



## **Oar Carvers, A Queen Cutlery Special Factory Order Series**

Dan Lago,

We gratefully acknowledge the comments and assistance from Mr. J.J. Smith and Mr. Steve Pieffer in sharing improvements to be made and Mr. Bob Stadlander for his contribution in ordering these knives.

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### Introduction

Like many knife collectors I mess around with carving wood, but real carvers often swim in a different stream than most knife collectors. I was not aware of this group of special factory orders from Queen until Mr. J.J. Smith pointed them out in his responses to a review of the 41L in 2015.

These knives were designed and first ordered from Queen Cutlery by Mr. Ross Oar of West Falls, N Y, for his business of supplying woodcarvers. (Who would not like to have his name on shield of his knife?) Apparently, he and other carvers appreciated Queen's decision to use the tool Steel D2 and it opened-up a new market for the company as soon as D2 was adopted. Mr. Oar subsequently sold his business to Mr. Stadlander who continued to procure and these knives which had quickly gained a following among traditional wood carvers, also adding sharpening service and more variety in handle materials until Queen closed doors forever in 2017, a 15-year collaboration in producing folding carving knives.

Woodcarvers have many choices but kept buying these pocket knives as long as they were available – suggesting to me, the mobile carver, the whittler who likes to sit on his porch - not in a dusty shop. Bob Stadlander was generous in sharing that he obtains these knives in “lots of around a 100 knives.” So, with the many different handle materials offered, and the duration of this special factory orders (SFO), suggests that a lot of carvers use and hang onto these knives for a lifetime. They are only rarely seen in the secondary market, especially now in the current decade.

Mr. Bob Stadlander was pleased to talk with us in 2015, and provided details on the handle materials and versions of Oar carvers he had

purchased from Queen. His website has necessarily moved beyond Queen knives but still provides carvers' supplies in 2023: <http://www.stadtlandercarvings.com/>

### Listing of Known Oar Carver knives by Queen Cutlery

The following knives have been offered in the OAR Series using four different Queen patterns the #6L Teardrop, the #11 utility, the #41L Mini Hunter, and the #64 Canoe. As described below:

**Single Blade Locking Oar Carver.** A one-blade folder built off the 41L pattern. The blade is 1 5/16th long and of D2 steel. Closed length = 3 3/4". With half stop. Was available in a variety of handle materials, including,

- American Black Walnut,
- Smooth Black Cherry Delrin,
- Crown Red Acrylic,
- Aged Honey Amber Stag Bone,
- Curly Zebra Wood
- Rosewood
- Abalone.

Abalone also says some carvers really like "pretty" and is completely consistent with the classy, gentleman's versions of the 41L. The Crown Red handle version of a 41L Oar carver is a nice example of SFO decisions. This material was cataloged only in 1997-8, before D2 steel was offered. However, when the Black Cherry Delrin was no longer available, Mr. Stadtlander was happy to accept the Crown Red acrylic offered to him by Queen as another low-cost, smooth handle option. The crown red acrylic is the only one I own and is shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Please be aware this knife is pre-sharpened by Mr. Stadtlander and it is sharp as the devil and has a small thumb nick and strong back spring. More important, on mine, the extra sharp blade has a little bit of the wicked point sticking above the handle when closed (shown in Figure 2). J.J Smith says carvers are equally divided in preferring the pre-sharpened blade or preferring to sharpen their own. Be careful with this little blade. If you plan to carry it, you might consider a leather pocket sheath.



Figure 1. #41L Liner Lock Mini Hunter in crown Red Acrylic.



Figure 2., Close-up of pre-sharpened 41L with blade “peeking out” a bit.





Figure 3. An Abalone version of a 41L Liner lock Oar Carver knife, showing the sturdy, grooved liner lock, but no “oar carver shield on this fine knife. (Internet photo).



Figure 4. Another 41L Single blade Oar Carver in Rosewood, an early choice, with a nice example of the oval shield with the Ross Oar’s preferred “Oar Carver.” (Internet photo).

**Oar Version I.** A two-blade folder built off the Queen #64 pattern with both blades 1 3/4" long, made of D2 steel. 3 5/8" closed length. (No Photo available but like the knife in figure 5, only with two short blades). Was available in:

- American Black Walnut
- Aged Honey Amber Carved Stag Bone
- Jigged Black Cherry Delrin.



Figure 5. Oar version II, two-blades with a large and small blade. Version II has been seen more often than version I in our experience. (Internet photo).

**Oar Version II.** A two-blade folder built off the Queen #64 canoe pattern, with one detail blade at 1 3/16" and the other at 1 3/4". Was available in

- Aged Honey Amber Carved Stag Bone.
- African Curly Zebra.

**Oar Chip Carver. (Locking)** A one blade knife built off the Queen #6L pattern, with one blade 1" long, available in a standard width or narrower blade. We have been unable to obtain a photo showing a narrow chip carving blade. Closed length = 3 3/4". With half stop. Was available in:

- Curly Zebra or Aged Honey Amber stag bone.
- Cocobolo.





Figure 6. Oar chip Carver on #6L liner lock Teardrop in a very dark Cocobolo handle. with the wider blade. Again, no Oval “Oar Carver” shield. This style with a locking mechanism – also like the 42 L Mini hunter Oar Carver were the most popular knives for both Mr. Oar and Mr. Statlander



Figure 6. A 6L Liner Lock Teardrop with narrow Chip carving blade in Amber Carved Stag Bone, around 2005-2007 (top). And a 41L Mini Hunter liner lock with 1 3/16" blade also in Amber Stag Carved bone. Both knives have D2 steel. (Internet photo).

**Oar Carver Slim Trapper #11.** If I recall correctly, there was a first version made on the Queen #11 Utility Knife or "slim trapper" frame, with a short wharncliffe-style chip carving blade in D2. Steve Pieffer remembers this style right as D2 steel was announced in 2002, but it has been difficult to find examples or photographs over 20 years later.





Figure 7. Oar Carver with wide chip carving blade in American Walnut, with D2 steel, probably ordered in 2002. This might be an early version, as Steve Pieffer suggests, either that or the slim pattern did not fit the oval “Oar Carver” shield that we see on most of these knives. (Internet photo.)

It is a lot of fun to realize that there has been a relatively long and vigorous history of these special purpose knives. Proves the common adage among Queen collectors, “You can't say Queen has never done That.” Certainly, with many hundreds of these knives produced, it is downright surprising that most Queen knife collectors do not know about “Oar Carvers.” For sure, when most of them come to the secondary market they will show heavy signs of sharpening. These knives were bought to use.