

Winkler calls this stag-handled hunter his "Razor Ridge" model. The sheath is individually hand-made and fitted to each knife by Karen Shook.

# Subtle Simplicity

## Daniel Winkler and Karen Shook Team Up to Create a Unique Knife Style

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PHOTOS BY SHARPBYYCOOP

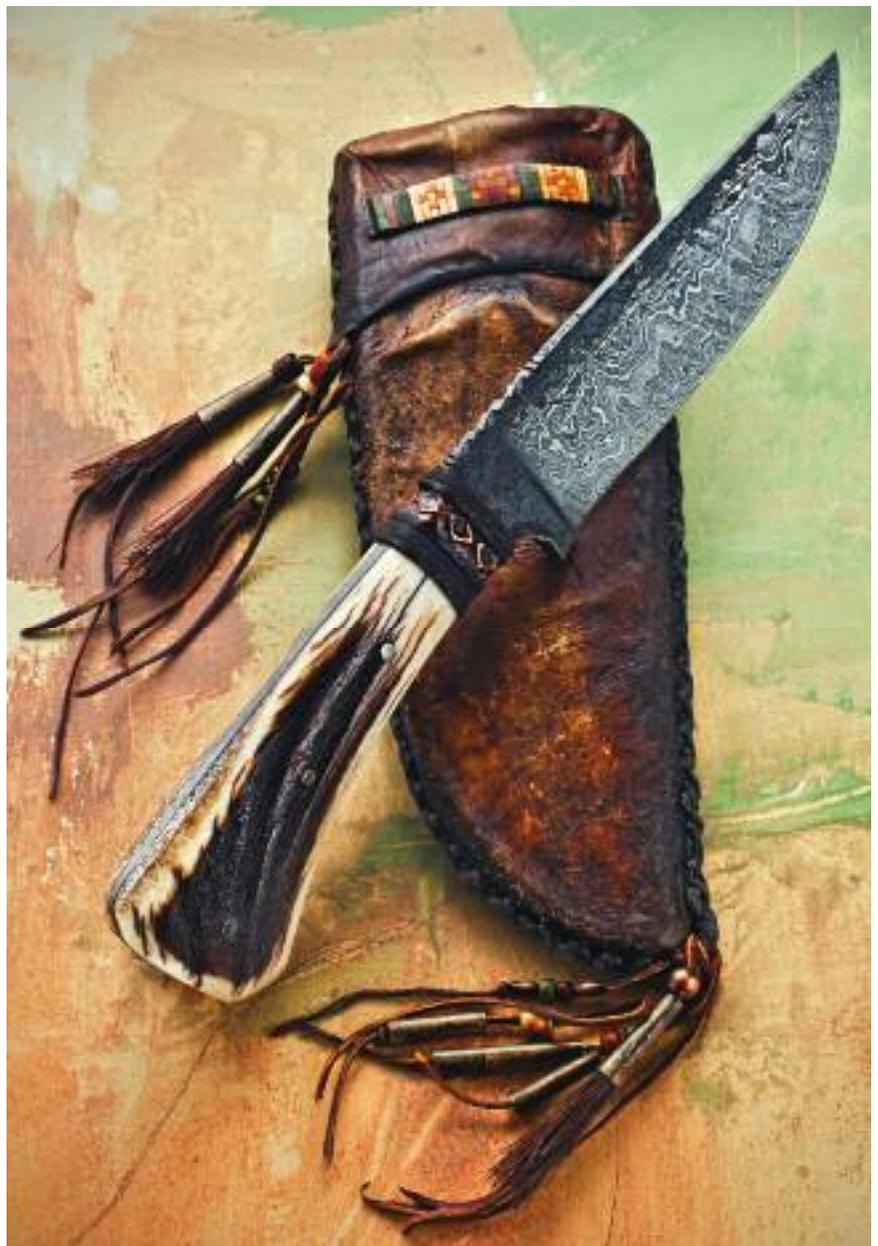
**E**very aspect of these knives was calculated. The choices of steel suited the knives' functions. The materials David Winkler selected for the handles were chosen to provide a combination of durability and desirability. The more I handled the knives and tomahawks, the more intrigued I became.

I was at the Blade Show some 10 years ago, and it was the first time I had met Winkler or seen his knives. His straight knives and tomahawks are based on historic designs and Native American influences. Consequently, at first glance, I thought I was looking at simple knives, things frontiersmen may have had as part of their gear.

But that simplicity was deceiving. Upon closer examination, that simplicity gave way to subtlety. I had to find out more.

### Knives Are Half the Equation

Daniel is quick to point out that his knives are only half the equation. The sheaths for his knives, all individually handmade by Karen Shook, complete the total package. These sheaths are rawhide-covered leather pouches with fringe, quillwork and bead



Winkler is an American Bladesmiths Society mastersmith. His unique style carries over into Damascus blades, as well. He calls this knife his "Homestead Hunter."

## Winkler Knives II—Knives for Real Special Ops, Knives for Serious Work

In 2009, responding to the request of United States military personnel, Daniel developed a line of knives called "Winkler Knives II." This line features straight working knives, combat, breaching and rescue axes made using the stock removal method. These knives are designed and built for serious work. They have to be, because they are put to the test daily, often in hostile environments in which failure is not an option. As a result of their design, Winkler Knives II have become favorites among many Special Operations Forces personnel.

These knives are made from either 5160 or CPM3V. Daniel uses S7 steel for the crash axes and breaching tools. He prefers wood, Micarta and re-cycled rubber for handle material. Daniel can also etch a group or unit's logo into the steel, if required.

My favorite handle material on these knives is the recycled rubber. If you get a chance to visit Daniel's table at a show, make sure you pick up one of the axes that features this handle material. The sheaths are made from Kydex or a combination of Kydex and leather. Camo blade coatings are offered in different colors and patterns.

Pricing ranges from \$350 to \$835, with a delivery time between three and six weeks. Additional information about models, finishes and handle material can be found on Daniel's website: [www.winkler.knives.com](http://www.winkler.knives.com).

Whether you are in the military or are just looking for a great hard-use field knife, check out these Winkler Knives II knives, axes and breaching tools.



**WK II Utility Knife** (top left) with curly maple handle: overall length: 9 ½ inches; made from 5160 steel with Woodland Camo KG finish; leather-covered Kydex sheath adaptable for right- or left-hand draw, vertical or horizontal.

**WK II Striker** with 550 Cord handle (bottom right): overall length: 10 inches; 5160 steel; 3/8-inch-thick tapering all the way to the point; leather-covered Kydex sheath; adaptable for right- or left-hand draw, vertical or horizontal. This knife features a hammer pommel without excess weight.

**Sayoc/Winkler RnD Hawk F/S** with curly maple handle (center): overall length: 14 inches; 5160 steel with Caswell finish; felt-lined Kydex carrier; adaptable for belt or Molle carry; 3/8-inch-thick steel with full-tapered skeletonized tang.

**Winkler Knives II belt knife** with recycled rubber handle (bottom left): overall length: 9 inches; 5160 steel with Caswell finish.



**Winkler Knives II field knives:** 5160 steel with full-tapered tang; recycled rubber and curly maple handles; thumb grip file work; overall length: 10 ¼ inches; leather-covered Kydex sheath; right- or left-hand draw, vertical or horizontal.

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decoration. Each sheath is custom fitted to accommodate a specific blade.

The steel choices for Daniel's forged blades are 1084, 1086v and 5160; his Damascus blades consist of 1080 and 15n20. He prefers to incorporate natural materials for his handles: antler, ancient ivories, wood and horn.

And Karen and Daniel's work is outstanding.

### Investment Knives

Which is why I wrote an article on investing in custom knives last year. In it, I listed Daniel and Karen's work as knives you should consider for this purpose. They bring a rare aspect to the custom knife world. In addition to being craftspeople, Karen and Daniel are business people. Every business in the world strives to "own its market."

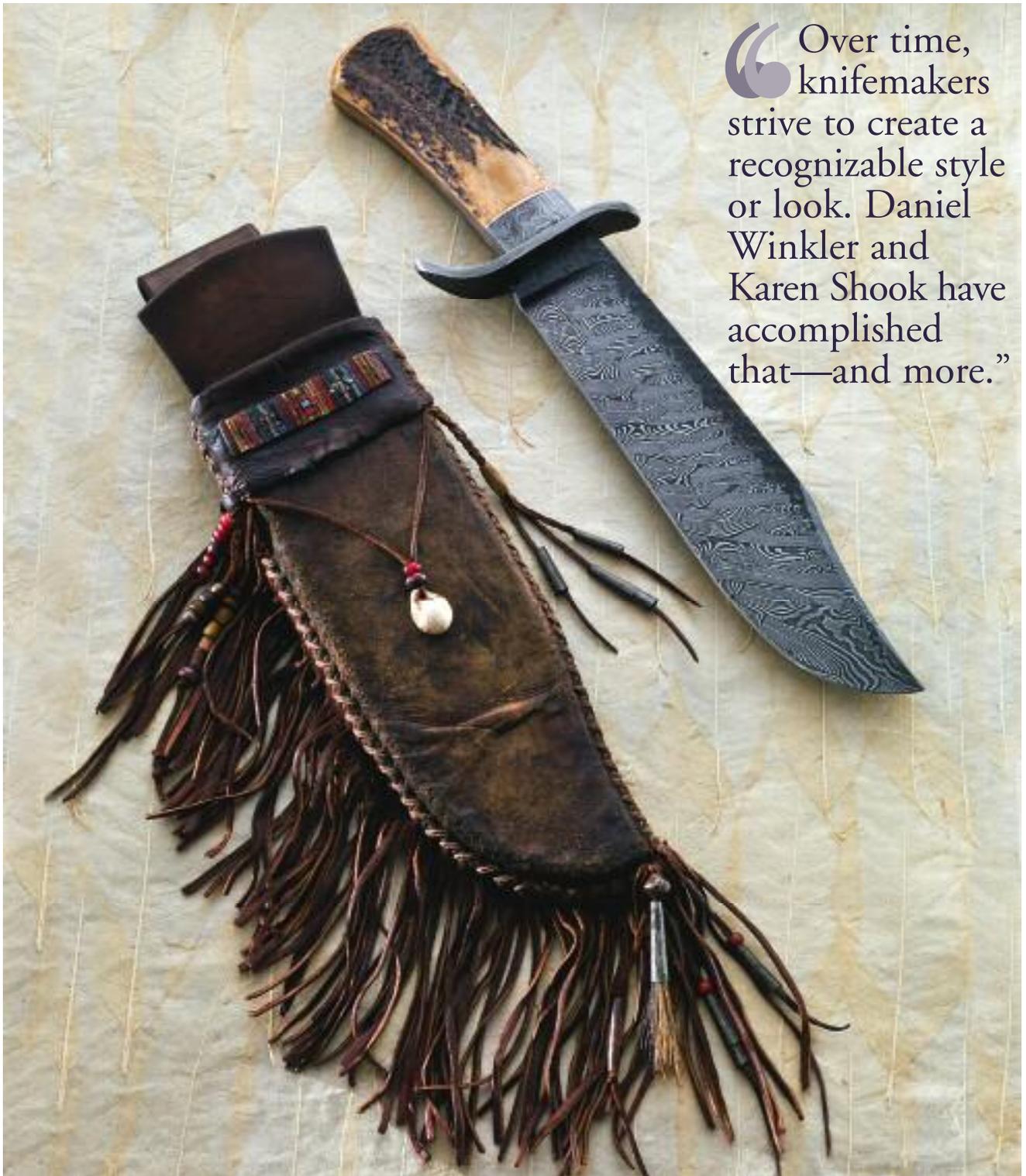
Well, Karen and Daniel do! They are constantly seeking new avenues to explore in regard to selling their knives and sheaths. I have always found them to be friendly and outgoing, and they go out of their way to provide exceptional customer service.



A grouping of Winkler knives, including his version of a cowboy Bowie and a tomahawk in authentic styling—both tactical/combat knives of an earlier time.

### Did You Know?

- Daniel Winkler made many of the knives and tomahawks used in the 1992 Michael Mann movie, *The Last of the Mohicans* (starring Daniel Day-Lewis).
- A picture of Winkler in buckskins was once used to illustrate a magazine article about Mountain Man knives. Unfortunately, none of his knives was shown or mentioned. However, he sold four knives from customers contacting him—simply because of his photo.
- Daniel has been forging his blades since 1975.
- In 1988, he became a fulltime custom knifemaker.
- In 1993, he earned a Master Smith rating from the American Bladesmith Society. Daniel also builds friction folders, in addition to belt knives and tomahawks.



“Over time, knifemakers strive to create a recognizable style or look. Daniel Winkler and Karen Shook have accomplished that—and more.”

The knife, itself, is the primary objective for most knife enthusiasts. On the esthetic side, Karen Shook's artistry includes a quilled band for this sheath.

The current delivery time for their work is between two and a half and three years. Daniel and Karen will take custom orders—as long as the knives fit their styles. The price range for their work is \$500 to

\$5,000, depending on size, complexity and materials.

Fortunately for us, Karen and Daniel attend several shows across the country every year (the Blade and Solvang shows, New Jersey Custom Knife Show, Plaza Cutlery Show and the South Eastern Wildlife Expo, in Charleston South Carolina). You can call them—828.295.9156—or e-mail

them at [danielwinkler@bellsouth.net](mailto:danielwinkler@bellsouth.net). For even more information you can visit their website: [www.winklerknives.com](http://www.winklerknives.com).

Over time, knifemakers strive to create a recognizable style or look. Daniel Winkler and Karen Shook have accomplished that and more. They have, to be sure, created a unique knife style. 