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FOR ALL NEEDS

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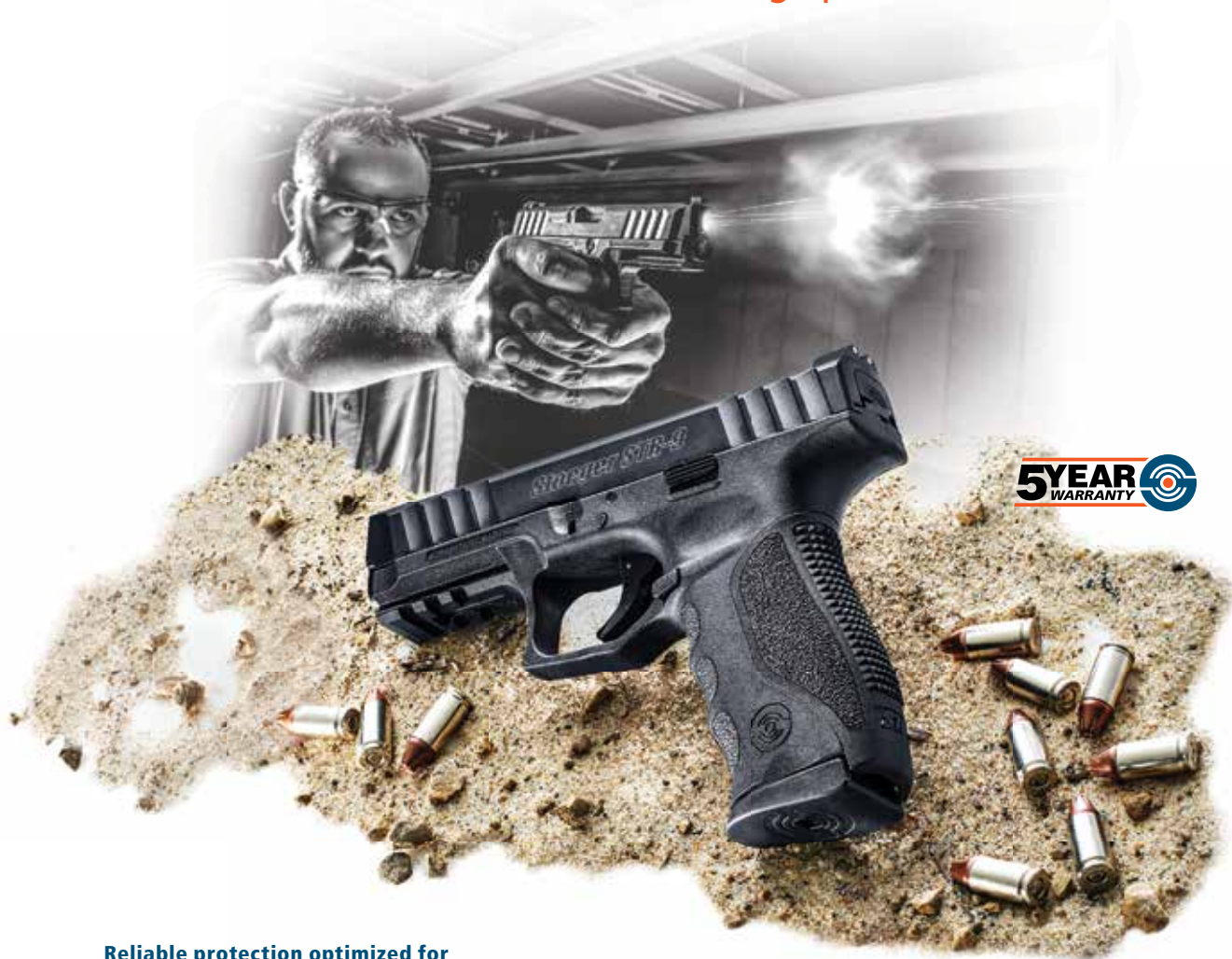
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RAT-TA-TAT-TAT! TAKE THAT, YOU DIRTY RAT!

I admit I laughed aloud while reading (and reminiscing) Doc Dabbs' GUNS-Magazine.com article "A Recent History of Toy Guns." Will and I must be "brothers from different mothers" — along with thousands of our fellow Baby Boomer comrades who spent hours-upon-hours playing Army. I still have my original Johnny Eagle Lieutenant 1911 in the plastic carry case complete with magazine and ammo! Being raised in the '50s in a blue collar family, my toy gun purchases were few and far between since they weren't necessities but our neighborhood platoon had a decent arsenal and we shared and took our turns.

My lawn mowing income, like Will's, varied from \$3 to \$5 per neighbors' lawn per week so it took a while to amass enough cash to buy toy guns. My Dad, bless his heart, helped out by making guns for me out of pine boards — several Wyatt Earp .45 Colt Buntline specials, an M1 Carbine and a Kentucky rifle. I was also fortunate to live in Upstate NY near the Crosman Arms

factory and their dumpster yielded quite a few almost complete rifle stocks that hadn't passed QC inspection. Our platoon quickly modified them with pipe barrels and other accessories. Thanks for bringing back some fond memories.

Jim Rosenbauer

TALE OF THE MICROMETER

I read Duke's "Changeover Challenges" (GUNS April 2020) and then looked at the pictures. Unless my eyes deceive me (it's possible, I'm 67), the pictured micrometer reading is showing 0.422" not 0.426". Maybe the slug is off center, maybe someone "clamped" the micrometer on the soft slug or maybe Yvonne's photos are just too clear? Ha! Everyone makes a mistake sometimes. Keep up the excellent work!

Lynn Cordell

He might be correct. The bullet might have shifted by the time it got from my reloading bench and into Yvonne's photo room. Or he may be reading it wrong. I better switch to digital. —Duke

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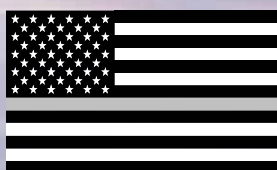
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A pair and a spare of replica Colt Walkers allows plenty of experimenting.

THE FIRST FORTY-FOURS 100 YEARS BEFORE THE MAGNUM

Mention “.44” today and most people immediately think of the .44 Magnum. However, the .44 Magnum did not just suddenly appear on the scene. Its roots go back more than 100 years before the Magnum arrived in late 1955. For the next couple of *Campfire Tales* we will be taking a look at just how the .44 Magnum evolved.

AN IDEA

In 1830 Sam Colt was on board the brig *Corvo* to begin training as a navigator and ship's officer. While watching the ship's wheel being rotated and then locked into place, Sam got an idea. Using his pocket knife he made a wooden model of a revolver. In 1836 Sam's idea became reality with his first revolver, and first successful repeating firearm, the Colt Paterson.

By 1845, Congress had annexed the Republic of Texas making war with Mexico a foregone conclusion. The Texans who had been fighting Mexico alone finally received federal help as General Zachary Taylor arrived in Corpus Christi with about 3,500 mounted troops. Taylor knew the value of repeating firearms as both he and many of his officers had used the Colt Paterson in the war against the Seminoles in Florida. Taylor gathered all the Colt repeaters he could find, however by this time Colt was bankrupt and the Paterson factory was closed. The Texas Rangers were drafted into United States service with two of those Rangers being Jack Hays and Samuel Walker. In 1846 Taylor sent then Captain

Walker back to recruit volunteers from Maryland as well as acquire more Colt revolvers. The problem was there were no more Colt revolvers.

As a result of the bankruptcy Colt had nothing, no factory, no machinery, no working models and no money, however he did possess his genius and ingenuity. He certainly saw the opportunity and quickly made an improved working model from memory and in late 1846 Sam Walker ordered 1,000 “heavy” revolvers complete with several improvements. By heavy, Sam Walker meant larger in caliber than the Paterson and definitely stronger. These were to be true sixguns, six-shot, 9" barrels, and in .44 caliber. They became known as the Model of 1847 Army Pistol, or more commonly, the Walker. The Walker literally dwarfed the sleek little Paterson. It weighed 4-1/2 lbs., with a much larger grip, square-backed brass trigger guard and a loading lever mounted under the barrel.

HORSE PISTOL

Walker held his Colts in high esteem, saying they were good on man or beast out to 200 yards. They were not eclipsed in power until the arrival of the .357 Magnum nearly 90 years later. However, the Walker Colt would be short-lived and more improvements would soon arrive for as effective as it was, it had two major drawbacks. Walkers were huge sixguns issued to the Rangers in pairs and were very heavy and cumbersome.

Walkers are not only quite heavy, they are

very difficult to use, especially one-handed. A second problem is the loading lever often drops upon recoil. Genuine Walkers are rare and very expensive, however I have had considerable shooting experience with four replicas and they are authentic down to the point of having loading levers drop when the Walker is fired with a full house load of 50 or more grains of black powder.

THE DRAGOON

It did not take long for the Walker to be improved. In 1848 the Transitional Whitneyville Walker Hartford Dragoon appeared. The grip frame, the main-frame, and working parts remained the same however, the cylinder was shortened slightly and the barrel was cut back to 7-1/2". The inadequate locking arrangement of the loading lever was also changed moving it from the center of the lever to the end with the spring-loaded male end matching the female stud on the barrel.

Colt shortened the cylinder and barrel on the Transitional Model to make it lighter and somewhat smaller bringing it to about 4 lbs. In addition to shortening the barrel to 7 1/2", the cylinder was also shortened to accept a lighter charge of black powder and the weight was now slightly over 4 lbs. These first Transitional Walker Dragoons maintained the standard Walker grip frame but it was soon time for more changes.

The grip was also changed and now had the familiar 90-degree cut at the top of the grip frame found on virtually all single action sixguns produced since 1848. The working mechanism also changed drastically since the days of the Paterson, from 17 parts to five parts — the same basic parts used in currently produced traditional single actions. The first of the improved design sixguns became known as the Dragoons.

Dragoons, just as Walkers, were issued in pairs and by 1850 with one shoulder stock. Army regulations of 1858 proclaimed, “Two pistols and one stock for each man; one pistol in holster on belt, one pistol in holster on saddle, and stock on left rear side of saddle.” Some of the Dragoons issued with shoulder stocks also had a folding three-leaf rear sight on top of the back end of the barrel instead of relying on the V-notch mated with the front sight when the hammer was cocked.

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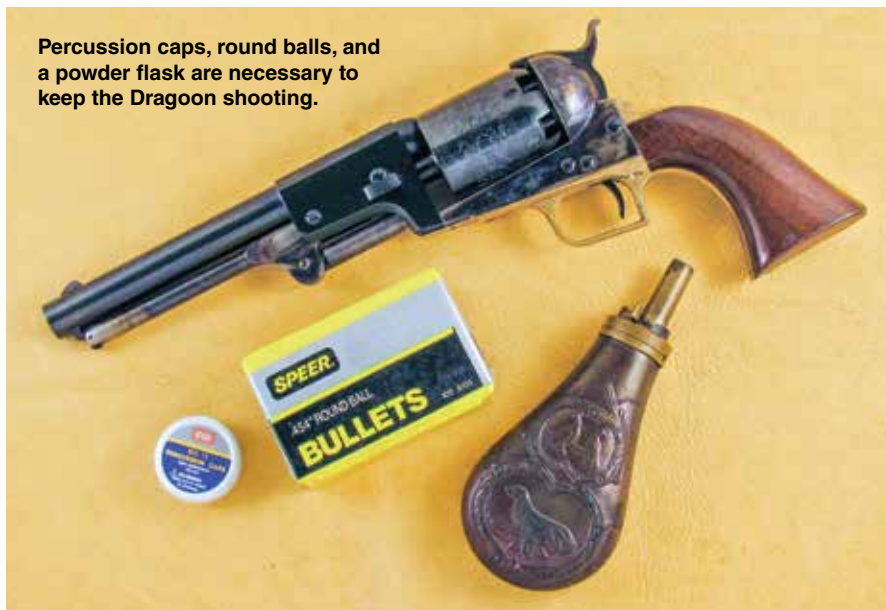


THREE OF A KIND

One of my replica 3rd Model Dragoons is set up this way. Dragoons would be produced from 1848 right up to the advent of the next improved .44 in 1860. There are basically three models of Dragoons with some overlapping due to availability of parts as Colt was never one to waste parts. The First Model had a square back trigger guard, round cylinder stop notches, no pins between the nipples on the back of the cylinder, and there was no roller on the hammer where it made contact with the mainspring.

With the arrival of the Second Model Dragoon in 1849, the trigger guard had been changed to the now familiar round shape, however some were also made with the square-backed trigger guard. Cylinder stop notches also gained the familiar and traditional rectangular shape, a roller was placed on the hammer to contact the mainspring allowing it to slide easily as the hammer was cocked, and pins were placed on the back of the cylinder between the nipples. These pins matched up with a hole in the hammer to allow the carrying of the Dragoon with all six chambers loaded without having to let

Percussion caps, round balls, and a powder flask are necessary to keep the Dragoon shooting.



the hammer down on a percussion cap.

The Third Model Dragoons all have round trigger guards and were made to accept a shoulder stock with notches on both sides of the recoil shield and at the back bottom of the butt along with protruding screwheads on both sides of the frame. The shoulder stock was locked into

this affair and then tightened with a rather large circular nut on the top of the shoulder stock behind the grip frame. Dragoons would be produced slightly over 10 years or until 1860 when the last improved .44 percussion Colt revolver arrived.

Next month: the 1851 Navy, Smith & Wesson and Winchester.





THREE BARREL LENGTHS. THREE CALIBERS. ONE RAGING FAMILY.

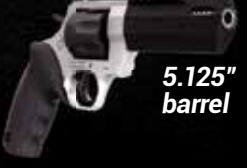
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THE 9MM VS. .45 DEBATE STILL RAGES

THE QUESTION OF CONTROL

In the handgun world, one long-standing debate is 9mm versus .45 caliber. There are arguments on both sides and I hope you'll forgive me if I sound like a politician when saying, "I basically agree with both opinions." A very long-time .45 guy myself, I've found myself carrying a 9mm about three times as much as I wore a .45.

"BECAUSE REASONS"

However, reasons need to be reasonable. I recognize in the same platforms, the 9mm version of essentially the same pistol will hold more rounds and will kick

less. However, the current trope of "all the service calibers are the same in terms of ability to stop the threat" is somewhat questionable. And I recently came across a 9mm theme I have to question even more strongly: "You can shoot twice as fast with a 9mm as you can with a .45."

Finding a little time on my hands, I went to my range with two functionally identical Springfield Armory 1911 pistols. I weighed the triggers — the 9mm was 4.61 lbs. and the .45, 4.87 lbs. Without the Lyman Digital trigger pull scale, I couldn't tell the difference. Ammo was American Eagle

full metal jacket, 115-gr. for the 9mm and 230-gr. for the .45 ACP. The electronic timer was a CED.

MAKE READY

I stood at five yards from an IPSC silhouette target, about the distance my friend and colleague Tom Givens has determined to be average between the combatants in the many gunfights his students have engaged and won. Time was measured from first shot to last in a five-shot string. I fired from a strong Isosceles stance, weight forward, wrists locked, using a max force crush grip with both hands.

The 9mm delivered five hits in 97/100ths of one second. The group clustered high in the center chest, four in the "A-zone" and one just above it. I gave it one point down, 24 out of 25 possible points, or 96 percent hit value. The .45 punched five holes in the A-zone in 1.01 seconds, 4/100ths of a second slower with 100 percent hit value. Using IPSCs Comstock Count scoring formula, score divided by time, was 24.74 with the 9mm and 24.75 for the .45. Group size, measured center to center between the farthest-flung shots, was 7.55" for the 9mm (one shot pulled low, the other four in 3.55"). With the .45 it was 3.65" for all five and 1.90" for the best four. The harder-kicking gun had actually scored better in terms of hits, taking 0.040 seconds longer. Four one-hundredths of one second is not a big difference ...

Split times, the lapse between shots, averaged exactly a quarter second with the 9mm. With the .45, splits were 0.26, 0.24, 0.25, and 0.26, averaging 0.2525 of one second. I would expect this much difference or more between two runs with the same gun and ammo by the same shooter.

FURTHER TESTING

I tried the same thing one-hand only with either hand at three yards, the distance NRA chose for the one-hand stage of their Police Service Pistol Course. Dominant hand only, both 9mm and .45 gave me clean scores, with "shots 1 through 5" times of 0.97 and 1.04 respectively; break times averaged 0.25 seconds for the 9mm and 0.26 for the .45.

Non-dominant hand only is an important test bed for when you can't get everything perfect. The 9mm dropped one point in 1.33 seconds for shots 1-5 (average splits: 0.37 sec), while the .45 put them all

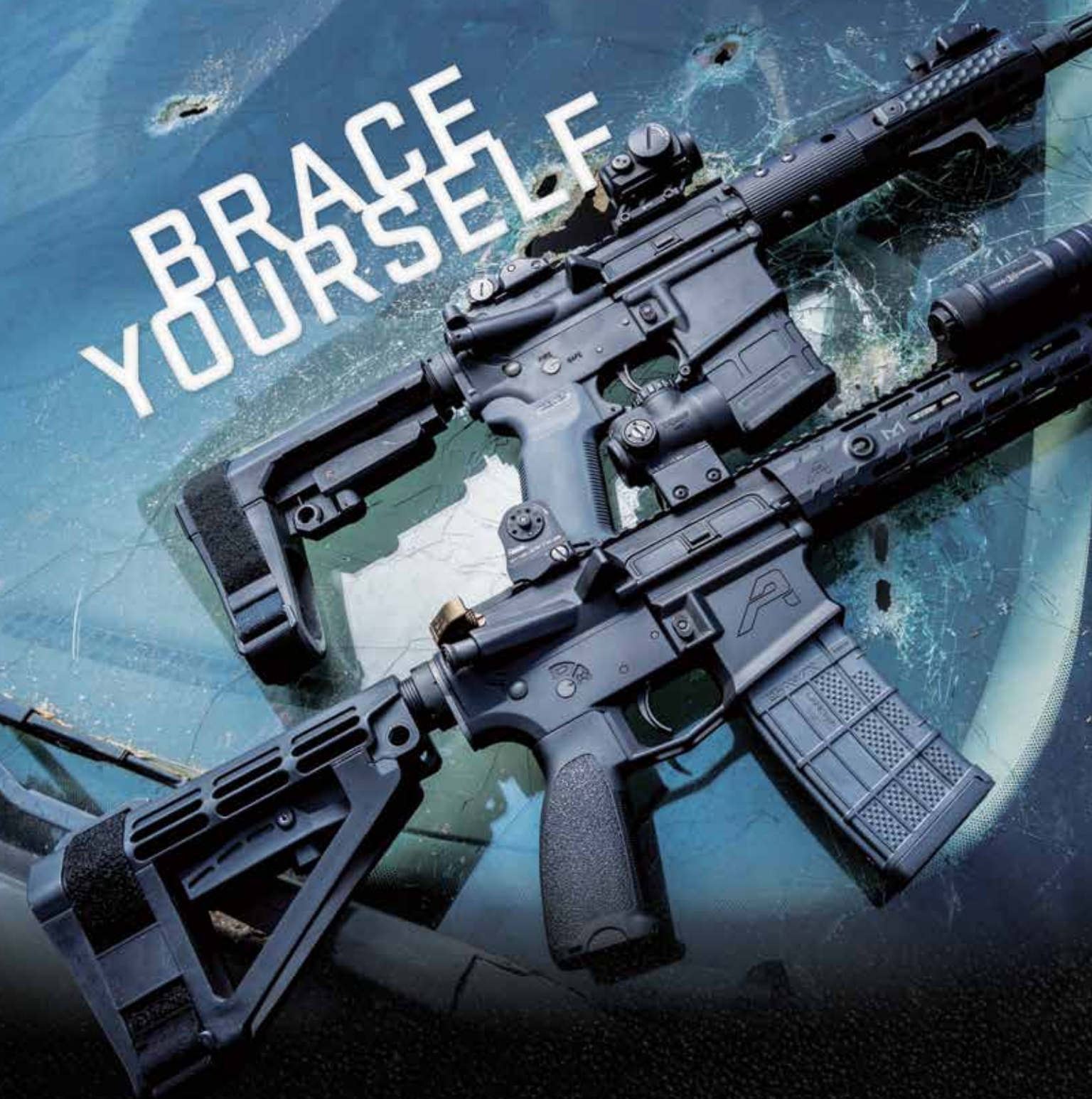


Brass flies as weak-hand-only .45 run starts.



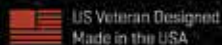
Big holes = .45, smaller = 9mm, 1-point difference in score.

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Weak hand only, 9mm was 1 point down (above) but gave 0.02 sec. faster splits. Mas suggests doing your own test to determine real world difference in control between calibers (below). Results may be surprising.



in the center zone of the IPSC target in 1.58 seconds (average splits: 0.39 sec).

Conclusions: Not a helluva lot of difference. Also, confirmation of what we already knew — two hands are better than one and we don't colloquially call one of our hands the strong one and the other the weak for nothing.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Every shooter needs to try this individually to see what the case really is for him or her. In the 9mm versus .45 debate, there are some immutable points and some debatable ones. For certain, the larger JHP of identical design will cut a wider wound channel than the smaller one at similar velocities and in the same pistol format, the magazine can hold more 9mm than .45 rounds. For sure, the 9mm kicks less, and while this can be hugely and even decisively important for new shooters, it's bunk to say a shooter with good technique will hit with two 9mms for every one .45 round in the same time frame.

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THE QUEST NEVER STOPS SEARCHING FOR .44 HAND EJECTOR GRAIL

In my humble opinion a life should contain quests, or in more modern parlance, "bucket list" items. Mine have been rather humble. The two most far-fetched ones I entertained as a kid in the 1950s was flying in a B17 and visiting the island of Iwo Jima. As an older fellow, more prominent quests including finding a wonderful wife, seconded by a nice home with lots of land so I could shoot on it freely. I'm happy to say all those quests have been satisfied.

However, more minor quests have kept me busy unto this day. Those were quests for various firearms, and brothers I have been mostly successful. I'll detail one right now.

YAHOO'S MISS OUT

Back in my native West Virginia, it seemed older S&W .44s were fairly common in gun stores and pawn shops. I even got to borrow a target-sighted triple lock (S&W Hand Ejector, First Model) for some shooting.

Another triple lock with target sights and a 5" barrel had actually belonged to one of Mingo County's Hatfield clan and was offered to me. Unfortunately, I didn't have the coin to afford it at the time.

Much later at a Montana gun show, an older gent with whom I was acquainted approached holding a holstered revolver under his arm. I could tell at a glance it was an older Smith & Wesson N-Frame revolver. He said, "I've waved this under the noses of several of these yahoo dealers and they have offered me a pittance for it. Are you interested?" I looked the gun over, instantly recognizing it as a target-sighted triple lock with 6 1/2" barrel. I made him what turned out to be a sufficient offer, he accepted and we both left the gun show happy.

A DAY AT THE MUSEUM

Quest guns can appear unexpectedly. A few years later, I was in a gun store/military

museum in Los Angeles of all places. Therein on the used gun shelf was a Smith & Wesson Hand Ejector 2nd Model with fixed sights and a 6 1/2" barrel. I paid for it and had it shipped to Montana. When lettering it, what did I find? It had been shipped to West Virginia in 1929. With this bit of good luck, my quest then became having Smith & Wesson .44s in all four basic models.

Later, after some diligent searching on the Gunbroker.com auction site, the quest for all four basic permutations of Smith & Wesson .44s was fulfilled. The next one was a Hand Ejector Third Model with fixed sights and 6 1/2" barrel. It lettered to an army officer based in California in 1939. Finally, after more diligent online searching, a target-sighted Model 1950 Target with 6 1/2" barrel appeared (the later model number was M24). I nabbed it. Those four big .44 Specials sure look good in a photo!

NOT DONE

But — I wasn't finished. As a teen poring over catalog sections in things like *Gun Digest*, I took note of another .44 Special Smith & Wesson revolver. It was their N-Frame fixed sight Model 21 which came with 4", 5" and 6-1/2" barrel lengths. Sadly I learned Smith & Wesson discontinued Model 21s, along with several fine N-Frame revolvers, right about the time I discovered them. A further frustration was only 1,200 Model 21s had been made, including those pre-model numbered ones named Model 1950 Military. (S&W adopted model numbers in 1957.) Satisfying this quest seemed unlikely.

Decades passed without ever encountering even one of those Model 21s. Then, in my early 50s, I walked into a gun show in Bozeman, Montana. Upon the first table visited there sat a Model 21 with a 4" barrel. Its price was steep but I didn't hesitate. It's odd how things happen, because within a year I came across two more with 5" barrels. I bought them too.

So — do all these .44s I quested for sit safe in my gun vault? No, they don't. Only two remain. They are the triple lock and the Hand Ejector Second Model. Why would I let go of such valued quest objects. Well, questing is an ongoing thing (ailment?). Over the half-century plus of my gun-buying quests arose for Colt SAAs, Winchester lever guns, Sharps single-shot rifles and even World War II full-autos. Sometimes satisfied quest objects must make room for new quest objects. 🦋



One of Duke's most important quests was to have a home site where he could shoot right in his front yard, which is exactly what he is doing with his MP40 submachine gun.



Both of these N-Frame S&W revolvers are Hand Ejector, Fourth Models. Top is target-sighted Model 1950 Target aka Model 24. Bottom is Model 1950 Military aka Model 21.



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RIA
IMPORTS

BUILDING YOUR RESERVES KEEP AMMO IN STOCK FOR THE NEXT BIG DROUGHT

As of this writing, we have pretty much recovered from the ammo drought of the last few years, when rimfire ammunition was in especially high demand. I heard stories of single bricks of 500 cartridges being sold for \$100 or more, though I can't say I ever saw it in person. For a while, a few individuals had a good thing going, scouring store shelves for cheap ammo and reselling it at gun shows at a healthy markup. Buy low/sell high, it worked for a while until prices dropped again and the same people found themselves with stockpiles they had bought high and now had to sell low.

PAYING THE PRICE

People are funny. During times of shortages they will pay exorbitant prices for things they don't even need. When prices return to normal they get complacent again. Today you can buy bricks of .22 LR for about 5¢/cartridge. Buy in case lots and cost can fall to 3.6¢ to 4¢ a cartridge. The same people who fought each other for the chance to pay 20¢/cartridge a few years ago can't be bothered to buy when prices are low.

The ammo shortages didn't affect me in the slightest. Why? Well, to modify an old saying, I don't buy my ammunition — I *have* my ammunition. When prices were low years ago I laid in what seemed a reasonable supply, and when prices went crazy, I lived off my hump like a camel.

How much rimfire ammo to stockpile depends on your circumstances and a realistic evaluation of how much you shoot. If you use your .22 rimfire to plink, maintain your shooting skills and occasional vermin control, two or three thousand rounds on hand should be adequate. Today you can buy a case of 5,000 .22 LR cartridges for around \$200 at bulk dealers. As long as prices stay reasonable, buy fresh bricks as needed to maintain the amount. If things get crazy again just feed off your stockpile and let others line up to pay high prices.

CENTERFIRE

Centerfire cartridges didn't inspire quite as big a feeding frenzy, maybe because

people don't shoot them as much and because they can be readily reloaded. Some popular loads were hard to find but even if your favorite .243 or .308 hunting load was out of stock, there was likely something you could use. As a reloader I tend to think in terms of components rather than loaded ammunition.

For cartridge cases the situation right now is the best I can recall. Most popular cartridges are readily available and even obscure ones can usually be special ordered. We have more brand choices than ever — Winchester, Remington, Federal, PMC, Alpha, Hornady, Lapua, Norma, Nosler, Starline.

For big-game cartridges, which might be used to take three or four game animals

a year, even 50 cartridge cases will keep you in business a long time. Personally, I like to have 200 to 250 cases on hand for a big game rifle — enough for load development and annual sighting-in checks. For cartridges I shoot a lot, such as .223 Rem. I think in terms of thousands.

LEAD IN BULK

Bullets likewise seem in good supply. In recent years there have been some impressive developments in bullets for long-range shooting and if you plan to try every one you'll need a generous budget and lots of shelf space. For a big-game rifle, having 300 to 500 bullets on hand should last a lifetime. If you plan to shoot a lot of competition, varmints or just practicing, save money and establish a reserve by buying in bulk.

POWDERING IT UP

So far the component scene I've been describing has been all sweetness and light.



These are happy days for reloaders with cases available for most cartridges and a wide selection of powders and bullets.



The .243 Win. goes back at least 45 years and Dave has used a lot of different powders and bullets for it — many of which did not even exist back then.



Dave loves new brass the way a crow loves shiny things. In terms of choices available and the quality of the brass these are the best of times.

When it comes to powder it gets a bit cloudy. Many of us have experienced times when we just can't locate a certain powder. The tendency is to blame it all on the *gubmint*. I think some issues are inherent in the system and unlikely to change. Smokeless powder production is a fairly complicated process requiring substantial investment in assets.

Distributors and retailers deal with strict regulations regarding transport and storage of smokeless powders and primers. These add to the usual costs of carrying product in inventory. With so many powders available, retailers have to make decisions on which they think their customers want.

The speed with which information spreads on Internet forums is a major factor. A few reloaders report excellent results with Powder X in a new long-range cartridge. Immediately everyone wants it and local retailers are quickly cleaned out. It takes time for the pipeline to restock the shelves and in the meantime the conspiracy theories fly.

HAVE A KEGGER

One solution is to buy 8-lb. kegs of your most-used powders. Remember there are legal regulations on how much smokeless powder can be stored, not to mention insurance regulations. SAAMI has an excellent guide to smokeless powder storage online at www.saami.org. If you don't use the Internet write SAAMI at 11 Mill Hill Road, Newtown, CT 06470-2359 for a copy.

Another solution is to find an up-to-date powder burning rate chart online and carry a copy when shopping for powder. If your retailer doesn't have Powder X check for other powders with similar burning rates. Be flexible, be patient and we should all be able to keep shooting!

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RELOADING THE .32 MAGNUM MINUTE-OF-PEA ACCURACY!

When the .32 Magnum first arrived I did not take it seriously. My friend Joe Penner, who takes all the pictures of me shooting, changed this as he acquired one of the first 9-1/2" Ruger Single-Sixes available. We loaded up some JHPs and searched for suitable targets. I found some out-of-date cans of split-pea soup and since I don't like the stuff anyhow, I figured it would be great for experimenting. Putting a jacketed hollowpoint through the first can at 25 yards changed my mind about the little Mighty Mouse Magnum. The can of split-pea split all right — we had green soup all over us and also on my red Bronco. This cartridge was no toy!

IN THE BEGINNING

The first factory loads from Federal were very mild as the .32 Magnum arrived in Harrington & Richardson revolvers, which is why it's known officially as the .32 H&R Magnum. The old H&Rs were not what you would call especially strong but handloads for use in the Ruger Single-Six could be loaded much hotter.

The .32 Magnum begins with the .32 S&W Long and is nothing more than an elongated .32 Long, which is a most pleasant shooting and accurate cartridge

especially when chambered in the Smith & Wesson K-32. Moving up to the .32 Magnum, my stable of Ruger .32s does not include a single factory version but rather customized sixguns by both Andy Horvath and Gary Reeder.

Starting with a standard Single-Six and a Bisley Model, Andy cut the barrels to just under 4" along with the ejector housing and ejector rod, totally tuned the actions, round-butted the grip frames and finished both in a high bright blue. They make excellent single-action versions of the classic Kit Gun and fit easily into a backpack or carry nicely in a holster. I mostly use these with the Sierra 90 JHC, Hornady 100 JHP, or Speer 100 JHP over 8.5 grains of #2400 for an accurate shooting 1,000+ fps. Even with a short barrel these loads will group right at 1-1/4" for five shots at 20 yards.

TROIKA OF .32S

Did you ever have one of those weekends when everything seems to come together? My friend and fellow Shootist, Fermin Garza, now retired from the Corpus Christi Police Department, found a couple of Bisley Model .32 Magnums in Arizona a few years back.

Bisley Model .32 Magnums are not easy to find and here we had both an

adjustable-sighted and a fixed-sighted version. I thought "why not?" and made arrangements for them to be shipped to my dealer Buckhorn Gun. Then, while I'm at the shop, what should I find in a showcase but another .32 Magnum, a 4-5/8" Single-Six. After several years of not being able to find a single Ruger .32 Magnum, the weekend turned into a trio of these excellent little sixguns.

TUNING UP

I first sent them down to Gary Reeder in Flagstaff with instructions to turn them into something special. Both of the Bisley Models were fitted with new 7-1/2" barrels while the Single-Six was turned into a true long-range sixgun with a 9-1/2" barrel. Gary also put my name on all three of them and finished them in the high polished blue he is so well known for.

With my favorite 8.5 grains of #2400 under the Hornady 100-gr. JHP it does 1,065 fps and groups five shots in a very tiny 1/2" which is amazing since I can't shoot this well. The adjustable sighted Bisley Model prefers the Speer 100 JHP over the same powder charge for just under 1,100 fps and a 7/8" group. Call them superb varmint pistols.

A REAL TEST

When the .32 Magnum arrived in the early 1980s Elgin Gates, then head of the International Handgun Metallic Silhouette Association, sent me a Dan Wesson Field Pistol version with an 8" Heavy Barrel and instructions to really put it to the test. Field Pistol was the new silhouetting game with half-size targets at approximately half the distance. The reality is when you shrink a target by half the length and half the width you really only have about one fourth the area previously afforded. This game required shooters to stand on their own two legs and shoot with two hands and no support. It required more accuracy and much less power than needed for Long-Range Silhouettes.

I later added a stainless steel Dan Wesson. Both of these have been excellent shooting .32s over the years and I especially prefer the Sierra 90 JHC over 8.5 grains of #2400, which achieves 1,150 fps and 1/2" groups for five shots at 25 yards. The Speer 100 JHP over the same powder charge is right behind it for 1,165 fps and a 7/8" group.





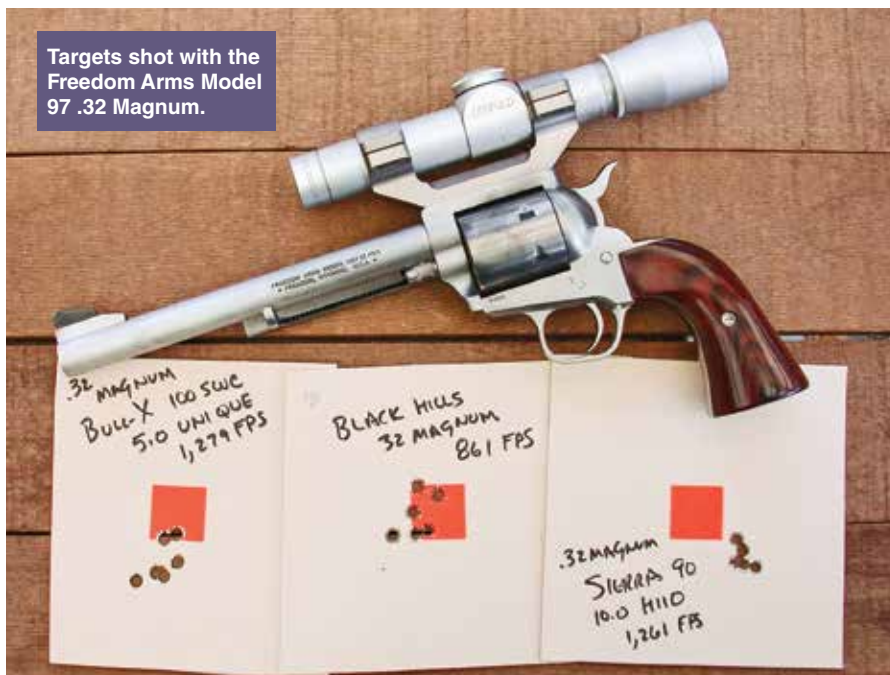
Hornady, Sierra and Speer all offer excellent JHP bullets of the proper diameter and weight for use in the .32 Magnum.

At 50 yards, the Dan Wesson 8" Heavy Barrel .32 Magnum Field Pistol fitted with a 5X Burris scope will put five 85-gr. Hornadys into one inch. The load is 10.5 grains of #4227 for 1,188 fps. Sierra's 90-gr. offering with 9.5 grains of #2400 for 1,199 fps will cluster five shots into 1-1/8" at 50 yards. These are examples of outstanding accuracy for both sixgun and bullet. Switching to cast bullets, NEI's beautiful little 100-gr. Keith SWC is also capable of excellent results in the 8" Dan Wesson.

I have two real favorite loads for this bullet: 10.0 grains of #4227 gives a muzzle velocity of 1,216 fps and will put five shots into 5/8" at 25 yards and 1-1/8" at 50 yards. Using 9.5 grains of #2400 ups the velocity to slightly over 1,400 fps and gives 1-1/4" groups at 50 yards. All of these groups are with the 5X Burris scope in place. I can't be this consistent with iron sights, especially now as I am in the middle of my 8th decade on this vale of tears, however the Sierra 90 JHC over 8.5 grains #2400 gives me 1,145 fps and five shots in 1/2" at 20 yards while the Speer 100 JHP over the same charge yields 1,163 fps and a 7/8" group.

FREEDOM ARMS

With the coming of the Freedom Arms Model 97 in the .32 version I opted for the same 7-1/2" barrel. All the chamberings of the Model 97 are offered with adjustable



Targets shot with the Freedom Arms Model 97 .32 Magnum.



These custom Ruger .32s by Andy Horvath are very easy to pack along when roaming off the beaten path.

sights and both 5-1/2" and 7-1/2" barrels.

As expected from Freedom Arms, this little gun is superbly accurate. All the original testing was done with a 2X Leupold in place to remove as much human error as possible. Five-shot groups with either the .32 Magnum or .32-20 cylinder in place were exceptionally small with groups of well under 1" at 25 yards being very common.

The most accurate load in .32 Magnum proved to be Sierra's 90-gr. JHC over 10 gr. of H110 for five shots in 1/2" and a muzzle velocity of 1,260 fps, while the .32-20 shot

best with Speer's 100-gr. JHP over my long-time favorite load of 10.0 gr. of #2400 for slightly under 1,200 fps and five shots in 5/8". There is no practical difference between 1/2" and 5/8", nor between all the other groups coming in at 3/4" and 7/8". When groups of 1" are considered "large," one gets some idea of what an excellent shooting sixgun the Freedom Arms .32 really is.

www.freedomarms.com
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Andy Horvath, (440) 458-4369



The Model 1887 hearkens back to a time when the lever-action was king and armor was made from leather.

MODEL 1887 LEVER-ACTION SHOTGUN THE FORGOTTEN WINCHESTER

The shotgun has been a part of our heritage since the founding of this great nation. They have been used for hunting, defense and even in times of war. Capable of being fired with birdshot, buckshot and slugs, it's a very versatile firearm.

REPUTATION ON THE LINE

The shotgun has been produced in almost every conceivable form: single shot, double-barrel, bolt-action, slide-action (pump) and semiautomatics. There is one category obvious by its very absence — the lever-action. Or is it?

In the late 1800s Winchester asked genius firearm inventor John Moses Browning to design a lever-action shotgun. Browning advised a pump-action would be a better choice for a repeating shotgun. The management at Winchester, however, remained firm and told the designer Winchester was best known for lever-actions and a lever-action shotgun should be produced.

Browning went to work and designed a rolling block lever-action feeding from a tubular magazine — the Model 1887 was born.

UNIQUE

The Model 1887 was offered in both 10- and 12-gauge and originally came standard with a 30" barrel. In 1888 a 20" barrel was introduced and was reportedly used by some law enforcement agencies and stage-coach companies.

Due to its unique look and action, the Model 1887 has been seen in numerous films including *The Professionals* with Burt Lancaster, *The Life And Times Of Judge Roy Bean* with Paul Newman, *Terminator 2* with Arnold Schwarzenegger, *The Mummy Returns* with

Brendan Fraser and many others.

Today, original Model 1887s are as scarce as the proverbial hen's teeth and highly sought after by Winchester collectors. The shotgun shown is a faithful reproduction manufactured by Norinco and imported by Interstate Arms Corporation.

The Norinco features a blued finish and the walnut buttstock stock with ball-type pistol grip. The forend piece shows a lot of grain. With the 20" barrel, overall length is 37" and the tubular magazine holds five rounds.

WORKING THE 1887

Compared to pump-action shotguns, loading the '87 is a time consuming, tedious task.

Work the lever forward and then hold the shotgun with the support hand. Drop a shell into the open action, push down on the elevator and insert it into the magazine. In my experience this is most easily accomplished with the thumb of the primary hand.

Closing the action will not chamber a shell. To chamber a shell and fire, work the lever. This will allow a shell in the magazine to escape the shell stop and raise the lifter and shell to the chamber.

To unload, open the action just short of ejection, invert the shotgun and allow the shell to fall out. Subsequent rounds are unloaded by activating the shell stop built into the right side of the receiver while simultaneously applying slight upward pressure on the case head to let the shell escape, invert the shotgun again and allow the round to fall out. Repeat until empty.

When cocked, the hammer only raises only about 1/8" above the receiver. While it is possible to decock by holding the hammer

back, pulling the trigger while continuing to hold the hammer, then allowing it to ease forward, becomes a very risky proposition if cold or wearing gloves. There is no half-cock position.

I have never used the half-cock "feature" on any lever gun and carry it with an empty chamber until I need to fire. With very little practice the lever can be worked as the gun is brought to bear on target as quickly and easily as disengaging a safety on a pistol after drawing.

Original Model 1887s as well as reproduction guns, most notably the Norincos like mine, have a reputation for failure to eject malfunctions. I initially experienced this problem until I began cycling the action the same way I do pump guns — working them like a rented mule. Cycling the action quickly and forcefully will eliminate most ejection problems.

IS IT STILL VIABLE?

Some competitors in cowboy action shooting employ the Model 1887, but most use either a Winchester '97 or a double barrel "coach gun." I still take mine to the range occasionally because I love lever-actions and shotguns. It is guaranteed to start a conversation.

A few years after the Model 1887 was introduced, Winchester relented and adopted the Browning-designed Model 1893 pump-action for smokeless powder. This was the forerunner of the now famous Model 1897.

With few exceptions, such as the Henry .410s, lever-action shotguns have become a footnote in history.

So, does the Model 1887 have any practical purpose today? Most folks would probably answer "No" as there are other, more reliable shotguns available for hunting, defense and competition.

There is much more to life than winning a competition or being "tactical." So, if you're like me and consider "fun" to be a practical purpose, the answer is a resounding yes, it's very practical!

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SIG SAUER MCX PCP AIR RIFLE

BUILD A SNIPER NEST IN YOUR KITCHEN!

Tom McHale

Suppose you could reduce the power of your decked-out modern sporting rifle by a factor of 100. Consider the possibilities — you could shoot it in your backyard, garage and (when your significant other is away), down the hallway from a sniper hide in the kitchen. Which brings up an important question — is it acceptable to use dishtowels as a shooting mat?

Here's the good news on a "low-power" modern sporting rifle idea: you can, which means one thing — those despot tyrants running the neighborhood association will stop tormenting you for shooting real ARs in your backyard.

Depending on your choice of caliber, .223 Remington or 300 Blackout, and your specific load, the "loud" version of the SIG SAUER MCX Virtus will deliver between 900 and 1,400 foot-pounds of kinetic energy but it's a little much for some casual range time in the backyard or garage. However, the new SIG Air MCX Virtus PCP Air Rifle is engineered to fling .22-caliber pellets with 12 foot-pounds, give or take, making it backyard friendly, assuming you're safe and use proper backstops.

THE REAL DEAL?

It's no coincidence the air Virtus weighs in almost the same as the centerfire MCX (7.9 and 7.5 lbs.) because it's intended to be a near-identical lower-power twin. Whether for recreation or training, the air Virtus looks and acts like the centerfire version. You will notice a difference in the stock area because this is where the air Virtus stores its compressed air cylinder. Yes, it's a pre-charged pneumatic (PCP) design — SIG's first in the category. For those new to airgunning, PCP rifles store a large supply of pre-compressed air on board in a mini-SCUBA tank of sorts. A regulator meters a precise volume of air to drive each pellet. This means you get a bunch of shots of similar velocity before you have to recharge the air cylinder.

The SIG SAUER MCX Virtus PCP keeps a generous supply of 3,000 psi of tacti-cool in its tank to deliver well over 100 rounds before you have to top it off. You can fill the air Virtus with a special high-pressure hand pump, and build your core



SIG "hides" the air cylinder in the dead space under the stock — clever and it doesn't upset the handling.



You can fill its 3,000 psi air cylinder with a high-pressure hand pump but this Nomad portable compressor from Air Venturi makes the job much easier.

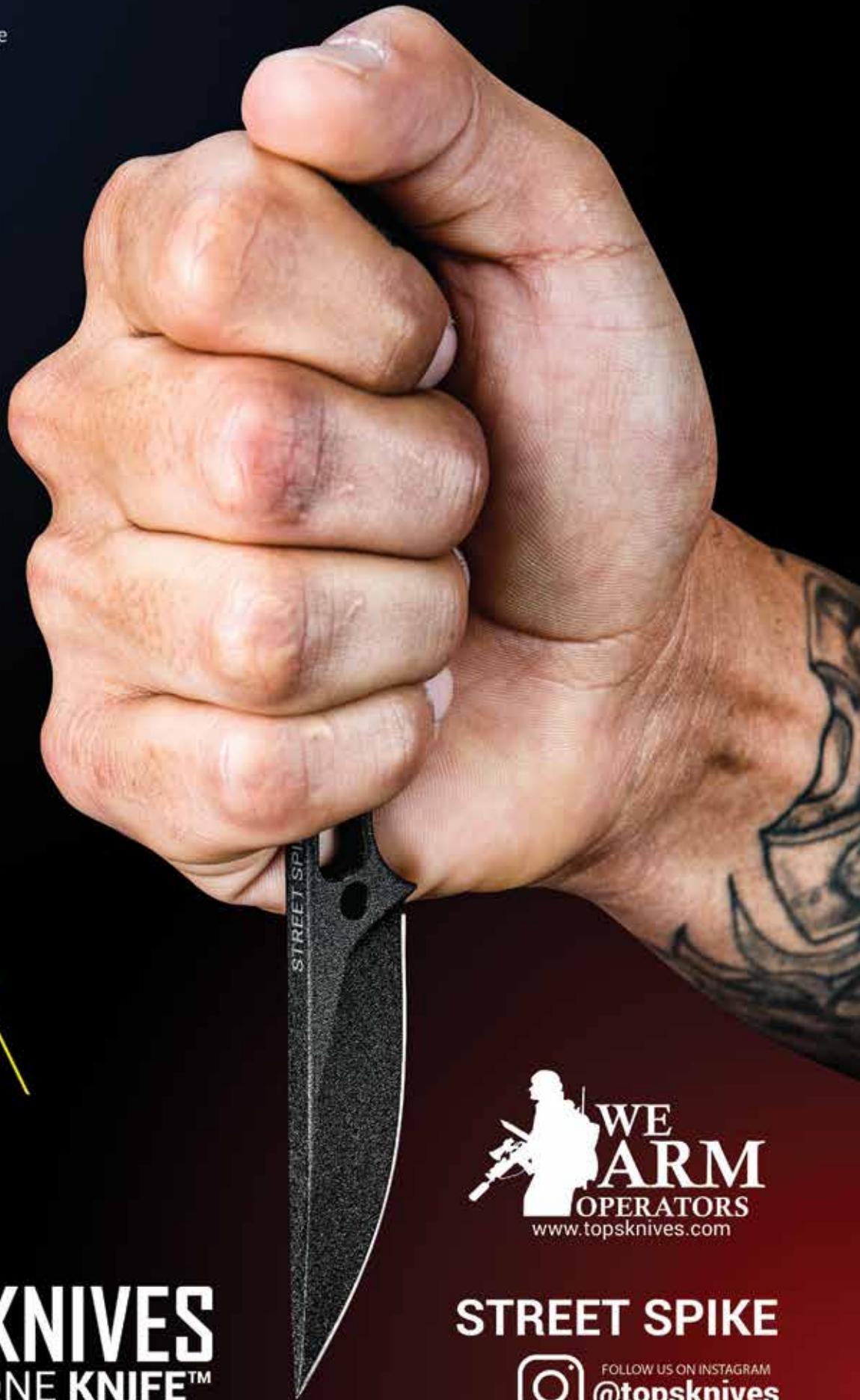
muscles in the process, or you can take the easy way out and use a compressor. This rifle arrived with its tank near dead empty. Filling manually would have cost me a few hundred very strenuous pumps so I used an Air Venturi Nomad portable compressor. I'm not as dumb as I look. After plugging in to the SIG's Foster air hose fitting, I was ready to go after just seven minutes of watching the Nomad do my work.

Even with its onboard air cylinder, the MCX Virtus handles much like its louder sibling. As the tank is in the rear, between the receiver and butt stock, there's no awkward weight forward of the receiver, allowing the front end to swing and handle normally. As for controls, you'll find an ambidextrous safety looking and operating like the centerfire equivalent. The forward assist and bolt catch-release lever are locked in place as they're irrelevant in the air model. The magazine release is functional, and although shorter than its fire and brimstone cousin, locks and drops a 30-pellet magazine.



The SIG SAUER MCX Virtus PCP Air Rifle looks and acts like the real thing, but is much more polite in the backyard.

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AMMO TIME

The MCX Virtus magazine seats as you'd expect but has a hidden secret. Inside a trap door, you'll find a 30-pellet belt. To load it up, just pull it completely out of the magazine — it's a single strand, not a loop. Press in your pellets and seat them using the multi-tool stowed away in the pistol grip. It sounds involved but loading the removed belt is much faster and easier than sticking individual pellets into a small hole in a fixed magazine. Even with my fat fingers, I couldn't miss. Feed the belt back into the magazine and it creates its own "loop" inside the internal track.

The MCX Virtus is "sort of" a semi-automatic. Each trigger press fires a shot and resets the action. However, the first stage of the trigger press advances the magazine belt. Call the mode of operation whatever you want; it just fires all 30 pellets by pressing the trigger repeatedly. I will note it takes very little pressure to move the magazine belt, so the action adds virtually nothing to the trigger sensation — it feels like a typical MSR service rifle trigger. I weighed the "pull" using a trigger scale and it averaged 5.5 lbs.



The magazine drops just like the centerfire version but runs off an internal 30-pellet belt.

As for shooting, it's a good thing pellets are cheap! While my wife was at work, I perforated the snot out of a series of targets while wiping out a herd or two of Air Venturi miniature steel silhouette targets. I did get scientific for a brief minute of mature gun writer work and chronographed two different SIG SAUER pellet makes, the Crux lead and ballistic alloy projectiles. The lead pellets clocked in at 591.5 feet per second, yielding 11.39 foot-pounds

while the ballistic alloys clocked in at 760.3 fps for 12.88 foot-pounds. This air marvel is definitely garage and yard friendly.

The MCX Virtus ships with flip up "iron" sights but also includes a full length top rail. I've already mounted a Crimson Trace CTS-1000 red dot sight for future shenanigans.

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“Protection and Strength for My Daughter” Diamond Bracelet

A Beautiful Expression of Faith for Your Daughter

With its stylish design and powerful message, the “Protection and Strength for My Daughter” Diamond Bracelet is a wonderful way to let your daughter know just how much you care. Superbly hand-crafted, it features a braided genuine leather bracelet. At the center, a gleaming cylinder in durable solid stainless steel reveals a stylized diamond-shaped cross set with a sparkling genuine diamond.

The reverse side of the cylinder is finely etched with the uplifting sentiment, “My Dear Daughter, May God Always Protect You and Give You Strength.” Two stainless steel beads ion-plated with 24K-gold accents

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Actual Size

THE BRITISH L66A1

A .22LR COMBAT PISTOL?

Will Dabbs, MD

In the 1970s Northern Ireland was a tinderbox. The ongoing ethno-nationalist conflagration was called simply “The Troubles,” and it ultimately claimed more than 3,500 lives. In my little corner of the Deep South the primary conflict between Protestants and Catholics orbits around who will snag the best parking places at the local restaurants after church. In the mid-’70s in Northern Ireland, however, the antipathy ran much deeper.

The details are beyond the scope of today’s treatise. Suffice it to say the Provisional Irish Republican Army shot people and blew things up, while the British Army also shot people and blew things up. Along the way the fight attracted some eclectic firearms.

THE IRON

The standard Infantry weapon used by the British Army at the time was the L1A1 Self Loading Rifle (SLR). An Anglicized version of the venerable FN FAL rifle chambered in 7.62x51mm NATO, the L1A1 was overly bulky for close quarters work but projected a great deal of authority downrange. Images of British soldiers patrolling the streets of Belfast with their L1A1 rifles at port arms were a recurrent part of the nightly news when I was a kid.

The IRA got their weapons from some motley sources. WWII-surplus arms like Lee-Enfield rifles and Thompson submachine guns were not uncommon early on. Muammar Ghaddafi was a fan, so Kalashnikov rifles and RPGs arrived thereafter. The cause also had its adherents on this side of the pond, so AR15 and AR180 rifles made it to the paramilitary wing of the IRA.

The Troubles was the only armed conflict wherein the Armalite AR180 saw significant action. Those close to the fighting called it the “Widowmaker” as a result. One of the strangest weapons used in the war, however, doesn’t really seem like a combat implement at all.



The Walther PP in .22LR was designated the L66A1 by the British MOD. This is one of the very few cases wherein a .22LR handgun was issued by a major military as a defensive weapon.



WWII-surplus weapons like this Webley revolver, Mills bomb and Lee-Enfield No. 4 rifle often saw service early on during the Troubles.

A .22 RIMFIRE. REALLY?

In 1974 the Royal Army Ordnance Corps ordered some 3,200 PP pistols chambered in .22LR directly from Walther. These weapons bore no distinctive British marks and were proofed at the West German proofhouse at Koblenz. Some of the weapons had a lanyard loop, while others did not. The official claim was they were intended for use as deep cover defensive weapons by members of the Ulster Defence Regiment.

The British Ministry of Defence designated this peculiar little gun the L66A1 and even assigned it a NATO stock



M1928 Thompsons were common in England after WWII. As a result many of the old choppers found their way into Northern Ireland.



number. Many to most of the weapons saw fairly hard use and underwent an FTR (Factory Through Repair) process. This rebuild included replacing the firing pins, stamping the slide with a "P" to document this fact, and refinishing the slides and frames.

The refinishing treatment involved coating the slide and frame in Suncorite. Suncorite is a black lacquer finish utilizing chemicals renowned for their simply breathtaking capacity to foment cancer. As this stuff is about as toxic as Plutonium, it's banned in the United States.

The L66A1 was withdrawn in the 1980s, and the guns were repackaged and sold commercially in both the U.S. and

Europe. Interarms imported about 1,500 copies into the U.S. in the mid-1990s. The guns were sold with a pair of magazines in a mismatched original box and are still available on gun auction sites from time to time today.

THE WALTHER PP ORIGIN STORY

Carl Walther debuted his trim little *Polizei Pistole* in 1929. The PP was a blowback-operated semiautomatic handgun feeding from a single column box magazine. The design used the Browning-inspired mechanism wherein the recoil spring telescoped around the barrel. Versions have been produced in .22LR, .25ACP, .32ACP, .380ACP and 9x18mm Ultra.

The Walther PP ultimately spawned a robust family of handguns. (L-R) A pre-war PP in .22LR, a pre-war PPK in .32ACP and a current-production PPK/S in .380ACP.

While the PP has seen widespread distribution, the smaller PPK (Kriminalmodell) got the most press. After a British firearms expert named Geoffrey Boothroyd posted a letter to Ian Fleming asserting James Bond's .25-caliber Beretta 418 might be a bit effeminate for the world's most awesome MI6 agent, the two men put their heads together and dropped a Walther PPK into 007's holster. The PPK and subsequently slightly modified PPK/S are produced in Arkansas today and still sell well.

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Free Book Reveals the 37 Items a Former CIA Officer Uses to Survive a Crisis

In the next few days, I am (with your permission) going to send you a brand-new copy of my book, *The Escape Bag Blueprint: 37 Items You Must Have to Survive a Crisis*. And, not only am I going to rush it to your doorstep, I'm going to send it to you for FREE!

Inside the book (which normally sells for \$29) I reveal the gear used by intelligence operatives, spec-ops, and even the "Hard Targets" unit to survive in some of the deadliest environments on earth. However, before I tell you the reason why I'm sending you this book and why I'm going to send it to you for free...

Let me quickly tell you who I am and why you may wish to listen to what I have to say. My name is Jason Hanson. I'm a former CIA Officer and a *New York Times* bestselling author. I've been blessed to share my strategies on dozens of television shows including *Shark Tank*, *Fox News*, and the *NBC Today Show*.

Because of my background, I've had to survive in some pretty rough environments. And now I use what I've learned to

teach people, just like you, how to protect themselves and their families during times of crisis.

In my free book I want to send you, I've condensed my years of intelligence training and decades of gun knowledge into the most in-depth guide to packing the ultimate bug out bag. I strongly encourage you to claim your book today at the website below.

If you're like others I've spoken with, you're probably wondering why I'm willing to give my book away for free. Well, the answer is simple. God has blessed me with a wonderful life and I feel a strong obligation to share these spy and survival secrets with others. Giving this book away for free is one way of doing that.

But, to be totally upfront, this offer is only good until I run out of books in our warehouse and I am giving away this book on a first come, first served basis. So, I hope you'll drop everything and visit my website to claim your free book today. The website you want to visit right now is www.Free37Secrets.com.

The most revolutionary aspect of the PP design was its revolver-style double action/single action trigger. While the PPs' double action trigger is heavier than Aunt Edna's fruitcake, the single action version remains fairly comfortable. This trigger design allowed the trim little guns to be carried safely with a round in the chamber. Variations on this trigger found their way into the Walther P38, Beretta M9, the SIG P226 and many other popular combat handguns.



The Walther PP introduced the Double Action/Single Action trigger as well as the hammer drop safety to the world of autoloading handguns.

The PP-series guns feature a pushbutton magazine release on the left behind the trigger and a hammer-drop safety mounted on the left aspect of the slide. There is a mechanical loaded-chamber indicator protruding out the back of the slide when the weapon is hot. The sights are lyrically small but there is a neat series of wavy lines cut into the top of the slide to minimize glare.

DENOUEMENT

The official party line claims these compact concealable rimfire pistols were intended as off-duty protection weapons and close quarters personal defense tools. However, the .32ACP version of the Walther PP, designated the L47A1, was also an issue weapon within the MOD at the same time, and it projected a bit more horsepower downrange. There are those who suspect these guns were assassination tools. The truth was likely lost when the Troubles thankfully ended in a cease fire in 1998.

Regardless of their original intended purpose, the Walther PP in .22LR is just cute as a button. The L66A1 isn't the pistol I would drop into my pocket for a trek across a spooky parking lot, but it remains simply great fun on the range. For close-in defense against rampaging aluminum beverage cans, it's the absolute perfect tool. 



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This 50-yard group is typical of what David was able to shoot with open sights and Winchester Silver-Tip .30-30 ammo.

The Model 336C Curly Maple would make an excellent deer rifle — and a darn pretty one, too!



Takedown for cleaning is easy, requiring a flat tip screwdriver and needle nose pliers. Barrel cleaning can be done from the breech, a great advantage of the 336 design!



Marlin 336C *Curly Maple*

ART IN GUNMETAL AND MAPLE

DAVID FREEMAN

When I was a kid, opening day of deer season was automatically an excused absence if you didn't show up for school. My dad wasn't a deer hunter but I hunted with my cousins using a shotgun with slugs. Of course I wanted a deer rifle, the obvious choices in my world being a Winchester 94 or a Marlin 336. Both were out of reach financially in those days but it didn't keep me from dreaming. I leaned more toward the Winchester for one silly reason — all my TV and movie cowboy heroes carried straight stocked Winchesters. The Marlin with its pistol grip stock just didn't fit my image of the perfect rifle for a kid who rode a horse.

I'm over it now and the new Model 336C with the curly maple stock is about the most beautiful lever action rifle I've ever seen. Never mind cowboys never had curly maple stocks. We've got 'em now!

TWIN SONS

The Marlin 336 is the same age as I, both of us arriving in 1948. It was based upon earlier Marlin rifles, the 1893 and the 1936, later renamed the Model 36. Based on the patents of L.L. Hepburn, the Model 1893 incorporated a new locking bolt system and a two-piece firing pin that has carried forward to the Model 336. The Model 336 design improvements included an open ejection port on the side of the receiver, a stronger and simpler round-profile, chrome-plated breech bolt; a redesigned cartridge carrier, an improved extractor and coil-type main and trigger springs in place of the flat springs used in earlier Marlin rifles.

The 336C Curly Maple is only available in .30-30 with a 20" barrel. The deep blue finish on the receiver and barrel contrast nicely with the light-colored, curly maple stock. The pistol grip and forearm are checkered with a deep brown color to accent the lighter color of the stock and forearm. The trigger is gold, the butt plate is rubber and the pistol grip end cap is shiny black plastic held on by a gold-plated screw. The black barrel band at the front end of the forearm also serves as a sling mount with a matching rear mount on the stock.

OPTIC READY

With its side ejection port, the 336C is easy to equip with a scope and, in fact, ships with an offset hammer spur and a hex wrench with which to mount it on either side of the hammer. The top of the receiver is flat and pre-drilled for mounting optics. The sights on the gun consist of a semi-buckhorn/folding leaf rear sight adjustable for windage and elevation and a hooded bead front sight. The front of the rear sight is dovetailed and can be easily adjusted from side to side by a slight tap from a nylon hammer.

For elevation adjustment, the elevation blade can be moved to raise or lower the sight as needed. I'm pleased to say all four shooters enjoying the rifle with me on its first time out found the open sights easily allowed shooting deer-heart-sized groups at 50 yards.

Although I'm right-handed, I shoot long guns left-handed because of a strongly dominant left eye. I like shooting lever-action rifles because I can easily operate the lever with my left hand. If the need arises for quick follow-up shots, I'm up for it. The lever on the Marlin operates smoothly throughout its entire cycle. Trigger pull on the test rifle averaged just a hair over 5 lbs. with a 1/2" take-up and a clean break.

Disassembly for cleaning requires a flat-bladed screwdriver and a pair of needle nose pliers. It's a matter of removing the lever pivot screw, pulling the lever assembly out of the bolt, removing the bolt from the rear of the receiver and lifting the ejector out with a pair of pliers. You can continue to remove the magazine tube and the butt stock but I personally have not yet seen the need to do so with the shooting we have done. You can clean the barrel from the breech, follow Marlin's instructions for lubricating the rifle and have it back together again in a jiffy thanks to the easy-to-follow instructions in the manual.

Thank you, Remington, for keeping the Marlin brand alive. Thank you, Marlin, for continuing to crank out the Model 336 and for having the vision to break the mold with a gun transcending into a work of art. I only see one drawback — it's just too darned pretty to scratch up, so I'm not likely to take it to the woods much. 

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THE TOP-TIER TACTICAL TOOL

Springfield Armory is a foundational name in modern combat weapons. Their storied line of XD-M pistols sets the bar for reliability, accuracy, human engineering and safety. Now Springfield Armory has taken everything righteous and wholesome about the XD-M and amped it up to the next level. This new apex predator is the revolutionary XD-M Elite OSP (Optical Sight Pistol).

BLACK OPS

In retrospect it was inevitable the CIA should use gun writers as counterterrorist operatives. Their wizened trigger fingers combined with the rare ability to turn a pithy phrase on the fly makes them vital national security assets. A new mission promised to test even their superhuman capabilities.

The target was a bloodthirsty terrorist with the *nom de guerre* Ugotabe Kidnme. Kidnme frequently called big-boned people “fat” and he considered roasted beagle puppies a delicacy. His henchmen had downed a V22 Osprey carrying the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders enroute to a USO show. Now the 20 gorgeous girls, buffeted but otherwise unhurt, languished in Kidnme’s evil lair.

The chiseled gun-writer-turned-CIA Special Activities Division

asset inserted via HALO parachute drop, just like always. He now stood invisible in the darkness outside the evil fortress, his heart rate languishing in the low 60s. He placed explosive breaching charges and retrieved the Springfield Armory XD-M Elite OSP pistol from its custom thigh rig. He closed his eyes, activated the Streamlight TLR8G combination white light/green laser and touched off the charge.

The blinding flash left the evil “Tangos” within momentarily stunned. The gun-writing SAD asset pushed into the expansive

smoke-filled edifice, the reticle of his Holosun slide-mounted red dot sight automatically compensating for the dim ambient light. The nearest terrorist, a shockingly hairy man, shook his head to clear his muddled senses and foolishly raised a poorly maintained Kalashnikov rifle. It was on.

The agent flowed through the room with a ballerina’s grace, dispensing double taps like party favors at the Playboy mansion. The SilencerCo Omega 45K sound suppressor coughed twice each time the asset indexed a new target. In seconds the slide locked back and 11 terrorists lay cooling on the hard stone floor. The XD-M Elite OSP carried a total of 23 rounds onboard but he had inadvertently pulled one. The asset would address it on the range when he got home.

Stroking the bilateral pushbutton magazine catch, the operator



The Man, the Myth —
As a terrorist-fighting
superhero, Will Dabbs would
choose the Springfield Armory
XD-M OSP to rescue
cheerleaders from
the clutches of
a puppy-eating villain.

WILL DABBS, MD
PHOTOS: ROBERT JONES/
THE IMAGESMITH, LLC



The slide has a cocking indicator which is easily seen in daylight or felt in the dark along with suppressor-height rear sight.

The flat Springfield META (Match Enhanced Trigger Assembly) offers "the finest factory trigger available in a polymer-framed pistol."

The barrel features an extended barrel with threaded muzzle, along with suppressor-ready tall sights. As a plus, the sights also co-witness nicely through a red-dot optic.

dropped the empty magazine. He had a fresh box through the flared magwell funnel before the terrified cheerleaders had time to gasp. The gun-writing SAD agent briskly slid his weak hand backward against the Holosun sight to drop the slide, causing one of the young ladies to swoon over his rarefied tactical coolness.

Just then Ugotabe Kidnme himself arose from behind the huddled mass of tousled girls, a stubby AKSU74 panning the group. The puppy-munching villain grinned through stained teeth as he prepared to deliver a well-rehearsed despotic monologue. Without a word, the SAD agent dropped him at a range of 60 feet with two well-placed 147-gr. SIG SAUER V-Crown hollowpoints.

"Quick," the asset shouted. "Everybody grab a puppy and follow me."

In an instant the cheerleaders were on their feet and stacked

behind the gun writer, each grasping a wriggling beagle puppy saved from Kidnme's nefarious stewpot. As they streamed aboard the waiting MH47G Chinook helicopter, the asset was nearly overcome by the sweet smell of runny mascara, newly liberated beagles and palpable unfiltered gratitude.

The Night Stalker crew chief turned to the flight engineer and keyed his microphone, "Wow, that guy is incredible!"

The flight engineer responded, "Yeah, I know. I read *Shooter's Rx* in *GUNS Magazine*. He really is that awesome!"

The flight back to Bagram was little more than a blur. During the exfil the rescued cheerleaders tried vainly to smear his face paint camouflage with smooches. The asset nonetheless resisted them all for he was a happily married man with the most amazing wife in the universe. The wispy tails of liberated puppies buzzed



XD-M ELITE OSP

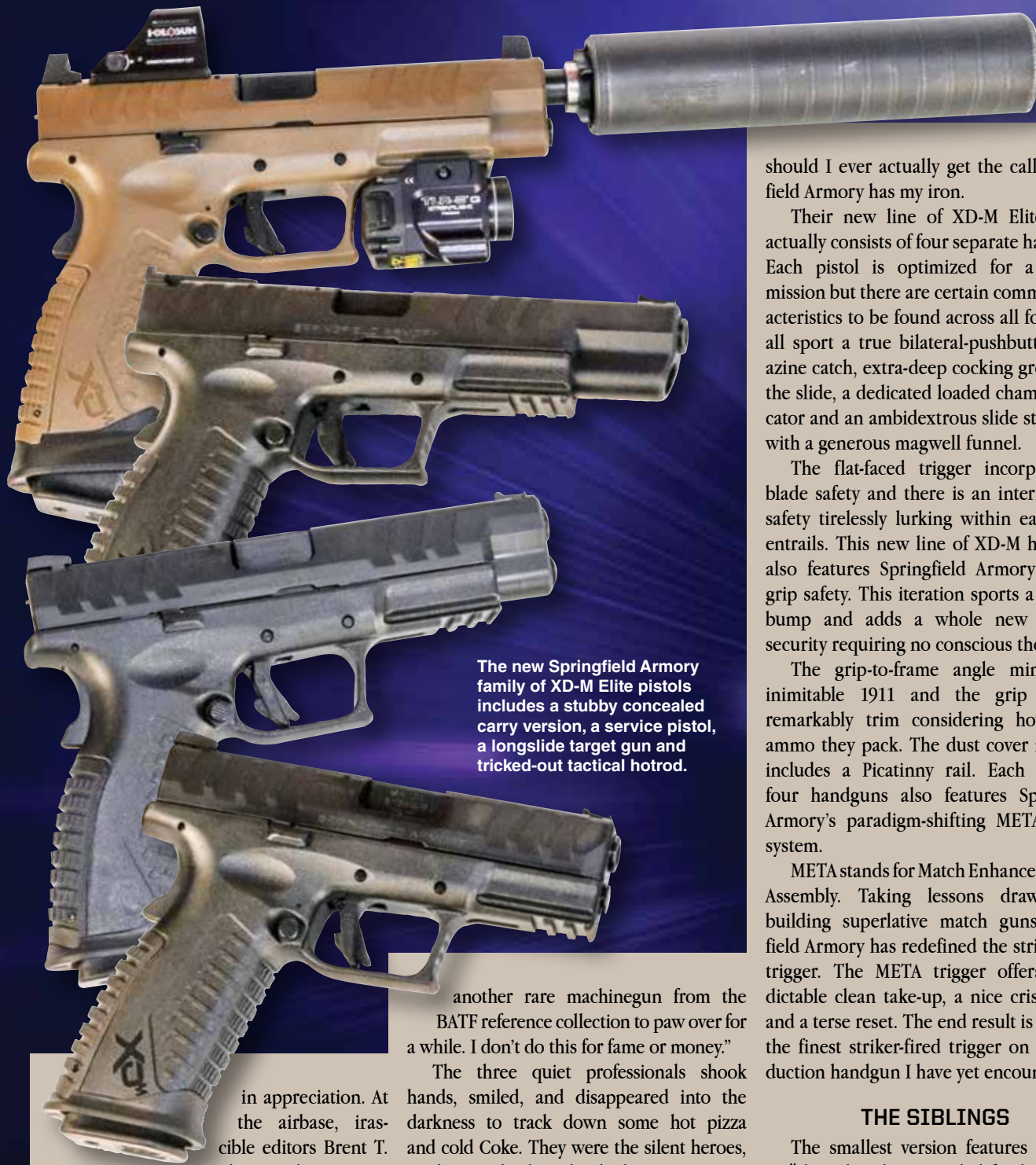


Springfield Armory XD-M Elite OSP offers a host of features, making it a ready-to-roll tactical pistol right out of the box!



GUNS[®]

MAGAZINE



The new Springfield Armory family of XD-M Elite pistols includes a stubby concealed carry version, a service pistol, a longslide target gun and tricked-out tactical hotrod.

in appreciation. At the airbase, irascible editors Brent T. Wheat and Roy Huntington stood clear of the aircraft until they were certain all of the liberated cheerleaders were accounted for.

"I just got off the phone with the President," Roy shouted above the dying turbines. "He wants you in the Oval Office tomorrow to accept the deed to one of the Florida Keys, a really nice European sportscar and a huge cube of cash. There's a jet waiting on the tarmac."

"No thanks, boss," the exhausted gun writer responded flatly. "Our standard agreement still stands. I'll drop by Martinsburg when we get back and borrow

another rare machinegun from the BATF reference collection to paw over for a while. I don't do this for fame or money."

The three quiet professionals shook hands, smiled, and disappeared into the darkness to track down some hot pizza and cold Coke. They were the silent heroes, working tirelessly in the shadows to preserve freedom, promote democracy, and ensure the uninterrupted flow of gun-related minutiae.

THE TRIBE

Shocking though it might seem, the aforementioned tale did not technically happen. The President has DevGru and Delta for all of his cheerleader rescuing needs. Additionally, the toxic combination of my tired eyes, sore back, and deconditioned cardiovascular system means Ruth Bader Ginsberg would likely do a better job of counterterrorist ops than I. However,

should I ever actually get the call, Springfield Armory has my iron.

Their new line of XD-M Elite pistols actually consists of four separate handguns. Each pistol is optimized for a specific mission but there are certain common characteristics to be found across all four. They all sport a true bilateral-pushbutton magazine catch, extra-deep cocking grooves on the slide, a dedicated loaded chamber indicator and an ambidextrous slide stop along with a generous magwell funnel.

The flat-faced trigger incorporates a blade safety and there is an internal drop safety tirelessly lurking within each gun's entrails. This new line of XD-M handguns also features Springfield Armory's divine grip safety. This iteration sports a memory bump and adds a whole new layer of security requiring no conscious thought.

The grip-to-frame angle mimics the inimitable 1911 and the grip remains remarkably trim considering how much ammo they pack. The dust cover naturally includes a Picatinny rail. Each of these four handguns also features Springfield Armory's paradigm-shifting META trigger system.

META stands for Match Enhanced Trigger Assembly. Taking lessons drawn from building superlative match guns Springfield Armory has redefined the striker-fired trigger. The META trigger offers a predictable clean take-up, a nice crisp break, and a terse reset. The end result is arguably the finest striker-fired trigger on any production handgun I have yet encountered.

THE SIBLINGS

The smallest version features a stubby 3.8" barrel and is intended for high-threat concealed carry. Next in the lineup is the service pistol with a 4.5" tube. This gun would be at home hanging from a cop's duty belt, living in your nightstand or riding in the center console of your minivan. Amazingly, both of these handguns come with three standard-capacity 20-round magazines.

The third pistol is the XD-M Elite Precision sporting a 5.25" barrel and elongated slide with a generous lightening cut up top. The rear sight on the Precision model is readily adjustable for both windage and elevation. The top-tier version is the XD-M Elite OSP. This gun features a 5.28" extended/threaded



barrel and suppressor-height sights. The Precision and OSP variants carry an astounding 22 rounds in their magazines.

THE APEX PREDATOR

The XD-M Elite OSP features a rear slide deck cut to accept standard small-statured electronic red dot sights. A red dot like my solar-powered version from Holosun peeks nicely above the SilencerCo Omega 45K sound suppressor. In the absence of a red dot, the suppressor-height iron sights enhance acquisition with a can installed as well.

You can optimize the aggressively textured grip via the interchangeable backstraps to interface with your anatomy as seamlessly as might a pair of cotton socks. The gun comes in both FDE and black, but the FDE version looks cooler. The end result carries, shoots and runs like the tactical thoroughbred it is.

TRIGGER TIME

The META trigger is indeed divine. The delta between crappy striker-fired triggers and superlative striker-fired triggers is defined by nuance. Springfield Armory got the details right with this rig.

Once you get beyond the beautiful trigger and truly ambidextrous controls you come to appreciate the expansive magazine capacity. As was said of the Spencer repeating rifle during the War Between



The XD-M Elite OSP comes ready to mount an RMR-pattern sight (above), covered by a removable plate. The aggressive texturing of the grip (below), along with interchangeable backstraps, provides positive engagement. The swappable magwell is widely beveled for speed loads.



the States, you load this thing on Sunday and shoot it all week. The fastest magazine change is the one you don't have to make and the XD-M Elite OSP exemplifies this axiom.

The grip is undeniably on the long side but the magwell funnel keeps it from looking or feeling weird. The long grip also gives you plenty of real estate upon which to cling for epically sweet rapid-fire engagements. The generous grip remains a small price to pay for having nearly half a box of 9mm Parabellum chaos onboard.

DENOUEMENT

I haven't talked much about how accurate or reliable this gun is. This is because it shoots delightfully straight and monotonously digested any sort of 9mm ammo I fed it. The day a Springfield Armory pistol is not reliable and straight-shooting is the day I will register as a Democrat. Fret not, the sun will burn out long before this happens.

The new Springfield Armory XD-M Elite OSP is what lesser tactical handguns aspire to become. Sleek, cool, voracious and mean, keep the OSP in mind for all of your home defense, recreational shooting and cheerleader-rescuing needs. Should the CIA ever call, it's the gun I'll grab. MSRP is \$709. 

www.springfield-armory.com

Savage Arms

DAVE WORKMAN

The .224 Valkyrie cartridge is fascinating, not because it can do something no other caliber can do, but because it was a celebrity from the get-go, being designed for use in the AR platform.

AR ROOTS

Introduced in late 2017 by Federal Premium, the .224 Valkyrie comes from good stock. It's based on the .30 Remington/6.8 SPC, necked down to accept the .224-caliber projectile and the results are impressive. On paper it launches a 90-gr. Sierra MatchKing bullet out of a semi-auto Modern Sporting Rifle (MSR) 24" barrel at 2,700 fps and I've got news for my pals at Federal — it goes a bit faster in a different type of rifle. Savage can accept the credit because it has taken the .224 Valkyrie and put it into a bolt-action platform, the Model 110 Prairie Hunter.

Having an opportunity to spend some time on the range with this sizzler, there's no doubt in my mind this Savage bolt-action will become a coyote's worst nightmare. For prairie dogs, it's certain *explode-o-doom*. The heavier bullets might also easily clobber a pronghorn or even a deer.

ROUNDING IT OUT

The .224 Valkyrie has a rimless bottleneck case measuring 1.6" and it takes a small rifle primer. Federal generously

supplied a variety of ammunition for this exercise, with bullet weights ranging from 60 to 90 grains. My test rifle seemed to prefer the heavier projectiles due to the 1:7" rifling twist, standard for this caliber. The 22" carbon steel heavy barrel carries a black matte finish, button rifling, target crown and is threaded at the muzzle for a suppressor or muzzle brake.

INTERESTING SPECS

Having discussed the cartridge, let's take a closer look at the rifle. Out of the box, the Prairie Hunter weighs 8.75 lbs. before a scope went on. It's not a rifle I'd want to carry around all day but it definitely is the kind of rifle an enterprising varmint shooter could set up overlooking a prairie dog town and create havoc.

LAYOUT

The receiver is also black matte-finished carbon steel and nestles into the grey synthetic stock nicely. It's textured at the grip and forend, and there are three QD studs, onto the most forward of which I mounted a Harris bipod for part of the field test.

The Prairie Hunter truly is a modular rifle that can be tailored to an individual shooter. This selection of interchangeable stock

components is called the AccuFit system, and it definitely works. Once I mounted a scope (three different ones were involved in this evaluation), I picked the highest replacement comb and went to work.

Length of pull varies between 12.75" and 13.75" depending upon which of the various spacers are installed. The rifle also comes with four extra interchangeable combs ranging from low (straight) to high. It's a simple process to swap these out. Just pull the recoil pad and remove the foam inner block, select which spacers you want and slide the selected comb back into place.

With an OAL of 42.25", the Prairie Hunter will easily tuck behind the seat of a truck or in an SUV.

Savage uses a three-position thumb safety at the rear of the receiver. It's identical to the safety on my Savage Model 14/114 American Classic deer rifle chambered for .308 Winchester, so shooting the Prairie Hunter was like using an old friend. I prefer a three-position safety because it allows the safe ejection of an unfired round if the need arises.



Fit this rifle with a good optic and Harris bipod, and it's ready to rock. Scope is a new Meopta Optika6 in 3-18x50mm.

110 IN .224

Valkyrie

TIME-TESTED PERFORMER IN A HOT NEW CHAMBERING!

AMMO

The Prairie Hunter comes from the factory with a one-piece 20 MOA rail installed. While waiting for a 3-18x50mm Meopta Optika6 scope to arrive, I slapped on a 3-9X Leupold for some preliminary range work. Recoil was easily manageable and after adjusting the scope, I managed some decent groups using the 90-gr. bullets and another Gold Medal load from Federal Premium using an 80.5-gr. Berger Open Tip Match Bullet.

My ammunition assortment also included a supply of 90-gr. Federal Fusion soft points, Federal Premiums using the 78-gr. Barnes TSX (Triple-Shock) and the aforementioned 60-gr. load using the Nosler Ballistic Tip Varmint bullet, which is a nasty surprise for prairie dogs.

Savage incorporated its AccuTrigger which breaks crisp and clean. It's user-adjustable but I didn't tinker with it because out of the box it had a superior letoff. Why fix something that isn't broke?

The magazine carries three rounds and I'll mention this in passing because you'll want to know: Press the rear of the magazine in first and then push up the front end. I tried a few times at the range to simply insert the magazine straight into the well but it hung up for me. Once I started at the rear and then pressed the front of the magazine, it popped right in.

AT THE RANGE

Here's where the fun begins. According to the cartridge box, the 60-gr. Nosler is supposed to check out at 3,300 fps but over my chronograph set about 48" out from the muzzle, the Ballistic Tip went ballistic, indeed, averaging 3,439 fps from the bolt-action!

Think for a moment. If you're shooting at a varmint at, say, 500 yards —1,500 feet — your bullet will strike almost before you feel the recoil and hear the muzzle blast. The .224 Valkyrie delivers the least drift and loss of trajectory of any cartridge in its class with similar ballistics, according to Savage. After burning through a few boxes of ammunition, I'll definitely take their word for it.

Moving up the scale, the Federal Premium load with the 78-gr. Barnes TSX is listed on the box as launching at 2,850 fps. Once again, out of the bolt-action Savage, my Chrony Alpha chronograph said it averaged 2,919 fps. There were no signs of excessive pressure on this, or any of the fired cases from the Federal factory loads.

I next loaded up with the Gold Medal cartridges topped by the 80.5-gr. Berger OT. On the back of the box, this round lists a muzzle velocity of 2,925 fps. Out of the Prairie Hunter, it departed at an impressive 3,002 fps average.

Moving to the two 90-gr. loads I had, the bonded soft point Fusion lists 2,700 fps on the box as a muzzle velocity but out of the test rifle it crossed the screens at an average of 2,832 fps.

Compare the .224 Valkyrie (right, top bullet) to the .223 Remington. Both rounds are sizzlers for small game while the Valkyrie works on pronghorns, deer and other mid-size game with heavier bullets.

Lastly, the 90-gr. Gold Medal load pushed the Sierra MatchKing a hair faster than the listed muzzle velocity of 2,700 fps. This particular load went cooking at an average 2,750 fps.

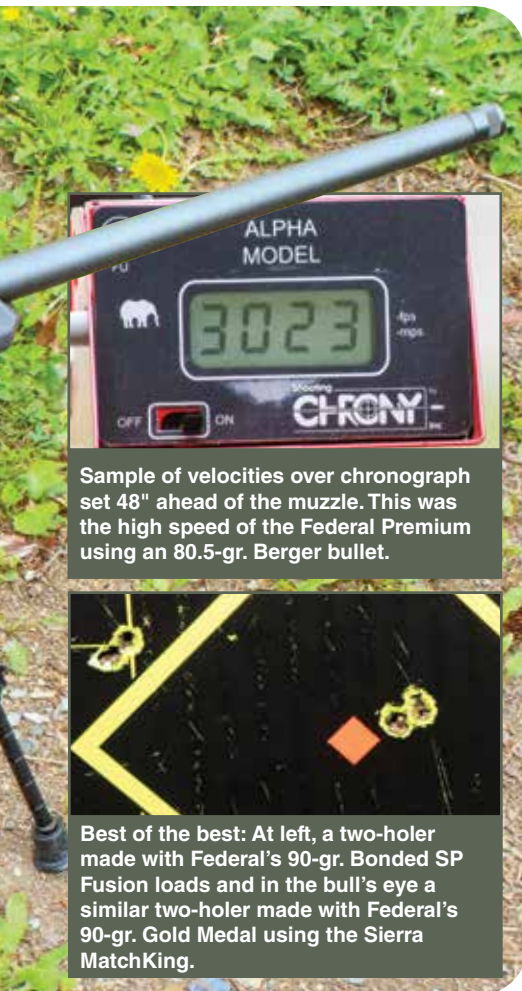
ACCURACY

As I said earlier, the Model 110 Savage in any configuration can turn out some very tight groups. I even managed some, and then again, the human factor kicked in and I'd throw a round here or there. Because the magazine carries three rounds, I stuck to doing a 3-shot group standard.

The widest group I got was with the 60-gr. bullet at just over 1.5" but I got some tighter clusters including a couple which could be covered with a quarter. When they're so close, it's not going to matter much to the critter on the receiving end.

After punching paper, I moved on to something a little more telling. Every gun range seems to have chunks of broken clay discs on the berms and mine is certainly no different. I loaded up with the 90-grainers and started shooting at these pieces at 100 yards off a sandbag rest. After pulverizing several such pieces with ease, I put the rifle away.

The experience was enough to convince me the Savage 110 Prairie Hunter in .224 Valkyrie is a terrific choice for varmint hunters or precision shooters, and with the right load, will put meat on the table. 



Sample of velocities over chronograph set 48" ahead of the muzzle. This was the high speed of the Federal Premium using an 80.5-gr. Berger bullet.

Best of the best: At left, a two-holer made with Federal's 90-gr. Bonded SP Fusion loads and in the bull's eye a similar two-holer made with Federal's 90-gr. Gold Medal using the Sierra MatchKing.

WILSON COMBAT X-TAC **COMPACT** 9MM

A DIFFERENT KIND OF HANDGUN TEST

MASSAD AYOOB

When testing a gun, I like to shoot it under pressure. This is where you really pick up the subtleties of how it handles and performs. The schedule doesn't always allow it but when I can, I shoot a match with it.

My time with the Wilson Combat X-Tac Elite Compact 9mm kinda went in the reverse ...

TAIL WAGS DOG

In June, I received an invitation from Bill Wilson to attend a reunion of a bunch of us who were involved in the International Practical Shooting Confederation (IPSC) in its early days. I checked my calendar, and damn ... I had a trial scheduled for the same week in September 2019. I sent my regrets and filed the invitation away without opening the enclosures which described the event and the match.

In August, the trial was postponed. OMG — I could make

the event after all! I called Bill who was kind enough to squeeze me in.

I got there early. In the course of conversation, I asked Bill if the Wilson Combat Compact Carry Beretta 92 I was wearing, one of my regular carry guns these days, would be suitable for the match. He cocked an eyebrow and said, "Didn't read the enclosures, did ya?"

UH, OH ...

Turns out, in keeping with the "Early Days of IPSC"-theme, we were expected to use guns of the period — which in IPSC, of course, were 1911s. I asked sheepishly, "Um, Bill, you wouldn't have a 1911 lying around that I could borrow, would you?"

Asking Bill Wilson if he has any 1911s lying around is like asking Croesus if he has any gold on hand. Bill was kind enough to fetch me one from his personal battery, an X-Tac Elite Compact 9mm with four magazines, a hip holster, and a magazine pouch,



The Wilson X-Tac Elite Compact 9mm test gun.



Fiber optic BattleSight and coned barrel crowned for maximum accuracy come as part of the X-Tac Elite Compact.



Big U-notch in rear BattleSight was easy to catch at speed and afforded more than adequate precision.



**"Footprint"
of X-Tac Elite
Compact
(right)
compared to
S&W J-Frame
revolver.**

all Wilson Combat brand, of course. A test experience was underway.

THE X-TAC ELITE COMPACT

This pistol has a 4.0" coned barrel, Match Grade and stainless, perfectly crowned. I didn't have a chance to bench it but several hundred rounds through the gun indicated it would live up to the manufacturer's promise of 1.5" groups at 25 yards. The dished muzzle crown helps. Wilson's trademark Bulletproof parts are evident throughout: hammer and beavertail grip safety, low profile magazine chute (which did aid in speedloads), mag release, and the company's BattleSights with a big U-notch in back and red fiber optic up front. Another WC trademark, the Starburst G10 grips, effectively complemented the wide, deep-but-not-sharp cross-cuts on the front and back grip straps. No matter how fast the shooting became, the X-Tac never shifted in my grasp. The usually-protruding right-side stud of the slide stop is flush with the frame and countersunk, to prevent it being pushed out of position by a clutching hand tightly holding the gun with the trigger finger over it, straight on the frame. Some serious thinking went into the X-Tac Elite's design.

Grip safety and thumb safety were perfectly adjusted — not too hard, not too light, and positive all the way through in



**The test
pistol rode
comfortably in
this elephant-
trimmed WC
holster.**

handling. Sweet triggers are a hallmark of the WC brand. The X-Tac Elite is spec'd for a 3.5 to 4.5 lb. pull and this gun was definitely on the light side.

Built with a short butt for better concealment (think Colt CCO .45 for overall footprint, but a quarter-inch shorter) the 9mm X-Tac Elite Compact comes with an eight-round flush bottom magazine, logically backed up with Wilson's 10-rounder with a stop to prevent over-travel in a short-butt single stack gun. The latter mags were what I used.

Reliability is the non-negotiable baseline with any defensive firearm and it's one of the things you're paying for at Wilson Combat prices. This one perked 100 percent through several hundred rounds, everything from 115

to 147 grains. Remember, this was Bill Wilson's personal gun and the guy owns an ammo company besides his gun company. He shoots a lot. He told me he figures he's got about 20,000 rounds through this gun, cleaned every few hundred rounds and doesn't remember it malfunctioning ever.

For a carry gun, you want comfort. The X-Tac Elite is beveled to eliminate sharp corners which might dig into the body. During the days at Bill's WC Ranch in Texas this was my all-waking-hours carry gun, in Wilson brand leather of course. (In elephant, no less. Bill, veteran of many African safaris, has style.) The gun's

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overall profile wasn't much bigger than the S&W J-Frame snub revolver I carried for backup in a pants pocket throughout the week. Thumbs up for the X-Tac Elite's "comfortable carry" element.

THE MATCH

IPSC started before electronic timers were perfected and affordable so the courses tended to be fixed time events. This format was in play at the Reunion match. We were using International Defensive Pistol Association (IPDA) targets with an 8" circle in the chest of the cardboard silhouette as Wilson (and some of the other folks in attendance) thought the IPSC targets had a too generously large center "A-Zone." This puts a premium on accuracy *with* speed. In the fixed-time event, doing it fastest didn't count — the object was to get the fewest points down from possible without going over the time limits. Bill presented us with four courses of fire, all on multiple targets.

On the first, the speed event, I got sloppy and dropped two points. On my very last target, sensing time was running out, I saw the front sight come into the down-zero zone at 3 o'clock, figured "good enough," and broke the shot. Turned out it wasn't "good enough." It told me to tighten up, go "conscious competence" and think about what I was doing, managing to shoot the next two stages clean.

Then, I made the mistake of looking at the scores. I was only two points behind the leader, the legendary multiple-time world champion Rob Leatham. It gave me a case of the wobbles for sure. I shot the next event with the hardest focus yet: "Power stance, crush grip, focus on the front sight, smoothly roll the sweet

trigger," I told myself. The stage was "Los Alamitos," from in-close to 20 yards and I managed to keep them all in. It turned out Rob dropped one point on this one. I can only assume some time in the late 1930s when the planet Krypton exploded, a meteorite from there buried itself on Bill Wilson's range and Rob was standing too close to the Kryptonite.

At the end, out of 715 possible points, Rob Leatham had shot 714 and Jim McCreary and I had tied for second place overall with 713 points apiece. For the shootoff, Bill set a Day-Glo orange target ball on a silhouette and had us each take one shot at it, the hit closest to center determining the winner. Jim and I were exactly equidistant, me shooting the X-Tac Elite Compact and Jim, an ace PPC shooter among his many other accomplishments, running a Wilson Combat 1911 9mm with a longer barrel. We "shot off" again and Jim got me by a fraction of an inch, knocking me down into third place. Don't think for a moment I whined about losing to such men.

CONCLUSION

So, bottom line of the test? A Wilson Combat X-Tac Elite 9mm retails for \$3,760. People ask what makes a 1911 pistol worth so much money. You can explain pride of ownership, the craftsmanship of Wilson's superb staff gunsmiths who handcraft every one of them, the glassy smoothness of the mated parts, legendary accuracy and reliability. But the week at WC Ranch, I learned a new reason.

If the gun will let a worn-out old geezer come within a point of a multi-time world champion, it might just make it worth the money right there.

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SPRINGFIELD ARMORY SAINT PISTOL

WHY BUILD WHEN YOU CAN BUY?

DENNY HANSEN

Pistol-length ARs are undeniably “hot” right now. Some people prefer to build (actually *assemble*) their own AR pistol but if quality parts are used the final cost may be higher than an already-assembled gun from a respectable firm. An excellent example is the new SAINT Pistol from Springfield Armory.

OVERVIEW

With a suggested retail price of just \$849, the SAINT Pistol is designed to offer shooters the quality and performance they expect at an affordable introductory price point. The pistol has upgraded features throughout, ensuring it delivers exceptional value and making it an ideal firearm for home protection and personal defense.

These features include a forged 7075 T6 Aluminum upper and lower receiver which is Type III Hardcoat Anodized, M4 Feed Ramps, Accu-Tite Tension System, Nickel-boron coated GI trigger and an M16 Carpenter 158 steel, Melonite-treated bolt carrier group fed from a Picatinny gas block and bouncing against a carbine “H” Heavy Tungsten Buffer.

The pistol is a direct-impingement, carbine-length gun chambered 5.56x45mm NATO that, of course, also allows firing .223 Remington fodder. Length is 25.75" to 28.25" and unloaded weight is 5 lbs., 8 oz.

The SAINT Pistol features a balanced 9.6" chrome moly vanadium barrel with a 1:8 twist, which is an excellent compromise between the 1:9 for lighter bullets and the 1:7 for the heavier stuff.

The long Picatinny rail on the upper receiver is “T-Marked” T2 through T12 to assure your optics return to the same spot.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

I was glad to see so much attention was paid to the bolt carrier group. It's made from the correct Carpenter 158 Steel and has undergone a high pressure test and magnetic particle inspection. I disassembled the bolt and sure enough, it uses the appropriate black (carbine) extractor buffer instead of the blue (rifle) buffer found in some manufacturers' guns. Perhaps a small detail, but still appreciated.

The adjustable premium Trinity Force Breach Brace meets ATF requirements for pistol classification.

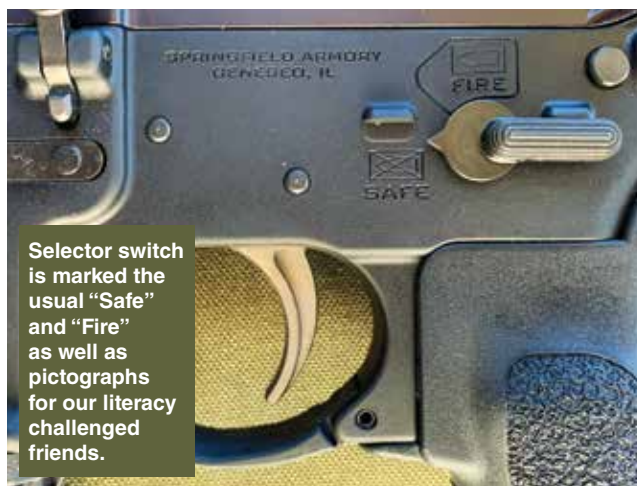
While it is indeed adjustable, it requires loosening two bolts to slide to adjust it. The brace comes adjusted flush with the lower receiver extension. A slot in the brace allows a sling to be attached.

The BCMGUNFIGHTER PCMR forward handstop is a great idea as the support hand gets very close to the muzzle of the short pistol barrel. The forend has three MLOK slots for lights or lasers and the muzzle device is an A2-type flash hider.

In addition to being marked with the usual “Safe” and “Fire” verbiage, pictograph symbols are used at the selector for the literacy challenged.

No sights are included with the pistol. It comes with one 30-round Magpul Gen M3 PMAG, a soft, zipper closure AR-15 pistol case with two exterior pockets and a cable padlock.

I installed an Aimpoint Micro-T2 red dot sight, gathered some



Selector switch is marked the usual “Safe” and “Fire” as well as pictographs for our literacy challenged friends.



Trinity Force Breach Brace is adjustable by loosening two bolts.





Black Hills Ammunition 62-gr. Barnes TSX 5.56mm rounds for accuracy tests and 300 rounds of reloads in order to fully wring out the SAINT Pistol.

AT HOME ON THE RANGE

I also took a 14.5" barrel BCM carbine with a permanently pinned Battle Comp Enterprises compensator to compare the velocity between carbine and pistol length barrels.

Accuracy tests were conducted from 50 yards. Two, five-round strings of fire were conducted from each firearm. Groups with the pistol averaged 3.5". Granted not as precise as a rifle, but still well within minute-of-bad guy and capable of making a head shot at 50 yards or less.

The carbine turned in groups averaging just under 2".

Backing up 10 feet from the screens of my PACT chronograph I shot a 10-round string from each gun. The pistol averaged 2,290 feet-per-second (fps) while the carbine averaged 2,660 fps — a difference of 370 fps.

In terms of foot-pounds of energy, the pistol had 729 while the carbine had 974. Yes, it's a big difference but considering a .357 Magnum, 125-gr. JHP leaving the muzzle at 1,500 fps produces 625 foot-pounds of energy, the rounds from the SAINT pistol still have more punch.

While 40 rounds can determine a baseline for accuracy and velocity, it does not establish reliability.

I fired numerous drills on my range, expending 300 rounds of reloaded ammunition. I had one double-feed malfunction traced to bad feed lips in an aluminum magazine. I fixed the

problem magazine using my standard protocol — placing it on a rock and smashing it with my boot. Aside from this, the SAINT was 100 percent reliable.

The only downside I could see is the muzzle blast from the SAINT's short barrel is tremendous. The muzzle flash produced could be seen even in bright daylight.

WHY AN AR PISTOL?

Because the terminal ballistics of a carbine is far superior to a pistol, some might wonder why not just stick to the longer gun. The main reason, obviously, is the size.

The compact size makes it a good choice where space is at a premium. This would include an RV, a boat, or a private aircraft. At just over two feet in length, it's much easier to find a place to fit the SAINT compared to a carbine or rifle. Inserting a 20- or even a 10-round magazine would make storage even easier.

For home defense, the shorter SAINT would minimize the chances of "flagging" yourself while negotiating a corner or possibly bump into something, alerting a ne'er-do-well to your exact location. It would also be easy to deploy it from a vehicle. However, note firing the SAINT from inside any enclosure would undoubtedly cause temporary — if not permanent — hearing loss.

If you are in the market for a compact AR pistol, put the SAINT at the top of your list. It's on mine!

www.springfield-armory.com

The Snake Eyes Have It

CLAYTON WALKER

In the final moments of 2019, Colt proudly announced they would add the archetypal Python back into their stable of revolvers — though you hardly needed a crystal ball to see such news coming after the reintroduction of the Cobra and King Cobra. As I expected, as soon as the new Python hit the market, the griping began.

“It won’t be the same,” I heard some say. “It’s not going to be hand-fitted the way the old revolvers were,” others opined. “I doubt the trigger is going to be anywhere near the smoothness of the old ones,” many groused.

If anything, the Python is a gun living in the shadow of its own reputation. The new ones are not being judged against the Pythons of yesteryear but the *myth* of the Pythons of yesteryear. As some celebrate 2020 bringing a beloved product back to store shelves, a very vocal contingent is adamant Colt’s new offering isn’t a “true” Python.

While I don’t have one of the new ones, I do have one of those old ones some claim represents a shining pinnacle of American-made revolvers, never to be reached again. As such, I believe I have enough knowledge and trigger time to offer an opinion of the gun’s function, legacy and value — especially when compared to what else is within reach of a buyer in 2020.

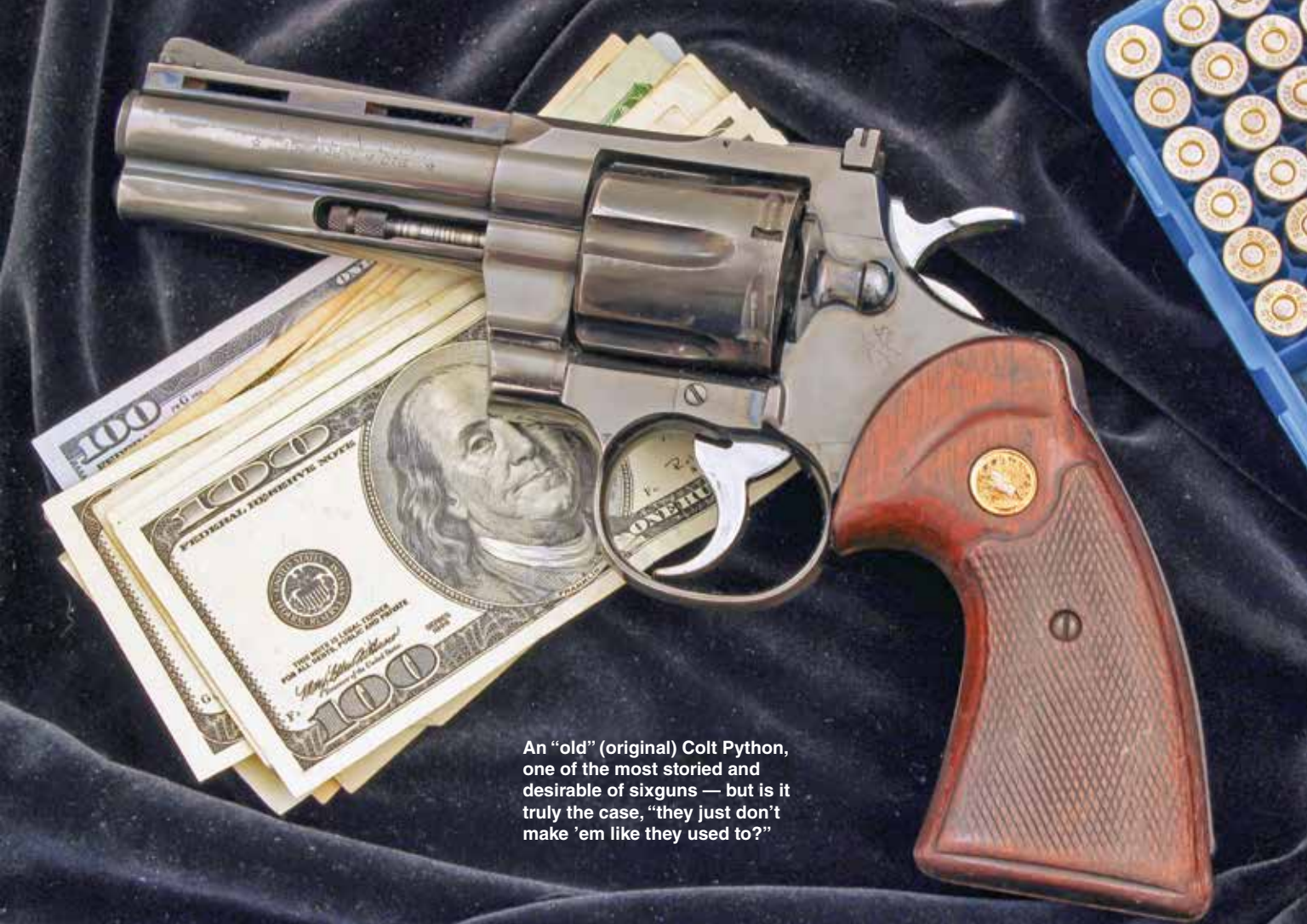
YES, THEY’RE GOOD!

When the Python was introduced in the 1950s, it was intended as Colt’s ultra-premium revolver. It was a gun for shooters who could shoot and for enthusiasts who simply wanted a superbly crafted tool. The Python action was precise and hand-fitted and its famous “Royal Blue” finish was a process Colt entrusted only to their most experienced craftsmen — the beautiful luster is a

A CRITICAL LOOK AT OLD COLT PYTHONS



Two D-Frame Colt gems: the Diamondback (top) and the Police Positive Special.



An “old” (original) Colt Python, one of the most storied and desirable of sixguns — but is it truly the case, “they just don’t make ’em like they used to?”

product of careful manual polishing.

Additionally, Pythons have a deserved reputation for being great shooters. Colt machined the barrels with a slight taper so bullets were further constricted before they left the bore, ensuring optimal accuracy. The full underlug of the Python not only created a superb “hang” on target but resulted in a very pleasant and substantial reduction to felt recoil. The generous teardrop hammer met the thumb perfectly, making single-action shooting an utter delight.



The V-spring of the original Pythons is known for contributing to a smooth DA pull — and for stacking.

Beyond all that, they just looked cool. Every element of the Python was pleasing to the eye, offering a sublime combination of masculine angles and feminine curves. It looks sexy and dangerous and there is no surprise why it became such a recognizable firearm.

BUT?

While the vintage Python action is praised for its smoothness, it has a very distinctive characteristic of increasing in weight (i.e., “stacking”) as the shooter pulls the trigger to the rear. True, this all but ensures you’ll get a surprise break but I’d wager most shooters — as a direct result of having to muscle through the pull — are going to yank the front sight off target somewhere along the process.

In fact, most first-time shooters of the old Colts are surprised at how different the feel is from what they’re used to, and not for the better. Even among the experienced pistoleros I’ve talked to familiar with the older Python action and its telltale stacking, the vast majority say they would prefer a bog-stock S&W to an unmodified, vintage Colt.

Furthermore, the tradeoff to the old Python’s “just so” action was it didn’t lend itself to modification. Gunsmithing on those Pythons is fast becoming a lost art, with fewer and fewer intimately familiar with the geometry. Additionally, the design is not user-friendly like a Smith or Ruger, where removing the sideplate and swapping out some springs is well within the skill set of most owners.

And speaking of this geometry: Part of the vintage Python's legendary "bank vault" lockup came from the force of the trigger against the hand, which in turn pressed up against the aligned cylinder notch throughout the recoil impulse. Over time, and as accelerated by hot rounds, the hand deformed. This was known to Colt and they had intended the part to be serviced (or replaced) as needed to keep the gun functioning correctly.

Keep in mind a lot fewer folks are in the servicing-and-replacing business when it comes to those Pythons and parts are only going to get scarcer with time. It's an additional reason I'm pleased the revolver has been redesigned, according to Colt, with 14 fewer internal parts and an increased emphasis on durability.

In any case, there are lots of *caveat emptor* here for a used gun costing a few thousand dollars and buyers should be aware of them.

VINTAGE OR BUST

If old Pythons appeal to you purely because of the connection to a different era of workmanship, you'd be remiss not

to look at the E-Frame Colt guns. These beautiful and immaculate handguns differ from the old Pythons only in terms of barrel profile and firing pin location. This would steer you toward the Officer's Models (Target, Special, and Match) as well as the plainly-named Colt 357.

The E-Frames are attractive because they were made during a time when meticulous hand-fitting was really the only known way to produce a quality action. A great number of the Officer's Model Targets were made during the Great Depression, when skilled labor was in high supply and at low cost. Colt built the E-Frame guns for real shooters, knowing customers would often take new purchases from the store directly to the 50-yard line and put them through their paces.

There are also the old Colt D-Frame guns. True, they're dimensionally smaller and their actions were not as "refined" as the Python — but they weren't far off. The Police Positive Special, the Agent and the Detective Special all give you the same "bank vault" lockup but, for now, seem to be exempt



E-Frame Colts were built to the same standard of quality as the vintage Pythons but are much less expensive to purchase.

The 2020 Colt Python — is "new" or "old" better? People will likely argue the point until the faraway day a third version is released! Photo: Colt

Costly nostalgia: This unfired Python could be yours, assuming you meet the owner's asking price of \$3,700.

The D-Frames compare favorably in size to their slightly bigger brother. From bottom: Police Positive Special, Diamondback, Python.



from the dreaded “snake tax.”

Now, if you *are* prepared to pay a snake tax, consider the D-Frame Colt Diamondback. While it too has climbed in price mainly due to looking like a miniaturized Python, the 4" .38 Special versions can be found for about \$1,200 if you're determined enough to prowling the auction sites. They're about 80 percent of the size of a vintage Python, though they're also about 50 percent of the price. In my hands, a Diamondback is just as accurate as its big brother and I'd argue no less gorgeous.

OR JUST BUY THE NEW PYTHON?

True, the 2020 Python lacks a few key hallmarks of what made the old revolvers what they were — hand-fitted parts and an equally labor-intensive bluing process — but I'm fine with stainless steel and an unquestionably better trigger. Based on the examples I've handled, the company has done a stellar job of completely eliminating the “stacking” trigger in their new line of revolvers. The new Python, for example, has taken the old “V” spring and replaced it with more of a “U” shaped part.

As a result of those and other internal changes, Colt states the factory double-action trigger pull on the 2020 Python is between 7.5 and 9 lbs. — a remarkable accomplishment for a production, non-custom gun. It also raises the question of whether meticulous hand-fitting and polishing is at all necessary, in an age of advanced CNC machining, to produce a slick revolver action.

My worry is many buyers willing to spend more than \$3,000

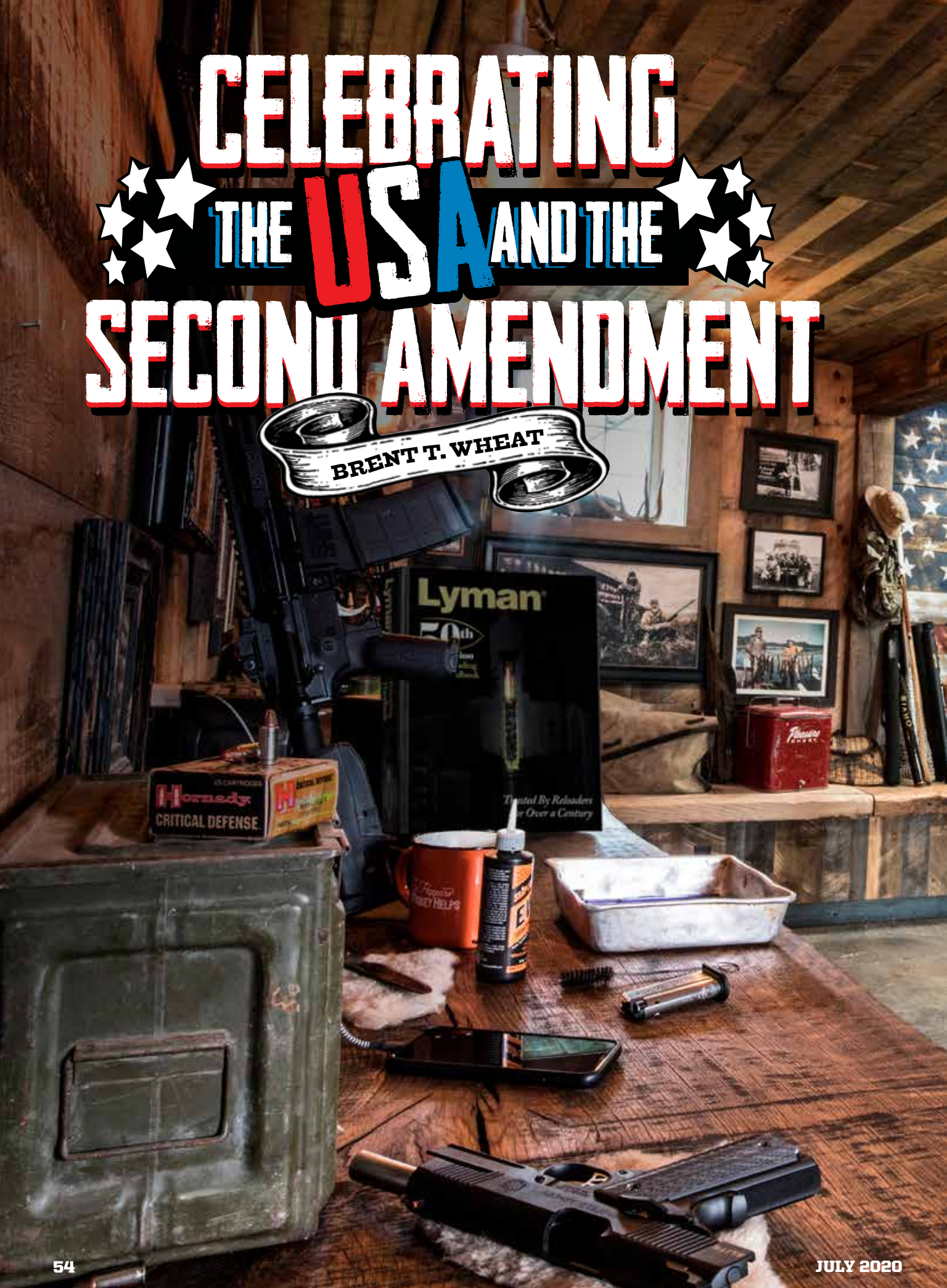


on a vintage Python are asking it to live up to a status of mythic proportions. Often, the most crushing heartbreaks come from getting exactly what we always wanted, only to find our expectations differ from reality.

I realize there's magic in nostalgia, and you may be hopelessly snake-bitten to chase older generations of Pythons as their values continue to climb. You may also be one of those folks utterly steadfast in the idea, “they don't make 'em like they used to.” In either case, I can only hope my humble words provide a useful dose of anti-venom.

CELEBRATING THE **USA** AND THE SECOND AMENDMENT

BRENT T. WHEAT



*I*n the July issue of *GUNS*, we're celebrating one of the most unique things about the United States of America — our right to keep and bear arms! Though *this* right is under constant assault, we wanted to commemorate our country's birthday with a visual celebration of firearms.



UNITED WE STAND



DIVIDED WE FALL



*“The strength of the Constitution
lies entirely in the determination
of each citizen to defend it.”*
— Albert Einstein



GOD BLESS AMERICA



Old school design meets state-of-the-art technology in the DiamondBlade Knives' Surge fixed-blade hunter.

DIAMONDBLADE KNIVES SURGE

FRICITION FORGED DANDY

The DiamondBlade Knives Surge may look traditional as hunting knives go — and it is — but its blade features advanced, space-age technology compared to even the most modern fixed-blades. DiamondBlade uses a process called Friction Forging which takes D2 high carbon steel and forges it by creating intense heat along the edge only, leaving it with a super tough, fine-grained, differentially heat-treated blade. In a nutshell, it's incredibly hi-tech. This unique process is explained in-depth on their website.

The 9.250" DiamondBlade Surge is one of their most popular models and rightfully so. The blade has a graceful, full-bellied 4" drop-point blade — it's old school cool. The friction forging produces a differential Rockwell hardness of 65-69 on the lead edge down to 42-45 at the spine. This keeps the blade from becoming overly brittle

while allowing the cutting edge to be super tough to retain sharpness.

The Surge's ample handle design, shown here in deer stag, has a nice finger groove at the top, a bolster offering excellent finger protection, exquisite mosaic pins, and a lanyard hole at the base. The sheath is a work of art in itself, featuring vegetable tanned split-grained cowhide, Kydex inner liner, topped off with a beautiful hand-tooled basket weave pattern.

WHY YOU'LL LIKE IT.

First off, thanks to Friction Forging, the Surge's blade is extremely sharp with edge retention out the wazoo. Secondly, the fabrication, fit and finish is of top-shelf, custom quality. Finally, you'll love their options. Price for the stag model is \$389 but there's also a budget-minded Suregrip version with a rubberized synthetic handle



The Surge's split-grained cowhide sheath is adorned with an exquisite hand-tooled basket weave pattern.

for \$289. There are other handle options aplenty including presentation-grade Desert Ironwood, Ram's Horn, Olive G10, and Black Micarta, all priced accordingly. The bottom line, if you ever wanted a hunting knife to deliver generations of pride and use, the Surge will deliver the goods in style.

www.diamondbladeknives.com

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THE 2A ACID TEST

HOW TO MAKE A FOOL OUT OF A "GUN SAFETY ADVOCATE"

Earlier this year, there were two occasions when this correspondent wound up in broadcast discussions with gun prohibitionists trying to pass themselves off as "gun safety advocates."

In one of those encounters, it seemed necessary to remind the listening audience there was one certified firearms instructor in the room and it wasn't the other person who was representing a Seattle-based gun prohibition lobbying group.

Take this as a learning experience because the elections are on the horizon, you're a voter with an opportunity to question candidates and you might wind up in a debate with some gun grabber who claims to be an authority on gun safety or a member of some so-called "gun safety" organization. This is when you can put them on the spot and they will unintentionally help you do it.

NRA Certified firearms instructors have a card identifying them as such. Mine has been protected with a laminated plastic cover. A friend who used to be a lobbyist was also an instructor and he habitually pulled out his instructor's card to ask opponents, "Do you have one of these? If you don't, you probably shouldn't be here talking about gun safety."

If you can't say you're a certified instructor, the next best thing is to challenge these anti-gunners to recite the four rules of gun safety as set down by the late Col. Jeff Cooper, the "Father of the Modern Technique." The founder of the American Pistol Institute, now known as the Gunsite Academy, Cooper kept it simple and his rules have withstood the test of time:

- Treat all guns as if they are always loaded.
- Never let the muzzle cover anything you are not willing to destroy.
- Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on target and you have made the decision to shoot.
- Be sure of your target and what lies beyond it.

There may be a moment of silence, possibly a blank stare as your opponent's try to figure out who Cooper was and maybe offer a remark about "not being the point" before they scramble to change the subject. This is when you've got them. They can't answer directly since they don't know. Whatever else

is said after this point, just keep reminding your opponent — and anyone else listening — your question wasn't answered.

These self-appointed arbiters of firearms etiquette don't really know anything about guns or safety, other than they don't like them and don't want anyone to have them. It's up to you to set it in concrete so people remember it. You're the expert, not them.

**"HERE'S ANOTHER WAY
TO MAKE THESE PEOPLE
LOOK FOOLISH: OFFER TO
TAKE THEM SHOOTING.
IF THEY'VE CLAIMED TO
BE GUN OWNERS,
INVITE THEM TO BRING
THEIR OWN FIREARMS."**

If or when one of these people claims to be a gun owner, it's easy to make them stammer by asking, "Oh, how many guns do you own?" Or better still, "How many guns have you owned? If you sold one or two to someone else, did you require the buyer to go through a background check?"

It's not unfair to ask when was the last time they went to the range to practice? Have you taken a gun safety course? The same questions apply to anyone running for local public office.

**'OH, WHERE DO YOU
OFFER CLASSES?'**

If you're in a discussion with somebody who says he or she is a member of a "gun safety" group, stop them cold by asking, "Oh, where do you hold classes on gun safety?"

When they respond, "We don't really hold classes," (and they will) this is the moment to remind them they've got no business preaching gun safety if they're not teaching gun safety.

This same strategy applies to meeting candidates because the next eight weeks should provide plenty of opportunities to attend at least one of these sessions. Any candidate who claims to support "gun safety" legislation

should be challenged to recite Cooper's Four Rules.

Here's another way to make these people look foolish: Offer to take them shooting. If they've claimed to be gun owners, invite them to bring their own firearms.

'DO YOU TAKE MONEY FROM ...?'

A couple of years ago, as a private citizen and constituent, I attended a public forum with three local legislators. A woman in the audience demanded to know if the Republican state representative had taken money from the National Rifle Association.

It's a fair question, but the savvy activist should immediately counter by asking whether the politician or candidate has accepted contributions from Everytown for Gun Safety or a regional or local gun control group. We discussed this last month.

GUN RIGHTS POLICY CONFERENCE

During the weekend of Sept. 18-20 the 35th annual Gun Rights Policy Conference will be held at the Marriott Orlando Airport Lakeside hotel in Orlando, Fla.

Rest assured there will be panel discussions on how best to prevail over the enemies of gun rights, not just between now and Election Day but in the months and even years ahead.

This annual conference is considered a "must" event for the most active of gun rights activists and many people travel great distances to be there. If you can't attend, there's an opportunity to watch it being live-streamed on the Second Amendment Foundation's Facebook page.

As this is written, a complete roster of speakers is still being finalized but it's safe to expect a veritable roster of "Who's Who?" in the Second Amendment community.

The conference is the brainchild of the Second Amendment Foundation's (SAF) Alan Gottlieb and he serves as the Master of Ceremonies. The event is co-sponsored by SAF and the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, and includes representatives from other rights groups such as Gun Owners of America, the NRA, Illinois State Rifle Association, New York State Rifle & Pistol Association, and other state organizations from around the country.

This is a genuine learning opportunity, and much of this year's agenda will be focused on national and local elections. ➤

SIG ROMEO1PRO RED DOT OPTIC

Tom McHale

The SIG SAUER Romeo1PRO red dot optic offers two design features negating the most common complaint against red dot sights on defensive pistols: finding the dot.

First, the Romeo1PRO houses a spacious coated glass lens surrounded by an aluminum body. The frame is slender and doesn't impede your dot finding activity — it leaps into view. Second, the Romeo1PRO aids the most effective dot seeking technique — forgetting it's there. The unit has a rear sight notch so with many pistols you

can just look for the irons as normal. When you do, the dot is right where you expect.

The Romeo1PRO runs 20,000 hours give-or-take depending on which of the 12 brightness (two are NVG-compatible) levels you choose. When the gun is at rest, the dot powers off. When in motion, it powers on. If you expect hard use, just install the included protective shroud to surround the lens area. MSRP is \$519.99.



www.sigsauer.com



STREAMLIGHT SIEGE

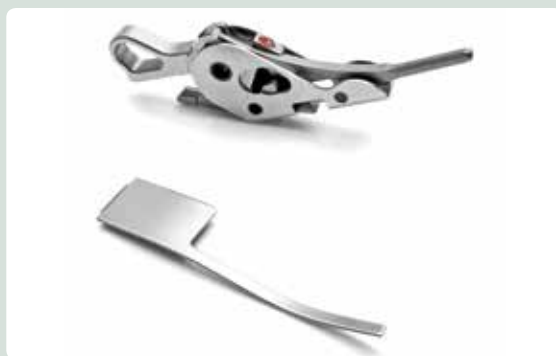
Will Dabbs, MD

Survival gear is supposed to be manly. It should project a sort of quiet gravitas and sit in a box labeled, "Break glass in case of war." Appropriate descriptors for such equipment might be robust, sinewy, chiseled, or muscular. Why then are we reviewing the Streamlight Siege X USB lantern, a personal lighting solution so undeniably adorable? Because the Siege, while indeed cute, is actually all the other stuff as well.

The Siege X USB rechargeable mini outdoor lantern is a 2-in-1 lantern/flashlight combo packed to the gunwales with features. The lantern puts out 325 lumens while the flashlight burns at 300. An included USB-rechargeable battery or pair of CR123A cells power the device. At 4.5" long the Siege X is about the size of one of those little tomato paste cans and weighs just 7.2 oz.

There are scads of operating modes, including a choice of white or red lantern light to preserve your night vision. The Siege X is compact, robust and brilliantly executed. It's my new favorite camp light. Price is \$46 on Amazon.com.

www.streamlight.com



NIGHTHAWK CUSTOM DROP-IN TRIGGER

Roy Huntington

It's nice when a plan comes together. Custom pistol-smith Mark Dye has worked with Nighthawk Custom Firearms to finalize his design of a completely modular honest-to-goodness drop-in trigger unit for the 1911. The result is a sort of chassis-based system containing the hammer, sear, disconnect and spring which drops right into your factory pistol. The drop-in system allows the hammer/sear/disconnector relationship to be rock solid, so a reliable 3.75 to 4-lb. trigger pull is assured.

The actual swap takes about three minutes and can be done by anyone capable of detail-stripping a 1911. The system is machined from 416 bar stock and can be had in a silver stainless look or black Nitride. It works with 1911 Series 70, Series 80, 2011 models as well as the "Swartz" safety style. The unit also comes with an unusual looking single-pronged spring replacing the stock three-pronged sear spring, since the drop-in unit has its own internal spring for the sear. The unit is CA-legal too. MSRP is \$299.99.

www.nighthawkcustom.com

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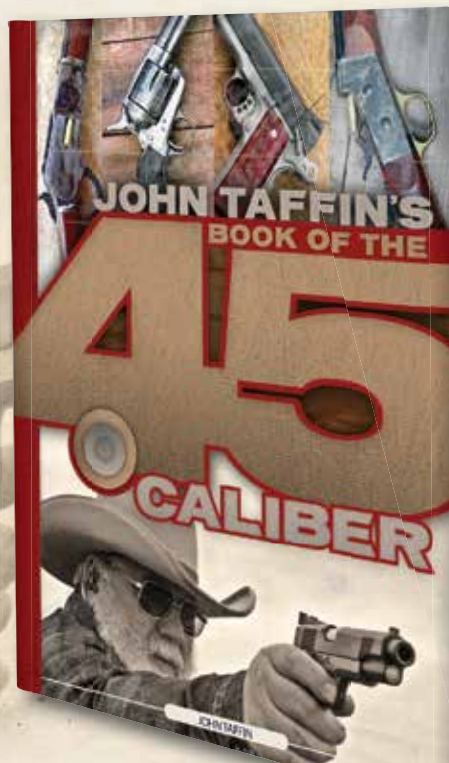


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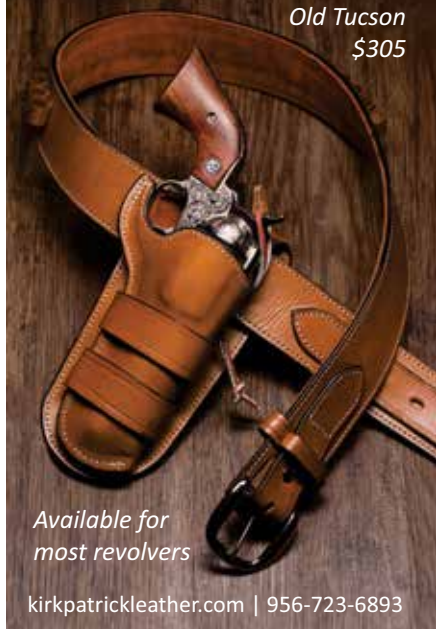

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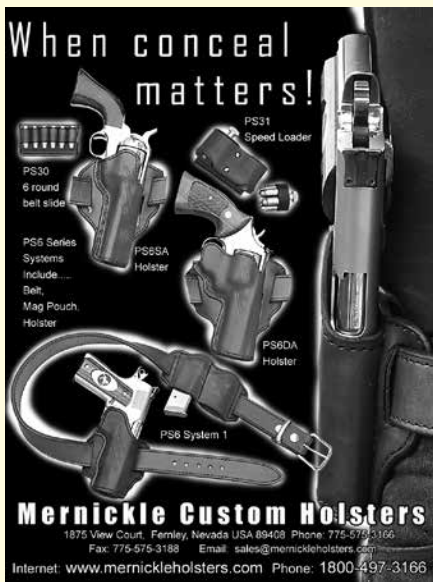
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It's not too much of a stretch to say that you're certain something's broken: the first Windows logo, for instance, was broken. They both passed tests.

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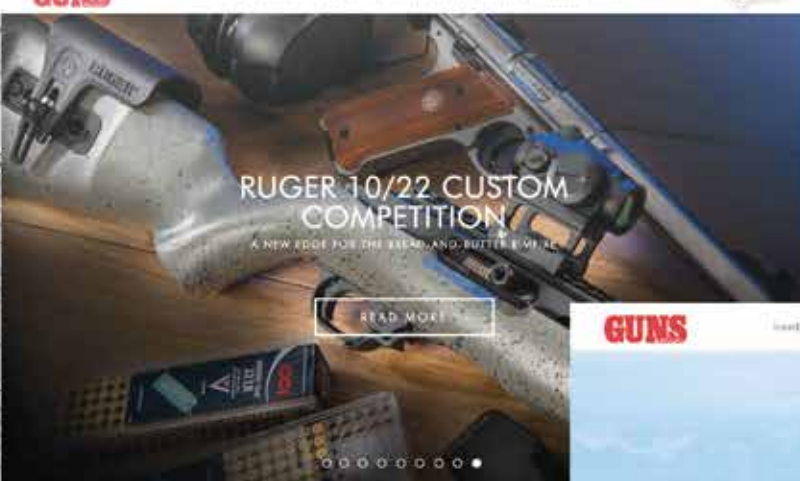
I finally found it. This is the one. After years of reading your and writing about them I've finally located the long gone of my dreams. It's in 2000.

Abstract



ETRS

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A NEW EDGE FOR THE BREAD AND BUTTER EMBROIDER

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AND OTHERS WERE MAGNIFICENT, BUT ALWAYS BEST.

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NEW LEVEL OF REVOLVER ACCURACY DEFINED

RE



DOG SOLDIER PREDATOR SCOPE

AXEON OPTICS

When Axeon Optics asked “Dog Soldier” Steve Criner what he wanted in a predator hunting scope, his answer was “light-gathering glass.” That’s because predator hunters hunt day and night and need available light. Axeon Optics thus came up with the *Dog Soldier Predator Scope*. It has a large 50mm objective lens, 30mm main tube and a green or red illuminated reticle that doesn’t affect your eyesight in low light. For more info: (479) 646-4210, www.axeonoptics.com

SHOTBLOCK

SHOTBLOCK

The ShotBlock is a new gun accessory that stops a gun from being loaded and provides anti-corrosion benefits to your weapon while in storage.

It thus aims to avoid the accidental discharge of a firearm. It ensures a bullet cannot be loaded into full breech. An easy-to-use indicator that slides into the barrel of the firearm, the ShotBlock allows a manufacturer to ship a firearm to a retailer protected from loading a live round yet offers a customer the chance to safely hold and manipulate a firearm. For more info: www.theshotblock.com



LAR-15M CAR A4 .350 LEGEND

ROCK RIVER ARMS

Rock River Arms recently introduced a new .350 Legend carbine. The *LAR-15M CAR A4 350 Legend* is a modern hunting firearm with minimal recoil and dominant short- to mid-range capabilities. It features a 16" chrome moly (also

offered in stainless steel), cryo-treated barrel with a 1:16 twist, a military style brake, two-stage trigger and winter trigger guard. Lower Receiver is Forged RRA LAR-15M Multi-Caliber; Upper Receiver is Forged A4. A hard plastic 10-round magazine comes with the rifle. For more info: (309) 792-5780, www.rockriverarms.com



UMAREX FUSION 2

UMAREX

The Umarex *Fusion 2* is a CO₂-powered bolt-action air rifle that can silently send nine rounds. Umarex has carried over the best aspects of the original rifle and added to it a re-designed SilencAir muzzle device, a 9-shot rotary magazine, a flexible CO₂ power system and an all-new stock design. The first thing shooters will notice about the Umarex Fusion 2 is how quiet it is. The impact of the pellet on the target is louder than the muzzle report. For more info: (479) 646-4210, www.umarexusa.com



MODEL 12 PUMP BB GUN

WINCHESTER AIR RIFLES

The Winchester Air Rifles *Model 12 Pump BB Gun* makes an ideal first gun for any youth. Made to resemble Winchester’s classic shotgun, the Model 12 Pump BB Gun allows mentors to teach gun safety and marksmanship skills

with a BB gun that looks just like Dad’s. Designed and sized for today’s youth, the Model 12 Pump BB Gun has an OAL of 34.35" and comes with a 12-round spring-loaded magazine and a 250+ BB reservoir. It shoots a single BB with each pump of the gun. For more info: (479) 636-1200, www.winchesterairrifles.com

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F1 RANGEFINDER

SECTOR OPTICS

Sector Optics has introduced its first stand-alone laser rangefinder: the *F1 Rangefinder*. Looking like a small flashlight, the F1 transforms any riflescope into a laser ranging riflescope. The easy-to-read display gives both linear range, as well as horizontal equivalent distances well over 1,000 yards. The F1 Rangefinder is lightweight so it does not add unnecessary weight or bulk to a riflescope, nor does it unbalance the rifle. The entire unit is powered by a single CR123 battery. For more info: (858) 755-4549, www.sectoroptics.com



OT2 HOLSTER

N8 TACTICAL HOLSTERS

N8 Tactical is offering the *OT2 Holster* for the FN 503 9mm single-stack pistol. Made of leather, the OT2 comes with a 3-layer backer providing full coverage of the firearm to maximize concealed carry comfort and eliminate pressure points. The holster features a moisture-proof neoprene core between the leather backer and the soft suede backing that goes against the body. This protects the firearm from sweat and body oils while offering a compression cushion. For more info: (888) 732-5011, www.n8tactical.com



ACE CLYDE — BRASS

GIANTMOUSE KNIVES

The Clyde is a mix of Scandinavian, Japanese and Persian influences. GiantMouse introduced it as an EDC knife but is now offered as the *ACE Clyde — Brass*. The knife comes with a slim, pointy and slightly upswept 3" blade made of M390 steel with a stonewash finish. But it's the brass handle that steals the show. Brass takes on a beautiful patina over time, with each knife developing its own unique look. So the more it's used, the better it looks. The ACE Clyde — Brass has an OAL of 6.97" and features bronze washers in its pivot mechanism. For more info: www.giantmouse.com



VCOG 1-8X28 RIFLE SCOPE

TRIJICON

Trijicon's *VCOG 1-8x28 Rifle Scope* is designed for close-quarters battle and long distance marksmanship. Waterproof to 66 feet, the scope is housed in 7075-T6 aluminum. The first focal plane reticle allows subtensions and drops to remain true at any magnification. The VCOG includes 11 brightness settings, including two for night vision. An integrated dial fin allows easy rotation through the magnification range; a mounting adapter eliminates the need for ring mounts. Users can quickly and easily mount the VCOG to any rail system. For more info: (800) 338-0563, www.trijicon.com



EARTH SKILLS KNIFE

TOPS KNIVES

Knife designer Matt Graham is often far from modern comforts and so prefers thinner, lighter tools because they are easier to carry over long distances. He came up with the *Earth Skills Knife*, a short machete with a bit of a barong feel to it. OAL is 14.25"; weight is 11.9 oz. The blade is made of 1095 stainless steel (RC 56-58) with Tan Canvas Micarta handles and a deep-carry old-school leather sheath. For more info: (208) 542-2945, www.topsknives.com

ALUMINUM SLIP-JOINT FOLDERS

BEAR & SON CUTLERY

The *Aluminum Slip-Joint Folders* from Bear & Son Cutlery are lightweight slip-joint pocketknives. They have aluminum handles that conveniently fit in pockets or purses and can even hang on key chains. Offered with 1.5" or 2.375" blades, the pocketknives include a taper-ground drop-point blade made from high-carbon stainless steel. Handles are made of aluminum. OAL of the folders is 4.25" or 6.5". For more info: (256) 435-2227, www.bearandsoncutlery.com



CLIP "RFT" GEN II HOLSTER

REMORA HOLSTERS

Remora's *Clip "RFT" Gen II Holster* is ambidextrous and with a stationary metal clip for comfort and versatility. Its unique design allows users to safely, smoothly and securely reholster one-handed — draw after draw. The holster features a lightweight and pliable outer skin. For more info: (239) 316-7770, www.remoraholsterstore.com



SUBMIT YOUR ENTRY ONLINE:

ROCK RIVER ARMS BT92152 GIVEAWAY

Protect yourself and your family with Rock River Arms' compact BT92152 — the Gun of the Month for our July issue. The BT-9 pistol with SBA3 arm brace in 9x19mm has a billet aluminum lower with a GLOCK-compatible flared magwell and integral winter trigger guard. The upper receiver is extruded aluminum A4. The 4.5" barrel is chrome-lined chrome moly with a 1:10 twist. With an OAL of 23.5" with the brace extended, the BT92152 is equipped with a Smith Vortex Flash Suppressor, an RRA 2-stage trigger and an aluminum, free float handguard that's M-Lok compatible. The SB Tactical SBA3 stabilizing arm brace is 5-position adjustable. Hogue rubber grips and a 17+1 GLOCK-compatible magazine are included.

Attach TRUGLO's *Ignite Mini Compact 22mm Red Dot Sight* to your new BT92152 and you'll be hitting most if not all your targets. Of course, you have to win the giveaway first. The sight has a 2MOA Red-Dot, a 22mm multi-coated objective lens, 10 brightness settings and a wide field of view.

Transport ammo in MTM Case-Gard's *Tactical Magazine Can* — *TMCHG*. Designed to hold 10 double-stack pistol magazines in pre-cut foam padding, the lockable mag can secures ammo especially when you're on the go.

The *Model CC-400-B* from Bear OPS is a tactical fixed-blade knife with an OAL of 6.25". The blade is made of 1095 Carbon Steel with a Rockwell hardness of 58-60. Both blade and handle has a black Epoxy coating. The CC-400-B comes with a Kydex sheath and chain.

Thoroughly clean your guns from bore, breech and action. The *Master Cleaning Station (AR15)* from Real Avid provides spill-proof storage and organizes gun-specific cleaning tools. A magnetic tray keeps small gun parts from getting lost. An oil resistant, no-slip, padded mat provides a safe working surface. The Master Cleaning Station rolls up and fits into a storage bag.

The last of our prizes, but of course not the least, is the *Razor X-TRM* from Walker's. Protect your ears with its dynamic sound suppression system! The X-TRM features cooling pads, a moisture-wicking headband and omnidirectional microphones for clear digital sound.

Don't miss the chance to win this giveaway! It's packed to help protect you and yours. Join now! Click on www.gunsmagazine.com/giveaways. You can also mail a postcard! —Jazz Jimenez



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www.truglo.com
VALUE: \$176.99

WINNERS CHOSEN BY RANDOM DRAWING. Limit one entry per household. To protect the privacy and security of winners, their names will NOT be made public. Contest void where prohibited by law. Winners must undergo a background check and comply with all other federal, state and local laws. Taxes and fees will be the responsibility of the winner. Contest open to U.S. residents only. Employees and agents of Publishers' Development Corp. are not eligible. No purchase necessary. Winners will be notified by certified mail on official letterhead. Attention deployed military: Use stateside address! Giveaway guns and accessories may have evidence of being test fired or exhibit minor handling marks. Factory warranties may apply in some cases. The Gun of the Month package is awarded only to the entrant drawn and will not be awarded if the firearm presented is illegal in the jurisdiction of the winner. An alternate, authorized winner will be selected. No substitutions or transfers to a third party are allowed.

ENTER TO WIN!



If you are unable to enter online, mail a postcard with your name and address (no envelopes please). Entries must be received before July 31, 2020. Limit one entry per household.

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CAST BULLET ACCURACY SIZE REALLY DOES MATTER!

By now you’ve observed my affinity and affliction for the humble cast bullet. I’ve always tried to be as self-reliant as possible, even as a kid. It started by tying my own fishing flies with feathers I found in the yard, raiding my mom’s sewing kit for thread and a little of her nail polish for color from her dresser.

No one told me it couldn’t be done using such basic materials. I happily tied my flies, mimicking the ones I saw from pictures in outdoor magazines. And guess what? They worked, further reinforcing the feeling I enjoyed making my own gear. It felt great to be independent! There’s a lesson there, somewhere?

CAST BULLETS

It wasn’t long after I started handloading I learned about cast bullets. Sure, I’d read about them from Elmer and Skeeter but never thought about it until I realized how expensive mail-order, let alone store-bought bullets, are when shooting them with any regularity.

I knew shooting hand-cast bullets would again fill me with the same sense of satisfaction of doing it myself, as well as saving money in the long run.

Later, every time I bought a gun, I’d research what cast bullet mold would be a good partner to accompany the gun. I’d read everything I could on cast bullets, as well as talk to anyone who cast themselves. My brain was like a sponge, absorbing all I

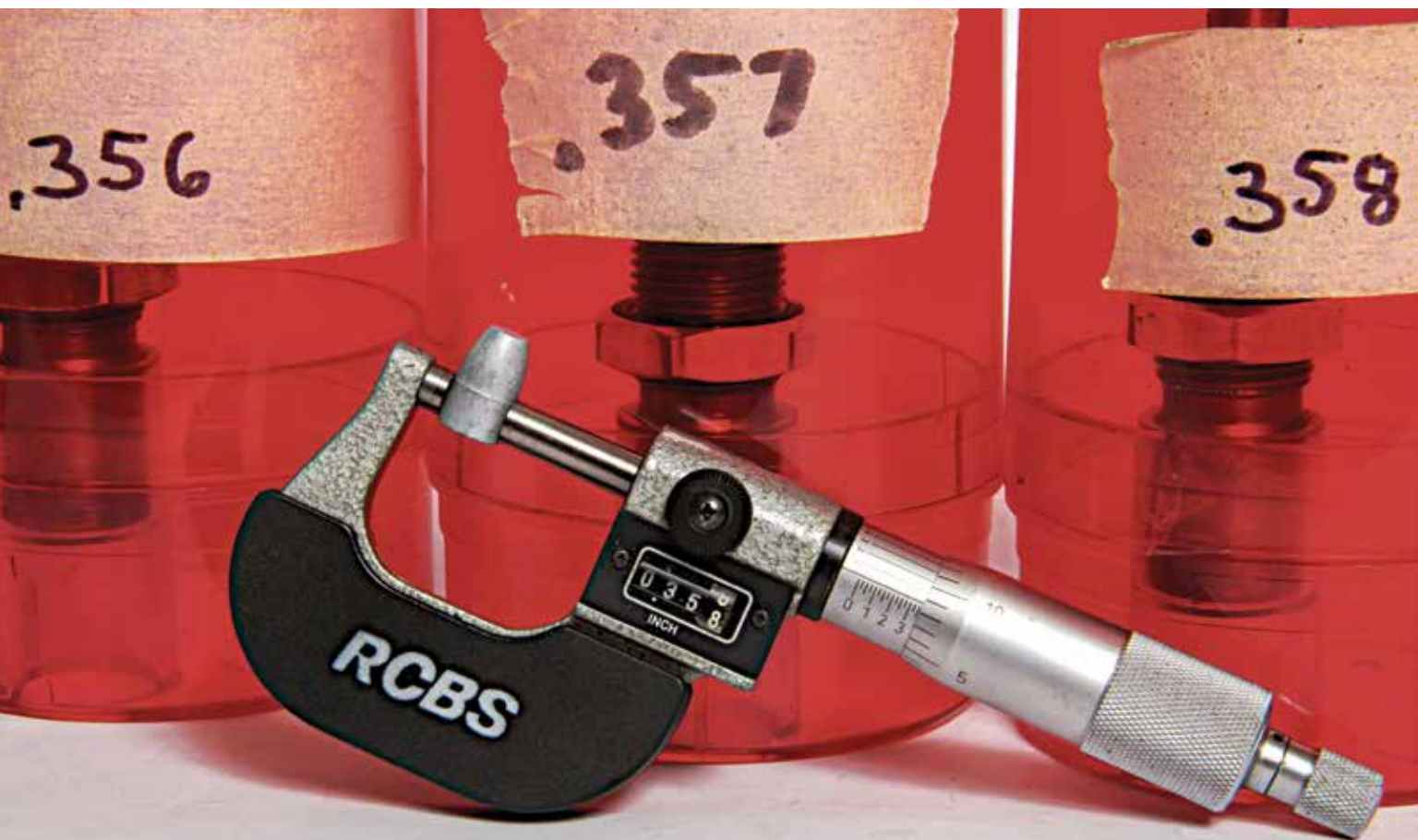
could on this fascinating subject.

Scrounging lead, mostly in the form of automobile wheel-weights (WW), lead sheathing from roofs and recovered lead shot was a skill I also became well versed in.

FOR THE LOVER OF LEAD

No doubt about it, I was a true lead-head lover. I learned about mixing alloys, water quenching, heat treating, powder coating, sizing and loading cast bullets along the way. I hunted with cast bullets and 95 percent of my shooting involved cast bullets. Yes indeed, I was hooked!

**“OF ALL THE THINGS I’VE
LEARNED FROM CASTING, LOADING
AND SHOOTING CAST BULLETS,
THE BIGGEST FACTOR I’VE FOUND
IS BULLET SIZE, SPECIFICALLY,
BULLET DIAMETER.”**





The targets tell the tale, the 0.358" sized slugs were the most accurate. This mimics results for most other 9mm semi-autos Tank has worked with. You never know until you try!

I'd shop for bullet molds the way most people shopped for ammo. Pouring from the silver stream of liquid alloy into a bullet mold, forming it to the solid shape of my choice, is nothing short of magic.

WHAT MATTERS MOST?

Of all the things I've learned from casting, loading and shooting cast bullets, the biggest factor I've found is bullet size, specifically, bullet diameter. Sure, bore condition has influence but a cast bullet providing a snug bore-fit can make the roughest bore forgivable.

THE EXPERIMENT

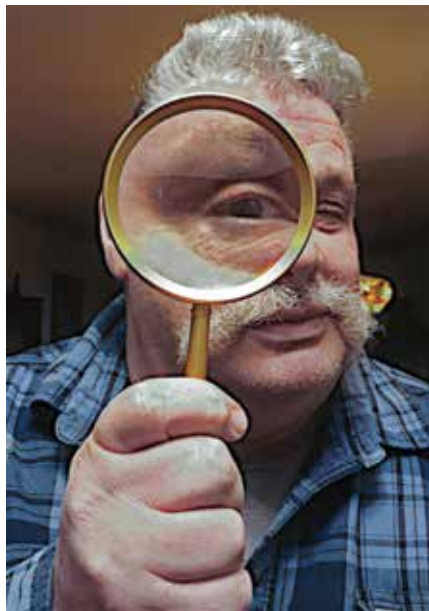
To prove my point in a simple demonstration, I'm going to conduct a test by shooting an Ed Brown EVO-KC9 9mm semi-auto pistol with three different-sized cast bullets — all cast, and powder coated from the same batch, for consistency's sake.

Bullets were from an 8-cavity MP Mold, 130-gr. radiused flat-nosed style bullet, which were powder coated with clear powder. The load was 4.5 grains of 231, loaded in Federal brass and sparked by WSPP.

The only difference is I sized some of them 0.356", 0.357" and 0.358" to show how diameter size affects accuracy. All the 9mm ammo was loaded on my Dillon 550C progressive press on the same run, again for consistency's sake.

SCIENCE SHOOT-OUT OF SORTS

Shooting occurred at my local range. Distance was 50 feet, with forearms resting on a carpeted 6"X6" block. I used



Tank is always trying to figure things out, especially when casting his own bullets!



Shooting was done with Tank's Ed Brown 1911 style EVO-KC9 9mm. Guess which "size" was the most accurate?

6" Shoot-N-See targets for all groupings of 10 rounds, one for each diameter size. I think 10 rounds provide a better idea of group performance for accuracy and consistency.

From the 10 shots, I eliminate the three worst rounds of the group, eliminating any human error, or load snafus. It's my preference, giving a good idea of what the particular load is capable of.

RESULTS

There were no surprises here. The 0.356"-sized bullet group (minus the three farthest) measured 1.56". The .357" sized bullet group measured 1.42" while lastly, the 0.358" sized bullet group measured 1.12".

NO PHENOMENA HERE

This "sizing" experiment simply demonstrates how size affects accuracy in cast bullets. A hard-cast bullet has a BHN of 20-25, which is really hard for cast slugs. Most measure around 14-18 BHN. A copper jacket has a BHN around 100-130, meaning filling the bore diameter isn't nearly as important for accuracy because the jacket is less prone to strip the rifling when fired. The softer lead bullet needs to fill the bore diameter to avoid stripping the rifling, for optimal accuracy.

Using softer alloy will help by bumping up in size when fired, but limits overall velocity. This is just something to chew on for fellow lead head lovers. The world of cast bullets is a fascinating and addictive one indeed.

GUNS[®] MAGAZINE

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since he had not retreated nearly as far as the spectators.

Just as things looked most frightening, another crisis arose — dozens of hotdog-sized rockets reached their apogee and were now falling toward the ground. It was later discovered many of the rockets had slow fuses due to the midwestern summer humidity and didn't burst until reaching the ground. Unfortunately, the impact zone for many of these recalcitrant pyrotechnics happened to be the patio where the spectators were huddled.

As rockets exploded among the panicked group the scene went from terrible chaos into full-on bedlam and it's a miracle no one was trampled in the melee. Another miracle took place as a great-grandmother temporarily regained the gift of mobility when she leapt from her wheelchair and led the assembled group in a series of high-hurdles over a nearby boxwood hedge.

One nephew later estimated her 100-meter time as 4.6 seconds — not bad for an octogenarian.

Fortunately, a garden hose quickly quelled the roof fire, no serious injuries were sustained to persons or property and the hair on my friend's arm eventually grew back. All and all, it was another great fireworks display.

However, this incident finally made our friend realize the error of his ways and he vowed to stop messing around with fireworks, gunpowder and other such threats to life and limb. I'm happy to report he nearly succeeded, staying "clean" for almost 364 days!

THE DISCLAIMER: Messing around with fireworks and gunpowder is an exceptionally dangerous activity and in many cases illegal. You have been warned — if your eyeballs get fried to a crisp after reading this column, it is not the fault of this writer, the publisher, this magazine, its employees, the printers, the advertisers or the person who delivered the magazine. Now go and have a grand and glorious Independence Day!

My friend certainly will.

IN OTHER NEWS:

Right now, there isn't a gun to be purchased in America. This is an exaggeration but only just. During the initial phases of the Coronavirus Pandemic, the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) slogged through 3.7 million screenings during the month of March, the highest number ever recorded by the system. It is estimated gun sales increased 85 percent over the same period in 2019. Many firearms retailers, especially in less-2A-friendly states such as California, report having no guns or ammunition in stock by early April. It's a short-term boost for the industry but hopefully lessons were learned last time there was massive panic buying followed by a period of relative calm.

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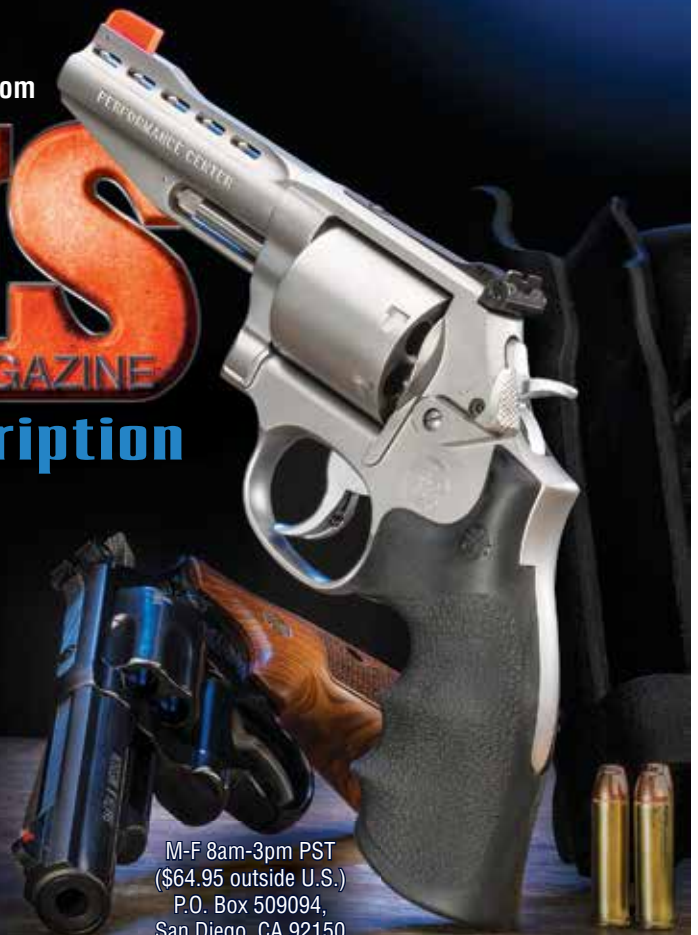
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ROCKETS WEREN'T THE ONLY THING GLARING RUN, GRANNY, RUN!

Ah, Independence Day, one of my favorite holidays! A favorite of young and old, the Fourth of July always evokes memories of cookouts in the backyard, parades, patriotic bunting flying high and the smell of burnt hair gently wafting on the summer breeze.

I have always been fascinated with exploding things and July Fourth is a quasi-religious holiday for people of my ilk. What could be better than a day devoted to eating barbecue and personally detonating more blackpowder than the entire Union army used during the Second Battle of Bull Run?

Gunpowder has always figured prominently in my life. The magic stuff from Dupont and Winchester has propelled shot and bullets toward real and paper targets while providing the foundation for some of the most memorable moments in life. However, during July's patriotic celebration, gunpowder takes another, more important role to those who display exceptional immaturity — fireworks.

I first met gunpowder in my youth when a friend of the family inexplicably gave me a red metal canister with just a few ounces of black powder left inside. After a bit of

experimentation, the moment a plastic airplane model disintegrated in a shower of smoke and flame in our backyard, I was hooked.

And, if the reader thinks I have carelessly endangered myself and others, you would be wholly correct.

I eventually realized black powder could be purchased by the pound at the local gun store with little fanfare. This was near the end of the era where dynamite could be bought at any feed store so a teenager buying a pound of gunpowder didn't raise an eyebrow. While these purchases were ostensibly for the muzzleloader I didn't yet own, the powder cache disappeared in a much more spectacular way.

As years passed I used the powder to build bigger, more elaborate and increasingly senseless fireworks shows. Always trying to top the previous years in terms of pyrotechnic thrills, some experiments were reported to the authorities by passing aircraft, concerned a munitions plant had exploded.

At the risk the following story violates several local, state, federal laws and common decency, I will courageously step forward to admit it actually happened to a friend of mine, of legal age, in another country, over 50 years ago, and is a work of complete fiction.

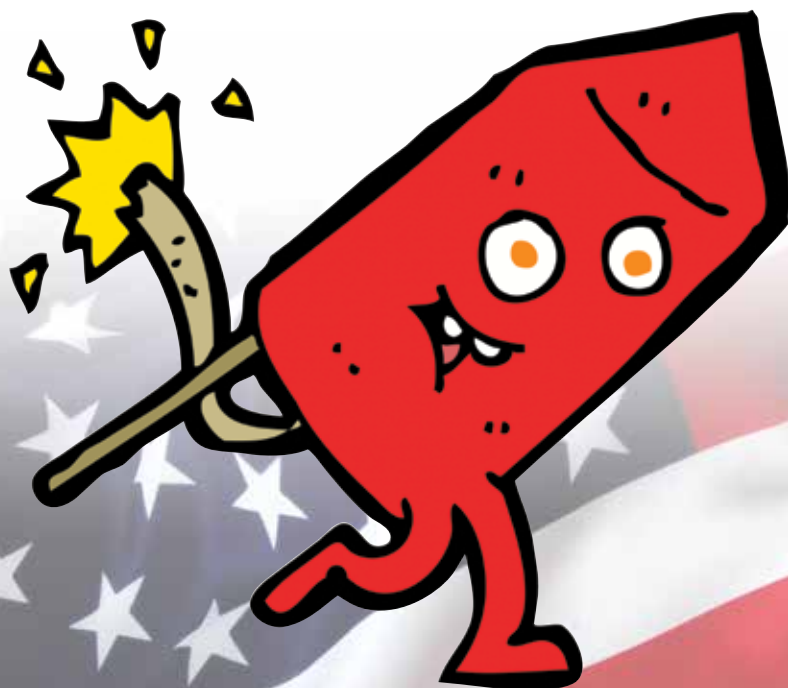
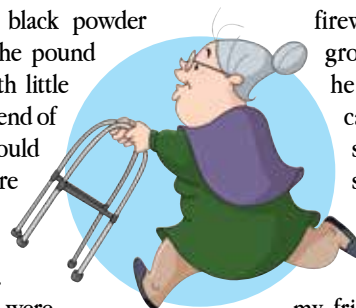
One year, in a flash of brilliance — so to speak — my friend had an idea on how to build the most spectacular home-brew fireworks display in human history.

Setting to work the morning of the fourth, he built a large scaffolding of old lumber. Gathering up several cases of fireworks, including an entire gross of large bottle rockets, he utilized a hot glue gun to carefully attach firecrackers, smoke bombs, rockets, sparklers, spinners and all manner of other pyrotechnics to the rig. During this painstaking process, my friend followed standard fireworks safety protocols such as wearing a shirt and having a cold beer stationed nearby.

As the sun set on the backyard gathering, the smaller preliminary fireworks were expended then it was time to dazzle the crowd with the grand finale. Our friend made final preparations by bathing the entire framework in black powder, operating on the principle “more is better, especially when talking about highly dangerous explosives.” As spectators began to nervously retreat, a length of green cannon fuse was stuck into the potentially lethal assembly and lit.

Witnesses and survivors initially disagreed about what had happened when flame met powder. Some believed a meteor had struck the house, while others thought a military fighter jet had accidentally scored a direct napalm hit on our bulk propane tank. All agreed there was a singularly bright flash of light and a really loud noise.

As 144 rockets shot skyward, the other fireworks simultaneously ignited to gush a solid wall of smoke, sparks and flame in all directions. At some point during this uncontrolled firestorm the hair on our friend's arms began smoking but he didn't realize the predicament because he was still blinded and crawling around on all fours



continued on page 73

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