

# My Personal Green River KNIFE

by Tom “Tomahawk” Moore



**T**here are many schools of thought on the types of knives, axes, hatchets, and tomahawks to use in the outdoors. Some people like expensive blades, some are frugal and don't want to spend too much on a knife. I tend to be more on the frugal side. My personal favorite knives are any type of Swiss Army Knife that has scissors and a saw. And my faithful Green River Knife!

I bought my Green River Knife at a junk shop in Moab, Utah for \$6.00 back in 1989. I've been carrying it ever since. A lot of folks really like the Mora Knives from Sweden, I don't really care for them due to the fact that the handles and blades tend to break under normal use, especially out in the cold. I have traveled all over the world and spent time with many native peoples and have seen knives made from old saw blades, punched out of an old army mess kit or made from bearings & leaf springs from old trucks. I've studied knife making and blacksmithing in Thailand, Nepal and The Philippines and have seen many skilled knife and tool makers, but a lot of these craftsmen are not skilled in the use of the blades they make, some are, but not all.

My conclusion is that it's not the tool or knife, or how much it costs, or the maker, it's your familiarity and skill with the knife. That takes practice and more practice. For a while now, I've been considering a

replacement for my veteran Green River Knife. I headed over to Trapper Jon's Knife Shop in Sierra Vista, Arizona to take a look at all the knives he has to offer in his shop. I was a little shocked and amazed at all of the "Survival Knives" that are now out there in the world. There were numerous "Xb15 Commando Survival Navy Seal Bushcraft" knives in Jon's shop, but all of this techno new age gear tends to get on my nerves a bit. I seem to always gravitate to the older style knives like the "Old Hickory", and of course the knives by Green River Forge.

The prices for the majority of these techno blades are way over-priced, and I seriously doubt their functionality in the field. There is no way I would pay \$300.00 for a knife. I've been using my Green River Knife since 1989, this knife has been my constant companion for all of my wilderness adventures and numerous trips around the world. Back when I was working as a wilderness guide/instructor it seemed to me that all wilderness instructors, including those at the Boulder Outdoor Survival School (B.O.S.S.) used the Green River Knife.

Now, I admire and respect the legendary Mors Kochanski as a teacher, writer and wilderness practitioner, but I credit (or blame) Mors for introducing the Mora Knife to the American Survival Community. Mors showed up at the B.O.S.S., which was a sponsored Rabbit Stick Rendezvous held in

Rexburg, Idaho back in 1990 with a Mora Knife slung around his neck. The next thing I know all of the B.O.S.S. guys and gals were also wearing one. The Mora is a good knife for certain applications, but it cannot compete with a Green River Knife.

While working as the Lead Survival and Impact Instructor at a Wilderness Therapy program in Utah, I had the fortunate luck to spend a lot of time in the field, either with the youth or in my off-duty time with some like-minded staff. On one such outing with the youth, we were crossing the desert to a place call "Bloody Hands Gap" (due to the red painted hand prints under an overhang in the gap between the rocks). I found a dead horse and skinned out a good-sized chunk of hide and took some sinews from the tendons. Then, I scraped the hide and dried it into raw hide, soaked it and sewed it around my Green River Knife to make the sheath.

Once it had dried, the hide made a custom fit on the handle and blade. I have been using this same sheath for as long as I have had the knife, and I keep a saddle makers needle stuck into the stitching on the back of the sheath for making emergency repairs on my gear, that is if I'm not in Agave country.

I wear my knife slung around my neck and inside my shirt depending on if I'm hiking or riding a horse or mule. The wearing of a neck knife is not a recent idea invented by the Bushcraft gurus, it has been around for centuries and was the primary way of wearing a knife for most Native Americans. I used a leather strap at first but those quickly rotted from sweat etc.

Now, I use a narrow piece of webbing held in place with 2 short pieces of para cord (550 to you sticklers out there). The webbing was found in the desert south of the Chiricahua Mountains of Arizona in an illegal alien lay-up site. The 550, I got from the dumpster on the army base and I have it sewn together in such a way that if it snags while I'm wearing it, the neck strap will break off and I won't choke myself.

The handle of my old knife appears to be made from Walnut Wood. Back in those days, as in today, I've been using the handle as a socket for my Bow and Drill fire sets. Usually, I carry 2 or 3 tinder bundles, and a spindle or two with me in my pack. If needed, I'll make a board and bow. String can

be made from a number of sources. I have read that people frown on using the handle for a B&D socket because it ruins the handle...ha! Really? I have been doing it for 34 years now and it is still serviceable. It will take me down the trail a bit further, I'm sure.

There is little in the way of maintenance performed on this old knife other than oiling the blade with whatever I can find to oil it with. Recently in Thailand, I used the fat from some cooked chicken skin to grease up both the sheath and the blade. I have used the back of the blade as a striker for making flint and steel fires and use either old pieces of charcoal from a cold fire pit or some Chaga Fungus to catch the spark. I just keep an eye out for stones as I hike. My favorite stone to use though is petrified wood, but the Utah Flint is excellent as is the Mississippi River Chert.

To sharpen my knife, I usually use the river stone method taught to me by my Aeta Negrito, a friend of mine who is from the Philippines. It works well and makes carrying a stone unnecessary, you can simply pick up one in the creek bottom. While in Thailand, I watched my lady friend sharpen my jungle knife on a large chunk of coral in the front yard of her house. Her family has been using this stone to sharpen all manner of edged tools for several generations.

I'll be taking two knives on my next trek, a Swiss Army Knife and my Green River Knife. I like to keep it simple and uncomplicated. From what I have read and seen it looks like folks now are really into survival but seem to be more gear-oriented then skill-oriented. To me that is sad, the more you know in your head the less you need to carry on your back. It is my hope that at least a few of the more hardy and independent thinking true adventurers out there will cut the gear umbilical cord which tethers them to society, grab their favorite knife and hit the trail!

*"Tomahawk"*

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