



**BATTLE PROVEN  
IN THREE WARS!**

WW II

KOREA

VIETNAM



**Ek Commando Knife Company**  
601 North Lombardy Street  
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**YOUR  
SILENT  
PARTNER**



*Ek Commando Knife Company*

**YOUR SILENT PARTNER**  
**A BOOKLET ON THE CARE**  
**AND USE OF EK COMMANDO KNIVES**

Prepared By  
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Neither author, manufacturer nor dealer accepts or assumes any responsibility or liability for injuries resulting from the use of the instructions contained in this booklet. Fighting knives are dangerous weapons and should be treated with the utmost care and respect.

All designs protected. The unique "*Handprint*"® grips are a trademark of the Ek Commando Knife Company.

Ek Knives have been used by hundreds of thousands of American Servicemen in every branch of our Military Services in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. Since 1941 Ek Knives have been battle tested and combat proven.

The first printing of "Your Silent Partner" took place in August, 1944.

## DEDICATION

This booklet is respectfully dedicated to the memory of

Dermont Michael "Pat" O'Neill

- former Detective Sergeant, Shanghai Municipal Police
- student and protege of Lieutenant Colonel William E. Fairbairn
- OSS Sergeant and close-combat instructor
- Sergeant & Lieutenant, First Special Service Force
- Police Combat Instructor, U.S. Agency for International Development

## Chapter 1

### JOHN EK: A LEGEND IN KNIFEMAKING

(29 September 1915—21 October 1976)

Unlike any previous maker, John Ek designed all his knives for combat use by American military personnel, and during the early years he would only sell his knives to servicemen. He pioneered a classic knife design unlike any other. And he was the first to produce "bench-made" knives in production-volume quantities.

Ek knives probably hold the record for being the leading privately purchased military knives in American history. By the end of World War II, it is reported that production reached 1,000 knives per seven-day work week, and virtually all were restricted to sale to U.S. military personnel. By estimates that are believed to be conservative; more than 100,000 Ek knives were produced during World War II alone. Yet each knife has that "custom" knife look—rather than being a carbon-copy look-alike.

John Ek supplied knives, on a private-purchase basis, to American military personnel in three wars—World War II, Korea and Vietnam. As he said in the mid 1970s: "There's been hardly a break without some kind of military involvement since 1941, so we've been busy with knives ever since."

In April or May of 1939, John Ek designed his

first prototype knives in the machine shop he owned. In 1941, he started producing this knife in quantity in Hamden, Connecticut.

He called his knives "John Ek Commando Knives." This was a reference to the British Commandos and American Commando-type forces who were highly respected for their knife-fighting abilities. Ek met with Commandos and Americans who trained with them, and they compared notes on knife design and fighting. Company reports indicate that he requested—and received—permission from the British War Office to use the term "Commando".

It is reported that President Franklin D. Roosevelt kept a John Ek Commando Knife on his desk in the White House until the time of his death.

General George S. Patton, Jr., also owned a John Ek knife (as did several of his subordinates), and John Ek even named his post-war Model No. 6 the "Patton Knife" after the General. Captain Clark Gable was also a customer of John Ek—thinking that if the situation required him to go into action he would have a dependable knife. Captain Gable flew on several bombing missions over Germany and wanted a knife he could depend on in case the mission did not go as briefed.

The information in Ek's registry files documents that his knives were owned by men of all ranks in every branch of service—Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Merchant Marine. Their mailing addresses prove that Ek knives were used in every theater of opera-

tions around the world.

One newspaper article indicated Ek knives "became surrounded almost immediately by an aura of fame and invincibility." John Ek had strong feelings about making his knives available only to active-duty servicemen. He did not want his knives to fall into the wrong hands. That is why military personnel are usually more familiar with his knives than "civilian" collectors.

Ek felt his knives were the finest made and that they gave the user an advantage over any adversary. His philosophy was: "A knife is more deadly than a gun. A gun will run out of ammunition, but as long as a person is behind a knife, it can kill."

He was a strongly patriotic American, a newspaper headline once calling him a "Modern Day Thomas Paine." In fact, one of the mottos of his company was—and still is—"Made in America, by Americans, for Americans."

Also unusual and distinctive were the "poured-lead" rivets which were used to affix the two wooden grips to the blade tang. Most knives at the time used standard cutlery rivets or pins, or they were simply driven onto the rat-tail tang. The poured-lead rivets had the advantage that, if the handle ever became loose, it could be tightened in the field without any tools. All the owner needed to do was take a heavy object, such as a rock, and pound the lead rivets to tighten them.

Another advantage of the poured-lead rivets was the extra weight which made the knife balance far better than most. This caused it to lie in

the hand, rather than fall out of it.

During a time of steel shortages, the U.S. Government War Production Board tested and approved the designs of the Ek knives and authorized John Ek continued availability of the high quality, nickel-chrome-moly steel, a strategic material. He was also made a member of the Army Ordnance Association.

Several aspects of his design made his knives distinctive and rugged. First of all, the knife was of "full tang" construction. Not only did the tang (the extension of the blade which runs through the grip) run the entire length of the grip, it was also the full width of the grip. In other words, the grip was about one inch wide and five inches long—and so was that portion of the steel blade tang, for maximum strength. By comparison, most knives of the day (even today) had narrow tangs—some running only one-third the length of the grip.

Also unusual was the extended butt—a direct extension of the blade and the blade tang itself. Depending upon the year of manufacture, the butt could vary in length anywhere from nearly one inch to approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch beyond the grip. This butt could be used as a prybar for opening ammunition crates or, according to Ek's version of "Your Silent Partner", for "an up stroke to lay your opponent out." Another use of this extended butt was to protect both the hand and wooden grips when the butt was used as a hammer.

As was the case with earlier production, the Vietnam production received acclaims from

owners—such as this letter from a helicopter gunship crew chief, received in 1965:

"When your ship is shot down in VC territory, your rifle or pistol is of no use to you if you have to walk back to friendly lines. You can't afford that much noise, so your knife and knowing how to use it are your best weapons. The only knives suitable for this type of war and for survival use are your Commando knives."

Although John Ek died on 21 October 1976, the business continued operating in Miami and St. Augustine, relocating in 1982 halfway between there and the earlier Connecticut location in Richmond, Virginia.

Current production knives are once again back to the larger, original World War II dimensions, and the steel is thicker (.150" vs. .125") for even greater strength. These and other subtle modifications to the classic Ek patterns were designed with the help of military personnel to make these knives of even greater value to the men of the Armed Forces.

Many an American life was saved in three wars by John Ek Commando Knives. The thousands of letters he received from satisfied GIs were a source of great pride for this patriotic American. His name, his knives, and the Ek Commando Knife Company live on today as a legacy of his ideas, his skills, and his patriotism.

Excerpted from *Allied Military Fighting Knives*,  
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## Chapter 2

# CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF EK COMMANDO KNIVES

### *A Few Basic Rules*

Every Ek Commando Knife is designed to provide a lifetime of rugged service. As with any tool or weapon, care and maintenance will help it live up to its full potential.

There are a few very simple rules to keep in mind:

- 1) When you are wearing your knife, *make sure it is well secured in its sheath* when not in use. For a parachute jump, our leather sheath with parachute cord tie-downs is recommended. The sheath-mounted cord can be inserted through the hole in the extended butt or through the small loop in the wrist thong to tie the knife in place.
- 2) *Never throw your Ek Knife.* If you miss, you have thrown away your weapon. It was designed to cut, thrust or slash and *not* to throw. Only knives especially designed for throwing at targets are to be thrown.
- 3) *Always keep your Ek sharp.* A sharp knife is safer to use than a dull blade and gets the job done quicker.

### The Survival/Fighter Model

The Ek Survival/Fighter Model features the rugged full-tang design, olive drab *Paragrip*® Hilt and olive drab, nylon sheath.



- 4) *Store your knife out of the sheath.* Both synthetic and leather sheaths attract and hold moisture which can eventually corrode the steel, even though it is "stainless".
- 5) *Stainless steel can eventually rust*—it simply takes longer. After use, the blade and grip should be rinsed in clear water to remove salt water or blood and then waxed or lightly oiled.
- 6) *Don't show off with your blade.* If you want to cut bolts, use bolt cutters. We are justly proud of our knives, but they are for use—not abuse. Emergency situations call for emergency uses which should not be confused with horseplay. A knife is as dangerous as a firearm; treat it with respect.
- 7) *Take care of your sheath.*

*Web sheaths* can be rinsed with clear water after use in dirty or muddy conditions. Make sure you get debris out of the sheath.

*Leather sheaths* should be kept waxed. Neutral shoe polish (paste type) or mink oil works well. For use in salt water, the sheath can be paraffin treated to minimize deterioration.

### Special Features

Survival/Fighter—The *Paragrip*® handle on the S/F can be periodically removed, checked for serviceability and rewrapped. You may even replace it with a leather thong or material of your choice.

### The M-Series Models

The M-Series is the top of the line. Each knife features removable Micarta grips, brass X-head fasteners and deluxe black leather sheath.



### The P-Series Models

The P-Series offers the strength and quality of the top of the line M-Series, but with Pakkawood grips, poured lead rivets and olive drab web sheath.





**M-Series**—The Micarta grips are easily removable with the brass crosshead fasteners. Simply unscrew to remove, clean & replace.

**P-series**—The Pakkawood grip scales are held on by both epoxy and the poured lead rivets. If a grip ever loosens (unlikely), it can be quickly tightened by gently tapping the rivets with a hammer. It may also be squeezed back into position by use of a vice. Do *not* pound on the scales or overtighten the vice.

### *How to Sharpen your Ek Knife*

The compound-ground bevel on every Ek Commando Knife is designed to be both strong and sharp. It will, however, not stay sharp forever when in use and must be periodically re-edged. This may be accomplished by using either a steel or ceramic rod to touch up the edge in the field, or Arkansas stones to restore the edge.

We recommend the use of a medium Arkansas stone to develop the edge and then a hard, or black, Arkansas to finish the job. These stones should be as long as the knife blade. The small stones that come with some knives today aren't large enough for proper sharpening. Your Ek knife comes to you with an extra-sharp, fine edge. It is hand sharpened at a very low angle. If you want a stronger edge that is not quite as sharp, raise the angle of the knife slightly when you sharpen it.

Follow these steps to sharpen your knife:

- 1) Lubricate your medium stone with light machine oil or water.

- 2) Place the knife diagonal to the stone on a 45-degree angle to the long axis of the stone.
- 3) Lift the back edge of the blade from the surface until the knife edge bevel is flat on the stone and sweep the blade across the stone from hilt to point. Move the cutting edge into the stone—as if you are trying to take a slice out of it. Concentrate the pressure on the blade edge.
- 4) Repeat the process in the opposite direction, keeping stroke for stroke with the same angle and pressure until the edge begins to come out again.
- 5) Decrease the stroke pressure for the last few strokes and finish with the black (hard) Arkansas for final edge.

### *How to Hold Your Ek Knife*

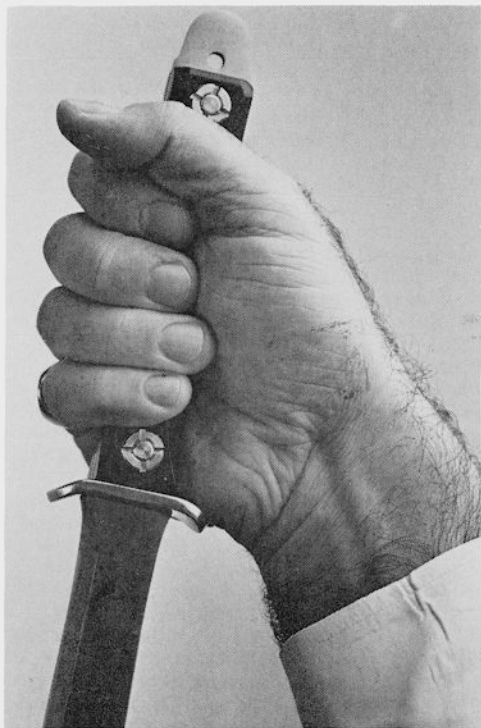
If you have selected an Ek Knife with the unique Ek "Handprint"<sup>®</sup> grip, take advantage of this design feature by holding it properly.

This grip is designed for the cross-palm fencing grip, as advocated by William E. Fairbairn, close combat instructor for the Shanghai Municipal Police, the British Commandos, OSS, SOE and many elite force units.

When held in this manner, the ball of the hand fits perfectly into the rear scallop of the grip; the thumb fits securely into the forward scallop of the grip. To properly achieve this grip, first place



cross-palm grip



Blade-rearward cross-palm grip

the ball of your hand into the rearward scallop. Then place your thumb in position.

Note that the scallops are symmetrical, so this cross-palm grip can also be executed in the blade-rearward, butt-forward knife position as instructed by many elite force units today. The knife models without the crossguard (Models 1 and 2) are more comfortable in this position.

## Chapter 3

### KNIFE FIGHTING

There are a number of texts available on the subject of knife fighting. Highly recommended are Colonel Rex Applegate's *Kill or Get Killed*, William L. Cassidy's *The Complete Book of Knife Fighting*, David E. Steele's *Secrets of Modern Knife Fighting* and Mike Echanis' volume *Knife Fighting and Throwing for Combat*. There are also several classics still available such as *Cold Steel* by Styers and Schuon and *Do Or Die* by A. J. D. Biddle. But the best of all are the works of Lieutenant Colonel William E. Fairbairn.

Fairbairn, former Assistant Commissioner of the Shanghai Municipal Police, developed the foundations of modern techniques for unarmed combat, practical pistol use and knife fighting. Basing his theories on the practices and observations of a 40-year career, Fairbairn's method became the basis of instruction for the Commandos, Rangers, Raiders and Special Forces of Britain, Canada and America.

Fairbairn's knife fighting techniques were simple, deadly and proven successful during World War II. He began with the recognition that in rough-and-tumble military combat the knife is an awesome weapon of the highest psychological impact. He recognized the real human fear of being cut and capitalized on this aversion.

In the design of his famous F-S Fighting Knife, Fairbairn emphasized several qualities necessary in a good military fighting knife. These features

are inherent in every Ek Commando Knife. Advocating a rearward point of balance, Fairbairn felt a knife should fall "into" rather than "out of" the hand. By keeping the blade light, the slashing and thrusting technique he endorsed allowed for lightning speed rather than an attempt to hack at the enemy. This also encouraged holding the fighting knife in the cross-palm "fencing" grip rather than the "hammer grip" more suited to chopping.

As for the body position, he advocated the "boxing stance", with the body turned slightly sideways. For a right hander, the left hand would be forward, both for balance and to help parry an enemy attack. The right hand would hold the knife, keeping it close to the waist, so an enemy soldier couldn't kick it out of your hand.

An alternate position is with the knife hand forward. This allows you to use the knife to parry—but makes it more vulnerable to being kicked or grabbed by an enemy soldier.

Finally, one of the most important concepts advocated by Fairbairn is that of training. U.S. military forces train on weapons systems and require qualification — but not on the use of the fighting knife. Millions are spent training on everything from .223-caliber M16s to 8" howitzers, but the use of the fighting knife is often left out.

We encourage you to complete your education in knife fighting with "Your Silent Partner". Read, heed and practice your skills because one day, as John Ek said in 1942, "A good knife can save your life."