

Sharper Edges

Fall 2003

The Texas Knifemakers and Collectors Association

"not just for knifemakers but for those who are "friends of knifemaking" - embellishers, leather crafters, collectors and purveyors, web designers.....everyone who has an interest in knives"

Meet a Board Member

Johnny Stout is a native Texan born in Alpine, Texas and raised in Uvalde, the Davis Mountains and Ft. Stockton. Before his tour of duty in Vietnam, he joined Southwestern Bell and then returned home safely in 1965 to work for them again until his retirement in December, 1991. Meanwhile, after seeing his first custom-built knife in 1983 he became so captivated by the art form that he allocated most of his spare time developing his skills as a knifemaker, encouraged by other knifemakers like Jim Moore, who as-

sisted Johnny in building his first knife, a fixed blade, in Jim's shop in Ft. Stockton. Knifemaking became Johnny's full-time passion and pursuit in early 1992. Another of Johnny's passions is sharing what he has learned with others, either one-on-one or at his biannual weekend-long Hammer-In & Knifemakers Rendezvous in September and January co-sponsored with Mastersmith, Harvey Dean, with their upcoming one to take place September 20/21, 2003. As a founding member of the TKCA, Johnny was

instrumental in setting up TKCA's knifemaker scholarships, as well as scholarships at the ABS School in Arkansas, where Johnny has also received training in various aspects of knifemaking. Johnny specializes in custom-built gentleman's folders. Anyone interested in learning more about knifemaking and collecting is invited to contact Johnny for more information.

Members Meeting Members

Many ideas have been passed around concerning members meeting members in one way or another. One member—don Halter—is organizing a get-together in the College Station area. Any members wanting to be involved as instructors or

just to attend contact Don at (979) 268-0880 or krag@kragaxe.com.

Johnny Stout's Hammer-In is Jan. 31 & Feb. 1, 2004 in New Braunfels, Texas. Contact Johnny at (830) 606-4067 or johnny@stoutknives.com.

We are also starting a regular column in the newsletter introducing the members to each other. Please fill out the questionnaire enclosed and return. Photos of work or yourself are also welcome. Have an idea for a get-together? Contact the TKCA newsletter. Contact info is in the newsletter.

Meet a Member—Wytse Sikkema

I grew up on the family farm in Frysland, a northern province of the Netherlands. When I was a kid, every boy and man would carry a pocket knife, all of them made in Solingen, Germany. I remember that from a very early age I was always interested in mechanical things, taking apart old clocks and my brother's toys, and trying to fit old knife blades to whittled handles.

I made a few knives before I came to Texas in 2000, but it was not easy, because tools, materials and fellow knifemakers were difficult to find in Holland. When we settled in Houston, I soon found out I lived very close to the Texas Knifemakers' Supply shop, and Jim Lemcke's support really helped me on my way. He also introduced me to the hammer-ins that Johnny Stout organizes, and most of my finer skills I have learned at these meetings. Going to the September hammer-in has become a yearly tradition for me, and I greatly appreciate meeting my knifemaking friends there.

I mostly make folding knives, and I use the stock-removal

method. I design all my knives on the computer first, then print them out and cut out the designs. I use a hacksaw to cut out the blades. Most of my knives are one-offs, because I like new designs, and I don't sell my knives. I use many different materials for the handles: desert ironwood, cocobolo, bone or kudu horn.

When we were in Alaska we found some good pieces of mammoth ivory, and I used some of that for one of my best knives. For the blades and springs I use mainly O1 steel, because I can heat treat it myself. I also like Thunderforged™ damascus and ATS34. For the bolsters I use nickel silver or damascus.

I don't have many tools in my workshop, just a bandsaw, drill press, belt grinder (Craftsman table model) and a small lathe. The lathe is very important for finishing the pins and other small jobs. I also use it for buffing and grinding. Another important tool is my Magicut™ file, which I use both for shaping metal and handle material. For an anvil I use a large square hammer head clamped in the vise.

My wife and I hope to be going back to Holland in a year or so. By that time I hope to have honed my skills, and also to have accumulated enough raw materials to keep me busy for a few years. I hope to start or join a knifemaking guild in Holland, and maybe we can organize our own hammer-ins there!

“I hope to start or join a knifemaking guild in Holland, and maybe we can organize our own hammer-ins there!”

We're on the Web!
www.tkca.org

Texas Legends of Knifemaking

This year's inductee into the TKCA Texas Legends Hall of Fame is Martin Pullen. Martin was a major contributor and founding member of the Texas Knifemakers and Collectors Association. His passing leaves a large void in Texas Knifemaking. He will be missed. We are still trying to find a location to display our



Texas Legends collection. Wytse Sikkema and Wally Pollock have contacted a Craft Hall in Houston for a possible display. For more information or to participate in the exhibit contact Wally or Wytse.

Bowie Knife History

By Joe A. Yeates

The Bowie Knife was named after James Bowie a famous knife fighter in the early 19th Century. He was born in Logan County, Kentucky in 1796 and moved to Louisiana at an early age. He grew to manhood in Louisiana where he was a land speculator, timber man and sometime slave trader. He moved to Texas in about 1828 which was a part of Mexico at that time and settled in San Antonio de Baxer. When the Texans rebelled against Mexican rule in 1835-36, Bowie was made a colonel in the Texas Militia. At the battle of the Alamo, William Travis commanded the regular army, Bowie commanded the Texican volunteer [militia] and Davy Crockett lead the Tennessee volunteers. They all died to a man on March 6, 1836 after holding off a Mexican army of up to 3000 men, which was under the command of General Santa Anna.

The general shape of the blades that bears Bowie's name is believed to have been around

for centuries. Bowies however provided for a 4" to 6" clipped point {false edge} and a cross guard that extended approximately 1" above the back of the blade and about 1" below the blade. The cross guard was to protect the users hand and the clipped point allowed an upward cut as well as downward slash without changing the knives position in ones hand. These modifications changed a hunting knife into a fighting weapon. The size of blade has been described as being between 10" and 13" long, about 2" wide, up to 3/8" thick and weighing about two pounds. The reasoning behind such a large knife was that during Bowie's time firearms were single shot powder and ball guns that were slow to reload. The knife was the main backup weapon as well as a very useful tool. No one knows exactly what Bowie's personal knife looked like as no photos or portraits of Bowie with the knife showing are known to exist. James Black a blacksmith in

Washington, Arkansas who was a well known cutler at that time claimed to have made the original knife that became known as the Bowie Knife in about 1830. He had developed a process for making steel that was very strong and held a fine edge, some say this process was Damascus steel, and was used in constructing Bowie's knife.

Bowie's skill with a knife and death at the Alamo in the face of overpowering military force insured that the Legend of Jim Bowie became forever sealed in American History, along with his knife which some Historians call "THE IRON MISTRESS".

“Bowie's skill with a knife and death at the Alamo in the face of overpowering military force insured that the Legend of Jim Bowie...”

Please Update Your Information

Many members have outdated information or incorrect information. Please contact the TKCA to be sure we have your information correct. Because the newsletters are usually mailed using bulk rate, we don't receive a forwarding address. You



can contact the TKCA at (817) 451-8243, FAX (817) 446-6982, e-mail tkca@tkca.org or mail P. O. Box 50711, Fort Worth, Texas 76105.

Many members are not receiving e-mail either.

There are a number of addresses that are coming back. If you have e-mail, just take a minute to send a note to the TKCA so your address can be recorded. If you've recently published a web site, send that address also.

Thank you.

THE ADVENTURES OF A METAL REMOVAL MAKER IN A FORGING WORLD

By Wally Pollock

In February I went to the ABS school at New Washington, Arkansas. I arrived at the state park about 3 p.m. and got set up in the bunkhouse -- very spartan. My bunkies were Pat from North Dakota, Dan from Utah, and Matt from Missouri. The first night we just got to know each other and learned to snore in harmony. Our instructor was Kevin Cashen, from up north -- Michigan, I think. He is a Mastersmith and an internationally-known swordmaker.



Day 1: We had an instructor demo on how to forge a blade. The students were then cut loose to forge their first knife of the two week course. My first blade was a small bowie, [this will show up later]. All in all, the first day was good and all the students made it through in fair shape. Some were sore from the hammer; some got burned; but I think all of us were happy we could move hot metal and make it conform to our particular vision.

Day 2: After Kevin got most of the grinders running, he gave a demo on how to grind a forged blade. I checked the milling machine and got it up and running. We forged most of the day. Some had an opportunity to

use the one coal forge that was working -- an interesting thing to see!

Day 3: More demos on grinding followed, as well as instruction on how to adjust a blade without any reference points; it is more difficult than using a piece of flat ground stock. We were learning to take a forged blade and follow a method to produce a fine knife. Since I haven't worked with a hammer for seven years, I was sore all over.

Day 4: We spent a lot of time in the classroom learning about temperature ranges and just what happens to steel at different levels of heat. I found the class very informative since a lot of what a bladesmith does is control what is going on inside the steel to produce a durable blade; if the temperature for forging is right, the metal moves like plastic; too hot, it burns; too cool and it won't shape properly.

Uncle Al invited the class to come over to the chili supper they have at his shop. In attendance were Jerry Fisk, R. Massey, Terry Primos, Mike Williams, and Kevin Cashen. They are all Mastersmiths. There were

about 20 people there. Paul Purkolos took his blade test for Journey-man. With five Mastersmiths in attendance, that takes some grit, but he passed. Congratulations!

Day 5: I ground the first blade I forged, heat-treated it and then used it for a demo. We broke the blade to see if I hardened and tempered it properly. Kevin said the grain structure was good enough to pass the test.

This first week of school was, for me, a lot of fun as I learned the reasons for what I have been doing for years. I think almost everyone took something from the class. We had people there that had never built a knife, and people like George Roth who is already a fine maker. In the next newsletter, I will tell about the test for passing the class and a few observations on the quality of the lesson plan.

"...I think all of us were happy we could move hot metal and make it conform to our particular vision."

"My Way..." by Don Robinson

Don Robinson, maker from Brownsville, TX has a new book out called,

"My Way. A Toolmaker's Method for Locating and Fitting the Lock and Detent on a Linnerlock® Folder". Very well put together book with many illustrations. Contact Don for more information or to order his



book.

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Board of Directors
Nominations

It's that time of year again. We will be electing 3 new members to the Board of Directors. Nominations will be taken until December 1, 2003. Ballots will be mailed out that week for the General Election. If you would like to nominate someone to the Board please send your nomination to: TKCA, P. O. Box 50711, Fort Worth, TX 76105 or call (817) 451-8243. You can also e-mail tkca@tkca.org.

Mission Statement

- ° Promote handmade knives and Texas knifemakers
- ° Increase public awareness of knifemakers, not as makers of weapons, but as skilled and versatile craftpersons producing high quality implements which happen to be knives
- ° Introduce handmade knives to more of the buying public and encourage the productive use and collection of handmade knives
- ° Provide, through newsletters and meetings, a forum for the exchange of techniques and ideas between all makers so we can all grow to our full potential in our craft

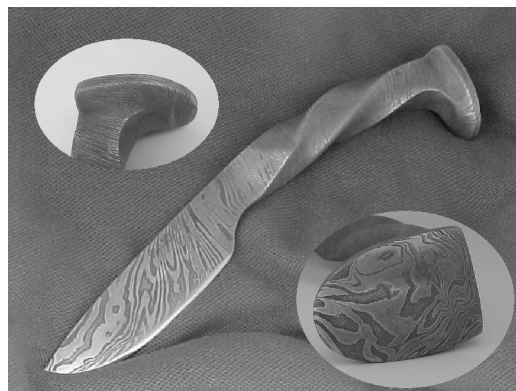
Board Of Directors

Bob Blasingame
Richard Epting
Pat Patterson
Bill Ruple
Wally Pollock
Johnny Stout

Officers

President - Jim Lemcke
Vice-President - Harvey Dean
Secretary/Treasurer - Gene Osborn

This damascus Railroad Spike is something you will not see anywhere else. As far as I know I am the only one to ever make one of these. Some people have made spike knives with damascus blades welded on but this entire knife is damascus. I first made the damascus steel, then I forged that steel into a railroad spike. Then I forged the railroad spike into the knife you see here.



Damascus Railroad Spike

Damascus Railroad Spike

By Bob Warner



Damascus Spike