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RIPOSTE

(rĭ-pōst') **n** 1. A quick thrust delivered after parrying a lunge in fencing.
2. A quick, clever reply : retort.



What Happened To Comparing Apples To Apples?

By Lynn C. Thompson

At Cold Steel, we ask only one thing of our competition. Put up or shut up. It seems lately, however, that some of our esteemed competitors may bend the truth just as efficiently as they supposedly bend a knife blade. We don't shrink from challenges. In fact, we welcome them. All we want is fair testing and verifiable results. At Cold Steel, we put our products through their paces on videotape for the world to see. Our competition seems content with misleading claims and flawed findings. Compare apples to apples. It's the American way! You'll find that Cold Steel backs its boasts. Let's carve up our competition.

Our competition claims their 9 1/2" Bowie knife can make 1,623 cuts in 1" hemp rope and still shave hair.

1. Did the knife our competition used in cutting all this rope have the standard cantle edge which is advertised to the public, or was it specially modified with a 1/2" wide rolled edge?
2. Is the competition saying their knife shaved hair with the very same part of the blade that made the 1,623 cuts, or was another part of the blade used for shaving?
3. Does the competition say they tested a Trail Master Bowie with the exact same edge as their knife, that they made the cuts with equal force, and that our knife failed to shave after making only 275 cuts? We'd love to see this "test" on video.

Our competition alleges that their 9 1/2" Bowie knife endured 21,000 pounds of stress at the blade/handle juncture and their handle sprang back to true without taking a set (a permanent bend).

1. Did the competition stress their blade/handle junction vertically where it would be strongest or horizontally where it would be weakest?
2. Did their 9 1/2" Bowie knife have a double brass guard to protect the fingers? Knives equipped with this protective feature generally have a narrower tang so the guard can be fitted in place, especially if they have a non-slip checkered Kraton handle so they won't fly out of your hand when wet or bloody like a smooth micarta handle may.
3. Is the competition saying that they took our Trail Master Bowie with a 9 1/2" blade that is 5/16 of an inch thick and tested the blade/handle juncture strength in the exact same manner as their knife? Boy, we'd sure love to see video proof of our knife failing at 1,300 pounds while their knife holds at a little more than 16 times the pressure without breaking, bending or taking even the slightest set. Yes, wouldn't that be an eye opener?

Our competition says their 9 1/2" Bowie knife can be driven through a 1/2" thick steel sheet with no damage to the point, and their nearest competitor will only go through a 1/16" steel sheet.

1. What's the point — on their knife, that is. Does it have a fighting or stabbing point designed by a proven knife fighting expert like our Trail Master Bowie does? Or, does it have a big, wide, fat point that carries its tip only slightly lower than the blade back? A point like the latter *may* be strong, but historically it hasn't been chosen very often for use on a fighting knife because a wide, fat point offers a great deal of resistance when used on a stabbing weapon (especially when single edged and shaped like a machete point), and requires a lot of physical effort to effectively penetrate. Instead, a wide, fat point like this is often used on heavy, clumsy, clunky, chopping or cleaving knives.
2. Does our competition say that they put our Trail Master in a *solid steel fixture and supported the blade the same way they did their own knife*? Are they saying that they then applied pressure from a hydraulic press in an identical manner and our point wouldn't pierce more than 1/16" of sheet steel without chipping, bending or breaking? Wow, we'd love to see proof of that on videotape, especially when we can drive our blade through 1/16" of sheet steel *by hand* with no damage to the point, and no steel fixture to support the blade or hydraulic press either.

Our competition says their 9 1/2" Bowie knife can cut through 20 2X4's and still shave hair while their nearest competitor can cut through only 11.

1. Are they saying they used the same part of the blade to shave hair and cut the 20 2X4's? We'd sure love to see a close-up of that on videotape.
2. Is the competition saying that the blade they used for the 2X4 test had the same cantled edge that they advertise to the public? Or did they specially modify it with a 1/2" wide rolled edge? We'd love to hold the knife that accomplished this feat in our hands.
3. Are they saying they actually tested a new 9 1/2" Trail Master Bowie with a cantled edge and that it only cut through 11 2X4's? Did they use the same part of the blade that did the cutting to determine sharpness or did they use another part of the blade's edge to shave? Once again, we'd love to see a video of our knife being tested like this by a competitor.

Our competition says they locked 1" of the tip of their knife in a vise, flexed it 35 degrees, and it returned to "true" without taking a set, while their nearest competitor could only flex 25 degrees and return to "true".

Is our competition saying that they locked 1" of the tip of a Trail Master in a vise, flexed it, and that it only went 25 degrees? We find that strange, because in our video, *Cold Steel Proof*, we conducted a *much harder test than this*. We locked the tip of our Trail Master 2" in a vise and flexed it 25 degrees. You see, when you put 2" of the tip of your blade in a vise, it makes



the blade much stiffer and more resistant to bending. This, in turn, makes it much more difficult to get the blade to bend or arc to 25 degrees than if we had only put 1" of the blade in a vise. Strange! What happened to comparing apples to apples? After all, that is the American way!

Our competition claims their 9½" Bowie severs ten 1" hemp ropes bundled together with a single cut and that their nearest competitor severs only 7.

1. How far from the end of the bundled rope did our competitor make his 10" cut? The closer to the end of the rope, the more difficult the cut is. This would make an interesting comparison, don't you think?
2. How much did our competitor's knife weigh? Was it heavier than a Trail Master Bowie?
3. How much did the man who made the cut weigh? Did he weigh 240 pounds, or was it 300 pounds plus? How many steps did he take before making the cut, or did he stand in place? A man weighing 60 pounds or more than another is always going to have the cutting power advantage, provided all other factors are equal.
4. Did the 9½" Bowie used to make the 10" cut have the same cantled edge of the models advertised to the public or did it have a specially modified ½" wide, rolled edge.
5. Did our competition use a Trail Master with a specially modified ½" wide, rolled edge sharpened identically to their knife? Did they strike the ten 1" ropes in the exact same spot as they did with their blade and use the exact same force and effort, resulting in our knife failing to make the cut? You bet we'd love to see a video proving that. Or is our competition relying on the cutting test in our *Proof* video where our admittedly very sharp Trail Master with a cantled edge cut through 7 ropes?

Our competition asserts that they clamped their Bowie knife 1" from the tip and flexed it to 80 degrees without breaking while their nearest competitor only went 60 degrees.

1. Are they saying that they took a Trail Master and locked it 1" from the tip, then bent it past 60 degrees and broke it? How far past 60 degrees did it go before it broke, or did it break at exactly 60 degrees? Or is the competition relying on our video *Proof* for their information?

Again, we find this comparison strange because in our video we locked our Trail Master more than 3" from the point in a vise and bent it 60 degrees without breaking. As we have mentioned, the further you put the blade in a vise, the stiffer and harder it is to bend or break. Do the math! A blade that is flexed with 3" of its tip in a vise is incredibly more resistant to arcing 60 degrees than a blade locked 1" in a vise. Again, what happened to testing apples against apples? Remember, it is the American way!

Cold Steel welcomes competition and freely acknowledges that some competitors make good knives. However, we have a lot of questions for the

competition when they make unsupported and unequal comparisons. And we hereby challenge them to any *equal* test of strength, sharpness or cutting power. This challenge includes all those manufacturers and custom knifemakers touting their tactical folders as the latest and best on the market and offering no evidence of their superior performance. Cold Steel provides *Proof*. Let's see others do the same.

Knives Can Be Primary Weapons

(Rebuttal to Ed Fowler's December 1997 Blade Article)

By Jerry VanCook

In the December 1997 issue of *Blade* magazine, former police officer Ed Fowler published an article entitled "Why Blades Are Not Primary Weapons". I've never met Mr. Fowler, and should our paths ever cross, I'm sure we'd find more things on which we agree than those on which we don't. But this article would not be one of them. As an ex-cop myself, I've got to take the exception with just about everything he said.

Mr. Fowler states that as a police officer he never wanted to take another life unless absolutely necessary. For most of us that pretty much goes without saying --- in our society we call the people who don't follow the rule "murderers." But then Mr. Fowler goes on to say that he didn't consider his own life as qualifying as absolutely necessary. Whoa, son! What police academy did he go to? I was always taught, and had no trouble accepting, the wisdom that if there had to be someone who wouldn't be going home after my shift it should be the other guy. I mean, even if you're willing to sacrifice yourself to spare some scumbag (and make no mistake --- *I'm not that noble*), what about the other innocent people the guy is likely to kill after your rotting away in the grave? You don't think he's going to drop his knife, say "Gee, I wish I hadn't done that," find Jesus, and then join a monastery do you?

Mr. Fowler also mentions his training under a master of a police baton. The inference is that he himself became quite skilled with a stick, and I have no reason to doubt that. But then he cites a couple of examples in which he used his nightstick to disarm attackers wielding knives, and the inference then is that any cop could do the same. That simply isn't the case. Most law enforcement officers don't possess the desire or discipline to become baton masters, and they are never going to reach Mr. Fowler's skill level. And considering the fact that much of the general public still doesn't understand how deadly a blade can be, and still cries out in unenlightened anger when a knife-wielding felon is shot, he's putting a lot of heat on those cops who may have chosen to concentrate their efforts on aspects of police work other than stick fighting.

Don't get me wrong. I'm delighted that Mr. Fowler is such a good stick fighter --- he'd have been a dead cop, and I'd have had to wear a piece of black tape over my badge the day of his funeral if he wasn't. But I'm also glad that the men who attacked him weren't even more skillful with their knives than he was with his baton.

Continued on next page.

Assuming, for whatever reason, that I myself was unable to put "two in the chest and one in the head" of someone attacking me with a knife, I too would rather choose a nightstick rather than another knife to defend against the blade. But the stick's length advantage is no guarantee to survival. Unlike the assailants Mr. Fowler described, there are countless trained knife fighters today who could easily penetrate the average cop's nightstick defense. While the vast majority of those who train with blades are splendid examples of good citizenship who would never consider such an act, a few honed their skills in the penitentiary. Even without superb technique, give one of these guys some crack, PCP, or a even a little simple insanity and you get a slashing, stabbing kamikaze who can, and will, sacrifice as many broken bones as you care to deal out in order to close with, and kill, you. I've seen a couple of men take blows to the head that by all rights should have killed them. But they kept coming.

There's another angle to consider here. All people --- and this includes nightstick masters --- are human. They don't always do everything right. I don't regard myself as a master of anything but I think it's safe to say I'm not much better with a nightstick than the average officer; weapons have always interested me, so like Mr. Fowler, I've spent a lot more time practicing with them than most policemen. But I make mistakes sometimes. It's no big deal if I miss my practice dummy. But in a life-and-death struggle against a man with a knife...

I've got to look at Mr. Fowler's view of what a knife actually is as a little over-romantic, too. He states that a knife is "a remarkable beautiful friend that improves the quality of life, and is a joy to use." Finally we can agree on something! But that's not all knives can be, either. And when he states that it's a "desecration of an art form to simply stick man's most beautiful tool into another human being" he's not only being melodramatic but exhibiting another limited perspective. Beauty, as we all know, is in the eye of the beholder. Many people have the same love for firearms which Mr. Fowler professes for knives. I have a friend who collects cudgels from around the world and many of them are as beautifully crafted as any knife. If we accept Mr. Fowler's narrow view point then we must also accept that he desecrated my friend's collection of art pieces every time he hit someone with his nightstick.

Perhaps most irritating of all is Mr. Fowler's use of his own childhood fist fights to promote that tired old cliché that "pulling a knife during a fight is the act of a coward." When I was a child, my friends and I felt the same way during similar "masculine coming of age" rituals. But even as children we knew the difference between squaring off with the playground bully and facing life-threatening attack. One was a game, the other a matter of survival. Cowardly acts are executed by people, not things like knives. A cowardly act can be committed with a knife but it can also can be committed with a gun, shovel handle, nightstick, ballpoint pen, or computer keyboard, and for a writer to mislead readers in such a way, even if unintentional, is irresponsible and inexcusable.

Mr. Fowler also states that he considers knives as a defensive weapons only as a last resort. Guess what, Mr. Fowler? So does everybody else with any brains. To paraphrase a tired old cliché of my own, if you're invited to a knife fight, you take a 12 gauge shotgun. Better yet, you stay home. But in today's society few people tote a shotgun around on a daily basis, and even citizens with concealed carry permits cannot take a gun everywhere they go. They are, in many instances, armed only with a weapon of last resort, or nothing at all!

And if all you have is a weapon of last resort --- like a knife --- that weapon of last resort becomes your primary weapon, like it or not.

Those of us who study, teach, and write about responsible self-defence recognized that some knives qualify as art objects. But we also recognize that our lives are works of art by God's hand, and we feel a responsibility to protect and preserve His work. All defensive weapons are tools; tools to prevent murder, rape, and other serious crimes. Likewise, all tools can be employed as weapons in one way or another. The role of any inanimate object is determined by the brain that directs the hand that lifts it.

This in no way should be taken as a personal attack on Mr. Fowler who, as I have already said, I have never even met. With so many of us old grey-bearded ex-cops running around these days, there are bound to be different opinions. And while I can understand the entire knife industry's governmental-control fears of promoting their products as weapons rather than tools, I am personally growing very weary of people today who keep trying to play the "politically correct" game by ignoring the fact that knives can, and should be employed as defensive weapons against unwarranted attack. An attacker is no more dead after being stabbed than if you used a gun, nightstick, poison, or smothered him with a life-sized dinosaur doll named Barney. It's time to quit wasting our time trying to find common ground with the anti-gunners, anti-knifers, anti-self-defenders, and anti-take-responsibility-for-your-your-own-lifers. We don't have any common ground with them. So lets go back to calling a weapon a weapon, and realize it can be used for both good and evil.

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Over the last 28 years he has trained thousands of police officers, military personnel, and civilians in both armed and unarmed self defence. A student and instructor in Okinawan Karate, he has also studied Aikido, Thai Boxing, Kung Fu, Kali, and recently received his sixth Dan ranking from the Bei-Koku Aibujutsu Ryu in Osaka, Japan.

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