



Queen Cutlery Guide

Clarence Risner: A Major Force in Schatt and Morgan Special Factory Orders (SFO)

Dan Lago, and Austin Jackson, January 2020

Clarence Risner (1933-2016) was deeply involved in America's fascination with collecting high quality pocketknives, and in particular helped power Queen Cutlery's growth as they re-introduced the Schatt & Morgan line. Public records and his obituary online (see references) showcased how busy he was in his community along with his 30-year career as a chemistry teacher and high school principal. This piece will focus on his similarly impressive work in his "hobby" as a knife collector.

Clarence Risner opened C. Risner Cutlery in 1974, and in addition to attending knife shows over a large region, also worked to develop exclusive distributor arrangements with knife producers. He concentrated on newsletters with knife dealers and quickly adopted the Internet with three well-known websites. For a good while any German Eye knife you bought in the United States came through Clarence. Later he developed a similar arrangement with Camillus Cutlery, and then with Queen Cutlery for both Queen brand and Schatt & Morgan Knives.

Clarence Risner had a very keen sense of what the growing numbers of pocket knife collectors wanted, because he attended shows regularly and monitored what sold quickly and what people discussed. He was active in the National Knife Collector's Association, serving as President, and through the 1970s and 1980s, and built a substantial national business selling to local dealers. His claim was "always with the lowest price and free shipping." He was known for shipping quickly.

At a knife show, another dealer got Clarence's attention with some of the new Schatt & Morgan knives. He had been busy with his contracts with Camillus and German Eye, but thought these beautiful knives had a very

nice future. He could sense the new Schatt & Morgan "Keystone" series was a hit. Before the show was over, Clarence has bought all the stock from the other dealer and asked to be put in touch with Jenny Miller from Queen Cutlery. They quickly reached a deal in 1995, and he focused his efforts on the revived Schatt & Morgan line. He soon added the regular Queen production as well.

However, it was not until 2000 that he began to order special factory orders in a big way. Key factory staff agreed with Clarence that quality standards must be maintained and he developed a strong reputation for insisting on quality before he sent knives to purchasers. He was a watchdog and frequently challenged Queen staff.

He sold complete sets, but also noticed there were some special "winners" in each year's production – and that he could easily sell more to satisfy that demand. Risner Cutlery ordered special factory orders (SFO) knives with complete Schatt & Morgan fit and finish, but were never cataloged. Clarence sold them very well through a newsletter to dealers and through the Internet as that method emerged.

Clarence Risner spent almost the last 25 years of his life in partnership with Queen Cutlery selling substantial numbers of both high-quality catalog and special factory order (SFO) knives. To give a sense of his business, an old record of his is provided for 2005. In that year he placed 46 orders for 8,270 knives at an average cost of \$28.36 bought from Queen Cutlery for a total cost of \$234,341.90. You can see he sold many Schatt & Morgan sets, special knives, but also seconds. A few years before (2002-2003), he bought all the old Schatt & Morgan sets that Queen Cutlery had in stock and thereby provided the cash flow that the company needed to "keep the lights on."

SCHATT & MORGAN SALES FOR 2005-& CARRY OVER BILLS FOR 2006
 shows date I received the bill -what it was for--how much.

	Total
1. JAN 6-- 34 PIECES OF #32--054431-mother of pearl congress Cost/1-\$61.08--	\$2076.72.
2. 1-12-06--68 pieces of #042265--File & Wire baby sunfish---Cost/1-55.20	\$3753.60
3. 1-13-06--368 pieces of 042206-Harness jack 2 bl----- Cost/1--47.01	\$17299.68
4. 1-18-05--40 pieces Presidents choice MOP 2 bl muskrat----cost/1--\$118.75	\$ 4760.00
5. 1-21-05--2 PIECES of Cattle King 3 bl stock-Dan Burke---cost/1-\$285.18-----	\$ 570.00
6. 1-25-05--112 Pieces #042265-File & Wire Baby sunfish --cost/1 \$55.20-----	\$ 6182.40
7. 1-27-05--40 SETS #XV SERIES -6 knives------\$343.93/SET-----	\$13757.20
8. 2-03-05--30 Pieces 042129 File & Wire English Jack--cost-\$65.46/1-----	\$ 1963.80
9. 2-07-05--55 Pieces--042206 Harness jacks--Poor seller Cost \$47.01-----	\$ 2585.55
10. 2-11-05--301-pieces at \$43.37/1 & 109-pieces at \$36.45--old winterbottom which I Had #042240 furnished qeee +7-seconds \$21.69/1 3-seconds \$18.23/1 Total of all-\$17233.94	
12. 2-28-05--12 #XV S & M Stag sets as #7-6 knives--per set cost/358.25-----	\$ 4299.00
13. 2-28-05--40 pieces Presidents Choice knife #3--cost \$118.75/1-----	\$ 4750.00
14. 3-28-05--30-pieces of 14-Sheffield jigged MOP peanuts-----\$44.93/1-----	\$ 1417.90
15. 3-31-05--18 SETS OF #XV SERIES knives--as #12------\$358.25-----	\$ 6448.50
16. 4-29-05--63-pieces #32 4 bl. congress bones-signature bol \$46.98-----	\$ 2959.74
17. 5-05-05--272 PIECES--#32--4 bl congrss bones sign. bol---\$46.98/1-----	12778.56
11. 2-23-05--16 #32--054431 MOP #1above -----	\$ 977.28
18. 5-19-05--20 PIECES Presidents knife #3 -----	\$ 2375
19. 5-26-05--62 Pieces #65 Baby Sunfish-signature bol. 3 dif. bones--3-sec ----	\$ 2670.81
20. 5-31-05--8 SETS #XV SERIES SETS-----	\$ 2866.00
21. 5-31-05--5 Chairmans Choice #99 MOP whittler--\$178.13/1-----	\$ 890.65
22. 6-06-05--108 MOP-MUSKRATS--KY cutlery--Misc Expenses etc.....	\$ 7177.00
23. 6-10-05--30-Presidents knife #4-MOP Sunfish+19-#041140 F & W gunstock \$ 4956.00	
24. 6-30-05--401--#14 S & M BONE Peanuts+ 7 seconds at \$15.88--\$31.60-----	\$12782.20
25. 7-25-05--240- #042265-Baby sunfish-with sig. bol-\$10094.40--54 se/21.03	\$11230.02
26. 7-27-05--20 pieces of Series III ED 2-english Jack File and Wire-----	\$ 1309.20
27. 7-29-05--801--pieces of #031116--Stag mini toothpicks -----	\$27234.00
28. 8-02-05--33 pieces #044431--PREMIER #6 + 4 seconds at \$93.96-\$46.98	\$ 2644.30
29. 8-17-05--15 pieces of Presidents knife #4--MOP sunfish \$132.95.....	\$ 1994.25
30. 8-23-05--4--Eng. Gents white MOP-by dan burke-#4 Black Pearl White MOP cost--\$162.71--Black Pearl--cost \$189.42.....	\$ 1408.52
31. 8-25-05--15--04113L-F & W mountain man lock backs \$57.79/1.....	\$ 866.85
32. 8-31-05--48 --Pieces of Presidents knife #4--\$132.95 -----	\$ 6381.60
33. 9-09-06--40 pieces of F & W series III ED 3 \$50.96/1 -----	\$ 2038.40
34. 9-26-05--50 Pieces of #33 above-----	\$ 2548.00
35. 9-29-05--17 pieces of #32 ABOVE -----	\$ 2260.15
36. 9-28-05--7 sets of #20 ABOVE \$358.25/1 -----	\$ 2507.75
37. 9-30-05--85 Pieces of 04113L-mountain man lock F & W-----	\$ 4912.15
38. 10-04-05--210--031116--STAG Mini-Toothpicks-----	\$ 7140.00
39. 10-07-05--23 pieces -MIXED pattern Seconds--see invoice 81135 for them	\$ 723.57
40. 10-26-05--10 sets of #36 above--\$358.25 -----	\$ 3582.50
41. 10-28-05--8 SETS OF #36 above --\$358.25 -----	\$ 2866.00
42. 10-14-05--308-03113L--\$45.30/1-92--\$45.75/1-3 sec-\$22.65-----	\$18297.99
43. 11-09-05--285-double backspring muskrats--\$40.25-105 At \$38.953.....	\$ 15842.49
44. 11-14-05--51 pieces of queen mother of pearls mixed-----	\$ 2750.28
45. 11-23-05--385--pieces of railsplitters-3 bones - -----	\$ 19447.50
46. 11-30-05--32 SETS XV with display cases -----	\$ 11464.00
47. 12-06-05--178 PREMIER #7--mini-english jack -----	\$ 8513.74

Figure 1. 2005 Purchases from Queen Cutlery by Clarence Risner

While there is not a complete record available, a great many Clarence Risner Cutlery knives can be identified by a high polish on the main blade including an etch of "Schatt & Morgan" over "1 of 100." An especially nice feature is an etch on the pile side of the blade will show the Schatt & Morgan model number and the year of production. One example, shown in Figures 2 and 3, is a swing guard lockback knife produced in 2004. Clarence had seen the customer preference for spear blades in the early Keystone '94,'95 editions and produced eight SFO's with spear blades in response. This detail of dating and consistent etching will become increasingly important over the coming years as all kind of "parts knives" start showing up, all claiming "rare."

It must be remembered that at the start of the Keystone Series edition numbers were near 1000, and came down to 600 of each knife at the end of the series in 2010. Risner Cutlery SFO knives contributed greatly to pushing down the edition size to "100" in the early 2000s.

The company also noticed Clarence's lead and followed up with many more swing guard spear blades, long pulls (rather than nail nick), and signature bolsters on their swing guards in their last years.

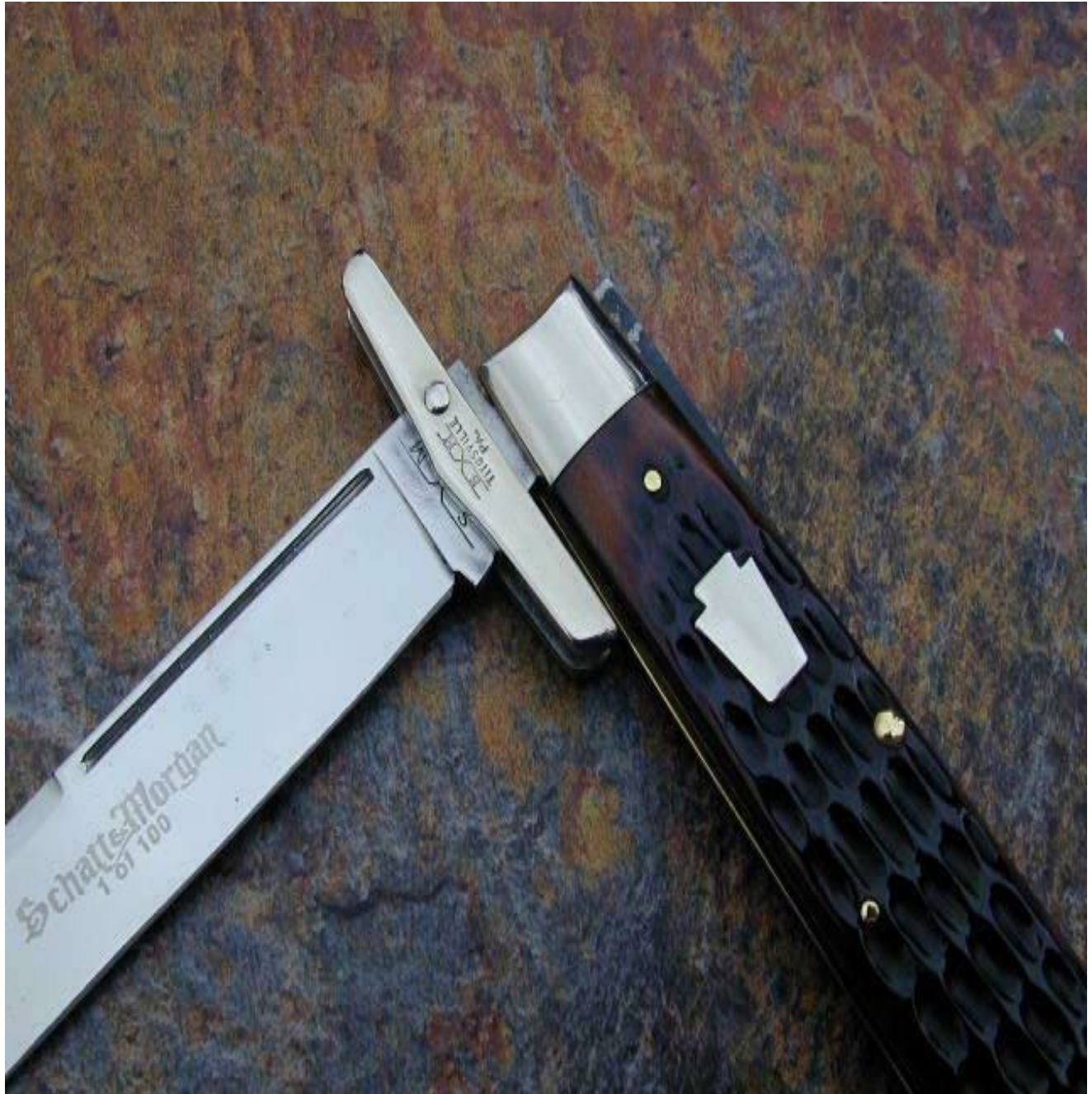


Figure 2, Risner Swing guard 1L, in brown jigged bone, mark side etch, with along pull and bright finished blade.



Figure 3. Pile side of 1L shown in Figure 2, showing Schatt & Morgan Model #1L, year of production on the spear blade.

The "**Premier line**" might be considered the nicest of Clarence's SFO lines and was begun in 2004, with two patterns each year. It was characterized by unusual knife selections, very attractive finishes, including a special "premier" Schatt & Morgan shield. He characterized the line as "The best of the best that Queen makes."

The set was seen as very special by collectors, including several patterns not emphasized in earlier production, including #47, - Humpback lockback whittler, #71 -the daddy Barlow and the #54 - serpentine whittler. All of these patterns provided design help for Queen in subsequent knives in Keystone annual series (especially the signature bolster on the Daddy Barlow) and Daniel's era use of the #54 whittler. Each of these knives was produced in editions, 350 pieces each – still less than the Annual Keystone Schatt & Morgans. That line included:

- #1. 4" muskrat, – two California clip blades
- #2. 3.5/8" Mini- trapper, 2 blades pen and clip
- #3. 5" coke Bottle, one blade
- #4. 3.7/8 Rail Splitter -stockman 3-blade
- #5. 5" large 2-blade Daddy Barlow
- #6. 4" 4-blade Congress
- #7. 3.7/8" English Jack, 2-blade.
- #8. 4" Serpentine Whittler, 3-blades
- #9. 3.5/8" Junior Scout knife, 4-blades
- #10. Hump Back Lockback Whittler, 3-blades – (previously last made in 1917)



Figure 4. Samples of Premier Line, #54 whittler and #71 two-blade Daddy Barlow with Signature bolster

A reasonable estimate of Clarence Risner's special factory orders is over 250 individual knives, each usually in an edition of 100. These knives are of special interest to pattern collectors and most have lived in a drawer/safe, so often they still come with a box and are usually in great condition.

Clarence was also successful in having his business and hobby outlive him. Austin Jackson, his grandson, says, "my grandfather, Clarence Risner and I shared the same passion. The passion of buying,

selling and trading knives. Ever since I was a little boy, Grandpa had me around knives. My memories as a child with Grandpa are memories that will be with me the rest of my life, often many meetings talking with knowledgeable knife collectors. As I grew into a young man, he always encouraged and guided me in learning the trade of the cutlery business. He taught me more than I would have ever imagined and I am very happy to carry his work forward."



Figure 5. A photograph of Clarence Risner and his grandson, Austin Jackson at a knife show. (Borrowed with permission, from Austin Jackson's website, [Traditional pocket knives.com](http://Traditionalpocketknives.com))

Certainly not that Clarence Risner or Queen Cutlery invented special factory orders, but their partnership helped strengthen the availability of Queen's contribution to high-quality American made pocket knives and helped keep the lights on for many, many years at 507 Chestnut Street,

Titusville. He deserves to be remembered as a key figure in Queen Cutlery's success in reaching knife collectors.

References.

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/dayton/obituary.aspx?pid=180301906>
Obituary of Clarence Risner

<https://www.traditionalpocketknives.com/>

Copies of Clarence Risner's business records provided by Austin Jackson, including 2005 purchases, and photographs of SFO knives.

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