

Last Of The Professional Knife Throwers?

An ancient art form needs your help to survive

■ By Bobby Branton

Dick Haines outlines his assistant employing what the late Harry McEvoy called the half-spin throw. (Hughes Studio photo)

The knife thrower fans out nine gleaming blades in his hand. He peels them off one by one and fires them toward a woman strapped to a spinning wheel, each knife piercing the wheel within inches of her body. After the thrower lets fly the last blade, he rushes to the wheel, brings it to a stop and unstraps the assistant, who steps away unscathed.

This once-familiar sight, seen mostly at county fairs and sportsman shows, is becoming increasingly rare. With advanced technology and state-of-the-art special effects overshadowing them,

professional knife throwers are slowly but surely disappearing. Fewer than a dozen professional knife acts exist today, and the majority of them have added specialty routines—fast-draw, gun-spinning, rope-twirling and whip-cracking acts—to their repertoires. Nonetheless, a few performers remain who specialize in knife throwing alone.

One of today's longest-running knife-throwing acts is that of Ken Pierce, also known as Prince Che Che, chief of the Seneca Nation in New York. His speed and accuracy are phenomenal. However, he must limit the number of stunts in his

act due to his added responsibilities of running a circus and to a shoulder injury he suffered earlier this year in a car wreck.

Another top performer is Larry Cisewski ("Throwing Real Knives At Real People," June 1987 *Blade*®), billed as "the world's greatest knife thrower." One of Larry's favorite stunts is The Devil's Doorway, in which Cisewski straps his assistant to one side of a revolving door. As

the door spins, Larry throws knife after knife into the side opposite his assistant. Timing is crucial.

Other active knife-throwing professionals are Sylvester and Barbara Braun (The Wizards of the West) who, along with their knife impalement act, do a



The late Harry McEvoy made throwing knives, wrote knife throwing books and is a member of The Blade Magazine Cutlery Hall-Of-Fame. His company, Tru-Balance, still sells throwing knives. (Dick photo)



Billed as "the world's greatest knife thrower," Larry Cisewski is one of the few full-time professional knife throwers.

rope-spinning and whip routine. Al Lamarre, whose stage name is Flash Lamarre, throws knives while standing on a rola-bola board. He also performs a fast-draw routine.

Another active knife-throwing professional, Dick Haines, runs the Haines Family Circus and performs a high-wire act. Actor, stunt man and knife thrower Alex Green has been working as

Knife Throwers Past & Present

No story on knife throwing would be complete without mention of such knife-throwing greats as Harry McEvoy; Skeeter Vaughan; Frank Dean; Ben Pitti; Adolfo Rossi; Paul Des Muke; Jack Cavanaugh; Joe Gibson; Lawrence Pierce (father of Ken "Prince Che Che" Pierce); Augie Gomez; Al Cody and the Shooting Mansfields; Stan Brion; Ivan Thurlow; R.M. Fearnley; Joe Eddy and Bob Fairchild; Jay Evans; Stewart Lipke; Paul Lacross; John Lepiarz; Arnold R. Sandubrase; and those who both throw knives and sell them, such as the author (who also makes them), Dan Dennehy and Bob Karp.—by *Steve Shackelford*

a gun-and-whip coach in Hollywood for many years. Learning his skills from stunt man-knife thrower Rod Reddwing, Green has worked as a double for actor Charles Bronson and threw a tomahawk in the made-for-TV movie, *People*



Across the Lake, starring Gerald McRaney, Valerie Harper and Barry Corbin.

Other full-time throwers are Fritz Brunbach, Bobby Fairchild, Lew Brotherton, Jay Evans and Dan Dennehy. Along with his son, John, Dennehy has performed at shows nationwide, including the Blade Show & International Cutlery Fair.

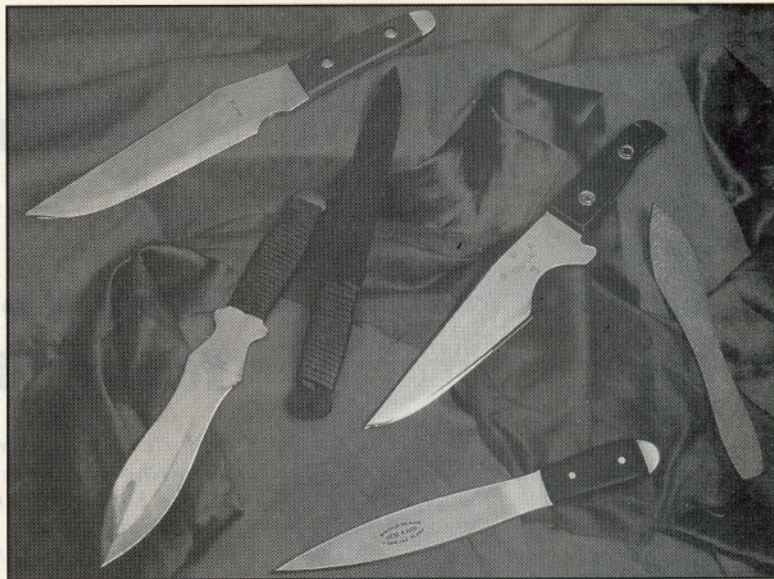
American Knife Throwers Alliance

Knife throwing will survive into the 21st century but to thrive it needs the involvement of young and old aficionados alike. The American Knife Throwers Alliance (AKTA) is dedicated to help those who wish to get involved in knife throwing.

In the 1970s, the AKTA grew to 1,200 members under the direction of Carmen Corrado but disbanded due to organizational problems. Today, the AKTA is making a comeback.

"An association of American sportsmen dedicated to the practice and promotion of knife throwing as a sport, recreation and hobby," the AKTA provides assistance and guidelines for those who wish to organize knife throwing on a local level. Membership in the AKTA entitles you to a quarterly newsletter, *The Bullseye Buster*, a shoulder patch and a membership card. For more information contact the AKTA, Dept. BL, attn: B. Branton, 4976 Seewee, Awendaw, SC 29429 (803) 928-3624. **BLADE**

Husband-and-wife knife-throwing teams such as Sylvester (not pictured) and Barbara Braun (left) are among the sport's most popular acts.



A sample of today's throwing knives, clockwise from top left: Bobby Branton, Cold Steel, Tru-Balance, Western, Bob Karp and C.A.S. Iberia.

Where To Get Throwing Knives

Blackjack, attn: M. Stewart, Dept. BL, 1307 W. Wabash, Effingham, IL 62401 (217) 347-7700

Boker USA, attn: C. Hoffman, Dept. BL, 1550 Balsam St., Lakewood, CO 80215 (303) 462-0662 fax (303) 462-0668

Bobby Branton, Dept. BL, 4976 Seewee, Awendaw, SC 29429 (803) 928-3624

C.A.S. Iberia, attn: B. Ross, Dept. BL, 650 Industrial Blvd, Sale Creek, TN 37373 (615) 332-4700

Cold Steel, attn: L. Thompson, Dept. BL, 2128 D-Knoll, Ventura, CA 93003 (805) 656-5191

Dan Dennehy, Dept. BL, POB 2-F, Del Norte, CO 81132 (719) 657-2545

Bob Karp, Dept. BL, POB 47304, Phoenix, AZ 85068 (800) 843-2523

Tru-Balance, attn: S. McEvoy, Dept. BL, 2155 Tremont NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504 (616) 453-3679

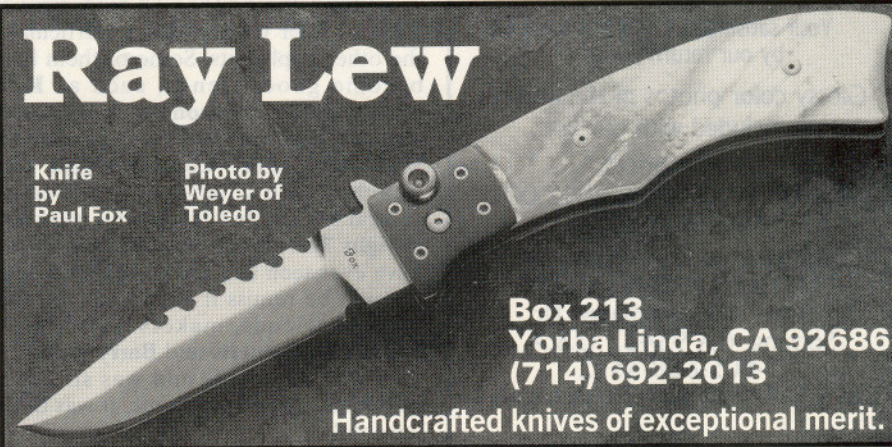
United Cutlery, attn: C. Petlitzer, Dept. BL, 1425 United, Sevierville, TN 37862 (615) 428-2532

Western, attn: T. Zona, Dept. BL, 54 Main, Camillus, NY 13031 (315) 672-8111

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