

Gary Busey (facing page) holds his Zac Buchanan knife and the birthday cake. Buchanan's repro of the Loveless Mini Wilderness pattern, the classic fighter sports a blade of CPM-154 stainless, a sambar stag handle, and gold engraving by the author (note the "Hands" motif for the author's surname). (Point Seven knife photo)

THE BUSEYS' BIRTHDAY BLADES

THE AUTHOR EMBELLISHES CHARLES SAUER AND ZAC BUCHANAN KNIVES FOR ACTORS GARY AND JAKE BUSEY



Among his many movie roles, Busey played Commander Krill in *Under Siege*. (Warner Bros. Pictures)



Busey was nominated for an Oscar for Best Actor for his performance in the title role of 1978's *The Buddy Holly Story*. Holly was a major influence on rock 'n roll during the 1950s and on such performers as *The Beatles*, the *Rolling Stones*, the *Nitty Gritty Dirt Band*, *Linda Ronstadt* and many others. (Columbia Pictures photo)

Early last year, a friend of mine asked me to keep an eye out for some good collectible knives.

"What are you looking for?" I asked.

"Well," he began, "I want two knives for you to engrave, maybe a bowie and a fighter. One is going to be a birthday gift for a father, Gary Busey, and the other a birthday gift from Gary to his son, Jake."

This was going to be fun! A veteran actor, Gary has appeared on television and in such movies as *The Buddy Holly Story*—for which he received an Academy Award nomination for Best Actor—*Lethal Weapon*, *Under Siege*, *The Firm*, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and many others, though in today's "what-have-you-done-lately" world, he may be best known for his appearance last year on Donald Trump's *Celebrity Apprentice 4*. Gary's son Jake is also an actor.

The 2011 BLADE Show was approaching and I told my friend I would keep an eye out for the knives there. Moreover, as soon as he mentioned *bowie*, I thought of my old friend, knifemaker Charles Sauer. Charles and I had done a few really nice knives back in the 1990s. He forges his own damascus, and a damascus bowie would be a good counterpoint to the as-yet-to-be-determined fighter.

I called Charles and he said he had a blank for a Dall DeWeese-style bowie he could finish up in a few weeks. A bit later he sent me an e-mail describing the knife and explaining a bit about William Dallas "Dall" DeWeese (1857-1928).

"Dall was a famous big-game hunter in the late 1800s. He was largely responsible for the opening up of big-game hunting in Alaska. The notable

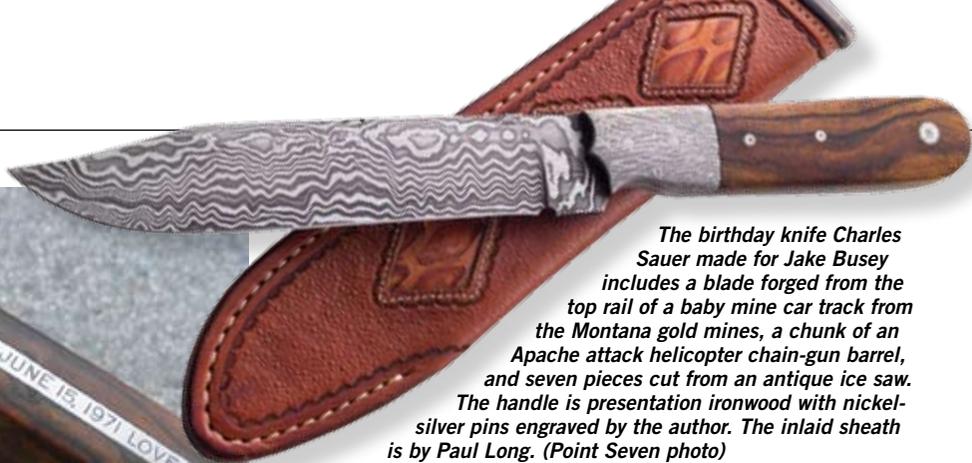
thing to me," Charles noted, "is that he not only designed his knife but had it made—kind of like the Jim Bowie story. Most all knifemakers back then were indentured, so whoever made his knife was probably a blacksmith. I stayed true to the pattern but blew it up from a hunting knife to a bowie. The pattern also has that old 'Green River flavor,' which is very popular."

Charles spared no effort in obtaining the materials and preparing them for the knife.

"I took a piece of the top rail of a baby mine car track from the gold mines in Montana, a chunk from an Apache attack helicopter chain-gun barrel, and seven pieces I cut out of an antique ice saw. I forged out the mine track and the barrel into two bars, then cut them both into seven pieces," he explained. "Then, I alternated the three steels into a 21-stack and forged them down and out into a billet, then handforged it roughly to the shape of the knife. I also zone tempered/differentially heat treated the blade, [including cryogenically treating] it. The chain gun and mine track are pretty soft steels, so the ice saw [steel] helped [balance them out]."

The bolsters are bridge cable and the bolster pins are damascus as well. The handle is presentation ironwood with nickel-silver pins. The inlaid sheath is by Paul Long. "Paul is the best sheath-maker around," Charles opined.

When I received the knife, I was extremely pleased. The damascus pattern is very appropriate for what I call the "overall flavor" of the knife. The pins were engravable and Charles left me a polished spot on the bottom of the tang on which to engrave an inscription. With one knife down and one to go, I went to work.



The birthday knife Charles Sauer made for Jake Busey includes a blade forged from the top rail of a baby mine car track from the Montana gold mines, a chunk of an Apache attack helicopter chain-gun barrel, and seven pieces cut from an antique ice saw. The handle is presentation ironwood with nickel-silver pins engraved by the author. The inlaid sheath is by Paul Long. (Point Seven photo)

The author engraved Gary's birthday wishes to son Jake on the tang spine of the Sauer knife. (photo courtesy of Barry Lee Hands)



Excellent Interpretation

The BLADE Show rolled around and there was a lot to see. I must confess, I spent as much time cutting up with friends as I spent looking at knives.

Knifemaker Steve Johnson and I were looking about and visited Thad Buchanan's table. Thad has been making Loveless-style knives for many years, and he was eager to introduce us to his son, Zac, and the knives he had been making. Zac had some really nice pieces and one of his fighters caught my eye. After the show I called and told him I needed a knife to engrave for Gary, and I was thinking about buying the fighter.

"I could tell you liked that one, but it's gone," Zac said. My heart sank. I should have bought it when I could but somebody beat me to it. However, all was not lost. "I do have one that I was keeping for myself," Zac confided. "It's the best piece I've made to date and if you want, I'll sell it to you."

"What is it?" I asked. "A Loveless-style Mini Wilderness," he replied.

Now I was excited. The Mini Wilderness is one of my favorite Loveless designs.

Two days later I had the knife in my hands and was really pleased. The fit and finish is excellent. It is curved in all the right places and straight in all the right places—an excellent interpretation of the classic Loveless design.

Zac is a chip off the old block. He sent me a copy of the letter he sent to Gary that describes the knife. In part, Zac wrote:

"I was pleased to hear one of my custom knives was purchased for you. I hope you enjoy my work as much as I enjoy yours.

"The steel is CPM-154," Zac's letter continued. "The guard and handle fittings are

416 stainless steel. The handle material is India sambar stag. If needed, the blade can be cleaned with a mild soap and warm water, but try to avoid washing the handle with soap and water. It is better to use vegetable oil on the stag if it needs to be cleaned. If the blade gets dull, I will be happy to sharpen it for you at no charge."

It was time for me to embellish the knife. The Mini Wilderness does not have a lot of area to engrave, but it still takes some time to do it. My friend wanted it ready for Gary's birthday party, which was in a few weeks.

I had been thinking about a new style of 24k-gold overlay with my trademark "black satin" background. I went at it working long hours, as an engraver is often required to do to meet a deadline.

Cuttin' The Cake

The birthday party was at the California Yacht Club in Marina del Rey. Zac could not attend but Charles and I were there with Gary and a small circle of friends.

Gary is a lot of fun and loved the knives. He asked many questions about how they were made. Later, after dinner and as Gary cut the birthday cake with Charles' knife, I asked if he would supply the answers to a few questions. Those questions and his answers follow:

BLADE: What was your first knife?

GARY BUSEY: When I was in the 2nd and 3rd grades, I had a little pocketknife with a picture of Gene Autry on it.

What do you like about knives?

I like the artistry and manifestation of



Gary holds the Dall DeWeese repro knife and mugs with the maker, Charles Sauer (right), during the birthday party at the California Yacht Club in Marina del Rey. (photo courtesy of Barry Lee Hands)

the knife and what the knife stands for—in survival in the woods, the mountains, and jungle. God bless the knife!

Have you used knives in your movies?

No, just guns and fists.

Is there an inscription on the Charles Sauer bowie you gave your son for his birthday?

Yes. "Happy 40th, Jake. Love, Dad."

Do you feel engraving enhances a collectible knife?

Absolutely!

What do you envision for the future of knife collecting?

How much time you got? In terms of knife collecting, that's here to stay.

Barry Lee Hands is a long-time engraver of knives, guns and other items. For more information contact him at 30608 Fernview Ln., Dept. BL6, Bigfork, MT 59911 406-249-4334 www.barryleehands.com. For more on the pictured knives, contact Charles Sauer, Dept. BL6, 842 Division St., Prescott, AZ 86301 623-606-6442 www.sauerknives.com, and Zac Buchanan 541-815-6706 zacbuchananknives@gmail.com.

To read all about the latest knives, knife news, forums, blogs and much more, see www.blademag.com.