



UNBRIDLED COLLABORATIVE MAYHEM

**JAKE HOBACK KNIVES AND PROOF RESEARCH
COME TOGETHER TO CREATE AN ALL AROUND
SURVIVAL AXE WITH DEFENSIVE INTENT**

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JOSHUA SWANAGON

Is it a tomahawk? Is it a crash axe? Is it an ultralight? Yes.

The first time I met Jake Hoback I knew that he was a true innovator and that I could expect a goldmine of quality products to feature. Stepping into 2018, I have not been disappointed in the slightest. With that said, I decided there was no better way to start the year than to feature an exciting new collaboration between Jake Hoback Knives and PROOF Research.

In Jake's own words (taken from his website), the PROOF of Life Axe came about by taking a "1/3rd tomahawk, 1/3rd crash axe, and a 1/3rd ultralight and mix[ing] them together with a pinch of hate and a few drops of blood..."

Now that is how you get someone's attention. But as with everything here at *Knives Illustrated*, the PROOF is in the pudding. Pun intended.

"THE SCALLOPED BEVEL CHANNELS THROUGHOUT THE BLADE SERVE A PURPOSE FAR GREATER THAN JUST GIVING THE PROOF A MORE AGGRESSIVE LOOK ..."

First Impressions

When the PROOF of Life Axe first showed up I was drawn to its dramatic design elements and overall aggressive profile. The scalloped bevel channels throughout the blade serve a purpose far greater than just giving the PROOF a more aggressive look, they were an actual functional element added to help guide the PROOF through its subject matter and decrease the potential for glancing blows. Once the edge bites into its target, the channels act as guides to keep the PROOF moving straight through its subject.

The 2.625-inch spike features the same scalloped channels as the edge, which helps guide it through its subject matter.



The haft has the PROOF moniker stamped in the steel just above the handle scales.



The top bevel (on the toe) has a steeper angle to provide more meat, while the lower bevel (heel) is leaner for finer work. The two come together in a secondary point for focused striking force.



The 4.75-inch edge comes in two parts, with the toe (top edge) having a meatier bevel for harder use, while the heel (bottom edge) has a much leaner bevel for finer work. The two come together in a secondary point that helps focus and maximize striking force during any kind of chopping task.

The beard is very aggressive and would be excellent in hooking during a close quarters encounter. It also provides a great pocket for the hand during finer slicing or shaving tasks.

The spike protrudes 2.625 inches from the tang and comes to an aggressive point, which includes the scalloped channels for guided penetration.

The 7.5-inch handle has some strategically placed angles for ergonomics and hot-spot reduction. At the knob of

the handle there is a bit of a beaver-tail-type hook that helps your hand settle nicely into the throat, providing a solid purchase during heavy chopping. The scales are made of a very durable "uni-directional carbon fiber, UD tape laminate, a very expensive IM fiber and a toughened 350F aerospace resin system." With the balance point located at the top handle bolt, the PROOF of Life Axe feels very fast in the hand.

The .293-inch S7 tool steel helped to mitigate shock during my chopping tests, which I found to be a very welcome decision on Jake's part. At 12 inches overall, the PROOF of Life Axe was still a very light 1 pound, 2 ounces in the hand and provided just enough length for generating power in the swing during chopping chores.

The sheath is a very basic pancake-style

The PROOF of Life Axe bit deep into dead maple with every swing.

Kydex, with grommets around the entire outside edge, allowing for many different carry attachment options.

In the Woods

I started my testing in the woods, because I felt that this is the type of axe that could potentially make it on the ruck of someone who places themselves in harm's way on a daily basis for our sakes, so I wanted to see if it had good field application.

I started out finding a piece of dead 2.5-inch-diameter maple. Maple is already a hard wood, but dead maple is very tough on an edge. With each swing of the PROOF of Life Axe I was able to bite deep into the maple and had a few pieces chopped up within a very short time, with little to no wear visible on the edge.



I was able to split through the dead maple easily for kindling size pieces.

“WITH EACH SWING OF THE PROOF OF LIFE AXE I WAS ABLE TO BITE DEEP INTO THE MAPLE ...”



Although not ideal for this task, the PROOF was able to get some decent feather sticks using the heel portion of the edge.

PROOF Research Changes the Game in High Grade Firearms

Located in Columbia Falls, Montana, PROOF Research is a science-based company that combines aircraft-grade carbon fiber with high-temperature aerospace resins to create lighter and more rugged barrels and complete rifle systems designed for reduced weight and improved accuracy.

Then I used the PROOF of Life Axe to split a piece for kindling. After creating a baton, I placed the edge of the PROOF onto the end of one of my pieces of chopped wood and batoned through the log with just a couple of strikes to the shoulder of the haft, just below the spike.

Finally, I took a 1-inch-diameter piece of maple and began to make a feather stick, using the lower (heel) portion of the blade, and was able to get some fairly good curls. I would not say that it would replace a good bushcrafting knife—designed for this purpose—but if this was the tool you had on you in a wilderness survival situation, I believe you could do enough bushcrafting to save your life in a pinch.

⊕ SPECS

Blade Material: S7 carbon steel
Cutting Edge: 4.75 inches
Blade Thickness: 0.293 inches
Haft Material: Uni-directional IM carbon fiber
Handle Thickness: 0.66 inches
Handle Length: 7.50 inches
Overall Length: 12.0 inches
Weight: 1 pound, 2.6 ounces
Weight with Sheath: 1 pound, 6.4 ounces
Blade Finish: Natural (will vary from piece to piece)
Sheath Material: Kydex
MSRP: \$750

No Holds Barred

Considering the light weight of the PROOF of Life Axe, I was very interested in seeing just how it would perform during very heavy testing. I was also intrigued by the scalloped channels and couldn't wait to see how well they would perform.

For the serious testing I decided to see how well the PROOF of Life Axe would perform as a crash axe, and took to work on a car.

“WITH JUST A FEW MORE STRIKES I HAD DEVELOPED A ROUGHLY 2.5-INCH-DIAMETER HOLE IN THE TRUNK LID.”

My first test was to the spike. After a couple of exploratory strikes I was able to bury the spike into the trunk lid of an old Buick. With just a few more strikes I had developed a roughly 2.5-inch-diameter hole in the trunk lid. Had I kept going I feel I could have opened that hole to 6 inches within a few minutes. After this test, the tip of the spike showed a little blunting, but no damage that would prevent it from continuing, and the finish was barely affected at all.

Next, I moved on to testing the edge by attacking the trunk lid at the shoulder. With the first couple of strikes, I was using the lower (heel) portion of the edge and got some fine cuts to the steel. After that I moved on to using the secondary point, where the heel and toe (top edge) come together, and was able to open up the trunk like a can opener in just a few strikes.

Next, I used the spike as a breaching tool and easily popped the lock out of the door to allow easy access to the car. With the way cars are built today, this took hardly any work at all.

Finally, I tested the spike on the windshield, and with one strike, I was able

Utilizing the secondary point of the edge, I was able to open a large hole in the trunk lid like a can opener.



I was able to create a 2.5-inch-diameter hole in the trunk lid using the spike with very little effort.



It was very easy to pop the lock out of the door with the spike.





to sink the spike 2.25 inches into it. Due to the fact that the spike penetrated into glass, it was no surprise that this test marred the finish slightly, but not nearly as much as I anticipated.

After this testing the edge took a bit of a beating and will need to be sharpened, but all in all, considering the PROOF just hacked up a car, I do not find that to be a blackmark on its credibility. The edge had no chipping or curling at all and was only slightly dulled. A quick sharpen with light grit and some honing and it will be back to new.

Valuable Solution

The Jake Hoback Knives PROOF of Life Axe is not a cheap solution, but it is definitely a valuable one. At first glance at the price tag, you may be prone to see it as a safe queen, but I

The spike went straight through the windshield with almost no resistance.

Due to the nature of glass, the finish was slightly marred on the spike after penetrating the windshield.

can honestly say that you would be doing yourself a disservice if you did not use it for its intended purpose. The PROOF of Life Axe is a solid, sturdy powerhouse that easily handled what I threw at it. Each feature and design

element was painstakingly thought out to the smallest detail, providing a hawk/axe/ultralight that won't back down from anything and will be at your side when the going gets tough. **KI**

Contact Info

Jake Hoback Knives
JakeHobackKnives.com
[Instagram.com/jakehobackknives](https://www.instagram.com/jakehobackknives)

PROOF Research
 (406) 756-9290
ProofResearch.com

