

Attacked by a Shark but Saved by a Queen

Queen Cutlery has been known over the years for its innovation in knife design and use of materials. They are documented as one of the first cutleries to use stainless steel for blades and springs starting in the early 1920s. Of course they also offered carbon steel in their knives during these early years also. After WWII Queen Cutlery made a major commitment to stainless in their knives. E. C. Erickson was elected president of Queen City Cutlery in 1940. He was a creative manager and cutlery designer and it was he that led to company through war years. In 1946, Queen City Cutlery, incorporated in 1922 in Delaware, was dissolved as a Corporation and re-incorporated in Pennsylvania as Queen Cutlery Company.

This is a short story of the use of one of Erickson's inventions, the Big Chief, Queen Cutlery Pattern #45. Below are the patent documents, a news paper article about three men attacked in a raft by a shark in the Atlantic and the use of a Big Chief to fight off the shark. The Big Chief was patented in 1955 and the knife was produced for many years ending production in 2008. The patented design was also used of several Queen Barlow patterns also show below.



Queen Pattern #45, Easy Open Big Chief

The Big Chief was sold by the thousands all across America and found it home in many tackle boxes. It was especially popular in the southeast and particularly near salt water environments. Having only four parts, cast aluminum housing, a stainless blade and spring and one pin, it was a simple knife; and in the easy open pattern could be opened readily with a gloved hand.

The following information was provided by Robert Siple of Meadville, PA. Bob was sales manager at Queen for many years and it was during his time there that the shark incident occurred.

Shipwrecked sailor tells of deadly battle with giant killer shark after it saved his life

A YACHTSMAN has told how he mustered his last ounce of strength to courageously fight off a 14ft. killer shark that attacked him and two companions after they had been adrift in a tiny raft without food or water for five days.

Ironically, the vicious attack saved their lives by waking them from a semi-coma in time to wave down a passing tanker, said 35-year-old Jerry Willis, whose 40ft. sailboat had sunk 10 miles off the Florida coast.

Exhausted from lack of food and their desperate battle against a violent sea, Willis and his shipmates Doug Dixon, 21, and Chris Napolitano, 19, were jolted out of their stupor when the shark crashed into the bottom of their life raft.

The impact was so great Napolitano was tossed into the air, and Willis immediately grabbed a 4in. knife after seeing the shark swimming beside the raft.

"He was determined to overturn the raft and put us all into the water," Willis said.

The next time the shark approached, Willis says he thought the creature was going to leap into the raft. So he hauled himself onto his knees, steadied himself by clutching an oar and prepared for a do-or-die attempt to stab the shark.

"My knife was not long enough to penetrate behind its gills, so I

aimed for the dorsal fin — one of the few places I could do him any damage," he said.

"As he came in to attack he rolled over and I looked into his eye. We were eyeball to eyeball about eight to 10 inches apart. I will never forget that sight.

"With all the strength I could muster I lunged at him and stabbed him right forward of the dorsal fin, next to the spine. I made good penetration and must have hurt him. He swam away trailing blood through the water."

It was then that Willis and his companions spotted a tanker passing half-a-mile away. While he slumped into the raft exhausted, the other two men attracted the attention of the ship by waving their yellow life jackets.

"It went past us and then turned to pick us up," said Willis. "That was the most wonderful sight in the world. It's beyond description. We would never have made it through another day. Fighting that shark had finished me."

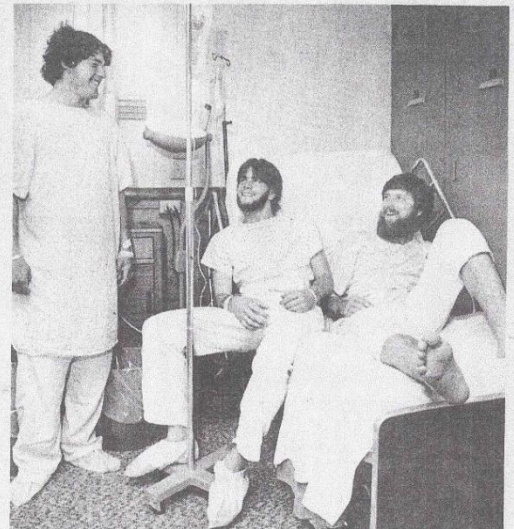
The men were transferred from the tanker to a Coast Guard cutter and taken to a hospital in Jacksonville, Fla., where Willis recalled their ordeal.

It began when they tried to sail a yacht Willis had bought in Annapolis, Md., to his home in Navarre, Fla.

The men had almost reached their destination when the boat



Jerry Willis holds the knife he used to kill shark.



The three shipwrecked sailors are reunited in the hospital. They are (left to right): Doug Dixon, Chris Napolitano and hero Jerry Willis.

suddenly began taking in water. Within a matter of minutes they were overboard, in a life raft, without any provisions.

Huddled in the six-foot rubber dinghy, they had to use a tennis shoe to bail out water being dumped on them by 15 ft. seas. And they used a small poncho spread overhead to protect themselves from the fierce sun.

The men spotted many passing

vessels, but were unable to attract their attention. By the fifth day, their raft had drifted 90 miles off the Florida coast.

Willis says it was a picture of his wife and three young children that gave him the strength to endure the ordeal.

"I knew I had to fight to stay alive for their sake. I kept thinking about the children running up to me, throwing their arms around

me and shouting Daddy, Daddy."

Willis was the most experienced sailor of the three men. Napolitano, from Eowie, Md., and Dixon, from Waverly, Ohio, had only sailed on quiet bays before their ill-fated trip.

Willis calls their survival a miracle. "We prayed to God all the time," he said. Somehow he heard us. It's the only explanation we've got for coming back."

News article about the shark attack from "The Star" February 19, 1980

Courtesy of Robert Siple

Queen Knife Saved Lives Of Sailors

Doug Dixon, Chris Napolitano and Jerry Willis, are alive today and they have a tiny bit of Titusville to thank for their survival.

Several months ago, the trio was near death from exposure on a life raft in the Atlantic Ocean after their 40-foot sailboat sunk ten miles off the Florida coast.

Moments before they were rescued, the trio's life raft was attacked by a 14-foot shark. The men were in a semi-coma state and the shark's pounding on the raft woke them.

It was then that Willis mustered the last of his strength, came to his knees and watched as the shark came at the life raft once again.

The only weapon against the shark was a knife which Willis still held in his hand.

When the shark attacked again, Willis was able to plunge the blade, less than four inches long, deep enough into the shark's back to draw heavy blood and make the shark leave.

The story was recounted in numerous paper's throughout the country, but the tie into Titusville was never noticed until Robert Siple, sales manager from Queen Cutlery, came upon a copy of The Star, a tabloid newspaper, which carried a story about Willis and his companions.

The story included a picture of Willis in his hospital bed holding the knife which saved his life.

The knife is a special patented model produced only by Queen Cutlery. The Queen name can be seen on the knife blade.

Siple contacted Willis at his home at Mary Esther, Fla., and confirmed it was a Queen knife.

One of the selling points of Queen knives, repeated over the years, is their ability to withstand salt water without damage and still open after exposure to salt water.

Willis' feat backs up that claim admirably.

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2,728,139

POCKET KNIFE CONSTRUCTION

Eric C. Erickson, Titusville, Pa.

Application August 21, 1953, Serial No. 375,642

1 Claim. (Cl. 30—155)

This invention relates to new and useful improvements and structural refinements in pocket knives, and the principal object of the invention is to provide a pocket knife of the character herein described, which is extremely simple in construction and which may be quickly, easily, and economically manufactured from the standpoint of a small number of parts and expeditious assembly.

These together with other objects and advantages which will become subsequently apparent reside in the details of construction and operation as more fully hereinafter described and claimed, reference being had to the accompanying drawings forming a part hereof, wherein like numerals refer to like parts throughout, and in which:

Figure 1 is a side elevational view of the invention; Figure 2 is a top edge view thereof;

Figure 3 is a fragmentary, longitudinal, sectional view on an enlarged scale, taken substantially in the plane of the line 3—3 in Figure 2;

Figure 4 is a group perspective view illustrating the components of the invention; and

Figure 5 is a sectional view, similar to that shown in Figure 3 and illustrating the manner in which the spring member used in the invention is installed in the knife casing.

Referring now to the accompanying drawings in detail, the pocket knife is designated generally by the reference character 10 and embodies in its construction an elongated hollow casing 12 having an open lower edge 14, an open front end 16, a closed rear end 18, and a closed upper edge 20, the latter being provided with a recess 22 extending forwardly from the closed rear end 18 as is clearly shown in Figure 3.

A transverse pin 24 is mounted in the open end portion 16 of the casing 12 and a projectable and retractable knife blade 26 is swingably mounted on the pin 24 in the conventional manner. Moreover, an elongated spring member 28 is disposed in the casing 12 in abutment with the closed upper edge 20 of the casing, one end portion 30 of this spring member operatively engaging the knife blade 26 in the conventional manner, so as to sustain the knife blade selectively in an open or a closed position.

The other end of the spring member 28 is provided

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with an anchoring element 32 which is disposed in the recess 22 of the casing 12 and abuts a right angled transverse shoulder 34 formed integrally with and extending forwardly from the closed rear end 18 of the casing. As is clearly shown in Figure 3, the shoulder 34 is disposed under the recess 22 is spaced downwardly therefrom and is narrower than the length of the recess 22.

To facilitate convenient and expeditious assembly of the knife, the recess 22 of the casing 12 is of such size forwardly of the shoulder 34 as to permit the entire length of the spring member 28 to be slid through the recess forwardly of the shoulder 34 in the direction of the arrow 36 in Figure 5. Conversely, if the knife is to be disassembled, the spring member may be withdrawn in the same manner.

Finally, it will also be observed that the anchoring element 32 of the spring member 28 is formed with a right angled notch 38 engaging and straddling the shoulder 34 of the casing.

From the foregoing, the construction and operation of the device will be readily understood and further explanation is believed to be unnecessary. However, since numerous modifications and changes will readily occur to those skilled in the art, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact construction shown and described, and accordingly all suitable modifications and equivalents may be resorted to, falling within the scope of the appended claim.

What is claimed as new is as follows:

A pocket knife construction comprising a hollow casing having an open lower edge, a closed rear end, an open front end and a closed upper edge provided with a recess extending forwardly from said closed end, a right angled shoulder extending forwardly from said closed end and underlying said recess transversely in downwardly spaced relation therefrom, a transverse pin provided in the open end portion of said casing, a projectable and retractable knife blade swingably mounted on said pin, an elongated spring member positioned in said casing in abutment with the closed upper edge thereof, one end portion of said spring member operatively engaging said blade, the other end of said spring member being disposed in said recess and having a right angled notch engaging and straddling said shoulder, said other end of said spring member fitting between said closed rear end and one end of the recess, said recess extending forwardly of said shoulder so that said spring member may be slid through said recess into said casing.

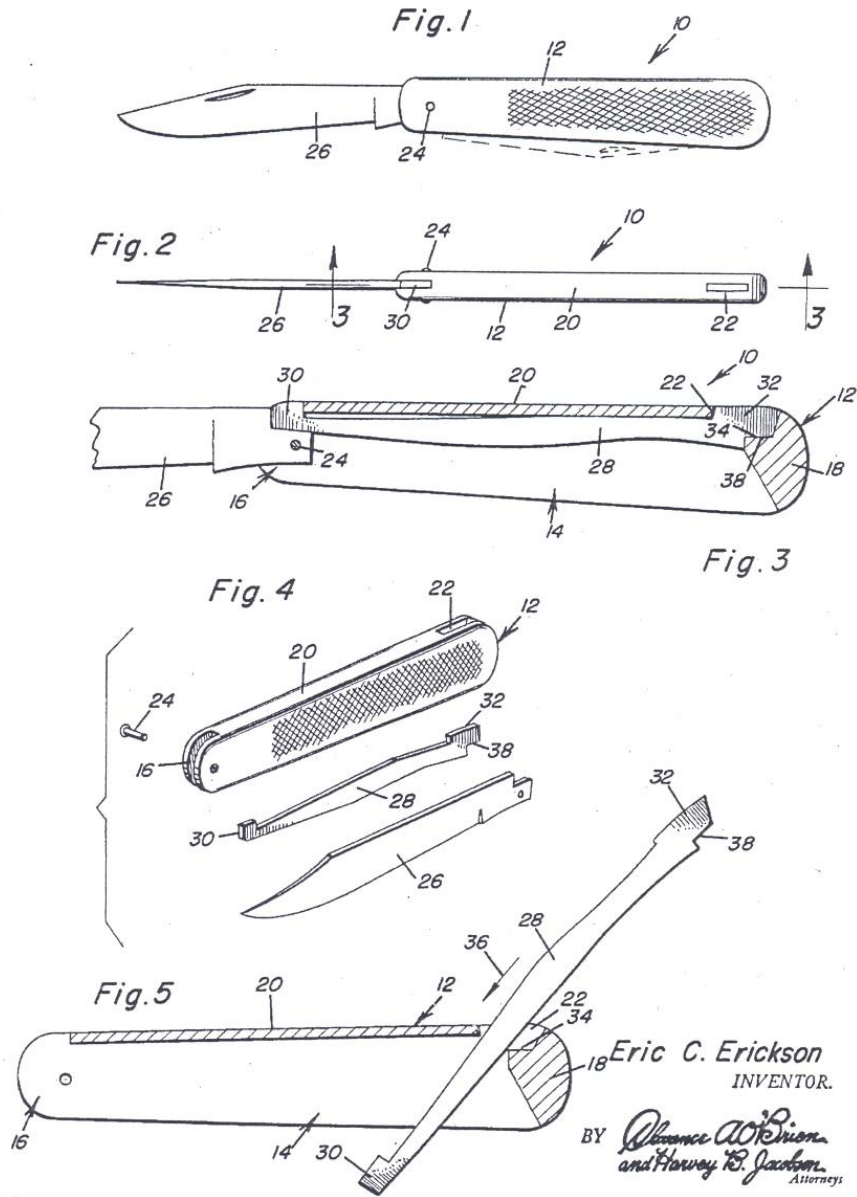
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Dec. 27, 1955

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2,728,139



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Erickson's Patent - 1955



The Big Chief shown above was given to Robert Siple by a salt water salvage diver from Florida. It was modified by drilling a large hole to accommodate a heavy bale and clasp; an example of the heavy work this pattern could do. Courtesy of Robert Siple



Other examples of Erickson's Patent No. 2728139 used in the Barlow and the smaller #45M pattern.

By David Clark
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