15OT Deerslayer/15UH ramble

Well, the missive I posted on the 165 seemed to draw quite a few views and a bit of interest, so maybe there is the same sort of interest in the 15OT Deerslayer, Schrade's most massive Old Timer hunting knife. While one might use it in a tactical assault, or use it to fight off and enraged buck deer, please refrain from calling it a "Tactical", Assault", or "Fighting" knife as so many people do. I don't even call it a skinner, though you could try to use it for that (I have), the much smaller, more agile Sharpfinger is a better skinner.

Once again I will ask that anyone with further information or corrections please let me know. I hope Rich can tell me a bit about the UH version, where information is sorely lacking.

The Schrade Old Timer 15OT Deerslayer is one of my favorite classic Schrade patterns. The 15OT was first introduced in 1964 and produced continuously for thirtyfour years, a third of a century. It was produced for ten years as Schrade Walden (1964-73), then for twentyfour as Schrade (1974-97). Deerslayer has serpentine shaped brown sawcut delrin handles held to the full tang by three nickle silver flat head rivets, and a 1 1/8" nickle silver Old Timer shield. A promenant choil on the tang in front of the handle acts as a lower guard and protects the fingers from the sharpened blade. A grooved, raised thumb rest on the top of the tang aids in blade control for finer work. The 6" full tang blade is flat ground 1095 carbon steel. A really stiff blade, the bladestock is nearly 3/16" thick. The tip is upswept.

As with other early Old Timers, there are some small distinctions between the Walden knives and the later ones from Ellenville. These are relatively minor engineering changes, but help to distinguish the chronology of production.

Earliest production was marked with a "PAT. PEND." blade etch briefly, then added to the lefthand tangstamp. Perhaps this led to some complications with production and stocking the 15OT's. The early Walden 15OT's were serialialized on the left tang perpendicular to the blade beginning sometime before the patent issued in April of '64. The first tangstamps were applied to both sides of the tang perpendicular to the blade, with SCHRADE-WALDEN over NY USA on the right, and 15OT PAT. over PEND. on the left.
Sometime before 1974, the entire tangstamp was moved to blade right. Later Ellenville blades have the tangstamp on blade right, but parallel to the thumb rest and angled to the blade reading SCHRADE over USA 15OT. Occasionally a blade will be seen with the stamp in front of the thumbrest parallel with the blade, but this is far less common.

Limited editions, private issues, and the "UH varient" usually have a tangstamp of SCHRADE+ over USA LTD., and often used a 440C stainless blade. These editions sometimes sported the upgrade Staglon handles and brass flat rivets, special etches, and on the later issues, laser cutouts in the blade just in front of the tang. One edition has been seen with a fancy filed blade spine. The thumb rest grooves were deleted on this edition as well. One very early private issue bearing the Patent Pending stamp had a Ted

Williams signature etch showing that it was produced early in '64 for Sears Roebuck & Co. It had no other special features beside the leather laced basketweave tooled sheath and insert. Several subsequent Sears issues have been found with CRAFTSMAN USA tangstamps both left and right.

Another special issue is the 15OTO knife with hunter orange handle and LIMITED EDITION shield. It may have been comissioned by Smokey Mountain Knife Works in 1991 for inclusion in their "father and son" hunting sets with the 165OTO DEERHUNTER, 152OTO LIMITED EDITION, and 158OTO with an Old Timer shield.

Several sheath designs have been found so far and, as usual, not really enough of a sampling to establish an accurate chronology. One used in 1964-65 was a basketweave tooled tubular sheath with long belt hanger, and laced with leather laces. This was the fanciest sheath, but it had a problem. The long sweeping knife blade tended to cut the leather laces. Factory engineers solved this temporarily by adding an aluminum rimmed fiber sheath insert. This was too expensive to continue and the sheath was redesigned with the tooling deleted and six eyelets added to protect the laces. The most common, naturally is the later sewn tubular with five rivets protecting the stitches. This style continued pretty much through the remainder of production.

Early success of the 15OT inspired Schrade to issue an Uncle Henry version of the knife. I do not know when the UH version was made in Ellenville, but I do not believe it was a cataloged edition, and it bore the SCHRADE+ over USA LTD tangstamp.

My interest in these knives, though discontinued eight years now and made by a company no longer existing, began more than thirty years ago when I purchased a 165OT for my hunting and camping adventures. The serpentine handle and heft of the 15OT are reminiscent of the familiar 165OT. The long choil is mimicked on the 152OT. The massive 15OT knife is a favorite of many "old timer" hunters of large game, yours truly included.

Codger