

Raw Hide Gazette

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Puget Sound Leather Artisans Co-Op

October 1996

Meeting Activities

Where to start? We had a demonstration on swivel knife use, blade sharpening, casing techniques, cleaning leather, wall mounted tool racks, proposed competitions, and much more — so here goes:

The Swivel Knife

Bill displayed a small sample of swivel knives (over a dozen) that came from X-acto, Craftool, and miscellaneous other companies. Some were the open collar type and some were complete ring types. Some were aluminum, some steel, and some stainless. Some were adjustable - some were fixed with and without ball bearings. In all cases they had one thing in common - they had a blade that allowed leather to be cut in a swivel action using the collar for pressure and the knives shaft for the swivel action. The action requires a smooth, flowing coordination of proper tool movement while applying and releasing pressure (to alter the depth of cut) while pulling and swiveling the knife to alter the direction of cut. Sounds simple - doesn't it? Well it does until you try cutting without recent practice, with less than sharp blade on an improperly cased piece of

leather that has some fill or imperfect spots on it. All four problems can be fixed. Read on:

A Little History of the Swivel Knife:

Swivel knife blades were originally made from regular steel with the blade being approximately 1/8 inch thick, 1/2 inch wide and ground with an angle of approximately 30 degrees. Later the



material made from was changed to tool steel because it held the cutting edge longer but the angle and thickness remained the same. Then they came out with the hollow ground blade so when the knife was held at the proper angle the portion of the blade that started the cutting was narrower and made the cutting of the leather easier. They then came out with an angle blade (still of steel) with the blade thickness still being the same,

which helped in making cutting or carving the leather easier.

Later they came up with the hollow ground blade in the wider flat faced version which made carving leather still easier because when the swivel knife was held at the proper angle the portion of the blade that initially entered the leather was narrower, then widened out, again making the leather easier to carve. At around the same time they came out with an angled blade (of steel) that wasn't as thick which was intended for use when doing filigree work.

Still later they came out with what they called the Rubyat blade because the synthetic ruby was found to hold it's cutting edge longer and didn't require the frequent stropping, but it was not made in a hollow ground version. This was a better blade but it had a fault in that it chipped easily and also it would not stay glued into the steel "shank".

After that came the ceramic blade that is in general use today. It comes in the flat blade, the angled blade of the standard thickness, and an angled blade that is thinner for doing filigree work, but it is not made in the hollow ground version. The newest blade out is made of tungsten carbide steel which is 1/2 inch wide, 1/16th inch thick and hollow ground, but it is not made in the angled version.

Each new development has been intended to do away with most or all of the necessity to strop and hone the cutting edge, but it is still necessary. When you notice that your leather is

getting a little more difficult to carve it is time to check the casing (the leather should feel cool when held against your face) and it is also time to strop your blade, no matter what material the blade is made from.

Bill Churchill
Federal Way

Practice

How do you get to be a leather craftsman? Bill assures us that just thinking about leather carving or buying the tools and books will not make you that special craftsman. Practice - practice - practice!!! Bill showed an "S" and a reverse "S" pattern that work well to keep you loose and ready for those special projects. Bill suggests 10 minutes a day to keep in practice.

Sharpening the Swivel Knife

Bill demonstrated the Craftool "Keen Edge" swivel knife sharpener" (Tandy #8118 for \$7.79) and how the blade is pushed (forward strokes in the direction of the edge) to sharpen the knife and how the blade is pulled (backward strokes away from the edge) to hone the blade.

The final honing is done using a business card or card stock paper that has been rubbed with jewelers rouge. As you use the blade, stop often and use that business card to keep a fine edge honed.

You can also used a piece of leather glued on to a smooth stick to do the same job. The leather strop works best if you rub the surface with jewelers rouge and fully impregnate the surface. A stick about 2" x 6" is large enough.

Altering the Swivel Blade

Bill also showed how he has altered

the swivel blades to make them thinner and changed the angles to allow a much smaller filigree type cut. The altered blade is much more fragile and really does require those rubber tube

covers to protect them. Remember that all Auto Parts stores have a wide selection of rubber hoses that you can select to fit and protect leather tools and swivel knives.

Bill suggests an expensive ceramic sharpening stone to sharpen those swivel knives. His supplier is:

Wood Carvers Supply, Inc.
PO Box 7500
Englewood, FL 34295-7500
1-800-284-6229
FAX 1-941-698-OFAX
Question line: 1-941-698-0123

Which Swivel Blade Should YOU Have

Bill suggests you keep a few swivel knives in their adjustable swivel handles ready for use: a regular blade, a filigree blade, a hair blade, and a double cut blade. Try to adjust the swivel handle to be as long as possible, but still comfortable to give the best control.

Casing Techniques for Cutting and Tooling

Two methods: (1) THE PREFERRED method is to completely soak the

leather in a casing solution, place in the refrigerator overnight, remove the next day and allow to air dry until the surface starts to return to its original color. The leather at this point is ready to cut or tool. It will feel cool to the touch when placed against your cheek. (2) THE QUICK DEMO method uses a sponge to apply the casing solution to the front and back of leather that is thicker than 3/4 ounce and only to the front of thinner leather. Allow to air dry until the surface starts to return to its original color. The leather at this point is ready to cut or tool.

Casing Mixture Re:Reprint

This casing formula is reprinted again because there were those attending this meeting that requested Bill repeat the formula:

For those of you who have not attended my carving classes - we now use tanning oil mixed with water and glycerin to case our leather before we carve.

To MIX: One cup tap water, one teaspoon of tanning oil, and five "squirts" of liquid glycerin. The glycerin is not really necessary, but it sure does help. Ask any one who has used the casing mixture and you will find the burnish is unearthly (I watch the X-Files).

Bill Churchill
Federal Way, WA

Casing Leather Comments from other Leather Craftsmen

"I have found that casing is best accomplished by wetting the leather and then allowing it to sit in the refrigerator for a while before you do your carving. For some reason it just works better that way".



"I have found that perfect casing, for me at least, comes from patience. I like to thoroughly soak the leather under a hot water faucet. I let it sit overnight in a large Zip-lock bag if the piece is small enough. If the piece is too large, then I soak it in the morning. By the time the afternoon rolls around, it is usually just about right".

"For me, the leather has to be just a little damp on the surface for smooth carving with the knife. If I am just going to stamp, I let the surface dry completely. The best stamp impressions always happen on leather that is dry as a bone on the surface, but still cold to the touch. When you stamp it, the impressions turn nice and dark, providing a great deal of contrast. "Of course, if your just going to dye it all one color anyway, it doesn't really matter too much. Just make sure the leather isn't so wet that it squishes when you stamp on it!"

"If you want your leather to carve easier put about 10 or 12 drops of JOY (repeat JOY) liquid detergent in about a pint of water and do your final casing before carving with it. The difference in how easy it carves will amaze you. The solution doesn't spot or discolor the leather when it dried. Another tip I use, when I'm carving and want to re-case a local spot is to use a spray bottle with some of the casing fluid in it.

Leather Selection

The leather size is measured with electromechanical devices and does not vary from one place to another, but leather is graded at each tanning facility. Then each distributor has its own grading. Each business has its standards, and each craftsman has his own expectations. The cost is not the best judge, but it does give an indicator of quality. If you are not sure about the quality of the leather ask your leather distributor for help, find an "old timer" and get him to help you pick out the pieces, or learn (like most learn) by trial and error. That big project that you attempted that had a bruised or filled spot that wouldn't tool

or dye properly is a real big teacher! Remember - part of leather's appeal is its character. Otherwise we would all tool smooth even colored plastic sheets.

Robb Barr - Two Day Seminar in Tacoma

Robb Barr, the International Leather Artist, will be at the Tacoma Tandy Leather store on Saturday and Sunday, November 16th and 17th from 9am to 5pm. The seminar fee is \$100 and space is limited. Pre-registration is required and should be made through Larry at the Tacoma Tandy Leather store (ph. 206-474-1777).

Checks should be made payable to Robb Barr. A list of the required tools and materials will be available prior to the seminar. LEARN the TECHNIQUES of a MASTER.

The PSLAC Web Un-raveled

The Executive Committee requested that the posting of the Rawhide Gazette on the World Wide Web be discontinued and the current pages removed. This was done on September 28th.

TANDY "On-Line"

The Tandy Company has gone "on-line" with the beginning of its web site. There is a page that has the current catalog cover (in full color) and it has the location, phone, and FAX number of all its stores. The WEB page can be found at:
<http://www.tandycrafts.com>

PSLAC Competition

The Executive Committee wants to plan some monthly competition that results in a periodic (perhaps yearly) prize. The prize has been picked - the

Tandy Anniversary Swivel Knife, but the details for the competition are not firm yet. The initial plans are to form a "point system" that would all to compete. Points for such items as: (1) giving a demo at the monthly meeting, (2) attendance at meetings, (3) bringing in a new member, (4) extra points for bringing in a new member under the age of 16, (5) carving competition, (6) construction competition, and MY FAVORITE (7) submitting a newsletter article for the Rawhide Gazette. These are just the initial thoughts. If you have some ideas - just let the Executive Committee know (phone numbers somewhere in the newsletter) and they can then finish the rules for the PSLAC competition.

Bob Stelmack
Tukwila, WA

Cleaning Leather (Stains)

Bill says: "If you use oxycylic acid dilution to clean stains from leather — DO NOT use Antique Dye!. It will turn purple."

Also you may use formaldehyde to remove mildew stains from leather. Avoid mildew by watching how long and where you case your leather. Leather cased may be kept in the refrigerated section of the refrigerator, but not more than a couple of days. After that time, place the leather back on the marble slab and allow to air dry. Then you can re-casing the leather when you have the time to work on it again.

Another tip Bill gave was to only case sections that you are working on. Those sections completed will lose some of their detail if re-cased. Use a brush and the "magic casing formula" to prepare the sections to work on. Yes, this will show some small areas of coloration, but for the most case it will not be noticed and a large number of leather projects receive some sort of dye after all the carving and tooling is

complete.

Picture Perfect!

Now that you've finished that special project and it is ready for delivery (or gift giving) - what about a picture of it for your portfolio? Don Betts has some suggestions to get the best possible picture.

He suggests Fuji film, not because it is better, but because the film comes in transparent containers that can be used for small parts storage (rivets, eyelets, etc.) or dye mixture storage. For the actual picture taking Don suggests a neutral non-descript background (a rug, towel, lawn, cloth, drape) that allows your project to be displayed at its best.

Taking the picture requires either natural outdoor lighting or controlled indoor flash pictures. The flash attachment should be covered with a piece of tissue paper to diffuse the light and reduce those "hot spots" and soften shadows. If you are using a point-and-shoot camera, cover the flash with tissue and be sure to use 400 ASA film or higher film.

The shutter speed and "f" stop should initially be set at normal for flash pictures (e.g. 1/60 second at f5.6) and then OPEN UP by ONE STOP. This means reducing the "f" stop number. In this example my lens has f4 as the next lower "f" stop.

Normal flash: 1/60 sec at f5.6
OR

Leather setting 1/60 sec at f4

(adjusted to allow for less light from the diffused flash, making the aperture larger)

Then be sure the subject is in focus and perpendicular to the camera.

Take several pictures of the entire project and special close-ups of the areas of detail.

Put your pictures in your hand tooled portfolio and show them off. And, as Andy Stasiak has said in the past: "Keep that portfolio with you at all times - you never know when a sales opportunity with show up". Remember, the leather pictures are not like vacation pictures - others love to look at them!

Don Betts



Puyallup, WA

Wall Mounted Tool Rack

Jack Gordon brought in a sample wall mounted leather tool holder. The swing out door allows for storage and visibility for a large number of tooling dies. The inner compartment allows for mounting edgers, hammers, etc. and the two pull-out drawers for those smaller items.. A great idea for those smaller work shops or those work shops that are really the second bedroom. Jack's son-in-law is prepared to make these for anyone for \$150 (in pine) and \$175 (in oak). With all the "oohing" and "aahing" we failed to notice that when closed up and mounted on the wall the swing out door had a place to mount a mirror or (most likely) a special leather tooled picture. If

you would like to pursue the purchase of one of these units contact Jack.

Jack Gordon

707 37th St. SE #6
Auburn, WA 98002
Phone (206) 833-3216

Executive Communication!

It has come to the attention of the Executive Committee that again some members are taking it on themselves to

become spokesmen for the Co-Op. This includes signing for shows, services etc.

Absolutely no one is authorized to use the name Puget Sound Leather Artisans Co-Op to sign up for any service without the express written permission of the Co-Op Executive Committee. We have this hard and fast rule to protect

the Co-Op and its commitment to its members. The bottom line is — the Executive Committee has the final word on anything that is done using the Puget Sound Leather Artisans Co-Op name.

"The Executive Committee" —

General Seymour (360) 893-6759,
Bill Churchill (206) 839-3038, **Don Betts** (206) 848-2649, **Fred Nachbar** (360) 876-6227 and **Chuck Carlson** (206) 848-5359

Uncle Bill's Corner

Nothing this month.

Bill Churchill

Federal Way

Next Meeting!

Don't miss Ken Imus's demo on embossing! Mark your calendar! Sunday, October 27th is the next PSLAC meeting at the Foster Greens Apartment, Information Center (Recreation Center), 13865 - Interurban Ave, Tukwila, WA. All members and sponsors are invited... Just a reminder that parking at the apartment complex is very tight and that 50 feet south of the meeting room is a business that is not open on Sunday - park at your own risk.

The Editor Steps in it Again!

I relayed some information I found, trying to expand different ideas and ways to work with leather. The issue was in regard to the filler used to fill an embossed or "pro-petaled" area in a leather project. The answer that a Mr. Don Berglund, from the International Internet Leathercrafter's Guild, gave for the use of leather dust & a fine saw dust 50/50 and mix with rubber cement until like putty conflicts with Ann & Al Stohlman's methods described in their many books. Especially the "The Art of Embossing Leather", produced in 1986. The technique of leather plugs is shown and as the authors attest - provide the greatest detail and finer finished product than other methods.

I will continue to try to find methods to pass along regarding leather craft. We all know the most prolific and best known leather crafters in the world are Ann & Al Stohlman and their books offer a wealth of knowledge and experience. It is obvious here that the leather dust example in the last newsletter was a poor choice.

So check the leather crafters Bibles — the Stohlman's publications for tried and proven methods on leather.

Bob Stelmack
Tukwila

Re:Help!

If you haven't turned in your survey - please do it now. If you have lost it here it is again. REMEMBER - this information can lead to hard cash jobs in your spare time. This also gives you (the craftsman) a chance to do those things you are good at.

Puget Sound Leather Artisans Co-Op Expertise Survey

A survey to assist our Leather Distributor Sponsors for work on projects for their customers. The following information will be given to Tandy, Leather Factory, & MacPhersons Customers.

Fill in only that information you wish the customer to see. CHECK the items you would like Tandy, Leather Factory, & MacPhersons to recommend to their customers.

- Lacing
- Hand Sewing
- Belts
- Belt Finishing
- Special Order
- Billfolds (Kits Only)
- Billfolds Repair
- Billfolds Tooled
- Clothing (Making)
- Clothing (Repair)
- Chap (Making)
- Chap (Repair)
- Saddle Repair
- Moccasins
- Other

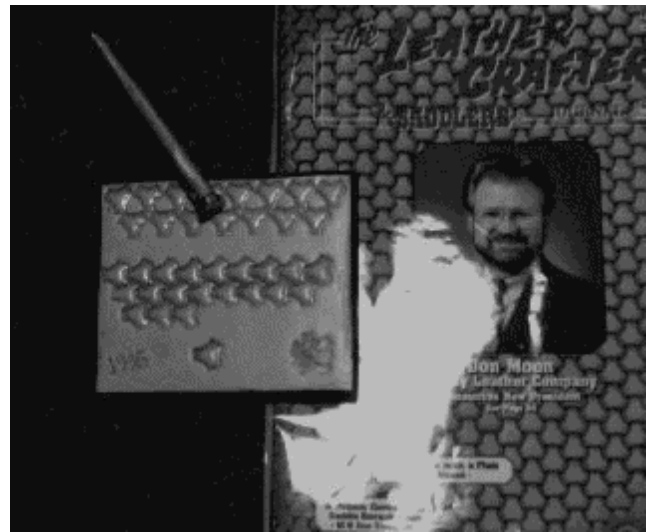
Your Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
Hours to Call: _____

Return the completed form to:

Bill Churchill
1471 - South 302nd St.
Federal Way, WA 98003

Bill's Famous Nail Trick

Bill showed how he was able to reproduce the stamp pattern on the



cover of the latest "Leather Crafters and Saddlers Journal". Just using a large nail, Bill was able to study the stamp imprint, grind the nail to match, and reproduce the exact pattern shown on the "Leather Crafters and Saddlers Journal" cover. The picture here does not do the effort justice. YOU MUST see how Bill converts ordinary nails to stamping tools of very high caliber.

Puyallup Fair Press Release

Attached are the results of the 1996 Puyallup Fair Leathercraft competition (the "*" indicates current Puget Sound Leather Artisans Co-Op member)



When I went to the Puyallup Fair I didn't have a camera so the only picture of a Fair project I have is mine.

Use some of Don Bett's tips on taking pictures and send me a picture of your project to include in one of the next news letters.

**Bob Stelmack
13820 - 56th Ave S, #301
Seattle, WA 98168-4779**

Non-Professional

<u>Class</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Crafter</u>	<u>City</u>
1800		Pocket Items	No entries		
1810		Wallets	No Entries		
1820	1	Other Items	Dream Catcher Beads	Kimberly Lipp	Sumner
1828	1	Best in Junior Category	Dream Catcher Beads	Kimberly Lipp	Sumner
1850	1	Pictures	The Grotesque	Robert Stelmack*	Seattle
1850	2	Pictures	Round Fish Picture	Richard Workman*	Eatonville
1850	3	Pictures	Horse Hair Picture	Len Phay	Tacoma
1850	HM	Pictures	Mountain Lion Picture	Jack Gordon*	Auburn
1850		Pictures	Betty Boop Picture	Harve Zimmerman	Eatonville
1850		Pictures	Eagle Carving	Alan Cunningham*	Seattle
1855	1	Tooled Sportsman Carriers	Gun Sling with Feathers	Jeff Young*	Tacoma
1855	2	Tooled Sportsman Carriers	No Title	Don Betts*	Puyallup
1855	3	Tooled Sportsman Carriers	Hunting Pouch, horn & Knife	Thomas Hill	Enumclaw
1860	2	Tooled Carrying Cases	Knitting Bag with Tooled Deer	Len Phay	Tacoma
1865	1	Tooled Handbags	Handbag/Flower	General Seymour*	Orting
1865	2	Tooled Handbags	Purse Stirrup	Linda Stockhausen*	Puyallup
1865	3	Tooled Handbags	Rose Purse	Len Phay	Tacoma
1870	1	Tooled Pocket Items	Dog Key Fob	Jeff Young*	Tacoma
1870	2	Tooled Pocket Items	Key Case 6 Hooks with Leaves	Len Phay	Tacoma
1875	1	Albums, Scrapbooks	Portfolio Leatherwork	Jeff Young*	Tacoma
1880	1	Wallets	Cat Checkbook	Jeff Young*	Tacoma
1880	2	Wallets	"Jeri" Clutch Purse	Len Phay	Tacoma
1880	3	Wallets	Native Amer. Blue Paint Wallet	Linda Stockhausen*	Puyallup
1885	1	Belts	Alaska 49th State Belt	Fred Crick	Enumclaw
1885	2	Belts	Stamped Belt	Fred Stockhausen*	Puyallup
1890	1	Household Items	Cow Key Board	Linda Stockhausen*	Puyallup
1890	2	Household Items	4 Leg Leather Ottoman, Cowboy	Kim Dunnigan	Puyallup
1890	3	Household Items	The Howard's, Sign	Harve Zimmerman	Eatonville
1890		Household Items	TV Guide Cover	Len Phay	Tacoma
1890		Household Items	BBQ Lighter Holder	Peggy Harbison	Tacoma
1895	1	Stamped Items	Lighter Case Cabin/Trees	Linda Stockhausen*	Puyallup

1895		Stamped Items	Knife Case "AP"	Len Phay	Tacoma
1900		Jewelry	No Entries		
1905	1	Wearing Apparel	Vest with Deer Skin	Constance D Smith	Rainier
1905	2	Wearing Apparel	Hair Clip with Nail	Linda Stockhausen*	Puyallup
1905	3	Wearing Apparel	Deer Skin Shorts	Robert Stelmack*	Seattle
1905	HM	Wearing Apparel	Medicine Belt-Bag	Linda Dahlen	Granite Falls
1905	HM	Wearing Apparel	Mitts	Victoria Reninger	Puyallup
1910	1	Untooled Items	Black Handbag, Bead Down Middle	Lucero Ganza	Seattle
1910		Untooled Items	Bear Painting Mandella	Lori Peak	Tacoma
1915	1	Braiding	Braiding Key Fob	Jeff Young*	Tacoma
1920	1	Other Leathercraft	Mandella Feathers & Beads	Victoria Reninger	Puyallup
1920	2	Other Leathercraft	Dream Catcher Basket with Tears	Susan Wakeman	Tacoma
1920	3	Other Leathercraft	Mini Saddle in Glass Dome	Peggy Harbison	Tacoma
1920		Other Leathercraft	Orca Dream Catcher	Richard Workman*	Eatonville
1920		Other Leathercraft	Cig Case "Jeri" Rose Lighter	Len Phay	Tacoma
1920		Other Leathercraft	Horse Belt Buckle	Linda Stockhausen*	Puyallup
1920		Other Leathercraft	Large Saddle Stripped Blanket	Denise Ruether	Eatonville
1928	1	Best in Seniors Category	Handbag/Flower	General Seymour*	Orting
1929	1	Best in Leathercraft Division	Pale Blue Castle with Sparkeroof	Andrew Nakayama	Federal Way

Professional

<u>Class</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Crafter</u>	<u>City</u>
1950	1	Pictures	Framed NW Coastal Wolf Scene	Deb Laudadio	Kent
1955	1	Large Tooled Article	Clutch Purse	Kenneth Imus*	Everett
1960	1	Small Tooled Article	Tiger Carved Address Book	Bill Churchill*	Federal Way
1960	2	Small Tooled Article	Black/Red Colt 45 Holster	Deb Laudadio	Kent
1960	3	Small Tooled Article	TV Guide Notebook	Fred Stockhausen*	Puyallup
1965	1	Leather with Other Medium	Calendar Hummingbird	Bill Churchill*	Federal Way
1965	2	Leather with Other Medium	Jewelry Box	Doug Dahlen	Granite Falls
1970	1	Wearing Apparel	Cowboy Cuffs	Kenneth Imus*	Everett
1975	1	Untooled Articles	Large Handsewn Saddle Bags	Deb Laudadio	Kent
1975	2	Untooled Articles	Fish Notebook	Bill Churchill*	Federal Way
1975	3	Untooled Articles	Batik Clutch Purse	Kenneth Imus*	Everett
1999	1	Best in Leathercraft Division - Professional	Framed NW Coastal Wolf Scene	Deb Laudadio	Kent

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