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A. G. Russell FeatherLite One Hand Knife

Sharpshooter

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Description :

Testing the newest A.G. Russell One Hand Knife... ATS34 vs AUS-8 Steel

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I'm always looking for good lightweight pocket knives; and I think I have found a GREAT ONE...

In 1987 A.G. Russell introduced the "One Hand Knife", featuring an oval shaped hole in the blade allowing lefties or righties to flick the knife open. A.G. added a unique lock, just behind the tang which can also be operated one handed with either hand.

A.G. has added a "Featherlite" version of the One Hand Knife to his line, with a one piece fiberglass reinforced handle that is surprisingly comfortable and strong. Attached to the handle is a razor sharp hollow ground blade in either a clip point or what A.G. calls a general purpose blade which looks to me like a modified spear point, although I have only seen it in pictures.

I was lucky enough to have TWO of these super little knives show up in my mailbox; they looked like identical twins until I looked closer and realized that both of the available blade steels were represented by this pair.



The standard blade is AUS-8; no slouch in the Stainless Steel category as it's used by Spyderco, Kershaw etc.

- ▶ Carbon 0.7 - 0.8%
- ▶ Manganese 1.0%
- ▶ Chromium 13.0 - 14.5%
- ▶ Nickel 0.5%
- ▶ Vanadium 0.1 - 0.25%
- ▶ Molybdenum 0.1 - 0.3%

The Vanadium promotes a fine grain during the heat treating and A.G. has them hardened to 57 to 59 Rc.

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Now AUS-8 would make a knife that's good enough for just about everybody, a good basic utility knife that's sharp, light, easy to use and very reasonably priced. I guess that's not enough for A.G. because he's also making the knife with ATS34.

ATS34 is a vacuum melted, high carbon, stainless steel. I know ATS34, my EDC Benchmade 710 has it and I really like the way it takes and holds an edge.

- ▶ Carbon 1.05%
- ▶ Manganese 0.4%
- ▶ Chromium 14.0%
- ▶ Molybdenum 4.0%

The ATS34 blade is hardened 60 to 61 Rc. a bit harder than the AUS-8.

The quandry sometimes is figuring out HOW to test a knife; since I'm a fixed blade user who likes the woods, a pair of light little folding knives presented a challenge. I think I arrived at a useful conclusion; test them like a "city boy" would use a knife. Carrying the knives everyday allowed me to become comfortable with the lock and to figure out that the lanyard hole in the scales was perfectly placed; OD Paracord on the ATS34, black on AUS-8. Before anyone attempts to figure out the code to the color selection, it's simple; I had small pieces of OD and Black 550 cord and just attached them to the knives.

I started on cardboard, city folks always use knives to cut open cardboard boxes and such. So it was time to dig out some packing boxes. I sharpened both knives before starting the test, not because they needed sharpening, but for consistency's sake. Both edges sliced thru newspaper like.... well like a sharp knife thru newspaper.



Cardboard is very hard on edges, still it took over a hundred 12 inch slices before the AUS-8 edge started to rip the outer layers indicating that the knife was finally dulling.

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The ATS34 blade just breezed past the 150 cut point with no sign of being ready to quit.



The fact that the ATS34 edge lasted longer wasn't a big surprise, my Benchmade 710 holds an edge forever. What was surprising however; was that the AUS-8 blade held up as long as it did. When I last tested an AUS-8 Blade, it dulled very quickly and that on a knife costing twice what A.G. is selling these for.

Back to the sharpener we went; to regain the edge on one and to bring everything back to even for the second round. Here's where the AUS-8 wins, as it certainly is easier to sharpen; or so I thought.

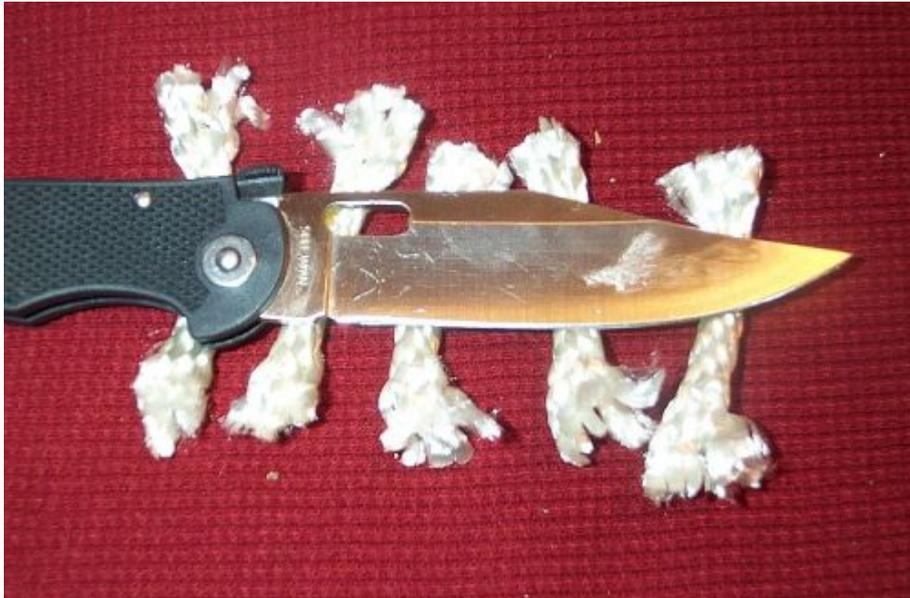
The next test was cutting nylon rope. I believe nylon rope is the reason for so many serrated edged knives; if the edge isn't sharp, the rope just slides.

The ATS34 seemed a bit "toothier" as it bit right into the rope...

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I expected that the AUS-8 would go easier, since it certainly seemed to pop hairs, especially after stropping with some green compound on cardboard. But something was wrong... the razor sharp edge just didn't seem to want to go thru the nylon, and when the cuts were completed the end was very frayed...



almost like I was cutting with a dull knife.

I mentioned this in a conversation with Mike Stewart and he suggested that I go back over the dull acting sharp edge with a coarse stone and then back over the medium and fine stones, even stropping.

He was right, I guess the dulling, sharpening on a fine stone and stropping combined with the fine grain creates a "Polished Edge" that isn't suited to cutting nylon rope. Different edges for different materials... I guess it's true. With that point however, the ease of sharpening AUS-8 isn't quite true.

To sum up the test...

I really have come to like the Featherlite One Hand Knife, a lot more than I thought I would. It's a useful size, very light, comfortable and very usable. But how about the ATS34 vs AUS-8 question? I guess it's a matter of personal

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preference; if you don't mind spending time tuning the edge periodically or aren't a hard user, the AUS-8 should be perfect for you.

For me; I use everything I own to within an inch of it's life, rode hard and put away wet... so ATS34 is my pick.

A.G. Russell has the Featherlite on his [Site](#). A good little knife with the best warranty in the business, you can't miss.

Reid