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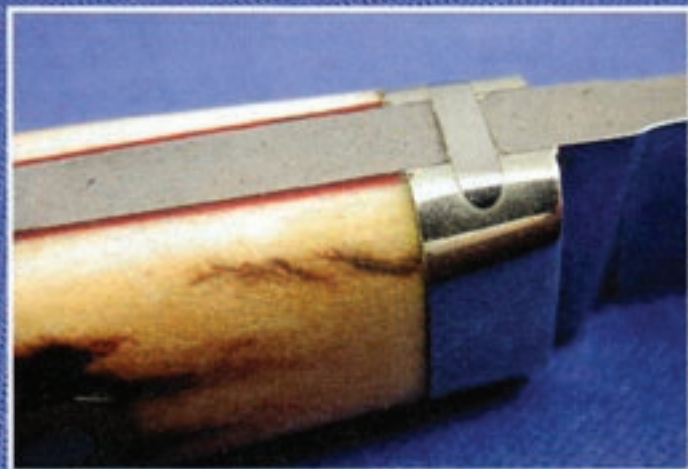
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THE FIRST LOVELESS STIFFHORN

BY JOHN DENTON



Unique Stiffhorn construction includes a crossbar in the bolster.

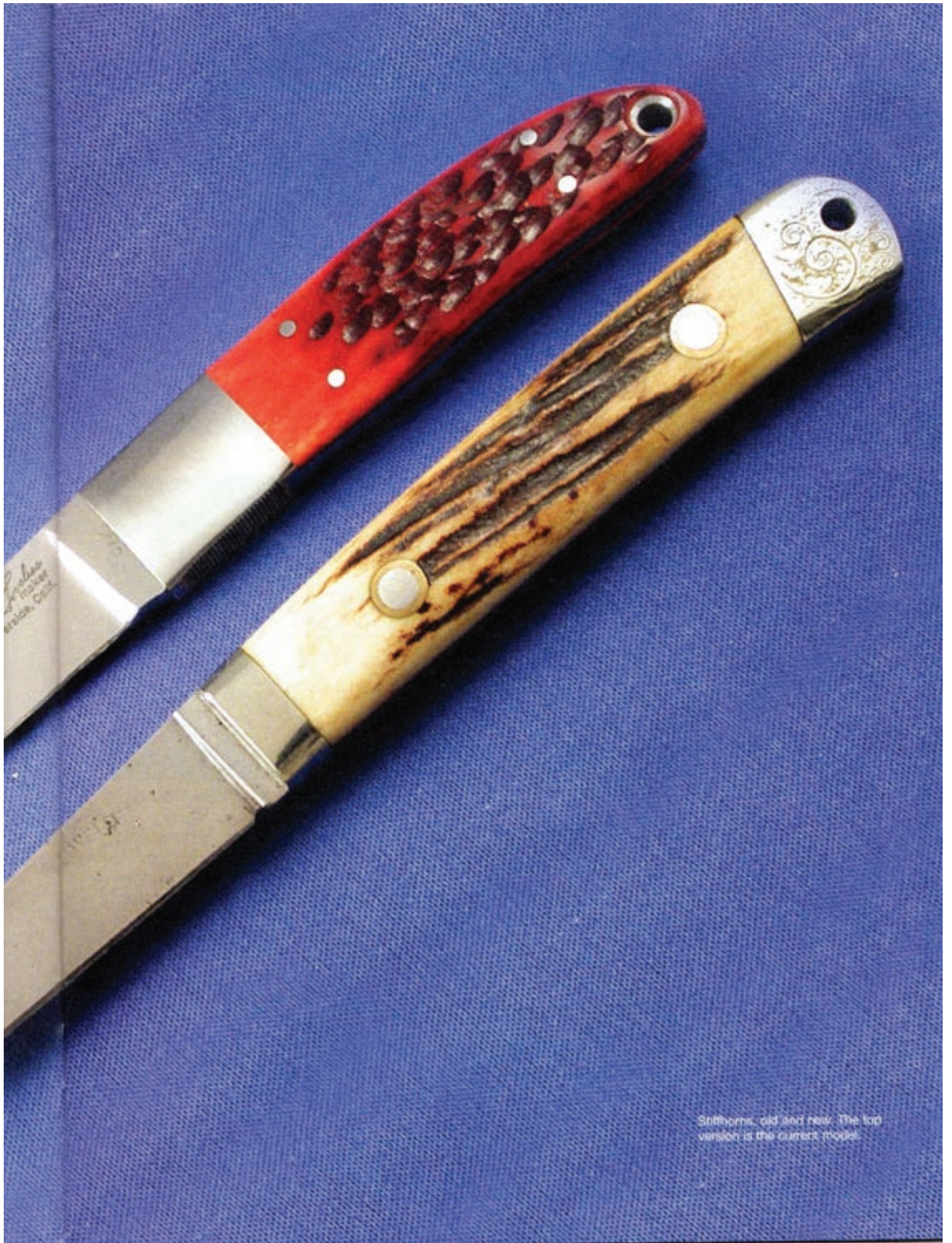
The first Bob Loveless Stiffhorn knife is pictured on page 50 of the Loveless tome, "Living on the Edge," a compilation of knives in the A.L. Williams collection.

The history of this knife was unknown until I talked with A.G. Russell on a Sunday at a Blade Show about Loveless-Johnson knives. A.G. looked down at my table and saw the Stiffhorn from the book.

"THAT'S MY KNIFE."

I first thought he was describing a knife also pictured in the book that had been stolen from A.G. and later reunited with the owner at the 2000 Blade Show. When A.G. said that was not the stolen knife, but a knife he had owned, he told the story.





Stiffhorns, old and new. The top version is the current model.



The Engraved R.W. Loveless Stiffhorn model, named as a fixed-blade version of his design for folder-maker Jess Horn.



A closer look at the Lynton McKenzie unmarked engraving.



In his lifetime, McKenzie was considered one of the top knife engravers.



An early Loveless logo marks this first Stiffhorn.



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Russell was at Loveless' shop in Lawn-dale, California in 1967, where he was working on a knife he described as a "non-folding" folder. This design is what Loveless collectors now know as the Stiffhorn.

Russell paid Loveless \$35 for that knife. A distinctive point of this particular knife is that the handle was ground down to the point to where the pins were exposed on the bottom of the guard. I had wondered about this and had even asked Ron Lake why Loveless would do such a thing. Lake had no idea. The logo was almost worn off the blade, and all that could be seen was "R.W. Loveless".

Russell added that, in 1968, he was at a show in New Orleans, where Lynton McKenzie was doing a demonstration on engraving and said to him, "Let me have your knife, and I will engrave it for you." Russell did so, and although McKenzie did not sign the knife, it was the first proto-type for what was to become the Stiffhorn.

The blade was a utility, and Loveless was interested in folders and blade shapes. He would later go on to design many of Jess Horn's folding knives, and in part, the Stiffhorn name given to the design was with Horn in mind.

Russell's last words as he left my table were, "That's a historical knife."

Thanks to that conversation, an unknown Loveless knife engraved by an unknown engraver becomes, as Russell said, "historical." ❧