

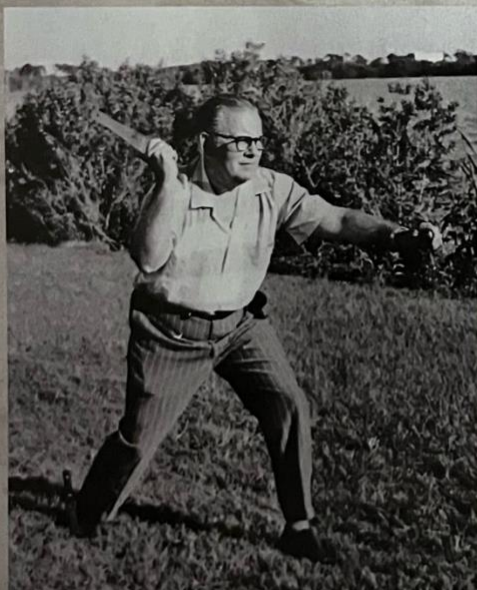
>> KNIFE IMAGES COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Still On TARGET



Celebrating Tru Balance's 75 years of operation is the company's new 75th Anniversary Bowie Axe. Made in the USA, the throwing knife features 1050 carbon blade steel and an overall length of 13.5 inches. MSRP: \$200.

Tru-Bal Co. celebrates 75 years of hitting bull's-eyes



BLADE Magazine Cutlery Hall-of-Fame® member Harry McEvoy shows the form and throws one of the Tru Balance knives that helped revolutionize knife throwing.

Small businesses that operate continuously for 75 years are a testament to the quality of their products and the dedication of their founders and owners. Such businesses have stood the test of time and have been able to adapt to changing market conditions and consumer preferences. Knifemaking is no different.

In 1949, Harry K. McEvoy, who would soon be considered the father of modern-day knife throwing and one day be inducted into the BLADE Magazine Cutlery Hall of Fame®, was a long-time resident of Grand Rapids, Michigan. He worked for the Meyercord Co. as a traveling district salesman selling decals to wallpaper and decorating stores. In his spare time, Harry spent hours in his shop designing and crafting knives. His passion for knifemaking was fueled by his ongoing search for the perfect throwing knife.

Knife throwing as a modern sport began shortly after World War

II and centered around a few individuals who threw knives at stumps or targets in their backyards. The knives they used consisted of very primitive homemade throwers that were often much smaller than the ones you see today. Harry began making his own knives around this time because he was unable to find any commercial knives suitable for throwing.

While he practiced throwing knives in his backyard, neighbors would gather to watch. Intrigued by how well his throwers performed, the onlookers were compelled to discover the source of his knives. When he responded that he, in fact, had made them himself, they asked him to make knives for them and others who were interested, and thus was born the Tru Balance Knife Co.

RANDALL & SCAGEL

Around 1951, Harry learned of a knifemaker from Orlando, Florida, and another future Cutlery Hall-of-Famer by the name of W. D. "Bo"

Randall. As a fledgling hobby knifemaker, Harry decided to write to Bo about his knives and the two became fast friends, exchanging letters regularly. McEvoy soon found out that Bo had an interest in throwing knives and was surprised to learn that a throwing knife could even be found in Bo's catalog. As a father with young children, money was scarce for Harry, so he convinced Bo to trade a Randall thrower for a couple of McEvoy throwers. Generous and willing to help a fellow knifemaker, Bo was happy to oblige.

Around 1952, Bo asked Harry if he would visit yet another future Cutlery Hall-of-Famer, William Scagel, who lived very close to McEvoy in Fruitport, Michigan, and buy some of Scagel's knives for his collection. McEvoy was more than happy to do his friend a favor. Harry would eventually befriend the reclusive Scagel, too, and on his visits watched him make knives and bought knives for himself and Bo.

As their friendship grew, Harry would visit Bo at the Randall summer home in Michigan and would even travel to the Randall home in Orlando, Florida. The two became quite close and eventually Bo decided to feature two Tru Balance Models in the Randall catalog. The Model #1 Professional Thrower and the now world-famous Bowie-Axe Throwing Knife made their catalog debut in early 1960, which resulted in a spike in sales for Harry.

Bo thought so much of Harry's work that he gifted one of Harry's Tru Balance Bowie Axe throwers to astronaut Gordon Cooper. He also took Harry's popular Bowie Axe design and modified it into a large machete style knife and submitted it to NASA in the 1960s when NASA was looking for a machete for astronauts to carry on the Gemini missions. Unfortunately for Harry, NASA required a much thinner design and eventually chose another manufacturer, Case Knives, to make the machete.

AKTA

Meanwhile, Tru Balance soon be-



● The author (left) bought Tru Balance Knife Co. from Stephen McEvoy (right) in 2017. The business continued to grow but the author had to sell in 2021 due to physical issues.

"HIS PASSION FOR KNIFEMAKING WAS FUELED BY HIS ONGOING SEARCH FOR THE PERFECT THROWING KNIFE."

came the go-to company for anyone who wanted a high-quality professional throwing knife. Tru Balance throwing knives became highly sought after by soldiers heading to Vietnam, professional knife throwers and knife collectors around the world. In 1971, Harry started the American Knife Throwers Alliance (AKTA) to aid and offer guidelines to individuals and groups who wished to organize competitively in their local areas. Harry became very close friends with professional knife throwers like Kenneth Pierce, aka Che Che Whitecloud, Paul LaCross

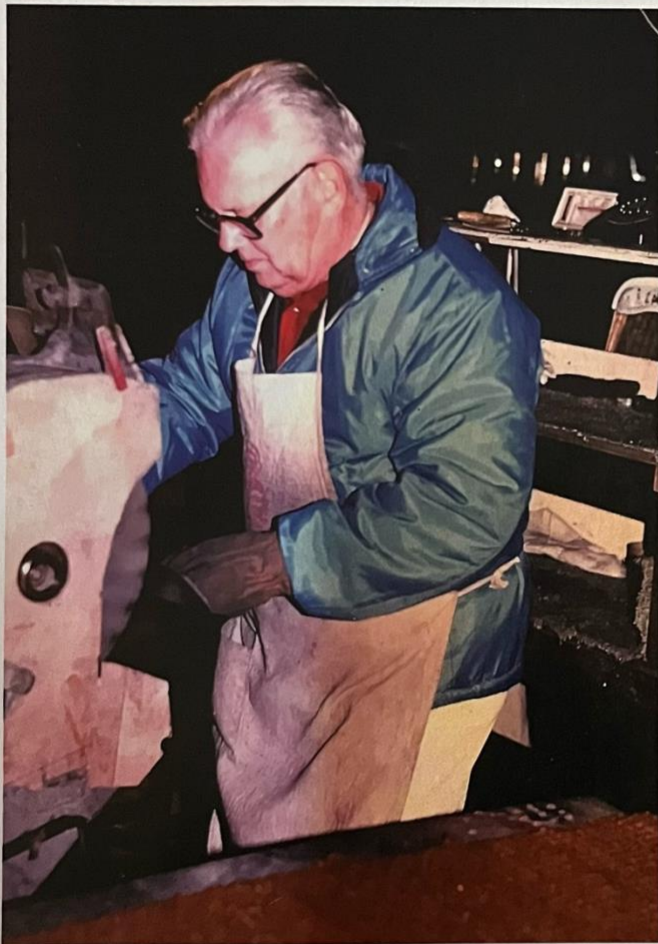
and George E. "Skeeter" Vaughan, who holds the distinction of making the most fantastic knife throw in recorded history. Considering the circumstances surrounding his legendary feat of taking out a German sentry during World War II with a modified bayonet from 87 feet, he most likely will maintain his grasp on that honor for a long time to come. "The Saga of Skeeter Vaughan" is told by McEvoy in the April 1982 *BLADE*.

Harry went on to author such books as *Scagel: The Man and His Knives*; *Archery Today*; *Crusader*



● George E. "Skeeter" Vaughan made the most fantastic knife throw in recorded history, taking out a German sentry with a modified bayonet from 87 feet during World War II. Skeeter was also an outstanding tomahawk thrower, showing his skills here with the help of a "target girl."

"TRU BALANCE SOON BECAME THE GO-TO COMPANY FOR ANYONE WHO WANTED A HIGH-QUALITY PROFESSIONAL THROWING KNIFE."



in the Wilderness; Knife Throwing: A Practical Guide; Knife and Tomahawk Throwing: The Art Of The Experts; For Knives Lovers Only; and co-authored Knife Throwing a Modern Sport, with Charles Gruzanski. McEvoy also held two design patents and trademarks for his knife designs. He also authored other articles for BLADE, as well as for Knife World (today's KNIFE), Muzzle-loading Magazine, Fighting Knives Magazine and many more.

MCEVOY LEGACY

In 1991, McEvoy was inducted into the Cutlery Hall of Fame for his exceptional contributions to the world of knives. It was around this time McEvoy's son Stephen had taken an interest in his father's knives and had begun learning more about the business. Stephen eventually took over the company in 1993 following Harry's passing from an illness. This writer, a friend of Harry's and a fellow knifemaker, reached out to

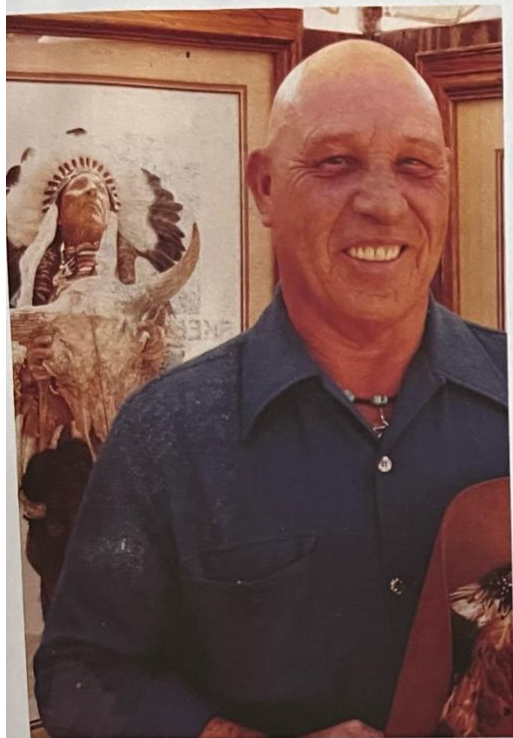
● In his spare time, Harry McEvoy spent hours in his shop designing and crafting knives.

Stephen via telephone to offer condolences and advice. We chatted regularly and, over time, as we shared stories, we developed a friendship. Our phone conversations led to Stephen's yearly visits to my home. During one of those visits, I asked him if I could take over the defunct American Knife Throwers Alliance (AKTA) and Stephen agreed.

Stephen would continue to run Tru Balance Knife Co. the same way his father ran it for many years. In 2015, after retiring from his job as an executive at a major insurance company, Stephen began speaking to me about slowing down and retiring from making knives. Already a full-time knifemaker with my own line of throwing knives, I envi-



● When McEvoy—here mugging during a lighter moment—practiced throwing knives in his yard, neighbors would gather to watch. The onlookers showed interest in the knives, and Tru Balance Knife Co. was born.



"BILL AND JAMES BEDNARICK TURNED OUT TO BE THE PERFECT CHOICE TO PRESERVE THE COMPANY'S LEGACY."

successor was underway, a mutual friend brokered a connection between me and two brothers from Michigan who had an interest in the business and the revitalization of the AKTA. The brothers made knives as a hobby and also happened to be skilled knife throwers.

Bill and James Bednarick turned out to be the perfect choice to preserve the company's legacy and bring it back to its original home in Michigan. With their keen eye for detail, quality and passion for knife throwing, their dedication has ensured that the Tru Balance Knife Co. has lived on to see its 75th an-

niversary in 2024.

For more information on Tru Balance knives, contact Tru-Bal Knives, Cadillac, Michigan, billbednarick@gmail.com, bill@trubalanceknives.com or james@trubalanceknives.com 231-920-6068 trubalanceknives.com.

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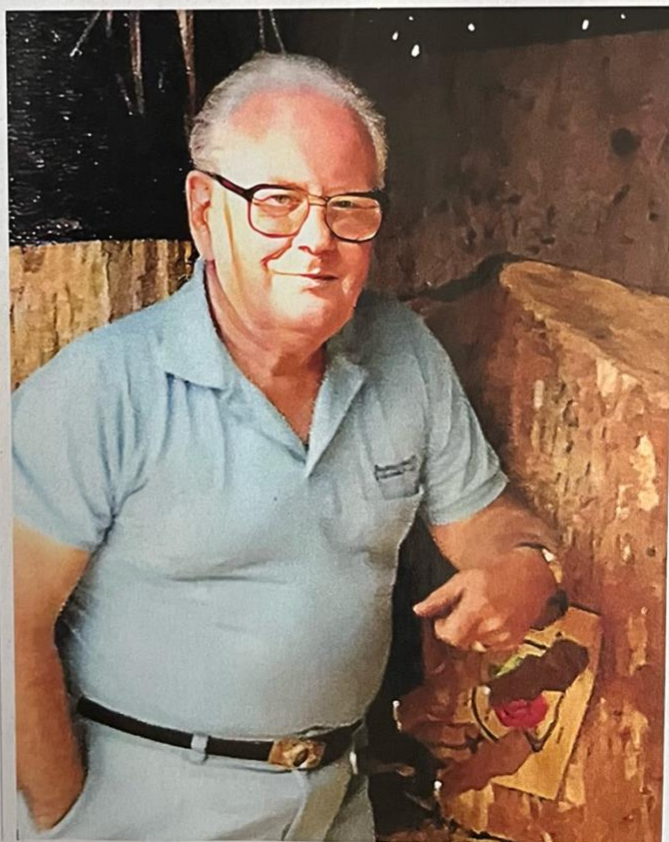
BLADE

sioned bringing Tru Balance Knife Co. into the 21st century by selling Tru Balance knives on its own website and promoting the business via social media. With the newfound success spearheaded by the new business plan, Stephen finally decided to fully retire from the business. A deal was brokered and I bought Tru Balance Knife Company in 2017, moving it to my hometown of Awendaw, South Carolina. The business would continue to grow but, not long thereafter, I developed some knee issues and struggled to keep up with the company's new customer demands. Unable to find a qualified apprentice to help me fill orders, I decided to sell the business in 2021.

BACK HOME

Though several companies made offers to buy the company, I decided I wanted to hand pick my successor to ensure the legacy of the Tru Balance Knife Co. and that the knives would continue to be made in the USA. As the search for the right

● Skeeter Vaughan's Cherokee Indian name is Grey Otter. He served as a chief of the Federated Indian Tribes for a number of years.



● Harry McEvoy was inducted into the BLADE Magazine Cutlery Hall of Fame® in 1991.

