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TRENDS

IN THE KNIFE INDUSTRY by James A. Keating

There are certain era's which are remembered by a specific trend or social habit which came out of them. In 1969 and 1970, bell bottom pants were all the rage in fashion. Did this mean that bell bottom pants were superior to normal pants? Did they protect the wearer any better than standard leg blue jeans? The answer is NO, they were simply a trend. In fact, they often did not work as well as normal straight leg pants! Bell bottoms were prone to entanglement in bicycle chains and working machinery. When wet, they were heavy and when in the field, they would snag on brush all too easily. Yet, in their day, they were all the rage. Manufacturers made millions off the gullibility of John Q. Public by selling the idea that bell bottoms were "cool". Some of you are by now asking, "What's this have to do with knives?" Simple, it is an accurate analogy of some of the same trends which are currently running/ruining the cutlery industry. Let me explain in more detail as per what I am referring to.

There are two worlds coexisting within the cutlery community. One caters to collectors, art affectionados and fantasy buffs. The other is peopled by those who actually use knives (sportsmen, military, wood carvers etc.) I probably fit in the latter category as would most of my friends. We use knives! We carry knives! These knives must work/perform when needed. Like any tool must, a man's knife must not only do it's allotted task's, but also do them correctly.

COMMON SENSE AND HANDS ON EXPERIENCE: BE YOUR OWN JUDGE

The current fascination with chisel ground blades is a classic example of a trend which takes over a group, industry or nation. Similar to the above mentioned bell bottom pants, these chisel ground knives are NOT better than regular bladed knives, nor can they even measure up to a conventional bladed knife when side by side tests of basic cutting are done. Simply put, they DO NOT work better than a conventionally shaped blade. Why?

The blade of a knife is a wedge, not a half-wedge. A wedge splits and separates, the

material being cut is shunted off from these angular planes. This in turn, facilitates ease of cutting. Plus, the cut is still effective when done from the extremes of either blade side. This is not so on chisel ground knives. When on the non-blade side (chisel side) the knife's ability to cut efficiently is severely compromised. Still a doubter? Try this simple experiment at home.

The next time you are splitting a log for firewood please notice that you are not using an axe, you are using a maul, which is basically a wedge. Get yourself two splitters made of wood. Make one in the form of a V or wedge (a knife blade). Make the other in the form of a half wedge or chisel ground type of form. These will wear out quickly, but go ahead and insert these "splitters" in the seams of the wood and see for yourself what version of a splitter has more effectiveness.

ARRIVING AT A CONCLUSION

I was dressing Elk ribs for the dogs, after a hunt. All I wanted to do was to cut between the ribs evenly, leaving ample meat on each rib etc. I was carrying a chisel ground folder. I thought this to be an opportune time to test the chisel ground knife out, especially since this very same model has been heavily promoted by the magazines as the greatest thing since sliced bread. So, as I began to slice I noticed a really significant drag to the cut, ugh and grunt! Another aspect was the even line I was intending to make kept becoming a zig zag line, back and forth. The plane of the knife acted like an airfoil on an aircraft, causing the knife to react as would a plane in the air (dipping and rising), only this time the medium of operation was flesh instead of atmosphere. Hard to cut with and when cuts were finally made they were ragged and uncontrollable! The chisel type design is a TOOL form for a specific use. For that job which a chisel is intended to do, it works perfectly! For such configuration of the blade on a knife intended for combat or work, HAW! I would rather have a sharpened surveyors stake! What next? Chisel ground pants and bell bottom knives? Let reality guide you and allow common sense be your friend, avoid trends and stick with what works!

THE SINGLE EDGE ADVANTAGE

by Lynn C. Thompson

Ever since I was a kid I have been inundated with that tired old pack of myths and mysteries surrounding the double-edge fighting knife. I'm sure many of you are familiar with them, but for those of you who aren't, the gist of it goes something like this: "A stiletto-like blade with a thick spine and two keen edges that allows cutting, slashing and thrusting is essential and comprises a true fighting knife."

Nonsense! It seems to me that many of the so-called experts who have propagated this garbage over the last 40 years are badly out of date.

Maybe it's because they have occupied more time at the typewriter fantasizing about sneaking up on and sticking sentries than actually cutting or stabbing animate or inanimate targets. If they had spent more time in reality, they would have soon discovered the single-edge combat knife would be superior in all situations or environments because it has a stronger point more conducive to slashing, a sharper edge, cuts deeper, is stronger overall, is more versatile and is safer in all

aspects, including possession and exposed or concealed carry. So hang on to your hats, sit up on the edge of your chairs, and let's get it on, as I prove calmly and succinctly that when it comes to a fighter, the single edge is the real king.

The point of a single-edged blade, all else being equal, will always be substantially stronger than a double-edged knife because the blade back can be brought much closer to the point for a thicker cross section. Another factor that aids the strength of the single edge blade is that many examples sport a wider or fatter point than the double-edged variety, which, again, adds metal near the tip for even more strength. Why, you ask, is it so important that the point not break? After all, even a knife with a broken point will still penetrate.

The answer is, if you lose $\frac{1}{4}$ inch or even $\frac{3}{16}$ ths off the tip of your knife you will see a marked decrease in penetration which could cost you the fight! If you don't believe this, break or file a quarter-inch or so off the tip of your favorite fighter and then stab it into a stack of flattened-out cardboard boxes, noting the depth of penetration. Next, take a like blade with a perfect tip and stab it into the boxes with the same amount of force and you will see a dramatic increase in both ease and depth of penetration.

In modern warfare the point strength issue is

even more critical because the opposition will, in all likelihood, be covered with a variety of heavy gear that can break your point. You see, soldiers don't just stand still like the classic sentry in the movies when you stab or cut them. Instead, they move, duck, evade, parry, block, etc., and the clear opening you had on initiation may terminate with the point of your blade lodging itself in a loaded 30-round AK-47 magazine, entrenching tool, belt buckle or even a cigarette lighter. All of these items can easily snap the point of a double-edged blade—or worse, bend it past 45 degrees, making it useless if you are fortunate enough to have the time for a second strike.

A single-edge blade will usually be quite a bit wider than a double edge and carry its point higher than the center line of the blade. This combination produces more curve or belly near the tip, which is critical for slashing, especially at long range, and is absolutely essential for a long, disabling cut.

A single-edge blade, particularly a flat-ground one, will almost always offer a more shallow grind angle than a double edge. This shallow grind creates, in turn, a more acute and therefore sharper edge. A razor-sharp edge is a decided advantage on a fighter or combat knife because if it will cut at the slightest touch, it is much less likely to turn or skate off your enemy's heavy clothes or a jacket made of denim, wool, nylon or leather.

A single edge will always cut deeper than a double edge for several reasons. First, it can be honed much sharper with a lot less effort. Second, most blades will cut deeper because they possess the more efficient slashing point and a more gradually tapered cross section, which allows the blade to slip deeply through the target without experiencing the resistance typical of the more abrupt wedge-like taper of a double-edged knife. Third, a single edge will almost always have more mass than a double edge, with all dimensions being equal, which will cause it to cut deeper with less effort. Fourth, a single edge allows the user to place his thumb safely on the back of the blade, which results in greater leverage and accuracy in the cutting stroke.

A single edge will invariably be stronger than a double edge due to the fact it will have more material (steel) in its cross section. This can be very important in situations or environments where only one knife can be carried, and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to get a replacement. If this is the case, what you have with you has to be equal to the tasks at hand without the risk of breaking, because there is no resupply.

A single edge can chop, cut, slice, dice, peel, whittle and pry far more effectively than a double edge thanks to its superior edge geometry, blade profile, cross section and greater mass. What's more, since you can use your thumb on the back of the blade to apply pressure, you gain greater

control over the edge and point for delicate or precision work. Now I know some of you will be thinking a combat knife or fighter is not supposed to be used for common, mundane tasks in' the



field and is only to be reserved for the big moment. The problem is that the gear load of the average trooper today is so heavy that most are unwilling to tote two or three knives into combat. So the fighting or combat knife often has to do double duty in the field, which won't hurt a single edge a bit provided it's resharpened regularly.

In hand-to-hand combat the single edge is a lot safer for its wielder than a double edge because there is a dull, safe side that can be held close-in next to the trunk or limbs without the fear of self-injury. A double edge, on the other hand, has no safe side and great care must be taken not to hold it in a position where it could easily cut its master by accident or be slammed back into its owner's body by the enemy. A second reason the single edge is safer is that it has only one edge to watch out for when you choke up on the blade for some utility or skinning-type chore that requires the use of the index finger to better control the tip of

The Bush Ranger™ possesses all the best features of a single edge combat knife while retaining the superb thrusting qualities of a dagger. Read more about the Bush Ranger™ on page 12 of this catalog.

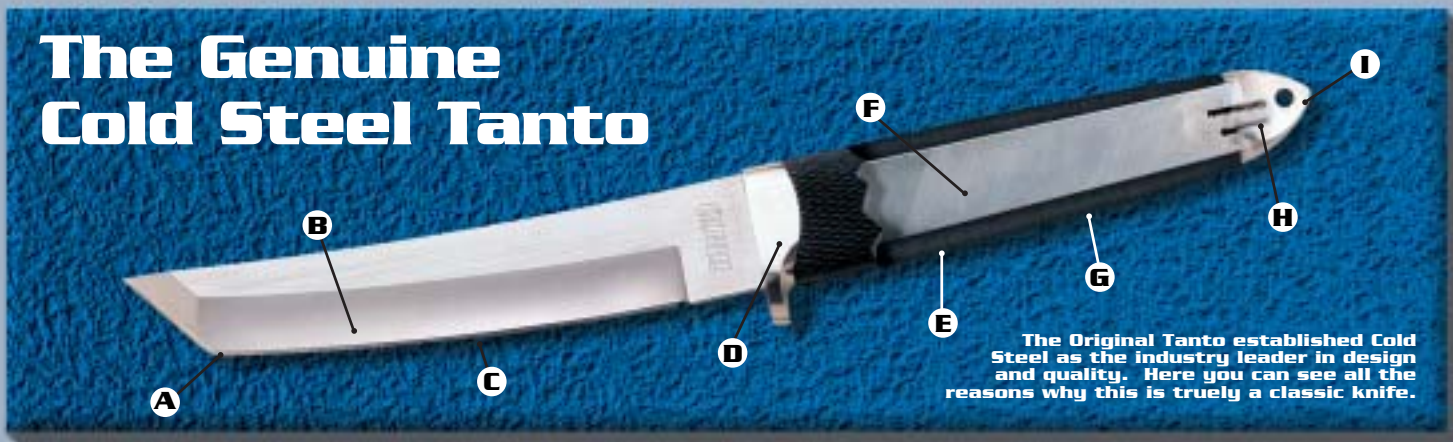


the blade. A third reason is that it's safer to carry on the person from a legal standpoint, as it is less likely to be held as a dirk or dagger. Police officers often frown on anyone carrying a double-edged knife despite the fact that in many states it is entirely legal when worn in plain sight.

So I think it's obvious from the above arguments that a single-edged fighter or combat knife should be nearly everyone's weapon of choice.

In the next issue Lynn talks about the **double edged knife's** advantages and what he has learned after 700 hours in knife sparring!

The Genuine Cold Steel Tanto



The Original Tanto established Cold Steel as the industry leader in design and quality. Here you can see all the reasons why this is truly a classic knife.

A. Secondary Point:

The secondary edge, sweeping up to the tip of the blade, allows effective slashing at full arm extension. Plus, where it joins the primary edge, it forms a secondary point that simultaneously cuts and pierces on impact.

B. Hollow Grind:

Deep hollow grind provides a surgically sharp edge despite the massive blade spine. It also creates a distinctive contrast with the line grain finish on the blade's flat surfaces.

C. Perfect Curve/Razor Sharp:

Perfect 23° curve for maximum cutting efficiency, and hand honed and buffed to razor sharpness.

D. Guard:

Stainless steel guard, with a new shape for added finger protection.

E. Unique Handle:

Ergonomically designed, the handle is deeply checkered and oval, so it's very comfortable and won't roll or twist in the hand.

F. Full Tang Construction:

The Tanto Series features full tang construction. This means the massive blade extends through the interior of the handle to the pommel for maximum strength.

G. Non-Slip Grip:

Kraton® is a space age rubber compound, first used in the knife industry by Cold Steel.® It offers an unparalleled non-slip grip that is slightly yielding to the touch for comfort yet it won't warp, crack, or mildew.

H. Pommel Stud:

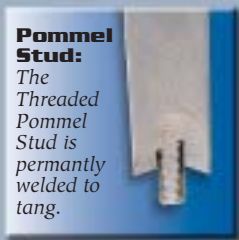
A threaded stud is permanently welded to a notch in the tang. Its special alloy steel is able to absorb the tremendous forces generated by blows struck with the pommel.

I. Pommel:

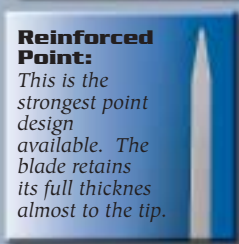
Tapered, semi-pointed shape of the polished stainless steel provided maximum force at the point of impact.

J. Reinforced Point:

This is the strongest point design available. As you can see the blade spine retains its full thickness almost to the tip. Yet the point offers dagger-like potential, combined with a leading edge that shears as it penetrates.



Pommel Stud:
The Threaded Pommel Stud is permanently welded to tang.



Reinforced Point:
This is the strongest point design available. The blade retains its full thickness almost to the tip.

A Public Service

WARNING

From Cold Steel, Inc.

The Tanto designed by Lynn C. Thompson has become tremendously popular since its introduction in 1981.

Over the years, many companies in Spain, France, Taiwan, Japan, and even here in the U.S.A. have tried immitate the Tantos unique looks and performance. Their goal was to fool the public with cheaply fabricated imposters that aped the look, but in reality fell short in materials, workmanship, and performance. In some instances, they used cheap pot metal handles (like the one shown above), in others they used third rate TPR rubber (never Kraton®), and chrome or brass plated "cheapo" castings and junk yard steel. In every case, they have succeeded in ripping off their customers.

Cold steel has purchased a number of these poorly made look-alikes and had them tested by Master Bladesmith Dan Maragni (of the American Bladesmiths Society). With his permission, we are reprinting pertinent parts of his report on the test knife above.... A typical imposter.

BEWARE OF THE TANTO IMPOSTERS



A. "Stabbed point into dry, hard maple and snapped out losing 3/16" of the point. Drove into maple 3/4" and snapped out losing 3/4" of point."

B. "Placed blade in vise to yakote (7/8" from where point was) and applied light pressure-blade bent slightly and then snapped."

C. "Placed blade in vise 3 1/2" from shoulder and applied moderate pressure by hand and blade bent 10°. Heavier pressure snapped blade and broke the hilt."

D. "Placed blade in vise at edge /ricasso transition and applied pipe very lightly - tang snapped and hilt broke."

E. "Obviously the hilt is a very weal point in the construction of these knives. Upon sectioning of the hilts I found them to be a pretty poor casting (note grain structure and

holes) with the blade extending into them 1 3/8". It also appears that the only thing holding the blade in the hilt is a small amount of epoxy."

Excerpts from Mastersmith Maragni's conclusions on Tanto imposters.

"The wide variation exhibited by these two knives leads me to believe that the quality control in the heat treatment is very poor. Not only does it vary widely from knife to knife, but also from place to place on the same blade."

"The hilts on these knives are atrocious, not only are they very poorly constructed buy they are also very uncomfortable to use. They are difficult to grip, and heavy and awkward to cut or to chop with. They are also fairly easily broken and removed from the blade."