



Queen Cutlery Guide

"Parts Knives" and Queen Cutlery, 1972 to about 1981

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There have been two important incidents in Queen's history involving "parts knives" – that is, knives made with parts produced or marked by Queen, but finished knives made out of these parts by others with lesser skill or integrity. This piece covers the early episode. Another piece on "parts knives after bankruptcy" is also available on this site.

The first "parts knives" problem occurred in the 1970s, after Queen Cutlery Company was acquired by Servotronics. To recover their costs of investing, the new ownership sold any completed knife in the vault (producing a considerable problem of filling customer orders in a timely way) as well as selling parts for knives they thought were not needed immediately in the factory. This not only created a problem in the factory in completing knives, but also permitted others to make knives with Queen tang stamp or blade etches with less finishing and at lower cost.

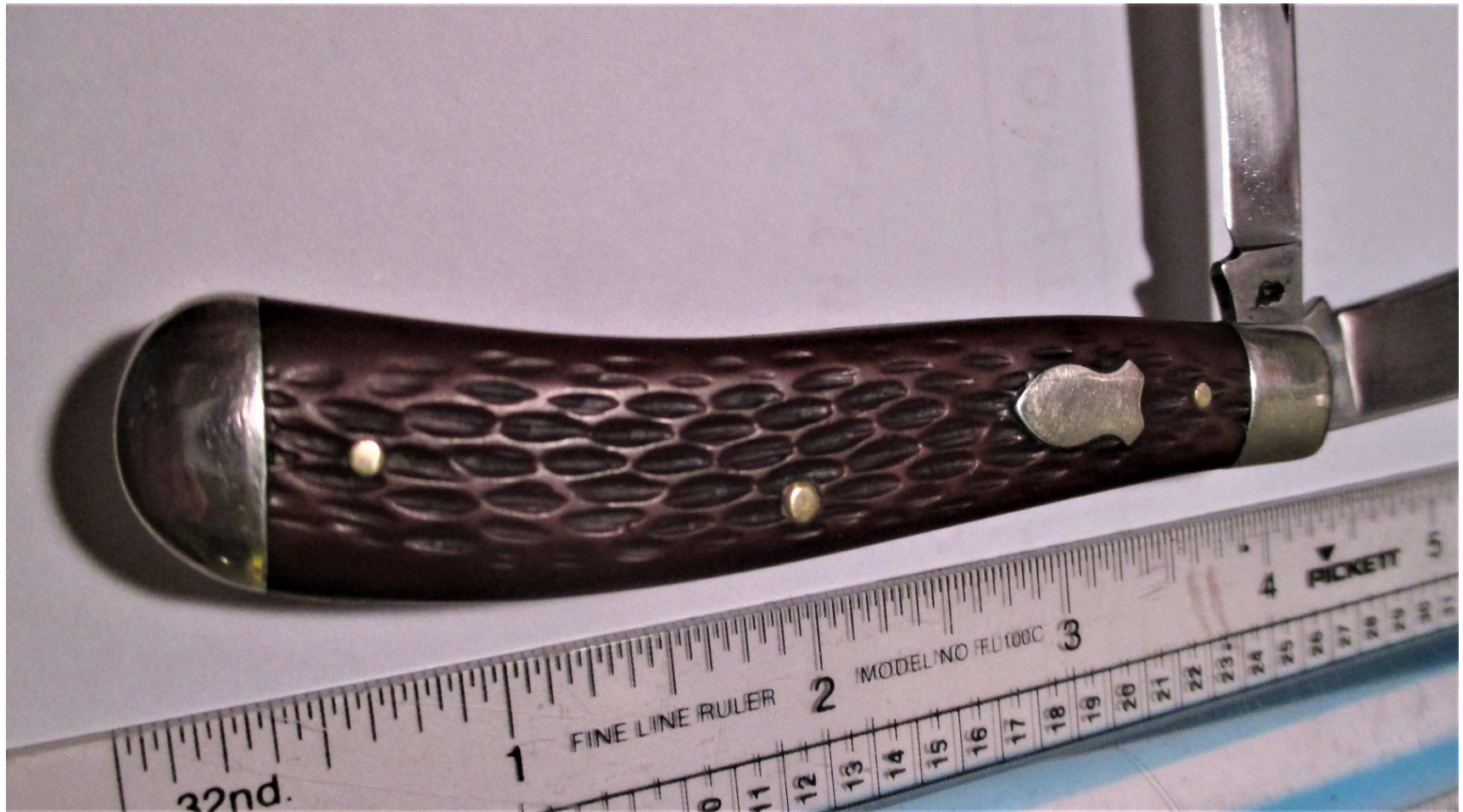
The problem became severe because Queen had at that time a very strong warrantee policy and gradually noticed more and more parts knives showing up at the factory expecting warrantee repairs when they were actually made by others. Many different distributors and individuals were major purchasers of knife parts. These parts were farmed out for the completion of the "parts knives" in large numbers to many different individuals with varying degrees of skill. According to Bob Siple, Sales manager of Queen Cutlery as they shifted toward the collector market in 1980, the parts knives (without warrantee) returned for repair and

the threats to the company's overall reputation for quality knives finally led company officials to change the policy of selling knife parts that could in any way be identified as "Queen."

The damage was severe on both back-ordered knives and perception of quality. Knives last for a long time and some of these knives still circulate in the collector market. Some parts knives are fairly obvious, as when Queen blades are substituted for an earlier non-Queen knife. Here is an example of Queen tang marked blade inserted in what many think is a Schrade-knife body – what some call a "Frankenmesser," a useable knife made out of parts of other bodies.



Queen "Frankenmesser" on a Presumed Schrade body – with bone and heraldic shield used very little by Queen at that time. Note also the two different tang stamps on the same knife- '76 on the main blade and the "Small Q," late 1971, on the secondary blade.



(Same knife as in figure 1) One of us (DL) bought this knife as a "bargain" a little earlier in his career – paying too much attention to the oft-repeated phrase, "Well, you can't say Queen never made that." Later, the first author (FF) and David Clark both agreed – "Something is wrong – Why two different stamps?"

Detecting Early Parts knives. There are several other hints about an early parts knife. First, look at the pins. By the end of 1949 (Fred Sampson, personal interview) Queen was using tools which SPUN the pins in, so both sides would be smoothly rounded. Many parts knives show an older style of hand-peening or filing, leaving a flat surface and also might show some damage on the surrounding handles, usually on the pile side. A dead give-away is that the pins on the same knife may be made from steel, nickel silver or brass – the maker used whatever pins were on hand. A more subtle characteristic is the Winterbottom bone on some of these knives is much lighter colored- more like "sunbleached" or caramel-colored than the bone used on actual Queen knives of the same period – the company apparently kept the darker bone for their own knives.

Now this is not to say that some of these parts knives still find their way into many fine collections and are very well made. Coke bottles #38 and folding Moose knives #52, have been often been seen in this group. While one might hope that these knives have been "used up" in 40 or more years, they can still be found, especially now that the Queen Cutlery bankruptcy has increased the value of early knives in the re-sale market.

References

Fred Sampson, Personal communication

Robert Siple, Personal Communication