

## **HORIX STORY: DEATH THREATS, A NASTY DIVORCE AND A COMBO BOTTLE OPENER by Don Thornton**

It was a scandalous divorce case unfolding over two years and involving a high society St. Louis woman with ties to champagne and newspapers and a Chicago manufacturer/inventor with a bottle opener/corkscrew connection.

The woman filed suit for divorce Oct. 11, 1928 in Belleville, Illinois, charging her husband of four years with non-support, cruelty, and death threats. She said he once placed a scissors point at her throat and threatened to cut her heart out.

She also testified her husband had borrowed from her and failed to repay \$7,000 between March, 1924 when they were married and May, 1928 when she left him. The husband denied all the charges. He testified his wife had an independent income of \$12,000 a year and had agreed before their marriage to support herself and her then 14-year-old daughter because he was already burdened with alimony payments.

The wife was Carrie Cook Pretorius Horix, daughter of Douglas Cook, millionaire manufacturer of “Cook’s Imperial Champagne,” and widow of Edward L. Pretorius, the late publisher of the St. Louis Times and German-language Westliche Post.

The husband was Carl Horix, described in newspaper reports as an inventor.

Mrs. Horix won her first divorce suit in Belleville before a jury. After an hour’s deliberation, the jury ruled in 1929 that Horix was guilty of “extreme and repeated cruelty.” However, that decree was set aside on Horix’s appeal, because the wife had not lived in Illinois long enough to establish legal residence there. Mrs. Horix moved to Los Angeles and a year later again went to court to end her marriage. Superior Court Judge William Hazlett issued an interlocutory decree of divorce October 17, 1930.

To say the least, it was an acrimonious affair. For example, shortly after Mrs. Horix first filed for divorce, her husband filed suit in the same Belleville court against his mother-in-law, asking for \$250,000 in damages, alleging alienation of affections.

Horix claimed that Mrs. Douglas G. Cook of St. Louis was behind his wife’s refusal to move with him to Chicago. The outcome of that suit could not be determined.

Horix, 1874-1944, was a failure at marriage but he had better luck with one of his inventions. The St. Louis Dispatch on March 6, 1929 in a story on the divorce gave this background: “Horix, until recently, was in the brass manufacturing business in Chicago. He is now perfecting a pen knife and corkscrew combination.”

And that would be the very collectible “Buddy-Nife.” Horix was granted a patent for his “combination tool” on June 18, 1929, Patent No. 1,717,925. His headline-generating divorce and this patent appear to be his only claims to fame.

“This invention relates to a pocket tool comprising a plurality of implements mounted on a single handle” and “effectively encased when not in use so that the tool may be carried in a pocket without danger of tearing the lining of the pocket...” Horix said in his patent papers.



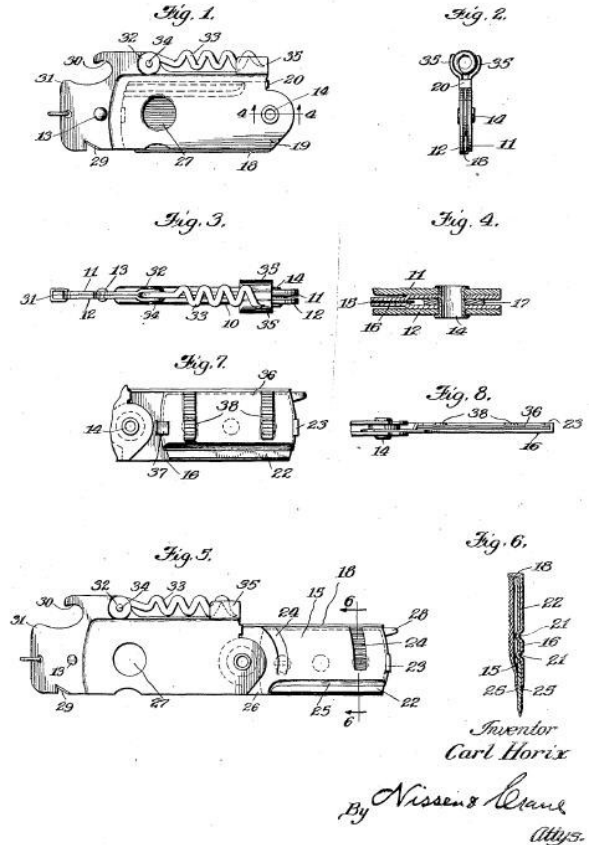
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Popular Mechanics at the time gave this description: "Several useful articles are combined in a pocket-knife that employs a discarded razor blade for its cutting edge and is flat to take up but little room. Bottle opener, corkscrew, twine and cigar cutter, and a nail file and cleaner are included, making the knife a small compact article."

The Greist Manufacturing Company of New Haven Connecticut produced the 3¼-inch long combo tool, marking it **Buddy-Nife, Reg. U.S. Pat. Off., Pat. App. For** on one of the flat sides with the other side open for advertising purposes as a promotional article. Later models included the patent number.



June 18, 1929. C. HORIX 1,717,925  
COMBINATION TOOL  
Original Filed April 15, 1926



Some were manufactured with a small file instead of a corkscrew. The one pictured is marked: **MOUNTAIN VALLEY MINERAL WATER GINGER ALE & CARBONATED PITTSBURGH OFFICE 22 PENN AVE. PHONE COURT-0824.**



