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Subject: The Ontario Knife Co., "COMBAT" Marked M9 Bayonet.

Starting at the very beginning of the M9 bayonet's history, Buck Knives found it necessary to establish two production lines for the first M9 bayonet contract (1986-1989). One line was for the commercial bayonets, the other line was for the U.S. Government contract bayonets. Chuck Buck used to complain that he had to keep double the number of workers and inspectors on the military production M9 contract line, versus the commercial production line. The problem of tolerances and measurements of the bayonets was made more difficult as the man responsible for the bayonet drawings was a gun-guy, and he put firearms-close tolerances and measurements on the bayonet drawings which were delivered to the U.S. government as a requirement of the original contract.

Everyone at the time knew that the drawings had errors and many of the dimensions were unnecessarily tight for a bayonet, but no one ever got around to doing much about it. It was always Buck's contention that it was Phrobis' responsibility to correct and upgrade the drawings. Phrobis never did anything about it before they went out of business.

When Lan-Cay became the next manufacturer of the M9, they changed the drawings only when absolutely necessary. On their part, they felt that as long as the Army's Quality Assurance Representative (QAR) would accept "form, fit and function" as the standard, why should they waste time correcting the drawings, so they never got around to cleaning them up.

These were the same drawings that were issued to Ontario Knife Company when they started making M9 bayonets. This set the stage for a quite crazy series of events which almost forever closed Lan-Cay.

When Lan-Cay's new QAR came on board two years ago, he was a tight tolerances man, not a form, fit and function man. He squashed down on Lan-Cay in a most ferocious and harsh manner, almost permanently closing down the company. It took Lan-Cay almost two years to finally get out from under this QAR, and they had to actually fight up the Army's chain of command, which took forever. All this was in spite of all the awards Lan-Cay had won from the Army previously.

All that being said, the Lan-Cay QAR was absolutely within his responsibilities and job description to hold Lan-Cay's (and any other company) nose to the frying pan. Form, fit and function were also his choice, but there was no requirement that he had to follow this previously accepted contract inspection method.

All this contract activity caused Lan-Cay to have to go back to the original drawings, and slowly dig their way out of the morass. They are still in the process of doing this today, but have this fall delivered their first bayonets which passed the more rigorous inspection no required of them.

Now our history comes to its point. As an adviser and consultant to Ontario, having worked with them since they produced the new Marine Corps bayonet, I had early on made sure they were aware of the original problems with the M9 drawings. As Lan-Cay battled the Army; Ontario was also quite aware of Lan-Cay's problems and wanted to avoid even the slightest involvement in them. Ontario was quite concerned, even though they had a totally different QAR from a different part of the country, working out of a different set of offices.

The very public problems at Lan-Cay caused the president of the Ontario and his M9 contract manager to erect two separate assembly lines, one for the U.S. government M9s and one for the commercial sales M9s. This proved to be not too practical and a real headache, but for a few months all the Ontario commercial-contract M9 bayonets were distinctively marked on both ricassos, and assembled separately under special supervision.

On the left ricasso of the "commercial" M9, Ontario used their old, obsolete die stamp with the hyphen between the "M" and the "9" making the marking "M-9". Stamped on the right ricasso, running parallel to the crossguard, is the block-letter word "COMBAT".

These marking differences were intended to keep the assembled commercial bayonets from getting into the Government bayonets and "contaminating" them. The concern was that the QAR problems at Lan-Cay, might spread to Ontario's QAR and create totally unnecessary contract problems. The idea worked a bit, but Ontario finally realized that it wasn't an efficient way to do things, and gradually with Lan-Cay finally sorting out its problems, Ontario decided to shut down its commercial production line and end using the "commercial ricasso markings" as a separate line/product.

The commercial Ontario M9 "COMBAT" bayonets were produced both with the old style lime-green ("pond scum green") colored parts with the round grip and with the ACU, Army colored, plastics with the ergonomic grip. Ontario was using up the last of their first model plastics and moving their entire production of M9s into the new ACU colored plastics with the ergonomic grips. These were only the two variations produced of this distinctive M9 bayonet.

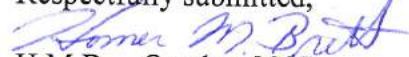
One of the curved balls in all this effort is that once the commercial bayonets were offered for public sale they frequently ended up in soldier's hands and on armory walls. This same thing happened to the original Phobis-Buck commercial M9s during Desert Storm, and it has happened with the Ontario "COMBAT" marked M9s. A soldier who loses his bayonet wants to quickly replace it so as not to incur punishment or adverse

entries in his permanent records. A supply officer or NCO deploying to, or bringing a unit back from Iraq or Afghanistan wants his armory fully stocked, again to avoid penalties or investigations. The easiest way to do this is to purchase M9s on the open market. Once again the Army's soldiers are carrying the current "commercial" M9 bayonets in actual combat; it was only to be expected.

As with the Buck-Phrobis commercial M9s, the Ontario "COMBAT" marked bayonets are circulating (in small numbers) in the Army supply and armory system, again history repeats itself.

What is the significance of the stamped word "COMBAT"? This stamping die was made for, and used early on some of during the Marine Bayonet trials models, on the prototypes submitted by Ontario. The stamp was still on hand and paid for, so they used it, rather than making a new one.

Respectfully submitted,



H.M.B.---October 2007