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January 7, 2005 - Carlton R. Evans Custom Handmade Knives Are Awesome



Evans does spectacular work.

Growing up in a small Texas town, the great outdoors was of interest to me. Like most of boys in that era, I carried a small pocket knife. Usually they came from a local five-and-dime store. My first knife came with the purchase of a pair Levis from Pete Briscoe's clothing store. I believe it was an Imperial knife. I graduated from Gainesville High School in May 1966. One week later, I went to work for General Dynamics, in Fort Worth, Texas, as a tool and die maker apprentice. I was drafted into the Army in 1971, and did my basic training at

Fort Ord, California. Two weeks before basic training ended, my orders were amended sending me to Germany rather than to Vietnam. At that time, I was disappointed because I was ready to fight for my country. Looking back now and being a little older, I am glad I was stationed in Germany, rather than the original tour of duty to Vietnam. Upon arrival to my duty station in Schwetzingen, Germany, my responsibility was to maintain and operate a mobile machine shop. This mobile machine shop would prove be very valuable in my future.

I saw my first handmade knife in 1966. I asked Mr. Talley, the knifemaker, to make one for me. He laughed, indicating that if I wanted a handmade knife I would have to build my own. So in 1967, after much research, I made my first handmade knife. It was a folder with two blades. I thought my first knife was a very well made. I was told by others that it was indeed a very nice knife.

Since 1967, my craftsmanship has greatly improved because I strive to make the next knife better than the last. I had an attachment to the first knives that I made. I would not sell them. There was no way I could put a price on them. To me, every knife became a unique work of art. Therefore, I gave the knives away to people that appreciated the craftsmanship of handmade knives. I still have an attachment to the knives that I make, but not so much to the knife, but to the craftsmanship.

After my tour of duty in the U.S. Army, in 1973, I went back to work at General Dynamics. While working at General Dynamics, I attended college and earned an Associate degree in Applied Science, as a machinist.

By 1978, I had experienced several layoffs in aerospace industries. I was offered a more secure job with Santa Fe Railroad in Gainesville, Texas. I worked at Santa Fe Railroad for five years as a machinist. And you guessed it, there are no secure jobs. The railroad closed that facility, and I was once again without a job. I went back to work for General Dynamics. The drive to Fort Worth was 82 miles one way. I made that commute for nearly three years. My wife Pauline and I decided that this daily commute had to stop. We sold the house in the country, and moved to Fort Worth. When we moved, I had to leave my knife shop behind and I ended up selling most my equipment.