

## THE ORIGIN OF THE MEEHAN (UTILITY BAG & BAR ROLL-UP)

*In February 2006*, Simon Difford published a feature on bartender kits in Difford's Guide that featured the equipment carrying case of globe trotting mixologist Jamie Stephenson. At that time, proper equipment in most bars was scarce so you needed to bring your own when training, putting on demos or events. Besides being one of the first equipment features that sent me hunting for proper mixing glasses, stirring spoons and atomizers, the article cemented the idea that bartending was a trade, just like being an electrician or plumber, that required tools *and* a toolbox. Simon first featured a photographers lens bag that had been repurposed for bartending equipment. I bought that bag and stowed my equipment in it, but couldn't help think that there were far too many pockets for my needs. Additionally, since every compartment was mirrored on each side, I usually found myself searching all over to find what I needed.

*A few months later*, while taking the BAR class, I saw how some of the other traveling mixologists were stowing their equipment. The founders of Contemporary Cocktails, Willy Shine and Aisha Sharpe, had repurposed long, over the shoulder knife bags for cocktail equipment such as muddlers, strainers, citrus presses and spoons. The bag fit snugly in a large backpack or small carry-on pieces of luggage where larger equipment such as cutting boards, mixing glasses, measuring cups and bitters bottles could be stored. The zipper on my first Koobikit branded bag broke when I attempted to stock too many tools in the bag.

*The combination of my second Koobikit bag*, a smaller knife roll-up that houses a pairing knife, utility knife, channel knife, wine key and tap wrench: all stored inside a rolling, carry on size suitcase has served me well for the past year. In that time, I've seen metal attaché kits such as Jamie Boudreau's that have been custom fit with foam for his equipment, a boxy vintage leather carrier that Don Julio's Brand Ambassador Brian Van Flandern uses, the highly modern kit that Michael Silvers created to house his excellent Uber Bartools and Simon Ford of Pernod Ricard's new doctor's bag that combines the functionality of Velcro and nylon on the inside with a classy leather exterior. Every bag has its pros and cons: most were repurposed and therefore fail to fulfill the primary purpose, others are too flashy, too utilitarian, or too posh and few of them appeal to me aesthetically.

*Six months ago*, Paul Morrison, a bar regular of mine who works in the fashion industry, introduced me to his old friend, Brooks Morrison (no relation). Brooks was visiting from Virginia where she is the Director of Public Relations for Moore & Giles, a 75-year-old VA-based leather design company that recently expanded their offerings to include an extensive collection of leather bags and accessories. She asked me if I'd be willing to collaborate with her company to design a bartender bag. After picking my jaw up off the table, I agreed and met with Brooks and the Company's President, Sackett Wood to discuss my ideas.

*I wanted my bag* to reflect the style and timeless design of my calfskin Jack Spade messenger bag, canvas Filson luggage and vintage Belfast raincoat while delivering the functionality of my Koobikit and camera bag. After visiting the vintage Airstream trailer that Moore & Giles uses to transport and display their collections at trade and trunk shows across the country, I was struck by the simplicity of their designs and the luxurious leathers that made each piece appear timeless and elegant. At the Architectural Digest Interior Design show in March, I met Moore & Giles designer Heather Dillard. Besides charming me, she listened patiently as I listed off my ideas and showed her my inspiration pieces including a vintage army knife roll-up Gramercy Tavern chef Michael Anthony loaned me and a couple editions of the Japanese Style Bible Free & Easy. Heather drew up a few ideas as I spoke: letting me know what would work and what wouldn't. The Airstream filled with Moore & Giles bags served as a materials template.

*One month later*, after formalizing an agreement with Sackett, I sent Heather numerous sketches of what I wanted the bag to look like. We went over my notes inch by inch for hours over the phone as she sketched the designs. After traveling to the Dominican Republic to supervise the creation of the prototype, Heather sent it to me for feedback. I went over the bag with a fine-toothed comb. After two days of contemplation followed by two hours of discussing revisions over the phone, Heather sent our changes down to the Dominican Republic to be mocked up again. The final product is a testament to her design savvy and the company's faith in my intentions. Sackett Wood insisted that no one would be satisfied until we had produced a bag that I was eager to use.

*I put my name on this bag* because it is everything I desire from a piece of equipment:

- The leather and waxed canvas are reminiscent of old saddles, army jackets and postal bags. The simple, functional design will never go out of style
- The laminated canvas interior is easy to wipe and features the stamp of the bags maker
- There is no branding on the exterior of the bag: the materials and design speaks for itself encouraging the customer to open it up to discover its lineage

- The leather-lined roll up is more durable and stylish than modern canvas knife roll ups
- Every tool needed for one bartender to prepare and serve drinks behind a bar was taken into consideration before the bag was designed. Each and every one of those tools has a place, or mise en place as we say in the kitchen, in this bag
- The bag does not look like a bartender kit, and can be repurposed as a messenger bag, carry-on bag or wine tote
- We went over each and every inch to ensure that no space was wasted in each every pocket and divider. We wanted the bag to be compact enough to encourage frequent use
- The canvas lined exterior pocket with key clip, PDA and business card holder affirms that this bag is used for business as well as pleasure

The MSRP of the bag and roll up will separate the bold from the intrepid. This is not the first bartender kit and will not be the last. I expect the category to grow around Moore & Giles gutsy guess that there is a need for this type of bag for bartenders and chefs all over the world who have the privilege of demonstrating their craft outside their respective bars and restaurants. It is our hope that bartenders view this bag as an earnest attempt to go above and beyond addressing their needs. This bag, like my passion for the craft, is overindulgent and a labor of love. I hope you like it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Meehan', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jim Meehan