



This month's cover knife is by Tommy Johnson,
our featured knifemaker.

See page 6 for more information on Tommy and to see more of his work.

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*******NEWS, ARTICLES, CLASSIFIEDS*******

This is **YOUR** newsletter. To make it the best it can be, we need your help. If you have shared information at a workshop, or if you have certain **tips you can offer** on any aspect of the making of knives, please send these in for inclusion. If you have an **idea for an article**, or would like to read info on something, please let us know so that we can try to work it out. We are also interested in offering a **classified section (see back cover)** so that you can buy, sell, or trade knife-making tools and materials. Send all info the editor via email.

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 NCKKG.

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Knife making and related endeavors are inherently dangers 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 NCKKG 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 the either the president or the editor at the addresses shown at right.

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A NOTE FROM BILL BISHER

For those of you that have not gotten the news, one of the Guild's original members has passed away. **Wayne Whitley** was killed in a motorcycle accident this past April. He was with his motorcycle club on a charity ride and was hit by a pickup truck. Two other riders were also killed. Wayne will be missed by all that knew him. He was an excellent craftsman who shared his knowledge with anyone who had an interest in knife making. His trademark was the ever-present cup in hand, which was never empty. Wayne was one person I thought would live for ever.

Please keep his family and friends in your thoughts and prayers. They will need them in

these trying times.

I will move on to more pleasant subjects. The last meeting was well attended at Montgomery Community College, and Travis pulled together some good demos. As everyone who attended knows, Travis was replaced as Vice-President by **Bob Ham**. Bob has a lot of work ahead of him and needs the help of the membership to get demos set up for the meetings. One person can not do it alone. If you have something you would like to share with the group, let Bob or me know and we will help you in any way we can in setting up the demo. We have a lot of talented people in the Guild with a lot of knowledge. Please consider sharing some of it with the other members! Remem-

ber we are here to promote knife making and other aspects of knives.

Our next meeting will be at Bob Ham's shop in Hendersonville on July 18. I hope to see a big turnout. Times are hard, I know, but take a break and come to the hills and enjoy a fun weekend.

I hope everyone has enjoyed our new newsletter. We need to thank John Hege's wife, Rebecca Dresser, for all of her hard work. We now have a professional looking newsletter again, and to keep it going, we need something to put in it. So at future meetings, take pictures or notes, or both, and get them to me or Rebecca so we can keep the newsletter going.

UPCOMING GUILD MEETING

SATURDAY, JULY 18
at Bob Ham's Shop
45 Crescent Point Drive
Hendersonville, NC. 28739
828-329-8043
bobham@mchsi.com

THE DAY'S ACTIVITIES WILL INCLUDE

Business Meeting
 Iron in the Hat

A Variety of Demos:
 Grind a Blade
 Attach Bolsters
 Attach Handles

Scrimshaw Demo by Pete Driscoll
 Make a Sheath (if time permits)

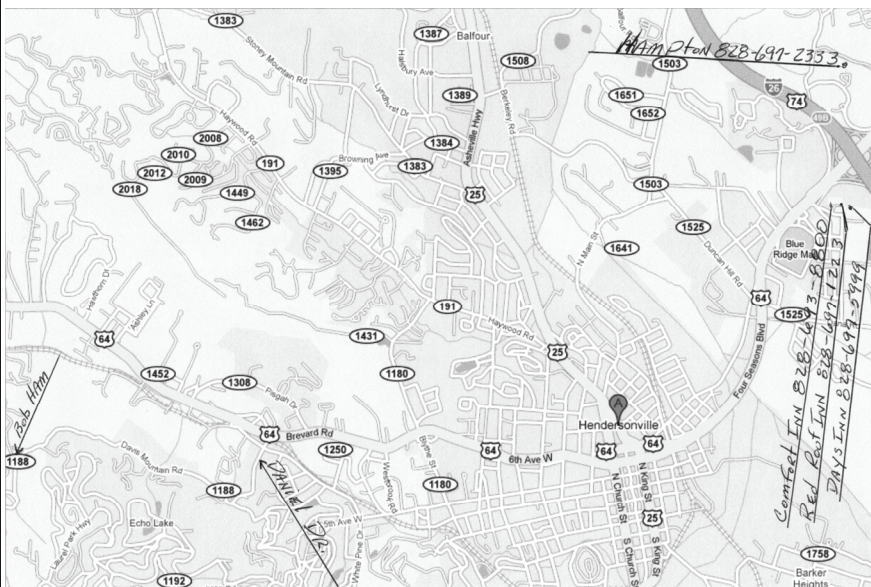
Lunch will be at the shop
 (It would be helpful to let Bob know if you will attend.)

PLEASE NOTE:

The shop will be open for any who want to return and play on Sunday. All are welcome.

To the left is a map with motel numbers.

A word of caution, July is the largest tourist month of the year for Hendersonville, so don't wait too long to make reservations.



Minutes of the N.C.C.K.G. General Business Meeting: April 25, 2009

Submitted by Tommy Johnson, Guild Secretary

An attendance sheet was passed around for everyone to sign. Twenty-two members were present; seven visitors attended.

Elections:

- Elections for Director and Vice-President were held. Travis Daniel nominated Barry Jones to continue as Director, seconded by Tommy Johnson. No other nominations were made, the vote was held and passed. Travis Daniel nominated Bob Ham for Vice-President, seconded by Tony Kelly. No other nominations were made, the vote was held and passed.

New business included the following:

- A request was made for any pictures of Wayne Whitley.
- Please contribute pictures, articles, etc. to the newsletter.
- Tony Kelly presented the financial report; the balance is \$4,752.48.
- Spartan Knives had 3 day passes to the Blade Show to give away.
- The Guild Video Library has videos available to borrow, see the Jones Brothers.
- It was noted that Bill Bisher has the new Guild brochures. Several were ready and handed out.
- Travis Daniel made the motion that the Guild make a donation for a Wayne Whitley Memorial Scholarship, seconded by Tony Kelly. The vote was held and passed. A motion was made that the proceeds from the meeting's Iron in the Hat go to the Wayne Whitley Mem. Scholarship. The motion was seconded and passed.
- The date of the next meeting was not set, with agreement that it would be decided later.

DEMO PHOTOS FROM APRIL MEETING



Eric Luther demonstrates braiding a lanyard from paracord.



Murphy Ragsdale shows the group how to use vinyl siding in sheath-making.



Phillip Jones demos clay-tempering.



Tim Scholl recruits help for his Cable Damascus demo.

Remembering Wayne... by John Hege

(Photos courtesy of Tommy McNabb)

On a Sunday evening in April I got a call from Tommy McNabb. He told me that Wayne Whitley had been killed in a motorcycle crash on Saturday afternoon. I remember the feeling of having been cheated, cheated out of the years to come when we would still be meeting at knife shows, classes, and other events or just an excuse to drink a beer.

I hadn't known Wayne for very long, maybe five years. But when we were first introduced at the Chesapeake Knife Show in '04, he had a friendly, easy-going southern style that made me feel like we'd known each other for a long time. I was beside his table for the whole show and noticed that his display was made up of top-notch work that reflected his years of experience. Forged blades with stag handles and other details of semi-precious stone and metals made up most of his table. It was in Wayne's work that I first saw turquoise and copper together in a knife handle, an effect that I've since used myself. His sheaths also reflected an attention to detail that complemented all of his work.

But it was his Tomahawks that he was famous for. When the show opened, I noticed not a few collectors came right in the door and headed straight for Wayne's table. He had a couple of well-appointed "hawks" on the table and they disappeared right away. But customers kept coming and asking for hawks. He continued to pull them out of a box from under the table, but he let people ask for them, later remarking that if he put them all on the table he might not be able to get as much for them.

I learned that Wayne was always happy to share what he knew, from details about knife-making to which were the good shows and which were a waste of his time. As a new knife-maker, I would sometimes show him my work for his advice or opinion. He was quick to give credit when it was due, but he was also a tough critic, sometimes pointing out flaws that I had missed and setting me back to work on knives that I thought were finished. I valued this kind of advice even if it was sometimes hard to take. If Wayne complimented a piece of work you knew it was first-class.

Most of us in the guild have seen one or more of his demonstrations and for the past few years he taught several classes in making Tomahawks and assisted in many others at Montgomery County Community College. There he'll also be missed.

Wayne loved a good laugh, and he could see humor just about anywhere he looked. He once told me about a time he took a co-worker, who was new to eastern NC, deer hunting. Wayne had stashed a huge elk antler where they would come across it and he

could act like he just found it. "That feller just about s... himself!" he laughed. "He's been after me to go hunting every weekend after that!" Another time he attended a hunting and fishing show where they were holding an auction. Someone

had donated a Damascus blade knife for the auction.

"Those people had never seen a Damascus blade before. They didn't know what it was worth, so I thought I'd get things started and I bid \$300. Well, the bidding ended and I had to buy it! I didn't have that much money so I had to borrow some to keep from looking like a fool."

My wife, Rebecca, met Wayne at a small arts and music festival in King, NC, where Wayne was showing and selling his wares beside Tommy and Travis. She remembers him

as a very generous and fun-loving guy, kind and always smiling. "The first thing he did was hand me a beer! He also saw me admiring some pottery and he bought me a coffee mug, which I use to this day." She remembers at that show that part of the entertainment of the day was a performance by two belly dancers. "When those two women began dancing in their thin, flowing scarves and bells, Wayne shot right out from behind his table to be sure to have a good view, and he was none too quiet about it either!" The whole gang came here to our home for dinner that night, and Rebecca had a chance to get to know Wayne and Travis little bit better. Her regret, and mine of course, is that she won't get to spend any more time with Wayne.

Of course Wayne loved to ride his motorcycle. He put in a lot of miles solo and with the Frog Level Motorcycle Club which was well represented at the funeral. By now everyone knows the story. He was out with the club and got hit along with two other riders when a guy in a pickup truck came over the center line. He's not the first guild member we've lost to a motorcycle crash. All too recently John Poythress was killed while he was out for a ride. In both cases their deaths were the result of someone else's carelessness.

I'm a motorcycle rider and I'm sure there are others in the guild. When these things happen, it reminds us that you can do everything right and still go on your last ride any time. But that's true of just about anything that's worth doing. So remember Wayne and John with fondness, live well, and be careful out there!



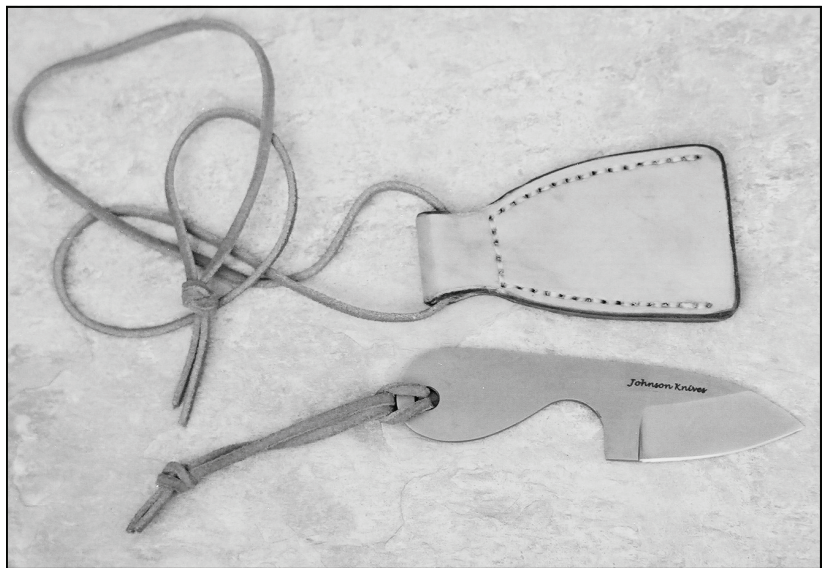
MEET TOMMY JOHNSON

Tommy serves as the guild's secretary and faithfully takes minutes of all meetings and submits these for every issue of our newsletter. He lives in Troy, NC. He learned about the NCKKG through a notice for a meeting in the Montgomery Herald newspaper.

While he hasn't found a favorite knife maker yet, he has definitely been influenced by other members of the guild because "they share their knowledge so freely."

As for his own knife making, Tommy prefers stock removal, and he enjoys making small hunters and skinners, which can be seen in the photos here. His favorite steels are ATS-34 and 154-CM for stainless and O-1 for simple carbon steel. Tommy does everything in his own shop except heat treating stainless, which he sends to Paul Bos.

Tommy shows a sense of humor when he responds to other questions. He says his favorite step in knife-making is "selling one!" Actually, he says, "it is probably the final finish" when it all comes together. He further states, "I don't claim any expertise" in making knives, "unless you count making mistakes."



On Making Tomahawks

by John B. Hege

It was in the spring of 2007 during a visit to Tommy McNabb's shop that I learned to make a tomahawk. It was a pretty rough looking thing, but after two hours or so of draw filing, it looked all right. Now that I've done one the hard way, per Tommy's famous teaching methods, the rest of them will be finished on the grinder!

Just a few weeks later, Tommy informed me that he'd put my name down for a tomahawk demonstration at the Knife Guild's summer workshop weekend. That's how I ended up in Wayne's shop in July explaining how to do something I really didn't know that much about. But the crowd was very patient, in spite of the heat, and made it easy.

The tomahawk head is made of a 10 x 1 1/2 x 1/4 bar of mild steel and a 1 1/2 x 1 1/2 x 1/8 piece of tool steel such as 1084 or 1095. The large bar is first bent cold in half to form a V shape; this is most easily done on a press but can also be done in a vise. It's best to clean what will be the inside of the V while you can reach it as it is eventually going to be welded there.

Grind the tool steel bit into a wedge shape. This will allow the weld to close up behind it without a gap. If you have a wire welder, it's a good idea to tack the bit to the bar near the end to keep it from moving while you work the bar. It can also be done by sliding the bit between the halves at the first heat, but it can be a nuisance if it slips out while you're trying to weld.

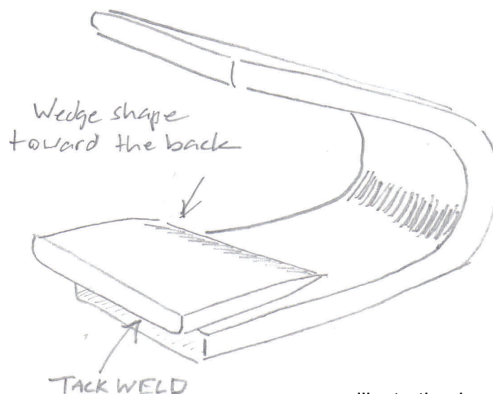


illustration by John Hege

Warm the folded bar in the forge (you may have to take it out to let the heat distribute); then bring it up to forging temperature, but not welding temperature. Dip the back of the bar where it's folded into water so it will keep its shape and then lay it on the anvil with the back hanging off the side and bend the ends together and flat, leaving an open eye at the back side for the handle. Flux the halves well and put it back in the forge to bring it up to welding heat.

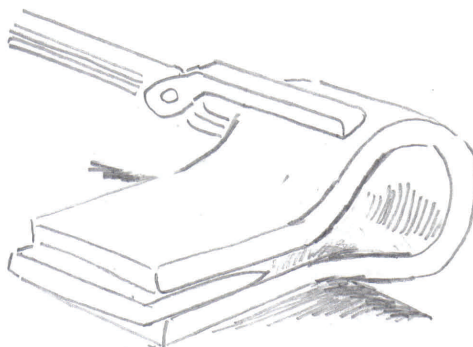


illustration by John Hege

When the time comes to weld, don't hit it too hard. If it's hot enough, it will feel soft under the hammer for the first few blows. Strike near the bit at first, then work back towards the eye. Flux it again and put it back in the forge. When you take it out the second time, strike where you think it may not be welded at first, then start drawing it out to length. Turn it over frequently and keep checking for straightness, striking about the same number of blows on either side. Once you've decided which side is going to be the top, draw the face of the out towards the bottom to get the blade shape you want.

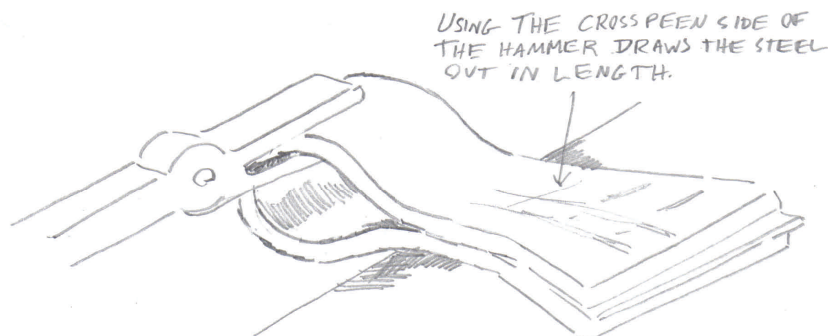


illustration by John Hege

Now that you have about the shape you want, heat the back side of the head to a good orange color just short of welding heat. You should have a tapered drift in a good strong vise set up and have on hand something to drive the head over the drift. A length of pipe with a cap on one end works well. Put the tomahawk head over the drift and drive it down to shape the eye for the handle. Watch your weld carefully as it may try to pull apart when you spread the eye out. It may take a couple of heats to get the eye shaped the way you want it.

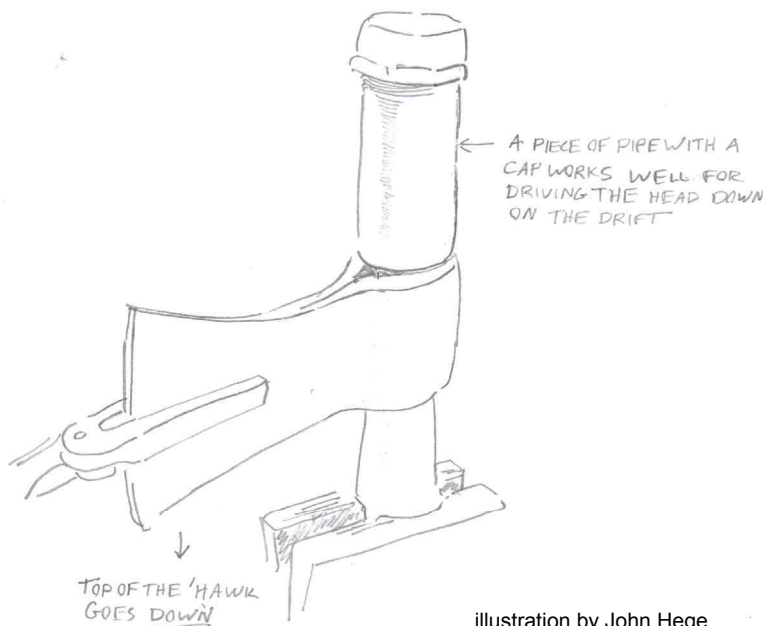


illustration by John Hege

Once the eye is shaped, you'll want to do some straightening and fine tuning on the blade end. Finish with a flatter on both sides to take out the big dents. When you're done, normalize the steel by heating your tomahawk up one more time and letting it cool slowly either in the forge or buried in wood ash or some other insulating material.

The 'hawk can be finished by draw filing or grinding, whatever suits you. Any ornamentation like file work or engraving should be done before hardening. The possibilities really are endless, and there are countless examples of antique tomahawks that may have design elements you'll want to try. When it's done, it should be differentially heat treated so the back side doesn't get hardened. Place the blade end in the forge and leave the back end out so you can bring the front up to temperature but not the back. After quenching, draw the temper in, either by placing the blade near the forge or with a propane torch.

In each issue, we hope to feature one knife-maker, but in order to do this, we need information from you. The questionnaire gives basic information and more to help us get to know you.

If you have not yet filled out the questionnaire, please do so legibly and mail it as soon as possible to Bill Bisher, President or Rebecca Dresser, Editor 1015 Beck Road, Denton, NC 27239 P.O. Box 316, Danbury, NC 27016

GUILD QUESTIONNAIRE

(Please don't be chintzy with your answers; we want to get to know you! Use extra paper if you need more space.)

Name: _____ Address: _____

Phone and Email: _____ Age/Birthday: _____

How did you find out about our Guild AND when did you join? _____

Who or what was your major influence when you began knife-making or collecting AND why? _____

Favorite Knife, Knifemaker(s), etc AND why? _____

Preference? Forging or Stock Removal? _____ Style/Pattern? _____

Favorite Steel or Steels? _____ Area of Expertise? _____

Favorite Step or Part in knife making? _____

Is everything done in your shop? Sheaths/Heat Treating, etc? _____

Affiliations? _____ Website? _____

When did you start making knives? _____

How much time do you spend in your shop in a given week? Describe your shop set up, please. _____

Please tell about making your first knife. _____

What knives sell best for you? _____

2009 KNIFEMAKING CLASSES

AT MONTGOMERY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

www.montgomery.cc.nc.us

Silver Wire Inlay with Steve Keeslar

July 17—19, \$240

Learn the decorative art of inlaying silver wire into wooden gunstocks and knife handles. Students will learn design, layout, and proper tool techniques to make beautiful patterns.

Basic Knife-making with Travis Daniel

August 20—23, \$315

Learn knife-making by designing and making a knife under the guidance of the instructor. Each student will grind, heat, and finish a knife using the stock removal method. This class is for beginners to intermediates who want to perfect their knife-making talents.

Automatic Folding Knives with Ed VanHoy

September 10—13, \$315

Design and craft a spring-loaded folding knife. The course will include basic principles and methods of construction required to make this type of knife. Techniques will include drilling, tapping, grinding, and finishing.

Forged Scagel with James Batson

September 24—26, \$315

Learn the basics of forging and assembling a classic William Scagel style folding knife. Students will learn how to forge the blade and prepare it with a file and grinder for heat treating. Course is designed for all levels.

The Art of Mokume Gane with Phillip Jones

October 1—4, \$315

Learn the ancient Japanese technique of combining various copper-based metals for decoration in knife-making or jewelry-making.

Basic Damascus Steel Making with Tommy McNabb

October 16—18, \$240

This will be an intense class covering Damascus steel, basic and advanced pattern development and finishing. The class will address many aspects of making Damascus steel, such as billet preparation, steel combination, & tooling.

OTHER COURSES OF INTEREST

Beginning and Intermediate Metal Engraving with Jesse Houser

August 3—12, \$60 + \$50 supply fee

This two-week course will focus on drawing and cutting basic and intermediate designs for engraving metals. The class is self-paced, and during the second week, students will work on their own designs and projects.

Alternative Metal Finishes – Brownells Tech

August 10 - 14, \$60 + \$50 supply fee

The purpose of this class is to familiarize students with various alternative finishes other than hot caustic bluing. Instruction and demonstration will be in hot water bluing treatments such as Brownells Classic Rust Blue, Dicropan IM, and Nitre Blue. Students will also be instructed in the setup and use of Zinc and Manganese Parkerizing and in the setup and application of various spray-on finishes. Students will have the opportunity to apply Parkerizing or one of the spray-on finishes to at least one firearm and possibly a second one if time allows.

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: _____ Renewal: _____

Member Category: Maker _____ Collector _____ Student _____

Mail form and check to:
NC Custom Knifemakers Guild
Attn Tony Kelly
348 Bell Road
Kinston, NC 28504

NCCKG SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM APPLICATION FORM

All applications are due by December 31 of each year. A drawing will be held by the Board of Directors during the January meeting . If your name is drawn, you will be notified, and it is your responsibility to pay Montgomery Community College for the knife-making class you choose. You must complete the course, send a copy of your certificate to the NCCKG Treasurer, demonstrate your new skill at a Guild meeting or write an article for the Guild newsletter. At that time, the course fee will be refunded to you. Please note that the scholarship covers only the course fee; all other expenses are the responsibility of the student.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Course Name and Date: _____

Mail form to:
NC Custom Knifemakers Scholarship Program
Attn Tony Kelly
348 Bell Road
Kinston, NC 28504

LOOK INSIDE FOR....

Photos from Recent Guild Meeting

In Memorium: Wayne Whitley

Feature on Making Tomahawks

Info on and Map to Next Guild Meeting

This issue's Featured Knifemaker



CLASSIFIEDS

WANTED

Looking for 2" and 4" Contact Wheel for Bader grinder. May also be interested in other Bader attachments. Call John at 336.593.8324

FOR SALE

1982 Ford F100 pickup truck. \$1000. Runs good, looks okay. Call John at 336.593.8324

Please send all classified ads to Rebecca at rdresser@hughes.net.