

UNBREAKABLE KNIFE BLADES. FORGING OR STOCK REMOVAL.

A little common sense about knives, and maybe a word of caution. It does not matter who makes your knife, and it does not matter if the maker think that they have found the secret of the ancient ninja masters. There are no secret or magical qualities given to a knife by its design such as that of oriental swords, and short daggers used by ninjas or other movie exaggerations such as dragon slayers, it is just a knife, and the blade can be broken. Once while talking to a customer and fellow knife maker who I respect highly the question of forging over stock removal came up. His take was that by forging a combination of steels under the hammer that a knife maker could make a product of superior quality to one that could be made from metals generated by computerized methods. My thoughts were that a computer could generate the same formula of metal composition repeatedly and over again today, tomorrow, or years from now. No matter how talented the forger is, he cannot produce the same composition in his product from batch to batch. My friend became extremely agitated when I expressed my thoughts on forged cutlery. My rebuff would be that no matter how talented the knife maker is once the chemical composition of the metal is established the heat treat and the draw is the heart of the blade.

It does not matter if the metal is made by hammering the *Wootz* into a blade with ten thousand folds while chanting unmeaning free verse, or by just grinding the metal with abrasive-stones or abrasive-belts, which is known as the stock removal system. It does not matter if the metal is heat treated, and drawn with a soft spine or with a harden spine in pig fat, quench oil, lemon juice, snow, Mrs. Butterworth syrup (I know a maker who used this) or some holistic formula that the maker may have discovered while reading an obscure manual reprinted on the internet by a Jedi forum-toad sitting around in his underwear drinking Robitussin cough medicine in his mom's basement IT CAN BE BROKEN!

There are a few who do the stomp dance when it comes to the virtues of Damascus. A student of mine from the college who is beginning to make excellent art knives told me just days ago that he had made his second small Damascus blade and fitting it with a Whitetail deer antler tang. He was elated that he had sold it for \$500.00. Great! I was tickled to death for him, and I told him so. In my opinion I think Damascus is a great metal for selling. (*I said for selling*) Now if that peeves all the Damascus makers off I am sorry, and I do not want you to think this is a pile on Damascus steel diatribe. All I am saying if Damascus and all the home grow hammed metals were such wondrous metals we would be using it for car bumpers, tanks, and gun barrels still. Damascus is good sometimes, it is beautiful sometimes, it makes nice looking knives sometimes, I love it sometimes, I use it sometimes, I have made it, and sold some beautiful knives at very handsome inflated prices, but it along with computer generated wonder-metals are not sailor proof. **This is what I am trying to get across.** Metals of all kinds including some of the new high-tech "wonder or secret" formulas for all of there exaggerated hype and sophisticated manufacturing process will have flaws. These flaws can be a result of manufacturing glitches, or by the B-B, or idiot factor. You have hear the old saying that he is such an klutz that he could screw up an anvil. When I first got into the knife making business, I worked for a very talented if not the best knife maker in the Untied States. We made knives for one of the most prestigious purveyor of cutlery in the world. I started at the bottom of the heap and ground hundreds if not a thousand or so drop forged steel billets. As I processed or shaped I should say these billets into knife blanks I would occasionally find a flawed blade. The country that manufactured these billets had been making them for over a century and a half, but still I would reject about one out of ever sixty blades for cold flows, cracks, splits, or what ever you wanted to call them. another reason blades break.

I had a man call me one day and complain about a knife he had purchased from me had a broken tip for no reason.

We asked if he had been throwing it? "No," was his reply.

He became slightly perturbed that we would ask him such a question. "The knife metal was brittle, it just broke."

Okay! No big deal it happens some times when a maker does a flawed heat treat, or the user misuses the products for a purpose that it was not intended. After a severe step-child rear chewing about what a sorry S.O.B. I was and what a sorry "F'in" product I made the customer said he was sending the knife back, Once again, okay! No problem send it back.

Now have I every made a bad blade? I am sure I have. Do I do it as a standard manufacturing practice? NO! Do I take ass eating well? NO! but I told the man to send the knife back and we would replace it or give him his money back. He continued with the tirade until I told him I was finished listening to his mouth and hung up. The knife in question is one of our medium sized combat utility blades that is very, very popular with military, law enforcement, and just good ole boys. I have never had one come back with the blade broken off.

The next day the man's wife called and asked one of the girls in the office what the mailing address was for sending the knife with the broken tip back. The girl told her, and was about to hang up when the woman said, "I told him to quit throwing the knife at a tree. He and some of his buddies were drunk and throwing knives at a big oak tree." Like I said anything can be broken. Needless to say after just being lied to all around, I called the man back and talked to him and not his wife. I told him I would not replace the knife due to the fact that he had out and out lied to me about what happened. That was the end of the story. Now i could have replace the knife, but my good heartedness goes only so far. If a maker or some one who has knives made and then says he is the maker want to have a policy where he replaces knives no questions asked, well good for him. I guess I could have some of that stuff made for \$16.00 and sell if for six or seven times that amount and give free replacement also. I have had less than a half dozen knives ever returned or replaced for structural problems..

Quick note about knives and the inner working of the brain of a man. The best-laid plans of mice and men are at work when men pick up a knife. Hell, I have done it myself. I have had that grin comes across my face like an Opossum in an outhouse. Many men seem to find something spiritual in those first moments that they hold a knife in your hands, and the bigger the knives the more teeth show in their grin. I have watched countless men walkup to my table at trade shows and pick up a knife. Sometimes it is very discreet, and sometimes it is all consuming. Their eyes squint as the facial muscles pull at their jowl compressing and stretching skin as it pulls their lips apart too expose their teeth. Their minds race as they see themselves standing stalwartly atop a mountainous spire with a woman tucked just behind them in barefooted huddling dependency while clutching protectively a pack of hungry kids. A pack of bright eyed smiling gaunt looking dogs run at his feet as he surveys the valley below from horizon to horizon as Buffalos, Mammoths, and Whitetail Deer with twenty-four tine racks pass before in triumphant parade. Masculinusidious, pronounced 'mask-u-line-us-it-tee-oh-de-us', strike the majority of them. The condition of Masculinusidious has been inbreed into about 97% of all men worldwide except the (*add your choice of countries here*) over the generations. *Masculinusidious Dumbmasses* the formal terminology is an infliction most prevalent when men pick up swords. At this point, their brain flushes. The only other time that a man is stricken with Masculinusidious Dumbmasses is when he thinks he is getting close to getting some sex.

One last remark if you think I am putting down people who like knives: I am not. I have been very privileged to meet some truly nice and extremely intelligent knife loving people over the years. I am honored when someone tell me about using my product or carrying my product and how they feel safe with a Zipper or Woo knife around their neck in Miami Florida, or Little Rock Arkansas, or a myriad of other cities and countries around the world. Many of my customers have become my friend, and I truly appreciate their knowledge, and impute on designs, and other aspects relating to cutlery. I have

learned a tremendous amount from talking to real users and not forum-toads who sit around doing drop test, stabbing oil drums, and seeing how many times, it takes to destroy a folder by doing two-by-four loc slaps. All these things have their place, but good gosh give it a rest. One last thing, I have also met some total flakes also, like the guy that walked up to my table at a Springdale Arkansas knife show and asked me in a considerably drawn out drawl full of colloquialisms, if I had a good knife for killing somebody? I could see that he only had one moth flying around his 40-watt light bulb.

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