

Prince Albert in the Can

by dennis ellingsen

When I was a kid, back in the days where a high tech phone was a rotary dial, we would call the local apothecary store and ask if they had Prince Albert in the can. When they answered yes, we quickly yelled, "Well, let him out before he suffocates." It was a childish prank, but so much fun.

I suspect I didn't even know what Prince Albert was at the time, but it was a fun game. And for those who do not know...



Prince Albert is a crimp cut pipe & cigarette tobacco that could be purchased in bulk. The cans were brilliant red in color, and I guess the gentleman pictured on the front of the can was Prince Albert. This product was made by the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company out of Winston Salem, N.C.; and the product was first introduced in 1906. Many style tins and cans evolved through the years, and there are many nostalgic memories associated with these tins.

Recently I became interested in Prince Albert, but certainly not for the product. After all these years I have become

terribly allergic to tobacco smoke. My interest in the Prince was triggered by good ole ebay. While touring this vast empire of "got it all", I stumbled onto a knife that caused me to think about Prince Albert. It was an Ulster utility knife. The seller said that it was a knife that was offered as a special offer through Prince Albert Tobacco.

As is the case with ebay, I paid too much for the knife; and the mystery of the knife was on. The curious part of the knife was that it was an Ulster "Old Timer" knife. When I stopped to think about it, I always recalled that the name "Old Timer" was associated with Schrade. And it is still today. Even though Ulster and Schrade are under the same ownership, there are still names that are synonymous with certain factories. Schrade is "Old Timer."

The next step was to find out about this special knife offer. So back to ebay I went to look for a Prince Albert Tobacco can, and there were a bunch of them. I was looking for the one which had the knife offer on it. I went on a Prince Albert tin buying spree. Collecting Prince Albert cans wasn't on my list of collecting trips so once I found my target I stopped. The important tins were the ones that advertised the

knife offer on the outside with the real treasure, the coupon wrapper paper, still in the can. This was the key to get these knives. All it took was five wrappers and \$2.00, and you could get your choice of one of three "Old Timer" knives by Ulster. I should have been so lucky at this point in time. I guess my luck was at least finding

them on ebay.

There were three knives offered on this special offer. It started with a two blade barlow pattern (10 OT), a three blade whittler pattern (58 OT) and a four blade utility knife (50 OT). This was a 2,3,4 blade offering. Well, after many months I captured a set of three Ulster Old Timer

knives to complete my mini collection. The next question was the time period that this offer was valid. My first attempt at dating was based on the clues of the material at hand. The Prince Albert tins I have that offer the knives all have a zip code on them. (Did you know that ZIP stands for Zoning Improvement Plan?) This numbering system was implemented in 1962.

The next search was to contact Debbie

Chase at Schrade and see if she had any idea about these knives. She found that the 10 OT was made between 1964 and 1967. The 50 OT and the 58 OT were made from 1961 to 1966. By a little deduction we can say that this knife offer by Prince Albert was between 1964 and 1966.

All in all it was a fun project. I think anyone can get a collection like this with a few bucks, a computer that gets going with ebay and some spare moments for the treasure hunt.

