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Holt Bodinson, Brent T. Wheat

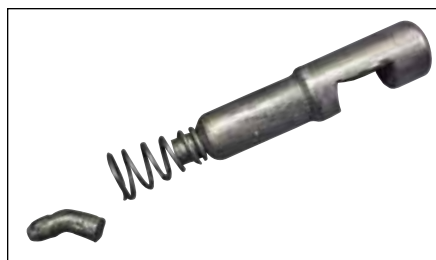


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GUNS

CROSSFIRE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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SO WHO NEEDS A RIFLE?

John Taffin's June "Campfire Tales" on turn-of-the-century era autos brought back some memories. My grandfather, Charlie Damon, also hunted whitetail here in Michigan with an Artillery Luger. I love the historical topics John writes about.

*Richard Fortino
Via email*

NO .22s?

Like Duke Venturino, I don't "need" a .22. As a matter of fact, I need three — a Ruger 10/22, a Ruger SR22, and an S&W K-22

(Model 17 to you newcomers). Since I am so much older than Duke (born 1933), I prefer to use whatever time I have remaining actually shooting instead of playing with "milsurps." Having lived through a previous shortage of .22s in the '40s and '50s, I was prepared for the latest scarcity. I applaud Duke's ingenuity (I read everything he writes), but don't see myself following his example. Keep on keepin' on!

*Jack Collins
Rocky Mount, VA*



FAIR SHAKE FOR STEYR

As a collector of all things Steyr and Mannlicher for many decades, I always enjoy any articles in my area of interest. In Mr. Bodinson's article he covers the Steyr 1912 fairly well, but I would like to comment on a couple of points. First, the use of the stripper clip versus a magazine. One must go back to the era when the Steyr was made, at that time materials were expensive and labor was cheap. It would require much more material to make a magazine than a

continued on page 63

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THE FINEST IN THE FIREARMS FIELD SINCE 1955

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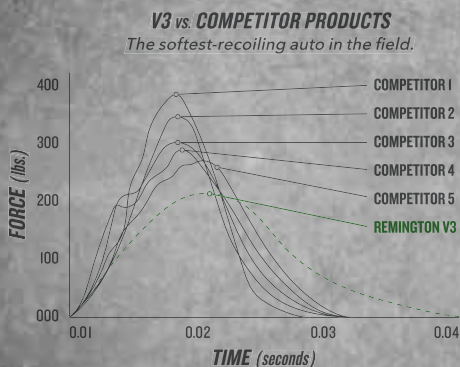


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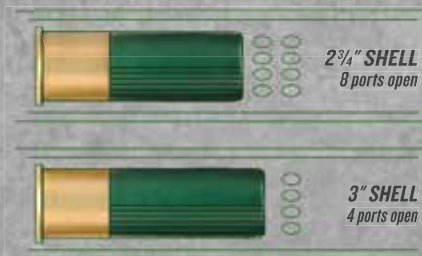
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GATHERED ON THE FRINGE

Despite the new leftist meme making the rounds on social media which claims “the NRA is a fringe organization with declining membership,” about 81,000 or so “deplorables” descended on Indianapolis April 26–28 for the organization’s annual meeting.

Just for the record, this so-called fringe group is pushing the six-million-member mark and doing just fine.

Among all the other interesting stories from Indy, perhaps most noteworthy was the fact attendance exceeded expectations. The NRA says about 81,000 people attended the three-day event, most of whom “were

standing in every aisle I tried to walk down,” quipped FMG Editorial Director Mike Humphries at one point.



The crowds were quite maddening if you were trying to get anywhere, which is a wonderful state of affairs for our country’s largest Second Amendment civil rights organization. By all accounts, the 15+ acres of guns and freedom displayed in the Indiana Convention Center was a resounding success.

Oh, and the threatened protests? While there were undoubtedly a few misguided souls holding signs and chanting somewhere in downtown Indianapolis, the threatened “hundreds and hundreds” of anti-gun protesters were nowhere to be seen. For this and many other reasons, I’m proud of my home state for serving as a gracious host to this celebration of “Free America.”

“THE” CONTROVERSY

The NRA Annual Meeting was also ground zero for some major controversy as President Oliver North withdrew from the ballot and literally left town in a figurative knife fight with NRA Executive Director Wayne LaPierre. As someone who has been given “insider” information from several different factions involved in the brouhaha, I will demur from sharing any insider dirt nor take a side because the situation is terribly complicated and as one knowledgeable tipster said, “There are plenty of bad guys to go around.”

However, we will raise an important point: The anti-gun groups and politicians in our country are having a field day with the situation. We’re not sure how the whole ugliness, involving lawsuits between the NRA and its long-time publicist Ackerman McQueen (“Ack Mac”) plus multiple financial investigations by the State of New York, will eventually play out. However, we urge both sides of the controversy to attempt to settle their differences in such a way the NRA won’t be destroyed and without giving the “antis” any further talking points.



The NRA certainly isn’t perfect but when it comes to one organization fighting on a local, state and federal level for gun owner’s constitutional rights, the NRA has no peer. Let’s not throw the baby out with the bathwater!

NRA MUSEUM ROCKS!

We recently got an exclusive guided tour of the NRA’s National Sporting Arms Museum from curator Joe Wood and a shop towel was needed to contain all the excessive salivation from this wholly overenthusiastic reporter.

Located inside the giant Bass Pro Shops mothership in Springfield, Missouri, the NRA Museum is one of three official NRA museums, the others located at NRA HQ in Fairfax, Virginia and The Whittington Center in New Mexico.



The genesis of the Missouri museum was the interest of Bass Pro founder Johnny Morris. As the story goes, after touring the NRA museum in Virginia, Mr. Morris was inspired to bring a similar collection to his giant outdoor shopping playground. Morris provided space free-of-charge to the NRA and they brought out hundreds of unique firearms from their collection.

Inside the museum, located above the gun and hunting accessories

department of the mega store, you will find everything from the rubber gun props used in several famous war movies to one-of-kind prototypes, along with the guns of several famous lawmen and at least a couple of infamous bad guys. You can even view President Teddy Roosevelt’s bedside pistol.

The museum is free of charge and open to the public every day of the year except Christmas from 10 am to 7 pm. Located 10 minutes off Interstate 44, it is an absolutely must-see if you pass through the area — or even if you aren’t! Between the Museum, the incredible Bass Pro Shops superstore and its attached (and also world-class) World of Wildlife Museum, plan on spending an entire day at the complex.

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pop-eyed perch, scary-looking ducks and moth-eaten bearskin rugs inhabit the opposite end of the universe from the incredible animal creations we saw in the Springfield Convention Center.

Most immediately apparent was the amazingly life-like appearance of the animals. Gone are the glassy-eyed stares of typical mounts, replaced by eyes and mouths that appear moist and unbelievably detailed. Moreover, the presentations themselves aren't simple plaques or slabs of wood but entire dioramas ranging from a baby skunk lounging in a realistic silk flower, to mergansers standing on faux ice and a river otter swimming among bronze swirls representing flowing river currents. Even those who hate taxidermy, such as one incredible, wonderful and beautiful wife of our intimate acquaintance, had to agree the animals on display were truly artistry instead of mere stuffed bags of skin.

While in Springfield, we stumbled on the World Taxidermy and Fishing Carving Championships. This little-known event features an international sampling of the most stunning examples of the taxidermists' art.

Any avid hunter or angler has witnessed hundreds of examples of decent and not-so-decent taxidermy. However, oddly smirking deer,

WRANGLE ME ONE



Among all the new products announced at the recent NRA show, the hottest must certainly be the new Ruger Wrangler .22 revolver. How do I know? The answer is simple: When five writers simultaneously contact the editor and ask to review the gun. Unfortunately, this situation is much like telling five of your children there is only one piece of candy left in the bag!

If you haven't seen it yet, the Wrangler is essentially a .22 version of the classic Ruger Single-Six. Most noteworthy is the gun brings Ruger quality into the single-action .22 revolver market for a list price of \$249 dollars. Now you can have a high-quality rootin' tootin' cowboy gun for around \$200 bucks "street price."

Available in black, bronze or silver Cerakote, this gun is loads of fun and perhaps currently the hottest ticket in town.

In fact, since the writers are all fighting among themselves for the right to review the new piece, I'll just be forced to take our test gun away from them and keep it at my house.



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UNDERSTUDY GUNS

TRAINING OPTIONS BETWEEN DRY-FIRE – AND *BANG!*

My predecessor as Handgun Editor here at *GUNS* was Jan Stevenson, who the late George Nonte called the most articulate of gun writers. I think George was right. Jan left big shoes to fill and I'm going to step into them now. One of Jan's most famous articles was on what he called "Understudy Guns." These are handguns identical to your "serious" sidearm, but chambered for .22 Long Rifle for cheap practice, mild recoil and soft report.

In those days, Colt and S&W made .22 revolvers in the same format as their medium-frame service guns, and small-frame .22s cloned from their snubbie .38s

(Charter Arms, Ruger and Taurus eventually followed suit). Colt made the .22 conversion unit for their big autos. Many such guns are available today — there were even pellet guns that handled at least somewhat like fighting handguns, such as the Crosman 38. Nowadays, though, you have more understudy options.

THE CHOICES TODAY

Sim Guns — Though they're not generally available to the private sector, GLOCKS and SIGs are available which are built to fire Simunitions paint pellets. There's nothing better for simulated gun-fighting known as Force-on-Force training.



S&W's M&P22 can serve as a "stand-in" for the company's "service grade" M&P centerfires. Airgun, rimfire, "the real thing" — 10 shots from 7 yards each. From left: Umarex (BB), Advantage unit on G31 (.22 LR), Gen5 G19 (9mm).



Mas (right) demonstrates disarming techniques with a Duncan metal dummy S&W 4506.

Purpose built, they can't accidentally be loaded with live ammo and the sting of a Sim round most definitely "reinforces the learning experience."

Dummy Guns — People have been killed or crippled practicing disarming — and handgun retention — with functional weapons when a live cartridge slipped into the mix. Non-shooting dummy guns are the obvious solution. They're also suitable for quick draw practice in your living room, and they're great for wet-fitting and boning leather holsters. Even when you've applied Saran Wrap and grease, you can almost hear your handgun rusting in the wet leather overnight — an identical plastic or metal dummy alleviates the worry.

I also like the dummy guns for training new shooters; it's less traumatic for them if they inadvertently point it at themselves or you during the early stages of learning safe gunhandling practices. I've had the best luck with the super-popular "blue guns" from Ring's, but the gray ones from Blackhawk work well. They're all made of lightweight polymer but if you want more realistic heft, Ring's makes weighted ones and you can get rugged all-metal ones from Odin Press ("Google will get you there").

Air Guns — For real marksmanship training, you need actual projectiles. Air guns don't pollute indoors and it's easy to craft makeshift backstops for the missiles they launch. No ear protection is required, though of course eye protection is still a must. I spend the most time with Umarex's licensed copy of the G19, but there are lots of realistic air guns available for practice. Many use Airsoft for Force-on-Force, and it's okay so long as proper safety gear and protocols are applied.

SIRT — Mike Hughes at Next Level Training hit a home run with his SIRT training pistol, available in GLOCK or S&W M&P format. Pressure on the trigger projects a solid red laser dot on target, and breaking the shot marks the point of

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impact with a green dot. Silent and with no projectiles, it's "hotel room safe" for dry fire. SIRTs are ideal for learning to hit from body position index without aiming (hip-shooting, protected gun position), and allow you to participate in TV's *Walking Dead* by head-shooting the zombies before the good guys do. I now watch the show on a projection screen at home because I don't like the idea of potentially eyesight-damaging laser beams bouncing off glass surfaces. Ammo cost: zero.

.22 Conversion units — We have way more .22 conversion units for centerfire autoloading pistols today than when Jan first addressed understudy guns. For the 1911 there are multiple choices, my favorite being the Marvel, so superbly accurate people have long been winning .22 bulls-eye matches with them. You can shoot a 3-gun 2700 match with all the same frame and the exact same trigger, using the Marvel top for the .22 stage and the big-bore top-end for centerfire and .45. I like the Advantage Arms unit for my GLOCKS.



The 8-shot Ruger LCR .22 LR (left) serves as understudy to the 5-shot .38 Special (right).

SIG makes some excellent conversion units I've had very good luck with and the one Beretta makes for the 92 is so good it's sometimes been hard to find — but it's very much worth looking for!

NOTHING'S PERFECT

The air gun you wind up with may be distinctly different in trigger pull from your real handgun, though the Umarex model comes fairly close. My SIRTs are not quite identical to my GLOCKS but come close enough for valuable trigger time. Obviously, none of

the above options are going to duplicate the recoil of a full power handgun.

However, they're great for tasks like drawing to the first shot, since recoil doesn't really matter until after the critical Number One round on target. And, shot for shot, they teach you to hold the gun locked on target until the trigger breaks and the missile is on its way to the mark.

Each of them has a place. Jan Stevenson was spot-on when he called these things "understudy guns," and we have more of them today than ever to use to enhance our handgun-related skills.

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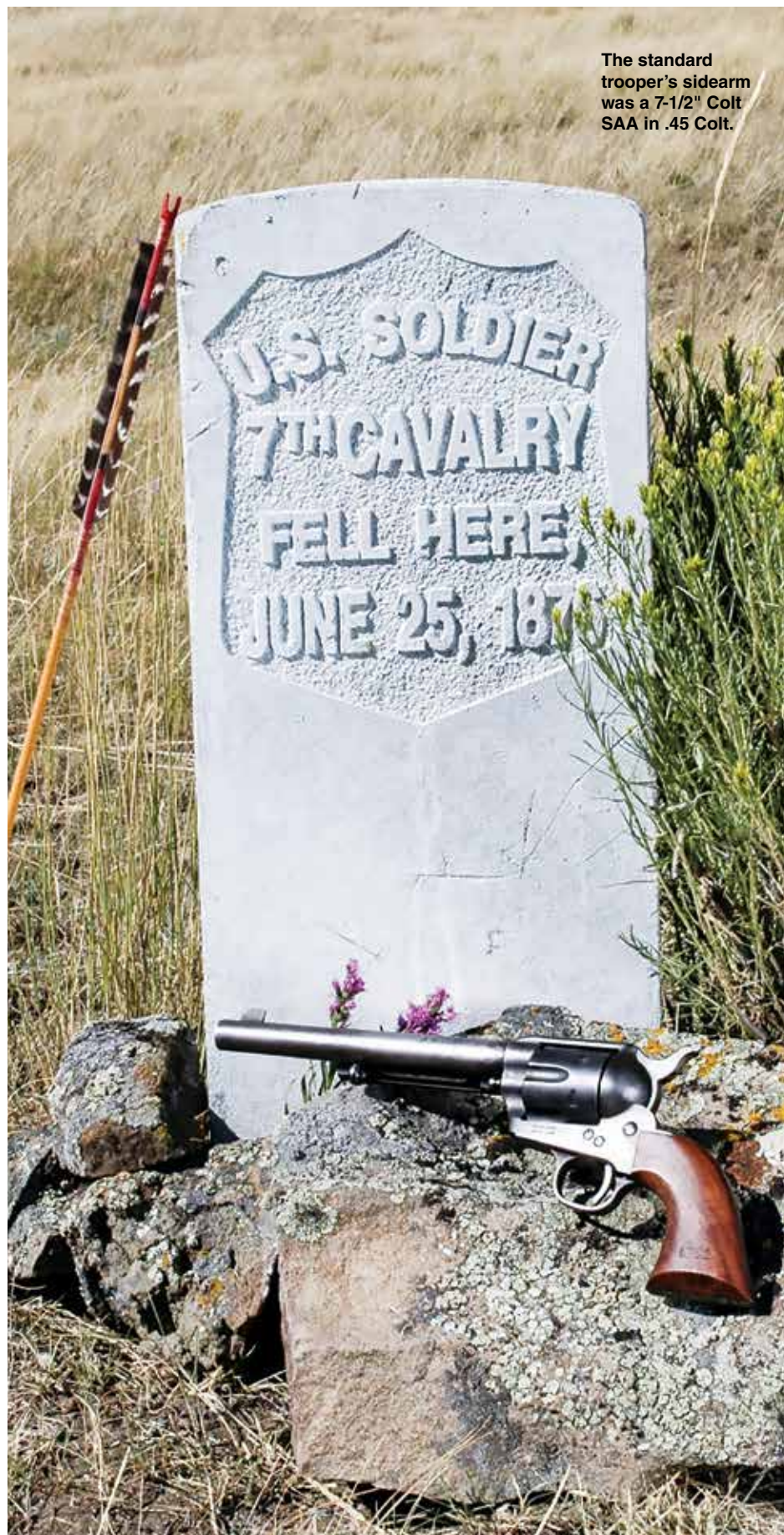
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The standard trooper's sidearm was a 7-1/2" Colt SAA in .45 Colt.

LAST STAND LOADS

LITTLE BIGHORN AMMO REDO

I'm a lifelong student of the "Custer Battle," otherwise known as the June 1876 Battle of the Little Bighorn. There, the U.S. 7th Regiment of Cavalry and a multitude of Sioux and Cheyenne warriors fought to the death. Perhaps it's inevitable I would try duplicating the performance of guns known to have been involved.

CAVALRY BATTERY

How would you go about experiencing what it was like to shoot .45 Government (.45-70) Model 1873 "Trapdoor" carbines and .45 Colt SAA revolvers, such as the troopers carried? For cavalry service, the carbine charge was 55 grains of black powder with 405-gr. lead RN bullets. The charge for the Colt revolvers was 30 grains of powder behind 250-gr. conical bullets with a small flat nose.

Nowadays black powder charges using Swiss or Goex 1-1/2 Fg or FFg black powder easily fit in modern .45-70 and .45 Colt brass. Moreover, any RNFP 250-gr. bullet design from molds made by Lyman, RCBS, LEE or Redding/SAECO approximate the profile and weight of the swaged lead alloy .45 Colt Government bullet. Lyman's cast bullet #457124 was actually designed in the late 1800s specifically to duplicate the 405-gr. swaged

These were the main cartridges used by the Native Americans in the Little Bighorn Battle (from top down): .44 Henry Rimfire, .44 WCF (.44-40) and .56-50 Spencer Rimfire.





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The most common rifle/carbine on the Indian side were the Henry (top) and the Winchester Model 1866 (bottom).

lead alloy Government carbine bullet.

Velocities of the Government loads at the time were rated at 1,150 fps from a 22" carbine barrel and about 850 fps from a 7-1/2" SAA barrel. Those figures may sound

deceptively puny to modern shooters.

One day a few years back I helped a movie company with live firing using my original Model 1873 Trapdoor. While filming I touched off about 70 rounds from

the 7-lb. carbine and that night I had trouble sleeping because my shoulder was bruised from recoil. Thirty grains of black powder behind a 250-gr. bullet in a 2-1/2 lb. Colt SAA will cause the muzzle to flip skyward in recoil. Both carbine and revolver put out huge clouds of smoke.

NATIVE AMERICAN GUNS

On the Sioux and Cheyenne side of the Little Bighorn fracas the majority of warriors armed with firearms used Henrys and Model 1866 Winchesters. Those were chambered for .44 Henry Rimfire and obviously we cannot duplicate it today.

This is close though — in replica .44-40 Henrys and Model 1866s, a 30-gr. charge of FFG black powder of either brand under RCBS bullet #44-200FN perfectly matches .44 Henry black powder ballistics around 1,100 fps.

Modern archaeology has proven no fewer than eight Model 1873 Winchester .44 WCFs (.44-40) were at the Little Bighorn in 1876. The load's ballistics can be duplicated, although it's impossible to get a full 40-gr. black powder charge in modern brass.

However, 1870s .44 WCF ballistics can be achieved by using 35 grains of FFFg Swiss black powder. Lyman's mold #427098 was developed in the late 1800s specifically for black powder loads in the .44 WCF. Winchester rated their then-new .44's



A vintage .45 Government round with a 405-gr. bullet (above) with Duke's handload using a Lyman #457124 bullet (below).



Every enlisted man in the 7th Cavalry at Little Big Horn was issued a Model 1873 "Trapdoor" carbine in .45 Gov't (.45-70) caliber.

velocity at about 1,300 fps. The modern load will hit 1,250 to 1,300 fps, depending on the exact rifle barrel length.

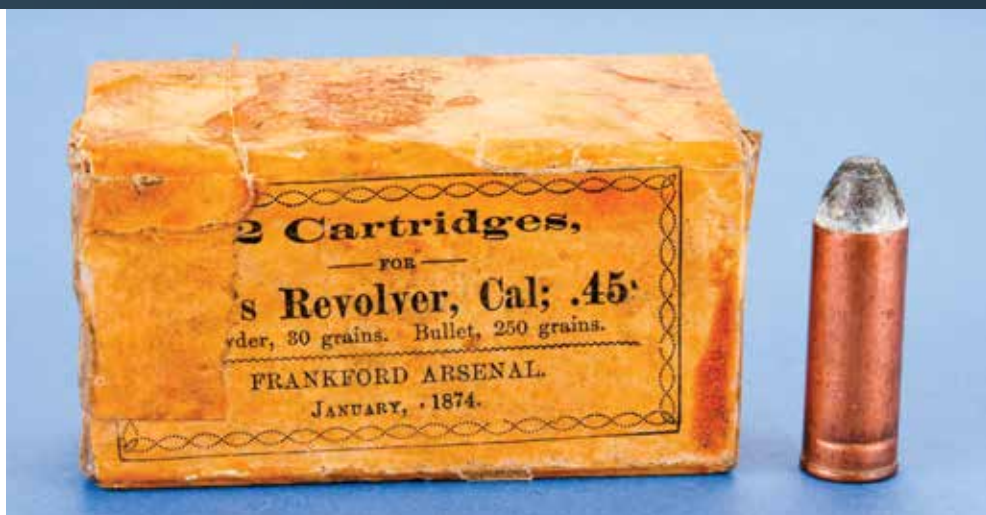
THE "BIG .50"

There was a hodgepodge of other firearms used on the Sioux/Cheyenne side of the battle. Spencer lever guns probably saw action, but they were rimfire so we'll wind up with a cartridge both sides were known to use in the fight — the .50 Government, also known as the .50-70.

Several dozen .50-70 Sharps carbines were fired by the hostile Indians at the Little Bighorn while "Trapdoor" .50s were handed out to some of the auxiliary Indian scouts working with the 7th Cavalry. Custer himself took his Remington No. 1 .50-70 Rolling Block rifle into the battle.

Standard load for the .50 Government was a 450-gr. conical bullet over 70 grains of black powder. From the long barrels of Models 1866, 1868 and 1870 Springfields, velocity was rated at 1,250 fps.

Today, 70 grains of Swiss or Goex Fg or FFg black powder will fit in Starline .50-70 brass. Lyman's #515141 bullet was designed specifically to duplicate the government's



Original U.S. Army .45 Colt loads used 250-gr. bullets over 30 grains of blackpowder.

bullet. From my original Model 1868 "Trapdoor" the load gives 1,250 fps — give or take a dozen fps.

ACCURACY POTENTIAL

How well will all these modern black powder handloads shoot in the original or replica firearms? If the ammunition is prepared correctly (and the shooter can deal with those open sights), I'd say you can expect groups from rifles and carbines in

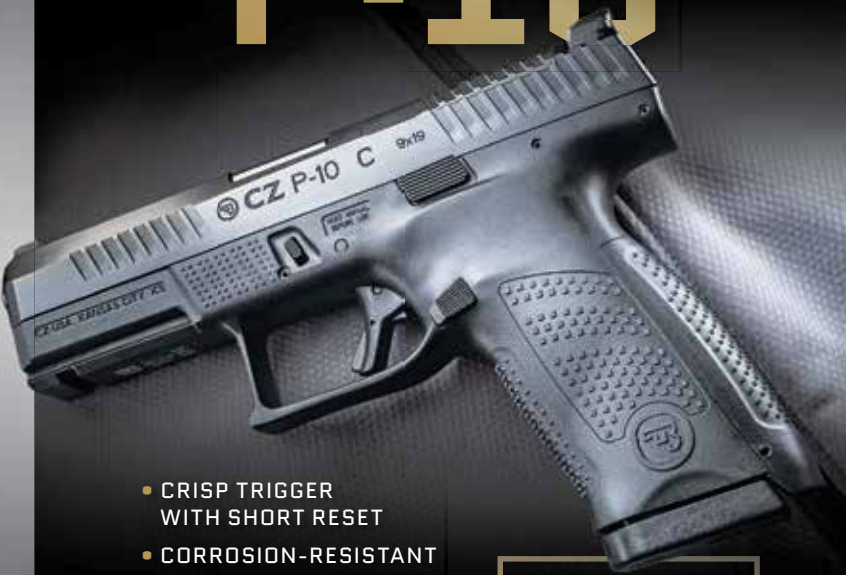
the 2 to 4" range at 100 yards. The Colt SAA revolver will put 10 shots in about 3" at 25 yards.

But — and this is a critical "but" — such accuracy will only last until blackpowder fouling builds up. On an extremely dry 90-degree-plus day as it was on June 25, 1876, fouling could have ruined accuracy in as few as 10 rounds. In such a chaotic, dust and smoke-filled battle, pinpoint shooting was likely not done anyway. 



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THE .455 WEBLEY BRITAIN'S BIG-BORE HEAVYWEIGHT, PART I

America and Great Britain have been tied together in many ways. It did take two wars to convince the Brits we were going to be independent, but since then we've been strong allies — and both of us looked to .45 caliber sidearms soon after cartridge sixguns began to appear!

DOUBLE-ACTION ANGLO STYLE

While our early history revolved around single-action percussion and cartridge revolvers, the double action mechanism for the British goes back to the 1850s. One of my first revolvers when I was a teenager was a double action Deane & Adams British

revolver. Our cartridges of choice were the .45 Colt, .45 Schofield and .45 ACP while the British went with the .450 Boxer and the .455 Webley MKI and MKII. What we called "Top-Breaks," the British called "Hinge-Frames."

The original Webley MKI Service Revolver — although a .455 — was initially called a ".442" as this was the bore diameter, not the groove diameter. Eventually it became the .455 Webley and served the Brits in a long series of homely — though highly efficient — sixguns. None of the Webleys will win any prizes for looks but it should be noted their grip frames, especially on the MKI through MKV models, were much more comfortable than the early American DA revolvers.

INCREASING IMPROVEMENTS

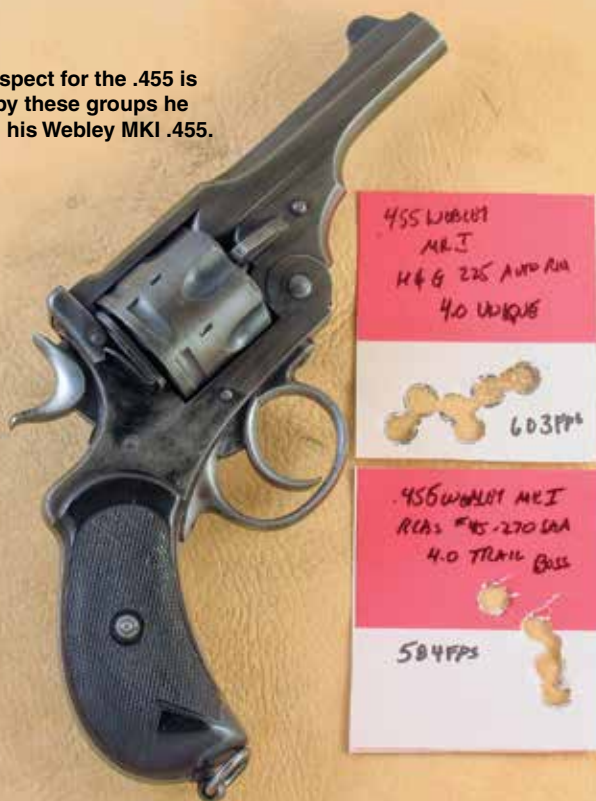
The MKI arrived in 1887 chambered in .455 Webley, with more than 35,000 produced by 1894. In 1894 the MKI became the MKII with the most noticeable changes being the hump at the top of the grip frame, a sturdier trigger guard and a wider hammer. Interior V-springs were replaced by coil-style. In 1897 the MKIII arrived with several internal improvements. This was followed two years later by the MKIV with more internal improvements as well as a lightened hammer spur and a rounding of the angles on the frame. In 1913 the MKV appeared with an increase in cylinder diameter and in 1915 the final model — the MKVI — arrived with a 6" barrel and a grip frame with a more square profile. This was the basic British service revolver throughout WWI.

BIG, SLOW, EFFECTIVE

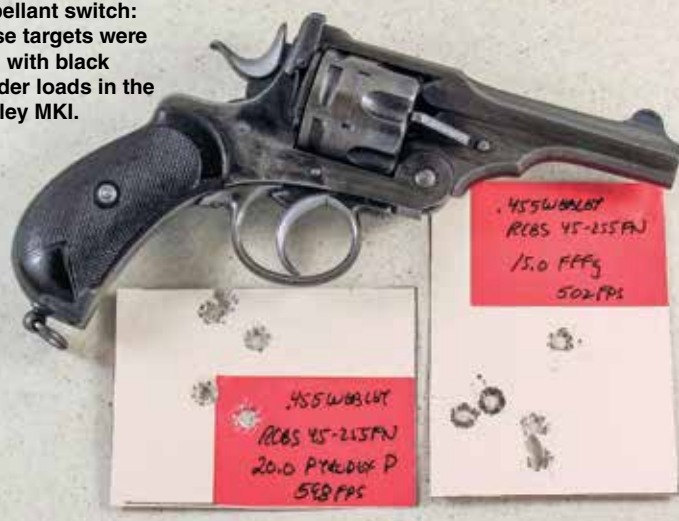
The .455 Webley was originally a black powder cartridge with a case length of 0.85 to 0.87" (the MKI). With the arrival of smokeless powders, the case length was reduced in 1897 to 0.74-0.76" (MKII). However, all subsequent .455 Webleys were chambered for the longer original cartridge so either case length would work in any of them. The original .455 Webley round is the .455 MKI and Colt made this same round (with a different shaped bullet) as the .455 Colt.

From the MKI, which arrived in 1887 through all the minor changes to the MKVI of 1915, the Webley .455 served the Brits for 60-plus years. During this time the .476 Eley, .476 Enfield MKIII, .455 Colt, .455 Revolver MKI, .450 Revolver, .450 Short, .450 Adams,

John's respect for the .455 is justified by these groups he fired with his Webley MKI .455.



Propellant switch: These targets were fired with black powder loads in the Webley MKI.





Big-bore lineup (left to right): .455 Webley MKII, .455 Colt, .45 Colt, .45 ACP.



A factory .455 (left) compared to John's loads assembled with the RCBS #45-255 FN (center) and Lyman #454424 (right).

and .450 Colt were all cartridges that can be fired in the same .455 Webley.

Today the only manufacturer I know producing .455 Webley ammunition for sale in this country is Fiocchi. Their MKII loading is an LRN weighing 262 grains. Actually, the nose is much more pointed than it is round. In my Webleys it clocks out at 649 fps and groups five shots into less than 2" at 20 yards.

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS

For reloading the .455 Webley I use the RCBS 3-die set and all my brass comes from fired Fiocchi rounds. This brass is shorter in length than .45 ACP rounds and has a very thin rim, even less so than found on the .45 ACP. It also uses small — rather than large — pistol primers. Any bullet normally used in traditional .45 Colt loads as well as those used in loading the .45 Auto Rim can be used in the .455 Webley.

For bullets I go with the Lyman #454424, the original Keith design weighing around 255 grains. Unfortunately, this bullet is no longer available from Lyman but it can be found on the Internet and at gun shows. It has been replaced by #452424 and that certainly works just as well for most applications.

Also from Lyman I use another Keith design, the #452423 — a 225-gr. SWC



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design for use in the .45 Auto Rim; this is backed up by a virtually identical design from an old Hensley & Gibbs mold. From RCBS there's the #45-255 FN based on the original flat-nosed conical bullet for the .45 Colt, however, this one has a crimping groove. Finally there's the #45-270SAA bullet probably the best now available for use in the .45 Colt for standard loads. This one weighs right around 270-280 grains (depending on the alloy) and is actually an improvement on the original Keith design. All bullets are sized to 0.454".

At a cartridge case length of approximately three-fourths of an inch there's not a lot of case capacity to work with in loading for the .455 Webley. We also need to consider the fact the early guns go back to the 1890s so they need to be treated gently. With my MKI I go the black powder route with both Pyrodex P and FFFg and CTG Goex black powder with all loads measured by volume, not by weight.

For smokeless powders I look to Trail Boss, Unique and Red Dot. From my collection of older loading manuals I found a 60+-year-old Lyman Manual that had data for the .455 Webley/.455 Colt. Two of the

four powders shown are long gone and those loads using Unique and Bulls-eye were for the longer case.

When using Unique with any of the above bullets in the older Webleys I do not go above 4.0 grains when the bullets are crimped in the crimping groove. I get the same results with 5.0 grains when the bullet is seated out. That is, instead of using the crimping groove the cartridge case mouth is crimped into the lubricating groove resulting in greater case capacity. I do use the 5.0 grains of Unique load with bullets crimped in the crimping groove in later revolvers such as the MKVI and Smith & Wesson versions. Smith & Wesson

chambered their 1st Model Hand Ejector/ Triple-Lock and also the 2nd Model Hand Ejector in .455 for the British military.

One thing we can say for certain with the .455 Webley revolvers is they are not target pistols by any means. They were meant for combat, not bulls-eye shooting — for their intended purpose they serve exceedingly well. My most accurate loads with the 4" Webley MKI is the Lyman #452423 or H&G 225-grain .45 Auto Rim bullet over 4.0 grains of Unique for right around 600 fps and groups just over 1". I also get good results with loads put together with black powder using the RCBS #45-255FN bullet. With 20.0 grains of Pyrodex P (Pistol),



Trail Boss is mild and just about ideal for use with the older Webleys.



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John shooting his .455 Webley MKVI. It's no beauty, but it's powerful, accurate and more ergonomically comfortable than it might appear to a Yank!

velocity is 667 fps while 15.0 grains of Goex FFFg is a very mild shooting 500 fps. Both loads group five shots in less than 2" at 20 yards. With the same bullet seated out and crimped in the lube groove over 4.0 grains of Trail Boss, velocity is 550 fps with a group just under 3" while 4.0 grains of Red Dot group a little tighter at 2" with a more respectable muzzle velocity of 720 fps.

Switching to the MKIV .455 Webley, I found using the RCBS #45-255 FN bullet over 5.0 grains of Unique performed very well with 1-1/2" groups and a muzzle velocity of 760 fps. The use of this later

revolver allows a step up in muzzle velocity. Another load I feel much more comfortable using in this later Webley is the #454424KT over 5.0 grains of Unique which gives a muzzle velocity of 780 fps with groups just over 2". Now we're in the neighborhood of some serious loads!

The .455 Webley revolvers will never win any prizes for aesthetics. They were built for a task they fulfilled remarkably well. At a time when we had switched from the proven .45 Colt to the woefully inadequate .38 Long Colt, the British stayed with their .455. However, they too eventually went

backwards going to the .38 Enfield in WWII. Today, I would not feel at any great disadvantage carrying one of these old .455 revolvers from a bygone age.

What would make sense today would be a reasonably priced Webley-style revolver in modern chamberings!

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RETICLES: THE CRITICAL INTERFACE DOTS, WIRE, POSTS – AND SHEEP FENCE

“Little people, little pleasures,” sighed Alice early in our marriage as she watched men in heavy jackets hug big rifles to perforate dime-size circles. By then my Anschütz had earned a secondhand 20X scope. After an apprenticeship with iron sights, dicing X-rings with its crosswire was a wondrous thing.

Scopes make hitting easier partly because they make the target easier to see and put the aiming device (reticle) in the same apparent plane as the target.

DOTS, CROSSWIRES, POSTS

During my youth, reticle options were limited to crosswire, post or dot. I marveled at TK Lee’s 0.008” dot on spider web! A dot obscures nothing in the field except your point of aim. Properly sized, it’s also quick but even big dots can get lost in poor light and against mottled backgrounds. Long ago a dot in a Lyman Alaskan hid in the shadowed hide of an elk at dusk. Frantic, I searched for it in bleached grass under the bull. Faintly, it winked! I jerked it up onto the elk and fired. Luck and short yardage blessed me.

The best size for a dot depends on magnification. To me, a 2-minute dot seems right for a 6X scope, a 3-minute for a 4X, a 4-minute for a 2-1/2X. Powerful target scopes have dots covering as little as 1/8” at 100 yards. For bulls-eye shooting, however,

I think a crosswire works as well. Very fine crosswires, like small dots, can be hard to find, and hard to track when pulse and muscle twitches bounce the sight picture through powerful lenses.

In a hunting scope, a crosswire must be thick enough to acquire quickly in dim light. An intersection covering a saucer-size patch on a distant deer denies you nothing. As with the bead on an old carbine, if it hides the middle of the vitals and your bullet hits what you can’t see, you’ll still kill the beast!

Magnification and reticles allowing you to quarter bullet holes are useful only if you’re shooting at targets the size of bullet holes.

The best reticle? Leupold’s Duplex and “plex” spin-offs afford precise aim with their thin center wire. Posts comprising the wires’ outer sections draw your eye in dim light. Better yet is the similar German No. 4 — without an unnecessary post at 12 o’clock. It excels as a range-finding device, because its three posts are squared off, not tapered. Such reticles have been made in various ways. Leupold has used .0012 platinum wire flattened to .0004. Premier Reticle Ltd. has supplied wire ribbon, twisted. These and more complex reticles can also be photo-etched with .0007 metal foil. Chemicals strip away all but the final form.

Range finding reticles have accelerated the trend to long-range shooting. Most popular is the mil dot. A mil (for milliradian)



Even in bright open country, a fine reticle can slow your aim. Deer vitals are big — use a bold reticle!

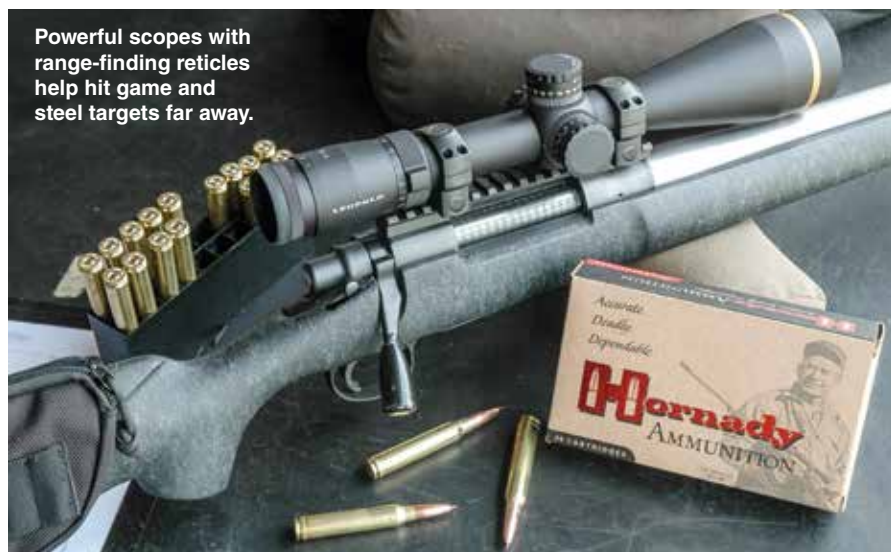
is an angular measure spanning 3.6” at 100 yards. A mil dot reticle has a series of dots one mil apart along a crosswire. To find your target distance, divide target height in mils at 100 yards by the number of mils subtended. Result: range in hundreds of yards.

If a moose 6 feet tall (20 mils at 100 yards) appears to stand four dots high ($20/4 = 5$), the moose is 500 yards away. You can also divide target size in yards by mils subtended, then multiply by 1,000 to get range in yards: $2/4 \times 1,000 = 500$.

Among my favorite range-finding reticles is the Burris Ballistic Plex. After zeroing, check ranges at which the three bars on the six-o’clock wire give you dead-on hits. Those bars don’t impede quick aim with the otherwise clean plex reticle. A Ballistic Plex helped me kill a fine pronghorn that had me pegged at 393 steps. I’ve less enthusiasm for range-finding reticles cluttering the field of view with something resembling sheep fence.

FRONT PLANE, REAR PLANE

Europe’s first- or front-plane reticles have become popular in the U.S., otherwise



Powerful scopes with range-finding reticles help hit game and steel targets far away.

long wedded to second- or rear-plane reticles. A first-plane reticle stays the same size relative to the target across a scope's power range. Perversely, it can cover small, distant targets at high magnification; and it shrinks to obscurity at the lower power useful for fast shots in thickets! Rear-plane reticles stay the same apparent size across the magnification range. Its dimensions change in relation to the target.

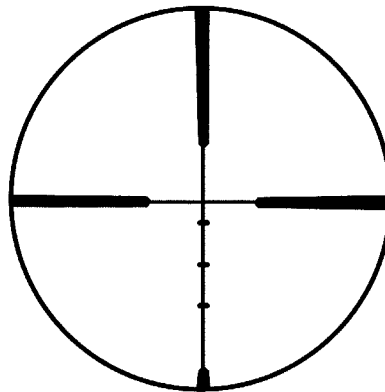
LIGHT UP

Illuminated reticles are now legion. In place of batteries, Trijicon AccuPoint scopes use tritium and fiber optic windows. Schmidt & Bender's Flash-Dot has a beam-splitter to illuminate the center dot.

Zeiss Varipoint scopes had a crosswire in the front focal plane, a lighted dot in the rear. The main reticle stayed in constant relationship to the target; the dot was sharp and small even at high magnification. With any illuminated sight, adjust the brightness dial no higher than necessary. Even a pinpoint of light shows up in a dark forest plus excess brilliance causes a



One-hole groups like this require a good gun along with a high magnification scope and a precision reticle. Wayne likes the clean Burris Ballistic Plex (below).



spot of "night blindness" and makes the dot big and fuzzy.

NOW FOCUS!

To sharpen reticle focus, turn the rear of the eyepiece. On traditional scope, a lock ring secures a fine-threaded ocular housing. Fast-focus eyepieces rotate on helical threads inside the housing. Adjust either type this way: Spin the eyepiece all the way in. Point the rifle at the sky, away from the sun. (You don't want an object in the field, as your eye will automatically try to focus it.)

Now turn the eyepiece out slowly until the reticle looks sharp. Check after resting your eyes for a moment. Adjusted, the reticle will appear crisp at all ranges until age changes your vision.

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MARLIN'S 1894C .357 MAGNUM LEVER-ACTION ADDICTS REJOICE!

Pistol-caliber rifles and carbines have been around as long as metallic cartridges have existed. Notable examples include the Henry (1860), Winchester 1866 and 1873 and Marlin 1889. In the 1890s lightning struck twice with two brilliant designs — the Winchester 1892 and the Marlin 1894. Both would prove so useful they're still being made to this day, a century and a quarter later.

Initially both were chambered for .25-20, .32-20, .38-40 and .44-40. Winchester made around a million Model 1892s. Marlin production numbers are

hard to nail down, though I've seen estimates of around 250,000 units. According to Philip Sharpe's *The Rifle in America*, Marlin sold "large quantities" of 1894 muskets with 30" barrels and bayonets to the Chinese Army.

The 1892 and 1894 were light and compact, easy to carry and store. They were popular with farmers and ranchers for predator control, as well as with explorers, miners, trappers, hikers, campers and anglers. No doubt many a rural peace officer liked the idea of a handy long gun, especially if it used the same cartridges as his service revolver.

The Winchester was discontinued in 1941, the Marlin in 1934 (Sharpe says 1936). Originals became increasingly valuable collectibles. In 1969 Marlin reintroduced the 1894 and a few years later several modern reproductions of the 1892 appeared. The growth of Cowboy Action shooting and a renewed appreciation for the utility of

these carbines led to model variations and added chamberings.

IRRESISTIBLE APPEAL

My interest in these neat little lever guns is relatively recent. Increasingly I find myself drawn to light rifles, mild recoil and inexpensive ammunition. With thousands of .38 Special cases on hand from my competitive handgun shooting days, the .357 Magnum versions were especially appealing. Marlin 1894s in this chambering have been hard to find in recent years, so I was pleased when they once again started appearing.

Marlin fans — although happy with the 1969 reintroduction of the Model 1894 — were less pleased when a manual cross-bolt safety was added in 1984. I'm not crazy about it myself, since I carry my rifles magazine loaded/chamber empty. Chambering a cartridge as the rifle is being raised to the shoulder is about as quick as releasing a safety.



This Marlin 1894CS was made in 2018 but the design predates the Ford Model T by about 30 years. The scabbard is by Triple K.



The stock shows very good fit to both upper and lower receiver tangs.



The Marlin was nicely fitted and finished, with the action cycling smoothly and reliably.

Nonetheless, such features are here to stay. A more serious issue was a decline in quality control after Marlin was acquired by the Freedom Group in 2008. Replacing worn and outdated production facilities was no doubt necessary but moving to a new location meant the loss of experienced workers. Word quickly spread about poor fit and finish, canted sights, rough and unreliable operation.

REP REESTABLISHED

A reputation for quality takes decades to earn yet can be quickly tarnished — and once tarnished, hard to regain. As workers gained experience, Marlin quality control has improved steadily. Even though I wanted an 1894 in .357 and was hearing good things about current production Marlin's, I'll admit to a certain amount of trepidation.

The rifle shown here is one I purchased from a local dealer at full retail price. According to the date code on the barrel it was made in May 2018. The fit and finish is very good. The action cycles smoothly, reliability with both .38 Special and .357



A Marlin 1894 in a leather scabbard would have carried nicely on a horse in 1895 — it still does on Dave's Polaris today.

Magnum rounds has been flawless and accuracy excellent.

My rifle is marked as model 1894CS. Overall length is 38-1/2" with an 18-1/2" barrel (1:16 twist). Weight is 6 lbs., 7 oz. The stock and forearm are American black walnut with machine-cut checkering. Length of pull is 13-3/8". The magazine holds nine cartridges. The trigger? It's crisp and consistent but heavier than I like at 5-1/2 lbs.

The solid top receiver makes the Marlin well suited to optical sights but when first introduced in 1894, optics were hardly a consideration — Marlin didn't even start drilling and tapping receivers for sight

bases for another 60 years! The perceived advantage of the enclosed receiver was better protection in the event of case failure.

SWEET SHOOTER

For accuracy testing I used a Weaver base and rings to fit a veteran Leupold M8 3X scope. I had on hand a variety of .38/.357 ammunition from Black Hills, CCI, HPR and Winchester, in bullet weights of 125 and 158 grains. Just about everything would group five shots into 2" or less at 100 yards (temperatures hovered around 20 degrees F).

I got the best and most consistent results with Black Hills 158-grain .357s, averaging around 1-1/2". I think a higher power scope, warmer trigger finger and lighter trigger would reduce group size.

I'm absolutely delighted with my new rifle. If quality is typical of current production, which I think it is, Marlin fans can once again rejoice.

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AXEON
OPTIC SOLUTIONS



Legacy Sport's small-gauge Pointer is a graceful upland gun with nice Turkish walnut.

LEGACY SPORTS POINTER PHENOMA A TURKISH DELIGHT 28-GAUGE AUTOLOADER

I admit to being a 28-gauge enthusiast. Some call it a “magic gauge” — the perfect ballistic marriage between bore size and a 3/4 oz. payload producing patterns all out of proportion to its diminutive size.

GAUGE OF SUCCESS

At this year's SHOT Show, Legacy Sports International's 28-gauge Pointer Phenoma semi-auto really caught my eye. To begin with, “Pointer” is a great name, considering the fact shotguns are pointed (not aimed), and more often than not are found in the hands of an upland hunter trailing his favorite pointer. Unlike many of their heavier big-bore brothers, small-gauge guns weighing 5.5-6 lbs. are lively and dynamic, so feathery in some cases you have to readjust your swing a bit or else you're not where you should be when the shot breaks.

Available in 12, 20, 28 and .410, the

gas-operated Pointer Phenoma guns are available in three distinct finishes. There's a basic synthetic stocked model completely finished in Realtree Original, Mossy Oak Bottomland, Mossy Oak Obsession and good, old, simple black with an MSRP of \$529. Next up is an upgraded synthetic line with Cerakote treated receivers in Burnt Bronze, Midnight Bronze and OD Green laser etched to blend in and match three Realtree camo patterns applied to the stocks. These have an MSRP of \$999. Then there's the sensational duo-toned combination of a Cerakote treated receiver and barrel mated with richly figured Turkish walnut stocking (pictured here) in 28 gauge and carrying an MSRP of \$669.

A STOCK TO BOND WITH

Synthetics are certainly more durable, but give me figured walnut every time if it's available. The beauty and warmth of wood

just makes a day in the field much more special.

According to my Brownells gunstock pull-and-drop gauge, the Turkish walnut buttstock has a 14" LOP with a drop of 1.5" at the comb and 2" at the heel. It's finished with a thick rubber recoil pad featuring a smooth, rounded plastic insert in the heel to ensure snag-free mounting.

The gnarled checkering panels on the pistol grip and forend are “grippy” and — being darker than the surrounding walnut — are pleasing to the eye. The forend itself is fully rounded at the bottom and scalloped in toward the barrel to enhance your grip. The gun's a “pointer” all right.

The barrels on the Phenoma line are all 28", giving the guns an overall length of 48.5". Five choke tubes are standard — C, IC, M, IM, F — as is the red, fiber-optic front bead.

Not only do most 28s pattern exceedingly well, most people can shoot them well. They're fast on target, easy on the shoulder and so light you can spend the whole day afield with them without feeling like a gun bearer. If you think you're seeing more 28-gauge shells on store shelves lately, you have. Thankfully, the prices are coming down with every passing year.

ON-PAPER PERFORMANCE

The first thing I do with a new shotgun — particularly a pump or auto with interchangeable barrels and choke tubes — is to determine if the point-of-aim and point-of-impact coincide. Often they don't, and there's no sense in taking a gun afield if this is the case.

The POA/POI test is simple. Take a plain piece of letter-size paper and draw a solid 2" circle in the middle. (I'm lazy so I use a HunterJohn “clays” patterning target that already has a large red dot in the center). Place it 15 feet in front of your bench. Install a Full-choke tube. Bench the shotgun, aim



Holt, Steamer and a 28-gauge Pointer can't wait for opening morning.



The Cerakote-treated receiver and streamlined trigger guard add to the visual impact of the Pointer.



Holt's 28-gauge Pointer produced lethal, well-balanced patterns on HunterJohn clays targets.



The bronze-colored magazine cap contrasts nicely with the walnut fore-end.

it like a rifle at the center of the dot or at 6 o'clock and shoot one round.

At this distance, the result will be one ragged hole plus one or two wad holes. If the shot hole coincides with your POA, you got a keeper. Next comes patterning.

Again, I use the HunterJohn clays patterning target depicting 126 clay silhouettes, roughly the body size of smaller game birds. To pattern the Pointer, I selected a modified tube, Winchester AA ammo (3/4 oz. of 7-1/2s at 1,300 fps) and let fly at 30 yards.

My hope was to get a 30-yard pattern

with no less than two (and hopefully three or four) pellets in most of the clay silhouettes in the core 20" area. I was a happy hunter when the Pointer produced a very even 50-50 pattern (50 percent above and 50 percent below my POA. This is very useful for rising birds, crossing birds and bounding cottontails. Functionally, the Pointer fed, fired and extracted without a hiccup.

Weighing only 6 lbs., Legacy's 28-gauge Pointer with its handsome bronze receiver and walnut stock would make a great upland gun for you, your spouse, your kids

or grandkids. And, yes, the 28-gauge *does* have a certain magic about it.

Legacy has been continually improving and expanding their Pointer Phenoma line. The more Turkish shotguns I see and handle, the more impressed I am. It's remarkable how fast Turkey has come online as a hotbed for innovative shotgun designs, modern production processes and strict quality control.

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This Mad Max-style side-by-side 12-ga. pistol is a mission-specific snake-killing tool. When stoked with Aguila mini shells, recoil isn't bad.

IN COLD BLOOD PELLETS TRUMP FANGS

The petite woman had been out hiking along a riverbank with her kids. The water moccasin caught her just above the right ankle. By the time we met in the ER her leg already looked pretty gross.

What followed was a long, laborious recovery involving both antivenin and surgery. She kept the leg, but it was a tough road. There are those who will take umbrage at what follows, but you might just have to get over it. I simply despise venomous snakes.

ROLL CALL

There are four major players in North America, only three of which are usually troublesome. Water moccasins, rattlesnakes, and copperheads are pit vipers and ubiquitous where I live. Coral snakes employ a neurotoxin akin to that of a cobra, but they are both rare and timid.

I've heard all the arguments about how venomous snakes eat rats and such and are therefore really our pals. *Whatever!* Down here in the Deep South we refer to them

as targets that can kill you. Bird-hunting aside, venomous snakes are the *real* reason God made shotguns.

AMPHIBIOUS OPERATIONS

I was out with a buddy in a johnboat during a Mississippi Delta flood. We were either too young for live firearms or couldn't afford the ammo. Our defensive weaponry this day was a recurve bow and a couple of cedar arrows tipped with broadheads. I was in the front of the boat.

The current got the better of us, and we slammed nose-first into thick brush. I rolled backwards, fully enveloped in limbs, leaves, spider webs and bugs. When the boat came to a stop I was also nose-to-nose with a simply gigantic water moccasin.

I shouted for my buddy to extricate us, but nothing happened. Afraid to take my eyes off the snake hovering maybe 6" away from my eyeball, I noticed the tip of a broadhead appear next to my right ear. Before I could speak the world exploded in a maelstrom of muddy water and goop. The snake was gone.

I disentangled my end of the boat from the snake's lair while vigorously expressing my displeasure with my buddy's risky solution to my problem. Now he wanted his arrow back,



Copperheads are dangerous but less so than the Cottonmouth. Photo: Wikimedia

the fletching of which was sticking out of the water and quivering.

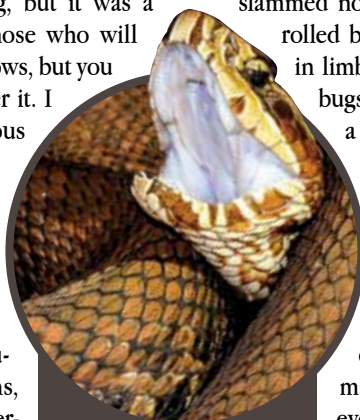
He gingerly lifted the arrow to find it had pinned the snake to the creekbed. The missile had passed into its open mouth and through its lower jaw. The snake had been mere milliseconds away from biting me in the face. We beat the thing to death with a log and called it a day.

CLOSE CALL

My daughter was seven and the most adorable carbon-based life form on the planet. (You may recall she was my able gun photographer before she left for college some years back.) We live way out in the wilderness and, like most little kids, she liked to run about barefoot.

As she scampered down the stone steps to the lake that serves as our backyard, I saw something move. I snatched her up just as her little pink foot was plunging into a massive coiled moccasin on the next step. The snake

A centenarian Remington Model 11 — ceramic engine block paint, cool-guy stuff from Brownells and a Gator Shotgun Spreader from Paradigm SRP makes this a snake-slaying machine.



Water Moccasins are the major players in Will's Area of Operations. This pic explains the "Cottonmouth" nickname. Photo: Geoff Gallice





Western Diamondbacks get massive. Will has encountered Texas specimens that were simply breathtaking. Photo: Wikimedia

had its head cocked back and its mouth open, showing us its ample dentures. I restarted my heart, placed my daughter a safe distance away, and expeditiously retrieved my cut-down Remington 870 12-gauge.

The gun is an NFA-registered short-barreled shotgun with a 12" tube. I jacked a shell into the chamber and arranged my muffs as I ran back outside. In moments the snake and I were staring at each other over the front sight bead.

I didn't want to blow a divot out of the steps, so we had a bit of a Mexican standoff. Eventually he blinked and retreated down the steps at speed. I drew a bead on the spot where he would fly off the end, my finger poised on the trigger.

The blasted snake just dove into the water without giving me a shot. In frustration I ran to the last step and cycled four rounds into the reeds, throwing copious mud and detritus heavenward. I was actually both shocked and thrilled to find myself showered with snake entrails.

HERP HARDWARE

I built a cut-down side-by-side 12-gauge pistol via a BATF Form 1 specifically because it handles Aguila Mini Shells. The 870 has obviously claimed its share of scaly scalps. My current primary counter-snake gun is a heavily modified, century-old Remington Model 11. I bag a couple each year and tan the hides. We can't stroll about in the dark without boots, but we're not overrun. Good riddance!



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THE 'OTHER' TRAPDOOR: THE .50-70

THE ALLIN CONVERSION WAS PURE YANKEE INGENUITY

Holt Bodinson

Springfield Trapdoors abound at gun shows, gun shops, pawnshops and in private collections. Some are so beat up they surely were in the Indian Wars. Others are so pristine they look like they were never issued. Most are in decent shooting condition and are still affordable, but 90 percent of the existing Trapdoors out there are .45-70s.

Here's the story about the other 10 percent — the .50-70 Trapdoors.

AN ECONOMICAL FIX

Imagine yourself as the Chief of Ordnance at the end of the Civil War. You know the muzzleloader is obsolete, but you're sitting on a stockpile of approximately a million perfectly functional .58 caliber rifled muskets. The Federal Treasury is nearly broke from a four-year apocalyptic conflict, but the military needs a battle-tough, breechloading rifle and they need it *now*.

Trained as an officer to delegate problem solving to subordinates, you look around, identify your best mechanic and hand him the problem. The mechanic was Erskine S. Allin, the Master Armorer at the Springfield Armory. The assignment you give him?

"Devise a plan for altering the musket into a breechloader for metallic primed cartridges."

Allin's solution was ingenious. Starting with a stock Springfield muzzleloading musket, a portion of the barrel just in front of the breech plug was milled off. The face of the breech plug was then milled to form a locking lug seat. The now familiar "Trapdoor" breechblock was fitted and attached to the top of the barrel with a hinge secured by soft solder and a single screw.

The cup face of the percussion hammer was milled off

flat. Otherwise, the original 1861 lock, stock, sights, buttplate, trigger guard assembly, barrel bands, band springs, ramrod, etc. were retained. The Springfield muzzleloading musket had been successfully and inexpensively transformed into the Springfield Model 1865 breechloading rifle.

FROM .58 TO .50

And the "metallic primed cartridge"? Because the first Allin conversion used the existing .58 caliber musket barrel, the new cartridge was a copper-cased, .58 rimfire cartridge loaded with a 480-gr. lead bullet and 60 grains of black powder. Velocity of the new round was approximately 960 fps, essentially duplicating the wicked .58 musket round. The .58 caliber rimfire was powerful but short-lived.

One year later, after a series of troop trials, the decision was made to reduce the caliber from .58 to .50 to accommodate a new .50-70 centerfire cartridge recently developed at the Frankfort Arsenal. In the name of frugality, the Trapdoor conversion was accomplished by reaming smooth the .58 caliber rifled barrel and inserting a .50 caliber liner. Thus the Springfield Model 1866 was born, later incorporating a number of improvements to be known as the Models 1868 and 1870.

It didn't take long before the 1866 Trapdoor and the .50-70



Trapdoor sights (above) were regulated to 900 yards. Wagon target distance maybe? Both Holt's 1870 and 1869 models carry 1870-marked breechblocks (below).





To reduce costs, Springfield used Civil War era locks on the new Trapdoors (left). Allin's ingenious cartridge conversion soldiered on until the adoption of the Krag (right).

cartridge made history in the hunting world.

William F. (Buffalo Bill) Cody christened his 1866 Trapdoor, "Lucretia Borgia," and with it killed 2,480 buffalo in a period of 18 months between 1866 and 1868 to feed the crews working on the Kansas-Pacific Railroad. Chambered in Trapdoor, Sharps and Remington, the .50-70 was a popular caliber in the buffalo camps due to the availability of .50-70 Gov't cartridges at government posts.

General George Armstrong Custer was particularly fond of the .50-70 for hunting and carried a sporterized Model 1866 Trapdoor with double-set triggers. Later in 1873 he switched over to a .50-70 Remington Rolling Block Sporter. Writing to Remington in 1873 at the conclusion of his Yellowstone Expedition, Custer tells of taking 41 antelope, 4 buffalo, 4 mule deer and 3 whitetail with his .50-70, noting the average range of all antelope taken was 250 yards with the farthest being 630 yards.

THE CADET

The two Model 1870 Trapdoors pictured here are typical of the model with one notable exception — one is a standard Model 1870 rifle and the other known as the "Cadet" is a scaled-down Model 1869 (although correctly it carries an 1870 marked breechblock and a full-size .50-70 chamber).

Cadet Model Trapdoors were issued primarily to West Point



Two representative .50-70 Trapdoors: An 1870 rifle (top) and an 1869 Cadet (bottom).

and Naval Academy cadets and featured shorter barrels, thinner stocks, lighter furniture and — in some models — shorter stocks and shorter chambers for the .50-55 cartridge (the .50-70 loaded with only 55 grains of powder).

What's particularly interesting to me is both models correctly sport old Civil War locks, the rifle lock being dated "1863" and the Cadet "1865." Both barrels show signs of their .50-caliber liners at the muzzles.

LOAD AND ACCURACY INFO

If you're so lucky to own a .50-70, it's a forgiving cartridge to load, and in my experience the average .50-70 rifle will outshoot a comparable .45-70 rifle in terms of accuracy. I expect my old, coarse sighted .50-70 Trapdoors, even with a bit of pitting in their bores, to produce 3-shot groups of 3/4 to 1" groups at 50 yards, and 3 to 4" clusters at 100. The larger groups at 100 yards aren't the fault of the rifle or the load, but the product of very crude musket sights.

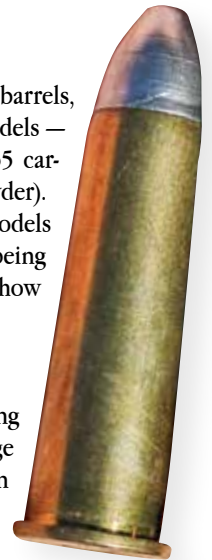
The loads? First, with all-new Starline brass, I open up the flash hole with a 3/32" drill to promote good ignition of black powder or black powder substitutes with Federal 215 Magnum primers. The standard bullet is the 450-gr. Lyman or Lee bullet cast from a 20-1 temper mix that drops from the mold with a diameter of 0.515. No sizing is necessary.

I lubricate them with either SPG lube, Lyman Black Powder Gold or a 50-50 mixture of beeswax and olive oil. If you don't cast, Buffalo Arms is a reliable source for the cast and lubricated Lyman bullet and Lyman .50-70 dies.

The best performing loads in my 1870 rifle have been 70 grains Swiss 1-1/2 black powder (or Olde Eynsford) at approximately 1,290 fps, and a duplex load consisting of 7.0 grains of IMR 4759 as a priming charge plus 52 grains of Swiss 1-1/2 for approximately 1,315 fps.

For a complete smokeless load, try 9.5 grains of Trail Boss for approximately 845 fps and MOA accuracy. *Always* use "Trapdoor" reloading data.

That's the story of the *other* Trapdoor — the successful and frugal conversion of a Civil War muzzleloading rifled musket into a very workable .50-70 Trapdoor. 🦏

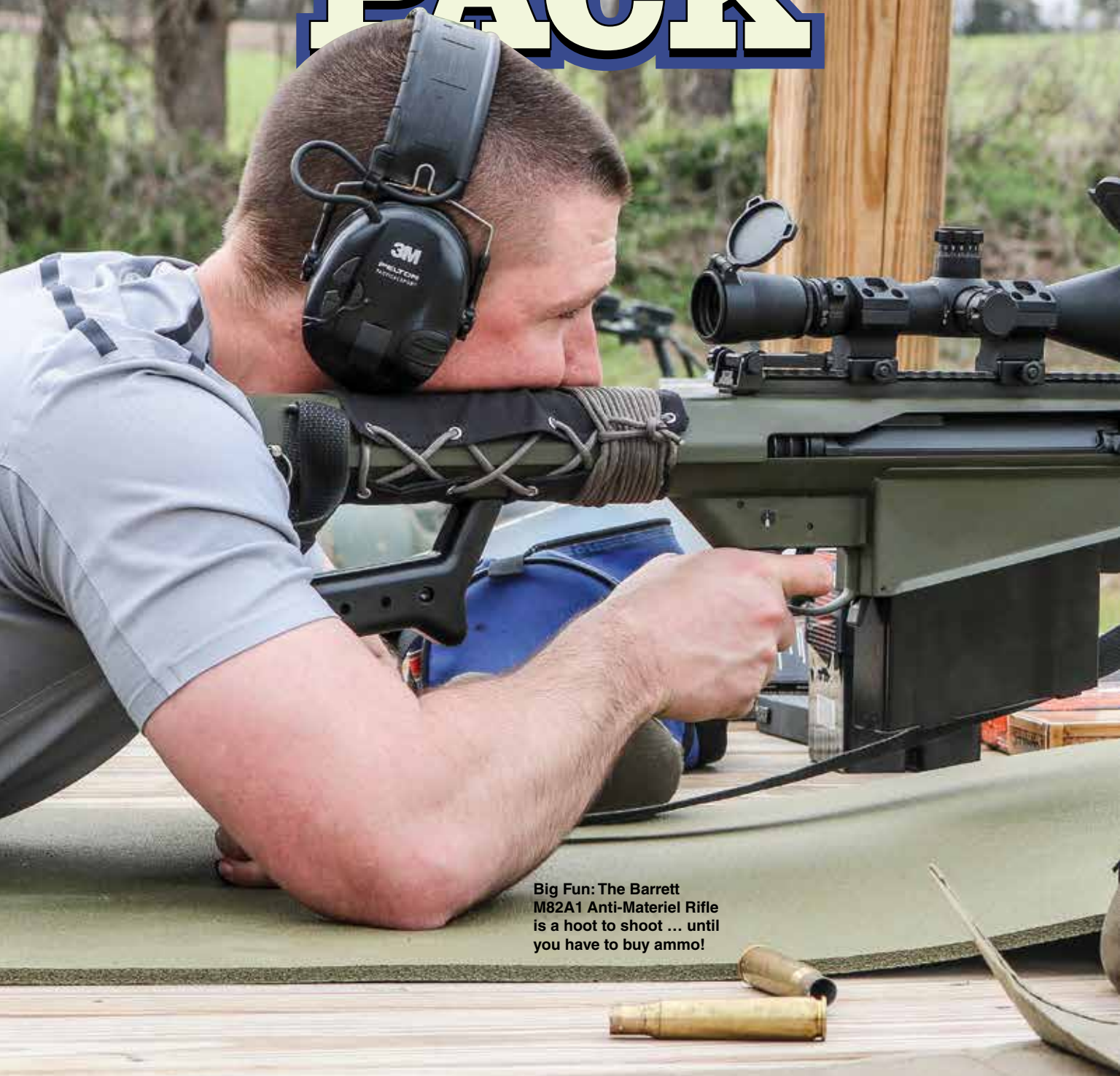


The Army adopted the .45-70 cartridge (above) for the Trapdoor in 1873, replacing the .50-70 (below).



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TAKING THE PLUNGE

Inimitable firearms luminary John Moses Browning originally created the .50 BMG (Browning machine gun) round to counter the barrage of balloons, aircraft and primitive armored vehicles on the battlefields of World War I. The original specifications came from General John "Black Jack" Pershing himself. The cartridge

is simply a scaled up .30-06.

This massive round and the peerless Ma Deuce heavy machinegun firing it were apparently perfect. Despite several attempts we cannot seem to make anything better, even now in the Information Age. The same M2 Heavy Barrel still fights atop armored HUMVEEs and MRAP vehicles even today, more than a century after its inception.

I freely admit I drank the Kool-Aid. I scraped up my pennies for what seemed half a lifetime until I finally landed a Barrett M82A1 anti-materiel rifle of my own. I could imagine myself exploding engine blocks half a mile distant behind the same gun gracing such action flicks as *The Accountant* and *Robocop*.

I found a good deal on the gun on Gunbroker.

AN 'EASY' WAY TO RELOAD THE BIG GUN



A whole lotta lead: (L-R): 5.56 NATO, a 750-gr. Hornady A-Max .50 BMG bullet, a 147-gr. 7.62 NATO bullet and a 7.62 NATO round.



Dies for the .50 BMG are like those for the .308 (at right), only bigger. *Much* bigger.

However, getting a good deal on a Lambo-rghini is still a crazy lot of money — once I actually bought this beast of a gun, I had to feed it.

Cheap ammo made from pulled GI components was \$3 a round and grouped in a coffee can lid at 100 meters. What had I done? This insanely expensive rifle would

clearly never perform a grid square away if it couldn't print cloverleaves at a football field.

Then I ponied up for some match ammo and found the Barrett was indeed one tack-driving howitzer. The only problem was .50 BMG match ammo costs (no kidding!) \$6 per round. It looked like my expensive new pile driver would be a wall hanger and little else — until RCBS saved the day.

SUPER SIZE ME!

Reloading really is fun, particularly when it's a family affair. Back when my kids were young they helped me manage components, and it was always great fellowship. The work is repetitive so there's plenty of time to think and visit.

Thanks to RCBS, reloading the .50 BMG is just like loading any lesser rifle cartridge, only on a way-bigger scale (after all, we're talking an OAL of 5.45). The folks at RCBS know what you'll need so it all comes in a single box. The set-up is called the



Will believes these Hornady rounds are the finest .50 BMG factory ammo — but they cost \$6 per pop.



Hodgdon US 869 is designed to stoke big rounds like the .50 BMG.



CCI No. 35 primers launch the .50 BMG. The .22 LR cartridge is there for scale!

Ammomaster .50 BMG Pack and it is one-stop shopping to get you into building your own supersized rifle rounds. The only other things you need are the sundry components, a way to manage powder and a gun to shoot your massive new cartridges!

The press is a gargantuan contrivance sufficiently upsized to provide the considerable forces required to size these things. Compound leverage and a generous handle make this a surprisingly easy chore. The solid steel ram is 1.5" across. Despite its impressive dimensions, the rig will still fit on a typical bench.

The full-length sizer and seater dies look much like their lesser counterparts except they're as big as hot dog buns. The ram-priming unit fits into the press and the set comes with a trim die as well.

I opted for the RCBS Quick Change High Capacity Powder Measure. This leviathan will hold up to 2 lbs. of powder and comes with three different drop tubes, one of which is designed specifically for the .50 BMG. The metering assemblies exchange with a pull pin. You can certainly make do with less but keep in mind the prodigious scope of this enterprise.

COMPONENTS

CCI makes the primers and they are indeed impressive while Hodgdon makes the powder. A family-owned company, the Hodgdon Powder Company began with 50,000 lbs. of government-surplus gunpowder sold in paper sacks via mail order immediately after WWII. Hodgdon US 869



The Massive RCBS Ammomaster .50 BMG on Will's reloading bench. The hopper on this monster will hold up to 2 lbs. of propellant!

feeds really big rounds like the .50 BMG. Loading data is on the label.

If you're looking for world-class big bore accuracy then 750-gr. Hornady A-Max bullets are the finest show in town. These high-performance boat tail brutes sport exceptionally pointy tips and a secant ogive profile. I'm not completely sure what the last thing means, but these babies are precision beasts downrange.

THE PAYOFF

Rolling your own .50 BMG rounds is fairly fundamental for anybody who has ever reloaded before. Even if you're a neophyte the instructions included with the set are clear and easy to understand. Should you get stumped there is always the miracle

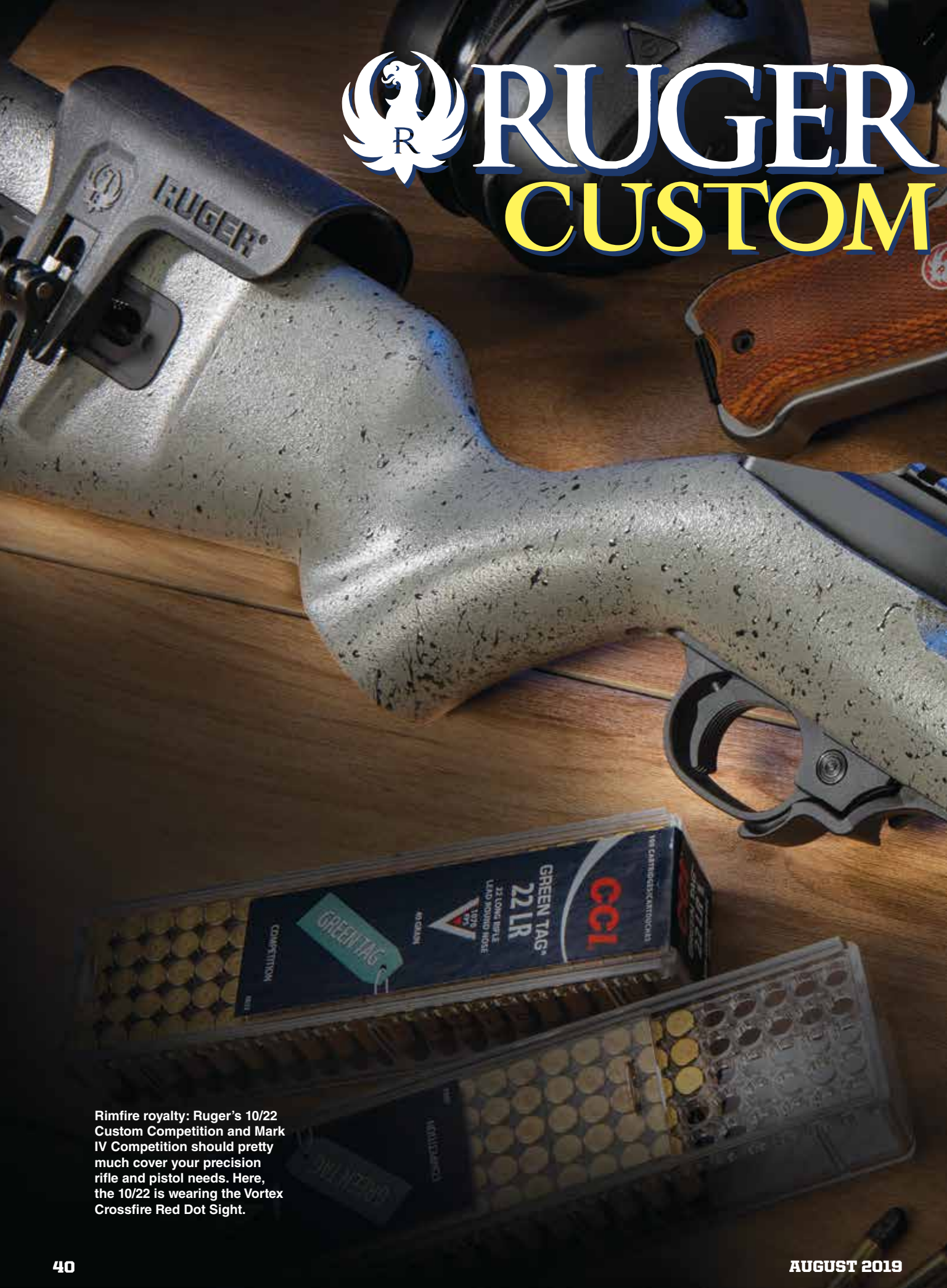
of YouTube.

I'm not really a reloading fanatic like some names you might see in these halcyon pages. I have reloaded for decades simply to avail myself of cheap bulk blasting ammo. However, if you take your time, the RCBS Ammomaster .50 BMG Pack produces precision .50-caliber rounds that punch tight groups just like the crazy-expensive match stuff, all for the price of components. It's the only reason I get to play with my fancy .50-caliber rifle!

www.rcbs.com
www.hodgdon.com
www.hornady.com
www.cci-ammunition.com
www.barrett.net



RUGER CUSTOM



Rimfire royalty: Ruger's 10/22 Custom Competition and Mark IV Competition should pretty much cover your precision rifle and pistol needs. Here, the 10/22 is wearing the Vortex Crossfire Red Dot Sight.



HOLT BODINSON

**PHOTOS: ROBERT JONES/
THE IMAGESMITH, LLC**

10/22 COMPETITION

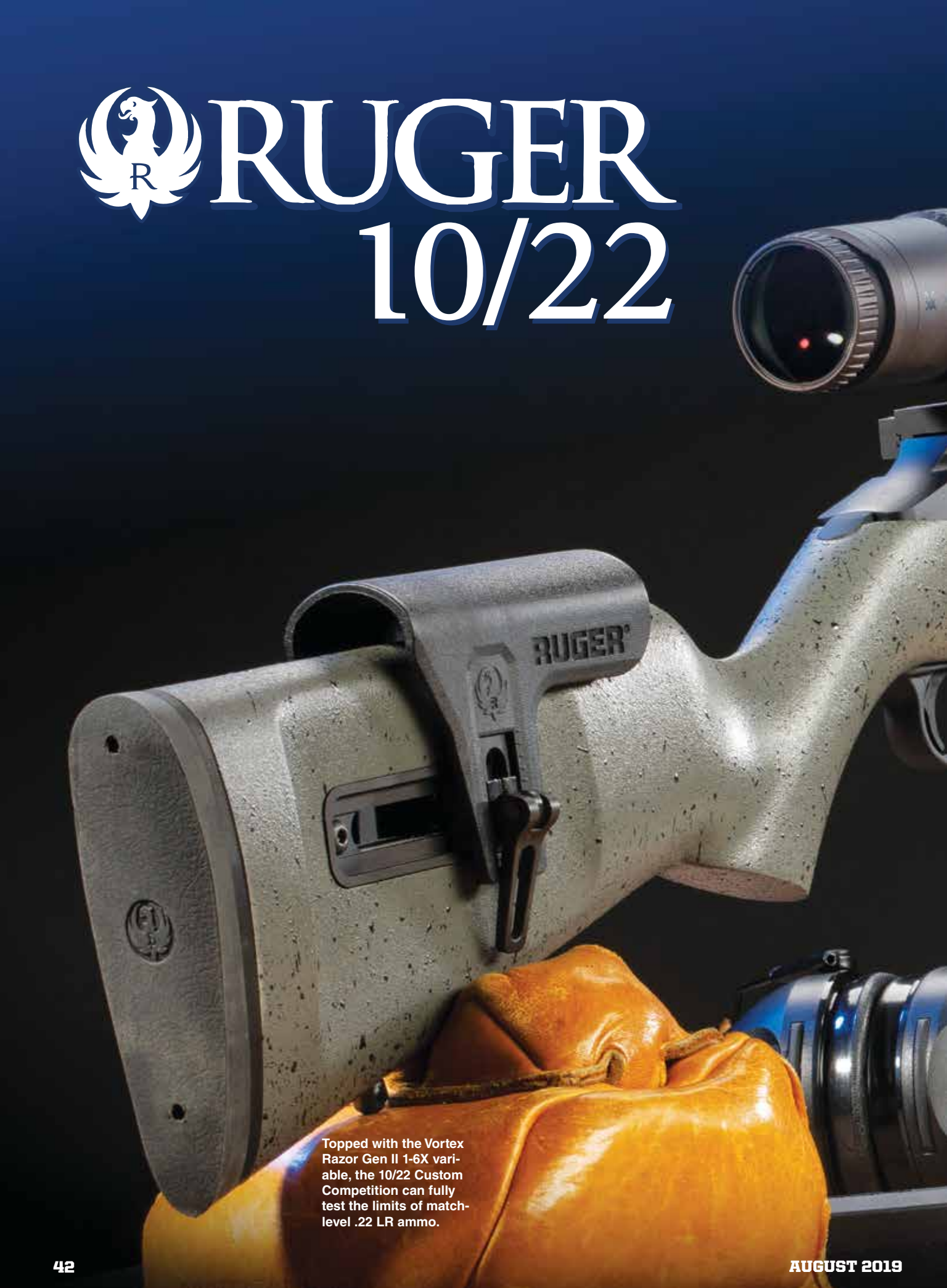
A NEW EDGE FOR THE BREAD-AND-BUTTER RIMFIRE

With the recent launch of Ruger's Custom Shop, we wondered what would be rolling out the door. It didn't take the new operation long to turn their sights on Ruger's 55-year-old rimfire classic, the 10/22.

What emerged was the 10/22 Custom Competition with upgrades and refinements we haven't seen in previous 10/22 models at an MSRP of \$899.

TOOL FOR THE TIMES

The timing of the introduction couldn't be better. Rimfire competition is exploding in popularity with some great new tactical, precision rifle and silhouette games

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a silver-colored Ruger 10/22 rifle. The rifle is positioned diagonally across the frame. A Vortex Razor Gen II 1-6X variable scope is mounted on top. In the foreground, an orange drawstring bag is partially visible. The background is a solid dark blue. The Ruger logo, a stylized bird with an 'R' on its chest, is visible on the side of the receiver.

RUGER 10/22

Topped with the Vortex Razor Gen II 1-6X variable, the 10/22 Custom Competition can fully test the limits of match-level .22 LR ammo.



GUNS[®]

MAGAZINE

RUGER MARK IV COMPETITION PISTOL

A .22 TO COUNT ON WHEN RESULTS MATTER

BRENT T. WHEAT

I've not had a lot of experience with Ruger .22 pistols so I jumped at the chance to spend a little quality time with Ruger's Mark IV Competition, built for folks who are *serious* about rimfire match pistols.

The pistol traces its lineage all the way back to 1949 and Bill Ruger's original Standard Model .22. Over the years, the gun has gone through various major numbered-series makeovers and improvements until the Mark IV was unveiled in 2016.

Mark IVs come in several flavors, even a "Tactical" model and the well-loved Target version (frequently customized). Last year, Ruger decided to up the ante and build a new top-of-the-line Competition version.

SPECS

Weighing in at a stout 46 oz. (vs. 36 oz. for the Target model), it certainly has real-deal heft. Utilizing a cast rather than stamped frame, the fit and finish of the satin-stainless piece is almost flawless and reinforces the feeling of a quality tool rather than "just" a .22.

The Mark IV series features a one-button takedown system, alleviating the significant maintenance headaches of earlier Ruger pistols. With the Mark IV, you push a button underneath the rear bolt and the entire upper assembly swivels on a hinged connection at the front of the frame, much like an AR. From there, the bolt pulls free for cleaning. To reassemble, you simply reverse the process, pivoting the upper into the lower until you hear a click.

The Competition features a distinctive slab-sided 6.88" barrel (1:16



Out of the box, the Mark IV Competition sports plain vanilla adjustable sights. Serious competitive types will probably opt for optics.



The Ruger Mark IV Competition has a host of features sought by serious hunters or competitors.

likely undertake.

The factory sights are, well, sights. The front is a large black blade while the rear is a straightforward micro-adjustable. The irons are certainly adequate — good for a broad range of tasks but great at none. Once again, this model is geared for competitors and other inveterate tinkers, so it would appear Ruger chose a good, basic set of sights knowing most serious end-users would likely add optics — or at least change out the standard equipment.

The stocks are laminated wood and feature sharp checkering along with the red Ruger medallion. Most noteworthy is the prominent thumb shelf on the left panel. This makes the gun almost impossible for a southpaw shooter to properly grip out of the box, so if you're a lefty, aftermarket stocks would be a necessity — a mildly surprising design choice for

a gun featuring an ambidextrous thumb safety. For a right-hander, the panel does provide a nice place to rest your thumb (though I didn't use it as such).



Ten rounds at 25 yards using 40-gr. Federal Champion ammo. With optical sights, Brent thinks the gun is capable of even better performance.

in play. Since many of them adhere to strict time limits, an accuracy-tuned, semi-auto is a decisive advantage. It's the perfect competitive instrument to put you in the winner's circle.

My go-to 10/22 has been the snappy looking, stainless steel, bull barrel Target Model. I've liked its looks, its weight and — fed Aguila Rifle match ammo — its ability to knock out 1", 5-shot groups at 100 yards. Yet, compared to the new Custom Competition model, it's a big, stolid beast while the new Ruger guy on the block is lithe and lively.

There's a dynamic to the new model. With its 16.12" fluted and compensated barrel, an overall length of 36" and a weight of 6 lbs., it feels dynamic in your hands. You could simply say it's a "well-balanced package," but there's so much more.

The weight of the Custom Competition is equally distributed between your pistol grip hand and your forward hand. When you shift the gun left or right, you don't have to stand there and wait for the barrel to arrive. It's there — *immediately*. This subtle "pointability" makes all the difference when seconds count. Ruger's Custom Shop got it right.

Adding to the dynamic is its highly textured stock with "grippy" hand grooves radiused into both sides of the forearm and a fully adjustable cheek rest, which can be fine-tuned, horizontally and vertically — even reversed — to accommodate a variety of optics and faces to provide a stable and repeatable cheek weld for the competitive shooter.

10/22 TWEAKERY

Taking a closer look at the features built into the new gun, there's Ruger's pace-setting BX-Trigger system. The BX-Trigger is not new this year but it takes any old 10/22 model and moves it into an entirely higher performance plane.

Owner-adjustable from 2.5-3 lbs., it's light, crisp with minimal overtravel, a positive reset and, yes, it's a drop-in module fitting all existing 10/22s and 22 Charger pistol models. As an accessory, it's available directly from Ruger for \$89.95 at www.ruger.com — and it's worth every penny.

The receiver itself has received a makeover. No longer is the Picatinny rail a Ruger bolt-on accessory. The new, optics-ready Picatinny rail is now cast and machined integrally with the receiver for utter rigidity. Moreover, the rail is 30 MOA, giving the shooter increased long-range

continued on page 46



For rapid magazine changes, Ruger's Custom Shop has added an extended, ambidextrous magazine release (left) to the BX-Trigger assembly. It wraps around the front of the trigger guard and can be operated rapidly. Threaded muzzle? Of course! Swap out the factory muzzlebrake (right) for a Gemtech suppressor if that's your pleasure.



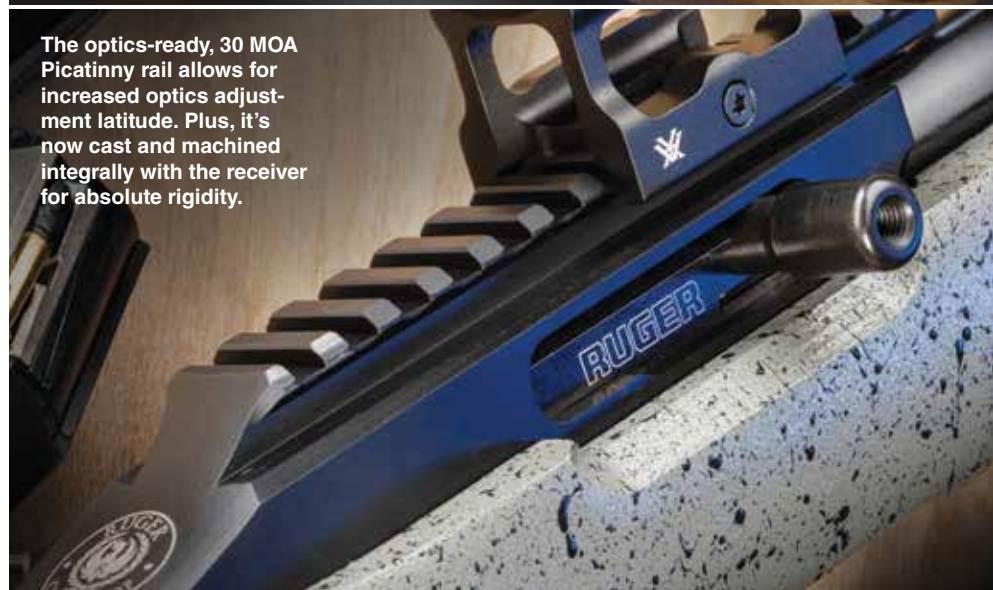
“Running 14 different loads through a rifle at 50 yards was eye opening — *all* the five-shot groups measured under an inch!”

elevation adjustments with their optics. This is important in the typical tactical rimfire match where steel targets are often placed out beyond 100 yards.

The custom receiver action has also been tweaked a bit to increase better stock bedding with the addition of a secondary, rear bedding lug visible at the rear of the receiver. The fluted bull barrel is fully free-floated in the stock and features an enhanced match quality chamber.

Since competitive events often call for rapid magazine changes and reloads, the custom shop has added an extended, ambidextrous magazine release to the BX-Trigger assembly. The release wraps around the front of the trigger guard and can be operated rapidly with the trigger hand. When the release is pulled down, those

The optics-ready, 30 MOA Picatinny rail allows for increased optics adjustment latitude. Plus, it's now cast and machined integrally with the receiver for absolute rigidity.



The highly textured stock features fully adjustable cheek rest that can be fine-tuned to accommodate a variety of optics and provide the perfect cheekweld.



The trigger was crisp, with no noticeable creep and a clean break, but fairly heavy overall for a “target” gun; unfortunately, our trigger scale decided to go on the blink so I have no way of determining poundage. Using my own *Mark I Experienced Finger* I’d estimate it in the 4-to-5 lb. range. Fortunately, there are many gunsmiths across the country who can work magic on the Ruger pistol trigger assembly — again, another common practice for the competitive shooter.



Takedown is one-button simple. The left grip panel thumb shelf doesn’t help the lefties but they’ll appreciate the 1911-style ambidextrous thumb safety.

RANGework

We fired the gun with every type of .22 ammo on hand, all adding up to 10 different brands and upwards of 600 shots. After an afternoon of shooting (and the accidental killing of one of our “good” sandbags), the gun consistently favored standard velocity RN ammo.

The best performance was turned in by the 40-gr. Federal Champion while the second best — somewhat surprisingly — was from an old but unopened box of 40-gr. Winchester Wildcat ammo.

Rather than shoot standard 3- or 5-round bragging groups, the fully loaded 10-round Mark IV magazine simply begged for all the lead to go downrange in one sitting, so I obliged. At 25 yards from a sandbag rest on a windy day, the best 10-round group I could muster was just over 1.5". Not too shabby, but probably beneath the capabilities of the gun in better circumstances and with some type of optical sight.

Ultimately, if you’re looking for an *uber* high-quality .22 pistol for hunting, casual matches or to serve as the basic canvas for building a “serious” competition rod, you can’t go wrong picking up the Ruger Mark IV Competition. The MSRP is \$749. 

www.ruger.com
www.federalpremium.com

“We fired the gun with every type of .22 ammo on hand, all adding up to 10 different brands ...”



10-round Ruger magazines just shoot out. With no magazine hang-ups, it’s a neat design giving the competitor yet another slight edge.

NO FOUL BALL

Blowback semi-auto rimfires, particularly hard-used competition guns, are naturally dirty little beasts that readily accumulate grease, powder and lead residues. Accordingly, Ruger’s owner’s manual for the 10/22 Custom Competition goes

into infinite illustrated detail on the complete disassembly and cleaning of the gun. What’s intriguing to me about the traditional rimfire fouling problem is the timely appearance of CCI’s new “Clean-22” loads.

Dispensing with traditional bullet lubricants, CCI has developed a proprietary polymer coating for two 40-gr. offerings — a high velocity load featuring a red-colored RN bullet at 1,235 fps and a blue-bullet subsonic loading at 1,070 fps.

CCI claims the new poly coating



virtually eliminates traditional lead and copper barrel fouling while cutting lead buildup in suppressors by 60 to 80 percent. I couldn't wait to try their "Clean-22" in Ruger's new Custom Competition, so it was off to the range.

Running 14 different loads through a rifle at 50 yards was eye opening — *all* the five-shot groups measured under an inch! The most accurate combinations were CCI Standard Velocity (0.45) and CCI Mini-Mag (0.46).

These were followed by Federal Champion (0.64), Federal Hunter Match (0.70) and Remington Viper (0.73). Interestingly, two refined match loads, Federal's Ultra Match and Aguila's Rifle Match didn't make the top five, turning in 0.78 and 0.77 groups respectively.

And CCI's new Clean-22 brand? They're clean, but they lost out to their conventionally lubricated cousins with a 0.81 Blue group and a Red cluster of 0.92.

The results prove once again every .22

is a law unto itself when it comes to ammunition compatibility.

After working with Ruger's new 10/22 Custom Competition, I can assure you this rimfire will prove as handy in the squirrel woods as it will be a commanding force in the tactical rimfire matches (www.NRL22.org). 

www.ruger.com
www.vortexoptics.com
www.cci-ammunition.com

THE BISLEY REVOLVER

A 'NEARLY BRITISH' PEACEMAKER

ALAN GARBERS

She was bred from rugged stock to fill the demand for a refined tool in a challenging contest. Her lines and curves were familiar to countless men and women of the American West, yet she had a style echoing the elegance of the Victorian Era.

We're talking about the Colt Bisley (1894-1912).

Built on the frame of the Colt Single Action Army, the Bisley was designed to meet the demands of shooters competing in the Bisley pistol matches in Great Britain.

The key differences were a lowered and wider hammer spur and distinctive humped, inward curving grips. While the lower and wider hammer spur make sense, one may wonder about the unusually shaped grips. Unlike the common straight-arm shooting styles, the recommended Bisley-style was to aim with the wrist and elbow bent.

MADE FOR A MATCH

According to Hugh B.C. Pollard's *The Book of the Pistol and Revolver*, the Bisley matches were a timed event with targets staged at 20 yards, then moved to 50 yards as contestants were thinned from the ranks. The contestant could use only one hand



By installing reproduction Colt hard-rubber grips, Alan turned his Cimarron Bisley repro into a spitting image of the original Colt.



Alan's Cimarron Bisley is a faithful reproduction of the original.

with no additional support from their body.

The targets themselves were timed and only visible during a three-second window. During those three seconds, the shooter had to raise the pistol from the shooting rail, aim and fire before the target disappeared again for three seconds. Only one shot was allowed during each appearance of the target and when the target disappeared, the pistol had to be lowered so it was touching a shooting rail. The recommendation was to practice the timing with a metronome.

Each match consisted of 12 shots. At 20 yards the shooter was given 60 seconds to fire six shots. At 50 yards the shooter was given 90 seconds.

Most Colt Bisley pistols went to Great Britain sporting maximum-length barrels of 7-1/2" and adjustable rear sights but as semi-autos became popular, the single-action Bisley lost favor.



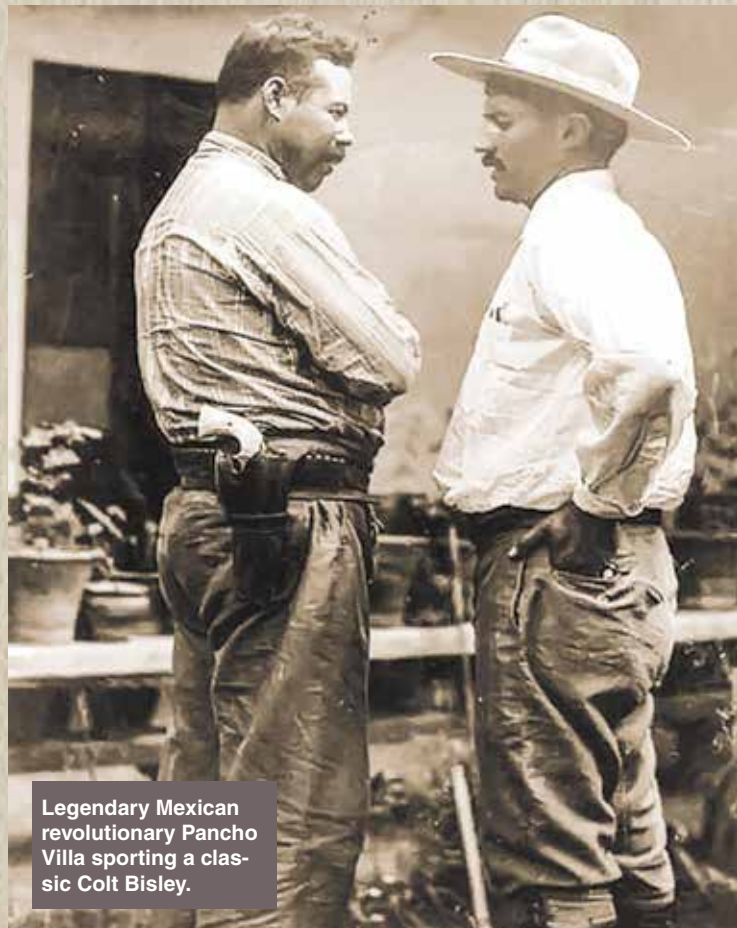
Gentleman Bandit Bill Miner was a popular folk hero and carried a Colt Bisley.

PANCHO VILLA

While a few Bisleys were shipped across the "Big Pond," many more made their way west into the hands of cowboys, outlaws and lawmen and firearm historians say the majority of the Bisleys went to the arid Southwest. This may have been from the popularity of one well-known admirer — Pancho Villa.

The Mexican outlaw turned revolutionary had many followers on both sides of the borders. Freedom-loving cowboys from the U.S. flocked to his banner, fighting to overthrow the corrupt leadership that had a chokehold on Mexico. In their admiration for Villa, it stands to reason many of his followers would want similar guns.

Accounts say Villa owned several Bisleys and one now resides in the Autry Museum of the American West. It is a fine example of a 1912



Legendary Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa sporting a classic Colt Bisley.

Bisley Colt in .44-40, complete with heavily worn bluing, a faded color case hardened frame and custom mother-of-pearl grips.

While the Bisley's unique styling may have attracted Villa, it may have been more of a need than a fashion statement. Some historians say Villa had arthritis in his hands and the Bisley grips were easier to hold than other grip styles of the day.

AUDIE MURPHY

This held true for another famous admirer of the Bisley Colt, Audie Murphy. Murphy had problems gripping pistols due to injuries he had received during WWII and movie star Gary Cooper gifted Murphy a Bisley with custom grips to make it easier for the star to hold.

Colt's records show the revolver was shipped to Tufts-Lion Arms Company in 1905, but left the factory chambered in .38-40 and with a 5-1/2" barrel. Cooper had the gun refitted by Colt with a 7-1/2" target barrel and rechambered to .45 Colt — Murphy's favorite caliber. The Colt factory brought the pistol up to "presentation grade" with an ivory front sight insert and a lanyard ring. When completed, the gun had every appearance of those used in the Bisley matches 50 years earlier.

COWBOYS, LAWMEN

Other good guys liked the Bisley. Cowboy, lawman and writer Walter Rogers wore a Bisley across the arid plains and canyons of Texas. He preferred the Bisley grips as they allowed him to get off a faster first shot.

"In repeat shots, it is much slower than the Army Model," Rogers wrote, "but it can be used with amazing speed on the draw and first shot, and is very accurate."

The Bisley was designed for "duelist" or one-handed shooting but Rogers appeared to prefer using the "shootist" or two-handed style of shooting. As a result, he had the trigger spur modified higher to almost the same profile as the original Colt SAA.

The Colt Bisley found its way into many cowboy holsters such as John K. Rollinson's who worked for the M-Bar Ranch in Wyoming in the



Authentic Colt Bisleys can often be found at bargain rates compared to other First Generation Colt SAAs.

This 1901-vintage .32 WCF Colt Bisley made the perfect canvas for engraving historic Texas cattle brands — King Ranch, Diamond H, Rocking R, XIT Ranch and others. Photo: Terry L. St. Clair



The blued Cimarron-made Bisley is a faithful copy of the Colt, while the stainless Ruger Bisley is closer to Elmer Keith's Revolver Number 5.

1890s. "We all carried guns. I remember that each of the six men had guns almost exactly alike," Rollinson said. "We all preferred the Colt single-action six-shooter. Some liked the Bisley model, others the Frontier model."

At the age of 19, Texas cowboy G.R. Tucker drifted into the pages of history as a "regulator" in the infamous Johnson County War of Wyoming in 1892. Tucker was part of the paid mercenaries from Texas sent to clean out the rustlers and squatters who infested the open range of north-central Wyoming. Working from a death list from the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, the regulators started their lethal work. After a few lopsided "battles," the tables turned on the regulators when the local populace rose up in force and trapped the regulators on a remote ranch. Tucker managed to stay alive during the two-day siege until the U.S. Army arrived to quell the dispute.

Tucker drifted back south and became a U.S. Deputy Marshall, then Assistant Chief of Police in Ardmore until moving on to Ragtown during the oil boom in 1915. He must have fallen into a large sum of money because he purchased a nickel-plated Colt Bisley engraved by none other than Cuno Helfricht. The gun is stunning with mother of pearl grips sporting a steer head on the right side. It currently resides in the Autry Museum of the American West.

IN THE MOVIES

Some outlaws also favored the pistol. Bill Miner, known as the Grey Fox or the Gentleman Bandit, used a .41 Colt caliber Bisley in his later years. Miner gained his reputation as the Gentleman Bandit by being polite to those he was robbing and insisting his gang only shoot to kill as a last resort. Legend says Miner coined the phrase, "Hands Up!"

Miner started out robbing stagecoaches in California but was repeatedly caught and imprisoned. Starting over, Miner took on the alias George Edwards, moved to western Canada, and commenced robbing payroll trains. Miner was again caught and imprisoned, but escaped not long after.

In 1982 Richard Farnsworth starred in a movie of Miner's life story. In it, Farnsworth used Miner's original Colt Bisley.

Bisley lovers can also catch glimpses of its classic lines in the hands of Andy Clyde, better known as "California Carlson" in the Hopalong Cassidy matinees of the 1940s, and on the hip of Eli Wallach in *The Magnificent Seven*.

Colt Bisley revolvers can often be found at gun shows and online auctions. Best of all, they often are in better condition and cost less than Colt SAAs in the original configuration from the same time period!



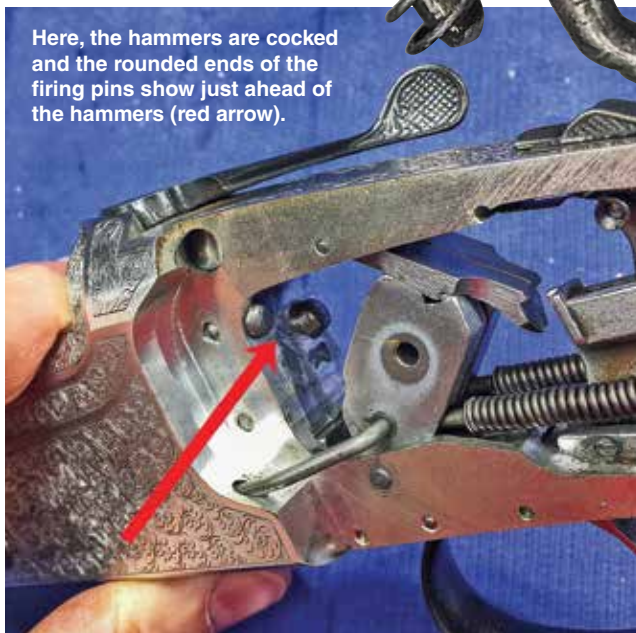


Easy FIRING

YOU BROKE YOUR GUN —

Oopsie — broken shotgun firing pin is at the right. The other “good” pin is used as a reference.

Here, the hammers are cocked and the rounded ends of the firing pins show just ahead of the hammers (red arrow).



During my decades of “hobby gunsmithing” — as I like to call it — I’ve lost count of the number of broken firing pins I’ve fixed, replaced, rebuilt or caused me to eventually throw my hands up in despair. While the most recent one has to do with an over/under shotgun, the same basic steps apply to just about any firing pin for revolver, auto, rifle, shotgun and even many .22s. The real mystery is when the pin is missing and you can’t find a sample, even in a picture — but that’s another story!

This is a friend’s gun and what happened was after firing, the pin didn’t retract fully so when he opened the action, it bent and broke off the firing pin’s tip. Initially he couldn’t figure it out, but just knew the pin seemed stuck “out” as he said. He tried to find a pin online with no luck. He told me about it and since I have some experience fixing shotgun firing pins, I figured I could just make one to lend a hand.

TAKEDOWN TIPS

If you attempt something like this, use your “magic” smartphone and take plenty of pics while you disassemble things. To say they’re worth their weight in gold at such times is a serious understatement! “Oh, I’ll remember how the widget goes back on.” Nope. You won’t.

Once the gun was apart, I saw the issue. This is an affordable “big box store” shotgun so the final fit and finish of the parts wasn’t great. The pins showed plenty of peening and wear already, even though the gun wasn’t very old.



Roy makes the first pass on the cut-down screw to get the correct outer diameter.



Getting close: the unbroken pin is used as a guide. Roy uses a digital caliper, along with his *Mark I Eyeball*, to make sure!

PIN FIX

WHAT NOW?

ROY HUNTINGTON

A firing pin needs to be soft enough to take repeated blows without shattering, but hard enough to withstand wear and tear. It's a delicate balance at times. In this case, it looked like the peening on the broken pin had jammed it in the firing pin channel, causing it to stick out, hence the break. But, I saw this was an easy fix.

BIG NAIL OR BOLT?

Yup. Believe it or not, a nail or bolt often makes great raw stock for firing pins of all sorts. I might not use one for a .300 Win. Mag. but for old revolvers, many autos, shotguns, .22s and such, your spare parts bin is your bag-o-old-nails, bolts and screws! Since I didn't have a big enough nail handy for this one, I used an old lag screw. Just keep in mind you don't need or even want an extremely hard bolt. Regular Home Depot bulk-bun stuff like nails and bolts are fine.

I spent a bit of time with a digital caliper, drew up a simple chart for dimensions and turned the unthreaded end to proper diameter after hack-sawing off the bolt head. Then I carefully turned the other diameters of the various bits. When you turn the final pin end there's not much strength there so very light cuts of .001, finished to size with a very light file, are the ticket.

Once finished on the lathe, I used my small mill for the cross-cut where the action/receiver pin crosses to hold the



The slot cut (left) and a bit more work with a fine file tidied things up. It's ready to install. Presto, good as new. Actually, at least one firing pin is better than new!

firing pin in its channel. It's wider than the cross-pin since the firing pin needs to move forward and backward at the blow of the hammer. The spring holds it "retracted" and when the hammer strikes (inside the guns' action) the pin flies forward, striking the primer, then the spring retracts it so the action can be opened. Unless the pin sticks and the end gets broken off!

FINAL STUFF

A bit of light hand work in the lathe rounded sharp edges and a touch of 220 grit to 400 grit paper made things smooth. I love it when a project comes together and it worked fine right off the bat. I always learn something, enjoy this sort of work and doubly enjoy the big smiles on the faces of the people I help. And, it helps to keep my "sipping bourbon" stash well stocked! "Thanks Roy, here's a present!"

Something to keep in mind is this is very simple to do. If you have an electric drill you have a "mini-lathe" and can use a file to shape things like this. You can also use a file to cut the slot. I've also found old ball-point pens can often supply springs needed, and just about everybody has a pile of rusty nails and bolts around. The key is "don't get in over your head," and make sure you match the original firing pin length or, if it's worn, make yours a bit longer so you can shorten it to fit as needed.

JUST DON'T BLOW YOURSELF UP!

Do you have an experience fixing a broken gun like this? Tell us about it and send a photo or two. We'd all love to see it. Also, go to www.brownells.com if you want to shop for gunsmith tools of all sorts!



(L-R) The broken pin, the unbroken pin and the "made from lag-screw" rough version. Notice the peening and wear on the old pins due to soft steel.

MAGN

Duke dumped this coyote with his pet Remington Model 700 .222 Remington Magnum — which Duke doesn't consider a true magnum.

MIKE “DUKE” VENTURINO

**PHOTOS:
YVONNE VENTURINO**



Magnums often recommended for large game (left to right): 7mm Remington Magnum, 7mm Weatherby Magnum, .300 Winchester Magnum, .300 Weatherby Magnum and .30-378 Weatherby Magnum. Duke thinks the .270 Winchester and .30-06 at right are a better choice.

UMS?

No Thanks!

I'm not saying I never used magnum rifles. I've owned and hunted with such magnums as a 7mm Remington, .300 H&H, .300 Winchester and .308 Norma to name a few. In fact, I've actually shot two critters with a magnum rifle. The first was a cow elk standing broadside at about 80 yards. After I shot, she just stepped into the brush and disappeared — I'd swear the bullet just made her feel better. Seconds later, another cow stepped out of the brush almost in the first one's tracks. I shot her too. She stopped and looked at us, whereupon my partner shot her and she fell down — dead.

The friend then looked at me and said, "How did you miss them?" To which I replied, "I didn't miss them. Both were good shots." He didn't believe me until we walked up to his elk and, in addition to his spinal hit, there was a bullet hole precisely in the heart/lung area where I had aimed. The bullet hole was about the size of a pencil going in and the same going out.

After his elk was tagged and dressed we went looking for the first cow elk, and we found her too. A young couple was dressing her out. They were a little defensive when we asked if she had a bullet wound through her lungs. I said, "Don't worry. That's your elk. We just don't want another wounded one wandering about." Then they said "yes," the elk had also been hit. Same story: In



Duke keeps these two vintage .357 Magnums for sentimental reasons — a 1970 Colt SAA (left) and a 1939 S&W pre-Model 27.

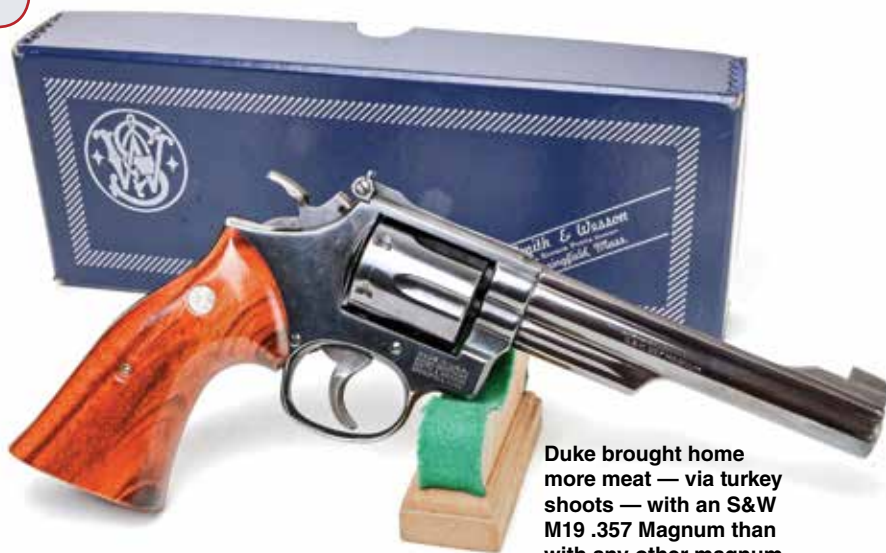
and out with no expansion.

I was never any great shakes as an elk hunter but I did get a few: A cow with a .270 Winchester, a smallish bull with a .30-06, another with a .308, a big bull with a .50-90 Sharps. None were fiascos such as happened with the magnum. Of course, it wasn't the rifle's fault — it was stiffly jacketed bullets in those factory loads that didn't expand after impact. In my pursuit of mule

AN EXPERT'S CASE FOR STANDARD CALIBERS



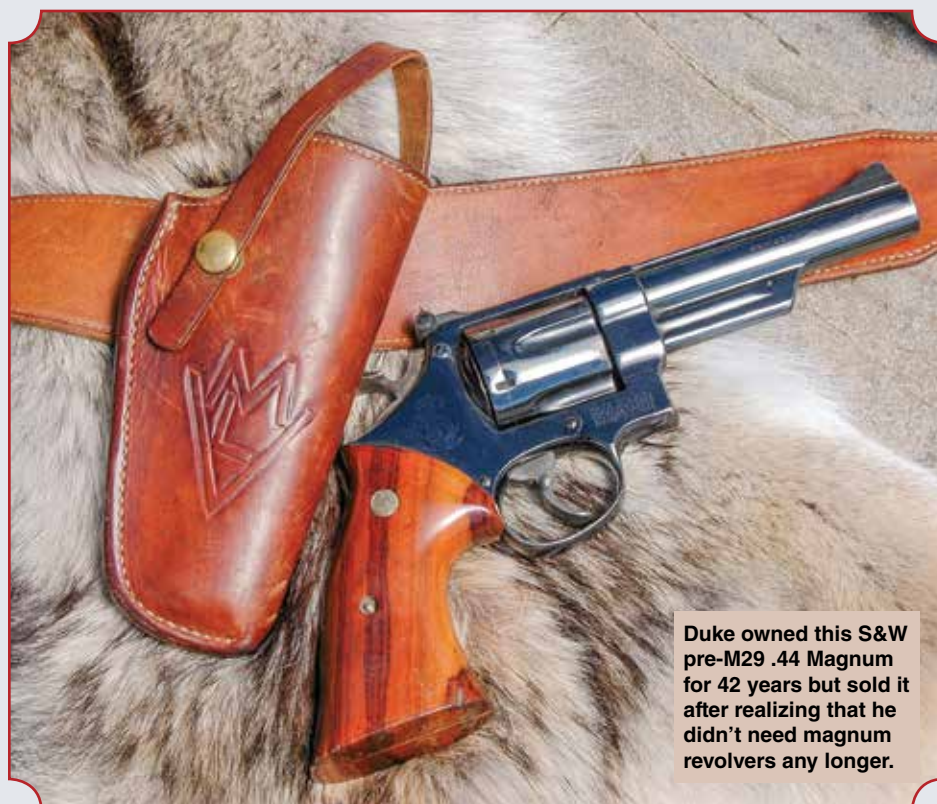
Duke used a Browning BLR .30-06 to take his last elk. Only one shot was needed.



Duke brought home more meat — via turkey shoots — with an S&W M19 .357 Magnum than with any other magnum.



Remaining magnum: Duke's lightweight J-Frame weighs only 11 oz. unloaded but is painful to shoot with Magnums so Duke feeds it .38 Specials.



Duke owned this S&W pre-M29 .44 Magnum for 42 years but sold it after realizing that he didn't need magnum revolvers any longer.

deer and whitetail and pronghorns, I used the .257 Roberts, .270 Winchester, 7mm-08, .280 Remington, .308 Winchester, .30-06 and .45-70. Never was a magnum needed for any of them.

Regular readers of mine (If there are any!) should be remembering a magnum I still own and brag about. It's my early 1960s-vintage Remington Model 700 ADL in .222 Remington Magnum. I bought it in May 1980 and it has served me well for varmints ranging in size from tiny ground squirrels to coyotes. It's somewhat battered now but I'll never sell it. Anyway, I don't consider it a "true" magnum in the belted-case sense of the word.

MAGNUM HANDGUNS

As to handguns, I did feel a need for magnums when I was younger. I spent a lot of time in the mountains north of Yellowstone National Park, which is known as grizzly bear habitat. In my town it wasn't uncommon to see black bears strolling through the streets. On my various horseback forays I almost always packed a magnum handgun. When concerned mostly about black bears my favorite was a Smith & Wesson Model 27 .357.

However, if I was deeper into the mountains, I packed something a bit bigger. I started with a Ruger Super Blackhawk .44 Magnum upon which I had the barrel amputated from 7-1/2 to 5-1/2". After a few years a friend talked me out of it, so it was replaced with a Smith & Wesson pre-Model 29 with a 5" barrel.

This S&W was one fine handgun. It had been made in 1957 and was shipped to my home state of West Virginia with a 4" barrel. I bought it from a Mingo County deputy sheriff in 1968, along with 18 rounds remaining from his first box of ammo purchased with the gun. Along the way I had a 6-1/2" barrel installed. While on a visit to Elmer Keith, he swapped me one of his books for the old 4" barrel. Shortly thereafter I sent the .44 to Smith & Wesson and they cut the barrel to 5". They dated their work. Stamped under the wooden stocks was "3-74."

Actually I was able to shoot those .44 Magnums fairly well. My eyes were good and I was working outdoors every day, so my health was great. They weren't what I would call fun but I could get a dozen or so rounds through them before flinching set in. In 2010 I sold my S&W .44. Why? Because I was made a handsome offer for



This Ruger Blackhawk .44 Magnum sandwiched between the two Colt Single Actions holds a treasured spot in Duke's single-action battery because it was a gift.

a gun merely gathering dust and I've never missed it. Not once in all the years I had those magnum handguns did I ever have to fire a single round in a serious situation.

What about personal protection in the real world, not out in the woods? Those N-Frame Smiths were too big and bulky for keeping close by in civilized areas. However, still having a magnum mindset, I picked up a 6" barreled Model 19 .357. It was a wonderful revolver — the trigger pull was an even 2 lbs. and with good handloads it would cut one ragged hole in paper targets. It went nigh everywhere in the pickup with me. I never shot a live animal with it, yet it helped me bring home plenty meat.

How did it work out? In those days there was a fad locally of having cow and horse pasture turkey shoots up and down

the Yellowstone River Valley. Some organization or another wanting to raise money would buy a mess of frozen turkeys and local handgunners competed on paper targets with rifles and handguns. The shot nearest to center won a bird. The most I came home with in one day was four. I hate to admit this but somewhere along the line I let the Model 19 go and don't remember to whom or even when. It's one of the very few, out of hundreds of guns which passed through my hands in over a half century, I've tried to relocate and buy back. No luck!

I do still have a few magnum revolvers. There's a 1939 vintage S&W ".357 Magnum" with 6-1/2" barrel and Ruger Old Model Blackhawk .44 Magnum (circa late 1950s) also with 6-1/2" barrel. Both were gifts and aren't going anywhere. A third is my 1969

Colt SAA 2nd Generation .357 Magnum with a 4-3/4" barrel (the first handgun I bought legally after turning 21). I did relocate it about 20 years ago and bought it back. I keep all of them for sentimental reasons.

Finally, there is a Smith & Wesson Model 360 .357 Magnum with 1.8" barrel but it's a lousy excuse for a .357 Magnum. Firing full charge loads in it is almost a crippling affair. I only feed it .38 Specials now and it travels most everywhere I go because it only weighs about 11 oz.

It seems Americans are madly in love with magnums, both rifles and handguns. There are now handgun rounds that make .44 Magnums seem weak. My feeling about them is if you need a handgun this powerful, you're in dire need of a rifle.

A few years back a friend — in an effort to sell me his .416 Remington Magnum — showed how it would shoot through a telephone pole. (It was his pole so we weren't committing an act of vandalism!) No way would I buy that thing! Another time a fellow shoved his .470 Nitro double rifle at me and said, "Try this!" No way, Buster, I shoot rifles in competition. One blast with this cannon and I'd flinch for an entire season!

For a good portion of my adult life there have been magnums of one sort or another within reach. But having reached seven decades, I'm really happy shooting gentler non-magnum rifles and handguns. 



If you need a hand cannon like this S&W .460 Magnum, maybe a rifle would be better!

RUBBER BULLET PLINKIN'

DAVID FREEMAN

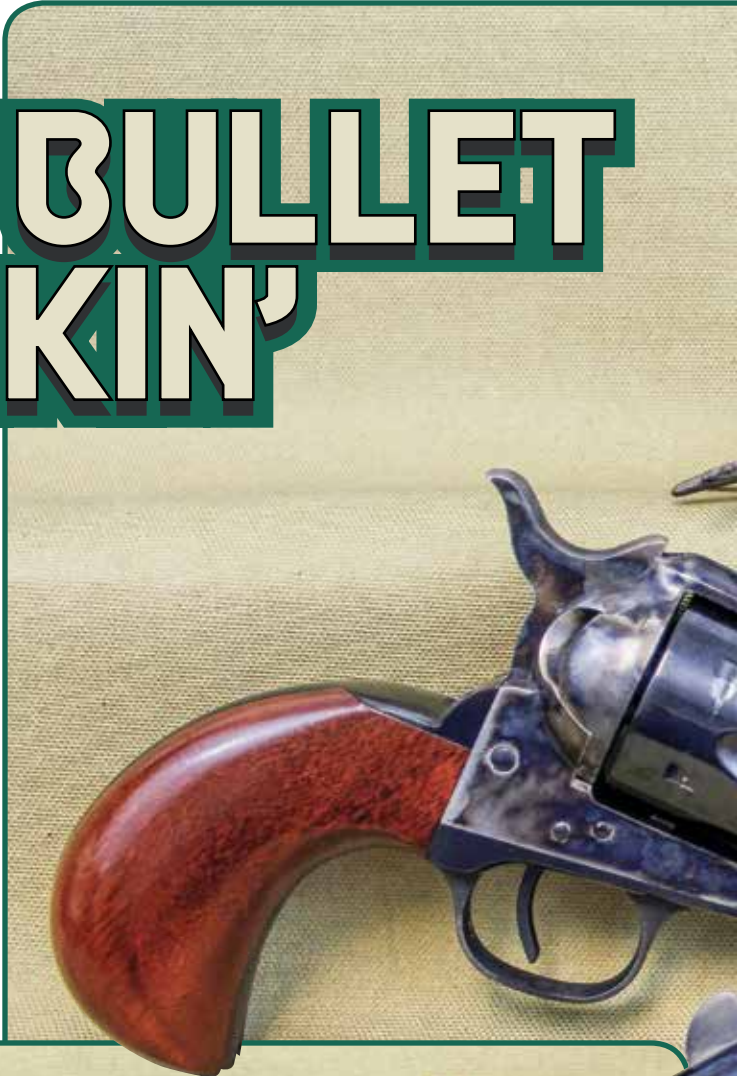
Some out-of-town visitors told me how much fun they had shooting cowboy guns at a local dude ranch. Knowing the dude ranch was within the city limits, I asked if there was a shooting range on the property. "Oh, no," was the answer. "We were using rubber bullets."

"RUBBER BULLETS?!?"

One of the guys in the group explained; "It was primers only. It's not very loud, and the bullets don't go very far, but we were shooting tin cans and it was a lot of fun."

PRIMER PLINKIN'

Immediately I thought of my grandchildren. I'd never heard of — or thought about — plinking with primers only and rubber bullets. I wondered if it was something we could do in my yard.



Backyard match setup: Rubber bullets, cases, primers, a priming and depriming tool.



“... I even took my stuff to work one day and we shot tin cans in the parking lot of our small office complex.”



Dave's Uberti SAA clones get a workout. The boys favor the El Patron (right) while the girls like the Bird's Head model.

DISCREET PRIMER-POWERED PRACTICE FOR BACKYARD FUN

If so, it would be an opportunity to let my grandkids know a little of what they're missing by not growing up country!

Before investing time into the project, I figured I'd better check on the legality. Would the cops consider shooting primer-only rounds in my backyard within the city limits a violation of some ordinance? I live in Texas, and it turns out in my city if I can ensure a projectile fired on my property won't cross property lines and won't come within 150 feet of one of my neighbor's buildings, I'm good to go. I've got a big backyard with empty lots behind and beside me, so it works for me but you should check the laws in your own location.

But I'll tell you this: It's not very loud and the rubber bullets don't travel very far, so it's not likely to attract attention unless you have *very* close neighbors. Once I learned how to do it, I

even took my stuff to work one day and we shot tin cans in the parking lot of our small office complex.

WATCH THE BOUNCE!

In my search for rubber bullets I discovered there are some designed for less-lethal defensive use and there are lightweight ones designed for target practice. Meister Bullet and Ammunition Company of Ozark, Missouri, makes a line of X-Ring bullets which are lightweight, hollow rubber projectiles in .38/9mm, .40, .44 and .45 calibers.

Bullets are easily loaded into the prepared shell casings by hand and can be reused.



Cases must have the flash hole enlarged. Put the empty in a 13mm socket on a piece of scrap lumber and drill it larger using a 1/8" drill bit.

Rubber bullets are plenty accurate enough at short ranges while Shoot-N-C targets give instant visual feedback.

I also obtained rubber bullets made by Concepts in Ammunition in Garden City, Michigan. These bullets are solid and can be used with gunpowder for defensive use where less-lethal capabilities are desired but they also work with primers only. You just need to be careful when using them because they bounce off solid objects with a lot of momentum. Although rubber bullets are available in several calibers, I elected to experiment first with .45 Colt because it's the most common caliber of my Cowboy Action guns.

AMMO PREPPING

Having a complete setup, which would allow us to keep shooting without multiple trips to the reloading bench, was desirable. If you're using previously fired brass, it has to be

deprimed and even if you start with new brass, you're going to want to reuse it, so a method of quickly removing primers on site is handy. I ordered a Harvey De-priming Tool, an easy-to-use handheld device that works with all popular rifle and handgun calibers.

PRIMER SETBACK

Before you start loading your first rounds, a little extra preparation of the brass is required to keep your revolver from locking up after each shot because of primer setback. The reason for this annoyance is somewhat complex but fortunately, simply drilling out the flash hole eliminates the problem altogether.

To enlarge the flash hole sufficiently to avoid setback, drill it out using a 1/8" drill bit. I found placing a 13mm socket on a board (facing up) and inserting the empty case in the socket holds it perfectly, making drilling out the flash holes a breeze.

One caveat: *Make sure you keep the drilled-out brass separate from any brass you may use for reloading standard rounds.*

PRIMED AND READY

My .45 Colt cartridges work well with CCI's Magnum Large Pistol Primers. To load them I use a Hornady Hand Priming Tool I also found at MidwayUSA. You're going to need a caliber-specific shell holder for use with the Hand Primer. I wasn't able to find a .45 Colt holder made by Hornady but MidwayUSA had an RCBS #20 shell holder that works perfectly with the Hornady tool.

Once you've primed the brass, loading the rubber bullets is

For on-site primer loading, try Hornady's Hand Priming Tool.



Primers create smoke, sometimes fire — and very dirty guns so be sure to clean them afterward. Better yet, teach the kids to clean them!

done by hand. With either type of bullet, hollow or solid, it is simply a matter of inserting the rubber bullet in the case far enough to secure it. The X-Ring bullets typically wind up with the head of the bullet even with the case mouth. With the solid RN Concepts in Ammunition bullets, I simply push them in until the edge of the brass aligns with the first of several rings on the bullet.

RECYCLING TOO!

When we're shooting, the kids recover a large number of the bullets. They are recovered essentially undamaged, even the ones that have punctured an aluminum drink can. We use them over and over.

To keep the kids shooting, I take a fired shell casing, pop out the primer with the Harvey Deprimer, insert a new primer with the Hornady priming tool, push in a rubber bullet and have a loaded cartridge ready to go again. You can reuse the brass, you can reuse the bullets but of course the primers work only once — make sure to have enough on hand to keep your shooters happy whenever you ask, "Who wants to shoot the cowboy guns?"

SAFETY NOTES

Hearing protection isn't really necessary if you're shooting outdoors but you do want your shooters (and anyone near the firing line) to have eye protection. Depending upon your backstop, those rubber bullets can bounce back with a lot of momentum.

Take all the precautions as you would with standard ammunition and have fun. The bullets will knock down tin cans and send them spinning with subsequent shots. They make a good mark on a Birchwood Casey Shoot-N-C or similar "splash" target. They may or may not spin a steel target, depending on how far away you are, but in general they work quite well for just



A solid rubber bullet by Concepts in Ammunition (above) and a Meister X-Ring Rubber Bullet (below).



plinking. Accuracy is pretty decent at close range.

My grandkids, boys and girls alike, enjoy this type of shooting, as do their parents, and we can pretty much do it on the spur of the moment. I have my supplies packed into a plastic container so it's easy to transport the reloading supplies to the shooting line.

Our favorite guns for this are Uberti 1873 SAA clones. The guys favor the 1873 Cattleman El Patrón and the girls like the Birds Head model. When we have a bunch of shooters we also use an Uberti Hombre and a Beretta Stampede. Keeping those guns in ammo keeps me pretty busy, so I only get to shoot when the others are done.

You're probably wondering if these loads would work in your semi-auto. They will, but you'll have to cycle the slide after each shot. Naturally, the primer doesn't generate enough pressure to cycle the slide on any 9mm or .45 ACP.

I've seen recommendations to avoid shooting primer-only rubber bullets in rifles. I have two .45 Colt rifles — a lever-action with a 22" barrel and a pump with a 26" barrel. The bullets do exit the barrel with either one of these and are pretty accurate up to about 20 feet. When shooting them, we're always listening and watching to ensure each bullet exits but so far all of our bullets — hollow or solid — have.

With this type of shooting, you get smoke and you get fire, but no recoil. You also get very dirty guns, so be sure to clean them after each session.

Teach your kids to shoot and have fun doing it — try the rubber route!

www.meisterbullets.com, www.conceptsinammunition.com, www.hornady.com, www.harveydeprimer.com, www.cci-ammunition.com, www.uberti-usa.com, www.birchwoodcasey.com



The Kershaw Copper Matrix sports the latest in cool handles — and an equally groovy grooved blade.

KERSHAW'S MINI NATRIX COPPER IS THE NEW COIN OF THE EDC REALM!

Kershaw is known for taking a successful knife design and ratcheting them up to intensify the *Wow!* factor. Such is the case with the new Copper Mini Natrix which, as the name suggests, gets an eye-popping handle of the cupreous metal whose use dates back as far as 8,000

B.C., when it was pounded into shape straight from the earth before smelting was invented.

Copper's distinct orange/pink color has graced many a jewelry maker's bench over the millennia. More recently, it has become a status symbol in many young knife users' EDC gear assembly including small flashlights, mini pry bars and the like.

The original Natrix line was introduced in 2018 in both a large and mini model. The folder featured here is based on the smaller version. The Copper Natrix has a 2.75" modified Wharncliffe blade of D2 steel with a distinctive enlarged groove that can be used for opening the blade. If you prefer — and most do — there's a flipper mechanism for swifter deployment. The blade rolls out slick as butter on glass thanks to Kershaw's patented KVT ball bearing system. The handsome copper frame, however, is the star of the show. The copper front slab is done up in nicely sculpted curves while

the backside, sculpted to match the front, has the copper slab serving as a sub-frame for a stainless steel locking leaf. Copper is denser than stainless steel so the Copper Mini Natrix packs a tad more weight (3.7 oz.) thus adding a more substantial feel to the knife. In addition, a 1.15" deep-carry pocket clip completes the package.

WHY YOU'LL LIKE IT

Right off the bat, the Copper Natrix is just a damn good-looking knife. One of the reasons many users like copper is because it will develop a patina over time, giving it an aged, rustic look. Some even use chemicals to force a surface finish with the greenish highlights often seen on old copper (check out the old coins in the photos).

You can avoid a patina if you wish by wiping the handle occasionally with a light oil or the rust-arresting medium of your choice. For the *coup de grace*, the cock-of-the-walk Kershaw Copper Natrix has a very affordable MSRP \$94.49 — a great price for this cool copper locker.



The back of the knife utilizes a copper sub-frame supporting a stainless steel locking leaf.

kershaw.kaiusalt.com

CROSSFIRE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

continued from page 8

stripper clip and it would also require a very expensive spring to operate. A stripper clip used and dropped on the battlefield is not a huge loss but a magazine would be. Also, the act of loading the stripper clip on the back of a horse could be easier than loading a magazine. Second, the M1912 was perfectly designed for what it was meant to do. I've read articles that denigrate the sights and trigger, but it was not designed to be a target pistol and to review it as such is ludicrous. I was pleased Holt did not go down that road. He actually went out and fired the pistol and discovered it performed fairly well — even with the sights provided. These pistols were designed to be fired by a cavalryman on a bouncing horse at close range targets. As stated in the article, a heavy trigger would be an asset not a liability as a light touchy trigger could empty the magazine with unintended consequences. The Steyr M1912 is a very well designed pistol for its intended use — a good article by Holt Bodinson.

*Tom Seefeldt
Billings, MT*



PAIR OF TENS

I just read Will Dabbs' June article on the 10mm Springfield XD(M) and really liked it. But I'd love to get his opinion on this gun vs. the Model 20 GLOCK.

*Troy Etheredge
Via email*

I admittedly don't have a great deal of trigger time on the G20. However, the

continued on page 71

BOLD, NOT BIG

Yes. This is the smallest ZT we've ever made. And yes, it's an impressive piece of engineering. Built with the same premium materials and precision manufacturing as every ZT, the 0022 is compact, made to practically disappear in your pocket—until you need it.

NEW



0022



GO BOLD



THE HOUSE DIVIDED

TIME FOR A REALITY CHECK FOR PELOSI'S DEMOCRATS

February's passage of two House gun control bills aimed at expanding background checks and extending waiting periods was hailed by the gun prohibition lobby as a victory. It was also sold to the American public as another step in preventing so-called "gun violence."

Neither of those things is true and they know it. American gun owners now have an opportunity to stop the anti-Second Amendment crowd, consisting of House and Senate Democrats and a handful of Republicans. All it takes is phone calls, letters and emails — more about that in a minute!

Almost immediately following the November 2018 election in which Democrats regained control of the U.S. House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi declared gun control would be a priority. The announcement was cheered by the Democratic Party base and passage of H.R. 8 and H.R. 1112 essentially fulfilled the promise.

Sure, there was resistance from House Republicans. Perhaps the most energetic of those is Alabama's Martha Roby, who wrote an op-ed saying, among other things:

"Any time Congress discusses placing restrictions on an enumerated constitutional right, it is our responsibility to very carefully weigh the many competing interests, which is ultimately why I recently voted against H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019, during its consideration in the House Judiciary Committee. This is a poorly drafted and ill-considered bill that would punish lawful gun owners without doing anything to prevent gun violence."

A House colleague, Oklahoma's Markwayne Mullin, wrote in Fox News: *"Stricter gun laws do not always equate to safer cities. Look to Chicago, where Illinois has some of the strictest gun laws in the country. The state earned a B+ rating from the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. Illinois ranks 8th in the nation for gun law strength."*

A few paragraphs later, Mullin added, *"House Democrats will continue to carry on about how their bill will 'prevent' future gun violence. But H.R. 8 will not prevent gun violence at the hands of criminals. Current law already requires a background*

check on every commercial gun purchase in America. But that doesn't fit House Democrats' narrative.

So instead of working across the aisle to put forward legislation that will get to the root of the real problem ... Democrats want to go after our constitutional right to bear arms. House Democrats bring before us H.R. 8 — misguided and careless legislation that turns lawful American citizens into criminals."



Florida Rep. Martha Roby

CREATING A NEW CRIMINAL CLASS

Before going further, let's review. H.R. 8 is the "universal background check" legislation requiring background checks on nearly every firearm transfer. Loan a gun to a friend, go through a background check first. To get it back, go through another background check. This is essentially the core of anti-gun Initiative 594, passed in 2014 in Washington State. So far, no one can verify it has prevented a single violent crime.

H.R. 1112 is a waiting period bill disguised as an "enhanced background check" measure stretching the NICS check review period from the current three days to 10 days. But wait! If the check still doesn't clear within this time frame, an additional 10 days can be added, stretching the waiting period to 20 days. If the check still isn't "resolved" within this time frame, the transaction is supposed to be allowed.

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

Another nasty bit of legislation, H.R. 1263, which is aimed at amending the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, would include semiautomatic rifles and shotguns using detachable magazines under the regulatory authority of the National Firearms Act.

Sponsored by Rep. Ted Deutch (D-FL), this is what the bill says in part:

"Any person who, on the date of the enactment of this Act, lawfully owns or possesses a semiautomatic rifle or shotgun (as defined in section 5845(a) of such Code, as amended by this Act) that has the capacity to accept a detachable ammunition feeding device (as defined in such section) shall, not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of this Act, register the semiautomatic rifle or shotgun in accordance with section 5841 of such Code. Such registration shall become a part of the National Firearms Registration and Transfer Record required to be maintained by such section. The prohibition on possession of an unregistered firearm under section 5861 of such Code shall not apply to possession of such a semiautomatic rifle or shotgun that has the capacity to accept such a detachable ammunition feeding device on any date that is 120 days or less after the enactment of this Act."

You *shall* register — within 120 days of the Act's effective date!

LEADING THE OPPOSITION

Naturally, gun rights leaders had unflattering comments after House passage of the gun control measures, H.R. 8 and H.R. 1112.

Chris Cox, Executive Director of the National Rifle Association's Institute for Legislative Action (ILA) observed H.R. 8 was an "extreme gun control bill" which would make criminals out of law-abiding citizens. Cox had this to say:

"It will also make it harder for good people to defend themselves and their families. Criminals, on the other hand, will continue to get their firearms the way they always have — through the black market, theft and straw purchases. Forcing more government paperwork and additional fees on good people trying to exercise a constitutional right will do nothing to make Americans safer."

He was joined in his criticism by Alan

Gottlieb, chairman of the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, who said the legislation erodes the rights of honest citizens without preventing so-called "gun violence."

"It's all flash and no substance," Gottlieb asserted. "It seems more designed to discourage honest citizens from exercising their rights than preventing a single crime."

But then Gottlieb said something else, providing activists with a lesson in the process. If you're going to oppose something, offer something else as an alternate solution:

"What the House should be doing, if they really care about fighting crime, is passing National Concealed Carry Reciprocity legislation. That legislation would empower law-abiding citizens with the means to defend themselves and their families from dangerous criminals, no matter where they travel across this great country."

Now there's an interesting suggestion. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell had a chance to make it happen during the



NRA ILA Executive Director Chris Cox

measure. I sincerely believe this/these bills violate the Constitution. As an alternative, I would like to see him/her sponsor or co-sponsor national concealed carry reciprocity legislation, for example, because I and my family and friends believe this would really improve public safety." Above all, be polite.

"Don't think for a second the Republican Senate will just **automatically nix** any gun control legislation passed by the House."

last Congress but the legislation passing the House was not acted upon even though it had a good chance of passing and being sent to President Donald Trump for signature.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Aside from joining and financially supporting groups such as NRA, CCRKBA and Gun Owners of America, grassroots activists can turn their angst about gun control into energy and action.

Keep pressure on the GOP-controlled Senate to stop any gun control measure launched by a House vote. There are a couple of ways to do this.

You can call the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121. From there, a switchboard operator can connect you directly with the offices of your two U.S. Senators. Be brief, get right to the point by identifying your concern (for example, "Hello, I'm Robert Jones from [your town, your state] and I am calling to urge Senator So-and-So to oppose H.R. 8, H.R. 1112 and any other gun control

Send an email. According to advice found at the following link: www.senate.gov/general/contacting.htm, "Some senators have e-mail addresses while others post comment forms on their websites. When sending an e-mail to your senator, please include your return postal mailing address. Please be aware as a matter of professional courtesy, many senators will acknowledge, but not respond to, a message from another senator's constituent. If you "snail mail" a letter, address it to: Office of Senator -----, United States Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510.

Don't think for a second the Republican Senate will automatically nix any gun control legislation passed by the House. Politics is not a perfect process; it's a contact sport, not a spectator sport. Where guns are concerned, emotions run high.

Gun owners must defend their own interests and we just offered some advice on how. Stop expecting some major national group to do it for you. You're in the game and the other side is playing to win. ➔



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S&W SW1911SC E-SERIES

COMMANDING ROUND-BUTT, SCANDIUM FRAME 1911

David Freeman

Some of us were carrying slim pistols before slim was cool. Before the S&W Shield, Springfield XD-S, G43 and SIG P365, there was the ... dare I say it? The 1911. And, for easier concealment, 1911s with 4-1/4, 4 and even 3" barrels. It's true Smith & Wesson came late to the 1911 party (actually, a year shy of 100 years late, since the first S&W 1911s rolled out in 2010) and they got rave reviews.

But — I already had my 1911 bases covered, or so I thought.

It's funny how a gun can endear itself to you when it wasn't even on your radar. It was like that for me and the S&W SW1911SC E-Series Round Butt Commander (*Okay*, it's a mouthful). After I got mine, I quickly realized if I put in an order for a custom 1911 from any one of America's greatest (and priciest) gunsmiths, I couldn't think of anything I'd ask for this production Smith didn't have.

GOOD LOOKS PLUS ...

How a gun looks is always important and this one is a cool combination of black and stainless steel S&W calls

"Duo-Tone," although you can also get them in solid black if you like. The slide has unusual serrations on each side — they're like fish scales. I found them easy on the hands while providing an excellent purchase for racking the slide or a press check, although on this gun the press check is unnecessary because there's a view port on top of the slide at the back end of the chamber through which you can see if there's a round in the chamber.

The ejection port is cut low and beveled. S&W calls it a "Combat Ejection Port." The right side of the

The handsome round-butt Scandium Commander has everything David wants in a 1911 — at any price!

slide has a heavy duty external extractor. The top of the slide is slightly dished out with a series of vertical cuts going almost the full length of the slide. Their purpose is to reduce glare. The back of the slide has horizontal versions of those same glare-reducing cuts.

Trijicon night sights are mounted front and rear — exactly what I'd order on a custom gun. An ambidextrous safety? Yes, and it's not tiny like a stock 1911 safety but it's not one of those honking big ones either. To me the size and width is just right and it snaps solidly into place, on or off. The gun comes with beautiful rosewood grips with the same fish scale pattern as on the slide, plus a nice little diamond with the letter "E" to remind us this is an "Enhanced" 1911.

The trigger and hammer are the skeletonized lightweight jobs we all love. The hammer settles nicely into the beavertail when it's cocked, and the trigger pull is an easy 4.9 lbs. with 0.0125 take-up and a crisp, clean break. The muzzle is recessed and the firing pin is titanium. The trigger must be pulled for the gun to fire — dropping the gun will not make the firing pin go forward to strike a primer.

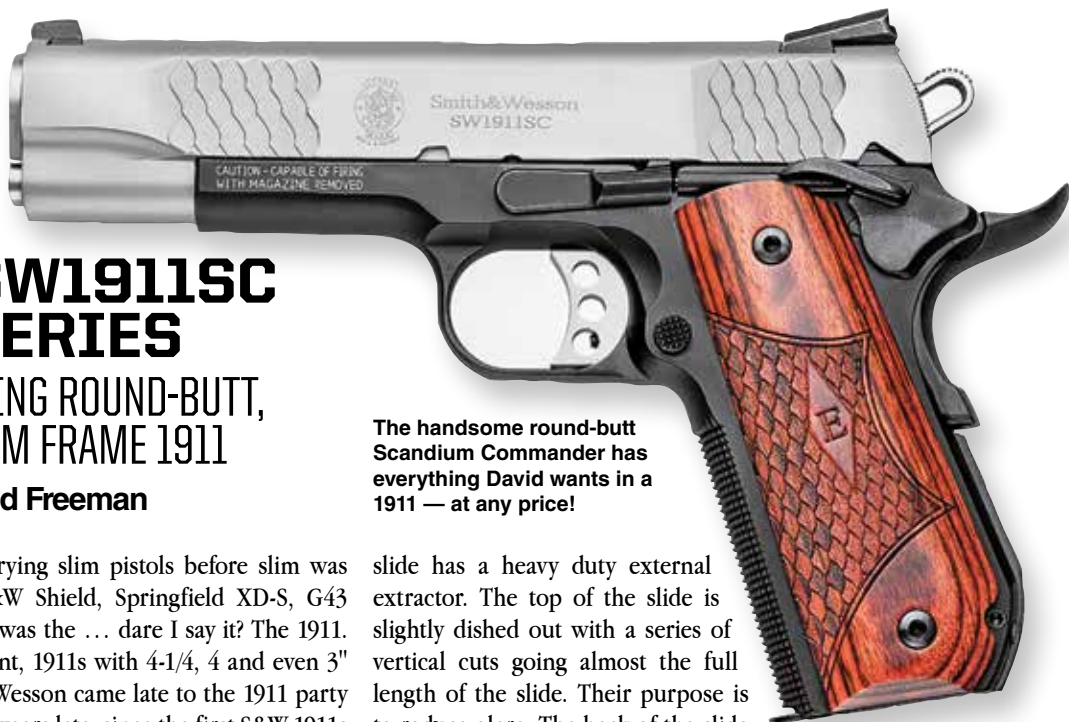
OTHER ENHANCEMENTS

S&W opted for an oversized extractor. There's a memory bump on the grip safety and just below the grip curves into what we typically call a round butt which really *does* equate to easier carry in IWB mode. I really like checkered front and back straps to help my grip and this model comes with 17 LPI on both. Coupled with those attractive fish scale rosewood panels, the security of my grip on the gun is superb.

The "SC" in the model name stands for Scandium, a very lightweight but extremely strong alloy combined with aluminum in the frame to lighten the load while maintaining durability. Unloaded, the gun weighs 28.8 oz. It comes with one 7-round magazine and one slightly extended eight rounder. I elected to replace them both with Colt 8-round magazines so I always have nine rounds on board, with nothing extending from the butt of the gun.

NO WIDEBODIES HERE

Since slim is in, I decided to compare the S&W SCE Commander to one of my favorite carry guns, the Springfield XD-S



The S&W SCE Commander (left) is barely wider than a Springfield XD-S .45 (right).



This 15-yard offhand group with Black Hills ammo is typical. David takes full responsibility for the flyer!

.45 ACP. Would you believe the body width of both guns is the same at 0.91"? At their widest point there is a 0.30" difference. The total width — including the ambidextrous safeties on the

Smith is 1.35, whereas the width of the XD-S at its widest point is 1.05. This makes no noticeable difference inside the holster.

I can't afford one of those \$3,000 to \$6,000 (or more) custom guns but I feel like I got one with the S&W 1911SCE Commander. One trip to the range was all it took for me to put it into my "carry rotation." At the range I compared it to other 1911 Commanders from Colt, Ruger, SIG and Springfield, and it held its own. Several times since I've used the S&W to test various types of ammo, including the newer, lightweight fluted rounds from Inceptor and Lehigh. It's as accurate as any of the other guns and more accurate than most and I've never had any kind of failure to feed or extract. It's a delight to shoot.

Smith and Wesson catalogs them at an MSRP of around \$1,500, which should probably make the street price somewhere around \$1,250.

www.smith-wesson.com



The Streamlight Microstream USB is the almost-perfect EDC light.

STREAMLIGHT MICROSTREAM USB LIGHT

EDC POWER,
PERFORMANCE AND VALUE!

Brent T. Wheat

It's tough to type a story when there is a big white fireball floating in the center of your vision.

I know, because I just once-again checked out my Streamlight Microstream USB and did the same stupid thing I always do when playing around with flashlights — look directly at the lens (albeit off-center) while switching on the light. Don't do it! I always remind myself the same thing but eventually end up flailing around like a blinded opossum in the headlights.

If you follow my lead you'll certainly get dazzled by this itty-bitty lighting instrument. Half the size of a typical medical or aviation penlight at 3.8" OAL, it puts out light far in excess of what should reasonably be expected from

The light charges via an O-ring-sealed Micro-USB port.

such a small package. This kind of power in a small, tough light is certainly a strong selling point but when you add in the ease of USB charging, I'm ready to nominate the Microstream USB as the ultimate EDC (Everyday carry) light!

Foremost with any flashlight is the light output. The Microstream is rated at 250 lumens and 1150 candela for the high beam and 50 lumens on low — on par with many larger "tactical" lights but coming from a front reflector the size of a shirt button. The tail-mounted rubber-coated switch allows you to choose between momentary and constant-on, plus the aforementioned low- and high-power settings.

The light features a machined aluminum case with a Type II MIL-Spec anodized finish available in either black or coyote. My light is the coyote version and quite stylish in its own right, fitting well into my high-society lifestyle. (Sarcasm, folks, sarcasm!) There is also a removable spring-steel pocket clip, which traditionally is the weakest link in the overall chain.

To charge the light, you pull the lens



forward to reveal an O-ring sealed micro-USB port. Plugging into a charger or even your computer, the light is fully reloaded after 4 hours. The light is supposed to last 1.5 hours on high and 3.5 hours on low although I've never run mine continuously to test.



The business end of the Microstream is smaller than a penny.

The light is rated as impact resistant to one meter, something I can attest to on multiple occasions. The electronic seals are rated IPX4 for water resistance, which essentially means it's splash- or rain-proof. We'll see what happens when it inevitably ends up going through the washing machine or plopping into the toilet, the places where most of my pocket flashlights eventually end up meeting their demise.

However, until the day when loss or water tears us apart, it will ride with me 24/7. So far mine has proven its utility on a dozen airline flights, lit up a darkened lodge kitchen while I tried to scavenge a pre-dawn breakfast, helped read a theater playbill, frequently illuminated the deepest recesses of my backpack and lit up countless nighttime excursions. The high power setting is bright

enough to serve as a shooting light if necessary while the low power setting works fine for close work or reading fine print without blinding yourself.

Best of all, this versatility comes in around \$30 bucks "on the street." While there might be other, more bulletproof or brighter pocket lights on the market, the Microstream USB is my current choice as the perfect combination of power, size, durability and value for an EDC light source. In other words, you get everything you need in a pocket light but without the fear of developing full-blown clinical depression if it goes missing or does an impromptu Full-Gainer into the porcelain swimming hole.

www.streamlight.com

HENRY AR-7 SURVIVAL RIFLE

A STONER DESIGN FOR JACK-RABBITS – AND JAMES BOND

Will Dabbs, MD

Man kind has imagined a cornucopia of many-splendored contrivances to protect our soft carcasses from threats both natural and otherwise. We enthusiastically explore everything from the depths of the oceans to the vacuum of space, all the while relying upon 3 lbs. of goey gray stuff between our ears to keep us intact and healthy.

One of the most critical tools for the person burdened with a healthy wanderlust is a proper survival weapon. However, to be truly effective the weapon should be portable, weatherproof, reliable and effective. The good folks at Henry produce something many consider the ideal tool for this

task — the AR-7 U.S. Survival Rifle. Time has proven the lightweight survival arm a worthwhile companion.

Gene Stoner, father of the AR-15, first thought up the ArmaLite AR-7 Explorer in 1959. A modular takedown design, the .22

LR AR-7 easily breaks into sub-assemblies stowing inside the stock alongside a brace of 8-round magazines. The whole shebang only weighs 3.5 lbs. If you drop it in the water, the gun will even float, though if you leave it overnight it will ultimately



The 3.5-lb. rimfire takedown is compact and packable — the ultimate survival tool!



Everything stows in the stock — available in your choice of black or camo.

sink (ask me how I know this!).

The rights to manufacture the AR-7 have followed a circuitous path to rest eventually with Henry since 1980. They were built in Argentina for a time and carried operationally by Israeli combat aircrews. Sean Connery even used one to bring down a helicopter in 1963's 007 classic, *From Russia with Love*.

The basic blowback semi-auto action is



Henry Repeating Arms has produced the Stoner AR-7 design domestically since 1980.

reliable and stupid-proof. Henry offers the gun in both black and camo. Your favorite 10/22 is more comfortable, just not quite as cool. The Henry U.S. Survival AR-7 — don't leave civilization without one! The MSRP is \$305 (black), \$368 (camo).

www.henryusa.com



ZERO TOLERANCE 0022 ULTRA-COMPACT CUTTING EDGE

Payton Miller

The knife-guy acronym “EDC” may have just gotten morphed into “AUEDC” (Almost-Unnoticeable Every Day Carry) by the Zero Tolerance 0022.

Zero Tolerance — Ker-shaw's super-premium line of folders — has earned a considerable reputation for innovation, quality and just plain coolness. Now, the ZT 0022 — designed by Tim Galyean — is their smallest folder yet.

Let's get the numbers supporting this contention out of the way first: 1.8" clip point blade (0.12" thick). *Check.* 3" length closed. *Check.* 4.57" OAL open. *Check.* Curb weight: 1.7 oz. *Check.*

Now, when you shrink down a serious folder to those dimensions, you could reasonably expect to lose a couple of the features justifying a premium (as in “not-inexpensive”) price tag. You'd be wrong.

MATERIALS MANIFEST

The blade steel is stonewash-finished CPM 20CV — noted for toughness,

edge-holding qualities and corrosion resistance. The front of the handle is textured carbon fiber, the flip side is stonewashed titanium.



The ZT 0022 also makes a classy money clip!

The titanium frame lock requires an outward push of your thumb to disengage for “folding up.” It's a bit slower than deploying the blade manually via a ball-bearing arrangement actuated by a small, serrated flipper but it's okay. Given a choice, most of us would opt for speedy opening over speedy closing.

And, of course it's got a reversible pocket clip for right-hand, left-hand, tip up or tip down carry.

IT'S A SMALL WORLD

You gonna pick nits? Okay. This is a small knife and lots of guys say a big knife can do small knife chores better than a small knife can do big knife chores.

I'm not going to argue with the contention, except to say, for many of us, small knife chores are likely the only tasks we'll *ever* have to worry about. Besides,

The just-under-2" clip point blade (above) is stonewash-finished CPM 20CV. A serrated stud (right) serves as the flipper for manual blade deployment.

trailblazing, kindling whacking and bear skinning are not the tasks this little folder was built for.

Heck, I used the 0022 to slice up carrots and de-bone chicken. Did a good job — and stayed shaving sharp when I was done. Would a more “task specific” fixed blade been better?

Well, yeah. But I just happened to have the ZT in my pocket at the time it was needed (sound much like a CCW argument for a micro-size pocket .380?). The “proper” blade was miles away — in a kitchen drawer no less.

Okay. Sure, I've got no shortage of traditional (and much heftier) lockback and slip-joint folders that'll do most of what this one can but the ZT 0022 has got the premium cachet — and the designer cool — which goes a long way toward justifying its upscale (\$250) price tag.

Not sure if I can put into words *why*, but it does. Sometimes a beautiful, scaled-down piece of engineering is its own excuse for being.

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CROSSFIRE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

continued from page 63

biggest factors in favor of the Springfield — for me — are the 1911-style grip-to-frame angle of the XD and the Springfield Armory grip safety. I cut my teeth on a 1911, so that's what fits me best. I frequently pack a GLOCK (today in fact). However, for me at least the blockier angle of the XD just feels a wee bit more natural — kind of like walking into your living room after a hard day at work. Feel free to call me a heretic (trust me, many have), but that extra layer of safety while holstering just brings me peace of mind. Springfield Armory's grip safety is so well executed I don't see a downside there. Both guns are bet-your-life reliable and occupy a similar envelope. Any differences in how they carry would be nuances at best. They just have slightly dif-

ferent personalities. It really comes down to what feels more natural in your hand. —Will Dabbs

one of my favorite sections. I'm always interested in crystal-clear educational stuff for newbies, particularly regarding rifles. Seems that much is assumed about the unique terms used in firearms, and I rarely find them clearly described, or it's a few levels above my head — like on rifle scopes (I'm kinda lost in that area as a handgun guy). Maybe I'm being too lazy and should use Google more, but I've come to trust you guys, and don't have to sift through all the stuff I don't know. I love the practical stuff, like Tank's piece in the June issue on the Alaskan guide and the rifles she likes. You guys are great, keep it up!

Cobie Fair
Via email

Thanks Coby! As the "newish" Ruling Despot, I hope to bring along some fresh ideas while keeping all the stuff our readers love! —BW



I just finished John Taffin's June "Handloading" column on loading for .32-caliber leverguns. John mentioned no one chambers a rifle for the .327 Federal. I just wanted to mention Henry Firearms does indeed chamber their Big Boy in .327! I heard a rumor Ruger was going to chamber it in their 77 Series bolt-action carbine, but I don't see a current listing for one. Keep up the good work.

.327 FEDERAL

I'd almost stopped reading GUNS til Brent Wheat took over (I liked Connor and Clint Smith, but honestly wasn't interested in much of the content/style aside from that). I like the change! The increase in the "Crossfire" letters section — and the responses from Brent and the other editors and writers is also interesting. Seeing what other gun owners are thinking makes it

Floyd Burress
Via email

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Rock River Arms' *BT-9 9mm Series* models are based on RRA's billet aluminum lower receiver with a GLOCK-compatible flared magazine well. A built-in winter-style trigger guard offers room for the trigger finger even when wearing tactical or cold-weather gloves. The BT92133 Pistol, BT92142 Pistol and BT91700 Carbine Rifle feature RRA's aluminum upper receiver and Lightweight Free-Float M-LOK-compatible handguards. For more info: (309) 792-5780, www.rockriverarms.com

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The *RMR HRS* is Trijicon's SOCOM version of the Type 2 Ruggedized Miniature Reflex. It has audible and tactile windage and elevation adjustments for quick and easy zeroing with no need for special tools or devices. The anodized-brown RMR HRS features electronics that bolsters durability and performance in severe environments and eight adjustable brightness settings, including two for night vision. The CR2032 lithium battery lasts up to four years at a mid-setting. For more info: (248) 960-7700, www.trijicon.com



QUICKIE

TOPS KNIVES

The *Quickie* from TOPS Knives is a 3-finger karambit. This means the third finger away from the blade should be placed in the hole in the knife's skeletonized handle. The design allows the user to still have some use of his/her hand while holding the knife. The Quickie has an overall length of 5" and weighs 1.2 oz. without a sheath. Its 1.63" blade is made of 1095 steel with a hardness rating of 56-58 RC. For more info: (208) 542-0113, www.topsknives.com

TACTICAL SOLUTIONS

Tactical Solutions' *X-Ring Takedown VR .22 LR Rifle* features an ambidextrous bolt, a dual guide rod system and integrated 15 MOA Picatinny rail. The X-Ring TD VR is threaded for the addition of a suppressor or compensator. The 3.5-lb., 16.5"-long rifle is available in Gun Metal Gray, Matte Black, Matte OD and Quicksand with a Magpul X-22 Backpacker or Hogue OM stock. For more info: (866) 333-9901, www.tacticalsol.com



VORTEK STRIKERFIRE

TRADITIONS PERFORMANCE FIREARMS

The *Vortek StrikerFire* from Traditions Performance Firearms has a redesigned, recoil-reducing buttstock and buttpad. With less recoil, shooters can enjoy increased accuracy and all skill levels will feel comfortable shooting the rifle. The solid buttstock will be a treat for those who spend a lot of time at the range. The Vortek StrikerFire is now offered in the Realtree Edge camo pattern. For more info: (860) 388.4656, www.traditionsfirearms.com



TEXAN LSS AIRFORCE AIRGUNS

AirForce Airguns has added the *Texan LSS* to the Texan family of big bore air rifles. It combines the power of the original Texan with the sound suppression technology featured on the Texan LSS. The LSS sound reduction system will be available as a complete rifle as well as an upgrade kit for existing non-suppressed Texan rifles. For more info: (877) 247-4867, www.airforceairguns.com



ADJUSTABLE TARGET STAND KIT BIRCHWOOD CASEY

Birchwood Casey's *Adjustable Target Stand Kit* comes with six modular uprights, a target stand and a single target backer. The stand can be adjusted from widths of 13 to 25". A 19.5"x19.5" white backer board is included and works with Birchwood Casey Shoot-N-C and Dirty Bird targets (sold separately). The kit is ideal for home, range and hunting camp use. The stand breaks down into smaller sections and can be easily stored or transported. For more info: (800) 746-6862, www.birchwoodcasey.com

380 ALLER BENCHMADE KNIFE COMPANY

Benchmade's six-in-one *380 Aller* was designed with travel in mind. Features on this compact friction folder include a Wharncliffe blade, screwdriver/pry tip, micro bit slot, custom pocket/money clip, bottle opener and lanyard/key-ring hole. The blade has a plain edge and satin finish and the handle is black G10. For more info: (800) 800-7427, www.benchmade.com



BULLSEYE WI-FI SCOPE CAM GSM OUTDOORS

GSM Outdoors announced the release of the *Bullseye Wi-Fi Scope Cam* from Shooting Made Easy (SME). The Wi-Fi Scope Cam is a high-definition video camera that secures to most spotting scopes with a 1" to 1.5" diameter eyepiece. Connect the camera and your mobile device or tablet via Wi-Fi to engage the free Bullseye Target Manager App. Shooters will then have a clear live view of the downrange target on their device and also access to advanced shot tracking and logging features. For more info: (877) 269-8490, www.gsmoutdoors.com

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With the *Pistol Red Dot Sight Mount*, you no longer need to send out the slide of a semi-auto handgun for machining to accept an optic. The right sight dovetail slot can be used to add an optic mounting base. Made from CNC-machined billet steel with lightening cuts and a Nitride Fortress Finish, the Pistol Red Dot Sight Mount is available for all double-stack models of GLOCK, most models of S&W M&P and Ruger Mark II to Mark IV rimfire target pistols. For more info: (888) 887-8456, www.truglo.com





575 GLS PRO-FIT IWB HOLSTER

SAFARILAND

Safariland's 575 GLS Pro-Fit IWB Holster is offered for several subcompact handguns including the GLOCK 43, Springfield XD-S and Smith & Wesson M&P Shield (9mm, .40, .45). The 575 incorporates Safariland's GLS retention in an open top design with a slimmer, low-cut and compact body for a comfortable, smaller footprint. The holster body is made of SafariSeven, a proprietary nylon blend. For more info: (800) 347-1200, www.safariland.com



MARLIN 336 IN CURLY MAPLE STOCK

MARLIN FIREARMS

The Marlin 336 is now available with a *Curly Maple Stock*. Its substantial sidewalls are cut out only where necessary for loading and ejection. The Marlin 336, chambered in .30-30 Win., has a

20" polished blue barrel with micro-groove rifling, a seven-round magazine capacity, adjustable semi-buckhorn rear sights and a curly maple wood stock with pistol grip. For more info: (800) 544-8892, www.marlinfirearms.com

AIR 1745

PELICAN PRODUCTS

The Air 1745 case from Pelican Products is 44"-long, with built-in wheels and 8" of internal space. It comes in two configurations: empty and with Pick N' Pluck foam. It's Pelican's deepest long case — providing the option to stack multiple items on both bottom and top layers or just use the top layer to nestle long individual equipment. The case features press-and-pull latches tested for extreme pressure and impact situations. For more info: (800) 473-5422, www.pelican.com



HAMMER

UMAREX USA

The .50-caliber *Hammer* airgun from Umarex is powered by natural atmospheric air. Its carbon fiber tank can be filled with 4,500 lbs. per square inch of compressed air up to a maximum of 24 cubic inches. The Hammer's Lightspeed valve with precision regulator instantly pulses a measure of air, compressed to 3,000 psi, behind the projectile. It's equipped with three safeties, an air pressure gauge, a standard Magpul AR grip, an 8.5" Picatinny rail and more. For more info: (479) 646-4210, www.umarexusa.com



SMART DRIVE 90

REAL AVID

The *Smart Drive 90* is a master-grade gunsmithing bit set. It features a unique driver that comes with a jeweler's top handle for one-hand adjustments. A smaller driver that can be used alone or paired with the main driver offers Torque Assist. An added innovation is a super-bright, 360-degree COBB LED light to illuminate your work area with zero shadows. The Smart Drive 90 comes in a well-organized case with a magnetic compartment to store and hold loose fasteners and springs during disassembly. For more info: (800) 286-0567, www.realavid.com



N1 PISTOL

NAROH ARMS

The *Naroh N1* is a micro-compact 9mm handgun with a 3.125" barrel and an OAL of 6.1". Weighing 16 oz. unloaded, it's an appealing option for concealed carry. With front and rear slide serrations for easy manipulation, the N1 has a 7075 aluminum hard coat anodized receiver with full length slide rails and a 1913 accessory rail. Sights are polymer 3-dot (white) standard; grips are glass-reinforced polymer. Naroh's pocket gun is double-action only (DAO) with an internal drop safety. No trigger pull is required for disassembly. For more info: (321) 806-4875, www.naroharms.com



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BEAR & SON CUTLERY

The *Bear Branded Bone Knives* series celebrates Bear & Son Cutlery's almost 30 years of knife manufacturing and the launch of their new logo. Bear Branded Bone Knives feature a laser-engraved white smooth bone handle, a high carbon stainless steel hollow ground blade and a nickel silver bolster. The lightweight knives in the series consists of three Lockbacks, two Trappers, one Large Stockman and a Cowhand design. For more info: (800) 844-3034, www.bearandsoncutlery.com

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CORDOVA OUTDOORS

The *NRA Official Coolers* from Cordova Outdoors are rotomolded coolers with eco-friendly foam insulation. The walls of Cordova coolers are thinner than those of competing models, providing better cooling performance and greater storage capacity. Other features include a "no-fail" lid lock system to prevent the lid from closing on your hands while open, aluminum handles with a built-in bottle opener, an airtight seal system and more. For more info: (208) 466-4370, www.cordovaoutdoors.com



Stoeger **STR-9** STRIKER-FIRED PISTOL PACKAGE

Stoeger builds upon its legacy of manufacturing quality firearms at an affordable price with the *STR-9 Striker-Fired Pistol*. Chambered in 9mm with a 15+1 capacity, the STR-9 combines both form and function making it ideal for everyday carry, home protection or fun at the range. It features a black nitride finish for corrosion-resistance, interchangeable backstrap grips for a custom fit and a 4.17" barrel for easy concealment and quick deployment. It also has an internal trigger safety, dovetail sights and front and back slide serrations. OAL is 7.44" and weight is 1.5 lbs. Durable and reliable, the STR-9 is an ideal personal defense pistol at an affordable price.

Peltor Sport's *Smart Tactical 500 Electronic Hearing Protector* preserves your hearing and allows clear communication. It suppresses harmful gunshot noise and amplifies low-level sounds. The *Sport SecureFit Safety Eyewear* meanwhile, features a flat-temple, low-profile design to better seal and minimize noise leaks when worn with the hearing protector. Impact-resistant lenses with anti-fog coating absorb up to 99.9% of UV radiation.

Coast's *TX9R* is a flashlight you can use anywhere for any situation. Created for law enforcement and military operators, it has high, strobe and low modes, a rechargeable long-range optic system, slide focus and an anti-roll bezel.

The *McBee TT* from Spyderco is a compact everyday carry cutting tool. Designed by U.S. Marine veteran Jonathan McNees, the knife's 1.52"-long blade is made from CTS XHP steel; the handle is Titanium.

We know you like these prizes but you'll like them even more if you win. So what are you waiting for? Enter now! Go to www.gunsmagazine.com/giveaways or mail a postcard! —Jazz Jimenez



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TURN-IN TREASURE MIXED NUTS, MOON CLIPS AND TALES



This Planter's Mixed Nuts tin held tinned WWI-vintage .45 ACP rounds. Stirring examples of long-gone ammo (below) ended up with Tank when he was “working the desk.”



Being blessed (cursed, my wife says) with an eye for the old, unique and strange, allows me to expand my knowledge. We're mostly talking gun- or hunting-related items lurking in basements, attics, or sheds until they're mindlessly tossed away by a family member, usually after the owner dies.

Old stuff and history go hand in hand, taking on a whole new meaning as time ticks by. It triggers memories of the good old days, reminding us of special people we knew, or simply, an era we wish we lived in. You can call it nostalgia, but I know it's real!

SENTENCED TO THE CHAIR

One night, when I was a rookie cop, our desk clerk called-in sick. Amid catcalls and good-natured kidding from the old salts during roll call, I made my way upstairs to work the desk. Seniority meant something in those days, as did being new — I was “volunteered” for any detail, any time.

Working the desk required answering phones, taking care of walk-in reports, fingerprinting people for various things, calling for wreckers, and a couple dozen other duties. Pandemonium sprinkled with chaos would be an accurate description.

Desk duty's saving grace were the “turn-ins” of guns, old ammo, knives or other interesting items, usually by some little old lady who'd recently lost her husband.

MIXED NUTS?

One cold, dreary February evening, this very thing happens. She walks in, lugging an old shoebox. My antenna tingles and a big smile spreads across my face as I greet her. She informs me her husband recently died and she wants to turn in some old ammunition. “Sure, ma'am! No problem ...”

In the box are various 12-gauge shotgun shells, the kind displaying beautiful pictures of pheasants, hunting dogs and hunters on the front. They were from the 1940s — easy. Lastly she hands over an old metal Planter's “Mixed Nuts” can. Inside were a couple dozen .45 ACP cartridges.

Chatting with her for several minutes, I learn her husband was a WWII veteran who liked shooting and hunting. I tell her I'll take care of it, and do. I still have the shotshell boxes displayed in a shadow box in my basement where they're admired on a daily basis.



Tank's prized box of .32 Winchester Specials marked "September 1949"; the bear adds a touch of drama!

The Planters can has graced my loading bench for 35-plus years. It got buried under piles of reloading gear, getting excavated every so often during a cleanup. Not knowing why, I've always kept the can, knowing it's somehow special.

Getting interested in 1917 revolvers recently, I remember the can. Looking at the cartridges, I know they were GI issue by their crimped primers and case-head stampings. A closer look shows most of them are from 1917 and 1918. Wow! They're over 100 years old now. The bullets

have a dull nickel jacket, or at least look like they do.

A CHRISTMAS STORY

Examining the can, I see "45s" written in grease pen for the first time. Solder marks remain on the can for the key used to open it (remember those?). By turning the key, the metal seal peeled away around the key so you could open the lid.

I imagine the husband opening the can for a Christmas gathering long ago. He's smoking his pipe while nursing a scotch

and soda. He places the empty can on top of his refrigerator for later use ... as the aroma of Captain Black tobacco wafts through the air.

Later during the party he invites his buddies down to the basement to look at his guns — as men did back in the day.

BACK TO THE BULLETS ...

The grayish-silver projectiles pique my curiosity. After much digging, I learn the copper jacketed bullets had been tinned, a practice accepted by the military in 1912. Doing so prevents verdigris — the nasty green oxidation copper takes on when exposed to the sea air.

I notice some of the brass has three holes around the top, clear down to the tinned bullet. Further investigation reveals this extra crimp was for .45 ACP rounds made specifically for S&W and Colt 1917 revolvers, so bullets won't jump the crimp used for autoloaders. I also learn full moon-clips didn't surface until 1982 (for competition shooters).

It's amazing what you can unravel by giving deceptively mundane items a closer look. Unlocking long forgotten secrets from the past is pretty interesting to me.

We often wonder "If *only* this thing could talk." Well, this one did. I *heard* it with my own two ears. Or perhaps I'm nuttier than the contents of a very special can turned in to my desk one dreary February night.



Here's Tank's vintage S&W 1917 with the period-correct half-moon clip and a full-moon clip for comparison.

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FORCING CONE, MUZZLE CROWN?

Friend Denis happened to have the tools needed to re-cut the forcing cone, so it's the first thing we tried. I really thought this would solve the problem. It didn't! Now what? Looking at the muzzle under magnification, it appeared there were some very tiny nicks. I didn't see how this could be a problem but it was something we could try to fix by re-cutting the crown. My local gunsmith at Buckhorn Gun re-cut the muzzle crown. Now I was *sure* this would be the answer. After all, we now had a custom forcing cone and a custom muzzle crown. It would *have* to shoot — but it didn't! Now what?

A LITTLE FACTORY HELP

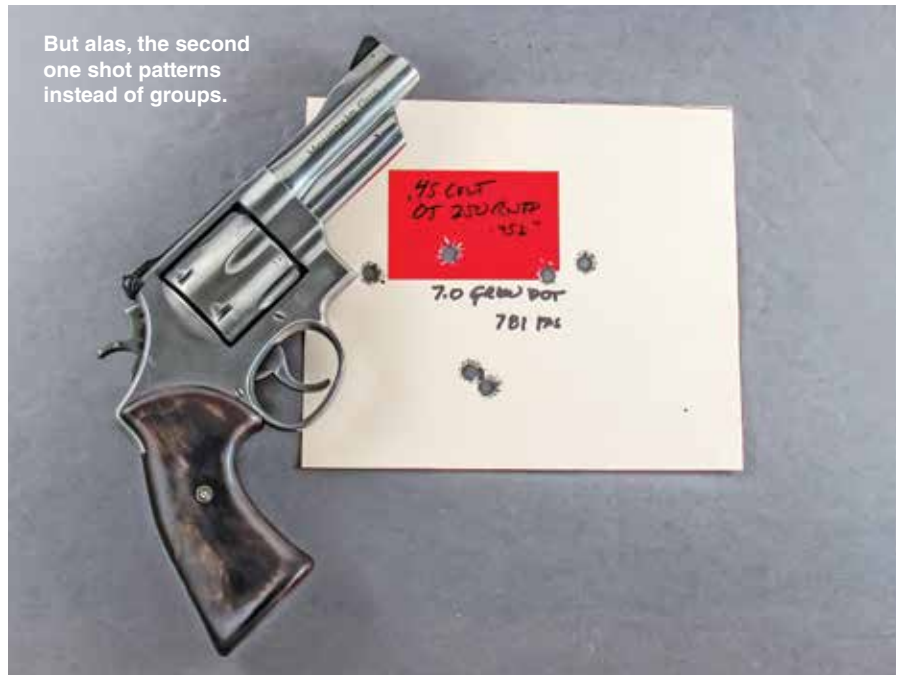
The next thought was there was something wrong with the barrel. As several of us looked as best we could, it appeared there was something in the bore, just behind the front sight. It appeared to be about a quarter circle on the right side and an even smaller mark on the left side. These were not readily apparent but shouldn't have been there. So Buckhorn called S&W to explain the problem and they were told to send it back to the factory. So off it went.

After a couple weeks they called back to say they did not have any of the slim "pencil-style" stainless barrels available, but they did have a 4" heavy under-lug barrel they could install and they gave the folks

at Buckhorn the price. Had this been a factory defect they would've probably fixed it for nothing. I had purchased this gun at Buckhorn so the owner offered to refund my money. I said I would rather just get it fixed so he agreed to go 50-50 on the barrel price, which I thought was very fair.

The turnaround time was even faster than S&W had promised and they not only installed the new barrel but also a new set of S&W wood target stocks. These are very good looking and quite comfortable — the best to come from Smith & Wesson since they dropped the Diamond Coke Bottle grips 50 years ago.

But alas, the second one shot patterns instead of groups.



My two .45 stainless steel 4" S&W sixguns are no longer a matched pair but with the new barrel, groups are even tighter from the full-lug gun than the Cocobolo. My first two groups out of the now heavy barreled .45 gave me groups of 5/8 and 7/8" for 5 shots at 20 yards. The same load consisting of the Oregon Trail 250-gr. RNFP over 7.0 grains of Green Dot had given 3-1/2" groups with the old barrel. Success!

A BULGING CULPRIT

Now this gun has been fixed and shoots well it raises a question — what happened to this barrel to cause this problem? Obviously, the former owner had done something to mess up the barrel which we now know had a bulge. He probably stuck a bullet in the barrel and then sent another one behind it. Denis — who has sensitive fingers — could feel the bulge on the outside of the original returned barrel once he knew what he was looking for.

All of this raises an ethics question. If I have a gun that doesn't shoot, I am not going to try to pawn it off on someone else. Whoever previously owned this gun sold it to Buckhorn without telling them of the problem.

The gun looks fine, has a smooth action and locks up tight, so the boys at Buckhorn would have no reason to look for a problem. I found the problem by shooting, shooting, and *more* shooting. Normally I've found shooters are way above average when it comes to ethics. This particular shooter was — apparently — an exception.



Success! Now the second gun shoots exceptionally well.

THE FIXER

PERPLEXING PISTOL PROBLEMS RESOLVED

A few years back I got a call from my good friend Jim Martin — a single-action sixgunsmith in Arizona. He'd called to tell me he had a .44 Special New Frontier for sale belonging to one of his customers.

THE RIGHT BULLET

My interest was immediately piqued by both the caliber and the particular sixgun. Jim told me he had totally tuned the action and did a trigger job, however, the customer said he wanted to sell it because it wouldn't shoot. Jim then mentioned the \$600 price and he didn't have to go any further as I said immediately, "I'll take it!" I didn't take any convincing. Any Colt New Frontier — especially one chambered in .44 Special at this price — was not to be allowed to slip by because I firmly believe the right handloads can solve most problems. Not all, mind you, but most.

After I said I'd buy it, Jim explained what the problems were — his customer had complained the gun shot (1) too low and (2) not very well. I took this as a challenge.

When the gun arrived, one look told me what the problem was. The rear sight was raised very high, which told me the

previous owner had been using lighter weight bullets — probably 200 grain. This also indicated he'd been using bullets of the wrong diameter. I surmised his loads were handloads with .44-40 bullets sized to .427. I used plug gauges to measure the chamber throats and found them to be a uniform .433, so I loaded up some .431 diameter bullets, screwed the rear sight all the way down and was rewarded with a most accurate shooting sixgun. All it took was the right bullets.

THE RIGHT LOAD

Several years ago I had a 2nd Generation Colt New Frontier that had started life chambered in .357 Magnum. I came up with a 4-3/4" .45 Colt barrel and had the original cylinder re-chambered tightly to .45 Colt. Everything was right but it would not shoot to my satisfaction so I tried several handload combinations without much success.

Finally, however, I hit on the right one. This little .45 Colt would shoot one-hole groups at 25 yards using the Lyman #454424 Keith bullet over 20.0 grains of H4227. My problem was solved simply by handloading. Another time a fellow wanted to meet with me as he had three S&W .44



The second Mountain Gun came back from S&W with a heavy under-lug barrel and new S&W target stocks.

Magnums in three different barrel lengths that he said wouldn't shoot. It didn't take me long to figure out his handloads were the problem and I was able to point him in the right direction.

MOUNTAIN GUN MYSTERY

Recently I ran into another interesting problem. I have a pair of virtually identical pre-lock S&W .45 Colt 4" stainless Mountain Guns. Both were fitted with Skeeter Skelton Stocks by BluMagnum — one Cocobolo with a lot of grain and the other plain dark walnut. I shot the Cocobolo gun first and was rewarded with some very excellent groups, however, when I shot the walnut gun, my friend Denis asked if I was shooting .45 Colt loads or .410s! The groups were 4" and larger.

THE SEARCH BEGINS

I measured chamber throats on both guns and found them to be a uniform .451, so I figured just trying different loads would solve the problem. Several loads were assembled using bullets from .451 up to .454.

Using the RCBS #45-255 KT sized to .454 over 6.0 grains of Red Dot (and also 6.0 grains of Clays) saw the Cocobolo .45 averaged well under 1-1/2" while the walnut gun came in over 3".

An assortment of bullets sized to .451, including the RCBS #45-270 and the Lyman #454424 over 6.0 grains of Red Dot and 6.0 grains of Clays shot even better in the Cocobolo .45 — groups averaging just under 1". The walnut-stocked .45 remained a lost cause. The Cocobolo Colt Mountain Gun shot everything well and the walnut-gripped .45 continued to shoot poorly. Handloading didn't solve the problem — so now what?



The first .45 Colt Mountain Gun of the pair shot well ...

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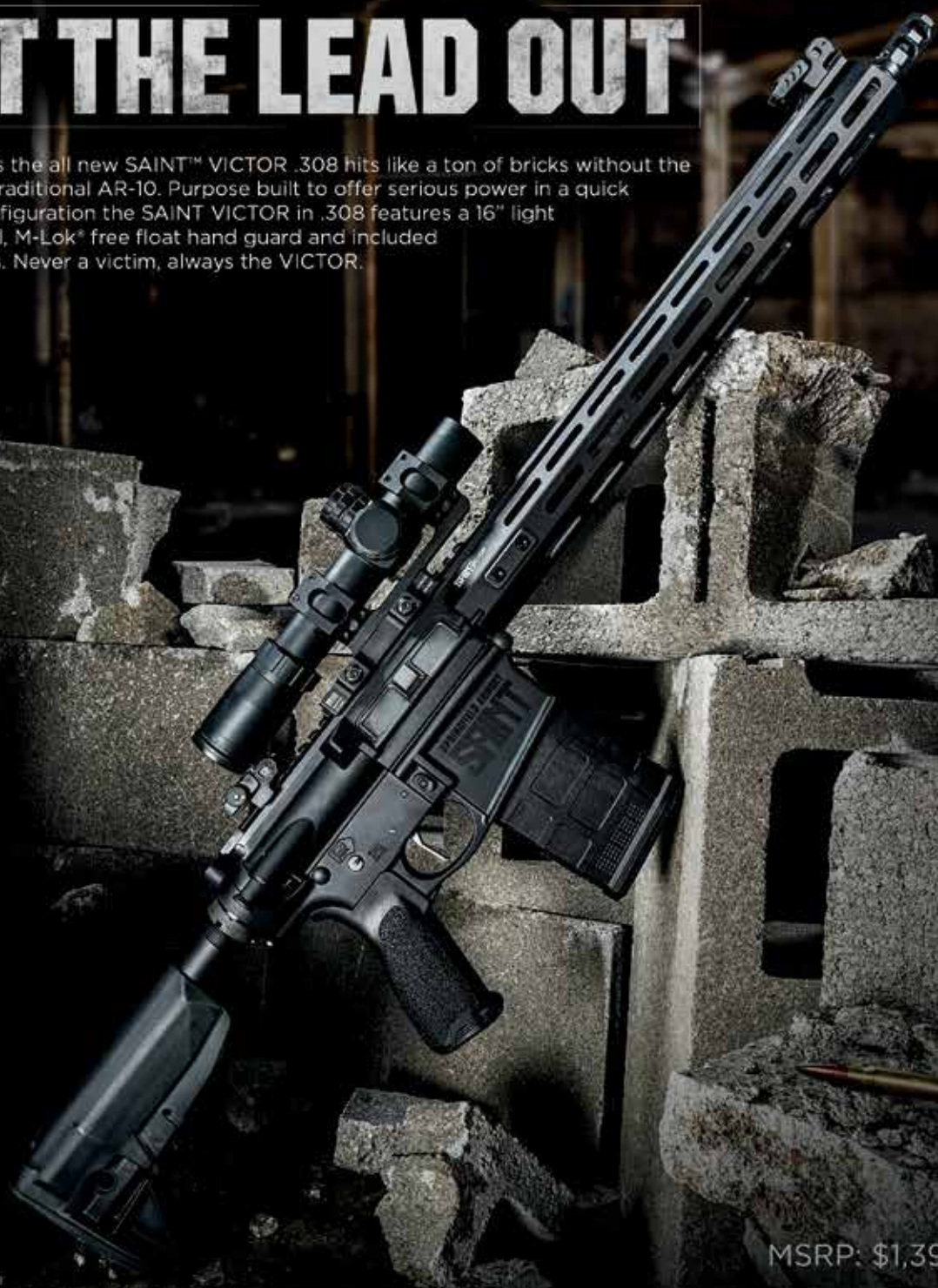
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