

From Bicycle Wheels to Case Knife Collecting

By Lisa Boser-Miller

Doug DeWitt (*Doug D on the Case Knife Forum*) joined the Case Collectors Club last summer and credits his wife Suellen with inspiring him to do so. The story is told that Doug received a special Christmas gift from her. It was a copy of the book titled *Collecting Case® Knives Identification and Price Guide* by Steve Pfeiffer. Doug opened the book and has since then read it over and over again memorizing and studying each and every page. Doug shared, "This book lit up my interest. I did not just skim through it. I read and learned every page. This book once again created a spark for collecting in me." He has learned so much more about Case knives since then and he has purchased several other books as he yearns to educate himself even more about the Case brand.

Doug was born and raised in Rock Hill, SC which is the fourth largest city in the state of South Carolina. Rock Hill was named after a flint hill of rock that had to be removed to make way for the Charlotte and South Carolina Railroad. A depot once sat on the site that eventually became Rock Hill. This city is home to the world-class Giordana Velodrome. Endorsed by USA Cycling, this facility hosts national and Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) caliber events while introducing the local community to the Olympic sport of track cycling. Doug grew up with bicycles being a part of his life so it is really astonishing that a training facility of this magnitude opened in his hometown.

He was one of nine children born to Ezra and Jenetta DeWitt. Ironically his Daddy owned a bicycle shop and locksmith business known as "DeWitt's Bike & Key Shop." He was a self-taught businessman who could open any lock put before him. Known as the best locksmith in town, he even made keys for Roy Rogers and Dale Evans. Ezra was hard-working and spent many hours at his store earning a living to support his family for almost 40 years. His store had bicycle parts piled up out front, inside, and anywhere else that there was a spot to throw another bicycle. Doug never owned a brand new bike, but he had one of the best looking bikes in the neighborhood. That is because he built



it himself under the watchful eye of his Daddy. Ezra was a kind and honest man who was a friend to everybody. He had a heart as big as a giant and made sure that every child had a bike, even if the child could not afford it. Traveling down Saluda Road on SC 72 in Rock Hill, SC you will notice a special sign along the way. This two-mile stretch is named the "Ezra DeWitt Memorial Highway" in honor of this generous and loving man who ran his store soon after World War II through the 1950s.

Doug learned many things from his Daddy. The importance of family, to treat others like you would like to be treated, taking care of others no matter what the situation, and honesty were just a few things taught. Besides spending time together at the family store, they found time to chat about knives. Doug's first knife was a green bone Canoe that was a given to him from his Daddy. Doug carried and sharpened it for years. He has now cleaned it one last time and put it in a safe place with the hope of presenting it to his son someday. As a teenager, Doug remembers driving to Ellenboro, NC with his Daddy to buy knives. A gentleman had a shop behind his house filled with thousands of Case knives. They would visit him at least once a month on the way to the mountains and they would always

return home with some new finds. His Daddy's favorite knife was a yellow composite Bird's Eye with brass rivets. Looking through his collection, Doug has a few knives that he will cherish forever including three Stag knives (Cheetah®, Muskrat, and Copperhead) and a 1981 bone-handled Trapper carrying an embellished blade which his Daddy bought him (pictured to the right).

Ezra passed away in 1999 and Doug was honored to receive a part of his collection. Ezra stored his knives in leather suitcases similar in shape to a doctor's bag carried in days past. He never displayed his collection rather he just slid the bags carefully under his bed before he retired for the evening. After Doug read the book mentioned previously and gained some further insight into Case knives, he thought it was time to once again examine his Daddy's collection, as well as add more knives to it. That is certainly what he has tried to do. Doug is now very passionate about collecting. His favorite pattern is the Trapper...and Muskrat...and Seahorse Whittler...well, he says he just likes them all. He prefers knives made with Stag handles and he wishes Case could offer more knives carrying this handle material but he knows if it were possible, Case would do so. Doug also likes to search for knives carrying Case "Long-Tail C" serialization. One of the things that he enjoys about being a Case Collectors Club (CCC) member is that all of the exclusive knife offerings featured through the CCC are serialized.

Doug & Suellen met on a blind date and have been married for 41 years. Doug was once the proud owner of a '64 Chevy and enjoyed driving around with her in his car. They have one son who lives in Russia. Doug retired from Continental Tire (Charlotte, NC) in 2008. He enjoys spending time with his wife and Scottish Terrier named "Weezer." He enjoys fishing, reading, and traveling. He attended his first Case Consumer Event last summer. He was thrilled to meet so many collectors and folks from Case at the Case Collector 125th Anniversary Celebration in Norris, TN. He is proud to share that he indeed got every tour knife available for sale that day – totaling eight! Doug plans to attend additional events this year and is looking forward to meeting more CCC members. He also plans to upgrade his membership to Life Member status. We certainly cannot wait to welcome him as one of our newest Life Members.

It is such a gift to have childhood memories that bring a smile to one's face. In closing, Doug shared the most important life lesson that he learned from his Daddy was that of honesty. Like many others, I hope to travel on the Ezra DeWitt Memorial Highway someday. At which time, I'll give a special wink to this fine man as I pass the sign marking the name of the road for which I am traveling.

