then there could be a problem. However, if the detent is strong enough to keep the blade retracted, all will be well. (I will discuss detents later.) This can only be determined by deassisting the knife or by checking with someone who has deassisted the same model knife. Once again, before deassisting a knife, it might be worth checking on YouTube to see if someone has already done this on camera.

Automatic Knives

Automatic knives open with the push of a button and were once called **switch blade knives**. There are strict laws concerning automatic knives in most states, so be forewarned. In fact, it might be a good idea to check both your state *and local* laws concerning carrying knives of *any* type. There may be blade length limits in your area. Also, carrying a knife hidden in your pocket may be considered carrying a *concealed weapon*, whereas carrying a knife in your pocket partly exposed using a pocket clip may be perfectly fine. Good luck on this.

Actually, in some parts of the country, automatic knives are legal if and only if the blade length is under 2 inches. The California-based knife company Pro-Tech produces some automatic knives just for this market. Figure 27 shows the Half Breed from Pro-Tech, a very well made little switch blade for the kid in most of us.

Figure 27: The Half Breed automatic knife (Pro-Tech)

Locking Mechanisms

Not all folding knives have locking mechanisms. After all, normal cutting and slicing actions act to keep the blade open and so, for these purposes, no locking mechanism is needed. That notwithstanding, there are a variety of locking mechanisms for knife blades, the most common of which are as follows.

LockBack Locks

The **lockback lock** is shown in Figures 28, 29 and 30.

Figure 28: Lockback lock—blade partially open

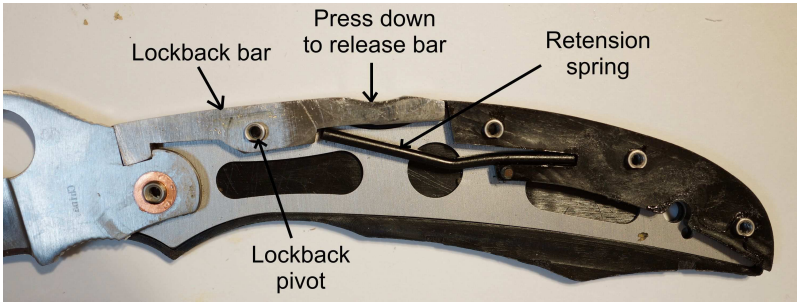

Figure 29: Lockback lock—blade open

Figure 30: Lockback lock—blade closed

When you press down on the **lockback bar**, which is a substantial metal bar running along the spine of the handle, the bar rotates around the **lockback pivot** so that the front of the bar raises up and releases the blade. The lockback bar is held in the

locked position by the **retention spring**. Note that the lockback bar is also responsible for holding (but not locking) the blade in its closed position.

Personally, I find lockback locks to be somewhat less ergonomic than other locking mechanisms. In fact, I once bought a knife that I liked *very* much—Its small size and elegant design approached perfection for me. However, perhaps precisely because the knife is small, my thumb was so close to the lockback pivot that the force required to disengage the lock was beyond my comfort level. (There is also no cutout for the thumb and the edges of the lockback bar are a bit sharp, which I believe to be a design flaw.) I realized reluctantly that this knife was not for me.

I should also mention that lockback knives require some special attention when closing, lest you cut yourself. (This really applies to all types of knives, but I think more so to lockback knives.) Specifically, if you hold the knife as in Figure 31 when you disengage the lock, the blade may very well swing down and back up into your finger, causing a nasty cut! (This happened to me *twice* when I got my first lockback knife many years ago. You would think that I would have learned after the first time!)

Figure 31: The WRONG way to close a lockback knife with one hand

Figure 32 shows the correct way to perform a one-handed closing of a lockback knife. By placing your index finger close enough to the pivot point of the knife, you can prevent the cutting edge of the blade from contacting your finger. (Of course, you can always use your other hand to control the blade movement.)

Figure 32: The correct way to close a lockback knife with one hand

Liner Locks

Figures 33 and 34 show the **liner lock**.

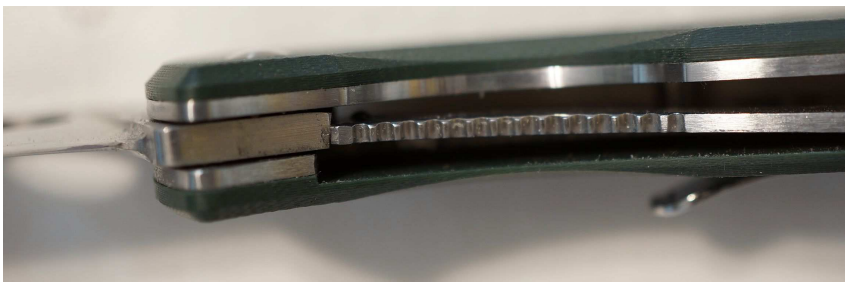

Figure 33: The liner lock