

**"HELM TAKES CUSTOMER REQUESTS, BUT HAS TO FEEL THAT IT MESHES WITH THE WAY HE WORKS AND THAT HE CAN DO IT SATISFACTORILY."**

# Rock Solid Tradition

HELM ENTERPRISES HAS A HISTORY OF PROVEN QUALITY

STORY BY JOSHUA SWANAGON, PHOTOS BY JAMES HELM



**FORGED** in the heat of the southern Texas sun himself, James Helm began his career, pounding steel to his will in high school. Coming from a family history of blacksmithing and a love for fantasy novels, it is no surprise that James found himself at home in front of an anvil.

Following are some facts about this up-and-coming knife maker, who runs Helm Enterprises.

## 1 Before the Knives

Growing up on his parents' farm, Helm regularly used bladed tools to clear brush.

## 2 The Challenges

His biggest challenges are balancing time, money and resources between

shop repairs/upgrades, experimentation and completing customer work.

## 3 His Philosophy

If you don't take care of customer work, then time and repairs/upgrades are moot. But if you don't take care of time and repairs/upgrades, it's harder to do the customer work.

## 4 Seeking Greatness

He draws a lot of his inspiration from



two of the greats in Neo-Tribal Metal-smithing; Tai Goo and Tim Lively.

## 5 Material Preference

Helm prefers simple carbon steels, with a focus on 5160, although he is transitioning to 80CrV2 as his primary alloy. For his Tactical Tomahawks he uses 4140.

## 6 Handle Material

Helm prefers synthetics and uses a lot of paracord wraps impregnated with marine epoxy to make them rock solid and waterproof. From time to time, he uses slab handle scales and prefers TeroTuf due to its lightweight and grippy feel.

## 7 The Process

Helm mostly forges his blades but has recently begun the process of bringing to life a line of mid-tech stock removal blades. While he has some new designs in the stock removal side of things, they are mostly based on already proven designs and are intended to increase production and better meet demand.

## 8 Requests

Helm takes customer requests, but has to feel that it meshes with the way he works and that he can do it satisfactorily. He is currently not accepting new orders while he catches up on current commissions — unless you are active duty military, law enforcement or first responder, in which case you go to the front of the line. He will begin taking new orders again in a few months. **KI**

Website:

[www.HelmForge.com](http://www.HelmForge.com)