

A cut above the rest

Faulk creates custom knives from horns, exotic woods

By MICHAEL RODGERS
The Luverne Journal

Bill Faulk said he's loved knives his entire life, but about three years ago, he decided to try making his own.

"I bought my first knife in Pigeon Forge at Smokey Mountain Knifeworks when I was 8 years old," he said.

One of Faulk's other hobbies is bow shooting, and he said that one of his friends had a display of custom knives he'd made at a shoot.

"I looked at them and thought, 'Wow, that's great.' So I came home and started looking on the internet and saw where you could order blades, and I made my very first one," he said.

Faulk still has the first knife he made, which is a small skinning knife.

Looking back at that first attempt, he said it's "crude" and could use some touching up, but he leaves it the way it is as a reminder of how far he's come.

Now Faulk fuses pieces of antler and horn to a variety of exotic wood in order to make custom knives at his shop in Highland Home.

"I've got everything from moose and caribou to impala and mule deer," he said. "I've also got a lot of whitetail antlers."

Faulk said local people will give him spare antlers, and he orders the more unusual varieties of antler from eBay, particularly from one vendor who lives in Alaska.

He said he can leave the antler in its natural state or treat it with a poly-acrylic.

"The poly-acrylic makes it look more like a fossil bone, but it also stabilizes the horn and gets into the pith area," Faulk said.

Faulk also uses a number of exotic woods like cocobolo or Blue Mahoe to craft the handles, but he said he doesn't limit himself to unusual woods.

"I've got some wood that came from the side of the road," said Faulk, who added that he's always on the lookout for trees and limbs that have been cut down and discarded.

He built his own vacuum pump to force air out of the wood and stabilize it with acrylic.

Many of his more complex knives feature a hidden tang, which is an extension of the metal blade that continues into the handle.

Faulk cuts holes in the wood, antler and pieces of brass and stacks them around the hidden tang.

He uses one of the strongest available epoxies called J-B Weld to glue the pieces together, and grooves in the tang help the glue grip the pieces.

Faulk has also designed and built a custom clamp to help hold pressure on the knife while the pieces are setting.

"I was sitting one day and talking to some people who used rubber bands or stack weights on them, and I thought there had to be a better way," he said.

Once all the pieces are solidly together, the knife makes its way to the belt sander for finishing.

Assembling the knife and then sanding it assures that all the lines are smooth and the different materials flow into each other.

While Faulk said he has ordered blades off the internet, he also makes his own out of discarded saw blades made of M2 high-speed steel.

Faulk works at Dongwon Autoparts in Highland Home, and the saw blades are used to cut through door frames. The blades eventually get dull, and they can be sharpened three times before they're too short to use.

Faulk asked what they did with the discarded blades and found out that they are just thrown away.

The discarded saw blades will make between three and four knife blades, depending on the size of the knife.

Faulk has a number of different blade patterns, such as the Cherokee and Choctaw, and most of them are named after Indian tribes.

He said the blade will hold an edge as well as almost any other material available.

Faulk has custom-made a number of pieces of equipment and clamps he uses to work with the blades, and he has used money made from knives to buy specialty pieces of equipment like ceramic sanding belts and a wet grinder.

"I've learned a lot by trial and error," he said.

Faulk said it usually takes between four and six hours to complete a knife, but the time is getting shorter as he refines his technique and gets new, specialized equipment.

"One day, I hope for it to be the main thing I do," he said.

He sells his knives at shows and bow shoots, and he also donates some to charity.

"I donate some to an auction for the Children's Hospital in Birmingham," he said.

Faulk also said that he aims to make them affordable to people who want them.

"I can't afford to go out and spend \$250 on a knife. They're great and wonderful, but I've got other things I can spend money on," he said. "Mine start at \$65 to \$70, and I wanted to make one that the guy working in the factory can afford."

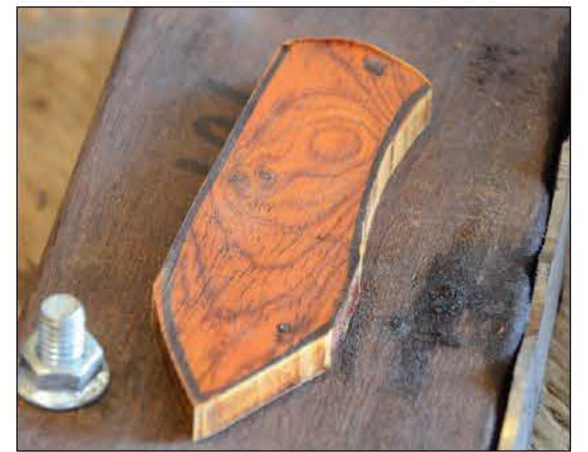
He said the feedback on Facebook and from customers makes it worthwhile.

"I enjoy making them, but I also enjoy hearing back how much the customer enjoys it," Faulk said. "When they comment and say that it's one of the best knives they've had, it makes you feel good."



JOURNAL STAFF / MICHAEL RODGERS

Above: Bill Faulk creates custom knives in a home workshop. Below: Photos depict a knife throughout the creation process. The finished knife is second from the bottom in the final picture.



PERDUE | continued from page 4

was playing and started playing the song in the same key.

"That's when I realized there might be something to this," Perdue said.

From there, he started going to Friday night singings and eventually began playing with Scott Fowler, another local musician who had a group called Soldiers of the Cross.

The group played somewhere almost every weekend, and Perdue said he played with the group for years until Fowler started a solo ministry.

One thing Perdue said he learned was never to say no because you never know what opportunities may show up.

He was asked to attend a

jam session near Troy, and from that, he was asked to play the harmonica on a Christian blues album.

"Mike Benton asked me if I wanted to get into a prison ministry, and I said yes without even thinking," he said.

He said that door was opened, and now the Good News Blues Prison Ministry travels to the prison near Union Springs once a month to perform and minister to the inmates.

He also plays gospel music with Becky Montgomery and the Gospel Sounds.

Perdue said he's also been writing short stories and poetry all his life, but a dream in

1994 led him to start writing Christian and inspirational stories.

"I had a God-sent dream where I was floating in the sky and stretched out, looking down," he said.

Perdue said the sky was red, and he found himself at the foot of the cross before God told him that he had two days to find the right path.

"I woke up and sat on the side of the bed with my heart racing," he said. "I said, 'I know.'"

Perdue said he tried to write about the dream, but every time he tried, he fell asleep.

"About a week later, I sat up in bed about midnight, grabbed

a pencil and wrote lines and lines," he said.

The verses didn't even require a second draft, but the last verse came the next day when Perdue was thinking about the meaning of the red sky.

He said he looked in the Bible and had the realization that many of the words in the Bible are also red.

In addition to writing inspirational stories and poems, Perdue also draws on past experiences from growing up for stories.

He also keeps his eyes open for day-to-day observations that might turn into a story.

"I'll take a trip to

Montgomery and the things I see and do, I'll write it down," he said.

Perdue has written 93 poems and numerous stories, many of which he has posted to his Facebook page.

He said the feedback he receives from other people encourages him to keep writing.

He also said that people should keep exploring new hobbies until they find something they're good at and enjoy.

"Everybody's got a talent," he said. "My wife has a talent for keeping kids. Everyone's got something, but you've just got to find it. I was 50 or older before I really found mine."