

**SURGICAL FORCEPS CONVERTED
INTO BIRD BAND OPENER**
By Christopher N. Rose

Having "sprung" my cuticle scissors removing bands on several occasions, I decided to find a tool with a finer jaw and better leverage. My investigations carried me to a surgical supply catalog and revealed the Backhaus Towel Forceps as being most adaptable for this job. The actual task of conversion can be done over the kitchen stove with the assistance of a pair of longnose pliers, a larger pair of utility pliers and possibly the extra force of a hammer, gently applied.

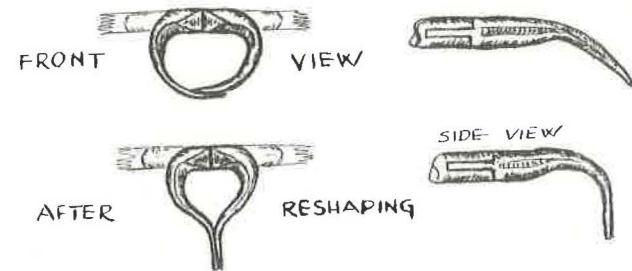
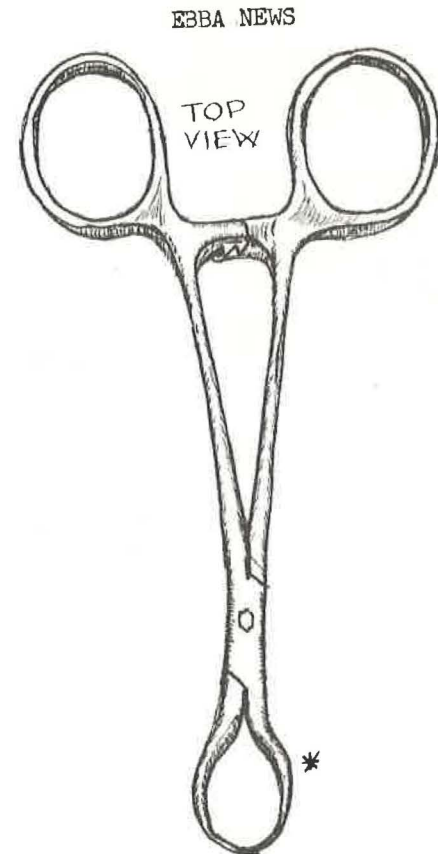
Start as follows:

1. Heat the front tip of the jaws to a bright red and with the long-nose pliers bend the one jaw down so it no longer overlaps. Reheat again and repeat process on opposite jaw. (See drawing on facing page)

2. Reheat jaws again! You'll notice that the thin points heat up before the rest of the jaw. Since the depth of the longnose pliers is about 3/8" top to bottom -- get one point of the forceps hot and then grasp this in the jaw of the pliers so the first 3/8" of the forcep jaw is hidden inside plier jaws. Bend forcep point straight down -- reheat and do the same for the opposite jaw. Once this operation is completed the jaws of the forceps no longer close, however when viewed from the side the points are at right angles to the shaft and finger loop.

3. Next close and fully engage the ratchet at the back near the finger loop. Now reheat again the top bend of the jaws to a bright red. Have someone hold a 20 penny spike or 1/4" diameter metal rod back between the jaws of the forceps -- and with the utility pliers squeeze the jaws until the sharp points cometogether parallel. If you can't move the jaws with the pliers use a hammer over a hard surface (such as a striking surface of a second hammer). BRIGHT RED HEAT is the most necessary requirement for this operation in order to prevent the metal crystalizing and breaking.

4. After reaching the desired shape, it will be necessary to re-temper the metal and for this operation place the entire jaw into the flame. As the metal begins to heat the metal will begin to discolor or oxidize. When a pale straw color reaches back to the center of the hinge, behind the jaw, quench (plunge) the jaw in a small pan of cold tap water. Reasonable care to the details of this operation should result in a pair of needle thin jaws, small enough to open a #0 band and strong enough to open a #2 band.



* JAWS DRAWN APPROX. DOUBLE SIZE

CN ROSE
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The Arista Surgical Co., 67 Lexington Ave., New York 10, N.Y., has the Backhaus Forcep in both 3 1/2" and 5 1/2" size available and selling for \$2.00 each. A check at your local hospital may reveal second hand units which can be had for a small contribution to the institution.

98 Lopez Road, Cedar Grove, New Jersey.



Page 195