



QueenCutleryGuide.com

The National Knife Collectors Association (NKCA) 1981-1982 Club Knife by Queen Cutlery

Dan Lago, 2-19-2021

We gratefully thank Bob Siple for his interviews and copies of correspondence over this knife. It is his story!

Queen Cutlery was not the first cutlery company to start making collector knives and they worked cautiously through the 1970s to gain skill in producing limited edition knives (Reference: Servotronics 1970s experience in Queen CutleryGuide.com). By the end of the 1970s, the company had hired Sales Manager Bob Siple to organize their sales team and expand their sales approach. He eventually got permission to compete for a National Knife Collector's Association (NKCA) annual addition.



Figure 1. The 1981 large "Bullhead" knife in torched Sambar Stag selected for the 1981 NKCA knife (edition of 12,000), showing the NKCA shield.

NOTE: This knife is frequently called by other names -including

"large cigar," or "cattle knife", etc., but we use its name at the time of adoption.

Fred Sampson searched through old 1907 Schatt and Morgan dies and selected this large pattern (4.36" closed) that had not been made for many years. Though it took a lot of persuasion to Queen management at the Franklinville, NY office, it was agreed to make 19 of this pattern, one to keep as the prototype and one for each member of the Board of Directors for the NKCA. (One of these prototypes was used for the 1980 Queen Catalog, page 10, showing "1 of 19" blade etch (Figure 2) with a summary of recent contracts with knife collecting clubs for private label knives to maximize the potential for future contracts. Bob Siple recalls a conversation with Bob Stamp over the costs in gaining the contract. Stamp complained, "What else do we have to do. Buy a cadillac and mink coat for somebody?" But, the size of the contract and doing business with the NKCA won out.

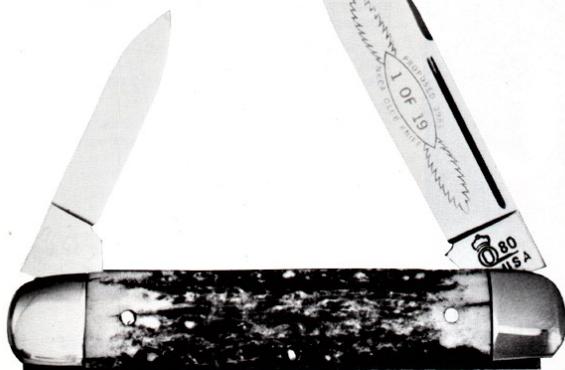
Some of Queen's management wanted to use their own Queen shield to mark the knife, but were persuaded to accept the NKCA shield which was customary on all their annual knives. It is clear that the Franklinville management were eventually persuaded to go along with Siple's negotiations with the NKCA, but were very cautious about the costs of making the knife and providing gift knives.

This was the first time a "gift" knife had been provided to Board members and was challenged by other competing cutlery companies. However, it was a winning strategy. One Board member, Mr. Ben Kelly, immediately sold his knife for \$600 and donated the money to the NKCA, which had a very strong influence of the Board's decision to adopt this knife.

In negotiations with NKCA staff, mainly James Parker and James (Jim) Frost there were many issues dealt with including a discussion of a "propellor" shield or the usual circular NKCA shield, different technology for blade etching, and packaging the knives so serial numbers were prominent on the outside of the wrapping. Appendix letter 1, from Bob to James Parker gives the first summary of the "Standards for the knife" after all agreements were completed.



National Knife Collectors Association 1981 Club Knife



At the Louisville, Kentucky Knife Show on April 26, 1980, the NKCA Board of Directors met to select the club's 1981 club knife from the many submitted by several knife manufacturers.

Chosen by the majority vote of the Board was the knife pictured at left. The knife will be made for the club by Queen Cutlery Company of Titusville, PA. A large "Bullhead" pattern, the knife will have two blades with appropriate NKCA club knife etching on the master blade. As with the prototype knife shown at left, the handles will be genuine stag; however, the club knife's handle will have a shield.

Other club knives manufactured by Queen Cutlery:
1. Mid South Knife Collectors Association 1978-1979
2. Wolverine Knife Collectors Club—1980

3. Noccalula Knife Collectors—1978-1979
4. North Carolina Wildlife Knife—1980
5. Vulcan Knife Club—1981

6. Southern California Blades—1980

Figure 2. Page 10, Queen 1980 Catalog, promoting success of this large contract and growing private label contracts with knife collecting clubs. (top of page only).

The other major consideration was the original Schatt & Morgan dies which would be used for the production of the knife, would be DONATED to the NKCA museum to no further use of this pattern would be possible. Please see Appendix letter 2 from Jim Frost that announces Queen has been selected and that the donation of the dyes (*sic* dies) would be expected.

The large contract came at a time that definitely helped Queen "keep the lights on" as they transitioned to many new lines of knives and helped solidify the production of "collector knives" for the company. In fact, Bob Siple was provided with a large format check from the NKCA, which was used in the factory and with Queen's management to promote the success of this huge purchase. It also led to a number of subsequent NKCA knives Queen produced in future years (See reference: "Queen-produced knives for NKCA").

Appendix 3 shows a three-page report received by Queen after the contracted knives were delivered. The report shows 83 knives rejected by the NKCA by serial number and the problem that needs to be repaired to complete the contract. Given that 12,000 knives were included in this

contract, that translates into a "rejected" rate of 0.00692 % from an organization that was VERY concerned about quality (or less than 7 knives returned per 1,000). Queen honored the contract and repairs were made. Because of the details in this contract (and Bob's records) this is one of the only times when Queen's "quality control" is well-documented. Since this is a rarely documented set of "returns," the last page of Appendix 3 summarizes the main reasons given for all 83 knives (mounting of blades and problems with stag handles are prominent). This is a compelling reason why Queen was able to do many knives for NKCA and also for other private label customers, in the future. A major success to start the 1980s!

References

QueenCutleryGuide.com

Queen Cutlery Early Experiences with Collector Knives: the 1970s

[Queen-Produced-Knives-for-NKCA.pdf \(myftpupload.com\)](#)

[Queen Cutlery History. com](http://QueenCutleryHistory.com)

[Queen-Catalog-1980.pdf \(queencutleryhistory.com\)](#)

Fred Sampson and Bob Siple, Video Interview, 2018. "The development of the NKCA knife, 1981 and 1982"

Bob Siple (2021) Personal Communication over the NKCA 1980 Knife

Thank you to Bob Siple for all three of the attached Appendix materials on this knife.

Appendix 1, 2, and 3, follow:

Queen Cutlery Company

SUBSIDIARY OF SERVOTRONICS, INC.
TITUSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA — TELEPHONE: Area Code 814 827-3674

Mr. James Parker
National Knife Collectors Association
P.O. Box 21707
Chattanooga, TN 37421

May 15, 1980

Jim,

Below are the specifications of the #1166 pattern which was chosen to be the NKCA knife for 1981.

Master blade-----	440 stainless steel spear blade - mirror finish
Etch-----	Electroetch of your design on mark side of master blade (We are at this time looking for a source of a photo etch)
Tang stamp-----	Tang of master blade NKCA 1981
Secondary blade-----	440 stainless steel pen blade mirror finish
Serialization-----	00001 thru -----
Location of serialization-----	Bolster of master blade, mark side, horizontal on lower end of bolster below pin.
Handle material-----	Genuine India Stag
Shield-----	Mark side of handle, nickel silver with NKCA imprint
Backspring-----	Stainless steel polished inside
Bolsters-----	Nickel silver
Pins-----	Brass and nickel silver
Scales-----	Brass
Spacer scale-----	Brass
Cost each-----	\$18.57
Terms-----	2% 10 days net 30 days
Delivery-----	Complete by May 30, 1981

Jim, would you please fill out the second page and return it to us at your convenience.

Thank you,

Robert M. Siple
Sales Manager

RMS/cmg

Appendix 2.

NATIONAL
KNIFE COLLECTORS ASSOCIATION
PO BOX 21070, 7201 SHALLOWFORD ROAD, CHATTANOOGA, TN 37421

November 30, 1982

Mr. Bob Siple
Queen Cutlery Company
507 Chestnut Street
Titusville, PA 16354

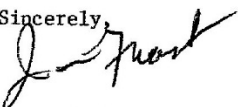
Dear Bob:

I want to express our sincere thanks for the 1981 club knife which Queen made for the NKCA. We certainly do appreciate the fine craftsmanship which Queen displayed in the making of these knives. Our membership is very happy with the 1981 knife.

I would like to ask at this time that all dyes for this knife including liners, bolsters, shields, etc. be forwarded to the National Knife Museum as was requested upon the making of this knife. I would appreciate this at your earliest convenience.

Many thanks.

Sincerely,


James A. Frost
Executive Director

JAF:jf

Visit the National Knife Museum, 7201 Shallowford Rd, Chattanooga, TN 37421

Appendix 3. All returned Knives from the NKCA Bulleard contract

<u>Knife #</u>	<u>Problem</u>
241	No snap
260	Handles too thin
525	Bad handles
1,252	Nicks in blade
1,256	No snap in master blade
1,439	Small blade lazy
1,478	No snap in master blade
1,499	Defective master blade
1,504	Bad handles
1,635	Cracked handle
1,658	Cracked handle - no spring in sm. blade
1,677	Mis-matched handle-no spring-bad bolsters
1,686	Sm. blade has no snap
1,870	Shield cracked & does not fit-nicks on blade-blade hard to open
2,040	Dent in bolsters-separation in handles
2,099	Master blade scratched
2,375	No snap in blades
2,493	Green on 1 side-mis-matched handles
2,569	Mis-matched handles, shield crooked, no snap
2,628	Cracked handle
2,781	No snap in blades
2,822	Cracked handle
2,929	Shield not on good-no snap in lg. blade
2,999	Cracked handle
3,028	Bolster scratched
3,148	Blades will not open
3,303	No back spring pressure
3,744	Handles cracked
3,803	Blade action bad on both blades
3,808	No spring in blades-handle separation
3,913	Lazy blade
3,966	Handles cracked
4,619	Cracked handle
4,629	No shield-cracked handle
4,671	Sunken handle
4,771	Cracked handle
4,987	Shield does not fit handle properly
5,134	Bad handles-sm. blade hard to open
5,198	Lazy blades-stag too thick & poor.

*KNIVES
RETURNED*

<u>knife #</u>	<u>Problem</u>
5,317	Thin handles
5,322	Bad workmanship
5,402	Cracked handle
5,419	No spring in either blade
5,694	No snap in blades-not flush with back springs
5,775	Shield on upside down
5,903	Scratched handle-sm. blade hard to open
5,905	Dent in blade
6,010	damaged blade-will not close completely
6,050	extra lg. rivet holes in center of knife.
6,580	Dent on big blade
6,647	No spring in main blade
6,666	Blade hitting back spring-nick in blade
6,759	Blades do not close all the way
6,769	Cracked handle
6,883	No snap in blades
7,064	Scratched handles
7,187	Mis-matched handles-shield ½ embedded-crack
7,376	Mis-matched handles
7,566	Bad handles
7,973	Mis-matched handles - cracked
8,040	Cracked handle
8,108	Cracked handle
8,225	Mis-matched handle
8,283	Master blade does not close
8,308	Large blade scratched - no spring
8,319	Master blade scratched -- no snap
8,623	Cracked handle
8,680	Flaw on sharp edge of master blade
9,001	Handles do not open properly
9,364	Blades do not work properly
9,733	Cracked handle-bolsters ground too much
9,782	Blade action bad
10,150	Flaw in main blade
10,336	No spring-sm. blade has to be pushed close
10,363	Scratched blade
10,418	Bad handle
10,493	Scarred bolsters & jaggered edges that do not fit handles.
10,574	Master blade strikes the back spring & notched blade

Page 3.

Knife #

10,754
11,033
11,108
11,136
11,168

Problem

Nick in main blade
Large blade bent or improperly aligned
Mis-matched handles-green on handle
Cracked handle
Handle broken off

Page 3.

Reasons for NKCA 1981-2 Bullhead knives Returned for Repairs

(six knives had multiple problems, first one is recorded)

No Snap (lazy)	19
Cracked handle	19
Bad handles or mis-matched, scratched	13
Flaw in master blade edge	7
Master blade scratched	6
Shield cracked or mounted wrong	5
Dent in bolster or scratched	3
Master blade won't close	3
Master blade strikes back spring	2
Handles too thin	2
Bad master blade	1
Master blade won't open	1
Bad workmanship	1
Extra rivet holes in center of knife	<u>1</u>

83