

Ken Brock scribes outline of knife model onto bar stock from template.



BROCK BLADES'

OPERATORS TRAVEL UTILITY KNIFE

» BY SCOTT OLDHAM

When your life is going to depend upon a piece of equipment, you want to be sure that it is being designed and manufactured by someone who knows not only what they are doing, but exactly why they are doing it.

Knives are tools, but in our culture, among those who consider themselves serious about their profession and their own survival, knives become a very personal thing indeed.

There are a wide variety of production knives on the market that would most likely be more than capable of almost any task that could be asked of them in terms of real-world use. The key words here are "most likely." These blades are all designed and built in a production format and may or may not have been built for a specific purpose, so you might not get exactly what you need if you are not careful in the selection process. Some production knives may have actually been built for a specific *look* rather than a *function*—caveat emptor.

During the latter part of 2007, after a training trip to the East Coast, a large quantity of my gear was left setting on a rainy airport tarmac when my flight was delayed for several hours. While the gear—which between my business partner and myself encompassed three very nice 1911s and their associated support gear, several high-end production knives and a variety of other tactical equipment—all survived and arrived with us at our destination, the experience left us both with the feeling that

one day it might not. Perhaps we would be better served with equipment that was rugged in the extreme and selected for the explicit purpose of meeting our needs, while at the same time not breaking the bank if it was lost or stolen.

When searching for the equipment that I would need to fill the roles I had in mind, I realized that one of the most important pieces of kit would be a knife that could be counted upon to take care of any conceivable need. It needed to be brutally tough without being so expensive that if lost it would be an overwhelming financial hardship to replace.

Ken Brock is right now one of the best-kept secrets in the knife-making world—but he won't stay that way for long. He offers a full catalogue of blades, all of which exhibit a level of absolutely stunning craftsmanship, at extremely attractive price points.

What has kept Brock off the world stage of knife making up to this point is that it's not his main profession. He is a working cop with over 17 years of experience and is assigned to his department's Aggressive Criminal Enforcement Team. This job assignment, coupled with the fact that he is a member of the agency's SWAT unit, relegates knife making to a part-time pursuit. As a result of his ex-

perience, he knows first-hand what a life-threatening situation is—he doesn't need to guess at it. Consequently, all of the blades that come from his small shop can be counted on not to fail when lives are on the line. In the world of tactical law enforcement, there is no place for second-rate pieces of equipment.

Although he had made a couple of knives back in high school during shop class, Ken came to knife making back in 2002 and then only as a hobby. He'd been searching for something to do in his off time that would be challenging and interesting to him, but did not strictly revolve around the law enforcement profession.

After deciding that the knife-making world interested him and finding that he exhibited more than a little flair for it, he was fortunate in that he was befriended by a couple of well-known knife folks who taught him the ins-and-outs of the business. He has been picking up speed ever since.

Brock Blades now offers a number of different styles designed for a host of real-world purposes. Ken designs and builds knives based on his experiences and the experiences of those he trusts, which has led to a line that is second to none in rugged reliability.



Author's Brock Blades' OTUK knife.

Brock Blades does not produce knives that are considered "good enough." Knives that leave the South Carolina shop are the best that there is for the job at hand or they end up in the scrap pile. As Ken and a number of knowledgeable tactical officers of both his and my acquaintance stake their lives on blades that come from his shop, I felt that he was the ideal choice to craft a blade I could depend on, no matter what problem I might run into.

As I had seen and handled several examples of Brock's work over the years, I left the actual design up to him, telling him only that "This knife must be a 'jack of all trades,' as it will be the only fixed blade I'll carry with me on most training trips and details. Most likely use is hard-use utility. I need a tough, 'get my rear out of what I have gotten myself

into' blade." It was with these parameters that he set off to construct what has become the OTUK, or Operators Travel Utility Knife.

The OTUK is crafted from CPM 154, as it is easy to sharpen in the field and offers all the strength that one could ever need in a blade of this type. The 3/16" wide OTUK is approximately 7.25 inches in overall length, with an actual blade length of 3.25 inches. The handle is tightly wrapped in 550 cord for several reasons, including its ability to be quickly and easily replaced if soiled or contaminated. The knife came equipped with a Kydex sheath of Ken's design that is well suited for a variety of both open and concealed carry methods.

The blade is chisel ground so that it can be easily sharpened using only the most basic of tools. The profile of the

knife is best described as a traditional Japanese style tanto, which carries the full width of the blade to within .25 inches of the point, causing it to exhibit an extreme amount of strength. The knife features a deep finger choil to keep your hand from sliding forward, along with a series of serrations along the top of the blade to assist in retaining your grip no matter what the conditions.

Designed from the ground up to be a no-compromise utility knife that has a lot of potential use for self defense, the OTUK has replaced a series of other highly regarded blades upon which I used to depend. Offered from Brock Blades for \$150.00, the knife represents an exceptional bargain for those who need a blade that can be counted on no matter what.

After months of field use, the knife shows little wear and is still nearly as sharp as the day it was delivered. It has been used to cut a variety of different materials, including rappelling line, denim, nylon strapping and leather. Several times the knife has been used to pry objects and has come away from each use without damage.

In the custom knife world, you will find no maker better than Ken Brock. Right now the wait time for a Brock Blade is approximately six months, but that is sure to increase as more people come to him for blades that they can stake everything on. Designed and built by someone who knows not only how, but *why* the specific knife is being built, a Brock Blade is a very personal thing indeed. Get in line now—you'll be glad you did. ©

SOURCE:

Brock Blades
Dept. S.W.A.T.
1017 Blumefield Rd.
Anderson, SC 29625
(864) 940-2940
www.brockblades.homestead.com