

The Victorinox® Blade

April 2000

Issue No. 3

Official Newsletter of the Victorinox® Swiss Army™ Knife Collectors Society

The Victorinox Story

Part 3

In 1931, the world's first fully electric steel hardening shop was added as a wing of the forge shop.

Following up to the 50 year anniversary celebration in 1934, a two story work shop addition was added on to the house which still served as the "factory". The new addition also permitted movement of the office and salesroom to the upper ground floor of the house. In 1941, another extension added to the south, allowed expansion of the office area, which had become much too cramped.

The Second World War (1939-1945) created a huge drop in the export business. It was however, offset by a surge of contracts for domestic shipments of the soldier's knives, bayonets, and officer's daggers. During the war years, the number of employees climbed from 117 to 199, and two sons, Carl and Eduard joined the firm to become third generation managers.

Finally, in 1943, the company began construction of a new factory. This was to replace the many workshops scattered through nine different buildings. The Swiss War Administration allowed for a minimum

amount of material to be used, and make-shift materials had to be used in part. It was noted that the manager of an English cutlery firm visited the new factory and was laughed at when upon his return to Sheffield, he tried to explain about the knife factory he visited in Ibach, with its bright shop floors, and white walls and ceilings.

In 1946, a new hardening and surface grinding shop had to be added. In 1950, father Carl Elsener died, and the company operation was taken over by his wife Elise, and their sons Carl and Eduard. Through their efforts, the company continued to prosper and grow, and in 1969, construction of a new five story building was begun. Upon its completion, it and the buildings built in 1943 and 1946, form the complex that is today's VICTORINOX.

Today Victorinox is the largest cutlery manufacturer in Europe, and the largest employer in the canton of Schwyz. Their 950 employees on a daily basis produce 34,000 Swiss Army knives, as well as 43,000 of 300 other styles of pocket tools, and 43,000 kitchen knives. 90% of this



production is exported to 100 different countries. (Not too bad for a company that into the 1960's didn't even have a marketing department. Sales were by word of mouth, and editorial features in newspapers, magazines, etc.)

The factory, no longer a series of improvised workshops and offices, is a modern complex. The plant and 100 adjacent flats use a heat recovery system from the industrial processes within.

Though stocks of steel are brought in from France and Germany, all other processes required to finish the knives take place in the factory in Ibach-Schwyz. In a relatively labor intensive system, some grinding and polishing of the blades is still done by skilled cutlers, by hand. Due to the high volume production requirements of the best selling knives, machine assembly techniques are used. Special blade lock models, however, are still produced by hand labor.

As a part of their commitment to quality 10% of the workforce is employed in checking each knife before it leaves the factory.

One of Karl Elsener's plans, which brought about the knife business, included a desire to bring much needed employment to his home region. Today, it is a proud boast of the company, that through depression,

recession and wars, they have been able to maintain a full workforce without having to lay off workers during troubled times.

The number of different knife models produced is growing each year. An already extraordinary one hundred or more annually, new tools and uses continue to add new and improved models. Most recently being added, are specifically designed tool kits for automobile drivers, motorcyclists, bicyclists, inline skaters, golfers and electronics and computer addicts.

During the 19th century, cutlery craftsmen and entrepreneurs from all over the world, competed with each other within the industry. Specially designed folding pocket knives for special and ordinary uses always rated their major output efforts. Many individuals and companies still today, expend large amounts of time and money, making specially designed pocket knives. It is surprising, today these knives from Switzerland have become to the whole world, a symbol in the industry, of fine design and craftsmanship. A symbol which sets the standard by which all of the competition is measured. Surely, a line of products for which Swiss craftsmen have justly become distinct and famous.

Being continued.....

COLLECTORS' BITS & PIECES

Evolution Of The Victorinox Swiss Army Knife

- 1884 January 1st, Karl Elsener starts his own business
- 1891 First contract to supply Swiss army with soldier's knife (wooden scales, large blade, screwdriver, can opener, reamer)
- 1897 June 12th, official registration of the "Officer's Knife" (fibre scales, large blade, screwdriver, can opener, reamer, small blade, and corkscrew); other new models added with wood-saw, scissors, tweezers, toothpick, and lanyard shackle
- 1908 Soldier's knife - scales changed to fibre, added embossed Swiss emblem
- 1909 Officer's knife - all others (except soldier) scales changed to fibre, metal cross inlaid
- 1923 First stainless steel knives
- 1937 Cellidor (Celluloid) scales replace fibre scales
- 1942 New screwdriver with cap lifter (bottle opener), nail file, and nail cleaner
- 1946 New patented can opener
- 1951 Soldier's knife weight reduced from 4.4 oz to 3.2 oz, improved patented can opener with small screwdriver, new screwdriver with cap lifter, wire stripper and wire bender, alox (aluminum alloy) linings replace nickel silver linings
- 1952 Phillips screwdriver, large nailfile with nail cleaner, metal saw and metal file, fish scaler and hook disgorger
- 1961 Soldier's knife has fibre scales replaced with red alox and embossed Swiss emblem, weight reduced to 2.5 oz., officer's knife has invisible scale rivets, shackle added, all models, new reamer with cutting edge
- 1965 Soldier's knife has silver alox scales with embossed Swiss emblem
- 1968 Officer's knife, keyring replaces lanyard shackle
- 1973 Magnifying glass
- 1980 Soldier's knife, embossed Swiss emblem is replaced with red shield and white cross
- 1983 Patented mini-screwdriver fitting into corkscrew
- 1985 Ballpoint pen, fine screwdriver, chisel
- 1986 Pliers with wire cutters
- 1987 Camouflage scales
- 1990 Swiss watch in scales

- 1991 Multi-purpose hook and pin
- 1992 Golfer's divot fixer blade
- 1994 Matte finish nylon scales on some models
- 1995 Wire crimping tool in pliers
- 1999 Wrench and case with 10 bits
- 2000 Translucent colored scales, precision thermometer, altimeter, whistle

To be continued-----

FROM THE PREZ

Here we are folks, issue no. 3, onward and upward! Growing slowly but surely, we now are in 18 states, and 3 foreign countries. We're at a point where member intercommunication could be really fun, especially for the collectors in the group. "Pen Pal" relationships could create some very interesting buy-sell-trade deals, and this prompts a remark from me regarding collecting.

I will quote from "The Daggers and Edged Weapons of Hitler's Germany" by Lt. Col. James P. Atwood. "The ultimate goal of most collectors is to accumulate as many varieties, in the best condition, of the items within their field of interest.

If it were not for the limitations faced by collectors, namely the size of their pocket-books, and the availability or rarity of the objects they seek to accumulate, most collectors would ultimately achieve and possess a complete collection. Few collectors ever manage to attain such a status.

Therefore, collectors retain an element of hope and suspense and dream of the day they will uncover a long sought after piece that will fill a gap in their collection."

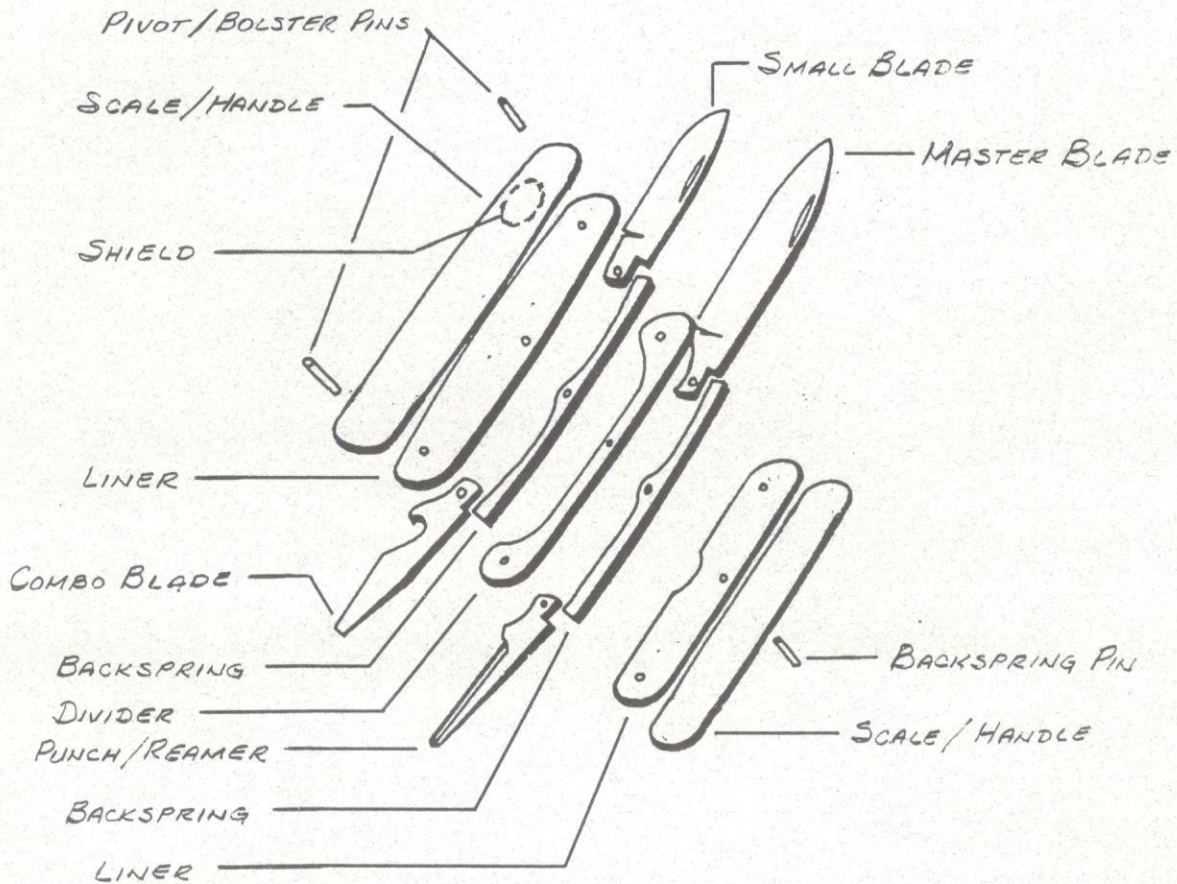
I hope this answers the question for a few of the members that asked. It does not answer the question of whether or not it can be profitable, or if it would even return its' invested dollars. There are too many variables, so I will pass and say it's whatever trips your trigger!

We're still thinking of a website, but time and interruptions are the norm here. we will keep trying, and hope to have something soon. Will keep you informed, so keep watching and always -----

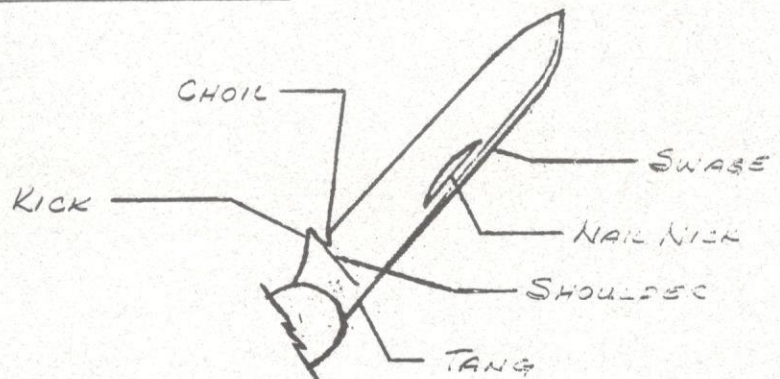
Cut Clean,

DAN

EXPLODED VIEW OF POCKETKNIFE PARTS



BLADE PARTS



SPECIAL NOTE:

Stay away from WD-40 and 3in1 oil or any oil that contains solvents when cleaning your knives! The solvents will mark the finish and may attack the color of plastic scales. Best to use only a good grade of machine oil.

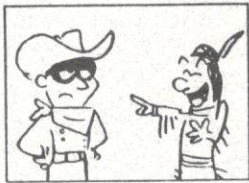
WORDS OF WISDOM

The first hundred years are the hardest!

Patience carries a lot of WAIT.

Luck happens when preparation meets opportunity.

Tonto's name for the Lone Ranger - KEMO SABE - means "white shirt" in Apache, and "soggy shrub" in Navaho.



CLASSIFIED

Estate sale - Victorinox stock from a store that never opened. All knives bought approx. 1980, new in boxes or plastic sheaths. 42 models available. Call or e-mail for price sheet or send \$5 for picture catalog to: G. Kettles, P>O> Box 1301, Bancroft, Ontario, Canada KOL 1CO (613) 332-5864, egailk@northcom.net

Buying, selling, trading all brands of kitchen hunting and pocket knives - Doug Dillman, Freeport Knife Co., 148 Main St., Freeport, ME 04032

WANTED - 50 additional - new - members! Pass enclosed Sign Up Sheet on to an interested friend.

YOUR AD COULD BE NEXT!!!!!!!

P.S. Coming next issue - Victorinox year 2000 new product info - and info on club hats, t-shirts, and a possible club millenium knife! Watch for it!!!!!!!

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