

Pruitt Knives of Valor on THE Overland Podcast

Joey - Hey everyone and welcome to the Overland Podcast. We are live here on a Tuesday night, February the 25th, 2025. First time ever we have two hosts and one guest with all the same hat.

Tony - This is true.

Joey - Yeah. First time ever.

Tony - First time ever. Yeah.

Joey – Yeah, I'm pretty pumped that we are all matching tonight. And at least two of us have the MAO MAO shirts on and the PKV. So, we're all down with the acronyms and the pseudonyms going on our clothing line here. So, it's really cool.

Tony - Acronyms and pseudonyms and no Pseudoephedrine's. No, but lots and lots.

Joey - Well, the way you've been popping pills here lately, we can have all that stuff.

Tony - Hey, listen, I've been through a hundred and eighty-four cough drops.

Joey - And the last twenty-four hours...

Tony - no in the last four weeks but like one bag was a 160 cough drops I was buying like you know the little sampler bag, and I was like oh this ain't going to work last week.

Joey - he texted me a picture then with it was like fifteen cough drops and he said we're fixing to have a crisis because it was the day of the ice and the snow and everything was closed and that was pretty funny. Hey, I want to give a shout-out to Baker Overland. Thank you for making the run over to Tony's place.

Tony - Yes, sir.

Joey - And bringing him the lid.

Tony - I really appreciate that. He's not feeling good either. I hope he's just like dust and allergies from this weekend because, oof.

Joey - Anyway, thank you, buddy. No kidding. Well, hey, we have with us tonight one of our good friends. We've spent a lot of time together, got to know him pretty well, Michael Pruitt. Welcome to the show. Appreciate you being here.

Michael - Oh, thanks for having me. Always a good time.

Joey - Now, are you originally from Arkansas?

Michael - I am not. I grew up in Orlando, Florida.

Joey - Really? Yep.

Tony - I had forgotten that.

Joey - I didn't know anybody was from there.

Michael - Yeah. Oh, yeah. Born and raised. So was my dad.

Tony - So, is your dad still there?

Michael - Yeah, they are moving up here Thursday.

Tony - Okay, that's wild.

Joey - To eastern central Arkansas from Florida?

Michael - Yeah. We came up here for school. So did both my brothers. So, I'm in Searcy. My older brother is in Little Rock. I got a younger brother in Atlanta. We've all got kids, and none of us are in Florida still. So, my mom retired, and now they're moving up here.

Joey - Have you ever wanted to live somewhere else?

Michael - Oh, yeah.

Joey - Really? Where would that be?

Michael - I was told people when I graduated college, if I wasn't married, I was going to Colorado.

Tony - Really?

Michael - That was the plan. I got married before I graduated, though.

Joey - Yeah, same here. Same here. That's why it took me thirteen years to graduate. Well, we've been a lot of places, done a lot of things, and spent a lot of time with you, but I just don't feel like we know you as well as what we should. So, we're going to play a little game here right off the bat. I have ten simple questions that I'm going to ask you, and you tell me the first thing that comes to your mind, and that way it will help us to get to know you a little more personally, and we'll see how your brain works.

Michael - Cool.

Joey - Here we go. Cartoons. Cartoons. Bugs Bunny or Spider-Man?

Michael - Oh, Bugs Bunny.

Joey - Okay. Meat, steak, chicken, or fish?

Michael - Steak. Oh, I like that answer.

Joey - If you could choose a superpower, would it be flying or invisible?

Michael - Oh, that's a tough one.

Joey - I know.

Michael - I think flying.

Joey - Oh, yeah, that is a tough one. Which are you more likely to binge watch, Friends or Seinfeld?

Michael - Friends.

Joey - Oh, I didn't. I was really not expecting that. Given the choice, Jeep or Toyota?

Michael - This is one I've been wrestling with for a while. I think I'm leaning Toyota, though. It's like a fifty-one forty-nine split.

Tony - I was going to say, I know where there's a built Gladiator for sale needs nothing. It's only sixty-five K.

Michael - Oh, that's it? I'll probably trade him a knife for it. Maybe even two knives. Maybe two.

Joey - Okay. Who, in your opinion, is a greater hero? A fireman or a police officer?

Michael - Ooh. I'm going to go police officer. Resource officer to be more specific.

Joey - Shirt preference, tucked or untucked?

Michael - Untucked, always.

Joey - T-shirt or button down?

Michael - T-shirt.

Tony - Sleeves or no sleeves?

Michael - Well, it depends on the occasion. If I'm dressing up, sleeves. Daily wear, no sleeves.

Joey - You got to show off them muscles.

Michael - See, look, I dressed up for the occasion. I got sleeves on today.

Tony - You did wear sleeves.

Joey - Yeah. If money was no object, would you rather buy a mansion in town or a cabin in the woods?

Michael - Cabin in the woods.

Joey - Which name are you most likely to holler around a campfire, Tony or Benji?

Michael - Tony!

Joey - OK one more bedtime are you early like an old man or do you stay up like a teenager?

Michael - oh early like an old man but I have been known to stay up. But if like let's say I'm by myself I'm going to bed early.

Joey - yeah same here

Michael - but if I'm with a bunch of friends I can easily stay up late and hang out but I'm definitely at the next day.

Tony – you, me and Benji stayed up until the rain came What was it, like midnight or something when we were farting around with your diesel heater?

Joey - Well, I appreciate you participating in our little reindeer games there. There was absolutely no bias on my part in any of the questions.

Michael – I didn't think so at all.

Joey – So, I appreciate you participating in that. Now, we've talked about this before, but I want you to give us a little background because you are a knife maker. You make knives. You create knives because I believe you create when you create something you make something from nothing. And you take nothing and make something out of it and I love that. But what developed your first interest in ever wanting to ever make a knife?

Michael - What guy growing up doesn't think knives are cool? So, I started when I was younger, finding the sweet gas station knives that look absolutely ridiculous and are completely useless. It became very realistic a few years ago when I was looking for...I kind of missed work on my hand. So, I grew up in construction and so I kind of missed labor type work. And then was it was a COVID era thing.

I had stopped working as a PT in a clinic in in fall of 2020 and took some time off. So, at the time I was like I was looking for something that I could do to be kind of self-sustaining, something I could do that my kids could get involved with if they want to go into business and give them growing up. I didn't have to ever go look for a job because I could work for my dad. So, I wanted to provide that opportunity for my kids. So, they want a summer job or whatever. Since we homeschool, they could work all year round. They'll have the they'd have the opportunity to come work for me.

And so, the more I the more I looked into it, I was like, man, I just hammer and hot steel just look just seems really fun. And of course, that was, I feel like Forged and Fire was really getting super popular. So, I started watching it and I was like, yeah, that's something I really want to do. And so, I started looking into start making knives.

I was like, well, you can get into making knives for virtually nothing. If you go to junkyards and find scrap and stuff like that like my plan was to build a coal forge. So, I started researching all that I'm like you don't can find this and that for free. Then, eventually I found a cheap propane forge that was only like ninety bucks on Amazon. So, I was like well that'll be easier because I don't have a good space for a charcoal forge in the garage like that's something you got to be outside handling hot steel. And so, but I did that.

I had a buddy that works for Union Pacific. So, he brought me a, a twelve-inch piece of railroad track. So, that was my first anvil. I had another friend who done some land clearing to build a house. So, I got him to cut me a piece of, of tree trunk that was probably a foot and a half in diameter. I use that as my anvil stand and I'm still using that. So, just little things like that I found; some tools here and there for super cheap on marketplace and then I just slowly I just started I watched YouTube videos.

I bought some online classes that um some knife makers put out there some master bladesmiths put out and the best piece of advice I was ever given was just get out there and hammer. Just learn how the steel moves. And so, I'd get out there and I'd get it hot and I'd hammer away and I'd mess something up, but I'd learn something each time. And so, it just kind of became like I didn't ever want to go into debt with it. So, I'd make a few things and I'd sell one or two things and then I'd use that money and put that right back in the business and slowly work on getting a better piece of equipment for one thing or another.

Joey - So you didn't go to Bubba University and learn how to make knives. You actually just taught yourself how to do it then.?

Michael - Yep, that's exactly what I did.

Joey - Anybody that you influenced that you follow at all?

Michael - I'd probably say the number one influence was Jason Knight. He's a master bladesmith in East Tennessee. But he was the big one. So, he puts out a lot of really just awesome educational info on YouTube and he's the one I bought classes from. One day I hope to actually go to his shop and actually take a class in person with him. Um, but his style was very, um, very interesting to me. So, I really enjoyed that. I'm always looking at his stuff and, he does a lot of forges to finish stuff. And the forging is the thing that drew me to knife making the most. That's the part I would say that's the part of the knife maker process I enjoy the most.

Joey - Well, I have a question on that. I have a question on that. So why is it important to, to take the time to take a piece of steel and forge it instead of just going on eBay and buying knife blanks that are all over eBay and just putting a handle on it? What's the difference, and why is that such a big deal?

Michael - I think a big part of that is the ability to create it. So, you can buy knife blanks that are good steel, and you can heat treat them and put a handle on them, and it'll be a really good quality knife. Um, for me, it was the creative process of forging it. That creative outlet, that was something else that, that kind of started this whole getting into knife making was because I thought, you know, as we get older, we lose the. desire to create, whether it's drawing or painting or sculpting or, you know, whatever. I think we lose a lot of that desire. And part of that, I think, is just because, you know, in school, we're required to do it. And then you get out of school and you're not required to do it anymore. And the further I got away from it, the more I thought, man, that's I really miss that because I really enjoyed art, the art classes I took when I was in high school and stuff. And so, this was just a way to kind of have that creative outlet to forge stuff.

Tony - I was just going to say, and you've also inspired your boys to sort of have this creative... side and develop it in making things.

Michael - Yeah. You've got one of my son's leather bracelets. This was one. So, my oldest boy, he's now, but he started this knife. He, his first one he ever worked on was this railroad spike knife. And he started it maybe a couple of years ago and he would not absolutely would not let me help. We kind of we got it mostly done and then uh a week or so ago I'd he remembered it I'd forgot I'd kind of forgotten it got some it got behind some stuff he goes hey can we finish sharpening that knife and I was like absolutely we can.

So, we got out in the shop and again he wouldn't really let me do it but he'd let me talk him through it and kind of guide him a little bit but he wanted to do it all by himself but man I've got I'm going to put a reel out hopefully this week but that sucker is sharp, and he just did an awesome job with it, I thought.

Joey - That's cool. That's really nice. Well, tell us about your first knife-making experience. How did that go? You still have it, don't you?

Michael - Oh, yeah. Yeah. I wish I had it in here with me. It's out in the garage. But the first I would say the first couple things I did was those railroad spikes. But the first like knife I made out of out of leaf springs was like a big kind of a big camp knife. And I started with the full piece of leaf spring. I didn't cut it at all like I do now. But I hammered on that thing for two days over the span of about ten hours total. And, man, it was grueling. And I made the tang of the knife so big that if I put a handle on it, you wouldn't have been able to hold it. And so I just wrapped it in some paracord and sharpened it. And I

was like, all right, that's my first knife. So, it hangs on my workbench out there. And I made it, you know, about three years ago, I guess now.

Joey - Right on. That's awesome. I remember when I got into leather work, I started making wallets. And the very first wallet that I made, I worked on that sucker for a week and hand sewed it and hand tooled it and stitched it all together. And when I got it together, everything was too small because I didn't allow for the stitching. And so, when I went to put a credit card in there, nothing would fit. When I went to put my driver's license in there, nothing would fit. A dollar bill wouldn't fit. And so, it was a definite learning experience on that first time. And you just have to figure it out, you know? So, if you don't have somebody there telling you, hey, you got to watch out for this. You got to watch out for that. It is definitely a learn as you go.

Michael - Oh yeah. That's always trial and error for sure. Lots of errors, lots of errors.

Joey - What's the most valuable lesson you think you've learned being a bladesmith?

Michael - Appreciate the process. That was something I got into hunting. Not long before I got into knife making, like seriously into bow hunting. Cause I had the time I was taking time off. And so, my buddy who bow hunts has been bow hunting religiously September to February for the last, since he was a kid, took me out and kind of taught me everything he knows. And, you can get real discouraged real quick deer hunting with a bow on public land. And so, we would go and go and go. And that was something I was like; I don't know if this is worth it. Of course, by the time when I finally got my first deer, it was I mean. whole body's shaking I'm so excited I can't believe I finally got something. But it was still one of those like hunting is about the process and not necessarily about the end result and that's what I think that's kind of life in general if you can't if you can't appreciate the journey and the process there it kind of takes away from the end result. And there's a lot of things in life I feel like there isn't really an end result. It's just a process and a process and a process and a process.

And so, with the knife making, that's kind of how I've learned. And even with like leatherworking, I don't, I do not like leatherwork. I don't like it, but I love how leather sheaths look. And so, I still do it and I've learned to appreciate the process of it, of all that. So that, that I'd say that's the biggest thing I've learned from it.

Joey - Now, through this knife making, you've really gotten intertwined with the Overland community. And you have been out camping, wheeling, all kinds of stuff. You've met amazing people and got to do some really cool things. Tell us how the two have really come together, the knife making and the Overlanding.

Michael - Well I'll say I got into the Overland world community because of knife making and that all is because of Caleb Baker (Baker Overland) and so I've been watching his videos for a long time. He's my wife's cousin. Me and my wife have always been really good friends with Caleb and his wife and when they were when they lived closer to us, we used to hang out with them all the time.

We were just talking about that this past weekend actually and so, so when I started making knives, I wanted to repurpose steel. I didn't want to buy steel. And this part of that was just trying to get, trying to not have to put a ton of money into stuff. And a little bit of me was like, well, I don't want to buy steel while I'm learning. Cause if I mess something up, I don't want it to be something I've had to put money

into. And so, I found some leaf springs. I learned leaf springs or carbon steel to make some good knives. I can get a ton of, ton of steel out of a pack of leaf springs.

And so, I started making my release rings and Caleb and I were in a family event and we got to talking about the knife making stuff. And when I told him I was making them out of leaf springs, he was like, no way. That's so cool. He's like, I have to have one. And so, he bought one of my first knives I ever made and he still has it. He still uses it. He got me connected with some of the events. And he was like, you need to come to these events and sell your knives. I think people think it's so cool that you're making them out of truck parts. And so, and of course I did and met some awesome people.

And as I did an event or two, I was like, man, this is a, this is really cool. I got to go out on a trip with Caleb. I guess it was only two, only like two years ago. I actually went out with him and it was a big trip with Caleb with Benji. It was the trip that just happened this last weekend. That was the first time I met Tony.

Tony - The inaugural trip. Yeah. The inaugural shenanigans trip.

Michael - Yeah. And it just kind of snowballed from there just because of the leaf springs and it got me a, it just kind of gave me my niche for the, for a good market. Cause I wanted to be somewhere. I wasn't with a ton of knife makers. I wanted to kind of be the, the only knife maker. And I've just really enjoyed it. And the more the more I do get involved with Overland stuff, the more I want to do it. And then, of course, somebody gave me the idea. I was just all my knives are made out of some 86 Chevy C-20 leaf springs. And somebody was like, hey, you need to get some. You need to get some Tacoma leaf springs and some Jeep leaf springs. And I thought, well, that's a great idea. This is a great place to get a bunch of leaf springs because all these guys are replacing them anyway. So, I just usually if I'm in need of some leaf springs, if I just hop on one of the pages and ask who's got something laying around and usually somebody does.

Joey - Yeah, because they're good for nothing once you take them off. What are you going to do with them?

Michael - Absolutely. You've got a really good source for your original stuff there because once they take them off, I mean, they're just dead weight.

Joey - Yeah. Boat anchors, what we call them. Yeah. So... Well, it's just kind of cool. You've got something unique you can offer your clients if they like Jeeps or Toyotas or whatever. That is a great selling point. And I remember when you and I very first started talking, you were like, well, this knife here is made out of Toyota springs. And this one over here is made out of Jeep springs. And I said, well, that one will break. This one won't break. And so it was, you know, that's a selling point because people are diehard for their, for their vehicles, whatever brand they're on, you know, and you know, most people, once they get with one, they stay with one.

And so that is a, that's a huge thing, but you've also had some very unique leaf springs given to you to make knives out of too, haven't you?

Michael - Oh yeah. So that was really cool. So, um, Ed, uh, and I may have his last name wrong, but it's Geisen or Geisen. I'm not sure how to pronounce it. Actually. I keep forgetting, but anyway, he contacted me out of the blue. I guess it was about a year ago now and he's part of a Model A car club up

in Kansas. So, he's he said, I've got some leaf springs off of a 1929 Model A4. Do you want them? And I was like, yeah, I do. And so, he brought him to me at Moore Expo last year. And I've been a little bit picky about what I've made him out of just because. every time I make one out of those leaf springs, it's either on by request, but if it's one, it's not really by request. I'm like, I want this to be like, I want it to be unique. Cause I mean, that's some old steel and I tell you that's some hard steel. When I got, when I started forging it, I mean, leaf springs generally are pretty hard, tough steel to forge with. But when I started forging with that, those leaf springs off that Model A, I was like, that is some hard steel. It did not move as quickly as the other.

Joey - Back in the twenties, it's a little bit different than nowadays, I guess.

Tony - I'm still on the hunt for some Model T springs. So, if anybody's listening.

Michael - Oh yeah. If anybody's got some Model T springs, I've got a special project in mind for that. That's cool.

Joey - Well, that would be cool. Can you, can you break down for those of us who have zero idea, we know you start with a leaf spring and you end up with a knife. What's the process when you get the spring, how is the process of making it into a knife? How do you start?

Michael - Well, the first thing I do is you got to take apart the leaf cap. And so that usually takes me a good thirty minutes or so just to get that apart. I finally got smart when I had some that I needed to take apart. I was like, I only need to make one or two knives out of this. So, I just got my angle grinder and cut a piece off. And then I was like, okay. So, what I generally do though is I'll take the leaf pack apart and I take the whole length of the leaf spring and I cut it in half lengthwise and so I have the full length but only half the width because that's I mean there's so much steel there, they're usually quarter to a third of an inch. I've got some dodge 2500 leaf springs that are like half inch thick. I mean it's just so much steel there.

But I'll take that I'll grind all the coating off of it once I've done that, I'll forge it out that'll usually take me an hour or two just to forge it out once it's done forging, I'll clean the profile up on the grinder. I'll drill the holes for the pins. I'll grind the bevels on. I'll hand sand it and make it look real pretty. Then I'll heat treat it. Then that usually takes about a day. That's what I started with. And so that heat treat usually takes about a day, and that's all about just refining the steel, making it stronger. Because the grain of the steel, you stress it, it grows. And it's almost like cracks in the steel, but as you heat treat it, you do some soak times at temperatures and stuff, it refines that grain. So, if you were to, once you quench it, harden the blade, snap it, you shouldn't be able to see the grain of the steel.

So once all that's done, it tempers in the oven for about four hours. Once that's done, I'll clean it all back up. Take me a couple hours to do that. I'll cut the handle material out. I'll make sure it all lines up real smooth so there's no gaps there. I'll glue that up. Once it's glued up, I'll shape the handle. Once the handle's shaped, then I'll make the sheath for it, usually Kydex. Once the Kydex is done, I'll sharpen it, polish it up, and clean it up. All in all, you're looking at about fifteen to twenty hours' worth of work into each knife.

Tony - Somewhere in there, you have to assault the paper towel cardboard roll...

Michael - oh yeah you gotta do a video

Joey - you didn't even say about a video

Michael - oh yeah then you gotta make content yeah and that's another twelve that's another twelve hours a day. I've got a whole stack I've got a closet back over here I've got this huge stack every time we finish a paper towel roll in the house it goes in that closet so I've got plenty of paper towel rolls to jump through you know reuse and repurpose.

Joey - Right. You need to, when you go to Jasper Jeep Jam, put you out a box that says empty towel rolls, please. And you could get some donations. Free video content.

Michael - So that's not a bad idea.

Joey - How do you design the shape? You were showing us before we went on air some of the knives that you had done and you called it a certain cut or certain shape or something like that. Do you draw that out or do you know your shape or how do you form the shapes?

Michael - Sometimes it depends. So, if I'm like, let's say I'm doing an order. So, I just recently, took an order from a fella and I, and he had a, he had some ideas. He's like, I really like this knife. Cause this is the knife I carry. I call this my little buddy design. But that one was drawn out before I did it because I wanted just a simple drop point knife with a nice fat belly. It's great for every day. A great skinning knife. Not terribly big. But that's what I carry. But he wanted something similar to that, but he made some tweaks to it.

So, what I did for him was I drew it up and got the dimensions of it and everything for him. And he's like, yeah, I love it. That's perfect. So, when I start forging... that'll be sitting on the work bench and I'll probably even cut this out and then trace it with a Sharpie on my anvil. So, I can sit there and compare it to the drawing as I'm forging.

Joey - And that's after the forge or before the forge?

Michael - That's before the forge. So, I'll draw that out before I even start forging. And so that's sometimes I'm just like, if I, if I'm sitting in the living room at night, you know, in the evenings and I want to start, I'll, I'll do a little bit of drawing and just see what I come up with. um other times I'm like you know I don't even know what I'm going to make I'm just going to start hammering on some steel and see what happens. That's actually how I came up with this design this one's my mallard design so I just started forging So that one right there.

So, I just started forging. I forged the point in it and I didn't really pay much attention to how I, you know, there's steps along the process to finish in a certain shape. And so, I just kind of followed the process, but I didn't try to manipulate it any special way. And when I got the blade shape, I was like, you know, I really like that. So, then I finished forging out the handle bit. And after I got done with that, I traced it because I was like, I'm definitely making more of those.

So sometimes it's just I'm out there and I'm hammering hot steel and I have no idea what it's going to end up looking like. I mean, and I'm sometimes I'm like, I don't know. It's going to be a small knife. It's going to be a big knife. It's going to be a kitchen knife. It's going to be a camp knife. You know. I just, those are the days where I'm feeling super burned out and I haven't had a chance to be real creative with it. I'm just going to start hammering and see what happens.

Tony - You know, one of the things I like, taking the time with your client and figuring out the blade design. But what I find really interesting is you, you also take the time to figure out the handle design too. Like if somebody has a wide palm, you know, you know, you figure out the length as well, not just the blade design, but the length of the handle that fits your client. Or, I mean, that's something that we discussed anyway. And I've done that with several.

Tony - And I remember doing that with you and I did like the, you really liked the mini cleavers and you're like, the handle is just a, the handle is just a touch short for me.

Michael - And so, I need to lengthen that handle up for Tony. And I was trying to be trying to be incognito about it. Cause I think at that point, And Arla was already, I think Arla had already had it in the works. So, I was like, well, tell me, because you got wider hands, what would fit your hand? And so, we kind of looked at it. And so, I got the idea of how wide it turned out good for us. I was glad that worked out.

Joey - You do a really good job also of lying and being deceptive when gifts are being given. Because the very first one that I got, my wife got for me for Christmas. And we were actually at Rendezvous and I went over and looked at it. And next thing I know, it was under the tree and I was unwrapping it. And you actually delivered it to my house after you made a sheath for it. And I used this one tonight when I was cutting up fifty thousand jalapenos for dinner. I'm fortunate enough where I actually get to have some in the house and also in the in the vehicles. But I use these at home almost every day when we're when we're cooking. This chef's knife right here is. It's my very first one that I ever got, and it is absolutely incredible. I use it almost every day, and I've got the stuff to take care of it, and I wash it, and I treat it like one of my children. Love it.

Tony - So you like to chop broccoli with it?

Joey - I don't chop broccoli. You don't chop broccoli? Chopping broccoli. I buy my broccoli already chopped. Some brockery for ladies but I just want to throw that out there because tony and I have both been a victim of your deception and deceit.

Tony - One has one has been one has been gifted in the works we're going to give you a pass too

Michael – Yeah, I'll tell you surprise gifts are some of the things I love to do so that's it's always fun. So fun to get to sneak around and get someone surprised really cool thing so yeah, you go around looking at it, and the next thing you know, you're getting it, opening it in the present. I mean, that's just outrageously cool.

Joey - Yeah. So, you're talking about the design and the process. Which part of the process is the hardest part? Which sets it apart from being easy and hard?

Michael - the hardest part and sometimes the most frustrating part is making sure that the handle and the tang of the knife match up so there's no gaps.

Joey - What do you mean by the tang?

Tony - What's the tang? Thought tang was a drink.

Michael – So, the tang on the knife. Let's see if I've got one unfinished. Oh, I've got one unfinished right behind me. Let me grab it really quick. Okay, so the tang of the knife is just the middle portion of the

handle of the knife. So, for me, I do what's called a full tang handle. So, this is the tang. And so, the full tang means that the tang of the knife is the full size of the handle. So, you can see with a full tang knife, the tang is exposed in the handle. So, all that steel there is just the tang.

What I'm doing is I take my handle material and as you can see there, let's see if you can focus in on that. There are no gaps in that handle all the way down. That is something I'm very, very meticulous about. Cause I mean, one, especially like if it's like going to be like a kitchen knife or something, you don't want to stuff to get down in it. But that's just some of the detail work that I like to do that I feel like sets it apart. Getting that to line up just right from a forged, a hand forged knife, getting that to line up without accidentally grinding off the scale and the exposed knife part is so tough to do. And that's probably the most difficult part that sometimes takes me forever. And if I'm fortunate enough, it doesn't take quite as long.

Tony - that is fit so well you can't even hardly tell where the metal stops you know and starts you can't even hardly tell

Michael - thank you. yeah, I can imagine getting that getting that straight where it'll straighten flat after you've hammered on it so much I don't feel anything on the end.

Joey - Love it. Every time I hammer on something, it doesn't stay flat. It gets crooked, really crooked. So, we must have a different hammering style.

Tony - You know what my favorite thing is? The black patina that you do.

Michael - Oh, yeah. I don't know if everybody can tell, but there's like a lot of the blades, you know, you have the shiny part on the bottom. but I love the all-black look.

Michael - That's a, that's a fun one. And when I, when you force that patina, put some, soak it in vinegar and it darkens that blade helps give it a little rust protection.

Joey - Baker wants to know if your knife is pink, Tony. And yes, his knife is pink and Arla's is the black one. So, you know, the pink handle knives are handy.

Michael - The pink handle knives are handy because you know where they are when you, you know where they are when they drop them. Cause they make that sound when they hit the ground. Yeah. Pink,

Joey - No, when you drop them, they go, oh, yeah.

Tony - Yeah. Usually, we're wearing shoes that would not stand up to a drop knife, so you're trying to do the dance like you're dropping a bomb on your foot.

Michael - That's happened a couple times, and I learned very quickly that the sharpening of the knife is the very, very, very last thing I do so that once it's sharp, I'm not having to handle it anymore. But yeah, I have knocked the tip off of some knives dropping them and they hit that concrete. But I got me some leather. I got some rubber flooring to put underneath the workbench so worst case if I drop it or I guess best case if I drop it hits that rubber and nothing happens to it.

Joey - You've done this for quite a while now. You've got some years under your belt doing this. What would you say is the biggest mistake that you've ever made while making a knife that maybe you had to start over or something? Dropping one, cutting yourself. You don't have any appendages missing.

Michael - No, thankfully. I have, I have thankfully not had any huge mishaps. Now I have, I have had some knives that I've had to start over, just because it wasn't quite what I for like specifically for an order. I had a knife I was doing for a guy and as I was forging it out, um, I forged the blade a little too short. And I mean, he just, you know, he had a, he had a specific length that he wanted and I got it forged out and I thought, you know, that's not what he's ordering. And so, I was like, well, I'll set that one aside and I'll just start over.

I've cut myself plenty, but thankfully it's always been mild. I burned myself pretty good a few times, but that's, like I said, it's, I've been very fortunate not to have any major incidents.

Joey - If you do, if you do have a failure or, a blade breaks...is it possible to start over to use that same material or do you just have to throw it away and get something new and completely start over?

Michael - Something I hear a lot of knife makers say is knife makers don't make mistakes. They just make shorter knives. But I would, I would be leery of taking a knife that broke the, after I've done the heat treat. If I broke it, either it could be just because I dropped it when it was hard. And sometimes if you drop a knife on the concrete floor right after you've hardened it and before you tempered it, it's likely to break several times because it's so hardened. When it's at its peak hardness after you've quenched it, it's very brittle. And so that's why you temper it because it brings that hardness down just enough to where it won't break.

But I have dropped a knife a time or two on the concrete and it didn't break, thankfully. But it scared me half to death. I thought it was going to, I'm going to have to start over. But if one were, if one were to break, I would not feel good enough. I wouldn't feel confident enough in that knife to still want to, to still sell it just because there may be other flaws in the blade that I don't, that to me, it's not, it's not up to, up to the PKV standard.

Joey - If you could, if you could make a knife for any historical figure, who would it be? Who would you want to carry the PKV knife?

Michael - I've never thought about that.

Tony - Yeah. Davy Crockett.

Michael - I mean, that's a... I was thinking like Davy Crockett or... Yeah, or... Yeah, something like that. Oh, well, and so right now I'm reading the... I don't know if you've ever seen Caleb's... It was a video he did maybe a couple few years ago now. But it was Finding Erskine's Grave. It was like the Ghosts of the Piney series he was doing. And so, I bought that book by Gerstacker. And it's Gerstacker's diary. And so, a small, a little bit, I mean, not just because that's fresh on my mind. I'm like, I'd kind of want to make a knife for him. That's right. He's got, he's got a pretty cool, interesting, adventurous story coming from Germany all the way to the Ozarks.

Joey - Nice. What's the most challenging knife you've ever made?

Michael - one right there what made it the most challenging a couple of things one is recurve knives have been very challenging to me however the recurve knife is one of my favorite blade shapes um so that's one I actually just did recently um but getting this careful now getting this bit right here sharp that initial sharpness on it, the way I sharpen my blades on a belt, on a small belt grinder is quite difficult.

And so, there's a, there's an even more free hand. Cause usually when I'm sharpening my knives, I set them on the grinder and I can use that tool rest as a guide. But when it's got that, when it's got that convex bit, I'm, I'm kind of free hand and I'm scooping it across that. So that's one of the things that makes it hard. But the other thing was, right. Was that handle. Just getting that forge, forging that handle in the way that I wanted to, which it didn't, it didn't quite make the shape. So, I ended up grinding a lot more of that handle shape than I wanted to. And I'm doing the same.

So, this is a, this knife is, is being forged in that same shape. And you can see there's not nearly the shape here as there is here. Cause what I'm going to do is I'm going to end up grinding the shape of that handle in just because I haven't, I haven't quite mastered forging in that shape. So that's something I'm still working on.

Joey - That's cool that you're working on new things all the time and trying to get better. I love that. Have you ever had a really unusual knife request?

Michael - Yes, I have. I can't think of the name of who it was, but I did that knife for them. I think I met them at Rendezvous in 2023. It was a couple and then she had a, she had a five, eleven knife, but it was a folding knife and she wanted a, she wanted that exact same knife, but in a fixed blade, which is all the knives that I make are, are, are fixed blade knives. And I was, we, as we were talking about, I was like, oh yeah, no problem. I could, I could remake that for you. You know, that won't be an issue at all. And so, but they didn't have it with them at the time.

And so, I got home, and I didn't hear back from them for a little while. And then about two months later, they messaged me, and they sent me a picture of the knife they wanted. And I was like, I don't know I'm going to be able to replicate that. It was funky. And I wish I had the picture I could show you. But it had some finger grooves in it that were really odd. It was a very, very oddly shaped knife. And it's usually when I do a knife order, I'll take them deposit and then I'll do the knife. And then when it's done, they'll pay the rest of the balance. And on this one, I was like, please don't pay me yet because I don't know if I can do this for you. But let me, I thought, let me make sure. I told him, let me make sure I can do this knife because I don't want you to pay me and then I might not be able to do it. And so, I managed, but I managed to get it done and they were very happy with it, which I was tickled to death that I was really pleased with it. But it was a very oddly shaped knife, I thought.

Joey - You've been at quite a few events in the past couple of years. Do you, you enjoy doing the events?

Michael - I do. I really do. Caleb describes me as the most extroverted person he knows. And so doing, doing shows and stuff, I really enjoy it. I just like being around people.

Joey - Well, you have one of the most interesting booths at any of the events because you actually forge on site. I remember at Rendezvous last fall, you were doing everything you could to get away from the sun because it was so hot with the sun and the forge and everything. I mean, you were probably losing five pounds a day.

Michael - Oh, man, yeah. It was hot at Rendezvous this last year. Really warm. Man.

Joey - But love how you do everything on site. And we have an event coming up in just a few weeks, Jasper Jeep Jam. And Cajun Cass said, how many knives are you bringing? What's the normal for you to bring to an event?

Michael - Fifteen to twenty is pretty typical. Or at least that's what I go. That's what I shoot for. I think I've only managed to do one event that I actually brought twenty knives to. And I can't remember which one that was. But here at that, so I've got, let me count them really quick. I got one, two, three, four, five, six. Let's see. That doesn't seem right. I feel like I got more than that. I think I'm going to have about eleven or twelve knives and one hatchet at Jasper Jeep Jam. I've got three knives I just forged out yesterday that I'm hoping to get those three done in time to have those ready for the Jeep Jam also.

Let's see. Show up and set up next to Pruitt with a migraine. You got that right. You do have the loudest booth most of the time as well. Yeah, and that's not just because of the hammering. Yeah. No kidding.

Joey - You also, when you go to these events, you also will be visiting with everybody and taking special orders, correct?

Michael - Yes.

Joey - So, if somebody has an idea of something that they want, a drawing, picture, anything like that, they can bring to you and say, hey, I was thinking about this. And that starts the discussion.

Michael - Absolutely.

Tony - Special handle, special handle color.

Michael - Yeah.

Tony - If you need something that matches your truck.

Joey - Yeah. Like Meowberry. Well, that's good. That's good. Custom service.

Michael - Always. Absolutely.

Joey - What's your take on mass produced knives versus handmade, homemade blades in a garage in Searcy, Arkansas?

Michael - You're not going to get the quality on most mass-produced knives. In my opinion. I'll say there are some businesses out there that do mass-produced knives that really make some quality stuff. Montana Knife Company is one of them. I really enjoy following his because he's a master bladesmith. If I remember correctly, he's the youngest master bladesmith that ever earned his master's. I want to say he was a teenager when he earned it. He does some incredible work. I love his knives. Some of his stuff has been inspirational to me as well because I like to make Hutton and Skin and Knives as well. He does a lot of those. Using him as inspiration but not to try to steal another knife maker's ideas. I watch him a little bit because that's kind of the dream I have for Pruitt Knives of Valor. I'd like to be able to do something like that. To where I'm being able to produce large quantities of very high-quality knives for folks that are made in the USA. And then continue to do my hand forged stuff.

Because there's, I mean, even a good quality knife from like Montana Knife Company, I don't think anything beats a hand forged knife. No matter who made it. I mean, it's just, there's, there's some artwork and their skill that goes into it that just is unmatched with, with something that's just been, you know, water jetted or laser cut out of steel.

Joey - Yeah, got to love the art. And I love the time, and the love and all that that goes into it. That's what makes it for me, you know, for somebody who's into things that are quality. I mean, if you're into cast iron or anything like that, you know, it's so much better than... you know just any anything that you can get out there at target and it's going to last a lifetime and you'll be able to hand that down to generation to generation. And you know if you teach people that come after you what it means and what somebody went through to make that it's um It means so much more to me to have something like that.

Tony - These are heirloom quality, so they'll be around long after I'm gone.

Michael - Yep. Yeah. Buy it nice or buy it twice. You got that right.

Joey - Well, what do you see? What do you see coming up for 2025 for PKV? What's going to be going on with you this year?

Michael - Oh, well, I've got so that as far as events goes, I'll be at. I've got Jasper Jeep Jam coming up next month, really, in like, what, two and a half weeks?

Joey - Two and a half weeks.

Michael - March thirteenth through the fifteenth, if I remember correctly, and then I'll be at Moore Expo in April, I want to say twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth. So that's what I've got coming up here pretty soon. And then in the fall, late summer fall, I'll be at Overland of America in September, and then I'll be at Rendezvous in October again.

Joey - So how, other than orders and selling at events, how else are you selling knives?

Michael - I mean, I'm just, I'll take orders at events. I'll do orders there. I'm doing, doing them on my Facebook and Instagram page. And then I've also got them at Midwest Adventure Outfitters. That's right. I've got a, I've got a custom design that is only found at, at Midwest Adventure Outfitters. It's called the Mayo. It's called the Mayo Sax knife. It's designed after the Viking Sax sword and it's got kind of that funky shape because from my understanding the belief is that a lot of their swords were broken because they fought so much and that was generally the shape that they had after they were broken.

So, this one I got this one right here, but the handle color is the match to what he's got currently. I love that blue. It turned out really, really pretty. It's beautiful.

Joey - And that's a polished blade, isn't it?

Michael - This is something I'm starting to get into is more some stock removal stuff. I can do larger volumes of them for shops and things like that if they want to carry some of my knives. I can do them for a little bit cheaper because it doesn't take quite as much time to make these. The heat treat, the quality of the knife, the edge it's going to hold and everything is still the same quality as something I've hand forged.

Joey - What's your warranty on a knife when somebody buys one?

Michael - you ever need anything done to it and you need some upkeep sharpening, anything like that, bring it to me at a show, or if you want to mail it to me, mail it to me and I'll take care of it for you. No problem. Then if there's something that happens to it, breaks chips, whatever, if it's something that a knife should be used for, I'll, I will replace it, if need be, or I'll fix it. If you were doing something that a knife shouldn't be done with, I might not.

Tony - If you're using it as a pry bar to open up your...

Michael - Yeah, a pry bar, you're hitting it with a hammer or something like that. But for the most part, you're using a knife the way it should be used and it breaks on you. In my opinion, that's my fault. And so, I'll fix it or replace it.

Joey - Nice. I just don't see one ever breaking. I just don't, that's one reason why I chose, that's another reason why I chose leaf springs because it's such a tough steel, that it's known to be a good, tough, and that 5160 generally is what spring steel is made out of. And so, my thought was I want to make some camp knives that can take a beating. And, I've known some guys that have hit them with a hammer before and they were fine, but I wouldn't recommend it.

Joey - I cannot say that I have not split wood with mine, with the knife and the hammer.

Tony - Um, no, no, I have a Walmart knife and hatchet thing.

Michael - Yeah. I'll split my knife with this right here, but it gets wrapped in a towel. Yeah. It gets, so that's what I'll, I'll split wood with this. but I'll baton it. So, the base, you know, if you're, if you're splitting wood with a, with a camp knife, the best thing you can do is to hit the knife with wood. You don't want to hit, you don't want to hit hardened steel with steel because then something's going to break, which, so then you're also looking at injuring yourself. But I'll just take another piece of wood. I'll get this in it and I'll baton it with another piece of wood.

Tony - Or you can use a hatchet.

Michael - Yeah. Well, there's that. are so cool is that a leaf spring as well it is I made this one out of that dodge leaf spring because I needed some thickness on it that's awesome so it's got a little bit of a hammer back to it. I've got a pretty narrow hammer on it but um so you've got that if you need it so what I've done with my hatchet though is the only hardened part of this is from here to here. So just that much of it's hardened. So, if you needed to hammer like a tent stake in with this side, you're safe to do that because it's not hardened back here. So, it's going to be able to handle that no problem. So, I did what's called an edge quench. So, from here to the edge of the blade is the only part that's hardened. Gotcha. So, it kind of acts as a shock absorber for the back of it.

Tony - And it doesn't mind, you know, the blade doesn't mind that transition from one to the other. Interesting. you'll see a lot of knife makers do something called blue backing. And so, what they'll do is either they'll harden that whole knife, but then they'll torch the spine of the knife until it turns blue while they usually have the edge of the knife in water or something. So, it doesn't soften the edge of the knife, but it softens the spine of the knife. And so, it acts as a bit of a shock absorber. So anytime you hit something with it, the softer part of the blade kind of absorbs that shock and it's less likely to break on you.

Joey - Interesting. Well, man, that's so interesting. I love learning new things. You know, I have no idea. Never made a knife. I've made a lot of sheaths for knives, but I've never actually made a knife. So, learning about it and learning about something that I own and the love that went into it, that means the world. And so, I appreciate you coming on and sharing with us.

Michael - Yeah, absolutely.

Joey - you're always fun to visit with fun to talk to fun to sit around the camp with and have a good time with so

Tony - hey for me it's about the chocolate chip cookies... his daughter makes the world's best chocolate chip cookies

Michael - so if I'm out camping, I'm likely to have them. Her cookies are quickly becoming more popular than my knives.

Tony - Yeah, everybody wants to know if Michael's going to be there, not because of his knives, but because of his daughter's cookies.

Joey - Well, I really appreciate you coming on. It's always fun to have you on. I want to say that I am blessed to have a few of your knives and use, like I said earlier, use them all the time, almost daily. Tony also has got a good collection started, one of them being pink. I don't have a pink one yet. I guess I need to broaden my horizons a little bit.

Tony - Well, I mean, to accurately address Baker's comment earlier, this is the knife that I purchased. And this other one is the knife that my wife purchased. So, I mean. Gifts all around. I guess I did buy a pink knife.

Joey - You did good. Well, thank you, everybody, for joining us. We appreciate all the comments, all the viewers that have come on. Tomorrow, this will be live on all podcast platforms. And I hope you guys have a wonderful week. Hope everybody that's listening has a wonderful week. Get outside and do something fun, experience nature and cut some stuff because we like doing that.

Tony - That's right.

Joey - I want to thank all the sponsors that we have that make sure this podcast is a success. And we're on every week. Midwest Adventure Outfitters, Shop Overland Apparel, Blackbeard Fire starters, Expion360, Blue Sail Coffee, Outback RV of Texas.

And we would like to say that. Pruitt Knives of Valor is the official knife of the Overland Podcast. Because I don't think I could cut anything with anything else. I just can't do it. I just can't do it.

Tony - You can't. It's hard to beat. It's hard to beat.

Joey - I mean, there's a lot of cutting and stabbing going on, and it always has a PKV on it. The next thing that I'm going to need is a brand, a PKV brand to put on my steaks.

Tony - Oh, yeah. That'd be pretty cool. I might be into something there.

Joey - Yeah. I also want to say that we are the official podcast of Jasper Jeep Jam coming up in the next two and a half weeks. Hope to see you there. Because we're going to be there. Yeah. Michael's going to be making knives and we're going to be watching. Be there, be square. Yeah. It'll be fun.

Well, everybody, happy to see you. Good to see you guys.

Whether you travel by vehicle or by shoe, whatever you do, look out for number one. Have a good week. We are out.