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HUNTER**

.357

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DA REVOLVER?**

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**KALASHNIKOV
MEETS GLOCK**

COLT FACELIFT

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A brace of Taurus Raging Hunter revolvers graces our cover in front of the skull of our late lamented porcine friend.



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THE .455 WEBLEY

TAKE IT EASY ON THE SIXGUN

Mr. Taffin, I found your article "The .455 Webley Part 2: Dealing with the conversion question" in the September 2019 issue of *GUNS Magazine* very interesting. You mention you can shoot .45 ACP and .45 Auto Rim in these guns — what type of loads are you using? I have read and heard from more than one source that although these guns were converted to .45 ACP they were only designed to cope with the much lower pressure .455 round. Also, a related question — many S&W 2nd model Hand Ejectors originally chambered for .455 were also converted to .45 Long Colt. I've read the same precautions regarding these conversions. Would you recommend keeping

to "cowboy" pressure loads, or do you have a handloading recipe more appropriate for the situation.

Adam D'Amico via email

For both of your questions I would definitely err on the side of caution with both of these sixguns. They are old and who knows what they may have been subjected to in the past. Easy is the watchword!
—John Taffin

TAFFIN'S FOOTSTEPS

In reference to Taffin's Campfire Tales in the October 2019 issue ("Marlin or Winchester? A lever-lover wrestles with the

continued on page 30

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BUCKET LISTS

FULL OR EMPTY, THEY GUIDE A MAGICAL JOURNEY.

I would've been all of 10 years old when Tex Ritter sang the mournful lyrics: "Oh my buckets got a hole in it; Yes my buckets got a hole in it; Oh my buckets got a hole in it ..." And who can forget when Jimmy Durante literally kicked the bucket in *It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad, World*?

Then there was the more modern bucket scene when Tom Selleck as Matthew Quigley made an unbelievably long shot on a bucket way out yonder with his Sharps. Long before any of these buckets happened I was making lists. I didn't realize at the time these would be called bucket lists.

HARD TIMES

Money did not come easy in the late

1940s, at least not in my family and I often collected old newspapers and pop bottles to make a few pennies. Once I got 25 pennies, I would buy one of the outdoor magazines and read about exotic hunts all over the world. My bucket list consisted of a diagram of my future game room as I planned where each trophy would be hung. This changed virtually every day as my dreams expanded. I made so many lists it was a rare animal I could not recognize and plan where it was to be displayed.

From the beginning, mapping of all my dreamt-about trophies, I expanded to all kinds of lists — future guns I would have, the future places I would live and future adventures I would experience. All of

these were bucket lists even though I did not know it at the time. Shortly thereafter we moved from the housing project for returning veterans to a real house where I could have my own bedroom. "This is a great place to hang maps of all the places I would soon hunt around the world," I thought.

I planned to live by myself in some forest area and I remember drawings of myself, levergun in hand, a loyal malamute by my side and a Jeep parked in the back-ground. I never did get the Jeep and I was still a teenager when a young girl — the future Diamond Dot — changed my plans for living a solitary life.

ON THE LIST

One searched-after firearm on my bucket list was a Marlin levergun — not just any Marlin but a straight-gripped .35

"I never did get the Jeep and I was still a teenager when a young girl — the future Diamond Dot — changed my plans for living a solitary life."



The bottom levergun is the elusive .35 Remington straight-gripped Marlin John captured at a Labor Day weekend sale; the two pistol-gripped versions were added later.

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Remington. In my youth, Marlin issued a special Texan lever action with examples in both .30-30 and .35 Remington but I never saw either one except in pictures. In the early 1980s I started looking for a straight-gripped .35 Remington Marlin levergun with a 20" barrel and had people around the country looking for me. None were to be found.

At the time we owned acreage in the mountains 100 miles north of town we used for camping with the kids. Eventually we moved a 70-foot mobile home onto the property and covered it with a snow roof. We had electricity and even a well. It was a great place to just rest and recuperate.

We would often pass a small gun shop on the main highway about 15 miles south of our mountain hideaway. Every weekend when we would go up there, the shop would be closed — at least until one Labor Day weekend. As I drove by I noticed it was not only open but had a large sign saying: "20% off everything this weekend only." I turned around and quickly went back, feeling I would probably never find anything I really wanted.

I walked into the shop, looked at the rifle racks behind the counter and spotted a straight gripped Marlin levergun. I asked the owner about it and his immediate response was: "Oh, you don't want that thing. It's not a .30-30, it is one of those .35 Remingtons."

I tried not to get too excited as he handed me what he thought was a second class Marlin. I continued to remain very calm as I wrote the check. Finally the

Another important bucket list item for John was this Custom King Gunsight Company Colt Single Action.



straight-gripped .35 Remington, which had been on my bucket list for decades, could now be crossed off.

A KING CUSTOM

Another gun I have dreamed about for even longer was a custom sixgun by King Gunsight Co. D.W. King was a rifle marksman who was not satisfied with the sights available, so he decided to make his own. This was in the late 1920s and he formed the King Gun Sight Co. He not only provided rifle sights but did a brisk business applying custom sights to sixguns, especially for target shooters. The King Gun Sight Co. could not survive after the death of the founder and disappeared in the early 1950s.

Looking at pictures of his custom work will show his ideas were later incorporated into factory guns. King also did custom

work such as cockeyed hammers and wide triggers both set up for a short action. Elmer Keith had his 7-1/2" .44 Special Colt Single Action worked over by King and this classic sixgun was one I lusted after as a beginning shooter. In addition to ivory stocks Keith had his fitted with a barrel band front sight, a fully adjustable rear sight, and a King short action.

One of my best friends works in the local Cabela's Gun Library and I have come up with some very cool sixguns over the years by stopping in occasionally. This trip he had a Colt to show me. Checking the serial number I found it was a Colt Single Action manufactured in 1921. It was chambered in .357 Magnum, which did not arrive until 1935, meaning sometime between 1935 and the beginning of WWII it was sent back to Colt to be converted to the then-relatively-new .357 Magnum with a 5-1/2" barrel — but this was only the beginning!

The gun had also been turned over to the King Gun Sight Company for extensive custom work. Just as with Elmer Keith's .44 Special, this one had the short action, cockeyed hammer, wide trigger, and a full-length rib which contained the King mirrored front sight and adjustable rear sight. Another bucket list firearm had been found!

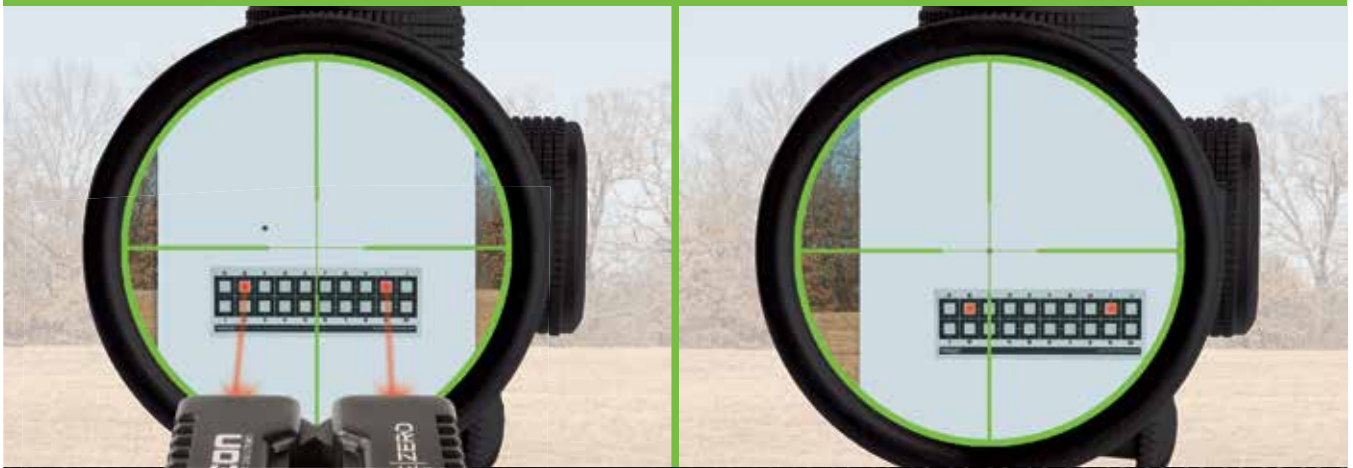
Our bucket list, as well as life, can often be like the bucket Tex Ritter sang about. Sometimes our bucket is full and overflowing, sometimes it's half-full, and sometimes it just has holes in it. My bucket list definitely has holes in it and I will never complete the whole list, however I have been blessed beyond all measure and when I pass, the bucket list will still not be complete — but I have certainly enjoyed the trip.



John's latest items to be crossed off the bucket list are these SIG SAUER semi automatic pistols chambered in .357 SIG.

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THE NON-SLIP GRIP

"DON'T MOVE!" SHOULDN'T
JUST APPLY TO BAD GUYS.

Every year I compete in Richard Davis' seminal bowling pin shoot at Central Lake, Michigan (pinshoot.com). This year I saw some things to inspire this particular column.

Those big wooden tenpins are heavy and need some *oomph* to blow them three feet back off their table. Hence, the main guns are .45s, full power 10mms, and assorted

Magnums. The fastest times win, and the significant recoil at speed wants to move the gun within your grasp. Having to regrip between shots slows you down while not regripping properly will impair accuracy. The software fix is to find out the exact optimum grasp on the handgun then apply a really hard grip with both hands.

The hardware fix generally involves



External grasp fixes on GLOCKS: rubber "GLOCK sock" on G42 .380 (left), Decal Grips on G17 9mm (right).

changing the grip configuration or surface in some way.

METAL-FRAME AUTOLOADERS

First, the grip shouldn't have anything to bite the hand when shot, or make it want to be somewhere else. Beavertail grip safeties on 1911s and rounded rear slide edges and beavertails on Walther PP series pistols are good examples of hardware correction for this.

The harder the pistol "kicks," the more it wants to twist in the shooter's hand. I've seen horizontal striations on grip frames, which won't do much; vertical grooves, which help more; and stippling and checkering, which help most of all. The more lines per inch of checkering, the less abrasive it is to your hands in long-term shooting. For a match, I like 20 LPI. If I'll be shooting .45s a lot more, such as during an intensive training course, 25 LPI is easier on my fingers. This is what I specified on my signature model Ed Brown revolver because it was a carry gun.

Stippling as opposed to checkering? The styles vary. Personally, the scalloped designs are easy on my hands while the toughest was Jim Clark's signature "tiger tooth" job, which had little projections all down the front. It bit rock solid into the hand and I won several matches with it but "bit" was the operative term as far as comfort. I was glad I had it on my light-kicking long-slide Clark Colt chambered for mild .38 wadcutters.

Another route is "rubber" grips, like the Hogue and Pachmayr models available. You can get them with just the side panels providing a tacky surface for the palms or with a frontal wrap-around. The latter configuration will make the grip feel bigger, especially in the finger-grooved style, and will feel as if you have "less hand around the gun" — but will certainly reduce slippage.

G10 and Micarta grip panels, such as

Custom GLOCK stippling (from top): Light touch by David Maglio on G33, light stipple by Tarnhelm.com on G30 .45, aggressive stipple by Robar on G30S.





Pick your grip (Left-right): smooth, striated, stippled, checkered, flat rubber and finger-grooved rubber.

“The recoil chewed the hell out of his hand, drawing blood.”

those by VZ Grips give wonderful traction, but some sensitive hands find them too rough; ditto sensitive bellies when carrying concealed against bare skin.

POLYMER FRAME PISTOLS

One option is factory-provided stippling, the most aggressive of which was GLOCK's RTF2 series and Smith & Wesson's M&P 2.0 pistols. The RTF2 was discontinued because the stippling was wearing through police uniform jackets. It's subjective, but I really like the stippling on the current Gen5 GLOCKS. Want more? Several custom gunsmiths can make them as rough (or not) as you want plus there's always the “GLOCK sock,” which started out as bicycle tire tube around the grip and soon morphed into several purpose-built styles and brands. More aesthetically pleasing are stick-on panels such as Decal Grip and Talon Grips.

REVOLVERS

At the Michigan Pin Shoot one of the top shooters, Pat Sweeney, shot a lot with heavy-loaded revolvers, one of which had been stippled aggressively all the way up the backstrap. The recoil chewed the hell out of his hand, drawing blood. The web of the hand is a lot more tender than the palmar surface on most of us. The traditional answer is rubber grips by the makers mentioned above but the style putting



Don't custom checker on the area making contact with the sensitive web of the hand! Yep, those are bloodstains on the big-bore S&W.



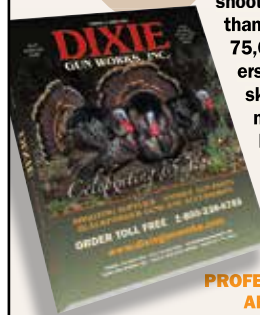
Or you get this — too-high checkering has bitten into a duct-taped hand from heavy caliber S&W recoil (arrow).

some cushion between web of hand and backstrap also increases trigger reach and can make it a bit harder to get leverage on a double-action trigger.

If your choice is S&W, don't neglect their own X-Frame grips, designed to absorb the kick from .460 and .500 monster Magnums. If the problem is just grip shift and no recoil cushioning is needed, one “old-school” ugly-but-effective option is wrapping electrical friction tape around the revolver's grips.

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SIG SAUER SIG716 PATROL

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When the term “AR-15” comes up, most folks tend to think of the 5.56mm/.223 Remington cartridge. Fact is the first rifle of this genre invented by Eugene Stoner was chambered for 7.62x51mm NATO (.308 Winchester) and known as the AR-10.

GENESIS

The AR-10 was created by Eugene Stoner in the late 1950s at the firm of ArmaLite. Hence, the prefix AR does not mean “assault rifle” or “automatic rifle,” but rather refers to the company first making the rifle.

When the Army began looking for a rifle to replace the M1 Garand, ArmaLite entered the AR-10 in the competition, going up against what would eventually be known as the M14 and FN-FAL and, of course, the M14 was selected to replace the M1. Since then, many companies have made — and improved — AR-type rifles chambered for the .308 Winchester cartridge. One of these companies is SIG SAUER.

OUT ON PATROL

SIG, not content to rest on its laurels, has improved the original SIG716 Patrol with the release of the 716G2. The subject of this article will be the original Patrol model which, besides having a different handguard and the use of a muzzle brake instead of a flash hider, is essentially the same as the newer rifles. It is available in Flat Dark Earth

(shown here) or black, which I like to call “Scorched Earth.”

The 716 Patrol has a 16" barrel with a 1:10 twist barrel capped by an A2-type flash suppressor. The barrel is free-floated and housed inside an aluminum quad-rail forend. Both front and rear sights fold down. The rear sight is adjustable for windage and the front is adjustable for elevation. The magazine release is ambidextrous.

Overall length of the 716 with the Magpul 6-position ACS stock fully extended is 37.4". Two socket-type sling studs are located on both sides of the handguards and on the lower receiver behind the pistol grip. Yet another is located toward the butt end. This last one is reversible but not located on each side.

Unloaded weight is 9.3 lbs. The pistol grip used is the Magpul MIAD.

The rifle utilizes SIG's short-stroke pushrod operating system, which some feel is more efficient than the direct impingement design. While recoil is subjective, in my opinion the 716 does indeed have less felt recoil than other semiautomatic rifles of the same caliber.

For optimal performance under varying conditions, the rifle has a four-position gas regulator. The four positions are:

- #1: normal
- #2: adverse conditions such as fouling or under-functioning ammunition
- #3: firing with a suppressor — partial gas

cutoff but still allows cycling of the action

#4: firing with a suppressor — complete gas cutoff, allowing the rifle to function as a single-shot rifle

The rifle ships with one 20-round Magpul PMAG but will work with AR-10 magazines from other companies. Hunting-legal five-round mags as well as 10- and 20-round magazines are available from Brownells while Magpul offers 10- to 25-round mags and even a drum 50-rounder.

SEEING IT ALL

For the evaluation, I mounted a Redfield Revolution/Tac 3-9x40 on the 716. I chose this optic due to its light weight — less than one pound — to keep the weight low on an already somewhat heavy rifle. The iron sights can be seen through the ocular lens, sitting in the lower 1/3 of the eyepiece.

The reticle consists of heavy four-plex lines with hash marks like a mil-dot optic, but the hash marks correspond to minute-of-angle (MOA) instead of mils, making it easier to zero for myself and other mathematically challenged folks. Windage and elevation clicks equal 1/4" (.25 MOA) at 100 yards.

Using NATO 7.62mm M80 Ball (147-gr. FMJ), I obtained a rough zero at 50 yards, then moved back to 100 yards and made the necessary adjustments to finetune the scope.

THE LITTLE CREEP

Although not a precision rifle, the 716 Patrol's trigger still left a lot to be desired. Using my Lyman electronic trigger gauge, it broke on an average of 9.4 lbs. after some noticeable creep.

I used a variety of military and commercial ammunition — both match and defensive/



The SIG716 Patrol is focused on self-defense, bringing robust big-bore power to an ultra-reliable AR-pattern rifle.

GUNS Your next gun story begins here!



Four-position gas regulator allows firing under all conditions, even when fouled or wearing a snuffer on the business end.



All the controls on the SIG716 Patrol reside in the expected AR places, while the mag release is ambidextrous.



Other high-end features include Magpul furniture including the excellent 6-position ACS stock.

hunting — to evaluate the overall performance. Magpul and Brownells' 20-round magazines were used exclusively to feed the beast. All loads were shot with the gas regulator in the "normal" position and did not require any adjustment.

Three five-round groups of each load were fired and then averaged to obtain overall group size. The rifle was shot from the prone position with a TangoDown ACB bipod.

The best group from the match loads

was the Black Hills 175-gr. BTHP, averaging 1.2". In this sample, the Winchester 168-gr. Match performed dismally, averaging 2.7". The best defensive/hunting load came from the Australian Outback 168-gr. GameKing, coming in at only 0.78". No malfunctions were experienced.

I have no doubt better groups could be turned in with an improved trigger. Of course, pursuit of greater accuracy could be a quixotic pursuit — the majority of shots fired with a rifle by law enforcement are

less than 100 yards. For the private citizen, I think with even a 50-yard shot it may be difficult to convince a jury you were in immediate fear for your life.

Overall, the SIG716 Patrol proved accurate and 100 percent reliable. If you like the ergonomics of the AR-15 but want something harder hitting at longer range, the SIG716 Patrol is worth a serious look.

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HOLD THE PHONE! SOMEDAY YOUR SCOPE MIGHT EVEN START BRAGGING FOR YOU!

Had the buck been peeking from behind a rock, or screened by aspens, my grip on the binocular wouldn't have dented its jacket. "Shoot!" I hissed, through teeth tight enough to sever a crescent wrench.

"I can't see him," said my client, eye to his scope. The rifle's barrel looped crazily, as if pulling taffy from the clouds — as if the buck might be up there instead of trotting through open sage before us.

"Look!" I pointed, arm beside his ear. The rifle bobbed about; the deer chugged along, spooling out more ground, quartering off. "Where I'm pointing!"

Apoplexy slurred my words.

This prompted the hunter to grab the scope dial with his trigger hand and twist it back and forth as he swept the sage with the gyrating muzzle. The deer jogged out of sight.

TOO MUCH MAGNIFICATION

I too have failed to see game almost begging for a bullet. The eye may seek a bigger or smaller image than the animal presents, or a different color or shape. Then there's the helpful guide or partner,

screeching "right by that tree!" — hand jabbing toward a slope with enough timber to build a fleet of Spanish galleons and four Seattle sub-divisions. Urgency seems to drop a veil.

When there's no time for the bino, you should find the beast in your scope as quickly as you see it with your naked eye. Too much magnification makes the task hopeless. A 4-16x scope set at the low end has a field of about 30 feet at 100 yards. At 16x, figure 7 or 8 feet, which is a small sliver of Colorado indeed! The client who savaged his scope dial trying to find the deer loafing through sage would have upped his odds by carrying the sight at 4x.

High magnification, if you must indulge, makes sense only after you're in position, ready to fire.

Modern scopes are much like smart phones — increasingly sophisticated and costly, with enough functions to control the earth's rotation, if only you keep dialing, scrolling and punching buttons.

Hunters would see more game if they paid more attention to the cover than to their hardware. They'd shoot faster with more primitive sights.

Early hunting scopes were simple tubes whose lenses magnified images two or three times. After coatings boosted brightness (1930s), tubes were fog-proofed (1940s) and reticles stayed centered during W/E adjustment (1950s), scopes offered hunters all they needed in a sight at attractive prices. In 1957 you could buy a 4x Lyman All American for \$49.50. The Bear Cub series later snared by Redfield had a 4x at \$59.50. Leupold's Mountaineer cost \$79.50, while the \$45 Weaver K4's sold to the walls.

LASERS, BLUETOOTH AND BARN RATS

Variable power, range-finding reticles, parallax correction, illumination, laser ranging, trajectory-matched dials and Bluetooth chat with wireless phones were distractions unimagined when I was peering through a 3/4" Weaver B4 to upend barn rats with .22 Shorts. My first hunting scope scaled 8 oz. As tube diameters grew from 7/8" to 1" to 26mm, then 30mm, weight increases were mitigated somewhat by a switch from steel to alloy. Now 34, 35 and 36mm tubes, and pie-plate front glass



Swarovski's incomparable new 5-25x52 dS (top) dwarfs their 3-9x36, one of Wayne's favorite hunting sights.



The march to higher power in bigger scopes is inexorable, but sophistication isn't for Neanderthals.

dishing more light into powerful lenses, push scopes over 40 oz.!

Swarovski managed to keep weight of its X5/X5i “Long Range Expert” to an even 2 lbs. The star of this 30mm series is a 5-25x56 illuminated optic with 1/8-minute clicks. Shooters who can hold into half an inch at 400 yards will savor the feature. The 3.5-18x50 version for the rest of us is still a champ, with 122 minutes of elevation adjustment and nearly 4" of eye relief. All X5/X5i scopes have a window to show rotation steps, so you won't make full-rotation errors spinning the trajectory-matched dial. Short months ago Swarovski upstaged its Z6i family with the Z8i — top power eight times the bottom. A span this broad seems pointless to me, but it's chic now. Swarovski also added a “switchable reticle.”

As if the Austrian firm needed to prove its innovative chops, it brought to the 2019 SHOT show a 5-25x52 scope with 40mm tube! The 38-oz. Swarovski dS is a feature-laden sight with superb optics and “digital intelligence.” A heads-up display shows ballistic data relevant to each shot, while an aiming point on the reticle lights up for dead-on hold, no matter the range. You must first program the dS with your smartphone, using a Bluetooth interface. You can even add wind speed.

EASY TO USE – PERHAPS

SIG Optics brought similar technology to market a year earlier with its BDX scopes, assembled at a spanking new facility in Wilsonville, Oregon. “BDX is as easy to use as a smart phone,” Joe Fruechtel from SIG told me. My eyes must have glazed instantly. “Or easier,” he added.

The BDX app works in “Android or iOS. Download it in your phone, with ballistic data. Then pair — synchronize — your phone with a BDX Kilo laser rangefinder. Follow simple protocols to synch the rangefinder with your BDX scope.”

If the OLED (organic light-emitting diode) winks back, you needn't start over. The scope now obeys the Kilo. Range a target, and a dot glows on the

reticle. BDX figures bullet drop and other variables to 800 yards. Plug in a wind read and a dot off the reticle stem appears to compensate for drift. A Kilo rangefinder bonds to just one scope at a time but the libidinous scope can bond to several rangefinders.

Of course, you can use a SIG BDX scope without help from phone or laser, the way hunters born during the Truman administration learned to shoot. Mind you, we don't have anything against OLED dots. Unlike beefy laser-ranging sights, SIG's 30mm, rear-plane BDXs sport traditional profiles. Four initial models — 3.5-10x42 to 6.5-20x52 — list at \$600 to \$960. As there's no laser inside, BDX sights are legal for hunting in all 50 states.

Complexity has yet to rein in scope sales, even among hunters too dim to use it. The other day I cinched a scope tight on a rifle before noticing the windage dial was on the left side — clear evidence a bluetooth interface might be beyond my capabilities!



A superb sight, Swarovski's X5i is also complex, with features many shooters can't use to advantage.

LUMBAGO AND THE ARMED AMERICAN PACKING WITH A BAD BACK

I hurt my back when I was 27 years old and a soldier. I wish I could tell you it was fast roping into some evil despot's lair to rescue the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders. Nope. I was climbing some stairs with a heavy duffel bag on my back. It wasn't sexy or cool at all.

Now some 26 years later my back still gets sideways about once a year and it's usually the most innocuous stuff setting it off. I can tote firewood and work my rural farm with impunity. The last time my back really got nuts, however, I was pulling on my socks. It truly sucks being older.

THE NUMBERS

Low back pain is the third most common reason people go to the doctor — 80 percent of the American population will seek medical attention for it at some point. Back pain is the world's single greatest cause of medical disability. In America, back pain accounts for 264 million lost workdays and \$50 billion in direct medical expenses each year.

Most of the misery wrought by

musculoskeletal low back pain is actually self-inflicted and you have no control over it. When your body perceives some of those sensitive nerves are about to be damaged, a protective mechanism — the *erector spinae* muscles — will spasm. These are the long strap muscles in the back. We call them backstraps in a deer. It's akin to a Charlie horse in your calf and it hurts worse than teenage love unjustly spurned.

THE CULPRIT

If I'm not asleep or in the shower, I'm packing a gun. As a gun writer, it's kind of my job. The villain in this case was an incredibly cool homebuilt 1911 Commander in .45 ACP.

The gun sports a sterile aluminum bobtail frame and a simply superlative set of parts from Stealth Arms. I built the gun using my Ghost Gunner home-milling machine. The end result is compact, lightweight and shoots like a dream. As I made it in my garage, it also does not sport markings. Like I said, truly epic!

I packed the gun for a week in an Alien



The doctor is in: a "full-size" defensive pistol is always a good prescription unless back pain rules otherwise.

Gear IWB rig underneath my scrubs at work and felt adequately prepared for anything life might throw at me. After three days, however, I could sense trouble. It started as a little twinge when I moved certain ways and by day four I couldn't get comfortable enough to sleep.

THE SOLUTION

Treating back spasms involves non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications or steroids and possibly skeletal muscle relaxers. The muscle relaxers help me sleep

Low back pain will take the edge off your personality in short order. It's a ubiquitous human malady — but it doesn't mean you have to be unarmed!





The tiny folding North American Arms .22 Magnum mini-revolver weighs nearly nothing but is worlds better than empty hands or a big rock!



Will's magnificent sterile Commander 1911 .45 ACP was the product of Stealth Arms and his Ghost Gunner milling machine.



Will says a tricked-out GLOCK 43 packed in a Wilderness Tactical Renegade ankle holster keeps him prickly without offending his back too badly.

but do little else. Gentle stretches make it better. It usually takes me about three days to get back in the game.

For those three miserable days, I'm still not really interested in wandering about unarmed. My solution is a Wilderness Tactical Renegade ankle rig and my optimized GLOCK 43. So long as I'm wearing long pants this combination is about invisible and doesn't hurt my back.

The Wilderness Tactical ankle rig features a sheepskin liner to keep it from abrading your skin unduly and a heavy Velcro and elastic mounting system. Another elastic bit straps over the top of the gun to keep it in place despite vigorous exercise. It's most comfortable over a pair of tall socks. With a little practice, you can

forget it's there and still access the gun quickly.

My ankle carry-gun is a customized GLOCK 43. The G43 is tough to beat when size really matters. A set of Hi-Vis sights from XS and a contouring surface treatment from DSP Laser optimize the chassis.

Another option is good old-fashioned pocket carry. CCW Breakaways makes some superlative dedicated concealed carry trousers with built-in holster pockets. Even more folks make pocket carry holsters for standard pockets, too.

For pocket carry, I reluctantly settle for a .380 ACP — a GLOCK 42 or Colt Mustang are personal favorites. I know this will be decried as heresy but I cannot bring myself to pocket carry with a loaded chamber. I

just practice *a lot* charging the gun on the draw stroke. Castigate me if you must, but I have seen a severed femoral artery before. I'm fairly particular about mine.

There are times when even a .380 pocket gun seems to stress my back unduly. For those situations I pack a folding North American Arms mini-revolver in .22 Magnum. This gun punches deep yet remains all but weightless. The NAA revolver is a gun you can always have on you.

With a little forethought you need not go unarmed just because your back hurts. With rest and the right treatment it should get better. Stay limber and be patient, but remain prickly. The right gear will get you there.



RELOADING THE .357 MAGNUM LEVERGUN

VERSATILITY PERSONIFIED

Two guns, one cartridge:
The Marlin 1894 and the
Ruger Old Model.

In 1935, Smith & Wesson introduced the .357 Magnum. It was not long before Winchester Model 1892s originally in .32-20 were converted to .357 Magnum. The same thing happened 20 years later with the new .44 Magnum and the Winchester Model 1892, which had originally been chambered in .44-40. Surprisingly, or not so surprisingly depending upon your point of view, factory chambered leverguns for the .44 Magnum were offered more than 15 years before arriving in .357 Magnum.

RIFLE OR NOT?

Is the .357 Magnum a rifle cartridge? My friend the late John Wootters raised this question in an article from 1983 and even before this, in November 1982, Ken Waters published "Pet Loads for the .357 Magnum Carbine."

In the late 1970s, leverguns chambered in .357 Magnum began appearing. Both the Browning B92 and the Rossi Model 92 were based on the Winchester 1892, while the Marlin used a modernized version of their original 1894 levergun. The Browning was dropped in 1986 but the Marlin and Rossi remain and we also have the .357 Magnum available in both 1873 and 1892 Winchesters, the Henry Big Boy and for a while, Ruger even offered their bolt action, five-shot, stainless steel Model 77/357.

For the most part, I use the same loads in .357 Magnum leverguns as I do in sixguns chambered for the same cartridge. In developing a load to use for both, a lot of trouble can be avoided if one finds a good load for the rifle first instead of the other way around. Most loads will work fine in a sixgun as long as they chamber in

the cylinder, however the levergun can be pickier. If the loads work in the rifle barrel it's almost a sure thing they will do fine in the sixgun, however it is almost imperative one uses either jacketed or hard cast gas-checked bullets in the rifle barrel. The big advantage with the rifle is the fact it is not only easier to shoot at longer ranges but it also picks up significant muzzle velocity over a sixgun barrel.

LOAD ONE, SHOOT TWO

The reason my loads for the .357 Magnum levergun are the same as they are for the .357 Magnum sixgun is simply because the whole point is to be able to use the same load in both. My most-used load these days in a .357 Magnum sixgun is the Lyman #358156GC bullet over 14.0 grains of #2400. This load in a 5-1/2" Ruger New Model Flat-Top clocks out at 1,333 fps. However, it gains right at 400 fps from the 18-1/2" Marlin 1894 and puts three shots in 3/4" at 45 yards. Not only is this excellent accuracy, it is a significant increase in muzzle velocity. One of my favorite heavy bullets is the 200-gr. NEI #200.358GC. I load this bullet over 13.0 grains of H110 and 12.0 grains of #2400. Muzzle velocity from a 4-5/8" Ruger Old Model Flat-Top are 1,050 fps and 1,150 feet per second respectively. However, load them in the Henry Big Boy and we pick up 375 fps and 250 fps respectively.

Switch to jacketed bullets in the .357 Magnum levergun and things get really interesting. The Hornady 158 XTP-JHP over



A series of targets John shot with the Marlin 1894, proving the accuracy of what some consider a "forgotten" Magnum!



Some of the components John uses for the .357 Magnum for leverguns.

15.5 grains of H110 is just under 1,600 fps in the Marlin and Rossi .357 leverguns. We don't always need full power loads and my more pleasant shooting loads are assembled with H4227. With Sierra's 158 JSP, 15.5 grains of H4227 is right at 1,380 fps and groups three shots well under 1" at 45 yards.

Shooters have been arguing for nearly 85 years as to whether the .357 Magnum is suitable for use on deer. There certainly is no argument when using a .357 Magnum levergun.

John Wootters questions as to whether or not the .357 Magnum was a rifle cartridge is pretty much the same conclusion I came to many years ago. John said in 1983, "All in all, I wound up this research project considerably more impressed with the .357 Magnum as a rifle cartridge than I expected to be when I started out ... the little pistol round can deliver the goods in a rifle ... and more importantly, provide an awful lot of shooting fun per penny in the process. These days, that's

All of these bullets (below) can be used successfully in the .357 Magnum rifle but only the gas check versions will normally work with the heavier loads.



saying quite a lot!" This was written nearly 40 years ago and not much has changed.

A MAGNUM CHOICE

From my perspective in this stage of my life if I could have only one centerfire rifle, it would be a .357 Magnum levergun, with my first choice being the Marlin 1894. I purchased my first when they first came out and our family has added three more since then. The last one, a brand-new Remington/Marlin, came from my local gun shop a couple months back.

It is a good solid gun but I made a few personal changes. The action was not as smooth as I would like and the trigger pull was much too heavy at 8-1/2 lbs. I had Milt Morrison slick up the action and take the trigger back to 3-1/2 lbs. I also wanted a better finish than the plain stained buttstock and forearm so I had Milt put a real finish on the wood. Now this rifle is ready for use by several generations of our family.



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During the heyday of BPCR Silhouette, the competition was fierce and the firing line at the NRA Whittington Center was packed to the gills!

BPCR COMPETITION IS THE STEEL CHICKEN DEAD?

Is the BPCR Silhouette dead? BPCR stands for Black Powder Cartridge Rifle and Silhouette is the game of shooting metallic targets at 200, 300, 385 and 500 meters. In the same order they are steel likenesses of chickens, pigs, turkeys and rams.

But — is the game dying? As far as the NRA sponsored National Championships, they seem to be on their last gasp.

HISTORY

The competition was initiated in 1985 as an idea of some of the NRA's Black Powder Committee members. In September an experimental match was held at the NRA's Whittington Center outside of Raton, NM. More than 30 shooters from around the country got the word and made the trek to Raton. I was one. The next year another trial match was held. Attendance broke 50.

By this time the NRA powers-that-be decided BPCR Silhouette would be a viable sport and thus the very first National Championship was sanctioned. This time 71 competitors showed up. Ron Long of Denver and Steve Garbe of Montana tied for first place with scores of 60 out of 120 possible. Long won the shoot-off.

Enthusiasm was high. One reason was the sport was virtually gamer-proof. Only black powder could be used for propellant. (Along with Pyrodex, which few used.) Lead-alloy-bullets-only, sans any sort of metallic gas checks were allowed. Cartridges had to be ones introduced in America prior to 1895 and the same for rifles (replicas permitted). Furthermore, rifles had strict measurement and weight restrictions — 12 lbs., two oz. — plus hammers had to be the exposed type.

Word about this game spread quickly. Monthly matches began to spring up all around the nation, along with state and

regional championships. Within a few years BPCR Silhouette nationals had even outgrown the range at Raton. The firing points and targets had to be expanded from 10 to 16. As might be expected, shooters got busy experimenting with bullets, powders, primers and even cartridge shapes in order to increase their shooting precision. After all, the body of a ram at 500 meters was only 12" deep and to keep all bullets on the body of a turkey at 385 meters required a group no larger than 11".

A RECORD SETTING RUN

In 1992, the long-run record on rams was 11. At the Nationals I ran it up to 14 but my score was soon bested. Lyman, RCBS and Redding/SAECO all came out with special BPCR bullets and numerous custom mold makers appeared on the scene.



Steel chickens, pigs, turkeys and rams dot this typical metallic silhouette range.

Powder companies even began to import black powder from Europe to rival our own single domestic brand — Goex.

Many of the early BPCR Silhouette competitors were already nearing senior-citizen age when the game started. Due to their aging eyesight the NRA instituted a scoped BPCR Silhouette game. Except for scope dimensions and styles, rules were kept the same so both iron and scoped matches could be fired together. The first year for scope awards was 1998 with a mere eight competitors. A few years later as participation in scoped matches increased, the NRA made the championships separate. Sixty-shot two-day events were shot for both iron sights and scopes. Total possible scope was 120.

AGING EYES AND GROWING PAINS

Iron sight BPCR Silhouette topped out in 2004 with 358 shooters. As happy as most shooters were about the popularity of the game, most admitted the range was getting crowded. Brad Rice of Denver won iron



Twenty-five percent of BPCR Silhouette targets — chickens at 200 meters — must be shot from the offhand position.



Duke shooting one of his scoped BPCR Silhouette rifles.

sight with 97 hits of 120 possible. As qualifying scopes became more available, scoped championships grew. The scoped Nationals topped out in 2012 with 120 competitors.

Then something happened. Some blame the NRA for bouncing the event around between early July and late August. This made it difficult for shooters to plan vacations. Others say it was because fuel prices made travel so expensive. Others blame the poor economy during the Obama years. Regardless, attendance in BPCR Silhouette began to decline. By 2013 only 103 people showed up for iron sight and 99 for scope. For 2019 there were only 53 shooters for iron and 61 for scoped.

As far as monthly matches and/or state and regional championships, attendance is down but not so drastically. However, the nationals are hurting. Many of us fear with such low numbers the NRA will drop both BPCR Silhouette iron and scope National Championships. I've been to all since 1987 so I'm using my space here to urge readers who might be on the fence to jump off and attend these fine matches.

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ELD BULLETS

SAME SPACE, MORE EFFICIENCY

Increased interest in longer-range shooting led to more efficient bullets, which in turn shook up the cartridge list. These bullets are heavy for caliber with a highly streamlined profile and typically longer than older designs. For example, the Hornady 7mm 175-gr. round-nose bullet (discontinued) was 1.240" long while the Hornady 175-gr. ELD-X bullet is 1.567" long. This is an extreme example, as round-nose bullets don't see much use these days. The difference in sharp-pointed bullets is less dramatic, but even so, the Hornady 7mm 175-gr. Spire Point (1.320") is almost 1/4" shorter than the 175-gr. ELD-X.

LONG BULLET, SHORT ACTION

The popular 6.5 Creedmoor and its 6mm offspring were designed to take advantage of long bullets but made to fit short actions. There's no hard and fast rule on what constitutes

a short or long action and American rifle makers generally offer the two lengths. Short actions utilize a magazine box accepting cartridges approximately 2.8" overall length while long actions use a magazine box accepting cartridges of 3.3" overall length. Short actions are well adapted to the .308 Win cartridge and its offspring such as the 7mm-08 Rem, .260 Rem and .243 Win. Long actions are adapted to the .30-'06 cartridge and others on the same case such as .280 Rem, .270 Win and .25-'06 Rem.

Using the .260 Rem as

The Hornady 175-gr. ELD-X bullet seated in a 7x57 Mauser case (left) and in a .280 Rem. Case (right). Both cartridges have an overall length of 3.300".

an example — if we limit cartridge overall length to 2.800" in order to fit the magazine, long bullets must be deep-seated with the base of the bullet extending into the body of the case, thus reducing case capacity. With some streamlined bullets, the full-diameter section of the bullet is below the top of the case neck. Seating the bullet into the case body is hardly the worst ballistic crime but I'd rather avoid it if possible.

The 6.5 Creedmoor has a shorter case body than the .260 Rem. Using the same long, efficient bullets with a cartridge overall length of 2.800" the base of the bullet doesn't extend down into the case body. Although an empty .260 Rem case has a slightly greater capacity than an empty 6.5 Creedmoor case, with long bullets and the same overall length the effective powder capacity is nearly identical. The Creedmoor designers used a 30-degree shoulder, which many designers consider optimal for accuracy. Rifle makers use fast-twist barrels, usually 1:8 with the Creedmoor cartridges, to stabilize long bullets.

While I like short actions, using a long-action rifle isn't yet a criminal offense. Why



Two of Dave's 7x57 Mauser rifles — top is a Brno ZG-47 made in the 1950s, beneath it a Winchester 70 Classic Featherweight.



The 7x57 Mauser and .280 Rem. are excellent cartridges — with the Hornady 175-gr. ELD-X, both have an overall length of 3.300" at the same case capacity.

“While I like short actions, using a long-action rifle isn’t yet a criminal offense.”

not put the same principles to work in a long action? Why not design a case a bit shorter than the 63mm case length of the .30-’06, and then load it to the same overall cartridge length?

GOING LONG

Actually such cartridge cases already exist. In fact they were designed over 130 years ago, went into production in the early 1890s and are still being made today. The cartridges are the 7x57 Mauser and the 6.5x55 Swedish Mauser. The “Swede” deserves its own column but for now we’ll talk about the 7x57.

Around 1981 when the push feed Winchester 70 Featherweight appeared, I bought one in 7x57. A few years later I bought a Remington 700 Mountain Rifle in .280 Rem. I used 139- to 140-gr. bullets in both, loaded to 2,880 fps in the 7x57 and a bit over 3,000 fps in the 280, both in 22" barrels. A couple of years ago I bought another model 70 Featherweight 7x57 from a limited run on the current controlled round-feed action.

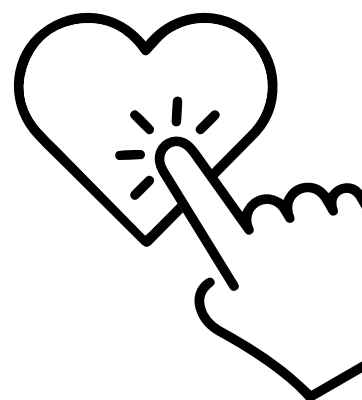
The sleek long-range bullets are game changers, in particular the Hornady 175-gr. ELD-X. I’ve been experimenting with this bullet in both 7x57 and .280 Rem. cases to an overall length of 3.30" to fit the

magazines of my rifles. With the .280 the base of the bullet extends well into the cartridge body, reducing effective powder capacity. With the 7x57 at 3.30" overall length the bullet doesn’t go into the case body and we end up with similar effective case capacity.

Using Alliant RL-22 powder and load data from Alliant, both cartridges chronograph at 2,600–2,650 fps in my rifles with 22" barrels, with the .280 having a 25–30 fps advantage. A more adventurous reloader could likely push both to around 2,700 fps, but personally I see no need. With its incredible ballistic coefficient (G1, .689; G7, .347) the ELD-X bullet is amazing at retaining velocity and resisting wind drift.

Hornady recommends a 1:8.5 twist for this bullet, to ensure stability even at sea level and in very cold temperatures. Many 7x57 rifles, including my early model 70, use a 1:8.66 twist and a long throat well suited for long bullets. My Remington 700 .280 has a 1:9.25 twist, the newer model 70 a 1:9.5 twist. Shooting in late spring at temperatures around 65 degrees F and 1,800 feet above sea level, even the slower twist rifles stabilized the long bullets. At sub-zero temperatures stability might get a bit iffy, in which case the older Winchester 70 would have to save the day!

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SHARPS' .50-70 CARBINE

THUNDER HEARD ACROSS THE GREAT PLAINS

Holt Bodinson

If there ever were a name to conjure up strong images of Western battles and big game hunts, it would be the name *Sharps*. In the hands of the U.S. Cavalry and buffalo hunters, Sharps Model 1874 .50-70 carbines are simply romantic firearms. The four-volume study of *Sharps Firearms* by Roy Marcot and Ron Paxton, recently released by Northwood Heritage Press, brings forth more data and images of Sharps firearms and their use than any references we've ever had access to before. The work simply breathes new life into the legends of the Sharps big-bore single-shots.

CARBINE CACHET

I've always been attracted to the original Sharps carbines. They're handy, powerful, attractive and a lot more affordable than Sharps rifle models. You can stuff your pocket with a few .50-70 rounds, stroll out the back door and go hunting plus it also has a fascinating history.

During the Civil War, there were 19 major breechloading Federal cavalry carbines fielded. In terms of total wartime production, the big five were the Spencer (94,196 produced), Sharps (80,512), Burnside (55,567), Smith (30,062) and Starr (25,603). As a group, the Union carbines of the Civil War were the most attractive shoulder arms of the conflict. Light, short, fast firing and accurate, the breechloading cavalry carbines signaled the coming end of the single-shot muzzleloader era.

At the conclusion of the war, the Ordnance Department was sitting on countless stacks of carbines, including approximately 50,000 percussion Sharps carbines and rifles. The challenge facing the Ordnance Department was to select the next generation of firearms for the infantry and cavalry and, being financially strapped after the cessation of hostilities, to

do it at the least cost. The answer was to convene a "Board" to test and evaluate possible firearm options.

With the end of the war came an end of military contracts and most Civil War-era firearms manufacturers simply went out of business and disappeared forever. Sharps was barely hanging on, which begs the obvious question — why didn't Sharps put a metallic cartridge model of their own into production? It seems they didn't have the capital to do it, but the problem was about to change.

A NEW POWERFUL PACKAGE

The Ordnance Department was looking for a carbine design to deliver "musket power" in a compact package. Fortunately, one of the outstanding qualities of the Sharps action design was its ability to handle powerful cartridges.

In January 1867, 10 months after the "Board" concluded its evaluations, the Chief of Ordnance, General A.B. Dyer, contacted the Sharps company and requested they submit a percussion-to-centerfire carbine conversion for testing to the Springfield Armory chambered for the new .50-70-450 Gov't cartridge.

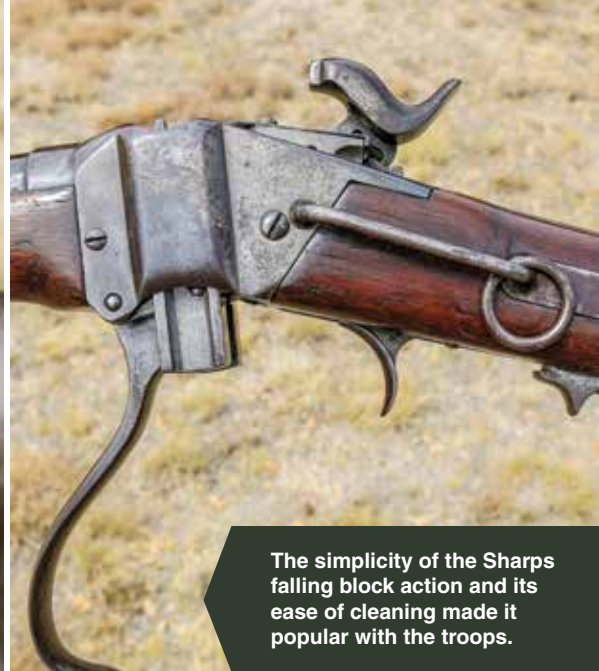
Springfield Armory was impressed with the Sharps, and in October 1867, a government contract was signed with the Sharps Company to begin converting the New Model 1859, New Model 1863 and New Model 1865 carbines held in government stores to .50-70 centerfire models.

The conversion process turned out to be a cooperative effort between the Springfield Armory and Sharps, with the Armory providing overall supervision and producing an assortment of replacement parts like stocks, springs and tumblers as well as relining oversize barrels.

The conversion consisted largely of removing the parts from the Lawrence patented percussion primer system, replacing the breech block, adding a firing pin and extractor and sleeving the chamber to .50-70. However, it took the Springfield Commandant to identify a serious underlying problem — oversized .52 caliber percussion bores which ran as large as .53 caliber.

He then decided any bore over 0.5225" in diameter was to be relined. Richard Lawrence at Sharps reported almost





The simplicity of the Sharps falling block action and its ease of cleaning made it popular with the troops.

Although partially stripped during the centerfire conversion, the Lawrance pellet priming system (above, left), seen under the hammer, moved a pellet primer onto the nipple. The .50-70 carbine delivered "musket power" in a compact, cavalry arm (above, right).

two-thirds of the percussion models delivered to the factory exceeded tolerance so the oversize barrels were removed at Sharps and sent to the Springfield Armory for relining.

As a point of identification, Sharps relined at Springfield sport the standard 3-groove, .50-70 barrel adopted by the Armory for the Trapdoor conversions while unlined Sharps barrels still carry the original Sharps 6-groove barrel.

GOIN' OUT WEST

The conversion contract called upon Sharps to convert 1,000 percussion models a month. From February 1868 to October 1869, approximately 32,190 carbines were switched over to the .50-70 cartridge. The carbines were immediately sent to the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments in the West, replacing their Spencer repeating rimfire carbines. Until replaced by the Model 1873 carbine in .45-70, the big Sharps was the primary arm of the U.S.

These patents covered the Sharps design and Lawrence's unique pellet priming system.



Cavalry during the early Indian Wars and its hearty *Boom!* commanded the Plains.

In either original or replica form, the Sharps .50-70 carbine is a hoot-to-shoot. With a load built around Lee or Lyman's 425- to 450-gr. bullets, cast with a 20/1 temper or Hornady's pre-formed 385-gr. Great Plains bullet, Starline brass, Federal 215 magnum primers and either 55 grains of Blackhorn powder or 9.5 grains of Trail Boss, my typical 3-shot groups at 50 yards range from 1.25"-2.75". I do find the short, coarse sight picture of the carbine a serious challenge for group shooting, yet the original carbine sights are graduated out to 800 yards. Those old boys could shoot!

Original Sharps carbines in good shooting condition are not uncommon, and if you need a good excuse to buy one, they're only going to appreciate in value. On the other hand, strictly as a shooter, get the new replicas to enjoy the romance of the Sharps and the .50-70 cartridge without stretching the checking account. Either way, you're going to love the little Sharps.



Converted Sharps carbines in .50-70 caliber were the primary arms of the U.S. Cavalry Regiments following the Civil War.



CROSSFIRE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

continued from page 8

eternal question”), I must have followed in John’s footsteps. I grew up in the same era and was influenced by some of the same TV westerns! I did fill a hole in my want list a few years ago with a Marlin 336CB in 38/55. I’ve been playing with a few different home-cast bullets and a few smokeless powders. To help things along I have put an MVA Soule sight on the tang and an MVA aperture with level sight up front. I did manage to ring steel at 927 yards with the setup using cross sticks and my wife Louize doing the spotting! (Photo: Carl Zmuda)

Carl Thomas Zmuda via email

WHAT GIVES IN CT?

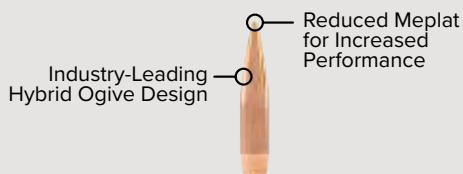
I am more than a bit confused regarding Brent Wheat’s “Insider” article on page 10 of the October issue of *GUNS*. I believe the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCCA) is still in effect and should have nullified any lawsuits by Connecticut parents for simply manufacturing a weapon

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which was stolen and used illegally. I suspect I will not be the only reader/subscriber confused by this.

Mike Quill via email

You aren't the only one asking this question. In a decision from March of this year, the Connecticut Supreme Court allowed a state lawsuit against Remington to proceed despite protections of the PLCAA. Basically, the court said "Yeah, the federal law applies everywhere ... except here." We'll see if this actually survives another legal challenge. If the plaintiffs eventually win, two things will happen: First, it will become legal open-season on firearms manufacturers and secondly, the progressives/socialists will wet their organic-cotton free-trade non-GMO gender-fluid underpants with joy. —BW

BLACKHAWK PIN PROBLEM

I recently purchased a Ruger .44 Magnum Blackhawk with a four-digit serial number dating to the first year of production. It has some light rust in a few areas and it appears the spring in the catch holding the base pin in place is broken. The base pin is very difficult to remove for disassembly but jumps

out of position when the gun is fired with loads as light as 8 grains of Unique and a 250-gr. Keith-style cast bullet. Now that I know this gun is from the first year's production, I wonder if I should just have the base pin issue repaired and let it go at that or proceed with custom work and full refinishing.

J. Larry Lohr, via email

Since the .44 Flat-Top is not in pristine condition I would not hesitate to "make it the way I want it" if I were you. A good start is a Belt Mountain Base pin — #5 locking style would look great. —John Taffin

THE JOY OF SHARING

I am a long-time subscriber but I don't archive old issues — I pass them on to new shooters or leave them in public places for others to peruse. In the September 2019 Crossfire section there was a mention of an article that John Taffin wrote on the Marlin 39A several years ago. Is it possible to get a copy of that article from the archives? Thanks. I enjoy the magazine very much.

Joe Tucker via email

Joe, thanks for passing along our magazine. I often leave them in airline seatback pockets, I'm sure it upsets a few people, especially on California flights! I'll see what we can do about the old article. Don't forget you can purchase recent back issues and download some free old classic GUNS Magazine issues at gunsmagazine.com —BW

SINGING THE PRAISES

Best gun magazine ever! I've received them ALL for over 40 years. I enjoy keeping up on all the new firearms and love your attention to our incredible history and the continued interest in the production of our SA/DA revolvers!

Brooks Jarrett via email

Brooks, on behalf of our world-class predecessors and the current top-flight team at GUNS, thank you! Don't worry, you'll keep seeing plenty of revolver action here! —BW

SNIPER STORY BECOMES PERSONAL

I found Mike "Duke" Venturino's article in the September issue very interesting ("WWII Snipers — Myths, realities, tools

Let the Target Be Your Challenge

Not finding a comfortable position

Lyman's Tac-Mat Shooting Mats are perfect for long range shooting, target or tactical shooting, and varmint hunting. They offer a large footprint that will work well for even the tallest shooter, yet they roll up to a compact, easy to transport size. These comfortable mats will protect you from dirt, rocks, wet surfaces, insects, hot truck beds, gravel or pavement.

HD model features 1000D construction, elbow pads and a built-in bipod stop, as well as a carry handle and shoulder strap.



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of the trade"). I have always been interested in WWII history and particularly the firearms used in the conflict. I grew up in that era and it is a very vivid part of my memory, even at nearly 82. It may appear morbid to some that I am fascinated by stories of snipers, in that I lost a brother

to a sniper according to my father. I don't know how it may have been verified, but the inscription on his tombstone reads "Killed by German sniper while manning machine gun in Northern Italy, Oct 20, 1944."

Robert Reef via email

NOT ENOUGH TENSION

I have a 9422M XTR Winchester and John Taffin mentioned he also had a 9422 and loved it in your latest GUNS (Oct 2019). I have a problem with the tube magazine rod being loose, especially when it is unloaded. There seems to be not enough



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“... the world would be a duller place if we didn’t have all the great new — and occasionally laughably awful — guns and shooting toys!”

tension somewhere when you turn the knurled knob into the slot. I have heard this is a common problem with 9422s. Do any of you know a fix? I am a retired Industrial Machinery Mechanic and am familiar with fitting such things but want your expertise before experimenting on such a quality firearm.

Nelson Slate via email

You are experiencing a common problem not just with Winchester .22s but Browning and Marlin as well. I have been able to bend the Marlin catch slightly to solve the problem BUT it could also break. Perhaps as a machinist you could come up with a better catch? All great guns with this one flaw. —John Taffin

THE DISLIKE LIST

I must agree whole-heartedly with John Taffin in the Aug 2019 issue of *GUNS* on page 25 where he writes “What would make sense today would be a reasonably priced Webley-style revolver in modern chamberings!” I hope someone from the firearms manufacturers reads *GUNS*. It seems there is a “Me Too!” attitude toward new products. I don’t want a 1911 in 9mm, I have GLOCKS. I don’t want a striker fire 10mm, I have .44 magnums. But something different like a stainless-steel Luger or a high-quality top-break revolver in .38 Special would be different and interesting. They don’t have to re-invent the wheel, just offer something different.

Jens Jensen via email

First, rest assured most manufacturers read GUNS. Secondly, I will agree with your premise to some degree, but then again, the world would be a duller place if we didn’t have all the great new — and occasionally laughably awful — guns and shooting toys! Plus, I can show you a stack of reader letters taking completely the opposite position. In other words, “to each his own,” so long as we all support the Second Amendment like rabid badgers! —BW

PLAINS SPENCERS

Mike Venturino’s interesting historical article, “Plains War Spencers” (October 2019), somehow overlooked the Modoc Indian War of 1872-1873. This conflict occurred inside the Lava Beds National

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PLAINS WAR SPENCERS

Monument in Northeastern California. Warm Springs Army Scouts deployed in the Lava Beds on the south shore of Tule Lake were armed with Spencers. The Oregon Volunteer Infantry, including U.S. Army regulars, were armed with the Model 1868 .50-70 trapdoor Single-Shot Springfield rifle Third Allin Conversion. The cavalry carried primarily the Model 1868 Sharps carbine conversion, also in .50-70. The Modoc Indian War was the only Indian

campaign where a U.S. Army General was killed: General E.S. Canby in April. This six-month campaign deserves far more attention and recognition.

James A. "Jim" Farmer via email

EXULTATION OF SPIRIT

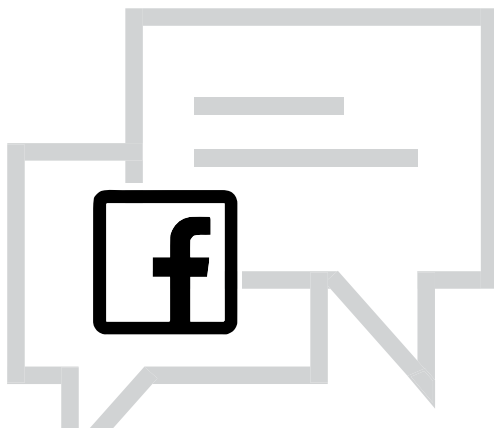
I was rereading letters in both *GUNS* and *Handgunner* today. I noticed a vibrant pattern that is getting stronger, especially in *GUNS*. Readers have a varied interest but the

same *Joie de Vivre*. (I think that's French). I searched the periodical section at the big library we have here this afternoon and could not find anything to compare. Perhaps you have found a segment of the population that is far superior to the rest? If we reach a point of numbers where we can influence society, all the better. Also, we are armed and competent!!

Ted P. via U.S. Mail

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It's for the trophies on the wall.
For the stories, for the laughter.
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experience that takes your breath away.

It's for the memories.

Shown: Doug Turnbull's personal antique Winchester 1886, restored and converted to .475 Turnbull. Contact us to explore the possibilities of your own restoration project.

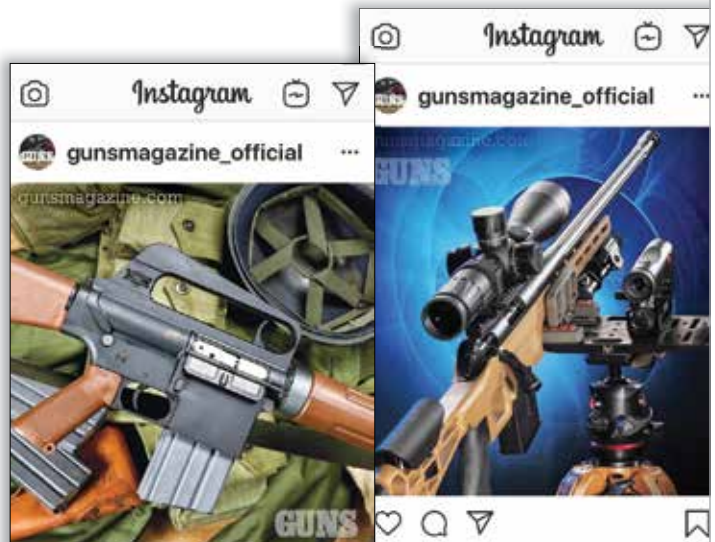
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PEACEMAKER SPECIALISTS "1880 PACKAGE"

Mike "Duke" Venturino
Photos: Yvonne Venturino

After 50 years of buying Colt Single Action Army revolvers in many calibers and all generations, I had never actually had one custom-made to my specs. Of course, I've had special ivory, bone or fancy wood grips fitted and I've had special-order barrel lengths such as a 3rd Generation .38-40 with a non-cataloged 4" barrel with matching ejector rod and housing.

GOING OLD-SCHOOL

Recently in a conversation with Eddie Janis, head of Peacemaker Specialists located in Paso Robles, Calif., he mentioned his "1880s Package." It consists of taking a 3rd Generation SAA with the so-called "black powder" frame and remodeling it to duplicate an 1880s Peacemaker as closely as possible. Now, I've been friends with Eddie for over 20 years and had him slick up

MAKING A CLASSIC SAA EVEN BETTER

the internals on a couple of Colts, and purchased items from his extensive inventory of parts for all generations. After he described the alterations for a 1880s Package, I got to thinking — "I'm now approaching my seventh decade. If I want to have a special Colt, it better get in the works." So it did!

Let me describe the 1880s Package. Please note any of the services mentioned next can be purchased individually and the customer does not have to go for all of them.



Duke's Colt SAA
.45 remodeled with
Peacemaker Special-
ists' 1880s Package.

Here's the list — the barrel and all blued parts are cleaned of finish and markings, then restamped as they would have been in the 1880s. The cylinder flutes are lengthened and front of flutes beveled. Beveling is also done to the front of the ejector rod housing, and toe and heel of grip frame. The hammer spur is checkered and outlined and hammer is color case hardened. The other parts, after cleaning and re-marking, are then rust blued.

After the cosmetics, there is the inside of the Colt to consider. First off, I'm sad to say the internals of third Generation SAAs are often a mess. They usually function OK but most specimens are gritty and heavy when cocking the hammer. Likewise with the trigger pull. Cylinder looseness is a gripe often mentioned by new buyers.

Peacemaker Specialists makes all those problems go away. When I received my gun back, its action was remarkable. Cocking the hammer made me wonder just how it could be so smooth and light, without any sideways wobble the 3rd Generation hammers sometimes have. Trigger pull was right about 3 lbs. with absolutely no creep or grit and the cylinder — how can it be so tight, both with hammer cocked and at rest? There is not one iota of shake either laterally or fore and aft. It baffles me.

STOCKING UP

When it comes to handgun stocks, I'm a bit of a nut job. Hardly any of my handguns wear factory issue stocks except the military collectibles. Factory stocks are usually too thick, too thin or just too ugly for me. Contrary to many Peacemaker lovers, I'm not big on ivory stocks as a grip material although I do have some. Bison bone is a great material for SAA stocks but the fellow who made mine is now deceased. The truth of the matter is I'm simple in my tastes and prefer good American (black) walnut. I instructed Eddie to use ordinary straight grain walnut as Colt would have used circa 1880 and to make them one piece as Colt did. They fit perfectly.



The gorgeous color-case-hardened hammer (above) now matches the frame. Caliber stamp on barrel (below) in the white during the Peacemaker Specialists remodeling compared with current style of caliber stamp.



“A friend wouldn't build something for a friend knowing it was going to come out substandard ...”

The Raw Material: Duke's second — and final — candidate for customization came from the Colt factory as a 7.5" barrel .45 Colt.





Left is the factory cylinder, while right is the "new" cylinder. Note the bigger bevels at the end of the cylinder and larger flutes.



Keepin' it real: Duke chose straight-grain walnut stocks (right) on his remodeled 1880s SAA instead of fancy walnut grips (above) fit for a dude!



These parts were sent back to Duke "in the white" during the work so they could be photographed.

I didn't go for one service offered by Peacemaker Specialists — a new cylinder, made by rechambering a smaller caliber cylinder so the chamber mouths match .45 Colt barrel groove diameter. Colt SAA .45s have 0.451" barrel groove diameter as standard but their cylinder chamber mouths usually run 0.455-0.457". The redone cylinders offered by Peacemaker Specialists have 0.452" chamber mouths. For years, I've preached against Colt putting those huge chamber mouths in .45s, so why didn't I go for the smaller size with this SAA?

The answer is logistics. I have a dozen other .45 Colt revolvers, most with those huge chamber mouths. My .45 Colt hand-loading is usually with softer 1:20 tin-to-lead alloy bullets sized to 0.454". This system gives more than adequate accuracy from all my .45 sixguns. Thus, I wanted to leave the cylinder chamber mouths of this special .45 the same dimension so I didn't have to load different .45s rounds for it.

OF PINS AND LOCKS

From introduction in 1873 until the mid-1890s, Colt Peacemakers had their cylinder base pins secured by a screw angling in from the front of the main frame. In the 1890s, Colt began phasing this system out in favor of a transverse spring-loaded lock. Somehow, the first system got the moniker "black powder frame" although Colt did not guarantee SAAs for smokeless powder ammunition until 1900. Therefore both frame styles were actually sold prior to the smokeless powder warranty.

Regardless, for Peacemaker Specialists to do a true 1880s package the customer must supply them a "black powder frame" sample on which to work and it's actually not as easy as it sounds. Colt reintroduced a limited number of black powder frames in their 1873-1973 Peacemaker Centennial Commemoratives. In the 1980s, with their 3rd Generation production, Colt began to offer black powder frame SAAs as a custom shop option and continued to do so albeit intermittently into the 21st century. They do not offer them now. The only option for people like you and me is to find one on the Internet or sitting in a gun shop.

After my conversation with Eddie Janis about the 1880s Package I began perusing Gunbroker.com for a black powder frame 3rd Generation .45. Initially, I wanted it with a 4-3/4" barrel so Peacemaker Specialists could re-mark it with the old style double address line. It took a few months



The checkering done on Duke's SAA hammer spur to match an 1880s hammer spur. Unfortunately, the firing pin cannot be changed to match an 1880s model.

of Internet searching but I finally found a 4-3/4" .45 back in Kentucky. Once it arrived, I fired it 10 rounds, hit the stump of wood I aimed at every time and shipped it right to Eddie.

PROJECT HITS A SNAG

Soon Eddie called and in an almost regretful tone told me essentially the following — "A friend wouldn't build something for a friend knowing it was going to come out substandard in the end." My quickly bought-and-shipped 4-3/4" .45 was manufactured during a time when Colt was having problems with fit and finish of third Generation SAAs. He pointed out several flaws I should have noticed so he returned it and my search started again.

After a couple months I hit the jackpot upon encountering a new-in-box 7-1/2" SAA made in 2008. It was a beauty. Although I wasn't going to get my two-line address, the 7-1/2" length is actually my favorite for shooting. It was sent to California and Eddie approved of it.

WAITING, WAITING ...

To make a long story short, months passed but finally my *new* old gun arrived back home. It's a beauty!

How does it group on paper? Darn if I know; having never shot it on paper. I can hit steel or wood time and time again despite my 70-year-old eyes. Even better, those eyes can bask in the Peacemaker's radiance when taking a break at my word processor because I've been keeping it near me on my desk.

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Deer dropping and pig-poppin' perfect, the Taurus Raging Hunter (shown here in the 5.1" barrel .357 Magnum version) is the out-of-the-box hunting revolver!



The Raging Hunter uses a pair of cylinder locks to ensure rock-solid lockup. To access the cylinder, push the rear latch forward and the front latch downward.



The Raging Hunter uses a transfer-bar mechanism to prevent the hammer from meeting firing pin unless the trigger is pulled fully to the rear.



The Raging Hunter features stippled rubber wrap-around grips. The contrasting cushion insert takes the recoil so much John didn't use a shooting glove!

TAURUS .357 MAGNUM RAGING HUNTER

A NEW LEVEL OF
REVOLVER
ACCURACY DEFINED

John Taffin

Photos: Rob Jones/The Imagesmith, LLC

As closely as I can count, I've had extensive experience with over 75 .357 Magnums. This includes single and double action revolvers, semi-automatic and single-shot pistols, as well as lever- and bolt-action rifles. This brings me to the latest .357 Magnum being offered to handgunners — the Taurus Raging Hunter, a sixgun especially made for hunting. After spending considerable shooting time, I can say this is singularly the most accurate double action .357 Magnum revolver I have ever experienced.

More on this shortly.

IN THE BEGINNING

In 1935, a whole new chapter in the Book of Sixgunning was written with the arrival of the .357 Magnum. Phil Sharpe was a noted ballistics expert and handloader of the time. He was also a good friend of Col. Doug Wesson. On a hunting trip together they used a pair of .38/44 Outdoorsman revolvers with heavy loads Sharpe had developed. This was in the early 1930s and Sharpe began work on developing the .357 Magnum case by lengthening the .38 Special brass while Wesson went about developing a new revolver that could handle the pressure which would be developed.

The first .357 Magnum, actually a pair of them, was used successfully by Col. Wesson to hunt pronghorn antelope, elk, moose and even grizzly bear. Phil Sharpe had designed the bullet for use in the .357 Magnum, a cast SWC of about 155 grains in weight. For the next two decades the .357 Magnum was the most powerful factory



Tools of the porker trade: the .357 Magnum Taurus Raging Hunter with 8.3" barrel, a TOPS Camp Creek fixed-blade skinner and a Leupold LTO-QuestHD Thermal Imager.



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handgun/cartridge combination available. Handgun hunters and law enforcement personnel took it up as well.

Then everything changed — the next new chapter in the Book of Sixgunning arrived with a new cartridge, the .44 Magnum. Achieving the same muzzle velocity as the .357 Magnum with a 240-gr. bullet, it was only the beginning. After the big .44 came the .41 Magnum, Heavy Loaded .45 Colt, .454 Casull, .475 and .500 Linebaugh and .480 Ruger. All more powerful than the .357 Magnum while fitting in standard-sized sixgun cylinders. The .357 Magnum was buried — *almost!*

All of these big bore mentioned cartridges are above the .357 Magnum in muzzle energy but it still doesn't make the round any less effective than when Col. Wesson used it so successfully. In fact, with the current technological advances in ammunition and bullets, the .357 Magnum is better than ever. I would certainly not hesitate to use it on deer-sized game, antelope or feral pigs with the proper ammunition.

GOIN' HUNTIN'

The Taurus .357 Magnum has a barrel length of 8-3/8" and a weight, according to my postal scale, of 3-1/2 lbs. (56 oz.). In

The Revolver uses an aluminum-shrouded steel barrel, ported to tame recoil and muzzle flip. The molded Picatinny rail allows easy mounting of a red dot or scope.



my experience, this package makes for the most comfortable shooting .357 Magnum. There was a time when most of us were too macho to admit any sixgun was more than we could handle but this all changes with age as our hands become more tender. For any shooter who wants as much power as is possible to easily handle, this revolver is worthy of a good look.

The weight is attained by several factors such as the heavy full-length barrel shroud. The barrel itself is a steel sleeve inserted into an aluminum housing. The housing has a full-length underlug and the top of the shroud, from the front of the frame to 2" behind the front sight ramp, consists of a wide Picatinny rail with 13 mounting slots. This makes mounting a scope very easy and for some of my shooting tests I used a Leupold 2X LER scope with Leupold PRW rings.

Not only is the Raging Hunter easily scoped, it also has excellent adjustable sights. The front sight is a black post pinned into the ramp while the rear sight is black with a square notch perfectly matching the front sight for my eyes. The rear sight blade is also slanted backwards to help reduce glare. This whole rear sight fits into the top of the frame and is easily adjustable for both windage and elevation.

The cylinder of the Raging Hunter holds seven rounds of .357 Magnum, or .38 Special should one be so inclined. The cylinder is locked both back and front with thumb locks. The cylinder releases by pushing the rear lock forward while pushing the front thumb piece downward. It is much easier accomplished than it sounds. The frame is stainless steel while the sights, shroud, hammer and trigger are finished in matte black, making for an eye pleasing two-tone color combination.

In addition to the weight of the Raging Hunter, felt recoil is also reduced by factory-tuned porting and a gas expansion chamber designed to disperse gases directionally, reducing muzzle flip. This is accomplished via four round holes on both sides of the front sight. At the other end of the Raging Hunter we have full wrap-around, finger-groove stippled rubber grips with a built-in red-colored cushion insert along the back strap. I always wear gloves when I shoot because my hands are much more tender than they used to be. I do not use a padded mitt but simply a golfing or batter's glove. With this .357 Magnum the recoil was minimal enough I did not have to wear a glove.

TRIGGER TROUBLE

Everything about the Raging Hunter .357 Magnum has been definitely positive up to this point, however there is one negative — trigger pull. The double-action pull is quite easy and smooth, however the single action pull registers 7-1/2 lbs. on my Brownells Trigger Gauge. This is at least double what it could be on a dedicated hunting sixgun, as the Taurus is clearly designed and so-named. If I had to make a choice between good sights and a good trigger, I'd pick the sights every time — but I really had to concentrate with this heavy trigger. At least it's an easy fix.

For test-firing the .357 Magnum Raging Hunter I used both factory loads and hand loads, cast bullets and jacketed bullets, lightweight, standard weight and heavyweight bullets ranging from 125 up to 200 grains. Six factory loads and 10 handloads were used, fired with both the factory iron sights and the Leupold scope installed. I started with the scope in place and my first six shots at 25 yards with Black Hills 158 JHPs measured 5/8" — the first indication this had to be a special sixgun. Although the



Raging Hunter is a seven-shooter I always give myself a stress-reducing mulligan which is the closest I ever get to golf. All of the groups mentioned were the best six shots at 25 yards with the 2X scope in place and 20 yards with the iron sights.

RESULTS

With loads fired with the scoped Raging Hunter, the Buffalo Bore 158 JHP, SIG SAUER 125 FMJ, HPR 125 JHP all gave 3/4" groups. Likewise, several handloads such as a Sierra 170 JHC with 4.2grf AA#9, ranging at 1,397 fps, give the same result. Several rounds grouped right at one inch and the "worst" group was 1-1/8" for six shots. I think this is astounding performance!

The scope was then removed and I went with iron sights at 20 yards. The Black Hills factory 158 JHP that previously gave me a 5/8" group at 25 yards with the scope in place, "widened out" to 3/4" for six shots at 20 yards using the iron sights. I was especially gratified with my results using cast bullets in the Raging Hunter. In addition to the other handloads, I also went with my favorite cast hunting bullet for the .357 Magnum — the NEI 200-gr. flat-nose gas check. With 12.0 grains of #2400 it clocks out just over 1,300 fps and put six shots in 1-1/8" using both the scope and iron sights.

The real surprise for me was the Lyman #358429 Keith bullet. Cast hard, this one weighs just over 160 grains and can be very picky about how it shoots in both .38 Special Heavy Loads and .357 Magnum Loads. Over 14.0 grains of #2400, it clocked out at a respectable 1,250 feet per second and gave a 1" group with the scope and 1-1/4" with iron sights.

I threw out a lot of numbers and data but it shows exactly what a great-shooting sixgun the Raging Hunter is. With all the testing I did — 20 loads fired both with the scope in place and iron sights — the largest groups were 1-1/4", which to me is *astounding*. One can only wonder what this pistol would do with a decent trigger pull and perhaps someone much younger who can really shoot.

Taurus will never see this particular sixgun again — one postage stamp and the check is on the way to Taurus!

www.taurususa.com

COLT 1903 POCKET HAMMERLESS REISSUE

U.S. ARMAMENT TACKLES A CLASSIC

Mike Cumpston

1903 — Henry Ford launched his motor company but the first models were still a few years away. Automobiles on the road were still a novelty if not a pestilence and the cognomen “horseless carriage” still fit. Horsepower via Horse was still the dominant means of private transport and would remain so until well into the next decade. The first transatlantic cable communication took place as did the first game of the World Series. The Wright Brothers patented their aircraft and in December, flew the first practical, maneuverable engine-driven airplane. Arizona and Oklahoma were still territories.

Colt Patent Firearms, in concert with

John M. Browning, had been working to produce a practical self-loading service pistol and achieved a measure of success in the model of 1900. The Colt/Browning pistols were a radical departure from the auto loading pistols of the late 1890s and first years of the 20th Century, setting a pattern for handgun development for generations to come. The Colt Automatic Calibre 32 Rimless Smokeless emerged as a finished design from its patent date in 1903 and remained eminently popular with military, police and civilians for the next 40 years.

It served an official role as the Officer's Pistol issued to American Generals and occupied military roles in Great Britain

in the '20s as a Lend-Lease Item in 1942. Due to its convenient size, a decent level of power in comparison with earlier hideout guns and a reliable design with a redundancy of safety features, it was very popular among American civilians. Celebrity owners included Mark Twain, Alphonse (Al) Capone and many others.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

In the 21st century, with a view toward commemorating the military leaders of the Greatest Generation, Colt Firearms in partnership with the United States Armament Company projected a limited run of 3,500 pistols with four finish variations including Parkerizing. For the General Officers

The .32 Hammerless, introduced in 1903, remained in production for 43 years. The officially licensed Colt /U.S. Armament 1903 is built to matching specifications.



commemorative, serial numbers matching those assigned to the Officers who carried them would be produced. Other options would be standard blue, nickel and bright blue. Prices ranged from mid-\$1,300s to mid-\$1,500s — by no means too expensive for routine shooting. By April 2019 a license for an additional 3,500 units came about and additional variations are in the works; more on this later.

FEATURES AND FUNCTION

My copy of the gun came from Able Arms in a plain cardboard box, Colt .32 number GOP1748 hand-inked in the corner per tradition. Contents included the bright blue pistol, two magazines and a facsimile of the original owner's manual. The gun is 6.5" long, has a 3.75" barrel and weighs 24 oz. while the magazine holds eight rounds.

The trigger pull on my example is 6 lbs. from the toe of the trigger and seven from the more natural center point. If anything, it feels even heavier. There is a pronounced tactile "click" during the trigger pull and considerable weight remaining before it breaks. It's a trigger pull that responds best to an aggressive straight-back press instead of any effort at finesse.

The array of mechanical safeties anticipated the 1911 design. A thumb safety activating a sear block, a grip safety doing pretty much the same thing and the disconnect prevents firing until the action is closed. The hammer has a half-cock notch, designed to prevent firing if something goes wrong in the full cock-sear engagement. Add a heavy trigger pull and you have the package. One early advertisement suggested simply releasing the grip safety was sufficient to render the pistol "safe."

WORDS AND PHRASES

Apparently, the company considered "semi rimmed" unnecessary until the real rimless cases became common. "Hammerless" explains the invisible nature of the enclosed article but there is a very nice hammer inside the slide. In those halcyon days of yore the term "Semi Auto(matic)" had yet to emerge from the cloaca of whichever pettifogger invented it. You could call your Roscoe an "Automatic" without triggering a Superiority Dance.

My initial functional problems occurred when the rim of the ejecting case came into hard contact with the case "neck" of the next round up. This locks things up tighter than the south end of a northbound

The modern rendition comes with a well-illustrated instruction booklet in a plain cardboard box — with hand-written serial number — per the originals!



Sellier & Bellot ball loads shot this group from the bench at 25 yards.



The '03 dismounts in the same manner as the FN and Colt 25 autos.

mallard. I experience it consistently with the .25 and .32 semi-rimmed cartridges. The phenomenon appears nowhere in literature, other people who shoot the things give me this funny look when I mention it and it looks like it doesn't happen to anybody else.

Running ball rounds into a crimping die to radius the case neck effectively solves the problem and results in reliable function. Head space is unimpaired with semi-rimmed cases. The Colt is now smooth-functioning with the 73-gr. ball loads. I tried a 100-gr. factory flat point and was unable to get through a full magazine without a hard jam.

Ergonomics has improved significantly in the last 116 years. The flat safety is difficult to reach without breaking the shooting grip. It requires two hands to re-engage. The fixed sights are period-tiny and need adequate vision correction and high contrast target for best results. Even so, shooting from one hand — as was

traditional last century — produces gratifying groups out to 15 yards and, on those days when I have the trigger pull dialed in, it is not impossible to keep the rounds inside the scoring rings of the B27 at 25 yards.

I put off shooting from the 25-yard bench for quite a while because I was jumpy about the basic accuracy of the pistol and the self-devaluation coming from my inability to hit anything. The first Sellier and Belloit 73-gr. ball load clocks 1036 fps from this pistol. I shot a 25-yard five-round group rested, handheld which went 2.7". It might have been a fluke but I shot another five rounds of Dynamite Nobel GECO Ball measuring 3.1" at 953 fps.

The Pocket Hammerless does present its challenges but it is a high-quality firearm opening the door into history, allowing the modern shooter to experience the same challenges and pleasures as previous generations.



PATRIOT SYNTHETIC .308

John Barsness

The Mossberg Patriot Synthetic could be called the *21st Century Semi-Classic Affordable* because it combines classic features with some modern touches, both practical and stylish.

I became acquainted with the Patriot Synthetic in 2017 when Mossberg invited me on a ranch hunt for deer and elk one hour from my Montana home. The invitation included the loan of any Mossberg Patriot available, and after looking at the choices, I picked a Patriot Synthetic in .308 Winchester for a couple of reasons.

First, we'd also be hunting with EOTech scopes which, like all modern "dialing" scopes, aren't particularly light. The Synthetic had the lowest weight of any Patriot, 6.5 lbs., and with a 1-6x24 EOTech Vudu scope it weighed-in at exactly 8 lbs.

Second, I asked for a .308 Winchester, because considerable

hunting experience eventually convinced me the .308 is among the best all-around big game cartridges on earth. This may not be a stylish observation, but I have used the .308 on plenty of big game up to 750 lbs. — both in North America and Africa — out to over 400 yards. With today's bullets it works fine, with moderate recoil even in a light rifle.

The Patriot's action appeared to be identical to the Mossberg ATR I tested a few years ago, with a basic 2-lug bolt, and 2-position safety lever on the right-hand side of the action tang plus an adjustable trigger. The 22" barrel also has similar "cosmetic" flutes which are too small to reduce weight significantly. My calculations indicate the six 9" grooves eliminate slightly under an ounce of steel, but they're certainly 21st-century *stylish*.

The spiral grooves in the bolt body actually have a function. While also shallow and considerably shorter, they provide built-up gunk some place to go, allowing the bolt to slide back and

STYLE, ACCURACY AND AFFORDABILITY IN A BLACK PACKAGE

With a 6x38 Weaver Classic the Patriot qualifies as a modern "mountain rifle," weighing slightly over seven lbs. John knows the .308 Winchester is certainly adequate for elk (inset), proven by John's wife Eileen who crumpled a big cow with one shot from her .308 a month earlier.



The Mossberg Patriot uses the same basic action as the discontinued Mossberg ATR, but with several improvements elsewhere.



forth easily. Bolt-gunk sometimes happens when hunting in dust, rain and snow.

The injection-molded stock sports more complex checkering and steel sling-swivel studs rather than the molded-in bases of the ATR. Unlike many stocks these days, it's not adjustable but rather a basic straight-comb "classic" (if black polymer can be considered classic) stock with a 13.75" LOP and a recoil pad as soft as a wad of Kleenex.



Mossberg Patriots come from the factory with "Weaver Style" scope bases, the front base with two slots for more flexible mounting.

REALLY PRACTICAL STUFF!

Some other features are real upgrades such as the detachable, staggered-round magazine. It doesn't hold or feed rounds any better than the ATR's blind magazine but allows a hunter to unload their rifle without difficulty and to more easily clear cartridge misfeeds.

Unlike the detachable magazines on many other current rifles, the Patriot can be loaded from the top with the magazine still in the action, a desirable feature in the field. The release tab is recessed so it can't be inadvertently released by Mother Nature's many fingers, unlike the long levers jutting well below the stock on "tactical" hunting rifles.

The "Lightning Bolt" trigger broke cleanly at 3+ lbs., but I like 'em a little lighter in relatively light rifles so I removed the stock and adjusted the pull down to 2.5 lbs. The change is easily accomplished with a screw on the front of the trigger housing.

At the range the rifle didn't shoot very well, so I performed my standard "bedding" test on the free-floated barrel, grabbing both the tip of the forend and barrel in my right hand and squeezing. The forend easily touched the barrel, meaning the barrel wasn't really free-floated.

Slightly deepening the barrel channel inside the forend tip with a round rasp solved the problem, the rifle now grouping

three shots under an inch with Hunting Shack factory ammo loaded with 165-gr. Sierra GameKings, and handloads using Federal's 165-gr. Tipped Trophy Bonded bullets. Once dialed-in, the rifle proved capable of consistently hitting an 8" gong at 600 yards.

SNOW TESTING

The hunt took place mostly on snowy mountainsides, where I slipped and fell once. Luckily, falling in shin-deep snow doesn't hurt much and the Patriot survived nicely. Some snow entered the action around the bolt, but the detachable magazine allowed a quick clean-out, and the fluted bolt still slid easily.



The "Lightning Bolt" adjustable trigger has a tiny lightning bolt machined into the trigger tab.

On the last morning of the hunt I took a mid-sized mule deer buck and got a brief chance at an elk toward evening, right after my hunting partner, fellow writer John Haviland, shot a 4x4 raghorn across a canyon. At John's shot, a 5x5 bull we hadn't seen trotted into an opening and I was just settling the reticle on its chest when John shot his bull again — whereupon "mine" disappeared into the nearby timber.

After returning home I became curious about what the rifle might weigh with a lighter scope and rings. The Patriot comes with "Weaver Style" bases installed, the front base having two grooves an inch apart for mounting flexibility. After trying various scopes and rings I ended up using a 6x38 Weaver K6 in Burris Zee rings, which, like the Patriot rifle are very affordable and practical. This dropped the rifle's weight to 7 lbs., 3 oz., placing it on the upper edge of modern "mountain" rifles. After this work I liked the Patriot so much I now own it — my collection of .308s had a hole the *21st Century Semi-Classic Affordable* rifle fills perfectly!

www.mossberg.com



LOVE AT THIRD SIGHT — A .22 MAGNUM 1911

David Freeman

Rock Island Armory — sometimes they create a niche, sometimes they fill a niche. There wasn't a 1911 in .22 Magnum but now there is. I can just hear the engineers when company president Martin Tuason left the room —

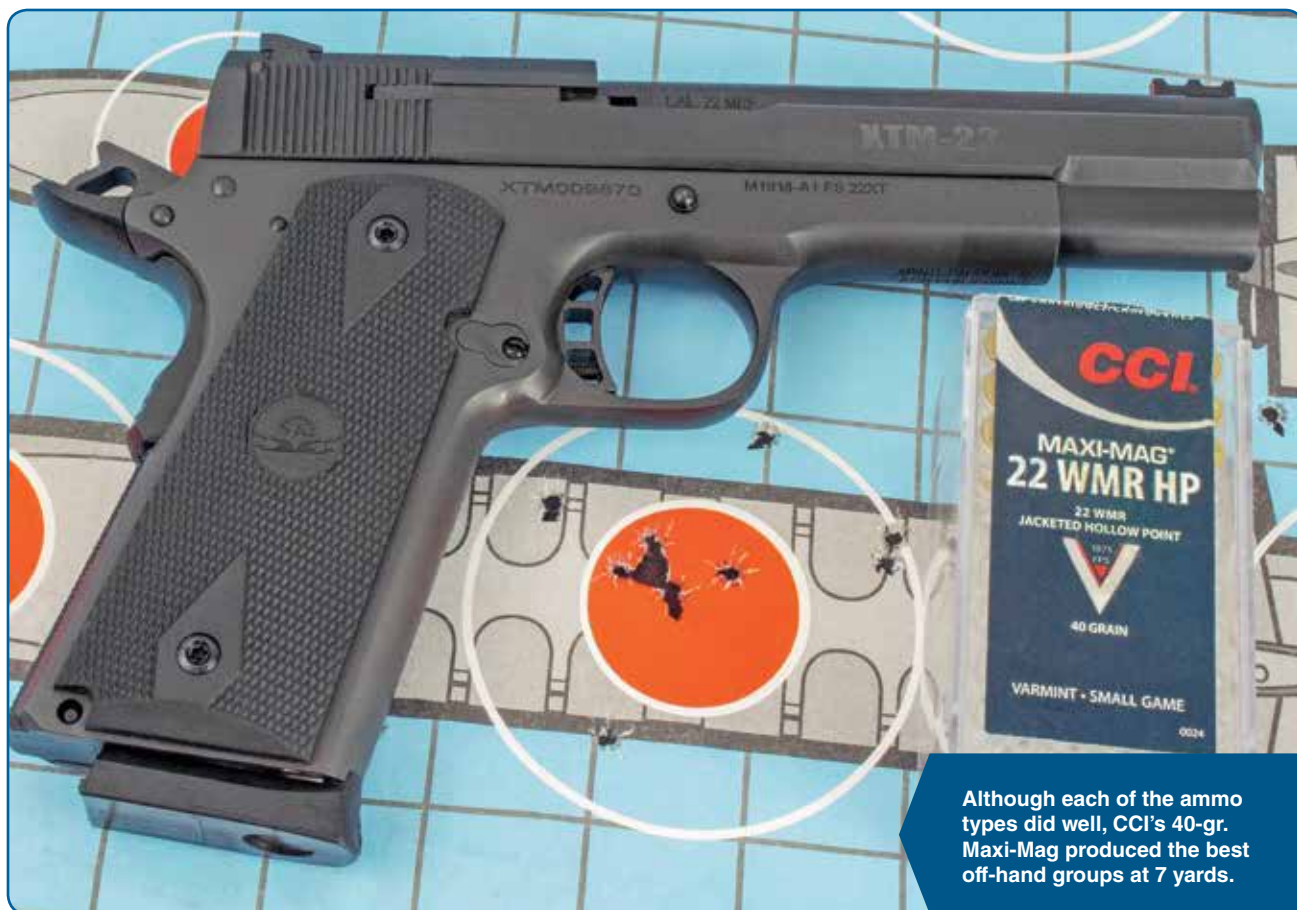
"He wants us to *what?*"

"I think he said 'build a .22 Magnum 1911.' "

"That's what I thought he said."

Since it's Armscor/Rock Island Armory (the company building more 1911s than any other company in the world), they did it.

I've been working with a Rock Island Armory XT22 Magnum Pistol off-and-on for three weeks now. Week one was love. Week two — not so much. Week three and I was back head-over-heels in love. My advice is this: Don't give up on this gun if you want to enjoy a unique bit of firearm charm.



Although each of the ammo types did well, CCI's 40-gr. Maxi-Mag produced the best off-hand groups at 7 yards.



GREAT, BUT CHALLENGING, CARTRIDGE

The .22 Winchester Magnum Rimfire, also called .22 WMR, .22 Magnum, .22 MRF, .22 WMRF or .22 Mag was introduced in 1959 by Winchester. It uses bullets in weights comparable to the .22 Long Rifle but is considerably faster. It also shoots flatter and hits harder than the .22 LR, allowing deeper penetration and more reliable expansion against raccoon-sized game.

Negligible recoil of the .22 WMR caliber, especially in this all-steel gun, also makes it an easy-going target and plinking round. It's a loud cartridge with significant muzzle flash, which makes it even more fun. Putting all of this into a 1911 makes it easy to love the XTM-22 platform. Currently, there is only one other semi-automatic handgun chambered in .22 WMR, the Kel-Tec PMR30.

The classic lines of a Rock Island 1911 and familiar controls make shooting the XTM22 Magnum a pleasure for 1911 fans.

PROBLEM SOLVED

There are some challenges in building a small caliber, locked breech, semi-automatic pistol. The XT series is a classic Browning-pattern 1911 but with some major differences. For one thing, the slide is more like a Beretta 92/M9, open at the top with the barrel visible. However, it's not the barrel you're seeing — it's a sleeve. The system is described as a modified 1911A1 frame incorporating a sliding barrel inside a barrel shroud, fitted with an integral lug, along with a modified slide open at the top and firing pin function suited for the .22 Magnum cartridge. There is also a dovetailed fiber optic front sight atop the barrel shroud.

Obviously, when it comes to operating details, there are differences that became evident as I got to know the pistol. The high pressure of the .22 WMR cartridge, along with the slow burning powder, requires a little pressure release right after ignition. The XTM uses a pinned barrel design and delayed blowback slide. You can see a small gap between the barrel shroud and the barrel as the gun goes into battery.

In a standard 1911, the barrel tilts to unlock and this requires the barrel link to pivot. On this gun, the only movement is rearward — there is no tilting. This means when you disassemble the gun for cleaning, you've got different-looking parts than a "standard" 1911. It's no big deal, except for the recoil rod and spring plug, which are threaded. You don't need to remove it when disassembling the firearm. I removed it.

The darn thing had been locked down with thread locker. I talked with one of the gunsmiths at Rock Island and he said it's done because the plug works out over time while shooting. It's worthwhile to check the plug and tighten from time to time.

RUNDOWN

The back portion of the slide is typical 1911A1 with a drift adjustable, solid black rear sight and small GI-type vertical cocking serrations. The slide lock, plunger tube, mag release and thumb safety are old school 1911 as is the grip safety. The



Disassembly is almost classic 1911 but with few extra parts.

grip panels are rubber with the familiar checkered diamond cut pattern and RIA logo. The mainspring housing is flat with 25 LPI checkering while the front strap is smooth. Hammer and trigger are skeletonized while the hammer has a serrated non-slip thumb surface. The trigger has an over-travel adjustment screw and pulled at a consistent 4 lbs. 6 oz. The finish is parkerized and the gun weighs 2.5 lbs. empty.

The magazine holds 15 rounds in an alternating double stack formation. All parts are made of CNC-machined high ordnance steel.



The barrel, shroud, recoil guide rod and spring (above) are noticeably different from the 1911. The end of the recoil guide rod should be frequently checked for tightness. The barrel and barrel shroud (below) are different than a standard 1911's with a gap between barrel and shroud to release gas pressure.



It's not required but David found it much easier to remove the guide rod to overcome the strong recoil spring during slide removal and reinstallation (left). Hammer, trigger, cocking serrations, thumb safety, grip safety and mag release (below) are reminiscent of GI 1911A1 handguns.



RANGE TIME

My first trip to the range with the XTM was a get-acquainted trip. I didn't shoot it for accuracy but I did some chronograph readings just to see how it compared with the Kel-Tec PMR30 and my Henry pump .22 WMR with 20.5" barrel. With CCI's 40-gr. Maxi-Mag cartridges, the XTM averaged 1,295 fps while the Kel-Tec was a little slower at 1,258 fps. From the rifle barrel, the average was 1,788 fps.

I had a crew of kids and grandkids with me on the trip. They wanted to shoot a bunch of different guns so I let them shoot the XTM along with the others while I sat back and watched. I gave them six different brands of ammunition and there were no issues with the gun. The fire-breathing magnum rounds, with associated loud pops, were a hoot for the kids to shoot.

After the first trip, I cleaned the gun then took it to an indoor range to get a better feel for the piece while doing some accuracy testing. I took all my .22 WMR handguns because I wanted to see how shooting the XTM compared to shooting the PMR30 and two revolvers — a Ruger Single 9 and Taurus Raging Bull, both with 6.5" barrels.

Range time highlighted differences in how the XTM operates compared to other 1911s.

The first is putting the gun into battery — it will not rack or slingshot. The only way to get it into battery is to disengage the slide lock. Because of the 15-round double-stack magazine and the length of the .22 WMR cartridge, the grip is slightly larger than most 1911s and I couldn't reach the slide release with my right thumb.

I learned to push the slide release down with my left thumb. Once I got used to this maneuver, I was fine with it. The next difference is the slide doesn't lock back after the last round is fired. This is by design and noted in the manual.

The best group was with the CCI Maxi Mag 40-gr. JHP rounds, five in a ragged hole and the other five within two inches. However, there was a problem — with each type of ammunition, I got light primer strikes on at least one, sometimes two rounds. Each time I simply cocked the hammer and the gun fired, but it obviously wasn't an ammo issue.

I then remembered something the gunsmith told me about lubrication. He said to make sure there was plenty of oil underneath the barrel shroud where it contacts the slide, but to keep the breech face dry. You should also clean the chamber and breech face at least every hundred rounds. I cleaned and oiled the gun as suggested before the next range trip and the gun has operated flawlessly ever since.

TAKEAWAY

Looking at the overall experience with the XTM, the gun worked fine out of the box. It had light primer strikes after I cleaned it using my usual method of cleaning. After cleaning it again and following Rock Island's instructions, it worked flawlessly with multiple types of ammunition.

If you're a 1911 person and just want to enjoy shooting something different, you'll like this gun. When you see the way the Rock Island engineers solved some of the challenges of making a 1911 operate with a lightweight caliber, you'll understand why they are among the best at creating innovative products at very reasonable prices. MSRP of the XTM is \$598.

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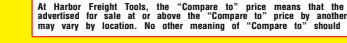
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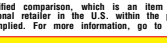


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CENTURY ARMS DRACO NAK9X

**RUNNING “LIKE BEETS
THROUGH A TODDLER.”**



Nicely accessorized the Century Draco NAK9X is a room-clearing hotrod. The gun is chunky, but it remains uber-reliable and dead-on accurate.

Will Dabbs, MD

The Century NAK9X is what would happen if a Kalashnikov rifle had a baby with a GLOCK handgun. The end result is just stupid-reliable while remaining ugly enough to be almost cute. As one might expect with parents like these, the gun runs like a scalded ape. The NAK9X is made in Romania and those guys clearly know how to make a hard-use firearm.

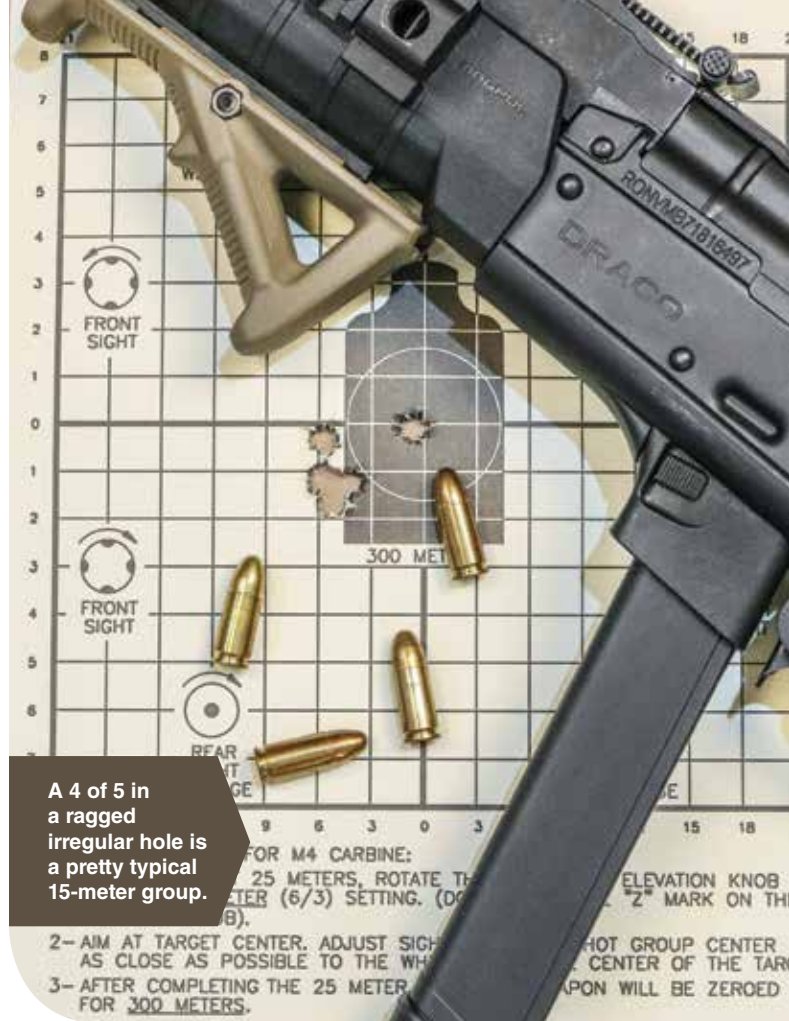
The NAK9X just feels thick. At 6.38 lbs. it's not really fat, it's just big boned — like an Uzi or a Thompson. You can just feel this is a real-world tool when you first heft it.

A COMMIE CLASSIC IN NEW CLOTHES

The basic chassis is 100 percent Kalashnikov. The receiver is stamped, and the trunnions are milled. There's a polymer spacer within the gun's guts to adapt the rifle action to fire a pistol cartridge. The top cover is pressed steel and pivots at the front like an AKSU-74. The stubby front sight base seems familiar when compared to other Century AK handguns. However, this is where the similarities stop.

The action is straight blowback. In place of a separate gas-driven bolt and bolt carrier, the recoil-driven bolt on the NAK9X is a single hefty piece. It's massive, like T72-tank-massive. The charging handle is fixed to the bolt so it reciprocates with the action. This lets you manhandle the gun in the profoundly unlikely event it ever gets sticky. The safety is the standard AK pivoting ranch gate. Love it or hate it, with 100 million copies in service it definitely works.

The stamped sheet steel top cover has a Picatinny rail rigidly affixed. If this were a sniper weapon intended to ring steel at a kilometer, you'd fret about the tolerances. As this is



a pistol-caliber room-clearing beast, it doesn't matter. Given its pivoting design, the mount is plenty rigid for its intended purpose. I couldn't make my copy wiggle.

The NAK9X feeds from standard GLOCK magazines and comes with a 33-round box for those living in a free state. Mags insert straight from the bottom, no rocking required and are held in place via a thumb-operated, side-mounted pushbutton.



“The **NAK9X** spits out double-taps like a politician spews lies.”



The Gemtech GM9 sound suppressor strikes a nice balance between small size and high performance.

The bolt does not lock back after the last round is fired, but the gun still runs plenty fast.

The iron sights are standard Kalashnikov. The front post is heavily fenced, while the sliding rear notch is adjustable for range out to 400 meters. However, since it fires the 9mm Parabellum cartridge, good luck.

The furniture is Magpul MOE, so you know it's awesome. The forearm has plenty of M-LOK slots for accessories. Since the gun is considered a pistol you can legally mount an angled foregrip but not the vertical sort. I don't understand it either, but it's the law.

The muzzle is threaded a standard 1/2x28, so you can mount any common 9mm muzzle attachment. My NAK9X rocks a Gemtech GM9 sound suppressor. Thusly configured the gun easily pegs the cool meter.

The action of the NAK9X terminates at the rear trunnion but Century ships the gun with a buffer tube and Shockwave Pistol Stabilizing Brace installed. The Shockwave is a simple affair substantially enhancing the gun's controllability, particularly when moving fast.

BATF was a bit indecisive about the legality of these marvelous devices early on, but we have since gotten a definitive resolution. It doesn't matter how you hold or fire the gun, the addition of a PSB does not change the weapon's pistol classification. The Shockwave is held in place via an ample Allen screw, letting you adjust the brace to suit your particular anatomy.

ACCESSORIZING

The Vortex Razor AMG UH-1 holographic weapon sight with appropriate batteries will recharge off a USB port and is as tough as the NAK9X host. The genuine holographic EBR-CQB reticle is fast and clean while the throw lever mount makes management breezy. The AMG UH-1 is one killer gunsight.

The Magpul AFG Angled Foregrip gives you something natural to wrap your support hand around while a Streamlight TLR-1 gun light pierces the darkness and keeps running long after I've quit. The Gemtech GM9 is a monocoire suppressor rated for full auto fire and meticulously crafted. The cumulative end result will run fast indoors or from a car without perforating your eardrums.

HOW DOES SHE RUN?

The tricked-out NAK9X seems like it ought to fit like sandpaper underpants. The gun looks as



The entrails of the NAK9X are similar to those of an AK yet still fundamentally different. There is no gas system.



Magpul furniture and an angled foregrip keep everything cool, controllable and comfortable.

utilitarian as a fire hydrant but lift the gun up into firing position and you can hear the angels singing.

The trigger has a little bit of predictable take-up, but it breaks nice and clean. It's better than a traditional AK and not nearly so uncultured as the boggy sort on an Uzi or MP5. Index the gun on target and you can squeeze off sequential double taps until you get sick of doing it. The suppressor cuts down on the racket, and the heft combined with the gun's generally over-engineered design keeps the muzzle dead on target.

I pumped a little bit of every type of ammo I could find through the piece. Round-nose *anything* ran like beetles through a toddler. Truncated cone rounds or hollowpoints hung up on occasion, but it got better as the day wore on. As is the case with all things Kalashnikov, you need not waste a lot of time training to clear stoppages. With the right ammo the NAK9X is the Energizer Bunny of plus-frame handguns.

The Shockwave keeps the gun stable. Indexing onto close to mid-range targets is quick and easy. The NAK9X spits out double-taps like a politician spews lies.

WHAT COULD YOU DO WITH IT?

Precious few American gun nerds will ever be called upon to use tactical firearms to rescue the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders from the clutches of some evil criminal mastermind. Personally, I have myself only done this twice (I'm lying) despite being a certified gun writer (not a real thing). However, what we might conceivably do is while away a lazy Saturday afternoon turning ammo into noise. The NAK9X does this particular job perfectly.

You would be hard-pressed to find a more enjoyable plinking platform. Buy it by the case, and 9mm Parabellum ammo is just dirt-cheap these days. Now is the time to stock up. Save your milk jugs and empty aluminum beverage cans, fill them with water, drag them to the range and then blow them to smithereens. The resulting explosive muddy mess will reliably cure what ails you. (*Editor's Note: Will is a real-live doctor, so he can legally prescribe 9mm Parabellum!*)

Should you actually find yourself venturing forth into the sorts of places where the Wild Things roam, the NAK9X is simply splendid company. The gun is small enough to tuck behind the seat in your pickup truck and sufficiently tough to not care if it gets scuffed up in the process. Nothing will put the fear of God into a rampaging mob of Antifa terrorists faster. If you find the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders are indeed in dire need of saving, the NAK9X will certainly help you there as well.



The action on the NAK9X is massively overbuilt. Note the bolt is fully closed but the angled cutout on the forward end makes it appear like it's cracked open.

CLEANING UP THE BEETS

This is the best time in American history to be a gun nerd. Machineguns are pretty much gone and the days of \$25 Luger pistols will never return but the local gun emporia are more robustly stocked than ever before. In amongst the myriad AR15 variants and plastic pistols aplenty, there yet remain a few truly unusual offerings — the hybrid Century Draco NAK9X foremost among them.

Slicker than warm snot across glass and as rugged as a tire tool, the NAK9X is the utility gun you can beat up, knock around, or leave out in the weather and still have it shoot every single time. Clean the gun regularly — or don't. The NAK9X doesn't seem to care.

The NAK9X is just bug ugly, but once you hang a little cool-guy stuff on it the overall effect inevitably grows on you. The tricked-out NAK9X is refreshingly different. Accurate for its class and tougher than Chuck Norris' toenails, this neat new blaster from Century fills an interesting niche.

The argument could also be made the heavy full-figured pistol-caliber weapon is the ideal home defense tool. It's easier to run than a conventional handgun and packs plenty of onboard ammo. With some well-reasoned accessories it's your recreational range toy *and* vaccination against real-world chaos. 

www.centuryarms.com



With premium 140-, 158- or 180-gr. .357 loads, Marlin's M-94 CSBL classifies as a "real" rifle.

MODEL 94 CSBL THE UPSCALE SHORT-THROW .357 THUMPER.

Payton Miller

I've been using rifle-caliber Marlin lever guns — .30-30, .35 Remington, .45-70 — most of my life and I confess to being a little late to the pistol-caliber party. Truth be told, my interest in the M94 was sparked by John Taffin's enthusiasm. I figured if John liked it, there *had* to be something to it.

The Marlin Model 1894 was originally built to accept the most popular late 19th Century handgun cartridges — .44-40, .32-20, .38-40 and the like. By the 1970s the menu had grown to include our two powerful, preeminent pistol-caliber offerings — the .44 and .357 Magnum.

The company's latest iteration of this short-action levergun classic is the Model 94 CSBL, a 16.5" barreled, stainless/laminate stocked little gem which goes a long way toward demonstrating the .357 Magnum's versatility.

PRETTY AND PRACTICAL

The Model 94 CSBL in .357 Magnum weighs about a half-pound less and is 3.5" shorter than the Marlin Model 336 in .35 Remington. Pickup truck advantage — something Chuck Connors never had to worry about in *The Rifleman* — goes to the M94.

I had a bit of initial trepidation over the "big loop" designation



Short, handy, accurate and powerful, the M94 CSBL can handle everything from plinking to small game and even deer within reasonable ranges.

of the CSBL but my fears of some monster Chuck Connors “spin-cycle ring” were groundless. It’s slightly oversize but sensibly so, enough to allow you to stick a gloved hand into the loop easily.

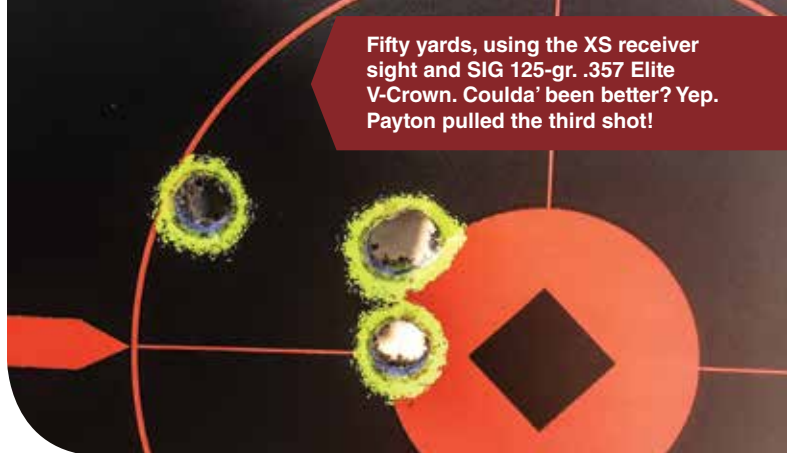
PICK YOUR POWER

There’s one undeniable fact here — it’s pretty tough to beat a .357 in terms of versatility. Using factory ammo, our 1894 CSBL seriously expanded the power envelope of both .38 Special and .357 Magnum ammo.

Let’s start with our fave Walmart “bulk pack” .38 Special plinker — Remington UMC .38 Special 130-gr. FMJ at 1,059 fps. It’s a pretty good small game load and grouped around 1.5" at 50 yards using the iron sights. Hornady’s standby standard-pressure .38 Special 158-gr. XTP grouped just as well, while getting pushed well into “Super Plus P” territory at 980 fps.

Going up the .357 ladder to Buffalo Bore’s Hard-Cast LFNGC, the 180-gr. hit 1,871 fps, Hornady’s 140-gr. FTX LeverEvolution clocked 1,772 fps and Speer’s GDHP 158-gr. averaged 1,785 fps. All three of these grouped well under 2" at 50 yards whether we used the scope or the irons. We did try a 125-gr. “lightweight,” SIG’s 125-gr. V-Crown Elite which delivered 1" groups at 50. The 16.5" tube of the Marlin is remarkably efficient, meaning you’re gonna get pretty much everything the .38/.357 family has to give.

The trigger? Pretty nice for a levergun — about 4.5 lbs. and just a bit of creep. No deal breaker. The action cycled with no hitches; what else would you expect from a time-proven Marlin platform? One caveat: Don’t be coy about working the lever. Be forceful, or you may just spin those short cases around without ejecting them



Fifty yards, using the XS receiver sight and SIG 125-gr. .357 Elite V-Crown. Coulda’ been better? Yep. Payton pulled the third shot!

THE CASE FOR THE CSBL

The combination of stainless steel and gray/black laminate is pretty easy on the eyes. With an MSRP of \$1,214, the CSBL is undeniably pricey compared to other Marlin leverguns, but as a movie critic once said of a big-budget epic, “All that money is right up there on the screen.”

A .357 carbine stoked with .38s can also be a most valuable — and pocketbook-friendly — tool in transitioning younger shooters up to a centerfire. They get an exciting whack-and-thump with relatively zilch in the way of recoil.

This little Marlin’s considerable appeal is pretty simple to understand. I noticed every time I handed it to someone, nobody seemed overly eager to hand it back.

www.marlinfirearms.com

A detailed advertisement for the North American Arms, Inc. RANGER II Break-Top 2.5 revolver. The image features a silver revolver with a wooden grip, shown with its break-top mechanism open. Several .22 caliber bullets are arranged in a fan shape in front of the revolver. The text "Actual Size Shown with LR Conversion Cylinder" is printed near the revolver. The slogan "Convenient, Reliable, Effective!" is written in a stylized blue font. The North American Arms logo, featuring an eagle head, is in the top left corner. The website "www.northamericanarms.com" is at the bottom right, accompanied by Facebook and Instagram icons.



Francesco Baracca, Italy's top fighter ace of WWI, scored the first Italian victory of the war in his Nieuport 11 fighter equipped with a remote-firing Lewis gun.



Twin 8mm Maxims, usually with 500 rounds each, became the standard German fighter armament in World War I.

MAXIMS IN THE THIRD DIMENSION

Barrett Tillman
Photos: Greg VanWyngarden

If you do an internet search for “chattering Spandaus,” you only get 95 hits but the stock phrase has become synonymous with World War I aviation. Generations of moviegoers have seen the image: the leering Teutonic ace, hard eyes gleaming behind squared-off goggles above the blazing muzzles.

The fact is, there is no such thing as a Spandau machine gun — or *Maschinengewehr* in German. Nearly all German fighters of the Great War were armed with Maxim designs and the fact many were produced in the Spandau arsenal led to the misnomer.

Of far greater import — the weapon was designed by an American-turned-Briton, Sir Hiram Maxim.

WWI AERIAL GUNNERY REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

CROSSING THE POND

Maxim was a passionate inventor, best known for his electric lights as a rival of Thomas Edison. Maxim's business took him from Massachusetts to London so often he permanently moved in 1900, becoming a citizen of the United Kingdom. He was knighted the following year.

By then, the former Yankee had revolutionized warfare. In the Victorian era of hand-cranked Gatling guns, the recoil-operated, belt-fed Maxim gun represented a huge technological

advance. The basic design, patented in 1883, was demonstrated in Maxim's garden the next year, churning out 500 rounds of .303 ammunition per minute. The heat produced by the high rate of fire was dissipated via a water jacket surrounding the barrel.

Nearly a decade passed before the wonder weapon was used in combat, deployed against Rhodesian tribesmen in 1893. Thereafter, Maxims became a standard tool in Britain's



Britain's Vickers machinegun was the Allies' most-used aircraft weapon of the Great War, usually in .303 but also in 10mm for destroying observation balloons.



America's first mating of airplane and machine gun occurred in 1912 when three army pilots took aloft a Lewis Gun for three days of tests in a Wright Flyer.



Leading American ace Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker in his Nieuport 28 with two Vickers. The narrow fuselage required offsetting the second gun.

colonial feuds. A bit of doggerel declared, "Fear not for we have got the Maxim gun ... and they have not."

AERIAL WAR

A more-or-less copy of the Maxim gun appeared in Germany in 1908, designated the MG-08, chambered in the 792mm rifle cartridge. The "aught eight" became one of Germany's iconic weapons.

When Europe immolated itself in 1914, every army had machine guns, mostly Maxim designs, but war elevated them to the third dimension. Observation aircraft often carried machine guns but the front-mounted propeller got in the way.

Legend claims Dutch designer Anthony Fokker designed an interrupter gear composed of cams and levers, permitting a Maxim to fire through the prop arc. However, Swiss inventor Franz Schneider actually patented the concept in 1913.

By early 1915 the German Air Service succeeded in bolting MG-08s to Fokker *Eindecker* monoplanes. The weight of a heavy cooling jacket and water was avoided by holing the jacket to enhance airflow across the barrel. Fed by a 500-round belt, the gun made the E-I and later models into the first "system aircraft" because the weapon was more significant than the platform.

The spring and summer of 1915 was the era of "The Fokker Scourge." With the advantage of aiming the entire aircraft rather than swiveling the guns, the first German *Jagdflieler* (fighter pilots) cut a wide swath through Allied formations. The *Eindecker* control system limited maneuverability but the synchronized gun made a huge difference.

A generation of German airmen earned the coveted *Pour le Merite* on Maxim-armed fighters. The first two, Lieutenants Oswald Boelcke and Max Immemann, became internationally known. Boelcke was even interviewed by the *New York Times* almost a year before the United States entered the war.

Immemann died in a confused combat in June 1916, either

the victim of synchronizer failure or a British gunner. Boelcke ran his score to 40 before being killed in a crash.

With better aircraft — especially the French-built *Nieuport* — the Allies regained air superiority over the Western Front for a time. Germany countered with the lethal Albatros series of biplane fighters, featuring twin "Spandaus" which led to the "Bloody April" of 1917.

BRITISH ACCENT

In the meantime, French and British pilots struggled with the drum-fed Lewis Guns mounted on the top wings of their biplanes in order to clear the prop. The American-designed Lewis fired from an open bolt so it wouldn't work with a timing mechanism, though back-seat aerial observers employed Lewis guns on swivel mounts. However, help was on the way. The Vickers Company had bought out Maxim in 1896 and developed an improved model but a long gestation ensued and the British Army did not adopt the Vickers until 1912.

Like the Maxim, the Vickers was well suited to aircraft use because it fired from a closed bolt, permitting consistent timing for synchronization with the aircraft's propeller. The first British planes armed with a synchronized gun were two 1916 Sopwiths — the two-seat "Strutter" and the delightful little "Pup." Eventually, two-gun fighters emerged, the famous Sopwith Camel and SPAD XIII.

One significant Vickers improvement was the disintegrating ammunition belt. The steel links securing each cartridge automatically dropped away when the round was chambered. Available from 1917, the disintegrating belts largely avoided cloth belts' tendency to ice up or warp from repeated use.

THE WAR TO END ALL OTHERS ...

When Maxim died in November 1916 he had seen his invention proven in a form of combat unique to the 20th century.

The Vickers eventually was employed by at least nine other nations, usually chambered in the 6.5 to 7.6mm realm but a century later, aerophiles still respond to the notion of "chattering Spandaus."

GUNS[®]

MAGAZINE

2019 GIFT GUIDE

Yep, it's time to start thinking about all the good little boys and girls in your life and what they'd like to see on Christmas morning so here are 10 great gift suggestions any shooter would love! And — for yourself

— we'd suggest leaving a copy of this guide lying around with a few appropriate notes scrawled in the margins in order to avoid getting another pair of loud novelty socks or the dreaded fruitcake!

OTTO NOIZEBARRIER MICRO EARPLUGS

OTTO NoizeBarrier Micro earplugs provide natural and enhanced hearing on the range and in the field. The electronic earplugs provide up to 40 dB of noise protection and feature a one-touch enhanced mode, amplifying soft sounds by 5X for improved situational awareness. NoizeBarrier Micros last for 16 hours of continuous use and are rechargeable up to 20 cycles with the provided charging station on a single charge. For more info: (817) 428-7171, www.otto-comm.com



HACKETT EQUIPMENT RIFLE BURRITO

In the field or on the range, the HACKETT Equipment Rifle Burrito offers versatility as a slim and lightweight soft case backpack and shooting mat. Available in 36", 42" and 46" lengths, the case can secure bolt-action and AR-style rifles, plus ammo and accessories. Featuring backpack straps, a carry handle, and MOLLE loops, the black water-resistant exterior and red fire-resistant interior provide durability against the elements and avid shooting. For more info: www.hackettequipment.com



BCM GUNFIGHTER STOCK MOD 1

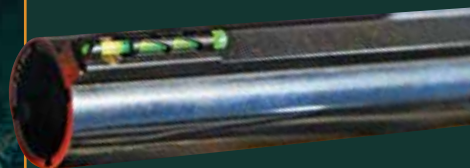
One rockin' stock for mil-spec buffer tubes, the Mod 1 stock assembly from Bravo Company offers everything you need on a real fighting carbine and none of the eye-candy fluff. Starting with a better cheek weld due to the SOPMOD-type upper surface, there are multiple sling mounting options and even the modular VBOST (Vehicle Borne Operations Sling Tab) to prevent tangling with the shooter's sling, molle gear or other kit. Alongside a host of other features, the stock also has a huge

storage compartment in the toe for life's little tactical necessities. For more info: (877) 272-8626, www.bravocompany.com

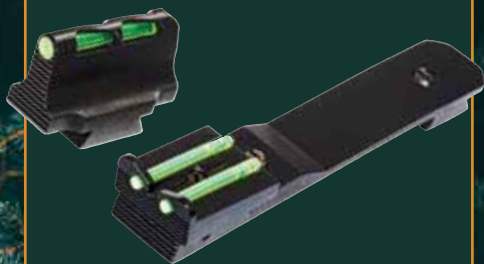


HIVIZ SIGHTS

These gifts from HIVIZ are sure to be appreciated: The LightWave CompSight and the Henry Rifles Sight Sets.



The LightWave CompSight (above) is the choice of competitive shotgun shooters, including Olympic champions. It is also popular among hunters. Replacing a bead front sight with a green, red or white LitePipe, the LiteWave CompSight offers the advantages of the light-gathering technology in a low-profile and durable design. This HIVIZ sight is compatible on most Beretta, Benelli, Browning and Winchester vent-ribbed shotguns and others.



Dress up your favorite plinker or hunting rifle with the brightest sight on the market. Now available for Henry Rifles, HIVIZ offers four new tackdriving sets with its patent LiteWave design front sight. These sights deliver an amazingly bright sight picture for quick and easy target acquisition to boost your shooting performance. All sights are fully adjustable for windage and elevation. The set includes red, green and white LitePipes for the front sight and one set of green LitePipes for the rear sight. For more info: (307) 223-2785, www.hivizsights.com

MAVEN B.5 BINOCULARS

When you need to glass vast open country, look no further than Maven B.5 binoculars. Purpose-built for increased magnification at extended ranges with low-light performance, the B.5 is one of the most modern optical systems on the market. Available in 15x56 and 18x56 models, the 45 oz. binos feature fluorite glass with edge-to-edge clarity, 92.9% light transmission and a scratch- and oil-resistant lens coating suitable for rugged field use. For more info: (800) 307-1109, www.mavenbuilt.com



CZ-USA 557 AMERICAN RIFLE

CZ-USA's new CZ 557 American is a hunter's dream rifle: accurate, durable, and extremely functional. It features a 24" cold-hammer-forged and lapped barrel. The longer barrel squeezes a bit more velocity out of the chosen chamberings, including the 6.5 Creedmoor and 7mm-08. Its American-pattern stock has a strong pistol grip with a bit of a palm swell. Add in the classic stock checkering and the rifle will remain in hand even in wet and cold conditions. For more info: (800) 955-4486, www.cz-usa.com



LASERMAX LIGHTNING WITH GRIPSENSE

The new Lightning with GripSense Technology is our most universal Laser yet, fitting most guns with at least 1" of rail space. Simply gripping the firearm sets off a motion sensor once in the detection zone, activating the laser immediately and does not require the user to change their firing grip. Additionally, the Lightning includes significant innovations including a programmable operating mode and up to 20 hours of continuous battery life — safeguarded by a 10-minute time out feature. The Lightning comes in Vivid Red or Daytime Green. For more info: (800) 527-3703, www.lasermx.com



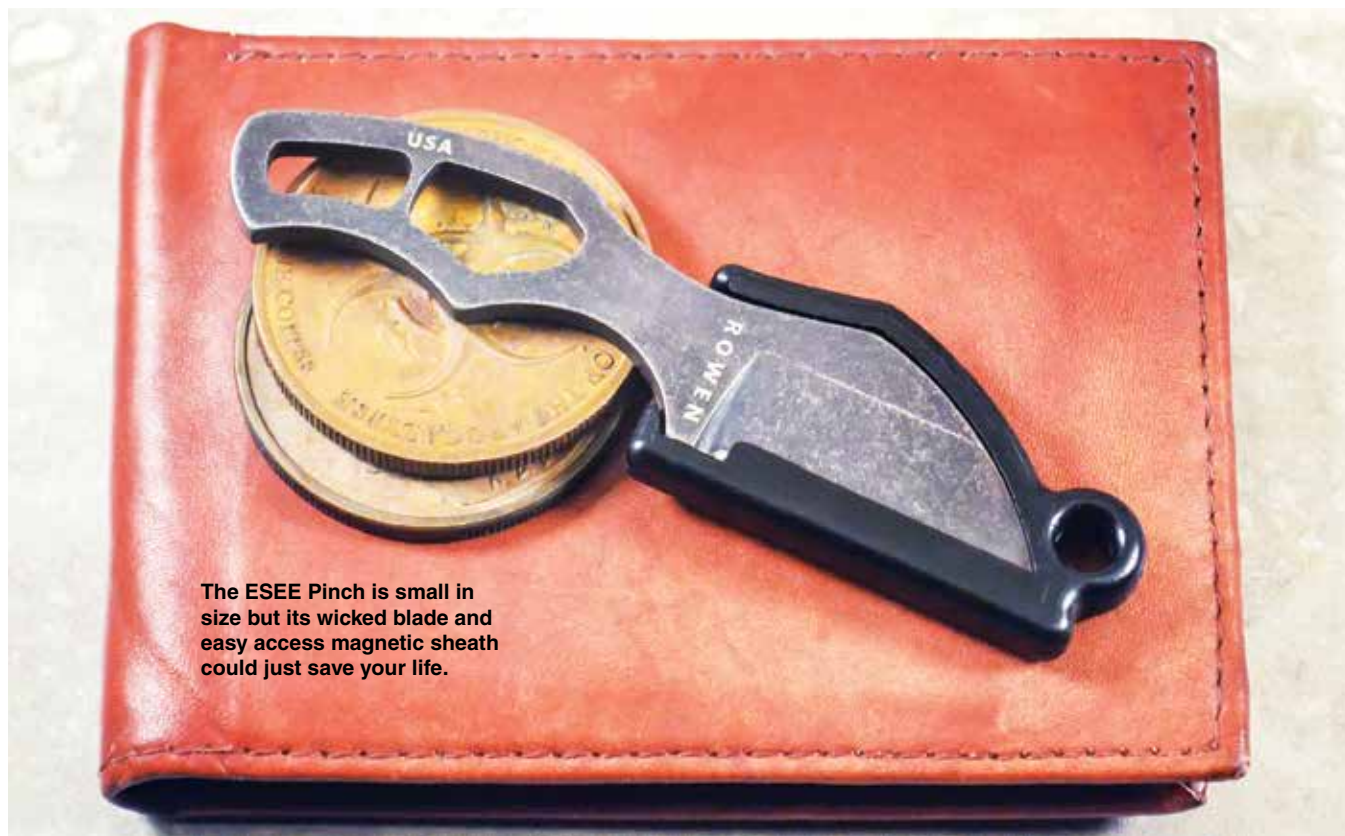
BALLISTIC APP

Designed for serious shooters, Ballistic is the definitive ballistics calculator for iOS devices. Powered by the industry-leading JBM Ballistics database, the app calculates trajectory, windage, velocity, energy, lead and bullet flight time for any valid range and caliber while also compensating for temperature, barometric pressure, humidity and altitude. It also includes Mil-Dot and MOA rangefinders, a heads-up display and interfaces with atmospheric instruments and GPS. The comprehensive app also includes a shooting log and doesn't even need cellular access to function! For more info: www.ballisticapp.com

SIG SAUER ELITE HUNTER TIPPED AMMUNITION

The newest line in the rapidly growing SIG SAUER brand of ammunition gives the serious sportsman unmatched long-range accuracy combined with devastating on-target performance. Designed for massive expansion and deep penetration, Elite Hunter Tipped ammunition delivers instant knockdown capability and maximum terminal performance at extended ranges. The premium cartridges feature a yellow-tipped, lead-alloy bullet with an enhanced boat tail design for superior flight characteristics over a wide range of velocities. For more info: (603) 610-3000, www.sigsauer.com





The ESEE Pinch is small in size but its wicked blade and easy access magnetic sheath could just save your life.

ESEE PINCH EXPRESS ACCESS!

When you think of ESEE fixed-blade knives the word “brawny” comes to mind. Even their smaller knives are well known for their tough demeanor but say *Hello!* to the ESEE Pinch, the smallest knife the company has ever made. The Pinch was designed by knifemaker James Gibson who is also a wilderness instructor at Randall’s Adventure and Training — a sister company of ESEE Knives. Gibson has lent his talented design touch to several popular ESEE knife designs and more recently an axe.

The Pinch is 3.4" in overall length and made of ESEE’s much lauded 1095 Rowan heat-treated high carbon steel. A black oxide coating keeps the rust bugs away. The 1.3" blade is a straight-edge Wharncliffe style with a deep, flat V-grind — small, but all business. The handle sports comfortable curves for gripping and has two skeletonized holes for looping or lashing. The Pinch’s neck sheath is pure genius. The front is open-faced with a lip at the base into which the blade nestles. The knife blade itself is held in place by a very strong

rare earth magnet. The knife is deployed quickly and easily by simply tipping the knife out of the sheath rather than struggling to separate the knife from the sheath. At the base of the sheath is a cord loop for wearing the Pinch around the neck.

WHY YOU’LL LIKE IT

Many savvy self-defense minded individuals carry a “hideaway” knife for use as a last ditch effort to ward off an attacker and the Pinch serves this role well. The Wharncliffe blade — with its ability to grab and snatch — is widely considered one of the most effective blade styles for combat. The Pinch’s quick tip-out sheath makes access much quicker and easier.

When not warding off attackers the Pinch is a handy EDC knife as the Wharncliffe profile is also known as an excellent “working” blade. Alternative carries could include a pouch-style wallet or purse, or attached to a belt dangler.

Like all ESEE knives the Pinch comes with a lifetime, no-ask guarantee. MSRP for the Pinch is \$76.50, but you’ll find the dealer pricing more to your liking. Given its size, this diminutive dynamo will make for a heck of a stocking stuffer this holiday season.



The Pinch’s ingenious sheath uses a rare earth magnet to keep the knife at the ready — just tip out the blade and go!



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UNHAPPY NEW YEAR!

ANTI'S WORK HARD IN DECEMBER TO RUIN THE FUTURE

In case you didn't get the memo, there is no "holiday cheer" among gun prohibitionists toward the tens of millions of law-abiding American gun owners whom they desperately want to disarm.

They're working on it right now, while you're busy doing your Christmas shopping or partying with your pals.

Gun-grabbers traditionally use late November and December to meet with friendly anti-gun politicians and put together new gun control measures to be introduced in January or February as state legislatures convene.

We need to counter this by putting together pro-rights bills. Fight fire with fire and be prepared for the "long haul." For liberal anti-gunners, politics is a contact sport. We gun owners need to be the defensive or offensive line, rather than the football.

Their "holiday cheer" comes in the knowledge they're eroding your rights a little bit at a time. If you're not working with your legislators right now, you're running in second place in a game where there is, as the late Bill Jordan observed, no second-place winner.

Their strategy is simple and proven and this is where Second Amendment activists — if you aren't one, better become one fast — play a critical role. It's up to gun owners to defend their rights, and it doesn't mean just sending 10 bucks to the NRA or some

state-level gun rights organization, then insisting you've done your part.

This coming year is going to be critical because it's a presidential election year. All brakes are off. Anti-gun activists want to destroy the Trump presidency, especially his efforts to balance the federal courts with pro-Second Amendment conservative judges and justices.

"Their 'holiday cheer' comes in the knowledge they're eroding your rights a little bit at a time."

Here's an *activist's checklist*:

- Make sure you're registered to vote and do likewise for anyone in your household of voting age.

- Make sure you know your state legislators. Send them a Christmas card or some other holiday greeting and spell their names correctly. Get acquainted. Find out his/her office telephone number and email address.

- If there is an opportunity to meet for a short chat, wear business attire. You're not going to a hunting camp or the gun range, but to a serious business meeting during which you need to have your facts straight in order to educate the lawmaker and his/her staff representative. Know the person's name, too, because you'll be working mostly with them.

- Keep an eye on legislative preview stories in your local newspaper and during evening news broadcasts. Be alert for any reports of pre-filed legislation dealing with guns.

- Get a calendar and circle the dates your state legislature convenes. Also, if you live in one of the primary states, find out the dates of your Democratic primary and pay attention to some of the significant events.

- Watch for notices of upcoming holiday season "Town Hall" events with your

member of Congress. Be sure to set aside the time to attend one of these, and take a friend or two.

KNOW THE PRIMARY SCHEDULE

The Iowa Caucus is Feb. 3 followed a week later by the New Hampshire primary. These two events will likely thin the herd and provide some indication of who the front-runners will be as we head toward the Democratic National Convention next summer where Donald Trump's challenger will emerge.

According to a schedule published by Wikipedia, March 3, 2020 is "Super Tuesday," when primaries will be held in Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont and Virginia. One week later comes the mini-Super Tuesday with primaries in Idaho, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio and Washington, along with the North Dakota "Firehouse Caucus."

March 17 gives us primaries in Arizona, Florida and Illinois, and all three are important states in the presidential election.

On April 28, primaries are scheduled in Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island. This is three weeks after the April 7 Wisconsin primary. Remember, Hillary Clinton lost in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, and Democrats haven't forgotten. They will not be taking those states for granted ever again.



Do you want any of these Democratic party hopefuls in the White House? The time is now to help prevent it from happening! Photo: CC BY-SA 2.0 by DonkeyHotey

REMEMBER STATE COURTS

Take a hard lesson from Washington State gun owners. Their lethargy has allowed the election of liberal justices to the state's Supreme Court.

This court ordered the restoration of anti-gun Initiative 1639 to the November 2018 ballot after it had been removed by a Superior Court judge for not meeting the requirements of state law. This was one of the most extreme gun control measures in the nation, and the result for Evergreen State gun owners has been nothing but trouble.

Take a lesson from President Trump as well. Work with other activists to recruit conservatives to run for judge positions, including state appellate courts and the state Supreme Court. Work to get them elected.

Judgeships are non-partisan, but study up on those judges presently on the bench. Find out who endorses them.

CHECK LEGISLATIVE CANDIDATES

State legislators will be up for election in the fall of 2020. Your state has some sort of public disclosure or elections commission. Go to their website and find out about your state lawmakers. See who contributes to their campaigns. Are they Republicans or Democrats? Pay particular attention for contributions from gun control groups (i.e. Everytown for Gun Safety Action Fund, or some offshoot of Moms Demand Action).

Defending your Second Amendment rights is a full-time enterprise, not something you do one Thursday evening every month at the local gun club. Don't sit back and count on some national organization to do the fighting while you sit back in the easy chair watching reruns.

The late Neal Knox used to open his speeches to various groups with the phrase "Hello, Gun Lobby." He was right. The "gun lobby" isn't some organization in a brick building back east — it's every one of you, working together, doing the heavy lifting.

Just think of it this way. You are the only thing standing between the likes of Nancy Pelosi, Dianne Feinstein, Cory Booker, Kamala Harris, Eric Swalwell — and the other gun grabbers now running for president — and the rights of your children and grandchildren.

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RUGER PRECISION RIFLE IN 6.5 PRC

There's no denying new cartridges are coming out faster than perhaps any other time in history, including the early days of metallic cartridges. On this rising tide comes a second tsunami — the high-BC, long-bullet cartridge, best exemplified by the unparalleled rise in popularity of the 6.5 Creedmoor.

The “Creedmoor” is a great cartridge but shooters are always looking for more. This year, at least, the current “King of all magnum 6.5 cartridges” is Hornaday's 6.5 Precision Rifle Cartridge (PRC). Originally designed as a hunting round, the 6.5 PRC offers fantastic performance without a significantly shortened barrel life or a dose of brain-scrambling recoil. It also fits nicely

into a short-action rifle such as our guest of honor — the Ruger Precision Rifle.

I recently got to expend a considerable amount of the not-inexpensive Hornady 6.5 PRC at the famed FTW Ranch in Texas on their world-class precision rifle course. The Ruger Precision Rifle performed admirably, making even this fair-to-middling shooter resemble a low-budget Chris Kyle or Carlos Hathcock.

At the end of four dusty but highly satisfying FTW days, I'll submit the Ruger Precision Rifle has everything you need — including accuracy — for long-distance



shooting at a price real people can afford. After all, if Your Obedient Servant can regularly *wang!* 1,800-yard steel plates, the *real* shooters in the crowd would probably do admirable work with the Ruger Precision Rifle in 6.5 PRC.

EOTECH XPS2 GREEN

It's not cool to admit, but darn it, I like EOTech holographic weapons sights (HWS). I like them because I've used them for years on my police patrol rifle in real-deal, sphincter-clenching situations with few complaints. Yeah, battery life on early models could have been better but I always kept a handful of spares in my rifle case. There was also the unpleasantness a few years ago regarding shifting point of zero in extreme conditions, but since I was potentially potting bad guys at eight or possibly 80 instead of 800 meters, it didn't

matter to me.

However, all those issues are a thing of the past. Having toured the factory, I'm satisfied the prior quality-control issues have been resolved and there is no reason not to bring my love for EOTech out of the closet. Even better, I recently got my grimy mitts on the new EOTech XPS2 Green unit and was smitten.

As it would indicate, the XPS2 uses a green, rather than traditional red, reticle.



This probably seems like a major marketing ploy but according to EOTech, the color change makes it six times easier to see in daylight. Using my Mark I Eyeball, I can't vouch for the number of Xs but it's significant. It also works great in darkness.

The sight is also small — the shortest and lightest true HWS — and conveniently runs on a single CR123 battery. After many years, I can finally say EOTech has done everything right, even when they've “gone green!”

THE GAMO SWARM MAGNUM .22 CALIBER AIR RIFLE

I'm a terrorist, at least if you would ask the local *Tamias striatus* (i.e. “eastern chipmunk”). However, you can't ask them because most are dead — and, let's

be honest; they're small non-verbal hyperactive rodents.

The damnable little nuisances constantly raid my bird feeders, stuffing all the

expensive sunflower seeds into their cheek pouches before stashing them, uneaten, into flowerpots, foundation plantings and even my hot tub enclosure. It's an everyday routine, at least until my GAMO Swarm Magnum .22 speaks with a stealthy *piff*.

The .22 caliber pellet, streaking along at 1,300 fps, ruins their day in a big way. The noise isn't bad either, a serious consideration for those who might be living under the ironclad thumb of a Homeowners Association (my neighbor won't mow his yard but apparently *I'm* the neo-Nazi for defending my seeds).

With a very nice adjustable two-stage trigger, 10-shot magazine and included 3-9x40 air rifle scope with rings, this package is a great all-in-one investment for plinkers, competitors — and chipmunk snipers.



AXEON SECOND ZERO

Occasionally, a smart-aleck will describe how a complicated machine works via "FM," which stands for *Freakin' Magic*. Essentially, it's a simple way of explaining a complex mechanism or process that operates using technology the explainer doesn't remotely understand.

So, trust me when I point out the Axeon Second Zero works by wholesale, case-lot amounts of FM.

The Second Zero is a profoundly simple device comprised of an optical prismatic lens fitting over the end of your scope or red dot, allowing you — strangely enough — to establish a second zero on the weapon. For instance, depending on the model, if you are sighted-in at 100 yards, you can engage the Second Zero and now have either a 300- or 500-yard zero on your rifle.



It's easy — flip up the lens and go shooting; no calculations, dialing, holdover or any other action required on your part. It performs this *FM* by shifting the image either 4.5 or 11.5 MOA, the necessary amount for a 300- or 500-yard zero for most common hunting cartridges (more accurately, 330 or 530 yards).

The military has been using the Second Zero for a while but Axeon brought the technology to the civilian market earlier this year. You might not be playing 180-grain whack-a-mole with terrorists at 530 meters but it'll make your next antelope or mule deer hunt much easier.

Perhaps best of all, the civilian models start around 70 bucks on the street. Precision shooters probably won't be interested but for those of us whose brains get tangled in the heat of the hunt, the Second Zero can make the difference between bragging and bawling.

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WALTHER PPQ 9MM COMPENSATOR JARVIS INC.

The Walther PPQ 9mm Compensator from Jarvis Inc. reduces muzzle rise and recoil felt by the shooter while firing. With a sleek design that follows the profile of the PPQ slide, the compensator will work on both Walther factory and Jarvis threaded barrels. To install, just screw on the compensator and tighten the single set screw at the bottom with the provided hex key wrench. For more info: (406) 625-2562, www.jarvis-custom.com



S333 THUNDERSTRUCK STANDARD MFG. CO.

The S333 Thunderstruck is a volley fire revolver from Standard Mfg. Co. Designed for personal protection, the S333 simultaneously fires two .22 magnum rimfire cartridges with each pull of the trigger. This results in firepower with very little recoil. The S333 features a redundant firing system and a blade-style safety on the trigger. Compact and lightweight, the S333 is made from 7075 aircraft-grade aluminum with high-strength steel cylinder and barrels. This ideal carry gun has red dot front and rear sights and a polymer grip. For more info: (860) 225-3401, www.stdgun.com

IGNITE TRUGLO INC.

TruGlo's IGNITE 30mm red-dot sight is CNC-machined from aircraft-grade aluminum. Precise aiming is possible with its 2-MOA red-dot reticle. Other features include 30mm multi-coated objective lens, digital push-button brightness controls, eight brightness settings, 1/2-MOA windage and elevation adjustments. IGNITE gives unlimited eye relief with its wide field of view and comes with a cantilever Picatinny rail mount. For more info: www.truglo.com



MC1SC STAINLESS TWO-TONE PISTOL O.F. MOSSBERG & SONS INC.

Mossberg introduces the MC1sc Stainless Two-Tone Pistol. It features a bead-blasted, stainless-steel slide over a matte-black polymer frame. The slide has multi-angle serrations and is topped with dovetail-mounted, low-profile, white 3-dot sights. The 3.4" barrel, constructed of stainless steel, features a black DLC (Diamond-Like Coating) finish and a 1:16 twist rate. The glass-reinforced frame gives the gun high-impact and chemical resistance as well as high-tensile strength and stiffness. Optional cross-bolt safety is available and is reversible for right- or left-handed shooters. This two-toned pistol joins the family of MC1sc models as Mossberg's first semiautos in the company's 100-year history. For more info: (203) 230-5300, www.mossberg.com



GRIP TUCK UNIVERSAL HOLSTER ALIEN GEAR

The Grip Tuck Universal Holster from Alien Gear features a grippy, textured outer material. This outer covering provides traction, gripping against fabric for a secure hold. The shell is high-density neoprene. The Grip Tuck is a universal pistol holster so it fits an entire class of firearms as opposed to just a single make and model. If you have multiple pistols of a similar frame size and barrel length, you may be able to use Grip Tuck with all of them. For more info: (208) 215-2046, www.aliengearholsters.com





BILLET-AR UPPER RECEIVER WITH OPTIONAL FORWARD ASSIST

WILSON COMBAT

Wilson Combat is offering their *Billet-AR Upper Receiver with Optional Forward Assist*. The integral MilSpec-style forward assist allows the user to manually close the rifle's bolt when checking the chamber or when the chamber/bolt is extremely fouled. If your guns are dirty or suppressed, a forward assist can help bring the rifle back in action. CNC-machined from 7075-T6 Aerospace Aluminum Billet Stock, the Billet-AR Upper Receiver also features a Picatinny top rail, shell deflector, M4-style extended feed ramps and an undersize bolt raceway. It fits standard GI lowers, Wilson Billet-AR Lowers and any standard AR barrel. For more info: (800) 955-4856, www.wilsoncombat.com

PACHMAYR KNIVES

PACHMAYR

The new line of *Pachmayr Knives* is tailored to the needs of shooters and sportsmen. The line consists of six different knives for various uses and carry styles. The Dominator, Grunt, Grappler, Griffin, Blacktail and Snare (in photo) are all built to the Pachmayr standard of quality and functionality. For more info: www.lymanproducts.com/brands/pachmayr/pach-knives



CLASSIC PT 92S

TAURUS

Taurus has added two models to its PT 92 semi-auto pistol line. The enhanced *Classic PT 92s* with Brazilian walnut wood grips reflect the heritage and classic styling of the popular full-frame handgun. Available in 9mm Luger, the pistols are built on drop-hammer-forged alloy frames in either matte black or natural anodized finish. The alloy steel and stainless steel slide models are offered in black matte or matte stainless finishes, respectively, both with a 5" barrel and 17-round capacity. Other features include a manual safety and ambi decocker, integrated front sights, drift adjustable rear sights and more. For more info: (305) 624-1115, www.taurususa.com



ABSOLUTE ZERO

AXEON OPTICS

Axeon Optics' *Absolute Zero* makes sighting in your rifle easy. Using two precision lasers, it guarantees your hold on the rifle will be in the same place for each shot to eliminate errors. It's a quick, efficient and accurate way to find your zero at 25 yards and allows you

to zero in at 100 yards with cold-barrel accuracy. The Absolute Zero is now easier to mount on a rifle via Picatinny rail or clamped to a 1" or 30mm scope tube. It works across multiple platforms and calibers (including crossbows) and with any optic. For more info: (479) 646-4210, www.axeonoptics.com





TP9 ELITE COMBAT EXECUTIVE

CANIK/CENTURY ARMS

The *TP9 Elite Combat Executive* is based on the 2019 TP9 Elite Combat but with upgrades from Salient Arms International. The Executive features a gold barrel by Salient. The optics-ready slide, threaded-barrel and small steel parts are nitride-coated while internal components are nitride- or nickel-coated. The Salient collaboration includes the barrel and thread protector, an aluminum Speed Funnel magazine well, and sight set with fiber optic front sight. The Executive is suppressor ready with 1/2x28 RH threads. It comes with a 15-round and an 18-round magazine. For more info: www.centuryarms.com



MASADA

IWI US

The IWI US *MASADA* is a 9mm polymer-framed, striker-fired pistol. Developed to meet modern battlefield requirements, its features were selected based on input from the military, LEOs and gun enthusiasts. Ergonomically designed with ambidextrous controls, the optics-ready *MASADA* comes with three interchangeable back-straps and a 17+1 steel magazine. Its cold hammer-forged barrel is 4.1" long; OAL is 7.4". The frame is made of high-strength, impact-resistant fiberglass-reinforced polymers. For more info: (717) 695-2081, www.iwi.us



REGULUS

LIONHEART INDUSTRIES

The *Regulus* from Lionheart Industries is a modular platform featuring two unique frames — the Alpha Full-sized or Beta Compact frame. Select a slide, choose between two slide lengths then add other customizable options like sight size, grips and colors. (There are about 6,912 possible combinations!) The *Regulus* has an aerospace-grade aluminum frame and a Chromoly steel slide and barrel; Cerakote protects the entire pistol. Each *Regulus* frame comes standard with an accessory rail. For more info: (888) 552-4743, www.lionheartindustries.com

WOOD/ALUMINUM AR-GRIPS

SHARPS BROS.

The *Wood/Aluminum Grip* for AR-pattern rifles from Sharps Bros. ships together with two matching MLOK hand guard panels. Grip frame is CNC machined from billet 6061-T6 aluminum and anodized black. Wood is Brazilian Cherry hand coated with Tung Oil to give it a rich, natural, protected finish. Hand guards have the same Brazilian Cherry wood. Set includes grip panel hardware, MLOK hardware, grip screw and grip screw wrench. For more info: www.sharpsbros.com



BEAVERTAIL HANDALL GRIP SLEEVE

HOGUE, INC.

Hogue's *Beavertail HandALL Grip Sleeve* is now available for the Ruger Security 9 Compact. The frame of the Security-9 Compact is smaller, lighter, and easier to conceal than its full-size counterpart. Aside from reducing recoil because of Hogue's ultra-soft rubber, adding the grip sleeves has other advantages. The added finger grooves provide a solid grip and the Cobblestone texture delivers a secure and irritation-free hold. Built from a durable thermoplastic elastomer compound, the HandALL's rubber ages well. It will not harden, split or crack with age or usage. For more info: (800) 438-4747, www.hogueinc.com



HK FRAY

HECKLER & KOCH KNIVES

The paracord-wrapped *Fray* from Heckler & Koch Knives (by Hogue) is made of 154CM steel. Intended for strenuous outdoor cutting activities, fixed blade enthusiasts will appreciate this usable, no-nonsense cutting tool. The Fray comes in tanto- and clip-point styles and both have thumb

ramp jimping and a finger indent. A 1/8"-thick paracord wrap (for lashing, hunting or first aid) weaves through the knife frame. The knife deploys with minimal thumb pressure and easily snaps into place when not in use. For more info: (800) 438-4747, www.hogueinc.com/knives/hk

MOUNT FOR GLOCK MOS

TANGODOWN INC.

TangoDown has added the *Mount for GLOCK MOS (AAM-01)* to its line of products. Precision machined from ordnance-grade steel, the mount plate offers a platform for the Aimpoint ACRO on the pistol slide. It is heat treated then given a Melonite finish for rust-resistance. The mount comes with Torx fasteners with Vibra-Tite VC-3 thread locking compound. The mount will fit most GLOCKS with reflex optics. For more info: (909) 392-4757, www.tangodown.com



12.7X42MM BRASS

STARLINE BRASS

Starline Brass will now manufacture its Part #3055 with the headstamp *12.7x42mm*. The cartridge cases will still be in its original design but will no longer be stamped .50 Beowulf to comply with trademark restrictions. Designed for AR-style rifles, the 12.7x42mm is a powerful big-bore cartridge using a large magnum pistol primer. For more info: (800) 280-6660, www.starlinebrass.com



BEAR EDGE 71526 AND 71527

BEAR & SON CUTLERY

Bear Edge Knives, a Bear & Son Cutlery brand, introduces the *Bear Edge 71526 and 71527*. Compact, portable and lightweight, both have durable and razor-sharp cutting edges. They are suited for outdoor adventurers, backpackers, hunters and anyone requiring minimal gear weight with maximum

performance. The spear point-style 440 high carbon stainless steel blade is 2.5" long on the 71526 (in picture) and 3.25" on the 71527; OAL is 6" and 7.5" respectively. A fold-away carabiner allows the frame-lock knives to be clipped on a belt loop, purse or backpack. For more info: (800) 844-3034, www.bearandsoncutlery.com

Weatherby®

VANGUARD WEATHERGUARD RIFLE PACKAGE

In this issue of *GUNS Magazine*, we celebrate the special month of December with a special gun: Weatherby's *Vanguard Weatherguard*. According to the Weatherby website, if it could talk, this is what it would say: "The U.S. Postman's creed, with a few little changes, is me in a nutshell: 'Neither rain nor snow, nor sleet nor dark of night shall stay this rifle from the swift completion of my appointed rounds.' As my name implies, I am fully guarded against weather — so you can take me into the nastiest environments without a single worry about how I'll perform. My Monte Carlo stock is made of ultra-tough GRIPTONITE and all my metalwork has maximum protection with a great-looking Cerakote finish." Other features of the Vanguard include a Sub-MOA accuracy guarantee, an adjustable match-quality, two-stage trigger, a fluted bolt body, a 3-position safety, a cold hammer-forged barrel, an integral recoil lug and more.

There's also ammo included in this giveaway! The 257 *Weatherby Magnum Select Plus* is suitable for long-range varmint shooting but can be for big game hunting too.

OTTO Engineering's *NoizeBarrier Range SA* delivers crystal-clear hearing, situational awareness and

industry-leading protection in high-noise environments. With the Range SA, normal-level sounds and nearby conversations can be easily heard. Wear the headset when you go hunting with your Vanguard Weatherguard, *if* you win this giveaway.

Bear & Son's *112* is an executive liner lock with a 2-7/8" hollow ground blade made from High Carbon Stainless Steel. Thin and lightweight, it's an ideal knife for everyday carry.

The *2-Day Assault Pack* from Mystery Ranch features a classic 3-zip design for easy access to the interior. Made of 500D Cordura fabric with YKK zippers, the pack will carry the gear you need when you go hunting or camping.

An all-weather rifle with ammo, a noise-cancelling headset, a lightweight EDC knife plus a heavy-duty backpack — all these can be yours if you win! It's easy to join. Just click on www.gunsmagazine.com/giveaways. You can also mail a postcard. —Jazz Jimenez

VANGUARD WEATHERGUARD RIFLE

MAKER: Weatherby
(307) 675-7800

CALIBER: .257 Wby. Mag.

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WEIGHT: 7.5 lbs.

www.weatherby.com

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www.mysteryranch.com

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If you are unable to enter online, mail a postcard with your name and address (no envelopes please) to *GUNS Magazine*, GOM December 2019, P.O. Box 502795, San Diego, CA, 92150-2795. Entries must be received before December 31, 2019. Limit one entry per household.



112

MAKER: Bear & Son Cutlery
(256) 435-2227
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FLATTOP "INFLUENCEA" THERE IS ONLY ONE KNOWN CURE

Driving past New Mexico's Florida Mountains, traveling over 2,000 miles by plane and hard road, I know it won't be long. It's far, but well worth the price of admission. The surreptitiously hidden hacienda in the New Mexico desert is the rendezvous point where we will meet.

Mother nature has been generous with her rain, as everything is green in the usually arid desert. Stories flood my mind of the Turkey Track ranch, Dobe Grant, and a young Buckaroo named Bart.

MAN-MADE NECESSITY

It's funny how a single man has the ability to influence us to the point of needing a gun just like his. Called *Gun Influencea*, it's a condition caused by the influence of others, this malady only has one sure cure — and you know what it is.

Over the years I've cured myself from numerous bouts by having several blued-steel antidotes locked in my safe whenever a booster shot is needed. Youngsters seem particularly prone to Gun Influencea, but I've

seen it strike old curmudgeons just as fast.

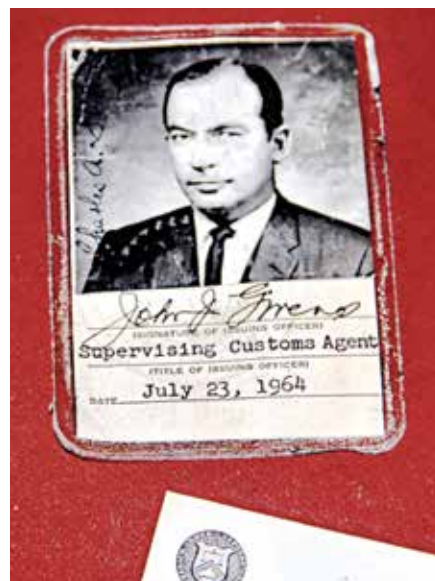
Avoidance is the best way to steer clear of exposure from this virus, but what fun is that? The breeding-grounds for Gun Influencea appear to mutate in the pages of old gun magazines and books, as well as from fellow gun enthusiasts, especially the older ones.

If a "seasoned" gun buddy cracks open his vault and starts pulling out guns, hold your breathe — and slowly back away to prevent breathing in this airborne contagion. If not, you'll be sucked in from the glimmer of blued steel and warm walnut, trust me!

RUGER .44 BLACKHAWK FLATTOP

This next part has the potential to expose you to a severe case of Gun Influencea and there were only a limited amount of original antidotes made, roughly 2,700. Luckily, I have one!

The gun I'm going to tell you about was a favorite of one of the most beloved gun writers ever gracing the pages of any gun



Skeeter's U.S. Customs (now U.S. Customs and Border Protection) photo ID.

magazine. In fact, he got his start with this very magazine as a young cub writer. For you savvy gun bums, you've already solved this caper with the clues I've dropped but for you younger or newer guys. I'm talking of none other than Skeeter Skelton.

His hands-down favorite hunting revolver was a Ruger single-action flattop Blackhawk, first introduced by Ruger in 1956. Chambered in .44 Magnum, it was a



Skeeter's Lawrence-carved shuck and belt a friend made him cradles a special Ruger flattop.



Tank's remedy for Gun Influenza — a 7.5" Ruger flattop flanked by a Barranti Leather-carved shuck with stocks by Zane Thompson of Texas.

stoutly chambered pistol in a lightweight gun.

It had an aluminum grip-frame and came in barrel lengths of 6.5", 7.5" and 10.5". The most common was the 6.5" with 25,660 produced; 2,700 of the 7.5" were made and lastly, 1,500 copies of the 10.5" version were built for a total of 29,860 guns.

A SHOOTER FOR SURE!

Skeeter and his 7.5" flattop went together like marinated goat meat and tortillas. He wrote stories of shooting deer, javelina and jackrabbits with it. Imitation being the highest form of flattery, Skeeter — having more than his fair share of admirers — caused a panic. Every now and then, a 7.5" flattop pops up, but they are rare.

I feel lucky to have gotten one, for I had a severe case of Gun Influenza! I won't go so far as saying it was terminal, but I wanted one bad and finally acquired it while scouring the Internet.

THE VIRUS ITSELF

Skelton's Ruger 7.5" flattop has custom walnut stocks Skeeter made himself, meticulously sanding them thin-profile and close to the grip-frame. This sixgun feels surprisingly good in your hand for having such

thin stocks, showing Skeeter *knew* what he was talking about.

The black anodized grip-frame had worn off in spots, so Skeeter polished it bright silver, giving it a two-tone palomino look.

The action and trigger work are top rate and his son Bart believes Skeeter did all ministrations to the mighty masterpiece. While owning an original copy of a gun is enough to quash Gun Influenza, shooting the actual gun itself is the best darn way of curing yourself!

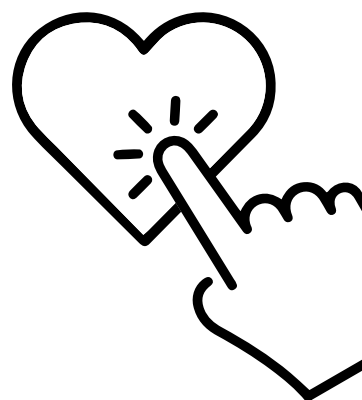
SELF-INOCULATION

My amigo Doc Barranti and I shot it a few years back. This year, Doc brought his two boys and they had the honor of getting their inoculations, shooting this iconic piece of handgunnery history. Both boys kept the empty shells, good medicine indeed!

There was no need for Doc and I to shoot it again, as you only get one chance to shoot something for the first time. No sense being greedy, but we did handle it.

We had a great two days visiting, talking guns and soaking up the great sunsets only New Mexico has to offer. It was a perfect vaccination to prevent Gun Influenza — or perhaps start a new strain altogether. I sure hope so!

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INDUSTRY INSIDER NEWS

There is none. No wait, I'm kidding. However, the late-summer and early fall are very quiet times in the firearms business. Folks are vacationing, marketing teams are planning for the upcoming trade show season and overall, everyone takes a breather before things get hectic again. We will note one important item missed in June: the passing of Robert Reese, 87, the man who founded the "new" Springfield Armory in Geneseo, Illinois in 1974. He was most noted as the man who resurrected the Springfield Armory name after the U.S. Government closed the original 184-year-old armory in 1968. While there is no official link, legacy or licensing agreement between the company and the government for use of the name, Springfield Armory Inc. is noted for its classic military



weapons such as the 1911 and M1A Garand, in addition to the XD series of pistols and Saint rifles. (Photo: Robert Reese)



A NOT-NICE SURPRISE

In light of the new NASCAR policy towards certain guns, we wonder how the good folks at Henry Repeating Arms feel about their just-announced sponsorship of the 2020 NASCAR Xfinity Series race at RoadAmerica, Rice Lake, Wisconsin. The Xfinity series is the "minor league" circuit for the big-time "Cup" races and Henry also sponsors the No. 00 Henry Ford Mustang of the Steward-Hass racing team. While Henry doesn't make "black guns" or other (currently) politically-incorrect gun products, they are strong Second Amendment supporters and this latest move by NASCAR must have surely blindsided the company and caused severe acid reflux among the marketing team. Likewise for NASCAR team owner Richard Childress, a prominent ex-NRA Board Member who recently stepped down.

SOUS VIDE FOR STAG OR SQUIRREL

Here's a great tip, courtesy of *GUNS* Publisher Roy Huntington, for those of us preparing for the upcoming hunting season: buy a *Sous Vide* machine! In a nutshell, a *Sous Vide* is a small, highly-accurate immersion heater used to prepare food — in my case, venison — without overcooking or drying out. The units start around \$70 and work by heating the food inside a plastic bag immersed in water at a carefully-controlled temperature. Once the food, enjoying a nice slow spa treatment in its own juices, is uniformly cooked throughout, you slap it on a red-hot grill for a quick sear and then standby for rave reviews. It'll truly change wild game cooking for you — even my deer-disliking wife thinks it's a miracle! 🔪



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NRA MEETING CHANGE

We're trying to stay above the NRA fray but things just keep happening which deserve reportage. The latest dust-up occurred when the organization decided to spend upwards of \$100,000 in a last-minute effort to move the annual Board of Directors meeting from Anchorage, Alaska to the suburbs of Washington, D.C. The meeting location had been a point of contention among nearly everyone. For its part, the NRA said the meeting was changed in order to deal with upcoming legislation threats. Regardless of reason, the move was probably wise though several crass, excuse me, mass-media outlets are now trashing the NRA for doing so. Unfortunately, this thing just isn't getting any better.



NASCAR OUT OF TOUCH?

It would appear NASCAR executives have totally lost touch with their fan base. In a late August letter, several firearms manufacturers were quietly notified the racing body has undergone a "gradual shift" in its views and policy towards firearms. National Event Publications, official media sales agent for NASCAR, contacted advertisers and requested they change their advertisements to "highlight some of the less controversial gun accessories, concealed carry or classes." Apparently, this was in response to ads referencing those dreaded black rifles the lefties all hate so much — in spite of not knowing a charging handle from a tire iron. NASCAR attendance has been on a downward spiral for the last several years and this latest decision doesn't seem like a smart move for a business proud of being "founded by moonshine runners." (Photo: CC BY 2.0 by brian via Flickr)

A TRULY WILD GAME

Looking to score, in both the biblical sense and with a hunting partner? If so, you might check out Hunting4connections.com. Billing itself as "Today's dating solution for outdoor enthusiasts," the site helps facilitate interpersonal relationships among those of us who don't worry excessively about the occasional deer tick. It's a refreshing change to note the site considers hunting and shooting as positive personality traits,



unlike some other online dating sites. Let me know if it works since I currently reside in a very happy marriage. Years ago, my sole attempt at online dating resulted in a lovely lunch with a nice woman who was witty, intelligent, kind and quite attractive — for an 80-year-old. She sheepishly admitted later her online photo "wasn't recent." As they say, *Live and Learn.*

I WANT YOU!

It's been mentioned before but one of the most common questions we get is, "Why can't I find *GUNS Magazine* on the newsstand?" While our subscriber base is robust and thriving, our advertising sales are going great and overall interest in *GUNS* is enjoying a new renaissance in the industry, we still hear how difficult it is for some readers to find the latest issue "in the wild." The main reason is simple, hidden and wholly infuriating: wholesale censorship of gun magazines themselves. Because

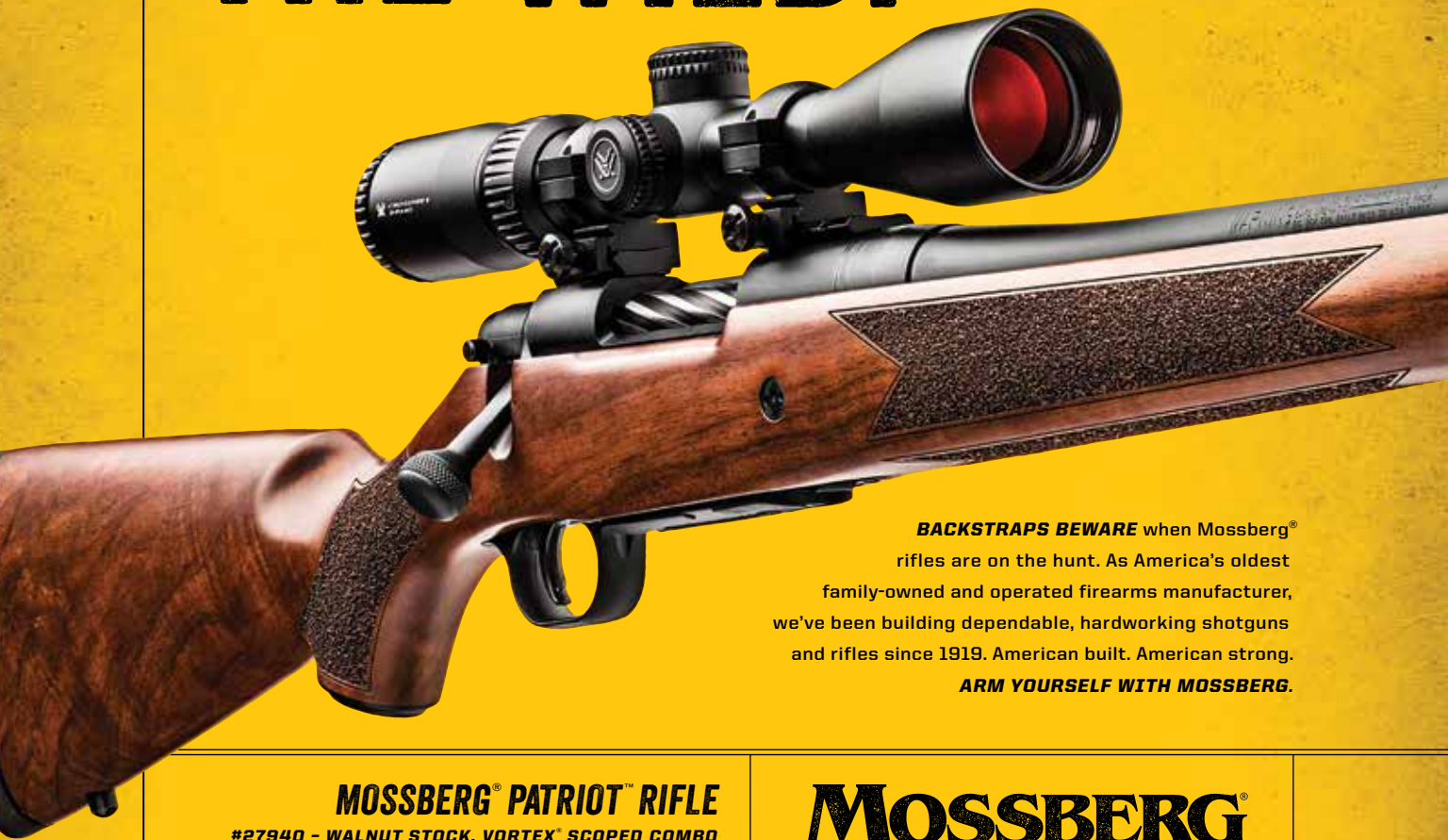


GUNS occasionally features non-Politically-Correct weapons, we have been unceremoniously dumped from several large chain stores over the last couple of years — more mindless corporate "virtue-signaling." The story is the same for several of our esteemed competitors. So, what's the answer? Subscribe! As both the First and Second Amendments are slowly being undermined by leftists in the name of safety and security, the best way to assure continued access to *GUNS* and other shooting magazines is by simply subscribing.

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