

GOLDEN HOURS

A MAGICAL TOUR INSIDE SPYDERCO REVEALS A STRONG SENSE OF PRIDE AND OVERWHELMING QUALITY

— STORY AND PHOTOS BY JOSHUA SWANAGON



“IT WAS VERY APPARENT THAT SPYDERCO HAS SPENT MANY YEARS DEVELOPING PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES THAT MAKE THEM ONE OF THE BEST KNIFE COMPANIES IN THE INDUSTRY.”

admit it. As a Colorado native, I have a bit of a soft spot for Spyderco Knives. After all, their factory is in Golden, just a short drive from where I grew up, in the Denver area. So, you can imagine my excitement when my brother and I received a tour of the facility last summer. Sure, Spyderco, founded in 1976 by Sal and Gail Glesser, has factories overseas, but this is their headquarters.

During the visit, we had the opportunity to witness the production steps used in making the Para Military 2, currently one of Spyderco's most popular knives. It wasn't hard to see why it is such a popular knife ... or why it's a popular place to work.

First Impressions

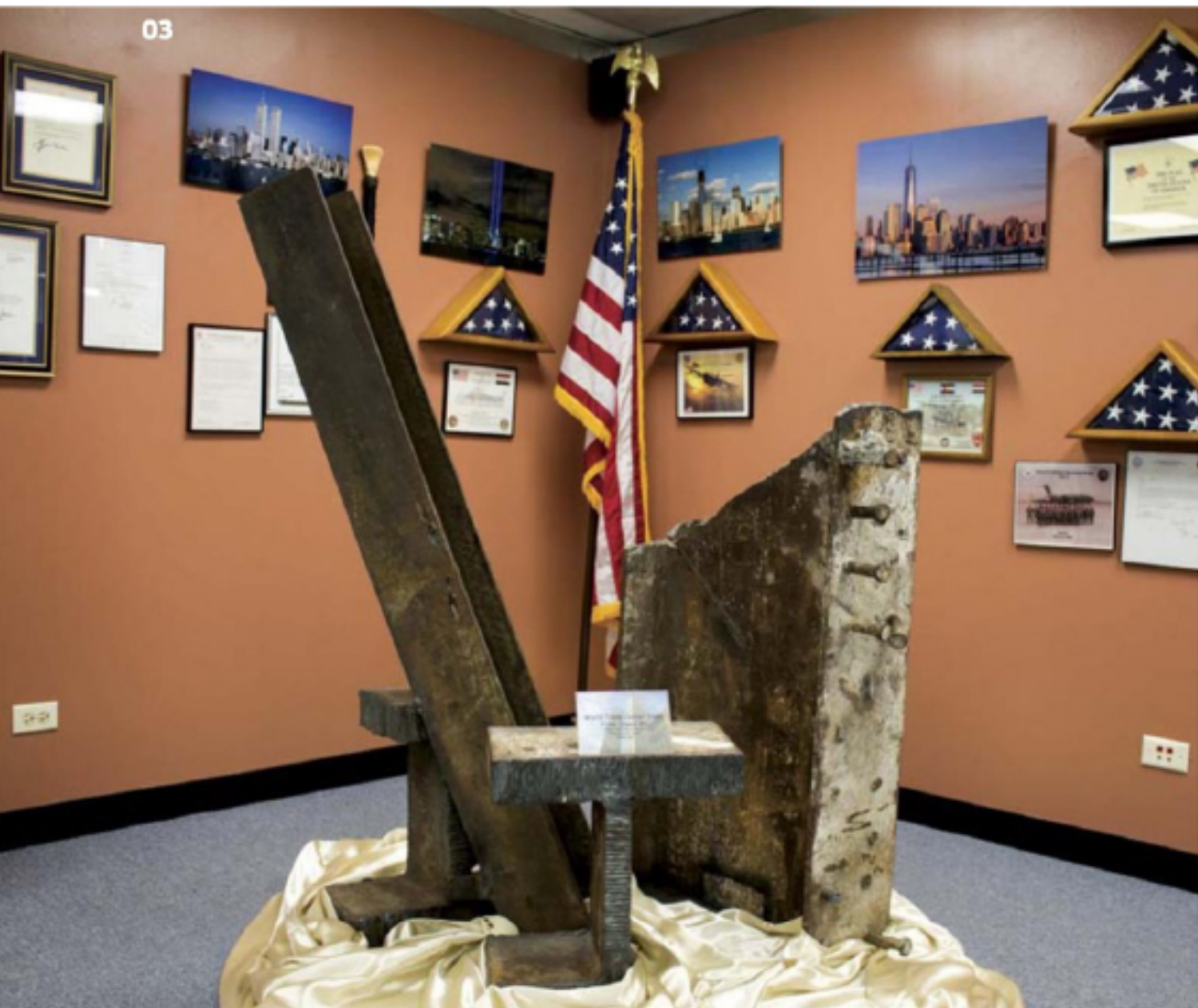
As we approached the red brick building, adorned with their familiar name and logo across the top, I mentioned to my brother that I couldn't think of any way a person could work all day with knives and not be happy, and my line of thinking was not incorrect.

As soon as we walked in the door, we were taken upstairs, where the office

1. Nestled in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, the Golden, Colorado headquarters of Spyderco Knives is a very inviting portal into a world of high-quality cutlery.

2. Spyderco Quality Control—the QC team—checks everything that comes through the factory and into the distribution center from overseas. Customers might be surprised just how many times human hands are on a knife as it goes from manufacture to QC to boxing and shipping.

3. An exhibit of steel girders from World Trade Center, Tower #1, on display in the retail store (Spyderco Factory Outlet).

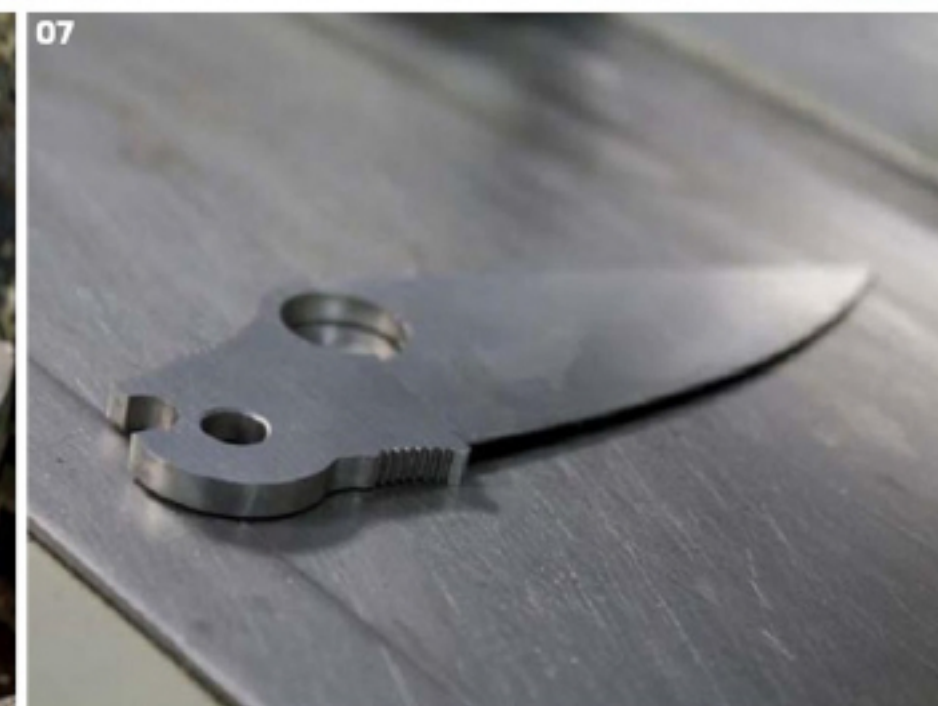
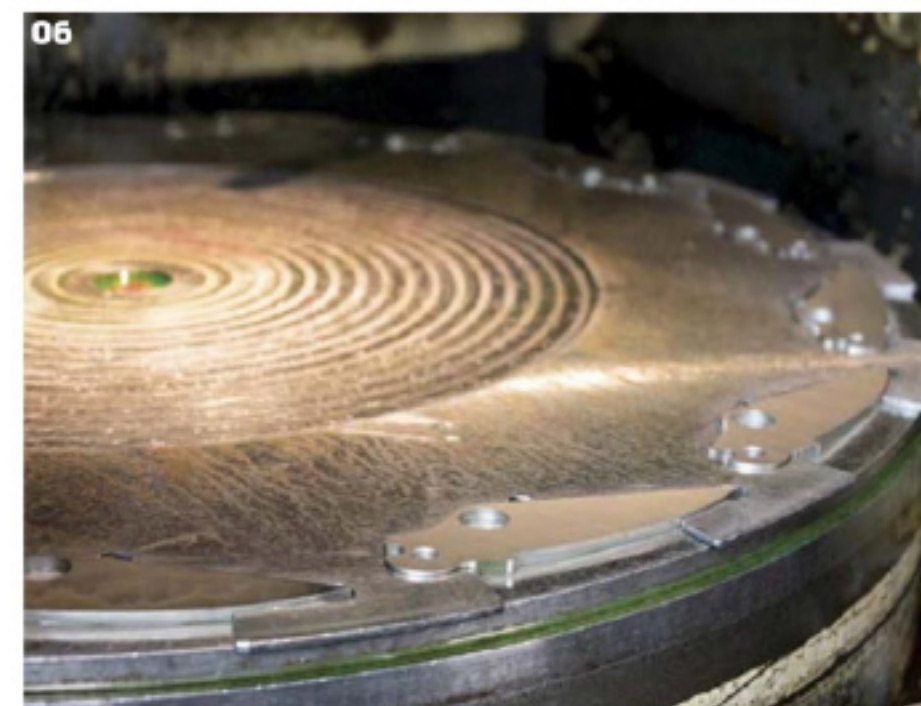


Heart for Service Men and Women

It was quite apparent that Spyderco has a heart for our service men and women at home and abroad, as witnessed when you walk into the retail store just off the lobby of the factory. In the corner of the store, you can find an exhibit created from steel girders from the World Trade Center, Tower #1, constructed in memory of the men and women who died on that day, and the heroes who lost their lives saving those they could.

Just days after 9/11, Spyderco was contacted by an NYPD officer who called to tell them that a fellow NYPD officer, John D'Allara, was killed entering Tower #1 that day. He was a huge Spyderco collector and fan. They sent some of the Tower #1 girders to Spyderco (now on display in their retail store) and Spyderco created a handle inlay for a new rescue model, called the D'Allara Rescue/World Trade Center Knife. The sales of the model went to The New York Police and Fire Widows' and Children's Benefit Fund (www.nswrtheca.org).

You will also notice a display of knives made specifically for our military men and women, as well as flag displays and plaques depicting military units and operations that were grateful to Spyderco for their continued support. If you ever find yourself in Colorado, make sure to head to Golden and stop in to see their store and the outstanding displays to those who stand in harm's way on our behalf.



"... IT WAS VERY EVIDENT TO ME THAT SPYDERCO TAKES THE QUALITY OF THEIR STEEL, HEAT TREATING AND DESIGNS VERY SERIOUSLY."

walls are adorned with photos of happy employees. It felt very much like a family-type atmosphere. I pointed out that most companies put photos of their employees on the walls for some form of recognition. Spyderco just seems glad to have them as employees.

As we walked through the second floor with the public and media relations representative, a tight bond was apparent everywhere. The camaraderie between her and the team members was strong and obvious. I was very impressed with the overall sense of satisfaction I got from everybody.

The number of patents and trademarks covering the hallway walls was also impressive, as was the display of steel from the World Trade Center,

which sat in a corner, adjacent to an American flag. That touching tribute to America reflects the quality of Spyderco's management team. Next, we got to see the quality of Spyderco's product line.

Walkthrough

We were taken down to the factory, and immediately we were introduced to their quality control team, where we learned that every Spyderco knife (including those from the overseas operations) is hand-inspected before being boxed and shipped to distributors—this ensures that each knife meets Spyderco's quality specifications. I found the hands-on approach to be a very solid step in ensuring a quality product every time. Just off the Quality Control and Shipping area is the warranty department, run by

4. A nitrogen-cooled laser, cutting Para Military 2 blades from CPM S30V steel.

5. Rough cut blades from the laser, waiting to go onto the next step in manufacturing: heat treating, grinding and sharpening. Note the bump at the tip is where the laser begins its cut.

6. A flat grinder working on Para Military 2 blades.

7. Para Military 2 blade as it heads through the manufacturing process. Once the blade is ready, it will join the rest of its parts in assembly and then head off to finishing, QC and into a box for shipment.

two individuals that take their job very seriously and pride themselves in friendly service and a very reasonable turnaround time.

It was very apparent that Spyderco has spent many years developing processes and procedures that make them one of the best knife companies in the industry. For that reason, I need to tread lightly with any details of the actual steps we were shown, because it is proprietary information. So, I will only be giving a general overview here.

Making a Blade

Although a lot of the steps in the process are automated, each step is overseen and controlled by an employee to ensure that everything operates at maximum efficiency. The blanks are cut by a nitrogen-cooled laser out of CPM S30V steel, where it is then moved to heat treating. Once the heat treating is complete, they are moved to a flat grinder and the primary bevel is added to each blade. After it moves through a few more

Their Work Distribution

Spyderco has overseas operations in Japan, Taiwan, Italy and China, but it is very clear that they do a large amount of work in their Colorado factory.



Crazy Warranty Requests
 While in the Warranty department, we had the opportunity to see some of the knives that customers had sent in, along with some of their stories. It was truly surprising to see how some people treat their knives, but perhaps even more surprising to see some of the things people expect to have repaired under a warranty.

If you have a Spyderco that needs repair, contact their great warranty department. If, however, you have ground the blade down to the diameter of a toothpick, don't expect too much.



“IN THE CORNER OF THE STORE, YOU CAN FIND AN EXHIBIT CREATED FROM STEEL GIRDERS FROM THE WORLD TRADE CENTER, TOWER #1 ...”

8. The hands-on personal touch, made in America.

9. Satin finish or DLC (Diamond Like Coating) coated blade? Yin and Yang.

10. A Para Military being hand assembled. Craftsmanship in every part!

11. Ready for the box.

12: It was really hard to believe some of the knives that the warranty department had received over the years.

proprietary steps, it goes on to receive a hand-ground edge. Once the blades are complete, they receive the laser etching and coating (if needed) and continue on to be assembled by hand. Finally, they are packaged and ready to move to Quality Control for final inspection and shipping.

Although I am not at liberty to talk about the details of what we saw while in the Research and Development department, I can say that it was very evident to me that Spyderco takes the quality of their steel, heat treating and designs very seriously. When I left the R&D department, I had a newfound respect for Spyderco and their products as a whole.

Final Impressions

I know that it may seem as though my impressions of Spyderco could be attributed to the adulations of a hometown boy, but when it comes to knives and knife companies, I take what I do very seriously, and I put aside favoritism in the interest of searching out quality products.

From their personalized, hands-on approach in the details of each knife, to the individual quality control given to each piece, I can honestly say that I was impressed with the Spyderco brand. Everyone I met seemed genuinely proud to be a part of the Spyderco team, and that can be rare in any company. **KI**

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