



unsheathed

By Steve Shackelford

They Are Coming After Us

They could not take down the gun industry so it looks like they are coming after the knife industry.

Written by Mark Fritz, “How the New, Deadly Pocketknife Became a \$1 Billion Business” in the July 25 issue of the *Wall Street Journal* is a classic study in how to twist and take out of context quotes and information to fit an anti-knife agenda.

Mr. Fritz tries to manipulate knife crime statistics; misrepresents a man defending himself from being mugged by using a knife to “kill” and “wound” his attackers (go figure); and intimates that knife companies are “racing” to make knives that will pass undetected through metal detectors—all blatant distortions of the truth.

Mr. Fritz writes the story as if the target is what he calls the “tactical knife industry,” but, if you read between the lines, his *real* target is the *entire* knife industry.

Consider: The only knife illustrated in the story is a Buck Metro keyring knife—yes, a *keyring knife*! The story also states that Case and Leatherman Tool have introduced tactical knives. How many Case tactical baby butterbeans have you seen lately? As for Leatherman’s new folders, Mr. Fritz writes, “... the ‘Blade Launcher’ mechanism ... lets the user flip a menacing-looking blade out ... with lightning speed. Yet it also has a bottle-cap opener, a nod to Leatherman’s heritage.” According to Mr. Fritz’s scenario, some ne’er-do-well apparently would commit an unspeakable act with the knife and then use it to open a bottle of Fresca. Give me a break!

As laughable as Mr. Fritz’s characterizations are, his supposition that “short knives” with “tactical-type characteristics” were responsible for the 9/11 terrorist attacks and that technology has made knives with 2-inch blades as “deadly” as knives with longer blades has chilling implications. In other words, he is using a broad brush to paint all knives as evil.

For instance, you would be hard pressed to find *any* knife without at least one “tactical-type characteristic.” As Blade Magazine Cutlery Hall-Of-Famer© Sal Glessner once told me, a

“tactical knife” is a knife you have to make do for whatever you need it for at the time, whether that means to cut a person out of a wrecked car, defend yourself from attack, etc. As a result, *any* knife can be a tactical knife.

Concerning the 2-inch blade reference, since most knives have blades *at least* 2 inches long or longer, Mr. Fritz basically is condemning *all* knives.

This past February, Mr. Fritz called me for quotes for his story, insisting that the article would not be negative, that it would be an overall study of the subject. Though he did not quote me, he quoted a number of leading industry figures, to whom I am sure he made all the same assurances.

By taking the quotes of the industry leaders out of context and making them sound anti-tactical knife, Mr. Fritz addressed two of his slimier deceptions: 1) That the industry leaders agreed with him and thus his premise, when in reality they do not, and; 2) To make the leaders look bad in the eyes of knife enthusiasts, no doubt in the hope that he could create infighting and recriminations among those within the industry—the old “divide-and-conquer” approach.

Now is not the time for those in the knife industry to blame others in the cutlery community for Mr. Fritz’s contrived story—it is instead a time for all knife enthusiasts, no matter what kinds of knives

or knife uses they espouse, to band together.

Let’s talk to the general public about all the good things knives and the knife industry do—and there are plenty of them—such as the many uses of knives to improve the lots and save the lives of countless individuals in countless situations; support of the Paralyzed Veterans of America by Kershaw/Strider/Ken Onion (see page 12); the supplying of knives and other items free of charge by selected knifemakers, knife companies and knife publications to our active-duty soldiers; contributions from knife sales and knife auctions to victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks; teaching children the responsible use of knives by such concerns as Shepherd Hills, Case, the American Bladesmith Society and others; and many other acts of giving too numerous to list here.

Finally, I would like to pay a left-handed thank you to Mr. Fritz. In his efforts to bring down an industry, it may just be that he stumbled on a way to unite it.

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In Mark Fritz’s hatchet-job *Wall Street Journal* story on tactical knives, the Buck Metro is characterized as a “keyring tactical knife.” Mr. Fritz’s phone number: 212.416.3227; e-mail: mark.fritz@wsj.com. Feel free to contact him, and feel free to use Steve Shackelford, BLADE® editor, as a reference. (Buck photo)