

Paul Kirtley Podcast Episode 63 Transcript

Paul Kirtley

[00:00:00] This is the Paul Kirtley podcast episode sixty-three.

Podcast Announcer

[00:00:04] The Paul Kirtley Podcast wilderness bushcraft, survival skills, and outdoor life

Paul Kirtley

[00:00:17] Welcome, welcome. My guest today in this episode is Joe Flowers. Now, Joe is probably best known as a knife designer, but he's also an outdoor guide with an education in zoology and entomology and a long-time student of traditional wilderness skills. Via his company, Bushcraft Global, Joe organizes guided trips in the Amazon working alongside indigenous communities. We first met at the Global Bushcraft Symposium in Alberta in 2019 and we've kept in touch ever since.

Paul Kirtley

[00:00:53] And when I was organizing the 2022 Global Bushcraft Symposium held in the UK, Joe was also a big help to me in the lead up as well as during the event, and he brought a lot of energy to that role as well. What follows is a wide-ranging conversation covering knives, machetes, jungle travel, indigenous knowledge, natural history, and much more. I hope you enjoy listening to this conversation with Joe Flowers as much as I enjoyed talking with him.

I am very happy to welcome Joe Flowers to my podcast. Hey, Joe, how are you going today?

Joe Flowers

[00:01:34] Doing extremely well. Just got out of the bush and chipper in the morning with tons of coffee. Cool.

Paul Kirtley

[00:01:41] Awesome. So where are you right now?

Joe Flowers

[00:01:43] So I'm in the mountains of North Carolina on the east coast of the US. I'm at about 3,000 feet. Paul, I suck at turning that into meters, I'm sorry.

Paul Kirtley

[00:01:53] About a thousand meters. It's fine. We do feet. Joe, the funny thing is about Americans are like " Ah, you Brits don't understand feet and inches." Like, yeah, we do.

We invented them.

Joe Flowers

[00:02:05] It's so true. Oh man. What? I actually like the metric more. And because I have to work with a lot of knife companies. So, I'm in the mountains of North Carolina. In real life everybody, I'm a stay-at-home dad and I just had to bring the kids to the bus just a minute ago after the wife, left. But my name is Joe Flowers. I'm a knife designer, outdoor guide, zoologist, entomologist, and a whole bunch of other hats. So, that's who I am and I can tell you all about my company and all that stuff too if you guys want.

Paul Kirtley

[00:02:39] Yeah, well we've got a lot to get into, Joe, and before we get into some of the more recent stuff where we've interacted, yeah, you mentioned you mentioned the zoology and the entomology. I know that was part of your educational background, so how did you get into that? That's a pretty cool and interesting area, so...

Joe Flowers

[00:03:01] Paul, if I named this one quote, tell me if you can recognize it. Now that's a knife.

Paul Kirtley

[00:03:08] Right, Crocodile Dundee.

Joe Flowers

[00:03:09] Right

Joe Flowers

[00:03:09] I watched that way too much as a kid. And honestly, that's like the answer for like everything. If I had to apologize, it's probably from watching that movie way too much as a kid. Here's a guy with a really big knife, who who's hilarious but also is really, really in tune with the bush, with the animals and all that. And man, as a kid in the 80s, Paul, I just put that VHS cassette on like repeat all the time and so I watched that a lot.

Joe flowers

[00:03:37] Always loved knives, always loved animals and always pursued that passion. Did the whole martial arts thing, got a black belt in as a teenager and as a teenager I met Richard Cleveland, which is interesting enough, one of your other hosts, Craig Caudill, actually also took classes from Richard Cleveland as well. Right. So this is a guy who was one of Tom Brown Jr., who's a very well-known American pioneer of survival skills and teaching them people. Passed away.

Joe Flowers

[00:04:11] One of his students took that in high school, was really hooked, always loved

knives. Went to college, NC State University, which is a great engineering college, but I didn't take any engineering. I got a degree in zoology with a minor in entomology. And then worked for the department of entomology, which is the study of insects, guys, under the apiary department section, which is beekeeping. And Paul, I did all sorts of atrocities to beehives.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:04:43] Managed like over 200 beehives, did a lot of genomics research, and then did a short stint at Syngenta, Syngenta Biotechnology, for about a few months before I decided that the lab life wasn't really for me. So I moved up to the mountains with my wonderful wife and pursued writing. Wrote for like a bunch of different magazines, most notably Backpacker Magazine and Tactical Knives Magazine. Paul, where do you put animals and knives together the most? The jungle.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:05:21] So, I started going to the jungle a lot with ESEE, which is a wonderful US, training group who I'm really good friends with. They've been very nice to me ever since I was a kid. And then got bit by the jungle bug. So now I host jungle trips all the way down in the Amazon jungle in Peru, Brazil, Colombia, pause, since we last talked, possibly Trinidad, Guyana with Anders from the Jungle Blog, The Wild Tales, he's a really cool guy. And a lot of other places too. So, I really love bugs, reptiles, amphibians.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:05:58] And then I also designed knives for like seven different knife companies, Tops, Condor, Artisan Cutlery, just a whole big line of knife companies because I love knives and I love using them in the outdoors. So, yeah, that's how I got into this.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:06:13] Crocodile Dundee

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[00:06:14] Cool. Yeah, well that make that makes total sense now. There's a that that's the missing link, isn't it? With the knives and the nature combined in one place.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:06:24] If you listen to a lot of American stories, a lot of them, a lot a lot of us like 80s like survival personalities like, I think they watched Rambo a lot and I and I picked up Crocodile Dundee and I got really lucky with that.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:06:42] Did you ever have any movies when you when you were a kid that were just like, oh, this is the one that's gonna inspire me to go outside more?

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[00:06:49] I was already I was already I was an outdoorsy kid anyway. We I was born in the north of north of England then we when I was five we moved to North Wales, which is where the GBS in 2022 was.

Joe Flowers

[00:07:05] Oh, that was an incredible experience. Holy cow.

Paul Kirtley

[00:07:09] And where I where I spent about five years of my life as a young boy was a bit further north than where we were, but it was very hilly, very forested in the valley that we were in and we had this big forest up behind the house that we lived in and I used to just from quite early on I used to just run around in that forest and so I was already I was already inspired by what was right on my doorstep, I think. Yeah. But yeah, I did see Crocodile Dundee, I did see Rambo. Lofty Wiseman's Survival Handbook was certainly, that was certainly a key part of my inspiration to actually pick up some skills, I think.

Joe Flowers

[00:07:52] Rambo definitely had an influence on... Just the masculinity of knife and being in the outdoors.

Paul Kirtley

[00:07:59] The way it had an influence on me and my friends 'cause when I was ten we moved away from North Wales to back to the north of England but again a really rural area out in the small village out in the country and there were two other boys around the same age as me. We were typical boys, this was in the 80s, we liked knives and catapults and running around in the woods and stuff. And all the knives then were all influenced by the Rambo stuff, right? Even, it was it was in the 80s and you could get these cheap survival knives that were like Rambo knife knockoffs and with a crappy compass in the top of the handle.

Joe Flowers

[00:08:40] Oh my gosh. I have one

Joe Flowers

[00:08:43] I need to interrupt at Shot Show. Somebody took one of my Condor knife Bushlore blade blanks, which is a ubiquitous point down the center line Scandinavian knife bushcraft knife. In my company Condor, we make blade blanks. He put one of the blades on one of those cheap Chinese Rambo knives. His name is Bushcraft and Baseball. And he gave it to me at Shot Show. Man, I remember that knife.

Joe Flowers

[00:09:08] It was so sentimental. And it's like half full of like liquid in the compass and the most cheesy

Paul Kirtley

[00:09:14] Yeah, it's like one of those compasses that people used to have on their car dashboards, but stuck on the end of the knife pretty much.

Joe Flowers

[00:09:20] Exactly

Joe Flowers

[00:09:20] It's I'm not going to jump away from the computer, but it's right here somewhere, guys. And we opened it up and like the products that were still inside were still there, the cheesy white and black or white and red like crappie in the US here we call them like a bluegill, sunfish, panfish, crappie lure, and like some like wire and stuff too. And you'd order these from the back of Boys' Life magazine, Boy Scout magazine in US for like five dollars, and you'd have to sell a lot of lemonade and stuff for it.

Joe Flowers

[00:09:54] It was awesome.

Paul Kirtley

[00:09:55] I think that's where the Rambo influence came in for us. I saw the movie at some point, but yeah, the fact that all the knives, particularly the cheap knives that we could buy as I guess we were in our early teens by that, maybe a little bit younger than that, maybe eleven, twelve, just before we started getting a little bit more serious about trying to learn some skills, those were the knives that were available to us, right? You go down, there was one gun store in town, the local market town, and serving the country sports, shooting and stuff, but then they had a fish little fishing section and they also had knives and tiny little store, it's not there anymore unfortunately, but we, this was back in the day when you could walk into a gun store as a 12-year-old boy and buy a knife. Yeah, doesn't work like that anymore.

Joe Flowers

[00:10:46] No, no, I'm sure.

Paul Kirtley

[00:10:47] But yeah, so we'd go in there and like look at stuff and then we'd come out with a cheap crappy thing that we could afford with our pocket money thing, from paper rounds or whatever. So,

Joe Flowers

[00:10:58] There's like a there's like a section it seems like in a lot of enthusiasts and outdoorsmen's life where they buy like a crappy knife and then they get to a Mora, yeah, like when they really like start getting like really, serious about crafting and just get like a Frost Erickson or something. And they could literally stop right there and be like good

to go. And then they get to the next set 'cause like sometimes I'll have like, I don't know, students in classes and stuff that bring one of those Rambo knives to class to like carve on and you're just like, oh, okay, here, take my \$10 knife. And they can get a lot more done.

Joe Flowers

[00:11:35] Impressive

Paul Kirtley

[00:11:36] I didn't get I didn't get to a Mora until much later. Ah that it 'cause 'cause I'm a bit older than you. Little bit. How old are you, Joe?

Joe Flowers

[00:11:46] I'm forty-one.

Paul Kirtley

[00:11:48] Alright, you look younger. You look younger, but I'm fifty-two. I'm fifty-two.

Joe Flowers

[00:11:52] All right. So... Okay.

Paul Kirtley

[00:11:54] Yeah, so,

Joe Flowers

[00:11:55] Well, you were there during the cool phase that in the 80s when it started getting like real cool. You could look in the back of magazines and books and stuff and get rea-I'm part of honestly like I'm as being like a 41-year-old, I'm like part of that term right before bushcraft became a term in the US. Yeah. And then the internet happened and everything went to all bullocks. Yeah. Out there. So.

Paul Kirtley

[00:12:17] Yeah, we had we had a couple of magazines over here. It was like one was called Survival Weaponry and Techniques.

Joe Flowers

[00:12:25] Wow, I bet you that's not allowed anymore.

Paul Kirtley

[00:12:30] And again, there was some great small ads in there and one that always caught my eye was there was a Buck survival knife and it basic and it had like the big like hand guard on it that you could screw in basically

Joe Flowers

[00:12:45] Yeah, the one that you could use for like a grappling hook.

Paul Kirtley

[00:12:47] Hook, yeah, yeah

Joe Flowers

[00:12:49] Straight up Batman stuff, everybody.

Paul Kirtley

[00:12:52] But they were quite expensive, they was way beyond our budget as kids. So there were a couple of like so we had these cheap Chinese crappy ones as we talked about. My friend got this one called like I think it was called a Marco Polo knife or something. I think it was it was like a plastic sheath, had a smaller blade, it was slightly better better made. It was still a survival knife type of design, that 80s Rambo-esque sawback, survival kit in there somewhere, had to be there. But it was a little bit better made.

Paul Kirtley

[00:13:27] He got one of those and then one of my other friends had this and I don't know what it was called. It had like a it had a metal sheath, green and again slightly smaller blade but a little bit more like the buck type of design, but like again a knockoff, with a

Joe Flowers

[00:13:48] Just absolutely massive

Paul Kirtley

[00:13:49] No, it wasn't. It was a bit it was smaller, but it was the same design. So yeah, so we three were in the woods with these like crazy,

Joe Flowers

[00:13:59] Oh, I've been there so much, Paul.

Paul Kirtley

[00:14:01] Crazy survival type knives that, we didn't know what we were doing with them and, it was, yeah, it was fun, fun times, fun times. Yeah

Paul Kirtley

[00:14:10] But I didn't so so that was like you say that was in the 80s and I didn't come to the Mora until much later, till I really started looking into to bushcraft properly here, which would have been in the late 90s. And we can talk a bit more about that because there's a knife that I bought because I you couldn't there were no Moras in the stores here at that point.

Paul Kirtley

[00:14:33] Really?

Joe Flowers

[00:14:34] Man, I always, as an American, over on this side, I'm always thinking that, it's everywhere in Europe because it seems that way now.

Paul Kirtley

[00:14:42] Knowing

Joe Flowers

[00:14:42] Even in the US. Yeah. They're everywhere. And this is this really is like a post-90s, like early 2000s thing.

Paul Kirtley

[00:14:49] I didn't get a Frost Mora until I went on a Ray Mears course in 2000. And it was an old model of it was like the old Clipper that they don't make anymore.

Joe Flowers

[00:15:00] Mhm

Paul Kirtley

[00:15:01] I probably got one in the drawer somewhere I could dig out, but yeah, I've got I've got a couple of them somewhere. Bit more like the handle's a bit more like the Mora 2000. It's like a mold, like it's no rubberization on it.

Paul Kirtley

[00:15:14] It's just like a piece of plastic with more of a finger guard on it, but a very similar blade to the what the Mora Clipper has has now. And then the sheath was a bit weird, it had almost like a finger guard on it so that you could you could hold the sheath better. I've not seen them for years, but that was the first Mora that I had.

Joe Flowers

[00:15:35] Like I know, I know which one one you're talking about. I have like 40 or 50 or god knows how many Moras. And then I inherited a bunch from Steve Watts when he passed away. Steve Watts from the Schiele Museum, really well known for his practicing primitive stuff. One of the bushcraft gurus, I guess you could say in the US who passed away in 2016. I got some of his really cool old-school Frost Moras with that same style, sheath and all that. And that was really cool. That's before Frost, and Mora combined together.

Paul Kirtley

[00:16:09] Yeah.

Joe Flowers

[00:16:10] Yeah.

Paul Kirtley

[00:16:11] Interesting So, so with the knife designs

Joe Flowers

[00:16:15] Yes

Paul Kirtley

[00:16:15] So something that I that puzzled me because when I when I started Frontier Bushcraft back in 2010, there was a guy that I was in contact with and I wrote an article about the Wilkinson Sword survival knife.

Joe Flowers

[00:16:32] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Paul Kirtley

[00:16:34] Which again was one that we, as boys, used to, used to dribble over, salivate over, but we couldn't, we couldn't afford it. We had these cheap survival knives, but there was a there was a company in the north of England called Survival Aids, which was a bit of an unfortunate name because AIDS became like really prevalent as something else in the in the 80s, but there's a company called Survival Aids. And it was all it was survival equipment basically. And they used to put out a paper catalog. They used to put out a one in the spring summer and one in the in the autumn and the fall winter. And

Paul Kirtley

[00:17:13] The clothing would and equipment would vary from season to season, but they would always have this similar survival equipment in there and there were some cheaper things in there, but there was also the Wilkinson Sword survival knife in there. And many years later I bought one and realized they were they were pretty rubbish for as they came out of the box because they just weren't very sharp, right?

Paul Kirtley

[00:17:32] Yeah

Paul Kirtley

[00:17:33] And the steel's extremely hard and they're difficult to sharpen at home. You need to get them on a grinder and sharpen them properly. But, I then got, I wrote this article about using it to survive. And I was somewhat and there was a later version called the Dartmoor knife which is an updated version of it. But this guy who had... Dartmoor, that sounds really familiar.

Joe Flowers

[00:17:57] The Dartmoor knight

Paul Kirtley

[00:17:58] Yeah, well it's basically the same Wilkinson Sword survival knife but it was updated. I think it was given to a bunch of Royal Marines and because Dartmoor is where they do their survival training. It was given to a bunch of Royal Marines and they said what would you change and they changed a few things and relaunched it as the Dartmoor knife.

Joe Flowers

[00:18:14] Wasn't that Ray Mears's like first style like design or something along that line?

Paul Kirtley

[00:18:19] So I don't know the full story of the of the of what happened legally and I'm not gonna so I'm not gonna go there but

Joe Flowers

[00:18:26] Of course.

Paul Kirtley

[00:18:27] What I do know is that so when I was a kid, I was reading the Survival Weaponry and Techniques magazine

Paul Kirtley

[00:18:36] There was another one called Combat and Survival, and then we used to we used to get these Survival Aid catalogs, and I think that I first got the Survival Aid catalogs because they were, they came as an insert in one of these magazines, and then once you got on their mailing list, they would send you them directly every, every six months or so. But the first time I heard of Ray Mears was flicking through this catalog, and the Wilkinson Sword survival knife was there, and it was designed by Raymond Mears. So that's where I first that's where I first heard of him, and this was again, as I say, this would have been in the late 80s.

Paul Kirtley

[00:19:14] And yeah, I didn't join the dots with that for quite a long time.

Joe Flowers

[00:19:19] Wow!

Joe Flowers

[00:19:20] It's a wild design too, guys. You can imagine quite frankly a little bit of what

we're talking about with the serrated edge on the back, like a bottle opener. Yeah. A ergonomic handle. The handle looks pretty ergonomic, but just definitely not your normal run-of-the-mill, bushcraft knife.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[00:19:38] No, not at all. It was it was it was very much of that 1980s survival knife.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:19:45] Yes, absolutely.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[00:19:47] Mine, but with a few differences. And yeah, so many years I later I got one and I was a bit disappointed with it. And that was before I started doing any bushcraft courses.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:19:57] The Wilkinson sword. Yeah. Raymond Mears survival knife was a very, very unique looking blade. This thing looks like a whale. Yeah, honestly. Hard to oh, you have one! Wow, look at that handle.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:20:15] Holy cow!

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[00:20:16] I don't have I do have a Dartmoor knife as well. I don't have that here, that's down in my kit store with all of my teaching stuff. Because I use it as an example of that, just like crazy 80s knife design. Yeah, it's a talking point, right? I've just got a bunch a little bit like not to the extent that Mors used to have with the table full of knives, but I do have a bunch of different knives that on my elementary bushcraft course, I get them out and we talk about...

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[00:20:46] Pros and cons of different and different design elements just to give people a bit of context rather than just handing them a mora and saying use this just which we do do they all get a mora on the course it's just giving them a bit of context around why we give them a mora to use for the things that we're doing on that course and also talk about where maybe other things might do a better job and other things might do a worse job so

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:21:14] Yeah, that I remember actually when I was like in my in my teens and I took my class with Richard Cleveland. I brought this big old giant Cold Steel Bowie looking thing because of course Crocodile Dundee, right? And he shows me the Mors and I'm like, ooh, I don't know if I could survive on that. And then he proceeded to blow my

mind with how well a Scandinavian edge does that. But that always seems like a funny little rite of passage of sentimental, stuff. I remember my dad, he was this like real hardcore dude in the Marines way back in the day before my time. In the 70s in Vietnam.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:21:53] He was a cap officer. So he got flown in like a group of six back behind enemy lines in Vietnam and would teach the villagers how to fight back and stuff. And when he came back, he had this really cool shadow box with his United States Marine Corps

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:22:11] K bar

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:22:12] Which is that this like leather stacked handled knife with a double guard. And I remember looking at that, in our family room as a kid while watching Crocodile Dundee and just being stunned with knives. So I think maybe that's where like the 80s, thing came in. Oh, we gotta have something combat related and huge for being able to use the environment around us and although I love me some machetes, oh, jeez, Paul.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:22:41] We could talk machetes for two hours.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[00:22:43] I think we we'll get onto the machetes. We'll get onto the machetes for sure.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:22:47] But even though I know that, I've learned the small little Moras and small knives sometimes do just as good of a job.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[00:22:55] Yeah, well they do a good job in the right context and that's I think that's right context is a big thing, right? I just wanted to pick up on something that you said. I think that was one of the things about the 80s, the survival stuff such as it was very interwoven with military. Thinking, yeah, absolutely military designs.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:23:15] Globally globally Not even in the U. S.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[00:23:17] Yeah, we were still in the Cold War at that point, remember? So...

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:23:20] Correct. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Paul Kirtley

[00:23:22] And so survivalism such as it was or just thinking about survival again was wrapped up in all of that as well. Again there was a lot of a lot of stuff in those magazines about, nuclear fallout, and it was it's just scary shit, scary stuff.

Paul Kirtley

[00:23:39] Hello as a boy, it was just like you're reading all this stuff about, nuclear war and survival and it was all just a bit depressing and scary on one level, so

Joe Flowers

[00:23:51] Yeah, we're we're worried more about gas masks than we are wild plant usage. Very much. Very much.

Joe Flowers

[00:23:58] And it's cool, I guess, to see such a big change and to go back to like to the point where like brain tanning is cool again and being able to go out and just forage in your lawn is just as cool as having five gas masks.

Joe Flowers

[00:24:18] It's pretty nice.

Paul Kirtley

[00:24:20] Let me let me show you the... For listeners, what I will do is I will take... I will take some photographs of all this stuff that we're talking about and I'll put it on the page with the show notes for this podcast. So if people want to go and have a look, at the at the knives that we're talking about, certainly this Wilkinson Sword one. And so just to answer your question, yes, it was designed by Ray Mears when he was younger. And then later on he, for whatever reason, and I don't know what went on between him and the company, he disowned it. He didn't want anything to do with it, which I think is why Wilkinson Sword relaunched it as the as the Dartmoor knife.

Paul Kirtley

[00:24:58] And again, this had a survival kit in the handle.

Joe Flowers

[00:25:01] Yeah, look at that. This thing is crazy. Listeners, this is like a black and satin coated blade and he's unscrewing the back so that the handle almost comes off the back and there's probably stuff in it.

Paul Kirtley

[00:25:15] Interesting compared to what a lot of those knives that had a hollow handle. This is still full tang. If I can get this thing off. Wow. But the tang's hollow. Look at that. The tang is hollowed out in the middle.

Joe Flowers

[00:25:26] I had no idea.

Paul Kirtley

[00:25:28] And then the little survival kit goes in, goes in there.

Joe Flowers

[00:25:33] It looks like a tampon that you're putting in your nose.

Paul Kirtley

[00:25:35] It's a plastic tube but it is about the size of a tampon applicator. You're right.

Joe Flowers

[00:25:39] That's cool.

Paul Kirtley

[00:25:40] And it had a little compass in the top, but it's not there anymore. The kit's not in there anymore, but yeah, so it was still a full tang knife with a survival

Joe Flowers

[00:25:48] What an amazing

Paul Kirtley

[00:25:49] It's quite it's quite a cool design in that respect, which is very different to the hollow-handled cheap Chinese ones that we had, that basically the blade was just bolted into the bottom of the handle and then

Joe Flowers

[00:26:00] Yeah. And nowadays, we even have 3D printed titanium handle knives. Yeah. I have two from UG, UG Tools out of Germany and they are Porsches, man. They are so lightweight.

Joe Flowers

[00:26:12] It's not even funny. It's incredible to see all the technology that comes up just from cutting stuff. We didn't get to where we are today by chewing on bones. We made knives. Steve Watts would say this. The knife gave us the edge or the edge gave us the edge over other living creatures with tools. We were able to make fire, we were able to defend ourselves. And it's just crazy to see everybody reinventing the wheel, all the time.

Paul Kirtley

[00:26:38] Gave us a leg up and I also I also found that Mora that we were

Joe Flowers

[00:26:42] Oh, that's it! Yeah, I have one of those. Oh man.

Paul Kirtley

[00:26:45] Yeah, so that was my first that was my first Mora, that one.

Joe Flowers

[00:26:48] Oh, so he has, guys, if you didn't know like a little bit of knife nerd stuff, like Frost and Mora used to be two different companies in Sweden that would make the Mora style knife. Mora is a town in Sweden known for its knifemaking. And then Mora of Sweden, the knife company purchased Frost, I believe, in the early 2000s, and that's where that big switchover, happened and stuff too. So, there's a lot of companies who are across the street from each other who buy each other. For instance, Gransfors Bruks and Wetterling's, have a have a good relationship because they're right across the street from each other and stuff.

Paul Kirtley

[00:27:26] Yeah, yeah.

Paul Kirtley

[00:27:28] So the first bushcraft type knife that I got. So like I say, late it wasn't until later that I made this connection with Ray Mears. I Ray Mears had a series called World of Survival.

Joe Flowers

[00:27:42] I remember that.

Paul Kirtley

[00:27:44] Cool because it was quite anthropological. He'd go to, some indigenous people, reindeer herders or what have you, reindeer herders in Siberia, people that were still living quite a traditional life and see how they lived, in nature. And that was quite, that's where I first really recognized him as a person. And then later on I was like, wasn't that the guy that designed that knife in the Survival Aids catalog that I used to read when I was a boy, like six, seven years ago?

Paul Kirtley

[00:28:17] And so I then got a book of his, which was a bushcraft book.

Paul Kirtley

[00:28:25] And he'd previously written stuff. Actually, no, it still said it was still called it was called the Outdoor Survival Handbook. And it's the one that goes through the seasons. And in there, he had a specification of what he thought was a good bushcraft knife, which is basically a picture. You look at it now and go, that's a Woodlore knife, right?

Joe Flowers

[00:28:43] But, ah, okay, yeah.

Paul Kirtley

[00:28:45] Again, this would have been in the 90s sometime. Nobody knew what a Woodlore knife was, I guess unless you'd been on a Woodlore course, right? It wasn't, there weren't, this is this is will blow some people's minds. It's just that there wasn't a bushcraft knife design yet. There's all of these Woodlore copies and clones now and many very variations on that theme, but that Woodlore knife wasn't well known back then. And so there was a sketch of the Woodlore knife in this book of Ray Mears and I was like, okay, well, I didn't even know that was like his knife. I don't think at that I just read the specs and then I went to this store that I used to go to as a kid.

Paul Kirtley

[00:29:23] Where we bought the cheap crappy survival knives. Yeah. And I bought the closest thing that I could find in that store to what he was specifying, which was which was this Normark knife. So when we when we were chatting on messages the other day, you said bring a couple of knives that have some sentimental value.

Paul Kirtley

[00:29:45] Look at that

Paul Kirtley

[00:29:46] That's one of them. And I actually made a video about this, a YouTube video a year or so ago, but it's not massively dissimilar to a lot of the bushcraft knives, but this was a normal, it's a stainless steel knife, that's the only thing, and it is a little bit brittle, but the edge is a little bit brittle, but it's very similar size to what we'd expect from a bushcraft knife now in terms of the Mora's or the Woodlore type knives. So that was one that I thought I'd bring to show you, Joe, because that was

Joe Flowers

[00:30:15] That's really cool. And that fits a lot of Mors Kochanski's teachings on a bushcraft knife too. Point down center line, good about four-inch handle, four and a half inch blade, more or less, or four-inch blade and yeah, perfect. And skin and even grind. That's really cool. Taking taking that formula of that four-inch blade, four-inch handle, point down center line, skin and even, that's basically the ingredients for a bushcraft knife. And it's really interesting to see all the different variations you can do that, especially now that bushcraft knives have become so popular.

Paul Kirtley

[00:30:53] Yeah. Well, I'm conscious I've talked quite a lot given it's given it's a chat about you, but what one while we're on the subject of variations on theme and designs, one thing that puzzles me and the reason it puzzles me was because when I started

Frontier Bushcraft, I actually started telling you the story before and we went down the Dartmoor knives, Wilkins's sword rabbit hole.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:31:14] Well we'll be going down rabbit holes this whole time we've been talking to me.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[00:31:18] That's cool. We have to take the place of people like Mors who go off on tangents and tangents and tangents, right?

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:31:24] Yeah. I've got a timer here to time how much I talk today. Make sure.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[00:31:28] We have to we have to train, we're we're still relatively young but we have to train that muscle so that we can get to that stage in a couple of decades time, right?

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:31:37] I hope. Oh dear.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[00:31:39] But the point I was making was I wrote this article about this fun thing that I did, which was I went to the woods with a 80s, DPM camo jacket, a Ventile camo jacket, and a Wilkinson Sword survival knife, and a couple of snares, and to do what I fantasized doing about as a kid, which was just to go and live off the land for a few days, right? And I and I was like, I'm just going to go and do this. And so I went and did this, and I had fun doing it, and I wrote an article about it. On my on my blog. Then this is this is more than 10 years ago. This is this is this would have been like 12, 13 years ago I wrote this article.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[00:32:18] Anyway, this guy contacted me and said " Oh, I because by this point Wilkinson Sword had gone as a knife maker had gone out of business. A lot of people still know Wilkinson Sword as a razor manufacturer, but they're two separate companies. Wilkinson Sword as a knife manufacturer had gone out of business and as a sword maker. And this guy contacted me and said 'I have all of the old stock of parts of the Dartmoor knives. I bought them at auction. Would you like one?'"

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[00:32:49] Right, so and so so I got some other I actually have some knife blanks as well somewhere that he sent me. So, that was weird and but then he put me in contact with this guy called Simon Fearnham. And Simon Fearnham owns Raven Armory who they make a lot of really high-end swords.

Paul Kirtley

[00:33:11] They do restoration work for museums on archaeological finds of swords, but they also make really, really high-end swords, presentation swords, swords for, Middle Eastern royal families, if you can imagine, not just the, not just the blade smithing but also the silver work and, they're almost like jewelry pieces, on the handles and scabbards and things. But this was just after the financial crisis and, there wasn't as much business in, ten thousand dollar swords at that point in time. And so, so, you nearly spat your water out there, didn't you, Joe?

Paul Kirtley

[00:33:51] Yeah,

Paul Kirtley

[00:33:52] And so he was looking to make just like a run-of-the-mill outdoor knife that he could make, much lower price point, but he could make it really well. And so this guy who had the Dartmoor knife parts put me in contact with Simon and said, Simon would like to have a chat about a knife design. And so I started chatting with Simon, but I was like, do we really need another knife design, there's lots of knives out there already.

Paul Kirtley

[00:34:23] Simon just basically said, well, make something you'd like and at least, at least you can have one then and then, if it comes to something. So he twisted my arm that way, but the thing that

Joe Flowers

[00:34:33] Yeah, we gotta twist your arm harder. It's pretty easy to design.

Paul Kirtley

[00:34:36] This was my question because I actually found it really difficult. Like I had to come up with one design and that you've come up with dozens and dozens of designs. It's like, how how do you do that? How do you where do you start? What what's your process for designing an AI? How do you think about it? And how do you come up with a bunch of designs that are different that you don't just converge on the same thing all the time, the same thinking?

Joe Flowers

[00:34:59] Yeah, that's, very hard.

Joe Flowers

[00:35:01] A ADHD helps. But B, I've been looking at knives all my life and I'm a creative person as far as well just a lot of different things and a lot of different aspects and ideas are really, really important to me. I get paid for my ideas. And sometimes I'll

do like there is a really big maker called Ken Onion in the US and he has loads of different knife designs and all that.

Joe Flowers

[00:35:30] And so sometimes I'll do what I refer to as his method where Paul, I'll make a story about a knife or a story about a guy who has to do something with a knife and then go backwards from there and be like, okay, what would that look like like? I would like to see a person from the Edo era in Japan having to do bushcraft, but he knows actual like blade geometry and he knows that his samurai sword blade that's a tanto size, that's a small, four-inch knife with a four-inch down centerline isn't going to work so well for knife carving.

Joe Flowers

[00:36:06] So he might do a combination of a Japanese tanto bushcraft knife or in some cases, what would a use of something, go backwards from that and be like, okay, what do people really, really need, really, really need? What would look very, very different than what's out there? All right, I could put more curves here, I can put God forbid, put some serrations and choils on something and you can make a knife design very different that way. And then, there's other methods of creativity that I'll use. I'll be real with you, sometimes I don't like being in front of the computer forever.

Joe Flowers

[00:36:45] Paul, I had to learn AutoCAD off of YouTube. After going to NC State, which is a really, really good engineering university, and I didn't take one lick of engineering. So, yeah, a lot of knife companies only need like a side profile of a knife design and then the top, right? For all of you listeners interested in knife designing how to approach a company or do something like that. It's not necessarily you need a 3D printed thing. So some of my very first designs, many of my first designs were just pen and paper.

Joe Flowers

[00:37:19] And because I've gotten tired of being in front of the computer, I still go back down to my office, which is, out in the woods. I'll bring my laptop even sometimes because I don't have internet, down over about seven minutes away by stream, and I'll draw and try and get different blade shapes that way. I'll use French curves. I'll get inspired that way as well. And then sometimes there's a need or a niche market or a need for something. Like for instance, when Ray came out with I can't I used to be such a nerd and be able to name exactly which episode, but to his credit, Ray Mears made the parang popular.

Joe Flowers

[00:37:59] And I'm a parang son of a gun. There's like two back behind me, listeners, back behind me. And that was the first time I ever saw any actual recognition of what parangs were anywhere else than my own findings at flea markets, in some old Swedish

catalog and things like that. And I came up to Condor Tool and Knife. This was back in the I think I was like 24 years old at the time. This is like freaking fifteen years ago or something. And said, hey, you need to do some of these Indonesian designs that aren't available in the market for the knife world. And they saw a huge increase in sales later.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:38:37] And that's because I designed a knife, a golok, which hadn't been seen on the market but had all of this really rich heritage in the Indonesian archipelagos. With that, I also look at history too. You don't just get this information from, the internet. You read books, you find mentors, you talk to people who you respect and they can give you links to stuff too. So, through Steve Watts, I got contacted with Libby Kephart, Horace Kephart's great-granddaughter. I got to go and I took Ethan Becker, a very famous US

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:39:15] Maker from a different company over to read Horace Kephart. Everybody just for some background, Horace Kephart was a really big, early 1920s Golden Age of Camping writer. He had a knife design, he was like one of the outdoorsmen who had his own knife designs before it was cool. We got to go handle that personal knife and go through his notes. And then I started to think, okay, stories from that, what would a Horace Kephart knife look nowadays? What would it look like if he, hung out with a knife fighter guy or, things along that line. So,

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:39:47] Creativity is important. Try not to reinvent the wheel. No matter what, it's just a cutting edge, right? There's there's only so many ways that you can do that with keeping away from other designs, but looking at archaeology and history is really important to me too and thinking about how to modernize that. So, in all honesty, just being a huge nerd about knives. Really blessed to be able to do that.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[00:40:15] Hmm

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[00:40:15] No, that's cool. That's cool. And so when you come up with a new design for a manufacturer, do they do they typically make a few and then test the market viability and then if they do well, they do more? How do they, because clearly they're taking a chance on the design and on you and it's like how do they manage that risk and scale it when it works but not end up with a storeroom full of knives that nobody wants?

[Joe Flowers](#)

[00:40:43] Ah, well, I'll answer it very, very, very easily. Every company is different and holy cow does that vary. So, I think I'm over like I'm not trying to like sound like that guy, but I think I'm over seven different companies now. I'm I've designed more

this year because I've been very hungry. But for instance, I own a company called Bushcraft Global. It's because I really love to travel globally and find out there's so much stuff to learn. So, and I got my roots traveling globally when I started this company. So I've tried to press out and see what all different makers from different places of the world have.

Joe Flowers

[00:41:22] In Indonesia, most recently I came out with this huge Gurkha kukri that literally gave me tennis elbow when chopping with it. And that was my fault 'cause I was in front of the computer too much ball and I haven't been working out my forearms as much as I should. But big old kukri, right? If listeners, a kukri is this giant crocodile Dundee looking 12-inch blade. They made about four or five of them. They're custom made and they are like more or less like custom runs when it comes to a knife that, you can buy, there's only four that are going to be made.

Joe Flowers

[00:42:01] If it gets more popular, they'll be able to do that. Whereas Condor Tool and Knife, they're one of the biggest companies I work for. They're out of El Salvador. They know about my background, because I've been working with them for the past 14 years. So they have a little bit more faith with my designs, so they'll just go for it sometimes. That doesn't mean it sells. So there's always a chance that, a knife could not sell. And then listeners, believe it or not, those plastic handled knives have a lot of investment in the molding, so it costs like ten thousand US dollars to invest in a mold.

Joe Flowers

[00:42:37] So you need to figure out a way to market it to show a company that it's going to sell. You can't just be like " Hey, I just want this one to be in this handle and this stuff." Well, that takes investment. If they're going to put a space-age material on the knife, it better sell enough for them to buy a bunch of that space-age material. And from being a huge nerd in my days back in the early 2000s on the knife forums and bushcraft forums, all the way to now paying attention in the markets and God forbid the social media and stuff, I have a good market sense-ish.

Joe Flowers

[00:43:11] That doesn't mean I'm a good businessman but business person, but I don't know what sells exactly, but I have a real good sense of that. So that's

Joe Flowers

[00:43:20] The thing. And a lot of times, somebody getting into the knife design world or something will be like, yeah, I just want to do this and show these guys this design and it's going to knock their socks off and it doesn't really work like that. I had to really work my way up just to be able to put my foot in the door, but I got very blessed and it's a very unique situation.

Joe Flowers

[00:43:39] So, each each company has its own thing. Like for instance, Mora, you don't see too many designers for Mora and but they keep them in company, right? They can't go design for other people. I'm lucky enough to where my relationship is, I can design for people globally and I and I like that. I wanted something from Indonesia because they do something out of 5160 spring steel. That's the same steel that your car rides on. So like, it's a really cool steel and I haven't worked with a company that had that steel before.

Paul Kirtley

[00:44:09] Interesting. Interesting. Yeah, I guess there's a lot of scope for variation there with the different steels as well.

Joe Flowers

[00:44:15] Yeah.

Joe Flowers

[00:44:16] Or the process that the company can do. Like for instance, Condor, whose parent company is Imacasa. Condor tool and knife is in El Salvador. That's in Central America, a very small country but also heavily populated. They make 40,000 machetes a month for the Central and South American markets. They made Condor tool and knife, but they do a lot of hand use. They do a lot of hand sharpening with the knives. They finish all the handles up by hand. They have a router that first makes a shape, but they do everything by hand.

Joe Flowers

[00:44:53] Then you go all the way to Mora, which is mostly those crazy robots that you see in the Avengers movies and stuff, that have those little bloop bloop bloop like in the automotive factory. So, it depends on the capability of the manufacturers. Indonesia, just dudes pounding on steel with like a cigarette in their mouth looking awesome.

Joe Flowers

[00:45:13] So, every every company has like a really glorious way and different way to promote stuff too and push stuff. For Paul, didn't we both just come off a canoe trip?

Paul Kirtley

[00:45:27] Nah.

Joe Flowers

[00:45:28] Oh, are you about to go on a canoe trip or what happened? -Oh. Okay, there's probably back

Paul Kirtley

[00:45:34] You just came off a canoe trip. I think you thought I was talking about about going to a canoe trip, but I think you forgot what season it is.

Joe Flowers

[00:45:43] Oh, okay, yeah, yeah. I am about seasons.

Paul Kirtley

[00:45:46] As we're recording, I am about to go out to Alberta, but it will it's minus thirty in Alberta at the moment. There won't be any canoeing, so

Joe Flowers

[00:45:55] It's going to be ice ice breaking, yeah. So, I just got off of a canoe trip, with some veterans and we can dive into that too, but for a new company I'm working on, Demko knives, they had a really, really, comfortable handle. And this is Santoprene. They already had all their money in the handle, Paul, so I don't have to invest in anything, for them except the idea of the blade shape, which is, shocker, a point that you can, whittle with and a Scandinavian edge with a spine on the back for ferro rods. And he gave me it in three different steels, but he didn't tell me what the steels are.

Joe Flowers

[00:46:35] And so, each one has a different color. Pretty

Joe Flowers

[00:46:39] And they also are performing differently. So, we carved and did that over the course of this canoe trip. I'm dousing them in the water, letting them roll around the bottom of the boat to see the oxidation, the rust. And so that's part of the story too. So it's creativity and design and being able to present a story that seems interesting is the way to sell, but also motivates me. I'm really, I've been Frankenstein-ing all over this knife project.

Paul Kirtley

[00:47:07] Now, it's interesting that you're talking about different materials, to maybe what people are used to seeing as well. The materials, technologies moving forwards.

Joe Flowers

[00:47:17] It's moving forward real quick. In the knife world, and guys, I promise I will not bore you with all the names and all this stuff too, but in the knife world in the past five years, there's been a lot of stuff with knife metals. There's been a book out called Knife Engineering, which is a really cool read. But there is a steel called Magnacut that came out that's like designed for all of the qualities, rust proof, good edge retention, being pretty tough, that they're still trying to figure out, but it's like a super space steel, which is one of these like do-all knives.

Joe Flowers

[00:47:53] But that's just like just like fads, just like the Rambo knife days in the 80s where it's probably really cool now, but in the future there might be some better steel. So everything has fads. I think without sounding that like that guy like spoon carving was like a big fad for a while. It hasn't gone away. People still love spoons, but for a while there, spoon carving and axe collecting. Axe collecting was huge in the US. Oh lordy. Axes are really, really popular in the US because of our American frontier heritage. So axe collecting was really, really big.

Joe Flowers

[00:48:28] It's not down, but some of the axe makers have stopped stopped rehandling axes and stuff they've done other stuff now.

Paul Kirtley

[00:48:36] You mentioned cookery, so I thought I'd show you this.

Joe Flowers

[00:48:40] Oh Ooh, look at that. That is an oldie but a goodie. Woo! Ooh. Ooh, that's really long.

Joe Flowers

[00:48:48] That's about like 13 inches long. So, they're pounding these kukris, this really ubiquitous like super long spread out blade on these big round pieces of ball bearings. And they have a nomadic culture and these Gurkhas, these guys in the Nepalese regions were really well known for being able to fight with this. But Paul, that knife isn't just for fighting. They'd use that in the kitchen, they'd use that in a lot of different rituals for cutting up different types of beef. They have, do you see how you have one steel that's sharp and one steel probably that's not sharp?

Paul Kirtley

[00:49:27] On the main blade or on the little extra blades

Joe Flowers

[00:49:30] On the little guys. Yeah. The one that's not supposedly sharp is like a steel to run along the coulee.

Paul Kirtley

[00:49:37] Yeah, that's just squared off on both sides, like it's like got a spine on both sides that one. Yep.

Joe Flowers

[00:49:41] Yep, that's it. That's differentially heat treated to be a little bit harder to act like a steel to help work the edge on the kukri. And it's really cool because you got a big knife, a small knife.

Joe Flowers

[00:49:51] Like the Sami reindeer herders who like a big knife a small deer, big knife a small knife and a reindeer as their survival.

Paul Kirtley

[00:49:58] Speaking of that with a big knife and a small knife, I will share photos. We should do

Joe Flowers

[00:50:03] Hey! Holy cow! I got one of those right behind me. Where did you get that?

Paul Kirtley

[00:50:09] Friend of mine sourced that so Dan Hume I got this via Dan Hume So.

Joe Flowers

[00:50:15] Oh yeah, the guy who did that fire look. Fantastic Man

Joe Flowers

[00:50:20] I got a piece of strikealite bamboo from him that I cannot get going. Look at that beautiful, beautiful paring. You'll notice that that's chisel ground. Guys, that means that it's ground on one side and then like a chisel, and then not ground on the other. They have like a right-handed and left-handed version of those things. What an amazing tool. And that's all made from trash. Yeah. You see where your right thumb is?

Joe Flowers

[00:50:45] That's all like melted grocery bags that they use for trash. So they just wrap that up on a blade and put that right into a handle and that becomes a glue. It's like a melted plastic.

Paul Kirtley

[00:50:57] And then a cup.

Joe Flowers

[00:50:58] All outsourced

Paul Kirtley

[00:51:00] And there's the companion blade there.

Joe Flowers

[00:51:04] So this is a really, really like a three-inch knife with like a maybe a ten-inch handle. They're able to tuck that like underneath their their armpit and are able to put that on their forearm for carving too. And it's Paul, it's really weird because I'm I have the joy on my bushcraft global trips that are down in South America. We run them out of Peru, Brazil, and Colombia. I have the joy of working with the Matis tribe. And they

were first contacted in the late 1970s, early 1980s. They can tell you about the time before metal. Very time before clothes. Very, very primitive, but...

Joe Flowers

[00:51:42] They still even though they have access to metal and law and knives and gush, I give them tons of knives, they love machetes, axes, they still use a goody teeth, which is like this mixture of a squirrel and a rabbit on a very, very long stick just like that knife from these guys from the Indonesian archipelagos. And they use it the same way, tucked underneath their armpit, to carve really, really well because it's a rodent tooth, it's able to self-sharpen.

Joe Flowers

[00:52:13] And it's really, really wild to see this really long-handled knife go all the way from one culture in Indonesia all the way to the middle of the Amazon to get that type of fulcrum and that type of grip on it. It's quite refreshing.

Paul Kirtley

[00:52:29] No, it's interesting. It's interesting and of course, your rodent teeth, beaver, you see what beavers can do to wood with their teeth.

Joe Flowers

[00:52:36] Good God, yes.

Paul Kirtley

[00:52:37] You can do you can do a lot of work, right?

Joe Flowers

[00:52:39] Yeah, they're using it like for the if you can imagine two split pieces of wood and you have to make a channel on the inside, they still use the agouti teeth for that channel. They say it works better than even our metal chisels and because, rodents are always self-sharpening their teeth. So it's wild.

Paul Kirtley

[00:52:58] Using it like a gouge thing.

Joe Flowers

[00:53:00] Yeah. Yeah, exactly.

Joe Flowers

[00:53:01] Exactly like a gouge ball. And it's really neat too because I just got back from Trinidad, country Trinidad, and they hunt agouti like crazy there. And I never got to see one up close until I saw one that they shotgunned and was able to see the teeth. And they looked like those those more curved knives. They really looked perfect for woodworking.

Paul Kirtley

[00:53:21] Spoon knife

Joe Flowers

[00:53:22] Yeah, like a spoon knife. So, nature's own spoon knife.

Joe Flowers

[00:53:26] I think that's why I like the jungle, Paul. Is not only you can use big knives and see a lot of creepy crawlies everywhere, which I love, but also the resources there, are so rich and they're just everywhere. And when you have any background in bushcraft and the ability to use the environment around you, that place becomes like a, for all intents and purposes, I'll go full American here and say it looks like a Walmart when you're there because there's so much stuff everywhere. You want a tree that tastes like chicken broth? Oh, it's over there. There's a tree with the medicine over there with the diarrhea. Oh wait, you got a cut?

Joe Flowers

[00:54:06] It's that tree back there. We have a fish that tastes like beef. We got beef that tastes like or meat that tastes like fish. You name it, they have it down there and it's so mind-blowing to see that in any jungle.

Joe Flowers

[00:54:19] Really makes you really appreciate all of these different nuances that you see. I used the kukri last time down in the jungle and it worked pretty well. But it's a heavier, big heavy beefy knife.

Paul Kirtley

[00:54:32] This one a friend of mine was a medic in the British British Army based in Catterick which is where the Gurkha Regiment guys are.

Joe Flowers

[00:54:42] Wow!

Paul Kirtley

[00:54:43] Because of course, maybe maybe maybe listeners in the states don't realize this, but the British military has a regiment of Gurkhas.

Joe Flowers

[00:54:51] Can you explain that a little bit more 'cause they really don't.

Paul Kirtley

[00:54:54] So it goes back to the old British Empire days, but we have it it's not like the French Foreign Legion, but that might put a picture in people's mind, but it's a regiment

of people who are not born and raised in the UK. They're born and raised in Nepal, and they have to work really hard to be selected into the Gurkha Regiment, and they are very fine soldiers. They're very fit. They're excellent fighters.

Paul Kirtley

[00:55:23] And there's there's a legend from the Falklands conflict when Argentina or at least let's not blame the Argentinians let let's blame the let's blame the junta that was in charge of Argentina at the time.

Joe Flowers

[00:55:38] There we go.

Paul Kirtley

[00:55:39] They invaded the Falkland Islands which, still belong to Britain, for historical reasons, and Margaret Thatcher, who was the Prime Minister of Britain at the time, took great exception to this and sent a task force of British, military down there to take the Falkland Islands back. And the Gurkhas were sent along with Royal Marines and Parachute Regiment and other, Welsh Guards and many other regiments. And, apparently when the Argentinians knew that the Gurkhas were close by, that they basically just surrendered because they have a reputation for going into battle with the, with the kukris.

Joe Flowers

[00:56:15] And yeah And the junta had a huge machete background too, so they were like, oh, okay, other big blades they know how to use are more choppy. Heh heh heh.

Paul Kirtley

[00:56:25] So, yeah, apparently the thought of Gurkhas with armed with kukris put the fear of God into some of the Argentinean conscripts, so they didn't really need to do a lot of fighting with them.

Joe Flowers

[00:56:36] Man, I want to meet one someday, dude. I want to meet a Nepalese Gurkha kukri wielder and be like, dude, show me how to use it in the kitchen. Not on people. Well, show me that part too, but I bet you they could teach you some amazing bushcraft skills.

Paul Kirtley

[00:56:50] Oh yeah.

Joe Flowers

[00:56:50] And meat craft skills

Paul Kirtley

[00:56:52] Absolutely. I'm sure they could.

Joe Flowers

[00:56:53] When you look at a kukri, if you look at like a good one, they have almost like a scandi grind at the back, to do like some of that heavy carving. And not not all of them have them like perfect, but it's much more thicker, bitey edge than the one that's over at the tip for the most part. I don't know if it would be with yours, but I got some over there. Does it look about the same thickness there does it as it does at the top end?

Paul Kirtley

[00:57:19] Pretty similar all the way along

Joe Flowers

[00:57:21] Ah, okay. But a lot a lot of mine vary.

Joe Flowers

[00:57:24] That's the cool part about Kukris though is that normally they're handmade. All out of like recycled and upcycled parts. You can look, you can go into another rabbit hole on YouTube watching these be made, dude. It's fantastic.

Joe Flowers

[00:57:37] Yeah. So, I just got off a canoe trip, with veterans and I had a kukri on that trip. It was a Tarahumara kukri machete. It's like a kukri shape but a machete style handle, so maybe about three millimeters thick. And it worked awesome out there for small brambles clearing out camp and couldn't believe how the shape really lent itself for making tent stakes when we ran out.

Paul Kirtley

[00:58:04] Where were you on this trip?

Joe Flowers

[00:58:05] In Florida. Oh. Yeah, Paul, it was incredible because it's cold up here where we're at, just about to get freezing temperatures, but in Florida it was 80 degrees Fahrenheit and just very nice, very overcast. We didn't see a lot of gators, but that limestone and live oaks hanging over the water, this tea brown water with all the sphagnum moss hanging off these crinkly crazy oak trees that go over. And it was more of a therapeutic things therapeutic canoe trip with bushcraft for some American veterans.

Joe Flowers

[00:58:44] And it worked really, really well. You just showed them how to make even a spark-based fire and they were blown away. So it was quite incredible and it really like showed me, having a zoology background, I really don't care about humans as much as I should. It really really showed me that therapeutic tendencies of being out in the wilderness just doing basic canoeing stuff too. And I finally got to get my Kevlar

canoe out, Paul. So that I live up in North Carolina where there's lots of rocks and like a two-foot like river that's really old, so it scratches up my Kevlar.

Paul Kirtley

[00:59:22] A bit scrapey for the Kevlar. Yeah, yeah.

Joe Flowers

[00:59:24] Not not for my baby.

Paul Kirtley

[00:59:26] Nah

Joe Flowers

[00:59:27] It's cool to get that out again.

Paul Kirtley

[00:59:28] So who who who is the maker of your Kevlar?

Joe Flowers

[00:59:32] Wenonah.

Paul Kirtley

[00:59:33] Nice, yeah.

Joe Flowers

[00:59:34] Yeah, it's a it's a 1.5, it weighs 45 pounds. I got it, of course, with a little bit of cash and trading some knives. But believe it or not, in 2019, Paul, when we first met over at the symposium, I met a dude called Peter Magnin. And Peter was one of the lead guide for this trip and so he hired me up as a secondary guide because I hired him. Meeting him at the symposium in 2019 in Canada. He came down to the jungle with me and really impressed me with his skills. So, we've been using each other back and forth for all sorts of different bushcraft related stuff.

Paul Kirtley

[01:00:12] Nice. Yeah, I wasn't sure if you guys knew each other before the symposium in 2019, so that's pretty cool that because because I was talking to some guys recently about connections that were made at the at the 2022 symposium and that there's some really fruitful collaborations come as a result of that. So that's cool to hear that happened to you guys because I know you guys came to the 22 symposium and I knew you'd been working together but I didn't realize that you'd first met in 19 at the Alberta symposium. Yeah.

Joe Flowers

[01:00:43] I think that's one of the incredible things about the symposiums that you

threw and that we've had in the past is it's been so amazing for networking. To that note, in the UK sense, I'm working with Howl. Jamie Dakota from Howl. So everybody, all the UK guys, we're trying to do a little bit more international stuff working with the UK because I think there's a lot of stuff that we can do together. Because Bushcraft is becoming huge in the US as well and for God's sakes, some of these American people are afraid to travel. And there's amazing stuff going on in the UK and Jamie Dakota really wanted to come down the jungle.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:01:23] We're like, yeah, come on down, let's collaborate. So that collaboration happened at your symposium in 2022.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:01:30] Yeah, and he and Adam Logan are doing good stuff together as well and they yeah they got to know each other through working together for the for the 22 symposium, so that's good to see.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:01:40] Thank Thank you, thank you, thank you. That symposium changed my life in more ways than one, I can tell you.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:01:46] Thank the previous group of organizers as well, David Dellafield and Chris Noble and the team that worked with them and Randy and Laurie from Carramatt and Mors of course and Dave Holder and Jonathan McCarthy and all those guys that organized the 2019 because they really got the ball rolling.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:02:03] Definitely

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:02:04] And brought me and Lisa Fenton over and a few others from this side of the pond and of course you were there and a bunch of great people from North America both Canada and the States.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:02:18] And of course.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:02:19] Great melting pot of ideas and yeah, fantastic.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:02:24] Fantastic. It really, it really was needed too because, a lot of a lot of people need to realize that like this isn't just a hobby. It really is something that's like world

renowned and quite respected and it's really cool for you guys to put on that too. If people are interested, you can see those videos, I believe, on Frontier Bushcraft. The twenty-two

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:02:44] The 22 one. Yeah, yeah, there's a separate website for them which I'll link to. The

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:02:48] Yeah, please do. Because those videos, especially you guys in America that miss it, if you have any relation to the bushcraft world, you need to check out these videos. It is well worth the price. I have poured over some of the videos and it's quite incredible.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:03:05] 'Cause even even those of us who were there couldn't go to all of the presentations, right?

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:03:10] I got to watch Dan Baird's thing and Teresa's because I was busy doing other stuff over there. I got to meet in 2019 a really cool individual named Andrew Thomas Price. I got to meet him again in 2022. He made it his mission to come out even though he had other obligations, he really worked hard to come out and say hi to everybody at the symposium and it was great to see him. So, I invited him to the US

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:03:38] To Blade Show and he came out and saw how big of a deal, the knife world is in the US. And sure enough, I really wanted to make sure he got a chance to have a good US experience. So I hosted him as much as I could and gave him a sword to walk around with so he could go to bars with the sword on and would cling swords with some of the friends that he met along the way. And we had a really good time. But more UK collaborations, check out Howe Outdoors because we actually had our first person from the UK come from the 22 Bushcraft event. And he came down, he took advantage of it and had a really cool time.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:04:17] Royal Marine

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:04:18] He came to do you one of your jungle trips.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:04:20] Yeah, he came about three years ago on the 2022 trip after going to the symposium. Good. So that was our first UK person.

Joe Flowers

[01:04:30] We've been quite global. We've had people from Serbia come as many as five times. I think Dubai this time and quite a bunch of other places, but I really like traveling and without going on another rant, there's there's a good balance of trying to be a family person for me and also traveling a lot too. For 2026, I'm going to be doing a lower key, more posh, Bushcraft Global Trip to where everybody gets to meet the indigenous, but they get to have a little bit more of a relaxed setting where we're not always like trying to dodge mosquitoes and do all that.

Joe Flowers

[01:05:10] We're going to bring different tribesmen up to the areas and we're going to travel up along different indigenous places and touristy places too. But it's going to be more open for the kids because I want one of my daughters to be one of the guides on it.

Paul Kirtley

[01:05:23] Which country are you doing that in?

Joe Flowers

[01:05:25] Columbia, Peru, and Brazil.

Joe Flowers

[01:05:27] So it's the Tri-Corners, if you can imagine like a three fingers like touching together, right where they all touch together is Peru, Brazil, and Colombia. Colombia and Brazil, they like coalesce into this city where there's barely a border. You can just walk into it without any problems with the passport or anything. If we're staying more than four days, we go to Brazilian Federal Police and get stamped. And it's awesome. Every time I go there, I think about my Discovery Channel show and how that guy got arrested, but that's a whole different story because it's the same federal police prison.

Joe Flowers

[01:06:07] And why I'm down there and always in good good spirits. So, we do that and then if you want to go to Peru, Paul, to get fish and chips, which is incredible, their fish and chips involve the arapaima, like a 400-pound fish that is just incredibly well-breaded and tastes, ah, fantastic. You have to go across the street, across the Amazon River.

Paul Kirtley

[01:06:30] I would never have I would never I've never been to Peru actually. I've been to Brazil and Argentina. I would never have thought of Peru and fish and chips in the same sentence. But.

Joe Flowers

[01:06:40] No, well, it's like this tropical like flavor where they just make stuff down there 'cause there's tons of indigenous. There's countless different tribes there. It's a giant melting pot. For instance, my my business partner down there in Gorn speaks, I believe, five, six different languages. Many of the indigenous who I work with, my prime indi-my prime indigenous doesn't sound right. The main guides who I work with and friends with will speak like three different languages: Portuguese, Spanish, Portuguese Brazil, Spanish, Colombia, and then Ticuna, for instance. So, you there's like a big amalgam of food there too where their their tamales are way different.

Joe Flowers

[01:07:19] They have mojoy, which is a delicacy which is this long long suru grub. It's like a four-inch grub or three-inch grub that has more protein per gram than meat does. And it's a delicacy down there when they fry it on little sticks. They have all sorts of like different flavors of mixtures there. So the fish and chips is chips, potato chip style, but not potato chips, like yucca, cassava, like salchip and a fried beautiful arapaima.

Joe Flowers

[01:07:55] And now they're able to source them ethically in farms and things too. So it's a little bit nicer on the conservation population.

Joe Flowers

[01:08:03] Interesting. The it's really I we'll probably have some off off-camera, or off thing talk at some point, but it's really neat to see how much the internet has blown up bushcraft because you run a really good email. Actually, I'm quite frankly, well, I think I've even emailed you about it before. It's really cool to see your email series and your online elementary bushcraft stuff that's available for everybody. I believe I did the fire-making one just to brush up my skills.

Paul Kirtley

[01:08:34] Got the little fire-making mini masterclass, did you? Got that, did you?

Joe Flowers

[01:08:39] Yeah, I think I think so, maybe about two years ago. Just to try it because at least as a bushcrafter for me as an like not advanced bushcrafter or anything like that, but like sometimes like I haven't done a friction fire in like maybe like half a year because I'm not teaching front of kids right now. And I just needed somebody to tell me what to do and your emails always come up and are really, really interesting. So,

Paul Kirtley

[01:09:02] Well, thank you. Yeah, I've used I've used email along, for a long while. It was just a way of keeping in touch with people. And then yeah, there is a little mini I basically got a bunch of I was like I've got all these articles and videos that I've made.

Joe Flowers

[01:09:20] Yeah, the digest. The digest.

Paul Kirtley

[01:09:21] They're spread out. So I did a couple of things, and this is something that other people can think about if they've been creating content for a long time. So I started like a website, a blog back in 2010 and I shared a lot of material on it over the time, including these this series of podcasts that people listening to now. They're all hosted on my on my site at paulcutley. Co. Uk. And I got to a point where I was like, I've got all these resources, but they're spread out over the years. And I don't know if anybody's anything like me, I'll look at a website, I don't dig back pages and pages and pages and pages and pages.

Paul Kirtley

[01:09:56] I might search on something and if the search function on the site's quite useful, it might throw up something, useful, but I thought, why don't I arrange these pieces of content into a logical order that people can, they can ask for them and I'll send the autoresponder will basically send them to them. And so that's what I did. I have this like free little Fire Course which I think is maybe what you were talking about where you basically just get every every day you get in it for 10 days you get an email on a different aspect of fire lighting and that...

Joe Flowers

[01:10:29] Which I worked on. It was it was like my little mini semester, mini semester of hey, get this stuff back just because Paul told me to email.

Paul Kirtley

[01:10:36] Ha ha.

Paul Kirtley

[01:10:37] And it's just a nice little, it's nice to you can see it as like a nice little 10-day challenge or just a 10-day brush-up on skills wherever you're at with your skills. And yeah, and then there's paid resources that I have. I started off with online courses quite early on and a lot of people laughed at me. They were like " Oh, online, online bushcraft courses." And I was, but the first one I actually started was a tree and plant identification course. And that was for people who had been on my real programs in the field who wanted to extend their tree and plant ID through different seasons.

Paul Kirtley

[01:11:11] Because if you come and do a course with me in the woods in June or September or March, the things I can show you are going to vary and they're not going to be yeah the same on each course in terms of like what resources exactly are available each season. So I wanted to try and help fill people's gaps there. But then that course blew up in its own right and people wanted to do it just for its for its own sake. And

then we in 2015 we launched like the beta version of an online bushcraft course and that was one where people really were like " Well, that's silly." I'm like " Well, you've got a bookshelf full of books with bushcraft in and you can learn from that."

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:11:47] This is this is similar and also, something like Ray Mears that's educational, people can learn from that.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:11:55] Not competition based

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:11:56] And it's just it's just a different format that people can consume and you can combine, you can have notes, you can have slide presentations, you can have videos. And that's what that online bushcraft course is and a lot of people like, like that. And it applies, I've got students all over the world on that. We've even got students in Japan and Australia and a lot in the UK and Ireland Europe and then quite a few in North America. I'd like more in North America. I think a lot of North Americans look at me as a British person and go, what are they what's he going to teach me about bushcraft? But we've got a real strong heritage of bushcraft as but also

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:12:35] Invented and brought it over here.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:12:38] But also I've traveled a lot, I've traveled to the States, I've traveled to a lot in Canada, I've traveled all over the world and one of the things that I wanted to do with that online elementary course is make it things that will apply in pretty much anywhere you go, so widely applicable techniques that you can apply pretty much as soon as you hit the ground wherever you go. Because those are the those are the core skills you need, right?

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:13:01] Mhm.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:13:02] And then you can build you can build environmental specific skills beyond that, whether it's desert, jungle, arctic, forests or what have you. So

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:13:11] Yeah, absolutely. Like it's really interesting because I have a chance to go to other countries where it's starting to get a little bit bigger and this is the perfect like like base for like somebody from Trinidad who was asking me " Hey, where to start?" I pointing them " Hey, try Bushcraft UK because you're going to be able to understand

him very well, you're going to be able to see starting up from spark-based fire making all the way up to, higher level stuff from that aspect." And a lot of people just get thrown into " Oh, you need to have all this canvas and all this stuff, ready right away" at least in from my observations here where I live.

Joe Flowers

[01:13:46] And instead of doing that, it's a little bit more well presented and this, that, this, that, and they're able to see it a lot more like academic based course style teaching.

Paul Kirtley

[01:13:58] Yeah, well, like you like you like you said before, what we do is not a hobby for us, it's a profession and we take it seriously and we want people to have the right context for applying skills. And that's something we've talked a lot about, particularly at the GBS in 2009.

Paul Kirtley

[01:14:21] Team

Paul Kirtley

[01:14:21] That the whole strap line of that conference was skills in context. And the other, the strap line of the 2022 symposium was lifelong learning, right? And those two things are both important in the areas that we operate in, whether it's, nature-based skills, whether it's the tool use. For all of your 120 knife designs or whatever, or you're probably up to more than that now, you can't have 120 knives with you in at any one given time, right? So you, what you choose to take with you to an environment is based on the context and the skills that you use in the environment.

Joe Flowers

[01:14:58] Skills. You should be able to make a fuzz stick with a broken piece of glass. It's the skills, Steve used to say, I think this is why Westcott and everybody said skills and context. Steve Watts used to say, without skills, it's just arts and crafts. We're looking at how beautiful we can make our fuzz sticks instead of. I remember I was with Mors one time. It was me and Chris Noble, one of the original guys who did the 2019 symposium. We were hanging out with Mors and Chris made the most beautiful fuzz sticks, Paul, like these like 14 curls and it looked like something you'd have in Better Homes and Garden or some really like well like like established thing.

Joe Flowers

[01:15:38] And Mors just goes, yeah, look how long it took you to make that. And it was just hilarious instead of get it done and go because you have the skills rather than trying to make the fuzz stick an art form. Yeah, yeah.

Joe Flowers

[01:15:50] Or something along that line and I think that was like one of my favorite

aspects of it and something that they can gain from your, the digest and in your scores as well.

Paul Kirtley

[01:15:59] That was one of the things I liked about Mors a lot. He was incredibly generous with his knowledge, but he was also Yes

Paul Kirtley

[01:16:06] He could also be quite brutal in a Mors way, not not in a not in a way to break you down, but in a way to make you think about things in a more refined way and to contextualize things better. And yeah, that's just that's just perfect, what you just described there. It's a perfect example of that. Yeah.

Joe Flowers

[01:16:27] It really is cool. Man, Paul Paul I got over a chance to go hang out with him for like a week just me, him, and Chris one-on-one and the dude was amazing. He had like over 350,000 books in his house, just everywhere, and he could remember everything. And you think I talk a lot. Holy cow.

Joe Flowers

[01:16:50] Like he would keep you going for hours on end. Then he'd take you to the other sheds where he had his like, survival history and he'd have like our our like five dollar, survival knife there and then talk about, how he started getting into Moras and these books and that books. And then he'd take you to his other shed where his where his binders were at of all of his news articles that he took from various magazines and things. So, it was truly, he was an icon. There's a reason why he was so popular. Yeah.

Paul Kirtley

[01:17:21] He again, prime example of lifelong learning and however however however however much he knew. Absolutely.

Paul Kirtley

[01:17:28] He stayed curious and another mentor of mine, Professor Gordon Hillman, who unfortunately is no longer with us either. And you might know him from the Ray Mears Wild Food programs if you've ever seen those shows.

Joe Flowers

[01:17:43] Yeah.

Paul Kirtley

[01:17:43] But I had the pleasure of working with Gordon. Gordon used to work with us on some of the programs that we used to run in Scotland he would come in and teach the wild foods. And he'd be there all week and so we we'd have a lot of time to chat and then, laterally I'd also help him with, collecting and processing plants, that he was still

researching. And this is the thing, this guy was a retired professor. He was highly renowned. He knew a huge amount about plants and plant food and use of plants as foods in the Mesolithic and the Neolithic.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:18:14] And he was still, even though he was getting somewhat disabled with Parkinson's disease, still curious to learn more, and that to me was always a huge inspiration. It's just like

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:18:28] Yeah, never.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:18:29] Finished

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:18:30] Yeah, and I think it was the same with Mors, right? He was just always wanting to learn more. And I think as well, the other the other thing I noticed with the seniors, the more the more yeah, let's say senior but not necessarily in an elderly sense. This when we went to the GBS in 2019, and I can't remember when you got there, but I got there the day before it all kicked off.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:19:00] And I was sat in a room in the evening, before a lot of people got there and, Lars Fält was there and Tom Lutyens and Mors and I can't remember if Dave Wescott was there at that point, he may have been. Andre Francois Bourbeau. And the thing that struck me about pretty much all of them, even if they didn't know you beforehand, when you sit down with them, they were interested to learn what knew.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:19:30] Right.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:19:31] Even though they knew a ton themselves, it's why they're so well respected in the industry and in the field, whether it's survival or primitive living skills or bushcraft or wherever their particular center is, they still wanted to know what other people in the room knew that they didn't. And I think that's a mark of a real, if you want to use the word expert, I think that's a mark of an expert because they're still, they know that there's a lot that they don't know and they're always trying to learn more.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:20:01] Oh, that's funny. That's exactly why I hate the word expert because to me sometimes it sounds like that to me the word expert is means you're done learning. And I think that hunger for that knowledge is really important. What keeps us, motivated in

the world of bushcraft and or knife designing or doing, anything along that line. The ability to see something different out there, something unknown.

Paul Kirtley

[01:20:27] There's always there's always more to learn as you say, as you travel around the world, which I think you're probably in the camp that you wish more Americans would travel around the world.

Joe Flowers

[01:20:36] Big

Paul Kirtley

[01:20:37] Yeah, you learn a lot. You learn a lot about different cultures, you learn a lot about different ways of thinking about things, you learn new ways of doing things and there isn't always a better way necessarily, but you just got different ways of doing things and it gives you more flexibility, it gives you more resilience. I think that's all super important.

Joe Flowers

[01:20:56] I got to see that the most the latest example would be the difference in what people do in Trinidad in the jungle and what people do in Colombia. Because a lot of the same trees and a lot of the same animals were there, but they hunted them completely different and did stuff completely

Joe Flowers

[01:21:15] Different with them as far as cooking, as far as like preparing them, and it was just incredible. And oh my god, the food in Trinidad was just incredible. We'd shoot this a gutti, and then they prepare it in this wonderful houlantre and cilantro. Houlantre is one type of spice, cilantro is another style, and it was just incredible. And I was like, oh man, they don't do this with the gutti down in the Amazon. You just throw 'em on the fire and rip 'em apart and eat 'em, so depending on which tribe, of course. But it was so neat seeing that. That's just one animal.

Joe Flowers

[01:21:53] You can't imagine all the different styles of using a knife.

Paul Kirtley

[01:21:56] Mmm. No, it's fascinating. Speaking of different ways of using a knife, there seems to be a perennial, and we touched on it implicitly, there seems to be this perennial argument or at least for people that are maybe new to bushcraft and survival, this perennial question of do I need a big knife or do I need a small knife or do I need both or how do you approach thinking about that? How do you approach, if you have someone that you're introducing skills to and given what about knives, what are your thoughts on big knives versus small knives?

Paul Kirtley

[01:22:34] 'Cause we grew up in some ways on big knives, Rambo knives in the 80s, and then we talked about transitioning to small bushcraft knives.

Paul Kirtley

[01:22:42] What do you say to someone who's coming to it now fresh, where what how should they be thinking about that difference?

Joe Flowers

[01:22:50] Oh, well, you're asking somebody who literally had the talk Big Knife Bushcraft at the Blade Show University at the Blade Show in the US, which is just a big show. So I can tell you, I'm completely biased with big knives. First off, my blanket term, which isn't exactly correct, but my blanket answer is it's easier to use a big knife for small knife tasks than it is to use a small knife for big knife tasks. But that's more or less in the terms of chopping. The biggest thing I think is the skills in context. So the blanket answer is start with the small knife.

Joe Flowers

[01:23:29] Get some control of your hands and all that too. When you start start with the machete, you're starting with something with much more of a cutting edge. We've got inches and inches of more cutting edge and chances to mess up. So in some cases, for instance, even in Central and South America, they might not even sharpen a machete all the way to the back. They have it just at the tip so they can grip it and use it like a small knife. So that's where my context comes from. I like carrying both, but learning how a knife cuts is going to be easier when you're using a small knife. So you have time to watch it curl along the wood.

Joe Flowers

[01:24:09] You can see the facets of what you're cutting on a piece of medium. You can watch a small knife cut a piece of meat and understand what it does when it cuts at a certain grain, whether it's meat, whether it's wood, whether it's any medium that you're cutting. And you can understand the process of cutting stuff. That way you get a better skill set. Then you can start working on to bigger knives. Now, as far as far as bigger knives go, in my aspect, we have a really big tradition of the American frontiers where our big knife was our camp knife.

Joe Flowers

[01:24:43] And also back in the day when we only had one shot fired from a musket, things became really personal after that. And so if you're bear hunting and you wound a bear and you have to spend time re-reloading before it charges, you're going to need a bigger knife. And when you want an angry, Sioux Indian, you want him that far away from you, and then you want him to hear. And so with, Steve Watts believes this too, believed this too, with the taming of the indigenous in the U. S., We started seeing the

big knives start to get a lot smaller.

Joe Flowers

[01:25:16] And then, at the dawn of the century in the early 1900s, you saw camping becoming more of a recreational thing rather than for war. And people would just go out and be using smaller knives like the Nasmuk style or the Kapart style knife out there. So it was a question of reloading and using all that. Now the camp knife has its big purp a real big purpose in a really knife use scenario. But a lot of times you don't see that in the US at least with the way we camp and in maybe in the UK too, where we're not getting stuff from

Joe Flowers

[01:25:55] The environment around us. Down in the Amazon for example, and down in Trinidad, they're taking machetes and they love the bushcraft machete for hacking up lots and lots of fish, man, and all this stuff that they get from the sea and from the ocean and from the jungle there. And they're using big knives for everything. And down in the jungle, they're using it for cutting up melon and using it all around camp for cutting up big fish and things like that too. So it also involves what exactly we're we're using the big knife for. In the US, I might not use a machete for anything but like a watermelon in camp, and even then that's a big deal.

Joe Flowers

[01:26:33] So, the situations are we don't have as much time to use that. In a craft sense though, when I'm making a bow and stuff, in the UK and in the US we love our axes. We really, really, really do. And we'll use small like Ransford Brooks craft axes or Julia Kaltolf's carving axe, for instance, in some of our in some of our crafts, whereas in the jungle we just pick up a machete and make a paddle. Got one around here somewhere. It's over there. Make a paddle. We're making it ninety ninety percent of the time with taking off lots of shavings with just a machete and hacking it out.

Joe Flowers

[01:27:13] So there is that example too. Using a big knife that style was really cool in the 80s. I still am going to be teaching a big knife bushcraft expedition where everybody has it's really just going to be called Rambo training or something along that line where everybody gets a machete and they have to do a lot of like fine carving work with the machete and all it does, Paul, is it teaches you how to use your hands more. And that's really what bushcraft is about. I work for a lot of gear companies, but at least for me, I consider bushcraft keeping yourself more more comfortable in your environment instead of survival where you're trying to get out of it.

Joe Flowers

[01:27:51] And being able to create with your hands whether it's a broken piece of glass whether it's awesome machete like this one Ting

Paul Kirtley

[01:28:02] I should say for I should say for listeners, I should return the favor because Joe was describing things I was holding up. He's holding up a large machete. It's very shiny. Yeah. It's

Joe Flowers

[01:28:15] It's made of metal with a plastic handle.

Paul Kirtley

[01:28:18] No, but it's just like the shine on it is like it keeps reflecting off your lamp on your desk and I'm like it

Joe Flowers

[01:28:25] I'm doing that on purpose to distract you guys. Yeah, I'm trying to get it in the ring light. So it's a nickel plate.

Paul Kirtley

[01:28:30] Related, right? Okay.

Joe Flowers

[01:28:31] And all of these companies have like a distinct style. With our axes, the Swedish axe has really taken over the scene as far as a popular axe, but there's so many different axe designs. Like from a Hudson Bay to a double bit. There's the same way with machetes too. Actually Martindale in the UK had a very distinct style that became very popular, like the Golok and the Survival Machete, back when they were made there and so you have all these shapes and all these styles. These guys really like nickel plating on theirs so they have a shinier machete.

Paul Kirtley

[01:29:06] What's the advantage of that, Joe?

Joe Flowers

[01:29:10] Shiner

Paul Kirtley

[01:29:11] But does it is it does it make it corrosion resistant?

Joe Flowers

[01:29:14] It does, but it's a coating, right? So it's gonna come off after a while. It does make it more corrosion resistant 'cause most machetes are made with a high carbon steel. But some places like Panama for instance, like their machetes to have a baked on red coating. And then in Nicaragua they like to have a nickel plated rivet, on the sides. And then in another country they like to have brass rivets. So it's like mind blowing. And then for sugarcane, Paul for sugarcane there's like seventeen different knife designs

for one plant.

Joe Flowers

[01:29:44] I don't get it. But so there's preferences. The nickel plating does help with the poly-with the rust prevention, but it's not perfect. It eventually wears off.

Paul Kirtley

[01:29:56] So when you're 'cause most most tropical places where machetes, gallocks, parangs, kukris, are particularly well suited to, as you say, there's a diversity of resources there, there's a lot of vegetation, there's a lot of resources that can be used and people are maybe accessing them more than perhaps they are if they're on a recreational camping trip in in, Arizona or something. Or even in the Appalachians or wherever. But a lot of those are high carbon steel.

Paul Kirtley

[01:30:24] That's a very rusty environment, it's humid, it's hot, it's damp, and they're using a tool that would corrode if allowed. What's what's the tips you've got for keeping that tool in good condition in those environments?

Joe Flowers

[01:30:39] Ooh, there is a bunch. Let's go from bushcraft all the way to really, really cool modern material. So, charcoal is an abrasive. You can take charcoal like a charred piece of wood and wet it, that's gray, and wet it, and it becomes like a micro-abrasive where you can use it like a rust eraser and take it off your nice your nice fielraven or fielraven, fieltiven, fieltiven blade or something that might have a little bit of rust like my Spyderco or something. And you can use that for like a bushcraft-based pulstus to take stuff off. And so, like I said before, just...

Joe Flowers

[01:31:18] A rotted piece of wood that might have some punk on it and charred and then a little bit of water and you can go back and forth on that and that works very well. Any type of oils will work. I say any type, some can go rancid, so like if you've used vegetable oil on your knives, it's food safe, but use coconut oil on your knives, it's food safe. Those will work, they could attract ants. You have various things there. I've even used bacon grease because America, tons of bacon all the time when I can't. So on my knives too, but that can attract ants as well. Food grade mineral oil is good too if you're using it around food.

Joe Flowers

[01:31:57] All the way to something that I like called Wicked Wax. Wicked Wax is a it's really cool because it's all organic. Of course, I like it because it has beeswax in it, a little bit of linoleum, but you can use it on leather, you can use it on wood, you can just smear everything with it and it works very well to keep even the most rusty carbon steels pretty good. A little bit of maintenance goes a long way, Paul. So not storing

something wet in a sheath, if I've been diving in the water and the indigenous are very, very clean every day. We clean ourselves in the water, we swim in the water with the piranha, never been bit. After 14 years in jungle, nope.

Joe Flowers

[01:32:37] And if people don't want to go in the water, they just use a tin and use the water and splash over themselves. But then when I go to bed, I take my knife out of my sheath because knife needs to breathe out of the sheath. Even if it's a polypropylene or plastic handle, like Amora, and it's stuck in there in that environment, that little hole at the bottom doesn't let the sheath doesn't let the knife breathe. So if I'm really particular, I do that. But I have I have a lot, a lot of rusty knives, Paul. A lot of rusty knives.

Joe Flowers

[01:33:07] But those are some of the big methods. And I pretreat mine before I go on any of my expeditions with that wicked wax. I do it for my silky saw too, and all that and it helps like in this canoe environment where stuff just soaks at the bottom of the of the boat. It helps with that too. So that's one way. The indigenous don't have all those resources though. But they're always using these machetes like they're disposable. So the rust, gets there but they're using it every day so the rust doesn't build up.

Paul Kirtley

[01:33:37] So using it

Joe Flowers

[01:33:38] Doesn't really chunk it. Yeah. The rust becomes a patina, and that patina becomes like a barrier for more rust.

Joe Flowers

[01:33:45] It's not perfect, there's still gouges in there, especially at the point in the intersection where the handle meets the blade. A lot of rust will meet there too. But that that's one way. But we use axes down there too. We're not all crazy machete people. We every single trip we bring at least four axes. Just because we're crazy bushcrafters and I always bring stuff to test. But they have a tree down there that's called Ranakaspas, Ranakaspay, which basically means like a paddle tree because you can make boat paddles out of it, but also you can take a little chunk out of it and the tree survives and it's the perfect axe handle shape already.

Joe Flowers

[01:34:22] So we just bring the axe handles or the axe heads out there and make them while we're out there and use that too. The axes will typically have, a little bit of pitting all around it, like your grandfather's axe that's been neglected, but the edge will be pretty polished because they've been using it.

Paul Kirtley

[01:34:38] That you take the handle out of, is that almost like a buttress on the bottom of the tree trunk, is it?

Joe Flowers

[01:34:43] Yes, exactly. It's very much like a buttress, like a cedar buttress or something. And the tree lives, it's a really good floating wood as well.

Joe Flowers

[01:34:53] The type of axes, Paul, that are in South America, not all of them are like this, but most of them have a round pole, so a round back end, and they're tapered eyes, there's an eye that's tapered like an American tomahawk where it just goes in through the top. And then you smack it down and it's hard. They don't necessarily put in the wedge unless it's going to be like a permanent axe at the house, but the handles are like disposable. They're just like, okay, it's a Monday, we throw this one out, put a new one on. And it's really incredible too. Their methodology, I remember your axe class over at the 2019 class. Their methodology, they almost like twerk when they do their axes.

Joe Flowers

[01:35:33] They throw their butt out and use it like a catapult style, like a spiral instead of dropping their hips and dropping their their

Paul Kirtley

[01:35:40] Twitching with a tightening in the lower back Yeah.

Joe Flowers

[01:35:44] Yeah, tightening the lower back and throwing it forward. Unless you're like a real like an axe nerd like us, you probably wouldn't notice it, but when you see them do it, you're like, wow. I'm guessing that's how the smaller guys are able to get all that torque in that movement. And they're using the axe, the same axe for everything. And it's got a huge, huge beard, like a six-inch beard.

Paul Kirtley

[01:36:05] I mentioned that tightening of the lower back in somewhere in my axe book in this in the splitting section because it was something that someone showed to me years ago. And I'm quite a tall dude and

Joe Flowers

[01:36:16] Yeah

Paul Kirtley

[01:36:16] But even for me, if I'm chopping something big on a big chopping block, just as it comes down, just that extra bit of torque, as you say, that extra bit of acceleration really makes a difference.

Joe Flowers

[01:36:28] Hey, check this out while we're talking with taxes. Hold on one second.

Joe Flowers

[01:36:32] Axes and the small forest axe and the jump of bushcraft became the jump of bushcraft became so popular that 23 to 25 inch boys axe became so popular that Tuatahi. Tuatahi made a small boys axe version. So this one's right around that length of their their racing axe. Oh, this is one of my babies. I had nothing to do with this design. Because I'm still a huge axe lover in all aspects and knife lover even though I work for knife companies, I still am allowed to buy stuff when I can afford it.

Joe Flowers

[01:37:12] And this is the racing axe that you see in a lot of those, timber sports things. But enough for the one of the major Lamborghini axe racing axe companies to make a camping version of the racing axe. And you can see this one's all shiny.

Joe Flowers

[01:37:29] I haven't destroyed this one like all my other stuff. I'm not waiting for the expedition for it. I just need to get out and use it. I have like 50 other axes that are all in testing phases right now.

Paul Kirtley

[01:37:40] That's the problem you get, isn't it? Someone sent yeah someone sent me this one recently. I haven't really got to use it much yet.

Joe Flowers

[01:37:48] Is that a prawn?

Paul Kirtley

[01:37:50] No, it's by it's by a company called Thornwood Forge and they're hand forged. Wow. It's an English ash handle, which is nice because Whoa. Yeah, because most axes here, all the Scandinavian axes have got American hickory handles now. But this is more traditional. It's still a small axe. It's similar size to a Hults, half-length axe or a Granfors small forest axe. But the interesting story there was years ago, and we don't run junior bushcraft courses anymore. We used to when I first started Frontiers Bushcraft, we used to run some courses, week-long courses for 13 to 17-year-olds.

Paul Kirtley

[01:38:29] And

Joe Flowers

[01:38:30] Oh, that must have been fun.

Paul Kirtley

[01:38:32] Well, yeah, that's one of the reasons we don't do it.

Paul Kirtley

[01:38:37] I think teaching young people skills outdoors is really, really important. I'm just not sure I'm the person to do it, frankly.

Joe Flowers

[01:38:45] Understand

Paul Kirtley

[01:38:46] Prefer to spend a week teaching twelve, scout leaders and youth group leaders who, that's what they do. I'd rather, and I get more leverage doing that, right? So, yeah, that's the route that I decided to go, that I'll teach the adults and the adults can teach the kids and I can get the skills out more that way than trying to teach, ten kids. And then the other thing...

Joe Flowers

[01:39:11] And their parents and their parents so

Paul Kirtley

[01:39:14] Yeah, well the parents weren't there on these courses, so we used to have to have a lot of staff there as well for safeguarding and for looking after them. And making sure that there are always two adults around, if anything happened and all these sorts of things. Yeah, and it just became quite, it's just quite costly to run. And of course, we also had you also end up being something of an inexpensive childcare service for parents who want to go on holiday for the week.

Paul Kirtley

[01:39:46] If they know they can send their kids on a bushcraft course for a week that gets rid of the kids for a week for less cost than pretty much anything else. And we found that was actually what was happening and some of these kids really didn't want to be there. It's just their kids had their parents had booked them on it so I was just like for a number of reasons. But then you also got really super keen kids who did wanted to be there. Yeah, they wanted to learn bow drill, they wanted to do feather sticks, they wanted to sleep out in your shelter.

Joe Flowers

[01:40:12] He's a bow drill master.

Paul Kirtley

[01:40:14] So you had this real pull between kids who didn't want to be there and you couldn't you couldn't get them to do anything because their parents had just booked them on it so they could go on vacation for a week and kids who were super keen. So

anyway, one of the super keen kids was called Joe and he came back and did yeah good name right? Yeah. He came back and did one of our adult courses when he was eighteen. He came back and did our adult intermediate course with one of the other super keen lads that he'd met on his on his on his course. And they were great and they worked super hard on the adults course as well just as eighteen year olds. And

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:40:52] Joe was getting into knife making at that point. He was starting to make knives, right? Fast forward ten years, I get an Instagram DM from this company called Thornwood Forge. It's like " Hi, you might not remember me. This is Joe. I now make handmade axes as one of the things I make at my forge. Would you like one to try?" So that was super nice. He's now in his late twenties and he's made a career of making really nice tools, handmade tools.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:41:25] I'm looking him up on Instagram right now just to make sure I have I'm a fan of his stuff.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:41:33] Yeah, so shout shout out to him because he was a student of mine and shows you what you can do with a bit of... Got it.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:41:42] Ah, yeah, that's cool. I got I got I just added him. That's really cool. Oh, and a refreshing take on some of the axes out there because you get, somehow all these axes start looking the same after a while.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:41:55] Yeah, yeah, they do. So, yeah, that's interesting to see what you've got there as well and yeah, there's there's there's always a fresh take or, a revisitation of a traditional thing that's maybe been, lost a little bit because as you say, fads happen, don't they? Everyone goes, everyone goes after the same thing after a while and then you step back and go, oh, what about this? This used to be popular or this used to really work for these people or the forest...

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:42:21] Yeah, I used to work for them.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:42:23] Forestry guys back in the day used to use these, not those. And yeah, yeah.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:42:28] It and it really shows you, the people the people who get out there and do stuff, you get to learn from them a lot more 'cause instead of just talking like you get

some like YouTubers and like " I designed this knife back in the day. I designed this knife to do that and the other" and you look at it and you go " I don't think this guy has ever made a try-stick before or something with this knife." And it's just mind mind-blowing? And I've definitely been one of those guys who's made some crazy designs.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:42:55] Yeah, but then then you what works and what doesn't as partly as a result of that, right? If you make something crazy,

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:43:02] Or sometimes what sells and what doesn't because I've designed some swords.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:43:06] But the flip side of what you're talking about is like people sitting in their bedroom designing things without any real world context is the people who comment. So it could be I don't see as many unboxing videos these days and I don't know whether that's because people don't make them or whether it's just that YouTube doesn't show me them, because the algorithm changes over time. But I it used to frustrate the hell out of me where you've got someone who's just like they've ordered something and they're like, Ah, let's unbox this. And then it's like, this looks really good, this looks like it would be really good for this looks like it would be really bad for that. And it's like, why don't you just go and try it? What?

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:43:43] Yeah, they immediately review it. And they're like, I could see where though, and it's like, no, you can't see 'cause you're not doing it?

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:43:50] That must frustrate the hell out of you as a designer though when you get those sorts of comments and reviews with people that have not people that are either criticizing it or making comments about the design when they haven't even tried to use it for what it's intended for.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:44:02] You gotta, kill them with kindness. And there there's always something to learn from everybody. That's why I always like try and make it a chance to even go take a bow drill class from from anybody because there's always something to learn. But like it still just blows my mind how you see some guy like just take something out right away and be like, okay, well this can do that, the other stuff. And they do really good job opening the box and then it's just off from there. That's all they. You can tell they're a really a really good box opener.

Joe Flowers

[01:44:31] Yeah.

Joe Flowers

[01:44:32] So, I've got this I've got this Instagram that I'm going to start up. It's called No Shiny Gear, and it's all about my gear that's been like completely destroyed. And I'm going to take like pretty pictures of this destroyed gear and other people's guest gear. And I'm going to be straight up, I'm going to use AI to make haiku of each one. And that's going to be like one side project I'm going to work on because sometimes you'll be in like some random restaurant where you see this old Optimus stove that has just amazing history. And you go, huh, that guy didn't have an unboxer.

Paul Kirtley

[01:45:09] Oh well, I'm sure I've got some pictures I could send to you for that if you need if you if you're short of any photos.

Joe Flowers

[01:45:15] Sure guest starring

Paul Kirtley

[01:45:17] Stuff that's being well used, for sure, for sure.

Joe Flowers

[01:45:20] What other stuff do you have coming up this year, Paul?

Paul Kirtley

[01:45:23] And one of my things that I'm trying to do more consistently because I've been horrendously inconsistent. I've been quite inconsistent with podcasts, but I've been horrendously inconsistent with YouTube videos. And every time I make a YouTube video, people say " Oh, Paul, please don't be away for so long." And then I don't make anything for three months or four months. And so one of the things I want to try and do is be more consistent. But that means me making time to not just run courses and trips and write articles. It means I've got to make time to go out to film, which is always quite time-consuming if you want to do it.

Joe Flowers

[01:46:02] And then editing

Paul Kirtley

[01:46:03] And the editing afterwards. Yeah, it's me that has to do the editing and so so yeah, but I do want to be more consistent with putting more material out.

Joe Flowers

[01:46:13] Amen to that. Good gosh, same too.

Paul Kirtley

[01:46:15] Yeah, I think it's important. Going back to the GBS in 2019, we talked about the fact that there is a lot of material on YouTube and some of it's good, but a lot of it's crap, and a lot of it's lacking in context. And most of the professional instructors out there don't make a lot of YouTube content because they're teaching a lot of the time. There's hugely knowledgeable people out there that don't make a lot of material. So we're living in this weird weird world where people who are introduced to bushcraft via YouTube, which is a way that a lot of people consume information these days, they're consuming their first bushcraft information from people who've never really taught the subject.

Paul Kirtley

[01:46:54] And it's a bit of a mismatch between

Joe Flowers

[01:46:58] Yeah

Paul Kirtley

[01:46:58] There's a deep deep knowledge base there but it's not coming through to YouTube and I'm not saying I'm going to solve that problem single-handedly but at least

Joe Flowers

[01:47:05] No, no, but it needs to be

Paul Kirtley

[01:47:07] I feel like if I do my part, it'll help, so so.

Joe Flowers

[01:47:11] 'Cause you ran courses, some of these guys are like just unboxing going "Now I'm gonna teach you this" and have never even ran courses or anything like that.

Paul Kirtley

[01:47:19] That's the context thing that's super important. But not not just of why. I was sort I was out with John Ryder this weekend who's another guest who's been on my podcast. I don't know if you met met him at GBS in twenty two but

Joe Flowers

[01:47:31] Yeah, I did.

Paul Kirtley

[01:47:32] So I was out with him, I'm doing a program with him at the moment where he it's a it's a tracking program and it's over it's over it's four weekends.

Paul Kirtley

[01:47:41] Over four months and just and it's specifically concentrating on following animals and we're largely just concentrating on following deer tracks and tracking tracking deer fallow deer here in the in the UK. And so I've just been out for three days in the cold wet woods we've been rained on we've been snowed on. It's been about three degrees with a cold north-easterly wind.

Joe Flowers

[01:48:06] Deer season has started for

Paul Kirtley

[01:48:09] And it's not a hunting course, but again, we were stopped we were stopped at lunch yesterday actually and we were talking about, how there's this huge thing about making so-called bushcraft shelters that look more like hobbit houses than

Paul Kirtley

[01:48:23] Anything that you would make or, maybe if you maybe if you were going on alone and that you're maybe going to be there for three months or four months and you need it to be super thermally efficient. But generally, a lot of these things that people are doing, they're digging into banks, they're felling trees, they're using a huge amount of resources, they're using a huge amount of energy to build them. And it's encouraging people to focus on the wrong areas in terms of skills that they need for

Joe Flowers

[01:48:53] I feel the same way.

Paul Kirtley

[01:48:55] The outdoors in general. And it's also people are going into sensitive areas and replicating these things and causing some damage, including national parks and things. So, but there's nobody giving people any guidance on the context of when that might be appropriate, when it's not appropriate, when it might be useful, when it's a waste of time and energy. Even with simple like debris huts, right? They often get framed in the, oh here's a here's a shelter that you can build with no materials and no lashings and no cutting tools.

Joe Flowers

[01:49:27] Under an hour

Paul Kirtley

[01:49:28] Yeah, and if you were if you were a day hiker, and the thing the thing is, if you're a day hiker, that's when you're most likely to need an emergency shelter, because if you're going out for a multi-day trip, right? You've got a backpack with a tent or a tarp, a sleeping bag, a bivvy bag, whatever, hammock, whatever, you're planning to sleep out. The people who need emergency shelters are people who are not planning to

stay out. So, they're a day hiker who gets lost or benighted. They're a someone out on a snow machine and their snow machine breaks down and it's 15 minutes by snow machine, but it's a day's walk in deep snow. And

Joe Flowers

[01:50:07] Yeah, yeah.

Paul Kirtley

[01:50:08] It's those those are the scenarios when you're not planning to stay out when you need emergency shelters. And then the question is, when do you decide you need an emergency shelter? Is it is it you leave your car at nine o'clock in the morning, you get onto the trail and at nine thirty you decide you need a shelter? No, that's not the way the world works. It's at fourth it's December, it's four thirty, it's getting dark, you realize you're five miles from the car and you're like, shit, I'm not going to get back. I don't even have a head torch with me. Now I need to now I need to bed down for the night otherwise I'm going to get hypothermia.

Paul Kirtley

[01:50:47] And if you've got an emergency shelter bag or something with you that helps, but then you're basically into building a very small thermal A-frame or something, not some great big elaborate palace. And so it's this complete lack of context and thinking about the reality. It's just fantasy land a lot of this stuff and I'm starting to get onto a Paul Kirtley rant here, but that's another another reason why I think, it's why I said in 2019 in that talk at the GBS, it was

Joe Flowers

[01:51:16] Yeah, I remember that talk very well.

Paul Kirtley

[01:51:18] We need your voice in the wilderness. It was a call out to all the people in the room who know what they're talking about to put more material on the internet that particularly beginners can come into and get some guidance on what's useful and what's appropriate and what's sensible and where they could be wasting their time and energy. So.

Joe Flowers

[01:51:36] Yeah, yeah, it's, and want to put so much more stuff out on the internet. Right now, Instagram is like my biggest, media thing and I'm completely banned on it, I'm stuck. I finally got to 21,000 on Instagram just recently, I think, from cross-posting with people because as a knife guy, they tend to hide, my knife stuff quite a bit and I'm always on probation for that. So, Joe underscore Flowers underscore Bushcraft underscore global. I'll put that in the link notes below, but the thing is, that's just like the first step.

Joe Flowers

[01:52:12] And then on there, the first thing that's on the front page for Bushcraft are these beautiful, Uberlin, setups with a giant like log cabin that must have taken the guy four days to make, Hobbit style houses and it's like the world of Bushcraft. And I'm like, dude, I don't think I've seen that like come up since like post-COVID. I think everybody had time during COVID to make all these things. And then that's about it because you never saw those in Larry Dean Olsen's books.

Paul Kirtley

[01:52:37] Still, there is a book called Shelters, Shacks and Shanties that had together had some of those things in, but again, a lot of that stuff was frontier living, where people were out in the middle of nowhere for extended periods of time. That's not where people should be focusing their attention to start off with, for sure. Yeah, maybe if you're going to, try and win Alone, you want to study up on what's a really good long-term shelter, but otherwise, there's other things, there's other skill sets that you should be focusing on first. And the shelter stuff that you should be focusing on is more how to stop yourself from dying overnight if you get stuck somewhere.

Paul Kirtley

[01:53:17] That's the stuff that's important. And often the answer, what Mors answer to that was a lot of the time, build a big fire.

Joe Flowers

[01:53:25] It's true. Yeah. Much easier to do that than everything else.

Paul Kirtley

[01:53:29] 30 in the boreal if you've got a big enough fire the shelter doesn't matter right

Joe Flowers

[01:53:33] Yep.

Joe Flowers

[01:53:35] There's that pyro bug. I remember, like every time you'd come see him and he says, yeah, I get a handful of fire, they were like armfuls, bushels of that and he's just ready to go. But that really comes down to it. If you become, better at fire craft, you become better at getting the context of why you're doing stuff. You're using tool craft, you're identifying wood, you're identi-using a little bit of biology to know the and the science behind why you're choosing hardwoods and softwoods rather than, I need to be able to use this silky soft for my next YouTube video. There's something along that line. It's a much, much more broader aspect to help the...

Joe Flowers

[01:54:13] The context come back and that's where it becomes important.

Paul Kirtley

[01:54:16] There is a lot of that product placement stuff going on as well, isn't there, as you say?

Joe Flowers

[01:54:20] Yeah, that's my job. That's honestly my job. I'm getting I get to go to Germany in two weeks because I have to go to IWA for product stuff. I know where I'm at. I'm a gearhead and a gear junkie. I'm surrounded by thousands of knives right now, Paul.

Paul Kirtley

[01:54:34] Books magazines

Joe Flowers

[01:54:36] Yes, inputs.

Joe Flowers

[01:54:38] These were a lot of these were donated from Steve Watts's collection, but it's a bushcraft library. And then the magazines, is an ongoing thing, because write for magazines, get magazines, like magazines. And not enough room for the bushcraft library coming here. I guess I got screwed over by going to Mors's and going, man, I need to expand my my book set.

Paul Kirtley

[01:55:03] Yeah.

Joe Flowers

[01:55:04] So.

Joe Flowers

[01:55:05] I'm at the point now where I'm going to have to make more shelves, but you get some context there too, like I have some really weird books called like, tents in their history and it shows nomadic tents from all over the world and why they have bell styles and stuff too versus the tents that are out now and you get to see the context. So, because this place has wind, instead of, hey, I'm just going to make another debris hut. Okay, maybe I'm at a, at a place where a debris hut might not work so well.

Paul Kirtley

[01:55:32] No, that again, as you say, context is super super important. Joe, I'm conscious that we've been talking for a fair while now and I'm also conscious of our our listeners' time. I think there's a whole bunch we could continue to talk about.

Joe Flowers

[01:55:48] Absolutely

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:55:48] We should perhaps do a do a round two at some point but

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:55:52] Yeah, it's not it's very common for me to have to do round twos on podcasts. So then we'll get to the ninth.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:55:57] That's cool. You were super, I have to say I didn't say this explicitly before, but you were super super helpful. Because I organized the 22 GBS and

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:56:08] Oh, God bless you for that.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:56:09] That was incredible.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:56:10] But you were super super helpful in engaging a lot of the sponsors, particularly for the giveaways and for the, for the display tables and engaging manufacturers, particularly in the knife world with all your contacts, but also hosting all the giveaways, the amount of energy that you brought to that you and you and Peter brought to that. I'd like to thank coffee personally. Yeah, but no, but again, it just took a weight off me and Lisa, that we didn't have to do that as well as all the other hosting and presenting that you we could just hand that to you and you just ran with it and that was that was super great to see.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:56:50] Came from, how wonderful of a time I had in Wales with you guys. So, that was my first time in the UK and it felt like, oh, like coming to family. It really was. Can't wait to come back.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:57:01] It was a lot of fun. It was a lot of fun.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:57:03] You can find me guys

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:57:05] You read my mind! You read my mind! That was literally what was about to come out. I was like, where's the best place to find you on the interwebs, Joe? That was literally the next thing coming out my mouth. You've done too many pod-you've done

too many podcasts already. You're a pro. You're a pro. Go, go, go.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:57:19] So you can find me on the internet at bushcraftglobal.com. I'm been out a lot, so I need to update my website so y'all can make fun of that. You can find me on the socials, Bushcraft Global, Joe Flowers, Bushcraft Global, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, now that's unbanned again. All that stuff too. Yeah. And of course, paulkirtley. Co. Uk for all of your Kirtley needs.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:57:44] Thank you, Joe.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:57:45] I have that pulled up over here just to double check.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:57:47] Thanks, Joe. Appreciate it. So I'll link to all of that in the show notes, people can check that out. And thanks to Joe for taking the time. It's quite early in the day for you. But coffee fueled and fun as always to chat.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:58:00] Absolutely

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:58:01] Thank you very much for being on the podcast.

[Joe Flowers](#)

[01:58:03] Thank you.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:58:05] Well, thanks again to Joe for joining me in this episode. I hope you enjoyed our conversation too and that it gave you some food for thought perhaps, whether that's about knives and tools, learning from traditional cultures, spending time in wild places, having experiences that are new and challenging, or simply looking more closely at the natural world around you. One of the things I particularly enjoy about talking with Joe is his enthusiasm and his positivity.

[Paul Kirtley](#)

[01:58:36] He's genuinely curious about the world and I think that energy and fascination comes through strongly in the conversation that we just had. All the links that we mentioned are listed on the page for this episode on my website over at paulkirtley. Co. Uk/ podcast63. That's paulkirtley. Co. Uk/ podcast63. And if you'd like to go deeper into bushcraft with me, I've created a structured sequence of articles, podcasts, and videos that takes you step-by-step through some key skills and ideas.

Paul Kirtley

[01:59:16] It's the best way to follow my free online material in a sensible order and get the most from it. You can join at paulkirtley. Co. Uk/ emails. That's paulkirtley. Co. Uk/ emails. Thanks for listening, and I look forward to bringing you another episode before too long.

© 2026 Paul Kirtley. All rights reserved. This transcript is provided for personal use only. Please do not reproduce or distribute without permission.