

A Cub Scout Leader's Friend

THE CUBMASTER

August 2013

Issue No. One

www.pack610nh.com

Contact Info
G. DAVID WILKERSON
30 Balcom Road
Pelham NH, 03076
TELEPHONE
(603) 635 2773
MOBILE
(434) 851 0043

Help! Bears Are Learning To WHITTLE.... Maybe?

The Yankee boy,
before he's sent to
school, well knows
the mysteries of that
magic tool..."

"Whittling" by John Pierpont

WHAT (SOME) MOTHER'S
DREAD AND FATHERS
(SECRETLY) ADMIRE:

A SCOUT'S FIRST KNIFE!

CHOOSING A KNIFE

Wow, there are thousands of knives to choose from. Most have specific purposes for which they are very well suited. Some have no use other than ornamentation. Many are appropriate for scouts and many are NOT.

Continued on Page 2

KNIFE SAFETY

For the sake of the squeamish we teach, as a fundamental rule, the concept of the "safety circle" but seasoned scouts all know it's the "blood circle" and so called for good reason.

Continued on Page 4

EARNING HIS "WHITTLE & CHIP"

Earning this badge is a rite of passage for every Cub Scout. For many it puts adulthood in sight.



Whittling is best done with others...



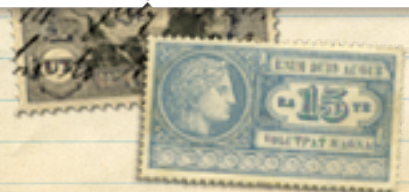
Whittling in the round is challenging and rewarding...



Learn techniques and practice...

It is the discovery
that keeps the
fingers moving..
...not idleness

"Whittling - The Last Class"
by John Stone



Choosing the Perfect Knife

Finding a knife sounds easy but if you're like me, you have leaned over the glass covered counter and seen knives of all kinds. More to the point, your idea of the perfect knife and your scout's idea are probably far apart.

What my scout, and his friends, first described as the perfect knife was close kin to a bowie knife (pronounced



boo-we). Your initial shock at his preference needs not be explained. What *does* need explaining is what choosing a knife really means. We begin with an

important question, "For what are you going to use the knife?"

KNIFE CHOICE DRIVEN BY TYPE

Knives can be categorized in a variety of ways. Fixed blade knives are often called "sheath knives" since carrying these without a sheath is impractical (*crazy*). Alternatively knives without a fixed blade are referred to as folding blade and are usually called pocket knives. As a scout parent it may seem self evident that the right knife for a scout is a pocket knife.

Oh, if only it were so simple. For example, suppose you want to fillet a fish? I can tell you from personal experience that using a folding knife for this purpose is an exercise in frustration at best. First of all, a folding knife is hard to clean. Imagine fish detritus being trapped in the inner workings of your pocket knife. The upside of the ensuing stench would be

the ease with which you can sniff out the location of your knife when you can't remember into which pocket it was last shoved!

In contrast, imagine trying to make a cool arrowhead shaped neckerchief slide with the long thin blade of a fillet knife. Just the difficulty of working around your fingers illustrates why such a knife is not practical. Additionally, Cub Scouts are not allowed to employ fixed blade knives for any purpose while engaged in a pack or den sponsored activity.

Even so, most scouts will express disappointment with the prohibition as they probably have grand visions of wilderness survival, etc. For that reason it helps to provide an alternative use for knives that many boys will find attractive. In this regard, I can think of two: whittling and handyman.

The handyman's knife has to be able to perform a variety of functions. It's best if it can loosen screws, cut cord, do simple whittling, and a few other tasks. The first example that comes to mind is the uber-functional Swiss Army Knife. Another that comes to mind is "the" Leatherman.

I suppose either is fine. However, there is such a thing as "too much". The Leatherman almost doesn't deserve to be called a "knife". I don't mean to say it isn't useful but it is a tool that includes a knife blade.



A sadly used knife on its way to renewal

Sometimes the best knife is a hand-me-down. Don't overlook the fun and benefit of yard

Choosing the Perfect Knife (cont.)

A handyman's knife that will be used for the enjoyment of whittling should feel comfortable in the hand. Think about the way the knife handle will be managed whilst whittling. The position of the handle relative to the palm will change. In some cases it tends to ride

fairly high in the hand (high meaning closer to the fingers). Think about how the handle will be used to guide the knife when paring (think of peeling an apple). A moderate to small Swiss Army knife might be the perfect compromise between whittling and performing handyman tasks.

Of course if you want to whittle you need to think about more than the handle, you need to think about the blade and how it will be sharpened. When using a tool for carving (whittling is a form of carving) the blade will have a very, even extremely fine edge. A fine edge is easily chipped by some materials. For this reason, if a boy wants to really have fun doing elaborate "whittles" it is worth considering having a dedicated knife.

I use a knife that has a single, locking blade. The edge has been reshaped to reduce the conventional double bevel common on knives used for utility or handyman purposes. It is also "mirror" smooth. To shape it I use water stones (medium and fine) and to truly sharpen, or hone it, I use a leather strop with a rubbing compound. You

can do this with any knife, even a Leatherman. But doing that



Cool stuff that has nothing to do with the story but looks good



My whittling knife laying on a strop beside rubbing compound.

to a Leatherman would not make good sense because

you are bound to use "that" tool for many purposes. The fine edge would be too easily damaged. On the other hand, it is much easier to carve with my "refined" blade. Also note the shape. The "pointy" blade makes it easier for me to undercut features and also to carve detail without resorting to gouges and other specially shaped blades founding in a wood carvers tool chest. I have those but I don't carry them in my pocket.

CONCLUSION

Get a boy the knife they need to get started and sharpen it with a durable and conventional double bevel. The blade doesn't have to lock. The blade should be 1 1/4 to 1 3/4 inches long. Watch the "over all" length (3 3/4) and seek decent steel. Mine is Queen cutlery D2 steel.

A knife is only useful in the hands of someone who cares enough to keep it sharp.

Knife Safety / Whittling & Chip Badge

KNIFE SAFETY

The Guide to Safe Scouting is the definitive word on what scouts in our pack may or may not do as part of a sanctioned / organized scouting event. The youth handbook and the leader guide are excellent tools to assist in the application of safety standards. What follows are my observations:

➤ Observe the safety circle and enforce it by having youth whittle while seated on the ground. They won't be tempted to lean back and it's harder to get up and walk around with an open/exposed blade.

➤ Don't faint if the boys want to call it the "blood circle". It's a graphic and effective way to communicate the issue of ensuring no bystanders (you?) get hurt.

➤ Consider the use of gloves or thumb guards. However, be aware that an knife wielded clumsily is inherently dangerous.

➤ Understand the basic whittling cuts: paring, levering, v-cut, and stop cut. The guide should make clear to never cut toward yourself. A paring cut may seem to violate this rule. However, properly executed it does not. Know how to whittle or get assistance from someone who does.

WHITTLING & CHIP

This Award is meant for Bear scouts, Webelos scouts.

Bear scouts and Webelos scouts may earn the privilege of carrying a pocketknife to Cub Scout functions. The objective of this award is to make scouts aware that:

'A Cub Scout knife is an important tool. You can do many things with its blades. The cutting blade is the one you will use most of the time. With it you can make shavings and chips and carve all kinds of things.

You must be very careful when you whittle or carve. Take good care of your knife. Always remember that a knife is a tool, not a toy. Use it with care so that you don't hurt yourself or ruin what you are carving.'

TAKE THE POCKET KNIFE PLEDGE

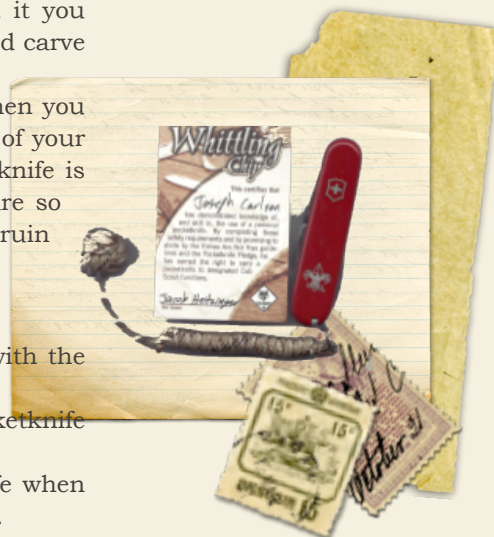
I will treat my pocketknife with the respect due a useful tool.

I will always close my pocketknife and put it away when not in use.

I will not use my pocketknife when it might injure someone near me.

I promise never to throw my pocketknife for any reason.

I will use my pocketknife in a safe manner at all times.



Knives can, and should, last a lifetime. The same is true of the character we seek for our scouts to develop. Proper temper in their forging, and diligence in their maintenance have an outcome that far exceeds the value of the effort itself.