

Knives

CHUCK KARWAN
& other sharp things

The Custom Folding Knives of Carlton Evans

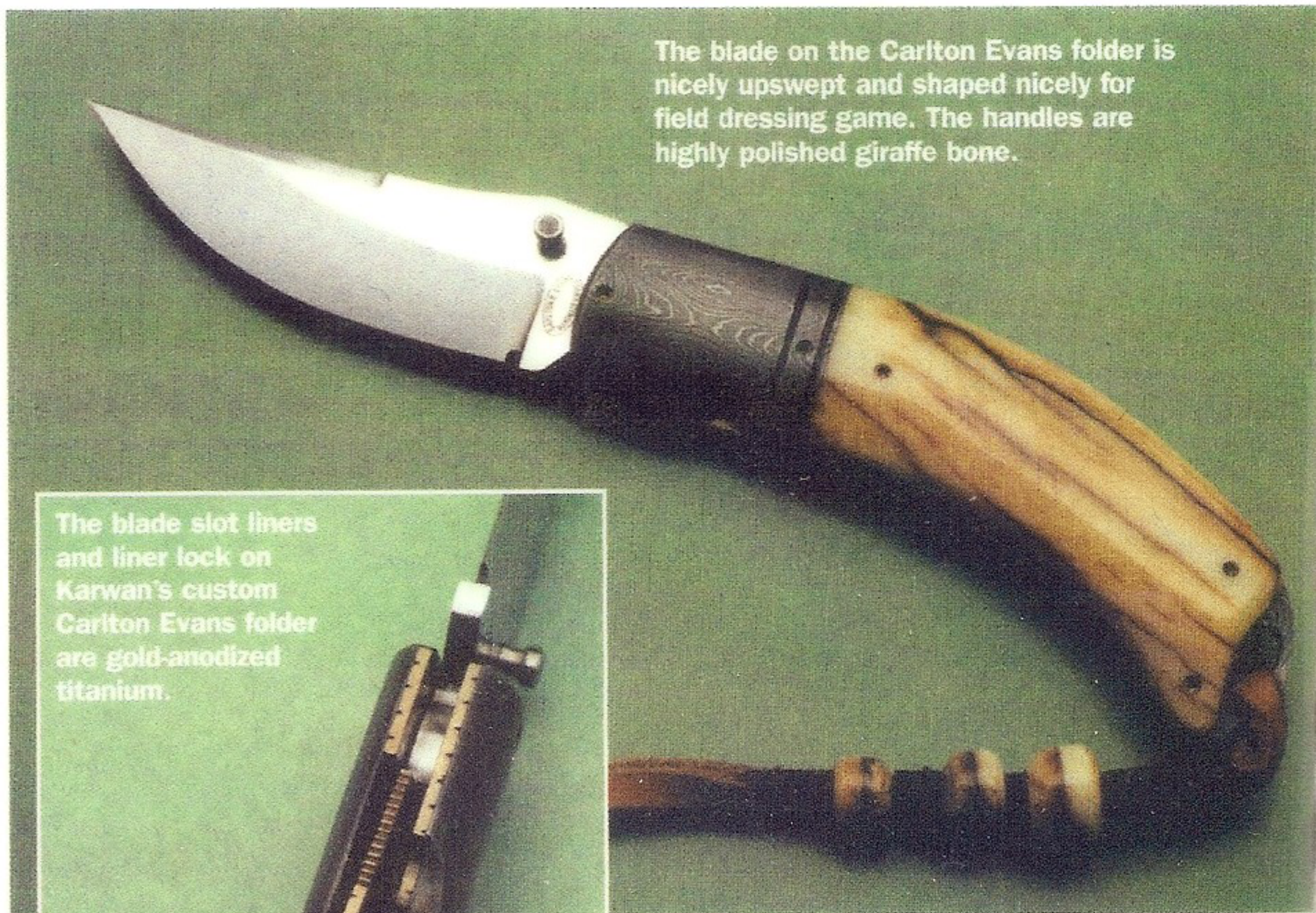
Until you have owned a custom knife made for you to your own specifications, you will never know the pride of ownership and joy that come from carrying and using such a unique tool. The quality of the construction details is what makes such a knife stand out. For the last few months I have been evaluating just such a knife, made for me by custom knifemaker Carlton Evans.

Carlton is a part-timer about to go full time in a unique way. He saw his first handmade knife in 1966 and immediately wanted one for himself. By 1967 he had made his first knife, a two-blade folder, a difficult type with which to start a knifemaking career. Since then he has made and sold many knives, concentrating primarily on high-class folders.

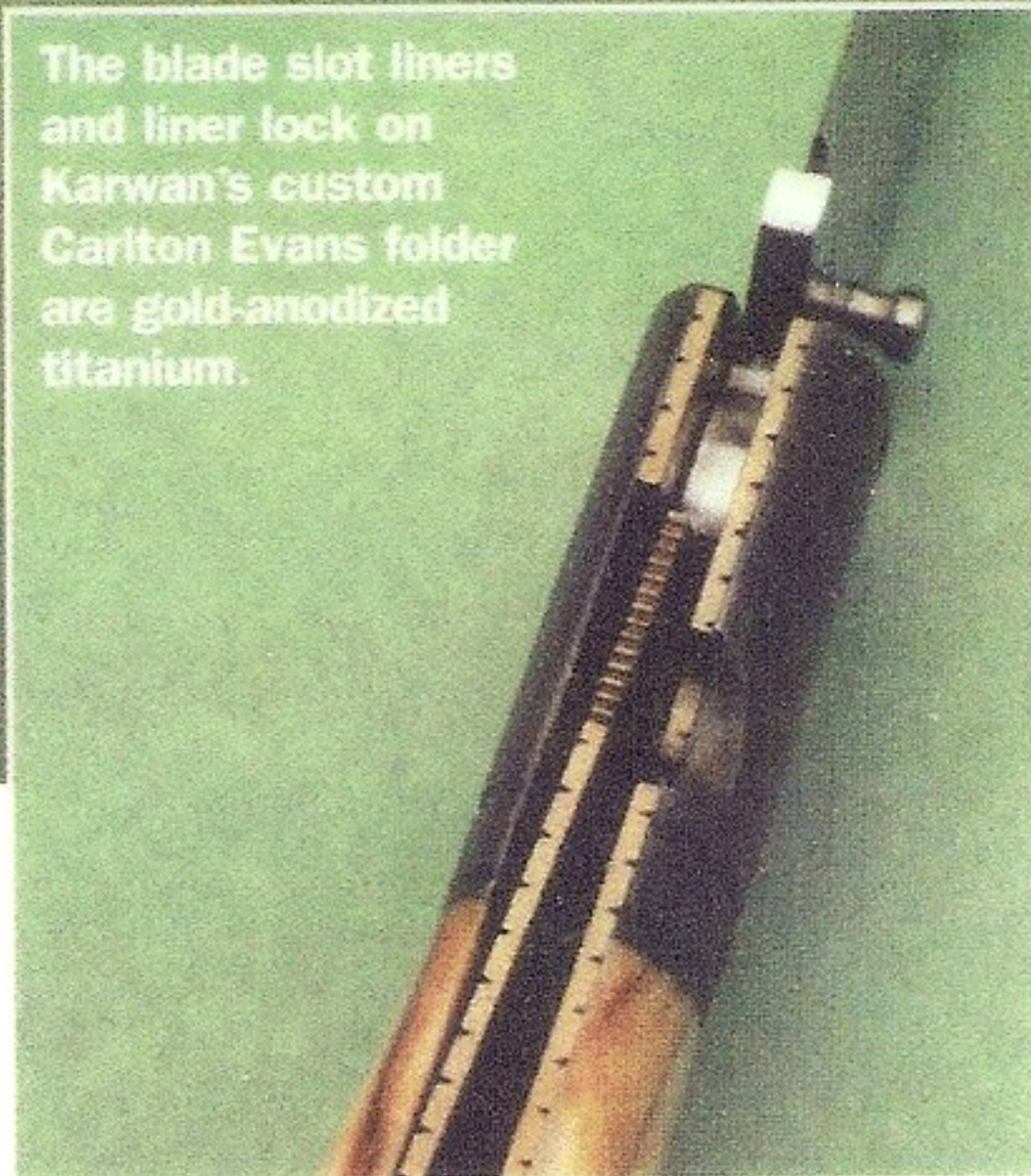
Carlton's "day job" has been in the aerospace industry, but in the last few years he has devoted more and more time to his knifemaking. When he retires in the near future he wants to do two things – travel with his wife and make knives. His approach is, to my knowledge, without precedent. To fulfill his two dreams, he has converted a 22-foot utility trailer into a mobile knife shop so that he and his wife can travel and he can make knives wherever they go.

Obviously, Carlton isn't your run-of-the-mill knifemaker. He is also a super nice guy and a lot of fun to talk to and spend time with. He offers folding knives in a number of different series including Cavalryman, Cowboy, Gentleman Cowboy, Gentleman, Gentleman Frontiersman, Scout and Wrangler. These vary in blade and handle shape, size, bolster configuration and other features. All have the look and feel of a cutting tool that an outdoorsman would choose.

He offers a variety of different steels including carbon, stainless and Damascus, but pretty much insists on



The blade on the Carlton Evans folder is nicely upswept and shaped nicely for field dressing game. The handles are highly polished giraffe bone.



The blade slot liners and liner lock on Karwan's custom Carlton Evans folder are gold-anodized titanium.

using high-performance steels. In handle materials he prefers those that require little maintenance and look good. They include walrus, cow and giraffe bone; varieties of ivory, antler, horn, pearl and woods; as well as synthetics such as micarta, G10 and carbon fiber. Typically, the blades of his folders lock open securely with a titanium-liner locking mechanism.

Probably the best way to convey the beauty and detail of Carlton's work is to describe my specimen in detail. The titanium liners and liner lock are not only anodized gold but also jeweled. The jeweling is down on the inside surfaces where almost no one would even look. The screws holding the knife together are heat-colored to match the liner. The back spacer and bolster of my knife are made from highly figured, etched, blued Damascus stainless steel made by Devon Thomas. A small piece of the same steel is inlaid into the blade thumb stud. The back spacer and backs of the liners are file-worked in a precise and attractive pattern.

The handsome handle scales are made from highly polished giraffe bone that is extremely dense and nicely figured. Giraffe bone is attractive but at the same time tough and durable. The shape of the Cowboy handle has a nice downward curve that makes the knife comfortable to hold and extremely secure in the hand, and the rear curve of the handle locks nicely into

the palm so that your hand will not slide forward onto the edge of the blade, even during heavy use.

The blade's upswept point is shaped nicely for both field dressing and skinning game. It is made from 154CM high-carbon stainless steel heat-treated by Paul Bos, who is widely considered the best in the business. The blade's edge geometry is superb for slicing, and the edge of mine was razor-sharp on arrival. The blade has a hand-rubbed finish that is attractive without the gaudiness of a mirror-polished blade.

This knife is designed to be used with a beautifully tooled, fully lined, tan-colored leather belt sheath set up for horizontal carry. The sheath was made by Paul Long. The butt of the knife has an elongated lanyard hole that contains a short leather thong with giraffe-bone buttons that make it easier to pull the knife from its secure and deep-seated position in its scabbard.

Over the years many knives have passed through my hands, some of them made by top custom makers. My Carlton Evans is second to none. My only problem is this knife is so gorgeous that I am afraid to use it.

If you like fine clothes, guns, watches and optics, you will surely like the knives of Carlton Evans. I can recommend them without reservation. Carlton will display his wares at the SCI Convention in Reno, Nevada U.S.A. January 26-29, 2005. Make a point of visiting his exhibit to view his work. 🐘

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