

# *Billetts & Blades*



The Official Publication of  
The North Carolina Custom  
Knifemaker's Guild

Dedicated to the Art & Craft of Custom Knifemaking

April 2002

# *Billets & Blades*

NORTH  
CAROLINA  
CUSTOM  
KNIFEMAKER'S  
GUILD

## Guild Officers and Directors

Billets and Blades is the official publication of the North Carolina Custom Knifemaker's Guild. It is compiled and published in four issues annually with two additional special publication dates possible each year. Compiled, published, and distributed by The Knifemaker's Guild.

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The North Carolina Custom Knifemaker's Guild was formed to meet the needs of a growing body of custom knifemakers in the southeastern United States. The purpose of this newsletter is to serve as a medium of exchange for the members of the NCCCKG.

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Please address correspondence about this newsletter to the President or the Editor at the above addresses. Please direct requests for information about the North Carolina Custom Knifemaker's Guild to the President, Tommy McNabb, at the above address.

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**FROM THE PRESIDENT:**

NC Custom Knifemakers Guild Members:

I can't believe it is almost time for our Spring Two day meeting again. I hope everyone will plan to attend this year, I know we have some great demonstrators lined up. We will also have elections for President and Treasure of our Guild. The Board of Directors will announce plans for scholarships for knifemaking classes to be given to members FREE.

Again this year invite our friends from the SC Guild to attend. If you know of anyone interested in knifemaking or collection knives please feel free to invite them to our meeting.

There are motels near if you need a place to spend the night. Also, remember to bring something nice for Iron In The Hat. See you in April in Troy NC.

Tommy McNabb  
President

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## JAN 2002 NCCCKG MINUTES DIRECTORS' MEETING

The NCCCKG Director's meeting was held on January 26, 2002. Those in attendance were Tommy McNabb, Andrew McLurkin, Tony Kelly, Barry Jones, and Joan Poythress

**Old Business:**

Tommy reported that a proposal was continuing to be worked up by Mike McRae about the possibility of the NCCCKG sponsoring a Hammer-In.

As part of old business Tommy reported about Mrs. Bill Moran passing away in December. A discussion about the possibility of a scholarship being set up for this year for one of the classes at the college in honor of Mrs. Moran. Andrew moved that we sponsor The Bill Moran Scholarship in memory of Margaret Moran. Tony seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Tommy reported that the classes for this year were now set up and a more detailed description would be included in the upcoming newsletter.

The need to continue printing the membership brochure was discussed. It was decided that it was very useful and the decision to update and print it again this year was made.

Tony gave the financial report.

**New Business:**

Barry Jones brought up possibly approaching Alex Whetsel of the Custom Knife Directory website about setting up a NCCCKG Forum as a way to promote our Guild. Tony moved that Barry get with Charlie Monroe (our webmaster) and approach Alex. If they decide that this would be something beneficial for our Guild, then they are to go ahead and implement this forum. Andrew McLurkin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Barry reported that the website he won was up and running. He was complimentary of the people in creation of the site.

Andrew was very complimentary of the "ever improving" facilities at the Montgomery Community College. He requested that this become part of these minutes. Discussion then ensued about having the Secretary write a letter about the facilities and the continuing improvements made in the area of equipment, etc... and the letter be sent to the college and also State and County Agencies.

Andrew agreed to take on the task of keeping the knives donated for the SECKS and information pertaining to them.

The new permanent inside last page of the newsletter will be a calendar of upcoming events for our Guild (meetings and locations, shows, classes etc...).

With no other old or new business Tommy moved we adjourn to start the demos. Barry seconded. Passed.

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The Guild Membership would like to express their deepest sympathy to James & Kay Poplin in the loss of his father on February 08 after a long illness. You can contact Pop at 103 Oak Street, Washington, GA 30673.

## Sheath Making & Tooling Tips

By  
John Poythress

The tips I am listing are just how *I* make sheaths. I do not advocate this as the only or best way but it is a way I have found works well for me. I recognize that each person has their own style and may have a better way than I have come up with. Also, I like to use 7 to 8 oz. leather.

The pattern I will use is for a pouch sheath. It can be used for a right handed sheath or a left handed sheath just by flipping it over. You may need to adjust the pattern wider or longer, depending on your knife. This pattern is 8 1/2 " long and 4 3/8" wide at the widest point just under the belt loop. My tooling pattern will be the basket weave design.



After cutting the leather by the pattern, I taper the belt loop on the end so that when it is folded and stitched to the backside of the sheath it is not as bulky. The next step is to wet the leather at the fold of the belt loop so it folds easier. After positioning the loop, I mark the leather a little narrower than the loop to use as a guide for applying the contact cement. When gluing, place the glue on the loop and the sheath. The next step is to mark off the stitch pattern using a stitch layout tool. Then you punch your holes for stitching.

Next, wet the sheath on both sides down the center for folding. Place the knife in the sheath, checking for the fit of the guard and blade edge. Then mark the inside along the edge of the blade and guard for placing the welt (spacer). After cutting the welt piece, place it inside the sheath along the edge and check the fit of the knife again. If I am satisfied then I use a caliper along the stitching edge to score the topside of the leather using the width of the welt as my guide. This is for the tooling border and as a stitching guide. Mark your top border only half as wide as the side border. With the sheath folded take

a straight edge and mark your tooling border close to the fold. Using a small leather knife, cut a shallow groove in your border line. This gives accent to the border line.

I am now ready to begin tooling. While tooling it is most important to keep your leather damp—not soggy. When you begin tooling, start at the bottom point on the inside of your border lines. We will be working from the bottom up diagonally. As you move your tool, be sure and connect the pattern to form a proper looking weave. After completing the inside weave tooling, I change to a sunburst border pattern along the tooling line moving from bottom to top. Tool both side lines first, then at the top line, measure the length of the line against the length of the tool to determine the needed spacing.

Your tooling is completed and now your leather needs to dry completely. When dry, glue your welt (spacer) to the inside back of the sheath. Dampen down the fold on the inside and out again. Put glue along the border on the inside front and fold the front to the back with the welt piece. Hold this firmly until the pieces stick in place.

Using the stitching tool, mark off your stitching pattern. Now move to your drill press and punch—not drill—your stitching holes. Punching gives you a clean hole with no material removal.

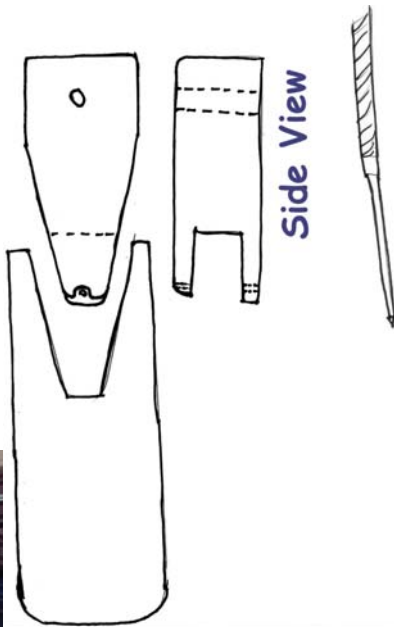
When I stitch, I hand stitch using 2 needles and the saddle stitch method. I begin my stitching at the lower tip beginning 2 holes up, stitch back to the end, back thru the stitches I just made and on up the side. This makes a double stitch on the end which is very strong. At the top edge, after getting to the end, I again stitch back two holes for that extra strength. After stitching I move to the belt grinder and grind the finishing edge along where I stitched. Then I chamfer the edges.

The next step is to dye the sheath. I use an air brush for this. I slip a yardstick inside the sheath to hold it. I use my lighter color (tan) all over and then use a darker color (cord) to shoot along the borders. While the dye is still damp, I spray Super Sheen to provide a clear protective coat. When this

all dries sufficiently to handle the sheath, I spray Super Sheen on a dabber heavily and rub the edge of the sheath. Then I take a round piece of wood to burnish the edges.

With the leather still damp from the dye and the Super Sheen, I place the knife in the sheath and form fit the sheath to the knife. You can leave the knife in the sheath for it to dry completely. If rusting is a concern, you can wrap the knife in cellophane to prevent this from happening.

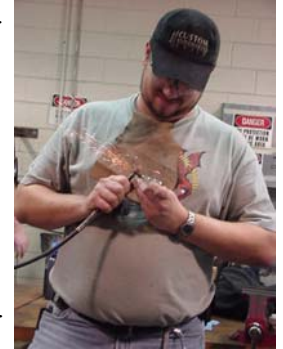
The punch is the shank of a rat tail file. It has 4 corners and I sharpen the point and polish it on the four flat sides. Since the shank is tapered the deeper you punch the bigger the hole for stitching.



John's tooling techniques and leather punching jig.



Alan gave close up instructions on using a dremel tool to do file work. You can find a copy of his patterns in this issue.



After completing the file work, your clothes may not be quite what they use to be. A little "airy-er" than when you began.

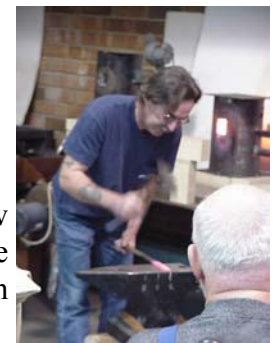


Susan Whitley trying her hand at tooling. She will soon be with Wayne out back in the shop.

Wayne Short had everyone's attention as he gave us instructions on how to color temper.



Wayne Whitley's narrow tang construction demo gave lots of good pointers on forging.



### From the January Meeting



After a long trip from Georgia it is always a treat to see everyone who attends.



A great session on marketing knives lead by Tommy

McNabb, Jack Hyer, Barry Jones, & Ed Van Hoy.

### On The Cover

The knife featured on the cover is the creation of Tim Scholl. The Bowie style blade is made from Mosaic Damascus constructed from 1095, 203E, L6, and mild steel 1018. The guard is nickel. The handle is mastodon ivory. blade length is 5 7/8" and the overall length is 10 1/4". The photograph was taken by Andrew McLurkin at the July 2001 meeting as part of his demo on knife photography. Great job to Tim & Andrew!

### Profiles in Steel

This issues featured maker is one of those rare individuals who is knowledgeable about a lot of different subjects - a real renaissance man. His interest range from building and construction to photography to blacksmithing and knifemaking. He was one of the pioneers in the sport of white-water kayaking and canoeing and enjoys the sports of skiing, hiking and camping (He's a pretty good cook over an open fire!). The maker is Tommy McNabb

He attended Clemson University and the Winona School of Photography in Indiana where he studied commercial photography and has owned and operated a photography studio in Winston-Salem since 1965.

The one activity that he seems to have focused on is knifemaking. In this he has been active in the production of knives and the promotion of knifemaking and knifemakers.

When he became interested in blacksmithing in 1979, he began a course of self-study which took him to Sloss Furnace in Birmingham, AL, Penland School, Penland, NC and the John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, NC where he studied under Glen Gilmore and Darrel Myers (advanced and pattern welded Damascus steel).

1982 found Tommy hand-forging his first knife out of Damascus steel and that was the start of an obsession with the craft.

In 1988 Tommy and his good friend Travis Daniel

became partners and formed Carolina Custom Knives taking advantage of their combined talents and experience in blacksmithing and knifemaking.

Tommy gathered some friends and fellow knifemakers together in 1992 to form a new group to be called the NC Custom Knifemakers Guild. He served as their first President. After drumming up support for an exclusively custom-made knife show to be held in North Carolina, the first show of the SouthEastern Custom Knife Show was held in 1995 in Durham, NC. The next year it was moved to Winston-Salem and has continued to grow each year since.

Tommy has always been willing to share his knowledge with others through workshops for the NC Chapter of Artist Blacksmith Association of North America (ABANA), Montgomery Community College, free demonstrations or with individuals in his own shop.

About Tommy personally - he is a very low-keyed individual, modest, quiet and always taking time to help others - giving his time freely to answer questions and inquiries about blacksmithing, Guild business, classes, the SouthEastern Custom Knife Show, or any of the other myriad inquiries people on the phone may have!

Organizations Tommy has become associated with to promote and further the craft include: The North Carolina Chapter of ABANA - Past President and Treasurer (National Organization of Blacksmiths); Founding member and President of the North Carolina Custom Knifemakers Guild; SouthEastern Custom Knife Show - Director; Piedmont Craftsman, Exhibiting member; Flint River Knife Club; Tar Heel Knife Club; Artist Blacksmith Association of North America (ABANA); Tar Heel Knife Club.

As if his associations were not enough to keep him busy he also finds time for his jobs as Vice President and co-owner of Iron Concepts, Inc. (where custom iron work and forged furniture is produced); as President (Knifemaker) of Carolina Custom Knives; and as President and owner of

McNabb Studio, Inc. for commercial and location photography.

Tommy is married to Trena McNabb. He has two step children and two step-grandchildren.

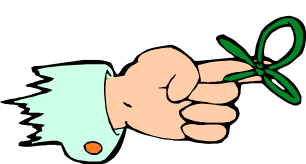
**Demonstration Schedule**  
**April 13 & 14, 2002**  
**Montgomery Community College**  
**Troy, NC**

**Saturday:**

- 8:30am Board Meeting
- 9:00am Guild Meeting
- 10:00am **Hot Bluing** — Wayne Bernauer
- 11:30am **First Aid For The Shop**—The Jones Brothers
  
- 12:30pm **Lunch** (BBQ or Fired Chicken will be provided. Please bring a side dish, beverage, or dessert!)
  
- 1:30pm **Iron In The Hat**
- 2:00 pm **Sharpman Competition** hosted by Tim Scholl. (Knives can be any length or style. Must have a secure handle and lanyard for safety)
  
- 3:30pm **14" Wheel Hollow Grinding** - Andrew McLurkin - (Bring a knife blank and give it a try)
  
- 5:00pm **Departure**

**Sunday:**

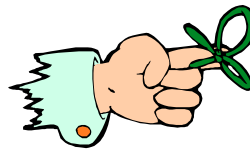
- 9:00am **Shop Tips**—George Herron
- 10:30am **Silver Sheath Construction**—Tommy McNabb
- 12:00 pm **Flat Grinding**—The Jones Brothers
- 1:00pm **Departure**



**If you are going to donate a knife for the SouthEastern Custom Knife Show raffle please bring it to the April Meeting.**

**Hotels**

Days Inn Biscoe, NC 910-428-2525	Comfort Inn Albermarle, NC 704-983-6990
Uwharrie Mountain Lodge Troy, NC 910-572-3701	Holiday Inn Express Albermarle, NC 704-986-2100



**Double Remember:** The April meeting is time to elect our next President and Treasurer. You will want to be present for this.

**The Ladies Point**

**Why Women Cry...**

(Co-Editor, Marge Gervais, received this on an e-mail. We decided this describes us perfectly and wanted to share it).

A little boy asked his mother, "Why are you crying?" "Because I'm a woman," she told him. "I don't understand," he said. His Mom just hugged him and said, "And you never will."

Later the little boy asked his father, "Why does mother seem to cry for no reason?" "All women cry for no reason," was all his dad could say.

The little boy grew up and became a man, still wondering why women cry.

Finally he put in a call to God. When God got on the phone, he asked, "God, why do women cry so easily?" God said: "When I made the woman she had to be special. I made her shoulders strong enough to carry the weight of the world, yet gentle enough to give comfort. I gave her an inner strength to endure childbirth and the rejection that many times comes from her children.

I gave her a hardness that allows her to keep going when everyone else gives up, and take care of her family through sickness and fatigue without complaining. I gave her the sensitivity to love her children under any and all circumstances, even when

her child has hurt her very badly. I gave her strength to carry her husband through his faults and fashioned her from his rib to protect his heart. I gave her wisdom to know that a good husband never hurts his wife, but sometimes tests her strengths and her resolve to stand beside him unflinching. And finally, I gave her a tear to shed. This is hers exclusively to use whenever it is needed."

"You see my son," said God, "the beauty of a woman is not in the clothes she wears, the figure that she carries, or the way she combs her hair. The beauty of a woman must be seen in her eyes, because that is the doorway to her heart - the place where love resides."

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### Schedule of Classes

**Course:** Grinding Knife Blades

**Dates:** June 21-23, 2002

**Cost:** \$225

**Instructor:** Ed Halligan

**Description:** Students will learn fixed blade design and how to hollow grind and flat grind knife blades. Ed will teach students how to heat treat, make bolsters, guards, and handles. He will also demonstrate handle finishing and carving.

**Course:** Forged Bladesmithing

**Dates:** July 26-28, 2002

**Cost:** \$225

**Instructor:** Dr. Jim Batson

**Description:** Students will learn the art of forging knife blades. They will also be taught long blade knife design. This course will include building a fire, forging, grinding, heat treating and finishing the blade.

**Course:** Powder Damascus Steel

**Dates:** August 2-4, 2002

**Cost:** \$225

**Instructor:** Dr. Jim Batson

**Description:** Have you ever wondered how the modern mosaic Damascus is made? Enter the exciting new field of making abstract or intricate patterns in steel with metallic powders. You will make powder Damascus steel with tools found in a blacksmith or bladesmith shop. We will deal with three shades of color black, gray and white. These tech-

niques may be incorporated into jewelry, knife blades and knife fittings.

**Course:** Basic Knife Making

**Dates:** August 23-25, 2002

**Cost:** \$225

**Instructor:** Tommy McNabb

**Description:** In this course the students will learn knife making by designing and making a knife themselves under the guidance of the instructor. Each student will grind, heat-treat and finish a knife using the stock removal method of knifemaking. This class is for beginners to intermediates that want to perfect their knifemaking talents.

**Course:** Automatic Folder

**Dates:** October 4-5, 2002

**Cost:** \$225

**Instructor:** Ron Newton

**Description:** Students will observe Ron construct a complete folding knife that can be automated or disabled by the removal of a coil spring. Ron will teach the necessary skills of machining, grinding and assembling this knife. He will also explain all of the special tools needed to make this special knife.

**Course:** Pattern Welding and Mosaic Damascus

**Dates:** October 11-13, 2002

**Cost:** \$225

**Instructor:** Darrel Ralph

**Description:** This will be an intensive course with students working on a class project with Darrel designing and producing a Damascus knife blade with a dragon logo in the blade. You will also do some mosaic Damascus that would be useful in knife blades or bolsters.

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**Ladies:** Some of you had asked about a "computer tips" class at our next meeting. I have asked Wayne to arrange for us to have access to some of the computers at the college on the Saturday of our meeting. If this is still of interest come armed with questions and some of us will try our best to give you answers and all our tips.

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The Sunday School Teacher asks, "Johnny, do you say prayers before eating?" "No sir," little Johnny replies, "I don't have to. My Mom is a good cook."



At the January 2002 meeting Alan Folts showed us how he does file work using his dremel tool. Below are a copy for the patterns he used.



1/4 SPACING  
1/8 BURR  
CUTOFF



1/4 SPACING  
1/2 DRUM  
1/8 BURR



1/4 SPACING  
1/8 BURR  
CUTOFF



1/4 SPACING  
1/8 BURR  
CUTOFF



1/2 SPACING  
1/2 DRUM  
CUTOFF



1/4 SPACING  
1/8 BURR  
CUTOFF



1/4 SPACING  
1/8 BURR  
CUTOFF



1/4 SPACING  
1/8 BURR  
CUTOFF



1/4 SPACING  
1/4 DRUM  
CUTOFF



3/16 SPACING  
CUTOFF



1/4 SPACING  
CUTOFF



3/8 SPACING  
1/2 DRUM  
1/8 BURR



1/8, 3/16, 1/4 SPACING  
1/8 BURR  
3/16 DRUM  
1/4 DRUM



1/4 SPACING  
3/16 DRUM  
1/8 BURR

## Calendar of Events 2002

### April

**NCCKG Guild Meeting.** April 13 - 14, Montgomery Community College, Troy, NC.

### May - June

**The Blade Show,** May 31- June 2 , Cobb Galleria, Atlanta, GA. For more information call (877) 746-9757.

**Knife Class:** June 21 - 23, Grinding Knife Blades. Ed Halligan, Instructor, Montgomery Community College, Troy, NC. \*

### July

**NCCKG Guild Meeting.** July 13-14, Norm, & Marge Gervais, Hardy, VA.

**Knife Class:** July 26-28, Forged Bladesmithing, Dr. Jim Batson, Instructor, Montgomery Community College, Troy, NC.\*

### August

**Knife Class:** August 2-4, Powder Damascus Steel, Dr. Jim Batson, Instructor, Montgomery Community College, Troy, NC.\*

**Knife Class:** August 23-25, Basic Knife Making, Tommy McNabb Instructor, Montgomery Community College, Troy, NC.\*

### September

**Southeastern Custom Knife Show.** September 7-8, Benton Convention Center, Winston-Salem, NC  
For more information contact Tommy McNabb, (336) 759-0640 or go to [www.ncknifeguild.org](http://www.ncknifeguild.org).

**New York Show.** September ?

**Knife Class:** September 20-22, Custom Folding Knives, George Herron, Instructor, Montgomery Community College, Troy, NC.\*

### October

**NCCKG Guild Meeting:**

**Knife Class:** October 4-5, Automatic Folder, Ron Newton, Instructor, Montgomery Community College, Troy NC.\*

**Knife Class:** October 11-13, Pattern Welding and Mosaic Damascus, Montgomery Community College, Troy, NC.\*

\*A registration form for the classes is on the back page or you can print one from the the web site, [www.ncknifeguild.org](http://www.ncknifeguild.org)

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

<b>Date:</b>		
<b>Name:</b>		
<b>Address:</b>		
<b>Phone:</b>		
<b>City:</b>	<b>State:</b>	<b>Zip:</b>
<b>E-mail:</b>		
<b>Website:</b>		
<b>Choose Membership Category: (Check One)</b>	<b>Collector</b>	<b>Student</b>
<b>Choose One:</b>	<b>New Member</b>	<b>Renewal</b>

Membership/Renewal fees are \$50.00 per year  
 Collector membership fees are \$25.00 per year  
 Student memberships are \$10.00 per year

Please send this form with a check or money order to:  
 NC Custom Knifemaker's Guild  
 Attention: Tony Kelly  
 348 Bell Road  
 Kinston, NC 28504

<http://www.ncknifeguild.org>

Mail completed registration form and fees to:

NC Custom Knifemaker's Guild School  
Attention: Continuing Education  
Montgomery Community College  
1011 Page Street  
Troy, NC 27371

No space will be held without advance payment

Name: (last) \_\_\_\_\_ (first) \_\_\_\_\_ (middle) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

SSN: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex:  Male  Female

Race:  White  Black  Indian  Hispanic  Asian

Education: (Check highest level completed):

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  GED

Adult High School  Post High School Voc. Diploma  Associate Degree

Bachelor Degree  Master Degree or higher

Employment (Please check one):  Full-Time  Part-Time  Unemployed  Retired

Method of Payment (Please check one):

Check or money order enclosed  (Payable to Montgomery Community College)

Please charge my credit card:  Master Card  Visa

Account Number:

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Registration fees are nonrefundable. Materials will be provided for classroom use for all hands-on courses.

Check in the right column all courses you plan to attend:	Date:	Type:	Total Cost:	Check Here:
Grinding Knife Blades	June 21-23, 2002	Hands-on	\$225	<input type="checkbox"/>
Forged Bladesmithing	July 26-28, 2002	Hands-on	\$225	<input type="checkbox"/>
Powder Damascus Steel	Aug. 2-4, 2002	Hands-on	\$225	<input type="checkbox"/>
Basic Knife Making	Aug. 23-25, 2002	Hands-on	\$225	<input type="checkbox"/>
Custom Folding Knives	Sept. 20-22, 2002	Hands-on	\$225	<input type="checkbox"/>
Automatic Folder	Oct. 4-5, 2002	Lecture demo.	\$225	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pattern Welding and Mosaic Damascus	Oct. 11-13, 2002	Hands-on	\$225	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED</b>				