

# Billets & Blades

PUBLICATION OF  
THE NORTH CAROLINA CUSTOM KNIFEMAKERS GUILD

**SPECIAL  
POINTS OF IN-  
TEREST:**

- The **SouthEastern Custom Knifemakers Show** is Back for 2013!
- Next **North Carolina Custom Knifemakers Guild** Meeting Date: October 6th, 2012
- Classes still available at the Montgomery Community College



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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

This issue I have good news and bad news. First the bad. On August 5th the Guild lost long time member Tony Kelly to complications from a brain seizure. Flowers were sent on behalf of the Guild. Tony was a friend to all and will be sorely missed, (see article) If anyone has any "Tony" stories send them in for the news letter.

Speaking of the news letter, Michael Wilson has taken over the duties as editor and is in charge of the web site. Anything you have for either send them in to Michael. Also if you do a demo an article is to be written about it. So write it, bring it along to the demo and give it to Michael!!! The web site has already been updated and looks fantastic.

Now for the good news. For those who were around in the 90's and early 2000's Tommy McNabb promoted and the Guild sponsored the **SouthEastern Custom Knife Show**. Well IT'S BACK!!! John Hege and Michael Wilson are the promoters and the Guild will again sponsor it. The show will be at the **Benton Convention Center** in Winston Salem on **September 21st & 22nd 2013**. This is the only all custom knife show on the east cost with the exception of the New York shows. If you want a table contact John or Michael for details. Also if you are not going to get a table we need volunteers. The Guild will be manning the door, walking the floor giving table holders a break, and helping suppliers etc. load and unload. So members, wives, and children let's help make this show the best show on the east coast as it once was. More details will be available latter.

As I said in my last letter we will be having a cutting competition at the October meeting. There will be from 8-10 events which will put your cutting skills and your knife through the ringer. Steve Randall and I have been brainstorming on some doozies. Requirements for the knife are as follows. Blade no longer than 11" from the front of guard or handle and no wider than 2". The knife must have a lanyard for safety's sake. Handle can be full tang or hidden tang (hidden tang must be pinned) Knife may be forged or stock removal from any steel and you must have a sheath or zipper pouch for when you are not cutting. Knives will be checked after each event for edge chipping, deformation and cracks. Bring a knife and join in the fun! See you in October.

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## ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION AND OUR GUILD

*Billets and Blades* is the official publication of the North Carolina Custom Knifemakers Guild. It is compiled and published in four issues annually with two additional special publication dates possible each year.

The North Carolina Custom Knifemakers Guild was formed to meet the needs of the growing body of custom knife makers in the southeastern United States. This purpose of this newsletter is to serve as a medium of exchange for the members of the NCCKG.

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Knife making and related endeavors are inherently dangerous crafts or occupations. The material contained in this newsletter is for information only and is not intended for private instruction. Therefore, the North Carolina Custom Knifemakers Guild and its officers and editors specifically disclaim any and all responsibility for damage or injury that may occur as a result of the use of any information that is contained in this newsletter.

### Advertising Policy:

The NCCKG accepts no paid advertising as a matter of policy. From time to time, advertisements may appear that are deemed by the officers to be in the best interest of the Guild. Space for advertisements is offered free to Guild members who wish to promote a service or offer specific items for sale. The officers and editor reserve the right to edit advertisements for brevity.

Members, please submit ads to either the president or the editor at one of the addresses shown at left.

## FROM THE EDITOR

If you are a new member, please make sure that I have your correct email and physical mailing addresses. You may send this information to me via the contact info at right.

If you are currently receiving *Billets and Blades* but are no longer interested in being a member of the NC Knife Guild, please let us know. You may contact Michael Wilson (see contact list on page 2) to have your name removed from the mailing list. Thank you.

Also, if you know of someone who may be interested in becoming a member, please let Tim or Michael know and we'll be happy to mail a copy of the current newsletter to that person.

## **STEP UP. BE SEEN.**

Featured Knifemakers are needed.

Don't be a wallflower!

Please let us get to know you and your work.

Contact Michael at [ncckg@triad.rr.com](mailto:ncckg@triad.rr.com)

## FRAME HANDLES By John Hege

On some larger knives a full tang handle or a single piece hidden tang handle may be too heavy. Or even if it's not too heavy, a large hidden tang handle may require a single piece of material that's unusually large. Other times you may want to make a knife out of a few small pieces of a particular material that you have on hand. In these and other cases making a frame handle can give you a variety of design options that other methods don't.

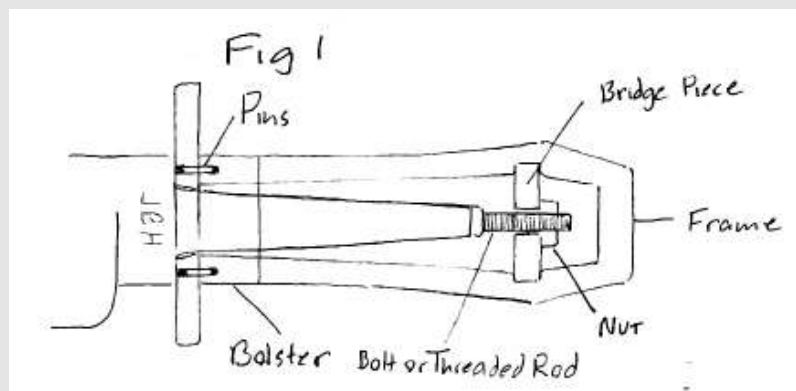
Many of the famous large fighting knives of history had frame handles, often supporting handle materials like ivory or stag. Some sported cast pommel pieces that have become familiar, like the popular alligator horse casting found on some of the old Sheffield Bowies. Some of these materials are very expensive and hard to find in large pieces. Building a frame handle makes a strong supporting surface for practically any size or shape handle material.

What usually comes to mind at the mention of frame handles are the coffin shaped handles popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many knife makers enjoy making reproductions of these classic Knives. But frame handle shapes are not confined to the old traditional shapes, they can be made in any shape that can be imagined.

One of the cool effects of a frame handle is that it can look like a full tang knife. If the frame material is similar or identical to the blade material, and is cut to the same thickness, It can appear to be a continuous piece of metal from tip to pommel. Since the guard, if there is one, Has no joints or seams and has been pushed up over the smaller tang and the frame fitted behind , It gives an illusion that will make those with an untrained eye wonder how the guard was installed.

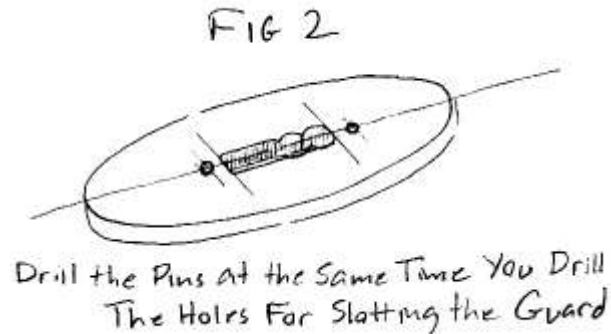
For the popular classic shapes, symmetry is important. As with the blade of a dagger, that's easily achieved by folding the pattern in half and cutting one side. Drawing a few shapes free hand and then choosing the one that's most pleasing is a good idea to start with. If the shape you choose is a symmetrical one, folding the pattern lengthwise then trimming it with scissors will yield a near perfect template for the handle. Transfer the external shape to the material first, so you can be sure there will be enough room for the supporting pins.

If the knife is going to have a guard, The guard should be made and fitted first. Fitting of guards is a subject worthy of its own article but in short, it should be fitted such that there is little or no movement when it has been installed all the way up the tang. This is important to the overall strength of the handle because the handle frame should be pinned to the back of the guard. With the guard fitted, grind, file, and otherwise shape the tang to its final form.



Its easier to drill the guard for pins while it's off the knife, and if the knife is thick enough to cover the holes, it's most efficient to drill the holes for the pins all the way through the guard to where they will back up to the shoulder of the blade. Use the same reference line that you used for cutting the tang slot for placement of the holes for the pins to ensure that they are centered. I don't recommend drilling into the back of the blade unless the knife is particularly large, but if the knife you're working

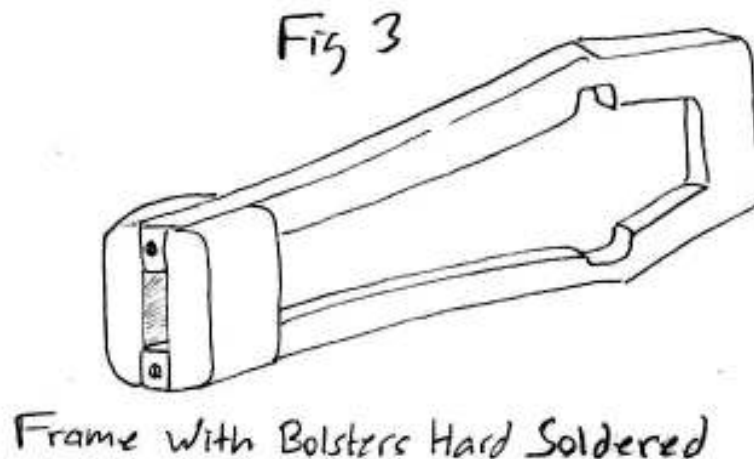
with a 3/16<sup>th</sup> inch blade or more, drilling into the shoulder and pinning the guard and frame to the blade can add some strength and stability.



When the guard is properly fitted and the tang is shaped the way you want it, lay the tang on the frame material and mark out the shape. Then mark it again to remove as much material on the inside as is practical to reduce the weight. Be sure to leave the frame wide enough for the pins that hold the handle material and leave enough material at the front of the frame to touch the upper and lower sides of the tang. Before cutting the inside of the frame, mark a centerline down the steel to use as a reference for squaring up the front end. Then square the end using your flat platen and a work rest. The square end is important to keep the handle from wanting to twist to one side or the other when it is installed. After squaring the end, cut out the inside of the frame. Leave enough material for the mounting pins, but you can relieve the areas where there will not be any hardware if you need to reduce the weight of the frame any further.

If you were able to get the holes in the guard all the way through, Drilling the frame for the pins is a simple matter. I use a dummy tang to line up the guard with the frame, super glue it all together and drill out the end of the frame using the holes in the tang as drill guides, usually not drilling into the frame more than about 3/16<sup>th</sup> of an inch. If You were not able to drill through the guard and have to work with blind holes, it's a little trickier, but the holes in the frame can be located by installing pointed pins in the blind holes of the guard and striking the guard like a punch. It's a little clumsy but it can work.

In some cases, I may want to solder a bolster to either side of the frame to add strength or just to act as a spacer. If that's the case, I recommend soldering the bolster material *before* drilling the pin holes for the frame as the frame tends to move around during soldering and your holes may not be in the right place afterward.

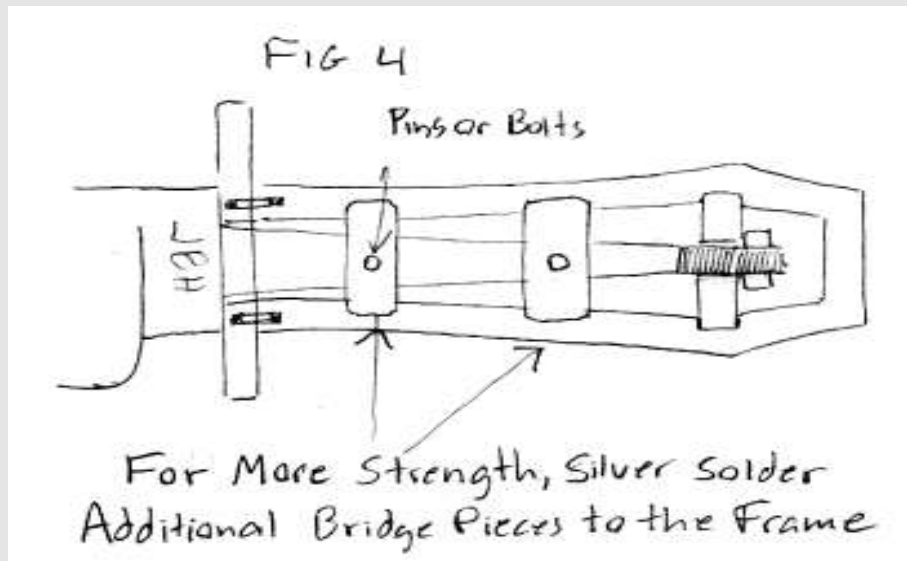


Continued on page 6

At this point, with the pins installed in the guard and frame, the frame and guard should be able to slide neatly up the tang to sit squarely on the shoulder of the blade. If the knife is going to be built as a take-down, it's necessary to put in a mechanism for tightening up the frame on the tang. Even if it's not intended to be a take down, I like to put some kind of bolt feature in the frame because it makes it easy to put together and take apart during the build. If it's not a take-down, and you've done the final assembly, the cavity can be filled with epoxy to hold it all together.

Because it's nearly impossible to get a perfect fit without using machine tools, it's helpful to install a piece such that the bolt can rock around a little bit while it's being tightened. This makes it take up any errors in the handle neatly (within reason). There are two good ways to do this. One is to silver solder the bolt to the end of the tang then build a bridge piece to lay across the frame where notches can be cut to fit it snugly. Tighten the nut and adjust the frame to where you want it, then silver solder the bridge into place. Another way to do this is to notch the end of the tang for the bolt head, and let the bolt head slide in where it can wiggle around until it's been tightened.

On a large knife, especially one that may see some abuse, it's a good idea to install two or three more bridges on the frame to further secure the frame to the handle. There can't be many things more embarrassing for a knife maker than to have the handle come loose in use, so there's no such thing as over building a knife. Lay two or three pieces of steel (0.60 should be heavy enough) across the frame and silver solder them to the frame. It may be necessary to slip in a few shims to help with the handle alignment, but once everything is straight, drill the bridge pieces all the way through the frame, install some steel or brass pins, and peen them into rivets. The frame is now as secure as it can be. If you have in mind to build a take-down, bolts can of course be substituted for the rivets.



When the frame is secure, it's time to install the handle material. This part of the process should be familiar to any knifemaker. Of course it's necessary to relieve sections inside the scales to clear the various bridge pieces, and you can relieve more if you want to save weight, but the rest of the process is pretty straightforward. Just one word of caution: when drilling the holes for the pins, drill them far enough from the outer edge that when the scales are radiused, you don't grind into the pin holes! It's far too easy to make this mistake and you won't know it until the knife is nearly finished. So be careful! In order to get it right, you usually have to drill the holes so far from the edge that you'll swear it's too far. "Drill the holes about twice as far as you think you should, and it will be about right," said one old knifemaker.

Compared to more conventional handles, Frame handles seem like a lot of trouble at first. But once you get settled in your methods it goes pretty quick. There are lots of good publications out there with descriptions of various methods that I haven't touched on here, Joe Keeslar's "Handles and Guards" published by the ABS

## REMEMBERING TONY KELLY BY TIM SCHOLL

It is with a heavy heart I write these words, I have lost another friend and knife making buddy .On Sunday August 5th 2012 Tony Kelly passed away due to complications from a brain seizure. Tony wore many hats throughout his life. He was a retired fire chief of Kinston NC, civil war re-enactor, photographer, helped restore the CSS Ram Neuse and knife maker. He was a founding member of the North Carolina Custom Knifemakers Guild of which he only missed 2 meetings in 20 years (there are only 3 founders left Tommy McNabb, Travis Daniel and myself).

When Tony joined into the Guild, George Herron offered to buy his three knives but he would not sell them saying "the knives meant more to him than money but thanks for the offer". Tony never sold any of the hundreds and hundreds of knives he made but chose to give them away instead. He just loved making knives and was a very giving person. Tony is survived by his wife and constant companion Carol (when you saw Tony you saw Carol) 6 children 12 grand children and 1 sister. Rest in Piece Tony you will be missed by all you touched.



**Tony Kelly**

Guild members who have gone to that big knife shop in the sky:

Dr. Herb Baker  
Lester "Red" Banks  
Norm Gervais  
George Guthrie  
George Herron  
Tony Kelly  
Robert Livingston  
Bill Moran  
John Poythress  
Wayne Whitley

June 2012

Knife World

# Knife News

## Objects Containing Ivory, Tortoiseshell, Other Materials Seized in California Sales of ALL Such Items Banned, Including Antiques

In recent months, California has begun to enforce a recently revised state law of particular interest to knife collectors, knifemakers, and anyone else who might offer for sale objects made, in part, of materials derived from animals. While ivory is the material that has drawn the most headlines, many others have also been targeted or could be targeted in the future, including tortoiseshell and some types of teeth, bone, horn, antler, skin and fur. Certain woods could be targeted as well, including Brazilian rosewood.

The basis for these seizures is California Penal Code Section 653o, which makes it illegal to import for commercial purposes, to sell, or to "possess with intent to sell" (i.e. offer for sale) within that state "the dead body, or any part or product thereof, of any polar bear, leopard, ocelot, tiger, cheetah, jaguar, sable antelope, wolf (*Canis lupus*), zebra, whale, cobra, python, sea turtle, colobus monkey, kangaroo, vicuna, sea otter, free-roaming feral horse, dolphin or porpoise (*Delphinidae*), Spanish lynx, or elephant." Crocodiles, alligators, and seals are also covered. Likewise, it's illegal to sell, or possess with intent to sell any plant, animal or parts thereof that are illegal to import under the Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 and subsequent amendments, or under the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972. (Mammoth ivory remains legal, but the onus may be on you to prove that's what it is.)

What this means is that if you offer for sale, in the state of California, a knife, sheath or any other object that contains materials covered under this law (such as ivory, tortoiseshell, elephant, alligator and crocodile hide), you're guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by fines ranging from \$1000 up to a maximum of \$5000 *per violation*, possible prison time, and of course the confiscation of your goods. In order to protect themselves, some auction houses and dealers have already stopped selling objects containing ivory to California residents.

Unlike the Federal law, antiques and "pre-ban" materials are *not* exempt in California. In the words of California Department of Fish and Game law enforcement spokesman Patrick

*Only in California is it illegal to sell a knife like this handmade Joe Kious barlow, handled in "pre-ban" elephant ivory that can be documented to 1948.*



*SharpByCoop photo.*

Foy (as quoted in the April, 2012 *Maine Antique Digest*), "It is not legal to sell elephant ivory [etc.] in California. It doesn't matter if it's antique. There is no provision in the law for how long it has been possessed or when it was made."

Despite claims that this law is "not an enforcement priority," recent seizures have occurred at antique malls, flea markets, and at least one auction house, where \$150,000 of antique ivory goods were confiscated in February.

To make matters

worse, other existing laws cover materials derived from California's wild animals. "If an animal exists in the wild in California," Foy says, "it's illegal to sell parts from that animal. As an example, if you hold a valid hunting license and shoot a nice big buck and have the head mounted, it's illegal to sell that head to another person." The same goes for antlers, bones, and any other materials – according to the law, it doesn't matter if the animal in question is a bear, deer, or field mouse (though you might expect there to be inconsistencies in enforcement.) Recent seizures under this law have also occurred, and similar laws exist in other states – so consider yourself forewarned.

These laws were originally created to protect wildlife populations from being impacted by trade in animal parts like elephant tusks and rhino horns. But to date, only California has seen fit to enact and now enforce a law unilaterally banning sales of *all* ivory, tortoiseshell, etc. regardless of age, in opposition to Federal law based on the CITES international agreement of 1973. Reportedly, the California law may not hold up in court – but at this time, that remains to be seen.

Evidently, California is the only place in the world where its legislators are sufficiently brilliant to determine that today's wildlife populations need to be protected from a miniscule trade in objects made from the "parts" of animals that died forty or more years ago – either that, or these idiots have simply created a new source of revenue by tightening the screws on California's collectors, dealers and craftsmen.



## 2012 Montgomery Community College Knifemaking Class List

### **Advanced Knifemaking Techniques\* - Travis Daniel**

September 20 -23, 2012

Cost \$375

An intensive class centering on complex construction methods and fit and finish techniques.  
For the experienced knifemaker that wants to improve their skills.

### **Coffin Frame Handle Bowie Knives\* - James Batson**

October 25 - 28, 2012

Cost \$375

Each student will forge an early American or Sheffield Style Bowie blade of high carbon steel to shape,

The rough ground blade will be finished with power belts and hands.  
The students will learn to heat treat various carbon steels and the blade.

The guard and frame handle will be fashioned and fitted to the blade.

Walnut, stag or bone scales will be used for the handle scales.

A plain stag crown may be hafted to the blade of this knife.

Make checks payable to:

**Montgomery Community College**

Mail to:

**Montgomery Community College  
Continuing Education Department**

1011 Page St.

Troy, NC 27371

Phone: 910-576-6222, ext. 253 Fax: 910.576-.5162

<http://www.montgomery.edu/nra-courses.html>

## **UPCOMING GUILD MEETING**

**Saturday October 6th, 2012**

Location: Montgomery Community College

### **Events Include:**

Board Meeting Begins at 8:30am, to be followed by our General Business Meeting  
Iron in the Hat

### **Demos:**

Barry Clodfelter: Hand Finishing

John Hege: The Fluted Handle

Chopping Competition (If you'd like to take part, please bring a knife, which should have a 10" blade and be approximately 15" in overall length )

Lunch will be around Noon. You're on your own.

As always, friends and family are welcome.

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM**

Membership/Renewal Fee: \$50 per year

Collector Fee: \$25 per year

Student Fee: \$10 per year

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_

New Member? \_\_\_\_\_ or Renewal? \_\_\_\_\_

Member Category:

Maker \_\_\_\_\_

Collector \_\_\_\_\_

Student \_\_\_\_\_

Mail form and check to:  
North Carolina Custom Knife Makers Guild, Attn: Tommy Johnson  
144 Poole Road Troy, NC 27371

# SOUTHEASTERN CUSTOM KNIFE SHOW

returns to Winston-Salem  
at the MC Benton Convention Center  
SEPTEMBER 21 & 22, 2013!

The North Carolina Custom Knifemakers Guild invites makers and crafters of handmade custom knives and suppliers of materials and equipment to display in a world class setting in downtown Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Tables are available for the weekend of September 21 & 22, 2013 for \$225. Additional tables are \$185.

Discounted rooms will be available at the Marriot and Embassy Suites beside the convention center. Many restaurants and night-time events in downtown are within walking distance for your evening pleasure.



## FOR DETAILS, CONTACT

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OR

**Michael Wilson** at 336.202.1695  
or [michaelwilson@triad.rr.com](mailto:michaelwilson@triad.rr.com)

The **North Carolina Custom Knifemakers Guild** was founded in June of 1992. Our goals are to:

- Promote the craft of custom knife making
- Seek to constantly improve the craftsmanship of its members
- Provide an educational resource to anyone interested in the craft
- To encourage new makers and provide a forum for their training

Through public knife making and forging demonstrations by a group or individual members, we try to display the craft and to educate the public. It is our intent to raise the general awareness of custom-made knives and the people who create them. That is why there is no cost to attend one of our meetings, and welcome anyone with an interest in knifemaking. Our quarterly meetings are organized around speakers and various demonstrations of activities important to our craft. These speakers and demonstrators are from our membership or experts in the field who come as our guests. As a training resource, our Guild is prepared to present any aspect of our craft to organizations that feel it would be beneficial and informative.

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**CUSTOM**  
NORTH  
CAROLINA  
KNIFEMAKERS  
GUILD