

Energy Partners

A monthly look at the happenings of and related to:



New-Mac Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner The power of human connections



The Safe Electricity website offers numerous educational videos, stories, games and teacher resources.

Safety information available Electrical safety is always important

While May is designated as National Electrical Safety Month, at New-Mac Electric, we give electrical safety our full attention every day! That is why a valuable resource is always available when our members (or anyone) visits newmac.com.

On our website's home page, scroll down the left-hand side and you'll find a button with blue and red lettering stating "Safe Electricity." By clicking on it, a wealth of educational options are presented to site visitors.

This site is loaded with interesting stories, pictures and videos that will

inform and show the effects of electricity. Kids can play interactive games teaching them both to respect electricity and also how to save energy around the house.

The website also is a valuable resource for school teachers. There is a page on the site dedicated to "Teacher Materials". It offers print-outs, lesson plans, activities and much more.

Beyond the resources of the Safe Electricity website, there's more safety information to be found at

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Don't forget to check your surge diverter lights AFTER the storm

When was the last time you checked the lights on your surge diverter?

An effective means of surge protection, known as a surge diverter, has been made available to New-Mac customers for over a decade. Many customers take advantage of this protection for a \$5-per-month lease (after a \$25 installation fee). This device is installed directly behind your meter and provides protection for your home's major appliances, such as your refrigerator, dishwasher, and clothes washer. The surge diverter can be very helpful if it hasn't ALREADY served its purpose.

Customers need to remember, AFTER THE STORM HAS PASSED, to check the indicator lights on the underside of the surge diverter. These two red lights should

always be lit if the device's arrestors are still in working order. If the lights have went out, that means the surge diverter has already taken a surge and the arrestors are blown.

These lights are easier to check during the evening hours but can be faintly seen during the day by cupping your hand around them.

So, if you haven't checked your surge diverter lately, please do so, and don't forget to check the lights AFTER future storms. If these lights are not lit, you need to call the New-Mac office so a new surge diverter can be installed.



The indicator lights need checked AFTER each storm has passed. These red lights will be lit if the device is still in working order.



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New-Mac Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner The power of human connections

Energy Partners is a monthly publication of New-Mac Electric for the purpose of informing members of the programs, services and happenings of, and related to, the cooperative.

Mulch available

Need some mulch for those landscaping projects?

New-Mac Electric has mulch available for \$5 per scoop. Anyone interested should call the Neosho office (451-1515 or 800-322-3849) and ask for Susan or Tobey so arrangements can be made to assist you.

Please don't lock us out

Remember New-Mac Electric always needs to have access to your meter both for periodic inspections and in the event of an outage. So, make sure the co-op can get to your meter, and any existing lock arrangements with New-Mac need to be maintained.

Please call before you dig

Digging in areas where there may be an underground electric line can be dangerous! So, before any project that requires digging, call the Missouri One Call System at 800-DIG-RITE, or you can dial 811. Please call three working days in advance.

Those who fail to make this call not only face the chance of electric shock – or even electrocution; they also will be held responsible for any repairs that may be necessary if a line is accidentally cut or damaged.

Another  on the lines 

His knives say he's got the know-how

Ramsey says he's always learning

There's a lot that goes into making a knife.

Richard Ramsey has learned that over the last two decades of forging knives.

"It's something everyone needs to try at least once in their life so they can appreciate how much time they'll spend," he said.

Ramsey's not complaining; he's thoroughly enjoyed gaining the knowledge he has over the years.

"It has to be a work of love or you'll never do it."

Much of his attained skill has come through experience.

"I learn most of it on my own and by asking questions."

However, his knowledge base got a jump-start in 1991, when he attended the American Bladesmith School in Old Washington, Ark. There he learned "the old original way" of blacksmithing with coal fire, according to Ramsey.

"Everything was by hand with the anvil and the hammer."

Ever since then, he's made and sold knives from



Clockwise from above, you can see a knife made from a railroad spike and one in-the-works; a fancy display created by Ramsey showcases one of his knives; Ramsey's shop is located next to his home at 8525 Trout Farm Road.



At left, Richard Ramsey holds a 13.5-inch Bowie knife which he made. Below, you can see the Damascus steel patterns in a knife-in-progress.



his home and then out of his store, built next door with the help of his wife, Patricia, and sons, Rick and Steve, in 1996.

Richard has made "a few hundred" knives by his estimation. He's shipped blades overseas, been featured on TV, sold to famed actor James Earl Jones, and was asked to make a knife for Clint Eastwood.

But Richard would say he's still learning. That's not uncommon among knife makers, as even arguably the best ever, Bill Moran, made it known that trial-and-error was how he mastered the trade. Moran died in 2006, but he forever secured his legacy as a blacksmith by rediscovering how to make Damascus steel. This steel, known for its distinctive patterns, was used in ancient blades but the technique was lost for hundreds of years before Moran figured it out in the 1970s.

Damascus is Richard's choice steel – which basically means he's forge-welding multiple carbon steels into a single blade. He so much enjoys working with these carbon steels that he'd prefer not to work with the stainless variety.

"If they want stainless, I try and talk them out of it," he said. "Anymore I just do what I like to do."

Remember that Eastwood knife? Richard turned that job down.

He likes to make "rustic-period type knives," and Damascus steel gives each blade character.

"The aesthetic value is what it's all about today," explained Richard. "You have ladder patterns, random patterns and some that look like feathers."

The patterns come from layering and folding the steels, thus making the blade harder and keeping it sharper longer. The process also allows the blacksmith to really make a pronounced hamon line. "Some call it tempered, or hardness lines," Richard explained. "It's harder below the line and less hard above the line."

Damascus indeed allows for continued learning, especially if you happen upon a

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Another **STOP** on the lines

'I just like doing it'

Wilson wants to keep knife-making a hobby

It's just a hobby, maintains knife-maker Denny Wilson.

He's had knives go for as much as \$475 at a benefit auction, and if you want one, the list is over a decade long, but for Wilson, it is just a hobby.

His day job is that of a serviceman for the Seneca Dairy Supply, but of an evening (or when he has spare time), he's been making knives for the past quarter-century.

His friends, family and fans of his work are quite appreciative of his hobby, and so is the Neosho Christian School, to which he has donated a knife every year for its annual benefit banquet. But unless you're the high bidder at the school's auction, or a friend or family member, you're not likely to acquire one of Wilson's knives.

Years ago, he used to sell some for \$100 each, but not anymore. Wilson says the only way he'll sell one now is if it's for a benefit auction.

"I never did feel right about selling a knife for some reason," he said. "Everybody thinks I'm crazy. They say, 'It costs you money to do it.' But I say, 'If I was a golfer it'd cost me money to golf if that was my hobby.' I just like doing it."

Of course, Wilson isn't your typical hobbyist. He's made several hundred knives by his count, and he's done so through a lot of self-learning and ingenuity.

"Somewhere between 25 and 30 years ago, I found me an old coal forge with a hand-crank blower and basically learned by



At left, Denny Wilson puts the snakeskin in place on a sheath he is making. Above, you can see a variety of styles in his finished works.

trial-and-error because I couldn't find anybody that could tell me anything about it," he said.

In addition to the coal forge, he's got the anvils of both his grandfather and great-grandfather, and his grandfather's blacksmith vice. Wilson thinks being around the past generations' equipment probably created his fascination for knife making. His shop also includes propane forges (that he built himself) and a 100-year-old trip hammer he's modified to run on an electric motor, as opposed to the original steam engine.

He uses a variety of steels to make his knives, with one exception.

"I don't use any stainless," he said. "Most of them would either be L6, 5160 spring steel, or 52100 bearing steel."

"I've made knives out of anything that has enough carbon to harden," he said, including chainsaw and motorcycle chains.

He's even made his own Damascus steel, forge-welding together low-carbon steels using 20 Mule Team Borax laundry

detergent as flux.

Wilson said he doesn't make Damascus steel very often just because the process is so time consuming.

"The bearing steel is my favorite. It holds an edge and cuts the best," he said.

As he does with the blade, Wilson puts a lot of thought and time into the rest of the knife. Many of the handles he makes from deer antlers, exotic woods he's ordered, or local trees – all of which he stabilizes in a vacuum chamber.

His sheaths, which he also makes entirely on his own, also feature a local eye-catching component.

"Most all of my sheaths have some kind of a snakeskin inlay in the front."

When he puts a knife in an auction, he always writes up a description which includes "home-grown copperhead skin inlay."

That's somewhat in jest, because most all

See *Wilson*, page 4



Wilson has made several knives out of steel cable.

Energy Partners' Recipe of the Month:

SWEET POTATO DELIGHT

Submitted by New-Mac member: **Audra Elliott**

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| 3 cups cooked mashed potatoes | 1 tsp. vanilla |
| 1 cup granulated sugar | 1/4 cup milk |
| 2 eggs, well beaten | 1/2 cup butter |

Mix all ingredients together and pour into a buttered dish.

*****TOPPING*****

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 cup packed brown sugar | 1 cup chopped pecans |
| 1/3 cup flour | 1/3 cup butter |

Mix together and sprinkle over potatoes. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes.

Send your recipe, along with your name and account number, to: Recipes, c/o New-Mac Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 310, Neosho, MO 64850; or recipes@new-mac.com. If your recipe is selected, New-Mac will apply a \$15 credit to your bill.

○ Safety

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http://newmac.com/customer_information.html.

There you'll find a list of everyday safety reminders, as well as frequently asked questions regarding electrical safety.

So visit newmac.com for information on how to stay safe around electricity this month and every month! Or, if you do not have access to the Internet, stop by or call our office and we can provide printed electrical safety information.



By clicking on this link from newmac.com, site visitors can find a wealth of resources regarding electrical safety and energy efficiency.

○ Wilson

Continued from page 3

of his snakes are roadkill. It's illegal to kill a copperhead in Missouri, and because of that, Wilson was hesitant to use its skin. So, he called the local game warden and explained his use of roadkill snakes and was assured that all was fine. So, especially in the fall, he'll get calls from friends that have found snakes for him in the road.

"I'll just coil them up, put them in a little box and stick them in the freezer. When I'm ready to tan, I'll get a whole bunch of them out. A lot of times, Tina (his wife) will go out there and get in the freezer, and I can always tell when she's found a copperhead. I can hear her scream," he

laughed. "She doesn't like it."

But the recipients of his knives do like what they're getting. For Wilson, that's what makes it all worthwhile. "I really like the look on a person's face when he gets one," said the knife-maker. "That's what I like most."

He's figured up, making a half-dozen or so knives a year, he's got a list of people 12 years out wanting knives.

"I've been asked, 'Why are you here? Why aren't you in Branson?,' and I said, 'Because I like it here. This will never be anything more than just a hobby. That's all I want it to be... I want to keep it a hobby, because I think if I didn't do that, it wouldn't be as much fun.'"

So for Wilson, it remains a hobby.

○ Ramsey

Continued from page 2

specific pattern you would like to see again.

"The problem some had early on was they forget to write down how many folds and the little particulars," said Richard. "You need to make notes if you make another one similar to it. It won't ever be exact."

Even beyond the patterns, some of Richard's productions have additional character that comes from long before they were knives.

"I always enjoyed making knives out of what we called found steel and if it had a history behind it especially."

A few examples include knives made from the prison bars of the old Newton County Jail (located in the courthouse) and blades he's made from railroad spikes.

But there's far more to a knife than just the blade. When you look at one of Richard's works, it's evident that just as much craftsmanship was put into the non-cutting end. Among the classes, he took at the American Bladesmith School (which not surprisingly is

now known as the Moran School of Bladesmithing) was one on handles and guards, and later he returned for a class on scrimshaw carving (artwork in bone or ivory).

Just walking through his shop, you can tell Richard is always looking for good handle material, as there are antlers and various types of wood everywhere.

"I've enjoyed that part just as much as the other because I like beautiful wood and antlers as you can tell."

He's got horns from most every kind of deer ... and elk ... and moose. He also has an extensive collection of exotic woods he brought home from California. Although, wood requires some extra work, especially considering it's often the decaying trees that have the most character. Sure enough, Richard has figured out how to strengthen wood.

"I even do my own stabilizing. I learned to do a vacuum pull on a lot of woods. You take and pressure treat it and pull hardener through it with a vacuum."

Sometimes, you'll see his carvings on the handle, where you'll see the skill of a man who has also taken art classes at Missouri



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Questions? Comments?

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Southern.

Then, there's the sheath too. Yes, he makes his own. He claims, "I'm not super good at it," and most of the time he makes what he calls a plain sheath. However, sure enough, he's made plenty featuring some fancy leather work.

His store, built with an 1840s western front, can be found at 8525 Trout Farm Road, Neosho. That's where you'll be able to find him for the next 11 months or so, before he and Patricia move to Nixa to be closer to their son Rick's family. However, most find Richard at his website, www.ramseyknives.com.

Of course, the website hasn't always been around, but it won't be going anywhere. Guess who figured out how to design and maintain it? Richard will tell you, there's always more to learn with the knife-making business.