



The Barrett/Emerson M-50 comes in a lined metal box complete with a dual Barrett .50-caliber tie tack/lapel pin.

BARRETT'S BLADE

A .50-CALIBER TACTICAL FOLDER

▶▶▶ **SHORT-RANGE TACTICAL FOLDER FROM THE FIRST NAME IN LONG-RANGE RIFLES.**

STORY BY **STEVEN DICK**

Practically every firearm company has tried their hand at a cutlery line at one time or another. Some have subcontracted actual production of their knives and then retailed them through normal dealer networks. Others have simply franchised the name to the highest bidder. Frankly, several of these franchised lines are of such mediocre quality I find it hard to believe the parent companies allow a trademark to be stamped on them. With that in mind, I was very pleased to learn Barrett Firearms brokered an agreement with Emerson Knives to produce its own entry into the cutlery field.

Naturally, the best place to start when contracting the production of any knife is to find a company with a reputation for a quality product and innovative design. From its origins as a one-man custom shop (Ernest Emerson), through their evolution into a production knife company, Emerson Knives has led the field of tactical cutlery. Few combat folders have the near-cult following that Emerson's customers have with the military. (Most first timers at major knife shows find the mob for the mere chance to purchase a custom Emerson nearly impossible to believe.) His production knives are equally well regarded among people who put their knives to use in the real world.

BRING ON THE NEW M50!

Barrett's entry knife, the "M50," (I bet the knife's name is a big surprise, right?) is an improved version of the older Emerson MAX-1. The main difference, and you have to look closely to even notice it, is that the handle frame was adapted from the limited edition Emerson HMMV-K model. There is also a series of decorative cut-outs on the left side of the M50's G-10 scales that echo the distinctive look of the M82A1's upper receiver.

The 154CM stainless blade (Rc 57-59)

is 3.5 inches long and .125-inch thick. The 154CM stainless was originally created for use in aircraft engine parts placed under great stress at high temperatures. Legendary knifemaker Bob Loveless is usually credited with being the first to see its potential for cutlery. For many years this was THE state-of-the-art blade steel, but eventually a similar alloy from Japan, ATS-34, became the darling of custom knifemakers. In the last few years there's been a swing back to 154CM, as many knifemakers have decided Loveless was right all along. This alloy provides a combo of edge retention, corrosion resistance, strength, and resharpening ease.

All M50 blades are straight-edged and coated with the Emerson's "Black-T" finish. The handle frames are black G-10 with titanium liners and liner-locking bar. A steel spring clip allows tip-up, right-hand carry deep in the pocket, and a Terzuola-style disk on the blade spine provides ambidextrous one-hand opening. Weight, 4.65 ounces and suggested retail price \$195. There is also a limited, numbered-edition (250 pieces) with company founder Ronnie Barrett's signature on one side of the blade and Emerson's on the other for \$275 that is an instant collector's item. All knives come packed in a padded metal presentation box with a neat tie tack/lapel pin of the famous Barrett M82A1 rifle.

ACTUAL FIELD WORK

As much as I like bone handles, mirror-polished blades and sparkling nickel-silver bolsters, I know many people hate the thought of what real fieldwork will do to those fine finishes. Having carried one particular Emerson folder (a custom left-hand CQC-6) for a decade, I can say from experience the company produces knives you need not be afraid to use. If anything, a few battle scars just add to its visual appeal.

The Barrett M50 is no different in this regard than standard Emerson knives. It's a folder meant to be "rode hard and put up wet" without fear of hurting it.

In use, I found the Barrett M50 handle

to be very comfortable in both the standard cutting hold and the reverse grip preferred by some martial artists. Three-and-a-half inches is a highly effective blade length, long enough for most heavy folder chores but still small enough for fine work. The elongated clip point and the sweeping edge of the M50 make it an efficient tool for a wide range of cutting needs. While the black finish may shout "military," the M50's blade shape has a long history of use on hunting knives, and it is equally well suited to field dressing and skinning chores. I also found the thumb ramp behind the opening disk useful for adding more power to cuts.

As a left-hander, I tend to take a very close look at right-hand liner-locks before I carry them for anything serious. Some will unlock if squeezed too tight in a southpaw grip. The Barrett proved to have a correctly inset locking bar that was as reliable in my left hand as my right.

Putting the knife to some of my standard cutting tests, I found the M50 would normally slice through about one 1/4-inch braid of a 1-inch manila rope with a single slice of the blade. This is actually very good performance for a knife, as far too many will barely scratch the surface of the tough fiber. Next I tried slicing a section of an old 2.5-inch forestry fire hose I keep for the purpose of testing knives. Fire hose is made of a combination of woven linen with a rubber liner. The Barrett M50 cut through fine.

Last was a whittling session on both seasoned and green hardwood. The goal here is to be able to slice off long, thick shavings with the minimum amount of force. Again, the Barrett M50 performed well. I should probably mention all resharpening during my cutting tests was performed on a Norton Fine India benchstone, with WD-40 as a lubricant.

Barrett has chosen a maker for their folders whose work is an equal in reputation to that of their famous rifle. For more information please contact Barrett Firearms, P.O. Box 1077, Murfreesboro, TN 37133; (615) 896-2938; www.barrettrifles.com. ♦



The M50 proved to have excellent edge geometry for basic cutting chores like working with both green and seasoned hardwood. Resharpening was a cinch with a Norton benchstone.

.50 Caliber M33 Ball Ammunition



Feed your rifle right with Barrett's M33 Ball .50 caliber ammunition. It has brand-new brass, primer, powder, and 660-grain projectiles.



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