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Looking Back On the Gerber EZ-Out

By Phil Elmore

One of the first “tactical folders” I carried regularly in my life was Gerber’s EZ-Out. The great little folder from the Portland, Oregon-based manufacturer was a fast favorite. I don’t remember where I bought it, but it had an incredibly smooth action, a comfortable handle, and a satisfactory “click” when snapped open.

One of my first posts to the rec.knives newsgroup online was in praise of the inexpensive EZ-out. I even had my wife take a Polaroid picture of me with the EZ-Out that I sent in to *Blade Magazine*, in which it was published in the “The Knife I Carry” column. They butchered my accompanying write-up with heavy-handed editing, but I was pleased nonetheless.

When I broke my EZ-Out’s pocket click (it got caught on something in my car and pulled free as I got out of the vehicle), Gerber sent me a replacement and mounting hardware free of charge. While I waited for the parts to arrive, I bought an ATS-34 model at a local gun show.

Over time I ended up accumulating three EZ-Outs. I think I sold them all later as my tastes evolved. Unless one is at the bottom of the drawer somewhere, those early EZ-Outs are no longer part of my collection.

Recently I was in Dick’s Clothing and Sporting Goods marveling at the fact that they had SOG Seal Pups hanging in plastic blister packs on a floor tree. There I noticed the latest incarnation of the EZ-Out, packaged with a Gerber Sharpening rod for less than 30 USD.

Struck with nostalgia (and the urge for a knife) I picked it up and bought it.



Photo by Phil Elmore

Gone is the semi-squared oval hole that used to characterize the EZ-Out, a legacy of Spyderco’s innovative thumbhole. The new EZ-Out now sports a skeletonized grid in the blade, which gives it a contemporary and sleek appearance. The 3.5-inch blade (I’m including the choil in this measure) appears more streamlined than I recall, but this could be an optical illusion.



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The handle is as I remember it. It is tacky enough for daily chores and ergonomically designed. The lock release is also more or less as I remember it in tension and “feel.”

Overall, however, the new EZ-Out was a disappointment. The action was very gritty out of the box. This has improved after repeated openings, but it does not snap open as briskly as did my old EZ-Out. No increase in lock strength has been achieved, either, as the new EZ-Out still fails the “spine whack test” (something for which the first generation of EZ-Outs was notorious).

The pocket clip was far too loose out of the package. I removed it and bent it to increase its tension, but it has not held its new shape well and appears to be discoloring in spots. The blasé is showing a couple of minor spots of discoloration, too.

While the new EZ-Out still offers more quality at a good price point than do the competitors available in the average retail store, it’s not what I consider a winner. It lacks the smoothness and casual-quality feel of its predecessors. I’ve heard more than once that you “can’t go home again.” In the case of the new EZ-Out, it seems this is true. ♠



Photo by Phil Elmore

In Praise of Expanding Batons

By Harvey Moul

Those of us who are familiar with Filipino stick fighting know how comforting it is to have a solid length of rattan or hardwood in your hand when opposite an opponent. Sticks are deadly instruments that are easily acquired, the basics of which are easily mastered for adequate self-protection. I learned the basic blows and footwork twenty years ago and can still run any of several flow patterns with ease. The uses of a stick are many, but sticks have one drawback as far as I am concerned: you can’t easily carry one on your person without attracting undue attention.

Trust me: a pair of 30” fighting sticks slung over your shoulder is going to draw as much – and nearly the same type of – attention as if you tattooed a swastika in the middle of your forehead. While this may have the desired effect of keeping the riff-raff at bay, it will have a seemingly magnetic property when it comes to having the police stop you on a regular basis. Cops and the public in general don’t want to see “thugs” packing dangerous weapons around as if they are escapees from a Kung Fu movie.

The obvious solution to this problem is purchasing an expanding (telescoping) baton. While I am sure many of us have seen these for sale in various places, and perhaps even seen video of them, I don’t run into very many people who have actually bought one. The reasons vary somewhat, but basically I think that without personal exposure to a variety of batons, you don’t know which one to get and you’re not aware of what is really available. I spent a good few years