

= Ernest Emerson =

Ernest R. Emerson (born March 7 , 1955) is an American custom knifemaker , martial artist , and edged @-@ weapons expert . Originally an engineer and machinist in the aerospace industry , Emerson became a knifemaker by producing knives for a martial arts class and making art knives early in his knifemaking career . In the 1980s he became better known for his combat knives and popularizing a style of knife known as the Tactical @-@ folder .

In order to secure military contracts , Emerson eventually founded Emerson Knives , Inc a production company to mass @-@ produce his designs in 1996 . Emerson 's knives have been displayed as museum pieces , designed for use by Navy SEALs and used by NASA in outer space .

Emerson 's knives have been featured in films and novels , due to their association with military units . This has furthered their popularity with collectors .

Emerson is an accomplished martial artist who has developed a combatives system , Emerson Combat Systems , which has been taught to police officers , military units , and civilians .

= = Background = =

Ernest Emerson was born on March 7 , 1955 in northern Wisconsin . While attending high school he displayed athletic ability as a wrestler and baseball player , being drafted by the St. Louis Cardinals to play professional baseball at the age of 17 in the Midwest League .

Emerson began his training in martial arts at the age of 16 with the Korean version of Judo known as Yudo , traveling from Wisconsin to Minnesota twice a week to attend school . He continued his study of the martial arts while attending the University of Wisconsin ? La Crosse where he earned a brown belt in Kyokushinkai Karate and a black belt in Shotokan Karate while competing on the university 's karate team . After graduating with degrees in physical education and world history , Emerson moved to Southern California for the sole purpose of continuing his martial arts training at the Filipino Kali Academy . There he studied Jun Fan Gung Fu , Jeet Kune Do , and Eskrima under the tutelage of Dan Inosanto and Richard Bustillo (both protégés of the late Bruce Lee) . Emerson subsequently trained in Gracie Jiu Jitsu for three years at the original Gracie Academy in Torrance , California , under the founders of the Gracie Jiu Jitsu system , Rorion and Royce Gracie . Eventually , Emerson became an instructor in his own right and combined the principles of all these systems . It was in Southern California where he met his wife , Mary , who at the time was one of the world 's top female practitioners of Jujutsu . During this time , Emerson worked as a technician , a machine operator , and eventually a design engineer for Hughes Aircraft in El Segundo .

= = Early knifemaking = =

Although Emerson credits his grandfather 's gift of a Barlow knife to him at the age of eight years with starting his interest in knives , it was not until later in life that he turned to making them . The summer of 1978 found Emerson in need of a balisong knife for his study of a Filipino martial art and , unable to afford one on his salary , Emerson decided he would attempt to make his own instead . He milled and drilled the handles from aluminum stock ; the knife 's blade was a simple steel blank that he hand cut with a hacksaw , shaped with files , and heat treated at his dining room table with a butane torch .

When he started classes with this " homemade " knife , his instructors and fellow students were impressed with his handiwork and asked him to make knives for them . Emerson did so and sold these early butterfly knives for just the cost of materials , but he soon raised the price to \$ 50 each , as demand for his knives increased . Emerson went on to make fixed @-@ blade knives on a part @-@ time basis , but upon seeing a Michael Walker handmade folding knife at a gun show , he was so impressed by the quality and design that he decided he was going to make folding pocketknives from that point on . Emerson contacted Walker and obtained his permission to use the Walker Linerlock mechanism on his own knives . According to a 1990 article by Paul Basch , Emerson said

of Walker , " Here was a guy who put everything I was looking for into a knife . It was then I decided to start making knives seriously and locking liners in particular " .

= = Pre @-@ tactical models = =

Emerson 's early folding knives were of the linerlock variety , ground by the stock removal method , and utilized rare materials from the aerospace industry , including titanium , carbon fiber , micarta , and meteorite . He incorporated exotic materials common to knifemakers of the time , including mother @-@ of @-@ pearl , abalone shell , paua shell , staghorn , and rare hardwoods . Writer Paul Basch reported in 1990 that Emerson refused to use the parts of any animal or plant which was an endangered species , noting Emerson as being an environmentally conscious knifemaker . The steel used in these blades was typically graded ATS @-@ 34 , AEB @-@ L , or 440C , and the blades were either highly polished or hand @-@ rubbed . Emerson made knives with Damascus steel blades . Among custom knife collectors and purveyors today , these knives are known as the " Pre @-@ Tac " (Pre @-@ Tactical) models . They can be identified by their bright anodized titanium bolsters and liners and the predominant use of clip point blades . The knives were noted for their close tolerances and precise locking mechanisms . Emerson credits the following knifemakers for helping him along during his early years as a knifemaker : Michael Walker , Clint Breshears , Bob Engnath , and Jim Ferguson .

Emerson 's first logo or stamp on these knives was " Emerson Knives " surrounding the outline of a Bowie knife ; accordingly this is referred to as the rare " Bowie Logo " , appearing on only a very small number of knives . When a knife collector asked Emerson if he made Bowie knives , Emerson informed him that he did not . The collector then advised him to change his logo or he might confuse the knife @-@ buying public , as they would ask for Bowie knives instead of linerlock folders . Emerson agreed with this assessment , dropping the knife outline and the word " knives " from his stamp , using just his name in a half @-@ circle on the blade as a logo . This marking is known among collectors as the " Half @-@ Moon Logo " and would appear again as a transitional mark between the Viper and Specwar lines of knives .

These early knives sold for between \$ 800 and \$ 2 @,@ 000 each ; that , combined with his appearances at knife shows and write @-@ ups in knife magazines , helped Emerson gain status and credibility as a custom knifemaker . Once established as a serious and reputable maker , Emerson was soon able to concentrate on making the knives he wanted to make ? knives designed for use as opposed to show , specifically folding @-@ knives designed for combat .

= = Viper Knives = =

As a direct result of watching his fellow martial artists train with a fixed @-@ blade fighting knife in class , yet carry some type of a folding knife when they left the training area , Emerson decided there was a need for a sturdy folding knife designed primarily for combat . Although Emerson had always maintained that the knives he made were built as fighting knives first and foremost , in October 1985 he stripped down five of these designs to simpler materials . He continued his use of linen or canvas micarta because of its high tensile strength and superior gripping surface when wet ; he decided on black or dark grey for the color instead of the brighter colors used previously . He retained the titanium for the liners and bolsters but chose to bead @-@ blast them a flat grey matte color as opposed to the colorful anodizing which used to appear on his knives . The reasons for using titanium were its exceptional strength @-@ to @-@ weight ratio and corrosion resistance .

Emerson ground the blades of these knives from ATS @-@ 34 steel with a Rockwell hardness of 57 ? 59 and made them thicker toward the tip , creating a stronger @-@ tipped blade than he had made previously . He bead @-@ blasted the blades as he did the liners and bolsters instead of rubbing or polishing them , giving them a matte finish as opposed to the mirror @-@ polished finish common on his earlier knives and other knives at the time . Emerson designed each one of these knives for a specific purpose . The slender Viper 1 and smaller Viper 2 were designed for use as a police officer 's backup weapon . The Viper 5 was designed to be used by naval boat crews , as the

handle was contoured with a rear brake so as to not slip from the user 's hand when wet and the Viper 3 was designed as a pure fighting knife with its 4 @-@ inch blade .

Emerson 's goal for this Viper line was to produce a working knife which would be more resistant to the elements and more durable than the " art knives " for which he had become known . These knives were created to satisfy the demand for a practical field @-@ grade combat knife which could be carried discreetly and accessed quickly . He sold these five models under the name " Viper Knives " and changed the logo on the blades to read the same . Emerson makes these models on a custom basis under the names MV1 ? 5 , " MV " standing for " Model Viper " .

= = Specwar Knives = =

In 1986 individual Navy SEALs from a West Coast team had been using personally purchased custom fixed @-@ blade knives made by Southern California knifemaker Phill Hartsfield . Hartsfield 's knives were hard ground from differentially heat @-@ treated A2 tool steel and are known for their distinctive chisel @-@ ground blades . More accurately , they are zero ground ; that is , the edge has no secondary bevel , minimizing drag when used for cutting purposes . Emerson had long been impressed by the cutting ability of the chisel @-@ ground edge and had asked Hartsfield 's permission to incorporate it into his own folding knives , which Hartsfield granted . When the SEALs asked Hartsfield to make them a folding knife , he informed them that he did not make folding knives and referred them to Emerson .

According to the SEALs ' requirements , the knife had to be corrosion resistant , designed for easy cleaning in the field , durable enough to be used on a daily basis as a tool , and capable as a weapon should the need arise . Emerson 's folding chisel @-@ ground " tant? " became the sixth model in his Viper series and , while a handful of prototypes were referred to as " Viper 6 " , the model was soon named the " CQC @-@ 6 " (CQC refers to close @-@ quarters combat) and was chosen by the SEALs for use . Ownership of a CQC @-@ 6 soon became something of a status symbol among members of various elite military units , including Navy SEALs , Army Special Forces , German GSG 9 , and British SAS . Because of this connection to the Special Warfare community , Emerson changed the name of his custom knife line to " Specwar Knives " , and in 1990 this new designation began appearing in the logo on his blades .

Other models followed in the Specwar line bearing the CQC Series moniker , including the CQC @-@ 7 which is another chisel @-@ ground tant? @-@ bladed folder similar to the CQC @-@ 6 but with a saber @-@ type handle shape . The CQC @-@ 8 (" Banana Knife ") was a folder inspired by Bob Taylor 's Warrior knife and William F. Moran 's ST @-@ 23 is used by British SAS troops . The knife has the distinction of being the first folding knife that was designed to be ergonomically correct in both forward and reverse grip . Its users refer to it as " the finest fighting knife ever developed " . The CQC @-@ 9 (" Eagle Knife ") is a reverse @-@ curved hawkbill blade developed as a backup weapon for an American law enforcement agency ; it has an opening hole in the blade licensed from knife manufacturer Spyderco . Although Emerson has standard models for these custom knives which progress in order to CQC16 , each one is made individually by hand .

= = Popularizing the tactical knife = =

While not the first knifemaker to build what is known as a tactical folding knife , Emerson was one of several makers who popularized the concept of the handmade tactical folder in the 1980s . Emerson 's knives began appearing in the Rogue Warrior series of novels written by the founder of the US Navy 's SEAL Team Six , Richard Marcinko , at this time which helped fuel interest among collectors .

This surge in interest for Emerson 's knives soon became overwhelming . Although he had been making knives full @-@ time since 1994 , Emerson was still manufacturing these knives in his home garage workshop three years later . As Emerson watched his customers ' wait time expand from two years to seven , he realized that the demand for his handmade blades was far outpacing his ability to produce them . The first method to bridge this gap between supply and demand would be through

factory collaborations with established cutlery companies .

Emerson 's first collaboration with a knife manufacturer was with Timberline Knives in 1993 for his SPECWAR model . According to Stephen Dick , the editor of Tactical Knives , this collaboration was a result of " the Navy deciding that only commercial designs would be considered due to failure of a previous custom knifemaker to deliver enough models to satisfy the need " . This model featured a one @-@ side chisel @-@ ground tant? blade almost 1 / 4 inch (6 @.@ 35 mm) thick . Its handle was made from fiberglass @-@ reinforced nylon molded around a near @-@ full tang . Vaughn Neeley of Timberline designed the sheath . The knife was originally a custom piece designed for Naval Special Warfare Group One , and this factory version was soon entered in the trials for the Navy SEALs knife in 1995 . Although it was not chosen by the Navy , Stephen Dick reported that a number of members of SEAL Team One privately purchased the knife and were disappointed it was not made the official blade . The Emerson @-@ Neeley SPECWAR knife won Blade Magazine 's 1995 American Made Knife of the Year Award at the magazine 's Blade Show in Atlanta , Georgia , and that same year and was displayed as an exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art in New York City from May 24 to August 15 , 1995 .

In 1994 the president of Benchmade Knives , Les DeAsis , approached Emerson to manufacture the CQC @-@ 6 on a larger scale as a factory production model . Preferring to keep the CQC @-@ 6 as a custom @-@ only knife , Emerson instead licensed a similar design of his , the CQC @-@ 7 .

The Benchmade factory version was sold under the model name BM970 or BM975 depending on blade length . Other designations followed which denoted blade finish , manual or automatic opening , or partially serrated blade . The knife retained the profile of Emerson 's custom piece in addition to the ATS @-@ 34 steel and the titanium liners . However , on Benchmade 's offering the titanium bolsters and micarta scales were replaced with G10 fiberglass scales , the slotted screws were replaced by Torx head screws , and the pocket clip was repositioned so that the knife could be carried in the pocket in a tip @-@ down position .

Despite these changes the knife was true to Emerson 's original design , and even though it did not have the craftsmanship of a handmade piece of cutlery it satisfied customers with their own version of Emerson 's work at a lower price point and without the five @-@ year wait .

= = Emerson Knives , Inc . = =

" First folding tanto with liner lock and G @-@ 10 " -Emerson . In February 1996 , Emerson and his wife , Mary , founded Emerson Knives , Inc . (abbreviated as EKI) in Torrance , California to manufacture knives on a larger scale than he was then capable of . This new company would be a distinct entity from his Specwar custom knives , although several custom designs would make their way into the production lineup . Four years after starting this venture , Emerson sold an entire year 's worth of production in four hours at the SHOT (Shooting Hunting and Outdoor Trade) Show in January 2000 .

Emerson continued to collaborate with other companies on knife @-@ related projects as his own company grew . In some cases these collaborators had become his competition , such as Gerber Knives . In 2002 Emerson collaborated with Gerber Knives to create both companies ' first automatic opening knife , the Gerber @-@ Emerson Alliance . In that same year , Emerson collaborated with SureFire Flashlights by making an exclusive CQC @-@ 8 (Banana Knife) numbered and marked with the SureFire logo and sold with an identically numbered Emerson @-@ marked Centurion C2 CombatLight . In 2005 Emerson collaborated with Andy Prisco , the CEO of the American Tomahawk Company , to produce the CQC @-@ T Tomahawk . This tomahawk features a curved head machined from 4140 steel with a rear spike and a lightweight fiberglass handle . Although not made by Emerson , the tomahawk was designed by him . In 2007 , Emerson announced a collaboration with custom knifemaker and knife thrower Bobby Branton . The collaboration piece is a fixed @-@ blade knife designed primarily for knife throwing dubbed the BETT : Branton @-@ Emerson Tactical Thrower . " CQC @-@ 6 is the most collectible knife in the world " -Emerson

One of Emerson 's earliest production models , the Commander (winner of Blade Magazine 's

Overall Knife of the Year Award for 1999) , is a large recurve folding knife based on a special custom design , the ES1 @-@ M , that he had made for a West Coast Navy SEAL Team . The Commander has a hook on the spine of the blade (originally designed as a blade catcher) which , when snagged on the edge of the pocket or sheath , causes the knife blade to open as it is drawn . Due to its visual aesthetic , Emerson called this innovation the " Wave " and secured a patent for it in 1998 . Since another knife and tool company , Leatherman , had trademarked the name " Wave , " in March 1999 Emerson changed its name to the " wave @-@ shaped opening feature " . Emerson 's Wave made its way onto most of the knives in both the production and custom lines , with the exception of the Viper models . It is a required feature on all knives that Emerson supplies to military units , search and rescue units , and law enforcement agencies .

After a disastrous helicopter crash in 1999 resulting in the deaths of six Marines and one sailor , the US Navy performed an assessment of their equipment and decided among other things that they needed a new search and rescue knife . The KA @-@ BAR knives issued to the SBUs (Special Boat Units) had catastrophically failed to cut the Marines free from their webbing .

The Navy went to Emerson , who designed and fabricated a working prototype within 24 hours . They found that it met their needs , and the model was dubbed the " SARK " (Search and Rescue Knife) . The SARK is a folding knife with a wharncliffe @-@ style blade and a blunt tip designed so a rescuer could cut trapped victims free without stabbing them . The knife features Emerson 's Wave . Seeing another need in the police community , Emerson replaced the blunt end of the SARK with a pointed end and named it the " P @-@ SARK " , or Police Search And Rescue Knife . In 2005 , the Navy changed the requirements on the SARK to incorporate a guthook on the back of the blade for use as a line @-@ cutter . Emerson made the change on this model which is only available to the US Navy and the model designation is the NSAR (Navy Search And Rescue) Knife .

In 1999 , NASA contracted Emerson to build a knife for use on Space Shuttle missions and the International Space Station . Rather than design a new model from scratch , NASA chose an existing model which already met their specifications , with one additional design requirement . The model is a folding version of the Specwar knife that Emerson had designed for Timberline with the addition of a guthook cut into the tant? point of the blade with which astronauts could open their freeze dried food packages . The knife is not available for purchase outside of NASA .

On July 1 , 2000 , Emerson announced his semi @-@ retirement from custom knifemaking in order to concentrate on this new production company and to fill the thousands of outstanding orders for his custom work . He still makes custom knives available for sale at knife shows , but takes no orders for new custom work . Since 1995 the only way to get a new custom knife from Emerson himself is through a lottery held at knife shows where he is present . Depending on the size of the show , as many as several hundred potential buyers write their names on individual pieces of paper at his booth , and at a predetermined time a name is drawn . The winner gets a chance to buy one of the custom knives brought to the show .

In 2007 , Emerson branched out in a new direction , announcing he would manufacture twelve custom electric guitars per year . His first guitar debuted at Blade Magazine 's Blade Show in Atlanta in June 2007 . In 2008 , Emerson opened a clothing company called " Emerson Brand Apparel " specializing in MMA and casual clothing . In 2009 at the annual NRA Convention , Emerson announced a collaboration with custom pistol manufacturer Les Baer to produce a custom M1911 pistol built to Emerson 's specifications with a semi @-@ custom (handground blade) folding knife named the " CQC @-@ 45 " (out of sequence from the CQC series as the number relates to the caliber of the pistol) . In late 2009 , Emerson announced a collaboration with Spike 's Tactical to produce an M @-@ 4 Carbine based upon his specifications for training , chambered in .22 long rifle and in 5 @. @ 56 NATO ; with a matching folding knife designated the " CQC @-@ 22 " (out of sequence from the CQC series as the number relates to the caliber of the rifle) .

In September 2010 , Emerson announced a collaboration with Pro @-@ Tech Knives to produce an automatic opening version of the CQC @-@ 7 . In November 2010 , Emerson 's Roadhouse Knife won Knives Illustrated 's American Made Knife of 2010 ? 2011 Award at the Spirit of Steel Show in Knoxville , TN . According to Emerson , the knife will be used as a prop on the Sons of Anarchy Television Show .

In January 2011 , at the SHOT (Shooting , Hunting , Outdoor Trade) Show in Las Vegas , NV , Emerson debuted a new knife model designed in collaboration with Kelly McCann known as the Canis .

= = Emerson 's knives in the media = =

Emerson 's knives have appeared onscreen in films and television shows . In Night of the Running Man , Scott Glenn 's character carried a mother @-@ of @-@ pearl handled , one @-@ of @-@ a @-@ kind Emerson CQC6 . Emerson Ravens , neck knives , and the Commander knife were used as props in the short @-@ lived UPN television series Soldier of Fortune , Inc . A Commander knife was used by the character of Zak in the 1998 movie Placebo Effect ; Emerson Knives is thanked in the film credits for the knife .

Ridley Scott 's 2001 film Black Hawk Down portrayed soldiers carrying Emerson folding knives in the hangar scene , and in Tears of the Sun the Kandahar model appeared on Bruce Willis ' character 's web gear , and other actors were seen with Emerson Police Utility Knives . Emerson Karambits , La Griffes , and Police Utility Knives are often used as weapons or rescue tools on the television show Burn Notice . Frank Castle used an Emerson Karambit to kill an opponent in one of the final scenes in The Punisher . Transporter 2 briefly showed an Emerson fixed @-@ blade Kandahar knife in the trunk of Jason Statham 's car along with other weapons as props . An Emerson La Griffe was featured in the 2007 film : Doomsday .

In the Russian movie 12 a remake of the classic Twelve Angry Men , an " Emerson CQC @-@ 7 " is revealed as the potential weapon used by a Chechen teen in the murder of his Russian foster @-@ parents . However , the knife shown in the movie is not a CQC @-@ 7 or even an Emerson made knife .

Emerson 's knives are mentioned in mystery , spy , military , action , and adventure novels . At least seven of Richard Marcinko 's Rogue Warrior novels (Red Cell , Green Team , Task Force Blue , Detachment Bravo , SEAL Force Alpha , Violence of Action and Holy Terror) prominently make mention of Emerson 's knives (CQC @-@ 6 or CQC @-@ 7) as a regularly carried piece of equipment . The protagonist , Marcinko , uses an Emerson CQC @-@ 6 or CQC @-@ 7 on various occasions . On page 175 of Task Force Blue , Marcinko remarks that his CQC @-@ 6 was a " personal gift from Ernie Emerson , himself " .

New York Times bestselling author David Morrell 's novel The Protector not only has the main character , a former Delta Force operator named Cavanaugh , using an Emerson CQC @-@ 7 knife , but the cover art itself is a photographic illustration of a blood @-@ stained Emerson CQC @-@ 7 . Cavanaugh uses the knife in combat as well as in many rigorous cutting chores . The author claims Emerson is " the best manufacturer of tactical knives " as well as a " top level blade instructor for elite military and law @-@ enforcement units " . In an interview with British E @-@ Zine Shots : The Crime and Mystery Ezine , Morrell indicated that he injured his collarbone during an Emerson knife @-@ fighting course while performing research for the novel . Morrell went on to include Emerson 's knives in his books Creepers and The Spy Who Came for Christmas .

Three of Marcus Wynne 's novels (Warrior in the Shadows , No Other Option , Brothers in Arms) feature use of Emerson 's knives by the main characters . The CQC @-@ 7 , Commander , and La Griffe are favored by the main characters and are used as defensive weapons throughout the books . The characters of S.M. Gunn 's novels based on Naval Special Warfare , Navy SEALs , and submarines routinely carry Emerson 's knives . One of the main characters carries an Emerson custom MV @-@ 1 Viper knife in the book SEALs SubStrike . Barry Eisler 's fictional hired killer John Rain 's former U.S. Marine Sniper friend " Dox " uses an Emerson Comrade CQC @-@ 12 , a folding knife based on the AK @-@ 47 bayonet , in The Last Assassin , referring to it as a " helluva knife " that could cut through a car door if he needed it to .

Retired Navy SEAL and SEAL Team 6 Plankowner Dennis Chalker routinely puts Emerson 's knives (CQC @-@ 7s and Commanders) into the hands of the heroes of his Home Team novels based on the exploits of former Naval Special Warfare Operators . Emerson 's CQC @-@ 7 has made its way into the Clive Cussler novel , Plague Ship .

Emerson has appeared on the cable television show Auction Hunters as an expert in edged weapons including an Exposition knife and a Samurai sword .

= = Emerson Combat Systems = =

Emerson has developed a combatives system drawn upon his experience known as Emerson Combat Systems , which has been taught to hundreds of law enforcement agencies , members of the U.S. military , and civilians .

According to Emerson , the techniques are based upon the physical and instinctual laws that govern the survival instincts and physical function of a human being . This system is characterized by training as realistically as possible (not training in workout gear for example) and using flowing , dynamic concepts (for example , integrated fighting and weapon transition with a strong emphasis placed on overall physical fitness . Emerson maintains he does not teach a " martial art " encumbered by ritual or sporting aspects but a combatives system where the goal is more than simple self @-@ defense .

Emerson has been consulted as a technical advisor to television and movie productions including National Geographic , specifically the program Fight Science , due in part to his position as the hand @-@ to @-@ hand combat instructor for Harry Humphries ' Global Studies Group Incorporated , a company that teaches police and military tactics to law enforcement agencies and film production crews .

As an author , Emerson has written over 30 articles on hand @-@ to @-@ hand combat , knife fighting , history , and knifemaking for publications including Human Events , Blade Magazine , American Cop Magazine , Martial Arts Experts , Journal of Modern Combatives , Inside Kung @-@ Fu , Black Belt Magazine , Police Magazine , and American Handgunner .

In 2014 , Emerson was inducted into the Black Belt Magazine Hall of Fame as " Self @-@ Defense Instructor of the Year " .

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