



## What are the Marshal Keys?

By Steve Young

Shortly after GM introduced the 10-cut lock system, articles began appearing in the "Tips & Tricks" columns of the various locksmith magazines about how easy some of them were to pick with a specially cut key. The cuts on the keys that people offered varied quite a bit, but most of them worked very well.

At that time, I was traveling around the country with Bill Reed, Frank Agius, and Jerry Levine as a part of the "Frank & Bill Show." Since this was information that the folks who attended our seminars wanted to know, I soon incorporated these "Pick Keys" into my classes. I made slides that showed the keys along with the cuts of the ones that I had found to be the most effective, so that the students could make their own pick keys.

At first, I was surprised when people asked me if I had any of these keys already cut that they could buy, rather than making their own. But soon, it was happening at every show I went to, so I gave the whole concept some more thought. Since I knew that the GM 10-cut system and the Chrysler 7 & 8-cut systems had a lot in common, I tried putting the same cuts on a Chrysler key as on the GM keys and was amazed at how well the keys worked. Taking that one step further, I applied the same thinking to the Ford 8-cut system since it too has similarities to the GM 10-cut system. The Ford 8-cut version doesn't work as well as the GM or the Chrysler, because that system has five cuts rather than four, but it does work in a surprising number of cases.

I made up a small batch of these keys to take to the shows and sold out so quickly that I soon added them to the Tech-Train product line as the "Marshal Keys." However, I kept the cuts posted on my website and continued to give out the cuts in my classes. In 2003, Tech-Train Productions merged with Lockmasters, Inc. and the Marshal Keys became a Lockmasters product. We still make them by hand here in Pensacola and we still sell enough of them to make it worth the effort, even though I still give out the cuts freely to anyone who wants them.

The important thing to remember about the Marshal Keys, or any other pick key, is that they are absolutely guaranteed NOT to work all the time. Picking a lock, regardless of how you do it, is more of an art than a science. Individual skill, the condition of the lock, and the user's patience all enter into the equation. But, pick keys like the Marshal keys have their place as another weapon in your arsenal when you are fighting to unlock vehicles.

In my opinion, anything that makes the job easier is good, but if a pick key doesn't work quickly, I go on to other methods. The real advantage of the Marshal Keys is that they will fit in your pocket and when they work, which is more often than not, they amaze the customer. They know full well that they paid you for a job that they could never have done themselves and they also know that you did it in a way that couldn't disconnect any linkages, or scratch the tinting film.

To use the Marshal Keys or any other pick key, you begin by inserting just the tip of the key into the shutter door of the lock. Then you apply turning pressure in the direction that you want to pick the lock, and then work the key into the lock while maintaining the turning force. Work the key in and out with an up and down motion and the lock should pick quickly. When you feel the lock "tighten up" and the key gets harder to move, this means that you are very near to picking the lock. And, keep in mind that every time you release the turning force on the lock, you are starting over. If the lock doesn't pick, stop and flip the key over since the cuts on the key are not the same on both sides. Practice will make a huge difference in your success rate, and I strongly recommend that you practice a LOT before you try to use the Marshal Keys in front of a customer.

As with any picking procedure, "friction is your friend." Don't lubricate the lock and if you have a choice of which lock to attack, always choose the one that you think has the most wear. In addition, as my buddy Jeff Cooper likes to say, lock picks can make you a "Hero or a Zero." If you can't pick the lock quickly, stop and try a different method; people today are so used to seeing locks picked in seconds on TV that if it doesn't work quickly, they will assume that you don't know what you're doing. If it does work quickly, don't act surprised, just charge your fee and go on to the next job with a smile on your face.