

Joel:

I looked at the [Woodsmith](#) article reviewing the [Adria](#) and [Lie-Nielsen](#) saws and was somewhat disappointed in what I consider to be mis-information. I admire and support everything that Lie-Nielsen [and Adria] has done to re-establish high levels of quality in the manufacture of hand tools. They indeed produce some of the finest hand tools available including their line of saws. But, to consider the folded back as inferior (as the article implies) is to say the least – erroneous. I say this simply because the purpose of the folded back is to actually create the ability to remove bends from the saw blade by transferring tension points as needed.

All of the old woodworkers, of which I am now one, used to remove bends or crooks from their blades by simply tapping the back of the spline with a hammer around the bend. This shocked the pinched steel into the folded spline and effectively pulled the blade into equal tension. It was common practice and it's worked perfectly for at least 150-years and more. The saws that you talk about do not have that capacity and if they did bend for any reason (from over heating or being stepped on), these cannot be removed in this type of machined back.

Another thing that was missing from the article is the fact that these saws will need sharpening as often as any other. If you don't have Lie-Nielsen's or Adria's sharpening skills and the best equipment to sharpen them to perfection then you must send them back to establish the same standards. That makes it quite an expense, not only in the cost of sharpening, but the time, cost, and hassle of shipping and handling, etc.

On the other hand, there is a saw that I can recommend for beginners for small dovetail-type work and even for crosscutting the shoulders of tenons. It retails for \$5.95 and cuts perfectly. You'll love it. It's made by [Zona](#) and you can find it in any hobby shop. My recommendation for dovetails is their 6-1/2", 32tpi saw. But, you can cut almost anything with it, including steel. No one should underestimate this saw.

I'm afraid new woodworkers who read this article will believe they have to spend \$125 for a saw they may use twice a month. My overall feeling is that there is a place for both types of saw. The Zona razor saw will actually cut superbly and as well as the most costly of saws. The kerf is perfect for dovetails for several reasons and even though the blade is made as a disposable, I have been using mine for at least a year now and it's still sharp. I know the wooden handle on the Zona is cheap-looking. But, I simply turned a new handle to my preference using rosewood and a more solid-looking brass ferule. It looks nice now and feels very good in my hand. When the blade gets dull I simply remove the old blade from the 'folded' steel back and slide in a new one.

For my students, I encourage them to start with a less-expensive saw and get comfortable using it. It may be years before they decide to upgrade their saw, at which time a Lie-Nielsen or Adria dovetail saw would both be excellent choices.

Paul Sellers