

[FIRST LOOK!]

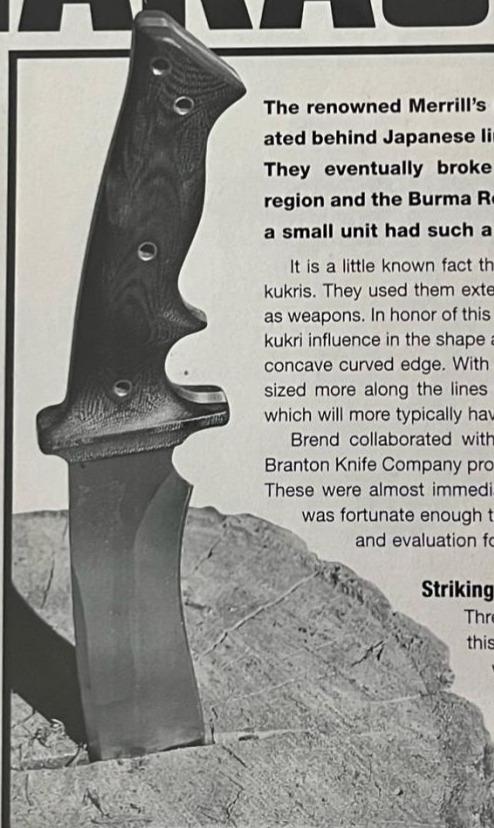
Walter Brend's

MARAUDER

BRANTON KNIVES
introduces a
kukri-inspired
custom combat
worthy of bearing
the name of
the legendary
long-range
penetration unit.

Here's proof that the
author pounded the
Marauder half its
length into a seasoned
hardwood log.

The knife was not
bothered in the least
but the author regret-
ted it when he had to
get it out of the log.



The renowned Merrill's Marauders of World War II fame operated behind Japanese lines in the China, India, Burma theater. They eventually broke the Japanese stranglehold on the region and the Burma Road. Rarely in military history has such a small unit had such a huge tactical and strategic effect.

It is a little known fact that this unit was issued British military Gurkha kukris. They used them extensively as jungle knives and on rare occasion as weapons. In honor of this heritage, the new Brend "Marauder" has some kukri influence in the shape and drop of the blade and handle as well as its concave curved edge. With a blade length of 7.25 inches the Marauder is sized more along the lines of a conventional combat knife than a kukri, which will more typically have a blade length in the 10- to 12-inch range.

Brend collaborated with custom knifemaker Bobby Branton, whose Branton Knife Company produced a limited edition of 25 Marauder knives. These were almost immediately snapped up by the collector's market. I was fortunate enough to have the use of a sample Marauder for test and evaluation for TK.

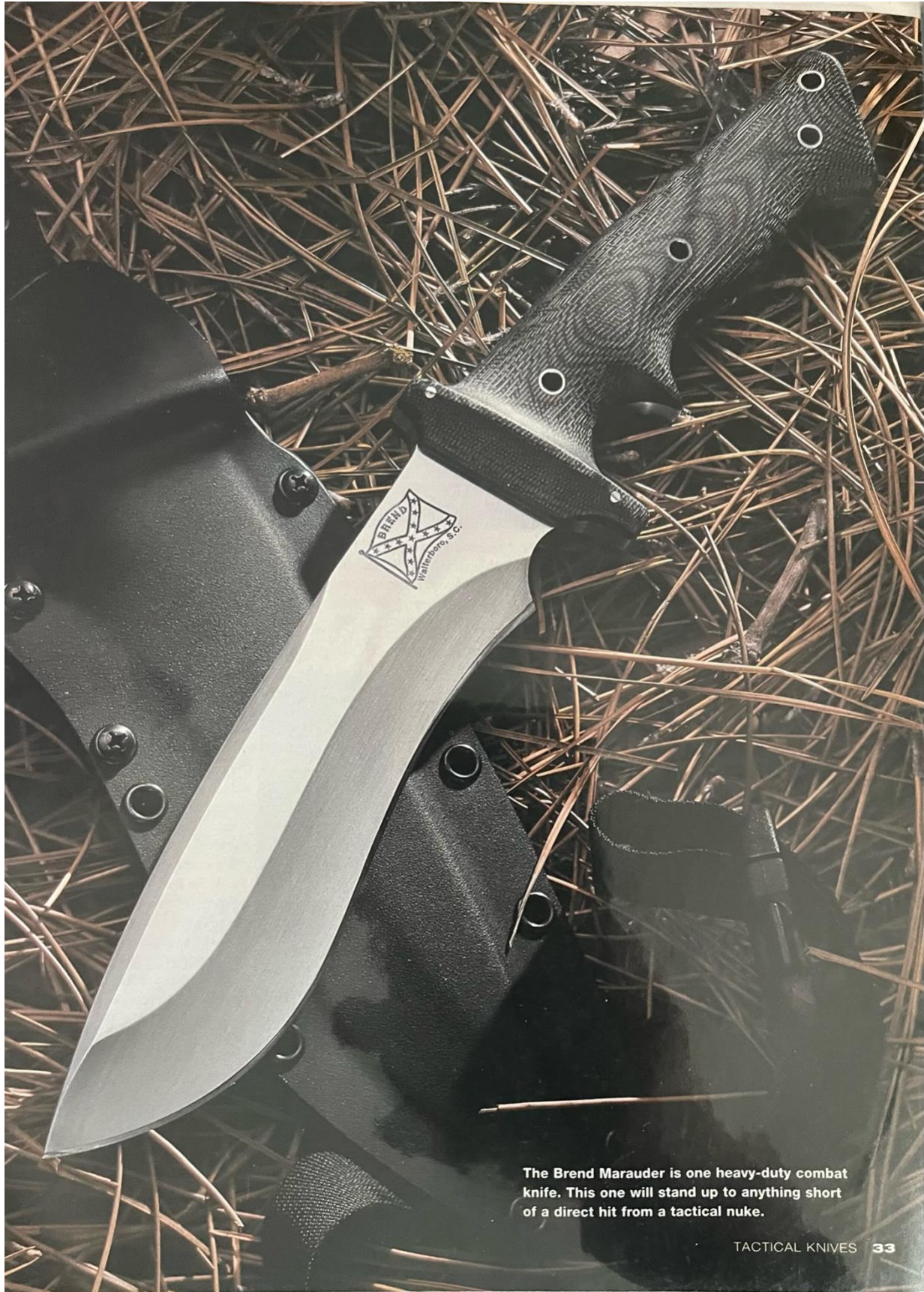
Striking Features

Three features strike you when you first examine this knife. First is that it is extremely good looking, with beautiful fit, finish and workmanship. There are no sharp angles, but rather only flowing curves with perfect side-to-side symmetry.

The second thing you notice is that the grip shape is incredibly comfortable and secure. Branton likes to say that the handle

BY CHUCK KARWAN

JIM WEYER PHOTO

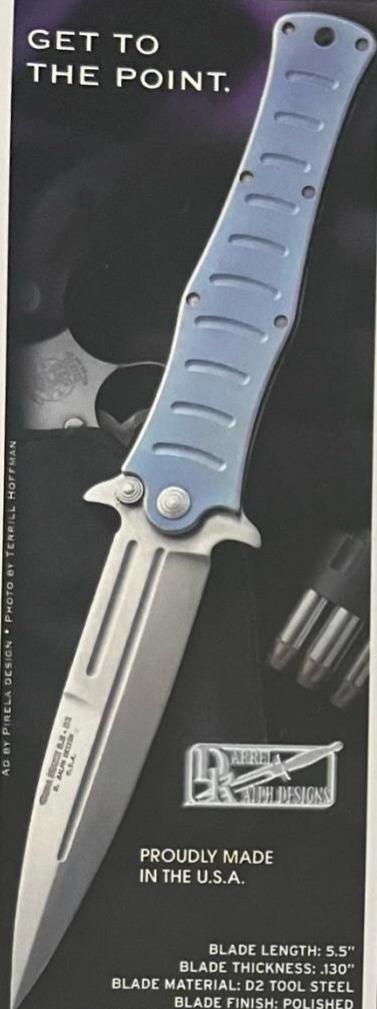


The Brend Marauder is one heavy-duty combat knife. This one will stand up to anything short of a direct hit from a tactical nuke.

CUDA MAXX STILETTO

GET TO
THE POINT.

AD BY PIRELLA GÖTTSCHE LOWE • PHOTO BY TERRY HOFFMAN

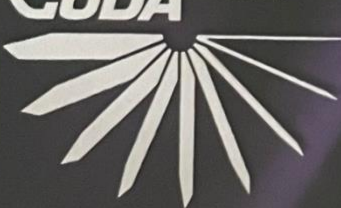


PROUDLY MADE
IN THE U.S.A.

BLADE LENGTH: 5.5"
BLADE THICKNESS: .130"
BLADE MATERIAL: D2 TOOL STEEL
BLADE FINISH: POLISHED
HANDLE COLOR: ANODIZED TITANIUM
LOCK: .124" HARDENED TITANIUM FRAME LOCK
WEIGHT: 7 OZ
CARRY METHOD: STAINLESS STEEL POCKET CLIP

SUGGESTED RETAIL: CU2242-\$250.00

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**“The grip of the Marauder is an absolute delight,
OFFERING OUTSTANDING COMFORT AND SECURITY,
even when using the knife for heavy chopping and even
when your hand is wet with water, blood, or oil.”**



The Marauder proved to be a workhorse chopper easily tackling limbs of substantial size.

just sucks your hand right into it. This is without question one of the best designed knife handles ever put on a combat knife of the chopping variety. The handle scales are tough black canvas Micarta perfectly fitted to the blade tang and its integral cross guard.

The third feature that you notice is that this knife is HEAVY. The good news is that it is of such heavy duty construction that the chances of breaking this knife even under the most severe abuse are virtually nil. The bad news is that I would not want to have to carry such a heavy knife on my belt or other load-bearing equipment on an extended field mission like that experienced by the Marauders. The modern soldier's load is already excessive and few will have the desire to carry such a heavy knife no matter what its performance level is.

D-2 Steel

The blade steel and heat treatment used in this knife is one of my favorites, D2 hardened to a Rc of 60. This is a tool steel renowned for its edge holding at this hardness, but without being brittle. It is also quite resistant to corrosion,

thanks to having about 12 points of chromium in its formulation. The blade stock used to make the Marauder appears to be 5/16, which accounts for its substantial weight. Though this knife is heavy I would be remiss if I did not point out that it handles extremely quickly and has an excellent balance that enhances its use considerably. This is not some clunky pry bar by any means.

The Marauder was taken out and field tested, including some downright abuse to see how it would perform and hold up. It arrived shaving sharp and held its edge throughout the testing extremely well, as was fully expected. Indeed I was never able to get the knife dull enough with normal cutting chores to warrant resharpening it. Consequently, I purposely dulled the edge on some grit-filled rope to see how hard it would be to resharpen in the field.

Using the round diamond lap I have carried in the field for nearly three decades, I was able to restore the D2 edge back to hair-popping sharp in short order. I should point out that because of the concave design of much of



Each Marauder comes with a practical lined filed sheath that will fit a military web belt.

this knife's edge, a round sharpening tool works much better than a flat one. After I was satisfied with the edge from the diamond lap, I followed up with a few strokes with a round ceramic rod to get an edge that is almost scary sharp.

The grip of the Marauder is an absolute delight, offering outstanding comfort and security, even when using the knife for heavy chopping and even when your hand is wet with water, blood, or oil. It was used to cut and chop a large pile of fruit tree suckers, a pile of ferns, underbrush, vines and brambles, which it accomplished with ease while still retaining a hair-popping edge. It slices meat with aplomb, though the thick blade spine does sometimes get in the way a bit.

Just to see what would happen, I pounded the knife point first into the end of a seasoned black walnut log for half of its blade length. I was actually on the verge of splitting the log in two using the Marauder as a wedge when I just could not get it to go in any more without finding a bigger stick to pound with. I also have to report that I had a devil of a time getting the knife out of the log!

This view shows both the tremendously thick tang construction of the Marauder as well as the palm swell and flowing curves that make the handle so comfortable.

Semi-Custom Version

The original 25 Limited Edition Marauders were all sold before I was even done evaluating my sample specimen. However, all is not lost. Bobby Branton has informed me that Branton Knives is now producing a semi-custom version of this knife for the user market. It is virtually identical in appearance but with a somewhat thinned blade and lightening holes under the handle. All other specifications are the same as to steel, handle material, heat treat, etc. These are priced at \$295 with scabbard and with the standard finish or \$325 with a Diamondcoat finish, a tough new corrosion-resistant finish that Branton is fond of.

Bobby also reports that a few Limited Edition Marauders handmade and serial numbered by Walter Brend himself are available through Branton Knives while they last.

Branton also reports that he will soon be introducing a Marauder Model #2 of lighter weight construction with a blade length of 6.5 inches. The second offering in the Branton/Brend designer series will be

based on Walter's model Model #2. The knife will feature an integral guard and 6 1/2-inch blade handground and finished by Brend. A Mid-Tech version will be available in January 2003. The Branton/Brend will be offered by both Branton Knife Company and Blade Art. Com." The Marauder knives all come with a black nylon scabbard with a utility pouch on the front and a blade safety liner to make the knife parachute jump safe. The scabbard is designed to be fitted to a military web belt or similar carrying harness.

Both Walter Brend and Bobby Branton are committed to producing these Marauder knives to the highest quality because they are well aware that many may be carried off to war by American servicemen. If you like big tough knives, you will love the Marauder. The Branton Knife Company Merrill's Marauders knife was evaluated by the Merrill's Marauders Association and has been endorsed as the official knife of the organization.

TK

For More Information

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