

# THE MARTIALIST: YEAR THREE MEGA ISSUE

## **Anza Dune Slayer, Boddington**

Review and Photos by Judson Miers

My overall philosophy of knives came from my blue-collar, outdoorsy upbringing. My ideal knife would be a functional knife that can be used on a daily basis for a variety of purposes, a knife that may or may not be pleasing to look at. For most tasks, I am kind of old-fashioned and prefer a fixed-blade knife. I know there has been a lot of research and innovation poured into folders, but I have this recurring fear of having a blade close on my fingers and cut clear to the bone when I'm really using it hard.

Another part of my philosophy deals with the materials of which the blade is made. I've recently begun building my own knives, or at least modifying blade blanks I've purchased and putting on handles. As such, I've immersed myself into the world of knifemaking. Due to the nature of steel, there are really three distinct types of blade steel available today. Most commercially available knives are made of stainless steel, which is generally accepted as those steels that have a significant amount of chromium (usually a minimum of 13%). This adds to its luster and ease of care. For this ease of care, the trade-off comes from the increasing content of chromium, which decreases the carbon content, resulting in an edge that is more easily dulled and harder to sharpen. In general, carbon or tool steel holds a better edge for longer than stainless steel, but it also rusts and discolors more easily. Stainless steel is the favorite of individuals who are working under extreme circumstances such as Special Forces troops like the US Navy SEALs, individuals who carry pocket knives (of which I am one),

individuals who don't want to take the time to properly maintain their knives, and dealers and collectors who want to display their knives with an attractive "shiny" appearance.

Damascus steel was once a necessity because of the lack of good steel alloys. By mixing a "hard" steel with a "mild" steel in varying compositions and with varying mechanical methods, many patterns of Damascus steels were eventually established. While many collectors hold in awe the aesthetics myriad patterns, the real "beauty" of Damascus is the differential wearing of the soft and hard steels on the knife edge. This leaves a nearly microscopic serration along the entire edge. For most hard-wear usage, carbon or tool steel is preferred.

## **DISCLAIMERS**

I want to set the facts ahead of time. While I don't know Charlie Davis of Anza Knives, I have corresponded with him over the Internet and telephone several times. Also, I did not purchase either of these knives. They were sent to be tested and reviewed. In fact, I asked Charlie if I could actually field test these blades, especially the Boddington, and videotape the results. This past year, I did purchase a couple of knife blanks from Anza Knives to put my own handles on. What I am trying to say is that I don't owe any loyalty to Charlie Davis out of some personal relationship nor do I owe any loyalty to Anza Knives because of some kind of a business relationship. My reviews of these knives are truly my own thoughts and the results of the tests.

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## OUT-OF-THE-BOX

When I took each of these knives (delivered almost 9 months apart) out of the box, I was very impressed by their overall fit and finish. The handles are made of semi-rough black canvas Micarta (for a better tactical grip) that has been permanently adhered using a high-strength epoxy such as JB Weld or 2-ton epoxy. Due to modern epoxy techniques, metal pins are no longer needed. I will admit that knives that do not have some sort of metal pins present in their handles do not look “right,” but those metal pins dig into the hands of the user.



Because the DuneSlayer is more of a combat fighting knife used for stabbing and slashing in closed quarters combat or CQB, it is equipped with a 7-½ inch modified Bowie blade with a false edge running approximately 3 inches (like a Randall Model 1 or Kabar USMC Fighting Knife). It has a sleek handle without a lot of protrusions.

The Boddington is more of a combat utility knife used for practical tasks such as opening boxes, cutting through fabric and seat belts, etc. As such, the Boddington is a 4-inch modified spear point with a false edge running

approximately 1 to 1 ½ inches on the top. It has a grip reminiscent of the Randall Border Patrol handle for a better grip. Both models have an exposed skullcrusher pommel with a lanyard hole drilled in it.



## “PROFESSIONAL” CRITIQUES

I am fortunate to know many Special Forces soldiers from a variety of US conflicts. I showed the Boddington to a Vietnam veteran who also happened to be a Navy SEAL. After thoughtful consideration, he gave it good marks without any negative comments. While he talked about how well he liked the grip, he kept going through the motions of gripping the imaginary knife. I was also able to show it to a Desert Storm veteran who also happens to be a Navy SEAL. He too was impressed by the Boddington, but he really liked the DuneSlayer better. I’ve also shown the Boddington to former Marines, fire fighters, SWAT officers, etc. To a man, every one of them said they would purchase a Boddington the next time they needed a tactical knife.

## FIELD TESTING

I took the knives to my front yard, gathered an old 2x4 board, and began

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the hacking process. This test is a standard part of the American Bladesmith test, so I figured it would be a fairly rigorous test. Before the testing, I checked the knives' sharpness. Both were absolutely razor sharp. (The Dune Slayer wasn't quite as sharp because I had cut several different substances like leather and credit cards a couple of months before to try it out and had not resharpened it. The Boddington was "virgin" for this test.)



Both knives performed admirably but with significant differences. The Dune Slayer handled the board much better due to its heft and longer blade length, but I had the feeling that I would lose my grip on the handle during sustained hacking and slashing. The Boddington's grip was MUCH better for this task, but the blade was shorter and more difficult to get an effective swing to be as productive as the Dune Slayer.

After the board hack, both knives were able to shave, although just barely, and both were able to cut without difficulty the leather that I use to make my own knife sheaths (by holding the leather in one hand free-hanging like a sheet of paper and then pushing the blade away from the body).



## **SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS**

The only suggestions I would make to improve either of these knives would be to make the Boddington longer by an inch or so. During the field test, the Boddington took much more force and a longer time to hack the 2x4 board in two. I would also orient the file in a reverse fashion. By "pointing" the file teeth in the opposite direction, they would help give a better grip on the unsharpened top of the blade. Both of these are relatively minor changes I would make. While the sheaths are adequate for hunting/outdoor type of applications, it would be a welcome upgrade to have more of a tactical sheath, perhaps with a sharpening stone included.

## **OVERALL**

I give the knives scores of 5 out of 5. I would not hesitate to deploy anywhere

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with either of these knives on my side or as a gift for someone I wanted to come home again. In fact, the interest generated by my field test from my friends and family alike has been phenomenal. (They all thought I was crazy to abuse knives like that!)

In my circle of friends, Anza Knives is now a household name. ♠

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## **I Got Your Bunkai Right Here**

By Harvey Moul

Just about everyone, when they start training in martial arts, wants to know the *bunkai* for what they learn. It is natural to want to understand *just what the work you are doing is supposed to accomplish* and, in many instances, understanding this bunkai greatly aids in developing proper focus for a specific technique. Learning a specific bunkai for a technique, though, can quite easily hamper your progress to the advanced levels of martial arts comprehension and application.

Case in point: my sensei was training us in some new Yamani style bo techniques when one of the kids wanted to know the bunkai for a specific maneuver. The technique in question was a simple stepping back accompanied by a forceful scoop that leaves the bo in a position to be used for a variety of attacks or blocks. I personally hadn't thought about it much, as I readily saw a multitude of uses for the maneuver. Sensei proved me right when he said that bunkai was "worthless" – if you learned bunkai, then you quit thinking about what you were doing because you had an answer given

to you. As any given technique has numerous applications, you will get a different bunkai for the same thing from many people – all of them are correct.



Photo by Phil Elmore

How many applications are there for a kick? There are too many to count – which is why you practice primarily the kick itself and not the specific application.

Using the philosophy that it is more important to learn how to properly use your body than a large variety of scenario-specific responses, you become more flexible in your use of any given technique. Lack of specific bunkai allows your mind to seek out alternative applications for what you have learned, as well as providing motive to make it work properly for you. One of the key differences between advanced practitioners of martial arts and beginners is that advanced students are constantly reviewing what they know and seeking a greater understanding of it.

This is perhaps one of the major reasons that kata "change" over time. Static kata means static thinking and