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Our international membership is happily involved with "Anything that goes 'cut'!"

September 2023

## How To Sharpen An Axe

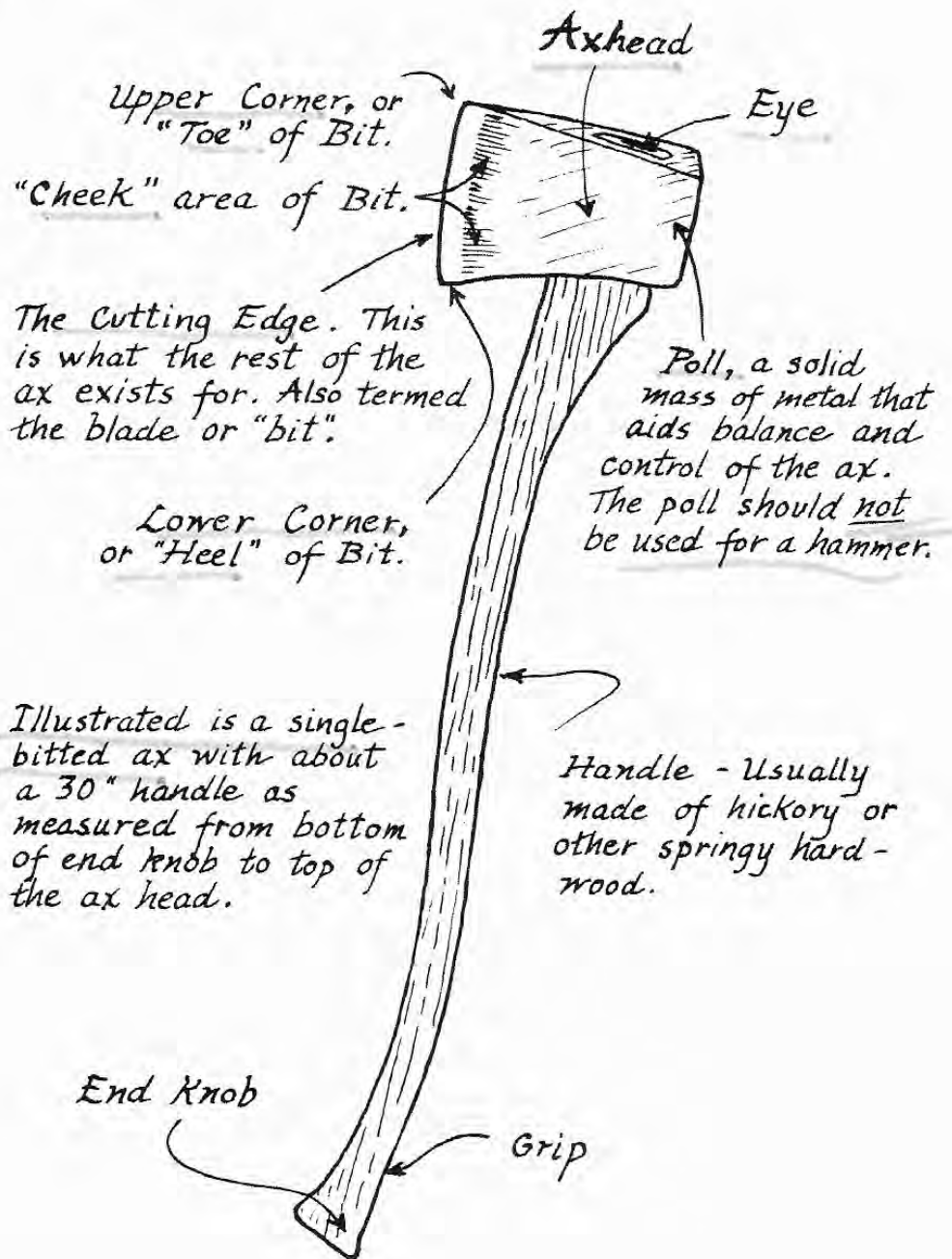
Gary Dekorte

The ax is usually used to clear an area so that we can use a chainsaw safely, and it is also used to remove limbs from felled trees. In bygone days, a strong, skillful axman could cut and stack two cords of wood in a day. Bronze axes more than 3,500 years old have been unearthed from ancient Ur in modern Iraq. A double-bitted ax found in Crete dates to 2000-1700 B.C. Generally, a new ax will have a bit that is too thick. When sharpening an ax, the slower hand tools make less chance of ruining the job.

The modern felling ax usually has a single sharpened edge, with a poll opposite the cutting edge and a handle with a curve. A lighter ax such as a 3-4 pounder is not only easier to swing, but is more accurate in the swing. Control, and not power, is the secret of chopping wood with an ax.

The double-bitted ax has a blade edge on each side of the ax head, and its history dates to ancient Egypt. Usually, one bit is thinner and sharper and used for felling; the opposite side is used for limbing where we encounter incredibly dense knots that need a coarser blade bevel. The double-bitted ax

## Ax Nomenclature



has a straight handle and is surprisingly more accurate to use. The double-bitted ax could have a field replacement of the handle if it broke, not so with the curved handle of the single bit ax.

A 10" or a 12" mill bastard file will do the job of thinning the cheek area of a new ax. Do not allow the file to reach the actual cutting edge, lift the file for the return stroke so as not to dull the file. Be careful to maintain the curvature of the ax head and not create flat surfaces that would make the ax head bind while chopping. The cheek area of the ax head is about an inch or so back from the edge. The corners are inherently less strong, they should be left just slightly thicker.

A round "hockey puck" style sharpening

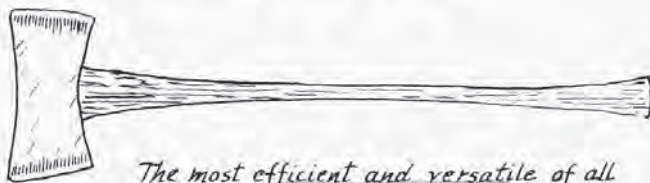
stone is used to sharpen the edge of the ax; it has a coarse side and a fine side. The stone is used in a circular motion, the coarse side first, scouring the surfaces of the cheek area that you reduced with the file. I prefer the newer diamond stones which are used dry. When the bit is even on both sides, the fine grit is used to rub out the marks from the coarse grit stone side. The smoother the bit, the less friction there will be, and the deeper the ax will cut. Next run the fine grit directly along the outer rim of the cutting edge at a slight angle to the edge on both sides.

The ax blade, just like a freshly sharpened knife blade, will typically have a feather-edge or burr. The cure for the burr is the strop. A strop can be made from a strip

of real leather, not bonded leather. A two-inch width would be ideal, maybe about 24 inches or longer. I prefer to glue the strop to a piece of wood so that I can have better control. I lightly oil the strop leather and rub in fine polishing compound. In stropping, we drag the bit backward toward yourself along the surface of the strop. The angle of the bit to the strop should be about 35 to 40 degrees. Being something of a safety nut, I recommend that your ax have a sheath, to save much sharpening time and prevent injuries. ↙

## The Double-Bitted Ax

Always straight-handled, it is two axes in one.



*The most efficient and versatile of all axes, it is also the most dangerous ax! You must not leave the double-bitted ax exposed so that somebody (perhaps you) will be hurt.*

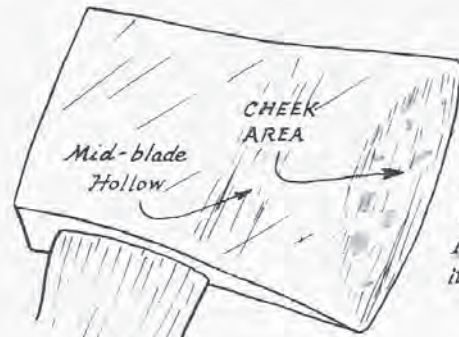


While working, safeguard the double-bitted ax:



## Sharpening the Ax

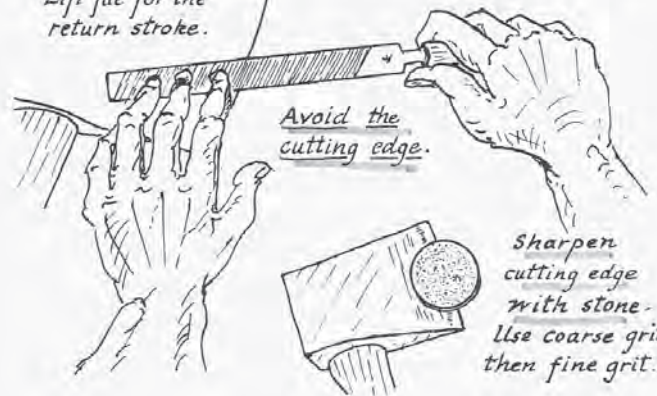
with file and stone is the most reliable system.



*With most new axes, the cheek area is too thick. Thin it with a hand file.*

*PUSH HARD, down & away from yourself.*

*Lift file for the return stroke.*



*Avoid the cutting edge.*

*Sharpen cutting edge with stone. Use coarse grit, then fine grit.*

# Swan Song

elayne and dennis



For three years the Pandemic held its grip on the Oregon Knife Club. We felt that to maintain our organization we would need to publish *Knewslettters* each month. No summer hiatus.

It was our hope to continue the support of our organization; so that, when the Pandemic released its death grip on us, we could have Shows again. Like we have had for so many years. Membership hovered at over a thousand then, but time reduced that membership to under 500. We paid penalties for mailings under 500.

When the announcement was made to have a 2023 April Show, we were ecstatic. It was short lived. Table applications by deadline December 15, 2022 were disheartening. So much so that we could envision a room that would be less than half full (or half empty) with tables. In January and February Elayne and I started an email and calling campaign

to previous table-holders to coax the late responders to attend. The excuses were many. We improvised, all in the spirit of making this happen. Not only happen but be a success. We, encouraged in spite of the excuses, offered tables to these individuals at spectacular offerings. To those who had signed up for a single table, we encouraged two tables at a significant bargain offer.

It was easy to note that the three years of Pandemic, added to the no Shows for three years, had been a very substantial financial and mental hit. We needed to evaluate our finances before we could accept payments for 2024 membership and Show



tables. Once all the bills were paid, which usually takes several months, it was easy to see that once insurance was paid and deposits for room rentals paid, we had no monies for a December Show much less for the April 2024 Show.

The Board met, with the facts laid out and the consensus was that there might be some hope for the April Show. But as the designated Prophet of Doom (ibid), I do not see this happening. Table- holder applications



were dismal before; and without the two drum beaters, I do not see that it will be a go or a successful go..

As of this *Knewslettter*, Elayne and

I have tendered our resignations on several fronts. We have reached the level of maturity where it gets more than difficult to carry on like we have in the past. Near 50 years is enuff, and our health issues have become a concern. We will maintain our positions on the Board until voted out or asked to leave. This will be the last *Knewslettter* put out by us. This will be the end of our co-ordination and orchestration of the OKCA Shows.

We will be rather selective on answering our phone and will be hard pressed to explain beyond what is written here. The Board is fully aware and sympathetic to our plight.

*Editors note:*

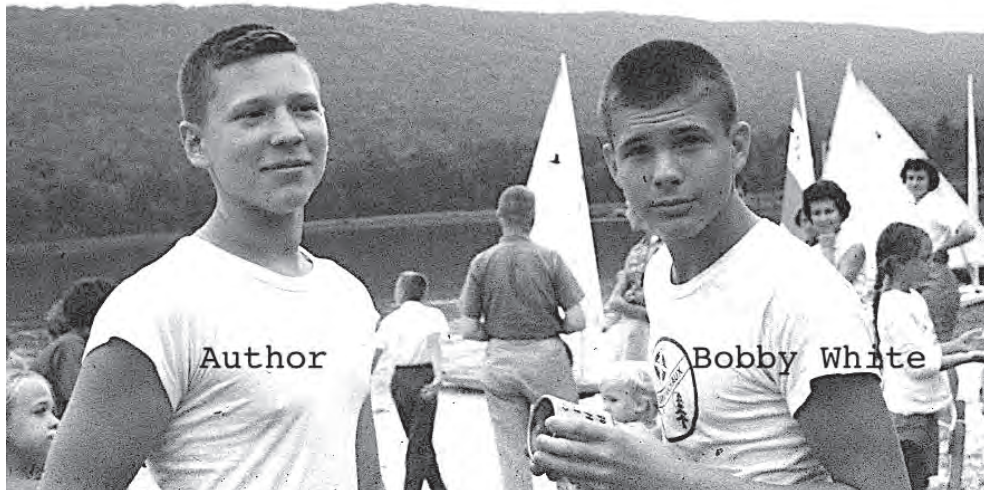
*A swan song is the final performance of an actor, singer, composer, poet, or the like. According to folklore, swans sing most beautifully before they die, and hence this phrase came to be used to describe someone that was leaving in style.* 🦢

# My Most Treasured knife

Michael Yoh

If you are reading this, you are most likely a knife collector or a knife accumulator. I'm not sure which I am. I collect vintage red, white and blue knives; but I accumulate a lot of different knives. I don't have many cheap knives, nor do I have many high-end knives. I have some good knives: Bark River, North Woods, Ruana, a Randall, a Chris Reeve among others. Most of my knives are using knives. What if I had to pick out my most cherished knife? It wouldn't be any of these.

My most prized knife would come from the category of knives I own with a personal history attached to them, going back through my family or to my childhood. I'm lucky in that I have several knives that I either bought when I was pretty young, or that were passed on to me by a family member. What about my grandfather's railroad Cattaraugus jack pocketknife that he carried throughout his career as chief telegraph operator for the CVRR railroad in the early 1900s. It was lost and returned to me many years after he died. What about my father's pair of KaBar sheath knives he acquired on his return from WWII and spent many hours on his belt. Now they are on mine. Perhaps it would be my father-in-law's small Remington jack knife he received upon high school graduation, which he put into a drawer and never used (etching on blade is like new), and which he gave to me upon my release from eight days in a hospital. It is still new and in a display case.



I also have my wife's grandfather's Remington muskrat. These are all up there at the top, and they would definitely be the last knives I would ever part with. Hopefully, they will be handed down to my kids some day.

However, my most cherished knife is in my pocket at this moment. It is Case 6254 bone trapper. Besides having great personal sentiment, it also has a bit of a mystery attached

to it. My best friend, Bob White, and I graduated from high school in 1965. We both loved the outdoors, but he was the real deal. He once caught a live rattlesnake, put it in a canvas bag and carried it around tied to his belt. We spent a lot of our childhood in the mountains where both our families owned cabins. I went on to a four year college, he went for a two year forestry degree. In 1967, I had a college draft



*Continued on page 5*

*My Most Treasured knife*

*continued from page 4*

deferment, but his draft number came up. I remember we went to our local sporting goods store, and we each bought a Case pocketknife. He bought a Case Trapper in stag, and I bought the Case Trapper 6254 SSP in bone. Why I didn't buy the stag version also, I will never understand. We both decided to drill a hole in the rear bolster in our knives to accommodate a FOB; and we broke a lot of drill bits doing so but we prevailed. I certainly wasn't a knife collector back then, these were our everyday using knives. Bob went to Vietnam in the late fall of 1967; and during the Tet Offensive in spring of 1968, he was killed by a sniper while on perimeter patrol, just a few weeks before shipping out for back home. It was a devastating blow to everyone who knew him.

While his Case knife was returned with his personal items and went to his younger brother, I lost my Case Trapper around 1969. Gone forever, I figured. About nine to ten years later, maybe 1978-79, my father was mowing our backyard and found my knife in the ground. Thankfully, it had a stainless steel blade, so it survived fairly well. The bone was dried and faded, and the blades were grimy and pitted. I put a lot of effort into cleaning and restoring the knife. Though some pitting is evident, it looks pretty darn good for spending 9-10 years in the dirt. While cleaning it up, I decided to try my hand at jimping the back of the blades. They turned out pretty well.

I think you can see why this is my most valued knife. I pick it up and think back to my high school and college years, enjoying the outdoors

and mountains with my best friend. I think of its loss, and of my father finding it. I think of the time we spent customizing our trappers, putting our personal touches on them. I love the feel of it in my hand. It's also a heck of a knife. Both the clip and spay blades are ideal, and it holds a razor edge. It still has the walk and talk it had when new.

Now the mystery. I took it to our local Knife Club meeting a few years back and showed it to our local Case knife expert and collector, while telling him the story behind the knife. I called it a Case XX. He utterly shocked me when he said this knife is a ten dot knife, and it couldn't have been purchased in 1967. Upon close inspection, I do tend to see ten dots that are just visible. However, this is definitely the knife I bought in 1967. It has the hole in the rear bolster that I drilled for the FOB. It was recovered in my parents' backyard, where I undoubtedly lost it. It has never been re-bladed



or taken apart. What's the answer? Are those really ten dots that seem to be there below the USA on the tang? Was it a prototype blade that got put into the knife at the factory? I don't know. What I do know is that this is the knife I bought new in 1967, and it is a knife I will never part with. 📌

# The Mysterious Sgian Dubh

Tom McVey

The mysterious sgian dubh, now usually found in the stocking of a kilted person, was originally a basic utility knife that could double as a fighting weapon if need be. After all the “kiltie” probably also carried a dirk, a sword and/or a firearm. If the kiltie was an average Joe (or Angus), he probably had his sgian dubh secured somewhere in his garb. Some were carried in a sleeve pocket of their jacket; but as many couldn’t even afford a jacket, it could be secreted under a belt, within a fold of the kilt, etc. When accepting hospitality from another, a highlander would place any weapons being carried into plain site: such as a boot-top or stocking top. Handy, in plain sight and hospitable!

There are a lot of sgian dubhs out there, but they are not always suitable to wear when in kilt. The reason they are not suitable is first and foremost their size. Imagine trying to keep a Bowie knife size weapon in your sock! Even a Sykes-Fairbairn would be a challenge. So I’ll give you budding sgian dubh makers a couple of suggestions based on many years of use. We’ll go into blades, handles and sheaths.

Sgian dubh blades are often produced with a single edged, triangular shape with jimping along one side. This is what we’ve grown accustomed to seeing these days, but other shapes are found. I have one from the 1940s with a clipped blade. Size is more important than shape – aim for a blade length of about 3 to 3-1/2 inches. Much longer and you can be sizing yourself out of practical use. Remember, it goes

in the sock these days so keep it light. Second, we have the knife handle. It again should not be too large. Sure, a huge chunk of amber stag would look good but

remember size again. Six inches of amber stag on a three inch blade will look and feel wrong. Scale your handle to the blade – four or five inches of wood, bone, horn or such will be enough. You can go crazy carving interlace into your wood handle – it looks great if done right, and you could even add silver or brass studs for that special finish. Or you can use a good piece of stag or bull horn for your handle. I’ve always liked the staghorn sgian dubhs; but by the end of a long day of Highland Games, they can leave quite an impression – on your leg! By the way, the black handled sgiens, often with silver fittings, are the dress-up version for evening wear. At least in theory. The horn or brown-wood/brass sgiens are more for daywear – such as going to the Highland Games. Now, let’s look at the final element – the sheaths. Many fine sgian dubhs have been produced that just aren’t wearable in the socktop. A kydex sheath is a perfect example: how am I



supposed to put that in my hosetop? Yes, it protects the blade, but it just doesn’t work. You have made a beautiful knife, it’s the right size for my use so now make an elegant but lightweight leather sheath. It doesn’t even have to be fancy, because it will spend most of its life under wraps in my stocking.

A few parting notes. The back of the handle, the part that goes against the leg, should be relatively smooth for comfort. The oldest surviving sgian dubhs are primarily military presentation pieces and dating to the Victorian era. They follow the military styles and often are matching pieces to a presentation dirk. Older, plainer sgian dubhs are rare at best. But it makes sense that civilian sgiens would be plain and utilitarian. Not something that would get passed down as a keepsake, just used until it was used up.

Parting words might make a good motto: Keep it light, but make it sharp! 🗡️



# Survival Of The Fittest For Knives?

Jim Jordan

Bear with me, it really does tie into the subject of knives and edged tools.

Like many of you, I enjoy going to flea markets, garage sales and secondhand stores. Over the years I have noticed the quality of newer hand tools taking a slide into mediocrity, if not downright uselessness. Screwdrivers in particular have caught my eye (or ire). Most of the flat screwdrivers on the market today are almost one use objects, unless you buy the most expensive ones from Germany, Switzerland or Japan. The heat treating is usually poor, the design of the tip commonly has "gripping grooves" running across the face. Supposed to help hold it into the screw slot, but really ends up making stress risers across the working end of the tool. Put any real torque on the screw and pop, there goes the tip.

Looking at old (experienced) screwdrivers, you can see the worn edges, polished from years of toil. Most have a decent patina of light rust, handles are smoothed from the hands of mechanics twisting and turning thousands of times, over decades perhaps. Look closely at the surface and you can almost see the quality of the heat treatment. Most weren't chrome plated, yet they still shine. Sharp edges have been burnished, small chips on the corners might be there; but the ends can be cleaned up and continue to serve well for many more years. Wrenches, pliers etc have fallen on similar fates, not quite as clear, but still evident.

So how does this apply to the title of the article or to knives in general? My theory is that the old tools are valued today by true connoisseurs of handwork, as much for their quality

as for the nostalgia of using a tool that their grandfathers may have used. This theory also lends itself to the overall design of tools. (or Knives)

During the early twentieth century, there were many many patented tool designs that were meant to make working with them easier. Or cheaper to make. My favorite one is the area of adjustable and pipe wrenches. The number of different designs is huge. Most haven't stood the test of time. Yet you can still buy a "Crescent Wrench" or a typical pipe wrench of a standard design.

Those designs are survivors, they are still being made by the millions and bought daily. Certain tool companies will bring out a "new" tool that is just a copy of old and expired patents. I call ironic these "Improvements on perfection;" because the standard "Crescent Wrench" design has been proven to be a time tested winner. Any "improvements" usually just are gimmicks that will fade from the shelves with time.

The same goes for knife/sword/axe or other weapon designs. All the fantasy swords or mall ninja stuff will eventually be worthless. But, a good blade design with a working folding mechanism and made from quality materials will always be useful. The traditional types of swords, that have historical reasons for the shape and handle designs and have been battle



tested, will "outlive" the useless bells and whistles of poorly thought out ones.

That's why there will always be many more knives that survive with the good old traditional shapes. Better materials and proper heat treatment also come into play, poorly made blades, tools etc, will break, wear out or just plain get thrown out from frustration. The knives and tools that get passed down from father to son, to the grandchildren, will be the ones that win at "The Survival of The Fittest" game.

So if you want the knives you collect, or as a maker the ones you create, to stand the test of time and be passed down, research what has worked in the past and go after "perfection" in what you make.

Quality truly has a 'quality' that's hard to beat. 🙌



# Hannah Morgan

I'm 29 and started working with leather in 2015. I'm almost entirely self taught. I make all kinds of leather goods including bags, small accessories, jewelry, sheaths and holsters. Sheaths seemed to be a logical step in my work,

since I've been around knives and the OKCA since my knifemaker Dad joined when I was a little girl. My business is named Grey Leather Company after my grandfather, Grey. He passed away before I was born but was involved in the leather shoe and handbag business (on the business side of things) for

many years. I like to think we would've bonded over handmade leather goods and quality craftsmanship. I make sure everything I make is worthy of being stamped with his name before it leaves my work bench. Contact info - [greyleathercompany@gmail.com](mailto:greyleathercompany@gmail.com) - 541-515-0609. 







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**Downsizing two shops.** Tools, leg vises, goodies of all kinds, some blanked blades. Some steampunk stuff. Gene Martin. bladesmith@customknife.com

**After Covid,** Sally has come up with some new and unique mosaic pin designs. That includes 1/4", 3/16" and 1/8" stars. sally@customknife.com

**Commemorative** Bi-centennial knife, etched both sides of 6" blade. Man holding rifle side one - back side 2 bison. Wood handle 4-1/2". Presentation box. \$175.00 includes shipping. Or best offer. Meredith (503)970-7629 or mjenriquez@hotmail.com

**Three piece Beretta USA** folding knife set 2-1/2", 3-1/4", 4" folded. Stamped with Beretta logo, engraved script P. Beretta stamped #233. \$200.00 inc shipping. Or best offer. Meredith (503)970-7629 or menriquez@hotmail.com

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**For Sale:** Collection of Bronze Knives. Eight (8) pieces that include five (5) bronze daggers, a bronze Roman spear point, a Roman bronze friction folder and a bronze war axe head. These were featured in the April 2022 issue of the *Knewsletter*. I will throw in a bronze bracelet and some bronze Roman coins. \$2,500.00 for all. I also have a meteorite blade from Indonesia and a very early steel sword blade from England. Contact Dan @ Westlind@wwestsky.net

**WANTED to buy:** American made Bowie and dirk knives from the Civil War and earlier, plus fancy California knives and push daggers. Mark Zalesky (865)310-0576 (leave msg) or email [knifepub@gmail.com](mailto:knifepub@gmail.com)

**For Sale -** Vintage and other knives and axes for sale on eBay under MAYERI BOUTIQUE. Carbon steel, German and Japanese knives and more. Becky Pierce.

**Randall Made™ Knives,** A Timeline 'The Quick Reference Guide - 4th Edition. Created to provide collectors and enthusiasts of Randall knives with a handy lightweight guide, useful around the house or for taking to gun and knife shows. A quick reference guide covering notable characteristics of both the knives and sheaths. Printed on waterproof synthetic paper. Six panel double-sided 12-1/2" x 25" accordion folded chart style format. \$30.00 Check or M.O. payable to Blue Star Knives. PO Box 862, Bigfork MT 59911

**Wanted:** high grade minty pre 1940 three blade stock knives 3-1/2" to 4-1/2" closed, in unusual and rare brands. Call Jerry (360)253-0366 (PST).

**Ernst Bruckmann knives wanted.** Not the run-of-the-mill Bruckmann knives, please. What I'm after are the larger knives, multi-blade knives and unusual knives in all their various handle materials. Call Bob (604)538-6214 or email [crescentknifeworks@gmail.com](mailto:crescentknifeworks@gmail.com)

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**For Sale - Mint Randall** 50 year commemorative #257 - Call Jim (562)716-9857 or email [jpitt306@earthlink.net](mailto:jpitt306@earthlink.net)

**Custom Leather** for 43 years. Horsehide and brass nailed knife sheaths. (951)303-4666. Visit website [mountainmikecustomleather.com](http://mountainmikecustomleather.com).

**Wanted:** Sequine knives that are unusual, such as custom orders, gut hooks, or any other unusual models. Please email [jh5jh@aol.com](mailto:jh5jh@aol.com) with a picture attached or call (805)431-2222 and ask for Jack.

**Wanted:** Remington scout/utility knife with pioneer boys or highlander boy's shield or heroism shield. Email [jpitt306@earthlink.net](mailto:jpitt306@earthlink.net) or phone Jim (562)716-9857.

**Buying OKCA Club Knives** for my personal collection. I am also interested in Wayne Goddard, Ron Lake, Lonewolf (Pre Benchmade), and Spyderco Kopa knives. Call or email Jordan (310)386-4928 - [jgl321@aol.com](mailto:jgl321@aol.com) @ aol.com

**Wanted :** Western Wildlife Series etched knives as follows: 532 bear, 532 eagle, 521 eagle, 534 antelope. Will pay fair price for any. Call Martin (406)442-2783 leave message.

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**Wanted:** 2012 Case XX USA medium stockman #6318 PU CV jugged bone w/punch w/signature of Skip Lawrie. Nuno Sacramento (916)682-9305.

**For Sale:** Buck knives. Large consignment list available from Larry Oden. Typically have Buck standard production, limited edition, BCCI, Buck Custom and Yellow horse models. Email [loden402@gmail.com](mailto:loden402@gmail.com) or call (765)244-0614 8AM-8PM EST.

**Mosaic pins** and lanyard tubes by Sally. See at [www.customknife.com](http://www.customknife.com), email at [sally@customknife.com](mailto:sally@customknife.com). (541)846-6755.

**Blades and knifemaker supplies.** All blades are ground by Gene Martin. I also do custom grinding. See at [www.customknife.com](http://www.customknife.com), contact Gene at [bladesmith@customknife.com](mailto:bladesmith@customknife.com) or call (541)846-6755.

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**Useful reference books on blades.** Collectible knives, custom knives and knifemaking, military knives, swords, tools, and anything else that has an edge. Email for a list. Quality Blade Books C/O Rick Wagner P O Box 41854 Eugene OR 97404 (541)688-6899 or [wagner\\_r@pacinfo.com](mailto:wagner_r@pacinfo.com).

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**Knewsletter** by elayne & dennis

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**09/20/2023**

