

# RUSTIC FRONTIER

ALLEN SURLS ADDS MODERN KNOW-HOW TO THROWBACK STYLES

STORY BY JOSHUA SWANAGON | PHOTOS BY DIRK LOOTS

**I absolutely love rustic-looking knives and natural materials, there is just something about them that harkens back to days gone by. When I came across W.A. Surls Knives (W. Allen Surls) I was captivated by the frontier style of his knives with modern construction techniques, making them the best of both worlds. I can't say that it is a surprise that his knives are so well made and aesthetically pleasing, what more can be expected of someone who is the vice president of Fiddleback Forge?**

## 01 Humble Beginnings

Coming from a knife family, Allen has been interested in knives from a very young age and got his first taste for knife making by messing around with kits back in 2013. At one point, Allen was going through a bit of a rough patch in his life and needed an outlet, so he decided to reprofile an old kitchen knife into an EDC knife and handled it with a piece of stag. When people saw it, they wanted one of their own and a knife maker was born.

## 02 The Challenges

As for many entrepreneurs, Allen finds his biggest struggle in being a one-man show and having to handle everything from producing and accounting to marketing and customer service. It can be a handful.

## 03 Inspired

Allen had a hard time boiling down a list of his inspirations, stating that there have been so many wonderful makers that have helped him along the way, but

## DIG A LITTLE DEEPER

Instagram: @WASurlsKnives

Website: WASurlsKnives.com

## GETTING PERSONAL

City: Buford, GA

Education Background: Some college for business

Family: Wife Staci, 3 kids: Addison (11), Ti(10) and Liam (9)

Years Making Knives: 5 years

he does cite Scott Davidson (Solid Rock Knives), Andy Roy (Fiddleback Forge), Jim Merritt (Loveless Knives), John Cohea and Carl Rechsteiner as the people who stand out the most to him.

## 04 Mediums

Allen primarily uses A2 and 80CRV2, stating that he prefers carbon steels for their organic feel and the natural patina they take on after long use, but he will occasionally use CPM154 and AEB-L as well. In keeping with his frontier style, he likes to use natural materials, such as bone, stag, ivory, copper and wood for his handles.

## 05 True Custom

"Production" is a term that Allen does not use. He has 60-plus models that he makes frequently, but they are all handmade. When you buy a W.A. Surls knife you know you are getting a hands-on product.

## 06 Ordering

In a modern twist, Allen does not take custom orders or customer requests. He instead created a wish-list thread in his forum inside BladeForums.com, where customers can post something that they would like to see. Then, from time to time he will create one of those knives and give the original poster first right of refusal. However, if you would like to purchase one of his regular models, you can go through one of his dealers: Olde Town Cutlery, USA Made Blade, The Knife Connection or Fiddleback Outpost.

