

## 152OT Sharpfinger and 152UH Uncle Henry Wolverine Research

The Schrade Old Timer 152OT Sharpfinger is a favorite classic Schrade pattern Old Timer fixed blade. The 152OT was the sixth fixed blade Old Timer when it was first introduced in 1974 and was produced continuously for thirty years, almost a third of a century. It was first manufactured after the Schrade-Walden name had been changed to Schrade Cutlery (in mid 1973), so an example with the Schrade-Walden tangstamp would be a truly rare collectable. It did appear in the mid 1973 Schrade Cutlery shortline catalog, even though most research sources state 1974 for the first production. In the 1973 catalog, it was referred to as a "Sharp Finger", later changed to a single word, "Sharpfinger" in 1980, when it listed for \$17.95. It listed for \$37.95 in the 2004 catalog, the last issued before the mid year bankruptcy forced the company's closing and liquidation (but could still be found at \$21.95 from the mass marketers).

The Sharpfinger has downward curve shaped brown sawcut delrin handles, referred to by the Schrade trade name of "Genuine Saw Cut Delrin", advertised and guaranteed as unbreakable. In cross section, they are generally rectangular with radiused edges, and the width tapers from a narrow 1/2" at the choil to almost 7/8" wide at the butt. This shape aids the user in maintaining blade orientation, while not being uncomfortable to hold as would the same shape without the rounded corners. The curvature, arched along the spine of the tang is very "ergonomic", though that was not a term in vogue in the early 1970's. It fits the user's palm well. The handle halves are held to the full exposed tang blade by two flush nickel silver flat head compression rivets, and a 3/4" nickel silver Old Timer shield is set flush on the right handle (rectangular with radiused ends and single stroke letters "OLD TIMER"). On occasion over the span of production, antler jigged Staglon, and black, orange, and cream delrin handles have been used on special and private issues. Jigged bone and Sambar stag, laminated wood, oak, and walnut will occasionally be seen as well. The handle has an unlined thong, or "lanyard" hole near the rear and earlier production knives were provided with a leather thong for the user to install. Sometime during production, the wrist thong fell out of vogue with users and it was deleted from the package, but the unlined thong hole remained.

A prominent choil on the ricasso in front of the handle acts as a lower guard and protects the fingers from the sharpened blade. While it is not as enlarged as the extended choil of the 15OT predecessor, it is smoothly radiused on the handle side to form a rest for the user's index finger in normal use grip, or the thumb with the knife rotated 90 degrees for skinning strokes. A raised thumb rest on the top of the tang aids in blade control for finer work. Unlike the grooved feature of the 15OT, the thumb rest of the Sharpfinger is smooth. These two features, as well as the blade sweep, are modifications of the Sharpfinger's much larger ancestor, the 15OT "Deerslayer" introduced in 1964. The 3 1/2" full tang upswept blade is flat ground 1095 carbon steel in its original design. A stiff blade, the bladestock is approximately 5/32" thick. Often described as a modified skinner, the blade has a pronounced skinner belly with an upswept tip, and just a hint of a false edge on the upper spine. Overall length was listed as 7 1/4" and weight 4.1 oz.

I have found three basic sheath designs so far. One was used beginning beginning with the introduction where the keeper strap originated through a diecut 5/8" diagonal slot in the left side of the sheath just above the throat and wrapped over the choil to the male portion of the snap mounted on the center of the sheath face. The fixed strap end was riveted through the sheath back and belt hanger. The blade tended to cut the strap when inserted or withdrawn by the user. This may be the least common sheath, though by no means rare. The throat opening at the front panel top on this model was cut straight across. This sheath used a 5/8" snap.

The sheath was later redesigned (sometime in the late seventies, early eighties) with the keeper strap moved up to the handle. This pattern is most common. The strap was fed through two parallel vertical slots diecut into the belt hanger above the sheath throat, and riveted through the belt hanger. A second rivet inside secured the belt hanger front to back. Sheaths of this type may be seen with the top closure snap portion either left or right. Perhaps this is an unintentional artifact of the right or lefthandedness of the sheath assembler. With the later sheaths, lefthandedness became much more consistent, as was the case with most of the manufacturing details at Schrade with the use of more automation and compliance to QS and ISO standards. The throat opening at the front panel top on this model was cut with a half moon shape notch to provide clearance for the handle scale. Earliest of these sheaths had keeper strap slots 3/4" long and used a

small (3/8") snap. Later ones had slots 1" long and used a larger (1/2") snap. As an interesting note, this keeper strap design was continued for the 154OT ('76-'88) and 158OT ('88-04) patterns.

The third type of sheath is a semi-tubular "pouch" sheath without a keeper strap. These are sometimes found with scrimshaw editions of the mid 1980's. So far, I have only seen them in chocolate brown. Composed of one piece of leather folded over, sewn with brown or black thread, and with a finishing rivet on each end of the stitching, the sheaths securely hold the knives by depth and friction alone. The back panel was again folded over to provide the belt loop, and secured by stitching alone. This design was later adapted for use with the 156OT Little Finger knife, and even later for the PH1 and PH2 knives and others. These sheaths are uncommon.

The first two sheaths had a formed front panel stitched with brown or black thread (early ones occasionally in white or tan thread) to a flat back panel, with two small rivets finishing the stitching at the throat. The back panel extended upward above the front piece and folded forward to form the integral belt hanger loop. On all variants I have seen, the belt hanger was attached with three rivets including the two finishing the stitching and one slightly lower in the sheath center. Because of the small size of the 152OT sheath, none were made with the stone pocket found on other Schrade fixed blade patterns. There were tooled border lines on the integral belt hanger on the earlier sheath design. Sometime in the 1980's, Schrade deleted this simple decorative detail.

Sheath finish color varied over the years from light tan, light russet, dark russet, to true brown. Occasionally an undyed replacement sheath shows up on the market. A few special and private issue sheaths are dyed black, usually with white stitching, and a few have appeared with exotic finish textures.

As with many other Old Timers, there are some small, relatively minor engineering changes on the 152OT over the years, but most are negligible, and not evident without using accurate measuring devices. One such change is in the blade stock thickness. There is not a consistent pattern of thick or thin stock that I have been able to pin down, but rather a general inconsistency over the life of the pattern production.

EDIT SPECIAL NOTE 1-26-06: It has been brought to my attention (by a former Schrade employee) that the blade grind was changed from a flat grind to a hollow grind in the last years. Examining examples of early and late knives, this is evident by the arched grind line at the ricasso end of the blade.

No distinctly different tangstamps have been noted so far on standard production knives, other than those a byproduct of worn stamping dies, or in the case of limited editions, special private issues, and the relics appearing from the Schrade sample room.

Earliest production was marked with the lefthand tangstamp "SCHRADER" over "U.S.A. 152" perpendicular to the blade and read from the handle. This tangstamp remained unchanged throughout the years of production. While the 15OT and many other Old Timer patterns utilized the "OT" suffix on their tangstamps, the 152OT followed the precedent of the 165OT and left the "OT" identifier off the tangstamp. The earlier Walden 15OT's and 165OT's were serialized on the left tang perpendicular to the blade, but I have never seen a production Sharpfinger serialized, excepting a few limited editions.

The success of the 152OT inspired Schrade to issue a stainless Uncle Henry Signature version of the knife in 1982, the 152UH "Wolverine", sporting a Staglon handle (Delrin molded and accent colored to imitate stag antler) with the Uncle Henry signature shield as found on the Signature Series pocketknives, and two flat rivets, all in nickel silver. This was a handle design first used on the 165UH during the short two year first production run in 1969-'70 and repeated on a second later production in 1994-'97. The 152UH was supplied with the standard sheath. Its tangstamp is "SCHRADER+" over "U.S.A. 152UH" on the 440A stainless blade as one might expect. These are most often found in the gray/black "A Sharp Idea" box.

In circa 1989-91, Schrade made some Sharpfingers, complete with custom boxes, using stainless blades and tangstamped "SCHRADER+" over "U.S.A. 512OT". Other than the steel and the tangstamp, they were identical to the base 152OT. It is my personal theory that these knives were intended as a test marketing of the stainless bladed Old Timer to see if the public would buy it. These are relatively rare. The one I have

was purchased in 1989 in the base tan box with standard 152OT Sharpfinger markings. I have since obtained an original unused box intended for the 512OT Sharpfinger, black with blue and gold printing. Perhaps these knives never made it past the sample phase, but sometime in the late 1990's, Schrade did begin making a running change to stainless 440A blade steel on the Sharpfinger, though the tangstamps and packaging was not changed to inform buyers. I have also one of these stainless 152OT's, one of the last stocked by a local Wal-Mart. Interestingly, the Sharpfinger was listed in the catalogs as "high carbon steel" until the 2004 catalog when the description was dropped from the listing. The 440A was .60-.75 carbon, whereas the AISI 1095 steel was .9-1.03.

Limited editions and a lot of private issue Schrade Cutlery knives had a right side tangstamp of "SCHRADER+" over "USA LTD.", and used a 440 stainless blade. These editions sometimes sported the upgrade Uncle Henry Staglon Delrin handle, brass flat rivets, special etches, and on the later issues, laser cutouts in the blade just in front of the tang. One late Ducks Unlimited edition has a brass DU oval coined shield and brass rivets, and DU laser cutout on the blade ahead of the ricasso. The last production SDU152 in the 2004 catalog had a light oak handle. One knife, with genuine stag handles and no shield or etch, has a tangstamp "SCHRADER+" over "U.S.A." The seller called it a 152S, but with no box or stamp and a "found in the factory" provenance, I cannot confirm that this is Schrade nomenclature.

The 2002 catalog lists a DS15 Federal Duck Stamp 15th Anniversary Edition Sharpfinger. It is shown in a custom walnut presentation box and included a money clip, had green pickbone handles, a flying duck laser cutout in the satin finished stainless blade. With a listed retail of \$150, I doubt too many were sold. I have a factory unfinished blank of this model and the tangstamp is "SCHRADER+" over "U.S.A. LTD.". The 2003 catalog lists a DS16 Federal Duck Stamp 16th Anniversary Edition Sharpfinger. It is shown in a custom walnut gift box and included a money clip, had bone handles, a flying duck laser cutout in the blade.

A private issue 152 was made for Cotter and Company, better known as True Value Hardware. True Value marketed products under the trade name of Master Mechanic. The tang reads "MM152" over "U.S.A.", and the shield imprint is "Master Mechanic". Date of manufacture was some time in the late eighties to mid nineties. I understand that they marketed several Schrade knives under the Master Mechanic label, and possibly under Master Electrician" as well.

One of the early special editions was the 1988 catalog offering of the 152OT in a gift set, SGS-1. It included a sheath and a 34OT "Middleman" stockman knife. This set must have been a good seller, as it was listed in every year's catalog through 2000.

Beginning in about 1979, Schrade produced the 152 pattern knives with cream delrin handles and die imprinted with inked scrimshaw art, done first by Frank Georgiani, their in-house artist. Every year for quite a few years, one or more designs were released. Most years the 152 scrimshaws were available in a set of seven or more different pattern knives, though many were sold individually. Listing the various different scrimshaws would be a daunting task, and one I will not attempt here. These limited edition knives were usually given unique tangstamps with either a prefix or suffix of "SC". Some I have noted are: 155SC, 205SC, and 502SC with the latter being most used. After the factory inventory liquidation, a large number of blank cream delrin "scrimshaws" appeared on the market, mostly with the 502SC tangstamp. I believe that Schrade held a good many in reserve, completed except for the addition of the scrimshaw imprint and inking, for upcoming special orders and commemoratives. The plain cream delrin is attractive in its unadorned state. A few cream delrin 152 tangstamped sharpfingers have also appeared with the "OLD TIMER" shield, indicating they were not intended for the Scrimshaw edition.

Another special issue is the 152OTO knife with hunter orange delrin handle and "OLD TIMER" shield. It may have been commissioned by Smokey Mountain Knife Works circa 1991 for inclusion in their "father and son" hunting sets with the 165OTO "DEERHUNTER", 150TO "LIMITED EDITION", and 158OTO with an "OLD TIMER" shield. Quite a number of these appeared for sale after the Schrade closing, so they are unique, but not really rare. I believe these used the 1095HC carbon steel blades and had the standard "Schrade USA 152" tangstamp.

The 154OT, a close pattern cousin of the 152OT was used in private editions for Copenhagen and Skoal

brand tobacco products promotions. Skoal used green delrin with a brass oval coined "Schrade" shield and a tangstamp of "Schrade" over "Skoal U.S.A." Copenhagen used black delrin and a tangstamp of "Schrade" over "Cope U.S.A." Some had a "Limited Edition" blade etch. I have been watching for a 152 in either of these private edition lines

The 152 pattern was used by Peterson Publishing in the late 70's or very early 80's, along with the 154 pattern, for promotion of subscriptions. Shields on the black sawcut delrin handles were stamped with the two magazine names, "Guns & Ammo", and "Hunting". Both patterns have been seen with each stamping. They used the production 1095HC blade blanks and tangstamps.

A sample emerged from the sample room after the Ellenville factory closing and sale with laminated wood handle and stainless blade with LTD tangstamp, no shield. I have the 165OT example of that model, and have seen a matching 150T pattern. Another pair of these unreleased samples had blue delrin on one and red delrin on the other. A few black delrin knives scrimshawed with white even emerged. Several 152 pattern knives came from the sample room with a tangstamp "New York-Walden- Knife CO.", custom burnt stagged bone handles, and a blank fancy nickle silver shield.

Box designs changed several times during the production span. Earliest was a brown woodgrained box with gold lettering "The Old Timer" and "A Knife Like Grand Dad's" , and the Schrade Cutlery scroll logo on the top, "The Old Timer Sharpfinger 152OT" on the end. The first ones were sturdy cardboard, sometimes with a red lining and had a slip top, then they became a flap closure box of the same design without lining. The next box was tan with a black stripe with the "Old Timer - Knives Like Grandad's" text on the left, Schrade Cutlery "cutler and anvil" logo and "Built To Last A Lifetime" in the center. The UH box at this time was gray with a black stripe with the "Uncle Henry - guaranteed against loss for one full year" text, the red "A Sharp Idea" banner in the upper right corner, and the Schrade Cutlery "cutler and anvil logo", and "Built To Last A Lifetime" in the center. Then around 2001, the design changed to a blue striped box. Next was the blue box with gray stripe on the left end and a small American flag on the right.

Clampack packaging was a boon for mass merchandisers because they were tamper resistant, were not subject to shelf wear like boxes, and could be placed on hanging racks for self service. Several Schrade clampack designs were used over the years. The catalog number for a 152OT in a clampack was 152OTCP. I believe the earliest had a tan card, gold border and header, with a black band across the top and text "OLD TIMER", the red "A sharp idea" banner in the upper right corner, "America Works With Schrade" slogan in the lower right. One like this included a bonus Brunton compass. At this time, the Uncle Henry clampacks were near identical in design, but were gray instead of tan. A later clampack (circa 2001) was a blue striped card with "SCHRADER OLD TIMER" text across the top and a small American flag below that, "SCHRADER TOUGH" logo in middle left, and "America Works With Schrade" logo across the bottom. Next was one with a black topped green card with yellow burst design on bottom right describing the bonus enclosed knife care kit (SK3). Another used an all green card with a black center band, a yellow burst design in the upper left corner describing the bonus enclosed "Arkansas Sharpening Stone". I believe the very last clampack design had a beige card, silver/gray diamondplate vertical band on the left with yellow text "SCHRADER", and dark gray or black band across the top

Imperial Schrade also produced variants of the 152OT Sharpfinger. One was the 154OT "Drop Point Hunter", which utilized the same handle design and construction, but continued the curving handle shape through the blade so that, viewed from the side, the top of the knife was one smooth continuous arc. The choil was reduced slightly in this pattern, but was still in the design as a utility feature. This pattern was produced from 1976 through 1988, thirteen years, and gave rise to yet a third pattern, the 158OT "Guthook Skinner" in 1988. The 158 pattern differed from the 154 only with the addition of a sharpened hook on the upper spine near the tip with a sharpened rear facing slot. The hook was intended for opening the abdominal cavities of game animals without puncturing the viscera. Evidently this pattern was more successful than the 154 upon which it was based, because the 154OT was discontinued after the year the 158 was introduced, and the 158OT continued in production along with the Sharpfinger until 2004.

Several knives were made with near identical blade shapes and similar handle shapes under the Imperial Frontier tangstamp. The butt of the handles on the Imperials were usually more rounded than the squarish

Old Timers. The separate Imperial line was discontinued shortly thereafter.

Several American companies have, since July of 2004, tooled up and begun producing their own versions of the Sharpfinger, and so far at least, none are trying to make exact copies. Some come close to the original design in appearance and function, and some even add their own detail improvements. Since the design patent on the Sharpfinger is long ago expired, the design is now in the public domain and no license fee is required for a maker to use the pattern under their own tangstamp. Camillus of New York was one of the first with their "Gran'Pa Sharp Hunter GP152" version. Next is Arrowhead Cutlery of Tennessee (manufacturing division of United Cutlery Brands) with three versions, the "Rigid Max Edge Bear Foot Hunter RG0152MX", the "Rigid Bear Tooth Hunter RG0152", and "Outdoor Life Small Fixed Blade Hunter FS0152C". And finally, Bear And Son Cutlery, Inc., of Jacksonville Alabama (formerly Bear MGC) is making the "Upswept Palm Skinner BC253R".

In the interest of identifying Imperial Schrade produced Sharpfingers, mention must be made of the imported "New Generation" knives from Taylor Brands LLC., purchaser of the Schrade trademarks and patents. These knives of the 152OT pattern appeared on the market in 2005, less than a year after the bankruptcy liquidation sale of Imperial Schrade assets at the factory in Ellenville. I will attempt here to point out the obvious differences to the collector, so that one will not be confused with the Imperial Schrade production.

Taylor Brands LLC. (formerly Taylor Cutlery) is an importer and wholesaler of knives, and now a licensor of the Schrade trademarks to some American cutlery manufacturers, and not a manufacturer themselves. The Taylor 152OT knives are contracted to a cutlery factory in China and the knives so far are all stainless (no "+" mark). The Taylor 15OT tangstamps are "SCHRADER" on the right aligned with the front of the handle and angled to the blade, and "152OT" on the obverse with the same alignment. Neither the importer's name, nor the country of origin is stamped on the knives themselves, but the first ones imported bear a left hand etch of the Taylor/Schrade Logo with the words "SCHRADER" over "CHINA '05", along with etched text "First Production Run". The Taylor version has, so far, the "SCHRADER" over "SUPER SHARP" etch on the right blade, the originals, as far as I have seen, do not.

The "sawcut" of the scales has a different appearance, more so under magnification. On the U.S. Schrade, the grooves are wider than the lands. On the imported knife, the grooves are narrower than the lands. The handle edge radius seems to be sharper than the Imperial Schrades. The rivet heads appear to be machine spun, not polished as on the U.S.A. produced knives. The Taylor "Old Timer" shield is of the rope border style that I have not seen used on the original 152OT from Schrade.

The Taylor sheath is made from the pattern of the standard Schrade Cutlery tan leather second design sheath with the keeper strap riveted to the belt hanger, and no rivets, whereas the U.S. has two small rivets finishing the stitching at the top of the sheath throat. The only other distinguishing feature I have found so far seems to be a slicker finish on the surface of what appears to be a lesser quality leather.

While the last MSRP on the Schrade Cutlery 152OT was \$37.95 in 2004, the MSRP for the Taylor 152OT in 2005 is \$24.00. With a bit of searching, a prospective buyer can purchase one for 2/3 to 1/2 of that price. It comes in a box resembling an original Imperial Schrade blue box with a gray stripe on the left end and an American flag on the right top panel. The side panel is marked with the "Schrade Tough" logo and "Taylor Brands LLC."

The Sharpfinger knife pattern was so popular for such a long time that hundreds of thousands (if not into the millions) were produced from the introduction to the cessation of production, both as basic 152OT Old Timer issues and variants. As smaller blades became the rule of the day with new generations of outdoorsmen, the sharpfinger gained in popularity, and became one of the few successful crossover fixed blades sold by Schrade, finding buyers among store clerks, grocery stockers, artists and craftsmen, and even self defense gurus. And as sales, i.e., profits sagged on the large hunting knives and they were dropped from production piecemeal, the 152OT soldiered on. That the 152OT survived as a production knife as long as it did is a testament to the purity of utility in Henry's original design. Quite a few fixed patterns

were tried and discarded during the diminutive Sharpfinger's production of thirty or more years. The Deerslayer found a loyal following among the "G.I." generation, and then the "Baby Boomers" that came to the knife buying market behind them. And Imperial Schrade prospered in this marketing period. As the older generations of buyers began being replaced by younger buyers, large knives preferred by their fathers and grandfathers for hunting and camping the old way fell out of fashion. More stringent enforcement of knife laws is another reason. In this state and many others, carrying a knife with a six inch blade is frowned upon, if not outright forbidden. This, I believe, is one of the main reasons that for the last years of Schrade's production of this knife pattern, it was purchased to be used as intended as a tool (although by Schrade's own admission, they never envisioned it's popularity among non-outdoorsmen).

Given the sheer number of units produced over such an extended time period, and the current glut of manufacturer and dealer NOS knives, the manufacturers of the new versions will have a chore ahead of them to capture a meaningful share of the increasingly saturated market for Henry Baer's Sharpfinger pattern skinner. Some of these may be dropped from production soon and become modern rarities.

My interest in these knives, though made by a company relegated for the time being to history, began more than thirty years ago when I purchased a 165OT Woodsman for my hunting and camping adventures, and then a 15OT Deerslayer. And then the 152OT Sharpfinger, the small skinner companion to the two larger fixed blades which became perhaps THE best seller Schrade fixed pattern, this one even among people who did not spend a lot of time outdoors. The little 152OT knife is still a favorite of many "old timer" hunters of large and small game and fishermen, yours truly included.

This then brings us to the question "How well does it function?" Very well in my opinion. Traditional skinner knife designs were usually much larger than the 152, and used a very rounded point to avoid puncturing or slicing through a hide. The 152 has the upswept tip, very much like the 15OT Deerslayer, but the blade is a near complete clip from the thumbrest to the tip. The clip is almost 1/4" deep which is pretty substantial on a 3 1/2" blade. The blade length itself is a close approximation of the length of the average adult male index finger, so it is no wonder it is easy to maneuver in barely accessible places while field dressing game.

In it's original form, the textured delrin handle provides a very sure grip even when wet, impervious to environmental heat or cold. It is impact resistant, not prone to being easily damaged by nicks and chips, and a not bad approximation of burnt bone in color and appearance. The nickel silver compression rivets, used from beginning to end, hardly ever loosen or corrode. Since the pattern is constructed of so few pieces, service problems are practically non-existent. The AISI 1095 high carbon steel is an excellent cutlery steel with .90 - 1.03% carbon, .30-.50 Magnesium, .040 phosphorus maximum, and .050 sulphur maximum. Rockwell hardness is "c" of 56-57, according to Schrade records. This is hard enough to be somewhat wear resistant, yet soft enough to be flexible to resist chipping and breakage.

Codger