



MADE IN AMERICA BY AMERICANS FOR AMERICANS

by Greg Walker

The title of this article happens to, also, be the motto of the most unique knife company I've come across during the course of this magazine's production. Ek Commando Knives specializes in nothing more than pure combat cutlery. Since John Ek, founder of the firm, began producing benchmade knives for private purchase by U.S. servicemen in 1941, his line never expanded into such areas as hunting, fishing or backpacking. Rather, he committed the direction of the company toward the arming of America's forces, with what he felt was the most reliable weapon they could carry and always count upon, an Ek blade.

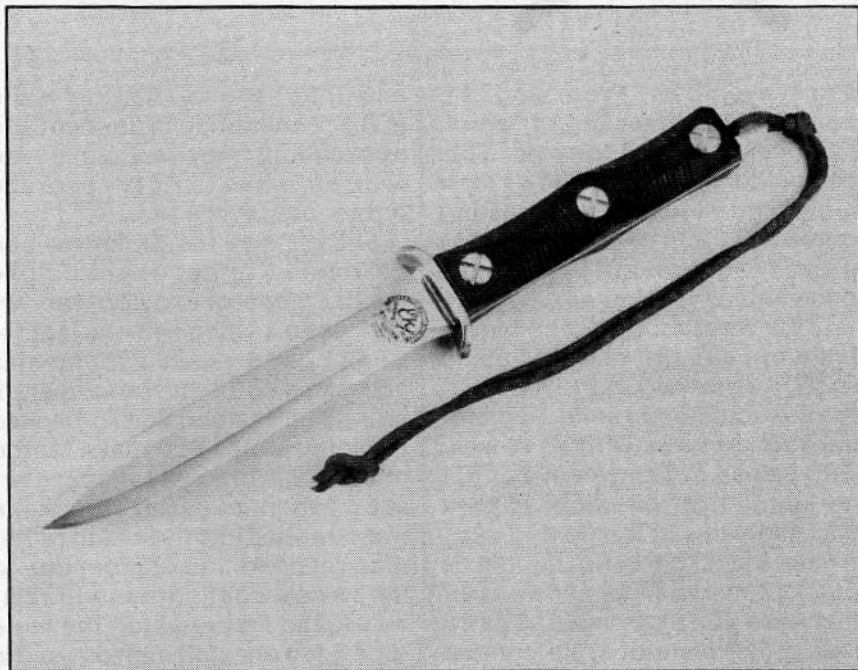
From the beginning, Ek sought out the input and expertise of those that would use his product. The use of the term "Commando" was granted by the British War Office, as John Ek never borrowed anything, preferring to represent himself in a straightforward manner, dotting all the *i*'s, crossing every *t*.

Original Ek knives featured a single-edged blade with no guard. This was the Model 1 and it was an instant success with Ek's buyers. He soon introduced the Model 2, which featured a double edge, but was still guardless. Ek's insight as to a guard was that it was too bulky when it came to easy carry and could get caught up in either clothing or equipment, should the



The Ek Survival/Fighter is as close to a perfect pure combat knife as one can get. Wasp-waisted for increased slashing power, double-guard, full tang and a common sense sheath make this an American Classic. It is, also, easy to handle, nearly unbreakable, and offered at a reasonable price.

FIGHTING KNIVES



For three wars and a number of "police actions," Ek Commando Knives have been carried by American ground forces. Their blades are well-designed, of benchmark quality, and a part of our cutlery heritage.

owner need to retrieve it quickly. The guardless models remain Ek's best sellers today, a tribute to John Ek's wisdom and research.

Another unique feature of an Ek blade was (and continues to be) his use of hot-poured lead rivets to hold his handles in place. The lead rivet allowed a handle that loosened up in the field to be tightened into place by simply hammering it. They, also, provided a practical weighting system to the knife. Three such rivets went into each handle's construction, as opposed to other similar knives that used only two standard cutlery pins.

Ek utilized a knife registry system, which allowed him to control the sale of his blades to his intended customer base. It gave him the capability of insuring his lifetime backing of any Ek knife produced to the original owner, and made him one of the most selective makers in the country. Even today, should an old Ek be found and the serial number checked with the company, the original owner, his service branch and date of purchase can be looked up and confirmed.

John Ek sold more than 100,000 knives in WWII, alone. His business furnished blades during the Korean War, and again during Viet Nam. Today Ek Commando Knives can be found in such places as El Salvador or the Philippines, "wars" that although undeclared still put American fighting men in harm's way. Because of this client base, Ek Knives continues the tradition of improving its product by talking with those that use it. An Ek knife is a combat knife. Its function and design has changed very little since the first model was packaged and set off to war, but today's blades are of the highest quality materials that should be expected in a fighting knife.

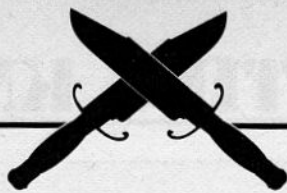
John Signorelli, of Ek Commando Knives, was kind enough to provide me with one of the newest Ek models to be introduced. During our conversations I found out that Ek is doing business in the 80's, with impressive sales both in the United States and Overseas. The company sells eleven different models of its knife, plus a SOG Bowie coming from the Murphy Combat Knife Com-

pany. An interesting aspect of Ek is their semireluctance to appear in print. The low-profile sought after by founder, John Ek is alive today in the firm's philosophy. Although their advertising is abundant, their business remains service-orientated.

I have owned and used an Ek Model 4 with double edge for nearly two years now. The M-series knives are the top of the line for Ek. They feature removable micarta grips, brass x-head fasteners and a configured leather sheath for carry. As with all the Ek knives, the M-series is ground from high carbon, stainless steel (HCS1718), which is heat-treated to 1950 degrees F, and then quenched at 120 degrees F below zero in order to create tremendous edge-holding capabilities. Indeed, my Ek M-4 came with, and still retains, a razor like, cutting edge, due to the excellent steel choice and practical grinding format. These are some of the sharpest knives out of a box you'll ever buy.

The blade of an Ek is classic combat. At just over six inches, each is wasp-waisted for increased cutting and slashing capability and superbly ground so that both blade body and tip are reinforced. This makes for a knife that will hold up to unusual lateral stress, such as prying and bending. Also, important to the Ek's innate strength is the full tang found on each model. Normally, the weakest of areas in any knife's construction (the second area being a poorly heat-treated blade), Ek Knives insist on a full-width, full-thickness tang or extension of the blade to act as a handle. This translates into reliability when using the knife in any application appropriate for a knife, and Ek is to be commended for their attention to this detail.

The M-4 features what Ek calls their "Handprint" grip. Molded from micarta, these grips are ergonomically designed so that the ball of the hand and the thumb are immediately positioned in either a fencing grip, or reverse grip depending upon the user's style or situation. Although this



design does work as intended and is comfortable, I found that I disliked being *told* by my knife which grips I would be held to. The original Ek design was either smooth grips or slightly contoured slabs that allowed for a variety of holds to be employed by the user. This broad styling also made it easier to manipulate the knife in the hand, quickly changing grip styles without losing the *feel* of the blade in motion. The current *handprint* grips make it difficult to spin the knife from an on-guard position to a reverse slashing position. Thought is required to insure that the knife ends up where it's supposed to be in relation to the ball of the hand and thumb. It is my feeling that there are too many edges, serrations and angles in this particular handle. At the same time, it limits you to what you can do *quickly and easily* with the blade once it's in motion.

The P-series Ek knives are of the same blade designs, but handle material is Pakkawood rather than micarta and the ever-faithful lead rivets are used in place of brass screws.

My second Ek knife is another version of the Ek Survival/Fighter. Titled the Ek SWAT Knife, this model displays the use of a paragrip handle, which is provided by utilizing 18 feet of 550-pound parachute cord. The paracord, also known in the Services as "550-cord," provides a generic approach towards how the knife can be held and is pleasing in its comfort during use.

My particular SWAT model came with a single edge. To be frank, I found that I truly prefer this feature over the purely combat double edge models. Because of the flat back available on the single edge models, you can apply extra cutting pressure thru thumb placement directly over the blade, something not possible with a double-edged knife. Additionally, a single edge is normally considered legal for carry in most states, whereas the Fighter can raise

some eyebrows. Protecting the hand is a full brass guard, which has been radiused forward. This design consideration allows for a more natural transfer of thrusting power into a target. It will aid in preventing broken thumbnails once impact is attained.

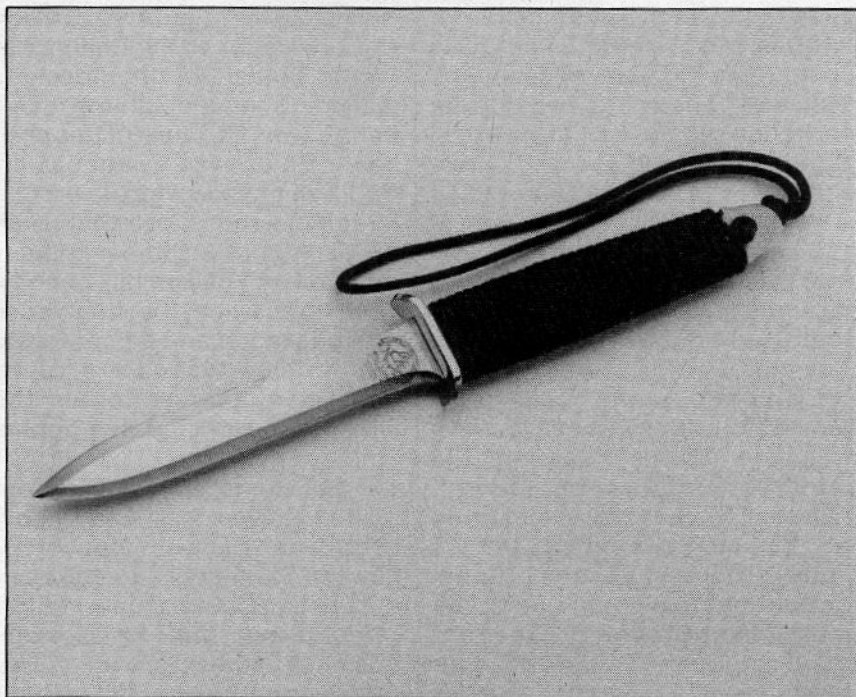
(This was first recorded by the team of Fairbairn and Applegate as they were working to redesign the F-S commando knife. Remember that John Ek worked closely with British influences. No doubt he learned of this problem thru his associates in the field.)

The black paragrip handle is quick to manipulate, allowing for fast, sure grip exchanges, regardless of the style of knife combat you prefer. Accessory wise you now, also, have 18 feet of tie-down should you ever require it, keeping in mind that the full tang of the Ek *always* provides you with a functional handle.

I strongly advocate the S/F models, which include the SWAT

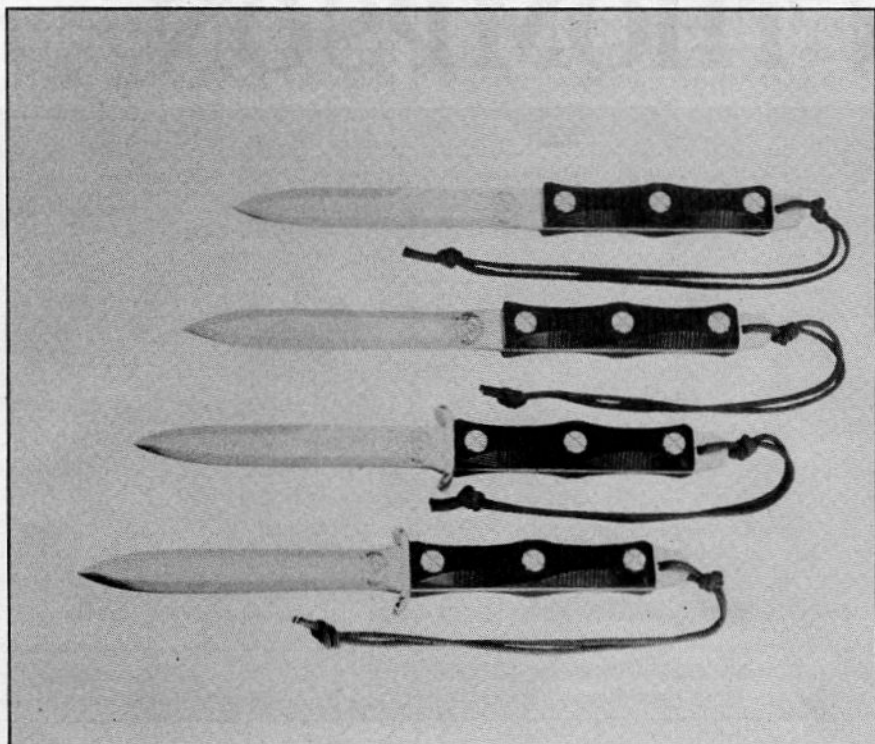
and International Rescue Knife (I.R.S.). Utilitarian in concept and application, they will serve you well as either a total package fighter or survival tool.

Sheath wise the Ek knives can be had in either their deluxe leather model or in nylon web. My M-4 was provided with the leather version, and again I found this accessory to be overengineered. Using dual leather, Velcro-backed retaining straps that make far too much noise for combat consideration when released, the knife was strapped into its sheath rather than retained. In addition, due to the handle configuration in relation to the first retainer, the knife rode a full one half inch out of the sheath during movements such as bending and crawling. The sheath itself is bulky considering the slimness of the blade being encased, and my final conclusion was that I'd *never* carry my Ek into any kind of action using this model sheath.

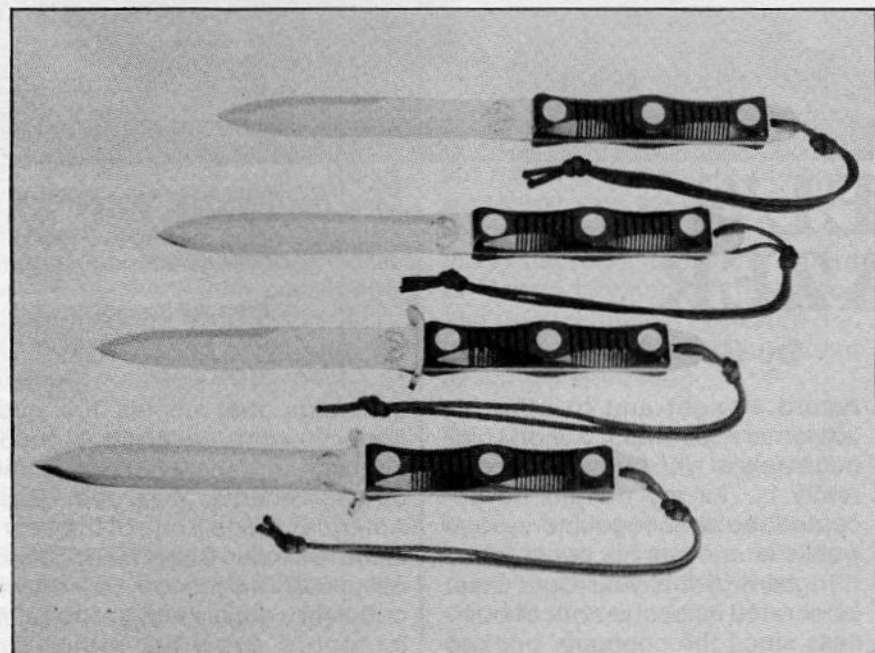


One of the latest additions to the Ek catalog is the SWAT Commando Knife. Geared towards those specialized law enforcement needs often found today, the knife features a paracord wrap handle, single or double-edged blade, full guard and superb Cordura sheath. This knife was evaluated for the purposes of this magazine and found to be one of the best purchases available to the reader.

FIGHTING KNIVES



"M" Series



"P" Series

The "M" and "P" series knives are Ek's mainstay blades. Para-wrap blades include the S/F, SWAT and I.R.S. models. Soon to be available is a SOG bowie made by the Murphy Combat Knife Company and sold thru Ek.

One hundred eighty degrees the other way is the absolutely brilliant nylon web sheath offered as a cost-reduction consideration. Provided again by Mr. Signorelli for both my M-4 and SWAT models, this sheath is exactly what is needed for field use. A single Velcro-backed retainer snug the knife into place directly above the guard. Retention is aided thru the emplacement *inside* the sheath's body of a heavy plastic liner, which provides friction against the blade and complements the efforts of the retaining strap. The result? *Sure grip with no slip.* Nylon is light, easily cleaned and repaired in the field and available in OD green or black per your desires and/or needs. Request any model Ek with the nylon sheath and you'll be both well-served and pleased.

One of the last observations has to do with the marketing and packaging that Ek does. Both my knives arrived in regal black boxes complete with Ek historical literature, order forms and a small booklet on knife care written by Ek, entitled "Your Silent Partner." No one else provides such a complete product package as Ek and the result of their pride-of-product is the owner's new-found pride of ownership.

Ek Commando Knives—**Made in America, By Americans, For Americans.** •

