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occasion to be writing about customizing civilian semi-automatic sporters, and one of the rifles was my stainless Ruger Mini-14. It was as standard as you could get when I acquired it and, aside from shooting it occasionally, I hadn't done a thing to it. This was the perfect opportunity to go one step better than my old folding-stock Mini-14 and change completely away from the factory stock and get magazines with greater than five-round capacity, too. Keep in mind, as far as I know, this

Butler Creek Folding Stock, Wakizashi Side Sword, Woolrich Elite Series Outdoor Clothing



Ahern is cheeking the Mini-14. Notice, however, that the pistol grip, which is quite comfortable, disallows using the thumb against the cheek for a spot weld.

These days, there is a tremendous interest in all things tactical. When Y2K was on the horizon, like a great many people did then, I decided to add a few items of equipment. I'd had and subsequently traded off a Ruger Mini-14 stainless some years before, equipped with a factory folding stock. Y2K seemed like a good excuse to get another Mini-14, but the folding-stock option wasn't in the cards. Y2K came and went, the only disaster being a couple of food items we'd put away getting spoiled.

Some nine years later, I had the



This button controls the locking and unlocking of the buttstock, whether folded or unfolded.

was before the advent of Ruger actually selling larger-capacity magazines for its own rifles to anyone but law enforcement or military, and before, too, Ruger offering the six-position ATI pistol-grip stock that also folds.

STOCK OPTIONS

I searched the internet and discovered that Butler Creek, a well-established firm (to be sure) offered just what I was looking for in a stock, reminiscent in appearance at the shoulder, too, to the old folding stock on that Mini-14 of years earlier. The rest of the stock was black polymer. Then, I spoke with my friend at Pro Mag and discovered that the company offered 30-round



The Butler Creek folding stock for the Ruger Mini-14 makes for comfortable and convenient carry, and even takes up less room.

black, polymer magazines that sounded ideal to go with the rifle.

As I want to remind people, I would have been a brain surgeon, but the cost of those custom-made 10-thumbed surgical gloves became prohibitive. This changing of the stock seemed like a job better undertaken with the assistance of my able, and very gunny, son-in-law, Danny Akers.

Swapping stocks for the Ruger Mini-14 involved paying attention and carefully following step-by-step instructions, but we successfully switched to the Butler Creek folding stock anyway.

From what I understand after checking out the internet, older Mini-14 rifles, like mine, the ones with wooden stocks, came standard with the U-shaped bracket and liner, as well as the screws necessary to use with the Butler Creek stock for the best possible installation. With a newer gun, you'll have to find the parts at Brownells (www.brownells.com).

The Butler Creek stock folds away from the right-handed shooter, folding to the right. It locks in the opened

and closed positions and it is rigid when opened. The finger-grooved pistol grip actually feels as if it were made for my hand. I lean toward the folding stock for carrying convenience, and that's valid reasoning for me. If you want to shoot your Mini-14 all day long and practice driving tacks with the little rifle, you'll probably

not want a folding stock at all, because the pistol grip on the stock precludes obtaining a spot weld.

The Pro-Mag 30-round magazines do the job for having greater than five-round capacity. They look good and seem ruggedly built. Pro-Mag is a respected name in the industry. My Ruger Mini-14 had become "tactical."

SAMURAI SIDEARM

The broad interest in tactical capabilities extends well beyond firearms however, to implements of all sorts, accessories, and even clothing. For example, one of the most sought-after tactical items out there, serially in and out of stock since its introduction it seems, is the Tactical Wakizashi from Cas-Hanwei. Think of it as a long-bladed field and fighting knife or short sword. Either description is accurate.

The samurai of Japan typically carried two swords, the katana, which is generically called a samurai sword, and the wakizashi, which many in the modern age simply call a wak. Cas-Hanwei refers to the Wakizashi as the "sidearm of the samurai," which, indeed, it truly was. The samurai only wore both swords while he was out and about, removing the katana when he returned home or



If you are new to the Mini-14—or, for that matter, the AK-47—always remember to start the magazine into the receiver by what amounts to hooking it at the front and rotating the magazine rearward and upward.



This Cas-Hanwei Tactical Wakizashi in its scabbard is a fine tool for modern warriors and would make excellent survival gear as well. Ahern was impressed with the “Wak’s” practicality. Incidentally, Ahern writes the sword column for this magazine’s sister publication, Knives Illustrated.



A classic defensive posture with a Japanese sword. Usually, a wakizashi will not allow the use of two hands, but the Tactical Wakizashi has a longer handle.

called socially or otherwise. But the wakizashi remained sheathed in his sash, edge upward, of course, until he might sit or lie down or go to sleep at night. Then, the wakizashi was beside him still, ready should he need to defend himself at close quarters.

Length of the “side sword” blade varied, but the classic dimension seems to be about 20 inches. The *fuchi* (handle sleeve) of the wakizashi was correspondingly shorter, as well. Blade length for the Cas-Hanwei Tactical Wakizashi’s blade is right on at 20 inches, while the handle is 9 ½ inches long, nearly 50-percent longer than that of a more typical Wakizashi, at just less than 6 ½ inches. The reasoning behind the longer handle seems obvious. The classic wakizashi was made as a single-handed weapon, or for fighting in the two-sword style of Japan’s archetypal master swordsman, Miyamoto Musashi. This modern wak will not be used en suite with a larger sword. That being the case, two hands might well be needed on the sword and the added length of the also uncharacteristic full-length, full-width, and full-thickness tang will give the Tactical Wakizashi added strength.

The *tsuba* (guard) is smallish, but enough, in conjunction with the

deeply checkered Kraton handle slabs, to keep the hand from sliding forward onto the blade during rugged use. There are two lanyard holes in the *tsuba*, and two in the handle itself, thus providing considerable lashing versatility when the Tactical Wakizashi will be mounted to equipment. Paracord is included, wrapped around the throat of the fiberglass scabbard like the *sageo* (flat cord) on the sheath of a katana or true wak. Fiberglass was chosen for light weight and durability, as well its inability to absorb water. There is also a drain hole at the very base of the scabbard.



There are lanyard holes on the handle and on the guard, as well. The guard is small, but adequate to keep the hand from slipping forward onto the blade.

The blade is 5150 high-carbon spring steel, plasma-coated for corrosion resistance. Plasma coating is a process in which the adhesive bond strength is enhanced between the coating itself and the material to which it is applied. The tang thickness is just less than ¼-inch. Like all Paul Chen Hanwei swords, the Tactical Wakizashi is forged. Weight is just 2 ounces shy of 2 pounds.

Many of the potential uses for the Tactical Wakizashi suggest themselves, and there’s no need to belabor those here. Suffice it to say, if I had a child serving our nation over in Afghanistan, he or she would be getting one of these post haste. So, why a Tactical Wakizashi as the first decade of the 21st century closes? Some weapons only improve with time.

FULLY VESTED

As I write this column, it is nearing the end of August, and we’ve had temperatures almost exclusively in the 90s here in Georgia since June. I’m wearing a pair of Woolrich Elite Series Tactical shorts. They’re “tactical” because of the materials from which they are constructed and the styling, which includes wide belt loops and a multiplicity of handy pockets. By the



Ahern is wearing the Woolrich Elite Series Tactical Polyester Fleece Vest. He sees himself getting a lot of use out of this under the Elite Series Parka this winter.

time you'll be reading this, with Christmas, Hanukkah and New Year's holidays just over the horizon, hopefully I'll be rid of the warm weather I so seriously don't enjoy and, when I step outside the house, I may be wearing a Woolrich Elite Series Tactical Algerian Field Jacket or even my Woolrich Elite Series Tactical Parka—and possibly one of the two cold-weather liners I have. I can't help it, I like winter!

When I was first shown the Woolrich Elite Series Tactical Parka, I commented that it seemed as though it wouldn't be well suited for truly cold weather. I was told that was in the works. The parka itself was fully waterproof, had a collar with a concealed hood that was close to snorkel style and allowed access to gear under the parka with two-way side-seam zippers. The parka is constructed from 100-percent nylon ripstop with a nylon, taffeta lining. Hidden security pockets and large

patch pockets with hand warmer access make the parka convenient and practical. There are even pockets on the sleeves, and zippered upper-chest pockets. The parka is treated with DuPont Teflon fabric protector and is breathable. Of course, there is double-needle stitching and bartacking at stress points.

All of this was great, and I really like the parka, but during winter in 2009-'10 here in northeast Georgia, we actually had some seriously cold days and I found myself having to layer something underneath the parka. At last, however, just as winter was winding down, so I only had a chance to try them once or twice, the layering pieces arrived, the long-sleeve one known as the Polyester Fleece Jacket and the sleeveless version known as the Elite Polyester Fleece Vest. The only real difference between the two items is the sleeves, and both can be worn as liners layered under the parka or worn by

WHERE TO FIND THEM

Butler Creek Corporation

Dept. GW
9200 Cody St.
Overland Park, KS 66214
800.423.3537
www.butlercreek.com

CAS-Hanwei

Dept. GW
650 Industrial Blvd.
Sale Creek, TN 37373
800.635.9366
www.cashanwei.com

Pro-Mag

Dept. KI
10654 S. Garfield Ave.
South Gate, CA 90280
800.438.2547
www.promagindustries.com

Woolrich Inc.

Dept. GW
Elite Series Tactical
1 Mill St.
Woolrich, PA 17779
800.996.2299
www.woolricheliteseriestactical.com

themselves as outerwear. They are made from 100-percent polyester fleece with rip-stop trim and feature a polyester tricot liner. Again, they have pockets, the two large pockets complete with zippers. As with the parka, there are two-way side-seam zippers to allow access to gear and ventilation; of course, they are wind-resistant.

One of these really came in quite handy—the short sleeved one—when we had a thankfully rare power failure and our electric heat wasn't working. This year, I'm really looking forward to the fleece jacket and vest—each of which has a pocket for a small handgun or magazines—keeping me warm as we walk Honey the Wonderdog.

Although the word “tactical” does get the idea across, I would look at the meaning of tactical as practical and versatile. And, practicality and versatility are a plus in virtually everything. **GW**