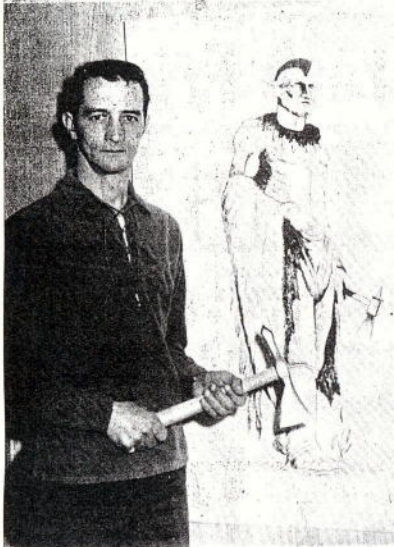


"Tomahawk" Makes Front Page News in San Francisco



As mentioned in last week's issue of the Mountaineer-Herald, the story of Peter LaGana Jr. and his famous "Tomahawk" was front-page news in the San Francisco Chronicle recently.

This week, former Ebensburg Leonard "Bucky" Williams sent along a copy of the paper, with the trials and tribulations Pete's having with Pentagon officialdom to make the device standard equipment for Army and Marine Corps personnel.

Here's Pete's story of his invention in his own words:

Ebensburgers all know of the tomahawk designed by Peter S. LaGana for use in Vietnam. Pete "invented" this modern-day conception because of the amazing demand for such a weapon by our troops in Vietnam. The whole story is an amazing one.

It really got started when the local mail carrier was summoned to the Pentagon in the winter of 1965. The Special Forces wanted to interview him on the possibilities of using a tomahawk for close-quarter combat. How did the army find out about it? One of Mr. LaGana's students in hand-to-hand combat, then Sergeant Robert H. Fennell, another Ebensburg, wrote to the Army Incentive Awards Committee and told them how he had been taught to defend himself ag-

ainst any hand-to-hand weapon with a tomahawk. He told who had taught him and where he could be located. That's when Pete was summoned to the Pentagon.

Ironic as it was, tomahawks were no longer produced. The tomahawks Mr. LaGana demonstrated were miniatures he had bought at Kinzua, back in 1948. When the press got into the story, and printed it, hundreds of letters were received by Pete for the tomahawk. Since there is no longer a town of Kinzua, and no one carried even a reasonable facsimile of a tomahawk, and many of the letters of request were so touching, not to mention the encouragement supplied by the entire community — Pete began to design a tomahawk such as the world had never seen.

When he finally felt he had the ultimate in balance, weight, and design, he invited many local citizens to LaGana's Trading Post on Tanner Street to try his tomahawk. Because of his ability to throw and stick anything from a lady's hat pin to a double bit ax, he felt he could not judge the balance of his new tomahawk. Dozens of people tried his tomahawk.

little girls, housewives and big bully men—they all threw this atomic-age tomahawk accurately. Satisfied with the design, weight, and balance, Pete applied for a patent. Again he was summoned to Naval Annex, Washington, D.

To date, 90 per cent of the tomahawks are bought by the Marines, their parents, wives or other members of their families. From Maine to Florida, New York to California, Puerto Rico, Germany, Cuba (Guantanamo Bay Naval Base), Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, in the far corners of the world are the tomahawks that originated in Ebensburg, Pa., U.S.A.

And what about the reports back from Vietnam, and other sources? A father who ordered this tomahawk for his son in Vietnam stated, "I

served twenty years in the Marine Corps and have used every known hand weapon, and let me tell you your tomahawk is the best damn weapon for feel and balance I've ever seen." And a War Correspondent interviewed a Marine Corporal just back from Vietnam: "They overran our position. Some of the men were using K-bars, hunting knives, rocks and bare fists. I had this tomahawk, and if the rest of them had had them, things would have been different. Since that encounter, quite a few men in Reconnaissance are buying this tomahawk."

"... your tomahawk comes in mighty handy when we go into a Viet Cong village. We are instructed to search every hut before we destroy it, and "Charlie" has some sneaky ideas. He sets booby-traps in doors and windows. I chow a hole through the side of a hut



Naval Annex, Washington, D. C., for an interview with the Marine Corps. After the interview, Lt. Col. Dbzema asked if he would demonstrate this new tomahawk at the Landing Force Development Center, Quantico, Va. At the demonstration Pete used his tomahawk to defend himself against a bayonet charge by one man, then two. He demonstrated the versatility of his tomahawk against a rifle butt, a machete, a Bowie knife, and a "clubbed" rifle. The Marines applauded the demonstration with a standing ovation. Eighteen officers witnessed the demonstration—each of the eighteen bought one of the tomahawks.

The Civilian Evaluators present all agreed to the fact that this tomahawk had few, if any, limitations. On their "scratch sheets" they had marked: Tomahawk: (1) no special equipment. (2) Needs no special training area, and (3) Needs no special training instructors, etc., etc. This pleased the Marine Officers and they assumed the tomahawk would be adopted. But the evaluators reminded them that before any new weapon could be adopted, it must replace some other weapon, according to military rules and regulations. However, it was firmly established that there would be absolutely no restrictions to the G.I.'s buying and using the tomahawk.

...they came from everywhere, up out of holes out of trees. It was frightening. Three were on me at once, the fourth snatched my rifle and ran. I was clawed, punched, kicked and bit in a dozen places before I managed to get the tomahawk free. I got all three, and one more with the tomahawk before 'Charlie' broke contact. I was offered ten times what I paid for your tomahawk."

"my job is to help clear areas for helicopters to land. The jungle clearing always have pole-size trees that must be cut down quickly. The tomahawk does this job with much more ease than anything we've used."

The letters of praise for the tomahawk are endless. The president of the Tru Flyte Knife Throwers of America, Mr. Gruzansky, Chicago, Ill., said this new tomahawk is the best-balanced throwing instrument he has ever held.

Bob Randall of Orlando, Florida, maker of the world's most exclusive knives, recently ordered six of these new tomahawks.

Adrian Van Dyk of Marietta, Ohio, is currently writing "The History of Edged Weapons in American Wars." He requested a tomahawk and its history of development and use. He is devoting a chapter in his book to the Vietnam Tomahawk.

And what does "Pete" think about all this? "It's a wonderful feeling to be able to do something special for the G.I.'s in Vietnam. And a few million people have heard of a place called Ebensburg, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.," he says.