



# BUCKAROO NEWS

Summer, 2010—Issue 2

## Buck Custom Knife Shop Operated For 13 Years



By John Foresman  
BCCI President

Did you know that Buck Knives, Inc. is the only large knife company that had a *custom* shop in their factory? The Buck Custom Shop was in operation from 1980 until 1993. What is a *custom* shop you ask? Before we answer that question, let's first explore how knives were made in the Buck Knives factory during that time. Production lines were set up very similar to the assembly lines that made cars. Each

employee had a specific task to perform. Each knife went through different steps performed by different employees.

The Buck Custom Shop was an enclosed area out on the factory floor where up to seven different knife makers made *custom knives*. A *custom* knife is a knife that is made by hand, usually by one maker. While the Buck Custom Shop was open, they hand made over 8,000 knives!

In our next issue, we'll explore the different categories of knives that Buck's custom knife makers crafted.

## YOUTH MEMBERS WILL ENJOY THE "SMOKY MOUNTAIN RENDEZVOUS"

The BCCI Smokey Mountain Rendezvous is scheduled for August 4-7. In addition to the banquets, informative seminars, Buck knife displays, door prizes, and many other great activities, the Club has scheduled a special seminar that will be especially helpful to our youth members.

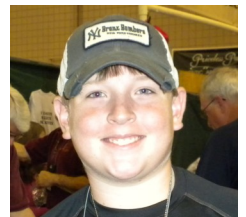
On Saturday morning, an informative seminar (tentatively called '*Buck Collecting 101*') will be presented. The goal of this seminar is to present many of the basics for beginning or relatively new collectors of Buck Knives. You will also have an opportunity to learn about (and see first hand) many of the various knives Buck has offered in the past. A really helpful part of

the seminar will zero in on the many terms Buck collectors use—terms that are specific to Buck collectors.

You will also be able to question many of our most knowledgeable Club members about collecting and displaying Buck knives.

See any of the recent regular BCCI newsletters for more details on this great event to be hosted by the National Knife Museum at Smoky Mountain Knife Works in Sevierville, Tennessee!

Meet Tyler Baird, Age 12  
From Alexandria, AL - New Youth Member



# Proper Sharpening Skills



Larry Oden, BCCI Vice President

## *Proper Method of Passing Your Knife*

A folding knife should be closed before it is passed to another person. However, if the blade is exposed (or if you are handling a fixed blade knife), the knife is passed handle first to the other person. The person passing the knife holds it blade up in his hand between his thumb and other fingers, keeping his hand away from the sharp edge.

When the receiving person has taken hold of the handle, he should say "thank you" and the person passing the knife should carefully relax his grip and remove his hand.

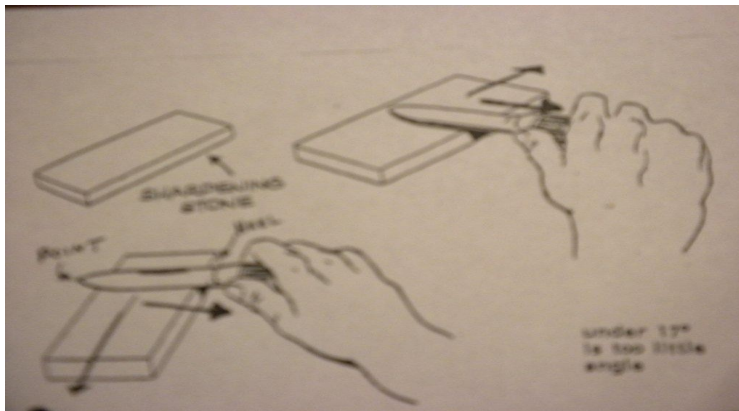
## *Proper Method of Knife Sharpening*

A sharp knife is a pleasure to use. It is also much safer because the user does not have to exert great force for the knife to cut. This makes it much less likely that the hand will slip and cause a cut.

There are numerous methods that may be used to sharpen a knife. It is my opinion that most people should know how to sharpen a knife on a stone. One never knows when this skill will come in handy. Further, knowing how to "whet" a knife on a stone will help one to become more informed when moving on to other sharpening methods.

I would like to emphasize that it is preferable to keep a knife sharp rather than allow it to become

extremely dull. Once a blade has lost its edge, it requires much more effort to restore its sharpness. Also, today's "high performance" steels (examples include S30V, BG-42, ATS-34 and there are many more) are extremely tough to sharpen using natural Arkansas or man-made standard type whet stones. The premium grade steels all require diamond or ceramic sharpeners once they lose their edge and become dull.



The skill of sharpening a knife on a stone takes practice, usually a lot of it. So, that being the case, do not allow yourself to become discouraged if you do not find success comes easily. Keep practicing, ask questions, and read whatever you can find on sharpening.

A good quality soft Arkansas natural stone is ideal and will accomplish most knife sharpening tasks. (Serrated blades are not included in this discussion.) However, some knives may be so dull that they will require advance preparation with a coarse grade stone. You may need to seek the advice of someone who can help you make this determination.

Put a few drops of light oil on the stone first. To sharpen properly, hold the knife at an angle of 17-25 degrees from the stone. Acting as though you were going to slice a thin layer off the top of the stone, move the knife across the stone while pulling the knife toward you from heel to point. Then, turn the knife over and repeat the stroke in the opposite direction. It is important that you use the same angle and pressure for each stroke and

## Proper Sharpening Skills Continued..

that you evenly alternate the strokes from one side to the other. You should repeat this sequence until the knife is sharp.

The most difficult parts to master are first, to match the angle and pressure on the return stroke, and second, to compensate for

### *Lucky's*

#### *Travels & Adventures*

*Russ Donoghue, BCCI  
Board Member*

Lucky didn't know whether to be afraid, or just sit on the wooden shelf

and try to be brave. What had his attention was that his two other file friends were being put in a fire (forge) until they turned kind of an orange color. After they were very hot, the 13 year old boy, Hoyt, put them in a bucket of oil (quenching) to cool them down. Then, the young blacksmith apprentice (student) put them on a big piece of steel (anvil) and began hitting each one of them with a hammer (cross peen) to try and change their shapes. They seemed ok as the hammering continued, but Lucky was not ok as he watched his friends change from a file to a different look. Three days ago when Hoyt had taken the three files out of the drawer and Lucky had thought to himself, "Wow, maybe my lucky day has arrived" he was happy and excited. Now he wasn't at all happy. He was frightened that he might never see his friends again.

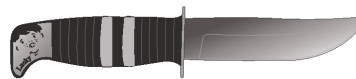
Hoyt kept the fire in the forge super hot by adding something that looked like coal, called coke. It made the fire extra hot. After he had beat on the files until they kind of looked like knife blades, the blacksmith came over to his apprentice and said, "The blades look pretty good, Hoyt. Keep up the good work with trying different tempering of the files and let me know when you are ready to sharpen your knives". As the Blacksmith turned to leave, he looked back at Hoyt and

the curve found in many knife blades. This is where practice and repetition cannot be shortcut. You must practice until you can duplicate the return stroke and also learn to slightly raise the handle to compensate for curved blades.

With enough practice, you will become skilled at honing the knife to a sharp edge. Remember to take care so that you do not cut yourself when holding onto the stone as you make the alternating sharpening strokes. Finally, a piece of newspaper can show you how the sharpening is progressing. As the blade becomes sharp, you will be able to make long slices through the paper with less tearing and effort. When you can easily make smooth cuts using the entire length of the blade with no tears or snags, you will have a sharp blade.

said, "We just got six grub hoes to sharpen and then this afternoon I need you to make two sets of horse shoes for Doc Wilson." OK, Hoyt shouted back.

Lucky's two friends were about ready to be sharpened when Hoyt scratched his head and said, "Something is wrong. You guys just don't look right. Maybe I got you too hot in the forge." So, he took the two new blades and put them back on the shelf near me. They looked at me and seemed really tired. They went to sleep before I could ask them what happened. When Hoyt had finished making the horseshoes, he came back over to me and reached to pick me up. I couldn't say a word. I was terrified. He put me down on the anvil and then began making the forge hotter by adding more coke. He said to himself, "Ok, you piece of used up file. I am going to make a knife out of you that will stay sharp longer than these grub hoes I have been working on today."



As he picked me up and moved my head close to the hot fire, I closed my eyes. I learned to pray in a hurry as Hoyt began to shape my new life.

# The Future of Our Youth On Display

By Brent Schindewolf, Life Member

*Summer Greetings from the HANDLE GUY!*

## **First Order of Business ..**

Has anyone found a Buck Catalog Handle material whose name starts with "U", "X" or "Y"? Remember from the last article, It can't be "Uncles skinner", or a knife used in the "X-ray room", or even a "Yellowhorse" knife...it has to be handle material.

## **Second Order of Business ..**

Will we be seeing you at the **Smokey Mountain Rendezvous**? I hope so. There will be plenty of activities just for youth and events designed so that you can sit next to your favorite

about your own knives (or the knives that might be yours someday). Go to the Buck Knives website, collect old catalogs and brochures, or better yet, visit our BCCI website and view catalogs on line. In short, be an information gatherer.

Next, pick your theme. Ask yourself what do I like best? Is it a Buck model: 110 Folding Hunter (who doesn't like those), or a "300 " series, a Cadet, Lancer, Companion or Stockman. Or, maybe you like fixed blades such as the Alpha Hunter or Gen 5. Who knows, you might even choose to find knives with different handle materials—imagine anyone doing that!! Whatever you choose to do—do it with pride. After all, you are a part of the Buck Knife family. You are also the FUTURE of the Buck Collectors Club. Whatever your age, get involved.

If you are at the **Smokey Mountain Rendezvous** this summer, come see the **HANDLE GUY** - come to my seminar on building displays. Shake my hand, look me in the eye and say, "I'm a BCCI Youth member, and I'm going to display my knives someday."



Buck Collector (Mom, Dad, Grandpa, Grandma) or visit displays with them and experience the wonderful world of knives at their best.

By the way, just because you're a Youth Member and may not have a huge knife collection, that shouldn't keep you from considering a display. When you are at a knife show, visit the displays, study them. Prepare a list of questions and ask the displayer if you can conduct an interview. Read Larry Oden's "How to Build A Winning Display" and our Club founder—Vern Taylor's article too. Find out every bit of information possible



# The Evolution of the 303 By Craig Heffelbower

## BUCK 303 Cadet



One of Bucks most popular knives is the 303 Cadet. It is a medium sized stockman, three blade pattern, slipjoint, folding knife with a Clip style main blade, a spey style blade and a sheepsfoot style blade. These blade shapes have a long tradition with historical evidence that each was sharpened in a particular way for specialized uses by farmers, ranchers and outdoor men and women of the past and present. The size of the 303 Cadet has generally been 3 3/8 inches in total length, a size that could be used in a variety of ways but was easy to carry in a pocket and be useful in day to day cutting activities. The Clip style blade was 2 1/2 inches in open length, with the spey and sheepsfoot blades under 2 inches. The tradition is that the clip style of blade is a general use blade. The spey blade was kept very sharp and not used often, taking its name from the use of that blade to spey or neuter farm animals. The sheepsfoot blade takes its name for the actual shape of a sheep's foot and was generally sharpened in a manner to make a very strong edge for heavy cutting. The 303 has been made in several different forms over its model life with different scale and blade materials and was even originally made by outside contractors.

The Cadet has has four distinct lives. When first introduced on the market by Buck in

1968, Buck was not set up in their factory to make that type of knife. So, they contracted its production to Schrade Knives of New York. Schrade was a large manufacturer of knives and was able to easily take care of Buck's contract to them. The Schrade version of the Buck 303 Cadet was made from 1968 thru 1972. Buck had to change contractors because the way that Schrade made the knife made it difficult to repair should warranty work be needed. To repair a broken blade it was necessary to take the knife completely apart to replace the blade because the pins (pivots) that held the blade were hidden under the ends of the knife (bolsters). Buck then contracted with Camillus Knives of New York to make the 303 with pivot pins exposed on the outside of the bolster ends making replacement of a broken blade easier. The Camillus production of Cadets continued from 1972 thru 1986. At the end of that contract Buck had expanded its factory and installed the necessary machinery to make their own folding knives and took over production of the 303. Buck has continued to produce the 303 since that time with several design changes and special editions along the way.



This photo shows a line-up of the standard production 303's. From left to right: Schrade contract, first version Camillus contract; second version Camillus contract; first Buck-made edition. with Buck printed with BUCK printed on

## EVOLUTION OF 303'S CONTINUED...

escutcheon (metal scale ID plate); change to three spring version with standard knife, bolt and hammer escutcheon plate; change to edge 2000 blade shape; addition of a dymjondwood version; addition of a Chairman version with more rounded bolsters and the newest, a yellow scaled, new blue escutcheon plate version. As an additional note, notice the change from the long pull nail nic on the contract versions versus the small nail nic (or French nail nic) of the Buck made versions.



In the photo above, see the differences in the construction of some standard version 303s. Left to right: Schrade contract; Camillus contract; first Buck made 303, two springs and brass liners; 1990 only, first three spring with last of the brass liners; all stainless construction with three springs. Last knife shows the modern edge 2000 hollow ground blade.

When Buck took over production of the Cadet, it followed much of the classic designs of the 303 contract knives and used brass liners, nickel silver bolsters, two back springs and flat ground blades of 425m steel. With the 1991 version they switched to an all stainless steel made knife with three springs (one for each blade). Later they added a hollow ground shape to the blades introducing it as the 'Edge 2000' design using the special heat treated 420hc steel blades. This heat treatment was invented by Paul Bos who eventually became a Buck employee. Those features continue today in the standard production 303

marking the 303 with a symbol stamped after 303 found on the tang of the clip blade. That system continues today with all models marked.

On special occasions or for special events, Buck would sometimes make a 303 with different scale materials, special blade steels, or special engraving or printing on the blade surfaces.



In the above photo you see an example of special 303 productions. Left to right:

Redbone (or jigged bone dyed red); Brown Bone (or jigged bone dyed brown); red Saw Cut scales instead of black; special edition Brown Bone; aftermarket artisan made scale; Poly Pearl scale; Stag (or antler) scale and Bone dyed black made to simulate horn from African antelope. All of these except for the Native American made art knife were standard offerings in the Buck catalog. Some additional 303's have been modified by other artists and special runs could be contracted with your choice of scale material and blade printing. If you had the money and could order the minimum number needed, you could have your family name printed on 303's clip blade. Several companies have used the 303 for advertising and award purposes.

The 303 continues to be a knife that is popular with the general public and is available from a number of outlets. It would make a good first knife or even a tenth knife. If you are interested in collecting them, even the early versions can still be found with a little searching.