

THE Automatic Knife Review Guide and Newsletter

Vol. 8 No. 3



DEVOTED TO SPRING STEEL SINCE 1992

*And now a word from your Editor:*

Hi Folks! Welcome to the latest compilation from the world of automatic knives. I know that among you switchblade fans that most of you tend to have favorites—A style, a type, a size range, a vintage, country of origin, a kind of action, (I know I'm leavin' something out), of switchblade that you enjoy/collect/seek out more than others. (Oh yeah, there are still novices out there who's only frame of reference for a switchblade is the traditional Italian, and are amazed that there are other kinds). But other than the small group of folks who only buy one issue of THE NEWSLETTER to buy "a switchblade", most others are more sophisticated in their interest and I believe THE NEWSLETTER has been instrumental in broadening that interest and enlightening the auto-knife fan. Well, I bring all that up because I try to present a cross-section from the auto-world in each issue—Appeal to the wide and varied realm of automatic knife enthusiasts. I didn't think I was doing it at the time, but I went pretty heavy on vintage picklocks this issue. Oh sure, that'll be aces for a lot of folks—but for the high-tech fans, there's slim-pickens. That's just the way it goes sometimes. But how about that knife on the cover! Ooooweeee!!!

Well anyway Folks, I would have loved to share a great newspaper article with you in this issue. But it would have been pages of words and no photos—However, this makes for great reading and it is available on-line. This is from the March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1999 Miami Herald, and it details corruption, theft and downright sneaky doings involving switchblades and agents of these United States Customs Agency. To top it off, prior to this sleazy behavior the Miami Herald published a special report on U.S. Customs in December finding more than two dozen employees promoted AFTER being caught—among other things—dating drug smugglers, wrecking an agency car after drinking, tampering with evidence and helping a key witness leave the country. Numerous Customs employees were harassed and ostracized after blowing the whistle on misconduct WITHIN the agency, on security breaches at airports and corruption. Ignored longstanding orders from Congress to end a chronic problem with "cronyism" and "good ol' boy networks" that federal regulators have repeatedly said raise questions about Customs' overall integrity. In January the three top managers of Customs in South Florida were ordered transferred out of Miami. All three were included in the special report, which detailed their rise to top positions, despite records of failed management, questioned integrity and accusations of sexual harassment.

Is it any wonder the priorities of these sleazy agents. They can get hurt going after drug smugglers—They get their same paycheck going after those evil switchblades. (And fill out theirs and their friend's collections in the process!) You can find this article in the Miami Herald's archives online. It was and may still be on the Bladeforum web site.

Many of you readers know all the crap that Customs has been heaping on the switchblade world the last year. Be aware folks, be aware. Jeeze, I got faxed an article from the April 6, 1999 The Spokesman Review out of Spokane, Washington. "Knives seized at gun show". Here's the first couple sentences: "A stakeout of last weekend's gun show at the Spokane County Fairgrounds yielded no illegal firearms sales authorities said Monday. Local and federal agents did seize more than 350 switchblade knives though". Well dear Readers, I don't know about you, but I'll bet the folks of Spokane slept just a little bit better that night—Knowing their local and federal agents spent such a fruitful day of taxpayers money. (I wonder how many homes were broken into and how many rapes and muggings there were while these stalwarts of democracy were "Staking out" the gun show...

About those Puma "Boosters". Sure, they're a disappointment to all that appreciate the quality of Puma knives. It's obvious Puma acted totally out of greed and saw money being made on simple coil-fired autos and figured they'd get on the bandwagon and get their piece of the pie—By taking advantage of the name recognition Puma has and exploiting the switchblade fan. Well I have it on good authority that Puma, while still not manufacturing the Booster itself, has contracted a German cutlery manufacturer in Solingen to do the Booster for them. When that happens—You'll see it here. Whew! Well, enjoy the issue!

Take care Folks,

*Sheldon*

## THE NEWSLETTER Reference Collection

It's certainly no surprise to any of you looking for information on automatic knives, just how scarce ANY kind of material is! If it wasn't for THE NEWSLETTER, there would be NO information printed on a regular basis. Along with the back-issues of THE NEWSLETTER that are available, is some rare and very special materials have been collected and assembled, and made available to you. Unless otherwise noted, each booklet is individually printed and bound and in an 8½"x11" format. These booklets contain a wealth of automatic knife knowledge! No collectors should be without them!

**KNIFE-PISTOLS**-A great deal of material was amassed while researching the article on knife pistols for Vol.2 No.2 of THE NEWSLETTER. A mere fraction of the material that was unearthed, was used for the article. This manuscript is MOST informative. A detailed restoration of a very popular knife-pistol, a "Huntsman", is included in this most intriguing material, along with several unique patents. 25 pages, Only **\$10.**

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### *When is the next issue?*

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Vol.8 No.4	7-31-99	9-17-99
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Vol.9 No.3	4-30-99	6-17-99

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Yes Readers, your editor is available for all your questions during the above times and days. At all other times as well as from time to time during "business hours", an answering machine will take over the phone chores.

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*Below are highlights from available issues:*

### Vol.2 No.2

- Hubertus Scale-release switches
- Unique Russian Paratroopers Front-opener
- Extremely RARE knife-pistols
- Infamous *Remington Steel* fiasco.

### Vol.2 No.3

- Tour of the German "switchblade manufacturer, Hubertus.
- Rarest of Case ZIPPER" switchblades
- A variety of Boker switches
- The 18th Annual OKCA Show review

### Vol.2 No.4

- "Custom Gallery", a FULL-COLOR center feature.
- Search for Puma automatics
- The Paul Fox Electric Switchblade
- Queen switchblades

### Vol.3 No.1

- Century old "Korns Patent"
- 3 pages of Italian "Picklocks"
- Puma Switchblade hunted down!
- Bubba reviews the New York Custom Knife Show

### Vol.3 No.2

- Rare French front opening switches
- More front openers from Italy
- Superb double-action switches from Hoskins
- U.S. Government issued switchblades

### Vol.3 No.3

- Introducing the Valotton "VIPER"
- The 19th Annual OKCA Show review
- 28cm picklock restoration "how-to"
- Production switchblades from Spain

### Vol.4 No.2

- Customized Hubertus
- 33cm Latama "how-to" restoration
- Soviet handmade switchblades
- Microtech side and front-openers

### Vol.4 No.3

- New Boker "Speed-Lock"
- 20th Annual OKCA Show Review w/Bubba!
- Rare Chinese Govt. issue switchblade
- *The Switchblade Sisters* review by Prof. Fuller

### Vol.4 No.4

- MicroTech Front-openers and their knock-offs compared.
- Dr. McMickle knocks your socks off with this gem of an antique switch!
- Bubba Shares a whale-of-a-tale from this years Blade Show in Atlanta.
- "Rockin' a Hard Place"- Spring Steel wizard Bill McHenry speaks out!

### Vol.5 No.1

- Magnificent customs from eight of the finest makers-All on one cover!

- Bubba does the Rhode Island Show and finds a worm in the Big Apple.
- Turkish-twist Damascus in a scale-release from bladesmith Jerry Rados.
- Restoration wizard Reese Torrit Does it again with a Case lever-action.

### Vol.5 No.3

- Part 2 of the LATAMA history featuring the rarest specimens.
- Professor Fuller presents the list of reader submitted "Switch-flicks".
- New production switches from South Africa, Czechoslovakia, & Germany.
- Specialized switches from Hubertus and vintage Mexican switches.

### Vol.5 No.4

- MicroTech's *MIRAGE* covered.
- Bubba reviews 21st annual OKCA show in Eugene.
- "Switches that Deliver!" The rarest of all switchblades, combination Knife-Pistols.
- Rare KaBar "Dogshad" and Aerial lever switches.

### Vol.6 No.2

- "Sign of Spring", dazzling custom spring steel from William J. McHenry
- Rare etched Flylocks, with original advertising and patents.
- Dr. McMickle presents an exotic 19th century coil-fired switch.
- Very scarce, mint specimen of turn-of-the-century PressButton "one-armed" knife/fork switch.

### Vol.6 No.3

- 19th Century switchblade combination knife pistol Torrit "before & after" restoration
- New "Pen ... elease switchblade from Hubertus.
- Exotic antique spring steel from Prof. Pete McMickle.
- New production knife-pistol chambered for percussion.

### Vol.6 No.4

- The exotic "Dragonslayer". Another spectacular auto from MicroTech.
- The Best of the Bayou. Fine hand-crafted customs from Louisiana's master knifemaker Charlie Dake.
- A fine spread of thos sought-after favorites--The coolest PICKLOCKS!
- Dr. McMickle Shows off a vintage "fishermans" switch from Sheffield.

### Vol.7 No.1

- Prof. Fuller delivers the second half of his interview w/switch dealer Ken.
- Spring Steel wizard Bill McHenry waxes eloquent again in "The Rumble".

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- Dr. McMickle again, tantalizes switch lovers with yet another remarkable century old gem of a switchblade!

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### Vol.7 No.2

- Dr. McMickle knocks us out again, but not with one, but a matched pair of 19th century Sheffield dirks.
- Bill McHenry pays tribute in words and photos to switchblade wizard Chuck Stewart's recent passing away.
- A cool Buck #110 conversion. That gorgeous carbon steel turned auto!
- A cover shot of a dazzling coil-fired picklock-era Italian w/dagger grind!

### Vol.7 No.3

- Spectacular humongous display switch from the 19th century graces the cover.
- Prof. Fuller waxes philosophically on favorite subject, switch-flicks and "The Cross and the Switchblade".
- "Interview with The Viper"-Bill McHenry does some Q&A with custom knifemaker Butch Valotton .
- Spring Steel gems--flat-guard Latamas, mint Case lever and much, much MORE!

### Vol.7 No.4

- "Jerry Rados-Master of the Forge". Wait'll you see this gem on the cover and more from this superb bladesmith!
- Dr. McMickle presents a spectacular near-mint switchblade from 19th century Sheffield.
- Bill McHenry reports on "Switchcon One" in his latest installment of "The Rumble".
- Mini-switches--folding-guard Italians--high-tech coil-fired French switches--New GT, ProTech and much, more!!!

### Vol.8 No.1

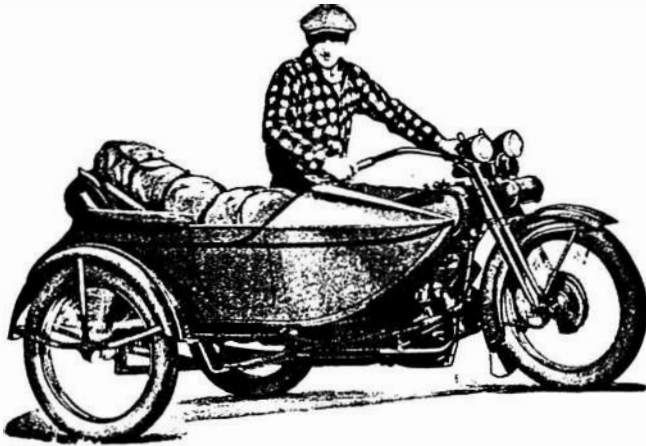
- Cool new dazzlers from MicroTech featured—Slick presentation/packaging Very-Limited-edition mini HALO.
- "California legal" – High-tech mini's from G-T and ProTech.
- The Bayou's Wizard of spring steel Charlie Dake in Bill McHenry's *THE RUMBLE*
- *The Viper's* brainchild tickles your imagination—outstanding front-opener.

### Vol.8 No.2

- A NEW switchblade from the illustrious PUMA. (For real, but a disappointment)
- Handcrafted custom switchblades from the other side of the planet—Lithuania
- Elegant oldies, but goodies. An assortment of rare vintage spring steel.
- Dr. Mickle's back with a pristine turn-of-the-century salesman's sample.

## Bubba Kahn Sez:

*"Go to a knife show this weekend"*



Knife shows and *Knife & Gun* shows are among the best venues for discovering that "rare treasure". The possibilities are endless! Like anything else, some shows are better than others. Those of you that frequent shows on the lookout for automatics know that patience and perseverance can definitely pay off. Keep in mind, that while you may not see any autos displayed at a particular table with cutlery on it, by asking, you may luck-out and come home from a show with something VERY special.

If there is a show coming up that you would like to share with the readers by including in this calendar, please drop a note to THE NEWSLETTER with the *who, what, and where*, along with any details you would like to add.

**JUNE 25-27 NOBLESVILLE, INDIANA** Indiana Knife Collectors Annual Knifefest. Info: Frank Phelps 765-642-6313

**JULY 9-11 POMONA, CALIFORNIA** Great Western Show. Info: Chad Seger 949-261-5700

**JUNE 9-11 SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI** NKCA Show. Info: NKCA Business office 800-548-3907

**JULY 9-11 SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI** NKCA Show. Info: 800-548-3907

**JULY 16-17 TITUSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA** Queen Cutlery Collectors Inc. Show. Info: QCC Inc. 814-827-6923

**JULY 23-25 NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA** 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Knifemakers Guild Show. Info: Knifemakers Guild 352-528-6124

**JULY 30-AUG.1 MISSOULA, MONTANA** Montana Knifemakers Assoc. Fourth Annual Show & Sale. Info: Wayne Thoming 406-821-3042

**JULY 31-AUG.1 BAYFIELD, ONTARIO, CANADA** Bayfield Canadian national Art Knife Show. Info: Wolfgang Loerchner, 519-565-2196

**AUGUST 13-15 LEXINGTON, KY** Central Kentucky Knife Club Show. Info: G.T. Williams 502-863-4919

**AUGUST 28-29 SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO, CA** Bay Area Knife Collectors Association Show. Info John Vautier 510-471-4751

**SEPTEMBER 4-5 FORT SMITH, ARKANSAS** 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Fort Smith Knife Show. Info: Morris Herring, 501-997-8861

**SEPTEMBER 4-5 KANEOHE, HAWAII** Hawaii Historic Arm Gun & Custom Knife Show. Info: Al Bardi 808-941-8010

**SEPTEMBER 10 WINSTON SALEM, NC** Bowie Knife Symposium at Benton Convention Center Ballroom. Info:

Tommy McNabb 366-759-0640

**SEPTEMBER 11-12 WINSTON-SALEM, NC** Southeastern Custom Knife Show. Info Tommy McNabb 336-759-0640

**SEPTEMBER 17-19 OAK LAWN, ILLINOIS** 19<sup>th</sup> Annual A.E.C.A. Knife Show. Info: Louie Jamison. 708-868-7784

**SEPTEMBER 18-19 WASHINGTON, PA** Allegheny mountain Knife Collectors Association Show. Info: Don States 724-479-3394

**SEPT. 24-26 LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY.** NKCA Fall Louisville Show. Info: 800-548-3907

**OCTOBER 2 ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA** . Florida Knifemakers Assoc. 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Custom Knife Show. Info: Roger Gamble: 727-384-1470

**OCTOBER 3 EAST WINDSOR, CONNECTICUT.** NCCA One Day Show Info: Arthur Green: 518-725-4889

**OCTOBER 8-10 COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA** Blade Show West, Double Tree Hotel. Info: 715-445-4612

**OCTOBER 29-31 COVINGTON, KENTUCKY** NKCA Spring Cincinnati Show .at the Northern Kentucky Convention Center. Info NKCA 800-548-3907

**NOVEMBER 6-7 MT. VERNON, ILLINOIS.** Mt. Vernon Knife Show. Info: Nancy Hancock: 618-242-4514

**NOVEMBER 20-21 MCKINNEY, TEXAS** The North Texas Fall Knife Show. Info: Darrell Lewis 972-562-5466

**NOVEMBER 28 MARBORO, MASSACHUSETTS.** NCCA One Day Show. Info: Bill Cain 978-575-0132

**DECEMBER 3-5 PIGEON FORGE, TENNESSEE.** Parkers Greatest Knife Show on Earth XVIII. Info: Parker's Knife Collector Service 800-251-1444

**DECEMBER 11-12 ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI.** Heart of America Show IX. Info: Mike Helms 314-928-5775

This month's perambulation around the switchblade world touches on two unrelated and yet eerily similar events. The first is more popular culture melodrama than high tragedy and comes to you from Skip, another friend I've made through this column. Skip took the trouble and time to tape and send me a videotape of a sort of sleazy version of "Biography" which runs

on a cable channel I don't get. Correctly figuring that I'd be interested, Skip forwarded to me the biography of Carl "Alfalfa" Switzer, memorable member of the "Little Rascals." Although the show touches on the tragic outcomes of several other cast members (as William Blake wrote, "Golden boys and girls all must/As chimney sweeps, come to dust."), Alfalfa is the main focus, at least partly because his death involved not just violence but a *switchblade* knife.

According to this bottom-feeding tabloid documentary, Alfalfa had the worst possible preparations for life after child stardom: he was arrogant, incredibly spoiled, had a disdain for, and a lack of ability in, school, had parasitical parents, and possessed no grown-up talent. Finally, several years of freefall bring him to a point where drink and rage convince him that a former partner owes him \$50. (he didn't) and he goes to claim it, armed with a switchblade knife. Now, suddenly, we leave the world of reality, original film, and interviews with survivors of the Hal Roach days, and enter the nether regions of "reenactment." We don't even get to see the faces of the actors, just their hands and weapons. We see a traditional Italian come out of the Alfalfa actor's pocket and flick open, with a voice over identifying it as "a knife, a switchblade." The adversary's hand appears. It holds a revolver (a S&W Model 10 I think). The knife threatens, the gun barks, and Alfalfa falls dead, the camera focused on the switchblade—and then, in case we missed it, coming back to focus on the knife once more.

Now, Alfalfa apparently was armed with a knife when he met what seems to have been an inevitable conclusion to a surreal life (or

## *SPRING STEEL - The Writes Of* by Professor Dan Fuller

Professor Fuller enlightens and inspires legions of university students with the infinite rules, regulations, uses, mis-uses, ups, downs, ins, outs, why and wherefore of the English language. (And your Editor to boot!) Professor Fuller has generously shared the fruits of his enthusiastic research with the readers of **THE NEWSLETTER**--From his search for the origins of the word "switchblade" to his monumental quest for examples of the visual portrayal of spring steel in the film entertainment industry. Professor Fuller's review of "The Switchblade Sisters" in a past issue of **THE NEWSLETTER** was a veritable tour de force of keen observation, destined to keep Joe Bob Briggs slappin' his knee 'til the cows come home! (And also have many of you rushing out for copies of the flick!) I feel honored to have Professor Fuller on board **THE NEWSLETTER** as a regular contributing columnist.-EDITOR

a two-reel life), but it is clear that the fact that it was a switchblade encouraged the "documentary" makers to focus on that aspect, even though the knife was not used for anything except a threat. So what's the point? Would his former friend not have shot him if he had, had a Sabatier chef's knife? Does the fact that it was a switchblade show the incredible depths to which our child-star has fallen? Or is it simply, as this column has observed many times, that the switchblade knife carries so much cultural baggage that it works subliminally on the viewer to establish a dark and sinister quality in our collective subconscious?

The second event lacks the gossip sheet connection to Hollywood Babylon, but has its tabloid qualities as well. In the rural

gone bad, which is not to understate the seriousness of any death by violence, but these are not random acts, they are not aimed at the community at large, they are, within the parameters of human weakness, "comprehensible."

However, this past fall one of the saddest, most disturbing crimes in local history occurred. A five-year old girl disappeared and was the subject of an intensive search by police, neighbors, and volunteers. When her body was found, she was dead of stab wounds to the neck. Almost immediately, a twelve-year old neighbor boy was taken into custody for questioning during which time he "confessed" to the killing. Without going into the details of the case, I can note that it was complicated by the different races of the killer and victim and ultimately involved not just the local NAACP but one of the major African-American leaders from Cleveland and became a cause celebre' around Northeastern Ohio. Ultimately the boy was found guilty and sentenced to the Youth Authority until the age of 21. (The conviction is, of course, being appealed.) Because the accused was a juvenile, much of the evidence was not made public, and that has, of course, fueled the rumor mill even more. Finally, for whatever reason, the local newspaper published the entire transcript of the "confession." "While that document is so bizarre that I would have a hard time

Ohio county in which I live, we have our share of crime, including violent crime. However, the two or three homicides which occur each year in this county are, with one or two notable exceptions, the results of domestic disagreements or criminal deals



Well, well—speak of the devil! That bon vivant himself, the esteemed Alfalfa (at the rear wheel) pictured along with Daria and Spanky.

(continued next page)

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voting for the guilt of anyone, yet alone a 12-year old boy, on its basis, that's not why I'm writing about it now.

As I was reading through the lengthy transcript, I was stunned to see the question, "And the knife you used was a SWITCHBLADE knife?" "Yes." Well, I was struck dumb for awhile. I guess I had somehow forgotten that the objects of our passion are still weapons. One of the arresting officers is a former student of mine, and he told me that the knife in question was one of the NATO/Super Automatic types which was actually owned by a different neighbor boy.

I anticipated the worst, but amazing enough, not one letter to the editor, not one caller to a local hotline, not the judge nor

the police, made anything out of the fact that it was an automatic knife. That made me breath a little easier; I had expected an attack on local gun shows, which are the most likely source of the knife, or an editorial diatribe against switchblades, or maybe even somebody commenting that a local knife collector had a number of switchblades. Surprisingly, and certainly fortunately, none of these things occurred. Perhaps it is a sign that people recognize that any kind of knife could have been the culprit here and the dreaded switchblade was not a contributing factor. At least I hope so. I realize that in the aftermath of the Littleton tragedy pocketknives, including switchblades, seem like pretty small stuff. Still, the working of fate are often strange and leave us bemused and bewildered. And since this is a time of self-examination,

there is a little voice in my mind (Poe called it the "Imp of the Perverse") that keeps saying, "maybe if that knife had not been a switchblade with all its exotic appeal and dramatic potential, maybe if his mother's paring knife had been all that was available, maybe the boy wouldn't have stabbed the girl." We'll never know, and this commentary should not be taken as an indictment of automatics, their manufacturers, or us collectors. I don't know about guns, but I guarantee you that the exotic and sinister reputation of automatic knives was created in the halls of Congress, the studios of filmmakers, and the collective consciousness of our popular culture.

If you don't buy that, look back at some of my past columns.

# Switch Hitter

Sure, there's nothing remarkable here—Just another CNC coil-fired T6 two-piece, screw secured aluminum handled auto. Same ol' release/lock-up. But waydaminute... There's something different. I can't put my finger on it, but there's just something a bit "off" here. Well I'll be darned! That's it—The release button is on the OTHER side. This is designed for southpaws! Sure 'nu! No mistake about it. The designation on the blade, "California Special", refers to a marketing focus of the last couple years among a number of switchblade manufacturers—both custom and production. Mandated by the California Penal Code, an automatic knife isn't considered a switchblade unless its blade is two inches or more. The switch pictured here, like others of this genre are outfitted with a blade of 1-7/8ths.

I guess most "righties" have no idea what it's like going through life left-handed in a right-hand oriented world. Being right-handed, I can only imagine. Well Folks, this may just fit-the-bill for you lefties out there. **For information and availability—Pioneer Cutlery.** (See their ad page 21 this issue)

# THE RUMBLE

By William J. McHenry

## “Why Trash Paradise?”

The first rule of metalworking or anything else for that matter is NEVER ASSUME ANYTHING! In that most arcane branch of smithing we like to call *Switchblade Mechanics*, there are just too many variables to take into account and the wise student quickly learns to figure things out for himself. It is by trial and error that the process is developed. Great knives and great knifemakers are the result of evolution—The amassing of a continually growing body of knowledge. The diehard, long-haul *springermeister* is, like the neophyte, driven by curiosity about, and a fascination with, the mechanical intricacies of the beast we call the switchblade. What separates the master from the all too soon discouraged beginner is the ability to maintain an open mind and learn from it.

Faced with a catastrophic mechanical failure or merely a seemingly impossible kinematics nightmare, the truly enlightened will persevere. The dilettante often quits or falls back upon the tried and true—learning ultimately nothing. Shame, shame.....

For me, switchblades are all about innovation and it is that quest for innovation that separates the men from the boys in this camp. Think about it—That two-buck imported piece of crap paring knife rattling around in your kitchen drawer will do most anything as well as the much, much more expensive and complex gem that rides along in the pocket of your leather jacket. They're both just knives...or are they? Sure they both have blades and handles, both will get the job done and surely both will cut you just as deep if you mess up. But that's not really what matters, is it? There's something else, almost intangible at work here. So something inherently cool about the switchblade knife itself. A springer is much, much more than just a knife; it's a cultural icon.

Many collectors and sadly makers too, ASSUME that a switchblade is just an automatic jack knife. You add a button, you add a spring and hey, you've got a switchblade! Man, I could tell you some horror stories—real tragedies uttered in hushed tones after knife show hours in smoky hotel bars—stores not intended for the ears of collectors, tales that scare the hell out of journeymen makers. Would I do that? Is this the Rumble? Okay, a few, but no names. Like the one about the nimrod who

scoffed at the waste of time and effort in putting an enclosed spine in his first linerlock springer—\$450, and went on to temper his kickspring to get some “real purty colors.” ShowTime came around, CRACK! —And out flies half the kickspring from the back of the knife narrowly missing his eyeball. Real funny, eh? Or the poor misguided smith who neglected to properly harden the lock on his \$2500. Ivory and Damascus second effort. First show.... Oops! It wobbles. Sorry, back to the shop...Again...And again. Five times, I heard. It's still out there, just don't fire it too often and of course, don't USE IT. Oh yeah, THE top seeded knifemaker who, knowing better than the rest of us lowlifes (and I might ad, charging WAY more too) pinned, glued and inlaid his premier investment grade automatic gent's knife, a double-action, escutcheon release to boot! Imagine how much fun the ONLY GUY who could afford it had; when he dry-fired all but the jagged stub of the leaf kickspring out into the palm of his soft little hand. Six thousand dollars of black pearl and 24K scrap. Ah.... the boom years. Everyone wanted a piece! I have lots more of these but I'll save 'em for later, dudes.

I cannot blame those guys, they really were and are still competent knifemakers, but after all, if a couple of dirt-road, white-trash-paradise HICKS with a little help from the three stooges (Hey Shawn, the answer is JAY) can print that kind of money, well hell, so can everybody! Just ask that ol' coot Rados. Heck, if he can do...we – will – all – be – Rich. RICH!

So what happened to those poor unfortunates? Guild members all—Switchblade makers? Not anymore. Just goes to show you about rarity and first springers. Greed sets in and common sense takes a hike. NEVER ASSUME ANYTHING.

Back to this *innovation* thing—The pro's, guys like Kenny, Whiskers, Charlie or Dewey know that nothing is carved in stone. Hey, the universe is in a constant state of

flux. Technology advances. The quest for knowledge leads to new possibilities, new solutions, and ultimately poses brand new questions. The very history of switchblade evolution is replete with stunts of one-ups-manship. Just look at the patents generated by the rival Schrade brothers or the friendly but high stakes dance between Chuck Stewart and Jim Servin—Two giants if there ever were ones in this field. I could digress on those two for days...

The common threat that unites “the gang” is curiosity and the quest for the better mousetrap. These guys really are in it for the challenge. Believe me, it's not an easy life. Some guys make money, some guys don't care, but they all have and will continue to push the envelope. They all understand kinematic magic. They know that a switchblade, unlike ANY other type of cutlery, possesses *moment*, that a “properly done” springer is not static, that it is literally an event, a piece of theater—of light, sound and fury.

Hit that button and you have my undivided attention you are in control. And that is the magic. That intangible quality—that coolness is *attitude*. A good switchblade seems to have a life of its own. It's more than just a knife—it is a way of life for some of us.

Any maker who limits himself to one mechanism is missing the point AND the boat! He's cheating himself. Worse still, if he just copies one of the popular actions and does nothing to advance or enhance it. Nothing is really learned and certainly nothing is contributed to *The Dark Art*. Stagnancy sucks. Likewise, the serious collector can impact our technology by encouraging individuality and innovation. By all means treat yourself to that pretty knife, but please keep your eyes and mind open to the fresh.

There are lots of mechanisms out there, lots of brands, lots of makers. Just ask yourself if you'd rather have a poster or an oil painting. A true switchblade maker, the genuine FIEND, knows that by definition a springer is a self-destructing mechanism. All will eventually fail, though the good ones, with a little luck and care, can last many lifetimes. The trick is to delay the inevitable by ingenuity a sincerely superior craftsmanship.

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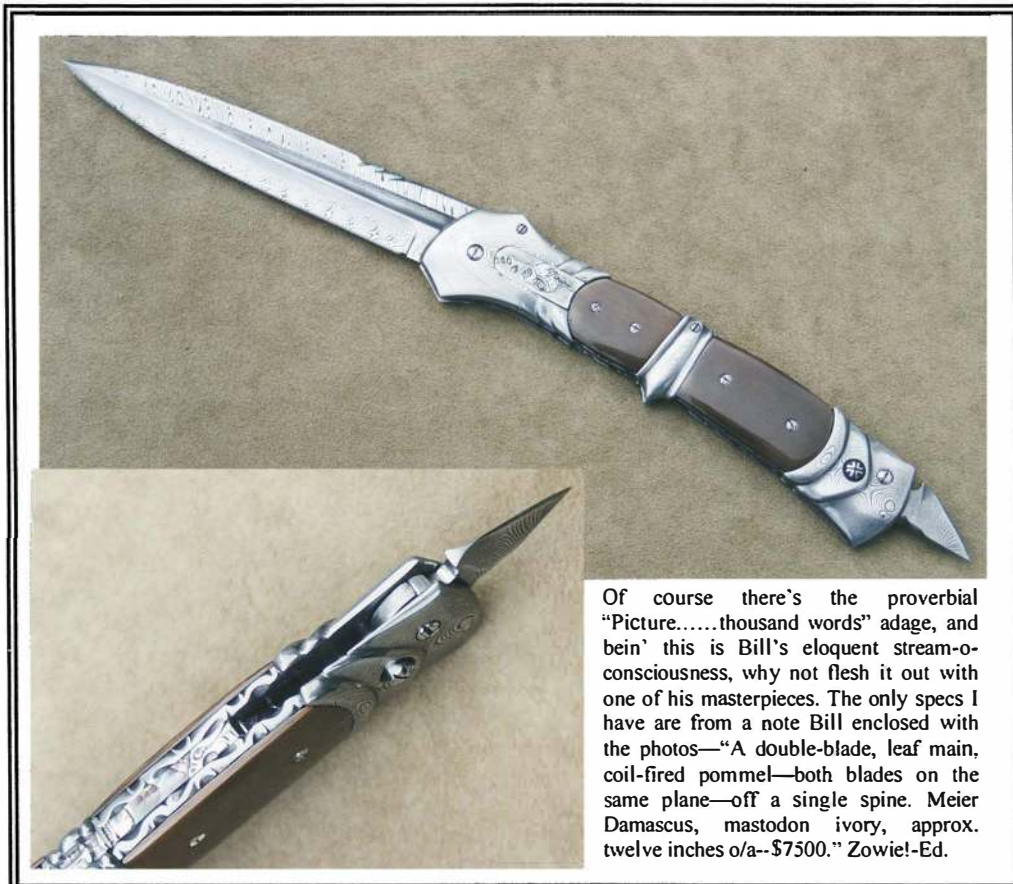
Is one mechanism better than another is? Yes and no. To ASSUME for instance that a CAD-CAM

coiler is better than the venerable picklock because it is more modern can get you in deep water. A well-made switchblade is timeless. Quality speaks for itself. You have to judge each knife on its own merits. An accomplished mechanic can take an ancient action and make it sing. A hacker can take the latest gizmo and turn it into whored-up-junk. You owe it to yourself, maker and collector alike, to get out there and handle as many automatics as you can, (While you still can!) and try to develop a sense of quality. Don't trust the Internet on this one. Believe me, you need to cultivate some tactile awareness. A switchblade is the most sensual of all knives. You must feel, see, and listen if you wish to get the total

experience. The gestalt. No other cutlery provides the high.

around their latest hardware. One after the other, dazzling, awesome switchblades,

antique and modern were circulating. Mike reached into his stash and pulled out a fixed-blade knife—A prize winning custom made Damascus Bowie of exceptional quality. I'll never forget him handing that knife over to Ray. Ray took a drag on his cigarette and without even looking at this contemporary masterpiece, handed it on over to Brad who just sent it on down the line. I mumbled something and looked over at Butch, who just



Of course there's the proverbial "Picture.....thousand words" adage, and bein' this is Bill's eloquent stream-o-consciousness, why not flesh it out with one of his masterpieces. The only specs I have are from a note Bill enclosed with the photos—"A double-blade, leaf main, coil-fired pommel—both blades on the same plane—off a single spine. Meier Damascus, mastodon ivory, approx. twelve inches o/a--\$7500." Zowie!-Ed.

grinned and said, "it don't go click." Amen.

Back in '94, sitting around in the Biltmore Bar and Grill with the usual suspects the evening before the great Rhode Island show got underway, we were having a mosh-pit show n' tell. Brad, Butch, Ray, Mad Mike, myself and a bunch of others were passing

Hey, just what kind of wax is Sheldon talking about anyway? Dr. Zogs or Johnson's? Until next time, keep clickin'.

*Basket Bill*

The Vallottons. (Butch an' the Boys) have produced a limited edition series annually for several years as a commemorative/tie-in to the annual Soldier of Fortune Shows. The design is unique from year to year. The model shown here is from 1995. The mechanism is one of the coolest double-actions every created. (What else would you expect from the creative force behind the Chameleon!) This auto employs a key to engage or disengage the mechanism. The discreet keyway appears to be just another screw. Each annual edition was only a few dozen at most. The limited production of such outstanding spring steel makes for a most sought after knife.





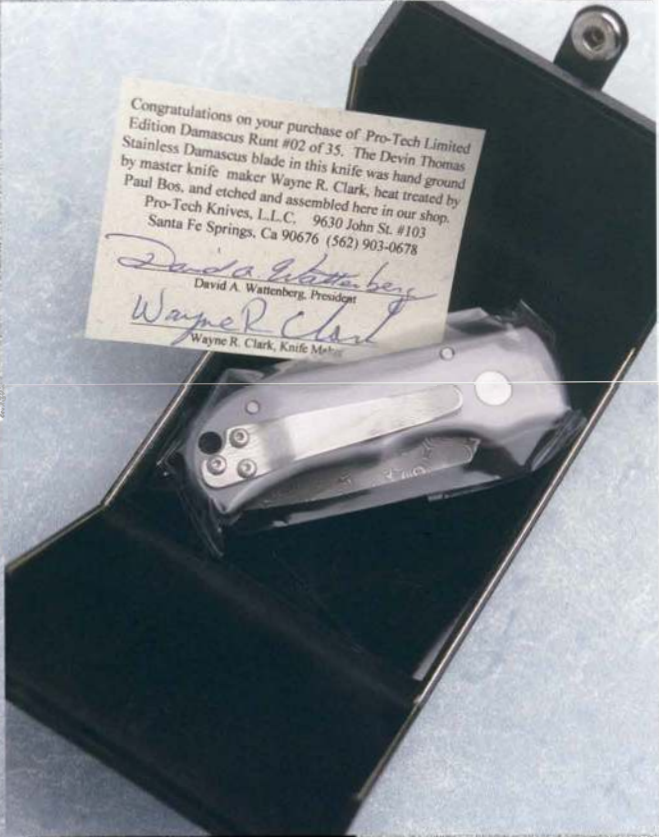
# Le Elégant Runt!



Pro-Tech's original "Runt", their contribution to that genre of diminutive autos, sized to comply with the blade lengths mandated by the penal codes of California and several other states have been given a spiffy upgrade. Pictured here is the "Pro-Tech Limited Edition Damascus Runt", #2 of a run of 35. The blade is stainless Damascus from the forge of Devin Thomas. The billet was hand-ground by master knifemaker Wayne R. Clark; Heat treated by Paul Box, then etched and assembled by Pro-Tech Knives.



For information contact:  
**Pro-Tech Knives**  
9630 John St., #103  
Santa Fe, CA  
90676



Each knife comes in a faux leather-covered presentation case accompanied by a certificate with a descriptive legend of the knife and signed by the owner of Pro-Tech and knifemaker Wayne R. Clark.



**SIBERIAN Spring – Steel**  
*Revisited*



Boy oh boy—Timing—Since first hearing from a knifemaker in Lithuania, *of all places*, who turned out these very cool looking springers I wanted to feature his work in THE NEWSLETTER. Our correspondence took a circuitous route from Lithuania to THE NEWSLETTER with a stop-over in Hawaii for translation. I was hoping to have a bit more information than I had for the feature last issue, but ran it with what I had and wouldn't ya know—The day after I took it to the printers, I received another missive from this dedicated knifemaker that contained a page from a Lithuanian newspaper. Considering the interest this feature generated and the support I feel this maker of spring steel on the other side of the planet deserves, here's the additional information I received—To start with, I reproduced this page from Lithuania's main newspaper "Lietuvos Zinios" (Lithuanian News) of December 2, 1998, featuring the very same, Vaidotas Ruibys. The article is about Vaidotas's passion for knives—That his enthusiasm goes back to his childhood. He started making knives as a teenager. It states that Vaidotas is one of the most renowned knifemakers in Lithuania and the only one in Kaunas City. So far he has created about one hundred knives. This is a professional vocation for Vaidotas, having sold every knife he has made, save one. The article mentions one knife that is very special to him because he made it especially for his father on his birthday—A knife he cherishes all the more now because his father passed away—before he was able to give it to him on his birthday.

Vaidotas included his responses to my queries regarding the state of spring steel in this part of the world:

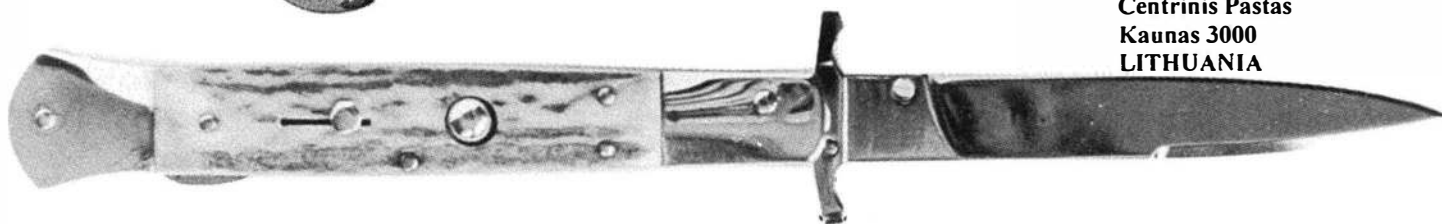
**The status of automatic knives in Lithuania?** *Officially, Lithuania made hunting knives in marijampole (near previous capital – Kaunas) from 1920s –1940's. In the Soviet era there was no official production. Now Lithuania has a free market and automatic knives are available.*

**The status of automatic knife production?** *There is still no such thing as mass production of automatic knives. No factories or anything like that exist. Knives are handmade by a very small number of people. The rest that are available are imports from outside of Lithuania.*

**What about knifemaking supplies—?** *It is very difficult to find quality supplies for making knives. There is no ATS-34 stainless steel available.*

Vaidotas uses stainless steel and sometimes clients will provide other materials they wish included in the making of their knives. He has regular clients and sometimes sells in specialty stores as well. ***He may be contacted directly:***

**Vaidotas Ruibys  
Iki pareikalavimo  
Centrinis Pastas  
Kaunas 3000  
LITHUANIA**



# From the Cover:

This is probably the most sensational picklock to grace the pages of THE NEWSLETTER. Several years ago, prior to discovering the truth of Latama's production years, from none other than the owner of Latama himself, picklock fans would occasionally refer to "pre-war" (WWII) Latamas. Not having the advantage of the "horses mouth" so-to-speak, we had no way of knowing that Latama did not even exist prior to 1950.

The origins of the traditional Italian-styled switchblade is one of those elusive, often asked details. THE NEWSLETTER has presented some picklocks over the years where an educated guess provided a pre-war origin. Well Dear Readers, the 33cm picklock on this issue's cover is an honest-to-goodness, without a doubt, MOST vintage, pre-WWII, in-the-Italian-style switchblade. This beautifully struck, crisp tang stamp, "PREMIATA, SOCIETA -COOP, MANIAGO" was the designation of a group of knifemakers from Maniago, Italy. A lavishly researched account of Maniago's cutlery manufacturing history refers to the origins of this tang stamp—Used by its makers from 1920 to 1923.



A well struck tang stamp. Crisp, fine lettering with an interesting anomaly to the text—The "S" in "Society" and the "N" in "Maniago" are reversed. I haven't a clue as to whether it was done by design or fluke—It is however, a curious aspect.



The beautifully stippled stag scales have that silky patina that only the handling of the better part of a century can produce. They are crowned by two-piece flat-guard bolsters. I'll get to the most important part of the knife—the blade—in a moment.

The vintage picklocks of the 1950s, Latama, Coricama, Edwin Jay, etc.—were never meant to be anything more than novelties. There was never any pretense on the part of the manufacturers. These were not purchased as using knives, but toys. More often than not, the carbon steel blades were not even hardened/tempered.

*(CONTINUED NEXT PAGE)*

So Folks, here is this way cool picklock that's 75 to 80 years old! And with some of the most wonderful design aspects. —Begin with the release and safety buttons. They look to be nickel or German silver and they are both uniquely flat. Not flush with the scales—nor originally domed and ground, but a solid material that has been substantially fitted to the locking/rocker.



**(CONTINUED)**

It's always sad to see some vintage gem with enough attempts at sharpening that the original grind lines have been obliterated—a foolish notion considering they wouldn't hold an edge that'd last beyond a few cuts of string.

Now back to the blade on this "old-timer" of a picklock—A traditional bayonet grind. Almost. The center grind-line is anything but. It is about 60% off-center, with the lion's share the cutting edge—Along with a couple of other intriguing aspects, both tangible and intangible. The most obvious is the stunning symmetry of the grind. The choil at the margin of the tang and cutting edge displays an attention to detail that only a skilled hand would produce.

Another obvious aspect is most revealing—Original to its manufacture; the blade and backspring are blued—, As a firearm's steel would be. This aspect takes on that intriguing intangible with knife in hand. This is a large knife—33cm—13inches. A lot of knife. No one can say the ergonomics of a picklock actually lend themselves too much practicality as a using tool. But this particular example is the exception. Otherwise bright steel rendered covert by bluing such a superbly ground cutting edge, in addition to its superior balance and heft, leaves no doubt this was designed as a very serious stabbing, cutting weapon.



Before you get excited by the 1911 on the tang you see here, the rather haphazardly stamped "1-9-1-1", done with individual numeral dies may have been some enterprising aftermarket attempt to "age" the piece or nothing more than a number to identify the style or model. Pictured here on the reverse along with the manufacturer and their geographical origins. "COLT. RIUN., MANIAGO".



Another vintage picklock find—And found in the same Maniago historical tome, a reference to "Le Coltellerie Riunite di Caslino e Maniago". Well, along with that "educated guess", I don't think it would be a stretch to take this tang stamp, "Colt., Riun., Maniago" to be this particular Coltellerie referred to in this history of Maniago. This particular reference is dated 1932. The "1-9-1-1" on the tang appears to be an after-market detail accomplished with individual numeral dies. More than likely an item, style or model number than an attempt to date. These markings grace the tang's reverse—The front of the tang reads "RANA". Perhaps it is an acronym or an abbreviation for some appellation of the manufacturer.

Broad, flat-guarded nickel bolsters cap the thin, tapered stag scales with traditional-shaped pommel/bolsters also in nickel at the rear. The most anomalous aspect to this knife is its size. A very slim, lightweight traditional Italian auto with full-blade that measures out to a unique 27cm. Unique in the respect that traditional Italians in that size range are usually 23cm or 28cm. A legitimate 27cm, (Not from wear/damage) is novel. Which gives it an overall length of a bit over 10½inches.



As substantial as the picklock on the cover is, this 27cm example is just the opposite. The overall fit and construction if solid—However, unlike the heft of the 33cm, the RANA appears to have been constructed with as little mass as possible. Very thin liners covered by well-tapered stag and whip-thin blade. While this is a microscopic contribution—the locking hole in the blade is an oversized through and through. But of course, less care is required than to produce a seated locking-hole.

On the obverse of the tang are four upper-case letters, "RANA". It is possible this could be some acronym for the manufacturer or perhaps an abbreviation. Then again, this could be the name of the cheese the blade-maker put on his pasta that day.

# Antique - Spring Steel

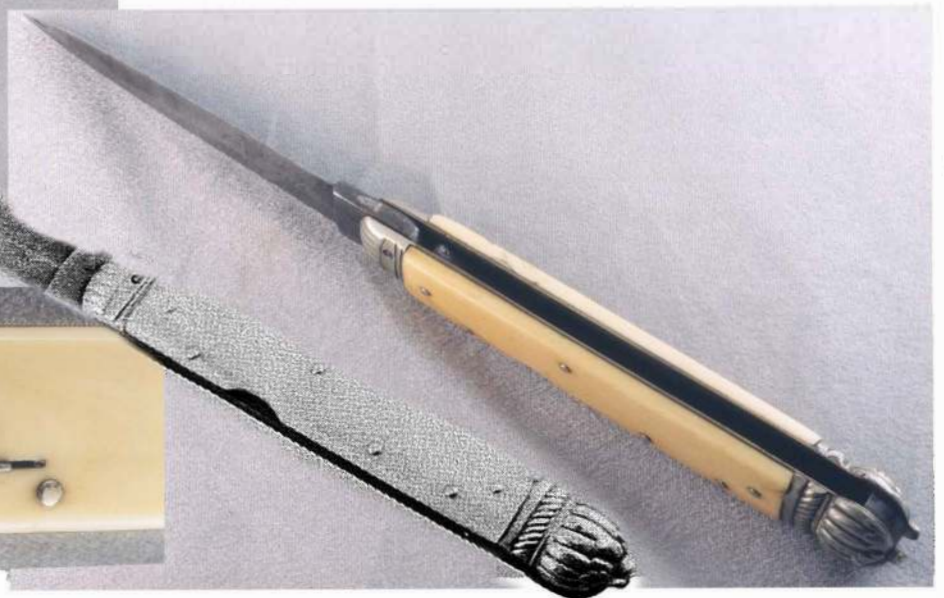
## by Dr. Pete McMickle

Aside from his university professorship duties, one of the things that makes Dr. Pete McMickle tick is his overwhelming enthusiasm for automatic knives that came into this world prior to the coming of the 20th century. Specimens from this long-gone era are among the rarest and most scarce of switchblades one could collect and/or admire. Readers with possible pre-1900 switchblades wishing expert opinion or with questions of switchblades of the period, may contact Dr. McMickle via THE NEWSLETTER.

James Butcher established the Butcher Cutlery business in the early 18th century. The history of cutlery manufacturing in Sheffield, England, going back more than two centuries is a most illustrious one. Throughout the last two hundred years, the Butcher family distinguished itself—their name synonymous with the finest cutlery Sheffield has ever produced. James Butcher's two sons, William and Samuel gave the Butcher name its principal notoriety during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The two brothers were in the right place and the right time to make the most of the American demand for Bowie knives, (fueled by the gold rush during the 1850s) and became one of Sheffield's most prolific makers. They marketed both folding and fixed-blade versions of the Bowie and by 1860 had nearly a thousand employees. William & Samuel Butcher—the "W. & S. Butcher" found on the tangs of their cutlery has endured, yea, persevered until 1959 and then continued to this day through various corporate incarnations.

The tang on this remarkable example is graced by a mark from the eminent Butcher family—However, it predates the work of William and Samuel—An educated guess is that this outstanding specimen of vintage Sheffield spring steel is the work of James Butcher, William and Samuel's father. Ephemera from the early William and Samuel era feature box labels with, "Butcher's Superior Table Cutlery". It certainly would not be much of an extrapolation that the genesis of this appellation was (as shown on the tang pictured here), "Butcher's Superior Cutlery".

Dear Readers, if any of you have an antique switch you would like to share with the readers or are not sure of what era your knife is from and would like to take advantage of my expertise please contact me in care of THE NEWSLETTER.



# O.T.F. Fans! A few for you:



In the 60s and 70s, a number of manufacturers, Italian, French and Asian have produced front-openers similar to the stylized traditional Italians pictured here. While their design varies, their action is like the Bonsa OTF. Most examples observed have cow horn scales with steel frames. One of the models pictured here has a cast aluminum two-piece handle designed to look like bolsters and checkered scales.

These rather flat front-openers, nine inches overall with a machined like pattern embossed on stainless steel are most familiar from Bonsa. Bonsa was a Solingen manufacturer of a variety of cutlery, both conventional and automatic. The release button had a shim-type sliding safety. The button also released the blade to close via gravity all but the last half-inch—the pivoting trapdoor/cover facilitated the complete close of the blade and cocking of the kickspring. Bonsa also produced their models on contract with a variety of baked enamel finishes on the stainless handle. The opened blade pictured at the bottom shows an etched logo from Robert Klaas's Kissing Crane. Bonsa went out of business in 1983.



We're not talkin' Viper or Halo here folks—Not even in the ballpark. However, they're not on the other end of the spectrum either. The only one close to the ubiquitous "Nato" mechanism is the ERN, the rectangular shaped knife at the lower right-hand corner of the page. A century old manufacturer of modestly priced cutlery, C. Friedrich Ern dates back to 1873 and ceased production in 1986. Shown about 90% of actual size, the sliding button in the upper-right of the handle opens and closes a typical Nato style mechanism.

## HOW-TO—Tune n' Tweek a 33cm Latama

THE NEWSLETTER restoration wizard Reese Torrit gives ya the skinny:

Well Folks, these side by side, “before” and “after” shots of this picklock are pretty dramatic in their extremes. While this knife certainly had its share of being played with over the last half-century, to get in this “before” condition was far more the result of neglect, than abuse. Except for addressing the blade not seating as deep as it could in he closed position, the principal concerns are cosmetic.



Fortunately the carbon steel blade had survived the last few decades without any serious attempts at sharpening. Most folks don't realize that the blades on these vintage picklocks were rarely hardened. There were no illusions on the manufacturers part that these switchblades were being marketed as novelties—not cutting tools. Of course, as a blade design, the only practical use for a bayonet grind would be sticking, not cutting. Trying to keep a cutting edge on these vintage, very soft carbon steel blades, was an exercise in futility. However, it has always been my experience that by virtue of their smaller, “handier” size, the 23cm switches on down are the ones most often found spoiled by over-sharpening and not the 28 and 33cm. versions.



In restoring this blade, that portion of the back of the blade would have to be blunted—to again be a false edge. The deepest pitting on the blade is the 2mm dark spot on the flat just below the end of the false edge—pictured in the full shot here of the knife.



Aside from the modest shaping, preparation and soldering required to reseat the blade, elbow grease is the principal ingredient. All the pitted metal surfaces need to be abraded in a series of abrasive grits to get down to “pit-free” steel. I use very few “power” tools and prefer the control as well as the satisfaction derived by sanding and filing by hand. My abrasive of choice is Klingspor. I always us a piece of Micarta 2”x5”x,½” as a sanding block. 120 grit will get the primary surfacing done. Then move on down the line through 180, 220, 240,280, 320, 400, 800, and 1000. That’s it for the Klingspor. Then I finish off with a great abrasive paper from 3M in 1500 and 2000grit. Depending on the look you want, the 2000 can do the trick or you can use a high-speed buffing wheel.



While the photos on these pages show various angles of the knife in before and after conditions, I will have to explain just how this was accomplished—as well as the re-seating of the blade. There’s a whole lot of “elbow grease” to get from “before” to “after”. There are these shots of the front scale removed to reveal the rocker assembly—both in position and removed from its pivot. Some thought and imagination on your part will be necessary as I explain a simple “fix” to re-seat the blade.





To begin this restoration process, let's break down this knife to its component parts—disassemble it. The pins will be destroyed in the process. New pins will be fabricated from the appropriate material in rod form. Trying to salvage the pins is a futile exercise. However, removing them carefully is necessary to avoid damaging the scales and the bolsters. The three principle pins are the blade's pivot, the rear pin through the bolsters/liners/backspring and the pin to the right of the safety through the scales, liners and backspring. Using a Dremel tool on a flexible handpiece, I prefer a small round dental burr. You can get them smaller than the diameter of the pins. Start at the center of a pin going enough to shear off the head of the pin from the inside. For the pin through the scales, short bursts with light pressure and a sharp burr will accomplish your goal avoiding the kind of heat build-up which will burn the scale material. The pins can then be driven out with a small punch or sometimes the knife can be shimmed apart and separated. Now the scales have to be removed from the liners. Their pins are countersunk and flush in the liners. They are easy to remove from the underside of the liners with a larger, (eighth-inch or so) round burr.

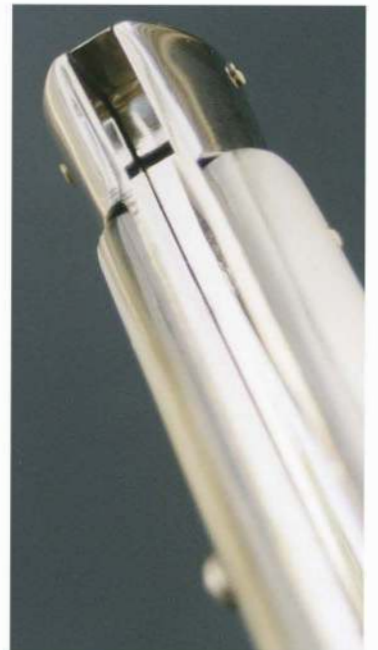
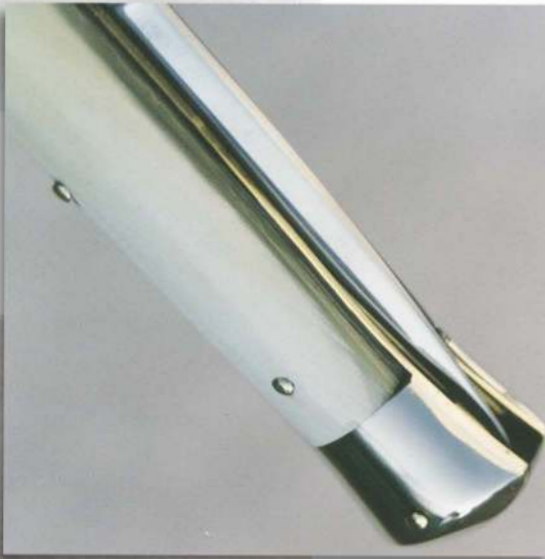
I tell ya Folks, anyone wishing to attempt restoration work of any kind on their knives is welcome to contact Reese through THE NEWSLETTER. There's also a very helpful book—While it is not on autos, it covers aspects that apply to all folders, auto or manual. *The Pocketknife Manual* by Blackie Collins, published by Benchmark Division, Jenkins Metal Corp., Gastonia, NC 28052.



To reseat the blade then, —the hole in the liner has to be "closed" up, back to its original size and the rocker has to be "moved" over a bit in the process. The simplest way to accomplish this is to solder a short length, (about half-an-inch) of eighth-inch of square brass rod to the liner along the left, (worn) side of the hole. This closes up the hole and also creates a bezel of sorts for the rocker, adding to the support of the pivot brackets.



The entire length of the backspring, especially the top around the blade's locking pin, is both darkened from oxidation and peppered with pitting. This condition pretty much applies to all the metal surfaces of the knife except the nickel of the bolsters. (front and rear), release button and safety.



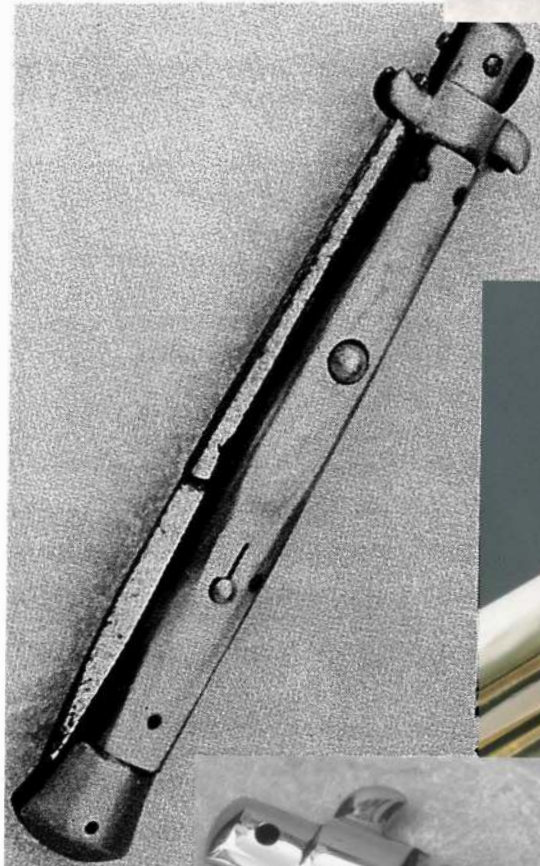
*HOW-TO—Tune n' Tweek  
a 33cm Latama  
(CONTINUED NEXT PAGE)*

In most cases the rocker is the only piece on a switch that has been hardened. Look at the two shots of it at the bottom of this page—the “pin” end goes through the thin brass liner to correspond with the hole in the blade’s tang and lock the blade closed. When closed, the kickspring is exerting tension on the blade, which in turn puts tension on this pin as it “rides” up and down through the hole in the brass liner. Well it’s no contest between a hardened steel pin and soft, thin brass as to which will wear first and foremost. As the hole in the brass for the locking pin widens, the kickspring’s tension moves the rocker towards the wear. Because of the geometry, a few thousandths of an inch of wear on the side of the liner’s hole, can translate to a quarter-inch or more of the blade sticking out of the handle when closed/locked.



On this particular 33cm example, somewhere in its history, a light sharpening was attempted—not only on the cutting edge, but the false edge, (On a bayonet grind, the “false edge” is opposite the cutting edge and begins at the point for about a third of the blade’s length). For the sake of this feature, a modest glossary will help with some of the nomenclature of the knife. Let’s call the assembly with the release button/rocker/locking pin the *rocker*. On most switches the rocker pivots on a pair of “half-circle” shaped brackets cut-out/punched-out in the liner and bent up at 90°. We’ll call these the *brackets*. A variety of bracket designs are found on autos. In the punched category, there are half-squares and half-rectangles cutout. On older autos instead of the liners being punched out, separate pieces of brass or other material is pinned to the liner as support brackets for the rocker. I will add *reseating* to the glossary—When a blade sticks up out of the handle while in the closed position it is not “seated” properly. So restoring the blade to its original seated depth is *reseating*.

*HOW-TO—Tune n’  
Tweek a 33cm  
Latama  
(CONTINUED)*



**THE NEWSLETTER  
restoration wizard  
Reese Torrit gives  
ya the skinny**

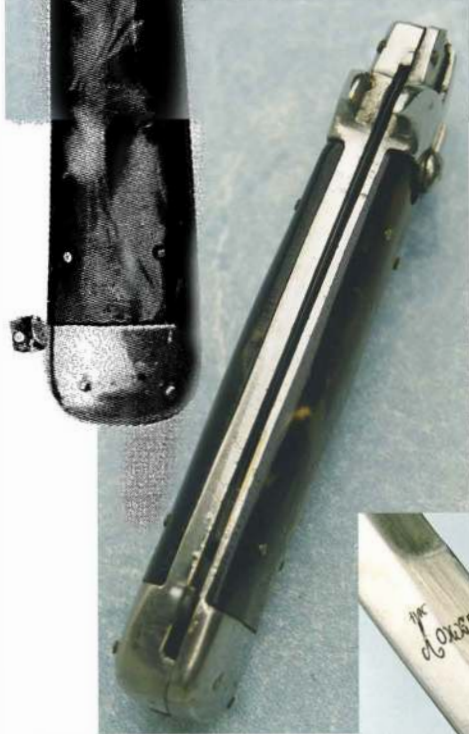


I know that there are many switchblade fans who’ve never had the opportunity to see exactly what’s “under the hood”. While the button/locking-pin assembly vary from maker to maker, the design pictured here is pretty typical. Two opposing “D” shaped holes punched in the liners and bent up form the pivot/brackets for the rocker. With the rocker removed you see the hole in the liner where the locking pin protrudes catching the hole on the blade’s tang.



This is one of the most novel front openers I've ever run across. Up-front, of course it's no Viper or Halo, but when this knife was made CNC was nothing more than letters of the alphabet. This knife was also constructed in an era and under conditions as different today as night and day. There's an archeology to establishing the origins of a knife like this knife—educated guesses, consensus of opinion and in this instance, taking into consideration the socio-economic history of post-war Europe.

# Holy Toledo!



The three-inch bayonet-styled blade symmetrical with a center grind line and a false-edge about 40% down the back. The four-inch handle/frame is chrome-plated brass. The scales are a dark gold pearlescent celluloid.

With most of Europe laid to waste during WWII, the post-war Economy was a unique one. Knives like this were among the typical souvenirs manufactured by cottage-industry craftsmen and marketed to the thousands of American military with money in their pockets as well as American issued goods to trade. One of the more plentiful metals in post-war Europe was brass. Lots and lots of brass. From the millions of small arms bullet casings to the millions of large artillery shells. The two large halves of this knife appear to be cut from larger pieces of solid brass. The thick, solid walls of the larger artillery shells provided a ready-made resource for myriad objects. Being cut to shape, not cast, gives a somewhat crude appearance to the construction of this knife. However, the design and action are clever and sophisticated.



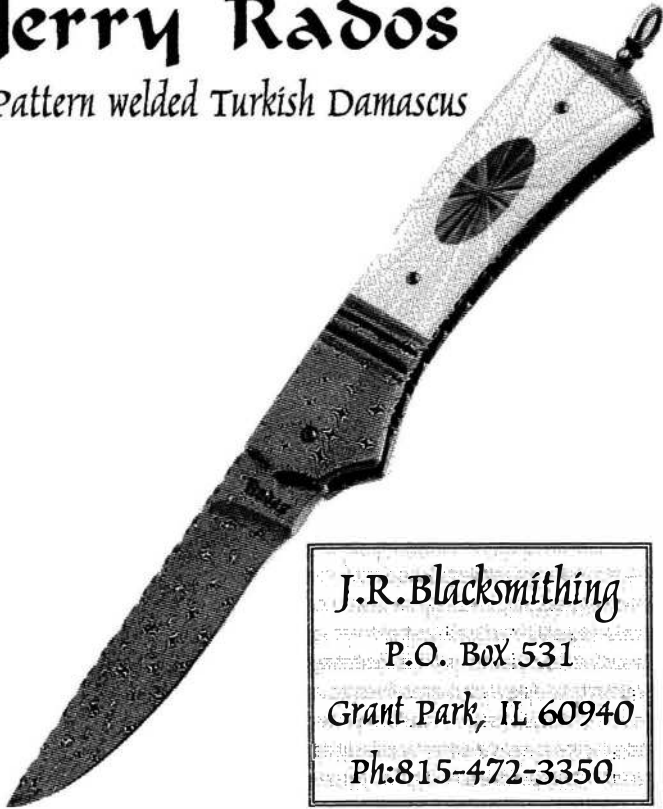
The photos show a tab with a hole protruding from a slot on the side of the handle. This extension off the blade's tang is grasped to retract the blade. It's hole and distinctive shape alludes to an additional piece, which was pinned and pivoted there. It may have been a cosmetic addition or an aid in retracting the blade fully—after it drops by gravity, 2/3rds of the way into the handle. The locking/release button is formed at one end of a single piece bent 90° at the other—This end forms a cover and lock/catch over the tip of the blade and falls into a horizontal slot in the tang, locking the blade opened. A single compression spring with novel shaped ends does double duty as kickspring and rocker spring. One leg catches the end of the tang the last third of the blade's retraction and the other leg has an elaborate configuration providing tension to the rocker/button.

Using the "Toledo" engraved on the blade is a reasonable place to begin. Toledo is to Spain as Solingen to Germany and Sheffield to England. Historically, various natural resources conspire geographically to create a center of steel production—with all the ancillary manufacturing. Cutlery being one of the more well known.



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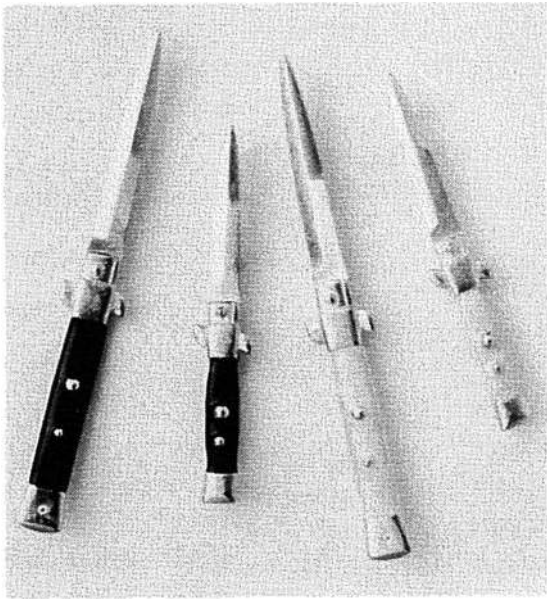
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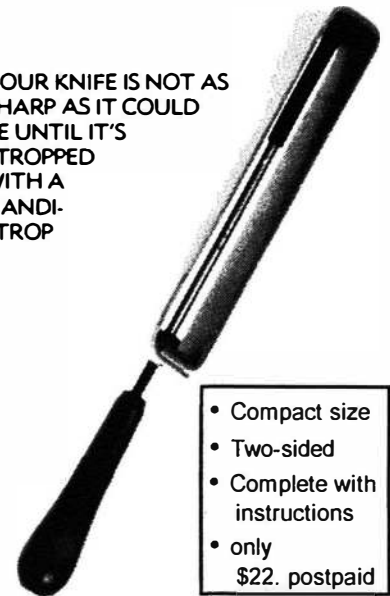


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*Dear Readers,*

Well it appears that again the offerings here are slim. As I wrote last issue, the popularity of the Internet has had a dramatic effect on the availability of automatic knives. However, it is because of the Internet that switchblades are more popular than ever. Those of you familiar with the online auction service Ebay and have had the opportunity to use it for the last few years recognize how important this venue was in stimulating interest in all kinds of autos. One of the most often heard comments to THE NEWSLETTER's web site was that seeing switchblades for sale on Ebay had rekindled a fascination for spring steel in adults who may have not even seen one since their adolescence, decades ago. These folks would also be surprised that there were other folks like themselves, intrigued by these mechanical wonders.

offending spring steel placed for auction among the half-million items for sale at any one time and consign them to some cyber-netherworld. So far, a rare switch with a blade exceeding the two-inch maximum slips through the cracks, but invariably it's some Korean Nato front-opener.

However, in the last few years Ebay has really provided a great service to fans of automatic knives and helped to bring many new collectors into the fold. And as I mentioned in the previous issue, there is another auction venue to take up where Ebay has left off, [www.bladeauction.com](http://www.bladeauction.com). While vintage and rare switches being offered there are a rarity themselves, they do show up from time to time. As more and switchblade fans become cyber-savvy and discover this site, it can only get better.

Unfortunately, as users of Ebay know, switchblades (Unless their blade length is less than two inches) have recently fallen from favor. Northern California based Ebay has officers from the San Jose Police Departments Computer Crimes division volunteering their time to discover the

I realize that THE NEWSLETTER "buy-sell-trade" feature can't even come close to competing with the blink-of-an-eye "slambam-thankyouma'am" kinda transaction of cyberspace, being a quarterly publication, but we're here for you. Good luck!

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