborate and spectacular. "He would be just crazy enough to make the most complicated thing he could, a show-stopper, something that had a couple hundred blades in it," Mike mused. "And it would've been spot-on perfect, too."

For more information on Yvon Vachon, look for Tom Guinn and Gordon Pivonka and their collections of miniature knives at selected Western knife shows, or contact the Miniature Knifemakers Society, c/o Terry Kranning, Dept. BL5, 1900 West Quinn, #153, Pocatello, ID 83202 (309) 237-9047.

Conclusion

What kind of work would Yvon Vachon be doing today if he were still alive? In

BLADE

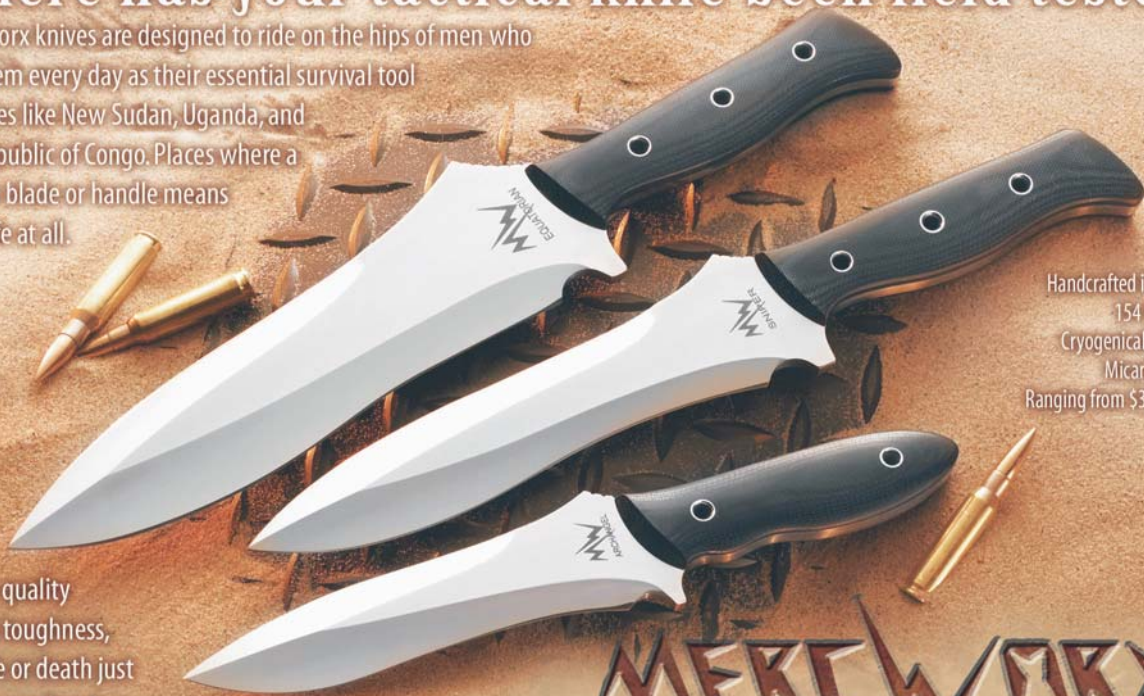
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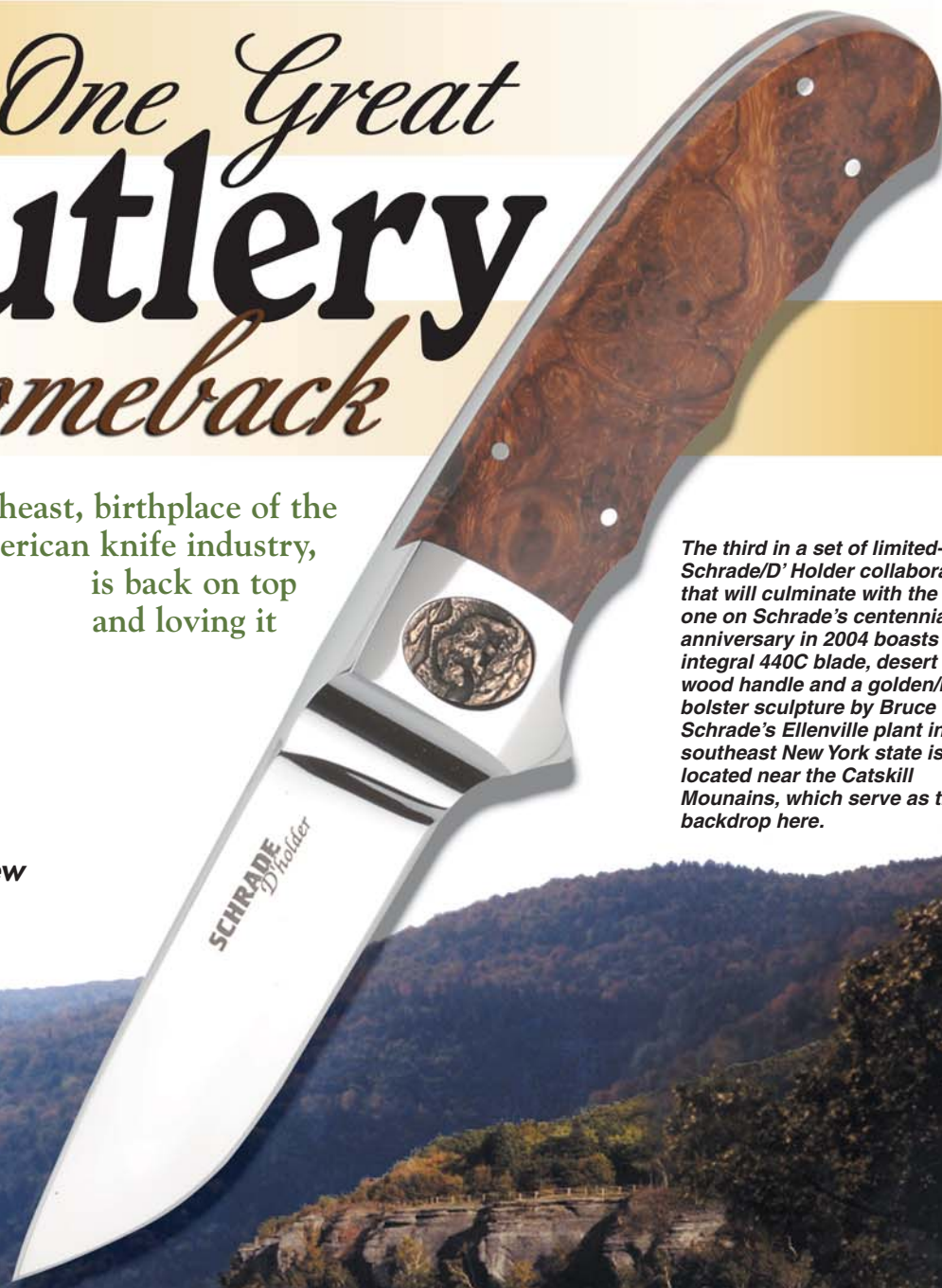
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One Great Cutlery Comeback

The Northeast, birthplace of the American knife industry, is back on top and loving it

By Mike Haskew

The third in a set of limited-edition Schrade/D'Holder collaborations that will culminate with the fifth one on Schrade's centennial anniversary in 2004 boasts an integral 440C blade, desert iron-wood handle and a golden/bronze bolster sculpture by Bruce Shaw. Schrade's Ellenville plant in southeast New York state is located near the Catskill Mountains, which serve as the backdrop here.



For more than a century, knife companies in the American Northeast grew, prospered, withstood difficult times, and re-energized the imagination that made them great. Some, such as Catta-raugus, Landers, Frary & Clark and New York Knife Co., withered on the vine, but others survived. Those that persevered have jelled in recent years and the Northeast once again is a center of innovation in cutlery design and production.

The design teams of Northeastern cutlery manufacturers have been looking at the market, listening to the consumer, and responding to opportunities to deliver outstanding knives. At Queen/Ontario some popular looks from the past have come back strong. The company is offering five different models with jugged mother-of-pearl handles, reminiscent of those seen decades ago. The models include the 6SJ penknife, the 59SJ gent's knife, the 96SJ small doctor's knife, the 14SJ peanut, and the 316SJ sleeve-board. Manufacturer's suggested retail prices (MSRPs) range from \$90 to \$100.

"We thought there was going to be a demand for the jugged mother-of-pearl handle," commented Bob Breton, president of Queen and executive vice president of Ontario, both in Franklinville, New York. "To our knowledge, nobody else was doing it. Bill Howard, who does a lot of design work for Queen, came up with the idea."

Last year, Queen made a leap in blade steel, switching 80-to-90 percent of its production to D-2, though some models continue to be offered exclusively in 420 stainless. "D-2 was another good idea of Bill Howard. We did some field testing and got good results," Breton advised. "Queen was at a crossroads where we needed to jump start the company, and we moved forward on it. D-2 is a tool steel, and we knew we could have a little one-up on other companies by offering it. [Editor's

note: Camillus and Ka-Bar employ D-2 blade steel on selected models as well.] Sometimes, it was also hard for Queen to find stainless, and D-2 is readily available."

Closing In On 100

Schrade celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2004, and the spirit and ingenuity of immigrant metalworkers is still alive in Ellenville, New York. "Over the last decade plus, we've focused on keeping our traditional pocketknife business solid and

and black-epoxy-coated blades. MSRP: \$59.95.

Collaborations with a who's who of custom knifemakers has kept the Schrade name at the forefront in industry awards and the eyes of the knife-buying public. The company's first joint venture with Van Barnett captured the Blade Magazine 2001 Knife-Collaboration-Of-The-Year Award®. "We've worked with the best," Faust continued, "including D' Holder, Joe Kious, Barnett, Ron Lake and Michael Walker. These are men we respect. Of course, they have all been to our factory. So, we shared some secrets and we learned a great deal from all of them. The Knife-Of-The-Year Award was a very great honor for us and a tribute to Van's talent. Working with talented craftsmen like Van and D' Holder and seeing their skills and creativity firsthand is probably one of the best parts of my job."

Drive & Creativity

When the Jerry Fisk OVB Bowie took the Blade Magazine 2002 Knife-Collaboration-Of-The-Year Award, it was a strong indication of the drive and creativity residing at Camillus Cutlery in Camillus, New York. Among other attention-grabbing collaborations at the company are the Bob Terzuola CQB series, the Rob Simonich Talonite/Talon/Mini

Talon line, and the Darrell Ralph CUDA EDC, Talonite EDC, CUDA MAXX and Arclite, the latter the Blade Magazine 2001 Best-Buy-Of-The-Year Award.

"Increasingly, the knife market has become a product-driven environment with more knives being developed more rapidly," explained Camillus's Will Fennell. "We've had good success with fresh approaches and ideas from the guys we collaborate with. When we do a collaboration, more people find out about the custom makers and the custom makers help us by lending their name and expertise. It's very much a two-way street. Collaborations are good for the maker and for the company, so there are more to come."



Tim Herman's latest designs for GATCO/Timberline are the Wall Street Tactical and Gentleman's Money Clip. The Wall Street Tactical is a locking liner with a plain/combination-edge 3-inch blade of AUS-8 and a burgundy Micarta handle. MSRP: \$100. The Gentleman's Money Clip comes with a 420-J2 stainless handle boasting 24k-gold inlay and a 1.9-inch stainless blade. Closed length: 2.5 inches. MSRP: \$59.99.

healthy, while incorporating exciting new products with new shapes, patterns and materials," said Tim Faust, Schrade director of marketing. "We even have a knife debuting in 2003 with two features that we filed patents on, one being the lock." Another new piece is the X-Timer, a lock-back with aircraft-grade aluminum handles

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The Case Mid-Folding Hunter is the latest from the Bradford, Pennsylvania, manufacturer and is a departure for the company in that it equips a traditional design with a pocket clip.

The Becker Knife & Tool line has been extremely successful for Camillus (for the latest BK&T piece, see the story on page 40). Moreover, in 2002, the company introduced its Buckmasters line of hunting knives, which was the result of input from the Buckmasters field staff and design consultants. "We have been a sponsor of Buckmasters," said Fennell, "and this came about through working on other projects with them. They do great programs on the outdoors and with kids, and, when we found out about the power of their organization, it made sense to meld the two together."

Old Is New Again

While the old has become new again at Case, the Northeastern powerhouse in Bradford, Pennsylvania, continues to deliver with its Tony Bose series. "We took a look at what Tony was building and he has concentrated on traditional patterns which are today still the core of our busi-

ness," said Case's John Sullivan. "A lot of what he was building were patterns we considered to be 'Old Case' with his special treatment and the wonderful work he does. We wanted to collaborate with Tony to reach out to custom knife enthusiasts."

For years, Case collectors had asked for a new sowbelly, and it turns out that the pattern was perfect for the Bose line. The three-blade was the first, and the five-blade appeared in the fall of 2002. The association between Case and Bose began in 1999, with limited-production runs of the slimline and millennium trappers, as well as the Yukon.

The reintroduction of tried-and-true patterns has made a big difference at Case. "If I were to mark a date when a turnaround really happened at this company," recalled Sullivan, "it was 1996 when we introduced a family of knives called 'Pocketworn' and focused on traditionally crafted pocketknives. Everything we've



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they could tell. Stories of working and hunting and fishing in frigid climates and sun-soaked heats. They have been sprained and strained and scarred to the bone. They have been blistered and callused and beaten and broken. They have

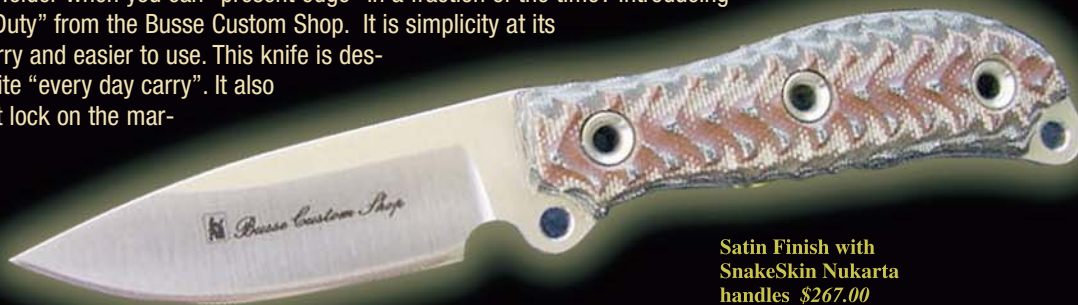
forgotten more about being a man than any 20 year-old could hope to know. They have worked until exhaustion and then headed out for more. They have held on when others would have let go, and have held on to those who they had to let go. Oh, and they still work... not like they used to... but they get the job done. And it's funny how small children can look at them with wonder in their eyes and somehow read the map that they have become, and know the scar-making stories behind them...



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Sheffield-jigged mother-of-pearl enhances the elegance of an already stately piece in Queen's 6SJ penknife. Closed length: 4 1/2 inches. MSRP: \$90.



done since then has been based on traditional products, starting with the Copperlock and the Mini Copperlock, which were the first two tooled, brand-new pocketknives we had brought out in many years."

Sullivan says Case has returned to the basics with reintroductions such as the popular Cheetah, Seahorse Whittler and Tuxedo patterns. Licensed programs with such well-known American names as Coca-Cola and John Deere continue to cultivate a cross-pollination of interested collectors. Involvement with NASCAR has been a hit in recent years, and discussions for a series of NASCAR knives are ongoing with the family of racing legend Dale Earnhardt.

D-2, Collaborations & More

Ka-Bar in Olean, New York, Kutmaster/Utica of Utica, New York, and GATCO/Timberline of Getzville, New York, are making strong contributions to the resurgence of Northeastern cutlery as well. Ka-Bar has marketed its D-2 Impact fixed blade line for several years, collaborated with custom maker Bob Dozier, and introduced the Italian-made Maserin folders, among others. (For information on the new Ka-Bar Camp Knife, see the story on page 40.) Ka-Bar, of course, is an Alcas company, Alcas being a major manufacturer of household cutlery in its own right. Kutmaster/Utica, meanwhile, offers a wide range of utility pocketknives, multi-tools and other pieces in economical price ranges that appeal to outdoors people and others who use knives on a daily basis.

New to the Northeastern cutlery scene is Phantom Knives of Three Rivers, Massachusetts, whose Rip Cord Medallion earned the Blade Magazine 2002 Most-Innovative-American-Design Award®. It was an invigorating shot in the arm for the fledgling company, which specializes in knives with a most unusual one-hand-opening mechanism designed for rescue, law enforcement and sports enthusiasts.

Then there's Providence, Rhode Island's, Colonial Cutlery International (CCI), a restructured company with an old name approaching the knife business in a modern way, according to CCI's Stephen Paolantonio. "CCI will continue to make some of the old knife styles and the Colonial name will continue to be used because it's known," he said. "But the knives themselves will have a higher-end finish." The inexpensive knives Colonial had been known for will be eliminated, he said, and replaced by much higher-end specialty pieces with wood-inlaid handles and nickel-silver bolsters.

The Northeast is also home or former home to several manufacturers of sharpeners, including Diamond Machining Technology, Edgecraft, Lansky (now headquartered in Henderson, Nevada), Norton and GATCO. In fact, GATCO bought Timberline several years ago and became GATCO/Timberline, offering both sharpeners and a full line of knives. The company has become heavily involved in collaborations in recent years, the latest of which include those with custom knife-makers Butch Vallotton, Greg Lightfoot, Kelly Worden, Tim Herman and Terry

Treutel.

Included among the latter are Herman's latest designs, the Wall Street Tactical and Gentleman's Money Clip. An elegant executive's knife, the Wall Street Tactical cuts via a plain/combination-edge 3-inch blade of AUS-8 that folds from a burgundy Micarta handle and secures in the open position by a locking liner. MSRP: \$100. At press time, the knife was slated to be available as you read these words. The Gentleman's Money Clip is a classy folder that comes in a compact closed length of 2.5 inches. The 420-J2 stainless handle boasts 24k-gold inlay and the stainless blade is 1.9 inches long. MSRP: \$59.99. Available: March 1.

Conclusion

With the exception of GATCO/Timberline and Phantom Knives, relative newcomers in comparison, most of the other cutlery companies mentioned herein enjoyed varying degrees of success in the early-to-late 20th century, only to experience the down times that most large concerns inevitably undergo after years of prosperity. Remarkably, those that did so all seem to have weathered whatever down times they may have experienced and most appear strong and vibrant. Here's to the great cutlery Northeast and another century of growth and progress!

For the contact information for the knives in the story, see "Where To Get 'Em" on page 98.

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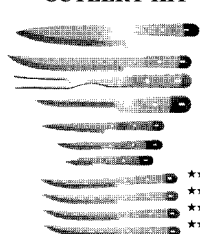
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■ By Judge Lowell Bray
BLADE® field editor

Right To Bear Arms: One Court's Opinion Part IV

The 5th Circuit Court nails down the relationship among the people, the militia and the right to bear arms

This issue, "Your Knife Rights" continues its examination of *United States v. Emerson*, a case in which the 5th Circuit Court considered the meaning of the Second Amendment and tried to choose between the "states rights" or "collective rights" model, in which the right to bear arms doesn't apply to the individual but only recognizes the right of a state to arm its militia; the "sophisticated collective rights" model, in which active, individual members of a state militia have the right to arm themselves if the state fails to do so; and the "individual rights" or "standard" model, in which all individuals have the right to keep and bear arms. This installment continues the court's discussion of the text of the amendment.

United States v. Emerson (cont.) c. "Keep ... Arms"

Neither the government nor [those who support its position] argue that "keep ... Arms" commands a military connotation. The plain meaning of the right of the people to keep arms is that it is an individual, rather than a collective, right and is not limited to keeping arms while engaged in active military service or as a member of a select militia such as the National Guard.

d. Substantive Guarantee as a Whole
Taken as a whole, the text of the Second Amendment's substantive guar-

antee is not suggestive of a collective rights or sophisticated collective rights interpretation, and the implausibility of either such interpretation is enhanced by consideration of the guarantee's placement within the Bill of Rights and the wording of the other articles thereof and of the original Constitution as a whole.

2. Effect of Preamble

We turn now to the Second Amendment's preamble: "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State." And, we ask ourselves whether this preamble suffices to mandate what would be an otherwise implausible collective rights or sophisticated collective rights interpretation of the amendment. We conclude that it does not.

Certainly, the preamble implies that the substantive guarantee is one which tends to enable, promote or further the existence, continuation or effectiveness of that "well-regulated Militia" which is "necessary to the security of a free State." As the [U.S. Supreme] Court said in [*United States v. Miller*], immediately after quoting the militia clauses of Article I, § 8 (cl. 15 and 16), "[w]ith obvious purpose to assure the continuation and render possible the effectiveness of such forces[,] the declaration and guarantee of the Second Amendment were made." We conclude that the Second Amend-

ment's substantive guarantee, read as guaranteeing individual rights, may as so read reasonably be understood as being a guarantee which tends to enable, promote or further the existence, continuation or effectiveness of that "well-regulated Militia" which is "necessary to the security of a free State." Accordingly, the preamble does not support an interpretation of the amendment's substantive guarantee in accordance with the collective rights or sophisticated collective rights model, as such an interpretation is contrary to the plain meaning of the text of the guarantee, its placement within the Bill of Rights and the wording of the other articles thereof and of the original Constitution as a whole.

The People Are The Militia

As observed in [*Miller*], "the Militia comprised all males physically capable of acting in concert for the common defense" and "that ordinarily when called for service[,] these men were expected to appear bearing arms supplied by themselves." [*Miller*] further notes that "[i]n all the colonies ... the militia systems ... implied the general obligation of all adult male inhabitants to possess arms." There are frequent contemporaneous references to "a well-regulated militia" being "composed of

the body of the people, trained in arms." Plainly, then, "a well-regulated Militia" refers not to a special or select subset or group taken out of the militia as a whole but rather to the condition of the militia as a whole, namely being well disciplined and trained. And, "Militia," just like "well-regulated Militia," likewise was understood to be composed of the people generally possessed of arms which they knew how to use, rather than to refer to some formal military group separate and distinct from the people at large.

[James] Madison [the author of the Second Amendment] also plainly shared these views, as is reflected in his Federalist No. 46[,] where he argued that [the] power of Congress under the proposed Constitution "[t]o raise and support Armies" (Article I, § 8, cl. 12) posed no threat to liberty because any such army, if misused, "would be opposed [by] a militia amounting to near half a million of citizens with arms in their hands" and then noting "the advantage of being armed, which the Americans possess over the people of almost every other nation," in contrast to "the several kingdoms of Europe," where "the governments are afraid to trust the people with arms." Plainly, Madison saw an armed people as a foundation of the militia which would provide security for a "free" state, one which, like America but unlike the "kingdoms of Europe," was not afraid to trust its people to have their own arms. The militia consisted of the people bearing their own arms when called to active service, arms which they kept and hence knew how to use. If the people were disarmed there could be no militia (well-regulated or otherwise) as it was then understood. That expresses the proper understanding of the relationship between the Second Amendment's preamble and its substantive guarantee.

As stated in *Kates*, Handgun Prohibition and the Original Meaning of the Second Amendment, "the [Second] Amendment's wording, so opaque to us, made perfect sense to the Framers: believing that a militia (composed of the entire people possessed of their individually owned arms) was necessary for the protection of a free state, they guaranteed the people's right to possess those arms," rejects, as "not warranted by the intent," an interpretation of the Second Amendment "that the right to keep and bear arms was only guaranteed to the Militia," and states "[t]he meaning of the provision undoubtedly is, that the people, from whom the militia must be taken, shall have the right to keep and bear arms; and they need no permission or regulation of law for the purpose. But this enables the government to have a well-regulated militia; for to bear arms

implies something more than the mere keeping; it implies the learning to handle and use them in a way that makes those who keep them ready for their efficient use."

Much the same thought was expressed more than one hundred years later in the following passage from Tribe, *AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONAL LAW* (3d ed. 2000): "Perhaps the most accurate conclusion one can reach with any confidence is that the core meaning of the Second Amendment is a populist/republican/federalism one: Its central object is to arm 'We the People' so that ordinary citizens can participate in the collective defense of their community and their state. But it does so not through directly protecting a right on the part of states or other collectivities, assertable by them against the federal government, to arm the populace as they see fit. Rather, the amendment achieves its central purpose by assuring that the federal government may not disarm individual citizens without some unusually strong justification consistent with the authority of the states to organize their own militias. That assurance in turn is provided through recognizing a right (admittedly of uncertain scope) on the part of individuals to possess and use firearms in the defense of themselves and their homes ... a right that directly limits action by Congress or by the Executive Branch ..."

In sum, to give the Second Amendment's preamble its full and proper due there is no need to torture the meaning of its substantive guarantee into the collective rights or sophisticated collective rights model which is so plainly inconsistent with the substantive guarantee's text, its placement within the bill of rights and the wording of the other articles thereof and of the original Constitution as a whole.

[Quotations taken from *United States v. Emerson*, 279 F. 3d 203 (5th Circuit 2001).]

Next time: the Emerson opinion continues.

Author's note: As BLADE® was going to press, the 9th Circuit Court had just announced a decision that contradicts the Emerson opinion. The court ruled, in a case called Silveria v. Lockyer, that the Second Amendment did not confer to the individual the right to own or possess arms. The 9th Circuit is famous primarily for two things—being the court whose decisions are most consistently reversed by the Supreme Court, and being the court to rule that it's unconstitutional to have "God" in the pledge of allegiance. The 9th Circuit Court's opinion will be considered in a future installment of "Your Knife Rights."

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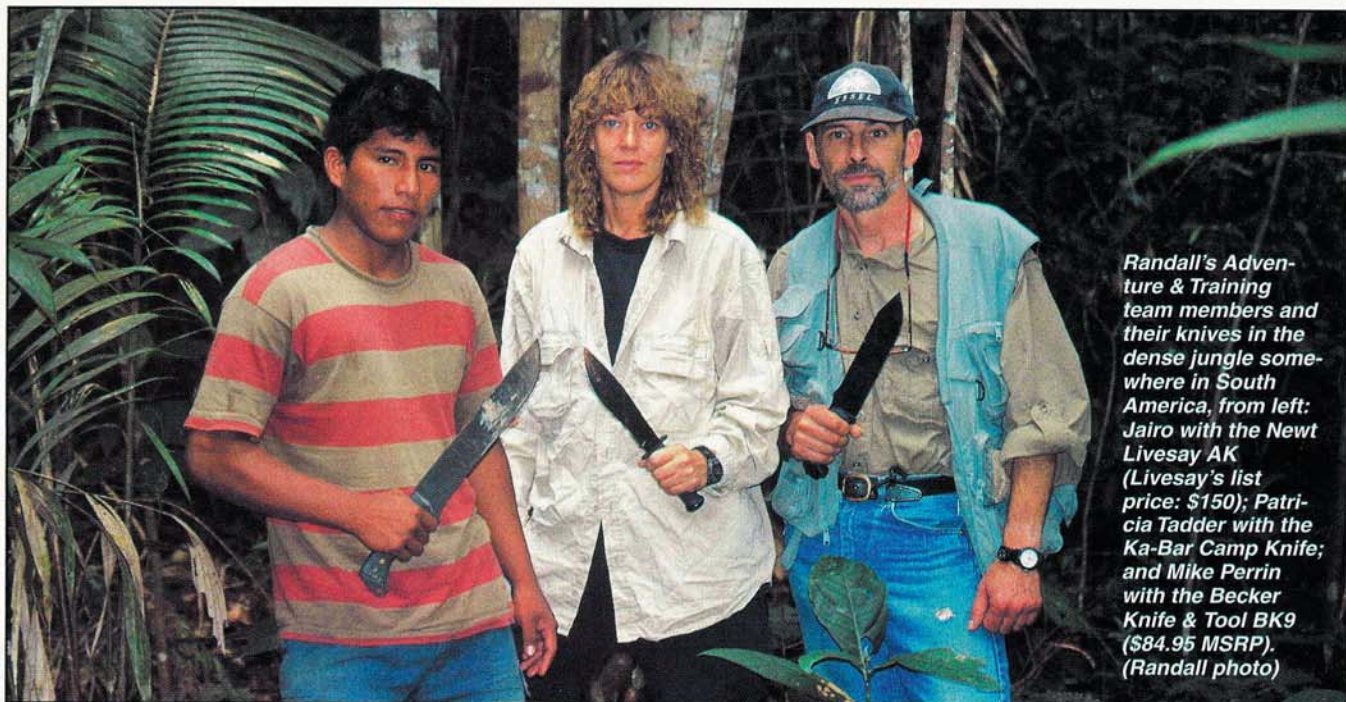
Knives & Survival in the Deep JUNGLE

These factory knives take on everything
the Randall Adventure &
Training Team throw
their way

By Jeff Randall

The Ka-Bar Camp Knife (top) and the Becker BK9 proved to be very capable work tools around the jungle campsites. The Ka-Bar (\$78.87 MSRP w/leather sheath, \$89.80 w/Kydex) was the best lightweight performer, while the BK9 was the most comfortable to use. (Randall photo)



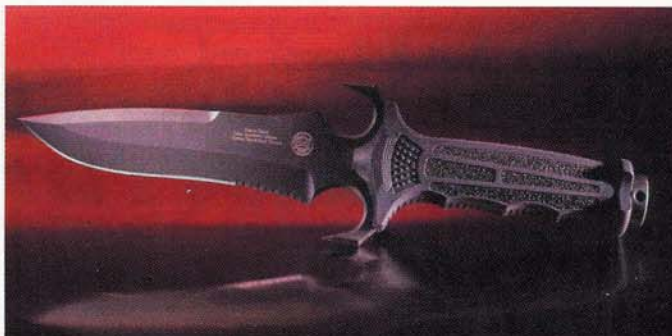


Randall's Adventure & Training team members and their knives in the dense jungle somewhere in South America, from left: Jairo with the Newt Livesay AK (Livesay's list price: \$150); Patricia Tadder with the Ka-Bar Camp Knife; and Mike Perrin with the Becker Knife & Tool BK9 (\$84.95 MSRP). (Randall photo)

Since this is my first chance to write about my field of expertise in *BLADE*®, I feel it only appropriate to outline my qualifications. My partners—Mike Perrin and Patricia Tadder—and I operate a jungle training and adventure company and are the

legal U.S. representatives of the Peruvian Air Force ESSEL School. *ESSEL* is an acronym for *Escuela de Supervivencia en la Selva*, which translates as *School of Jungle Survival*. The school also teaches search-and-rescue techniques. Our team has completed dozens of missions into the

jungles of South America training military, corporate clients, and civilians in the art of jungle survival and jungle search and rescue. Due to the nature of our trips, knives play a large role in the instruction and practice of these skills, particularly large machete or bowie-type blades.



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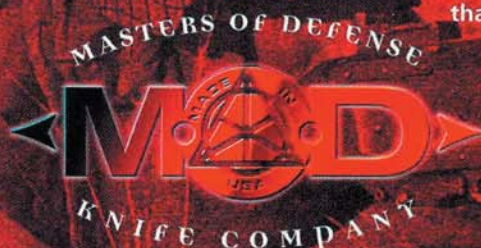
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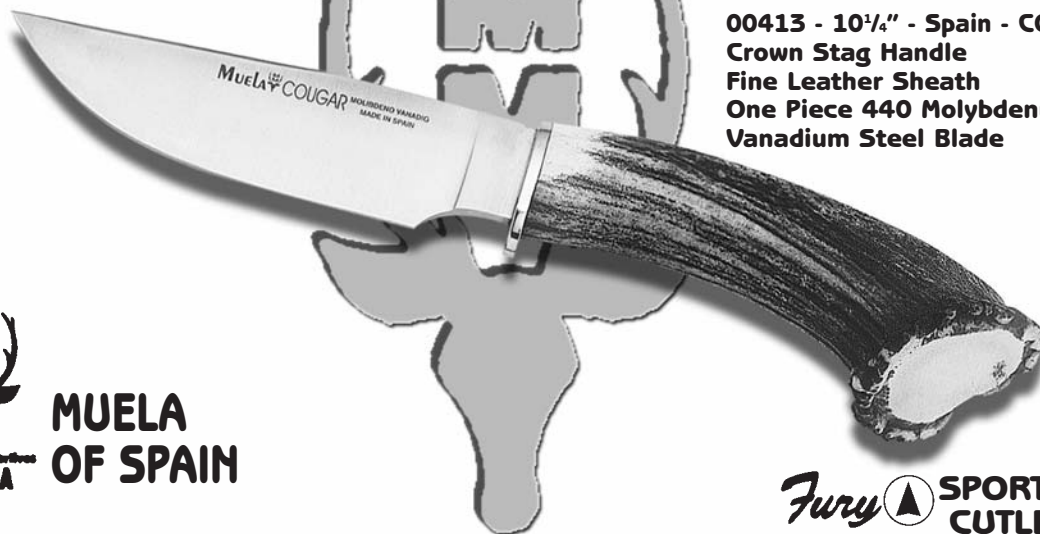
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Jairo uses the Livesay AK to clear away secondary jungle growth. The full flat grind and ergonomic handle made it the favorite of the Peruvian indigenous team. (Randall photo)

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During our last trip we chose three blades to evaluate: the Camillus/Becker BK9 Combat Bowie, the Ka-Bar Camp Knife, and a handmade piece from Newt Livesay's Livesay Combat Knives called the AK (Adventure Knife). All are offered with Kydex sheaths, which work much better than leather in humid jungle environments. The blades of the AK and the Camp Knife are 1095 steel, and the BK9 is 0170-6C carbon steel, just like the rest of the Becker line. To be honest, I haven't noticed much difference in the performance of the two steels. Both hold a very good edge, resharpen easily and have always been tough enough to withstand what my partners and I put them through, so what more could we want?

For jungle work, we've always liked carbon steels a little better than exotics or stainless steels. What about rust? The Camillus and the Ka-Bar have black powder coats, while the Livesay is mil-spec black phosphate. Both coatings have always held up well during our training trips in the jungle. Having said that, even if they do rust, who cares? If you're working a knife as much as we do, then surface rust quickly wears off and has little or no effect on the overall outcome of the task at hand. We like knives that work instead of blades that look pretty and shiny all the time, and carbon steel usually fills the bill without costing too much. Once you get the knives back home, just rub a small amount of oil over them and they're preserved until the next trip.

Becker BK9

Of all the knives that Ethan Becker has designed, the Patrol Machete and BK9 are my favorites. Both are well suited for jungle and tropical work. With a 9-inch blade, the BK9 is an awesome chopper while retaining the ability to do finer work. At .210 of an inch, it's slightly thicker than the "industry standard" of 3/16 inch. This gives it a little more weight out front, while the long, flat grind keeps the cutting efficiency up to par. Other features include a thumb ramp, hammer pommel and an unusual clip point that allows for some extremely strong point-piercing capabilities. Since the swedge of the clip is not sharpened, it doesn't cut into your hand while using the BK9 as a draw knife.

Chopping tests performed in the making of shelter poles proved the knife very comfortable in use. Though I've never been particularly fond of the "parrot-beak" handles on the Becker line, the weight and balance of the BK9 didn't bother my pinkie finger as much as the Patrol Machete, so no modifications were necessary. It readily became a camp favorite among the locals and military for cutting up dinner. Splitting through the tough bones and skulls of game taken for food caused no edge problems. As a machete, the BK9 sailed through vines, saplings and broad-leaf material. If you're looking for a "do-it-all" blade that's plenty tough and easy on the pocketbook (manu-

The team used the Becker BK9 for most of the food preparation. The edge configuration and excellent cutting efficiency enabled it to easily slice a jungle rodent (paca) to bite-sized portions, as well as cut vines, saplings and broad-leaf material. (Randall photo)



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Patricia clears a vine from her campsite with the Ka-Bar Camp Knife. (Randall photo).

facturer's suggested retail price [MSRP]: \$84.95), then check out the BK9.

Ka-Bar Camp Knife

Ka-Bar has consistently produced great wilderness blades. In fact, one of the most-used sheath knives I own is an old-issue Ka-Bar USMC fighting/utility that's been through the ringer and just keeps on giving service. So when I spied the new Ka-Bar Camp Knife, I knew I wanted to try it in the jungle.

The Camp Knife is much smaller and lighter than the other two pieces used during the trip. Its recurved blade comes in at 8 inches long and is built from 3/16-inch stock. It has the standard Ka-Bar-style handle made of a Kraton G thermoplastic elastomer—much better in the jungle than the standard leather-washer handle. The Camp Knife has a short hollow grind, leaving a lot of thickness above it. Even though the grind adversely affects the knife's cutting efficiency, it adds weight for chopping and lateral strength.

The Camp Knife performs as you would expect a camp knife to, and then some. It had no problems digging out roots below our mosquito netting, cutting stakes for tying our campsite down, and, due to its short hollow grind, was the best small-wood splitter of the three knives tested. It readily popped open kindling to get a cook fire started. It also worked alongside the Becker for cleaving small animals in half to be smoked over the fire. Typical of all the Ka-Bars I've owned, the heat treat and 1095 edge held strong through the entire trip, with no apparent defects. After returning home, I noticed the edge was somewhat dull but by no means unusable. In short, the Ka-Bar Camp Knife lives up to its name.

Livesay AK

Newt Livesay and I have worked together on numerous projects and I've always appreciated his knife designs—especially the comfort of the handles. Having graduated the ESSEL School with us, Newt now hangs around in the jungle about as much as we do, so it was only fitting that he should design a jungle knife.

The AK has a 12-inch blade with a stock thickness just over 3/16 inch. The full flat grind makes for an extremely efficient heavyweight slicer and chopper. It became our "front-of-the-boat knife" for cleaving through entanglements on our way up river.

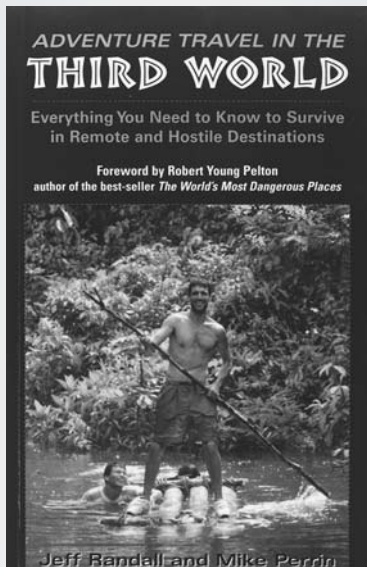
If there's one thing Newt is better at than most makers, it's handle ergonomics, and the AK is no exception. As with all his knives, I can use them all day without gloves and not get a hot spot or blister on my hand.

From clearing out areas for campsites to firewood chores, the AK saw its share of the workload. Our river pilot even used it to fashion a board from a small tree to repair the boat transom. As with the rest of the pieces used on our trip, the 1095 blade held up well with no edge problems. The Livesay AK is an excellent heavyweight among handmade jungle knives.

Conclusion

Though some worked better than others for specific chores, with any of these three models you wouldn't be "under-knifed." The bottom line to surviving in a jungle is having a knife that will slice vegetation, chop through dense areas, clean fish and game, and be tough enough to withstand stresses while maintaining a good edge.

A jungle survival knife is a tool—nothing more. It doesn't take exotic steels or



Primal Scream

As its title reflects—*Adventure Travel in the Third World: Everything You Need to Know to Survive in Remote and Hostile Destinations*—a new book written by Jeff Randall and Mike Perrin details not only how to survive but how to thrive in the wilds of the world's most remote locations.

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rocket science to perform the duties of such a knife. In fact, the indigenous jungle people survive everyday on blades of lesser quality. When it comes to survival, experience and knowledge beat technology most every time.

For the contact information for the knives in the story, see “Where To Get ‘Em” on page 98.

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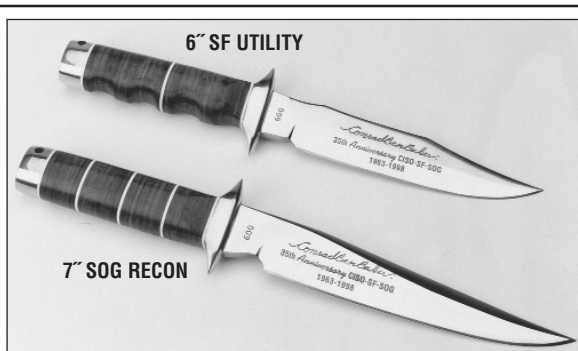
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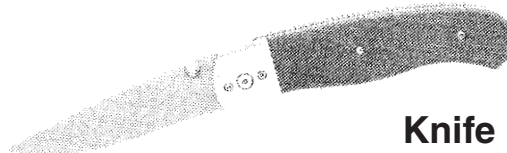
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■ By MSG Kim Breed
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Can the Lone Wolf Loveless Classic Utility live up to its name?



In light of today's many collaborations between custom makers and factories, those involving Blade Magazine Cutlery Hall-Of-Famer© Bob Loveless are a sure bet. His handmade knives bring a high price but the Loveless Classic Utility from Lone Wolf Knives allows everyone the chance to buy a Loveless design.

The knife is simple in concept yet its ability to function is high. The utility hunter blade is excellent for all-around use. The team at Lone Wolf Knives did a superb job adding a zippered case, a display stand and a cleaning cloth, accessories you normally would have to buy separately. Nice touch.

The Lone Wolf Loveless Classic Utility features a 4.5-inch blade of a special LV-04 stainless steel. The handle is a Bob Loveless favorite: green Micarta®. Overall length: 9.25 inches. MSRP: \$300.

OK, so the looks are all there. Let's check out the performance.

Straight From The Box

With hunting season coming to a close, I managed to bag another deer. The same day I received the Classic Utility. Talk about timing! I took it straight from the box and went to work.

I enjoyed the task of skinning the whitetail. The LV-04 stainless blade parted the skin with ease and showed no signs of losing its edge. Switching the knife from hand to hand posed no challenges, even with deer blood on the handle.

Now came the hard part: Processing the meat into steaks. I used the knife to quarter and finish cut 20 pounds of steak, 15 pounds of jerky meat, and 10 pounds each of stew and burger meat—all with the factory edge still able to grab the skin on my fingertips. From there, I sliced up 3 feet of cardboard to see if the glue would take the edge off a little. The edge would still grab some skin, so I started cutting half-inch manila rope.

After 15 cuts, the edge finally started to slide. I grabbed my extra-fine diamond



The LV-04 stainless blade parted the skin of the whitetail with ease and showed no signs of losing its edge.

hone and freshened the edge. From there, the Classic Utility made 30 single-stroke cuts.

It was time for the edge-flex test. I flexed both sides of the edge to see if it would curl. It flexed perfectly with no chipping, a sign of proper heat treatment.

As for handling, the wide thumb notches across the top of the bolster section provided plenty of control. The green, contoured Micarta slabs—a Loveless

favorite—filled my hand but could've been a little more rounded for a smoother fit. There's also a hole in the butt for a lanyard.

No Pouch Potato

A 7/10-ounce cowhide pouch sheath protects the Classic Utility. When the knife is fully inserted in the sheath, only an inch-and-a-half of handle butt is left exposed—ideal for an index-finger-and-thumb-grab withdrawal. A Kydex liner protects the



After the author used the Classic Utility to cut the deer meat, cardboard and 15 pieces of half-inch manila rope, the edge finally started to slide. He put a fresh edge on the blade and it made 30 single-stroke cuts on the rope.

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What Exactly Is LV-04 Stainless?

The LV-04 stainless steel used in the Loveless Classic Utility and other Lone Wolf Knives is not listed on common blade steel charts. That's because it's one of several steels developed especially for Lone Wolf Knives. The LV-04 was created because there was no existing steel that had the properties desired for the Loveless Classic Utility. Working with Loveless, Lone Wolf established how it wanted the steel to perform and then challenged a major steel producer to meet those requirements.

LV-04 is very similar in content to 440B Modified, including the same amounts of carbon (.9 percent) and molybdenum (1.15 percent). The difference is in vanadium. LV-04 has .10 percent of it as opposed to none for 440B Modified. As Wayne Goddard notes this issue in the story beginning on page 20, vanadium carbides are the hardest carbides found in steel, and hardness has a lot to do with edge holding. Of course, any steel is only as good as its heat treatment and, according to the author in his edge-flex test of the Classic Utility blade, its heat treatment seems to be just fine. Moreover, LV-04 can be forged, which Lone Wolf officials said was the key to producing the Loveless blades in a closed-die forging tool.—by **BLADE® staff**

sheath and, most important, the end user.

For more information contact Lone Wolf Knives, attn: D. Hutchens, Dept. BL5, 17400 SW Boones Ferry Road, Ste. 240, Portland, OR 97224 (503) 431-6777 www.lonewolfknives.com.

BLADE

SPEC CHART

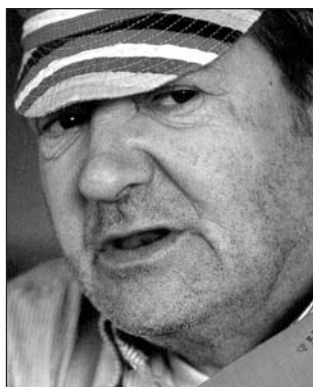
Company Lone Wolf Knives
Designer Bob Loveless
Model Loveless Classic Utility
Pattern Fixed-blade hunter
Blade Style Utility
Construction Full-tapered tang
Blade Steel LV-04 stainless
Blade Length 4.5"
Overall Length 9.25"
Handle Green canvas Micarta®
Rockwell Hardness 57-59 Rc
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MSRP \$300



When the knife is fully inserted in the sheath, only an inch-and-a-half of handle butt is left exposed—ideal for an index-finger-and-thumb-grab withdrawal.



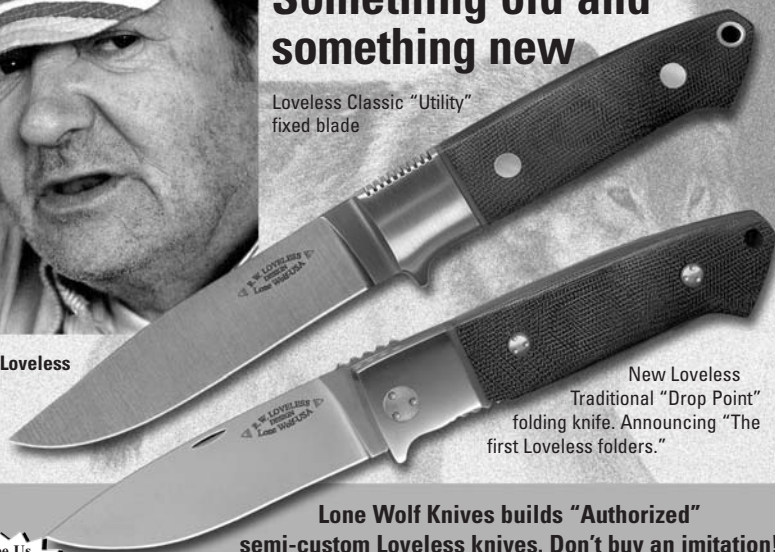
After cutting the meat and to see if the edge would hold, the author sliced up 3 feet of cardboard. The edge held. Note the wide thumb notches across the top of the bolster for extra control.



Bob Loveless

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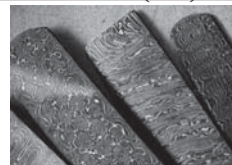
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Distal Taper:

What It Is and Why It's So Important

According to ABS master smith Mike Williams, knives that are designed for cutting such media as meat and paper will benefit from distal taper because it promotes a thinner edge that produces less drag. Here, Williams' Quachita hunter is used to do the honors.

By Darby Neaves

When buying a knife, how much thought do you give to the geometry of the blade? Of course, beauty, weight and feel play a role, but do you ever ask how the geometric lines of the blade are going to affect the knife's performance? Even if you never intend to use the knife, you should think that one day it might be used. As a result, you should carefully consider the concept of *distal taper*.

ABS master smith Mike Williams defines *distal taper* as the way the blade tapers from the ricasso to the tip. "Some will exhibit taper from the guard out, but currently it's normally from the ricasso out, with the ricasso itself being square," he observes.

Distal taper dates back centuries. "It's not a new concept," ABS apprentice smith Vince Evans notes. "From ancient times it was used to lighten and balance swords. If

a sword was not distal tapered, all you would have was a crow bar with an edge."

According to ABS master smith Tim Hancock, distal taper is most important on thick blades, such as some of the old bowies, which had spine thicknesses at the guard area of approximately 3/8 inch. "By tapering the blade to the tip, the knife would have the proper balance and speed. The thinner the blade, the less important distal taper is," Hancock offers. "In fact,

Jarrell Lambert prefers a modified distal taper with a flat area out from the front of the guard before the taper starts. His camp knife is equipped with a 7 1/2-inch blade of 1084 high-carbon steel. The handle is axis deer horn and desert ironwood with nickel-silver fittings. His list price: \$650.



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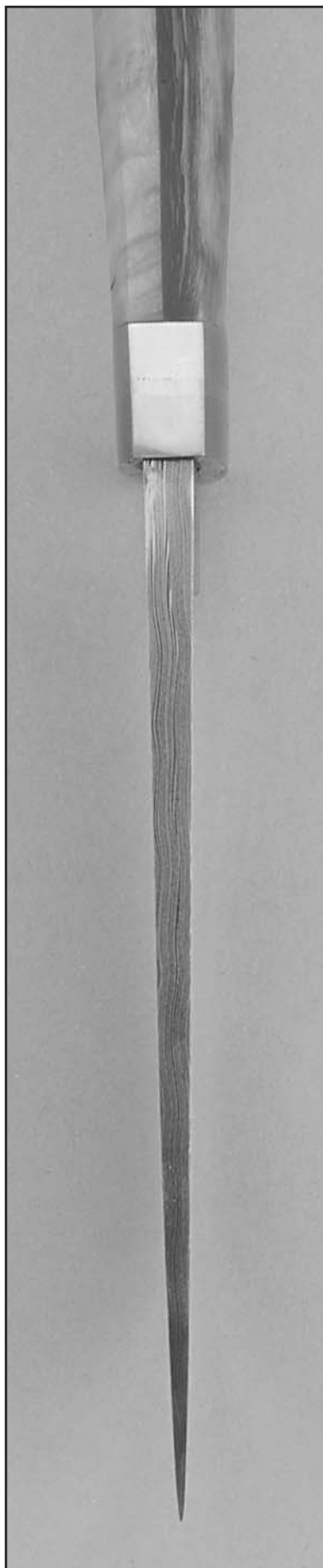
As Jim Crowell puts it, "Distal taper allows the cutting edge to have a smaller degree of angle progressing down the blade, resulting in less drag and producing greater penetration into the medium with a said amount of energy."

The 10 3/4-inch blade on this unfinished Crowell creation is Shimmer-pattern damascus—320 layers of 1084 and 15N20 high-carbon steels. The handle is elephant ivory. His list price for the knife when finished: \$2,800.





Mike Williams said some knives will exhibit taper from the guard out but currently it's normally from the ricasso out, with the ricasso itself being square. His damascus Quachita hunter has a 4.25-inch blade composed of 160 layers of 1084 and 15N20. The sheep-horn handle features mortised-tang construction. His list price: \$495.



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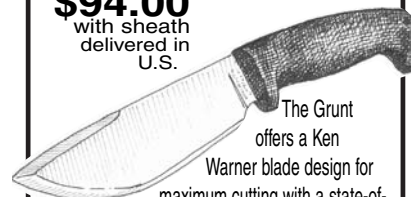
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blade geometry blade geometry

full-length distal taper on a bowie blade of 3/16-inch thickness and an 8-inch length would leave the tip area so thin and weak that, in my opinion, it would be an inferior knife. To me, it's a process of speed and strength. Some balance between the two must be considered to make a superior knife."

**"Distal taper is
the way the blade
tapers from the
ricasso to the tip."**

—Mike Williams

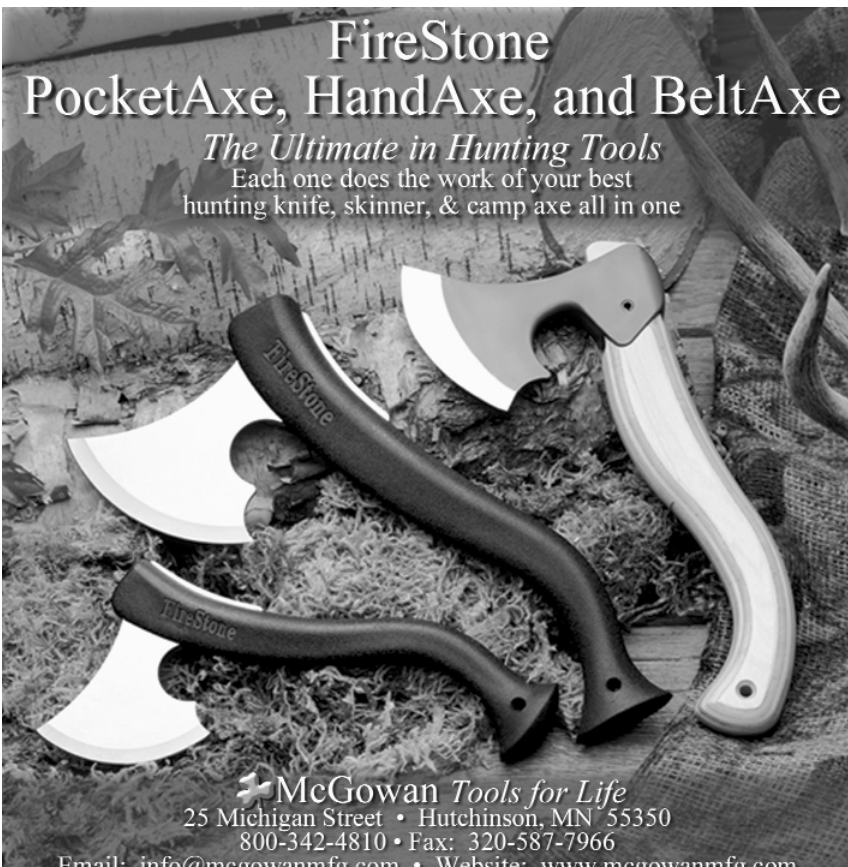
ABS master smith Jarrell Lambert says that distal taper will give the blade more flexibility and spread the stress more evenly throughout than a blade made of the same material and having no distal taper. "As a rule, when placed in a bending position, a blade that has the same thickness of material throughout most of its length will tend to bend in one general area," Lambert explains. "However, one with distal taper will have an even arc throughout the length of the blade." It all depends on the type of draw applied to, and the resulting flexibility of, the back of the blade, Jarrell stresses. "I use a modified distal taper on my blades," he adds. "I have a flat area out from the front of the guard before the taper starts and the same way with the tang area." Williams agrees. "Distal taper allows for the blade to flex further and then spring back than would be the case for a blade without distal taper," he notes.

**"From ancient
times it was used to
lighten and balance
swords."**

—Vince Evans

Big knives are the beneficiaries of distal taper. "The smaller the blade and the thinner the blade material, the less of a factor distal taper is," Williams advises. On the other hand, larger hunters, camp knives, some bowies—though not all antique bowies have distal taper—fighters and blades that are used in cutting contests where quickness and cutting ability are keys will benefit from distal taper. "Knives that are designed for cutting meat,

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paper and such will benefit from distal taper because it promotes a thinner edge that produces less drag,” Williams points out. “I don’t believe distal taper is important when cutting rope except for the balance of the knife itself. It’s like using a fillet knife versus a butcher knife; when cutting rope, you want the weight forward.”

Scientist of Cut

ABS master smith Jim Crowell is in what fellow ABS master smith Jerry Fisk says is the small percentage of makers who actually study the science of what makes a knife cut. “What is a knife’s primary function? To slice and chop,” Crowell asks and answers. “You want the knife to slice and

chop efficiently, in other words, to do the task with the least amount of effort.” Following are some of Crowell’s thoughts on distal taper:

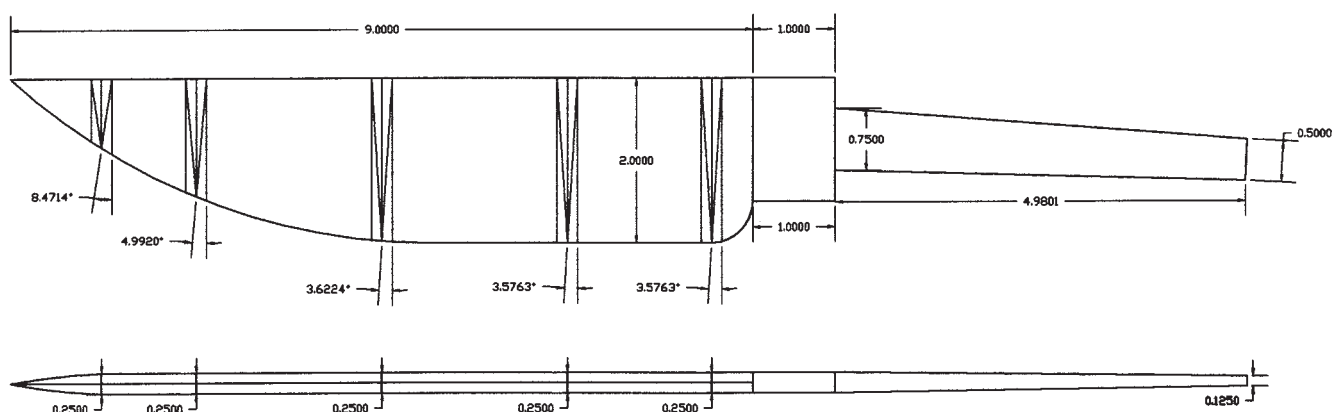
“Besides giving balance, weight reduction, looks and flexibility to the blade,

“Distal taper promotes a thinner edge that produces less drag.”
—Mike Williams

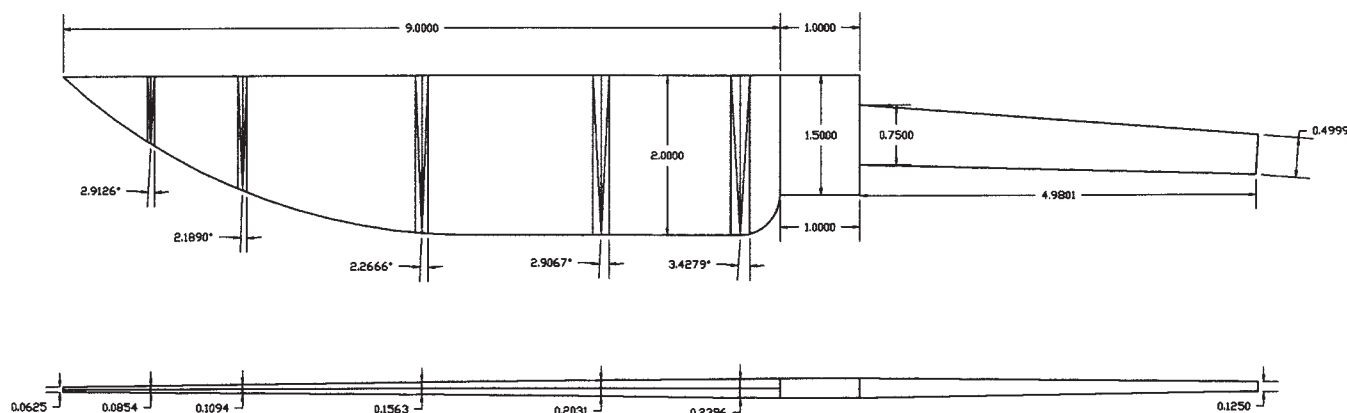
distal taper allows the cutting edge to have a smaller degree of angle progressing down the blade, resulting in less drag and producing greater penetration into the medium with a said amount of energy. As a result, a blade with distal taper will always cut more efficiently than the same blade with a parallel spine.

“If you want weight in your blade, maybe for chopping, increase the width of the blade, but have a distal taper. This will provide the weight needed but also a lesser degree of angle on the edge. Consequently, you will have the best of both worlds. This is what ABS journeyman smith John Fitch incorporated into his ‘Hog Body’ competition knife (for more on it, see the August ’02 *BLADE*®). Fitch has won more cutting

Parallel
Flat Grind



Distal Taper
Flat Grind



At bottom is the Distal Taper Flat Grind and at top is the Parallel Flat Grind. Each image includes both side and overhead views. As you can see, the angle is more “blunt” with the parallel spine. The point will be thinner and not as strong with the distal-taper spine. However, unless you simply want to punch holes with your blade, the knife with the distal-taper spine will be more efficient at cutting and chopping. (drawings by Jim Crowell)

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"What if the blade has a thin spine to begin with; do you still want distal taper? Yes. The degree of taper won't be as much as on a thicker spine—in fact, it will be very subtle—but even then it provides the most efficient cut.

"Say you like a parallel spine design; is there a happy median for having both a parallel spine and an efficient cutting edge? Yes. It will never be as efficient as a full distal taper but it can be close. If the happy median is what you choose, the blade must start to distal taper where the cutting edge begins to arc upward to the tip. This allows the degree of angle of the cutting edge to adjust to the blade as it becomes narrower, resulting in a smaller angle of the cutting edge. If the blade isn't distal tapered, the degree of angle of the cutting edge more than doubles compared to the distal-tapered blade, the angle of which hardly changes. That abrupt change in angle will only produce more drag, resulting in less efficiency or penetration.

"The thinner the blade, the less important distal taper is."

—Tim Hancock

"Imagine chopping a 2x4 in half; the percussion point of the blade penetrates the wood. With proper technique, the momentum of the swing makes the blade invade deeper into the wood. The stopping point or exit point will be further toward the tip than the percussion point. You want the angle of the cutting edge to be increasingly smaller as measured up the blade so there will be the least amount of drag possible, resulting in a deeper cut. These principles work the same regardless of chopping or slicing and regardless of the medium: wood, rope, meat, paper, etc."

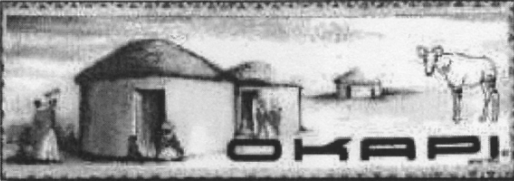
Conclusion

Williams, Hancock and Lambert explained what distal taper is, does and how it affects the weight, balance and feel of the knife. Crowell described how distal taper produces the most efficient cut. With the information at hand, it's my opinion that you would want distal taper, especially on every big knife, every time.

For the contact information for the knives illustrated herein, see "Where To Get 'Em" on page 98.

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KEY: BL05

knife coatings

knife coatings

The Hauzer 1500 is one of Bodycote's batch-coating machines. This particular model is programmed to apply a boron-carbide coating. (Ewing photo)



BEST Protection FOR YOUR Knife?

The 5.5-inch clip-point blade of CPM S30V stainless, titanium handle and all the hardware—screws, spacer pillars, blade stops and clip—of Darrel Ralph's Aftermath folding bowie are tungsten DLC coated. The result is even smoother action on what's already a smooth knife. Ralph's list price: \$695.

For enhanced corrosion
and wear resistance,
as well as eye candy,
Bodycote has knives
covered

By Dexter Ewing

Blade coatings have been an option in the knife industry for many years, with their three advantages being: 1) corrosion resistance; 2) anti-glare; and 3) enhanced cutting performance. In particular, knives with a tactical bent embraced blade coatings, and pretty soon the all-black "stealth" look was in and available on nearly every tactical folder and fixed blade on the market in the early-to-mid 1990s. After a few years, the popularity of the all-black look waned, with some consumers turning their attention to colors on their knives.

Now, there are two exciting coatings and an advanced technology in which they're applied.

Enter an England-based company called Bodycote Metallurgical Coating. Bodycote has developed two thin-film PVD (Physical Vapor Deposition) coatings—*boron carbide* and *tungsten DLC* (Diamond Like Carbon)—for use on metals in high-wear applications such as bearings and engine parts. The two coatings have also found a home on knives for greatly enhanced corrosion and wear protection, as well as providing a look that consumers crave.

Inside a 45,000-square-foot state-of-the-art facility in Greensboro, North Carolina, Bodycote services the knife industry, both handmade and production. Benchmade, Kershaw, MicroTech, Masters Of Defense and Strider on the factory end, and custom makers such as Trace Rinaldi, Darrel Ralph, Rob Simonich, Wally Hayes and Bob Terzuola—to name a few—all depend on Bodycote's expertise and skilled personnel to get the coating job done right and on time. A strong case can be made for boron carbide and tungsten DLC being the most popular blade coatings on the market. The coatings are extremely thin—about 1.5 microns thick—but highly durable and abrasion resistant. The thin film coatings have a low coefficient of friction, meaning they're like a dry lube. Folder parts treated with either coating result in a very smooth, silky action. Moreover, the coatings enable the blade to cut without much effort.

Viva la Difference

What exactly are the differences between boron carbide and tungsten DLC?

"Boron carbide is a solid ceramic coating. It's a non-metallic-based film that's the second hardest substance known to man, the first being diamond," notes Darrell Lewis, Bodycote's director of North American development. It is its hardness—boron carbide registers 92 Rc on the Rockwell C scale—that is its main attribute.

On the other hand, tungsten DLC is a metallic-based coating. "It's achieved by evaporating tungsten carbide," Lewis explains. "[The tungsten carbide] reacts with carbon to create a DLC film." The main advantage of the tungsten DLC coat-

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The Benchmade/Osborne 771BC1-01 Red/Black boasts Bodycote's boron-carbide coating. Blade steel is 154CM stainless and the handle is color-splash anodized aluminum. The mechanism is the AXIS Lock. Weight: 1.6 ounces. Closed length: 3.7 inches. MSRP: \$170.

"How **BLADE** ruined my life."

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(and he blames it all on *BLADE Magazine*).

Dear **BLADE**:

It is difficult for me to write a glowing recommendation for *BLADE Magazine*. It practically ruined my life. ♦ I'm a simple man. I used to have a simple life. ♦ I started making custom knives on a full-time basis in 1982. I was single and didn't need much. I made knives in a small, one-man shop and made just enough to get by ... on a very frugal budget. ♦ Macaroni and cheese was priced at six boxes for \$1, and \$8 could feed me for a month. Tuesdays were "Cajun Night" as I would add a little cayenne pepper ... good times ... good times ... ♦ I was a guy whose big dream was to someday have heat and running water in his shop. Live the dream!

Then, a few years later, I started advertising in *BLADE*. Orders began pouring in from countries all over the world. What was happening? ♦ I was young and foolish, full of mac and cheese, so I panicked and tried to slow the orders down by raising prices. *BLADE* countered this move by including some of the knives in feature articles and the next thing I knew, I was on the ropes. ♦ I had to hire a guy to help out ... and then another ... and another. I moved off of pasta with powdered cheese and up to burgers and fries. What was happening? I was confused. ♦ Time went by ... I continued to adver-

tise in *BLADE*, never realizing that this was the cause of all of the dramatic changes in my mundane and frugal existence. ♦ Soon my shop had heat and running water, followed by air conditioning. Then I had to build another shop, much larger. There was no stopping it! The floodgates were now open and sirloin was pouring in!!! ♦ Next thing I knew, I was getting married to the most beautiful woman on the planet (see picture at left) - Thank you *BLADE*!!! ♦ Now, we have an ever-expanding facility with banks of CNC machining centers and automated grinders. There are employees everywhere and I haven't had mac and cheese in ten years.

So, if you love mac and cheese and hate running water, take my advice: Do not advertise in *BLADE*!!! Stay away from them! They will simply ruin your life with hundreds of new customers and record-setting sales. ♦ Hide!!! Go Amish!!!

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ing is its low coefficient of friction. While not as hard as boron carbide—tungsten DLC has a Rockwell hardness of about 80 Rc—the low coefficient of friction makes tungsten DLC highly scratch resistant. With either coating, Bodycote basically takes a solid—boron carbide or tungsten carbide—turns it into a gas, and re-deposits it on an object in a controlled, charged vacuum atmosphere.

How It's Done

Bodycote applies its coatings in an involved process totaling six hours per coating run. Knife parts are sent through a highly advanced, computer-controlled cleaning line consisting of 10 different stages. All parts are loaded in baskets and a single robot controls the entire process. There's a reverse osmosis and de-ionization water purification system that supplies the cleaning line, and all water is recycled through the system. The objective of the cleaning line is to remove any and all residue such as buffing compounds, oils, fingerprints and other impurities from the parts. The impurities adversely affect coating adhesion, thus causing the coating to either peel or flake off the metal surface. When parts emerge from the cleaning line, workers must handle them with surgical gloves to avoid smudging them with fingerprints.

Next, the parts are hung on a huge fixture apparatus. Lewis said that for a 4-inch-closed folder, one of Bodycote's fixtures can handle about 700 parts, including blades and liners. Once the fixtured parts are loaded into the coating machine is when the "magic" begins! As mentioned, the coatings are applied to knife parts in a controlled, charged vacuum atmosphere. Plasma arcs evaporate boron carbide and tungsten carbide solids, and the gas is deposited on the knife parts, which are charged with an opposite polarity from that of the vacuum atmosphere. This causes the thin film to gradually form on the knife parts. Uniform coating application is achieved as a result of the entire fixture rotating inside the coating chamber.

The Durability Factor

Exactly how durable are the coatings once they're applied? "Each coating is basically as strong as the [material to which it adheres]," says Chip Hallam, Bodycote's senior process engineer. But what about soft metals like aluminum and brass? Lewis explained that they, too, can be coated, much like steel and titanium. However, soft metals must first be coated with a barrier film. "This gives support for our coatings," Lewis notes.

Knifemaker Rob Simonich is sold on the durability of the Bodycote coatings. "[Boron carbide and tungsten DLC] may cost a bit more but I can demonstrate their durability by scratching against the coating with a hard steel knife point," he stresses,

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Cost

As for price, Ralph says he adds \$50 to the knife's overall cost if only the blade is coated and \$75 if the entire piece is treated. Noteboom said the coating adds about \$10 to the cost of a Benchmade knife. Rinaldi says it adds about \$25-\$50 to the price of each of his knives, depending on the size of the blade.

"The thin film coatings have a low coefficient of friction, meaning they're like a dry lube."

—the author

A major area of concern for knifemakers and manufacturers is finishing the surface appearance of the blades and handle parts prior to sending them to Bodycote. The thin-film PVD coatings don't hide surface flaws as well as the titanium nitride (TiN) or epoxy-based coatings. "[Bodycote's] coatings take on whatever finish the steel has before treating," Simonich observes, "so the maker or manufacturer still has to put the desired finish on the parts to be coated."

Conclusion

Bodycote has a legion of satisfied customers. Many are production knife companies that offer some models in tungsten DLC coating. The Chive 1600BLK, perhaps Kershaw's best-selling knife, is coated entirely with tungsten DLC. Kershaw's Craig Green said the company's Boa, Avalanche and Whirlwind models also are available with coated blades. Meanwhile, Benchmade's Model 690 and Warren Osborne 770 and 771 folders have boron-carbide-coated blades as an option.

Knifemaker Darrel Ralph says he prefers the tungsten DLC coating. "It seems smoother finish wise and is very tough," he remarks. His Madd Maxx and Aftermath folders are both available with tungsten-DLC-coated blades, as is his Venturi butterfly knife. Trace Rinaldi also uses the tungsten DLC. "The coated blades sell better and have a lot of 'cool factor,'" he winked.

If you're looking for a coated knife with



Here's a batch of Kershaw Chive handle and blade parts at the end of a coating cycle. The parts are ready to be unloaded and packaged for shipping to Kershaw for final assembly. With its all-encompassing coat of boron carbide, the Kershaw Black Chive was the Blade Magazine 2001 American-Made Knife Of The Year®. MSRP: \$74.95. (Ewing photo)

outstanding corrosion and scratch resistance, as well as one with a smooth look, action and feel, check into one with the Bodycote treatment.

For contact information for the knives illustrated herein, see "Where To Get 'Em" on page 98.

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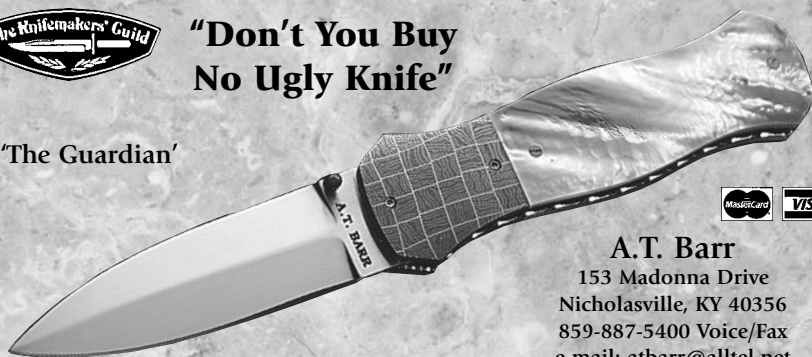


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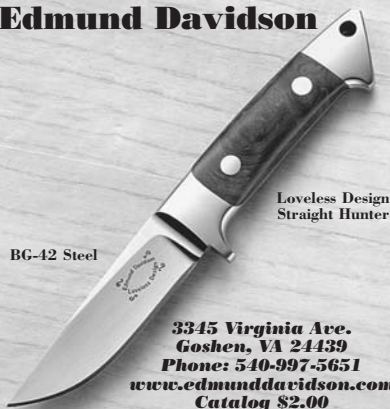
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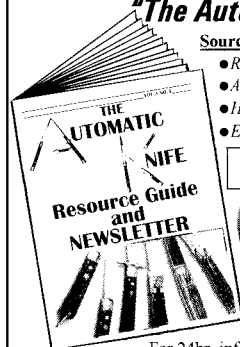
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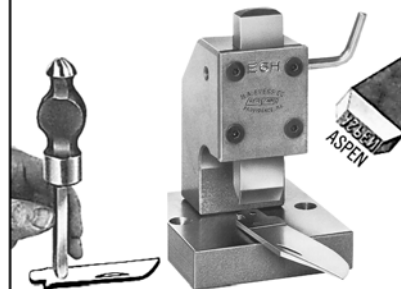
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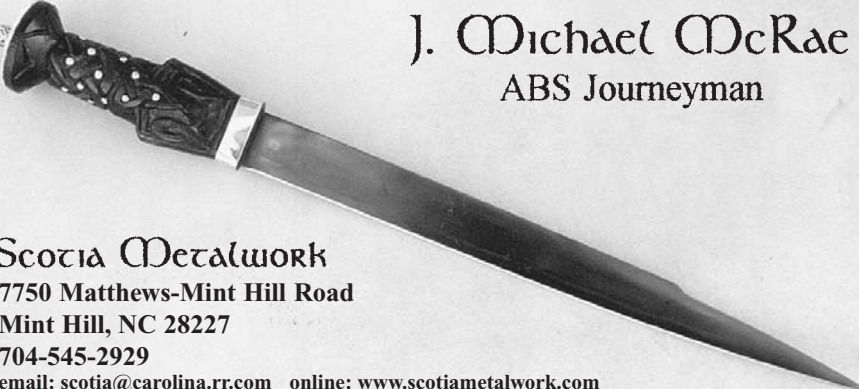
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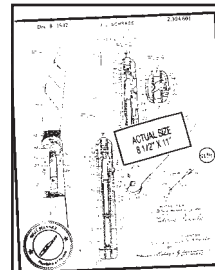


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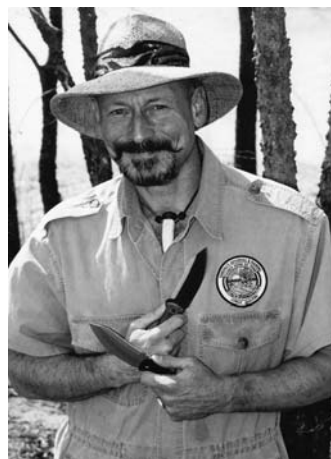
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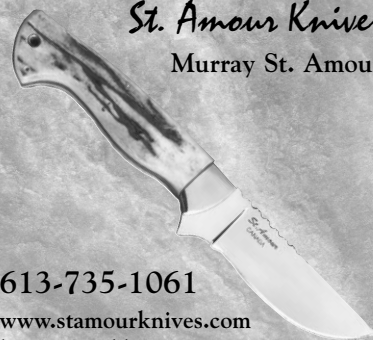
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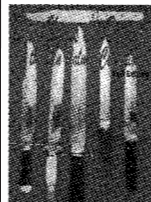


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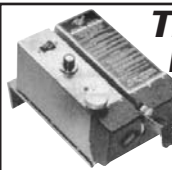
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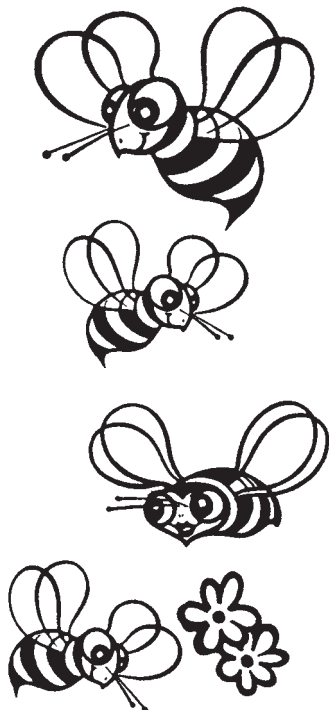
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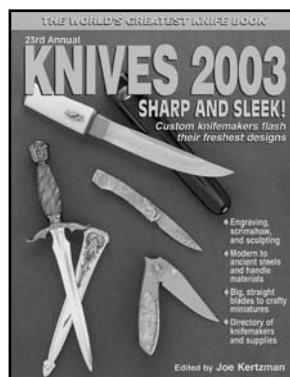


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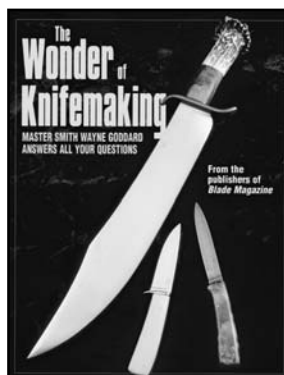
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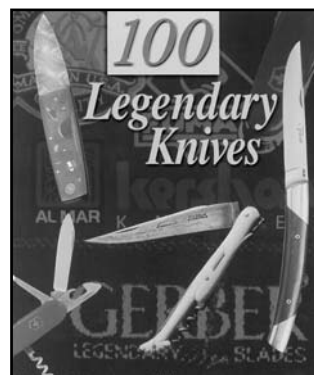
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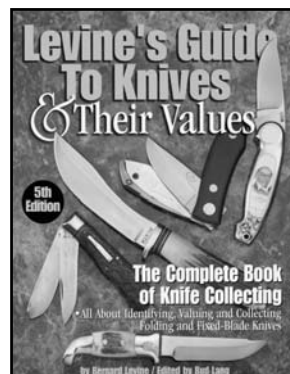
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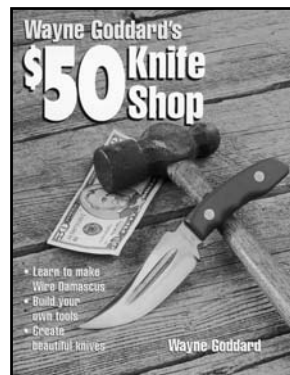
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show calendar

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MARCH

March 7-9 New York, NY East Coast Custom Knife Show, Crowne Plaza Manhattan. Contact Steve D'Lack (417) 335-2170 fax (417) 335-2011.*

March 8-9 Godfrey, IL Bunker Hill Knife Club Show, River Bend Arena, Lewis and Clark Community College. Contact Dale Rice, Dept. BL5, 108 Pickett, Bethalto, IL 62010 (618) 377-8050.*

March 14-15 Sharpsburg, MD Mason-Dixon Knife Club Show, Agricultural Education Center. Contact Matthew Halterman, Dept. BL5, POB 111, Toms Brook, VA 22660 (540) 436-9425.*

March 14-16 Wilmington, OH NKCA Ohio Spring Knife Show, Robertson Convention Center. Contact NKCA, Dept. BL5, POB 21070, Chattanooga, TN 37424 (423) 892-5007.*

March 15 Schnecksville, PA Eastern Pennsylvania Knife Collectors Show, Schnecksville Fire Hall. Contact Tom Iobst (610) 965-8074 or Eddy Petro (610) 965-9248.*

March 15-16 Pomona, CA ABS West Coast Open Clinic, W.K. Kellogg Arabian Horse Center. Contact Bill Herndon, Dept. BL5, 32520 Michigan, Acton, CA 93510 (661) 269-5860 BHerndonS1@aol.com.**

March 21-22 McKinney, TX The Knife Show, McKinney Holiday Inn. Contact R.L. Knife Co., Dept. BL5, 111 Tanners Farm Rd., Ferris, TX 75125 (972) 842-2918.*

March 21-23 Janesville, WI 20th Annual Badger Knife Show, Holiday Inn Express and Janesville Conference Center. Contact Bob Schrap, Dept. BL5, POB 511, Elm Grove, WI 53122 (414) 479-9765 rschrap@aol.com.*

March 22-23 Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada 3rd Annual Western Canada Knife Association Show, Kamloops Exhibition Arena. Contact Ron Lockhart (250) 752-2830 fran-ron@shaw.ca.*

March 29 Tunica, MS 2nd Annual Memphis Pipe, Cigar & Knife Show, The Hollywood Casino Hotel. Contact George Trent, Dept. BL5, 9178 Sycamore Creek Cove, Germantown, TN 38138 (901) 755-4543 get1st@aol.com.

APRIL

April 4-6 Harrisonburg, VA 12th Annual Greater Shenandoah Valley Knife Show, Rock-

ingham County Fairgrounds. Contact Chris Crites (540) 574-4511.*

April 5-6 Tulsa OK Wanenmacher's Tulsa Arms Show, Expo Square (Tulsa Fairgrounds). Contact Wanenmacher's Tulsa Gun Show, Dept. BL5, POB 33201, Tulsa, OK 74153 (918) 492-0404.*

April 11-12 Toronto, Ontario, Canada 9th Annual Canadian Knifemakers Guild Show, Days Inn Toronto Airport. Contact Paul Johnson (519) 453-4586 www.ckg.org.*

April 12-13 Eugene, OR 28th Annual Oregon Knife Show, Lane County Convention Center. Contact the OKCA, Dept. BL5, POB 2091, Eugene, OR 97402 (541) 484-5564 www.oregonknifeclub.org.*

April 25-27 Solvang, CA 19th Annual Solvang Custom Knife Show, Scandinavian Inn. Contact Nordic Knives, attn: Dave Harvey, Dept. BL5, 1634 Copenhagen, Solvang, CA 93463 (805) 688-3612 www.nordicknives.com.*

April 25-27 Louisville, KY NKCA Louisville Spring Knife Show. Contact NKCA, Dept. BL5, POB 21070, Chattanooga, TN 37424 (423) 892-5007.*

April 25-27 Toronto, Canada Canadian Guild Show, Days Inn, Toronto Airport. Contact info n/a at press time.*

April 26-27 Bull Shoals, AR Knife Extravaganza Of The Ozarks, Bel Arco Resort. Contact T. Bullard, Dept. BL5, 117 MC 8068, Flippin, AR 72634 (870) 453-3421 tbullard@bullshoals.net.*

April 26-27 Gulfport, MS 2nd Annual Gulfcoast Custom Knifemakers Show, Airport Holiday Inn. Contact Perry Wingo, Dept. BL4, 22 55th, Gulfport, MS 39507 (228) 863-3193 pbwingo@bellsouth.net.*

April 28-May 2 Washington, AR ABS Spring Hammer-In, Bill Moran School of Bladesmithing. Contact Texarkana College, Community Services Division, Dept. BL5, 2500 N. Robison, Texarkana, TX 75799 or Scotty Hayes (903) 832-5565 ext. 3236.**

MAY

May 3-4 Lugano, Switzerland 9th Espolama Knife Show, Palazzo dei Congressi Lugano. Contact Fabio Bianda 0041 91 7516203 fax 0041 91 7516421 info@espolama.ch.*

May 17 Washington, PA Allegheny Mountain Knife Collectors Show, Julian's. Contact John

Saraino (412) 464-0404 or Mark Remcheck, Dept. BL5, POB 23, Hunker, PA 15639 (724) 228-7214.*

May 24-25 Melbourne, Australia Australian Knifemakers Guild Show, Hotel Ibis. Contact Shawn McIntyre (03) 98132049 www.akg.org.au.*

May 31-June 1 Dover, OH 15th Annual Western Reserve Cutlery Association Invitational Knife Expo. Contact WRCA, attn: D. Musgrave, Dept. BL5, POB 355, Dover, OH 44622 (330) 746-4242 dusgrav@neo.rr.com, wrca-oh.com.*

JUNE

June 5-7 Pigeon Forge, TN Parker's Greatest Knife Show On Earth, Grand Hotel Convention Center. Contact Parker's Knife Collector Service, attn: J. Parker, Dept. BL5, POB 23522, Chattanooga, TN 37422 (423) 892-0448.*

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June 21-22 Anchorage, AK Midnight Sun Custom Knife Show. Location and contact info n/a at press time.*

To ensure timely publication of your knife show in the "Show Calendar," BLADE® requests that you send all pertinent information concerning your show in written form—dates, locations, etc.—at least three months before the show takes place to Krause Publications, attn: J. Kertzman, 700 E. State St., Iola, WI 54945 (715) 445-2214 fax (715) 445-4087. BLADE depends on the shows themselves for prompt and accurate information.

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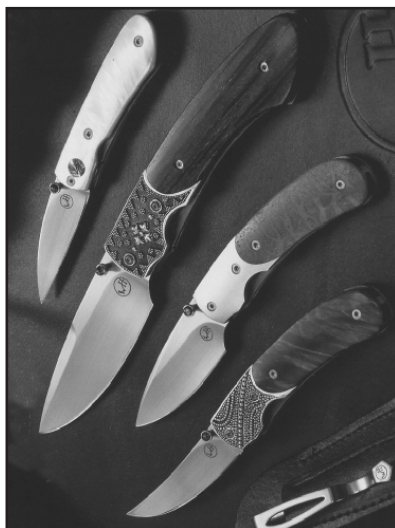
For more information contact Fallkniven, attn: P. Hjortberger, Dept. BL5, Havrevagen 10, S-961 42 Boden, Sweden (+46) 921 544 22.



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William Henry's limited editions of 50-250 knives include 18k-gold, sterling-silver, gemstone and handforged-damascus adornments.

For more information contact William Henry Knives, attn: M. Conable, Dept. BL5, 2125 Delaware Ave., Ste. C, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 (831) 454-9409.



Bolster Steel Is Part Motorcycle Chain

George Rebello sacrificed the chain from his 1947 Indian motorcycle for the damascus bolster of a fixed blade with an ironwood handle.

For more information contact George Rebello, Dept. BL5, 358 Elm St., New Bedford, MA 02740 (508) 999-7090.



M18 Offered With Color G-10 Inserts

The Kit Carson-designed M18s sport AUS-8 blades, 6061 T6 aluminum handles and color G-10 inserts.

For more information contact Columbia River Knife & Tool, attn: R. Bremer, Dept. BL5, 9720 S.W. Hillman Ct., Ste. 885, Wilsonville, OR 97070 (800) 891-3100.



Ironwood Leads Into ATS-34 Blades

Robert Dodd builds a pair of ATS-34 fixed blades with ironwood handles and spacers, and nickel-silver guards and pins.

For more information contact Robert Dodd, Dept. BL5, 4340 E. Canyon Dr., Camp Verde, AZ 86322 (928) 567-3333.



Grip Splits To Open And Close Blade

Josh Hazen's Trifold folder features a blue-and-black-anodized-aluminum handle that splits to maneuver the 154CM blade open and closed.

For more information contact Josh Hazen, Dept. BL5, POB 5934, Twin Falls, ID 83303 (208) 732-5525.



Wormgroove Grips Mimic Jigged Bone

Frost's line of Autumn Wormgroove knives include a Big Game Trapper, Mini Muskrat and Bullet Trapper I, all with grooved, jigged-bone-like handles.

For more information contact Frost, attn: E. McCarton, Dept. BL5, POB 22636, Chattanooga, TN 37422 (800) 251-7768.



Knife Handle Also Accepts Axe Head

Katz Knives premieres the Safari Kit featuring an interchangeable axe head and hunting blade.

For more information contact Katz Knives, attn: K. Derkatz, Dept. BL5, POB 730, Chandler, AZ 85224 (480) 786-9334.



Hunting Dogs Grace Interframe Folder

Claudio Riboni's locking-liner interframe folder parades a 416 stainless-steel handle engraved by Francesco Amatori.

For more information contact Claudio Riboni, Dept. BL5, Via L. Da Vinci, 80 20060, Truccazzano (MI) Italy (+02) 95309010.



In Search of the Sandbar Knife

In the conclusion,
the author speculates
on what the Sandbar
Knife looked like and
who made it

Part IV

By J.R. Edmondson

According to his descendants, Calaphas Ham was a recipient of a presentation bowie. The unmarked knife is on display in the Long Barracks Museum at the Alamo. Crudely forged from a file, it features an 8 1/4-inch blade with an abrupt clip, no guard and wood scales. It very nearly conforms to Ham's description of the knife Lovell Snowden allegedly made for James Bowie. As the author writes: "Could it have been made by Snowden? Might it be similar to the knife Bowie used in the Sandbar Fight?"



There is, finally, one more candidate for the maker of the Sandbar Knife who must be considered.

The October 1852 edition of *Debow's Review* included the story, "Early Life in the Southwest—The Bowies," by John J. Bowie. "[James] had a hunting-knife made, which suited his fancy, by a common blacksmith named Snowden," John wrote. "In after years this knife became famous, owing to some very tragic occurrences ..."

In other words, the older brother of James and Rezin did not agree that Rezin—or his blacksmith, Jesse Clift—manufactured the first Bowie knife.

Miss Lucy Leigh Bowie challenged the authenticity of the John Bowie account, probably because it detailed, without remorse, the Bowie brothers' slave-smuggling operation with the pirate, Jean Laffite. "... the article in DeBows is absolutely false," Miss Bowie wrote. "I have carefully gone over it several times item by item and every statement I find untrue."

In reality, there is much truth in the John Bowie article, and it's now universally accepted by historians as authentic. However, authentic articles aren't always accurate. Moreover, Rezin admittedly was closer to James than John, who had set out on his own when James was still a youth. Nonetheless, it's significant to note that John's origin of the bowie knife was supported and embellished by Caiaphas Ham. A close friend of the Bowie brothers in Louisiana, Ham accompanied James Bowie to Texas in 1830 and later fought beside both James

and Rezin in the San Saba Indian battle.

Ham's lengthy 1887 account was included in the memoirs of Col. John S. "Rip" Ford, the famous Texas Ranger. Though he had written many years after the events, Ham apparently recollected them quite well. He provided more details than anyone else about Bowie's first altercation with Maj. Norris Wright and the subsequent Sandbar Fight. Certainly, Ham had heard the stories directly from James. Concerning the first bowie knife, Ham wrote:

... Colonel [James] Bowie had the knife made which has since borne his name. He whittled a piece of wood into a model. Love Snowden, a Kentuckian, was the manufacturer. A flat file was used in the making. When finished it was not more than twelve inches long, handle and all. Colonel Bowie wore the knife for several years.

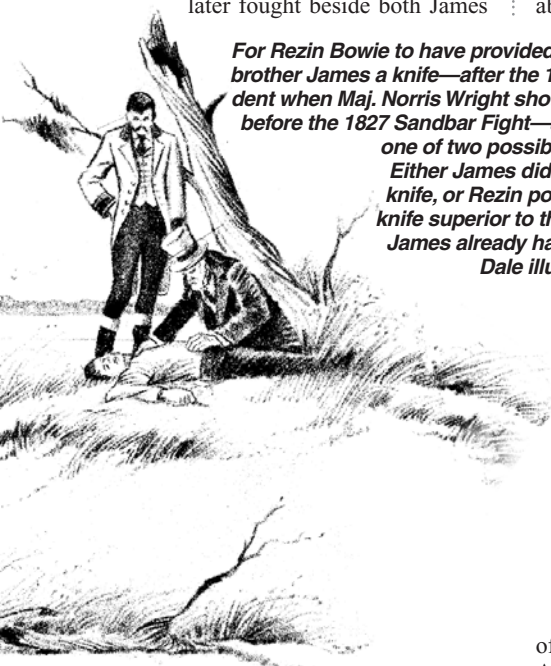
That Ham was writing after John did and including new details—including a first name for Snowden—establishes that Ham wasn't merely perpetuating John's account.

According to his descendants, Ham was a recipient of a presentation bowie. The unmarked knife is currently displayed in the Long Barracks Museum at the Alamo, a donation from Ham's granddaughter, Miss Graves Dewees. Unlike other known presentation bowies, which were exquisitely crafted by master artisans, the Ham knife is crudely forged from a file. It features an 8 1/4-inch blade with an abrupt clip, no guard, and wood scales. The overall length is 12 1/4 inches. It very nearly conforms to Ham's own description of the knife Snowden allegedly made for James Bowie. Indeed, the knife more closely resembles a butcher knife than any other knife attributed to the Bowie family. Unfortunately, Ham never mentioned the knife in his writings. Could it have been made by Snowden? Might it be similar to the knife Bowie used in the Sandbar Fight?

More Support For Snowden

Further support for Snowden as the maker of the Sandbar Knife appeared in a *Galveston Daily News*, March 31, 1890, article by Annie M. Bowie. Annie identified herself as the "Granddaughter of John Bowie, daughter of James Bowie." Apparently, her real grandfather was

For Rezin Bowie to have provided his brother James a knife—after the 1826 incident when Maj. Norris Wright shot Bowie, but before the 1827 Sandbar Fight—assumes one of two possibilities: Either James did not own a knife, or Rezin possessed a knife superior to the one that James already had. (Bob Dale illustration)



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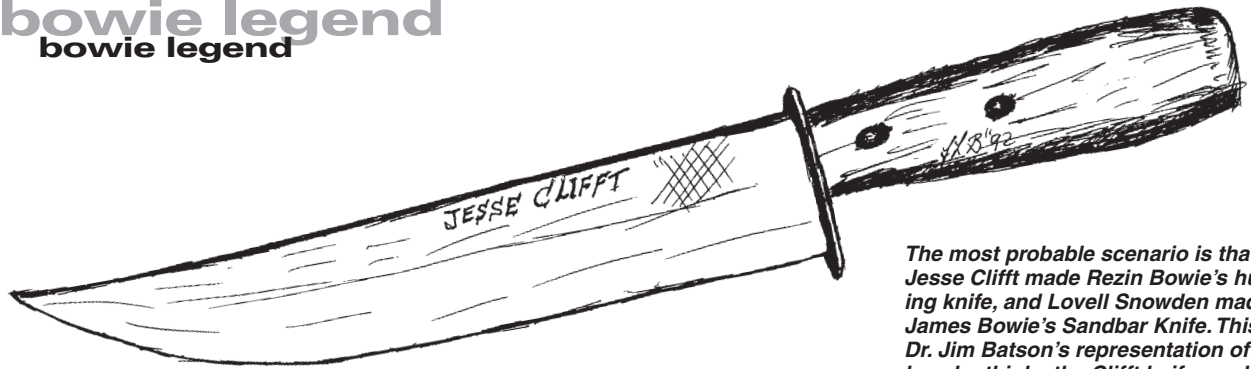
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bowie legend bowie legend



The most probable scenario is that Jesse Clifft made Rezin Bowie's hunting knife, and Lovell Snowden made James Bowie's Sandbar Knife. This is Dr. Jim Batson's representation of how he thinks the Clifft knife would have looked.

Stephen, the youngest of the Bowie brothers. Stephen's son, James Jr., married John's stepdaughter.

Annie told a somewhat fanciful story that placed both James and Rezin in a fight "on an island called Natchez" to help a "widow of limited means" recover her land from crooked planters:

[James] Bowie, knowing the deficiency of firearms ... decided to provide himself with an unfailing weapon of defense, and thinking he could improve on the knives of the period he selected a small piece of wood, of which he formed a model, the blade terminating in a keen taper point, and the handle provided with a cross piece, usually called a guard. Giving the model to a celebrated blacksmith, Lovel H. Snowden by name, he bade him copy it in steel, and when it

was completed, Bowie considered himself ready for the fray.

Thus, Annie agreed with Ham that James Bowie deserved credit not only for making the bowie knife famous, but also for designing it. More important is Annie's reference to the blacksmith. Ham's "Love" Snowden had now become "Lovel H. Snowden."

A respected Bowie historian and researcher, Dr. James Batson has verified the existence of Lovell H. Snowden, tracing him from his birth in North Carolina about 1790 to Kentucky by the 1810 census. Snowden enlisted in the Kentucky Mounted Militia on Oct. 30, 1812, may have fought behind the cotton bales with Gen. Andrew Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans in 1815, and apparently remained in Louisiana after that. On Oct. 28, 1828, a year after the

Sandbar Fight, Snowden married Susanna Simmons of Opelousas, St. Landry Parish, near the plantation of Rezin Bowie Sr., father of John, Rezin and James.

Dr. Batson did some additional digging and discovered that when Jesse Clifft left for Texas—probably with James Bowie and Caiaphas Ham in 1830—Snowden acquired Clifft's land and his blacksmith shop. Hence, Snowden could have been in Louisiana before the Sandbar Fight, indeed, as early as 1820, when the *Red River Herald* claimed the bowie knife was made. And he might well have been a blacksmith, since he acquired the shop of another smith.

Sandbar Knife Origins

Most historians today credit Rezin Bowie with the origin of the bowie knife. Rezin claimed to have made the first bowie knife himself. However, his descendants maintained that he supervised Clifft in the making of it. Apparently, Rezin also claimed to have made the knife he gave Capt. Thomas Tunstall (for more on it, see page 114 of the March *BLADE®*), though he actually must have commissioned James Black or some other skilled artisan to construct it.

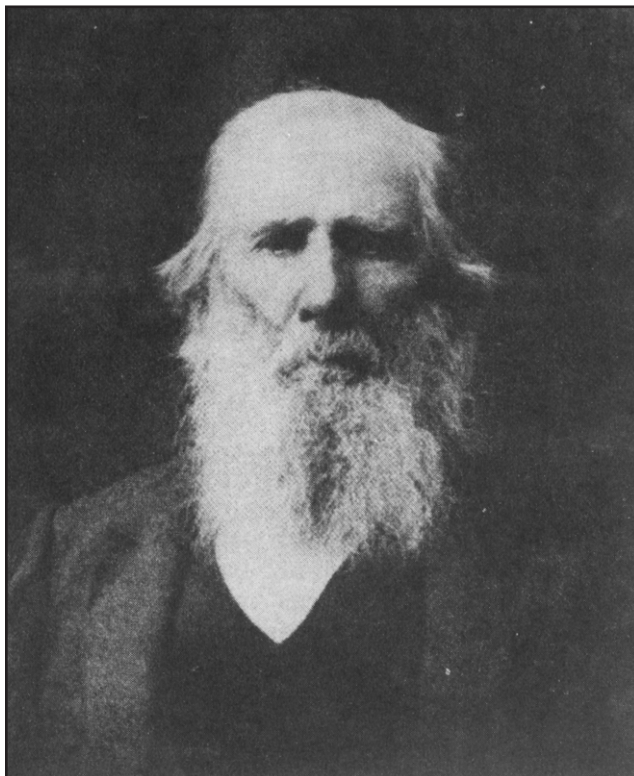
Certainly, Rezin promoted the knife his brother made famous, but did Rezin really originate the bowie knife or was he just one of many taking credit for the knife's origin?

Of the many published origins of the bowie knife, only three were provided by those—Rezin Bowie, John Bowie and Caiaphas Ham—who actually knew James Bowie. Of the three, John Bowie and Ham supported Snowden as the knifemaker. Significantly, neither Rezin, John Bowie nor Ham were at the Sandbar Fight to see which knife James Bowie actually used.

However, common sense also favors Snowden. For Rezin to have provided his brother a knife—after the 1826 incident when Norris Wright shot James but before the 1827 Sandbar Fight—assumes one of two possibilities: Either James did not own a knife, or Rezin possessed a knife superior to the one that James already had.

James Bowie was 30 years old in 1826.

What finally happened to the Sandbar Knife? Noah Smithwick—shown here at 91—claimed he saw it a year later at his blacksmith shop in San Felipe, Texas. "[It] was an ordinary affair with a plain wooden handle, but when Bowie recovered from his wound he had the precious blade polished and set into an ivory handle; the scabbard also being silver mounted," Smithwick wrote. "The blade was about ten inches long and two broad at the widest part."



Like Rezin, he had been raised in the bayous and backwoods of Louisiana. He had worked and played outdoors. He had hunted deer and bear and other game to supply food for the table, and he had to clean his prey. James certainly would have owned a hunting knife, and he would have used it virtually every day of his life. Where was his own knife when he went to the Sandbar Fight?

James might well have chosen his brother's knife over his own if Rezin's knife had matched the fearsome reputation described by P.Q.—a massive 12-inch blade with a sharpened concave clip-point so it could cut both ways “like a two-edged sword” (see page 39, February *BLADE*).

However, Rezin himself described his knife not as a weapon but as a rather ordinary hunting knife. Despite the assertions of his descendants, Rezin's presentation knives don't necessarily support the claim that Rezin's hunting knife even had a guard. Most historians assume it did not.

**“Dr. James Batson
has verified the
existence of
Lovell H. Snowden.”
—the author**

The most probable scenario is that Jesse Clifft made Rezin's hunting knife, and Lovell Snowden made the knife James used in the Sandbar Fight. James carried his own knife into the “chance medley.” Rezin, meanwhile, was a promoter who seemed to display a penchant for taking credit for what others had done. The Sandbar Fight made the bowie knife famous, and Rezin capitalized on that fame.

Where To Sandbar Knife?

What finally happened to the Sandbar Knife? Noah Smithwick claimed he saw it a year later at his blacksmith shop in San Felipe, Texas. He wrote:

The blood christened weapon ... was an ordinary affair with a plain wooden handle, but when Bowie recovered from his wound he had the precious blade polished and set into an ivory handle; the scabbard also being silver mounted. Not wishing to degrade it by ordinary use, he brought the knife to me in San Felipe to have a duplicate made. The blade was about ten inches long and two broad at the widest part.

Writing in 1890, Rezin's grandson, John S. Moore, reported that the original bowie made by Clifft was “lost five years ago by a cousin of mine—R. Bowie Moore.

He still has the scabbard.” Rezin's great-grandson, Dr. J. Moore Soniat, remembered:

The weapon became an heirloom, but was unfortunately lost by a grandson of Rezin's when his vehicle turned over while crossing the muddy Bayou Pierre in Mississippi and even now lies at the bottom of the stream. The silver tip of the scabbard is still in possession of descendants who reside in New Orleans.

Caiaphas Ham attributed an equally mundane fate to the knife Snowden forged:

On a trip to Goliad [James Bowie] killed a deer and butchered it. He left his knife on the ground and was miles away before he missed it. On his return he failed to find it. He supposed a wolf had found it and packed it off on account of the blood on it.

On the other hand, perhaps Bowie did give the knife to an actor, or perhaps he carried it into the Alamo, and after the battle it was smuggled out by a nurse.

When it comes to anything Bowie, the only danger is to be too absolute.

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SHARPER THINGS

The knives with the German-made blades spanned four decades and appeared in a selection of models

The regrinding of the Randall Solingen blades made them resemble bayonets somewhat. The tang was no longer 7/8-inch wide or 4 3/4 inches in length. Instead, it was ground down to a half-inch wide and cut off at 3 inches long.

Randall Solingens: A Capsule History

*By Pete Hamilton
Past Randall Shop Foreman*

1: What can you tell me about the Randall Solingen knives? (M.M., Maitland, Florida)

Mr. Randall and Erich Christians developed the Randall Solingen blades in the early 1950's. The first Solingen blades were made of carbon steel. They had three holes in the tang for mounting the handle material and a fourth hole for a lanyard.

Two knives fashioned with the blades appeared in the Randall catalog in '54. They were pictured with white tenite



handles, though the photo caption indicated that the blades were Randall Made. Below the caption was a "special attention section" for the Model 14 and 15 stating the availability of the factory-made Solingen blades. The special section appeared through the 12th printing of the catalog.

The picture of the Model 14 and 15 changed to showing the Randall blades in the 14th catalog printing in 1961. The Solingen special feature section remained as it was in the previous catalogs.

In the 16th catalog printing ('64), the Solingen-blade model was shown with the handle slabs riveted in place and no hilt. Also at that time, a new model was added—the Model 18 Survival. It, too, was available with a Solingen factory blade. By the 25th catalog printing in '79, Solingen blades for the Model 14, 15 and 18 were no longer available.

In the early '80s, Randall offered a new design made from the remaining Solingen blades. The knife was called the Solingen Fighter and was available in 5 1/2- and 7 1/2-inch blades. They could be ordered but weren't listed in the catalog.

The design—or should I say the regrinding—of the blades made them look somewhat like a bayonet. The tang was no longer 7/8-inch wide or 4 3/4 inches in length. Instead, it was ground down to a half-inch wide and cut off at 3 inches long. Regrinding the tang made it possible to use most of the handle material and handle shape. The Solingen regrinding continued until '95, at which time all the Solingen blades were used up.

2: When were Grigg knives available from Randall Made Knives, and who was or is "Grigg"? (a frequently asked question)

The first Randall Solingen blades were made of carbon steel. They had three holes in the tang for mounting the handle material. The fourth hole was for a lanyard. (Hamilton photo)

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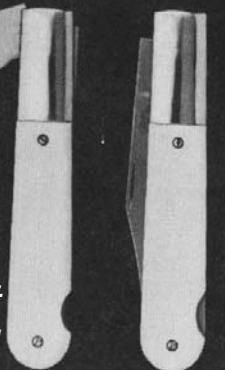
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An employee of Randall Made Knives until 1967, Walt Grigg made a granddaddy barlow

in '68. He had fliers printed touting his creation and asked Mr. Randall if he would insert them in the mail-out Randall catalogs. Mr. Randall agreed. Here's how the insert appeared in the catalog. Notice how the flier calls the knife a "Grandfather Barlow." (image courtesy the author)



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Walt Grigg was an employee of Randall Made Knives until 1967. In '68, he made a granddaddy barlow pocketknife and approached Mr. Randall about it. (In fact, Grigg presented one of the knives to Mr. Randall.) Grigg had fliers touting the barlow printed and asked Mr. Randall if it would be possible to insert them in the mail-out Randall catalogs. Mr. Randall

agreed. The insert (see illustration above) was available until '88, when the Grigg knife was no longer produced. The knives came with a Johnson leather pouch sheath. At the same time of the granddaddy barlow, Grigg also made smaller versions of the pocketknife.

If you have one of these knives and need some work done on it, Grigg may be

able to repair it or tell you who can. For more information contact Walt Grigg, 1303 Stetson, Dept. BL5, Orlando, FL 32804 (407) 841-2677.

3: What can you tell me about the use of the etched trademarks on Randall knives? (a frequently asked question)

In the early years, if any part of the "T/M"—the trademark sign—was removed during the crafting of the knife, the knife was shipped anyway. (As Mr. Randall noted at the time, it showed that the knife was handmade). As the world of knives expanded and finishing progressed, the trademark became a very important part of the knife. If part of the trademark were damaged in production and had to be replaced, it was less costly to etch it with acid than the alternative, which would have required taking the knife apart, heat treating the blade again, etc. The knives with etched trademarks were then shipped to customers. This sometimes caused problems. The customer would compare his etched-trademark knife to a non-etched one and question why the etched trademark was so much less prominent in appearance, for instance.

After many knives had to be returned due to customer complaints, it was decided to no longer ship knives with etched trademarks. Any knife that had to have an etched trademark would be sold at the Randall shop and a new knife was made in its place. By buying the knives in the shop, it gave the customer the chance to see the knife up close, and, if there were any questions about it, he or she could ask. There are many knives with the etched trademarks out there, so if you have any questions about them, just ask me.

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been called the GTR? (name and address n/a)

The GTR was designed by Gary T. Randall—thus the *GTR*—in 1975. There is no model number assigned to the knife. It has a 3 1/2-inch blade of 3/16-inch-stock stainless steel, a stag handle and either a brass or nickel-silver hilt. Gary and some of his friends used this one design for many years before it was added to the non-catalog insert list in '94, thus making it an item that could be ordered. It's still on the insert list.

Aussie Surprise

I recently received a phone-call order from Australia for one of my new books, *The Randall Chronicles*. The book was sent and I thought that was the end of it. I was shocked to begin with, receiving a call from Australia, but in a few days I received another call from Australia. The caller introduced himself as Michael Wickham and he began his lengthy praise of the book. Well, my head was getting bigger by the minute. It's always good to hear that what you have done is appreciated. At the end of the call, I was on cloud nine.

A few days later, a package arrived from Mr. Wickham. It seems that he's a part-time knifemaker and the package contained a knife he had made. What a shock! The damascus blade is 3 3/4 inches long with a nickel-silver guard, ivory spacer, stag handle and an ivory butt. He also made the accompanying sheath.

I know that there are many knifemakers in Australia but Mr. Wickham must be at the top of the line. His knife exhibits great workmanship and looks. It makes a wonderful addition to my collection. Thank you very much, Mr. Wickham!

A Limit Of Two

According to the office of Randall Made Knives, knife orders were being booked for July 2006 as *BLADE*® was going to press. From this time forward, individuals will be limited to a maximum of two knives per order every other month. The new policy applies to individuals only and not to Randall dealers. For more information contact Randall Made Knives, attn: G. Randall, Dept. BL5, POB 1988, Orlando, FL 32802-1988 (407) 855-8075 www.randallknives.com.

Send your questions to the author c/o *BLADE*®, 700 E. State, Iola, WI 54990 fax (715) 445-4087 blademagazine@krause.com, or contact the author at (850) 539-4320 fax (850) 539-4992. For more information on how to have the authenticity of your Randall knife verified, contact the author.

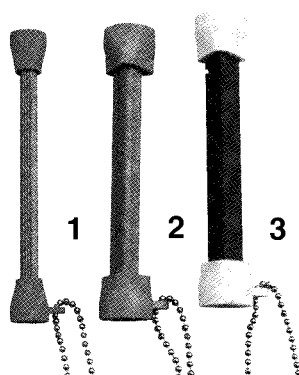
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knifemaker showcase

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Neil McKee

With a welding and fabrication background, Neil McKee not only makes knives, but also knifemaking tools, such as grinders, vises and air hammers. "As an outdoorsman, I've been involved with knives since I was 5 years old," he says. "I had concerns

about the quality of knives bought over the counter and their durability when the need arose. By studying steel and heat treatment, I can now build tough knives that give me confidence while in the bush." The Grass Fire Bowie (left) sports a 5160 blade, a steel guard and an elk-leg-bone handle. McKee's list price: \$500. His address: Dept. BL5, 674 Porter Hill Rd., Stevensville, MT 59870 (360) 825-6464. (BladeGallery.com photo)



Ron Welling

In the tradition and style of the late William Scagel is how Ron Welling describes the knives he makes. In addition to being a fan of Scagel's, Welling is also a Professional Bull Riders (PBR) enthusiast. "As a long-time fan and former rodeo participant, I became interested in the PBR," he says. "To share my enthusiasm for the sport, last May I gave Adriano Moraes, the only two-time world champion bull rider, a 6-inch hunter (above) with a custom leather sheath." Welling's list price for a similar piece: \$650. His address: Dept. BL5, 15446 Lake Ave., Grand Haven, MI 49417 (616) 846-2274. (Weyer photo)



Joe Smith

"It's working hot steel that I like, and if I didn't have to grind or make handles, I wouldn't," knifemaker Joe Smith admits. A past member of a Scottish living history group, Smith got into bladesmithing in 1988 when he needed an authentic 17th-century Scottish dirk. The Lone Star Bowie (right) features an 8-inch, handforged, carbon-steel blade with a hand-rubbed finish, a forged-steel guard and a mesquite-burl handle. Smith's list price for a similar piece: \$400. His address: Dept. BL5, POB 840, Bisbee, AZ 85603 (520) 432-5197 gow1954@hotmail.com.



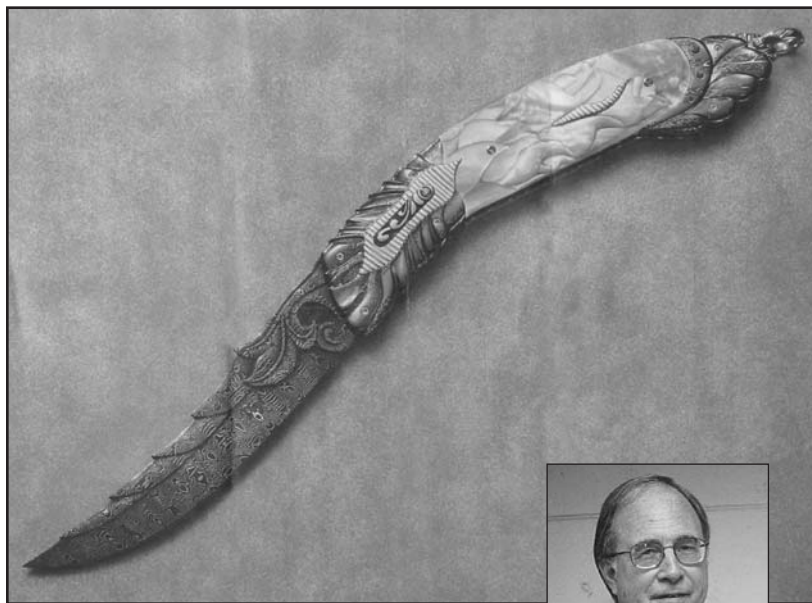
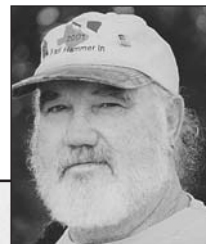
Aad van Rijswijk

In traveling to gun and knife shows, Aad van Rijswijk realized he shared a passion for knives with many other people. He says it took a few years to develop his own knifemaking style, resulting in collector-grade interframe folders with engraved handle frames and ATS-34 or stainless-damascus blades. He also builds half and full integrals, daggers and razor sets. "Being a knifemaker is working with beautiful materials, designing new models, and traveling and meeting kind people," he states. "There is a good fellowship and atmosphere among knifemakers." The interframe folder (above, right) parades a stainless-damascus blade, a mammoth-ivory handle inlay, and engraving in three colors of gold. His list price: n/a. His address: Dept. BL5, Arij Koplaan 16-B, 3132 AA Vlaardingen, The Netherlands (+31) 10-2343227 www.avrknives.com.



Jerry Lairson Sr.

"I have made everything from spears to tomahawks," Jerry Lairson Sr. relates. "I think designing knives is the most fun. I have so many knife-design ideas, I will never be able to make them all. Of the actual building process, forging is the most fun, but nothing compares with the self-satisfaction I get when I hold up a finished knife and say, 'There it is, out of my head and into my hand.'" Lairson forges his own damascus, as was the case for the blued-mosaic-damascus blade of the Teak Tanto (below), featuring a teak handle and sheath, and nickel-silver end caps and throat. Lairson's list price: \$950. His address: Dept. BL5, HC 68, Box 970, Ringold, OK 74754 (580) 876-3426 bladesmt@brightok.net.



Donald Vogt

Donald Vogt says that, in order to understand knifemaking, a novice must talk to veterans in the field. "I've had help from Florida knifemakers Bill King, Dick Atkinson, Rex Robinson, Roger Gamble, Joe Hytovick and Dewey Harris," he credits. "They invited me to their shops and showed me anything I wanted to know about knifemaking." Vogt builds folding art knives and carves the handles, bolsters and blades using small files, chisels and sandpaper. The latch-release folder (above) sports a carved Devin Thomas damascus blade, a carved mother-of-pearl handle, fileworked titanium liners and Robert Eggerling mosaic-damascus bolsters. Vogt's list price: n/a. His address: Dept. BL5, 9007 Hogans Bend, Tampa, FL 33647 (813) 973-3245. (PointSeven photo)



Inside World Knife Collecting & Investing EDGES[®]

No. 93

Toothpicks—Texas Style!



The Texas toothpick at bottom was made by Imperial in the 1920s. Above it to the right is a red celluloid KA-BAR with bird's-eye rivets and no bolsters. To the left of it is a mottled-celluloid Imperial model and a rare glitterstripe Kutmaster. The one at top was made by Wards, and the candystripe to the left of it was made by Imperial. The piece at the top left is unmarked. (White photo)

The super-sized folding knife and its offshoot, the fish knife, are hot

By Richard D. White

The popular American clasp knife known as the *Texas toothpick* has recently enjoyed a resurgence of interest among antique pocketknife collectors. Small wonder for a knife that was extremely popular in its day and which bears one of the most recognizable of knife names.

Even so, the origins of the commonly associated designation of *Texas toothpick* are up for debate. One theory behind the name lies in the image of a Texan cleaning his teeth with the large, slender knife. Knowing that "everything is bigger in Texas," the picture of a Texan using the "giant toothpick" as a dental aid is certainly a probable origin for the appellation.

"With its size, shape and colors, the Texas toothpick presented a memorable picture." —the author

Another possible derivation may relate to a fighting knife with the similar name of *Arkansas toothpick*. Sporting a narrow, slender blade, the Arkansas toothpick may have provided inspiration to its pocketknife brethren from the adjoining Longhorn State. In addition, the pocketknife had several other famous nicknames, thanks in part to its Southern origins.

Picture, if you will, a typical rural, 1920s Saturday

night dance. Sporting young men who frequented such affairs, dressed in dark, pinstripe suits and spats, long watch chains dangling from their pockets, seem to have favored the knife. Standing in small groups outside the dance hall, with the ever-present cigarettes dangling precariously from their lips, they would repeatedly snap their *Saturday Evening Special* knives open and closed while surveying the proceedings.

Meanwhile, the knife was given other nicknames in connection with such events, including *Tango Knife*, *Dance Knife* and *Society Knife*. It was perhaps the most popular pocketknife style of the period among young men. And, given the proclivity of some young males toward altercations, the knives were sometimes called *Chasers*, *Ticklers* or certain other nicknames to indicate their possible use in a fight.

It's rumored that some modified the blade of the super-sized pocketknife so that the point would stick up above the bolster, or they added a wooden matchstick under the blade to hold it up. With such a modification, the projecting blade end could be hooked against a pants seam or belt loop, causing it to flip open when brushed rapidly against the pants. In this way, it deployed more like a switchblade.

With its size, shape and colors, the Texas toothpick presented a memorable picture. Because of its large, flat-sided surface area, the knife's handle provided a palette on which cutlery manufacturers

could showcase their latest vivid hues of celluloid, with candystripe celluloid being a favorite and appearing on toothpicks from Hibbard-Spencer-Bartlett, Boker, Case, Pal Blade, Remington, Robeson, Valley Forge, Wards, Kutmaster, Imperial, KA-BAR, Camillus, Western States and others.

In addition to candystripe, Christmas tree was another popular celluloid for toothpicks. Other in-demand celluloids included "end of day," goldstone, imitation onyx, yellow and an assortment of mottled-and-swirled blues, blacks and grays. Some toothpicks were handled in jigged bone, though they are very rare and rather costly. Remington made several jigged-bone toothpicks, the most famous being the R-

1613 with the Bullet shield inset in the handle. Remington also made other jigged-bone, one-blade models—the R-953 and R-933—as did Winchester, Queen, Shap-

leigh Diamond Edge, Robeson, Maher & Grosh, New York Knife Co., Case (in the 61098 designation) and others. Case even produced a toothpick with a photograph of a model enveloped by a clear celluloid covering. Called "high art," such knives are extremely rare.

KA-BAR and Case made toothpicks with no bolsters, having celluloid sides running from top to bottom on the knife. Recognizing the need to achieve some strength where the blade attaches to the knife, KA-BAR designed a very fancy nickel-silver bolster that extended about a

"Some toothpicks were handled in jigged bone, though they are very rare and rather costly."

—the author



The Texas toothpick made an outstanding fish knife, including the two Camillus "Fisherman's Luck" models with yellow celluloid at upper left. Below them is a jigged-black Kentbrand with a "hook-remover" bottom bolster. At lower right is a Hoffritz fish knife and above it, an Ulster model. (White photo)

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EDGES (CONT.)



(Above) This absolutely mint KA-BAR T29 model in yellow celluloid would be the centerpiece of any fish knife collection. Notice the "Endorsed by Zane Grey" etching on the master blade. The

endorsement by the famous author and world-record-holding fisherman adds greatly to the overall value of this special knife. (White photo)

(Below) Toothpicks come in two sizes, the largest at over 5 inches and the smallest at only 4 inches, both in the closed positions. Examples include, from bottom, a KA-BAR with tortoise cellu-

loid, a Christmas-tree-celluloid L.L. Bean, a candystripe celluloid Imperial, and an IKCO candystripe piece. (White photo)



third of the way down the side of the handle. The specialty bolsters have often been called *barn-door hinges* because of their striking similarity to actual barn-door hinges.

Whopper Fish Knives

Because the slender toothpick originally was advertised as "the perfect knife for hunters, sportsmen, and for cleaning game and fish," it was soon adapted for the latter activity. For such duties, a second back-spring and blade were added to the basic design. The blade was a combination pattern designed to serve as a fish-scale skinner, hook degorger and can opener. With the addition of a small hook-sharpening hone inserted in the celluloid on the front portion of the handle, the knife became an instant success. The resulting *fish knives* were produced by such companies as Western Boulder, KA-BAR, Case and Camillus. L.L. Bean fish knives can also be found, most of which were made by Western.

In almost all cases, the knives were handled in bright yellow celluloid, and later in yellow plastic. The reason for the yellow was fairly obvious. If dropped into the water, the knife could be easily spotted as a result of the bright color. Some two-blade fish knives were handled in red celluloid and jigged black and are considerably rarer

than their yellow cousins.

One of the most desirable of the yellow, two-blade fish knives bears the etching "endorsed by Zane Grey" on the master blade. Grey, a famous novelist, held several world-record fishing titles and was asked by KA-BAR to endorse a special fish knife. The knives are quite rare and very desirable.

In recent years, fishing collectibles in general have increased rapidly in value. Though fishing rods, reels and creels traditionally have been sought by serious collectors, fish knives of all sorts are being snatched up, too. The emphasis for some collectors is on the very rare fly-fishing knives made by KA-BAR, Case and several Sheffield firms, but many other collectors search diligently for the two-blade yellow fishing knives as well. Consequently, the lowly fish knife has taken its proud place among its historical counterpart, the Texas toothpick.

Conclusion

Owing to the wide variety of brand names available and the various handle materials, the Texas toothpick is a very desirable and sought-after collectible. With the renewed interest in its offshoot, the fish knife, these pieces will continue to provide a strong emphasis in any collection.



Texas Toothpick & Fish Knife Value Guide*

Knife	Value
Camillus, candystripe, 5"	\$75-\$85
Imperial, candystripe, 5"	\$75-\$85
Robeson, candystripe, 5"	\$120-\$135
Robeson, jigged bone, 5"	\$175-\$200
Case Tested XX, Christmas tree, barn door	\$600
Case Bradford, Pa., goldstone, 5"	\$375
Case Tested XX, Rogers bone, 5"	\$375-\$400
Remington, R955, candystripe, 5"	\$350
Remington, R953, jigged bone, flat blade, no shield	\$300-\$350
Remington, R953, jigged bone, round Bullet shield	\$700-\$750
Pal, candystripe, 5"	\$110-\$130
Queen Steel, Rogers bone, "Big Q" stamp	\$115-\$125
Queen Steel, winterbottom bone, 5"	\$100-\$115
New York Knife, jigged bone, 5"	\$190-\$250
Winchester, jigged bone, 5"	\$185-\$220
Western Boulder, 2 bl., yellow w/hone	\$75-\$85
L.L. Bean, 2 bl., yellow w/hone	\$80-\$90
KA-BAR, 2 bl., yellow, 5"	\$90-\$100
KA-BAR, 2 bl., black jigged bone, 5"	\$95-\$125
Camillus, 2 bl., yellow "Fisherman's Luck"	\$55-\$65
Case 32095, XX stamp, yellow w/hone	\$75-\$85
Case 32095, 1970 10 dot, yellow w/hone	\$65-\$75

*All values are the author's for pocketknives in mint or near-mint condition. Knives in these categories must have full blades with excellent snap—"walk and talk"—upon both opening and closing. Handle material must be free from cracks, chips or other defects. Other potential defects must be non-existent as well. All handles are celluloid unless noted as bone. All listings with two blades and/or yellow handles are fish knives.

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joe Flournoy

By Mike Haskew

Joe Flournoy learned to make damascus from Jerry Fisk and has become so adept at it that he will teach a class on the subject at the Texarkana College/Bill Moran School of Bladesmithing April 21-25. The blade steel is 15N20 and 1084 on his ivory bowie. Overall length: 12 1/4 inches. (PointSeven photo)

Joe Flournoy has a nosy neighbor but doesn't mind. Tim Foster would say the same thing. The two award-winning ABS master smiths live only three miles apart in El Dorado, Arkansas. They share information, ideas, energy and even materials.

Since making his first knife in 1974, Flournoy (pronounced FLOOR-noy) has captured more than a dozen high-profile honors, including the Bill Moran Award and the 2001 BLADEhandmade™ Award for Best Fighter. While he's recognized as

one of the best at forging steel, he's also forged fast friendships.

Foster, for one, tips his hat to Flournoy for helping him get started. "Some of the best advice he ever gave me was to test every one of my knives and know how they perform before they go to the customer. He also said not to let just one thing stand out on a knife. It should be the overall flow of the knife that gets your attention and then you pick out the details," Tim related. "That's the best advice anybody could have given me."

Never a full-time maker, Flournoy

profile in steel

profile in steel

works as a construction supervisor for an oil refinery. Nonetheless, he still has managed to help others learn and grow in the craft while achieving excellence himself. Handforging his damascus in various patterns, he has a two-year backlog. His favorite handle material by far is desert ironwood, while he also uses curly maple and the occasional piece of stag on a special order. His sheaths are made by Kenny Rowe of Hope, Arkansas.

Joe enjoys the challenge of making folders and gradually is making more and more of them, spurred by demand. About 40 percent of his output is folders. He usually takes from seven to nine knives to

a show and sells them all. The reasons for his popularity are obvious.

"Everybody talks about the fit and finish," he offered, "and I try to price my knives where people can afford them and not keep going up and up. I'd rather make the knives and sell them than bring them home." His list prices for his wood-handle fighters are around \$750. The same knife in stag is about \$850. In damascus and stag, the list price is around \$950.

Having done stock removal for 12 years, Flournoy began forging after attending the first class at the Texarkana College/Bill Moran School Of Bladesmithing in the late 1980s. "I helped

Bill Moran unpack his tools," Joe laughed. "I watched Moran, Don Hastings and Bill Bagwell work with that coal fire, and Moran put a blade in a vise and let me bend it. I said, 'My knives—which were stock removal at the time—won't do that.' That isn't to degrade stock removal, but in my opinion forging makes a

Joe Flournoy

Dept. BL5, 5750 Lisbon
El Dorado, AR 71730
(870) 863-7208
flournoy@ipa.net

Specialties Forges utility fixed blades and folders, including hunters, bowies, camp knives and daggers among the former, and locking liners among the latter; roughly 40 percent of his output is folders

Blade Steels 1084, 5160 and 15N20 in straight high-carbon and damascus; ATS-34 on some folders

Handles A wide range of natural materials

Miscellaneous Won the 2001 BLADE-handmade™ Award for Best Fighter; will teach classes on damascus at the Texarkana College/Bill Moran School of Bladesmithing April 21-25

Sheaths Leather models made by Kenny Rowe

Mark Surname and "MS"—for his rating of ABS master smith—in script

Forty percent of Flournoy's production is folders. An example is this jiggered redbone locking liner with titanium bolsters and ATS-34 blade steel. Closed length: ~5 inches. (PointSeven photo)

Below: Early on, Flournoy patterned his knives on those of the late Clyde Fischer (left), here with Joe at a late 1980s BLADE Show.





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*Below: Flournoy copped the 2001
BLADEhandmade™ Award for
Best Fighter for this symmetri-
cal stag beauty in 1084 steel.
Overall length: 12 inches.
(PointSeven photo)*

better knife.”

One of the main reasons for that better knife, he says, is the balance and feel of the piece in your hand. His handforged damascus consists mainly of 1084 and 15N20 in as few as 40 or as many as 384 layers, depending on the pattern. Giving back to his avocation, Joe teaches at the Moran School. He has conducted classes on handles and guards and will teach damascus April 21-25. (For more information contact the ABS, attn: J. DuBois, Dept. BL5, POB 1481, Cypress, TX 77410-1481 (281) 225-9159 spqjan1@aol.com.)

“I’ve really never been around any other maker without learning something,” Joe commented. “I even learn from my students, and teaching is very gratifying if you have somebody that wants to learn.”

Flournoy asserts that he taught Foster quite a bit, but now the shoe is on the other foot and the teacher is learning from his former pupil. Joe also learned to make damascus in the shop of his friend, Jerry Fisk.

“Joe is one of the standards in the industry,” Fisk said. “He has won more awards for fighters and combat knives than anyone I know. He knows what he’s doing in both design and the forging of blades. He treats clients well and delivers a good knife fairly priced.

“I do remember him making that first damascus billet in my shop. Every once in

a while, Joe would scream out in pain. I was working in another section of the shop at the time and I would just holler at Joe and say, ‘Don’t do it that way next

time.’ He’s a quick learner.”

Fisk had to come clean about one experience with Flournoy. “He snores really loud,” Jerry grinned. “Joe and I traveled to shows together for years. One time when it was just Joe and I, he started snoring, so I got up, went over and kissed

The Flournoy File

Favorite Knives Sheffield bowies.

Long-Range Project “I’m working to catch up on orders right now, and I don’t think I ever will get caught up. Every time I make one, I sell one, but I’m not complaining.”

Favorite Knife Web Sites Les Robertson’s robertsoncutlery.com, Bruce Voyles’ jbrucevoyles.com, and Larry Conley’s knifeart.com.

The Knife He Carries “I carry one of my old LinerLocks™ that I made several years ago and a Camillus two-blade congress.”

*Flournoy captures the pure
essence of ladder-pattern
damascus in this sprawling
bark-ivory bowie. Overall
length: 16 7/8 inches. (Point-
Seven photo)*





Joe enjoys the challenge of making folders and gradually is making more and more of them, spurred by demand. His one-hand locking liner boasts a sheep-horn handle. (Point-Seven photo)

him. He stayed up all night afraid to go to sleep again. I got a good night's rest!"

Joe's wife, Gwen, is well known in her own right, collecting miniature handmade bowies and traveling to various shows as an ABS merchandiser. She worked on her husband for some time before he agreed to make a miniature to add to her collection. "She's very supportive and, in fact, if I lay around too much, she'll tell me, 'Look, big boy, you've got bills to pay; you need to make some knives.' The miniature I made for her is a damascus bowie with an ivory handle and a nickel-silver guard, and it was tough to make because all my equipment is [designed for work on standard-size knives]. I'm not planning on making another one," he said.

While his knives are much in demand, Joe makes them to be used. With pride, he tells the story of a customer who used a Flourney knife to clean four deer and it would still shave the hair off his arm.

The work ethic in Joe's blades probably comes from his original interest in knife-making. "I saw a knife my dad had made at the plant where he worked, and I had never seen a handmade knife before," he remembered. "It struck me as the neatest thing. I was using a knife that I had bought one day, and the edge wrinkled like an accordion. Then, I remembered my dad's knife, which was made out of 52100 steel, and I started talking to him.

"My bible was the book *Knives And Knifemakers* by B.R. Hughes. There was also an article by Bob Dozier that I studied religiously. Later, I got to know Clyde Fischer, and I tried to make my knives look just like his."

Nearly 30 years after his first knife-making foray, Joe Flourney has a style, a look and a reputation all his own. His work has a distinctive character, and the knife industry is better for it.

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STRANGER

In The Knife

The author almost doesn't come back from his latest dream of Excalibur

By Ed Fowler
BLADE® field editor

"I felt the knife's edge with my fingers; it was infinitely sharp, but a manner of sharpness I had never felt before."

The early morning was punctuated by a light rain and low clouds. A strangely warm mist saturated the scene as my Labrador retrievers and I walked along the bank of the Wind River. We passed through an especially heavy bank of mist, and then the scene brightened into a calmness I had never experienced before. Both my dogs and I sensed that this time was somehow different.

Through the mist, I noticed the most remarkable piece of driftwood I've ever seen laying by the water. It was about 9 feet long and its contours twisted and turned, displaying a fantastic continuum of shapes and forms. The surface, polished to a satin finish in a manner that would make any who could see it smile, revealed grain patterns from bird's-eye maple to fiddleback swirls of black, brown, tan and red that were a wonder to behold. I knelt beside her, retrieving my spectacles from my shirt pocket for closer examination. The exotic beauty of the wood was enchanting. I ran my fingers over the surface and, like

magic, hundreds of friendly shapes caressed my hands.

I tested the wood's hardness by trying to crease it with my thumbnail. Though the surface seemed to acquiesce, my nail left no mark. I tapped on the surface with a small stone; again, no mark and, for that matter, little sound. I estimated the weight of the driftwood at about 150 pounds. Still, as I lifted it from the ground, it seemed weightless. I knew that I had found the ideal handle material that would dance in perfect harmony between man and knife.

The Confrontation

As I stood admiring my prize, one of my Labradors, Abraham, gave a low growl to announce we had company. I noticed a man walking toward me through the mist. His manner was not friendly nor was he the kind of man with whom I would choose to spend time. His attention was on the branch I held in my hands. He reached under his belt and withdrew a tanto-style knife, complete with a black cord wrap securing what appeared to be a large precious stone gazing at me from the center of the handle.

First, he pointed the knife at me as if he intended to deflect any action on my part. He reached for the far end of the driftwood and, in one smooth, effortless motion, lopped about 3 feet off the end. I watched as he made the cut and the knife seemed to come alive, sending a wave of harmonic vibration throughout the length of the wood. Obviously, there was as much or more to his knife as there was to the driftwood I held in my hands. I knew that they were one, of the same spirit, a concert in function and beauty meant to dance in a perfect harmony man knows only in his dreams.

Again pointing the knife menacingly in my direction, the stranger said, "I will just take this portion for my share." For a brief second I felt I should yield, and then I decided *not* without a fight! I reached under my shirt with my right hand as if I were holding the .357 magnum that at times travels with me. It wasn't there this time but he didn't know that. He stared at me, his eyes hardening. Suddenly, he relented and said, "OK." Sensing a lack of purpose in his manner, I said, "We'll just trade the knife for the wood." Our eyes locked for long seconds. Was either of us ready to die for the sake of the moment? Sensing the hostile nature of the situation, Abraham and the rest of my Willow Bow Labradors uttered long, low growls, adding emphasis to my bluff. Then, thankfully, the

stranger shrugged and laid the knife on the sand of the riverbank. Gaining ground as I was, I suggested that he lay the sheath next to it. He did so and stood, his eyes filled with disdain, then departed in the direction from which he had come. The mist swallowed all but his memory.

In awe, I looked at the knife and sheath in the sand. The steel in the blade seemed to be alive somehow. The sheath was made of beautiful tan leather, sewn with a golden thread into a diamond pattern of intertwined serpents. The throat and tip were gold. I reached down and picked them up, the knife in my right hand, sheath in my left. As the knife filled my hand, the blade changed shape to the mild drop-point style I love so dearly. The black cord around the handle was no longer there; in its place was some of the beautiful handle material unmistakably similar to the driftwood. I felt the knife's edge with my fingers; it was infinitely sharp, but a manner of sharpness I had never felt before.

I picked up another piece of driftwood

to test the knife's cutting ability. The keen edge produced shavings so fine, they nearly floated in the air. I tried cutting across the grain and the stick immediately became two. Never had I experienced an edge so keen or a handle as friendly. I couldn't wait to return to my shop to further test the abilities

of the blade, knowing that all would be beyond my expectations.

I placed the knife in her sheath and slid it inside my belt. When I picked up the driftwood, I noticed the branch was again as long as it had been before the stranger had cut off his piece. With the branch in hand and the knife in its sheath under my belt, we headed toward the shop.

Saved By The Bell

Somewhere far away I could hear a bell ringing. From out of my euphoria, the ring became more insistent. I turned my head and saw the red numbers on my alarm clock. It was 5:20 a.m. Beside the alarm was that damn phone, ringing, ringing! A neighbor inquiring about a stray bull talked as the dream faded.

I lost my dream of Excalibur but will not forsake my quest. One day she will be mine. Lovely Nemo, Lady of the Lake, please don't forget me!

Along with the author, BLADE® wishes you a happy April Fools Day.

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PUTTING TACTICAL TO THE

By David E. Steele

BLADE® sent me three tactical straight knives—the Gerber Silver Trident, Mercworx Archangel and Bobby Branton boot knife—of different sizes and construction to test. In addition to the usual rope- and wood-cutting tests, I decided to stress the point of the knives' blades, using Kevlar as the test medium.

Standard police "IIA" Kevlar armor—which is impervious to most centerfire pistol bullets—is not "blade proof." In prison environments and places where stabbing assaults on police occur, reinforcement materials are added to the officers' Kevlar armor. Government and factory stab tests on body armor have been conducted in the USA and England, sometimes with live "attackers" armed with daggers.

Having familiarized myself with such an armor test, I decided it also would be a good informal gauge of the strength of blade tips. Though IIA armor can be penetrated, it isn't easy to do so. I've found that an Arkansas-toothpick-style blade penetrates the Kevlar well, but, for other reasons, a knife with such a blade isn't preferred for military service.

It's interesting to note that, considering how ancient the knife is as both a tool and weapon, there's still not much science in its testing. Some manufacturers do research marketing more than product testing. One of the factories that tests its new designs is Cold Steel. Since Cold Steel is near my home, I asked Lynn Thompson if I could borrow his facilities for some simple tests over which I had complete control. He

agreed, so I had the use of 1-inch hanging rope, half-inch cutting rope, stacked cardboard and 1.5x5.5-inch cutting board. All the tests are easily duplicated by anyone and not limited to a laboratory setting.

**"While a 4-inch
recurve blade
won't chop like
a 9-inch kukri,
it will skin,
slice and slash."**

—the author

Gerber Silver Trident

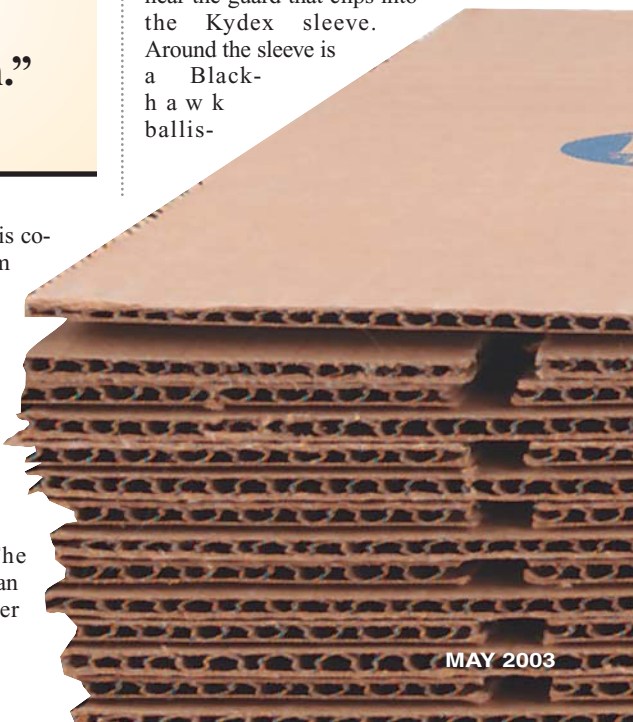
Gerber's new Silver Trident (ST) is co-designed by decorated Vietnam SEAL, Chief James "Patches" Watson, and custom knifemaker William Harsey.

Watson wanted a blade about an inch shorter than the one on a Ka-Bar fighting/utility knife. At 6 1/8 inches, the ST's spear-point blade has chisel-tip serrations on the spine for cutting cable, and standard serrations on the edge for cutting line. The 154CM stainless steel blade has an oxide coating for extra saltwater

corrosion resistance.

The double guard is made of Hytrel, which is somewhat more shock absorbent than metal. The handle is also molded of two different versions of the synthetic, with a hard inner core and a softer, stippled contact surface. Watson wanted a comfortable, non-slip handle, easy to orient in the dark or underwater, and Harsey provided it. He also provided his standard twin-finger grooves and a Loveless-style palm swell. A stainless steel pommel provides a pounding surface for setting booby traps, signaling underwater, etc. The blade has an indent near the guard that clips into the Kydex sleeve.

Around the sleeve is a Black-hawk ballis-



As part of his tests, the author stressed the tip of each knife's blade. The tip of the Mercworx Archangel blade easily penetrated the IIA Kevlar and 3 inches into stacked cardboard, as recreated here.

See how three fixed blades survive the author's own special kind of drill

ALS TEST

tic nylon sheath, with a snap release and pocket for accessories, such as a sharpening stone or scout knife.

In my opinion, the ST is close to perfect, especially in handle design. A dive sheath may be available soon. I'd like to see blade options other than the standard M3 trench style, such as dagger or Mexican-bowie patterns.

The ST easily penetrated IIA Kevlar, as well as 3 inches of stacked cardboard, slowing when the serrations were engaged. It was the only knife of those tested that cut the 1-inch free-hanging manila rope, and it

cut 10 sections of half-inch rope before dulling. In 30 seconds, it chopped close to 3 inches into the 1.5x5.5-inch board. I was so pleased with the test results that I wouldn't hesitate to recommend the ST to soldiers embarking for the Middle East.

Mercworx Archangel

The first thing I noticed about the Mercworx Archangel is how thick the blade is and how it retains the thickness through a full tang. The only attachments are black Micarta® handle slabs. Among other things, the blade is designed for prying in situations



knives at work

The Archangel has a slightly recurved, 6-inch, double-hollow-ground blade. The curve increases the usable cutting surface. Thanks to its hollow grind, the blade retains a .25-inch median thickness up to the tip for prying. The 154CM stainless steel blade has a Rockwell hardness of 58 Rc. MSRP: \$375.



The Bobby Branton boot knife chopped enough 1.5-inch board in 30 seconds to convince the author it could be used as a survival tool. More significantly, he said it cut 10 times through half-inch manila rope before it started to dull. The maker's list price: \$249.



where there's no suitable prying alternative.

The Archangel has a slightly recurved, double-hollow-ground blade that's 6 inches long. The recurve increases the usable cutting surface. Thanks to its hollow grind, the blade retains a .25-inch median thickness up to the tip for prying. The 154CM blade has a Rockwell hardness of 58 Rc.

The minimal double guard is integrally constructed for maximum strength, the top tapered to prevent thumb jamming when the saber grip is employed. The "lemon-drop" handle design provides a fast, sure grip, whether in the saber, hammer or icepick hand holds. The Micarta slabs are smooth and contoured for a sure grip in wet or hurried conditions. Two holes accommodate thong attachment or lashing to a staff.

The Archangel is available in a nylon, zippered storage pouch, or a multi-directional nylon tactical sheath with a Kydex insert. The sheath can be attached to a belt, rucksack or for upper arm "African" carry.

If I were ordering this knife for myself, I would have the top guard ground off so I could carry it close to my wrist, and I would have the choil enlarged to accommodate my first finger, especially for when I wear gloves. The choil would provide a more secure grip when a thong isn't available. I

used a thong in testing to prevent the knife from slipping during hard impact.

The basic quality of manufacture in both knife and sheath is excellent. The point easily penetrated the IIA Kevlar and poked 3 inches into stacked cardboard. The blade chopped a couple inches into the 1.5x5.5-inch board inside 30 seconds. However, it tended to wedge into rather than cut the rope. I called a Mercworx official and he said the knife had been shipped dull for safety reasons, the assumption being that it was for photos only. I'm reluctant to use

more than a ceramic stick to sharpen a test knife, since a grinding wheel wouldn't be available to the end user in the field.

Still, the Mercworx official has a legitimate concern about consumer safety. Manufacturers generally fall into two categories: Those

who ship knives at maximum sharpness and those who ship knives that aren't likely to injure the occasional customer who cannot resist running a thumb along the edge. I had Mercworx overnight another Archangel to me with maximum edge sharpness. It worked like a champ. I understand future models will offer partial serrations.

"If I were ordering this knife for myself, I would have the top guard ground off."

—the author

Branton Boot Knife

Bobby Branton's boot/belt/neck knife has a

4-inch recurved blade of CPM S30V stainless steel, with a black-canvas-Micarta-slab handle and Kydex sheath. Overall length: 8.25 inches. The handle has three hollow pins useful for thongs or survival-staff attachment. The friction-fit sheath has nine grommets and a belt lock.

Branton has been making knives since 1983, and the boot model is his third collaboration with veteran knifemaker Walter Brend. I've known Brend for a couple of decades and immediately recognized his first-finger-groove design in the knife's handle. Brend also does the heat treat and finish. The knife is available in increased numbers due to what some call "mid-tech"—the use of some parts made via CNC and other means assembled and finished in Branton's shop. The idea is to produce a Branton/Brend collaboration for a less expensive list price, about \$249 in this

case.

The boot knife is a scaled-down version of the pair's Merrill's Marauder kukri-influenced knife. While a 4-inch recurve blade won't chop like a 9-inch kukri, it will skin, slice and slash. It's also not designed as a sticker. Still, in my tests it penetrated the IIA body armor and 3.5 inches of stacked cardboard.

The Branton boot chopped enough 1.5-inch board in 30 seconds to convince me it could be used as a survival tool. More significantly, it cut 10 times through half-inch manila rope before it started to dull. Not bad! Overall, I was impressed at how this small, simple knife performed.

Conclusion

As always, I learned a lot from testing these knives. I didn't compare them to each other, since all were designed with different roles in mind. The same tests were used to give a general idea of each knife's capabilities. Each company or maker offers quality knives, and one set of tests shouldn't be taken as definitive. The idea is to see how close each knife, after consulting with the applicable maker or company, achieves its stated purpose.

For the contact information for the knives in the story, see "Where To Get 'Em" on page 98.

BLADE

The Gerber Silver Trident was the only knife of those tested by the author that cut the 1-inch free-hanging manila rope. It also cut 10 sections of half-inch rope before dulling. In 30 seconds, the author said it chopped close to 3 inches down into the 1.5x5.5-inch board. MSRP: \$339.



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profile in steel
profile in steel

NOW,

By Butch Winter

Tight tolerances and smooth fit are hallmarks of an Aaron Frederick folder. Here's a selection of his Dresser 3PS folders in CPM S30V stainless and a choice of ivories and mother-of-pearl. Check the flared damascus bolster on the wharnccliffe model second from bottom. That's a Timascus bolster on the folder third from top. (PointSeven photo)



That's Precision!



If you're into tight-fitting handmade folders by a maker with a bright present and an even brighter future, give Aaron Frederick's knives a look-see.

Though only 25, Aaron is no newcomer to the sharp scene. After making knives part time for a while, he started fashioning them full time when he left college. "I'd always liked knives and used them to hunt and to cut meat. In 1994, when I was 17, I was offered an opportunity to make a knife and really kind of just fell into the trade," he recalled. "The fourth knife I made I sold. And that's the way it's been ever since."

It might be more likely to "fall into the trade" if your father-in-law is John W. Smith, one of the premier knifemakers in the country, if not the world—and such is the case with Aaron.

"I learned everything from John with him standing over my shoulder mostly. That wasn't as easy as it sounds since he let me screw things up for myself first," Frederick said with a laugh. "I started breaking away from his designs about five years ago, but you can still see his influence in my knives. It's hard to get away from something that's right. I use every mechanism and action that John does, so my knives still work the same as his, they just look different. Some people say that John makes my knives. That's kind of stupid since why would he put my name on a knife and sell it for \$300 less than what he gets for his?"

During this interview, I mentioned to Aaron that I would be deer hunting over the weekend. He responded by sending me mug shots of himself to use with this story and of a trophy buck he had taken. "Though I prefer making folders primarily, I still make hunting knives every now and then, good ones for the job in my book since I use one on every deer I harvest. I have a hard time designing the high-end stuff that I know will never be used and wouldn't work right in the field," he

reflected. "But, on the other hand, I enjoy making the fancy Persian designs the most. I can't explain it but that's the way it is."

When Aaron first began making knives, he used ATS-34 and 440C stainless blade steels. Now he uses CPM S30V stainless and his own forged damascus, a combination of 15N20, 1084 and nickel.

The first 50 knives he made were engraved "AWF." Next came an "AWF" etch, followed by a smaller, cursive "AWF." Then he used "A. Frederick." His current mark is a shield with "AF" inside, the letters back-to-back. The result is a fertile field for someone wanting to collect knives bearing all the Frederick markings.

The 25-year-old maker says that he made less than 50 knives a year before he went full time. In 2002, he made about 150. "I get them done just 20 here and 20 there. I do my own heat treat and damascus, and damascus takes up a lot of time. To me," he added, "the lock is the most important part of making a knife"—an unusual observation, since most knifemakers say it's the steel, heat treat or grind that's most significant.

Aaron sent along two of his folders for me to examine. One he calls a "tactical" but would fit the bill for just about anything. Aaron named it his "Derringer" model because he copied the handle from a .22-caliber derringer pistol. The knife sports titanium bolsters and liners, carbon-fiber scales, a thumb stud for opening the 2 3/4-inch S30V blade, and allen-head-bolt construction. A pocket clip is included. Closed

length is about 4 1/4 inches. I mentioned to Aaron that I wouldn't mind using the knife to clean a deer. "That's not what it's designed for," he noted, "but it's a good working blade and about the right size."

The other knife he sent me is a real showpiece. Notice I said *showpiece*, not *showy piece*. It's almost the same size as his "Derringer" model, though the handle is a bit longer. If you really look,



Richly fileworked back-springs further enhance the overall feel and look of Aaron's damascus folders. The Persian piece (bottom) is his model of choice. (Point-Seven photo)

profile in steel

Aaron Frederick

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Blade Steels CPM S30V stainless and his own forged damascus, a combination of 15N20, 1084 and nickel; also has used ATS-34 and 440C stainless

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Embellishments Fileworked backsprings, anodized titanium and more

Mark A shield with "AF" inside, the letters back-to-back

Price Ranges \$300-\$4,000

Top Pair: Frederick's Persian folder (bottom) boasts a damascus blade with an unusual pattern highlighted by the gold color of the nickel in the blade. The same holds true for the bolsters and butt of the top piece. He arrived at the pattern by twisting two bars from two directions. The handles are mother-of-pearl and ivory. (PointSeven photo)

Bottom Pair: Fossil ivory, mother-of-pearl, gold inlay and damascus showcase two Frederick autos. The John W. Smith influence on the bottom piece is unmistakable. (PointSeven photo)



it's easy to tell the knives were constructed by the same maker thanks to the similar shape of handle, blade, placement of pins, etc. From there, figure in damascus bolsters, mother-of-pearl scales secured by gold screws, gold-anodized titanium liners, and a fileworked, sculpted stainless-steel back spacer. There's also a gold thumb stud on the CPM S30V blade, which is a full 3 inches long and of a slender spear-point design that affords very little sweep to the belly. Closed length: ~4 3/8 inches.

The very first place I look when I examine a handmade folder, or any folder for that matter, is where the blade butts against the backspring or back spacer. If the joint is clean and straight, it indicates that the knife was assembled with care. It takes careful examination to even *find* the joint on this particular Frederick knife. Now, *that's* precision! The blend of materials, colors and textures presents an aura of elegance without ostentation. To say this is a super attractive knife is the understatement of the year.

When asked what's next on his agenda, Aaron replied, "I'm always trying to find something new and design something that's easy to use." He added that Columbia River Knife & Tool was developing four of his designs as *BLADE*® was going to press. He said the designs may be ready by the *BLADE* Show June 13-15 at the Cobb Galleria Centre in Atlanta. He's also developing a frame-lock design with a Carson flipper, several of which he took to the Chesapeake Knife Show this past December. He said he sold them all.

What tips does he have for a prospective knifemaker? "I'd advise anyone interested in really learning how to make knives to go to a maker's shop," he responded. "I think a knifemaking school would help but there's no way to learn everything that you need to know in a school. You can't remember everything that's presented. I had to ask over and over on some things. In a school, who do you ask after you get home, try what you're supposed to have learned and have problems?"

Aaron has a well-equipped shop, including a Burr King variable speed grinder, Baldor buffer, band saw, Craftsman drill press, hydraulic surface grinder, micro lathe, disc sander and knee mill. "I still use equipment in John's shop," he admitted, "such as the forge. He lives only about seven minutes away, so, except for the necessary tools we both use all the time, there's no reason for me to have everything he has."

Frederick is a probationary member of The Knifemakers' Guild. His acceptance into the Guild, from this writer's perspective, is a foregone conclusion. He just needs to serve out the required time and voting membership is all his.

BLADE

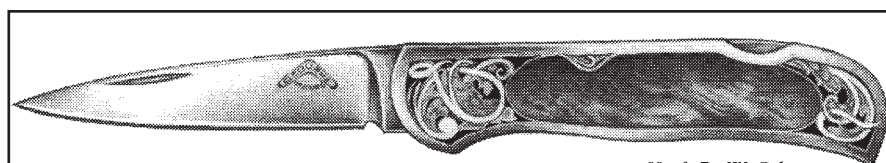
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Like Father, Like Son

Tony Bose, among the world's elite makers of multi-blade folders, has teamed with his son, Reese, to fashion a super limited-edition of Remington Bullet trapper repros, each sporting Tony's mark on one of the blades and Reese's mark on the other.

According to knife purveyor and multi-blade specialist Roy Fazalare, who commissioned the project, it's the first time the Boses have collaborated on a knife.

Dubbed the "Like Father, Like Son" series, the folders are available in a run of 10 only, serial numbered 0—the proto-

type—through No. 9. The R1123 pattern features traditional muskrat and spey blades, both of hand-rubbed ATS-34 stainless steel. The famed slip-joint pattern—perhaps Remington's most recognizable—features half stops for each blade. The handle is brown jigged bone, jigged by the makers. Closed length: 4 5/8 inches.

For more information contact Roy Fazalare, Dept. BL5, POB 663, Somis, CA 93066 (818) 879-6161 OurFaz@aol.com.

BLADE

The first-ever collaboration between Tony and Reese Bose bears both their marks

Spec Check

Knife Remington R1123 Bullet trapper repro

Makers Tony and Reese Bose

Blade Steel Hand-rubbed ATS-34

Blade Patterns Muskrat and spey

Handle Brown jigged bone, jigged by the Boses

Closed Length 4 5/8"

Miscellaneous First-ever collaboration between the Boses, with Tony's mark on one blade and Reese's on the other; super-limited edition of 10

The repro of the R1123 Remington Bullet trapper by Tony and Reese Bose is the first-ever collaboration between the father-and-son team.

The piece bears the Boses' special touch, right down to their jigging of the brown bone handle. (Point-Seven photo)

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