

The Victorinox® Blade

October 2000

Issue No. 5

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

The Victorinox Story Continues:

Everyone who reads the papers is well aware of the Swiss peoples' fiercely protected neutrality.

Recently however, part of that independence has come into the hands of an American company.

Victorinox® does business through distributors in about 100 different countries. One of these, now known as Swiss Army™ Brands, Inc., is here in America. Recently known as the Forschner Group, Inc., they are the exclusive marketer of Victorinox® products in America.

In 1987, they sold more than 4 million of the handy pocket tools alone. "It's a good business," were the words of then president James W. Kennedy. Of this number, the Classic model accounted for about 500,000 sale units. At the time, there were more than 60 different models available. In 1987 the United States accounted for about 35 percent of the factory knife

output. In spite of more than doubling in price over the next two years, due to a decline in the value of the dollar, sales continued to climb.

The R.H. Forschner Co. had started in 1855 as a manufacturer of butcher scales in New Britain, Connecticut. During the 1880's, they moved to New York City, where they remained until 1976. They then moved to Shelton, Connecticut, where they employed 80 people at a headquarters and a warehouse, where they also did some assembly and repairs.

Kennedy, who started with the company in sales in 1975, was named president and chief operating officer in June 1987. He was given the title of chief executive officer in March of 1988, when the then chairman left Forschner.

After World War I the company had started importing knives from Germany. Because they were



selling scales to the the meat-pack-
ing industry, they therefore could
assume that the same people would
be buying knives.

With the start of World War II,
the German source was lost, and
nothing was available from them.
When the war ended, because
Germany had been devastated, the
founder's grandson went over to
Switzerland to visit Victorinox®.
He had heard that they made a
very good quality butcher knife,
and a deal was made to start im-
porting them.

The same Swiss factory also
made the Swiss Army™ knife, and
of its commercial production,
supplied nearly 90 percent to the
United States.

Back in 1957, the founding
family had sold R.H. Forschner to
a businessman who then expanded
the butcher knife segment and
phased out the scale business. In
1974, the business had been sold
again, this time to Marline Re-
sources Co. Inc. The business had
been purchased for the butcher
knife segment, and sitting in a

corner was a little Swiss Army™
knife. A research study conducted
by the company concluded that
there might be a great opportunity
here, and a plan was formed.

However, it took until after 1974,
with the sales of 180,000 knives
in the United States, for the com-
pany to begin to actively reach out
to the consumers. This resulted
in the introduction of sealed dis-
play cases, now used by over
20,000 knife retailers to show off
the knives. They can't be opened,
meaning that the retailers have to
purchase the knives, but it also in-
sures that the customers can see
the product firsthand.

In 1988, a study was conducted
that showed that the typical cus-
tomer was a man, between the ages
of 21 and 35, living in the North-
east or Northwest, with the weak-
est sales being in the Southeast. (I
would be interested to see what the
same study would show today.)

Americans got their first major
exposure to the knives during
World War II, from GIs stationed
in Europe. They gave them the

name "Swiss Army™knives" because everyone in the Swiss Army carried one. They were required to do so as an item of equipment issue, and became to them, a memento that gave them a sense of pride, and at the same time, thanks when their service was over.

So why then was this agreement made? Signed about three years ago, the deal is meant to protect the trademark and quality standard of Swiss-made goods and clamp down on unauthorized products with military sounding names, to control the in-flux of cheap imitations. Officials say that the rights were licensed to an American company because of commercial reality. Millions of dollars have been spent building up world markets and it was felt that a U.S. company would have the most clout in fighting piracy and cut-price look-alikes. It appears to be the best possible solution to a problem that had been growing for 40 years.

Meanwhile, many of the Swiss people are finding the agreement

hard to believe. Some Swiss industrialists feel that the deal should have been offered to them and not an American company. Using words such as "crazy, totally perverse, a joke, and shocking" they feel that it is a big mistake. Few people in Switzerland seem to be aware that a company on the other side of the Atlantic is entitled to virtually exclusive use of the Swiss Army™name. When told, most are incredulous.

The contract reportedly will earn \$6,000 to \$12,000 per month on royalties, depending on sales. In 1998, Swiss Army™Brands had profits of \$1.5 million on revenues of \$128 million.

Meanwhile, the knife that is the subject of the controversy, a knife that is a virtual household name, is not selling to the Swiss army.

The Defense Ministry, which issues a knife to every single recruit, has not ordered a single one for two years because of high stocks and because of cutbacks in the number of men under arms.

COLLECTOR'S BITS & PIECES

15.) The tweezers on some models had metal ends

16.) Pocket knives are made most commonly in 58, 74, 84, 91, 108, & 111 mm lengths (closed), but there are some odd sizes

17.) Officer models come in two sizes - 84 and 91 mm

18.) Motorist, Grand Prix, and Automobile models have either old car or St. Christopher inlay in handle

19.) A tent and the word CAMPING may be inlaid or stamped on the handle of the Camper, Picnicker, Ranger, and old model Rucksack

20.) Some knives marked "OFFICIER SUISSE" on the main blade have no Victorinox® stamp on the other side

To be continued-----

FROM THE PREZ

WOW! As I was putting this news letter together, I realized we are starting our second year. GREAT!

And things are happening. We now have an established LOGO, and it is available for t-shirts and hats. You will be receiving an order blank with information in a couple of weeks, along with details of the club knife. It is being finished as you read this, and will be really special. Charles Elsener III, the company president, gets credit for the design, which will be on a model Compact (similar in size to the Climber), and in its' own tin gift box. Only 100 will be made, so save your mad money. It will be worth it, I guarantee it.

The website is also very near completion. Some of you computer "cruisers" may have run across our mention on a few random sites. These are not the official site, just someone doing us an unsolicited favor, and will show to be only

temporary. However, we'll take all the advertising we can get, especially when it's free. I will let you know when it is official and where to find us.

Last thing for now, and then I must go and celebrate our 1st birthday. I would entertain articles written by members, for the good of the club, to be used in future newsletters. I will reserve the right to edit them for size and content, but if they are of interest to the club members, I see no problems. How about it, do you have anything you'd like to share? Let us hear from you. I'm sure we can all gain from each other if we're willing to share. Let's give it a try.

WORDS OF WISDOM

Winston Churchill once said that nothing in life is so exhilarating as to be shot at without result. (Does this go with being a politician?)

Do not do unto others as you would that they should do unto

you. Their tastes may not be the same as yours.

Criticism is one thing most of us would rather give than receive.

We could all take a lesson from the weather. It pays no attention to criticism.

CLASSIFIED

Estate sale - 1970/1980 Victorinox stock from a store that never opened. Price sheets or picture catalog. \$5 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

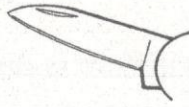
Want to buy - Victorinox literature catalogs, price sheets, etc., for archive. Dan Jacquart, P.O. Box 145, Cochrane, WI 54622

IMPLEMENTS

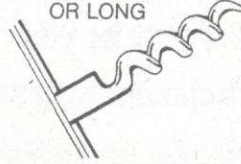
1 LARGE OR MEDIUM BLADE



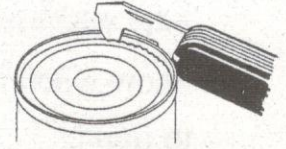
2 SMALL PEN BLADE



3 CORK SCREW—REGULAR OR LONG



4 CAN OPENER



5 MEDIUM SCREWDRIVER



6 BOTTLE CAP OPENER



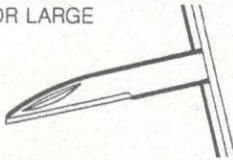
7 LARGE SCREWDRIVER



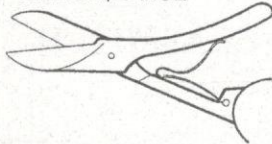
8 WIRE STRIPPER



9 REAMER—MEDIUM OR LARGE



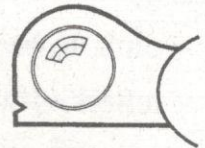
10 SCISSORS—SMALL, MEDIUM, LARGE



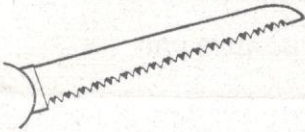
11 PHILLIPS SCREWDRIVER



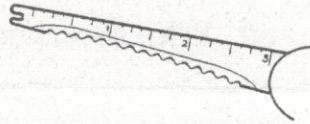
12 MAGNIFYING GLASS



13 WOOD OR ROPE SAW



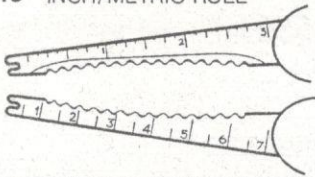
14 FISH SCALER



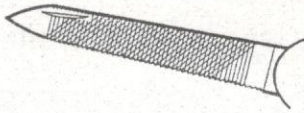
15 FISH HOOK DISGORGER WITH MAGNETIC TIP



16 INCH/METRIC RULE



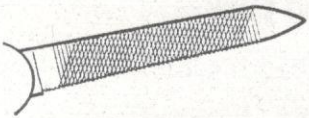
17 NAIL FILE



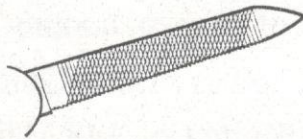
18 NAIL CLEANER



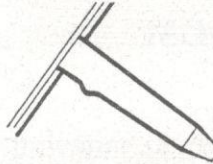
19 METAL FILE



20 METAL SAW BLADE



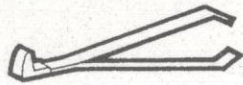
21 FINE SCREWDRIVER



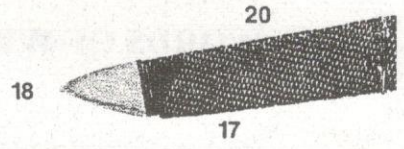
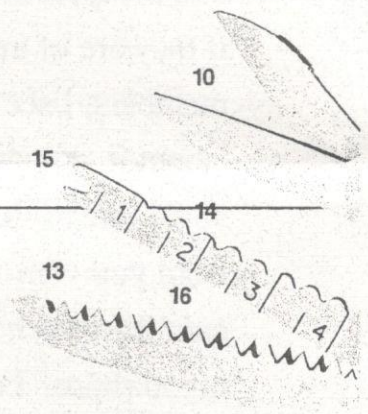
22 KEY RING

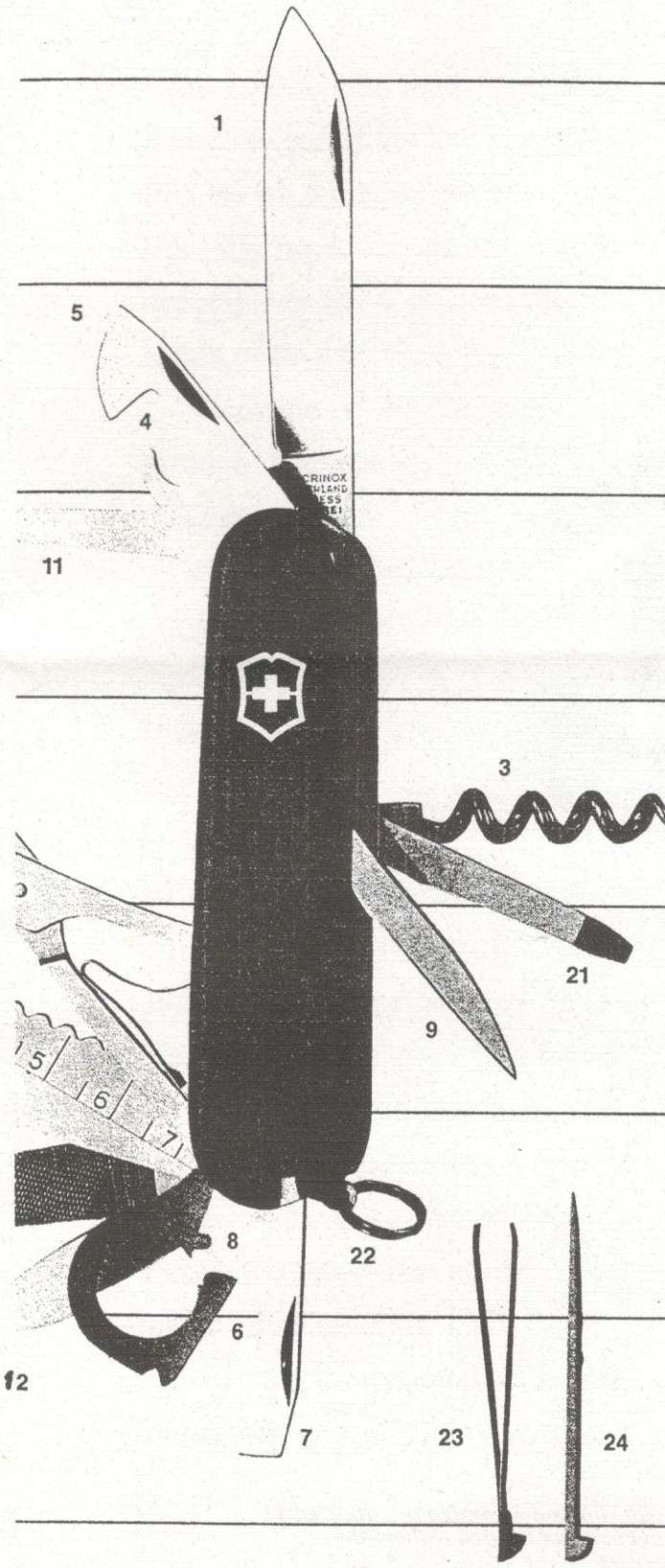


23 TWEEZERS



24 TOOTHPICK

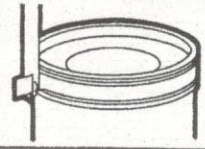




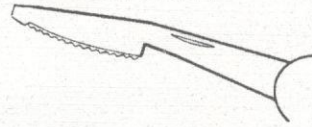
25 ANGLE BLADE



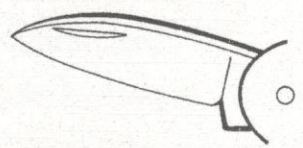
26 CAN KEY OPENER WITH PHILLIPS SCREWDRIVER



27 ORANGE PEELER WITH SCREWDRIVER TIP



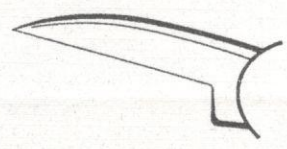
28 DOUBLE THICKNESS STURDY BLADE



29 COMBI TOOL WITH CAN OPENER, CAP LIFTER, SCREWDRIVER, WIRE STRIPPER



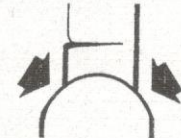
30 STURDY REAMER



31 UTILITY TOOL—CAN OPENER, CAP LIFTER, SCREWDRIVER & ALL PURPOSE SAW BLADE



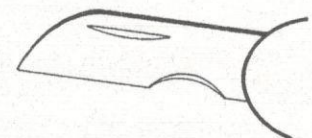
32 EXTRA HEAVY SPRING TENSION "LOCK" BLADE



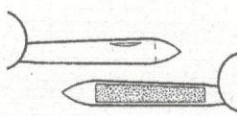
33 GAME SKINNING & GUTTING BLADE



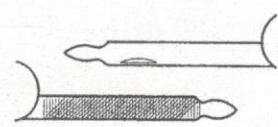
34 ELECTRICIAN BLADE



35 MANICURE BLADE



36 NAIL FILE/NAIL CLEANER





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