2018 KNIFE TEST ISSUE

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INSTAGRAM: BRAVE NEW WORLD OF KNIVES

Hammer Hawk and Backup from TOPS Knives

Hone in with EZE-LAP

BLADE VS. BEER
KNIVES THAT OPEN BREWS

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45 YEARS
ONLY THE BEST WILL MAKE THE CUT

FREE SHIPPING AND SOUTHERN GRIND HAT
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The Wayfarer comes in a number of variants, including the two above. Wayfarer Compact (left) is a linerlock and the Wayfarer 247 (right) is a framelock. Both have 3.5” blades with a multiple shape options. There are millions of ways to build one, so visit our website to explore what’s possible and order one direct.

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Mr. McEvoy Asks . . .

Concerning part one of your article "The Sea of Mud Knife" in the March BLADE:

a) The last I heard there is no physical proof or complete province—only unverified stories—to show that James Black made any knives;

b) Therefore, as a result of a) above, unless I missed the latest news, there is no proof that Black made any Carrigan-type bowie knives;

c) If Black made such knives, is there proof he gave BLADE Magazine Cutlery Hall Of Fame member James Bowie one?

d) If Bowie received such a knife from Black, is there proof Bowie carried it through time and space from Black's knife shop to the Alamo?

e) If Bowie had a Black knife at the Alamo, is there any proof that a Mexican soldier picked up that particular knife?

f) Is there any proof that the Sea of Mud knife had silver liners that might have been on a Carrigan-type knife and which were removed before the knife was abandoned or lost?

Do you even begin to understand what a fuzzy fantasy article like this will do to my opinion whenever your magazine praises a knife or a knifemaker?

Perhaps you should encourage Mr. Batson to try to locate Atlantis for you. Or, as an alternate, you might send him to me in San Francisco so that I can try to sell him the Golden Gate Bridge.

Now for something completely different.

Your article reminds me that I have read that Black lost most of his vision, possibly because his father-in-law severely beat him over the head with a cane. If this account is correct, a father-in-law possibly because his father-in-law severely beat him over the head with a cane. If this account is correct, a father-in-law seems to imply a wife, but I have never heard anything about her. There seems to be nothing, for example, about Mrs. Black caring for her husband after his loss of vision. Do you have any reliable information?

Philip McEvoy, a letter via e-mail

... and Dr. Batson Answers

Thank you for your interest in the first installment of the Sea Of Mud series.

If you read the rest of the series, you may lose the funny fantasy feeling you have toward BLADE. I don't think you could sell me the Golden Gate Bridge but I might buy the Brooklyn Bridge—it is more historic.

It is difficult to answer some of your questions with a probability of 100 percent. After all, the Alamo fell March 1836, 182 years ago.

I am Dr. James L. Batson. I have a Ph.D. from the University of Texas and have been researching James Bowie, bowie knives and all the bowie knifemakers. I have spent thousands of dollars over the past 30 years in this endeavor. I am a life member in the Antique Bowie Knife Association. I am also a master smith in the American Bladesmith Society and have been since 1993, specializing in the old-timey knifemaking methods.

I hope the subsequent installments of the Sea of Mud series answered at least some of your questions to your satisfaction. I am enclosing a synopsis of Black's activities garnered from the legal documents in Hope and old Washington, Arkansas. Also included are some newspaper articles and ads.

Also included is a provenance of the Carrigan knife (item b) and a brief proof that Black could have made the Carrigan-type knife (item a). I have made an in-depth study that includes other factors. The attached are from my research and have not been published. Again, I thank you for your interest.

James L. Batson, Huntsville, Alabama

Editor's note: As Dr. Batson notes, the vast amount of time between the Alamo's fall and today, not to mention the absence of decent records from the event other than those of the Mexicans and a few survivors whose recollections were only of events in their immediate vicinity during the battle and which were contradictory as time wore on, make the likelihood of answering all of Mr. McEvoy's questions 100 percent correct virtually impossible. Some of Mr. McEvoy's questions were addressed in the subsequent installments of the series since the March issue. Others may be addressed in the fifth and final installment of the series this issue (page 22). Meanwhile, look for Dr. Batson's three-part series "The Real James Black" beginning in the August BLADE. And, finally, perhaps Mr. McEvoy will get back to us with any observations once he has read the material Dr. Batson emailed to him in attachments regarding Batson's research on Black and the Carrigan knife. (We regret that we cannot reprint that material here-in due to its copious length and our space limitations.) Oh, and one more thing: Along with Benchmade CEO Les de Asis, Dr. Batson was inducted into the Cutlery Hall Of Fame last year. See his interview with BLADE live from the 30th Annual Batson's Bladesmithing Symposium in McCalla, Alabama, this past April at http://www.blademag.com/knife-history/edwin-forrest-bowie-knife.
The Hammer Hawk and Backup designed by Leo Espinoza for TOPS Knives make a versatile outdoor set for cutting and chopping tasks.

Though touted as a tomahawk, the Hammer Hawk’s heavy-duty nature makes it more of a hawk/axe hybrid. Blade steel, thickness and edge length: 1075 carbon, a broad 3/8 inch and 4.5 inches. Weight: 36.3 ounces. Overall length: 14.5 inches. The poll is hardened for smashing in case cutting does not suffice. The green canvas Micarta® haft is rounded and extends most of the way up the tang. A clever two-piece leather sheath features a blade cover separate from the belt frog for belt/pack carry. The frog allows you to insert and remove the belt from your hip without removing the belt clip. MSRP: $350.

The Backup is a nifty skeletonized fixed blade targeted for the smaller cutting jobs better suited for a compact knife. Blade length, steel and overall length: 2 inches, acid-rain-finished 1095 carbon and 5 inches. Weight: 1.6 ounces. Sheath: black Kydex®. MSRP: $75.

For more information contact TOPS Knives, attn: Craig Powell, Dept. BL7, POB 2544, Idaho Falls, ID 83403 208-542-0113 topsknives.com, or see the story on page 74.

Jesus Arellano photographed the cover.

DMS Captures photographed the inset image of the EZE-Lap Retractable Diamond Sharpening Rod.
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On May 3 in Scotland, a man was arrested for carrying a potato peeler. That’s right, a potato peeler. He was charged for carrying “an article which had a blade or which was sharply pointed, namely a potato peeler.” Maximum penalty: four years imprisonment.

Knife bans, like gun control, are not about saving lives but controlling them—including controlling the economically disadvantaged, people of color or others the state wants to keep “in their place.” (The potato peeler violator, by the way, was said to suffer “from significant learning difficulties.”) More to the point, knife bans are designed to keep the people down. For proof, consider the New York Police Department’s biased enforcement of New York State’s gravity knife statute involving the poor, black and Hispanic.

According to The Legal Aid Society of New York City, from July 1 through Dec. 31, 2015, 84 percent of its clients prosecuted for alleged gravity knife possession were black and/or Hispanic. Intent to use a gravity knife unlawfully against another was charged in fewer than 5 percent of gravity knife prosecutions, so it appears the vast majority of the 84 percent did not use the knives as “deadly weapons.”

The inequality of policing and prosecuting for possession of gravity knives by black and Hispanic men is most striking in NYC’s Union Square. There, according to Legal Aid, such men consist of only 11.5 percent of the population but account for a whopping 52 percent of those arrested and prosecuted for gravity knife possession. Moreover, the New York County District Attorney’s Office (DANY) exacerbates things by often classifying gravity knife possession as a felony, a charge that carries up to seven years in prison. From July 1-Dec. 31, 2015, DANY charged 65 Legal Aid clients with felony gravity knife possession—four times more often than all other NYC prosecutors combined!

Magnifying the inequality of the situation is the fact that NYC chain retailers sell folding knives designed and marketed as work tools, yet when Legal Aid clients are found with those knives in their pockets, the knives are suddenly “illegal” and the clients are arrested as criminals. Such inconsistent application of the law ensures a regular money flow to the local big box stores via sales revenues and to government through sales taxes and fines, while simultaneously keeping the victims “in their place.” As Doug Ritter of Knife Rights noted, knife bans help ensure that the circle of inequality remains unbroken.

“Repealing knife bans removes another excuse to engage in such biased arrests and prosecutions for the innocent carry of some otherwise arbitrarily illegal or allegedly illegal knife,” he observed.

While Knife Rights continues to fight NYC’s inequality of knife law enforcement*, knife control has raised its ugly head among the rank-and-file citizenry of London, England, and Canada. In January, the Canadian International Trade Tribunal upheld a Canadian Border Services Agency decision that classified most folding knives as prohibited weapons to import, even though the knives are legal to sell and possess in Canada. (For more on the Canadian knife ban, see blademag.com and the special story in the upcoming August BLADE®.)

Meanwhile, despite—or perhaps because of—its long-time ban on guns, for the first time in over 200 years London recently overtook NYC in terms of the murder rate. Though it is currently illegal in Britain to carry a knife longer than 3 inches in public “without good reason,” in early April London Mayor Sadiq Khan infamously said, “No excuses: there is never a reason to carry a knife. Anyone who does will be caught, and they will feel the full force of the law.”

The vast majority of those who will feel the full force of Khan’s edict as well as that of knife bans in general are the economically and other of the disadvantaged, or the simply not quite so advantaged. What better way to keep them all down than to arrest, fine and jail them for carrying knives?

At press time, Knife Rights was engaged in a federal civil rights lawsuit against New York City and District Attorney Cyrus Vance, Jr. over gravity knives. For more, visit kniferights.org.

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The Hogue EX-F01 has a flat blade grind, an impact pommel and lanyard/lashing holes. The blade is cryogenically heat treated to a hardness of 57-59 HRC. Handle colors include OD green and flat dark earth in addition to solid black. The automatic retention sheath (left) is ambidextrous and includes a Torx tool.
Designed by Darrin Sirois, U.S. Army sergeant major (retired) and founder of TCT Knives, the Doublestar Lite-Fighter includes a .08-inch-thick Boltron sheath with large Tek-Lok attachment. Sirois served 25 years active duty, including U.S. Army Rangers, Special Forces and Special Operations. His knife designs are currently serving in Afghanistan, Africa and worldwide.

A collaboration between Gingrich Tactical Innovations and Ranger Proof Arms, the RS-1 rides in a Kydex® sheath. In addition to black, blade finish options include rustic, bead blast and satin. The handle also is available in black Micarta®.

Gingrich Tactical Innovations RS-1

Doublestar Lite-Fighter EX Combat Utility Knife

Nitro-V blade steel, an “improved AEB-L” by New Jersey Steel Baron

MSRP range: $175-$225

Rockwell hardness: 58-59 HRC

Coated finish

3.75-inch blade

1.5 inches

154CM stainless steel

8 5⁄16 inches

Tumbled finish

.187-inch-thick handle

Tan canvas Micarta

4.75-inch blade
The Always There Knife (ATK) by White River carries in an adjustable Kydex® sheath (a 3/32 Allen wrench is included) that rides on the right or left side in line with a 2-inch-wide belt or at various angle tilts and heights. If worn as a neck knife on the detachable 550 cord belt loop—which also wraps around the handle for an enhanced grip—the belt portion detaches for a lower profile.
Manufactured by KA-BAR, the "EK45" features a flat-ground, clip-point blade 1.25 inches wide with a Rockwell hardness of 56-58 HRC, an "S" guard and a hard plastic sheath. It is an update of the old Ek Commando Knife, of which a presentation model in the original style with the classic spear/dagger blade and wood handle is also available from KA-BAR/Ek.

Ek Model 5

- Weight: 11.2 ounces
- MSRP: $135.95
- 12.938 inches
- 1095 Cro-Van carbon steel
- .154-inch-thick steel
- Glass-filled-nylon handle material
- Smooth black epoxy powder coating baked on

12.938 inches
MSRP: $135.95
Weight: 11.2 ounces
1095 Cro-Van carbon steel
 .154-inch-thick steel
Glass-filled-nylon handle material
Smooth black epoxy powder coating baked on

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One of many designs for Lionsteel by Michele “Molletta” Pensato, the T5 is a smaller version of the company’s M7 model. The T5 comes with a MOLLE-compatible, black leather snap-closure belt sheath. The handle is machined from one piece of Micarta®. It includes a single guard and a lanyard hole.

Lionsteel T5

- Weight: 9.67 ounces
- Niolox, a stain-resistant tool steel
- .2-inch-thick steel
- Flat grind
- 5.04-inch, drop-point blade
- MSRP: $240
A knife’s gotta do what a knife’s gotta do. And that’s surely not being a decorative piece in a presentation box.

In the village of Söderfors, situated in the middle of Sweden’s iron heartland, we produce the best performing stainless Damascus patterned steel in the world.

Damasteel® simply manufactures a steel that gives knife makers all over the world incredible opportunities for personal creativity with absolute function. Your high standards on design and function is our priority.

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Puma SGB’s Shadowcat ZX 12 Recurve boasts a single-finger-grooved handle with lanyard. The Kydex® sheath with snap-loop containment has a belt clip and a pouch to store a firestriker.
The Winkler Knives II Spike comes with an ambidextrous, lined, leather-covered Kydex sheath with multiple carry options. The “WASP” in the name came about when an employee had the idea to laminate and then sculpt the black and tan Micarta handle. He thought it looked like a wasp, thus the name. The grip also is available in sculpted maple.

For the contacts for the knives in the story, see “Where To Get ’Em” on page 62.

To read about the latest knives, knife news, blogs and more, visit blademag.com.

Winkler Knives II Spike

9.78 inches
Sculpted WASP black and tan canvas laminate-phenolic
Integral crusher spike connects to a skeletonized full tang
0.205-inch-thick steel
80CrV2 carbon steel
5.25-inch blade
MSRP: $375 and up

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The LTC (Legal to Carry) is a neat pen-knife which you can easily carry in your pocket. To conform to knife laws we have deliberately designed this folding knife to feature all the elements required to enable the user to carry the knife in most environments.

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PRODUCT DETAILS LTC
Length Folded 3.5”
Blade length 2.32”
Blade thickness 0.15”
Weight (knife) 1.10 oz
Steel 3G
Hardness (HRC) 62

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I’ve been collecting knives for around 70 years, and custom knives for around 45 years. I’ve used various knives for various purposes over time, but my everyday carry knife for the last 20 years or so is a trapper pattern custom made by Wally Watts of Gatesville, Texas. It has dressed a few big game animals and many trout, but it has a nice, thin handle, so is just as comfortable riding in my pocket and handling everyday chores.”

Charlie Battle, Hayesville, North Carolina

I carry a Case doctor’s knife. I love the ‘pillbuster’ design, especially the butt end pharmacists originally used to crush pills and such to make medicine.”

M.F. Callahan, Jr., a letter via e-mail

My EDC is the Zing by Kershaw. I like the assisted opening and the three-position pocket clip. I would add ‘put some zing in your cut with the Kershaw Zing’ but you probably would edit it out.”

Linda Jo Faulkner, a letter via e-mail

Tell us what knife you carry. Add a little history or an anecdote. Try to include a photograph—if digital, at least 600 KB but no larger than 2 MB—of you with your knife. We will publish your comments in an upcoming “The Knife I Carry.” Your name will then be entered in a drawing to win a free, high-quality, name-brand pocketknife. The drawing will be Nov. 15. Mail to: BLADE®, P.O. Box 789, Ooltewah, TN 37363-0789, or e-mail steve.shackleford@fwmedia.com. If you send your entry by e-mail, please include your physical mailing address in case you win the pocketknife.
Pursuit Channel delivers the outdoors straight to your TV and devices with a click of a button. Download our app today and never miss an episode.
During the Battle of the Alamo, the palisades defended by David Crockett and the Tennessee Mounted Volunteers and the Low Barracks where James Bowie lay were overrun by the cazadore companies of the Battalion of Matamoros and Jimenez, and of the Active Battalion of San Luis under the command of Col. Juan Morales. If Bowie or a Tennessee Volunteer had the Sea of Mud relic, a Mexican soldier in one of the cazadore companies probably retrieved it and was then the proud owner.

Still, it is not known how the relic got to the west bank of the West Bernard River. Mexican Gen. Jose de Urrea’s “Diary of the Military Operations,” March 1836, includes the following:

“17 March 1836—During the night Capt. Pedro Pablo Ferino and two scouts came to me … Ferino told me that Col. Juan Morales was approaching with 3 cannon and 500 men from the battalions of Jiménez and San Luis.”

According to Col. Jose Enrique de la Pena, “On 11 March 1836, the permanent Jimenez Battalion and the active one from San Luis with a twelve-pounder, an eight-pounder and a howitzer, together with those things required to man them and accompanied by sixty-five cases of rifle cartridges and sufficient supplies, all under the command of Colonel Morales, marched to Goliad to place themselves under orders of General Urrea.”

Col. Morales’ 500 veteran troops joined Urrea’s forces on March 18 and contributed significantly to the defeat of Col. James Walker Fannin Jr.’s command in the Battle of Coleto Creek on March 19-20. With Urrea, Col. Mariano Salas and Lt. Col. Juan José Holzinger, Morales negotiated surrender terms with the Texians on March 20, 1836. Afterward, Urrea ordered Morales to bring the prisoners and captured munitions back to Goliad, and then ordered the colonel and the Jiménez and San Luis battalions to join him as he proceeded to take the town of Guadalupe Victoria (now Victoria) en route to Brazoria.

Morales then commanded Urrea’s second brigade, composed of the San Luis and Tres Villas battalions, while Salas commanded the first, composed of the Jiménez and Querétaro battalions. The permanent Battalion of Jimenez (273 men) and Active Battalion of San Luis (394 men), along with the rest of General Urrea’s troops, crossed the West Bernard River from west to east on their way to “Madam Powell’s” (Elizabeth Powell’s house on the trail from Brazoria and Columbia to San Felipe). Col. Morales and the San Luis and Jimenez Battalions may well have transported the relic knife from the Alamo to the West Bernard River. The question is who bought the knife from James Black in Washington, Arkansas Territory and carried it to the Alamo? That person came down the Southwest Trail through the village of Washington past Black’s shop on the way to a date with...
RELIC OWNER CANDIDATES

Crockett was but a high private in the Tennessee Mounted Volunteers. Capt. William B. Harrison and Lt. Robert Campbell commanded the company. Crockett probably was instrumental in forming the Tennessee Mounted Volunteers. He was proud of the day when, in September 1813, he rode the 10 miles to Winchester, Tennessee, to join the Tennessee Volunteer Mounted Riflemen under Andrew Jackson. According to reports, Crockett was one of the first men to cross the Tennessee River into the Creek War (1813-14).

Riflemen in Capt. William B. Harrison’s company of Tennessee Mounted Volunteers who traveled down the Southwest Trail through Washington past Black’s blacksmith shop were Crockett and James Madison Rose, 31, volunteer from Arkansas, nephew of President James Madison and good friend of Crockett’s. Kentuckians who traveled together from Logan County, Kentucky, down the Southwest Trail past Black’s blacksmith shop were Daniel W. Cloud, 24, lawyer; Peter James Bailey III, 24, lawyer; William Keener Fauntleroy, 22, volunteer; B. Archer M. Thomas, 18, volunteer; and Joseph G. Washington, 28, volunteer.

Tennesseans who may have come down the Southwest Trail included Joseph Bayless, 28, volunteer; Lt. Robert Campbell, 26, volunteer; Andrew Jackson Harrison, 27, volunteer; Capt. William B. Harrison, 25; William McDowell, 43, volunteer; John Purdy Reynolds, 29, doctor; and John W. Thompson, 38, volunteer and possibly a surgeon.

Those who did not come through Washington were Micajah Autry, 42, farmer, teacher and lawyer from Tennessee, and Richard L. Stockton, 19, volunteer from Virginia.

Any of these men could have bought an everyday/plain James Black knife without the silver overlay on the blade. The Sea of Mud relic would be expensive, above the normal person’s pay range. As noted, Crockett was strapped for money because he had traded his watch for another one plus $30, and thus probably could not have afforded it.

When new, the Sea of Mud relic knife would have been expensive, above the normal person’s pay range. David Crockett (above) was strapped for money because he had traded his watch for another one plus $30, and thus probably could not have afforded it.

The carrying case that holds these epaulets (left) has the words “Corl Jan Morales” written with iron gall ink on an early style Mexican label. According to the author, there is a good chance that these are the epaulets Col. Juan Morales wore when his men attacked the south wall of the Alamo and probably David Crockett, and are believed to have killed James Bowie. The star denotes the wearer as a full colonel in the Mexican Army. (Joe Musso image)
is not so. According to Rose’s brothers, Hugh, Erasmus and Samuel, James “left Lake Providence in the winter of 1835-6 by the way of Alexandria Louisiana on his route to Nacogdoches Texas where he joined the company of David Crockett in the military service of Texas and was afterward killed at the fall of the Alamo.” Hence, Rose did not bring the relic knife to the Alamo.

MORE TRAIL CANDIDATES
Because Col. Morales left the Alamo with 500 Mexican soldiers instead of the 100 that attacked the Tennessee Mounted Volunteers and James Bowie’s position, the slain Texans that may have used the Southwest Trail must be considered.

Jesse B. Bowman, 52, a hunter and trapper from Red River County, Texas, probably visited Black’s blacksmith shop in Washington. He may have bought a couple of Black’s plain coffin-handle knives with plain iron rivets.

Henry Warnell, 24, hunter and jockey from Arkansas, served as an artilleryman in Capt. Carey’s artillery company. He could have visited Black’s shop and bought a knife. Warnell escaped from the Alamo on the morning of March 6 but died in Port Lavaca in June 1836 of wounds received in the battle. If he owned a Black knife, he probably escaped the Alamo with one.

The following Tennessee volunteers are possible Southwest Trail travelers among the rest of the Alamo defenders: Samuel L. Ewing, 24, artilleryman and secretary to the commanding officer in Carey’s artillery company; John M. Hays, 22, possibly served in Capt. Baker’s company; Burke Trammel, 26, served in Carey’s artillery company; and Asa Walker, 37, a rifleman in Capt. White’s infantry company.

MEXICAN CANDIDATES
Another possibility is that the relic knife was captured by one of Urrea’s troops during one of the enemy engagements along the coast of Texas. In this case, the relic knife could not have belonged to James Bowie.

Col. James Walker Fannin Jr. commanded the Presidio La Bahia near Goliad. He called it Fort Defiance. He owned a Black knife, he probably escaped the Alamo with one.

According to Mexican Col. Jose Enrique de la Pena: “On the first day of March General Urrea had news that Dr. James Grant, a Scotsman, was returning from Rio Bravo, where he had marched with a party of select riflemen in an exploratory excursion to round up horses. During the night, General Urrea started moving with eight dragoons to encounter him, but since the weather was so harsh and so excessively cold, it was necessary to await him at a point called Los Cuates
A number of Kentucky and Tennessee volunteers passed by James Black's blacksmith shop in Washington, Arkansas Territory, on their way to the Alamo. Bill and Margaret Moran donated this monument in memory of Black in 1991. It is located near Black's shop in Washington.
de Agua Dulce.

“The next morning, he dealt Grant a decisive blow; forty-two men were killed including Dr. Grant and Major Morris. Dr. Grant was a land owner in Coahuila, a person well known and prominent. His capture would have been more useful than his death: General Urrea thought and he recommended that no attempt should be made against his life and every effort exerted to make him prisoner, ‘but the bait of his silver Spanish saddle, of his flashy firearms and other valuable jewels, provoked one of the ‘Cossack’ officers shamefully to murder him.’

James Bowie knew Dr. Grant as a fellow land speculator. It could be possible for Dr. Grant to have admired a silver-mounted James Black knife that Bowie wore at his hip. If so, Dr. Grant had the means to acquire a like knife from Black. In 1835 and 1836, Dr. Grant was too busy with land speculation and the Texas Revolution to travel to Washington to acquire a Black knife.
How many silver-mounted Black knives were in Texas that could be the Sea of Mud relic—possibly three or less? I know of another that was found near Austin, Texas, before the turn of this century. As a result, to my way of thinking, the answer to the question of whose knife the Sea of Mud relic was lies in the answer to one of the following: Did James Bowie own the Sea of Mud knife? Was it taken from another Alamo defender? Or was it captured by one of Gen. Urrea's soldiers? You make the call.

References
• *With Santa Anna in Texas* by Jose Enrique de la Pena, Texas A&M University Press, 1975

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BRAVE NEW WORLD OF KNIVES

A GROWING KNIFE INDUSTRY FORUM, INSTAGRAM CAN’T BE IGNORED AND LIKELY WILL NEVER DISAPPEAR

Social media has become an ever-growing presence in the daily lives of just about everyone. Its impact on opinion and the free exchange of information is undeniable, and one of its most forceful components today is the phenomenon of Instagram.

Knife enthusiasts have come to know Instagram in huge numbers, and its simplicity and immediacy are serving as powerful tools in the sales process. Simply put, said Curtis Iovito, along with Mark Carey co-owner of Spartan Blades, “Instagram is a mobile, desktop and internet-based photo-sharing application and service that allows users to share pictures and videos either publicly or privately to preapproved followers. It’s a way to very quickly share information and ideas in a flash!”

Combining the horsepower of such a social media platform and the opportunity to buy and sell custom knives—as well as factory models by companies like Spartan Blades—makes for a marketplace alchemy like nothing seen before. Custom knifemakers can place their latest anodized and embellished Spartan Blades-Bill Harsey folder collaboration etched, and information, and to do so “in a flash.” These (left and facing page) are both sides of the first prototype that Spartan posted on its Instagram site.

form up have seen increased activity that otherwise might have required hours and expenses associated with travel, marketing and promotion.

“The impact on the knife community is significant,” Iovito commented. “I can say that this year we have reached more prospective customers and knife lovers than we have on Facebook based on customer responses. It truly is a mix of social responses, providing information and assisting prospective buyers. Instagram has started allowing businesses to sell via the platform, and we plan to do this soon. Sixty-four percent of sales for us are from mobile platforms, so we see this as a plus.”

Purveyor Neil Ostroff of True North Knives started an Instagram account as a social tool to connect with friends, family and customers, but it soon became apparent that an additional sales tool was at his disposal. He changed his account from his personal name into the True...
North Knives (TNK) brand and made it a business account that allowed the use of tools provided to monitor how posts were being received by the public, while the “View Insights” option offers a few interesting statistics.

“As Instagram and other social media platforms are constantly evolving and getting better, I’m finding that Instagram is the easiest to use and provides the most results,” Neil explained. “An example of a result is getting a direct message, e-mail or phone call asking for more information about the product. Although we only post knives that are immediately available for online purchase, it’s always nice to have some practical contact with the buyer. We take pride in our knife images, whether they’re taken by a professional like Jim Cooper or our excellent in-house team. If the picture is not top rate, then it reflects badly on the product.”

Breed points out that advertising in most any format is expensive. Instagram allows immediate access to potential buyers at virtually no cost. “Putting yourself out there to hundreds of thousands of people is powerful,” he noted. “If they’re looking for a knife, as soon as they search for custom knife or damascus, all sorts of stuff pops up to choose from.”

Kim refuses to hard sell on the platform. “Buyers just ask ‘how much?’ and it is a process of direct messaging between you and that person,” he said. “Some people post prices out there and everything has a different price to it. [Costs of knife-making supplies] have gone up 20 to 25 percent this year. If you’ve got old stock maybe you can keep prices lower, but if it’s newer stock you’ve got to pass the cost on. People will message me if they’re interested in something and then we talk price.”

After seven or eight months on Instagram, Kim sees an unlimited future for the platform. “All the stuff you’ve posted from when you first started [on Instagram] is out there,” he observed. “So, you don’t have to continually post the same kind of knife. Just as you make them you can throw them up on Instagram.”

CAUTIONARY TALES

Though social media is asserting itself in the TNK sales process, Ostroff is warily watching developments. His website is still king with his business at this point.

“In spite of Instagram’s popularity and audience, for True North Knives our website still takes in 90 percent of our sales,” he added. “As with any other shopping-cart-based website, the purchase is triggered by the photos, but then we offer a smooth and easy way to select, pay and order the knife. Instagram does not do that. It merely brings the product to the subscribers but then the hunt begins, and many potential buyers must go through many steps trying to contact the knife-maker, who may or may not be available to take an order.”

Another caution from Ostroff is that
Instagram provides any seller with an “escape hatch” to sell a knife to anyone and not necessarily the first customer who steps up to buy. When a traditional e-commerce website operates, the item for sale is listed and directly connected to actual inventory; once it is sold it is gone and marked as out of stock. “Fair game for all!” he said.

“Many knifemakers on Instagram are only offering their knives for sale by lottery or raffle. As I don’t buy knives from Instagram I feel sorry for the people who aren’t always ‘attached to’ their phones, and also don’t have the money to, in many cases, overpay for knives due to the hype,” Neil related. “Many knives are sold at grossly inflated prices by knifemakers who are merely looking for the quick buck with no regard for a potential secondary market”—a secondary market that will never come about when the initial/primary purchase price is way too high.

Still, the luster of Instagram has drawn custom makers, purveyors and purchasers to the platform like moths to a flame. “Initially, the knifemakers get a large audience, not only from active buyers but also from fans who may not be able to afford these knives but who really enjoy seeing the blades—like eye candy,” Ostroff said. “Knifemakers should assign or hire others to manage their account after knives are posted. Potential clients have questions, most of which never get answered by the knifemaker.”

According to Breed, payment is sometimes a sticky proposition. “When people talk with the knifemaker they should use common sense,” he remarked. “Like the internet, Instagram is a great thing, but it can be ugly at the same time. I let a guy place his order, and when I get close to sticking the handle on [the knife], then he needs to pop a check in the mail. Others pay with PayPal as soon as they order a knife, but some want to see what the finished product looks like.”

Mixed signals? No, simply an assessment of the pros and cons of Instagram enables participants such as Spartan Blades to post images like this tray full of Kranos models ready for sharpening to show followers how their knives are made.
Curtis Iovito of Spartan Blades said he and co-owner Mark Carey feel Instagram is an important enough tool that, at press time, they had integrated it with the company website so that it showed some of Spartan’s Instagram photos. The Ronin is another Spartan-Harsey collaboration.
a growing medium in the knife industry, one that cannot be ignored and likely will never go away.

“You almost have to get on Instagram,” Breed offered. “The younger generation that was raised on it will be jumping on other sites, too. I get on the computer once or twice a week because I’m spending most of my time making knives. Instagram is nice because it’s on your phone. If you’re grabbing lunch out or in your shop, you can have a brand new knife posted in less than two minutes and can follow up on what is happening with it.”

Integrating Instagram into the sales process, for everyone involved, is fast becoming a preferred method of doing business. However, the traditional opportunity to hold the real knife in your hand, feel the fit and inspect the finish is diminished. Buying from a picture, whatever the commodity may be, has its own inherent risks. The situation always improves when buyer and seller really know one another.

WORTH the TRADEOFF?

Frankly, Instagram has the potential to “cheapen” the knife buying experience, taking much of the personal element away. Whether convenience and immediacy are worth the tradeoff remains to be seen. The depth of the Instagram impact will be assessed on an ongoing basis, including the role of print media, knife shows and the good old face-to-face encounter.

Nonetheless, it appears the discerning businessman must make an investment in Instagram. Iovito commented, “Not only do we feel that Instagram is a great tool for reaching out to customers and friends, but we feel it’s an important enough tool that we have integrated it with our website so that it shows our last six Instagram photos.”

Stay tuned for more on the brave new world of the knife industry.

For the contact information for the knives in the story, see “Where To Get ‘Em” on page 62.

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Knifemaker - Bill Kennedy
Today’s top custom tactical fixed blades come in carbon steel, too. An example is Toni Oostendorp’s integral Orbis 5 in a 5-inch blade of O1 tool steel with a black Cerakote® finish. The blade, guard and tang are all one piece of O1. The handle is contoured and grooved black Micarta®. Overall length: 9.5 inches. The knife includes a Kydex sheath with a Maxpedition knife pouch. The author’s price: $700.

With apologies to Shakespeare, what’s past really is prologue—in other words, the past predicts the future. While the argument can be made for most knives, it applies particularly well to today’s custom tactical fixed blades. They are a culmination of decades of new materials, blade steels, guards, handle materials, coatings and finishes. For the most part, their designs are copies or modifications of knives that have been built for centuries.

The knives feature both stainless as well as carbon steel. While most are made through the stock removal method, makers who employ the forge method of creating blades are not excluded from this segment of the market. That said, additional maintenance is required on a carbon steel model—primarily cleaning and wiping down the blade with oil. No matter the steel, though, you should always maintain your knife after each use.

A BRIEF HISTORY
The term tactical was coined in the mid-1990s to define a look with certain characteristics. Regarding fixed blades, the characteristics included a non-reflective blade coupled with either no guard or one of stainless steel. Some still use brass and others incorporate titanium for guards, while some use black zirconium. Currently, zirconium’s price deters both makers and collectors. If the price comes down you can expect to see more zirconium for guards. Handle materials should be synthetics, including but not limited to Micarta®, G-10 and carbon fiber. However, these three are far and away the most popular handle materials on today’s custom tactical fixed blades.

Over the past century grip materials have evolved from wood, leather washers and even cast brass and aluminum to the current synthetics. In the mid ’90s, primarily Micarta was used. Linen, paper and rag Micarta were the staples of the day. G-10 then came along, offering more colors and configurations. Over the past five years carbon fiber has increasingly become a handle material of choice.

The non-reflective blade was accomplished through several methods, the most common being a belt satin finish. As the name implies the finish was applied simply by using a sanding belt. This gave the blade a good-looking surface that was not reflective.

Another method was sand blasting. While providing a non-reflective finish, this technique had a problem. The sand created micro pits in the steel. The
pits held moisture, leading to blade rust. That led to replacing the sand with silicon glass beads that did not leave pits and produced a more even, flat-gray, non-reflective finish.

Walter Brend and BLADE Magazine Cutlery Hall-Of-Fame® member Chris Reeve were early proponents of techniques previously used on firearms to blacken their blades/knives. Chris utilized a black Gun-Kote® finish early on, and Chris Reeve Knives still does today. Brend was asked to produce blades with a black finish and he used Parkerizing to do it. Both finishes were/are subject to scratches. The scratches were especially noticeable when the knife was combined with a Kydex sheath. Today finishes such as those from Cerakote® and other specialty outfits can provide choices not only of color but also of surface designs for your blade.

TACTICAL SHEATHS
Sheaths for custom tactical fixed blades generally are made from leather and Kydex. Those who coat their blades seem to prefer leather. However, if you don’t do something to weatherproof the leather and it gets wet, it will retain moisture. This can lead to blade rusting. If possible, do not store carbon steel blades in leather sheaths. For a leather sheath I highly recommend Kenny Rowe or Paul Long. A relative newcomer who does very good work is Nita Broadwell.

Kydex is probably the preferred choice of tactical sheath material because of its durability, maintaining its shape and it does not retain moisture. Many Kydex sheaths feature a hole at the bottom to drain water. Another advantage is their ability to be configured for multiple carry options. The downside to some Kydex sheaths is the line they leave on
RJ Martin was the first maker I knew to resolve the problem by putting moleskin in the beginning of the insertion opening of the sheath. Kevin Robinson is a Kydex sheathmaker whose work is among some of the best in the world. His Kydex sheaths do not mark the blade.

Remember, if you want a custom sheath, generally you must send the knife to the maker. Getting exactly what you want or need will enhance your enjoyment of the knife.

TRENDS to WATCH
Whether you have been collecting custom tactical fixed blades for years or are new to the market, it will behoove you to do some research. As alluded to earlier in the story, new materials, especially steels, seem to show up monthly.

A new trend is tactical folder (page 54) makers moving into tactical fixed blades,
which seems like a natural progression since some of the makers made fixed blades before they made folders. The majority of the knives, at least initially, will feature a blade and two pieces of handle material. These will be clean, functional knives and very basic. As such the price should reflect this. Depending on options, such knives generally should be in the $250-to-$450 price range.

Another trend is knives featuring guards, and not those of the “integral” kind. Whether single or double, guards add to the knife’s cost and weight. However, they more than make up for the additions with enhanced safety, especially on a double-edge blade, as well as providing additional leverage for the task at hand. Such knives will start around $800 and can go up to several thousand dollars.

A nice thing about fixed-blade sub-categories such as hunters, skinners, bowies, daggers, fighters, sub-hilt fighters, boot knives, neck knives, etc., is self-explanatory. If the knife has a blade with a very nicely done hand-rubbed satin or mirror finish and a natural handle material, it is considered a presentation fixed blade. If it has a damascus blade, no matter the handle material, it falls into the category of a damascus fixed blade. No one will call a damascus fighter with ivory a “tactical fixed blade.” That’s not to say that knives...
in the aforementioned categories cannot
be built in tactical configurations.
There is something special about hold-
ing a fixed blade. A properly balanced
knife with exceptional handle ergonom-
ics seems to become an extension of your
hand, inviting you to use it and put it
through the paces. It’s a visceral feeling
that lets your imagination run wild in
terms of what all the knife has to offer.

For the contacts for the knives in the story,
see "Where To Get 'Em" on page 62.

To read about the latest knives, knife news,
blogs and more, visit blademag.com.

Scott McGhee opts for premium carbon steel—
CPM 3V—in a belt-satin finish and a black linen
Micarta® handle for his full-tang Rover model.
Though an ABS master smith, McGhee used the
stock removal method to make the knife. Overall
length: 10.5 inches. The author’s price: $325.
(Mitchell Cohen image)
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THE LATEST CAP-OPENING KNIVES POP MANY BOTTLES, THOUGH SUDS RECEPTACLES PREDOMINATE

BLADE, MEET BEER

The CRKT Largo features a stainless-steel handle stone-washed at the edges but brushed smooth along the scales, creating a contrasting finish. Blade length and material: 2.542 inches and 5Cr15MoV stainless. Handle: 2Cr13 stainless. Closed length: 3.576 inches. MSRP: $49.99. (Eric Ochs action image)
Bottle openers continue to appear on an increasing number of knives. Sure, it adds another tool and increases the knife’s versatility, but there’s something else, too.

When you think about it, it makes sense: Humankind’s oldest tool, meet beer, the drink beloved by the oldest of civilizations. It’s a pairing particularly suited for Saturday afternoons, summer picnics and backyard bouts of cornhole, when friends and family gather and the cap on the cold one needs cracking.

In a way, the CRKT Largo celebrates what Portland, Oregon, is about. While the city is home to many of America’s best-known knife companies, thanks to the area’s hop production it’s also known as the craft-beer capital of the world.

The assisted-opening Largo is designed by custom knifemaker Eric Ochs, who lives just a few miles away from CRKT’s headquarters. Who could miss the bottle opener placed in the butt of the knife?

The Largo features a stainless-steel handle stonewashed at the edges but brushed smooth along the scales, creating handle stonewashed at the edges but opener placed in the butt of the knife?

In the very rear of the knife, I think it’s a matter of how the bottle opener gets oriented and placed on the handle."

While there are other tools a designer could add to a knife, such as a hex wrench or screwdriver, Ochs said he’s more likely to require a tool to open a bottle of India pale ale.

“‘You might walk outside without it and say ‘Oh, dang!’” Ochs grinned. “So it’s nice to have something in your back pocket or whatever with you so you can grab and open up your drink.”

SHOWSTOPPER POPPER
When it comes to wine, the Santa Fe Stoneworks Waiter’s Knife in the company’s Spalted Beech Collection is a show-stopper.

At a dinner party out comes the emerald-colored bottles of wine, and then the Waiter’s Knife with its handle of stabilized spalted beech and hints of turquoise. Who cares about conversation or, in fact, food and drink itself? For that moment, Santa Fe Stoneworks took years to design the Waiter’s Knife, which can pop caps and pull corks off those bottles of holiday wine.

“We went out and bought a bunch of good, upscale wine openers and tried to take the best ideas of all of them and incorporate it into something that we could put our stone and our wood on,” noted Bill Wirtel, founder of Santa Fe Stoneworks. Sporting stabilized spalted beech from Denmark with a grace-note of turquoise and spacers of nickel silver, the handle shines. “It just accents it a little more,” Wirtel said. “We’re known for that.”

When the knife comes to the company facility in New Mexico, Santa Fe Stoneworks personnel assemble the handle. The blade is “pretty purpose driven,” Wirtel said. It’s used to cut the wrapper—often a thick foil—from the glass neck of the wine or champagne bottle. To help with the task, the blade features slight serrations to help cut the foil away, Wirtel added.

Santa Fe Stoneworks sells the knife to several high-end wineries, including those in California and New York. While New Mexico is no longer a hotbed of wine production, Wirtel said the state is where wine was first produced in America. Spanish missionaries grew grapes for the wine they used in the Catholic sacrament of Holy Communion.

BOTTLE-OPENING BONUS
SOG Specialty Knives & Tools went for mobility and a touch of tactical with the Keytron. “The original intent was to incorporate a ‘dog tag’ appearance and I think we were successful in making this product not only functional, but almost a SOG ‘badge,'” said Spencer Frazer, company founder. SOG’s name is derived from MACV-SOG, a special operations unit that saw extensive action during the Vietnam War. SOG stands for “Studies and Observation Group.”

With the Keytron, Frazer observed, SOG hoped to shrink a serious knife into a small package. The bottle opener was a bonus. Frazer said a hallmark of a SOG design is to have multiple uses and applications. Adding another tool such as a screwdriver would have added weight. A bottle opener is both lightweight and functional.

SOG sits in the wet and wild north-
west, just north of Seattle, Washington, in Lynnwood. The area, Frazer noted, likes its craft beer and coffee, too.

The Keytron also has a ring in the handle butt to organize and carry keys for a person on the go. Used minus keys the ring also can accept a finger for a more secure grip. Concluded Frazer, “I love the minimalist slim profile and the overall design.”

A MULTI-TOOL WALKS INTO a BAR …

The Spyderco ClipiTool Standard looks more like a folder than a multi-tool, and that betrays how the company known for its focus on knife performance went about designing it.

Often multi-tool manufacturers are multi-tool manufacturers first and the design of the blade is secondary, Spyderco’s Joyce Laituri said. However, when Spyderco restarted designing multi-tools five years ago thanks to popular demand, it approached the design of its ClipiTool from the opposite direction.

“Each utensil opens/closes using its own pivot, and several of the tools lock securely open with a linerlock while used. It was an engineering challenge achieving this within the design parameters we set,” Laituri explained. “A pivotal objective was to build the tool as thin and flat as possible so it carries unobtrusively and ergonomically in a pocket. We want it to feel and carry like a pocketknife and not a bulky multi-tool.”

In the ClipiTool Standard, Spyderco included a can opener and two screwdrivers in addition to a blade. Instead of a nail nick, every tool opens one-handed thanks to the trademarked Spyder hole. A pocket clip is included. Adding a bottle opener was a no-brainer for the knife company located in Golden, Colorado.

“Golden is a beer utopia. It starts with Miller/Coors, conveniently headquartered down the street from Spyderco where we can easily keep an eye on it,” Laituri winked.

In addition, the area is home to three distilleries and many breweries. And Spyderco, like many local businesses, is involved with the area food and drink scene. Co-workers will meet up at a local watering hole after the grinding wheels stop spinning.

Moreover, the worlds of beer, knives and the outdoors are all intertwined.

“Golden is a mountain town,” Laituri explained. “Mountain towns are home to primarily outdoor, active-lifestyle people. Active outdoor folks are beer drinkers and are sportsmen—and women—who use knives. Ninety percent of the mud-crusted SUVs parked at a brewery have skis, kayaks, and fishing gear or mountain bikes strapped to their roof. More often than not, they have all four. If you live an out-of-doors Colorado lifestyle you own a pocketknife. Mostly likely, you own several.”

At least one of which probably is equipped with a bottle-opener.

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At least one of which probably is equipped with a bottle-opener.
In addition to the bottle opener, the SOG Keytron has a handle ring that doubles as either a key holder or a finger hole for a more secure grip. The 1/8-inch blade is 5Cr15MoV stainless steel and the handle is stainless steel. Closed length: 3.5 inches. MSRP: $27.

In the story see “Where To Get ’Em” on page 62.

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Blade
The hammer fell. The auctioneer at Sotheby’s January 1989 auction in New York couldn’t get another cent. The buyer, an anonymous American collector, had bought a 4.25-inch pearl-handled pocketknife.

The facts reported above are true. The sums of money mentioned are certifiable. Add the 10 percent buyer’s premium and the knife’s new owner got back $175 change out of 100 grand! Yep, the net price was $99,825.

The knife in question was not one you’re likely to find on a dealer’s table. This one was special!

On June 16, 1864, Abraham Lincoln spoke at the Great Central Fair in Philadelphia. To mark the occasion, prominent Philadelphians presented him with what Sotheby’s catalog described as a “historic mother of pearl presentation ‘American Army’ multi-bladed pocketknife of slightly serpentine outline. Paneled with mother of pearl and inlaid with a gold plaque engraved ‘Abraham Lincoln,’ the pocketknife is fitted with polished steel scissors, nail file and five various blades, two of which are damascened (decorated with inlaid patterns of gold or silver) with foliated inscriptions.”

Accompanying the historic knife is the original presentation box, made...
of fitted oak and lined with velvet and satin. The inscription inside the lid states that the wood and iron used in the box’s construction came from the “Old Liberty Bell.” The lid is inlaid on the outside with a spread-winged eagle surrounded by 13 stars. The sale also included a handwritten letter of thanks from Lincoln. The letter, dated Oct. 17, 1864, states:

“I have received at the hands of the Hon. Wm. D. Kelley a very beautiful and ingeniously constructed pocketknife accompanied by your kind letter of presentation. The gift is gratefully accepted and will be highly valued, not only as an extremely creditable specimen of American workmanship, but as a manifestation of your regard and esteem which I most cordially appreciate.

Your ob’t serv’t
A. Lincoln

The inscription on the clip blade reads, “LIBERTY, July 4th, 1776. Abraham Lincoln, Jan. 1st, 1863 EQUALITY.” The blades all carry the tang stamps “J. Ward & Co., Bronxville, New York.” It also is apparent from the photograph—kindly supplied by Sotheby’s—that various implements are fitted behind the pearl handle, such as a tweezers, pick and more.

Ward originally made the knife to the order of Albert B. Justice, a Philadelphia hardware merchant. Justice presented the knife to the fair’s board of directors, of which he was a member. He then solicited some 130 wealthy Philadelphians to endorse its subsequent presentation to the president. When presented, the knife was accompanied by a document containing the 130 Philadelphians’ signatures. The document is currently in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

Other items sold with the knife include a bronze medal commemorating the fair, as well as photographs of the presentation document, photocopies of a publication called Our Daily Fair that described the fair, and the text of Lincoln’s address.

The Bronxville factory in New York was originally a grist and saw mill prior to the Revolutionary War, and the four-story building housing the factory came into the hands of James Swain circa 1849. Swain utilized the building for the manufacture of axles, among other things.

In 1880, James Ward bought the property solely for the manufacture of cutlery. Ward, like so many of his countrymen of the day, sought the aid of qualified and experienced Sheffield cutlers, and he even advertised for them. One tiny fragment of a prospectus survives. It reads:

“Dear Sir,

The undersigned, Manufacturers of PEN AND POCKET CUTLERY, are now prepared to sell to the trade, a first class article, manufactured on the English system . . .”

Knives made by Ward in Bronxville are certainly not plentiful, nor are the records clear about how long the company lasted. The factory later became the police headquarters for the Bronx River Parkway before its eventual demolition circa 1959.

Editor’s note: The current location of the Lincoln pocketknife was unknown at press time.

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The EZE-Lap Diamond Sharpening Rod works very well with plain edge recurve blades. Light pressure is all that’s needed to be effective.

DON’T GET THROWN BY Recurves

ONE OF THREE TOP ROD SHARPENERS WILL HONE YOUR RECURVE BLADES
Recurve blades throw some folks off when it comes to edge maintenance because the lines of the curving edges do not fit those of more common blade patterns. Truth is, with the proper sharpener, re-sharpening recurve blades is just as easy as any more common blade pattern—and here are some sharpening rods well suited for the job.

**FEATURE FRIENDLY**
The LCD02 Diamond Carbide Sharpening Rod from Lansky marries the effectiveness of a diamond abrasive with the convenience of a retractable sharpening rod and the expediency of a pull-through carbide sharpener all in one package.

“The Lansky tactical sharpening rod is a must-have tool for any trip into the field,” says Barbara Worden, Lansky national sales manager. “It makes short work of dressing and honing knives, machetes, hatchets and axes.” The LCD02 is designed to quickly and easily handle any type of knife—large or small, fixed blade or folder—and most common steels found on today’s production knives. The coarse-grit diamond rod also can be used with recurve blades, as the rounded profile—and this is a key to handling any sort of recurve edge—allows you to effectively sharpen the recurve’s flowing curves. When not in use, simply retract the rod into the handle to protect it from damage during transport. The whole package is compact and stows easily in a tacklebox, toolbox, glove box, or any sort of backpack or storage container.

With recurve blades the carbide portion of the sharpener is pretty much impossible to use, so you will need to use the retractable diamond rod only. Employ light pressure as you work the blade down the rod. A nice feature is the carbide draw-through sharpener’s flat base. It stabilizes the unit, preventing it from rolling during use. Handle knurling adds a nice, non-slip grip.

According to Worden, the pull-through/diamond rod combo unit can serve as a kubaton/striking instrument, too. The LCD02 is the longest of the four sharpeners tested, which translates well as an impromptu kubaton, but the added length makes it less compact. If the carbide portion would be omitted, that would shorten the length to where

**SHARP CHART**

**MODEL:** LCD02 Diamond Carbide Sharpening Rod  
**COMPANY:** Lansky  
**LENGTH CLOSED:** 6 1/8”  
**LENGTH OPEN:** 9.5”  
**MATERIALS:** Aluminum, steel rod with diamond coating  
**SPECIAL FEATURES:** Carbide sharpener for quick sharpening; unit can double as a kubaton  
**MSRP:** $19.99

**SHARP CHART**

**MODEL:** Diamond Sharpening Rod  
**COMPANY:** AccuSharp  
**LENGTH CLOSED:** 4.75”  
**LENGTH OPEN:** 7.25”  
**MATERIALS:** Aluminum; steel rod with diamond coating  
**SPECIAL FEATURES:** Steel rod tapered on one end for sharpening serrations, sharpening groove for pointed objects and pocket clip for ease of carry  
**MSRP:** $10.99

**SHARP CHART**

**MODEL:** Retractable Diamond Sharpening Rod  
**COMPANY:** EZE-Lap  
**LENGTH CLOSED:** 4.5”  
**LENGTH OPEN:** 7 5/8”  
**MATERIALS:** Brass; steel rod with diamond coating  
**SPECIAL FEATURES:** Brass handle; O-rings provide secure fit with the handle screwed on; comes with belt sheath  
**MSRP:** $22.95

The AccuSharp Diamond Sharpening Rod can easily sharpen plain edge recurve blades as well as serrations, the latter by using the tapered end. The anodized aluminum handle has a pocket clip for ease of carry.
the LCD02 would be more compact and travel friendly. At a manufacturer’s suggested retail price (MSRP) of $19.99, the sharpener represents a good value in the genre.

**MULTI-CARRY MODEL**

The AccuSharp Diamond Sharpening Rod has an anodized aluminum body and a diamond-coated steel sharpening rod. “The retractable rod is engineered with a cone-shaped end for use on serrations and tight spaces,” says Kelly Clark, sales manager of Fortune Products, Accusharp’s parent company.

In the fully retracted position, the rod extends by unscrewing the knurled nut and pulling the rod out of the handle some, then re-tightening the nut to secure the rod in the extended position. The rounded profile allows it to follow the edge of a recurve blade. The overall diameter is similar to that of a pen, and it includes a steel pocket clip. The rod also has sharpening grooves for hooks, darts and other pointed objects. The sharpener’s compact size makes it easy to carry.

It is a pretty simple model construction wise but works well. The only thing I saw that could be improved is the overall diameter of the handle/body. Adding a bit of thickness would make it much easier to hold but also would increase weight and bulk. As is, it carries very well in multiple ways.

**FULL-KNURLED BRASS**

Similar in nature to the AccuSharp, the EZE-Lap Retractable Diamond Sharpening Rod is another compact, rod-based sharpener that stores easily. Unlike the AccuSharp, the EZE-Lap has a brass handle, which looks nice compared to the anodized aluminum of the other review models.

Measuring 3.25 inches long, the sharpening rod does not retract into the handle. Instead, it unscrews from and inserts into the handle, and then screws back down. In other words, it stows similarly to a capped fountain pen. A nice touch not found on many sharpeners of this type is the full knurled handle. The knurling aids in achieving a non-slip grip and works well wet or dry. The knurling adds confidence by not allowing the handle to rotate inadvertently in your hand.

Unlike other sharpeners of the type, the diamond coated steel rod does not have a tapered end for serrations. However, the
Leading Acid Reflux Pill Becomes an Anti-Aging Phenomenon

Clinical studies show breakthrough acid reflux treatment also helps maintain vital health and helps protect users from the serious conditions that accompany aging such as fatigue and poor cardiovascular health.

by David Waxman
Seattle Washington:

A clinical study on a leading acid reflux pill shows that its key ingredient relieves digestive symptoms while suppressing the inflammation that contributes to premature aging in men and women.

And, if consumer sales are any indication of a product’s effectiveness, this ‘acid reflux pill turned anti-aging phenomenon’ is nothing short of a miracle.

Sold under the brand name Aloecure, it was already backed by clinical data documenting its ability to provide all day and night relief from heartburn, acid reflux, constipation, irritable bowel, gas, bloating, and more.

But soon doctors started reporting some incredible results…

“With Aloecure, my patients started reporting less joint pain, more energy, better sleep, stronger immune systems… even less stress and better skin, hair, and nails” explains Dr. Liza Leal; a leading integrative health specialist and company spokesperson.

Aloecure contains an active ingredient that helps improve digestion by acting as a natural acid-buffer that improves the pH balance of your stomach.

Scientists now believe that this acid imbalance is what contributes to painful inflammation throughout the rest of the body. The daily allowance of Aloecure has shown to calm this inflammation which is why Aloecure is so effective.

Relieving other stressful symptoms related to GI health like pain, bloating, fatigue, cramping, constipation, diarrhea, heartburn, and nausea.

Now, backed with new clinical studies, Aloecure is being recommended by doctors everywhere to help improve digestion, calm painful inflammation, soothe joint pain, and even reduce the appearance of wrinkles – helping patients to look and feel decades younger.

FIX YOUR GUT & FIGHT INFLAMMATION

Since hitting the market, sales for Aloecure have taken off and there are some very good reasons why.

To start, the clinical studies have been impressive. Participants taking the active ingredient in Aloecure saw a stunning 100% improvement in digestive symptoms, which includes fast and lasting relief from reflux.

Users also experienced higher energy levels and endurance, relief from chronic discomfort and better sleep. Some even reported healthier looking skin, hair, and nails.

A healthy gut is the key to a reducing swelling and inflammation that can wreak havoc on the human body. Doctors say this is why Aloecure works on so many aspects of your health.

Aloecure’s active ingredient is made from the healing compound found in Aloe vera. It is both safe and healthy. There are also no known side effects.

Scientists believe that it helps improve digestive and immune health by acting as a natural acid-buffer that improves the pH balance of your stomach.

Research has shown that this acid imbalance contributes to painful inflammation throughout your entire body and is why Aloecure seems to be so effective.

EXCITING RESULTS FROM PATIENTS

To date over 5 million bottles of Aloecure have been sold, and the community seeking non-pharma therapy for their GI health continues to grow.

According to Dr. Leal, her patients are absolutely thrilled with their results and are often shocked by how fast it works.

“For the first time in years, they are free from concerns about their digestion and almost every other aspect of their health,” says Dr. Leal, “and I recommend it to everyone who wants to improve GI health without resorting to drugs, surgery, or OTC medications.”

“I was always in ‘indigestion hell.’ Doctors put me on all sorts of antacid remedies. Nothing worked. Dr. Leal recommended I try Aloecure. And something remarkable happened… Not only were all the issues I had with my stomach gone - completely gone – but I felt less joint pain and I was able to actually sleep through the night.”

With so much positive feedback, it’s easy to see why the community of believers is growing and sales for the new pill are soaring.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND ALOECURE

Aloecure is a pill that’s taken just once daily. The pill is small. Easy to swallow. There are no harmful side effects and it does not require a prescription.

The active ingredient is a rare Aloe Vera component known as acemannan.

Made from 100% organic Aloe Vera, Aloecure uses a proprietary process that results in the highest quality, most bio-available levels of acemannan known to exist.

According to Dr. Leal and several of her colleagues, improving the pH balance of your stomach and restoring gut health is the key to revitalizing your entire body.

When your digestive system isn’t healthy, it causes unwanted stress on your immune system, which results in inflammation in the rest of the body.

The recommended daily allowance of acemannan in Aloecure has been proven to support digestive health, and calm painful inflammation without side effects or drugs. This would explain why so many users are experiencing impressive results so quickly.

REVITALIZE YOUR ENTIRE BODY

With daily use, Aloecure helps users look and feel decades younger and defend against some of the painful inflammation that accompanies aging and can make life hard.

By buffering stomach acid and restoring gut health, Aloecure calms painful inflammation and will help improve digestion…and soothe achy joints… reduce the appearance of wrinkles and help restore hair and nails… manage cholesterol and oxidative stress…and improve sleep and brain function… without side effects or expense.

Readers can now reclaim their energy, vitality, and youth regardless of age or current level of health.

One Aloecure Capsule Daily:

• Helps End Digestion Nightmares
• Helps Calm Painful Inflammation
• Soothes Stiff & Aching Joints
• Reduces appearance of Wrinkles & Increases Elasticity
• Manages Cholesterol & Oxidative Stress
• Supports Healthy Immune System
• Improves Sleep & Brain Function

HOW TO GET ALOECURE

This is the official nationwide release of the new Aloecure pill in the United States. And so, the company is offering our readers up to 3 FREE bottles with their order.

This special give-away is available for the next 48-hours only. All you have to do is call TOLL-FREE 1-800-748-5760 and provide the operator with the Free Bottle Approval Code: AC100. The company will do the rest.

Important: Due to Aloecure’s recent media exposure, phone lines are often busy. If you call and do not immediately get through, please be patient and call back. Those who miss the 48-hour deadline may lose out on this free bottle offer.
Included with the Lansky Diamond Sharpening Rod is a set of angled pull-through carbide sharpeners.

The EZE-Lap exhibits very good quality manufacturing. Part of this is from the brass handle, so its appearance alone makes it stand out. The only thing I would change, like with the AccuSharp, is the handle diameter. I would make it slightly bigger for ease of holding onto in use.

For the contacts for the knives in the story, see “Where To Get ‘Em” on page 62.

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Edited by
Joe Kertzman

This indispensable and updated guide gives step-by-step instruction on making some of the most popular knives around. You’ll learn to create your perfect blade, whether it is a folding knife, dagger, bowie or anything in between. And the reference's vivid illustrations make certain expert and novice knife craftsmen get the point of every tip and technique presented.

Authored by an all-star cast of knifemakers and knife experts, with BLADE’S Guide to Making Knives, 3rd Edition you'll be certain that you’re learning the trade from the best. You’ll learn forging blade steel from Don Fogg, wax casting from Kevin Hoffman, knife designing from Ryan Johnson and many other vital techniques from top experts in the field.
The modern custom tactical folder has enjoyed many transformations and innovations since the early-to-mid 1990s. With so much water under the bridge, the challenge for tactical makers these days is keeping the knives fresh for their customers.

Brian Nadeau has been a custom knife-maker for six years—four of those full-time—though he worked as a designer, builder and troubleshooter in precision machining in his previous career. His Arch Nemesis folding dagger is a dress tactical lover’s delight.

“I’ve made it with a few different materials at this point ranging from 6Al4V titanium, zirconium, carbon fiber and Ti-mascus®, and blades from NitroV, S110V, S90V and Damasteel [damascus],” Brian notes. “It’s not a little knife by any means. While it has a 4.25-inch blade with an overall length of 9.45 inches, the sleek blade combined with tight constraints makes it feel smaller than it is.”

What sets his knives apart from the norm?

“...In a world where every knife has a carbon-fiber frame with Timascus bolsters and a damascus blade, I chose to not do too much of that stuff,” he begins. “These materials don’t showcase what I do best, which is machining. Textures, patterns and 3D surfaces are where I shine. Simulated carbon-fiber weave on zirconium or the three-color Escher patterns are a good example of the things I can do. I’ve shown that you don’t have to have $2,000 worth of materials in a knife to make it fancy.”
“I CONSIDER HOW EVERY KNIFE I MAKE WILL AFFECT THE VALUE OF ALL THE PREVIOUS KNIVES I MADE.”
—BOB OHLEMANN

STYLISH SIMPLICITY
Bob Ohlemann learned from one of the greats. “I’ve been making knives for about four years and folders for more than three of those years,” he says. “I got my start under the guidance of fellow Texas knife-maker Johnny Stout.”

The Ohlemann folder featured herein is the clean and stylish Freelancer XL. “The model name on my knives really refers to the handle shape and size. Beyond that, everything else is customizable, including blade profile,” he notes. The liner-lock folder features a 3.5-inch harpoon/recurve blade and is approximately 4.5 inches closed. “Blade steel is CPM154, which I really like for its edge durability and finishing characteristics,” he says. The bolsters, backspacer and pocket clip are all zirconium, and the scales are vintage Westinghouse ivory Micarta.

“I get a lot of compliments on my material combinations, which is something I take very seriously,” he stresses. “I don’t want my knives to look dated in five years because I chose a trendy material. I consider how every knife I make will affect the value of all the previous knives I made. I want collectors to feel confident that my knives will hold their value.”

Bob says people who handle his knives always comment on the fit and finish and the feel. “I come from...”
a tactical career field and I expect my tools to work well for their intended purpose," he says. "In terms of fit and finish, for me, it starts in the design phase. I strive to fit the absolute maximum blade length into every knife so the proportions are pleasing when the knife is open."

FREEDOM FLIPPER
Michael Zieba is no stranger to doing magic with metal. "For several years I owned a company where we did all types of complicated metal fabrication, but in 2012 I dedicated myself to the knife industry," he says. "I currently own a
A member of True North Knives Freedom Collection, Michael Zieba’s Freedom Flipper has a 3.5-inch harpoon-pattern blade of M390 stainless steel with titanium scales, spacer and pocket clip. He engraved the American flag on the top slab and the inscription “Freedom Isn’t Free” on the back. The folder is topped off with a lanyard and skull bead. (SharpByCoop image)

3,000-square-foot shop in the Greenpoint neighborhood of Brooklyn.”

The Zieba Freedom Flipper tactical folder is a special edition of his 8.5-inch S1 model, done up for the True North Knives Freedom Collection. It has a 3.5-inch blade of German “super steel” M390

The new and improved Paragon furnaces

**Compact** Paragon knife making furnaces need less table space than before. We moved the temperature controller from the side and placed it in an elegant sloped base. We also improved the heat distribution.

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“Compact Paragon knife making furnaces need less table space than before. We moved the temperature controller from the side and placed it in an elegant sloped base. We also improved the heat distribution.”

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with titanium scales, spacer and pocket clip. He also engraved the American flag on the top slab and the inscription "Freedom Isn’t Free" on the back. The folder is topped off with a lanyard and skull bead.

How does Michael keep his knives fresh in terms of design and other factors?

“I always put functionality and quality first,” he stresses. “At the same time I try to use proven simple materials. The price point is important because I want everyone to carry my knives as EDC. I have to do everything well because I know that everyone who buys my knife returns for the next.”

3 GUYS and SOME KNIVES

Trison Knives is three guys from South Africa living the knifemaking dream.
“Steven Lewis is the originator of the group and has been a collector of fine cutlery for quite a few decades,” explains Marthinus van Wyk, one of the trio. “Neill Schutte is our blade-grinding expert and is a renowned BLADE Show and Knife Makers Guild of South Africa award winner. I have been making knives since 2015. Our knives travel quite a bit within South Africa as Steven Lewis is located in Cape Town, Western Cape, Neill Schutte in Bredersdorp, Western Cape, and myself in Pretoria, Gauteng.”

The Trison TS-1 tactical folder features a recurve blade of CPM 154 stainless steel and a handle choice of bead-blasted 6Al4V titanium or carbon fiber/double-black G-10, both with 6Al4V titanium liners. The 3.65-inch blade runs on ceramic thrust bearings. Closed length: 4.7 inches. “It is quite close to the Spyderco Paramilitary in size, a model we all like personally,” van Wyk notes.

As for the TS-1’s appeal, van Wyk gets right to the point: “We feel it offers a classical, inspired piece in a modern folder package that is easy to carry and comfortable to use.”

For the contact information for the knives in the story see “Where To Get ’Em” on page 62.

For the latest knives, knife news, trends and more visit blademag.com.
Fossil coral, stag, wood and more—natural handle materials have the look and warm feel that appeal to many knife enthusiasts. Check the beauties out on this and the facing page and, when finished, ask yourself: Am I warm yet?

To read about the latest knives, knife news, blogs and more, visit blademag.com.
1 Mammoth ivory on a titanium frame, a blade of Dragon’s Breath damascus forged by Bill Burke and a bolster of Chad Nichols damascus top off the linerlock gent’s knife by Alan Davis. Closed length: 3 3/8 inches. The maker’s address: Dept. BL7, POB 652, Boerne, TX 78006 210-286-3733 alandavisknives@yahoo.com, alandavisknives.weebly.com, Facebook/Instagram Alan_Davis_Knives Alan Davis Knives.

2 A fossil coral handle with hardware anodized pink, a blackened titanium bolster and a 3-inch recurve blade of Bertie Rietveld’s Nebula damascus adorn the Spectre dress tactical flipper folder by David Kulis. The blade flats are colored pink/teal and the grinds black. Closed length: 4.75 inches. The maker’s address: Dept. BL7, 10741 S. Albany Ave., Chicago, IL 60655 708-218-1541 windycitywoodworks@hotmail.com, windycitywoodworks.com, Facebook/Instagram @davidkulisknives.

3 Stabilized box elder burl, a bolster of stainless, bronze and nickel, and a 15-inch blade of 1075 carbon steel garnish Thomas Ward’s expansive Depth’s Reaver. Overall length: 22 inches. His address: Dept. BL7, 604 South Oakland Ave., Apt. 1, Carbondale, IL 62901 508-277-3190 tempestrcraft@gmail.com, tempestrcraft.com, Facebook/Instagram tempestrcraft Tom Ward – Tempest Craft.

4 Black walnut scales on a carbon fiber frame, carbon fiber spacers and “S” guard, bronze accents and a 9-inch blade of 1075 carbon steel comprise John Doyle’s bowie. Overall length: 14.25 inches. His address: Dept. BL7, 3334 McCulloch Rd., Beaverton, MI 48612 989-802-9470 jdoylesknives@gmail.com, Facebook/Instagram jdoylesknives.

5 A koa wood handle, an 8-inch blade of pattern-welded steel by Damasteel and a bolster of 416 stainless steel complete Tom Buckner’s chef’s knife. His address: Dept. BL7, 120 State Ave. NE #136, Olympia, WA 360-970-1668 tomlinbuckner@gmail.com, bucknerknives.com, Facebook/Instagram Tom Buckner Knives None.

6 Sambar stag with nickel silver domed pins, a bolster, frame and liners of twist damascus, and a 9.5-inch blade of ladder-pattern damascus of 1084 and 15n20 carbon steels make up Tad Lynch’s bowie. Overall length: 14.5 inches. His address: Dept. BL7, 140 Timberline, Beebe, AR 72012 501-626-1647 lynchknives@yahoo.com, lynchknives.com, Facebook/Instagram @lynch_forge.

7 Elk stag slabs, a copper bolster with rawhide straps and a blacksmith’s curl with lanyard highlight the handle of John Cohea’s fixed hunter. The 5.5-inch blade is 1095 with a forged finger pad. Overall length: 9.75 inches. His address: Dept. BL7, 114 Rogers Dr., Nettleton, MS 38858 662-322-5916 jhncocoa@hotmail.com, Facebook/Instagram johnmcohea.
WHERE TO GET 'EM

WHERE TO GET 'EM

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Accusharp Knife & Tool Sharpeners, attn: Kelly Clark, Dept. BL7, 2010A Windy Terrace, Cedar Park, TX 78613 830-693-6111 fax 830-603-6394 kelly@accusharp.com, accusharp.com; EZE-LAP Diamond Products, attn: Ralph Johnson, Dept. BL7, 3572 Arrowhead Dr., Carson City, NV 89706 775-888-9500 eze-lap.com, Ralph_limax @zephyr-limax.com; Lansky, attn: D. Di Lorenzo. Dept. BL7, POB 50830, Henderson, NV 80016 716-877-7511 fax 716-877-9555 www.lansky.com

CUSTOM TACTICAL FOLDERS p. 54
Philippe Jourget, philippejourget@orange.fr, philippejourget.fr, Facebook/Instagram couteliers-philippejourget/philippejourget/; Brian Nadeau, SharpByDesign. Ph- (862) 258-0792. Web- www.sharpbydesign.com. Email- b.a.nadeau@gmail.com. Instagram- @sharpbydesign; Bob Ohlemann, Rangermade Knives, Ph- (503) 549-7218. Web- www.rangermadeknives.com, Facebook and Instagram- @rangermadeknives; Richard Rogers, Dept. BL7, PO Box 769, Magdalena, NM 88031, Phone: 575-838-7237, r.s.rogersknives@gmail.com, Trison Knives. Email- trisonknives@gmail.com. Instagram and Facebook- @trisonknives; Tyler Turner, Dept. BL7, POB 307, Hopkins, MI 49626 660-562-7863 turnerknives@yahoo.com, Facebook/Instagram turnerknife-tool/Turner Knife & Tool; Michael Zieba Knifemaker, 95 Commercial Street Magdalena, NM 87825, Phone: 575-838-7237, danielwinkler@danielwinkler.com, Daniel Winkler, Dept. BL7, POB 2166, Blowing Rock, NC 28605 828-295-9156 danielwinkler@danielwinkler.com; Winkler Knives II, attn: C. Cashbaugh, Dept. BL7, 13934 West 108th St., Lenexa, KS 66215 913.888.5524 www.rietveldknives.com; Web: www.rietveldknives.com Phone: 2783 232 8766, bertie@rietveldknives.com, Box 53, Magaliesburg, GT, SOUTH AFRICA 1791, hayesknives.com; Bertie Rietveld, Dept. BL7, POB 2544, Idaho Falls, ID 83403 208.542.0113 hayesknives@hayesknives.com; Web: www.hayesknives.com Phone: 226-787-4289, www.pumaknifecompanyusa.com; White River Knife & Tool, attn: John Cammenga, Sr., Dept. BL7, 130 Mason Dr., Coopersville, MI 49404 303-462-0662 fax 303.462.0668 www.bokerusa.com; Boker Plus, c/o Boker USA, attn: N. Nevins, Dept. BL7, 1550 Balsam St., Post Falls, ID 83854 716-877-6955 www.lansky.com

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Walter Brend Walter@brendknives.com (256) 736-3520; Nita Broadwell Nita.b179@gmail.com, Walter Brend Walter@brendknives.com (256) 736-3520; Nita Broadwell Nita.b179@gmail.com; Michael Zieba Knifemaker, 95 Commercial Street Magdalena, NM 87825, Phone: 575-838-7237, michaelzieba@msn.com; Instagram turnerknifetool/Turner Knife & Tool; Richard Rogers, Dept. BL7, PO Box 769, Magdalena, NM 88031, Phone: 575-838-7237, r.s.rogersknives@gmail.com, Trison Knives. Email- trisonknives@gmail.com. Instagram and Facebook- @trisonknives; Tyler Turner, Dept. BL7, POB 307, Hopkins, MI 49626 660-562-7863 turnerknives@yahoo.com, Facebook/Instagram turnerknife-tool/Turner Knife & Tool; Michael Zieba Knifemaker, 95 Commercial Street #4, Brooklyn, NY 11222. 347-335 9944

CUSTOM TACTICAL FOLDERS p. 54
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ASSISTED OPENERS p. 79
Note: Events with an asterisk (*) have knives and knife accessories as the main/sole focus. Events with two asterisks (**) are knifemaking seminars or symposiums, cutting competitions, auctions or other knife-related events.

**SHOW CALENDAR | BY BLADE® STAFF**

### JUNE

**Calknives.org** or call Joe Girtner 714-746-513-531-2690 ext. 11310, alicia.newton@email.com, aik-knifeshow.com.* **

**Cameron 618-753-2147 craig@camererknives.com, denverknifeshow.net.* **

**July 6-8 Denver, CO** The 26th Annual Denver Knife Show, Crowne Plaza Denver Airport Convention Center. Contact Craig Camerer 618-753-2147 craig@camererknives.com, denverknifeshow.com.* **

**July 13-15 Auburn, ME** The ABS New England Hammer-In, New England School of Metalwork. Contact Derek Glaser 888-753-7502 dglas@newenglandschoolofmetalwork.com**

**July 13-15 Belleville, IL** The 8th Annual Belleville Knife Show, Belle-Clair Fairgrounds. Contact Carl Edwards 618-645-2959 bvllkeknife@yahoo.com.* **

**July 15 Portland, ME** The NCCA Portland, Maine Knife Show, Clarion Hotel. Contact Mike Maine 207-326-9695 ncca.info.*

**July 21 Anderson, IN** Indiana Knife Collectors Knife Festival, U.A.W. Union Hall Local 663. Contact C. Engle 765-643-4237.*

**July 27-29 Washington, MO** The Aik Knife Show, Elks Lodge. Contact Crystal 618-656-9868 adamshknifeworks.com@gmail.com, aik-knifeshow.com.*

### AUGUST

**Aug. 4-5 Sydney, Australia** The 2018 Sydney Knife Show, Rosehill Racecourse. Contact sydneyknifeshow.com.au.*

**Aug. 4-5 Crossville, TN** Cumberland Gun & Knife Show, Cumberland County Complex. Contact Donnie Moody 931-250-1981 gkshow@charter.net, gkshow.org.*

**Aug. 11-12 Missoula, MT** The 22nd Annual Montana Knifemakers’ Association Custom Knife Show and Sale. Contact Nancy 406-728-2861 or Bob 406-827-4754 crowder@blackfoot.net.*


**Aug. 18-19 Boise, ID** Idaho Knife Show, Wyndham Garen. Contact Idaho Knife Association, Dept. BL7, POB 561, Meridian, ID idahoknifeshow@idahoknife.com.*

**Aug. 24-26 Troy, OH** The ABS Mid-America Hammer-In, Miami County Fairgrounds. Contact Butch Sheely 419-308-3471 americanbladesmith.com.*


**Sept. 22 Washington Township, MI** Wolverine Knife Collectors Show, 1860s Octagon House. Call Pat Donovan 586-786-5549 or Frank Meek 586-219-2487.*

**Sept. 28-30 Kansas City, MO** The International Custom Cutlery Exposition, downtown Marriott. Contact Harvey Dean harveydeanknives@gmail.com 512-446-3111 or visit iceshow.com/.* 

**Sept. 29 Wheaton, IL** Collectors Arms Dealers Assoc. (CADA) Fall Show, DuPage County Fairgrounds. Contact 715-526-9769 zurkopromotions.com or CADAGunShow.com.*

**Sept. 29-30 Easton, PA** Lehigh Valley Knife Show, Charles Chrin Community Center of Palmer Township. Contact Bill Goodman 484-241-6176 (cell), 610-258-5063 (home) GoodKnives@GoodmanCPA.com, PAKnifeShow.com.*

### SEPTEMBER

**Oct. 5-6 New Braunfels, TX** Guadalupe Forge Fall Hammer-In & Knifemakers Rendezvous. Contact Johnny Stout, Dept. BL7, 1205 Forest Trail, New Braunfels, TX 78132 830-606-4067 stoutknives.com.*

**Oct. 5-7 Portland, OR** The BLADE Show West, Oregon Convention Center. The latest in custom and factory knives, awards for same, demos, seminars and more. For more information visit http://bladeshow.com/blade-magazine-announces-the-blade-show-west-in-portland/ and/or contact Alicia Newton 513-531-2690 ext. 11310, alicia.newton@fwmedia.com, bladeshow.com.*

**Oct. 6-7 Washington, AR** The ABS Fall Piney Woods Hammer-In, Bill Moran School of Bladesmithing. Contact B.R. Hughes 903-838-0134 americanbladesmith.com.*

**Oct. 13 Chester, OH** The 15th National Shaving Collectibles Meeting, Hilton Garden Inn. Contact Jerry qualrunner@cinci.rr.com.*

**Oct. 19-20 Cambridge, OH** Ohio Classic Knife Show, Pritchard Laughlin Civic Center. Text or call 616-322-5846 or visit ohioclassicknifeshow.com.*

**Oct. 20-21 Garden Grove, CA** California Custom Knife Show, Embassy Suites-Garden Grove. For details contact 888.473.2661 californiacustomknifeshow.com.*

### OCTOBER

**Nov. 2-3 Pigeon Forge, TN** Voiles Knife Show, Smoky Mountain Convention Center. Contact 865-908-3015 or visit mypegeonforge.com.*

**Nov. 3-4 Mount Vernon, IL** The 36th Annual Mt. Vernon Knife Show, Roland Lewis Community Building, Mt. Vernon Veterans Park. Contact Nancy Hancock, Dept. BL7, 12193 E. Turner Dr., Mount Vernon, IL 62864 618-242-4514 jccd1982@yahoo.com.*


**Nov. 16-17 Jersey City, NJ** The New York Custom Knife Show, Newport Ballroom, Westin Jersey City Newport. For more visit fiftyfiftyproductions.net.*

### November

**JULY 2018 blademag.com 63**
JANUARY

JAN. 25 LAS VEGAS Tactical Knife Invitational, Bally’s Las Vegas Hotel. Show not open to the public. Admission granted through advanced registration only. Call 417-866-6688 for reservations or visit fifty-fiftyproductions.net for more details.*

JAN. 25-27 LAS VEGAS Antique Arms Show. For more info email beinfeldproductions@gmail.com, call 951-970-9669 or visit antiquearmsshow.com.

JAN. 26-27 LAS VEGAS The Las Vegas Custom Knife Show, Bally’s Las Vegas Hotel & Casino. Contact fiftyfiftyproductions.net.*

FEBRUARY

FEB. 1-3 LAKELAND, FL The 41st Annual Gator Cutlery Club Custom, Modern & Antique Knife Show, RP Funding Center. Contact Dan Piergallini 813-754-3908 or 813-967-1471 or email coolknifedad@wildblue.net.*

FEB. 15-16 LITTLE ROCK, AR The Arkansas Custom Knife Show, Statehouse Convention Center. For more details visit https://www.instagram.com/arkansas_knife_show/?hl=en.*

MARCH

MARCH 1-2 DALTON, GA Dalton Georgia Knife Roadshow, North Georgia Trade & Convention Center. Call 423-238-6753 or visit jbrucevoyles.com.*

NOVEMBER

NOV. 2 SAN DIEGO, CA NEW DATE! The Art Knife Invitational, Sheraton Hotel San Diego Bayside Tower. Contact artknifeinvitational@gmail.com, ArtKnifeInvitational.com.*

To ensure timely publication of your knife show in the “Show Calendar,” BLADE® requests that you send all pertinent information concerning your show in written form—dates, locations, etc.—at least three months before the show takes place to Krause Publications, a division of F+W, A Content + eCommerce Company, attn: Mary Lutz, 5225 Joerns Drive, Suite 2, Stevens Point, WI 54481 715.445.2214 fax 715.445.4087. BLADE® depends on the shows themselves for prompt and accurate information.

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<td>CPM 3V carbon steel</td>
<td>Locking folder</td>
<td>7075 T6</td>
<td>Aluminum w/Type 3 hard anodize</td>
<td>6Al-4V titanium in a “zero profile” for deep carry</td>
<td>17-4 PH (H900), Ion Bond/tungsten DLC finish</td>
<td>4.625&quot;</td>
<td>6 ozs.</td>
<td>A collaboration between Caswell Knives and Millit Knives</td>
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<td>ADB</td>
<td>Drop point</td>
<td>Curly oak</td>
<td>Finger grooved and dropped</td>
<td>Carbon fiber</td>
<td>Carved spider on handle butt (not shown) goes with the spider-web theme on the blade</td>
<td>10.5&quot;</td>
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<td>Devin Bliss, Dept. BL7, POB 1525, Hawkins, TX 75756</td>
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<td>2.8&quot;</td>
<td>80CrV2 carbon</td>
<td>Drop point</td>
<td>Curly oak</td>
<td>Finger grooved</td>
<td>Carbon fiber</td>
<td>Carved spider on handle butt (not shown) goes with the spider-web theme on the blade</td>
<td>10.5&quot;</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MODEL: Morphing Karambit</td>
<td>PATTERN: Locking folder</td>
<td>BLADE LENGTH: 2.5&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLADE MATERIAL: CPM 3V carbon steel</td>
<td>BLADE FINISH: Tungsten DLC</td>
<td>HANDLE MATERIAL: 7075 T6 aluminum w/Type 3 hard anodize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POCKET CLIP: 6Al-4V titanium in a “zero profile” for deep carry</td>
<td>COMPONENTS: 17-4 PH (H900), Ion Bond/tungsten DLC finish</td>
<td>APPROXIMATE CLOSED LENGTH: 4.625&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEIGHT: 6 ozs.</td>
<td>SPECIAL STUFF: A collaboration between Caswell Knives and Millit Knives</td>
<td>COMPANY: Caswell Knives, attn.: Joe Caswell 805-499-0707 <a href="mailto:joe@caswellusa.com">joe@caswellusa.com</a>, caswellknives.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNIFE MODEL: Stick-tang hunter</td>
<td>BLADE LENGTH: 5.25&quot;</td>
<td>BLADE MATERIAL: ADB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLADE PATTERN: Drop point</td>
<td>HANDLE MATERIAL: Curly oak</td>
<td>HANDLE DESIGN: Finger grooved and dropped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOUBLE GUARD: Carbon fiber</td>
<td>OVERALL LENGTH: 10.5&quot;</td>
<td>SPECIAL STUFF: Carved spider on handle butt (not shown) goes with the spider-web theme on the blade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAKER: Devin Bliss, Dept. BL7, POB 1525, Hawkins, TX 75756 903-736-3052 (Chuck Ward image)</td>
<td>COMPANY: Williams Blade Design, attn.: Chris Williams, <a href="mailto:orders@williamsbladedesign.com">orders@williamsbladedesign.com</a>, williamsbladedesign.com</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNIFE MODEL: Hunter</td>
<td>BLADE LENGTH: 6&quot;</td>
<td>BLADE AND GUARD MATERIAL: 160-layer billet damascus hot salt blued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLADE PATTERN: Drop point</td>
<td>HANDLE MATERIAL: Cherry burl obtained from an Amish community; stabilized and dyed by the maker</td>
<td>HANDLE DESIGN: Bird’s-beak pommel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERALL LENGTH: 10.5&quot;</td>
<td>MAKER’S LIST PRICE FOR A SIMILAR PIECE: $1,000</td>
<td>COMPANY: Williams Blade Design, attn.: Chris Williams, <a href="mailto:orders@williamsbladedesign.com">orders@williamsbladedesign.com</a>, williamsbladedesign.com</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MSRP:** $650  
**COMPANY:** Caswell Knives, attn.: Joe Caswell 805-499-0707 joe@caswellusa.com, caswellknives.com  
**MSRP:** $130  
**COMPANY:** Williams Blade Design, attn.: Chris Williams, orders@williamsbladedesign.com, williamsbladedesign.com
**SPEC CHART**

**MODEL:** Chef’s knife  
**BLADE LENGTH:** 6”  
**BLADE STEEL:** CPM 154 stainless  
**BLADE FINISH:** Mirror polish  
**HANDLE MATERIAL:** Maple  
**HANDLE DESIGN:** Bird’s-beak pommel  
**BOLSTERS/INTEGRAL GUARD:** Carbon fiber  
**OVERALL LENGTH:** 11”  
**MAKER’S LIST PRICE FOR A SIMILAR PIECE:** $375  
**MAKER:** Burt Flanagan, Dept. BL7, POB 594, Tom Bea, TX 75489  
214-236-5333 flanaganknives@yahoo.com (Chuck Ward image)

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**SPEC CHART**

**MODEL:** Wabakimi  
**BLADE LENGTH:** 3.3”  
**BLADE MATERIAL:** Triple-laminated stainless steel  
**BLADE THICKNESS:** .118”  
**BLADE PATTERN:** Drop point  
**HANDLE MATERIAL:** Curly birch  
**CONSTRUCTION:** Three-quarter partial tang w/pins  
**SPECIAL STUFF:** Designed in collaboration with Les Stroud, star of TV’s Survivorman  
**WEIGHT:** 4.76 ozs.  
**OVERALL LENGTH:** 7.9”  
**SHEATH:** Leather  
**MSRP:** $199  
**COMPANY:** Helle, c/o Treehouse Communications, attn.: James Graven  
970-420-1409 james@treehousepr.com, www.helle.no, http://lesstroud.ca/

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**SPEC CHART**

**MODEL:** 104N 5-in-1 Professional Knife & Scissors Sharpener  
**ABRASIVE:** Dual-grit diamond whetstone w/storage base  
**SPECIAL STUFF:** Angle Pyramid™ sharpening angle guide set  
**SIZES:** Choice of 6x2.5” and 8x3”  
**MSRP:** $24.95  
**COMPANY:** Sharpal, c/o Chelsea Hill, chelseahill@sharpal.com, sharpal.com

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**SPEC CHART**

**MODEL:** Confederate Artillery Sword  
**BLADE LENGTH:** 20”  
**BLADE MATERIAL:** Dodge automobile leaf spring  
**BLADE PATTERN:** Hint of a clip point  
**HANDLE MATERIAL:** Osage orange, aka bois d’arc  
**D-GUARD:** Blued mild steel  
**OVERALL LENGTH:** 25”  
**MAKER’S LIST PRICE FOR A SIMILAR PIECE:** n/a  
**MAKER:** Jason Fry, Dept. BL7, 720 8th St., Wolfforth, TX 79382 325-669-4805 frycustomknives@gmail.com (Chuck Ward image)
WHAT’S NEW

**SPEC CHART**

**MODEL:** Monarch Gracious  
**BLADE STEEL:** Wave damascus w/a ZDP-189 stainless core alternating layers of stainless steel and nickel silver  
**HANDLE:** Features the handcrafted art of Koftgari—a very fine cross-hatch grid in parkerized steel and 24k gold burnished into a pattern bound by the cross hatching  
**POCKET CLIP:** Titanium  
**LOCK:** Button lock  
**MSRP:** $1,870  
**COMPANY:** William Henry, attn: R. Thronburg, Dept. BL7, 3200 NE Rivergate, McMinnville, OR 97128  
888.563.4500, 503.434.9700  
www.williamhenryknives.com

**SPEC CHART**

**MODEL:** Utility fixed blade  
**BLADE LENGTH:** 4”  
**BLADE STEEL:** RWL-34 stainless  
**BLADE PATTERN:** Harpoon  
**HANDLE MATERIAL:** Walnut w/gemstone inlay  
**HANDLE PINS:** Brass  
**CONSTRUCTION:** Ring in tang  
**OVERALL LENGTH:** 8.5”  
**MAKER:** Matt Gaskill, Dept. BL7, 211 Southview Dr., Fate, TX 75189 903-456-4699  
http://gaskillknives.com (Chuck Ward image)

**SPEC CHART**

**MODEL:** Utility fixed blade  
**BLADE LENGTH:** 4”  
**BLADE STEEL:** RWL-34 stainless  
**BLADE PATTERN:** Harpoon  
**HANDLE MATERIAL:** Walnut w/gemstone inlay  
**HANDLE PINS:** Brass  
**CONSTRUCTION:** Ring in tang  
**OVERALL LENGTH:** 8.5”  
**MAKER:** Matt Gaskill, Dept. BL7, 211 Southview Dr., Fate, TX 75189 903-456-4699  
http://gaskillknives.com (Chuck Ward image)

To read about the latest knives, knife news, blogs and more, visit blademag.com.
Our comparison of two folders incorporates big differences in both the method and height of the grinding. The difference affects the cutting performance of the Busker from Olamic Cutlery and the CRKT HVAS. Those ways follow.

Cutting 20-pound bond paper for the out-of-the-box sharpness test, the Busker was up first. It sliced the paper with nice, smooth cuts. I messed up a couple of slices by beginning the cut before where the edge starts. The knife’s light weight (3.25 ounces) made the slicing very controllable. The bigger of the two knives, the HVAS (pronounced VOSS) tore into the paper aggressively and was clean slicing. It, too, was very controllable.

Cuts of single-walled cardboard were up. Using a push stroke only, I got long, clean cuts with the HVAS. The edge was very aggressive and smooth. The Busker kept the slicing going. It cut aggressively and smoothly, though slightly shallower. I could hear both knives crunch—cutting the cardboard.

I pulled some dense foam from under the workbench for the next round. The Busker sliced cleanly with a bit of drag at the end of the cut. The foam grabbed the blade and its short, flat grind. With a high hollow grind, the HVAS sliced smoothly throughout the test. It encountered no resistance while slicing.

The Busker’s edge barely flexed because of the thicker geometry but the rod still gave it a fine wire edge. A few passes on the 1200-grit diamond hone brought the edge back to new. The heat treat was spot on.

The HVAS flexed great on the brass rod. Coming back in the other direction, the knife experienced some micro chipping. A couple passes on a 1200-grit diamond hone brought the edge back to new. Like the Busker, the heat treat was mighty fine.

**SPEC CHART**

**MODEL:** Busker  
**COMPANY:** Olamic Cutlery  
**BLADE GRIND:** Flat  
**BLADE LENGTH:** 2 3/8”  
**BLADE STEEL:** M390 stainless  
**HANDLE:** Titanium  
**HANDLE FINISH:** Kenetic Sky  
**LOCK:** Framelock  
**SHARP OPTIONS:** Multiple Handle Finishes Available  
**WEIGHT:** 3.25 ozs.  
**CLOSED LENGTH:** 3.5”  
**MSRP:** $445
Skiving 8-ounce leather was next, with the HVAS up first. I was somewhat surprised when the edge dragged on the push stroke. It crunch-cut about halfway through then hit the inner part of the leather and slowed down. Next up, the Busker crunch-cut the leather. It also had some slowing on the tail end of the skiving. (Note to self: Freshen up your leather.)

I grabbed two pine pieces of kindling to make fire sticks. The Busker started off with nice, thin curly-cues. Then, as I got deeper into the wood, the curly-cues started getting choppy. The short, flat grind pulled the edge deeper into the wood. The HVAS cut some nice curly-cues as well, but they were a little choppy, too. The thin edge geometry from the high hollow grind gave me decent control, and, when I wanted it to bite deeply, it did just that.

I had some thicker pine pieces to split. The knives took the batoning great and made it through the wood in four smacks with a dead-blow hammer. Both folders maintained 100 percent lockup throughout.

Next on the agenda was half-inch sisal rope. Neither knife disappointed. The Busker started things off with a total of 173 crunching cuts before the edge started to slide. The HVAS crunched its way past and totaled 192 cuts. The knives wore my forearm out. Neither gave me a hot spot, to which I give a big “hats off”

STALE LEATHER SKIVE

The HVAS crunch-cut about halfway through then hit the inner part of the leather and slowed down. The Busker crunch-cut the leather and also slowed somewhat on the tail end of the skiving.

The Busker started off with nice, thin curly-cues in the pine. As it got deeper into the wood, the curly-cues started getting choppy. The HVAS cut some nice curly-cues as well, but they were a little choppy, too.
to the makers. Thanks for not tearing my hand up!

The final round was the brass rod test, one that constitutes abuse and will void warranties. Dragged across the rod, the edge should flex without chipping or bending if the heat treat was done correctly. The HVAS really flexed great. Coming back in the other direction, I could feel some micro chipping. The knife was still sharp and had a more aggressive edge. A couple passes on a 1200-grit diamond hone brought the edge back to new. The Busker barely flexed because of the thicker edge geometry, but the rod still gave it a fine wire edge. Again, a few passes on the 1200-grit hone brought the edge back to new. Both companies have their heat treat right on. Congrats!

FINAL REPORT
Both folders performed very well. It will be your preference in size and looks as to which you choose.

RECOMMENDATIONS
I would like to see the Busker hollow ground for a thinner edge profile, and the hollow grind of the HVAS shortened for more strength.

Both makers offer a full warranty as long as the knives are not abused. For more information contact Olamic Cutlery at 408-480-3533 or visit olamiccutlery.com, or contact CRKT at 800-891-3100 or visit CRKT.com.

For the latest knives, knife news, trends and more visit blademag.com.
The sleek spike on the RMJ Shrike has beaucoup penetration power. The diamond cross-section reinforces the spike but still allows it to come to a narrow point. The 2.75-inch edge is 80CrV2 carbon steel. Overall length: 15.5 inches. MSRP: $480.
Tomahawks are the lighter, faster members of the axe family. At one point, instead of a hatchet I carried a hawk for my large camp tool and loved it. It did its fair share of work in preparing the nightly campfire and took up very little space. In fact, on some canoe trips I took the head off the haft and stored them both neatly in a waterproof bag.

Tomahawks are both a good tool and formidable weapon. There are many myths on how a brave would never use a tomahawk for chores, but I find it hard to believe a semi-nomadic people would carry the weight and only use it for one thing. Modern tomahawks certainly have their tactical leanings and are loads of fun to throw, but in this test we made them work, too. We threw them, did some chopping and just carried them to see how they felt on the trail. I also looked at how well they carried on my gear—more specifically, my daypack. (By the way, no live trees were used for testing. We saved those for our chainsaws.)

**LUCKY SHRIKE**

The Shrike from RMJ Tactical has one of the most comfortable hawks in the group. The cross section is a good size—not too big and not too small—and the texturing is aggressive yet not so abrasive as to irritate your hand. Even with the non-abrasive texturing, I like to use gloves if chopping for any duration. The haft material is a high-durometer-rated rubber, which RMJ points out has a rating of 2,000 volts.

I guess that’s just in case you need to cut the power. (OK, that’s my one bad pun.)

Total length of the cutting edge is about 2.75 inches, the smallest edge in the test group. When it comes to camp work you don’t need a big axe—this size is plenty large enough to build a fire for you and your buddies to sit around and tell tall tales. On the pole section is a spike with a cutting edge. RMJ personnel used their noggin’s here and put the edge in a place that would not interfere with choking up on the haft to do finer work.

Speaking of choking up, when you do so on the Shrike you will miss the well-shaped haft on the lower part. The I-beam-like cross-section of the upper haft is not as comfortable. The underside of the beard also has a sharp edge that an ingenious person can probably put to good use.

Of the four test models, the Shrike was the only whittling hawk. What I mean by *whittling* is that there are two ways to use a hawk when you choke up. You can use it like a knife, in which case you don’t want to choke up too high because you can wind up banding your thumb on the work piece. The second way is choking up and taking small controlled chops to shape your work like in making a feather stick. With the Shrike, you can operate it like a knife or chop with it when you choke up.

A molded Kydex sheath enables you to draw the hawk from the bottom. The sheath is outfitted with multiple eyelets to attach a carry strap. Carry retention is good and reinserting the hawk is a bit tricky—as with most hawks—but not so tricky you could hurt yourself.

RMJ throws in one extra feature—a storage space in the bottom of the haft—that holds a small chainsaw-style file for re-sharpening your hawk or any other chore you find for it.

As for throwing, for me the Shrike sticks in the target at a distance of about seven paces, with its weight making it a solid hitter. Due to it being a spike hawk, you have a better chance of getting a good, solid hit. It is made from 4140 carbon steel and the MSRP is $480. Overall, I was impressed with the Shrike. It is a solid piece of kit.

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**HAMMER HAWK IS A BAD AXE**

This issue’s cover, the Hammer Hawk from TOPS Knives is designed to be much more than a standard tomahawk—call it a hawk/axe, if you will. Designed by Leo Espinoza, it is a full-tang, 3/8-inch-thick piece of 1075 carbon steel. The 4.5-inch edge is larger than most hawks and designed to tackle heartier chopping tasks as a result. The hammer pole is burly as well and a bear for jobs that require hammering instead of hacking. The accompanying TOPS Backup knife makes the perfect add on for smaller cutting chores.

For more on the cover combo see page 7.
PLENTY of EDGE
Camillus sends the Sin out with a huge hank of cord wrapped around the haft in a cobra knot pattern. I found the cord made the haft a bit too bulky and slick. If you decide to remove the cord, be sure that's what you want to do because there is a lot of wrapping. The haft's cross-section fits well in my hand but people with smaller hands might find the cord a bit much. Camillus uses a halved design with the tang secured in the glass-filled-nylon haft via Torx fasteners.

The Sin has a spiked pole with false-ground bevels only. For the bit, Camillus has a dropped beard design with a 4-inch cutting edge. At 15 inches overall, this is the second shortest hawk in the test group. The smaller size made it easy to fit in a daypack or lash to the side. A nylon sheath enables you to draw the hawk from the bottom after releasing the snaps. A snug belt loop is on the sheath's back side.

Raised contours are on the area where you choke up on the haft to aid your grip. The contours are not so aggressive as to irritate your hand. I found the grind too stout to do any controlled shaving/detail work, but it worked well with controlled chopping. The beard gives you plenty of edge with which to work. Despite the Sin's small size, you would have no problem collecting firewood or making a shelter with it.

As far as throwing, I found the best sticking distance at about 6.5 to seven paces. Over years of testing hawks, I have noticed that if the synthetic haft hits first the energy can be enough to send the hawk right back at you. MRSP: $52.98. The Sin worked well and took what we threw at it—or what we threw it at. My only concern would be the sheath, as I can envision having to replace it after some time. If you're looking for a budget hawk, the Sin would be money well spent.

MOST INNOVATIVE SHEATH?
I have to say that, of the test group, I must give Cold Steel the most innovative sheath award for the Trench Hawk. Heck, I would call this sheath innovative even when lining it up with some knives. It is a three-part sheath that has a pivot point for the portion that covers the bit and one for the portion that covers the spike. Cold Steel calls it a Secure-Ex™ sheath.
I’m not sure if that’s the design or the material, though either way it works. One of the major things that usually bothers me about a hawk design is the sheath. To me there is nothing worse than a sheath where you risk getting cut sheathing or unsheathing a knife or hawk. Cold Steel’s sheath design is easy as 1-2-3. Occasionally the strap gets in the way but that’s a very minor drawback.

The spike pole has two false grinds and the front bit has a short beard design. Detail whittling is not very effective with the Trench Hawk but the bevel angles are still slight enough to do controlled chopping. Out of the field, the Trench Hawk is the longest. Therefore, if you value reach in a tactical situation, the Trench Hawk gives you that.

Construction is a halved bit mechanically secured in a polypropylene haft. Cold Steel sells a replacement haft—just unscrew the broken one and fasten on the new one. It is about a seven-pace thrower and throws particularly well. However, watch for your hand dragging on the bottom swell of the haft.

The light haft makes it quick and agile for its size and it packs a thump when taking a full swing. The design has finger grooves at the top of the haft for choking up and controlled chopping. The haft has gentle texturing to prevent slipping. Out of the field if we were talking end of the world zombie apocalypse or murderous hordes of cookie-selling girl guides, the Trench Hawk would be my pick for the extra reach alone. MSRP: $67.99. To be truthful, if you had to have the Trench Hawk’s sheath made for you, the sheath would cost you at least that much.

SOLID TOOL
Colonial Knife Co’s T-200 is the smallest hawk in the group—14 inches overall with a 3.5-inch cutting edge. MSRP: $250. It is a compact package and out of the group was one of the better throwers. I had my reservations about the haft, though, as the G-10 was left blocky. However, after use it wasn’t as bad as I thought, as the corners are fairly rounded. For throwing the blocky haft helps keep the hawk oriented correctly during the throw. A downside is that the bottom of the spike has a sharp edge, which limits how far you can choke up on the haft. If you get too far up the sharp edge just might open the back of your hand.

The molded Kydex® sheath has a belt strap loop and a “G” clip. Unsheathing is easy enough but you have to really pay attention when sheathing. After a while I got the hang of it but it still required being able to see the bottom to line it up.

As a cutting tool, the one-piece head works well for small chopping chores and such. Starting a fire or building a shelter with the T-200 should be child’s play. Having the bottom edge of the spike sharpened makes the spike lean and aggressive—great for penetrating deep when using the hawk as a picaroon (a wood-handled, metal-topped log-handling tool), or being just the slightest bit off in rotation during a throw. In the end the T-200 is fun for throwing and, in the right hands, a solid tool.

YOU SHOULD HAVE ONE
Hawks are plain fun if only for throw-
ing. One day with any luck someone will invent one that walks its way back after you throw it, and at that point you might never go home. As tools and weapons, hawks are formidable. You can use them to fight, breach a door or for camp craft after a long day’s journey. Every cutting tool enthusiast should have one hawk—if for nothing else, simply to hang on the wall.

For the contact information for the hawks in the story see “Where To Get ‘Em” on page 62.

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The RMJ Shrike’s edge was the thinnest ground of the bunch, allowing it to be used in the same fashion as a knife when choking up. The author’s friend Rod shaves a piece of wood to make a feather stick. Weight: 30 ounces (including the Kydex sheath).

The Cold Steel Trench Hawk has plenty of weight (29 ounces) and length (19 inches overall) to deliver a solid blow. The 4-inch edge is drop-forged 1055 carbon steel. MSRP: $67.99.

The cord wrap on the Camillus Sin adds a lot of girth to the glass-filled-nylon haft. If you have smaller hands you might want to ditch the cord. Otherwise, it’s a great way to carry some extra cordage with you. The Sin includes a ballistic nylon sheath.

Short controlled chops with a hatchet or hawk can produce fine shavings to take the place of a feather stick. The 3.5-inch edge of the Colonial T-200 does the job. It includes a Kydex® sheath.

When throwing a hawk, your release should happen before your arm hits the point above. Such a release gives the hawk the needed loft to be able to hit the target. Targets should be of a soft wood, such as white pine, to stick easy and help avoid bounce backs. The author’s throwing distance for the test hawks varied from about 6.5 to seven paces.
Bringing Blades to Bear

Bringing the blade to bear quickly is a key to the best everyday-carry knives, and among the models that do it quickest are assisted openers. For BLADE’s new “Easy as EDC” feature I took four of the latest factory AOs for several turns around the pivot—and more.

I checked the opening mechanisms for ease of operation, reliability and smoothness. I checked the locks and clips for security, and the latter for positioning on the knife. As an aside, I carry all folders with clips clipped inside my waistband (IWB), not sticking out of my pocket, which draws unwanted attention. I evaluated the knives for general quality of construction, feel and handling, and for overall design. And, of course, I did quite a lot of the thing a knife is supposed to do: cut.

I checked for sharpness out of the box by trying to shave hair from my arm*, which has bare patches from doing it during other reviews. If you’re going to say a knife is “razor sharp,” I think you should check to see if it actually will shave. Surprisingly, all four of the review knives were sharp enough from the box to shave. In my experience this is unusual. All sliced paper cleanly. With each knife I made 25 cuts of each of the following: heavy cardboard, quarter-inch hemp rope and thick rubber tubing. I also used each knife in rotation for daily tasks: peeling apples, slicing bread and opening packages. Edge-holding results appear after the individual evaluations.

The author tested four of the latest factory assisted openers, from top: Buck Inertia, Kershaw Knockout, Boker Plus Gemini and Browning Black Label Decoded.

*All images by Mary Lou Ayres

The author tested four of the latest in factory assisted openers, from top: Buck Inertia, Kershaw Knockout, Boker Plus Gemini and Browning Black Label Decoded.
After the individual evaluations.

**Garage Gorilla**

The Boker Plus Gemini NGA BK Coyote carries tip down, which I prefer because it places your thumb on the blade opener without requiring a shift of grip. The clip was strong and secure, even in athletic pants, and positioned just enough of the handle to protrude above the belt line to allow a secure grip with no fumbling or shifting required. The handle has a slightly tacky feel with checkering on the sides of the scales, and was by a wide margin the most comfortable of the four test knives during extended cutting.

The assisted opener flings the blade strongly from the handle with a slight touch on the opening stud. Make sure you have a firm grasp on this one before pushing the stud. The linerlock was solid. The knife balances perfectly right at the index finger, which makes it seem light in hand and makes for ease of use. The Gemini is a well-made knife in the current style and the one I would choose if I had to cut up a garage full of cardboard.

**Squaring Off**

Generally speaking I am not a fan of tanto blades. In the case of the Browning Black Label Decoded Assisted Open, however, I like the blade design quite well. Its squared-off tip made for a perfect cutting edge on rope and rubber tubing, and made my work easier. If I had to cut rope or tubing all day, this would be my knife of choice. The modified tanto blade worked equally well on other materials. The handle is contoured and reasonably comfortable, though the edges could do with some rounding. The grip is a tad heavy but nothing most folks would notice. The clip was very strong and positioned the tip-down blade for an easy, natural grip. It’s a handy-sized knife that does pretty much everything I would need it to do.

**Safety Lock City**

The Buck 293 Inertia Assisted Folding Knife is the only one of the four test models with a mechanism to lock the blade closed. None of the review knives opened inadvertently, but I do understand the value of a blade lock on an assisted open-

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**Spec Chart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knife Name: Gemini NGA BK Coyote</th>
<th>Knife Name: Black Label Decoded Assisted Open</th>
<th>Knife Name: 293 Inertia Assisted Folding Knife</th>
<th>Knife Name: Knockout</th>
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<td>Blade Steel: Sandvik 14C28N stainless</td>
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<td>Blade Pattern: Drop point</td>
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<td>Handle Material: Aluminum</td>
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<td>Lock: Linerlock</td>
<td>Lock: Linerlock</td>
<td>Lock: Sub-frame lock</td>
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</table>
er, as on an automatic. An open blade in a waistband or pocket could be a painful, bloody mess. With the lock disengaged, pushing the hole in the blade opened the knife smoothly and strongly without it threatening to jump from my hand. The liner locked the blade open securely.

On all cutting materials the drop-point blade performed with predictable results—well. I mean, come on, it’s a Buck! The skeletonized scales lightened the knife and gave it a nice balance right at the index finger. The clip was strong but a little too short to prevent the knife from moving when worn with elastic-waisted athletic pants. The tip-up position required a shift of grip to get to a cutting hold after withdrawing the knife. All in all the 293 is a good example of a contemporary design at a modest price from an old-line company known for decades of quality.

21st CENTURY FOLDER
To my eye the Kershaw Knockout is in fact a knockout. The design is sleek, flowing and graceful, with all details blending into the whole—clearly a 21st century folder. The deep-bellied drop-point blade emerges from the smoothly contoured handle easily and strongly but doesn’t threaten to jump from your hand. The thin handle makes for a comfortable waistband carry. Though thin, the chamfered edges of the aluminum handle made for a surprisingly comfortable grip, even after extended cutting of rope and rubber tubing. It also balances right where it should at the index finger.

The deep belly sliced everything well. The frame lock was as solid as the proverbial bank vault door. The thumb stud is machined and polished and has no rough edges. In fact there are no rough edges anywhere on this little gem. The clip is strong but not long enough or strong enough to prevent the knife from moving in the waistband of athletic pants, which I happen to wear a lot. Like most tip-down models, the positioning of the knife when carried requires a grip shift to get to a proper cutting position. That aside, this is such a handsome piece of work I’m almost tempted to put aside my preference and EDC this one.

EDGE-HOLDING RESULTS
After a couple of weeks or so of daily use, in addition to the above cutting tests, none of the review knives would shave. All would still cut paper, some albeit a bit raggedly. There were minor differences in edge-holding ability, so minor the average user probably would not notice them. The Boker was slightly ahead of the pack. I do mean slightly in that it sliced paper a bit more smoothly than the others after a couple of weeks of daily use. A few strokes on a Spyderco pocket stone restored each knife to shaving sharpness. After dozens of openings and closings all the review knives were as solid as when they came from their boxes. These are all good knives for EDC use, with your choice being a matter of personal preference.

*BLADE* does not recommend shaving arm hair to test a knife for sharp. The practice can result in injury, or worse.

For the contact information for the knives in the story see “Where To Get ’Em” on page 62.

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**EXPLOSION!**

FANCY DAGGER IN EXPLOSION DAMASCUS AND BROKEN-OFF ANCIENT IVORY HANDLE WOWS ‘EM

Landon Robbins combines his explosion-pattern damascus and a piece of broken-off ancient walrus ivory that looks like the break could have happened in—you guessed it—an explosion for his fancy dagger.

The knife is a companion piece to go with a hunter sporting a keyhole handle of the same material that the ABS journeyman smith made for a customer a couple of years ago. “He wanted this knife to go with the hunter,” Robbins explained. The hunter had the same blade and handle material, though the latter was not broken like on the dagger. “I like the handle where it broke off. I like the natural edge of it,” he opined. “The handle is a little short but I wanted it to fit up in the customer’s hand.”

For more information contact Landon Robbins, Dept. BL7, 2370 State Hwy J, Crane, MO 65633 417-207-4290 lwrobins71@gmail.com, robbinsknives.com.

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**Spec Chart**

**Knife:** Dagger  
**Maker:** Landon Robbins  
**Blade Length:** 7.5”  
**Blade Steel:** Explosion damascus of 1084 and 15N20 carbon steels  
**Handle:** Ancient walrus ivory  
**Ferrule:** Same material as blade  
**Spacers:** Stainless steel with coined edges  
**Overall Length:** 12”  
**Maker’s List Price for a Similar Piece:** $1,200

Landon Robbins (inset) said this version of his explosion damascus has more “explosions” in it than the pattern in the companion hunter that preceded this dagger. “I’ve been playing with several different damascus patterns—single bar, multi-bar twists, ladder patterns and others,” he said. “I haven’t got it all figured out yet.” If and when he does, the results should be even more stunning. (SharpByCoop knife image)
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