

Editorial

By Lars Lind

Master & Chief Instructor of Weapons Combat Systems™



Soon summer will be here and the season for medieval re-enactment activities start.

For those who wish to be part of this and are not already part of Sct. Martin or any other group; send me a mail with name, birthday, address, telephone no. and I will take it from there. Membership is DKK 50 a month.

Another good quote:

"Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler"

Albert Einstein

Take care
Master Lars

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Weapons Combat Escrima – Escrima introduction seminar in Greve

Assistant Instructor Rolf held an introduction seminar in Greve WT club invited by Abhjit Singh, the clubs leader.

Nine attended the intro and there will be comments in the next Newsletter.

I hope that there will be an interest in Greve to start a Weapons Combat Escrima work group.



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Weapons Combat Escrima – Seminar weekend In Malmoe May 7-8th

By Master Lars, Chief Instructor Weapons Combat Systems

Saturday was a normal gradig seminar and we had 4 gradings:

1st student grade – Alexander and Christian

4th student grade – Sonny

10th student grad – (a very tired and sore) Tony

Well done all.

Sunday was a special seminar on “The Box” or rather a trip back to the origins of the box to what the box is in Weapons Combat Escrima.

As I have written before – it is the question if we still should call it “The Box”.

As things stand, we will still teach and keep ther name in the first three student grades, but in a very aggressive form where we always thinking of the attack.

From there we will begin to change so it becomes more and more like a wedge.



Participants (I'm for once holding the camera – I hope all know what I look like)

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Weapons Combat System – Famous knives – The Bowie knife

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



A Bowie knife (pronounced bow-ee nife) is a style of fixed-blade knife first popularized by Colonel James "Jim" Bowie in the early 19th Century. It was first made by James Black, although its common use refers to any large sheath knife with a clip point.

The "Jim Bowie knife" first became famous due to Bowie's use of a large knife at a duel known as the Sandbar Fight. The knife pattern is still

popular with collectors; in addition to various knife manufacturing companies there are hundreds of custom knife makers producing Bowies and variations.

Description



An early Bowie of the type made for Rezin Bowie and commissioned by the Bowies to Searles and Constable. This is a copy of the Fowler Bowie currently displayed at the Alamo.

The historical Bowie knife was not a single design, but was a series of knives improved several times by Jim Bowie over the years.^[3] The earliest such knife, made by Jesse Clift at Rezin Bowie's request resembled the Spanish hunting knives of the time and differed little from a common butcher knife.^[3] The blade, as later described

by Rezin Bowie, was 9.5 inches (24 cm) long, 0.25 inches (0.64 cm) thick and 1.5 inches (3.8 cm) wide. It was straight-backed having no clip point nor any hand guard with simple riveted wood scale handle.^[4] Rezin presented the knife to his brother because of a recent violent encounter with one Norris Wright.^{[3][4]} This is the knife that became famous after the sandbar duel of 1827.^[4] Bowie and Wright were attendants on opposite sides of the duel. When the principals quit the field, a fight broke out among the attendees and Bowie, though seriously injured by a rifle shot, killed the 3 men, by almost decapitating one, splitting the skull of another, and disembowelling the third.^[4] Bowie and his knife, described by witnesses as "a large butcher knife," quickly attained celebrity and the Bowie brothers received many requests for knives of the same design. They commissioned more ornate custom blades from various knife makers including Daniel Searles and John Constable.^[4] George William Featherstonhaugh described them as: These formidable instruments...are the pride of an Arkansas blood, and got their name of Bowie knives from a conspicuous person of this fiery climate.^[5]

The version most commonly known as the historical Bowie knife would usually have a blade of at least 6 inches (15 cm) in length, some reaching 12 inches (30 cm) or more, with a relatively broad blade that was an inch and a half to two inches wide (4 to 5 cm) and made of steel usually between $\frac{3}{16}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ in (4.763 to 6.350 mm) thick. The back of the blade sometimes had a strip of soft metal (normally brass or copper) inlaid which some believe was intended to catch an opponent's blade while others hold it was intended to provide support and absorb shock to help prevent breaking of poor quality steel or poorly heat treated blades. Bowie knives also often had an upper guard that bent forward at an angle (an S-guard) intended to catch an opponent's blade or provide protection to the owner's hand during parries and corps-a-corps.

Some Bowie knives had a notch on the bottom of the blade near the hilt known as a "Spanish Notch." The Spanish Notch is often cited as a mechanism for catching an opponent's blade; however, some Bowie researchers hold that the Spanish Notch is ill-suited to this function and frequently fails to achieve the desired results. These researchers, instead, hold that the Spanish Notch has the much more mundane function as a tool for stripping sinew and repairing rope and nets, as a guide to assist in sharpening the blade (assuring that the sharpening process starts at a specific point and not further up the edge), or as a point to relieve stress on the blade during use.

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One characteristic of Bowie knives is the "Clip-point" at the top of the blade, which brings the tip of the blade lower than the spine for better control. As the goal is to produce a sharp, stabbing point, most Bowie knives have a bevel ground along the clip, typically 1/4 of the way, but sometimes much further running the entire top-edge. This is referred to as a "false edge" or a "swedge" as from a distance it looks sharpened, although it may or may not be. Regardless of whether or not the false edge is sharp, it serves to take metal away from the point, streamlining the tip and thus enhancing the penetration capability of the blade during a stab. The version attributed to blacksmith James Black had this "false edge" fully sharpened in order to allow someone trained in European techniques of saber fencing to execute the maneuver called the "back cut" or "back slash".^[4] A brass quillon, usually cast in a mold, was attached to protect the hand.

Noted knife expert Bernard Levine has reported that the first known Bowie knife showed a strong Mediterranean influence insofar as general lines were concerned. This would have involved the single, principal cutting edge, regardless of the false edge's existence or not. It is noted that in the Old West many "Bowie knives" were made that in fact did not show Mediterranean influence, but were just large knives, often with two full edges.^[6]

The curved portion of the edge, toward the point, is for removing the skin from a carcass, and the straight portion of the edge, toward the guard, is for chores involving cutting slices, similar in concept to the traditional Finnish hunting knife, the "puukko" (though the typical early 19th-century Bowie knife was far larger and heavier than the typical puukko). Arkansas culturalist and researcher Russell T. Johnson describes the James Black knife in the following manner and at the same time captures the quintessence of the Bowie Knife: "It must be long enough to use as a sword, sharp enough to use as a razor, wide enough to use as a paddle, and heavy enough to use as a hatchet."^{[4][7]} Most such knives intended for hunting are only sharpened on one edge, to reduce the danger of cutting oneself while butchering and skinning the carcass.

History

The Sandbar Fight



A coffin handled Bowie Knife.

The first knife, with which Bowie became famous, allegedly was designed by Jim Bowie's brother Rezin in Avoyelles Parish, Louisiana and smithed by blacksmith Jesse Cleft out of an old file.^[4] Period court documents indicate that Rezin Bowie and Cleft were well acquainted with one another. Rezin's granddaughter claimed in an

1885 letter to Louisiana State University that she personally witnessed Cleft make the knife for her grandfather.

This knife became famous as the knife used by Bowie at the Sandbar Fight, which was the famous 1827 duel between Bowie and several men including a Major Norris Wright of Alexandria, Louisiana.^[4] The fight took place on a sandbar in the Mississippi River across from Natchez, Mississippi. In this battle Bowie was stabbed, shot, and beaten half to death but managed to win the fight using the large knife.^[4]

Jim Bowie's older brother John claimed that the knife at the Sandbar Fight was not Cleft's knife, but a knife specifically made for Bowie by a blacksmith named Snowden.

James Black's Bowie Knife

The most famous version of the Bowie knife was designed by Jim Bowie and presented to Arkansas blacksmith James Black in the form of a carved wooden model in December 1830.^[4] Black produced the knife ordered by Bowie, and at the same time created another based on Bowie's original design but with a sharpened edge on the curved top edge of the blade. Black offered Bowie his choice and Bowie chose the modified version.^[7] Knives like that one, with a blade shaped like that of the Bowie knife, but with a pronounced false edge, are today called "Sheffield Bowie" knives, because this blade shape became so popular that cutlery factories in Sheffield, England were mass-producing such knives for export to the U.S. by 1850, usually with a handle made from either hardwood, deer antler, or bone, and sometimes with a guard and other fittings of sterling silver.^[4]

Bowie returned, with the Black-made knife, to Texas and was involved in a knife fight with three men who had been hired to kill him.^[3] Bowie killed the three would-be assassins with his new knife and the fame of the knife grew.^[4] Legend holds that one man was almost decapitated, the second was disemboweled, and the third had his skull split open.^[4] Bowie died at the Battle of the Alamo five years later and both he and his knife became more famous. The fate of the original Bowie knife is unknown; however, a knife bearing the engraving "Bowie No. 1" has been acquired by the Historic Arkansas Museum from a Texas collector and has been attributed to Black through scientific analysis.

Black soon had a booming business making and selling these knives out of his shop in Washington, Arkansas. Black continued to refine his technique and improve the quality of the knife as he went. In 1839, shortly after his wife's death, Black was nearly blinded when, while he was in bed with illness, his father-in-law and former partner broke into his home and attacked him with a club, having objected to his daughter having married Black years earlier. Black was no longer able to continue in his trade.

Black's knives were known to be exceedingly tough, yet flexible, and his technique has not been duplicated. Black kept his technique secret and did all of his work behind a leather curtain. Many claim that Black rediscovered the secret of producing true Damascus steel.^[7]

In 1870, at the age of 70, Black attempted to pass on his secret to the son of the family that had cared for him in his old age, Daniel Webster Jones. However, Black had been retired for many years and found that he himself had forgotten the secret. Jones would later become Governor of Arkansas.

The birthplace of the Bowie knife is now part of the Old Washington Historic State Park which has over 40 restored historical buildings and other facilities including Black's shop. The park is known as "The Colonial Williamsburg of Arkansas". The American Bladesmith Society established the William F. Moran School of Bladesmithing at this site to instruct new apprentices as well as journeyman, and mastersmiths in the art of bladesmithing.

Variations and collecting



Krag Bolo bayonet US stamped, on the reverse date 1900

Over the years many knives have been called Bowie knives and the term has almost become a generic term for any large sheath knife. During the early days of the American Civil War Confederate soldiers carried immense knives called D-Guard Bowie knives.^[4] Many of these knives could have qualified as short swords and

were often made from old saw or scythe blades.

The Bowie knife is sometimes confused with the "Arkansas toothpick," possibly due to the interchangeable use of the names "Arkansas toothpick", "Bowie knife", and "Arkansas knife" in the antebellum period.^[9] The Arkansas toothpick is essentially a heavy dagger with a straight 15-25-inch blade. While balanced and weighted for throwing, the toothpick can also be used for thrusting and slashing. James Black is also credited with inventing the "Arkansas Toothpick" but no firm evidence exists for this claim.^[7]

Knives made in Sheffield, England, were quick to enter the market with "Bowie Knives" of a distinctive pattern that most modern users identify with the true form Bowie. The Sheffield pattern blade is thinner than the Black/Musso knives while the false edge is often longer with a less pronounced clip.^[4]

The shape and style of blade was such that the Bowie knife could serve usefully as a camp and hunting tool as well as a weapon, and is still popular as such with hunters and sportsmen even in the present day.^[4] However, some camping authorities dissent as to its usefulness as a camping knife on the grounds that it is far too large.^[10]

Since the 1960s, Bowie knives with sawteeth machined into the back side of the blade appeared inspired by the United States Air Force survival knife (NSN 7340-00-098-4327). The sawteeth were intended to cut through the acrylic glass canopy of a downed aircraft. During the Vietnam War the United States Army issued them to helicopter crews for the same purpose.

The Bowie remains popular with collectors. In addition to various knife manufacturing companies there are hundreds of custom knife makers producing Bowies and variations. The USMC Ka-Bar of World War II fame is based on the Bowie design.^[11] Custom knife maker, Ernest Emerson originally used a Bowie knife in his logo and manufactures a folding Bowie known in his line-up as the CQC13. A Bowie knife also appears on the shoulder sleeve insignia of the 39th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, headquartered in Little Rock, Arkansas. Jim Bowie was posthumously inducted into the Blade Magazine Cutlery Hall of Fame at the 1988 Blade Show in Atlanta, Georgia in recognition for the impact that his design made upon generations of knife makers and cutlery companies. Rock star David Bowie (born David Robert Jones) took the name Bowie after the Bowie knife because, in his words "it cuts both ways".^[12]

Legal status

The examples and perspective in this article deal primarily with the United States and do not represent a worldwide view of the subject. Please improve this article and discuss the issue on the talk page. (December 2010)



Sheffield pattern blades are not quite as wide as the Black design but most variations carry a false-edged clip point.

In the late 1830s, several southern states passed anti-Bowie knife legislation attempting to curtail the manufacture and sale of these knives. In 1837, the Alabama legislature imposed a \$100 transfer tax on Bowie knives and stipulated that any killing with a Bowie knife was murder regardless of the circumstances.^[13]

In Texas, the state where Jim Bowie died, it is now a criminal offense (generally a Class A misdemeanor) to carry a Bowie knife, as a Bowie knife is classified in Texas as an "illegal knife".^[14] This law does not apply if you are traveling in a private vehicle because it is now legal to carry a handgun, knife, or club while en route to or from the vehicle or engaged in a sporting activity involving the use of such equipment.

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Further reading

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This is the first in a series of articles, next Newsletter will continue with the Fairburn Sykes Comando knife

What is happening?

In May

May 7th – Lund – Weapons Combat Escrima – Grading and Technician seminar
Master Lars Lind

May 8th – Lund – Weapons Combat Escrima – Special seminar
Master Lars Lind

May 14th – Lappeenranta – Weapons Combat Escrima – Grading and Technician seminar
Master Lars Lind

May 15th – Lappeenranta – WingTsun Weapons Combat – Special seminar
Master Lars Lind

May 29th – WT Center – Weapons Combat Escrima – Grading seminar
Senior Instructor Peter “Lange” Tønder

May 28th – Haderslev – Weapons Combat Escrima – Special seminar
Head Instructor Kenneth Kyhe

In June

June 10th – 13th – Historical Weapons Combat
Copenhagen Medieval Marked

June 17th – 19th – Historical Weapons Combat
Erum Monestary - Ridderdage

Questions on this letter, seminars or Weapons Combat Systems™ can be put to me personally on telephone +45 40 30 48 39 or by mail to lars.lind@siemens.com

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