

Personal Folders With A Touch of Class

While I am a fan of the Leatherman Wave, and I always have one around, I don't always carry it. The portable tool kit look is incompatible with some of my multiple personalities – it just doesn't go with the Givency business suit, nor with the Royal Robbins water wear.

What I do carry, and have since I was twelve, is a locking, folding pocket knife. [Well, for a while I carried a non-locking swiss army knife, but it snapped shut at the wrong moment and, after stemming the bleeding, I swore always to carry and use locking blades.] When I was twelve, the choices were simple: a boy scout knife of dubious strength or a Buck folder of industrial strength. I went with the latter.

Over the years, though, I've tried quite a few others for daily carry. Some have been politely sized, some have been tactically correct (to use the SWAT jargon). Some have been expensive, some have been reasonably priced, and some have fallen apart (life is too short for bad wine or cheap knives).

Lately, though, I've been carrying examples of the art from CRKT, the Columbia River Knife and Tool company. [Let me digress for a moment. What is it about the rainy northwest and knife makers? Portland, OR, alone must have six or seven.] CRKT, for those of you blissfully unaware of the knifemaking players, is a recent entrant into the industry, making quite a name for themselves by collaborating with big name designers and turning out production versions of designer knives.

The first one I acquired was the Kit Carson – designed M16, which has become a standard in the CRKT catalog, with many variations. It's a bit big, though, and very industrial looking, so I've always had my eye out for smaller, more elegant folders in the CRKT family.

Two that I'm really happy with are the Viele-designed Wasp and the Tighe-designed Tighe Tac. Both are wonderful, small, elegant and durable. They're also discontinued. A reminder when knife shopping to use the Moscow rule of shopping: if you like it, buy it immediately, because it won't be there when you come back.

Any more on these two would just be teasing you, so I'll move on to my current favorite: the Michael Walker- designed Bladelock 2.

The “bladelock” part refers the locking mechanism that makes this knife unique. And Mr. Walker should know locking mechanisms: he's invented over 20 of the things. This one is integrated into the thumb stud, and is as bombproof as a locking mechanism can be. This one is just as solid to my eye as a fixed blade knife. Once you get the hang of it, one-handed opening and closing is safe and positive. In fact, it's easier to open one-handed than two-handed.

The “2” part refers to the inclusion of a truly fine blade design, namely “a satin finish Walker Drop Point blade of AUS 6M stainless steel ideal for precision cutting. Friction grooves at the base of the blade curve and thumb ramp reduce slipping”, as does the checkered feel of the handle material. Simply put, it is a perfect blade design for everyday use. It doesn’t need much sharpening, even after opening the morning mail (surprisingly tough on some knives) or opening the stupid plastic packaging on all the kids’ Christmas gifts. It even worked well deboning the Christmas turkey, when I couldn’t stand anymore the unsharpened lump of steel my unnamed relative calls a carving knife.

But the best part is that it is packaged in a light and polite size that doesn’t cry out “he’s armed!” You could probably clean your fingernails with it in the boardroom without comment, at least about the knife.

It does include a clip, if you’re so inclined, but I find it rides quite well in my pocket. So I took the clip off, and found it to be even more pleasant in the hand. Easy enough to do, CRKT was nice enough to use standard torx fasteners for those of us who have to tinker.

I will admit some misgivings when I first took the knife in hand, it’s unusual enough to cause one to wonder, but it’s grown quite attached to me. The editor keeps asking when I’m going to return it...thank goodness for caller id...