

RawHide Gazette

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"Without question, the RawHide Gazette is by far the best and most informative and comprehensive Guild publications of all of them! You are to be commended for your very fine and professional efforts. Keep up the good work. With admiration"
/signed/

Al & Ann Stohlman, December 1997

Volume 7, Issue 11

Puget Sound Leather Artisans Co-Op

February 2002

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Meeting Announcement

NEXT MEETING:

Meeting time: 2-5pm
February—10th
at 4248 A St. S.E., Auburn WA
(see back page for map)

Leather Jewelry by Lajos Kuti

Lajos was kind enough to give PSLAC permission to show some examples of his Leather Jewelry.

Here are some excerpts from his web site:

Our family enterprise manufactures leather bracelets, hair grips, pendants and different kinds of accessories since 1980. We have developed a handicraft technique, that is so far unique in Europe.

We will show you several product types which you can order on-line directly from our web site. You can also choose from hundreds of "one of a kind items", which we have put on our auction site. We invite you to look at those too.

We have designed accessories for women, men and there are also unisex pieces. Our products are made of 2-4 mm thick real cowhide. As you see our hundreds of products, you may notice, that we rarely make identical pieces. There are



<http://www.leatherjewels.com/index.html>



Barrettes

thousands of variations such as color, design, size and decoration, so it is almost impossible to put everything in every color and size on a web page. We hope, you will also agree that this makes our artwork unique and different from those factory made products.

The bracelets are equipped with a long lasting solid brass patent clasp. They are easy to push together, resistant if pulled, still easy to break open.

The decorations are colorful pieces of hand painted Murano enamel.

Lajos Kuti

Email: kutilajos@leatherjewels.com



Necklace



Bracelets



Barrettes

<http://www.leatherjewels.com/index.html>

A New Moon over Hide Crafters

Fort Worth, Texas, December 26, 2001



Hide Crafter Productions, Inc. of Fort Worth, Texas has announced the appointment of Mr. **Don Moon** to be **Vice President of Hide Crafter Leathercraft**. Previously Mr. Moon worked for Tandy Leather Company for 15 years as a Store Manager, Regional Manager and as President of the company from 1996 until 1998.

George Hurst, President states, "We are very fortunate to have obtained the services of Don Moon. He brings a wealth of experience in both administrative and leadership skills as well as being a fine leathercrafter. He is an experienced horseman who has saddlemaking skills in addition to being an outstanding salesman and teacher of leathercraft techniques. Most of all he has a love for the business and is dedicated to the advancement of the craft."

A Referral

Dusty Wert wrote: *I was asked at the Pendleton Show if I knew anyone who could make something for a lady and I gave her Kathy's cell phone number and this project came from that conversation that I had with that lady. I usually don't give phone numbers out, but I knew that I had only one chance at this*

one. So I took a gamble that it would be OK to give her phone number to a stranger.

This is the results of my giving Kathy's phone number to the lady:

Kathy Ashley wrote: *Here is an office gift -- an album of the Meadow Creek Lodge located in Hermiston. She apparently talked to you at the leather show*

Brettun's Village Shops
Offering a 10% discount to the PSLAC members

and you sent her to me. Thanks, they really loved it and it gave me some good construction practice.

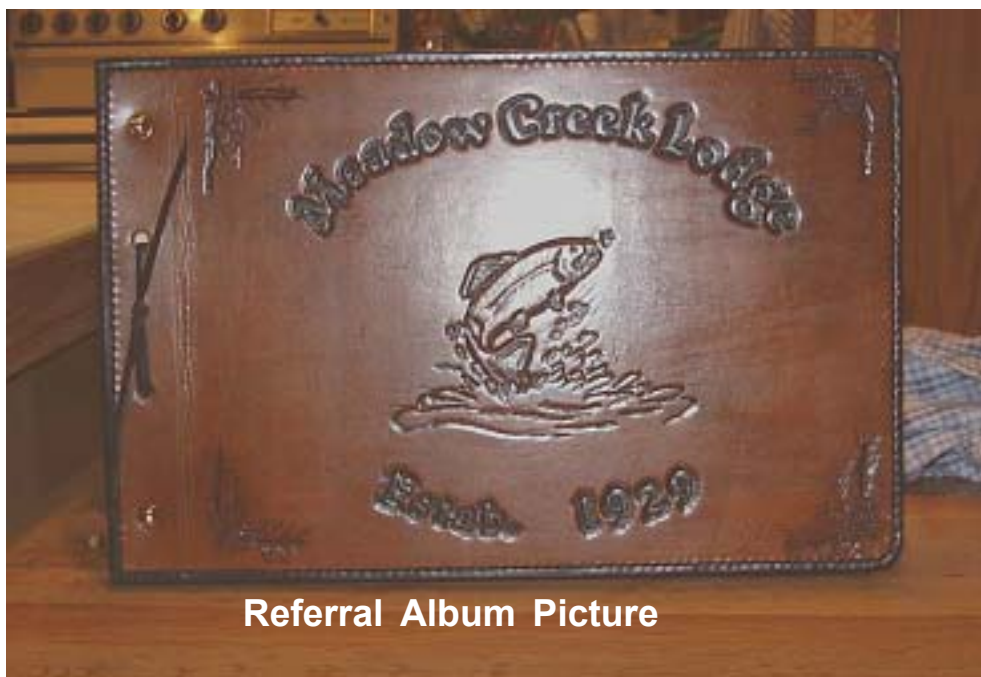
TLF Hires Jim Linnell as Director of Operations for Tandy Leather

FORT WORTH, Texas, Jan. 15 / PRNewswire/ -- **The Leather Factory, Inc.** (Amex: TLF - news) today announced that **Jim Linnell** has been employed as **Director of Operations for Tandy**

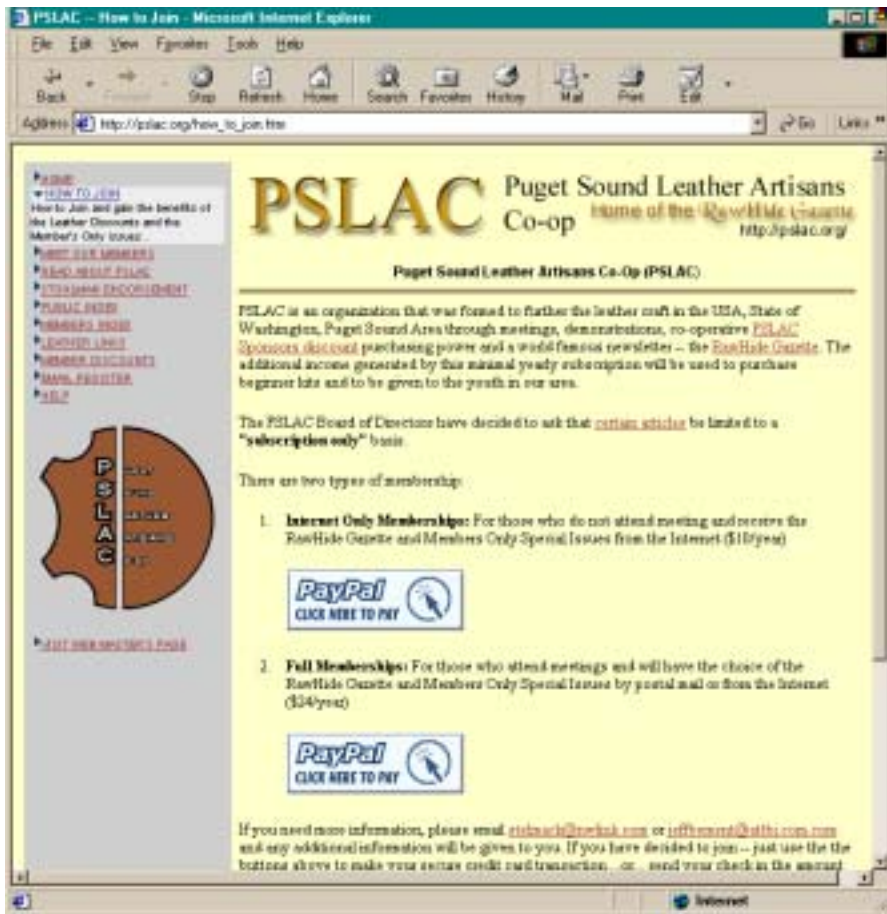
Leather Company. Mr. Linnell brings with him 35 years of experience in leatherworking and successful management of retail operations.

Mr. Linnell began working for Tandy Leather Company in 1978 as a store manager, and eventually became Regional Manager of 28 stores in the Rocky Mountain states. In 1989, he became President of Joshua's Christian Stores, a retail store chain of religious books, music and gifts. During his tenure with Joshua's, the chain grew from an 18-store regional chain to a 75-store national chain. Mr. Linnell is also co-founder of a leather supply company located in Fort Worth, Texas, and most recently, he was Executive Vice-President of a local retail leathercraft company.

Wray Thompson, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of The Leather Factory, Inc. commented, "We believe Jim's experience with the retail store chain concept, as well as his leatherworking background, makes him the perfect candidate to fill Tandy Leather's Director of Operations position. He's well known in the industry as a leathercrafter and a successful businessman. The combination of experience certainly qualifies him for his new position with Tandy Leather."



Referral Album Picture



The Leather Factory, Inc., (<http://www.leatherfactory.com>), headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas, is an international marketer and wholesale distributor of a

Trader's
Stitching Posts at Wholesale
Offering PSLAC Members a Discount

broad product line including leather, leatherworking tools, buckles and adornments for belts, leather dyes and finishes, shoe repair supplies, saddle and tack hardware, and do-it-yourself kits, and is a manufacturer and distributor of fancy hat trims, leather lacing and kits. The Company distributes its products through 30 sales and distribution units located throughout the U.S. and Canada and through its subsidiary, Tandy Leather Company, via mail/telephone/web site orders (<http://www.tandy-leather.com>) and

The Leather Factory -- Spokane
Offering a wholesale discount to the PSLAC members

1 retail store. Its common stock trades on the American Stock Exchange with the symbol "TLF".

PayPal in Operation

The ability to pay your annual PSLAC member dues has been set up on the PSLAC web site. This makes it quick, secure and easy to electronically pay the \$10 per year membership for Internet Only Members or the \$24 per year membership for the US Postal Mailing and Meeting Members. We didn't think that many people would use it, but so far, in a months time, five people have made their payments the electronic way. You can always check your membership status by going to the web site at:

<http://pslac.org>

...and entering your name or email address and the expiration date will be displayed to you.

Bob Stelmack
 Wellingore, UK



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This Months SPOTLIGHT on PRO-CARV — Working and Tooling
Leather Formulation

DIRECTIONS:
 Dilute concentrate with water: 1 part PRO-CARV to 10 parts water is recommended for carving and tooling. When immersing the leather for shaping or forming, add 8 oz. PRO-CARV to 3 gallons of water.

NO CASING IS NECESSARY

Leather can be immersed or sponged with this solution. PRO-CARV eliminates the need to case leather. PRO-CARV allows you to begin working with the leather after immersing for 3-5 minutes because of the very rapid penetration into even the thickest hide. Allow the surface to dry somewhat before beginning forming or carving.

Contact MacPherson's, Hide Crafters, Goliger's Leather,
and The Leather Factory for any of the fine Bee Natural
Leather products. *Advertisement*

December Meeting Review by Harry

(ed. note: I was a little late in placing this in the January printed version of the RawHide Gazette and my humble apologies to the author -- Harry. This was added to the on-line version just as it was released.)

Len Madisen had fourteen participants in his Turk's Head Knot Tying class. "I had a higher percentage of successes than with the Boy Scouts", was Len's summary of the workshop. "No one appeared to have lace permanently tied to their fingers at the meeting, which is total success to me".

Woody Collins led the formal meeting. His main point was scheduling Den Demos for the **Cub Scouts, 4-H** and anyone else interested. Our limit goal is one per week. **Woody, Ken Eriksen, and Jeff Bement** all expressed concern about burn-

The Leathercraft Store
Offering a Discount to PSLAC members

out, and the need for more members to become involved. Personally, I find it refreshing to get out and show the youngsters how to pound leather. Their enthusiasm is contagious! If you are at all interested, contact Woody. Your skill level will increase, and the kids love the attention. And you will have the pleasure of yours truly company for an evening!

General Seymour announced he is conducting class and private lessons in his home.

Ken Imus volunteered to give a gold craft painting exhibition.

Woody announced that **Renton Technical College** is scheduling leather craft classes next term.

Len provided handouts with directions for tying the Turk's Head knot for those who did not attend the workshop. Some

generous soul brought in duplicate Doodlepages for those interested. Thanks for your generosity.

PLEASANT VALLEY SADDLE SHOP
Offering a 20% discount to the PSLAC members

The Demos slots for the March and May meetings are still open. **Anyone have a skill, procedure or technique that you want to share?** We all appreciate the effort it takes to gain proficiency in this craft, and really appreciate the effort of organizing that knowledge into a demo.

There was a wide range of items on the Show and Tell table. We had a beautiful original pattern sketch done by **Jackie Holiday**. General is actually carving leather again, and brought in a gorgeous purse he is doing for a Christmas present. **Phil** carved a **John Deere** tractor on a wallet for a family member. Ken Eriksen showed an example of an adjustable hat band and, Ken Imus brought in that beautiful batik finished Day Timer cover. Finally, **Barb Lord** had some purses from her grandfather and great grandfather. The different styles in vogue at the different times were apparent. What nice pieces of history to be able to see.

Grant, Blake, and their mother, **Glenna**, were back learning stamping. They pounded out ferns similar to the ones on the cover of the **LC&SJ** a couple issues back. And Grant won a brand new glue pot in the raffle!

What is in store for us? Well, **Ken Eriksen is giving us a demo in Saddle Stitching in January. Ken Imus will show us, hands on, the Leather Batiking Finishing method in February.**

We are trying to get **Rob Barr** here in April to give a three-day workshop. Con-

tact Len Madsen with a deposit to reserve a spot. I believe there is a discount for payments in full 30 days prior to the class.

Finally — thank you to the folks that brought the chips and dip, and cookies for snacks.

Hope the Holidays were joyful and the New Year is prosperous for all!

Harry

Tips-Tips-Tips

Bits and Bobs -- Use fishing tackle boxes to store them. Those snaps, grommets, 3-D stamps, pony beads, and much more. The bits and bobs stay organized in the boxes.



Meet Leann Stevenson, one of PSLAC's newest members



RawHide Lamps

I went to Mt. Rainier (a while ago) and in the lodge were lamps made of Rawhide. Here are the pictures and if you like them, put them in the RawHide Gazette..

I don't know how they made them, but I think if anyone is interested they can study the pictures and figure it out.



Dusty Wert
dustytoy@nwlinc.com

J & W LeatherCrafters
Offering a 10% discount to the PSLAC members



Photos by Dusty Wert



**Start a Child in
Leathercraft Today**



**Bill Churchill's
Childrens
Leather Program**

*Confidence
Observation
Practice
Imagination*

RawHide Gazette

Editor / Publisher: Bob Stelmack
Co-Founders: Bill Churchill &
General Seymour
Treasurer/Secretary: Jeff Bement

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email: Jeffbement@aol.com

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All submissions are subject to editing for clarity and length. All articles submitted must be accompanied by name, address and permission of writer.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to PSLAC, c/o Jeff Bement, 3942 SW - 329th PL, Federal Way, WA 98023, U.S.A.

Advertising Rates

The *RawHide Gazette* now offers advertising space to interested parties. Ad spaces are as follows:

- 1/4 Page or Business Card \$60 USD
- 1/2 Page \$110 USD
- 1 Full Page \$200 USD

These rates cover a six month time period. Guild members are entitled to a 25% discount. Leather companies supporting PSLAC are given free Business Card size advertisement, additional space at regular rates.

Maker Stamps

I was a little disappointed in my latest order from Hide Crafters Leathercraft. It was not their fault, it was my expectation. I gave them a drawing of my Japanese Honko (old style Chinese characters) that is the equivalent of my last name in Japanese. Phonetically it is: su-te-ru-ma-ku, since there is no "L" sound in the Japanese language, they use the "ru" sound that, to their ears, sounds close to the "L" sound. The stamp came back in the exact replication of the drawing I sent in, but it was not what I had expected. The "negative" or the portion that will not be pressed into the leather was cut with what looked like fine Dremel tool. The pattern was exactly as my drawing, but not very deep into the aluminum plate that was adhered to another aluminum plate which was bonded to a 3-D stamp base. The shallowness of the engraving, coupled with the thinness of the first aluminum plate make for a less than spectacular result. Like I said, the design is exactly as the drawing submitted so I can't really complain.



Quite dangerous, but interesting results. Something I would like to try again and make my own maker stamp. Basically, a piece of metal is coated with an acid resist, such as a tar like substance, brushed, drawn or silk screened on it. The metal is then placed in the acid and allowed to rest until the acid eats away the metal in the exposed areas. The metal is removed and the tar substance is washed off with a petroleum solvent and the stamp can then be adhered to a 3-D stamp base. The beauty of the acid etching, is that the acid eats not only down, but even under cuts the edge to make the embossed design more distinct.

I'll use the stamp that I purchased, but will have to grind the excess overhang to allow a clean impression so as to not impress the second aluminum plate into the image.

Bob Stelmack
Wellington, UK

What this did make me think of, was back in high school when I experimented with two hobbies. One was Copper Enameling and the other was Electronics. With Copper Enameling and printed circuit boards I used a technique called acid etching.

PSLAC Membership Application

If you know someone who is interested in leathercraft — give them this information:
Puget Sound Leather Artisan Co-Op MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

YOUR NAME: _____
STREET ADDRESS: _____
CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____
PHONE NUMBER: (____)____-_____
E-Mail: _____

Send this form along with \$24.00 (\$10.00 for Internet Membership) your first years dues to:

Jeff Bement
3942 SW - 329TH PL
Federal Way, WA 98023
U.S.A.

*If you would like to subscribe to *The Leather Crafters & Saddlers Journal* through the Co-Op and include an additional \$26.00 for a one year subscription.*

The Bill Churchill Children's Leather Program AWARD Nomination Form for the Year 2002



PSLAC Mission is...

- To further the enjoyment of leather and to help others learn more about the real joy of leather - working as a group and sharing ideas and knowledge of leather, its uses and how to use it. To pass on this knowledge to others and then have them pass it on to the new members who come later.
- Form a fellowship with peers, young and old, expert and non-expert, anyone who has the love of leather.
- To show and demonstrate to people outside the Co-Op leather in all forms and try to help them to become interested in leather...to share...time and talent, with all others in the Co-Op -- especially the young.

The **Bill Churchill Children's Leather Program Award** is designed to recognize PSLAC members who are caring on those principles of the PSLAC mission.

Nominations can be made by any PSLAC member and should be in writing. This form can be used, or any other written method is acceptable.

The nominations should give reasons and examples why they feel the nominee should receive an award.

- How have they helped further the craft?
- Are they active in PSLAC activities?
- Do they help promote leather craft by fair entries, demonstrations, etc.
- Helped generate interest in others to pursue the craft.
- Willing to share knowledge for the benefit of all.

The PSLAC directors would make the decision for each year and the award would be a once in a person's lifetime. The award would include a medal similar to the Stohlman award with a replica of Bill's hands and his axiom: C.O.P.I. (confidence – observation – practice – imagination).

Send your **nominations by April 30th, 2002** to:

PSLAC
c/o Jeff Bement
3942 SW - 329th PL
Federal Way, WA 98023
U.S.A.

...or... email to pslac@pslac.org

RULES:

1. The award may only be won once in a lifetime.
2. The Directors will evaluate the nominations and decide on a winner – one each year.
3. If one of the Directors is nominated, that Director will be replaced by another PSLAC member for the purposes of selecting a winning nomination.
4. The award will be give out at the summer PSLAC Annual Bar-B-Que.
5. Nominations will be due by April 30th.

**The Bill Churchill Children's Leather Program
AWARD Nomination Form for the Year 2002**
Give examples for each category:

How have they helped further the craft?

Are they active in PSLAC activities?

Do they help promote leather craft by fair entries, demonstrations, etc.?

Are they willing to share knowledge for the benefit of all?

Cowboy by Ken Imus

Picture (1) Tooling:

Tracing the pattern onto damp 6 oz. leather, everything was carved, except the wrinkle lines on the neck and around the eyes. Those wrinkle lines were put in with a spoon (modeler). A checkered beveler was used on the outside and a smooth beveler on the face, vest and hands.

Picture (2) Embossed:

This shows the embossing. Wet just the cowboy's front and back. Start the embossing with a ballbearing about half the size of a marble. Placing the ballbearing on the tooling marble, leather over the ballbearing and rolling the leather over the ballbearing to get all the stretch in the leather that is possible. Then go to a larger marble and get more embossing effects. Three sizes of marbles were used in this project. Then additional embossing was done with a ballmolder. As the leather dried, the ballmolder was used to make sure the cheekbone, hat, knuckles and fingers had the right stretch and shape. As the leather dries this is the time to get the detail you want. Try to get things as close to the finished shapes before using the filler putty.

Picture (3) with Filler in place:

This shows the putty, leather dust mixed with rubber cement, which should be the consistency of cookie dough. Paint the embossed area with rubber cement and fill it with the putty. Let the putty dry about 4 hours. Take a spoon and press in the chin, jawline, eye and nose. Do what shaping you can before the putty gets hard.



Photos by Dusty Wert



Picture (4) Putting final tooling and knife work on picture:

Here we see 'the cowboy' with the putty hard and ready for the final tooling. Tooling around cowboy with a checkered beveler, then a matting tool and beveling the hair, ear, eye, shirt, vest and hat. It doesn't take much beveling, because most of the detail was worked in before the putty dried with a spoon. The hair and mustache were cut with a swivel knife. A beveler and small pear shader was used to shape the ear. Cut and lift the hair and ear with a surgical scalpel. A spoon was used to clean up and put the fingernails and lines on the knuckles and hands. Run a pear shader across the hat, wet it a little more, then lay rough sandpaper on the hat and rub it with a spoon to texture it and call it done.

Picture (5) DONE:

Finished with Krylon Matte Finish.



Ken Imus

On The Demo Trail

The month of January has its share of demonstrations, some already done and some that will take place after this writing.

On the 7th, **Jeff and his wife**, myself and a favorite member of mine from Idaho, (**Jackie Holliday**) went to **Beacon Hill** and ran a demo for **Wolves and Webolos Scouts** at a church recreation center, forgot to count heads, but we had a full house.

On the 8th, I went to a **Webolos Den of Scouts in Kent** and we spent the evening doing a free form fern design. They had some prior experience with leather at a

day camp and wanted to do something a little more advanced.

The 12th (Saturday), I went to **Graham** and sat in on a new event they are trying to get going. Seems that the **Webolos** have major events, but there isn't really anything for the smaller kids. What they have done is set up a **Wolves/Bears Day**. That's where the scouts get to learn different crafts and skills-usually presented by Webolos or Boy Scouts. They ask me to come and work a table for the Scouts to make a neckerchief slide and a rounder.

They got our names from **Roy Denton of Ft. Lewis** when we had done the Webolos weekend last year. They supplied the leather and I just brought the tools. They came through as Packs with just Wolves and Bear rankings. I think there were 9 packs involved with anywhere from 3 to 9 boys in each -- had a few adults and siblings too. All the Leaders were more than willing to lend a hand and a lot of fun was had from 8:30 to 3:00.

On the 15th, **Barbara Lourdes, Dave Jensen, Jeff Bement, and myself** went to



Photos by Dusty Wert





Lakewood, (by American Lake) and ran a Demo for a **Pack** meeting. With Dave's help we ran 8 pounding stations and did over 25 scouts plus others in just under one and a half hours. Jeff brought a friend who is in his wife's **4-H Group** and I've forgotten her name already, but she was a big help and took some pictures for us and I just want to say a Big thank you to her and sorry I didn't remember your name but as you get older you tend to forget easily.

The 21st, Martin Luther Kings Birthday, found **Dave** and me working with the **4-H Kids** on their **Marvelous Monday** event. We had done it last year and were asked to come again. We had two 55 minute sessions where we explained a bit about leather then had them make a rounder using 2-D stamps along with a veiner and camouflage tool. I was told as we left that it was considered one of the best classes that day.

On the 30th of January, Jeff and I will be taking **Paula Marquis** on her first **Den Demo** with the Co-op up in the **Northgate** area. I'm sure she will have some great ideas to add to the Demos that will enhance them.

Now for a part of the report that I have been putting off for awhile. Due to some changes that are taking place in my life that require quite a bit of time and energy, I'll be leaving the position of Co-director at the June Meeting. I'm telling everyone at the same time so everyone knows at the same time. There is a good chance that I may be leaving the area within a year or so and I don't want to cause any disruption of the Co-op by waiting too long. I want all to know that this has been a wonderful experience for me, one that I wouldn't trade for the world but I must move on. I will continue to be a member where ever I go and carry forth the ideals that the Co-op was started for—Thank You.



Woody Collins



Ken's Leather Sewing Seminar



Photos by Dusty Wert



- 1 - Ken instructing the seminar**
- 2 - Making holes with awl**
- 3,5 - Ken's thread holder**
- 4 - Template for the pouch and the hole placement**
- 6 - Ken's bag to hold all his stuff**

January Meeting Sharing



Photos by Dusty Wert



1,2 - Ken Imus latest project (notice that the antlers stand out)

3 - Woody's latest (pattern from a book for a Scroll saw)

4 - Len Madison with belts and wallet at show and tell

5 - Jeff with his projects at show and tell

6 - Jim Farrell with arm guards at show and tell



January Meeting Sharing



- 1 - Jeff's unfinished day planner**
- 2 - Len Madison's belts**
- 3 - Jeff's checkbook**
- 4- Vern's Montana farm house with close-up of the corners**

Making Stamping Tools

*(ed. Note: Dave started a very informative series of questions and answers that brought many of the "secrets" of stamping tools out for all to see. Many thanks to **Bob Beard** for his detailed sharing among the leather crafters on the IILG email members' list. Membership in the IILG group is strongly recommended to add additional leather knowledge, in this case – making tools. Please see <http://iilg.org/> for membership details.)*

Dave said:

I have recently acquired a checkering file and was trying my hand at modifying some tools last night. So far it seems like it will be fun but I plan on only making my own "seldom use" tools. I will leave making the everyday tools to the pros.

My questions today are:

After laying in the checkering, does anyone go over the checker with a 3 Square file (fine diamond shape) as recommended in the directions or do you just leave it with the grooves made by the checkering file?

What is the cause of my tool "sticking" to the leather? My first backgrinder looked wonderful, but I could actually hear and feel it gripping the leather when I would lift the tool. Is this due to the angles I used for the checkering or do I need to polish the tool after checkering? If you polish the tools after checkering, what do you use?

Thanks,

David Eppler

Email: theleathershoppe@hotmail.com

David,

I read your mail concerning the use of a checkering file. Perhaps I can give you a hand on this subject.

I use only a checkering file to place lines

on the face of a tool, Using a 3 square file can help close the "flat spots on the tops of each pyramid but, because the 3 square file almost duplicates the cuts of a checkering file. A four square file does an even better job of closing the gap at the top of a pyramid especially when using a coarse # 0 or a #00 file.

The first step is to cover the face of your tool with a perfect set of lines going in one direction only. You should keep filing until these first sets of lines are with-

Hide Crafter Productions
Offers a wholesale discount to PSLAC members

out any flaws. Use care not to alter the shape or curve of your tool blank. When satisfied with this first set of lines, now, you can cross these first lines with a set of lines going perpendicular to the first set of lines. You must make passes in each direction until ALL lines are even and equal in depth in all directions.

I use my checkering file to bring all the lines to full depth. Each diamond should be fully pointed at the top without any "flat" spots.

The sticking that you are receiving after you finish checkering is due to a "new" file. The teeth are very sharp when these files are new. You can flatten the tops of your checkering with a fine rouge or sandpaper. This will however make a new pattern... The sharpness of your file work will be compromised. This will also bring back the flat spots that you worked so hard to eliminate. Using a buffing machine will do even more damage to the lines as it will round off all the details of your file work making small bumps in the leather instead of nice clean lines or checkers.

To solve the problem of sticking tool impressions I use a "worn in file" to cut my lines. This worn file does not leave as sharp of a cut and therefore eliminates the sticking problem. The worn in file was created by using it to file around 500 plus tools. Your new file will stop sticking after several tools have been filed. It

does not take that long to break in. My present file has cut a few thousand tools. I will use a "newer" file as a follow up to clean up my lines and perfect my checkering. This new file is only slightly broken in and still quite sharp. This is my personal method of checkering a tool face. With this technique I receive clear sharp line work without sticking.

An alternative to waiting for your file to dull would be to use a 4 corner or square file to "SLIGHTLY" change the top angle of your pyramids. Run this file on one edge thru each line in both directions. The angle of this file will only contact the tops of each point. A 3 square file will reach to the bottom of the cut and alter the precision of the checkering file lines. It will not change the top of a point or dull the sharpness enough to stop the sticking. It will just make your job harder and deeper.

If you use sandpaper to dull the checkering, the tops of the checkers will be flattened, the lines will appear wider, the checkers will be duller, softer and a different size than you expected. This problem will be compounded when you try to match other tools in a set with your sanded version.

Your checkering file has the perfect pitch and depth to provide you with perfect line work every time! Altering this will cause a new set of problems to deal with. DON'T USE SANDPAPER or MA-

CLPW Leather

10% Discount for PSLAC Members

CHINES! Stamping a new tool on leather several times will dull the sharpness of these points. Leather is abrasive and will wear down most steels. This technique will not work as well on my tools as they are hardened and heat-treated. I doubt you will be using high carbon tool steel in your practice.

The most important advice I can give you is to practice a lot. Checkering is not easy. I filed over 500 tools before my eye

was trained and experienced enough to detect the slight imperfections.

I hope this helps you a bit. Practice will help you the most. Feel free to contact me personally if you continue to have problems. Have fun.

With best regards,

Bob Beard

Email: beardclan@cyberport.com
Pro-Series Tool Co. Inc.

Bob,

Believe me, trying my hand at this has made me even more committed to buying all my daily “work-horse” tools from you pros. I may be willing to put up with a bit of difficulty using a tool for a dozen impressions on a piece. But there is no way I want anything but the most perfectly balanced, beveled, checkered tool for beveling or anything else with several thousands of impressions every time I use it. I managed to find a 50 LPI (lines

TWLeather, Inc.
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per inch) checkering file so I could make some backgrounders that would more closely match the bevelers I have purchased from you. Right now, I am just reworking old Tandy tools and I have some small stainless steel bolts that I plan to use too. The picture I am working on is a pattern by Paul Burnett, Alphonse Mucha’s “Dancer” that he published in the LC&SJ several years ago. It has lots of tiny spots to get into. The other thing I will need to make for this project will be some very small filigree chisels. My wife has me on house-cleaning duty tonight, but I plan to spend quite a bit of time this weekend practicing.

Thank you so very much for the help. I will let you know how it goes.

On a related note – what are the advantages of the hardened tool steel that you

use verses the stainless steel used by some other toolmakers? I would swear that the Hackbarth matter I have looks dulled (the checkering) and it isn’t but a few years old. May be I just don’t like the LPI on that tool.

Thanks again,

David Eppler

e-mail: david.eppler@saraleedirect.com

Hi Bob,

It sounds to me like you make your tools in much the same way that a friend of mine makes his knives. His name is Wally Hayes, past president of the Canadian Knife Makers Association. One thing he has told me on many occasions is that the more carbon you add to the steel, the more brittle it can become. I have a few questions about this for you about the tool-making process.

How do you address the brittleness problem? I know there are a number of things you can add to the steel to overcome the tendency of high carbon content to produce brittle results. Do you use any of them, such as molybdenum or vanadium, or do you just go with the high carbon content alone? Also, do you use differential heat-treating, such as hardening the tool face while annealing the shafts?

As a collector of blades I have in my possession a number of differentially heat-treated blades in which the edge has been hardened to nearly 60 Rockwell while the back and tang have been hardened only to 38 to 40 Rockwell. For instance I own a Daito, an extra long Samurai long sword, which has an edge of 58 RC and a back and tang of 38 RC. This is to maximize cutting performance while allowing the blade to be very resilient and absorb great force and impact, both directly on the edge and in lateral impacts as well (e.g. when parrying). Would differential heat-treating apply to your tools in a similar manner?

I’m quite fascinated by this sort of work

and am thinking about getting into knife and/or tool making, so your expertise and knowledge is greatly appreciated. There are a number of designs for stamping tools that I would like to either make or buy, and knowing just how much work and what the processes are will be of tremendous assistance in reaching my final decision as to whether to make them or hire an expert such as yourself to create them for me.

Thanks a million,

Bear

Email: garylittlebear@sympatico.ca

David,

I have several reasons why I use hardened tool steel instead of stainless. And I’m sure that my opinion will stir up some controversy on the subject. First of all, stainless steel does just that – “stains less”. It is not rust proof. Nor, is it considered “tool steel”. To make stainless steel better suited to making tools, carbon is added. This reduces the corrosion resistance but increases the toughness and durability of the stainless steel. Some stainless steels can be heat treated and

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hardened only because of the addition of carbon. This allows the machining and working of a tool while it is in the annealed or soft state. Upon completion the part can be hardened and tempered increasing its wearability. But heat treatable stainless steels can be fussy about getting hot. If it heats up while it is being worked, it will harden prematurely and can make it most difficult to complete your procedures

You’ve heard the old saying, “They don’t make tools like they used to”. One reason is because tools that stay “pretty without rust or oxidation are desirable. Less emphasis is placed on performance and more on cosmetics. A tool’s first and primary function is to perform its task

well. Being attractive while doing this is secondary.

The goal of my business is to produce the finest tool possible – without any compromise in quality! The foundation of this work is based on my selection of raw materials. I elected to use a high carbon, heat treatable tool steel. “If you are building a tool, use “tool steel” for the job. It takes me just as much time and skill to carve my tool steel as it would to carve soft steel or junk.

The difference is that my finished and hardened tool steel will:

- get sharper
- stay sharper
- accept the tiniest of details
- last longer
- cut cleaner
- increase the burnishing effect on the leather
- require less force to impress the leather
- be more quiet
- survive occasional drops onto the floor
- never bend
- remain intact after an accidental blow into the carving marble or granite
- be stable enough to create exotic shapes that will hold up under impact
- ...and most importantly high carbon steel will preserve the work that I put into the tool for an indefinite amount of time. I’ll trade cosmetics for this kind of performance any day.

Even though the tool is made out of carbon steel, rusting problems are reduced because oxidation does not like hardened tool steel as much as soft steel. Also, rust has more difficulty getting started on polished surfaces. This is another side benefit from a polished tool face. The oxide finish that makes my tools black is a form of controlled rust. It is the same process used in the gun industry for protecting from rust. Oxidation does not like to attack places that are already rusted. The oxide is like a sealer that penetrates the

steel preserving the details of the tool instead of coating it with a layer of chrome that covers the details of an image. I can choose to use any material in the world to make my products. After 35 years of practice in making tools, I still remain convinced that my “high carbon steel” cannot be beat.

Just as a test, I used one of my sharp steep bevelers to cut another tool manufacture’s product in half. (Much like the Buck knife advertisement, pounding through a nail). Holding the one tool in a vice I pounded my tool through the other tools stem with a sledgehammer. The beveler used for this task was not dented or harmed in any way. The bluing wasn’t even removed. Now that is Tuff!

I’ll stop my ranting now... hope it gave you food for thought.

Bob Beard
Pro-Series tools

Gary,

The steel that I use is called 0-1 it is common oil hardened tool steel available all over. Some foundries offer a bit better quality, but they all work pretty well. I could use A-2, air hardening, but have had such great success with 0-1 that I find no need for the added expense of air hardening steel. My swivel knife blades are made of 0-1 or D-2 steel. D-2 is my choice as it is really a tuff material and holds an edge like crazy. It is a lot more expensive than 0-1, but the blades are superior and worth the extra cost. The hardness on my blades ranges from RC59 up to RC63 depending on the clients needs or “wishes”. Some times I will even perform a cryogenic treatment to my blades. This process freezes the steel down to approximately -365 degrees below zero. This really changes things! The durability and wear ability improves between 300 to 500 %. Yet, it keeps the hardness the same. I’m sure your knife-making friend knows all about this trick. IT WORKS!

When I heat-treat these materials I first

take them to their critical temperature (depending on the steel being used). After oil quench, the parts are what is called glass hard, around Rockwell 65-67c. In this state they are very unstable and can shatter while they sit on the table. Stress areas are the worst in sharp corners like 90-degree angles. I sometimes grind my final edges after the heat treat to avoid such stress areas.

My next step is to temper my parts in an oven re-heating them to a specific temperature based on the final hardness that is desired. The higher your tempering degrees the softer yet tougher the parts will become. The lower tempering temperatures leave the steel harder, but help to normalize or stabilize the steel. There is a fine balance between tuff or hard. I have found that my tools run between RC 54-57. This makes my tools as hard as “woodpecker lips”. Yet introduces a degree of wear ability and toughness to the product.

My tools are indeed harder at the head than they are up the stem. As you noted this allows this shock to be absorbed through the shank without the brittleness or shattering qualities of a glass hard tool. The head is harder because I want the integrity of my work to withstand years of heavy use and still remain clear and sharp at the end of such trials.

The way that I stack my tools in the heat treating rack the head receives most of the heat and the shanks are stacked together sheltered from the heat a bit. My tests have shown that while the heads

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maybe RC 55, the shaft can be in the area of RC 42-46. A substantial difference. This makes the shafts impossible to bend and very tuff indeed. Out of 50 or 60 thousand tools I have made, I have seen approximately 10 break over the past 30 years. Almost all of these broken tools were very delicate in the stem area with radical shapes or designs on the head. That is a great average of failures. I’m not looking to improve on this kind of perfor-

mance.

You may enjoy creating your own tools. I sure love my Job. It is however hard and skillful work. To make your own personal tools you may elect to spend several hours or days perfecting a design or carving the steel. Cost is not a factor. When I do it, I must try to solve your design problems, make it work well, be professional in its image and do this in a reasonable amount of time in order to keep the price realistic for my client. This is not always so easy. To assist me in my work and to make some things possible I have invested a sizable fortune in tools, equipment, files, grinders, buffers, heat treating ovens, oxidation tanks, sanding belts, bits, burrs, cutters, etc. Don't forget the knowledge and skill to operate these machines. The 35 years of experience as a professional leather artisan also helps me a bit. A great leather carver does not necessarily make a good leather toolmaker. The same could be said of a great machinist. You need both qualities with a great deal of skill, dedication and patience.

If you have these qualities and the necessary or minimal equipment, you will find creating your own tools a very rewarding pastime. I love this so much that this is how I spend ALL MY TIME!

Letting another professional, or me do the job for you is usually a lot more cost effective. It is my duty to meet your specific goals or needs. The finished product is going to be top quality and will not surrender its clarity or function even under years of productive use. Guaranteed but, you can certainly waste a lot of time, money and energy getting set up to make a simple tool – but, it is fun!

Enjoy.

Bob Beard
Pro-Series Tools

January Meeting Sharing



1 - Braiding by Ken Eriksen -- the 4 strand flat braid is about 2" long

2 - Len Madison's ladies wallet

3 - Jim Farrell's unfinished arm guards



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Jeff Bement's checkbook close-up showing the beveled plug that was put in the back for the concho.



Dusty Johnson

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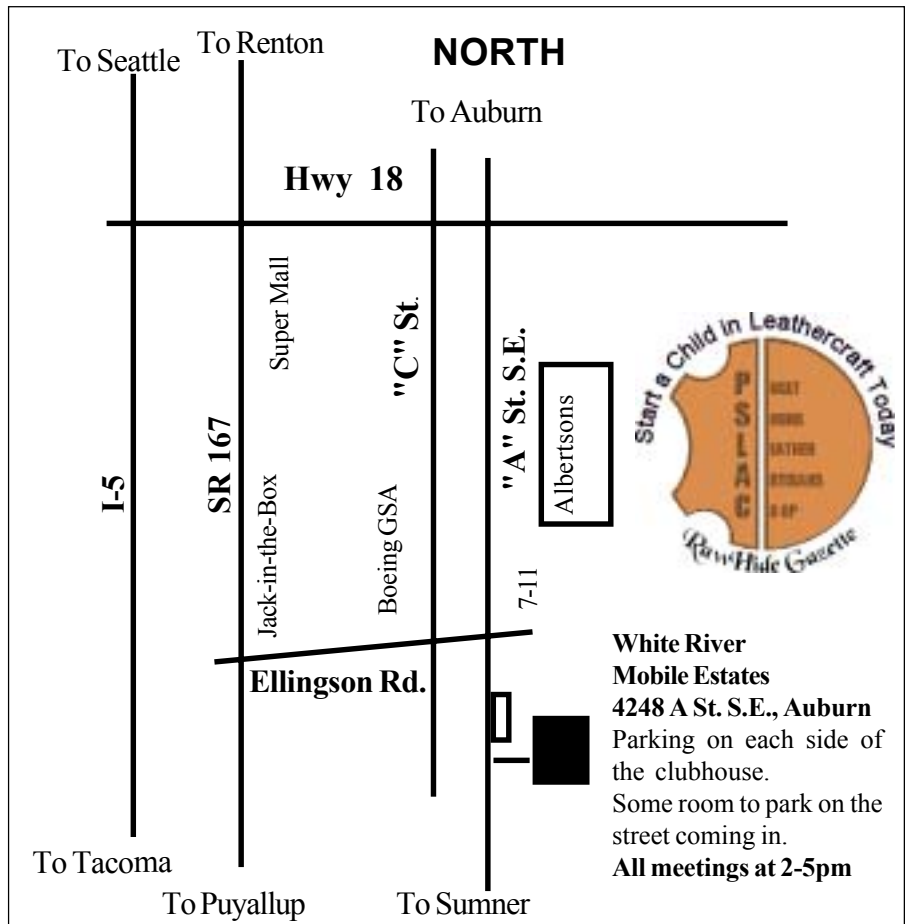
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