

The Elephant Toenail Knife

Do you enjoy trivia? Have you ever played the board game Trivia Pursuit? I have played many times and hate it, especially when my 9 and 11 year old daughters beat me by being able to answer questions I should know. For some reason, my mind just won't retain stuff that I think is trivial (maybe that is my problem), but give me a topic that is important, I mean *really* important, then watch out! You know important stuff-like knife trivia. Here is one for you about my favorite knife pattern- Important stuff, for sure. Let's see how you do with it.

What old knife pattern has the most names associated with it?

Give up? You don't. OK, then how about a clue- Here are some of the names for it: *Old Faithful, Camp Knife, Pumpkin Seed, Vest Pocket Axe, Old Honesty, Red Eye, Jumbo, The Bulldog, English Rope Knife, Sunfish and Elephant Toenail* (in addition to *elephant toe, or just toe*). Gave you too many didn't I? OK then, if you still haven't guessed it, while three of them do relate to a fish, the answer I am looking for is not the name of some bream out in a river or lake.

These are, instead, all names for one of the most unusual knives in all of American cutlery history. This knife, while it was called a *pocket* knife, is a truly massive knife. It is one that fills even the largest of hands. It is really too large to be a knife that is actually comfortably carried in the pocket, although it is a folder and not a fixed blade.

Knife enthusiasts universally agree it is a very odd and unusual knife, in fact most people have an immediate reaction when they first see it - either the person will be drawn to it, or they will just find it ugly and have no interest in it at all.

Many collectors are drawn to it simply because of its uniqueness, including possibly having the largest “master” blade of any pocket knife. It is a huge spear point master blade and “*nearly the size of a tea plate,*” according to Mr. Bernard Levine, author of Levine’s Guide To Knives and Their Values, 4th edition. Collectors are also attracted to its extremely large handles.

Ok, if you haven’t figured it out by now, I contend the knife with the most names is the elephant toenail, or sunfish knife. The uniformed may be quick to write off the elephant toenail, as I shall refer to it, (sometimes I’ll get lazy and just call it a toenail) as having been made as a fad knife, or one made as a marketing gimmick, however, in actuality this knife has one of the richest pedigrees of any knife pattern made in cutlery history. I also realize there are many more knowledgeable knife experts out there who may take me on about that, but while they know more than I do in general. The difference is they aren’t nearly as passionate about what they know as I am about toenails!

You old timers out there may be saying, “Oh no, not another article on toenails, didn’t Joe Seale do one about 20 years ago in Knife World?”

If you caught yourself thinking that, then let me ask you if you know about this-

“Did you know the elephant toenail, in its earliest days, was either directly or indirectly involved in all the elements of a made for television movie drama, including conspiracy, corporate fraud, suspicious factory fires, bankruptcy, corporate intrigue, price wars, price fixing, corporate buy-outs and mergers, trademark infringements, trademark purchases, and international competition? The toenail even is suspected as directly contributing to a very public feud between members of the most prominent cutlery families.”

Name/ Moniker

What's in a name and how do names originate? Most labels associated with a knife are directly related to the uses promoted by the company offering them for sale. We will look at these designed uses more closely, but for now consider the various names associated with the grand old knife: Old Honesty, Old Faithful, Butterbean, Pumpkinseed, Red Eye, Toenail, Elephant toenail, Sunfish, Toe, Camp Knife, Pocket Axe, Vest Pocket Axe, Jumbo, English Rope Knife, The Bulldog, etc.

In an interview I conducted with prominent knife dealer, Mr. Joe Seale for Elephanttoenails.com, Mr. Seale, who I think is really a toenail collector at heart, stated he was first introduced to the knife as a young boy back in the 1930's. He remembers the knife being called a Sunfish by the old timers because they were about the size of the sunfish caught out of the old farm ponds. He added they were also called Red Eye in one of the old Case catalogs.

The two most popular contemporary names for this knife are Elephant toenails and Sunfish. Only in more recent times will these names show up in knife company catalogs. Searching eBay, for example, under both of these names will always locate numerous examples, including many current productions, however conducting searches under the other labels identified herein is rarely fruitful.

Only speculation exists as to why "sunfish" is more prominent than the other labels. For example, one theory relates to the label "Elephant Toenail" being politically incorrect and at some point, in the recent times renamed Sunfish, though this theory is unproven and pure folklore. It is actually possible the knife was called Elephant Toenail first by the W. R. Case Cutlery Company and only since the about the 1970's. Many times too, a knife company will simply label a knife by its pattern number. W R Case Cutlery Company, for example, refers to the knife by a four digit number with the first number signifying the handle material, the second digit is the number of blades and the final two numbers are the pattern number. For example, 6250 is the most common. The 6250 is a bone handled two-bladed Elephant Toenail. Most of the cutlery companies had identification numbers associated with specific knife patterns.

Another popular theory knife collectors hold is that the knife was an “English Rope Knife.” This belief principally stems from a reference in a W R Case Cutlery Company catalog from 1970 in which the caption under the toenail reads “*Old English Rope Knife used on sailing vessels.*” While it is commonly agreed that one of the uses of the knife was to cut rope, it seems to have been more than likely in mercantile stores back in the early 1900’s, for example, as opposed to on the open sea.

In Dr. Foy Mitchell’s wonderfully informative article Speaking of Rope Knives in The National Knife Magazine May 1995, he convincingly argues Toenails were only used as “point of sale” rope knives and were not used at sea as was the Sailor or Navy Rope Knife. He contends, “*The main commonality between them (an elephant toenail and Navy Rope Knife) is both host a very wide blade with a thick back that enabled them to be ‘driven’ through a very thick rope using a wood peg such as a fid or belaying pin.*” [Moreover, it is extremely rare for a toenail to have a bail (the metal loop used to secure the knife to the carrier with a string or small chain), as do rope knives. Furthermore, there no evidence that indicates the knife is of English *origin* (although there is a toenail that was manufactured in the early 1900’s by an English firm, Lockwood Brothers). As unpopular as it may be, it is my opinion WR Case simply used this name as a marketing ploy.]

Toenail History

Whether most collectors of old knives recognize it or not, they are historians, of sorts. They see the knives, not as pieces of bone and metal, but as a reflection of an era gone by, of the lives and times of the past. To those of us intoxicated on old knives, we simply can’t look upon them without being swept back in time, as is the case with old elephant toenails. Sure, we are keenly aware of the financial aspect of this hobby, the monetary value of these knives, yet we look at them as a representative the early days of the cutlery industry here in America.

It is as if we see the owners of the cutlery companies, the towns where each was produced and its citizens, we can see the cutlery plant's site, oftentimes next to the river, where these knives were hand forged, we are able to see the rough hands of the workers as each knife makes its way in the process of being crafted, we see the traveling salesman, or drummers, actually putting these knives into circulation by calling upon the community merchants and hardware stores, we also see the individuals who purchased these knives and used them in their trade or recreation. We get a little piece of each person's life as it was but temporarily in his possession and before it traveled through time to end up here today.

The toenail has earned its place as being one of the oldest folding patterns made in America. Many American collectors and dealers believe Case Brothers "invented" the toenail. This may be due to Goins' assertion in Goins' Encyclopedia of Cutlery Markings that Case Brothers invented the pattern in 1900. While this firm may have designed the "standard" style toenail, though it is inconclusive at this time, yet very possible, we know they did not invent the swellcenter (C Platts) or teardrop (Henry Sears & Son) variety- both of which may well have been made prior to Case Brothers.

The elephant toenail has firmly established its place in knife history and has become one of the most popular vintage knives. While one could argue that toenail collecting is but a very small niche in the big scheme of knife collecting, but I have witnessed firsthand a rare toenail drawing the attention of the masses, almost compelling even the most innocent passerby to stop in appreciation of this intriguing knife. This actually happened when I was taking photos of some old toenails at Parker's Show recently. A gentleman had a box full of some you would give your first born for. One in particular was a NM to Mint Case Brothers pearl with TESTED XX etched on the master blade. I must admit when the owner took it out of the box, it was as if the knife glowed brilliantly throughout the hall, causing everyone to look over. Seriously, while I was taking pictures of it, everyone who walked by who knew anything about old knives, paused to appreciate it. I just wish I could have said it was mine, when they asked.

The elephant toenail clearly dates back to the very early 1900's, probably late 1800's. Almost all of the granddaddies of America's cutlery history have either sold this knife under their brand name, where the knife was made on contract for them by another cutlery company, or actually manufactured the elephant toenail itself. The list of firms reads like a "Who's Who" of the American Cutlery Industry- C. Platts' Sons, Case Brothers, Marbles Safety Axe, New York Knife Company, Napanoch Knife Company, Cattaraugus Cutlery Co., Camillus, Ulster, Union Razor, Henry Sears & Son, and John Chatillon & Sons just to name a few. (Notably missing, however, are Russell, Walden Knife Co., Northfield, Buck, Holley and Empire).

Much like today with different people claiming credit for creating the World Wide Web, the elephant toenail's colorful history includes a public proclamation by Case Brothers, who ran a full page ad in Hardware Magazine in the early 1900's featuring a toenail where they claimed to have been copied by "the monkey faced competition." Interestingly too, is an advertisement for a toenail also in Hardware Magazine on September 10, 1902 by John Chatillon & Sons, New York City (established 1835). The master blade is etched "Fulton Brand" with a picture of a riverboat.

Significance of Toenails- Age of Pattern

The elephant toenail can easily be traced to as early as 1900. The knife's historic significance is one of the reasons it ranks up near the top for collectors of old knives. W R Case & Sons Cutlery Company, probably the most popular American cutlery firm, sold toenails from their beginning in 1902. The earliest toenails from this firm bear a stamp of W R Case & Son (note the singularity of SON) made for them by Napanoch.

Another firm, Case Brothers, operated by the uncles of the founder of the W R Case firm, sold toenails beginning a few years earlier. These two firms were bitter rivals. It is Case Brothers who sold toenails first, between these two feuding family firms. This firm prominently featured this knife on the front cover of one of its catalog (circa 1900) where it was labeled "Old Honesty." Then in its 1904 catalog the toenail is offered in two different versions- the 8250 (mother of pearl) and 2251 (ebony and a longer version), though as veteran knife dealer, Tony Foster, has drilled in me that Case Brothers will not have the pattern number stamped on the knife anywhere.

Interestingly too, is the existence of an English toenail from the early 1900's, as previously noted. The cutlery company is Lockwood Brothers of Sheffield, England. The knife has been authenticated. It is believed to have been made for the South American market between 1900 and 1930 as indicated by the etching on the pen blade (not master blade) and the tang stamping. Experts of English cutlery agree there are no known catalog listings of the knife from the two largest English cutlery firms of that time. Their catalogs, it is believed, were produced for the European and possibly US markets, and didn't include knives produced to be sold outside of these markets.

To date three other examples of "foreign" toenails apparently existed from that era. The first is a French toenail called "The Bulldog" as translated from a 1906 pictorial advertisement in the French Manufacturer of Weapons and Cycles of Saint-Etienne mail order catalog. The second is the German maker, H. Boker & Co. of Solingen, Germany. This prominent cutlery company has a rich history, dating back to the mid 1800's. H. Boker made toenails in the more common standard style and in at least two known handle materials, bone and pearl. One of the earliest tang stamps used by Boker included the H. Boker & Co. Improved Cutlery (1869- 1914 per Goins' Encyclopedia of Cutlery Markings). Toenails with this stamp exist in collections today. The third is Henry Sears and Son Prussia (later marked "Germany"). Little is recorded about this stamp except, again in Goins' book and the time period is stated to be c.1883-1897. Additional records are needed before too much stock is placed in this, especially due to the potential significance of this toenail if these dates proven accurate.

When one observes the number, or lack thereof, of existing samples produced by other countries (other than the US), one is led to conclude, again based upon the physical samples discovered as well as the published reference material (examples of catalog listings, advertisements, etc) the Elephant Toenail pattern was invented by an American Cutlery firm, as well as any opinion to the contrary is very unpopular among American collectors.

Intended Use

Pocket knives in the late 1800's and early 1900's were most often manufactured to be a very practical aid to daily life, whether it was for recreation, or vocation. The elephant toenail was no exception, as it evident by early advertisements referring to it as a "Camp Knife" as is the case with Marble's Safety Axe, however, it was also described in other companies' ads as being for workers working with wire and rope. In many cases though men would have two knives- a work knife, used as an occupational tool and a "carrying knife" primarily a part of a man's everyday needs. Some men, and women, also had a "Sunday knife," a knife that was their dress-up knife carried to church or formal outings. These knives were usually a smaller pen pattern, and often times had pearl handles.

Many knife patterns made during this time were made for a particular designated use, including the melon tester, cotton sampler, physician's knife, smoker's knife, corn knife, sailor's rope knife to name a few. One of the interesting aspects of this odd knife is how it was marketed with so many different and diversified uses. While one can see a Madison Avenue like hype, it is interesting to see how the various competitors distinguished their elephant toenails from the other firms manufacturing or selling them.

Please understand too, that while almost 100 different brands of vintage elephant toenails have been documented to date, a cutlery company oftentimes produced the same knife pattern for different companies or brands and usually stamped each brand with the appropriate company's name.

Marbles Safety Axe (later to be renamed Marbles Arms Co.) of Gladstone, MI in its *Hints to Hunters* written in 1905 encouraged its readers "...a good hunting knife, and a small pocket or belt axe are about as much importance as any other part of the outfit."

A letter published in the July 1902 edition of *Outdoor Life* stated, "Every sportsman knows *Marble*.we go to *Marble*, as (the firm) has set out to give the sportsman the highest quality of implements on his outing."

The elephant toenail was the largest pocket knife offered by Marbles, unless you want to count its Folding Safety Hunter. The toenail was classified as a camping tool and was made under contract by Case Brothers of Little Valley, New York. In its 1905 *Marble's Specialties for Sportsmen* catalog, it stated, "*the (elephant toenails) have been selected with a view of fully meeting the requirements of our sports-men friends in the woods or in town.*" [As a side note, the 8250 pictured in this catalog has no tang stamp, but does have the TESTED XX stamped out on the master blade. In both the 1906 & 1907 Marbles catalogs, the knife is shown bearing the M.S.A. CO (over) Gladstone (over) Michigan USA stamps without the TESTED XX stamp/etch on the master blade. Also, understand, just because a catalog depicted a knife in a certain matter, doesn't mean it was actually produced that way, i.e. without a tang stamp as in the 1905 catalog.]

Among the most serious toenail collectors, the Marbles (MSA) knife is equivalent to the "Holy Grail" among elephant toenail collectors. The pearl handled toenails illustrated in its very early catalogs are extremely difficult to find. Case Brothers Cutlery Company also made a stag handled toenail for Marbles. It is viewed much the same in terms of desirability and value. Additionally, Mark Zalesky, editor of *Knife World Magazine*, has documented proof from 1905/06 of a bone handled MSA Co. toenail.

In a 1903 Gold Cross Coffee Company Catalog, pocket knives were used as incentives for new clients. In it the knife was illustrated as "Old Honesty" (a label taken from a Case Brothers Catalog produced around the same time) and the description read "*heavy blades and frame, just the thing for lumbermen, teamsters and oilmen. It is an axe, board axe and Jack-knife combined. No knife anywhere like it. Retails at \$1.50 and men who have them won't part with them at any price.*"

In the Oct 18th 1906 edition of *The Youth's Companion* the *Jumbo Pocket Knife* is shown in an advertisement illustrating the Napanoch Knife Company, Napanoch, NY (1900- 1919) toenail. The caption reads, "*Designed especially for that large class who require a knife for heavy work, such as leather or rope cutting, or other similar material requiring great strength.*"

An early Napanoch catalog illustrated this knife as a “Napanoch Axe (for the Vest Pocket)” and stated, “*The nearest thing to an axe, still can be conveniently carried in the top vest pocket and you would hardly be conscious of its being there. Best thing for Hunters, Campers, Sportsmen, and Linesmen hanging Trolley, Telegraph and Telephone wires.*” Also noteworthy is that Napanoch made toenails on contract for WR Case & Son during the years of 1902 and 1903 before the firm changed its name to WR Case & Sons.

A 1906 catalog of The French Manufacture of Weapons and Cycles of Saint-Etienne contained an ad promoting the toenail. The knife is identified as “The Bulldog” and is characterized as the knife “*to satisfy the desires of the sportsmen, motorists, and hunters.*”

The “Nuts and Bolts” of a Toenail

The toenail has many characteristics that set it apart from all the other knives. The size (length/height/weight) is one of the most obvious. The toenail is unique simply due to its parts being substantially oversized. This beauty weighs in at close to 6 oz, yet has a very solid feel.

Each of the earliest samples was painstakingly handmade. Unlike a modern assembly line production resulting in extreme standardization and uniformity, early toenails produced by the same firm have slight variations one from another though they were made to the highest standards.

The toenail is a two bladed double-end folding knife. Its master blade is an extremely large spear point blade (right at 3” long and an inch wide!). The secondary blade is commonly referred to as a pen blade (2 inches long) although it is larger than many knives’ master blade. Some examples exist with the master blade, or rarely the pen blade, being etched with the brand or hardware concern’s name or a business trade name. Etched toenails are very highly sought after. Very few, dozens not hundreds, have survived with the full etch intact and legible. Other toenails have a stamping in the center of the master blade, for example, the early Case Brothers toenails were stamped with their trademark, TESTED XX. Secondly are the very large iron bolsters.

The handles of the Elephant Toenail (size and material) are a very significant feature and one many collectors see as the most important characteristic. These massive handles typically range from 3 7/8 to 4 1/2 inches long, including bolsters. Very few pocket knives even come close to having massive handle materials like toenails. Handle materials add significant personality and the older knives possess major character even when showing slight wear.

Pearl handled knives were considerably more expensive than bone or stag, and are therefore rarely found on *work* knives, though you may find it interesting elephant toenails were made in small quantities with pearl handles and a few have survived to today. These knives rank as some of the most valuable (read expensive!) among collectors today. Some collectors choose not to collect pearl handled knives simply due to their high degree of fragility as they can crack or chip easily.

Another aspect that adds to the desirability of the knife is the treatment of the handle material by adding unique lines, grooves (like “worm groove”) or a pattern of indentions. These characteristics are commonly referred to as “jigging” and are not unique to just the toenail pattern. Many makers are easily recognizable, as they have adopted a characteristic “look.” This look can be a major indicator of the age as well as the era of the knife company.

Overall a toenail’s handles (material, color, and the jigging) provide collectors with significant “personality.” It is each knife’s character that sets it apart from the rest and provides the collector a large variety from which to choose. To date, over 250 variations of the three styles of antique toenails have been cataloged on Elephanttoenails.com. Simply scrolling through the list of old toenails will give you a sense of amazement as to the large variety and underscores the significance this pocket knife had back then (not to mention *today*).

Toenail Styles-

For the most part, toenails have been fairly consistent in style over the years. While a few manufacturers produced more than one style of toenail, including Platts (C Platts' Sons and Platts Brothers), Henry Sears and Son, Case Brothers, and WR Case, while most only manufactured the knife in a single style. When style is referred to it is not accounting for different handle materials, as many makers produced toenails in a bone, stag, pearl, celluloid, and metal (Case Brothers W250), instead style is a combination of a distinctive shape and size.

Most collectors agree there to be three main styles- Standard, Swellcenter, and Teardrop. In some cases, the styles either were designed by cutlery firms in an attempt to set their toenails apart or were to "make a better mouse trap."

Standard-

The style that has become accepted as the "standard" style is by far the most frequently encountered of the toenails. It is this style Case Brothers, apparently claimed to have invented immediately after the turn of the century even though there were a number of firms around at that time that also made toenails. It is also called an "equal-end knife." It ranges from 3 7/8 to 4 1/2 inches long, depending upon the manufacturer. The master blade is around 3 inches long and at least an inch wide.

Swellcenter-

The style that is the rarest is the Swellcenter. This model is also referred to as the "Jumbo." It is a colossal knife with a massive master blade, in fact the largest of any toenail. This style, though the largest, fits perfectly your hand. The master blade is a whopping 1 1/2 inches wide and measures out at just under 3 inches in length- a short stubby blade. Overall the knife is 4 3/4 inches in the closed position.

This style is also a sleeveboard design meaning the front bolster is measurably larger than the rear bolster, while the knife tapers down to the smaller rear bolster. The front bolster is 1 5/16 wide with the rear bolster is 1 1/4 inches wide.

The unique characteristic of a swellcenter is the broadening out (swelling) of the handle in its center. For example, the middle of the handle actually broadens out to 1 6/16 inches. Also, unique to the swellcenter is the huge (3/4 of an inch) round metal shield. These are only found on this particular model.

This style was only produced by one firm, C. Platts' Sons of Eldred, Pennsylvania and during the years of 1900 to 1905. During this time, the swellcenter was the only style toenail known to have been produced by the firm, although members of the Platts family later operated Platts Brothers Cutlery Co. (1907- 1910) that is only known to have manufactured the standard style toenail. While a collector will find the swellcenter style with the tang stamp of WR Case & Sons it is thought that Platts made this knife on contract for the WR Case firm.

The first toenail I saw was the swellcenter and I'll never forget the occasion. I was "studying" antique knives in Levine's Guide to Knives and Their Values, 4th edition when I turned a page and there it was. It jumped right off the page and grabbed me. I'm not saying it was a religious experience or anything quite that dramatic, but a spell was cast on me for sure. That Swellcenter was the most unusual knife I had ever seen. I knew that right then and there I had to have one of those rare old Platts toenails. Needless to say, my wife thanks you BRL.

One firm did step out and design a variation of the swellcenter- the Standard Swellcenter-. It is not nearly as large as the "Jumbo" swellcenter made by Platts, and is only known to have been produced by Robeson Cutlery Co. Mr. Tom Kalcevic in Knives Can Talk! The Story of the Robeson Cutlery Co. states that Robeson's toenail was manufactured beginning in 1911 as determined by the tang stamps found on existing toenail samples.

Tear-drop-

This style favors a teardrop and is also a sleeveboard design. Henry Sears & Son Prussia is the knife in this style. These cute little toenails were stamped with “Tom Thumb” in the center of the master blade. It was produced with celluloid, composite, genuine stag and mother of pearl handles. This design favors a tear drop shape more than a typical sleeveboard design. This style is also very appealing. It is right at 4 inches long. The front bolster width is 1 5/16 inches and the rear bolster is 1 1/16 wide.

Collectibility/Values

Antique elephant toenail values have risen steadily over the years. Mail order lists from dealers from over 20 years ago show them in the \$150 to \$250, and a very few as high as \$400. Today the average toenail brand in desirable condition fetches \$500 to \$750. Many of the so-called AA to AA plus grade brands sell in the \$1500 to \$3500 range and a highly desirable brand can easily command \$4000 to \$5000. There have also been a handful of sales over \$5000 in the last few years, including the reported sale (but unverified) of a pearl MSA (Marbles) for upwards of \$15,000. While at any time, particular toenails may experience a run up in value due to an increase in popularity, there are commonly accepted factors that consistently have the most significant influence on value and collectability.

The first among the antique toenails is that of the brand. The more prominent brands hold to a constant upward trend in desirability. There are many reasons for this in addition to scarcity, including quality of the knives produced, reputation, the people involved in founding the firm, the firm’s location and history, the ability of collectors to “date” knives with actual records and historical documents, to name a few. Many of the most sought after brands include MSA (Marbles), all Case related companies (Case Brothers, Case Bradford, Case Manufacturing, Little Valley Knife Association, and Crandall), WR Case, Napanoch, Platts, Union Razor, Union Cutlery Co., Ulster and New York Knife Co to name a few of the most recognizable.

In addition to the brand, the condition has a measurable bearing on value, though I contend condition is of less importance than the brand itself. All things being equal, it is true a knife in better condition is more valuable than a poor condition knife of the same brand, however, a highly sought after antique brand that is only in very good condition is more desirable (valuable) than a lesser brand in better condition to a collector of that pattern.

A third factor is that of the handle material. Generally speaking a mother of pearl (pearl) handle is more desirable (valuable) than bone and genuine stag is also more desirable than bone. A variation of the handle material factor is the handle's "jigging." (In some cases, the handles were purchased from a company who applied the jigging before they were shipped to the knife company, such as Winterbottom bone and Rogers bone.) Also closely related to handle material is handle color (dyes used to color the bone). Case, for example, produced greenbone and later redbone, which are significantly more valuable toenails than that of brown bone.

The other variables influencing value are the style of the knife, blade etching, shield, and pulls.

While it is true old knives are expensive (give it another 20 years or so and then see how much of an "investment" will be required). Have you looked around recently at other artifacts from our great Country's early history, like antique riffles, duck decoys, fishing lures, or even antique writing pens? The bottom line is it all boils down to finding enjoyment in something and through it being allowed a brief respite from the daily grind. What do you like and want to learn more about? As you can tell, I have a passion for toenails and I hope that you have enjoyed learning some of the tidbits about them. I recognize some of you old timers out there "have been dealing in knives longer than some of us have been out of diapers," and to you I simply ask you to be tolerant with us "newer" collectors, who in your opinion may not have all the facts and jargon down pat yet. In some cases, we are simply trying to verify the "facts" we have been told.