

It doesn't take much to get the thought processes derailed from whatever is on my mind and directed to something completely different. I don't know exactly what I was thinking about this morning except the *kalops* I was browning, getting ready to transfer the pan to the oven.

I peeled an onion, cut it up, and added it to the beef cubes that had browned nicely on the top of the stove. I took two large summer carrots from the crisper drawer of the refrigerator, peeled them, and cut them in chunks to put in the baking dish. I guess it was then that my mind took a detour from the seasonings of salt, pepper, allspice, and bay leaf and jumped to the knife in my hand. It was a cheap little paring knife, useful and handy.

And, then I began to think about knives in general, and the very best paring knife I ever had came to mind. It was an Olsen knife, made not that far from home—in Howard City, Michigan. Olsen knives had a good reputation, and reading a bit about them now after all these years, I understand that, in addition to making knives, they also handled Solingen knives from Germany that they had their own mark on, too, and they carried some Swedish knives.

Someone gave me a little paring knife years ago that was purported to be an Olsen knife. This was long after my real Olsen had been lost—probably in the compost pile and eventually on some field here on Coe Creek. The gift knife was of a later vintage, and I have always had doubts that it was a real Olsen knife. I seldom use it, because it isn't as functional as the cheap stainless steel one I prefer, but, maybe I will sharpen it and see if there is any feeling in my hand that has some connection to my old Olsen knife.

The Olsen company had roadside signs that reminded me of the Burma-Shave slogans of past times. The only one I remember completely is this: "Fatty, Fatty, run for your life! Here comes Skinny with an Olsen knife!" Not a thing most of us would utter these days, but it was memorable.