

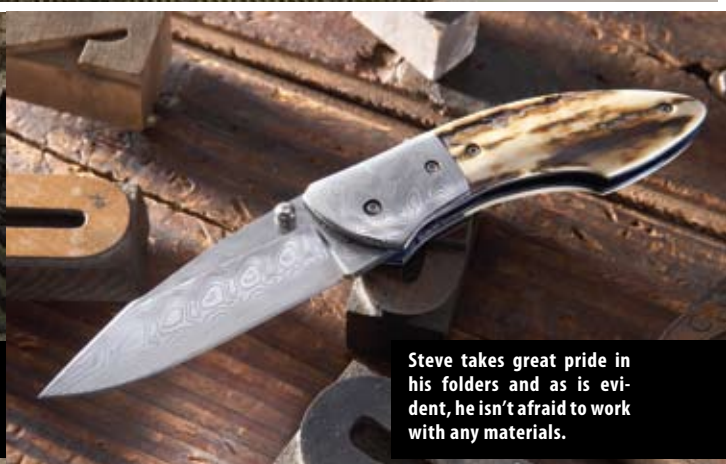
# BLADEMASTER PROFILE



STEVE WOODS



The "Hide Fighter" is a collaboration between Steve and the members of Sniper's Hide. Their input and Steve's skill created a true "Battle Blade."



Steve takes great pride in his folders and as is evident, he isn't afraid to work with any materials.



The true beauty of a knife is how well it performs the function for which it was designed, but a little Desert Ironwood on a fighter does add a nice touch.

# THE JACK OF ALL BLADES

**Pro photographer, consummate hunter and shooter, and on top of all that this Texan more than holds his own at custom forgings!**



What owner wouldn't have pride in his knife with such elegant features as Damascus bolsters and carbon fiber scales.

BY TERRILL HOFFMAN PHOTOS BY STEVE WOODS

Everyone pull out your No. 2 pencil; you're about to be tested. Who took the photograph gracing the cover of this edition of *Tactical Knives*? OK, no one is watching, you can cheat and check the inside credits. I won't kid myself; only editors, photographers (and our mothers) read the credit lines beside the photographs. If you wrote down Steve Woods before checking to see the answer, there are very good odds that you would be correct. Steve has been doing photographs for the magazine for several years. But it only makes sense; he has been a professional photographer for 25 years. Don't tell him I said this, but there are a lot of "professional" photographers out there. The list gets smaller if you only count those who are outstanding. Steve is a member of that elite group.

## Meet The Man

To most people, obtaining fame in a single profession would be achievement enough, but Steve has done more. He has been an avid outdoorsman, hunter and shooter longer than he has been a photographer. It was that sporting spirit which led to his interest in knives. Steve is human and can succumb to the same weaknesses as the rest of us mere mortals. His collector's interest led him to try a knife kit or two and, as many will testify, these kits can be addictive. No matter the quality of the outcome, kits often give you the drive to try to take the next step and fabricate a knife from scratch. The fact that Steve's photography business has placed him next to some of the better makers in the country has not hurt his quest to improve his own knifemaking skills. However, I would give more



This pair of knives may be smaller than the "Hide Fighter," but they still show the attention to detail you will find in all of Steve's knives.

credit to the fact that he has applied the same drive for excellence in his knifemaking that is evident in his photography.

### **ABS Member**

Steve's first attempts at knifemaking came 10 years ago and now he is a member of the American Bladesmith Society with his Journeyman's Stamp and is working toward his Master-smith rating. Forging or stock removal, folders or fixed blades, Steve is learning it all. In fact, it is making high-end folding knives that gives Steve the greatest thrill. These are the perfect examples of his skill, but they are also the ones his customers carry every day and show off to their friends. I will attest that for a photographer (and knifemaker), it is that customer satisfaction which is considered the greatest reward. We all like to show off our work, but we achieve a higher level of satisfaction when our customers are the ones showing it off.

Though I've known Steve for a few years, I wasn't about to let the chance to sample his work go by without taking advantage of it. I asked him to loan me a knife that he thought would be a good example of his work. At the same time, I also requested that he forward photographs of his other knives. Good knifemakers, and good photographers, will develop their own style and I'm not above stealing a few pointers from anyone. The knife Steve sent was known as the "Hide Fighter." The knife is all fighter but the name had me wondering a bit. My curiosity was satisfied once he explained that the knife was the result of a group effort from the guys on a popular

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Internet forum, “Sniper’s Hide.” Steve had been discussing knives on the forum and asked for input from the group. He took their comments, added his own flare and an example of the results was now sitting on my desk.

### **The Hide Fighter**

Steve’s Hide Fighter has a 6-inch blade of 3/16-inch thickness and a full tang. The handle scales are highly textured Micarta held in place with Torx-head screws. The last 3/8 inch of the tang is left exposed to remove any stress from the handle scales should you choose to strike with the butt of the knife. There is a usable thumb ramp along the top of the spine and an integral lower guard flowing to a pronounced single finger groove. The textured handle scales are well rounded and include a slight palm swell. The blade is flat ground and ends with a false edge of clip-point design. The example I have is of S30V stainless with a very fine bead-blast finish.

Any time I am reviewing a knife from a custom maker, I can overlook a slight imperfection. Ninety-nine percent of the time these minor details will not have any effect on the use and function of the knife. As hard as I looked, I have yet to find one on this knife. But to use an old tired adage, “Looks

aren’t everything,” and I did have permission to get it dirty. The first real test on the knife had nothing to do with strength or cutting ability but focused on the finish. A fighting knife needs to be black to prevent glare as you sneak up on your enemy. At least that is what I’ve heard and it always sounded like good advice. But here sits a stainless knife in all of its corrosion-resistant beauty. I carried the knife out into my back yard and placed it in obvious view of the porch. Guess what, turn off the light and you can’t see a thing. Let your eyes adjust; add in a little moonlight and you may be able to see it. Unless you are the one that put it there, you won’t be able to pick out the knife from any other object in the yard. I hit it with a high intensity flashlight and the bead-blast finish refused to offer up a reflection. If you’re the type of guy that sneaks up on a whitetail deer with a stainless rifle as I have often done, I would say the type of finish is more important than the color.

The handle shape felt good in any grip method employed and maintained a balance point right on the index finger. As mentioned, the blade is 6 inches of sharpened steel. There should be no doubts as to its ability as a weapon. Its rakish style and good looks really don’t speak for the utility uses of this type of knife, but as with any combat blade, utility is a must. The “Hide Fighter” was carried over a weekend camping trip and proved it was capable of everything from cleaning fish to shaping a framework for my tarp. One almost forgets that it is supposed to be a fighter. Steve had sent along an aftermarket nylon sheath that mated to the knife perfectly. With a weight of only 10-1/2 ounces and overall length of 11 inches, you can easily forget it is on your belt.

Steve markets his knives via a personal website and through dealers, but he is always willing to discuss a knife



TERRILL HOFFMAN

**Some may say the knife is an outdated tool for today’s soldiers. Would you want to be deployed without one?**



TERRILL HOFFMAN

**Steve has a sleek flow to his knife patterns, but he doesn’t sacrifice utility for form. The finger groove, thumb ramp and handle texture all proved useful during use.**

with a prospective customer. He has proven himself as a photographer and as a knifemaker. After seeing his images and handling his knives, I would say he doesn’t have to prove anything to anyone. However, knowing him, I’m sure he is already working to improve in both professions. **TK**



TERRILL HOFFMAN

**You can call it what you wish, fighter or battle blade. The name doesn’t take away from its general utility. I found it rather useful around the woods of North Carolina.**

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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