

# THE TOP MAKERS PICK THEIR BEST PROTÉGÉS



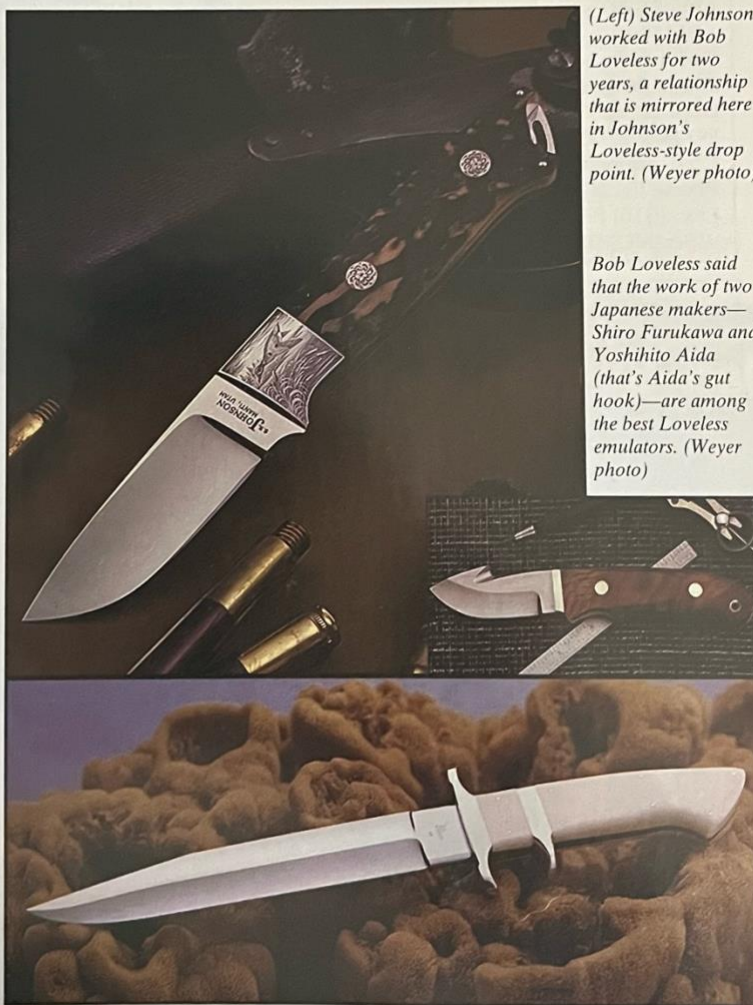
Few do it better than Loveless, Henry, Herron and Moran but that doesn't keep them from trying

■ by B.R. Hughes

**D**uring the last quarter of a century, four knifemakers have influenced custom knife design more than any others: Bob Loveless, Ed "D.E." Henry, George Herron and Bill Moran. During the 1950s and most of the '60s, Bob Randall most influenced knifemakers' work, but Loveless, Henry, Herron and Moran have had more impact on modern handmade knife design than any dozen of the others combined.

Loveless emerged on the knifemaking scene in the late 1960s. His tapered full-tang knives with thinly ground blades and small guards took the knife-buying public by storm. Within the span of a few years, he became the most copied knifemaker in the world. His grinds began very high on his blades and the feather-like edges cut with ease. Add the fact that Loveless brought to custom cutlery an extremely high degree of workmanship and it's not difficult to understand the impact he had on the market. A great many active makers of the 1969-74 era could copy Bob's style, but most did not do so well duplicating his craftsmanship.

Ed "D.E." Henry's Bowies are some of the more classic handmades of the genre. From the mid-'50s on he replicated 19th-century Sheffield Bowies that were almost the equal of the originals. His later interpretations of early American Bowies and California knives are testimony to his design genius. Makers of such Bowies



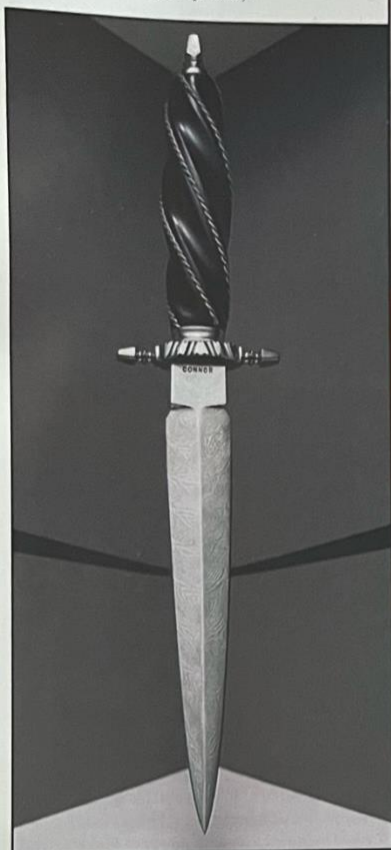
(Left) Steve Johnson worked with Bob Loveless for two years, a relationship that is mirrored here in Johnson's Loveless-style drop point. (Weyer photo)

Bob Loveless said that the work of two Japanese makers—Shiro Furukawa and Yoshihito Aida (that's Aida's gut hook)—are among the best Loveless emulators. (Weyer photo)

Lloyd Pendleton emulates the Bob Loveless fighter style here with the double grind and sub hilt. (Weyer photo)



(Left) Bob Loveless with a table full of his knives at the 1972 Knifemakers Guild Show. "It's easy for an aspiring knifemaker to copy an established maker's work," he observed, "but it isn't so easy to think for oneself and to achieve a distinctive style of one's own." (Hughes photo)



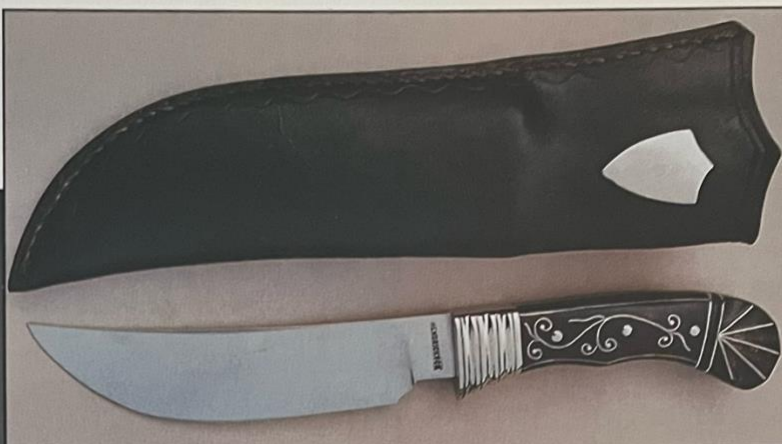
(Above) This fluted European-style dagger by Michael Connor reflects the Moran style and incorporates the Damascus steel Moran repopularized. Moran reintroduced Damascus at the 1973 Knifemakers Guild Show in Kansas City. (Weyer photo)

today return to Henry's designs again and again for inspiration and direction.

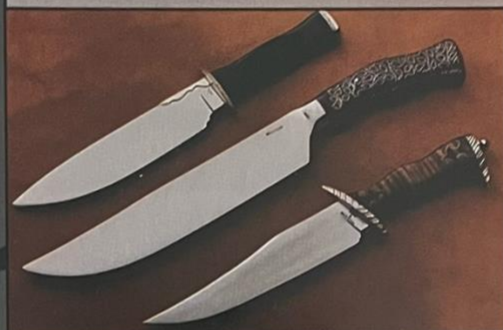
George Herron is the "godfather" to many a South Carolina knifemaker. His simple yet sublime utilitarian design style is reflected in the hunters of dozens of today's makers from the Southeast and beyond. If the handmade hunter you see today doesn't reflect the Loveless influence, it probably has Herron's.

Bill Moran had been forging blades on a professional basis since the 1940s but did not achieve "cult" status until he reintroduced Damascus steel at the 1973

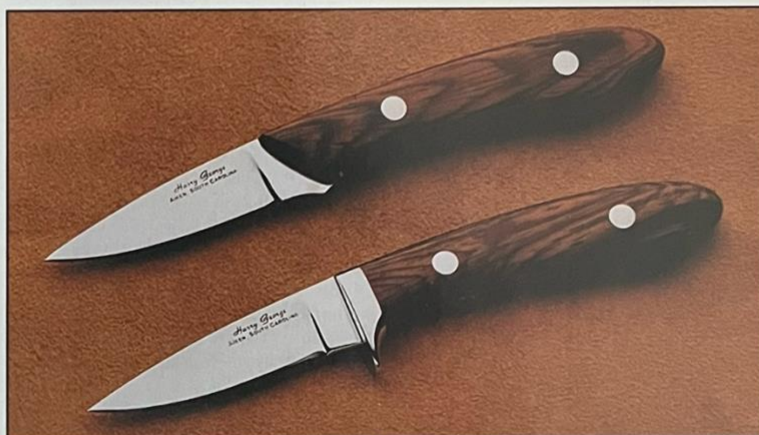
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(Above) Jay Hendrickson has imitated Bill Moran not only in style—here with the wire-inlaid handle—but he also has followed in Moran's footsteps, succeeding him as president of the American Bladesmith Society. (Heath photo)



Gary Anderson captures the Moran style in the design of these knives and the Moran technique in the wire-inlaid handles. Moran said he first saw the technique done on a Kentucky rifle. (Weyer photo)



(Above) That little slant-cut on the handle (top) is a definite George Herron trait. Not only is Harry George a Herron disciple—he's also Herron's son-in-law. (Weyer photo)



(Above) The influence of George Herron is easy to spot in these Russell Easter pieces: the single guards, dropped, double-ground blades and flowing lines between handle and blade. (Weyer photo)



Bobby Branton makes George Herron's recommended list of emulators here with the single guard and no-frills design. The handle is curly maple and the blade is forged S160 steel. (Long photo)



## PROTÉGÉS

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Knifemakers Guild Show in Kansas City. Since only a bladesmith could produce Damascus blades, his feat rekindled an interest in forging which grew when

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Moran helped form the American Bladesmith Society in 1976. As the number of active bladesmiths increased, so did the number of cutlers who patterned their knives after Moran's, including such features as the rolled edge, hardwood handles with silver wire inlays, and elaborate sheaths, many made of wood and embellished with wire work.

What do these four makers think about their work being so emulated? Is imitation truly the sincerest form of flattery?

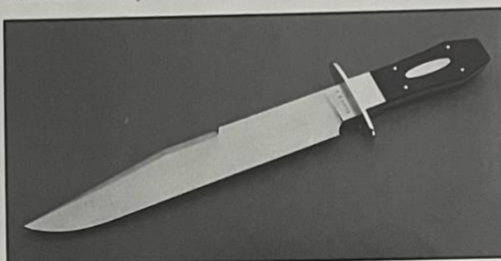
“I don't think that I have ever actively encouraged another to make such knives,” Loveless noted. “While I really don't mind if they do, I am concerned that most who try don't get it right! Imitation can lead to a high degree of perfection, as witness Japanese swords, but this is rare. Most often it simply degrades the vitality of an original theme.”

Moran sees such imitation as a compliment.

“Certainly I have no objection whatsoever to others who pattern their knives after mine. I do hope that if a person consciously tries to pattern his knives after what I have done that he will at least study my knives first so that he can appreciate what I was trying to accomplish. I have made a serious study



(Above) Joe Kious combines the Ed Henry look in overall design and the extended clip with some Henry “no-no’s”—engraving. (Weyer photo)



(Left) When Ed Henry was asked to name the people who best emulate him, Roger Green was the first maker Henry mentioned. Here Green uses the Henry hand-rubbed finish and extended clip. (Chase photo)

of knives and swords for over 40 years, and I think this is necessary if a person is to be a complete knifemaker,” he said.

Who among today's blade craftsmen might be viewed as “disciples” by each of the much emulated makers? Henry named but four: Roger Green, the late Bob Hays and two Japanese makers: Eigi Kikkawa and Pakeo Fukui. “Green is my current disciple,” Henry noted. “Fukui based a lot of his designs on mine. I think he's still making knives though I haven't see any in years.”

Herron, who said he would be making a knife New Year's Eve to bring in the new year when he was contacted for this story, has a lengthy list: Jimmy and Gerald Davis, Jack Barrett, the late Ron Little, Bill DeFreest, James Poplin, Dick Gillenwater, David Howe, P.F. Beck, Richard Bridwell, Mark Roper, Rade Hawkins, Clinton Manley, Bobby Branton, Wayne Hensley, Ralph Kessler, Hal Gainey, Ed Love and Wayne Hendrick.

Moran lists Hanford Miller, Jay

Hendrickson, Ray Kremzner, Aubrey Barnes, Jim Rhodes, Mark Sentz, Bill Hurt, Kent Nicholson and Mike Rochford. “And there are so many who don't follow my style but have used many of the techniques I've dug up,” he pointed out.

“Disciples?” Loveless scoffed. “I don't even like the sound of that word.” But when pressed he mentioned Joe Cordova, Shiro Furukawa, Yoshihito Aida, Steve Johnson, Herman Schneider and the late George Lee Sye. “And when I was too deep in orders I've sent a few of my customers to Herron,” Loveless added.

As a group, Loveless, Henry, Herron and Moran all seemed to agree that to make the best knives, you must study knives and their design, work long and hard at the craft and develop your own style before you can expect to make quality work. Plus, as Loveless stressed, you have to be able to sell your knives and yourself.

“It's like being an old-time Baptist preacher,” he remarked. “You've got to get on that mule and hit the churches!”

### Addresses For Knives Pictured In Story

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 Bobby Branton, Dept. BL, 4976 Seewee, Awendaw, SC 29429  
 Michael Connor, Dept. BL, Box 502, Winters, TX 79567  
 Russell Easler, Dept. BL, POB 301, Woodruff, SC 29388  
 Harry George, Dept. BL, 3137 Old Camp Long, Aiken, SC 29801  
 Roger Green, Dept. BL, 3412 Co. Rd. 1022, Joshua, TX 76058  
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