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The Nighthawk  
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# GUNS

## CROSSFIRE

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**GUNS Magazine®** welcomes letters to the editor. We reserve the right to edit all published letters for clarity and length. Due to the volume of mail, we are unable to individually answer your letters or e-mail. In sending a letter to *GUNS Magazine*, you agree to provide Publisher's Development Corp. such copyright as is required for publishing and redistributing the contents of your letter in any format. Send your letters to *Crossfire*, GUNS Magazine, 13741 Danielson Street, Ste. A, Poway, CA 92064, [www.gunsmagazine.com](http://www.gunsmagazine.com); e-mail: [ed@gunsmagazine.com](mailto:ed@gunsmagazine.com)

#### 1894 MARLIN QUESTIONS

Liked your article about the 1894 Marlin in 38 / 357. I am working on a woods gun for deer in cover. My question is — does the microgroove rifling prefer soft lead bullets? The soft Berrys and the extra long 180-gr. XTP seem to be my most accurate. I'm thinking if the bullets were 0.358" instead of 0.357" I might have better luck. What do you think? Also does the lack of a .38 special stamp on the barrel mean I can't shoot .38s out of it?

*Dave Schmidt via email*

*Conventional wisdom is the Ballard style rifling does better with cast bullets, while microgroove rifling is better with jacketed bullets. I can see this if you're talking .30-30 or .32 Special velocities over 2,000 fps as theoretically at least, cast bullets would seem more likely to skid and lead with the shallower grooves of microgroove barrels.*

*Theory is all very well yet I've read many reports from shooters getting good accuracy with hard cast lead bullets in 1894 .357s with microgroove rifling. I shoot a lot of .38 Special rounds loaded with 158-gr. lead bullets at about 1,100–1,200 fps which work fine with minimal leading problems and light recoil — just a fun round to shoot. If I wanted to get over 1,500 fps with lead bullets I'd*

*use a hard cast bullet, most likely with gas checks. —Dave Anderson*

Dave Anderson's article "Marlin's 1894C .357 Magnum" in the August 2019 magazine was interesting in the fact he is "less pleased" with the manual cross-bolt safety added to the Marlin lever actions in 1969. I have Marlin's .41 magnum and .308 Marlin Express rifles and was also less than pleased with the cross-bolt safety until I discovered "TURNBULL" makes a replacement for this cross bolt! Even I was able to install the rod in a matter of minutes. I highly recommend when installing Turnbull's replacement you do so over a bedsheet or large towel as there is a small ball bearing involved, and believe me it can roll to unknown places!

*David Connor via email*

A quick question for Dave Anderson. I enjoyed his article about the Marlin 1894. I recently bought one. Where do I find the date code telling when the rifle was manufactured? I have a Marlin 1894CS .357 Mag. as the one he bought. I enjoy your magazine.

*Dale Broom via email*

*Many Marlin firearms (but certainly not all) manufactured 1941–2011 follow a system wherein the first two letters or*

*continued on page 34*



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## END OF AN ERA

On Sunday, June 28, 2019, an era truly ended with the passing of Janelle Cooper. Mrs. Cooper, the beloved wife of the late Col. Jeff Cooper, was 99 years old when she peacefully passed away in her sleep surrounded by family. Remarkably, she lived alone in “The Sconce” (the famous Cooper family home on Gunsite Ranch), until only a few days before her passing. One of the final things she told Gunsite Chief Operating Officer Ken Campbell was her regret, “I don’t think I can be the proprietor of The Sconce any longer.” A gracious and charming woman who lived a life full of adventure alongside Col. Cooper, she was beloved by Gunsite



alumni and frequently invited students into her home for brownies and lemonade. She was laid to rest in the mausoleum next to her husband after a private service at Gunsite. *GUNS* and FMG extend our condolences to the Cooper family.



## NRA TIDE TURNING?

We’ve avoided staking out a position in the whole NRA fiasco because it’s a no-win proposition — unless we’re simply going for click-bait headlines, which isn’t our style. Even this brief entry will doubtless inspire an overwhelming stream of pro and con reader communications, most of which will be quite pointed. However, it’s also difficult to ignore the tide of resentment building against the LaPierre regime. The latest (at this writing) high profile NRA Director to turn against the *status quo* is Buz Mills, owner of Gunsite Academy. A week ago, Buz published a letter to the board blaming a lack of management oversight on the board itself and requesting an independent audit of NRA finances. It remains to be seen if such efforts gain traction but there definitely seems to be a groundswell building. I will share one personal thought: When a leader becomes so toxic (deservedly or not) as to jeopardize the mission of the organization, it might be time for the leader to step away for the greater good. (Photo: Gage Skidmore)

## FIREARMS FINANCES

We’ve been reporting on the downturn in the gun business, the one anti-gunners make so much spurious hay about. As we’ve pointed out to anyone who will listen, it’s really a “right-sizing” of the shooting industry after hyper-inflated demand during the Obama administration. However, it’s a real thing. For example, Ruger just came out with the second quarter earnings and they were down about \$40 million dollars on \$259 million dollars in sales. Fortunately, Ruger remains America’s largest firearms manufacturer and is still in fine financial shape, as noted by CEO Christopher J. Killoy in the earnings statement. He said, “We have



\$132 million in cash and short-term investments, and no debt, which puts us in a unique position in our industry. We remain financially strong, fiscally disciplined and focused on delivering long-term value to our shareholders.”



## ANOTHER PASSING

If the name Steve Fjestad rings a bell, it’s because we just mentioned him in last month’s *Insider*. Steve is the author and publisher of the famous *Blue Book of Gun Values*, one of the best references — and biggest time waster when you’re trying to get chores accomplished — in the shooting world. Unfortunately, right after

our mention last month, Steve passed away after a short battle with cancer. However, *Blue Book Publications, Inc.* is continuing Steve’s lifework of publishing the *Blue Book* and several other great firearms reference titles. You can learn more about Steve and his books at [www.bluebookofgunvalues.com](http://www.bluebookofgunvalues.com).



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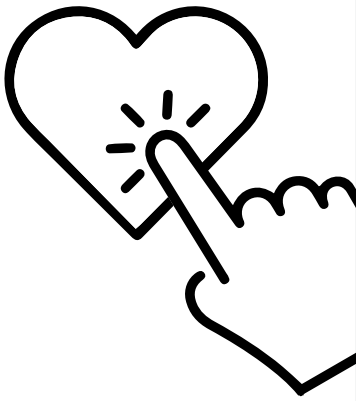
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## “I’D RATHER HAVE A SISTER WORKING IN A BORDELLO”

I’ve spent considerable time around the television/video side of the gun and hunting industry. I have several friends who work exclusively in video and many of them are decent, ethical — and fun — people. However, there is a dark underbelly to the whole “hunting show” industry, especially when you get into the second- and third-tier “personalities.” With intense pressure to produce a world-record trophy deer, elk, caribou, lemur or ground squirrel in every single episode, ethical corners sometimes get cut. The latest was Christopher Brackett, former host of the Outdoor Channel hunting show *Fear No Evil* who plead guilty in Federal court in July to violations of the Lacey Act. According to the plea, Brackett admitted killing two bucks in Indiana during an episode (Indiana is a one-buck state) then transporting the second deer to Illinois. He also told his staff to hide video footage and destroy the antlers. Bracket joins TV hosts Theresa Vail, Andrae



D’Acquisto, Bob Beck, Bill Busbice, William Saif III and even “Uncle Ted” (Ted Nugent) in having been prosecuted for violations occurring while or related to filming. The list is actually much longer but I got too depressed to continue researching.



## AND A FINAL PASSING

We’re not trying to be a downer but we must again report yet another person close to *GUNS* has disappeared into the mists of eternity. Fortunately, this last passing is much happier in most ways — esteemed FMG Editorial Director Michael Humphries has left our Thundering Herd. Mike was literally made an offer he couldn’t refuse and moved into a marketing/PR role with a major

manufacturer. Here at FMG Publications we’re thrilled for Mike, except when considering how much work it will take to fill his shoes. Good luck Mike, and once you arrive in your beautiful new office, please don’t worry about your old friends, sitting here slaving away at midnight over a hot word processor! Nope, we’re fine, don’t worry about us ... (Photo: Mike “Dirty Harry” Humphries)



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## EDC: STRIKING A BALANCE WHATEVER WORKS, WORKS

One man's mouse gun is another man's cannon. It's a debate that will never die.

I've said it before, but it bears repeating: There's a cliché on the gun-related internet and "around the cracker barrel at the gun shop" which, in effect, says, "Anyone who carries more hardware than me is a paranoid 'mall ninja,' and all who pack less than I do are helplessly doomed 'sheeple.'"

It's a theme worthy of critical examination.

I started carrying a gun when working part-time in my father's jewelry store at the age of 12. The year was 1960. (Do the math yourself; it's too depressing for me to count all those years.)

In all the decades since, if I've learned anything, it's this: Insofar as hardware choices, it's less likely to come down to

what *type* or caliber gun you have, nor how many rounds it holds or how many more you have on your belt. It will probably come down to "Did you *have* a damn gun?"

### HEART OF THE MATTER

From the 1970s on, studies have shown the vast majority of successful Defensive Gun Usages (DGUs) have not involved shooting The Bad Guy. Instead, they have centered around The Bad Guy realizing he was about to be shot by The Good Guy (or Gal), and as the great police self-defense instructor Arthur Lamb of Boston PD used to put it, "re-evaluating their negative attitude."

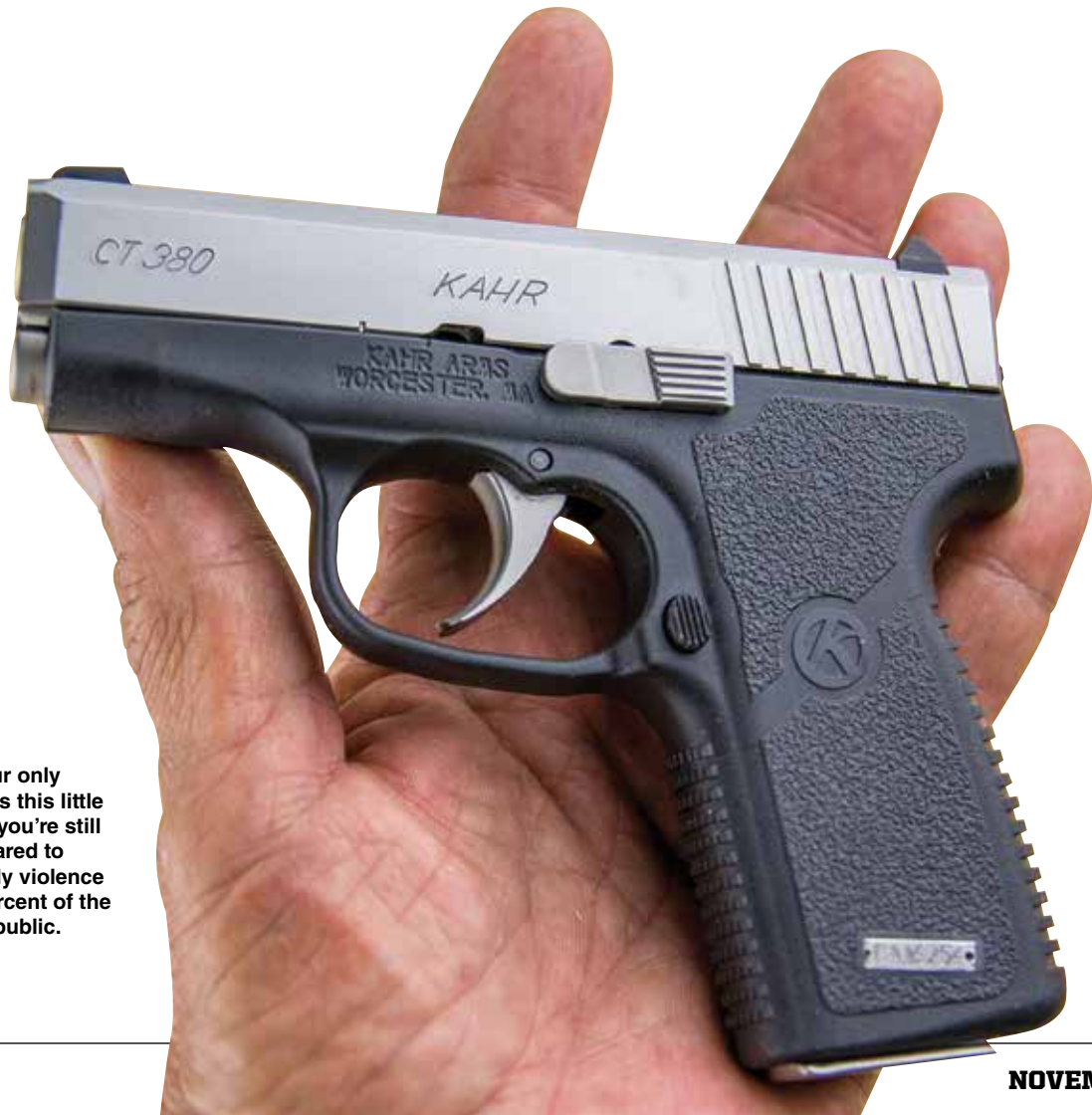
Did you have a gun? Did you get your gun deployed before The Bad Guy could harm you? Did you project enough resolve to make him realize if he continued his



The Springfield XD(m) holds a full 20-round box of 9mm, which is highly reassuring. IWB holster by Leather Arsenal.

attack, he would very likely die where he stood? If he still continued the assault, were you able to put bullets where they would render him incapable of succeeding? Only after those criteria have been met will it matter a rodent's anus what size, shape and speed of the bullets you launched, and how many of those bullets you had on tap to start with. In the minority of cases — where the good people have to shoot

*continued on page 16*



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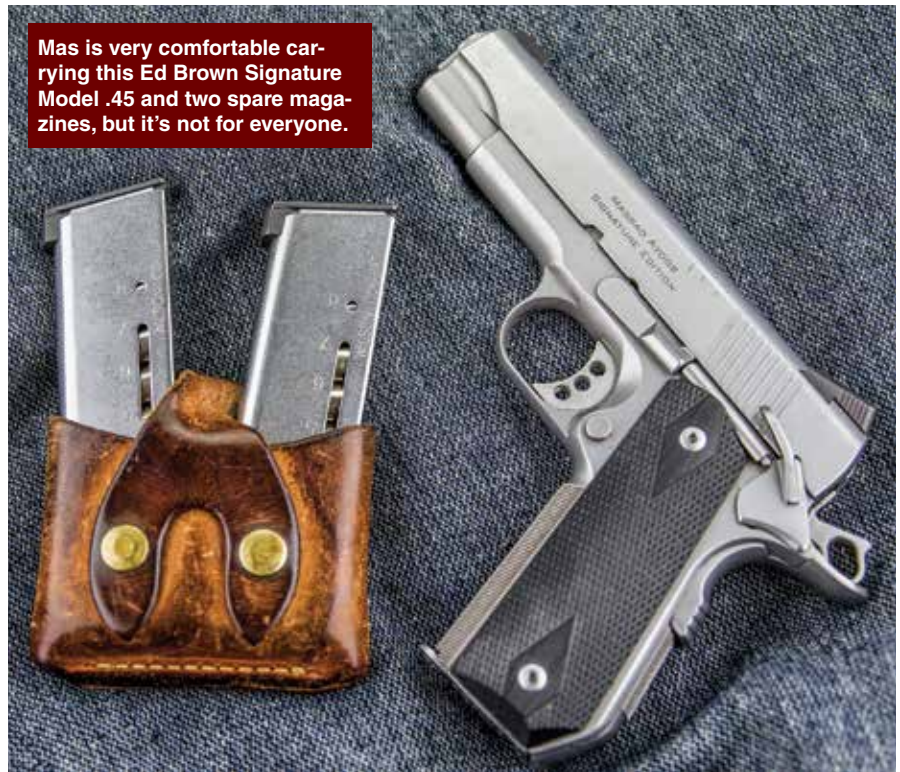
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## HANDGUNS

*continued from page 14*

— a huge number of surveillance films of gunfights show the bad guys breaking and running as soon as they come under fire.

And when it's so bad the aggressor continues to aggress, the universal agreement of experts is this: What stops the bad guy more than anything else is where each bullet hits him, and what parts of his body the bullets cause to stop working.

### CHOICES, COMPETENCE, CONFIDENCE

As a kid into guns, I had read the early writings of Jeff Cooper in *Guns & Ammo*. The gun I most often carried in the store was a Colt .45 auto loaded with 230-gr. hardball, which was pretty much the only defensive load you could buy for this caliber over the counter. As time went on, we learned jacketed hollow points were better and higher-tech JHPs better still. But those same ammo concepts jacked up the effectiveness of the 9mm Luger cartridge proportionally even more. Though I finished 43 years as a part-time cop carrying a .45 with 230-gr. +P Federal HST, I no longer felt undergunned carrying 9mm rounds. They had proven themselves to be highly effective on the street — a 115-gr. JHP at 1,300 fps, a 127-gr. Winchester Ranger JHP at 1,250, Speer's 124-gr. +P Gold Dot at 1,220, etc.

As a young man, and even as a young patrolman off-duty, I felt comfortably armed carrying a five-shot .38 snub and no spare ammo. Research into gunfights and some personal experiences changed my mind and I quickly learned to relegate 5-shot capability to backup guns and carry more firepower even when I wasn't serving the public. I had debriefed men who carried .380 autos, .32s, and .38 snubs who told me they didn't take action when they should have because when the life-or-death moment came, they didn't think they had enough firepower to win the gunfight, and they regretted their hesitation forever after.

Research and collective experience teach us confidence and competence intertwine inextricably. Confidence breeds a certainty of competence to allow unhesitating rescue action when necessary, and competence in turn creates confidence to overcome potentially tragic hesitation. This all translates into carrying a gun you can shoot well and know you can hit with under extreme stress. It must have enough power to damage large, aggressive, ragingly homicidal mammals, and enough ammunition — both in-gun and readily accessible for fast reloading — to get the bullets where they need to go in order to swiftly end a lethal threat to innocent human life and limb.

And yes, it *is* complicated ... which is why we continue to debate these issues. 🐉



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## TRAIL-BOSSIN' TRAPPERS

### PACK A LIGHT LUNCH IN YOUR LEVERGUN

Even though I'm stuck here in the second decade of the 21st century, my shooting soul still goes back to the couple decades before and after the turn of the 20th Century. I still think single-action sixguns and early S&W Hand Ejectors are state-of-the-art, and there isn't an AR ever made which can come close to stirring my spirit like a good lever-action — or as I prefer to call them, *leverguns*.

#### TURNING TO TRAPPERS

I have several leverguns with barrel lengths of 24" and even 26", and they are fine for easy shooting but not so good for easy packing. A pair of brass-framed 1866 Winchester replicas with long octagon barrels got very little use until I got rid of some extra metal and turned them into "Trappers."

There was a time when both Marlin and Winchester offered virtually any barrel length the customer would like. Just think how handy a .357 Magnum levergun with a 12" barrel would prove, besides exceptionally easy shooting. The same length on a levergun chambered in .44

Magnum would be quite practical for use in tight quarters — whether hunting deer or feral pigs. Alas, in this day and age, they're not to be.

Just about the time I was ready to enter this world, the U.S. Congress mandated minimum barrel lengths for rifles and shotguns. By the time I reached the age of being able to purchase a rifle, Trappers could no longer be made with 14" or 15" barrels. The first modern short-barreled levergun I can remember seeing (and lusting after), was the Marlin Model 336 Marauder with a 16-1/4" barrel chambered in either .30-30 or .35 Remington. This rifle was only produced for one year in 1963, a time I was married with three young pre-schoolers and attending college full time; there was very little expendable money — certainly no excess cash for a levergun.

**The .30-30 Winchester is still an excellent hunting cartridge, but its versatility is expanded with the use of cast bullets and Trail Boss powder.**

#### TAKIN' IT EASY

After I had an artery in my chest split six years ago, I immediately began backing off heavy-recoiling rifles. No more heavy-load .45-70s, I sold my .338 Winchester and .375 H&H and decided if I was going to shoot rifles a lot, I'd need some very mild loads.

I thought back to several years ago while hunting whitetails on the Penn Baggett Ranch outside of Ozona, Texas. My guide shared his load for jackrabbits and other varmints — a 170-gr. hard-cast gas-checked bullet over 6.5 grains of Red Dot in his lever-action .30-30. He allowed me to shoot his rifle and I found it both accurate and pleasurable to shoot. I didn't immediately tap into this information, but filed it away in the back of my mind for future use.

While pondering light loads, the information from the guide surfaced again and I put some loads together for use in my Marlin 336 Trapper. The results were quite satisfying with the RCBS #30-180FNGC clocking out at 1,074 fps with three shots in 1-3/8" at 45 yards with nary a kick in a carload. Oregon Trails 170-gr. FNGC was a little faster at 1,116 fps with a little tighter group of 1-1/8". For a little more velocity (but considerably still under factory loads), I found



This pair of Model 336 Marlin .30-30s were turned into Trappers by shortening the barrels.





Targets fired with the .45 Colt Trapper from USRAC.

20.0 grains of XMP5744 under a 170-gr. FNGC provided 1,700 fps and excellent accuracy of 3/4" for three shots at 45 yards.

However, there are several problems involved in trying to come up with lighter

loads, especially in such large cartridge cases as the .45 Colt and .44-40, both of which were designed to hold 40 grains of black powder. When you try to develop lighter loads in these cases, very little

capacity is taken up with the powder, resulting in a lot of airspace. When the cartridge is fired, the powder is not sitting on top of the primer as it does with a full load of black powder, but rather is lying along

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John firing a tang-sighted Trapper.

the bottom side of the case parallel to the ground and the flash of the primer goes *over* the powder rather than under it.

A second problem inherent in developing lighter loads with conventional powders is a chance of a double charge. All it takes is some distraction and an

unnoticed double charge drops into a large case. That's why I don't want *anyone* in my loading room except me when I'm putting loads together.

#### THE BOSS STEPS IN

Hodgdon Powders solved both of these

problems about 10 years ago with the introduction of Trail Boss, a powder designed specifically for low velocity lead bullet loads for practice, plinking and Cowboy Action Shooting. Trail Boss is unlike any other powder on the market today in several ways. It is so light a 5-lb. keg of

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IMR Trail Boss is larger than an 8-lb. keg of IMR4227. It also flows so easily you need to learn not to "overshoot" when transferring powder from the keg to the measure.

I've used Trail Boss in virtually every sixgun cartridge with very pleasing results and decided to try a different application for it in Trapper-length leverguns.

Using 10.0 grains of Trail Boss grains under the Oregon Trail 170FNGC resulted in 1,250 fps and a 1-1/2" group at 45 yards meaning it has enough energy and accuracy for small game, varmints, even turkeys where allowed, doing it with very mild recoil. I also took the time to try Trail Boss in some of the larger rifle cartridges such as the .375 of Winchester and the .38-55 Winchester. The .30-30 is nothing more than the .38-55 necked down, while the .375 Winchester is a slightly shorter .38-55.

My .38-55 Trapper is a Winchester Model 94 while my .375 Trapper is a Marlin Model 336. Both of these had longer barrels that I had cut back to 16-1/4". In the .38-55, 9.0 grains of Trail Boss under the Oregon Trail 240 FP results in a muzzle velocity of 1,030 fps and a three-shot 45-yard group of 1-1/2" while 16.5 grains of XMP5744 under the

"This means it's accurate enough for **head-shooting** small game and turkeys with **no meat wasted**."

Lyman 250GC and loaded in .375 Winchester brass clocks out at 1,133 fps with an excellent group of 3/4". This means it's accurate enough for head-shooting small game and turkeys with no meat wasted. This same load in my Marlin .375 Trapper provides almost identical results with a muzzle velocity of 1,117 fps and a group of 1".

At one time Winchester (then known as United States Repeating Arms Co.), offered Model 94 Trappers, I believe this was in the 1980s, chambered in .30-30, .45 Colt, .44 Magnum and .357 Magnum. They are such handy little rifles and — since I hate making major decisions — over a period of time I bought all of them. The USRAC Winchester .45 Colt Trapper gives the tightest groups of all of my Trappers using the RCBS #45-255FN over 6.5 grains of Trail Boss for an exceptionally mild-shooting 900 fps and an incredible group of 3/8" for three shots at

45 yards.

With the same load, the Marlin .45 Colt Trapper is more than adequate with a group of 1-1/2", however, it pales in comparison to what the Winchester .45 can do. Switching to the .44 Magnum, the Marlin with 240-gr. hardcast bullets over 6.7 grains of Trail Boss clocks between 950-980 fps with two different bullets and averages 1-1/2" while the Winchester .44 Magnum is not even close to being in the same league as the .45 Colt version with groups from 2-1/4" to 3". Who says the .45 Colt is obsolete?

All of these loads in all of these guns are not only excellent choices for varmints and small game, they are perfect for introducing young shooters — giving them a "big rifle feel" with "small rifle recoil."

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## WMR OR HMR?

### PICK YOUR PEST POISON – .17 OR .22

**T**he .22 Winchester Magnum Rimfire was introduced 60 years ago as I write this. Currently it's offered in more different bullet weights and designs, and in more firearms choices, than at any time in its history.

I was barely into my teens during the early 1960s when the .22 WMR was slowly

catching on. Winchester designed it to be both longer and slightly larger in diameter than the .22 Long Rifle to prevent it being loaded in .22 LR chambers. Compared to the .22 LR, velocity took a huge jump — increasing by around 50 percent. Currently, most 40-gr. .22 WMR loads have a claimed muzzle velocity in rifle barrels of around

1,900 fps (compared to about 1,250 fps for the high-speed .22 LR). By way of centerfire comparison, the .300 Win. Mag. exceeds the .30-06 by about 10 percent!

The .22 WMR came in for a fair bit of criticism. Some complained it was too destructive for a small-game cartridge — and it's true. If you hit a squirrel in the hams, especially with the HP load, there's not much left for the stewpot. For me as a near-penniless farm boy, the big deal, however, was cost. Then as now, .22 WMR ammo cost 4 to 5 times as much as .22 LR. Heck, I couldn't even afford .22 LR and stuck to .22 Shorts!

It seems obvious now but it took me a while to figure out the .22 WMR's niche. The .22 LR is a superb target cartridge, a wonderful plinker and an adequate small game and pest cartridge. With precise shot placement it can punch significantly above its weight.

The .22 WMR was designed as a hunting cartridge. There's no law against target shooting or plinking with it, but for such activities the round is unnecessarily powerful, loud and expensive. As a small game and pest-control cartridge it's superb — far superior to the .22 LR. So instead of thinking of it as an expensive rimfire, think of it as an “inexpensive centerfire.”

For pest control and small game hunting, the .22 WMR is ideal. It is also a fine cartridge for a rifle or handgun for emergency use in wilderness country. It isn't a huge niche, but big enough to keep the cartridge popular for a long time. Remington attempted to grab a share of this market



**Pest poppers (L-R):** .22 LR, .22 WMR and .17 HMR. The sharp bullet of the .17 HMR helps it shoot flatter and resist wind drift. Plus, it looks cool!



with the 5mm Remington Rimfire Magnum, but failed mainly because it offered little new. The 5mm is a good cartridge, but 38 grains at 2,100 fps is no huge advantage over 40 grains at 1,900 fps.

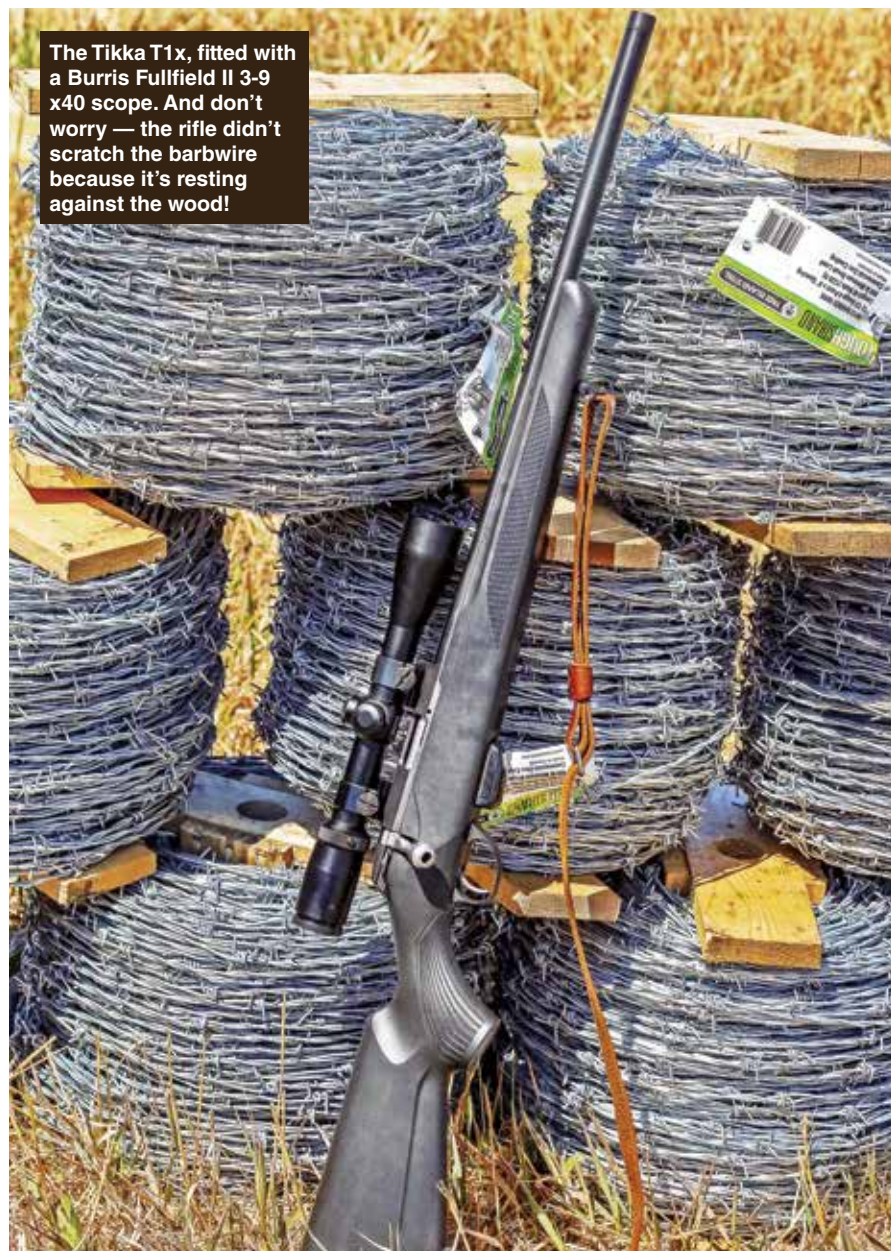
## THE .17 COMPETITION ARRIVES

Hornady's .17 HMR, introduced in 2002, *did* offer something new. Hornady cut the bullet weight from 40 grains to 17, designed the bullet with a wicked-looking sharp plastic tip, and increased muzzle velocity nearly 700 fps, from 1,875 to 2,550. The result was a significantly flatter trajectory, making for easier hits on the small targets for which these cartridges are used.

It proved to be a very smart move by Hornady. Manufacturers generally don't share their sales data, but going by ammunition and rifle choices I see on dealer shelves, the .17 HMR has been very successful and probably outsells the .22 WMR. Even so, I think the .17 has helped the .22 WMR more than it has hurt it.

A little competition can be a healthy thing. For decades it seemed the only bullet choices in .22 WMR were a 40-gr. solid or HP, and manufacturers may have become a bit complacent about accuracy standards. For several years after the .17 HMR was introduced, many users reported better accuracy than they had come to expect from the .22 WMR. Currently .22 WMR loads are available with 30-, 33-, 40-, 45- and 50-gr. loads and any accuracy differences are more likely due to individual rifles.

Currently, I own three of each — putting me firmly astride the fence. For all-around use as a pest-control rifle, I like the .22 WMR, using the CCI 40-gr. Maxi-Mag HP exclusively. I don't mean to suggest life on the farm is one constant battle with varmints — I'd as soon leave them alone.



The Tikka T1x, fitted with a Burris Fullfield II 3-9x40 scope. And don't worry — the rifle didn't scratch the barbwire because it's resting against the wood!

But we do get gophers in the garden, badgers in the pasture, skunks digging under the garden shed, squirrels stealing

martin eggs, raccoons in grain bins, beavers wrecking ponds and coyotes hanging around to snap up our cats. Having shot literally thousands of pests with both cartridges I'm convinced the heavier WMR bullets do more damage — even on small creatures. On bigger animals they are decisively better.

But for gopher and prairie dog shooting, which means small targets at uncertain ranges, I prefer the flatter trajectory of the .17 HMR. I've had 500+ round days with both cartridges in gopher-infested pastures and am convinced I get more consistent results with the .17 HMR. And, if a raccoon or badger came slouching by, I'm pretty sure I wouldn't give up without a fight! 🐾



Just in case varmints appear, Dave keeps his Ruger American Compact rimfire in .22 WMR at hand.



## WINCHESTER WILDCAT

### IT'S EASY TO KEEP THIS KITTY CLEAN

One of the intriguing qualities of the annual Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trades (SHOT) Show is there's always a surprise just around the corner. Browning's man-on-the-scene, Paul Thompson, and I were working our way through the extensive Browning/Winchester exhibit when I came face-to-face with a Winchester engineer who had the pieces and parts of a new rimfire semi-auto rifle spread out all over a table. To say what I saw was remarkable is an understatement. I immediately made Thompson promise to loan me his office copy for a few days since shipments of the new rifle had not yet arrived at dockside.

#### NO LITTERBOX REQUIRED

The new, little 4-lb. rifle has been christened, the "Wildcat." Designed by Winchester, produced in Turkey and sporting a price tag of \$249.99, the Wildcat has a very distinct pedigree with design features we have not seen before. It was as if an engineer had been given a blank piece of paper and encouraged to design a rimfire semi-auto to set the industry standard for easy-cleaning,

plus be utterly reliable and very accurate.

As it turned out, the Wildcat is the easiest-to-clean rimfire semi-auto I've ever handled. Blowback, semi-auto rimfires are naturally dirty little beasts which readily accumulate lubricant, powder and lead residues in the action and in the barrel. The typical fouled bolt and fire control system are not readily accessible for cleaning and barrels, by necessity, must be cleaned from the muzzle. The new Wildcat addresses both problems.

The answer lies in one major assembly that can be removed intact from the Wildcat by merely pushing a red button at the rear of the receiver. The unit, described by Winchester as the "lower receiver assembly," contains the bolt, trigger, fire control system and even the magazine well. Best yet, once removed, the hole at the rear of the upper receiver housing the magic red button readily accepts a cleaning rod, permitting the barrel to be cleaned from the chamber end, as it should be, to protect the crown.

Carrying the Wildcat cleaning procedure one step further, the unitized bolt assembly can be plucked from the lower receiver assembly, exposing the whole fire control

system. So now it's just a matter of spraying the works with a polymer-safe cleaning solution, digging around a bit with a brush to dislodge the gunk, wiping everything down, adding new lube where needed and slapping the Wildcat back together again.

#### FEED THE CAT

When it comes to reliability issues, there is nothing more reliable than a Ruger-style rotary magazine so Winchester basically cloned the design and added a couple of neat features of their own. They also added an exterior, thumb-driven, ratchet wheel on the side of the magazine. When turned counter-clockwise, it eases the chore of loading 10 rounds by relieving spring pressure on the follower, plus there's a transparent window enabling you to see the rounds being loaded. The Wildcat will accept standard Ruger rotary magazines but with one catch — the Ruger models will not hold open the bolt after the last shot while the Wildcat version will.

A really neat part of the Wildcat design is its magazine release system. There's a conventional magazine release catch at the forward end of the magazine well, but do you see those grippy, red strips above the magazine well? Pulling those plastic strips rearward immediately drops the magazine.



Pushing the red button enables the owner to remove the mechanics of the Wildcat for a thorough cleaning.



The entire lower receiver assembly is easily removable for cleaning.



Sliding these grippy, red releases to the rear immediately ejects the magazine.



Combining outstanding design with affordability, the Winchester Wildcat is a welcome addition to the world of rimfire.



It's a much handier and faster design than the conventional catch.

## SET YOUR SIGHTS

The Wildcat gives you a choice of sighting systems. There's a versatile Picatinny rail molded into the polymer upper which accepts a variety of optics plus an integral, adjustable, ghost ring, peep sight mated with a conventional front post. Good optics bring out the best any rimfire has to offer and my choice was Gru-Bee's svelte, 3/4" tube 4x24mm Wolf Pup scope and rings. It complements the proportions of the sleek Wildcat and adds only 6 oz. to the 4-lb. weight of the gun.

The polymer stock of the Wildcat has some great ambidextrous lines. Obviously, it's skeletonized to save weight, but there's a surprise or two. The rear sling swivel stud is molded in place forward of the plastic buttplate while the front swivel stud and a short Picatinny rail are hidden nicely under a removable fore-end cap — a pretty slick design, I think. Another design feature I like is its target-style pistol grip. It's a full

“Over the bags, it handles well indeed while offhand it **requires a firm, tight grip**, pulling the little wand back into the pocket of your shoulder.”

“marksman” stock with a tight radius to fit smaller hands while better positioning the trigger finger.

## SKINNING THE KITTY

Over the bags, it handles well indeed while offhand it requires a firm, tight grip, pulling the little wand back into the pocket of your shoulder.

At 4 lbs. 6 oz., the Wildcat is a real featherweight with a 5-lb., 2-stage trigger. You have to dominate it. This is where the Wildcat's great pistol grip really shines plus the 18" barrel has a bit of beef adding stability.

At 50-yards, I tested 12 loadings, firing 5-shot groups. The top three were — Federal Auto-Match 0.64"; Aguila Rifle

Match 0.83" and CCI Standard Velocity 0.95" all with zero malfunctions. An interesting aside is the latest Wolf Pup scope features two dots on the vertical crosshair serving as elevation compensating aiming points. With a 50-yard zero and firing standard velocity ammunition, the first dot down turned out to be a perfect zero for 100-yard targets.

With an affordable price point and innovative design, the Winchester Wildcat is a great performing rimfire rifle suitable for the whole family. It should be on your dealer's rack by the time you read this. 

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## TO REFINISH OR NOT REFINISH? BEAUTY IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

**W**ant to know something that'll set my teeth on edge just like chalk squeaking on a blackboard? It's when someone says they bought a mechanically perfect firearm but its finish is a bit worn so they want to make it look new again. Let me tell you, brothers and sisters, it won't look new again — it's going to look refinished.

### TRAVESTY IN THE COALFIELDS

Back when I lived in West Virginia I frequented (actually, I loafed in it) a small gun shop in my hometown of Williamson. In the early 1970s, fine old Smith & Wesson N-Frame .44s weren't uncommon in Mingo County. I think they were leftovers from coal mine/union wars of the 1920s. The owner of the shop would take one in trade and immediately ship it to Smith & Wesson for refinishing. I tried to tell him sending a slightly worn S&W triple lock .44 Special for refinishing was a travesty. I said he was turning a collector gun of high value into a shooting gun of lower value. It made no sense to him at all because now the old gun

was shiny — never mind the blurred lettering and rounded edges.

I like worn guns. I especially like them if I'm the one who put the wear on them. Over 20 years ago I ordered a rolling block .40-65 from Lone Star Rifle Company. My intention was it would simply be a BPCR Competition rifle, hence I ordered plain wood and no frills. When the rifle arrived, it about knocked my socks off. Not only was it stocked with presentation grade wood but the action was engraved with my initials inlaid in gold. I told the maker, the late Dave Higgenbotham he made a mistake because I ordered a plain rifle. He said, "Yes you did but I know how you trade and sell guns so I made it so you won't let this one go."

He was right — it is one of my most treasured possessions but it didn't sit in a display case. The gun has been to dozens of BPCR Silhouette matches and fired hundreds of rounds. At one match a few years back as I was getting off my mat, my bad knee gave out and I fell. The rifle and I both went into the gravel. My first worry was the crown at the muzzle. It was OK. The other



Duke's fancy Lone Star BPCR Silhouette rifle isn't for display — its been fired in dozens of matches all around the western states.



This is what's called a "duffle-bag" cut on World War II souvenir rifles. Note the brass straps — poorly — inlet into the wood.

scuff marks on steel and wood don't matter — they're just part of the rifle's history.

### THE DUFFLE-CUT

Speaking of history, in building my World War II collection, I bought a German K43 semi-auto rifle. It had what collectors refer to as the "duffle-bag cut." This is when a GI did not want to mail a souvenir home



Some might think these well-worn .38-40s are refinishing candidates. The Winchester saddle ring carbine and Colt Single Action Army both date from near the turn of the 19th century.



because he was afraid it might be stolen so he cut the stock in two to fit in his duffle bag. He could then carry it home himself. When My K43 got home someone inlet the stock for brass straps secured with glue and wood screws to hold it together. The repair is unsightly as heck but otherwise the rifle has all matching serial numbers, which is rare for a K43. Replacement stocks for K43s are available and I toyed with the idea of buying one but rationality caught up with me. The stock is part of the rifle's history — it should be left alone.

## A SPECIAL DETECTIVE SPECIAL

Back in 2015 I was browsing gunbroker.com when I came across a Colt Detective Special .38. It was located in an urban area back east. The description said it was a tired old revolver but still was mechanically good. Its buy-it-now price was a measly \$300 so I nabbed it without hesitation. The description was apt. By its serial number it had been made in 1961. The blue finish had plenty of wear marks from holster carry and the checkering on its walnut grips was



Duke got this Colt Detective Special .38 because the seller listed it as a "tired, worn revolver." The wear was cosmetic and Duke wouldn't sell it or refinish it.

worn smooth in places. Cylinder lock-up is perfect and bullets hit where the sights are pointed. I wouldn't sell it for twice the price I paid for it, and I won't ruin it by refinishing!

Don't misunderstand me — I'm not saying trashed-out guns shouldn't be

restored. If they have already been "messed with," there's no harm to fixing them up cosmetically and/or mechanically. The point is: shiny or pretty doesn't equate to value or functionality. Don't waste money on refinishing you could spend on ammunition for shooting!





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## SIDE-CHARGED ARS NOT FOR EVERYBODY?

I have long been a user and fan of the “side-charge” AR-platform upper receiver configuration when I can use it. Short course: a side-charge upper fits best into a “precision”-use AR15 rifle package but can have other applications as well. Here’s all about what — and why — it is.

I don’t think anybody really likes the conventional T-handle charging system. It’s awkward to reach and likewise awkward to manipulate so side-charge systems eliminate the need for the standard charging handle.

To get the T-handle gone, there’s a hole drilled and tapped into the bolt carrier, into which is threaded a bolt knob then the upper receiver gets a channel milled out to provide rearward clearance for the bolt knob shaft to travel. Simple.

However, there’s not much metal to work with at the point where the handle is attached into the bolt carrier body — it’s a thin wall which means a very short threaded section on the attachment piece, making it not nearly as secure as I’d like it to be.

An overriding hitch is the (real) possibility the handle will loosen during firing. If this happens the handle could then come off and said flying handle could then hit you in the noggin, which would then hurt said noggin. I’ve not had it happen but I also habitually give mine a snug down prior to, and every now-and-again during, use. There are also varying takes on how best to secure attachment of the handle. I favor those who use something involving a “wrench” — some I’ve seen are hand-tight-only.

### BEGINNINGS

The side-charge was born from competitive shooting, NRA High Power Rifle specifically, by and for those using AR-platform Match Rifles (which can be fairly free form). Why? The main reason was the T-handle set a height limit on the elevation of the stock top line. The handle has to be free to retract fully to load the rifle, and there’s barely any space between the bottom of the handle and the top line of

a standard A1 or A2 stock. This made it impossible to add adjustable cheekpieces to get the most from the AR platform. The sight mounting height is naturally higher in the first place. Adding a side-charging handle removed all restriction on the height of the stock top line.

The result of a side-charge and an adjustable stock (with a properly located cheekpiece) is a better fit, a better shooting position, a higher score — all good.

### WHY DO IT?

Running a rifle from prone or bench top, I like the side-charge because it’s just plain easier to operate. There’s no awkward shifting the gun around and reaching in to retract the bolt carrier. This is an especially noticeable help if you’re running a substantial optic and even more with an adjustable stock. The handle is just right there at the “front” of the receiver. It’s a simple and patently distraction-free effort to load and unload the gun as the shooter doesn’t have to shift away from position.

Other advantages to this system also include removing the functional need for forward assist. There’s debate respecting



Glen put this side-handle Fulton Armory set atop a specialty AAC defensive carbine. It makes operation much easier.

A side-charge setup makes life better if you frequently shoot from bipod or bench, or use heavy-duty optics.



the need for this in the first place, but having a bolt knob out there means either closing or opening the bolt is straightforward. This has application for a hunter who might want to stoke up the chamber more quietly, and it's decidedly easier to clear a jam. Resolving a feeding/extraction problem is fast and easy — just yank or bang.

## DETRIMENTS

Side-charge may not be for every application — it may not be the right setup for a high-fire-volume user. There is a potential it could loosen and detach. Such a situation, in my experience, would likely be the result of quite (quite) a lot of rounds fired, but... Moreover, the side-charge knob is sticking out there and it's a snag-grabber. The handle also has to be removed to remove the bolt carrier for cleaning.

The main objection I'd put up on behalf of a hard-use operative is the overall sturdiness because there is no doubt the knob attachment point is prone to breakage. However, a side-charge can operate in a conventional set-up using the standard



Glen says Eisenach Arms has the best purpose-built side-charge refits. This set would typically grace a serious competition AR15 rifle.

charging handle, which can remain in place if desired.

## AVAILABILITY

As with many of the now-standard AR15 "premium" components, the side-charge upper systems were first custom-built but now are commonly available boxed and ready to ship from a few different sources. Even better, they've become affordable — some are not much, if any, more expensive

than a routine upper/bolt-carrier-group combination package. In addition, many are now proprietary in design, meaning they are not modified uppers but engineered from the get-go to be side-charge.

Editors note: This article is a specially adapted excerpt from Glen's new book *America's Gun: The Practical AR15*. 🔫

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# RUGER 10/22 AIR RIFLE BY UMAREX

## A BEST SELLER NOW RUNS ON AIR!

**Tom McHale**

It's hard to argue with overwhelming numbers — the Ruger 10/22 rimfire ranks as one of the most popular rifles of all time. How pervasive is this plinker? Since 1964 the company has produced over 6 million of 10/22 rifles in one form or another. In these days of trillion-dollar government expenditures, 6 million may not sound like much but consider only about 7.5 million Ford Explorers have been produced since their introduction in 1990. In the gun universe, the 10/22 holds its own when you consider the Remington 870 has crossed the 11 million milestone while the Mossberg 500 family is right behind with 10 million and the ubiquitous GLOCK 17 numbers in the 10 million range.

The Ruger 10/22 is popular for lots of reasons. It's small, light and affordable, shoots inexpensive ammo, is plenty accurate and reliable to boot. What's not to love? In fact, the only place where the 10/22 is not so popular is the backyard of those of us who live under the iron-fisted oppression of a neighborhood association. Those folks couldn't find fun in a shooting gallery full of canned shaving cream.

Enter Umarex and Ruger. The two companies have been working together for years to produce a variety of airguns and now they've released the *Mac Daddy* of backyard-safe fun — a 10/22 Carbine powered by CO<sub>2</sub>. Hold the thought for a hot second. CO<sub>2</sub> isn't the norm for air-powered rifles, at least not in its 12-gram available-at-Wal-Mart form factor because one small canister struggles to find the fortitude to drive a serious air rifle. Accordingly, many air rifles use larger, more expensive, and harder to find 90-gram CO<sub>2</sub> canisters. Others are PCP (pre-charged pneumatics) carrying an expensive and complex permanent on-board air reservoir.

### TWIN ENGINE

This handy rifle uses two of those “regular” CO<sub>2</sub> cartridges, butt-to-butt to provide the oomph for a respectable number of



The two 12-gram CO<sub>2</sub> cartridges sit in the buttstock and power up using the integral wrench.



Fans of the 10/22 know exactly where the magazine goes and the Umarex 10/22 air rifle utilizes the same layout.

shots at over 600 feet-per-second. To install, just remove the butt pad, use the included (and handily mounted) wrench to tighten new canisters into place and break the seals.

When you open up the Umarex Ruger 10/22, you'll feel right at home with the brass bead front sight and the flip-up leaf rear sight mounted just forward of the receiver. If you want to add optics to your air carbine, it's easy — the Umarex Ruger 10/22 receiver is already tapped. Holes and threads are compatible with the rimfire model so you can pick up a rail at the Ruger store or use a compatible aftermarket version. Check before buying other gear because there are obvious architectural differences between the two rifles, at least on the inside.

Loading the Umarex Ruger 10/22 will be a familiar operation. A 10-pellet rotary magazine, nearly identical to the real



The licensed Umarex version of the Ruger 10/22 packs gunpowder feel into an indoor-safe rifle.





one, installs and drops from its housing forward of the trigger guard. One notable difference is the air 10/22 uses a disc magazine inside of a magazine to hold the pellets in position. It's a bit like pellet-powered Inception — a magazine within a magazine.

Once you're ready to fire, you'll find another slight operational difference. The air Ruger can be fired single-action with a 3-lb. trigger weight but you must retract the bolt before each shot. Note you don't have to operate this bolt, however. A heavier press on the trigger will rotate the next pellet into place and fire the shot, like the operation of a double-action revolver.

### 6 LBS. OF FUN

As for shooting this carbine, what's not to love? It offers all the easy handling of the rimfire model but in a garage-, basement- and backyard-friendly ballistics package. Considering .177 caliber pellets weigh between five and eight grains, with this rifle we'll get velocities in the 600 feet-per-second range, give or take depending on the pellet weight. We're talking about 6 lbs., again give or take, of kinetic energy at the muzzle. Keep in mind the .22 rimfire version of this rifle will crank out somewhere in the neighborhood of 120-foot-pounds. While all safety rules and procedures still apply, shooting with just 5 percent of the energy and much less projectile weight dramatically reduces the safe range requirements.

I did a little indoor accuracy testing with a variety of pellet types on my 10-meter indoor range facility — from the sitting room, through a bedroom, and into a target backstop in the master bath. It's a great setup and doesn't cost nearly as much



The rifle uses a magazine-within-a-magazine design, putting pellets in a close approximation of a regular 10/22 mag.

to install as you might think, at least until my wife figures out what I'm doing. Anyway, my five-shot groups all printed well under an inch with the winners, RWS Superdome 8.3 grain and Daisy Precision Max 7.8 grain, with groups coming in at 0.450" and 0.483".

Just as a rimfire Ruger 10/22 is a must-have for any shooter, not just kids, the Umarex Ruger 10/22 is one to add to your collection. You can feed it with consumables from your local stores and shoot it safely just about anywhere. I'm guessing Umarex wouldn't mind if this one matched the rimfire 10/22's footprint over the years.

[www.umarexusa.com](http://www.umarexusa.com)



# ROCK ISLAND ARMORY VRBP-100

## A BULLPUP WITH PLENTY OF TEETH!

**Holt Bodinson**

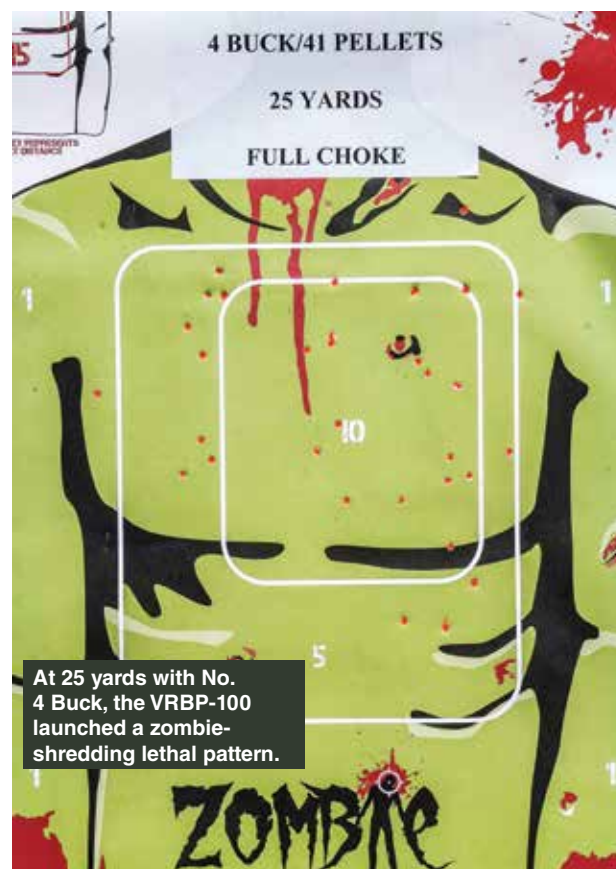
**B**ullpups are a fascinating breed and they've charmed shooters and weapons' engineers for decades. It's no accident in an era of highly mobile, mechanized combat in which you often find yourself cramped inside a combat vehicle, chopper or boat loaded down with body armor, full pack and ammunition, a compact weapon is a distinct advantage. Looking at the current military application of bullpups, four variations immediately come to mind — Austria's Steyr 5.56mm AUG, the British 5.56mm L85A1, the French 5.56mm FAMAS and Israel's Tavor series of rifles and shotguns.

The design makes a lot of sense. By virtually eliminating the buttstock and replacing it with the receiver, the compact design shrinks the overall length of a rifle or shotgun by 7" to 10". Currently, we are seeing an interesting spillover of the military bullpup into the civilian market with models like the semi-automatic versions of the IWI Tavor, FN PS90, the Steyr AUG and now the newly introduced Rock Island Armory VRBP-100, semi-auto 12-gauge.

### A LEAD FIREHOSE

The VRBP-100 is a mean-looking bullpup hungry for 2.75" and 3" shells from five- and nine-round magazines, and if you're going into a fight, there's an extended 19-round magazine strictly for 2.75" shells. It takes two hands, two thumbs and time to load 19 rounds of 12-gauge, and the loaded magazine weighs 4 lbs., 2 oz. when you're finished, bringing the weight of the gun up to 12 lbs.

Yes, the VRBP-100 looks a bit weird and unbalanced with an 18" magazine hanging out there. It's not hugely practical



and darn awkward to load. You could swap out two 9-round magazines and have a better-balanced, more practical package and think of the firepower! Let's see, 2.75" buckshot shells are available with nine pellets of 00 buck, 27 pellets of 4 buck and Winchester's PDX1 loading of a 1-oz. slug partnered with three pellets of buffered 00 buck. With 19 shells at one's disposal, the payload amounts to 171 pellets of .33 caliber 00 buck, 513 pellets of .24 caliber 4 buck and 19 1-oz. slugs partnered with 57 pellets of 00 buck sizzling downrange.



Rock Island's 12-gauge bullpup is an attention grabber, especially when fed from a 19-round magazine.



“You could run over them with a truck, and they would still keep shucking shells.”

The best part about the 5-, 9- and 19-round magazines is they are made of real, heavy-gauge steel. You could run over them with a truck, and they would still keep shucking shells. What's nice about a shotgun accepting detachable mags is the reload is snappy fast and you can mix your loads — buckshot in one mag, slugs in another.

The VRBP-100 is a gas-driven auto, which, fortunately, is easy to disassemble and clean. In fact, the step-by-step pictures covering the disassembly, adjustment, cleaning and reassembly contained in the owner's manual are absolutely first rate. I wish other manufacturers would follow their lead. I mention “adjustment” because the auto comes with two pistons, one for 2.75" shells and another for 3" magnums. In short, it's not a self-regulating gas system, but swapping out the pistons is simple, if inconvenient. In addition to the extra piston, the VRBP-100 comes with three choke tubes cylinder, modified and full, plus a wrench.

The VRBP-100 is a composite gun with an aluminum upper and polymer lower. The upper features a full-length Picatinny rail mounted with a set of plastic AR sights. There is also a short 45-degree, 5" rail on the right side of the forend which would be handy for mounting a weapon light. The VRBP carries a 20" barrel and measures a compact 32" in overall length. As a basis for comparison, my conventional tactical pump sports a 19" barrel with a 39" OL so the VRBP has a 1" longer barrel but is 7" shorter. Therein lies the real beauty of a bullpup.

### NO SOUTHPAWS

The Bullpups, with few exceptions, are usually set-up for a right-handed shooter and this is true of the VRBP. A forward-mounted, non-reciprocating charging handle is mounted on the left side of the gun while the ejection port is on the right. If you switch the gun over to a left-handed position, the ejection port is staring you right in the eye — not good! On the other hand, both the magazine release and the safety are ambidextrous, and the ejection port does sport an AR-type, flip-open cover.

This bullpup's buttstock is canted down slightly, a feature I like because it gives one's cheek a little bit more room to get down on the comb behind open sights. There is also a fully-adjustable cheek rest to position your face vertically when shooting optics. The buttstock also sports three length-of-pull spacers totaling 1" which provide an LOP between 16" to 17".

Bullpups of every pedigree routinely have heavy triggers. The challenge is mechanically linking a forward-mounted



Bullpup guns are typically set-up for right-handed shooters with the charging handle placed on the left side.



Because of the distance between the trigger and sear, bullpups typically have heavy trigger pulls. A vertical pistol grip with its improved trigger-finger position helps.

trigger with a rear-mounted sear while still maintaining an acceptable pull. The VRBP was no exception, averaging 11 lbs. on a Lyman electronic scale. However, the improved trigger-finger position made possible by the vertical pistol grip makes it feel lighter.

Rock Island Armory recommends a minimum break-in procedure of shooting 50-rounds of 3-dram, 1 1/8 oz. loads so I ran through a couple of boxes of Fiocchi high-velocity field loads before switching over to 3" Remington No. 4 buck (41 .24 caliber pellets at 1,225 fps) — a sensational coyote load and a sound home-defense choice. The full-choke, zombie-killing pattern delivered at 25 yards was impressive.

### A REAL CHARACTER

Recoil with a bullpup is straight-back and moderate. Bullpups are a bit noisier than conventional firearms because your ears are about 10" closer to the muzzle, but otherwise I enjoyed working with the VRBP.

Rock Island's VRBP-100 has character to spare. Bullpups are so unique just owning one brings with it a certain level of satisfaction. It's not a gun for quail covers but for home-defense and (with tweaking) competition, it would be right-at-home.

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## CROSSFIRE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

continued from page 8

numbers of the serial number indicate the date of manufacture. After 2011 the letters became "MR" (some suggest this is due to production moving to the Ilion, NY Remington plant). Fortunately there are many references on the internet to this numbering code or I'd suggest investigating the Marlin Firearms Collectors website [www.marlin-collectors.com](http://www.marlin-collectors.com). —BW

### BEAUTIFUL BISLEY

I really enjoyed Alan Garber's Bisley revolver article. There is something beautiful and strange about the Bisley.

Earlier this year I was in my favorite old school gun store. A young woman walks in with a box and says "I inherited my grandfather's gun and I want to sell it." The salesman is an old wheelgunner and his jaw drops when she pulls an old Bisley out of the box.



The young woman said she was offered \$400 for it at a pawn shop. The clerk told her "I will try to sell it for \$1200 and I can offer you \$1000."

She was happy and I got to see my first Colt Bisley in the flesh.

I love GUNS/American Handgunner. Please never stop.

Ryan Guzek via email

### WASHING MACHINE VS. PYTHON

Several months ago you published a letter from a fellow who, some years ago, was dispatched by his wife with \$300 to buy a washing machine. On the way, he stopped by the local gun store and spent the money instead on a new Colt Python. His wife was not amused then, and is not now!

Please more fully consider the consequences of such a letter. My wife shares my passion for "walnut and blue" guns, and I shared the letter with her. The next time I left the house, she shoved \$300 in my pocket and told me to come back with a Colt Python. I am now in kind of a fix!

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Keep up the outstanding work. I truly enjoy your magazine!

*Dave Shelby via email*

### SNAKES ALIVE

Will Dabbs (regarding *Shooters RX* "Snakes Alive" in August 2019) — Linda opened the kitchen door to find a coiled rattler. Dog started at it and she commanded "GET BACK!" The first gun she came to was a 5 1/2" single action in 44 Mag. The snake is down on the first step so she shot through the porch and put two rounds and a thousand splinters through that critter but

it was still moving. She cussed the ammo, dumped those and reloaded with different bullets. With a rest she put two holes in its head but it was still moving. She cut off the head with an axe, put it down a ground squirrel hole and the body in a box. She told me, "My ears rang for 2 1/2 hrs, the snake was still moving when it got dark, and that's my pistol now."

*No name via email*

I've been a fan and subscriber to both *GUNS* and *American Handgunner* for more years than I care to count! Your

publications are second to none!! In the August 2019 edition of *GUNS*, Will Dabbs penned an article on venomous snakes that I enjoyed. As a lifelong North Florida Southerner I would like to add that Will left out the most dangerous snake of all! It's the snake that has caused more damage and injury than all others combined! It's found throughout the United States. It's called the "stick that looks like a snake!!" I've been attacked by several in my life — I'm with you on snakes, Mr.Dabbs!!

*Larry K. via email*



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# RAVIN R26 CROSSBOW

Mark Hampton

## ARCHERY DYNAMITE COMES IN A TINY PACKAGE.

**I**t would be difficult not to see the rise in popularity of crossbows today. From television advertisements on outdoor channels to magazine ads, crossbows have proliferated during recent years. Outdoor gear catalogs have several pages of crossbows ranging from entry-level all the way to high-end models. Crossbows are here to stay and the technology behind them paves the way to some mighty impressive innovation.

Many states, like Missouri where I reside, allow crossbow use during archery season. For folks who enjoy spending time in the great outdoors, this provides a lot of hunting time compared to rifle seasons alone. The Missouri archery season opens around the middle of September and runs all the way to the middle of January. This gives hunters ample opportunity to hunt pre-rut, rut and post-rut for our most popular big game animal — whitetail deer. You can also use crossbows during turkey season, adding a new dimension to your outdoor experience.

There are many of us who won't tackle hunting with traditional bows for a variety of reasons. I've got a bad shoulder and it's painful to draw a bow. To be proficient at any method of hunting — especially archery — a lot of practice is mandatory and I'm unable to pull a bowstring enough to qualify. The crossbow allows folks like me the opportunity to spend quality time

hunting during archery season. My wife also enjoys hunting with the crossbow so it's nice we can spend time together chasing deer and turkey on our farm.

### EYE CATCHING

I'd been researching crossbows for quite some time and hadn't made a decision when I stumbled across something new and interesting in the Velocity Outdoor booth at a trade show. Hanging on the wall was a really short, compact crossbow by Ravin. This wicked-looking item caught my attention and, after handling it, I had to try it out.

The overall length is only 26" and to say it's compact would be an understatement. The axle width is only 5.75" when cocked and 9.25" un-cocked, making it the shortest and narrowest high-performance crossbow made. The little jewel weighs only 6.5 lbs. so you won't feel like you're packing a log around all day.

When I received the Ravin R26, I was like a little kid at Christmas. I've watched TV commercials where someone is shooting groups at 100 yards with the Ravin and now I had one to try out!

There are many attributes enhancing the overall performance in this crossbow. The frictionless flight system is just



The Ravin R26 is one of the most compact, accurate, hard-shootin' crossbows available and perfect for gun hunters who want to "moonlight" with a bow.





Mark took this big gobbler at 33 yards with one well-placed shot from the Ravin R26 crossbow.

one of them. HeliCoil technology allows the arrow and string to free float above the rail, eliminating friction. This design provides consistent accuracy and increases the life of the string. The system keeps both cams perfectly level when drawing and shooting. Rail friction decreases arrow speed while increasing inconsistent launch.

One particular feature I appreciated was the cocking system. This ultra-compact integrated mechanism is built into the stock design and I found cocking the Ravin to be easy. The system is ambidextrous and you can de-cock the crossbow without having to shoot it in to a practice target — a handy feature indeed!

Another unique feature is the Trac-Trigger firing system. This built-in mechanism slides forward on the rail, claspings directly to the exact center of the string each and every time the bow is drawn. The Trac-Trigger automatically activates the safety when the bow reaches full draw. The trigger breaks clean every time.

My test unit arrived with a 100-yard illuminated 1.5-5X Ravin scope. It's a slick-looking optic measuring less than 9" and fits perfectly on the Picatinny-style rail. The scope had rings already attached and mounting was painless. This optic has aiming points from 20 to 100 yards and the clarity was superb.

Six Ravin practice arrows with 100-grain field points and specialized nocks were also included. A quiver and mounting bracket also come standard. For those hunters who wish to carry their bow with a sling, built-in sling mounts are standard. The fully assembled and pre-tuned Ravin was now ready for the



The Ravin is extremely compact, measuring only 9.25" axle to axle.



range and I was anxious to see how well it would perform.

## ARROWS ON TARGET

I set up a 20-yard target at our farm and, utilizing the 20-yard crosshair, I began to shoot groups, adjusting the scope after each group. It wasn't long before the Ravin was delivering bolts with excellent accuracy. I found the crossbow extremely easy to cock using the integral crank. After sighting-in at 20 yards, I moved back to 30 and 40 yards. The scope, designed specifically for the Ravin, was right on the money using the dots marked for every 10 yards





The Ravin may be a tiny package, but it packs a deadly downrange punch.



The safety and cocking mechanism are ambidextrous. The ability to de-cock the Ravin means no shooting after dark to unload!



The included Ravin scope is specifically calibrated for the crossbow and includes aiming points out to 100 yards.



After shooting Mark's Ravin, Steve plans to get his own before fall deer season.

out to 100. I was both surprised and impressed with the accuracy at all ranges. The Ravin was not only fun, but easy to operate.

After the range session I was ready to take the Ravin hunting (after all, I didn't get this baby for punching targets). Turkey season was in full swing. I'd already called a big tom up for my wife earlier in the season, so now it was my turn. Karen also wanted to go with me and watch the crossbow in action. Before daylight, we'd set up.

## GOBBLER GLORY

At first light we heard a couple of gobblers but they were quite a ways off in the distance. As we sat in our blind, two coyotes, nine deer and a lot of squirrels entertained us. About an hour had passed when I heard a gobbler open up not far away. A few calls later we spotted him at the end of a field — probably 150 yards away.

It was quite a show watching him strut all the way across the field. There was a puddle of water in front of us and I used it as a marker. If the big bird would make it to the puddle, I was ready to launch a bolt. It took a while and my heart started beating faster the closer he came. Using the 30-yard crosshair, I set the mark on the bird, hoping he would turn to the side. He did — and I squeezed the trigger.

The bolt caught him through the wing and into his vitals. The bird flopped momentarily and it was time to notch my tag. It had been a wonderful morning in the woods and the Ravin performed like a champ.

## ARCHERY ENVY

When my lifelong friend Steve found out I'd taken a turkey, he asked to shoot the Ravin as we'd been talking about getting a crossbow for deer. After Steve shot it himself, he immediately told me he'd have one before archery deer season opened. It now looks like both of us will be hunting with one this fall.

If you're in the market for a crossbow, the Ravin just might be up your alley. It's compact, easy to carry, painless to cock (or de-cock) and impressively accurate. We think it's going to fill a freezer or two with venison this fall. In the meantime, Steve and I are having fun practicing.

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Limit 1 coupon per customer per day. Save 20% on any 1 item purchased. \*Cannot be used with other discounts, coupons or any of the following items or brands: Inside Track Club membership, Extended Service Plan, gift card, open box item, 3 day Parking Lot Sale Item, compressor, floor jacks, sales, storage cabinets, chests or carts, trailers, welders, Admiral, Ames, Bauer, Central Machinery, Cobra, Craftsman, Dayton, Diamondback, Earthquake, Fischer Hercules, Icon, Jupiter, Lynx, Poulson, Predator, Tailgator, Viking, Vulcan, Zurich. Not valid on prior purchases. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 1/10/20.

## SUPER COUPON

| CENTRAL PNEUMATIC                          | GOOD                                          | BETTER                               | McGRAW                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 21 GALLON OIL-LUBE AIR COMPRESSOR          | 20 GALLON OIL-LUBE AIR COMPRESSOR             |                                      |                                                          |
| 125 PSI                                    | 125 PSI                                       | 135 PSI                              | 135 PSI                                                  |
| Customer Rating<br>★★★★★                   | STANDARD LIFE                                 | 2X LIFE*                             | Customer Rating<br>★★★★★                                 |
| Not available in AZ, OH, OK and VA.        | STANDARD NOISE LEVEL                          | 25% QUIETER*                         |                                                          |
|                                            | STANDARD RUN TIME                             | 27% MORE RUN TIME*                   |                                                          |
|                                            | STANDARD OIL-LUBE MOTOR                       | SUPERIOR CONSTRUCTION OIL-LUBE MOTOR |                                                          |
| <b>\$169.99</b>                            | <b>\$199.99</b>                               | <b>\$174.99</b>                      | <b>\$199.99</b>                                          |
| SAVE \$69                                  | COMPARE TO HUSKY MODEL: C201H<br><b>\$239</b> | SAVE \$75                            | COMPARE TO PORTER-CABLE MODEL: 110020<br><b>\$249.99</b> |
| ITEM 61454, 69091/62803/63635, 67847 shown | 31873944                                      | 31874136                             | 31874136                                                 |

ITEM 61454, 69091/62803/63635, 67847 shown  
31873944  
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## SUPER COUPON

| CENTRAL PNEUMATIC                          | GOOD                                          | BETTER                               | McGRAW                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 21 GALLON OIL-LUBE AIR COMPRESSOR          | 20 GALLON OIL-LUBE AIR COMPRESSOR             |                                      |                                                          |
| 125 PSI                                    | 125 PSI                                       | 135 PSI                              | 135 PSI                                                  |
| Customer Rating<br>★★★★★                   | STANDARD LIFE                                 | 2X LIFE*                             | Customer Rating<br>★★★★★                                 |
| Not available in AZ, OH, OK and VA.        | STANDARD NOISE LEVEL                          | 25% QUIETER*                         |                                                          |
|                                            | STANDARD RUN TIME                             | 27% MORE RUN TIME*                   |                                                          |
|                                            | STANDARD OIL-LUBE MOTOR                       | SUPERIOR CONSTRUCTION OIL-LUBE MOTOR |                                                          |
| <b>\$169.99</b>                            | <b>\$199.99</b>                               | <b>\$174.99</b>                      | <b>\$199.99</b>                                          |
| SAVE \$69                                  | COMPARE TO HUSKY MODEL: C201H<br><b>\$239</b> | SAVE \$75                            | COMPARE TO PORTER-CABLE MODEL: 110020<br><b>\$249.99</b> |
| ITEM 61454, 69091/62803/63635, 67847 shown | 31873944                                      | 31874136                             | 31874136                                                 |

ITEM 61454, 69091/62803/63635, 67847 shown  
31873944  
LIMIT 1 - Coupon valid through 1/10/20\*

## SUPER COUPON

| CENTRAL PNEUMATIC                          | GOOD                                          | BETTER                               | McGRAW                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 21 GALLON OIL-LUBE AIR COMPRESSOR          | 20 GALLON OIL-LUBE AIR COMPRESSOR             |                                      |                                                          |
| 125 PSI                                    | 125 PSI                                       | 135 PSI                              | 135 PSI                                                  |
| Customer Rating<br>★★★★★                   | STANDARD LIFE                                 | 2X LIFE*                             | Customer Rating<br>★★★★★                                 |
| Not available in AZ, OH, OK and VA.        | STANDARD NOISE LEVEL                          | 25% QUIETER*                         |                                                          |
|                                            | STANDARD RUN TIME                             | 27% MORE RUN TIME*                   |                                                          |
|                                            | STANDARD OIL-LUBE MOTOR                       | SUPERIOR CONSTRUCTION OIL-LUBE MOTOR |                                                          |
| <b>\$169.99</b>                            | <b>\$199.99</b>                               | <b>\$174.99</b>                      | <b>\$199.99</b>                                          |
| SAVE \$69                                  | COMPARE TO HUSKY MODEL: C201H<br><b>\$239</b> | SAVE \$75                            | COMPARE TO PORTER-CABLE MODEL: 110020<br><b>\$249.99</b> |
| ITEM 61454, 69091/62803/63635, 67847 shown | 31873944                                      | 31874136                             | 31874136                                                 |

ITEM 61454, 69091/62803/63635, 67847 shown  
31873944  
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## HARDY POWDER-FREE NITRILE GLOVES

PACK OF 100. 5 mil thickness



Customer Rating  
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**NOW \$5.99**  
**\$7.99**  
COMPARE TO VENOM MODEL: VEN4145  
**\$14.97**  
ITEM 97581, 37050, 64417, 64418, 61363, 68497, 61360, 61359, 68498, 68496 shown

31897777  
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## HaulMaster 72" x 80" CAMOUFLAGE UTILITY COVER

• Thick, 30% recycled cotton/70% polyester



Customer Rating  
★★★★★  
**NOW \$7.99**  
**\$10.99**  
SAVE 27%  
ITEM 69508, 66044 shown

31916536  
LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 1/10/20\*

## CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS

### RECIPROCATING SAW WITH ROTATING HANDLE



Customer Rating  
★★★★★  
**NOW \$19.99**  
**\$29.99**  
COMPARE TO PORTER-CABLE MODEL: PC360  
**\$59.98**  
ITEM 65570/61884/62370 shown

31920142  
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## SUPER COUPON

| CENTRAL PNEUMATIC                          | GOOD                                          | BETTER                               | McGRAW                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 21 GALLON OIL-LUBE AIR COMPRESSOR          | 20 GALLON OIL-LUBE AIR COMPRESSOR             |                                      |                                                          |
| 125 PSI                                    | 125 PSI                                       | 135 PSI                              | 135 PSI                                                  |
| Customer Rating<br>★★★★★                   | STANDARD LIFE                                 | 2X LIFE*                             | Customer Rating<br>★★★★★                                 |
| Not available in AZ, OH, OK and VA.        | STANDARD NOISE LEVEL                          | 25% QUIETER*                         |                                                          |
|                                            | STANDARD RUN TIME                             | 27% MORE RUN TIME*                   |                                                          |
|                                            | STANDARD OIL-LUBE MOTOR                       | SUPERIOR CONSTRUCTION OIL-LUBE MOTOR |                                                          |
| <b>\$169.99</b>                            | <b>\$199.99</b>                               | <b>\$174.99</b>                      | <b>\$199.99</b>                                          |
| SAVE \$69                                  | COMPARE TO HUSKY MODEL: C201H<br><b>\$239</b> | SAVE \$75                            | COMPARE TO PORTER-CABLE MODEL: 110020<br><b>\$249.99</b> |
| ITEM 61454, 69091/62803/63635, 67847 shown | 31873944                                      | 31874136                             | 31874136                                                 |

ITEM 61454, 69091/62803/63635, 67847 shown  
31873944  
LIMIT 1 - Coupon valid through 1/10/20\*

## luminar OUTDOOR 250 LUMENS POP-UP LANTERN



Customer Rating  
★★★★★  
**NOW \$4.99**  
**\$6.99**  
COMPARE TO GO GREEN POWER  
**\$14.99**  
SAVE 66%  
ITEM 64110

31953069  
LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 1/10/20\*



THE NIGHTHAWK

# CUSTOM AGENT 2

SAVE THE PLANET ... AND LOOK GOOD DOING IT!

## WILL DABBS, MD

Fifteen years ago, Mark Stone bumped into a couple of guys at church who built 1911 pistols. They were firearms artisans struggling to find their niche and Mark was a banker with a knack for business. Together they started a small company building custom 1911s working out of a storage unit complex.

Today, Nighthawk Custom offers the finest combat handguns humanity can produce. Those few guys in a storage unit grew to become 60 people working out of a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility to produce legit mechanical perfection. Their Agent 2 is equal parts combat tool and heirloom.

### EXTREME EXTRATERRESTRIAL DUTY?

Malevolent space aliens are all the rage at the local Cineplex. And unnaturally muscular folk clad in spandex perennially save the planet from a bewildering array of extraterrestrial creepy-crawlies. But did you ever imagine how it might play out for real? What if there really *was* a shadowy agency tasked with defending all of humanity against a space-faring menace. What sort of weapons might they tote?

Well, cost is obviously no object — we'll not be cutting corners when the fate of the world hangs in the balance (as this is likely a government agency, it's not like it's *real* money anyway). Additionally, the gun would obviously be some variation on John Moses Browning's peerless hand howitzer. I can fathom no better contrivance for expeditiously transforming invading extraterrestrials into malodorous purple goo.

This hypothetical counter-alien smokepole also needs to look at least as cool as a BlasTech E-11 Star Wars blaster, because you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

"THE AGENT 2  
LOOKS LIKE A  
SCI-FI BLASTER  
AND RUNS LIKE A  
POLITICIAN  
TOWARDS MONEY."



The user controls operate like a fine swiss watch, while the Heinie Ledge rear sight ensures all the artisanship hits the mark.



A wide — but not crazy-big — magwell ensures quick reloads. Will says the gun is "equal parts combat tool and heirloom."





The wholly  
unique Nighthawk  
Custom Agent 2.





NIGHTHAWK CUSTOM BERR  
NCP 32



CUSTOM AGENT 2

**GUNS**  
MAGAZINE









Faceted cocking serrations ensure a perfect grip, yet aren't sharp, and complement the overall angled geometry. The muzzle is simply eye-catching.

powerful argument could be made that the perfect sidearm for real-world Men in Black would be the Nighthawk Custom Agent 2.

### A MASTERPIECE EVOLVES

There was once a Nighthawk Custom Agent 1. Mark built 50 of these remarkable pistols and then had 1,800 people line up to buy them. He had to sell them off via lottery and it led to the Agent 2 — a truly rarefied piece of firepower.

The slide cuts are proprietary to Agency Arms and produced under royalty. With this as a starting point, the artisans at Nighthawk got down to business. Mark told me the resulting evolutionary process both cost a fortune and grayed his hair.

Once they had the slide design in the bag there obviously had to be a unique frame to complement it. The sundry aspects of the frame were optimized leading to a distinctive thumb safety and slide stop, both of which were designed from scratch. Once those details were codified they designed a new grip safety and custom magazine release. That led to a unique barrel bushing and a dedicated barrel wrench to support it. Before they realized it, every significant piece of the gun had been reimagined to support this singular seminal theme. The end result is frankly breathtaking.

The Nighthawk Custom mantra is one gun, one gunsmith. Each pistol is a handcrafted work of tactical art. Each part of the Agent 2 is fully machined — not cast or molded. Nighthawk employs six members of the Pistolsmith Guild, more than any other comparable manufacturer. When one of these artists finishes a gun, he stamps his initials inside it.

### PURE VISCERAL APPEAL

Have you ever found yourself in the presence of something that left you just a little bit tingly? Such was certainly the case back when I was 16

and met the woman who would eventually become my bride. You get a little of that same buzz when first you heft the Agent 2 from Nighthawk Custom. The experience is a bit like running your hand across the Rosetta Stone or taking a big whiff of the U.S. Constitution. You can just tell in an instant *this* is something extraordinary.

For starters, it's a legitimate combat tool. Everything about the Agent 2 is optimized for close-quarters battle. The greased glass action, the crystalline trigger, and the melted edges all speak to its ultimate mission of moving quickly and reliably delivering rounds accurately on target. At the same time, however, the Agent 2 also exudes an oddly sensual mechanical vibe.

The faceted slide sports rakish cocking serrations both front and rear along with side windows, exposing the distinctive titanium nitride gold-tint barrel. The top of this radical slide is cut for an electronic

optic and features a Nighthawk fiber optic front sight along with a solid black Heinie ledge rear. RailScales' G10 grips perfectly complement the look.

There is a one-way scaly texture to the frontstrap, mainspring housing, and grip safety that tends to push your hand up higher and firmer. The mainspring housing is a one-piece unit incorporating a funneled magazine well. The magazine catch seems a small thing, but this one is, of course, unique. It has a cool oblong geometry and a uniquely pleasing texture.

The forged full-sized Government Model frame includes a lightened recon rail for accessories. The crowned flush-cut barrel includes flutes in the external chamber hood and interfaces seamlessly with the barrel bushing. This bushing has a distinctive faceted architecture and demands a unique barrel wrench. The frontstrap has an ultra-high cut for maximum grip and minimum flip.

The bottom of the front aspect of the slide also cut into facets



Every surface of the Nighthawk Agent is complex, a nightmare for those with a geometry phobia. Fit and finish are beyond flawless.



nicely complementing the rakish geometry on the sides of the frame. Every single bit of the gun is vaguely melted. There are no sharp edges to be found any place. The fit, finish, and workmanship are all flawless. It's as though the Agent 2 was hand-built one gun at a time, by a single artist/pistolsmith (which in point of fact, it was).

The flat-faced trigger has an unusually pleasing personality. There is a scant ledge at the bottom to keep your finger properly oriented. The trigger break is delightfully brittle following a predictable take-up with no discernible creep. The slide release and thumb safety are akin to Goldilocks' porridge. They're not too big and not too small, but rather just *right*.

The Agent 2 is available in both 9mm and .45 ACP. The overall synergy is lithe, attractive and functional. The gun looks like a sci-fi blaster and runs like a politician towards money.

### TRIGGER TIME

I've squeezed my share of triggers. A 1911 pistol falls into my hand like an old friend. But Nighthawk's Custom Agent 2 really is exceptional. Everything about the gun sort of magnetically pulls your digits to where they should be for optimal control. The grip circumference is small without being skimpy, and the controls are the chemical formula for perfection. The meticulous tight fit and inimitable design conspire to make the gun shoot unnaturally straight.

On the range, the limiting factor was my tired eyes — the Agent 2 shoots way better than I do. The gun is mechanically capable of sub one-1" groups at 25 meters, and with great ammo I came close to achieving such things off a simple rest.

Should you choose to run the gun fast, all of its mechanical attributes ally themselves to support the noble mission. The gun's salient mechanical features enhance control, while the many-splendored, optimized details perfectly interface flesh with steel. The end result is the ultimate iteration of John Moses Browning's incomparable masterpiece.

All control surfaces, like the textured mainspring housing and grip safety, are cut with precision yet remain comfortable due to fine finishing work.

Nighthawk says of the Agent 2 — "the resulting pistol speaks for itself." With the unique yellow flourishes, certainly it does!



### WHAT'S IT GOOD FOR?

The Agent 2 will set you back about what a reliable beater of a used car might. However, the gun's practical features make it literally peerless in the realm of close combat. For those of us willing to pack a full-sized carry gun, the Agent 2 is unsurpassed. The addition of the dust cover rail makes it a great host for lights or lasers as well.

The Agent 2 shoots straight enough for competition yet sports the combat features you need in a serious CQB tool. It's tough to capture in prose just how nice this gun feels on the range. Suffice it to say you get what you pay for.

At risk of sounding shallow, there is also an intrinsic pride of ownership coming from possessing such a rarefied weapon as this. I was most smitten with the dissonance of the gold barrel juxtaposed alongside —and within — the *Terminator*-themed slide. To put it another way, the gun just plain looks *cool*.

### NOT FOR EVERYONE

It's been often opined those who might disparage owning a quarter-million dollar automobile have themselves likely never *driven* a quarter-million dollar automobile. A similar dynamic is at work with the Agent 2. The gun is undeniably spendy but it also has an unimpeachable level of quality. You can feel it the moment you heft the thing.

Mark Stone knows how to build a gun company. In 15 years he's never had to advertise for employees. With his compulsion for quality and reputation, the right folks just showed up. Sporting collaborations with the likes of AAC, Knight's Armament and Silencerco, Nighthawk Custom represents the culmination of a lifelong vision.

Nighthawk earned its reputation the old-fashioned way — Mark and crew resolved simply to do it right from the outset. The tactical art flowing forth from Nighthawk Custom isn't cheap, but the end result is indeed adequate to protect your world. 

[www.nighthawkcustom.com](http://www.nighthawkcustom.com)



# SAINT VICTOR

# .308

## SPRINGFIELD ARMORY "CANONIZES" POWERED-UP AR.

**Will Dabbs, MD**

**B**ack in the old days if you wanted an American-made .308 battle rifle, you could opt for a Springfield Armory M1A or just go without. M1A acolytes will tell you their mystical rifle will ring steel a continent away, reliably get you a date with a supermodel, save you money on your taxes, and cure malodorous feet. Unwilling to rest on their laurels, Springfield Armory has now stretched their legs yet further.

### IN THE BEGINNING ...

I figured we die-hard American gun nerds needed a new AR15 like we needed a rectal exam. (Which sometimes you really do. Just bend over and get it done. It's even less fun for your doctor. Trust me, I *know*.) Then I actually handled a Springfield Saint Victor, and it was love at first squeeze.

A well-reasoned black rifle packed with premium features all at a Common Man price, the original 5.56 Saint established

itself as a lot of gun for the money. Now we have seen stripped down as well as tricked out Saints in both rifle and pistol configurations. With this foundation, the folks at Springfield Armory realized the only place to go was up.

Their new Saint Victor .308 packs everything righteous and wholesome about the smaller Saint into a package projecting serious .30-caliber horsepower. It sports the same top-end furniture, well-reasoned features and true battle rifle power, all in a package weighing a paltry 7 lbs. 11 oz.

### PERTINENT PARTICULARS

The lightweight Saint Victor packs all the cool-guy stuff defining the Saint genre into a trim .30-caliber chassis. Bravo Company makes the furniture, so you know it perfectly interfaces with the human form while remaining nigh indestructible. The Accu-Tite Tension System combined with a 16" lightweight



The Springfield Armory Saint Victor .308 offers serious .30-caliber punch all in a lightweight maneuverable package.





CMV Melonite finish barrel drops your rounds right where you want them.

The enhanced nickel boron-coated single-stage flat trigger is crisp and comfortable for long-range work, but remains sufficiently responsive for close-quarters combat. The overall impression is glassy smooth. Unique SA locking tabs keep the full-length 15" M-Lok aluminum free-float handguard rock solid. It offers plenty of real estate to support anything you might want to hang out there. The direct gas-impingement action runs through a pinned low profile gas block tucking nicely underneath the handguard.

The gun even comes with a quality set of flip-up iron sights so you can shoot it right out of the box. This may seem a small thing, but in the world of modern small arms, small things are what separate the players from the posers. You would have had to scrounge up some iron sights for the rifle anyway, so in this case it's just one less thing you've got to fret about.

The weird thing is you get all this top-end stuff, along with true .30-caliber thump, all at less than 8 lbs. As a skinny guy who has humped a belt-fed machinegun through a fairly grueling forced march or two, I can attest every ounce matters. What I was most interested in, however, was how this lithe .308 actually ran.

### COMBAT GLASS

A gun with this much reach is simply not exercising to its full potential without something sparkly perched up top. SIG's Tango6 1-6x24mm is at the top of the heap in tactical optics — the Army recently chose it to drive its new Squad Designated Marksman Rifle (a 7.62x51 HK G28 with all the bells and



The SIG Tango6 1-6x24mm tactical optic is sufficiently rugged and effective to equip the Army's new Squad Designated Marksman Rifle.



The new Springfield Armory Saint Victor .308 is a lightweight performer long on value and short on recoil!

The Springfield Armory Saint Victor .308 comes standard with a nice set of easily adjustable flip-up iron sights.

whistles). Uncle Sam's affinity for the Tango6 speaks volumes concerning its capabilities.

At 1X the Tango6 allows up close, both-eyes-open instantaneous engagement at bad breath range. Twist the ocular ring up to 6X and you can reach out to the practical limits of the .308 cartridge. The reticle is battery illuminated for use at close quarters or in dim light with a wide variety of brightness options.

The sight's MOTAC function turns it off when it hasn't moved for a bit and powers it back up again when you pick up the rifle to use it. The aiming point is an easily acquired horseshoe with associated holdover stadia allowing for instantaneous elevation estimates at extended ranges. My scope's first focal plane reticle changes size with power adjustments, allowing for quick and dirty up-close engagements as well as precise work at a distance without being unduly cluttered with mathematics.

### SAINT'S ALIVE!

The whole Saint line exhibits delightful ballistic synergy. The new Saint Victor .308 offers the sorts of premium features you'd find on those crazy expensive custom guns along with long-range power and a proven name you can trust all at a reasonable price. All this also now comes at about the same weight you'd expect of your favorite piston-powered poodle popper.

The unique Springfield Armory muzzlebrake excises most of the nasty out of those big fat .30-caliber rounds. I had honestly expected the shooting experience to be a tad overwhelming given the gun's modest weight. Such was simply not the case. I could bang rounds downrange until I ran dry without feeling battered. If I paid attention and used quality ammo I could squeeze out sub-MOA at a football field.

If you want to be safe from zombies riding in cars or hiding behind walls but don't want to lug around some backbreaking howitzer, the Saint Victor .308 is your iron. It throws seriously manly bullets a seriously long ways while remaining a dream to tote. Trim, tailored, and tough, the Saint Victor .308 is a holy terror on the range.

[www.springfield-armory.com](http://www.springfield-armory.com)



# RUGER 350 LEGEND RANCH RIFLE

*Brent T. Wheat*



The proof: Brent's trophy axis deer. He shot it twice but it wasn't necessary — the deer was already dead but hadn't gotten the memo yet!

## **GUNS** MAGAZINE BRINGS A NEW HEAT TO TEXAS!



“Pigs!” we shouted in unison.

Our guide, Steve Jones, slammed the four-wheel-drive utility vehicle to a halt on the rocky Texas ranch trail. Wild pigs are hated around these parts, especially among ranchers, so we had already been granted “guns free” clearance if any were seen. Now, only a few hours after flying into San Antonio, driving two hours west to the Ivy Ranch and spending a half-hour sighting-in my rifle, the proverbial green light was glowing. It was time to put up or shut up.

## PORK PANDEMONIUM

The two youngish boars had been minding their own business when our group of three gun writers rudely interrupted their evening. The pair split and flanked either side of our war wagon at a scalding pace. Jumping from the rear passenger seat, my lightweight Ruger American Ranch Rifle was instantly up and tracking one of the streaking porkers as he did his best impression of a startled greyhound. Time had already shifted into the classic one-heartbeat-per-minute mode

Upon Steve’s shout of “Take ‘em!”, I fired. To my not-inconsiderable surprise, the first big black pig piled up 40 yards away in an NFL Highlight Reel-worthy tumble as the 180 grains of Winchester 350 Legend slammed home. He was still kicking and squealing when I ran the bolt to send another bit of persuasion in his direction. It settled his hash quite nicely.

I’m not sure why his bristly wingman was still in the same ZIP code but I looked up and saw the second pig moving away, only inches from cresting a rise where he would disappear for good. Unsure if anyone else had fired but not wanting the pig to escape, I lined up the scope a few feet ahead of the ugly black snout and touched off my third round. The pig seemed to stumble as he rolled over the ridge. Oh well. Turns out nobody else *had* fired.

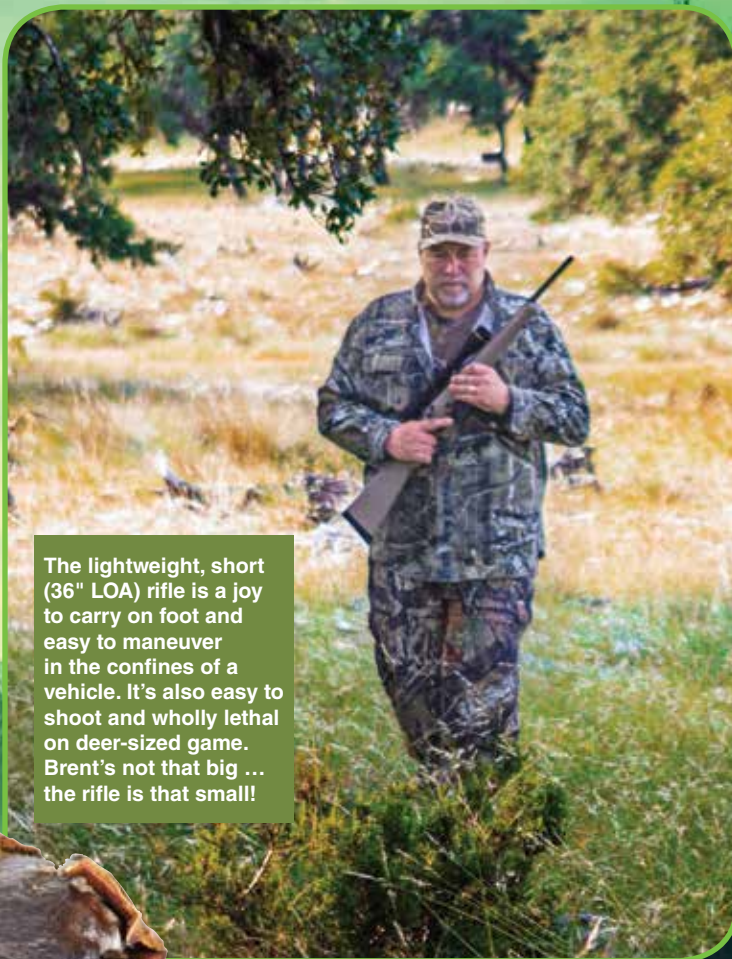
Walking toward the first pig like it was a ticking time bomb, I held my unsafetied rifle toward his head in case of sudden resurrection. I’ve seen what angry hogs can do with too-eager nimrods so I thought it was worthwhile insurance. I was nearly on top of the boar when one of my partners shouted he’d found the second pig. It was deader than good manners just over the rise but at the sudden unexpected noise, I blurted out something that sounded much like “Shot!”

Fortunately, I had brought along extra undergarments on the trip. Unfortunately, they were back at camp.

Regardless of any hygiene concerns, I had just dropped the first two animals ever taken with the new Ruger American Ranch Rifle chambered in 350 Legend. In the twilight, as we fled an impending Texas thunderstorm, I quietly basked in the rarified afterglow of two successful, challenging shots and clean kills. Full of myself, I felt ready to defend the Alamo *and* take on a herd of charging rogue elephants with the diminutive rifle I had just blooded.

## NEW CARTRIDGE, NEW GUN

This newest version of the Ruger American Ranch Rifle is a companion piece to the equally new Winchester 350 Legend cartridge introduced at the 2019 Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor



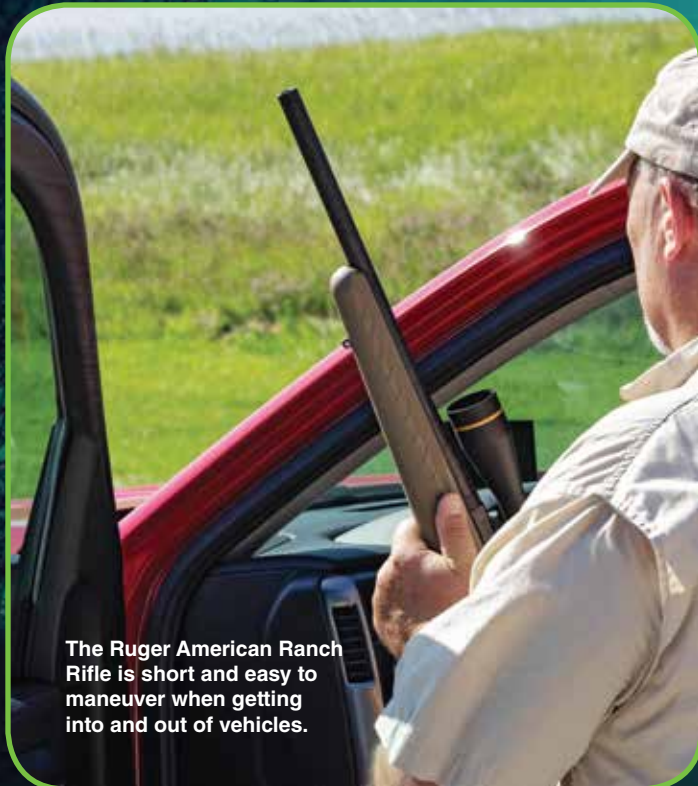
The lightweight, short (36" LOA) rifle is a joy to carry on foot and easy to maneuver in the confines of a vehicle. It's also easy to shoot and wholly lethal on deer-sized game. Brent's not that big ... the rifle is that small!



The recovered Winchester 180-gr. flat base .357 Power-Point bullet (left) was found under the hide on the opposite side while the second exited. Murderers Row (below): The 350 Legend (center) has more muzzle-energy than the .30-30 (left) but half the powder of the .308 (right), meaning significantly less recoil and muzzle blast.







The Ruger American Ranch Rifle is short and easy to maneuver when getting into and out of vehicles.



The Ruger American Ranch Rifle chambered in 350 Legend, a hot new deer combo for the Midwest — or anywhere else!



The matched Leupold VX-Freedom 3-9x40 350 Legend scope has calibrated turrets. Turn the dial to "2" and take a 200-yard shot. Easy-peasy!

Trades (SHOT) Show in Las Vegas. The cartridge was primarily designed to fill the needs of rifle hunters in so-called "straight wall" Midwestern states where "regular" rifle cartridges such as the .270, .243 or .30-30 aren't legal. However, inane regional hunting laws aside, I fell in love with the gun/cartridge combo and currently consider it my *go-to* medium-range, medium-game rifle.

The round is a great lesson in compromise. Billed as "the fastest SAAMI-approved straight-wall cartridge," the 350 Legend brings more energy and velocity than a .30-30, more penetration than a .243 Winchester but less recoil and significantly less-punishing muzzle blast. The cartridge covers all the bases for a legal and highly effective round for deer-sized critters at common eastern hunting distances. It also loses energy very quickly past 250 yards so there is none of the usual (and unfounded) concerns of errant shots entering nearby school buses or nunneries in populous areas.

## THE DETAILS

The Ranch rifle itself is very compact, almost reminding you of a kid's .22 rimfire. However, the gun is long on big-boy features, making it an invaluable tool for someone needing a rugged, lightweight, compact .35-caliber rifle to fit nicely in a utility vehicle, pickup truck, on a horse or carried on foot for miles. With an MSRP of \$549, it's also very affordable.

Overall length is 36" with a total dry weight (minus scope) of around 6 lbs. Featuring a flat-dark-earth synthetic stock, 16.3" barrel with 1:16 RH twist optimized for the cartridge, a Ruger Marksman Adjustable Trigger and one-piece Picatinny scope base, accuracy is guaranteed to be sub-MOA. Truthfully, such groups are not a particularly tough chore in the useful range of the round.

The gun was mated to the purpose-built Leupold VX-Freedom 3-9x40 350 Legend scope. The telescope features pre-calibrated turrets for the 350's ballistics. For example, if you have a 200-yard shot, you simply dial up "2" and take the shot. Both gun and scope worked great on the range and were still accurate after four days of crashing and bumping through deepest Texas in vehicles and on foot.

## NEXT DAY

After the wholly satisfying pig affair, I was back in the field early the next morning with ranch owner Mark Ivy. We headed



to his mom's place a few miles west to check out the free-range axis deer herds.

A native of India, axis deer are larger than whitetail, sport a miniature elk rack and wear a beautiful spotted fawn-like coat. They are commonly raised on Texas hill country hunting ranches but escapees have formed large indigenous herds over the years. We chased uncounted numbers all morning across the open cattle range.

Don't mistake this for a complaint — my axis kill was almost anti-climactic. Having stalked a massive bull all morning, we eventually lost sight of him and finally assumed the morning hunt was finished when it neared 11 a.m. Suddenly, as we turned a corner on a ranch trail, there *he* was, standing like the proverbial magazine cover face-on at 70 yards. As soon as Mark confirmed this indeed was our target (they all looked huge to me), I fired.

The deer took a few steps and I hammered him again. He took a couple more steps, staggered drunkenly for a few seconds then went down hard. We found both shots went perfectly into the boiler room and either would have been fatal even if he were standing on the doorstep of a major veterinary hospital. Terminal performance was perfect — one mushroomed bullet was found under the hide on the opposite side while the second had exited and spun into the trees. I had my trophy.

I was awed — in fact, one of the outfitters said it was a "once-in-a-lifetime axis." Not being an expert, I don't know if it really is such a noteworthy trophy but in a few months his head will take up permanent residence in my home. My long-suffering wife is thrilled (mostly).



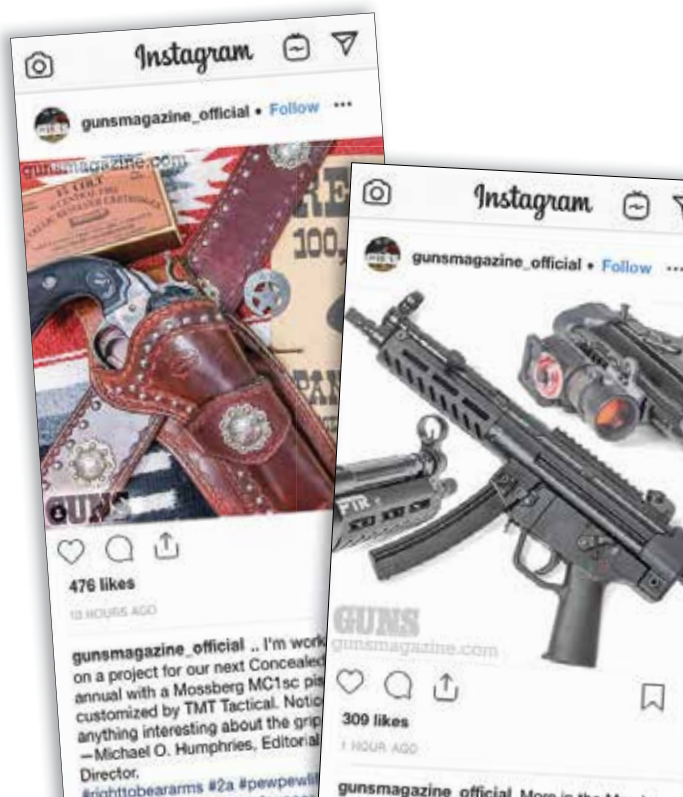
Most 100-yard, three-shot groups were easily under one-MOA but apparently the stars aligned when Brent shot this 0.445" group!

I came away with several lessons from the adventure. First off, axis deer are challenging and fun to hunt, spectacular to watch and the meat is even better than dry-aged beef. Second, and more importantly, the Ruger American Ranch Rifle in 350 Legend is arguably the perfect short-to-medium-range deer rifle regardless of what you *could* be legally toting on your hunting ground. I'm now a big fan — even when I'm wearing clean underwear!

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# MC1sc

Massad Ayoob

# 9MM

## LEGENDARY SHOTGUN/RIFLE SPECIALIST ZEROES IN ON THE CCW MARKET

**S**lim, subcompact 9mm concealed carry pistols are one of the hottest things on the firearms market today and Mossberg, most famous for its functional, reliable, affordable pump shotguns, is the latest company to jump into the market. One hundred years after their odd little four-chambered Brownie .22 of 1919, they have introduced the MC1sc.

### FOR STARTERS, TRANSPARENCY

The MC1sc comes with a six-round flush magazine and an extended seven-rounder. Both magazines have transparent bodies, allowing easy count of the semi-staggered rounds in the stack, and the pistol is designed to accept magazines for the popular GLOCK 43. We found it would also fit our G43 holsters.

I found the MC1sc free of sharp edges, both in the holster and in the hand. Recoil was mild and the pistol came quickly back on target. Trigger reach is about the same as the G43 series — ideal for an average size adult male hand while those with shorter fingers have the pad (the whorl of the fingerprint) centered on the flat-faced trigger. Notable is a unique fieldstripping system we found quick and easy, licensed by Mossberg from Strike Industries.

### NOTEWORTHY ACCURACY

Using my usual 5-shot testing protocol, the Mossberg delivered eye-opening results.

In the MC1sc, Federal 9BP standard-pressure 115-gr. JHP shot way low and left from point of aim, but punched a quintet of holes 3.15" apart, with four of them in 1.95" and the best three in 1.30". Nosler's pricey 124-gr. Match Grade JHP shot somewhat left and about 3.5" low at 25 yards in the small Mossberg, but the group measured 2.45" for all 5 and 1.30" for the best three.

Speer Gold Dot 147-gr. bonded JHP is one of the most popular police rounds out there, and is famously accurate. It delivered the most impressive group of the test — 1.80" for all five shots and seven-tenths of 1" for the Best Three.

Accuracy has two practical perspectives. One is Point of Aim/Point of Impact (POA/POI), or where the bullets strike in relation to where they are aimed. If I had kept this specimen, I

would have drifted the rear sight to the right, and ordered a lower front sight to raise point of impact. That being said, though, I was using a post-in-notch sight picture for the accuracy testing, though this pistol comes with 3 white dots embedded in the sights. At 25 yards, using the less-precise 3-dot sight picture, the mini-Mossberg was "on," nailing 8" Bianchi plates six for six. Because the dots sit below the top edges of the sights, any time you're hitting low with post in notch, using the dots raises point of impact. Conversely, if you're shooting high with a three-dot index, switching to post-in-notch will lower the point of impact.

The other element of accuracy is group size and here the Mossberg was simply outstanding. The "common custom and practice" says that 4" for all five shots at 25 yards is "adequate service pistol accuracy" for a full-size 9mm. This pocket-size pistol easily made the grade, and going sub-2" for 5 shots with 147-grain duty loads frankly impressed the hell out of me.

### GENERAL SHOOTABILITY

I ran the little MC1 subcompact on the "GLOCK the Plates" course from the GLOCK Sport Shooting Foundation matches. The Mossberg pistol competes in the market directly against the G43 slim-line subcompact, which fits in the GSSF Pocket GLOCK competition.

In this event, you face a Bianchi Cup table of six 8" diameter steel plates and are timed as you shoot them from 11 yards. Only seven rounds are allowed in the gun, so with no fudge factor to make up for more than one miss, you have to shoot it conservatively while the timer is running. Each plate left un-hit costs you a 10-second penalty. You get four runs.

**Unusual transparent mags show round count and the semi-staggered cartridge column.**



The second test MC1sc functioned 100 percent out of the box with over 200+ rounds from four manufacturers.



With the Mossberg, using the three dots, all four of my runs went six shots/six takedowns while times ranged from 5.21- 5.84 seconds. (I told you I shot it conservatively.) Compared to the last three GSSF matches I shot this year, two runs were distinctly faster with my familiar Pocket GLOCKs while the Mossberg would have beaten my worst score even though I was new to the MC1sc. I thought this spoke well of the Mossberg's shootability.

Continuing my rundown of the MC1sc's shooting characteristics, I ran it through a familiar 60-shot qualification course that includes reloads (one hand only with each hand), two-handed stances, and cover positions at distances, from 4 to 15 yards. Drawn from a Galco Yaqui slide type holster, the pistol handled best with the extended magazine in place and reloads were smooth — the mags fit snugly in a single-stack leather 1911 magazine pouch, but Kydex was just a *skosh* too tight. The slide lock lever was easy to use as a slide release for speed reloads. Final score was 300/300 — not the best group I've shot on the course, but all I could ask from a subcompact pistol.

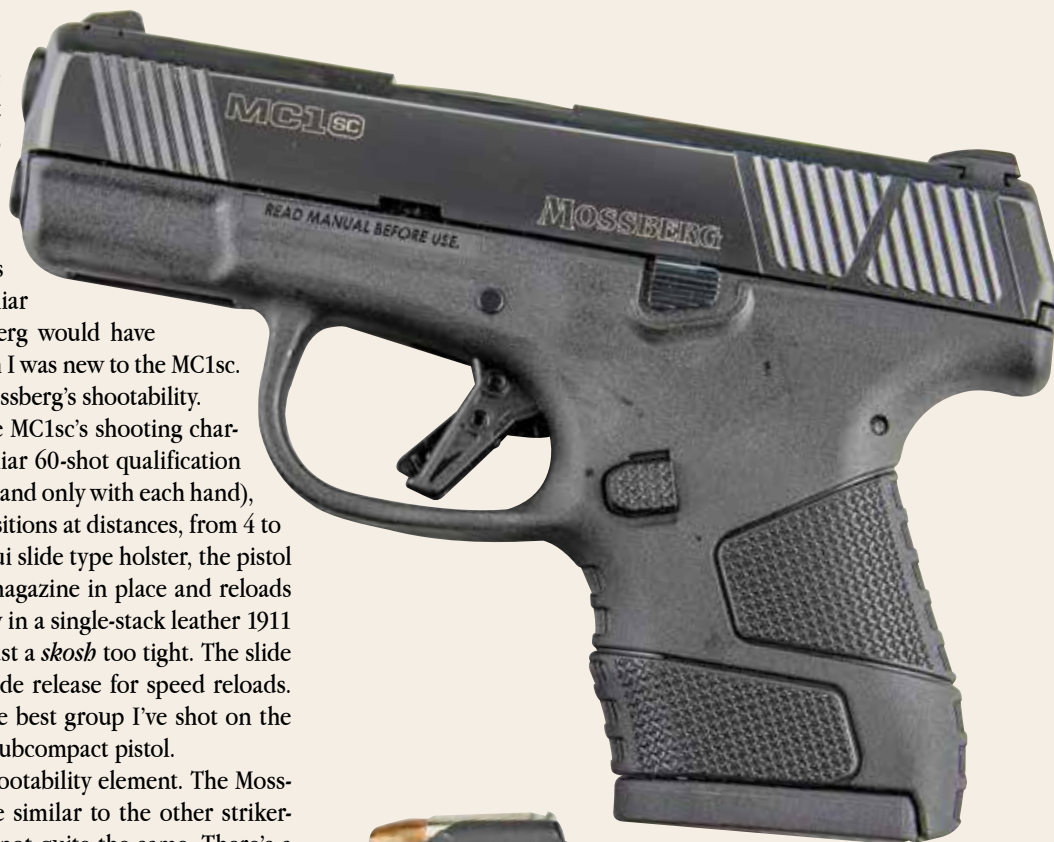
Trigger pull is critical to the shootability element. The Mossberg's pull characteristics — while similar to the other striker-fired pistols on the market — are not quite the same. There's a distinct two-stage pull as on a GLOCK, but still different.

Pull weight was measured on a Lyman digital trigger pull gauge. Measured from the toe of the pivoting trigger, where there is more leverage and hence less resistance, pull weight averaged 5.59 lbs. Measured from the center of the trigger, where the index finger naturally falls when shooting, it wasn't much more — 6.84 lbs. average. Mossberg specs the MC1's trigger pull at 5 to 6 lbs. across a 1/2" length of pull: *Meh*, close enough.

One solid tactical advantage of the MC1sc is, unlike most semi-auto pistols, it will fire with the muzzle pressed against a firm object, like the ribcage of an assailant. I'm surprised this feature, known as standoff capability, is not heavily advertised.

## THE RELIABILITY FACTOR

We had a minor issue with our first test gun. At the end of each full magazine, the trigger pin was protruding from the left side of the frame but it could be pushed back by hand. The pin never came all the way out or tied up the gun, but was pushed back into place after every stage of the qualification and every string of fire on steel.



MC1sc with 6-round mag in place, a GLOCK 43 mag for comparison (left), and 7-round extended Mossberg mag.



The unique takedown procedure, licensed from Strike Industries, is quick and easy.



Best of the best: 147-gr. Speer Gold Dot Bonded JHP at 25 yards from a bench rest. Magazine is for a G43.



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**Standoff capability:** Paper flies as Mas kills a dull hardcover book at muzzle-contact distance.



If this were a bad guy at contact distance, the MC1sc would really ruin his day — and keep running!

While the pistol had no feeding or ejection issues, I contacted Mossberg and found there had been some prior reports of the trigger pin protrusion. Those reports resulted in a change in trigger pin configuration, which solved the problem. They offered to send a second pistol as a replacement.

To Mossberg's credit, the replacement gun arrived quickly. I took it to the range the next day, and soon four ammo boxes lay empty. The second specimen perked 100 percent straight out of its box and there were no problems with the trigger pin. I'm satisfied Mossberg had indeed fixed the early problem with the trigger pin.

#### BOTTOM LINE

Our test team was pleased with the shootability of the MC1sc and particularly with the accuracy for its size. We appreciated the way Mossberg owned the problems with the first test gun and quickly made it right. The 100 percent performance of the second test gun was confirmatory to Mossberg's word they had corrected the trigger pin problem in current production. At \$425 MSRP, certainly less "on the street" in today's competitive market, this little 9mm carry gun shows promise to live up to Mossberg's long-earned reputation for reliability and value.



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The first production S&W .44 Magnums had 4" and 6-1/2" barrels — all of these from John's collection date back to the early days.



# THE **.44** MAG



Ruger's .44 Magnums include (top-bottom) the Super Redhawk, Super Blackhawk and Redhawk. John shooting his first Smith & Wesson .44 Magnum (right) acquired in 1962.



In addition to 4", 6-1/2" and 8-3/8" standard production .44 Magnums in the mid-to late 1950s, Smith & Wesson also produced a special run of 5" sixguns (lower right).



# GNUM OPUS



These are two of John's early .44 Magnum hunting sixguns — a 10" Flat-Top Blackhawk Ruger (top) and an 8-3/8" Smith & Wesson.

## John Taffin

The .44 Magnum has now been around for well over 60 years and it seems like a good time to look back at this excellent — perhaps even *all around* — sixgun load and the fine revolvers which have been made for it.

## IN THE BEGINNING

The .44 Magnum basically begins with Elmer Keith. If you are not a reader of Keith, now would be a good time to start. Although he has been gone now for over 35 years and some of his writing is definitely dated, for much of his life Elmer was way ahead of his time. His books *Sixgun Cartridges & Loads* (1936) as well as *Sixguns* (1955) and his many articles in *American Rifleman* from the 1920s and 1930s make fascinating reading and are filled with real sixgun knowledge. In the closing pages of his

# HISTORY REVEALED — FROM SOMEBODY WHO WAS THERE!





Elmer Keith had one of the first 6-1/2" .44 Magnums cut to 4-1/2" and engraved and ivory-gripped by the Gun ReBlu Co.

Keith experimented with his heavy .44 Special loads in the Pre-WWI S&W Triple-Locks.

Bisley Model Grip Frames (L-R) — Colt Single Action, Texas Longhorn Arms Improved Number Five and the Ruger Bisley Model.





Ruger produced less than 1,000 each of the original Flat-top Blackhawk .44 Magnums with 10" and 7-1/2" barrel lengths.

**"My friends and I all fired it and lied, claiming the recoil wasn't too bad."**

1955 book, Keith wrote: "We desperately need a modern, up-to-date, full powered factory loaded .44 Special — The King of all handgun cartridges."

For 30 years, Keith had been writing about his heavy handloads in .44 Special sixguns — the Smith & Wesson Triple-Lock and 1926 Target Model along with the Colt Single Action. His standard load was 18.5 grains of #2400 under his hard cast, 250-gr. #429421 bullet loaded in the old-fashioned folded, or *balloon head*, cases. With the coming of modern solid head brass, he dropped his load back to 17.0 grains of #2400. Both loads yielded around 1,200 fps from 6-1/2" and 7-1/2" barreled sixguns.

For those same 30 years, to no avail, he had been trying to convince ammunition manufacturers to bring out his .44 Special load. Product liability is nothing new and they were afraid someone would blow an

old .44 Special apart. Keith claimed there would be no problem with any Colt or Smith & Wesson heavy-frame sixgun, as he had been shooting his loads in pre-World War I Triple-Locks for years.

#### SOMEBODY HEARD

One person who did listen was Carl Hellstrom, president of S & W in the early 1950s. He showed interest in Elmer's pet load and discussed the prospect of a new .44 sixgun with Keith. Hellstrom asked Remington to produce the ammo and they agreed if Smith & Wesson would produce the sixgun.

The new .44 Remington Magnum was 1/8" longer than the .44 Special. This was done so it would not chamber in .44 Special sixguns and in 1954 Smith & Wesson re-chambered four 1950-manufactured Target .44 Specials to the new round. Remington

received one of the new revolvers for testing and it was soon obvious the 39-oz. weight of the .44 Target Model was too light for the recoil of the new .44 "Special-Magnum." For all those years Elmer Keith had asked for 1,200 fps and the new round achieved 1,500+ fps, or 25 percent faster than Keith had asked for!

To provide a needed increase in weight, S&W produced a revolver with a barrel 0.15" greater in diameter and a cylinder 0.18" longer. This brought the weight of the 6-1/2" sixgun up to 48 oz. or 3 lbs. By early 1955, tests were completed and S&W began tooling up to produce what at the time was simply known as the .44 Magnum. The first factory revolver was completed on December 29, 1955 and shipped to Remington. In January, the next two were completed and these went to the NRA for testing by Maj. Julian Hatcher while the other was



shipped to Salmon, Idaho to Elmer Keith. By the end of 1956, more than 3,000 S&W .44 Magnums were produced in both the original 6-1/2" length and an easier-to-pack 4" version. The longer barreled 8-3/8" did not arrive until 1958.

As a kid fresh out of high school, I fired one of the first of the 4" .44 Magnums a local gun dealer had. Rather than sell it, he rented it out at six shots for 50 cents and it was a real attention getter for his range. My friends and I all fired it and lied, claiming the recoil wasn't too bad.

Reporting in *American Rifleman* for March 1956, Maj. Hatcher said: "In shooting the .44 Magnum, we found it advisable to use gloves, as the recoil can only be described as severe.... I fired quite a few shots with this gun, but I must honestly confess it is not an unmixed pleasure."

Elmer Keith, writing in the *Gun Digest*, looked upon the .44 Magnum quite differently than Maj. Hatcher. "The big gun is, I would say, pleasant to shoot, and does not jar the hand as much as do my .44 Special loads from the much lighter 4" barreled .44 Special S&W sixguns ... the recoil has not bothered me in the slightest nor have

several old sixgun men complained."

At the time, reading both of these reports I felt the truth was somewhere in between and I leaned towards Maj. Hatcher's conclusion. In Elmer Keith's report in the *Gun Digest* entitled "The .44 Magnum One Year Later," he said he had fired the new gun 600 rounds the first year. This averages 12 rounds per week. There may be a lesson in there!

### THEN THERE WERE THREE

By 1958, .44 Magnums were available from Ruger, Smith & Wesson and Great Western as well. The Great Westerns did not last long after the factory closed in the early '60s, leaving the only U.S.-made .44s available from Ruger and Smith & Wesson. These were the Super Blackhawk and what we know as the Smith & Wesson Model 29.

Dirty Harry changed all this. Clint Eastwood's unrealistic portrayal of the San Francisco cop who packed a .44 Magnum created such a demand for .44s the Smith & Wessons were selling close to double their retail price.

This false demand turned out to be a good thing as other manufacturers decided

to get in on the .44-craze and soon .44s were available from, by my count, 13 different manufacturers. Besides the defunct Great Western, .44 Magnum sixguns were available from Smith & Wesson, Ruger, Dan Wesson, Interarms, Mossberg (Abilene), U.S. Arms (Seville and El Dorado), High Standard (Very rare Crusaders), plus foreign .44s from Europe. Uberti contributed the Cattleman and Dakota, along with others from Arminius, Llama, Astra, R.G., F.I.E., and Sauer & Sohn.

By now, the stage was set for .44 Magnums to become even more popular. Both Ruger and Dan Wesson took advantage of the fact they were able to build a larger and stronger double-action sixgun around the .44 Magnum cartridge. Ruger soon brought out their second double-action .44 Magnum, the Super Redhawk, which is even stronger than the almost indestructible Redhawk.

The Ruger Bisley arrived in the mid-1980s. Some of my friends in the industry said it "was an answer to a question nobody asked." I had to disagree — at least in my hand it was a great improvement over what Elmer Keith called the Ruger Dragon,

In 2006 Ruger issued the 50th Anniversary Model (top) of the original .44 Magnum Blackhawk.





or Super Blackhawk. At the time, I had a pair of .44 Special Colt Bisley Models I liked very much and found the Ruger Bisley grip to be an improvement over the Colt Bisley grip.

### ACCURACY

What kind of accuracy can one reasonably expect from a .44 Magnum sixgun? There are three major factors involved, namely the particular sixgun, the load, and the shooter. I am not personally satisfied with any sixgun or load combination shooting less than 1" groups at 25 yards off sandbags. Some .44s will gobble up anything and spit 'em out accurately — well, *almost*. Others are very picky about which load combination they will accept.

As a general rule, with some exceptions of course, I have found the harder you push 'em, the tighter they shoot. Also, generally speaking, 300-gr. bullets will normally have greater accuracy than 250-gr. or lighter bullets. I have experienced sixguns that couldn't shoot less than 3" groups with 250-gr. bullets but become one-holers when loaded to the max with 300-gr. bullets. The fun is in the search for the best loads.

John shot a lot of Keith's #429421 cast bullets through his early Model 29.



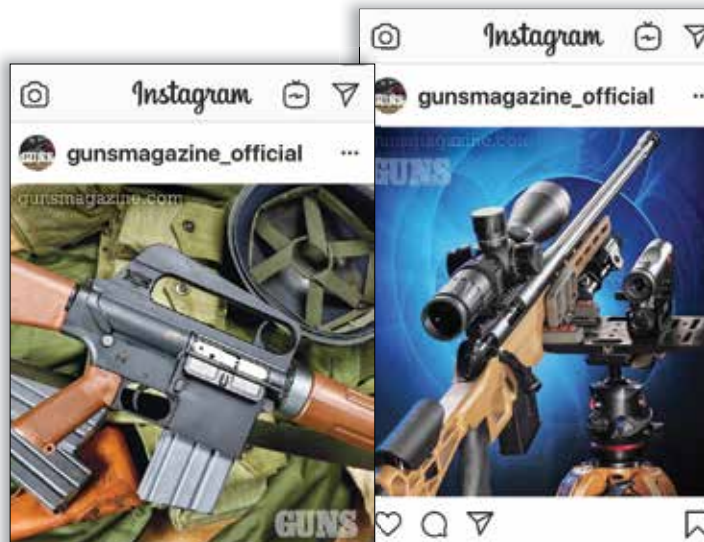
A good .44 Magnum will shoot right alongside any other sixgun target revolver. Elmer Keith always said the true test of any sixgun is shooting long range. The .44 Magnum can be loaded accurately enough to keep 10 out of 10 shots on a silhouette ram's body at 225 yards. Loaded with 300-gr. bullets at 1,300 to 1,400 fps, it becomes a premier hunting handgun when used with common sense and reason.

Chopped and channeled to become a 3" "belly gun" and again properly loaded, it is a highly effective defensive weapon. There are so many excellent jacketed bullets and cast bullets available it would take more than a lifetime of shooting to cover all the possibilities.

Col. Charles Askins once stated the .44 Magnum should have been still-born. I'm certainly glad it wasn't.

# Instant eye-candy

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The DPx HEST/F Urban Ti is a bulletproof and feature-rich Titanium-frame folder built to tackle everything the mean streets can throw at you.

## DPX HEST/F URBAN TI

### THIS FOLDING EDC BRUISER AIN'T NOTHING BUT A TANK.

**D**Px Gear is the brainchild of adventurer, author and filmmaker Robert Young Pelton who spent many years in and around international conflicts and deep wilderness treks. As you'd expect, the guy who authored *The World's Most Dangerous Places* knows a bit about hard-use knives and Pelton has poured his knowledge into the design and manufacture of his signature DPx Gear products. The company's

cutlery line — which took root around 10 years ago — has been overwhelmingly dedicated to knives for the outdoors, survival and tactical crowd. Pelton decided it was time to do a little something special for the urban EDC gang, so shortly over a year ago, the DPx HEST/F Urban hit the streets.

The DPx HEST/F Urban Ti — 6.7" in overall length — is an upscale version of the original G10 model featuring a sturdy

Titanium handle with an upgrade in blade steel. The Urban Ti's handle is 3.80" long with thick 6AL-4V Titanium frame slabs and a vault-like integral-lock mechanism on the back. A 2.9" drop-point blade of top-shelf CPM S35VN stainless steel does the cutting chores, rolling out like butter on glass via a stainless steel, caged-bearing pivot system.

DPx Gear is known for loading their folders up with features and the Urban Ti gets the royal treatment with goodies like a hex drive, cap lifter, wire stripper and glass-breaker tip on the base. Rounding out the folder is a reversible deep-carry Titanium pocket clip. Best of all, the whole package is proudly made right here in the U.S.A.

#### WHY YOU'LL LIKE IT

The numerous additional features on the Urban Ti make this folder stand out from the crowd. Not just useful, they could *actually* save your life. Secondly, the Urban Ti is built like a tank with no materials or mechanical functions — such as the ball bearing pivot — left out. The locking leaf on the integral lock mechanism even has a stainless steel cap to ensure long wear. It's got everything but the kitchen sink, but there's nothing on it you don't need. The Urban Ti is as good as a manufactured knife gets and rivals many customs. MSRP is \$375.



The backside of the Urban Ti features a reversible deep-carry pocket clip and a stainless steel cap on the locking leaf to ensure long wear.

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## INTERVIEW WITH ALAN GOTTLIEB PART 2

### LEADING GUN-RIGHTS ACTIVIST OFFERS CRITICAL ADVICE

*(Editor's Note: This is the conclusion of Dave's interview with Gottlieb, the founder of the Second Amendment Foundation and one of the foremost experts on Second Amendment litigation — part 1 can be seen in the October issue of GUNS).*

**GUNS** What's the biggest threat to gun owners right now?

The biggest threat is the opposition, particularly the Bloomberg-funded gun prohibition organizations. The other side is more organized, has more money and more paid boots on the ground than the whole gun rights movement does. You can add them all together and it doesn't matter — that's our biggest problem.

The second biggest problem is gun owners ... the other side is going use some of the problems we've read about in the press with the NRA to try and persuade gun owners to not be engaged.

I don't think that's going to work. I think gun owners are going to be engaged, no matter what. One of the problems we face is the NRA may not be spending as much money in 2020. They may not have it to spend ... with expenses going out the door with all their litigation and the things with the state of New York and Congress and other places where they're being attacked, it's going to be very difficult for them to match the kind of money we really need. That's why the grassroots effort in this is going to be more important than ever.

**GUNS** The Second Amendment Foundation has a phenomenal track record

with litigation — give us a rundown.

We've engaged in virtually everything. Starting with the 2008 Heller decision in the Supreme Court, we filed an amicus brief in that case, and our attorney Alan Gura, handled the oral argument and was a key attorney behind the case.

On the day Heller won, the Second Amendment Foundation filed the Chicago lawsuit (*McDonald v. City of Chicago*) that Alan Gura argued successfully. We won the case, which was really important because it extended Second Amendment rights through incorporation via the 14th Amendment so it is applicable to all the states.

The anti-gunners said if the court ruled our way, it would open the floodgates to all kinds of litigation in the courts — and our opponents were *right*.

Right now, we have approximately 30 cases going on in the courts on gun rights. The day we won the McDonald case, we filed a case known as *Bateman v. Perdue* in North Carolina that took out their emergency powers law so they couldn't suspend Second Amendment rights during snowstorms or hurricanes. This was important because it also took down similar laws in other states as well.

Right now, we have two cases pending with certiorari petitions before the Supreme Court and we have an amicus brief in a Supreme Court case we hope will go to hearing.

Over 80 percent of the case law that's



Alan Gottlieb, Director,  
Second Amendment Foundation

been made supporting Second Amendment rights has been won by the Second Amendment Foundation and/or our attorneys. That's an amazing track record that will support Second Amendment cases for generations to come. No matter who files a lawsuit, it will be supported by all of the Second Amendment Foundation victories, to build more victories in the future.

I'm really proud of that. The Second Amendment Foundation has built a foundation in the courts for Second Amendment litigation.

**GUNS** President Trump has been quietly putting conservatives in the lower courts and two conservatives on the Supreme Court. What do you see over the horizon in terms of court activity? Is there something coming up?

“Our Second Amendment rights are only **one election away from extinction**, and this election is going to be very important.”



Trump has now nominated and confirmed over 100 federal judges on the lower courts. That's really a phenomenal track record. The Obama administration was trying to slam the courthouse door in the face of gun owners. If Hillary Clinton were elected, that would have surely happened, so this is a night-and-day shift that is going to continue for a couple of years. If Trump gets reelected for a second term, I think the courts will be so pro-Second Amendment it will take decades before the other side can try to unravel it.

There's a significant number of cases coming up through the pipeline that deal with the right to carry, with semiautomatic firearms being protected by the Second Amendment; there's just a number of things that we're looking at that we still need to accomplish so the courts are very important.

Again, what I'd like to point out is the 2020 election is going to be very critical because the truth is, our Second Amendment rights are only one election away from extinction.

As *GUNS Magazine* readers are aware, the more than 20 Democrat candidates now in the race have staked out positions all in favor of different forms of gun prohibition. It's no longer about gun safety or "common sense gun control," they've come out for gun prohibition. Gun owners need to recognize that, because if they get elected, the venom being thrown at gun owners is going to turn into legislation, and our rights are really going to be under attack.

**GUNS** When Cory Booker came out earlier this year with his agenda, you ripped Democrats pretty good because none of the other candidates came out with a statement denouncing his proposals.

Cory Booker right now probably sits in the middle of where the other Democrats are on the gun issue. They don't disagree with him. They're all with him, and Cory Booker in the past has come out for banning all handguns and for banning all semiautomatic firearms. That's pretty much what the Democrats really want.

I'm sure there are some Democratic readers of *GUNS Magazine* and I really would urge them to cross party lines because of that one issue alone, because it's really about freedom.

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**Vulcan Model #225**





Bear's new pair sport 3-3/4" and 3" hollow-ground stainless blades (above).

## BEAR & SON RETRO LOCKBACKS PRINT ME A PAIR

**Payton Miller**

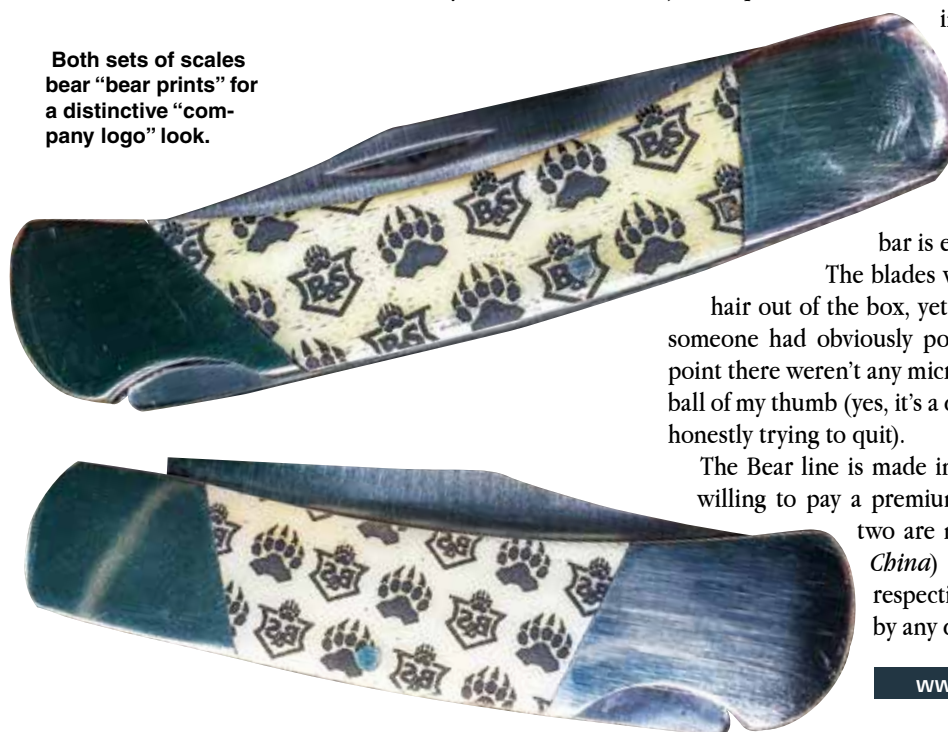
Back when I was a whole lot younger there wasn't much variety in lockback pocketknives. Well, at least not nearly as much as there is today. The reigning popularity champ was Buck's signature 110 lockback Hunter. A hefty, straight-forward, no nonsense clip-point with a positive lock actuated on the rear bolster, it was vastly influential and uncommonly sensible.

A boatload of current folders now rely on the liner lock

and while they're indeed "thumb handy," there's something traditionally comforting about the 110 style, including lack of speed flippers or assisted opening setups. Yes, they're probably slower to close but it's OK — you're not going to break any speed records opening one either. These are *pocketknives*, not tactical folders.

Bear & Son Cutlery follows the old-timey 110 template with two new lockbacks, although on a slimmer, smaller scale. The Bear Branded Bone series contains several styles but the White Smooth Bone models include a 3" clip point and a 3 3/4" clip point. Both feature laser engraved bear pawprints on white bone scales and stainless high-carbon 440 hollow-ground blades. Both are thin and unobtrusive. Nope, no pocket clip. They'll stay down in the bottom of your jeans pocket with the change and car keys the way God intended.

Both sets of scales bear "bear prints" for a distinctive "company logo" look.



Bear claims over 90 hand operations are required to produce each knife. I believe it. They're extraordinarily smooth on opening and closing, and depressing the lock bar is equally easy.

The blades were sharp enough to shave arm hair out of the box, yet they didn't "feel" sharp because someone had obviously polished or stropped them to the point there weren't any microscopic "teeth" to grab on to the ball of my thumb (yes, it's a dumb way to test an edge, but I'm honestly trying to quit).

The Bear line is made in the U.S.A. and lots of folks are willing to pay a premium price for this. Although these two are not inexpensive by import (read: *China*) standards, at \$80.99 and \$76.49 respectively, they're a pretty good deal by any domestic yardstick.

[www.bearandsoncutlery.com](http://www.bearandsoncutlery.com)





The grimace? Not from a measly 26dB noise level, but the Pyramex Amp BT can't help the felt recoil a .357 makes in an S&W J-Frame!

## PYRAMEX AMP BT

### NEW-AGE HEARING PROTECTION WITH A TWIST

**Payton Miller**

If you're a card-carrying member of shooting's "Senior Division," and still have a large percentage of your hearing left, congratulations! If you're anything like me, you've seen your share of different types of hearing protection employed over decades of exposure to gunfire. Everything from such jury-rigged measures as torn off cigarette filters, to empty shell casings and foam plugs, to plain-Jane earmuffs and finally high-dollar, custom-fitted "inside-your-ear" gizmos.

The real breakthrough came with electronic, "noise-attenuating" earmuffs. These made it possible to carry on a normal conversation while wearing them, which is no small thing when on a crowded range with range masters calling



The Pyramex Amp BT is exceptionally comfortable and features independent volume controls, Bluetooth connectivity and four microphones.



**Hookup:** You can use the Bluetooth feature — or you can use a 3mm patch cord — to combine superlative hearing protection with your smartphone's capabilities.

for a ceasefire as instructors shout directions. They protect all those delicate elements in your inner ear by shutting out the high-decibel bad stuff milliseconds before any harm can be done. After all, few things are more painfully disconcerting than yanking off your ear protection just as somebody one bench away lights off a .22-250.

The new Pyramex Amp BT from Venture Gear has kicked the whole earmuff concept up several notches. For starters, the "BT" stands for Bluetooth, meaning you can seamlessly connect with smartphone or you can use the supplied 3mm patch cord — allowing you to either talk on the phone or listen to music.

I'm not altogether sold on the day-to-day utility of the music feature while blasting away but being able to take an emergency phone call on the firing line definitely rates as a good thing. You still have the "Rapid Noise Suppression" feature in either case that is, ultimately, the main benefit of



electronic earmuffs. On top of this, it amplifies surrounding sounds via four microphones for maximum coverage.

The Pyramex AMP BT has independent volume controls for both ambient and Bluetooth sound, meaning you can control the volume from the shooter next to you vs. what's being piped through the headset from your smartphone. The whole deal runs off a pair of AAA batteries but there's another feature pretty much cinching the deal as far as I'm concerned — the unit automatically shuts itself off after four hours. If you've ever forgotten to click off the volume knob on your headset and found it Dead On Arrival at your next shooting session, you'll appreciate this.

At the range they were exceedingly comfortable; the headband is cushioned and is "ergonomically arched" in company terminology so there's no danger of crushing your favorite hat out of shape.

We shot a .357 Magnum and the Rapid Noise Suppression worked as advertised. It drove the noise level down to a very welcome 26dB whether we were listening to some old Jimmy Reed stuff on our smartphone or while carrying on a phone conversation with friends unlucky enough to be stuck back in the office. The Pyramex Amp BT's MSRP is \$119.99

[www.venturegear.com](http://www.venturegear.com)

## MAGPUMP AR15 PRO MAGAZINE LOADER

THUMB SAVING EQUATION:  
EASY LOADING = MORE SHOOTING

Will Dabbs, MD

I love to shoot, but I hate loading magazines. At the end of a long day turning ammo into noise, my thumbs are sore and coated with greasy carbon fouling. Fortunately, the new Magpump AR15 Pro magazine loader does all the tough stuff for you.

MagPump's AR15 loaders come in three grades based upon the composition of their chassis and actuating handles. The Pro has a billet aluminum handle and polymer body. They all come with a bolt-on bench mount but will run fine just sitting on a tabletop. They even mount to a Picatinny rail but I cannot fathom any imaginable circumstance under which you might



The Magpump AR15 Pro will painlessly load any standard AR15 magazine and sports an advanced polymer chassis and billet aluminum actuating-handle.

Will says this young stud recently back from a combat deployment in Syria agreed the Magpump AR15 Pro magazine loader beats human thumbs by any conceivable metric.



wish to do it.

Drop your cartridges into the generous 90-round hopper oriented in either direction. They cannot be jumbled but the MagPump doesn't care which direction they point. Stuff any AR15 magazine in the side and pump the handle. Each cycle loads a round and the machine shuts itself off when the mag is full. Round 30 loads just as easily as round one. The machine worked with every brand magazine I could find, from Vietnam-era Colt 20-rounders to Information Age Magpul 40s.

Gravity pulls the rounds down bullet-first, and the machine orients them properly. The hopper dismounts via pushpins, and there's a thumb-activated magazine release to keep your mags properly situated. I used the indestructible polymer version throughout a massive machinegun shoot without a hitch.

You may love to toil away stuffing rounds in magazines. If pain is your thing, knock yourself out. However, for the rest of us, the Magpump excises all the unpleasantness out of your magazine-loading chores. The MagPump AR15 Pro magazine loader is one exceptionally clever machine.

[www.magpump.com](http://www.magpump.com)



# THE ABDO CONCEALED CARRY PORTABLE SAFE

## PROTECTION HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT.

**Will Dabbs, MD**

Phasmids are insects designed to look like something they are not. The walking stick bug is the archetypal example. Such camouflage is an effective survival mechanism in nature.

Likewise, the ABDO Concealed Carry Portable Safe from EAA rides on your belt and looks like a big cellphone. However, hit a switch and the cover pops open to reveal your instantly accessible defensive handgun. It's safe, secure concealed carry but wholly inoffensive to the less durable members of society.

The ABDO is pretty big. However, some of the more recent cellphones are at least this large so the size shouldn't raise any eyebrows. The exterior of the case has molded-in features resembling a camera lens and sundry camouflage to complete the charade.

The case locks with a key if desired and is spring-loaded. Slide a readily accessible catch and the cover springs open. The gun remains retained via a polymer rod riding in the bore.

The ABDO accepts modest-sized .380 ACP handguns and they publish a list of compatible firearms on their website. The dimensions are such that only compact .380

When open, it holds a fistful of reassurance.



The ABDO from European American Armory is an unconventional open-carry solution that won't alarm the little old lady in line next to you at the grocery.

ACP pocket guns will fit.

There is also a smart version that includes electronic remote locking, app-driven features and controls, Wi-Fi and cellular connectivity, a self-awareness alarm and optional GPS location tracking. The basic ABDO will set you back 50 bucks. The connected version is around \$350.

Packing a firearm for personal defense is a multifaceted challenge orbiting around training, weapon selection, the operating environment, and your carry solution. The ABDO allows you to keep your firearm easily accessible on your belt without anyone around you being the wiser. Secure, accessible, rugged, and lightweight, the ABDO is the gun safe that you wear. 🔫



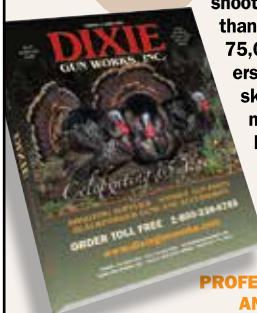
When closed, the ABDO appears to be a large phone or electronic device.

[www.eaacorp.com](http://www.eaacorp.com)

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Century Arms has launched the *Canik ONE Series* pistol line. It comes in two models: the full-size TP9SF in 9mm and the compact TP9SF Elite, also in 9mm. Each model includes Warren Tactical sights, a magazine, an additional back strap and a hard plastic case. Like other Canik handguns, the pistols in the One Series line are reliable and durable but offered at affordable prices. For more info: (800) 991-4867, [www.centuryarms.com](http://www.centuryarms.com)



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ALPS OutdoorZ's *ContenderX* is the ideal gear for whitetail hunters. Weighing 4 lbs., 13 oz. with a 30-liter capacity, it is designed for use in a blind, tree stand or while spot and stalk hunting. The U-shaped zippered top panel allows access to main compartment contents. The built-in bow/gun pocket provides hands-free weapon carry in the field. Other features include a molded foam suspension with load lifters, a hydration pocket with left- and right-side hydration ports and a rain cover. The Contender X pack comes in the VEIL Whitetail Pattern. For more info: (800) 344-2577, [www.alpsoutdoorz.com](http://www.alpsoutdoorz.com)



## ANNIVERSARY-EDITION MODEL 110

**SAVAGE ARMS**

Savage Arms celebrates its 125th year with the *Anniversary-Edition Model 110*. Only 1,894 of the rifles will be built, each with a high-gloss Monte Carlo walnut stock and special engraving on the receiver, grip cap and detachable box magazine. The rifle features a carbon-steel barreled action, button-rifled barrel, drilled and tapped receiver and adjustable AccuTrigger. For more info: (800) 370-0708, [www.savagearms.com](http://www.savagearms.com)







### MAGAZINE FED SHOTGUN (MFS) WILSON COMBAT

Wilson Combat refines the newest Remington 870 variant with custom touches to come up with the *Magazine Fed Shotgun (MFS)*. The 12-ga. MFS weighs 7 lbs. 24 oz. and has a capacity of 6+1. Its cylinder bore barrel

with 3" Magnum chamber is 18.4" long; overall length is 36". Features include an adjustable Trak-Lock Ghost Ring Sight and Ramp-Type Front Sight with Fiber Optic Insert, three stock options, MOE M-LOK forend and a detachable 6-round box magazine. For more info: (800) 955-4856, [www.wilsoncombat.com](http://www.wilsoncombat.com)



### PURSUIT SERIES BUCK KNIVES

Buck Knives' *Pursuit Series* is a multi-purpose alternative to traditional hunting knives. The knives in the series are competitively priced. They come in fixed and folding versions with standard or gut-hook blades in 420HC

steel. Additional design details create a comfortable, non-slip profile. Ideal for use in the field, the blades in the Pursuit line are finished with Buck's Edge2x technology making them really sharp right out of the box. For more info: (208) 262-0500, [www.buckknives.com](http://www.buckknives.com)



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The Maven *S.2 Spotting Scope* is designed to maximize performance while minimizing size and weight. It comes in an 11"-long, 34-oz. package so you can go places without the heavy load. The S.2 Spotting Scope features a 12-27x magnification range, a 56mm fluorite objective lens, an Abbe-Koenig prism and more. With its clarity and wide field of view, the scope is sure to deliver high contrast detail and enhance your glassing experience. For more info: (800) 307-1109, [www.mavenbuilt.com](http://www.mavenbuilt.com)

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### SWARM GEN2 GAMO OUTDOOR USA

Gamo's *Swarm Fusion 10X GEN2* has a horizontal magazine alignment making it easy to load 10 pellets. The rifle comes in .177 and .22 calibers and shoots at high velocities. It comes with a 3-9x40 scope and a recoil-reducing scope rail. The polymer jacketed steel

barrel is fitted with an open, adjustable iron back sight and a fiber optic front blade. Features of the Swarm Fusion 10X include a glass-filled nylon stock, a 10X Gen2 Quick-Shot System, Whisper Fusion sound dampening technology and a Custom Action Trigger. For more info: (954) 581-5822, [www.gamousa.com](http://www.gamousa.com)





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## 350 LEGEND BRASS

### STARLINE BRASS

Starline Brass has added another rifle caliber — the *350 Legend* — to their line-up of high-quality rifle brass. Introduced by Winchester and approved by SAAMI early this year, the .350 Legend is a cartridge without a parent case. The tapered case has a rebated rim so it can use the standard .223 bolt face found on many common rifles including the AR-15. The cartridge can be used for hunting in several states allowing straightwall rifle cartridges only. For more info: (800) 280-6660, [www.starlinebrass.com](http://www.starlinebrass.com)



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The *Eagle Defender* is a "Pancake-style" holster from Nelson Holsters. It has equal molding on both sides allowing the holster to hold the gun closer to the body. The OWB holster conceals a gun really well with a shirttail that's not tucked in. The Eagle Defender is available in two-tone (saddle tan and black). Made of 100 percent Wicket & Craig leather, each Nelson holster is handmade in the U.S.A. For more info: (828) 729-3415, [www.nelsonholsters.com](http://www.nelsonholsters.com)







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**NATA**  
**TOPS KNIVES**

The *Nata* from TOPS Knives is Leo Espinoza's version of the hatchet. The handle and grind have been updated but the small chopper still delivers. The *Nata* is a full-tang knife with an OAL of 11.63". Its 6.13" blade is made from 1095 steel either with a Black Traction or Acid Rain finish; handle is Burlap Micarta. It comes with a leather belt sheath. The *Nata* can be used to clear brush, prune branches and more. For more info: (208) 542-0113, [www.topsknives.com](http://www.topsknives.com)

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# Savage Arms

## 110 STORM PACKAGE

**F**ounded by Arthur Savage in 1894, the Savage Repeating Arms Company today continues to offer products for recreation, competitive shooting, self-defense and hunting. As the company celebrates its 125th anniversary this year (see *GUNS Magazine* September 2019 for John Taffin's "Savage Arms 125th Celebration"), we are delighted a Savage Arms firearm is at the forefront of this issue's giveaway. Built on Savage's time-tested 110 platform but with a modern design and improved ergonomics, the *110 Storm* has the fit and function of a custom rifle. It features an AccuFit system allowing shooters to customize length-of-pull and comb height, a user-adjustable AccuTrigger for a light, crisp pull and an AccuStock rail system to secure the action three-dimensionally along its entire length. Chambered in 270 WIN with a 4-round capacity,

the 110 Storm's stainless steel barrel and receiver with a matte finish complements the gray Sporter stock.

A box of Federal Ammunition's Gold Medal Berger 224 Valkyrie comes with the giveaway. Gold Medal Berger loads feature an advanced boat-tail bullet with a high ballistic coefficient providing the flattest trajectories, less wind drift and long-range accuracy.

Spyderco's *Efficient* (C216GBBK) is a cutting tool for the tactically oriented. The 7.07"-long knife we are giving away has a non-reflective black oxide coating on its 2.98" 8Cr13MoV blade. The ergonomic handle has stainless steel liners, G-10 scales, a lanyard hole and an hourglass clip.

CamelBak's *Sparta* is the pack to take for single-day excursions. Made of 500D Double-rip Cordura, the Sparta can carry over 30 liters of cargo including 100 oz. of liquid in its Mil Spec Crux Lumbar Reservoir.

According to Savage Arms, holding one of their guns is "knowing what winning feels like." That means if we pick your name in this giveaway, it's going to be a double-win for you. Go to [www.gunsmagazine.com/giveaways](http://www.gunsmagazine.com/giveaways) or mail a postcard instead. —Jazz Jimenez



### 110 STORM

**MAKER:** Savage Arms  
**CALIBER:** 270 WIN, **CAPACITY:** 4  
**BARREL LENGTH:** 22", **OAL:** 43",  
**WEIGHT:** 7.45 lbs.  
[www.savagearms.com](http://www.savagearms.com)  
**VALUE:** \$865



### EFFICIENT BLACK

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## DIAL KEITH-358429

### DIFFERENT FACES AND BASES FOR A LEGENDARY BULLET

If Elmer Keith were alive today, I imagine him pushing up his famous wide-brimmed Stetson, grinning at all the options available for his famous 358429 cast semi-wadcutter mold design. With all the options available today, the 358429 is still as viable today as it was when it first dropped from a hot Lyman/Ideal mold.

#### ELMER'S TAKE

Looking at the shiny brass Cramer-style hollow-point (HP) molds, Elmer would

appreciate the craftsmanship and skill involved in making these beauties. He'd marvel about his bullet design making it clear across the world, to the country of Slovenia, and having more options than a taco bar.

He'd notice and appreciate the stylish vent lines, the ease and speed of operation, while making piles of HP bullets almost as fast as casting solids. He'd love the different options too, thinking which ones he'd use for each specific task.

Yessiree, Ol' Elmer would be mighty



Nothing sexier than a 358429 loaded in .38 Special brass, except maybe the 429421 loaded in .44 Special.

pleased with the development of his humble cast semi-wadcutter slug. It's a favorite of mine, too.

#### SOME HISTORY

Elmer's famous trilogy of terror, caliber-wise, utilizing his famous "Keith" bullet design started with the Lyman 429421 for the .44 Special. He abandoned the .45 Colt SAA in 1927, when he blew it up on the 4th of July with heavy handloads of his own making. *Oops!*

He also designed the Lyman 454423 for use in the .45 ACP/Auto Rim. The 454424 followed shortly after for the .45 Colt. Lastly was the Lyman 358429, designed for heavy loads in S&W N-Frame .38/44 sixguns.

Elmer's long-nosed design was greatly designed, making it more aerodynamic, hence flatter shooting, but it had a drawback. It wasn't conducive to loading in .357 Magnum brass in S&Ws of the day. Bear in mind Elmer designed this bullet before the advent of the .357 Magnum, but his



The results: different bullets made using M-P Molds with a vintage Lyman/Ideal mold box in the background.



A variety of Elmer's famous Lyman/Ideal 358429. They've been making .38 Specials bark like magnums since their inception.



hot-loaded .38s got some people thinking.

Elmer designed it to be loaded in .38 Special cases, maximizing nose length and placing the crimp-groove so overall length would maximize powder capacity in the S&W .38/44 Outdoorsman.

If loaded in .357 Magnum brass, roll-crimping over the front driving band was necessary so the nose wouldn't protrude from the cylinder. Elmer added a fourth caliber to his trilogy in 1963-64 for the newly developed .41 Magnum, with Lyman's 410459.

## MP MOLDS

I first heard about MP Molds around 10 years ago on a cast-bullet website. People were talking about these beautiful brass HP molds from Slovenia. Owner and founder Miha Previc is just like you and me in that he enjoys casting, loading and shooting his own bullets.

He was a plastics mold designer in a previous life and tried making bullet molds for himself. The same principles are used, just different filling, right?

He knows vents are necessary to allow air to escape, preventing voids as molten alloy enters the cavities. His cavities are highly polished to allow easy drop out. The sprue-plate bolt has a cross-screw, locking it in place so it won't loosen during operation. Yes, Miha knows his molds.



**M-P Molds have different pins to allow different noses. Now it's socially acceptable to pick your nose and brag about the results!**

## OPTIONS, VARIATIONS

Miha knows cast bullets are versatile and made even more so when you tweak their bases, noses, and even lube grooves. By adding a Gas Check (GC) and a good lube, you can drive your cast bullets up to 3,000 fps without leading. Different HP styles allow for different rates of expansion. Go

deep-cavity for a more frangible, expanding HP, shallow for less.

Do you powder coat your cast slugs? No sense having lube grooves if you do. You'll pick up more bullet weight (5 grains in this instance) and casting will be a breeze as these groove-less bullets drop from the mold.

Miha also offers molds made in 2, 4, 6 and even 8-cavity styles. The 6 and 8 styles are limited to solid design only, but boy can they stack up the bullets!

Bobby Kell Jr. from Illinois is a big help, taking and sending measurements to Miha. They're sent in from customers interested in getting a mold. Ninety percent of M-P Molds are sold in the U.S. at factory-direct prices.

## TERMINAL EFFECT

The Lyman/Ideal 358429 is still an excellent bullet, especially when loaded in .38 Special cases (as intended) with 13.0 grains of 2400. This load is for .357 Magnum guns only! Velocities run over 1,200 fps from 4" barrels.

Combined with the many options available from M-P Molds, Elmer's classic bullets make them "the shot heard 'round the world" literally!



**Tank loads the bullets like they were designed to be loaded — hot! They should only be shot in magnum-chambered guns!**

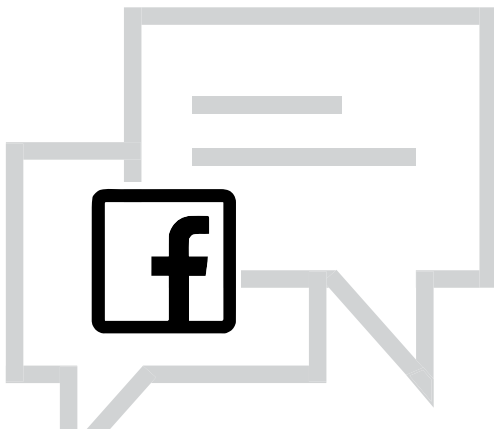
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## CAMPFIRE TALES

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Cimarron offers the Richards-Mason Conversions in both an Army Model (left) and a Navy Model (right).

and some of them are chambered in .44 Special allowing all three .44 cartridges to be used in the same cylinder.

Mike Harvey of Cimarron Firearms and I go way back. I was the first one to write about his replicas and also point out the fact he has worked very hard to have the Italians produce exceptionally authentic replicas — not only authentic in design but also of excellent quality. Cimarron's offerings have included all three stages of Colt conversions, the Richards, the Richards-Mason, and the 1871-72 Open-Top. I've been shooting conversion replicas ever since they first began nearly 40 years ago. Currently, I am using two relatively new Cimarron conversions.

### FRAMING THE DIFFERENCE

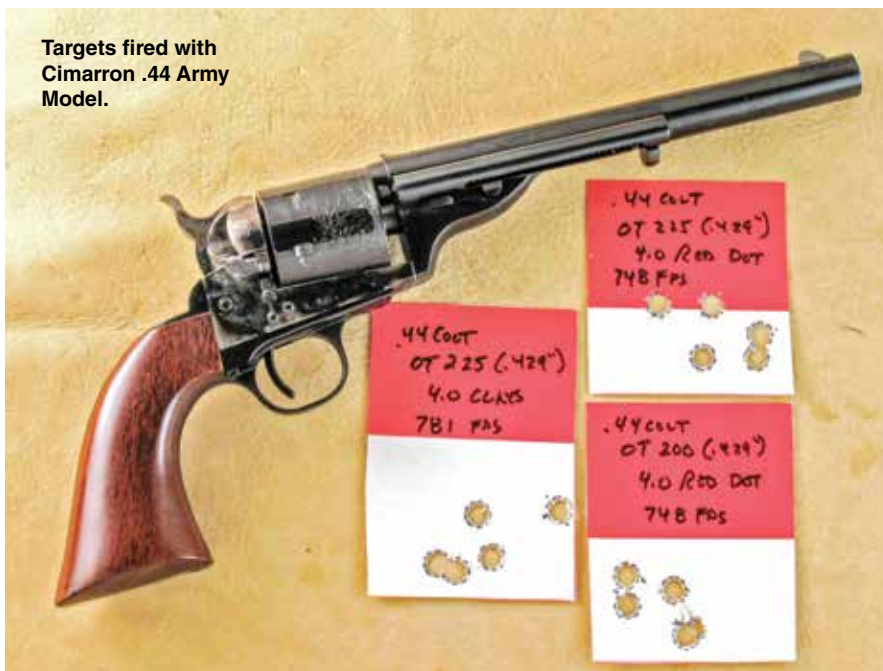
These two recent Richards-Mason conversions are basically identical except for the grip frames. The Army Model has a steel 1860 grip frame while the Navy Model has the 1851 Navy brass grip frame. The latter grip frame became the standard Colt Single Action Army frame. Both examples have 7-1/2" barrels, are very nicely finished with a deep blue, have smooth actions and lock up tightly. Although they'll handle all three of the .44 cartridges I've mentioned, I only use them with the two cartridges from the same era as the original conversions — the .44 Colt and .44 Russian. The .44 Special is one of my all-time favorites, however, I prefer to use it in sixguns which have arrived since it first saw the light of day in 1907/1908.

My most-used powders in loading .44 Russian and .44 Colt for use in these conversions are Red Dot and Clays. I mainly use Oregon Trail Round-Nosed Flat Point (RNFP) cast bullets. The 200- and 225-gr. over 3.5 grains of Red Dot at 700 and 770 fps respectively in .44 Russian brass — or the 240 over 3.5 grains of Clays at 780 fps — all group in the 1" range for five shots at 20 yards. Switching to the .44 Colt brass, my most accurate loads are the Oregon Trail 200-gr. RNFP over 4.0 grains Red Dot (725 fps) and the same bullet over 4.0 grains of Clays for the same accuracy and velocity.

With the loads basically duplicating the original black powder loads, these Richards-Mason cartridge conversions from Cimarron are pleasant to shoot with minimum felt recoil — they also serve well to transport our sixgunnin' spirit backwards to the time of the Western Frontier.



Old/new .44 lineup (left to right): .44 Russian, .44 Special, .44 Magnum, .44 Colt.



Targets fired with Cimarron .44 Army Model.



## CIMARRON'S COLT CARTRIDGE CONVERSIONS

### TECHNOLOGY TRANSITION FRONTIER-STYLE

Charles Richards was an assistant factory superintendent at Colt and was awarded three major patents for breech loading firearms, including the Richards Conversion, in 1871. Existing cap and ball cylinders were cut off at the back to allow the installation of a conversion ring to accept cartridges. To complete the conversion, the rammer for seating round balls over the powder charge was removed from beneath the barrel of an 1860 Army and replaced by an ejector rod and housing on the right side for removing spent cartridges.

A loading gate at the rear of the cylinder swung open for loading and unloading. Both civilians and the U.S. Army returned 1860s to the factory to be converted and others were produced as new sixguns at the factory. Among the various conversions, Richards Conversions are recognized by the rear sight on the conversion ring and

an ejector rod housing stopping about 1" in front of the face of the cylinder.

With the arrival of the Second Model Richards conversions, the conversion ring, hammer, and loading gate were all improved, and the Richards-Mason Conversion moved the rear sight to the back of the barrel in front of the cylinder. William Mason was superintendent of the armory at Colt from the mid-1860s until the early 1880s when he moved over to Winchester. He would be responsible for the improvements on the Richards Conversion, the 1871-72 Open-Top, and of course the Colt Single Action Army.

#### BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE

Sixgun history would not be complete without the cartridge conversions as they are the bridge from Colt's percussion revolvers to the Colt Single Action Army. Conversions were based on the 1860 Colt

“The conversions performed on these revolvers kept many of them **shooting right** through the turn of the 20th Century.”



The 19th Century .44s (left to right): .44 American, .44 Russian, .44 Colt.

Army which used a 0.451" round ball. When the switch was made to a cartridge system, the 1860 Army .44 was chambered for the .44 Colt. The round uses a heel-type bullet, a projectile whose base was smaller in diameter than the rest of the bullet. This results in a bullet the same diameter as the outside of the case, much like today's .22 rimfire rounds.

The original loading for the .44 Colt was 21 grains of black powder with a thick lube wad between a conical bullet and powder. Bullets weighed approximately 208 grains and muzzle velocity was around 750 fps. The U.S. Army adopted the .44 Colt as one of its official cartridges for two years. When Colt and Smith & Wesson introduced their cartridge-firing sixguns in the early 1870s, thousands of perfectly good cap-and-ball sixguns were still in service. The conversions performed on these revolvers kept many of them shooting right through the turn of the 20th Century.

Replicas are available in the Richards Conversion, Richards-Mason Conversion, and the 1871-72 Open-Top versions, all chambered in a modernized version of the .44 Colt. This “modernized” load was basically a .44 Special trimmed to length. I believe Black Hills was the first to offer modern .44 Colt cartridges in Starline .44 Colt brass. The first .44 Colts from Black Hills were still head-stamped .44 Special, but now all .44 Colt brass is properly marked. The replica cartridge conversions had a cylinder too small in diameter to accept six cartridges with the same diameter rim as the .44 Special, so the rims were simply turned to a smaller diameter. Today's .44 Colt cartridge conversions are available with a larger diameter cylinder so they'll accept .44 Russian cartridges



Original Richards Conversion (top) compared to a replica.

*continued on page 81*



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