

OPPOSITE PAGE—Knives by Bill Coperthwaite.

THIS PAGE—

1. Cut the blade to length, shape with shears, and then dull the saw blade teeth on a stationary belt sander. Next sharpen one edge, top side only, on the sander or a grinding wheel, and then use needle nose pliers to bend the knife end into a curved shape.

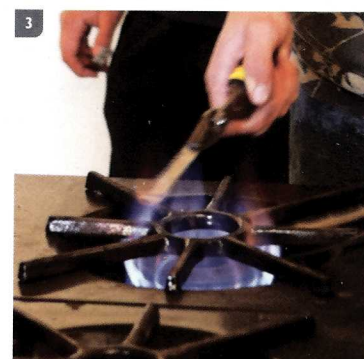
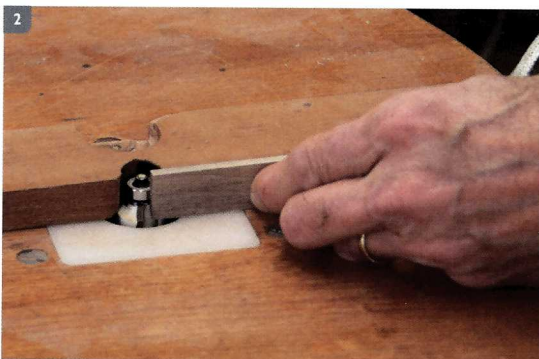
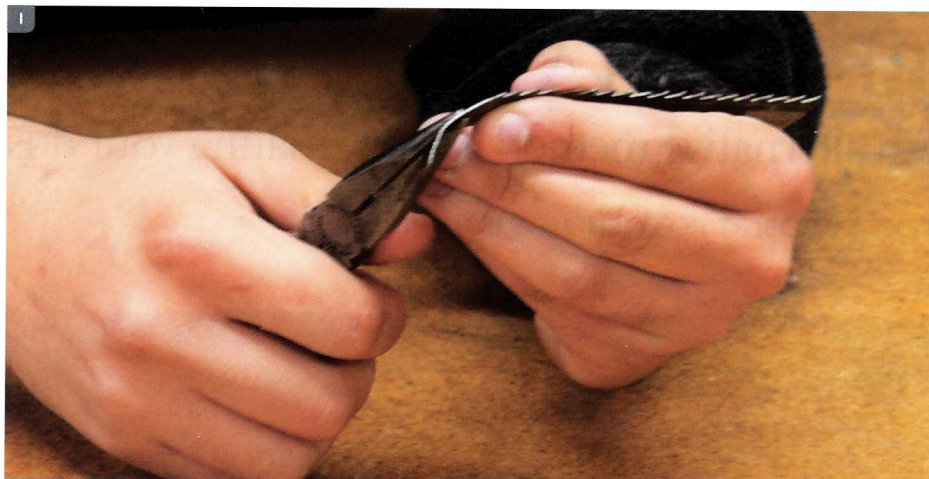
Special care should be taken if your belt sander is also used for wood—sparks can ignite sawdust and create a fire hazard. Clean the tool thoroughly first and turn off the dust collection system.

2. Cut stock for the handle to the width of the blade and use a round-over bit in the router table to shape two corners.

3. To harden the blade, hold it in the flame of a gas range or propane torch until it turns cherry red. An acetylene torch will heat to a higher temperature more quickly, but I felt safer with my students using the gas range in the school kitchen. Pliers are necessary to keep the fingers from burning. Quench the heated knife blade in water.

4. The steps in making a crooked knife are shown, left to right:

- Cut blade to desired size and shape.
- Sharpen one edge. For a right-handed knife, sharpen on the left side as shown, but reverse this for a left-handed knife.
- Bend the blade to the desired shape, carefully avoiding kinking. A simple, sweeping curve is best.
- After heating and quenching to harden the steel, add the wooden sides to form the handle and wrap the knife tightly with the leather strip. The first end of the leather is buried between the handle sides and blade. The tail end is either slipped between the handle parts and pulled tight, or worked into the last few wraps. To sharpen the crooked knife, we use a dowel wrapped in fine sand paper.



we used an old 1"-wide bandsaw blade with the teeth dulled on the belt-sander. Also, while we used thin bungee cord to wrap the knives in Providence, at Clear Spring we used leather scraps cut in thin strips tightly wrapped to hold the handles in place on both sides of the blade. Our crooked knives were not as beautiful as the one I first saw in Bill Coperthwaite's hand, but they carried a sense of practical beauty that I'm sure both Bill and Bob would understand and appreciate.

As woodworkers, we seem too often to be in need of one more tool displayed in whatever catalog came in today's mail. The

complexity of our needs and our lives can make us wonder whether we are indeed makers of things or simply consumers and collectors of the instruments we hope will make it possible for us to be makers someday. I believe that many of us as woodworkers would like things to be far more direct

that that, and perhaps have hopes that things might be simple as well. Perhaps carving with a simple knife of one's own making will be a start in a new direction.

*Doug Stowe is a contributing editor to Woodwork magazine.*