I was delighted to hear your responses to our first issue of Threads 'N Stitches. To all of you who took the time to respond, I thank you. Your thoughts are appreciated and I invite you to keep them coming.

I heard from Robert Schrap of Custom Leather Knife Sheaths located in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. The brochure Bob sent shows that he makes high quality knife sheaths and uses some exotic leathers. They are very nice, custom made products. If you are interested, you can visit his website at www.customsheaths.com or contact him via email at rschrap@aol.com. He can also be reached by telephone at 414-771-6472.

My friend Dan Crates of Crates Saddlery in Chattanooga, Tennessee also contacted me.

In closing, I have a quick update from my old friend Shep Hermann of Hermann Oak® Tannery. He said that hide and leather prices will probably not move in the coming months. Hide prices are still high and the demand remains strong with a low kill rate, keeping hides at higher than average prices. This is a good reminder that we all need to price our products at current costs, not in anticipation of lower future costs.

He knows and understands the saddle industry as well or better than anyone I know. We have enjoyed a long and pleasant relationship. The company’s website is www.cratesleather.com.

When it comes to choosing the right leather for a job or product, in many cases, it comes down to what is acceptable and what is ideal.

In our warehouse, we sell leather in literally hundreds of different types, weights, cuts and finishes. The right leather for many types of applications overlap, but some leathers are essential in turning out great specific products. For example, a tooled or stamped western saddle normally starts with skirting leather. With the right firmness and the ability to take a crisp impression, skirting leather is the perfect choice for western saddles.

My favorite leather has to be harness leather. Over the past 25+ years, russet harness leather has made a huge impact on the western tack market. When performance riders wanted extra heavy weight reins and accessories to match, the race was on to develop the thickest, plumpest leather that was not only massive, but also heavy in terms of weight. As a result, a pair of reins constructed from this leather will literally last forever with proper care.

What makes the quality of harness leather so great is really no mystery. Quite simply, it is a heavy full thickness hide that is stuffed with a variety of oils, greases and tallows that completely fill the fibers and produce soft, mellow leather that feels great in your hands and lays well on your horse. We have many old pieces in our Merle Grant Museum that are over 100 years old. They are still intact because of this method of preserving leather by stuffing.

Harness leather is used for a wide variety of products. Originally designed primarily for leather harness, harness leather now has become an all-around staple for any tack or harness supplier. When thickness, weight and feel are important, our trusted friends at Hermann Oak® Leather in St. Louis, Missouri still lead the way. Many have tried to duplicate their leather, but none have ever accomplished it. While there are many very good harness leathers out there, when the ultimate is required, Hermann Oak® harness leather remains second to none. Just ask Shep and he’ll tell you why this is true.

So, harness leather will always be my personal pick for leather that will outlast and perform above all others. You will find all of our harness leathers on pages 50-53 of our 2011 Supply Catalog. Please call if we can be of any assistance in helping you choose just the right harness leather for your project.
There is a saying that everything rises and falls on leadership. In business, it is an essential ingredient and there is no substitute for good, consistent and ethical leadership. As an owner or manager, the first person you must learn to lead effectively is you. If you cannot lead yourself, you cannot lead others. On the other hand, if you cannot serve others or be led by someone else, you also probably cannot lead others. You see, leadership is all about serving. It is not about how well you can do something like producing products or designing new products. It has everything to do with how passionate you are in serving your customers and your employees.

The first step is to identify who you are and what makes you tick. One way to test yourself is to take inventory of what you like to do — usually, it is also what you’re good at. People gravitate toward their comfort zone and generally like to stay there. If your idea of a good day is to personally make a certain amount of harnesses, saddles or belts, and the more you make the better, then most likely you are annoyed by interruptions like the telephone, walk-in customers, sales people and the list goes on! True leadership is getting things done through other people. They won’t always do it the way you would, but as long as the quality does not suffer, the labor minutes do not increase or your customers are not adversely affected, their way may be better than yours.

I know my father was a hard worker and gained much satisfaction from a job well done. He believed that office work was costly, unnecessary and basically made your products more expensive. You can imagine the unorganized disaster I walked into when I came into the business 30 years ago. My father much preferred being on the floor and directly supervising workers rather than leading the entire company. In other words, he preferred to be a specialist, a person who does something very well, to that of a general manager who oversees much but does not become a true expert in just one segment of a company.

The point I want to stress in this lesson is that you need to hire your weaknesses and not your strengths. If you love to work at breakneck speed, you need someone who is more methodical and catches all the details. If you are more interested in working with things than people, hire yourself a manager who is relational and loves to work with people. The list goes on, but you probably get the drift. Remember that no one is gifted in everything. Do not try to be something you are not because you will be unhappy, and so will your people. Work in your sweet spot and hire the right people to do the rest. You do not need to be an expert at everything that happens in your business. You just need to choose the right people for your business and put them in the right positions, then respect and appreciate what they do.

For over 30 years, I have been directly involved in leading people. I have read every book I could get my hands on concerning leadership, listened to countless tapes and CDs, attended seminars, and met with great leaders. I am still on that journey...and it is all a journey as there never is a destination where one has reached the pinnacle where no further growth or knowledge is needed.

My first and foremost leadership mentor is John Maxwell, who has countless leadership books on the market. To date, he has sold over 19 million copies of books he has written. You can go to his website at www.johnmaxwell.com and select a book that fits your current situation. Your journey starts there and it will encompass many people and many mentors and relationships along the way.

Over time, I hope these leadership articles will prompt you to grow and redirect your activities to best use your leadership potential. If you have a direct question, just drop me a note via mail or e-mail.

Mailing Address:
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Weaver Leather LLC
PO Box 68
Mt. Hope, OH 44660-0068

Email:
askpaul@weaverleather.com
Why Choose Brahma Webb®?

Since we introduced Brahma Webb®, our exclusive brand of coated webbing, over a year ago, many people asked why the industry needed another supplier of coated webbing. The answer is simple, and I will answer with a question. How many products do you buy that you have only one choice on what brand name to use? Not many, and when there is just one choice, we really have no choice at all. As a result, we developed this line to give you choice in the marketplace.

We believe that Brahma Webb® is not only a superior product in terms of looks, feel and wearability, but we back it up with a guarantee that is the first in the industry. We not only replace product for excessive wear or any lack of performance, but we also pay you for your time to rebuild the defective part. We are that certain that this product is what we say it is!

Brahma Webb® is a natural addition to our product line. It is available direct from us to be shipped from our warehouse or delivered on one of our routes as well as from our three distributors listed below. I encourage you to try Brahma Webb® for your next harness. Give us or one of our distributors a call and remember one choice is no choice at all.

Brahma Webb® is Available from Weaver Leather and the Following Distributors:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fisher's Harness Shop</th>
<th>Countryside Manufacturing</th>
<th>Clinton Harness Shop</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ronks, PA</td>
<td>Milton, IA</td>
<td>Goshen, IN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>717-687-6048</td>
<td>641-656-4339 VM</td>
<td>574-825-7018</td>
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</tbody>
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Q & A Corner

By Paul Weaver

Question: Which is the stronger thread, polyester or nylon?
Submitted by Noah Yoder of Yoder’s Harness Shop in Kentucky

Answer: Great question, Noah! In order to give you a completely accurate answer, I went to our supplier for the technical facts. This was their response: “Filament nylon (6.6 is what we use which is a high tenacity fiber) and filament polyester are both good products. Nylon has the best sew ability out of both products. Nylon is a little stronger than polyester and resists surface abrasion better than any fiber; typically used for products that are subject to abrasion like shoes, bags, boots, furniture, footballs, saddles, etc. Polyester generally has better ultraviolet (UV) resistance than nylon which is why polyester tends to be used for outdoor applications like tents, awnings, outdoor furniture, boat tops, etc. where products get more long-term exposure. Though today, if nylon has a UV inhibitor added, the nylon performs well to standard dyed polyester products. Finally, solution dyed polyester has the best UV resistance, but typically this only comes in a few colors since the color is extruded and not dyed.”

If you are interested in submitting questions for possible publication in future issues of Threads ‘N Stitches, please use one of the following options.

Email: askpaul@weaverleather.com
Mail to: Attn: Ask Paul
        Weaver Leather LLC
        PO Box 68
        Mt. Hope, OH 44660-0068

Call: 800-932-8371 x240 to speak with Corporate Administrative Assistant Lisa Rosenberry
The Right Finish Makes All the Difference in Your End Product

By Myron Stutzman

One of the topics I get asked about the most is choosing the right finish for a given project. Finishing your leather is a very important step and can make or break your end result. From my early years working closely with Harry Weaver to my experience as a production manager at Weaver Leather, I have learned important lessons about what works, and maybe more importantly, what doesn’t work. I’ve also learned a great deal from customers like you through the years. It’s always good to hear your experiences and learn a new tip or technique.

I’d like to take this opportunity to share with you a few of the finishing tips and products that I’ve found to be the most helpful through the years:

**Getting the Right Consistency on Fiebing’s Antique Finish**

I love the way this product gives your product a rich, two-toned patina. However, sometimes Fiebing’s Antique Finish can be a little too thick when you receive it or become dried out from sitting around the shop. This issue can easily be resolved by simply adding a bit of Fiebing’s Tan-Kote to thin it to a consistency that will work best for your current project. This technique will work on all the colors. Simply add a small amount of the Fiebing’s Tan-Kote, check the consistency and continue adding small amounts a little at a time until you reach your desired consistency. These products can be found on pages 226 & 227 of our 2011 Supply Catalog.

**Restoring a Smooth Surface with Gum Tragacanth**

It’s easy to restore a smooth surface on the back of skived leather simply by using Gum Tragacanth. I recommend applying the Gum Tragacanth with a sponge and then rubbing it in with whatever you normally use on your edges. Just as this product is used to slick edges, it can also be used to slick the back when you have an exposed skived surface. This product can be found on page 231 of our 2011 Supply Catalog.

**Sealing and Protecting Your Project**

A question I get frequently is what sealant I recommend. A few years ago, we decided to do our own experiment in our shop to settle the debate. We laser-engraved three leather coasters and put a different sealant on each one. We allowed the finish to dry overnight and then puddled water on top of each one the next morning. Bee Natural RTC Sheridan Resist and Finish outperformed all the rest! This top-notch sealer has become a favorite of belt makers everywhere for sealing in the color of their leather and making darker leather colorfast. A universal concern of belt makers is the risk of color transfer when their customers wear dark belts with light-colored or khaki pants. Using RTC will give leather professionals more peace of mind knowing that their final product will resist color transfer. This product can be found on page 225 of our 2011 Supply Catalog.

I hope you find these tips helpful. Choosing the right finish and utilizing the right techniques are the keys to consistently successful end products.