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BRENT T. WHEAT

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TAFFIN TARGETS

What are the dimensions of the pistol target squares John Taffin uses?

Jim Nosker

They are 2" high x 3" wide. —JT

MORE HAND EJECTORS

I was drawn to the photograph of the two S&W .44 Hand Ejectors illustrating your piece "The Quest Never Stops" (*GUNS* July 2020, p. 18). The photo looked very familiar and I thought I had a picture just like it saved from some long ago effort to illustrate something. I looked through my old photos and found the attached. Mine obviously lacks the



illustrative qualities of Ms. Venturino's work, but the similarity is striking.

Both guns have the "S" serial numbers and antedate model numbers so are contemporary with your .44s. Except for two things. My old guns both have Pachmayr grip adapters instead of Tyler T-Grips and mine are not .44s, but .38-44s. (Neither has been reamed out to make a .357.)

Marshall Williams

Cool, great-looking guns ... they might show up in Crossfire! —BW

.22 CASE LENGTH

In the May issue of *GUNS Magazine* there is an article on pp. 47–48 regarding .22 Ammo by David Freeman that has a discrepancy. Mr. Freeman states, "The J. Stevens Arms & Tool Company extended the case of the .22 long and added a 40-gr. bullet to produce the .22 Long Rifle, commonly called LR." The .22 Long and the .22 Long Rifle have the same case, but a longer bullet is what makes the .22 LR. I enjoyed the article, but just wanted to correct a discrepancy.

Thanks for putting out a great magazine. Best on the market!

Dick Berkey

Yep, we whiffed — the cases are the same length. David might have been thinking of the .25 Stevens Short and Long when he wrote the line and I missed it during proof-reading. There are also many sources who claim UMC actually introduced the round, but my research was inconclusive so we went with Stevens. —BW

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THE FINEST IN THE FIREARMS FIELD SINCE 1955

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The Smith & Wesson evolution (left to right) — .44 American, .44 Model #3 Russian and New Model #3 .44 Russian. The first Russian is notable for its humpback design and trigger guard spur.

THE .44 RUSSIAN BORN IN THE USA, PERFECTED BY THE BEAR

In 1870 the United States Military purchased 1,000 Smith & Wesson .44 American revolvers. However, they were not satisfied with this first cartridge-firing big-bore revolver and did not order any more. The Russians also ordered Smith & Wesson Americans and, as with the United States Military, were also not satisfied. However, instead of abandoning this new .44 sixgun they set about to improve it.

RUSSIA GETS INVOLVED

Smith & Wesson had originally sent a sample .44 American to the Russian Military Attaché, General Alexander Gorloff, who happened to be in Hartford purchasing rifles. This is one of the smartest things Smith & Wesson could have done as the first contract from Russia in May 1871 resulted in 20,000 of the Model #3 American going to Russia. Eventually over 130,000 were purchased by the Russians. However, they made two significant changes, one of which still impacts us today.

CHANGES

The original American had a rounded back strap. For better control, the Russians added a humpback back strap which allowed better control under recoil. They also added a spur on the trigger guard and to this day no one is sure why this was chosen. Some say it allowed the placing of the revolver in a

sash around the waist and the trigger guard would prevent it from slipping. Others say it was chosen as a place to put the middle finger while shooting. I have tried this method and it really works in steadying the sixgun. The Russians also ask for internal changes to be made to improve the American.

However, the most far-reaching change had to do not with the sixgun itself but the ammunition. The .44 American used a heeled bullet with the smaller diameter placed inside the case and the bullet itself the same diameter as the case. This is what allows us to make .44 American brass out of .41 Magnum brass trimmed to length.

The Russians wanted a bullet of uniform size and placed inside the brass. By keeping the bullet at the same basic diameter as the original .44, the brass case needed to be increased in diameter. This also allowed for proper crimping of the bullet to prevent it moving forward under recoil. The result was the same basic style of sixgun cartridge used today. To arrive at later .44 Cartridges, Smith & Wesson simply lengthened the .44 Russian brass.

MODELS

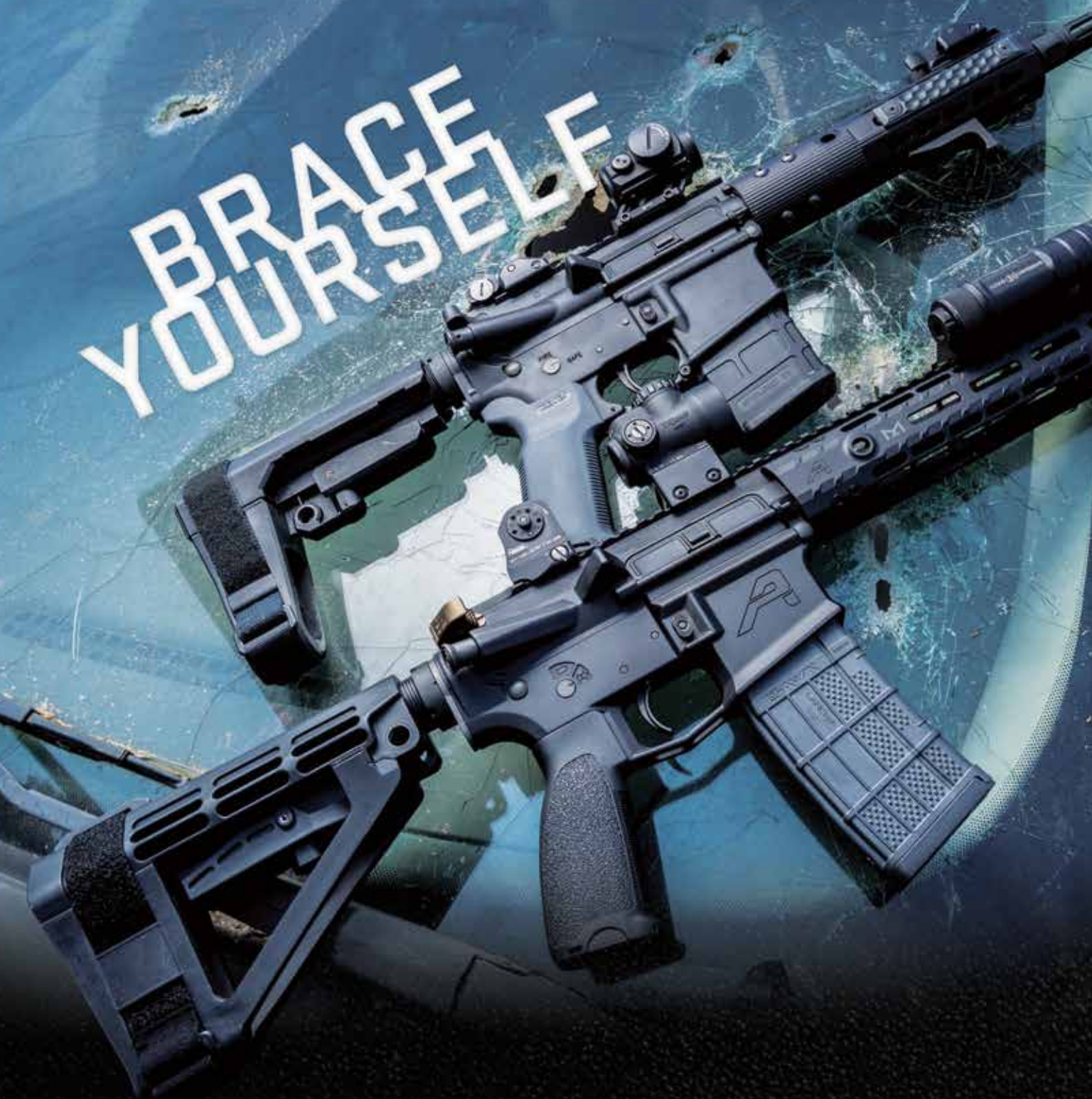
The first Smith & Wesson .44 Americans purchased by the Russians are known as the 1st Model and basically are the same configuration as the original. With the 2nd Model we see the arrival of the spurred trigger guard and the hump-backed, round-butted grip frame. By the time the 3rd Model arrived it was known as the Model #3 Russian and was standardized at a 6-1/2" barrel length.

Original Model #3 Russians were produced from 1874 to 1878 and may be tough to find in good shooting shape without commanding high collector dollars. However, Navy Arms offered an excellent shooting replica of the New Model Russian. The Navy Arms New Model Russian or Model #3 Russian is a faithful copy complete with very small sights of the original and is finished overall in a deep blue-black finish set off with a case colored hammer, trigger guard and locking latch. Stocks are



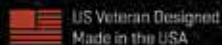
An original Smith & Wesson Model #3 Russian (top) compared to a Uberti replica.

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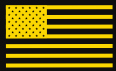
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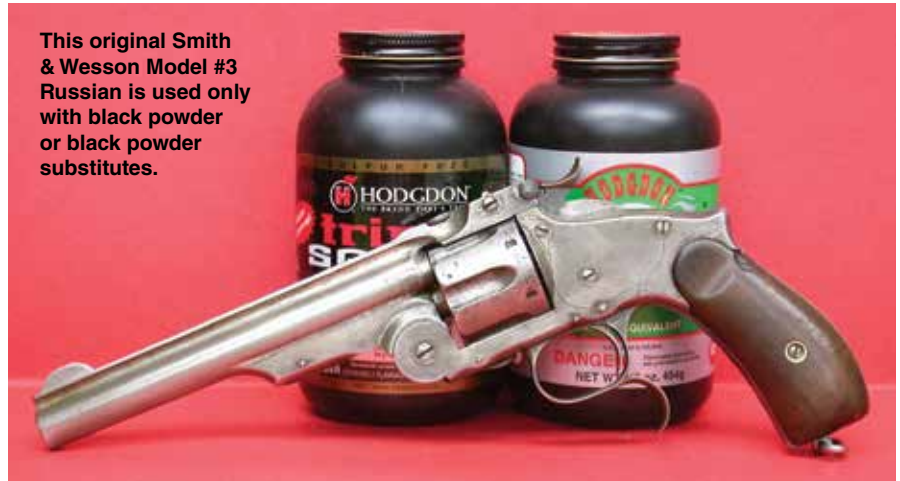
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This original Smith & Wesson Model #3 Russian is used only with black powder or black powder substitutes.



smooth walnut as found on the originals.

The Model #3 Russian is also offered by Uberti. Both versions come with factory stocks of smooth European walnut, however my personal Navy Arms New Model Russian has been fitted with Ultra Ivory grips from Eagle Grips. Ultra Ivory, while a synthetic material, is very close to real ivory, with milky white color and ivory type grain and they also provide a good contrast to the dark blue finish of the New Model Russian.

were so precise they are easily fouled and work very sluggishly after very few rounds. The only answer is to keep them clean.

Beginning in 1881 shooters now had a real choice when it came to Smith & Wesson .44 Russians. The Double Action First Model would be manufactured from 1881 to 1913, approximately 53,500 of them, however as with the New Model #3 all frames were made in the black powder era and they should only be used with black powder loads.

ACCURATE

The .44 Russian black powder load had a great reputation for accuracy. I decided to find out if there really was a basis for this. I loaded 50 rounds of .44 Russian duplicating the original load as closely as I could. Starting with .44 Russian balloon head brass (the old-style that had a greater capacity than modern solid head brass), I used a 250-gr. round-nosed cast bullet from a Lyman mold, black powder and the one concession I made to modern times was a magnum pistol primer. My test gun was a Colt Bisley Model which had been restored by fitting it with a 7-1/2" Colt .44 Special barrel and an old Christy .44 cylinder. At 25 yards all 50 rounds cut one ragged hole.

Today .44 Russian chambered sixguns are found in replica form at Cimarron Firearms not only in Smith & Wesson Model #3s but also in 1860 and 1851 Cartridge conversions. I have also added .44 Russian chambered cylinders to .44 Special and .44-40 Colt Single Actions as well as a Texas Longhorn Arms West Texas Flat-Top Target which also has cylinders in .44 Magnum, .44 Special and .44-40. Of course it is possible to fire .44 Russian rounds in both .44 Special and .44 Magnum cylinders, however I feel more connected with the old days when I have a properly chambered cylinder. 🔫

“THE MACHINING AND TOLERANCES USED IN THEIR MANUFACTURE WERE SO PRECISE THEY ARE EASILY FOULED AND WORK VERY SLUGGISHLY AFTER VERY FEW ROUNDS. THE ONLY ANSWER IS TO KEEP THEM CLEAN.”

NEW MODEL

After the Model #3 Russian the Smith & Wesson New Model #3 arrived and was a sixgun way ahead of its time. It is easily distinguished from the #3 Russian by the fact it does not have a spur on the trigger guard nor the prominent hump on the back strap. It is so precisely fitted it demands smokeless powder for perfect functioning. However all of the frames of these guns were built in the black powder era and should only be used with black powder. The machining and tolerances used in their manufacture

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PISTOL CALIBER CARBINES

FROM AN AGNOSTIC TO A BELIEVER

Pistol-caliber carbines is a firearm niche I've overlooked in the past. It always seemed to me if I could get the cartridge in a handgun there wasn't much point to using it in a rifle. The only example I owned, long ago, was a Ruger .44 Magnum carbine. I liked its compact size and moderate weight. It was certainly more pleasant to shoot than my Ruger Super Blackhawk revolver but carbines for cartridges such as 9mm Luger, .40 S&W, .45 ACP didn't interest me much.

Well, I'm not too old and stubborn to learn. I tried a Rossi 92 carbine in .38 Special/.357 Magnum and liked it so much I eventually acquired several similar carbines from Henry, Marlin and Winchester. Here's some of what I have learned about pistol-caliber carbines:

- They are great fun to shoot. It's like plinking with .22s but on a bigger scale, plus if you are a reloader and buy cast bullets in bulk it is almost as inexpensive.
- Most people can shoot a carbine more accurately than they can a handgun.



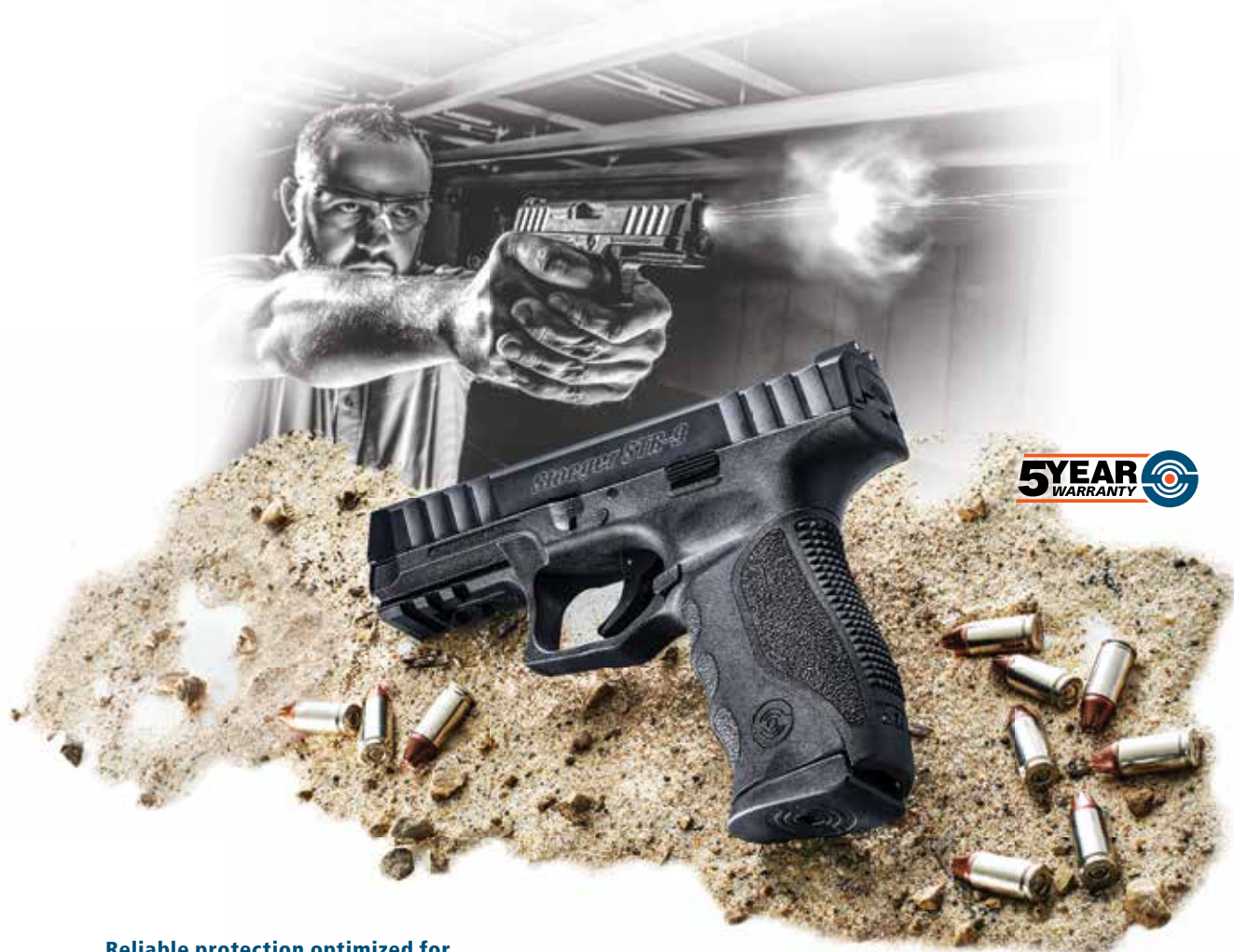
Ruger's PC Carbine in 9mm Luger is a great camp or home defense gun. Dave's is equipped here with a Streamlight light/laser and a Magpul 21-shot magazine.



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The Ruger PC Carbine is fully ambidextrous with the provided extra magazine well assembly and can feed on either Ruger or GLOCK magazines. The charging handle (right) is easy to swap from right to left side while the push-button safety and bolt latch are accessible from either side.



- As range increases the advantage of carbine over handgun becomes more evident. I can hit an IPSC target at 100 yards, or a steel ram at 200 meters with a handgun, but I can do it faster and easier with a carbine.

- Longer barrels generally increase bullet velocity, flattening trajectory and reducing wind drift.

- Felt recoil is reduced substantially due both to firearm weight and the fact the carbine is held against the shoulder.

- The longer barrel reduces muzzle

blast and the level of the report. Of course you must always use ear protection when shooting but there's loud and then there's *really loud*. Short barreled .357 and .44 Magnum revolvers, centerfire rifles with 16" to 18" barrels (especially under a roofed shooting point) can wear you out even when wearing both plugs and muffs.

For home defense you could do a lot worse than one of these little carbines. The late Jeff Cooper once referred to lever-action .357s as "Brooklyn Assault Rifles." In locations with unduly restrictive firearms

laws, these traditional-looking cowboy-era rifles tend to fly under the radar. My only concern is the lack of an accessory rail (though I know they are available on some models), the fact they take two hands to reload and the risk of jamming due to operator error under stress.

All of which made me take a second look at the pistol caliber carbine scene. I find the Ruger PC9 particularly appealing. I like the very fast takedown procedure. Taken down, it is easy to store in a pickup truck, UTV, canoe, boat, or small plane — if I had a small

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plane. Typical of Ruger it is built the way the Romans used to build bridges and offers remarkable value for the money. As a home defense carbine, or for camp security on fishing trips it is about ideal. My wife says, "Another ideal camp gun. What does that make, around 15?" I may have to come up with another reason for buying a new gun.

WINGING IT

Both front and rear sights are mounted on the barrel. The front sight is protected by vertical wings while the rear sight is a large aperture. I wasn't sure how it would work being so far from the eye but in fact it worked very well. The forearm has an accessory rail to which I fitted a Streamlight light/laser. Personally I want an accessory rail on any firearm used for home defense whether it is a handgun, shotgun, or rifle. The PC9 barrel is heavily fluted to reduce weight with a twist in 9mm of 1:10. The muzzle is threaded to accept accessories with 1/2" to 28 threads and has a protective cap.

The PC9 has some similarities to the 10/22 such as the trigger guard cross bolt safety and the bolt hold-open lever. Trigger pull is quite good with a pull weight of 4 lb. 6 oz. with a small amount of smooth takeup, minimal creep and overtravel. Both the bolt handle and the magazine release lever are easily reversible for right- or left-handed users. Length of pull can also be adjusted by removing or adding the provided spacers. In addition to the iron sights there is a Picatinny-style rail on the receiver for easy fitting of optical or red-dot sights.

RANGE TIME

For accuracy testing I fitted a Leupold M8 3X scope I had on hand. Five-shot groups at 50 yards were typically around 2" and so far the carbine has proven completely reliable.

The PC9 comes with one Ruger magazine. By removing the receiver and trigger group from the stock a provided extra mag well can be fitted to accept GLOCK magazines. The switch is simple and fast with Ruger even providing the necessary Allen wrenches. What I like and use are GLOCK magazines made by Magpul. My favorite is the 21-shot version, very well made, reliable, and its proportions just look right.

If like me you've not had much interest in pistol caliber carbines, it may be worthwhile to take a second look!

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THE ORTHOPEDIC HOLSTER HOLSTERS TO HELP WITH HEALING

When illness or injury make it hard to carry your handgun, an alternate carry option may solve the problem.

Recently, on a private gun forum, a friend of mine mentioned he had temporarily stopped carrying a gun because excruciating lower back problems made it hurt to wear a serious fighting handgun on his hip — where it had been up to and since retirement from his long and honorable police career. Here's

what I suggested:

"... consider a shoulder rig. When I went through hell with my lumbar in the early '90s, the doc told me to stop carrying a gun on my belt to take the weight off my hips. I told him I had to carry because I was on call for emergencies and asked about a shoulder holster. He said, 'That'll be okay so long as you carry a same weight gun on each side.' I asked him if he was kidding and he said, 'No. On one side only your body can

unconsciously bias its weight one way or the other and your back and hips will be a bit out of alignment."

I put together a half-assed double shoulder rig and pulled two S&W Air-crewman K-Frame .38s out of the collection with midrange wadcutters because of the aluminum cylinders, and felt like Sonny Crockett's older stranger brother. I did some experimenting and found a Galco Shoulder System with loaded Colt LW Commander .45 on one side and two spare mags, cuffs in the optional cuff carrier and a Spyderco Police knife clipped to the accessory side of the harness equaled each other about to the ounce. That got me through until the back healed up. So, you might want to give something like this a shot."

My friend has since ordered a Galco shoulder rig. I sincerely hope it helps him as much as it did me.

The shoulder holster can have other advantages. In 2013, I was in a helicopter crash which caused a lot of pain in the right hip area before it healed. The damage was to muscle tissue, not bone structure, so balanced weight on either side of the torso wasn't a concern. A vertical Bianchi X15 shoulder holster carried a full-size combat handgun under my left arm during the healing process with the spare ammo not at all uncomfortable on my belt until I healed up.

OTHER CARRY OPTIONS

Got some sciatica going on in the area of the hip holster? The shoulder rig can fix it but so can a couple of other types of carry.



Pocket holsters (above) can be a pain-free alternative whether all leather, hybrid, or all synthetic. These are J-Frames with Crimson Trace Lasergrips. Perfect balance: a brace of 9mm GLOCK 26s in a Galco shoulder rig (below).



This carry location can solve a number of problems. Classic Bianchi X15 shoulder holster with Kimber Custom II .45 takes weight off the hips and lumbar spine.

For many folks the Appendix Inside the Waist Band (AIWB) carry, currently the rage among the cognoscenti, may do the trick. If the belt itself is causing aggravation, suspenders work wonders.

AIWB carry is also one answer for rotator cuff injuries or other shoulder problems limiting your ability to reach to, and particularly behind, your dominant hand side hip. When I tore a rotator cuff and left deltoid on the same side, I had a lot more strength and range of movement reaching for a gun at front centerline than going for one on or behind my hip on the injured side.

CROSS-DRAW

The cross-draw holster — carrying the gun on the non-dominant side at waistline opposite gun hand, butt forward — was popular among cowboys in the old west because it worked particularly well when on horseback or while seated at a card table in the wrong saloon. It solves other range of movement issues still relevant today. Photos from yesteryear of real LAPD plainclothes cops show, just like on the long-lived



AIWB guru Spencer Keepers demonstrates his favorite carry holster, from Keepers Concealment.

Dragnet TV series, a whole lot of them carried cross-draw. The reason was until the third quarter of the 20th Century, LAPD required their detectives to carry standard-size service revolvers instead of snub-nosed “Detective Specials” (Jack Webb’s iconic Sergeant Friday character being a notable exception). The standard LAPD weapon at the time was a 6” Colt or Smith & Wesson .38 Special. Drawing a gun this long from a high-ride concealment holster on the strong

side hip was awkward, often requiring the lawman to rock his shoulders dramatically to one side to clear the long tube. Cross-draw, with such a gun, was much faster. It turns out to be also a good deal faster for those with impaired range of movement in the shoulder.

Ankle and pocket holsters can also have a place in “orthopedic pistol packing.” Just remember it’s awkward as hell to draw from a pocket holster while seated, though remarkably quick in the same position from the ankle. For older folks, a concern with ankle holsters is blood vessel constriction which could aggravate something like phlebitis. When arthritis hit my knees and ankles I noticed the weight of an ankle holster caused discomfort.

TAILOR THE TOOL TO THE TASK.

The task — being able to quickly defend yourself and your loved ones — may be compromised by physical impairment due to illness or injury and you must adapt accordingly. This is what the helpful device I call “the orthopedic holster” is all about. 🔫

An advertisement for the North American Arms, Inc. RANGER II Break-Top 2.5 revolver. The revolver is shown in a disassembled state, with the cylinder removed and placed to the right. The revolver has a silver finish and a dark wood-grain handle. The cylinder is marked ".22 MAGNUM" and "NAA, PROVO, UT". Several .22 caliber bullets are scattered in front of the revolver. The North American Arms logo, featuring an eagle head in a circle, is in the top left corner. The text "North American Arms®, Inc. RANGER II Break-Top 2.5" is prominently displayed in yellow and orange. Below the revolver, it says "Actual Size Shown with LR Conversion Cylinder". In the bottom right, it says "Convenient, Reliable, Effective!". Social media icons for Facebook and Instagram are in the bottom left, along with the website "www.northamericanarms.com".

SOVIET SVT40 7.62X54MM FROM THE PAGE TO THE RANGE

If readers are as old as I, they probably remember those fantastic ads in the back of *American Rifleman* in the 1960s. They were from an outfit called "Ye Old Hunter" and almost always concerned military surplus rifles from a myriad of nations. Prices were insanely low by modern standards but were still impossible for a West Virginia teenager.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Perhaps the most fascinating one was the semi-auto Soviet SVT40 in 7.62x54mm. They were eye catching, especially in the brand new era of space launches. This was because they had a modernistic appearance compared to most wood and steel military surplus rifles. They were long and looked pencil thin on those black and white pages. Also their handguards were combination wood and steel but both segments were perforated. There was another fixture at the barrels' end of which I had no clue. To me both features looked "neat" but actually were for barrel cooling and recoil reduction; facts never entering my 13-year-old brain. They also sold for more than the many Mauser bolt actions listed in the ads, which in my thinking meant they had to be "more-better."

Years passed, in fact many decades passed and never did a thought of SVT40s enter my brain. Although by the mid-1970s I became an avid gun show attendee, never did I so much as knowingly see an SVT40. My gun'riting career got off the ground in those years, mostly with me covering hunting rifles and revolvers with lots of handloading and bullet-casting articles. Noteworthy, however, was my secondary hobby of studying World War II history. Sometime early in the 21st Century, something clicked in my psyche and I became determined to build a shooting collection of World War II firearms.

Once started, it nigh-on snowballed out of control. But — it has been fun! Not only did I acquire an SVT40 but now have two. One wears iron sights and one has the special 3.5X PU scope intended only for SVT40s. Not all of them could accept scope mounts. To do so required a lateral groove across the rear of the receiver. The second

SVT40 was purchased precisely because of this groove. It would have been nice to get one with an original scope, however I had to settle for reproduction scope and mounts made in the Ukraine but sold out of Canada I found on gunbroker.com.

THE GUN

SVT40s are gas operated semi-autos with a slight benefit over some other military semi-autos in having the gas system over the barrel instead of under. SVT40s are a fraction over four feet long with a barrel slightly over 24". At 8-1/2 lbs. they are surprisingly light for a military rifle of this length. Magazine has a capacity of 10 rounds



Mike uses a variety of bullets (above) in his SVT40s. At left (below) is a World War II vintage Soviet 7.62x54mm, middle is a British .303 and at right is a U.S. 7.62mm NATO.



The Red Army liked long rifles. At left is the Model 91/30 compared to the SVT40 at right. Both fired 7.62x54mm.

and it's detachable but in combat they were not meant to be replaced with another magazine although it's possible. Soviet doctrine dictated they could be loaded from above with five-round stripper clips.

NOT ENOUGH TO GO AROUND

If the Soviet/German war had not started in 1941 the Red Army would likely have fielded far more SVT40s than the 1.5 to 2.0 million reportedly built. Instead they had to rely mainly on the old Model 91/30 bolt actions. At least both rifle models chambered the same cartridge. With not enough SVT40s to go around, Red Army NCOs got many and snipers got most of the scope sighted ones. Actually, there were many female Soviet snipers and they are often seen in photos and films carrying the SVT40. Another common user of these Soviet semi-autos were German soldiers. Photos abound of Wehrmacht troops armed with captured ones.

I've fired my two SVT40s with original World War II ammo, some post-war ammo made by Eastern European nations but



This is the mounting system the Soviets used with their 3.5X PU scopes on SVT40s.

mostly with my own handloads developed to replicate the Soviet "Heavy Ball D" loading with a 185-gr. FMJ at approximately 2,650 fps, or Light Ball LP with a 149-gr. FMJ. I worry not about using hollowpoint or softnose rounds since I'm not a signatory of the Hague Conventions.

By American standards Soviet-made military weapons are crude but they don't lack functionality. Neither of my SVT40s have ever had a failure to feed or fire though

with the iron-sighted model I did have a slam fire. For this reason I recommend to load 7.62x54mm ammo for them with mil-spec CCI #34 primers.

ACCURACY

My open-sighted SVT40 will give mediocre groups of about 3" to 4" at 100 yards. The scope sight one can shoot groups half the size. It was definitely a decent World War II sniper rifle. 



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Marlin 1894s in .44-40. Both have octagon barrels while the bottom rifle, belonging to John's wife Diamond Dot, has been cut to 19-1/2" length.

LEVERGUN LOADS: .44 WCF RENOWNED ROUND RIDES AGAIN!

In 1860, B. Tyler Henry received a patent for a truly landmark rifle. With a lever-operated action using a copper cartridge case, the Model of 1860 (or "44 Henry") was born. This first true levergun, chambered in .44 Rimfire, offered previously unheard-of firepower. When Oliver Winchester lent his name to a levergun, the first Winchester came forth as the 1866, or as it was soon called due to its brass frame, the *Yellow Boy*. Winchester set the stage for a whole line of great leverguns. The 1860 and 1866 were both great steps forward but the best was yet to come — the 1873 Winchester.

The ammunition for the 1873 Winchester was no longer rimfire but a reloadable centerfire, the .44 Winchester

Center Fire or .44 WCF, more commonly known today as the .44-40. The .44 WCF also used an inside lubricated bullet rather than the outside lubricated bullet of the .44 Rimfire.

The .44 WCF differed in two other ways from the Henry. The case was lengthened to 1.3" and instead of being straight-walled as the .44 Rimfire the .44 WCF is a tapered case with a slight bottle-neck. The .44 WCF in the Winchester 1873 arrived the same year as the .45 Colt in the Colt Single Action Army and it is very close to being a .45 case necked down to .44.

SNAGS

A couple of "problems" surface when loading for the .44-40 but these problems

can be minimized with experience. One of the problems is not cartridge so much as the leverguns and sixguns available over the previous 150 years — bullet diameter is all over the place. The early standard was a 0.426" bullet.

I have two Colt Single Actions, one a 2nd Generation Peacemaker Commemorative and the other a 3rd Generation Single Action. The first barely accepts 0.427" bullets while the other welcomes bullets with a 0.429" diameter and I have to keep both supplies carefully marked for use in each individual sixgun. This problem is not so pronounced in modern .44-40 leverguns and I have been able to use 0.429" to 0.430" .44 Magnum bullets with success in these.

Another fairly small problem is the fact .44-40 brass is tapered, basically being a .45 down to .44 which means a standard steel sizing die is used instead of a carbide version. This means cases must be lubricated before sizing but I spray lube all cases, no matter what type of sizing die I'm going to use. I also have had no problem loading .44-40s on a progressive press.

THE LOADS

The standard jacketed bullet for the .44-40 has been a 200-gr. flat nose. In the past both Remington and Winchester have offered this bullet sized to the standard 0.426" to 0.427" for use in leverguns or sixguns. Using the Remington version over 9.0 grains of Unique results in just over 1,240 fps while a charge of 20.0 grains of #2400 boost the muzzle velocity considerably up to just over 1,830 fps, resulting in

Lighter weight .44 Magnum bullets work well in loading for the .44-40.





a very potent hunting load. At 50 yards with the standard sights these two loads group into 2-1/2" and 3" respectively so they are definitely close range propositions.

I have also found .44 Magnum bullets sized at 0.429" to 0.430" also work just fine in .44-40 lever guns. For example using Hornady's 200 JHP over 20.0 grains of IMR4227 results in 1,375 fps muzzle velocity and just over 1" groups for three shots at 50 yards. Note the larger diameter bullet shoots tighter groups.

The Model 1873 may not be a strong action but the Model 1892 is very strong and can be used for many more varied activities. In my old Lyman Manual there are loads for the .44-40 in the Winchester '92 consisting of a 200-gr. jacketed bullet at 2,100 fps using #2400! Times change and powders and primers change and I don't believe I want to push the 1892 so hard.

'92 ONLY!

The following .44-40 loads are for use in Model 1892 leverguns only as some are much too heavy for the old toggle link actions of the Models 1860, 1866 and 1873. Groups are five shots at 50 yards: Using the Remington 200 JFP .44-40 bullet with 20.0 grains of H4227 yields 1,256 fps and a group of 1-1/4". Going up to 22.0 grains of the same powder raises the muzzle velocity to 1,537 fps while increasing the group size slightly to 1-3/4", still resulting in a good deer hunting load. For milder loads I use 9.0 grains of Unique for just under 1,200 fps and a 2" group.

Targets fired at 50 yards (above) with .44-40 replica 1892 leverguns. Two of John's most-used powders for loading jacketed bullets (below) in the .44 WCF are #2400 and Unique.



Switching to bullets designed for the .44 Magnum, Speer's 200 JFP over 10.0 grains of Unique gives an easy shooting 1,366 fps and a 2-1/4" group while the Speer 225 JHP over the same powder charge is just over 1,300 fps with a slightly tighter 2" group. All of these are very pleasant shooting.

Until the Renaissance of things Western with the arrival of Cowboy Action Shooting, the .44-40 cartridge was basically dead. Since then we have seen replicas of the 1860, 1866, 1873 and 1892 Winchesters all chambered in .44 WCF. Sometimes progress is wonderful.



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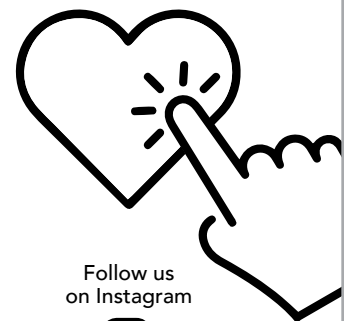
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Denny's trusty Winchester Model 1897 shown with a vintage Eagle Industries 60-round bandoleer.

WINCHESTER MODEL 1897 THE SHOTGUN BROWNING REALLY WANTED

In my last shotgun column I covered the lever-action Winchester Model 1887 shotgun designed by firearms genius John M. Browning.

The management at Winchester told Browning Winchester was best known for lever-actions and a lever-action shotgun should be produced for brand recognition, even though Browning told them a slide-action (pump) would be a better choice. Ten years later Winchester finally accepted the Browning-designed Model 1897.

SPECS

Over the years the Model '97 was manufactured in several grades from fancy walnut and hand engraved receivers to the no-frills riot and trench models. Barrel lengths included 30", 28", 26" and 20". Like most early pump shotguns the '97 had a single action bar as opposed to the dual action bars found on more modern designs.

The gun came in fixed and takedown models. Shell capacity was five plus one in the chamber.

Takedown is accomplished by pushing in the pin located at the end of the magazine, turning the assembly counterclockwise and then rotating a quarter of a turn to the left. The barrel/magazine tube can now be separated from the receiver.

The riot gun had a simple bead sight. The trench gun added a ventilated hand-guard and bayonet lug.

The longer barrel version was used by farmers and hunters, while the riot guns

were used by both lawmen and gangsters alike. The trench version was used to good effect by American Doughboys in World War I. In fact they were so effective the German government complained the Model 97 Trench Gun was illegal because "it is especially forbidden to employ arms, projections, or materials calculated to cause unnecessary suffering" as defined by the Hague convention.

An interesting side note — if the trigger is held to the rear, it will fire with each pump of the action.

The shotgun shown is my personal

Model 1897 and is of the takedown type. A check with Winchester revealed the gun was made 1909. It is a "D" version, indicating the magazine follower is flat.

DEAL OF THE CENTURY

I found my shotgun in 1985 at a local swap meet. It was in a bucket and completely disassembled, right down to the last pin. The man was asking \$50. I pointed out the barrel was crushed, the stock broken and I did not know if any parts were missing. I offered \$15 and ended up walking away with it for \$25.

Originally a 26" barrel, it had apparently been ran over and was crushed around 24" and the resulting dent ran back to the 20" mark. The stock was completely broken at



The '97 slide release is a button on the right side of the receiver.



The takedown pin is located at the end of the magazine.



Unlike more modern designs, the Winchester Model 1897 has a single action bar but the Browning design remains a favorite with shooters over 120 years later.



the pistol grip area and repair had been attempted by wrapping it with wire.

It took the better part of a day but after cleaning off rust and congealed oil, I was somewhat surprised when everything went back together. I received an original stock from Numrich Arms (now Gun Parts Corp.) a week later.

At the time renowned custom gunsmith Ted Yost ran the Gunsite Gunsmithy. I took the shotgun to him and asked him to cut and re-crown the barrel to 18.5", replace the original bead sight, put in a new magazine spring and finally, install the stock with a recoil pad with an overall 12" length of

pull. Between the original purchase, the new stock, recoil pad and the work done by Ted, I was into the grand old gun for a total of 60 bucks.

This shotgun and a Model 94 in .30-30 ride with me every day in my truck in a Big Sky roof rack. Between them and my handgun I can take care of any problem, big or small from close to far.

TRUE INGENUITY

When not on the road instructing, Louis Awerbuck and I spent countless hours solving the world's problems over coffee and cigarettes. Most of the time the problems would be back the next day but I recall one notable exception.

Louis was also a fan of the Model 97. He had an original takedown riot gun that often accompanied him, taken down to save space. One day he related to me the only problem was when taken down, the magazine tube could not be kept loaded because the shell stops were, of course, in the receiver and by the time it took to load it the fight might be over.

A week later Louis came by and told me he had solved the problem. He had drilled a hole into the magazine tube about 2" from the end. Now he could load four rounds, insert a grenade pin into the hole and when taken down the magazine could stay loaded, albeit at the cost of one round. Being able to reassemble quickly and with the pull of the pin, the gun would be ready to rock. I think John Browning would have smiled.

INCREASED POPULARITY

Popularity of the Model 1997 has increased dramatically with Cowboy Action Shooting, and original '97s are in high demand with prices to match — original Winchester Trench guns are going for \$4,000 and more. Even an imported Norinco riot clone will fetch around \$500 and a replica Trench will set you back another couple of hundred. I have some experience with the Norinco clones and have found them to be reliable.

Whether original or replica the Winchester Model 1897 is a true piece of American history. 



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ARE YOU READY FOR A SLUGFEST?

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Tom McHale

While cute and arguably adorable, airgun pellets are puny little things, aren't they?

A "standard" .177-caliber airgun pellet weighs somewhere in the vicinity of seven grains, give or take. That's about one-tenth the weight of a .32 ACP, a self-defense caliber mocked by many. Will an air rifle slug hurt you? Yes. Penetrate the skin? Yes. Leave a nasty little scar? Yes. Kill you? Theoretically possible, but it's quite the long shot.

Even though most home airguns carry about the same kinetic energy as a cluster of nine bananas dropped from six feet — yes, I did the math — they still require strict adherence to all the standard firearm safety rules. After all, five out of five moms agree airguns can put an eye out right before you get a whoopin'. Even so, let's just say airgun caliber pellets are less than ideal for dangerous game hunting.

REALLY?

There are pellets, and there are pellets.

I never much cared for the term "pellets" even when talking about airgun projectiles. The word reminds me of rabbit food and the recycled product they leave behind. Besides, times have changed. While "pellet" may have adequately described the miniscule skirted flat-point chunk-let of lead fired from a



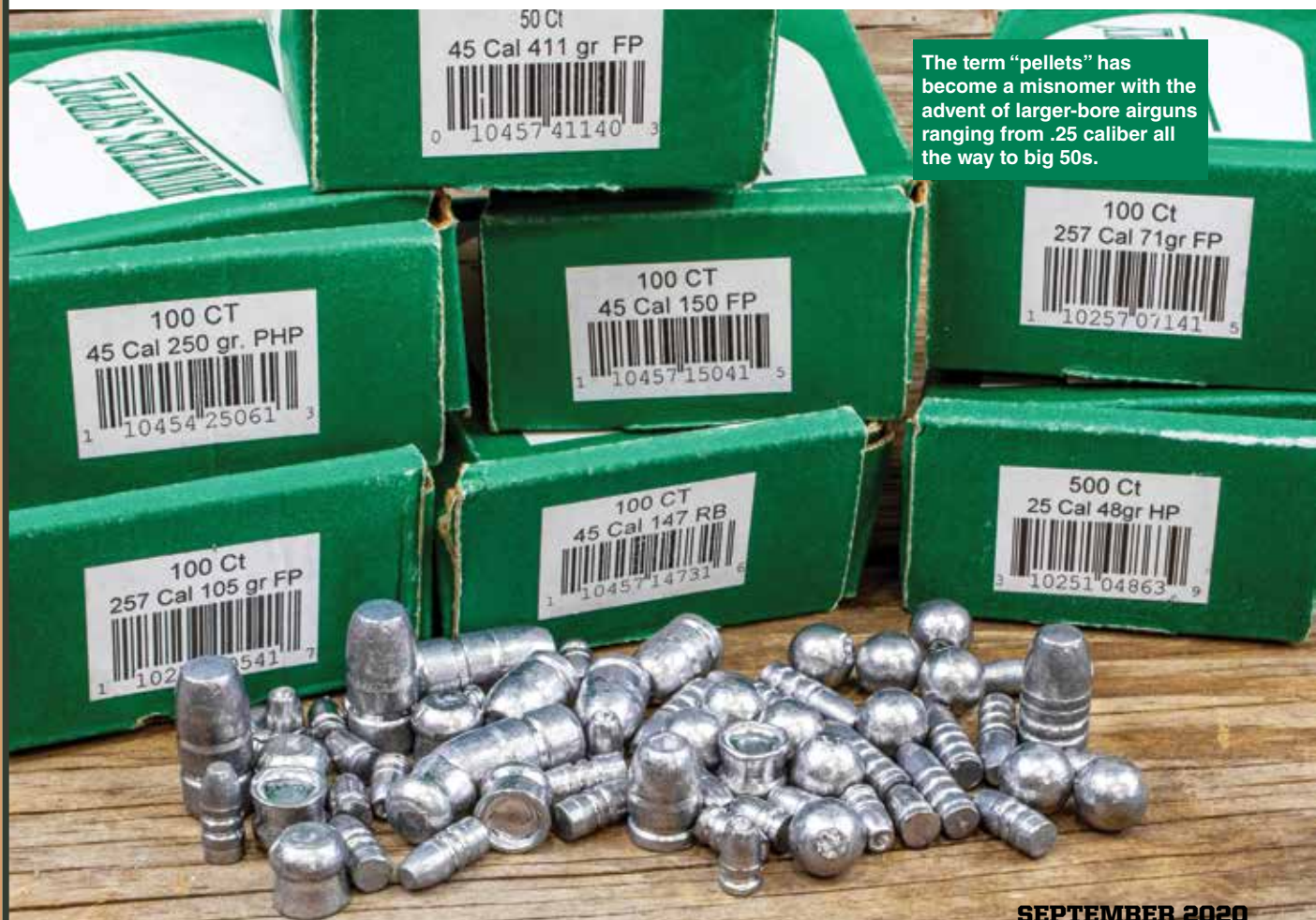
Left is the "tiny" .177 pellet we all know and love. Right is a .45 caliber 150-gr. flat-point "pellet" from Hunters Supply.

760 Pumpmaster, it doesn't do justice to the current crop of air-powered missiles.

I dare you to refer to airgun projectiles as "teeny little pellets" when in the presence of the folks from Hunters Supply. Comparing a "pellet" like those in a tin sold at the local Dregs-of-Humanity Mart to a modern airgun projectile is like equating a Tesla to a golf cart because both are electrically powered.

To ease into the world of modern air ballistics, let's start with something familiar in appearance. If you think of a "pellet" as something shaped like the Soyuz service module and capsule, you might be surprised to learn they grow them big too. If you want the flight characteristics of a skirted, air-catching projectile, but bigger, check out the Hunters Supply 138- and 150-gr. jumbo pellets. Chunky skirt, slender waist and flat-point included, these look just like the .177s except they're the size of the last digit on your pinky and generate 176 ft.-lbs. of muzzle energy.

If you feel like musketeering, check out round ball offerings like the .45 caliber 147-grainer. This one left a Gamo TC45 at 849 fps for 240 ft.-lbs. Or maybe you prefer a genuine



slugfest, launching a hunk of solid lead for maximum penetration? Try a 250-gr. lead hollow-point for 769 fps and 328 ft.-lbs. If you want a knockout punch, consider the 411-gr. solid. This one got me 637 fps and 370 ft.-lbs. from the TC45.

GELATINOUS SPLAT

Kinetic energy is a convenient way to measure raw power, but it doesn't always tell the entire story. The real test of terminal performance is on live game, or more conveniently, penetration and expansion performance in ballistic gelatin blocks.

When my wife was out running errands, I tested out some .25-caliber hollow-point slugs from Hunters Supply down in my under-house garage using an AirForce Airguns Condor SS rifle. This little gem flings those 48-gr. slugs at an average of 888 fps. If you do the math, you'll find the combo produces 84 ft.-lbs. of kinetic energy — somewhere between a .22LR pistol and rifle.

I happened to have a fresh and unused block of synthetic gelatin from Clear Ballistics. It was even labeled "for airgun use" so I figured I was good to go with the nine



The .25 caliber airgun platform has become Tom's favorite because of its versatility. Left to right: 48-gr. HP, 71-gr. slug, 105-gr. slug.

inches of fresh plastic material. I set up, aimed carefully, and promptly blew right through the nine inches of ballistic gel and smack into a pile of old books I'd set as a fail-safe backstop. Good thing, because my plan was dumb.

THE REAL THING

Realizing I was using more of a "real" gun than the Christmas Story model, I broke out some 16" centerfire gelatin blocks and repeated the test. This time, I did capture the slugs. They'd penetrated to a depth of 15" to 16" and had even started to expand.

The post impact diameter measured a hair under a third of an inch.

Just for kicks, I launched some traditional .25 caliber pellets into the gel as well. Those 27.47-gr. skirted versions penetrated just over 7" and expanded to the point of tearing the hollow-point sides away from the base.

Given the performance of the comparatively small .25 caliber slugs, I think I'll save the .45 caliber slugfest for an outdoor range trip.



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The MAS 36 feeds quickly and efficiently (above) from 5-round stripper clips. The MAS 36 bolt configuration (below) looks ungainly but lends itself to “palm up” manipulation. The knob is far enough forward to prevent it from banging into the trigger finger during recoil.



THE MAS 36

AN UNDERRATED AND INNOVATIVE FRENCH WARHORSE

Payton Miller

France's role in the design and development of cutting-edge small arms often gets overlooked, often by those casting a jaundiced eye toward the country's military setbacks since the days of Napoleonic success. This is manifestly unfair — not only to the country, but to the firearms designed, produced and used by the French.

From the lethal Chassepot rifle, which seriously outclassed the Dreyse “Needle Gun” in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, to the smokeless breakthrough of the Lebel Model 1886 and to the most excellent MAT 49 SMG of Indochina and Algeria fame, France's historic menu of personal weaponry has bested the competition on several occasions.

A LOOK ALL ITS OWN

However, if there was a contest for Best Ugly Military Bolt-Action Rifle of All Time, France's MAS 36 would be a contender for top honors. Aesthetics aside, its somewhat blocky two-piece stock, slab-sided receiver and dog-leg, rear-lug bolt shouldn't detract from the many sensible features of this carbine-length battle rifle produced from 1937 to 1952.

The acronym “MAS” stands for “*Manufacture d'armes de Saint-Étienne*,” the state-owned arms manufacturing company. The MAS 36 was used by French colonial troops as well as French regulars and Legionnaires and saw service in WWII, Indochina, Algeria and various flare-ups and civil wars including the 1956 Suez Crisis where elite French paratroops used scoped versions very effectively as counter-sniper tools.

With an OAL of 40" and an unloaded weight of slightly over 8 lbs., the MAS 36 is 3.2" shorter than the handy-for-its era 1903 Springfield and only half an inch longer than Britain's SMLE No. 5 Mk 1 “Jungle Carbine.” Compact as it is, the MAS 36



Nope, no raging beauty, even by military standards but the MAS 36 is solid, built to last and is an excellent rifle with its own brand of Gallic cool.

— with its full-length handguard — simply looks beefy, solid and built to last. When my unabashedly Francophile shooting buddy Doug Fee produced a very nice late 1940s specimen, it was *Vive la France!* for us.

ABOUT THE AMMO

The 7.5x54 cartridge the MAS 36 is chambered for features a 0.309" 139-gr. bullet rated at (an optimistic) 2,800 fps, putting it more-or-less in the .308 class without a lot of quibbling over grains, fps or thousandths of an inch. It's a slightly shorter version of the 7.5x57 which itself replaced the 8x50R Lebel of WWI fame in the mid-1920s.

Ammo availability is a challenge. The United States is by no means awash in 7.5x54. We did manage to scrounge up some commercial ball from Portugal's *Munições de Armas Ligeiras* as well as some elderly surplus Berdan-primed Syrian-made stuff in 5-round stripper clips, three to a box. The Portuguese FNM ammo features non-corrosive Boxer primers but not so with the Berdan-primed Syrian stuff. The only other source for 7.5x54 we're aware of is Prvi Partizan.

TOADSTICKERS, SIGHTS, STRIPPER CLIPS

Perhaps the most anachronistic feature of the rifle is its 17" spike (more correctly, cruciform) bayonet. It definitely resembles something out of the Napoleonic Wars and is stored in an under-muzzle tube alongside the stacking swivel. You simply push a catch, pull it out, reverse it and reinsert in the storage tube with no interference from

a Moment of Clarity



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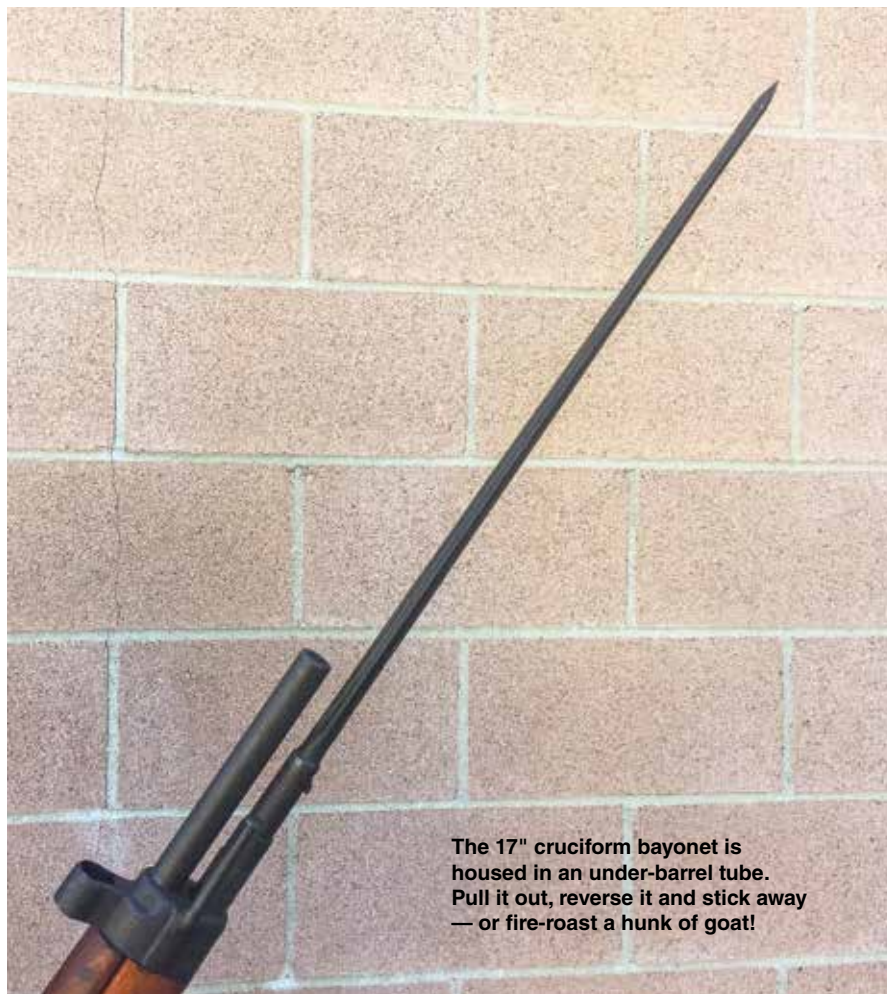
the side-mounted sling.

It's very easy to picture French Colonial troops using it to spit and roast chunks of sheep or goat over an open fire in 1943 Tunisia or at Italy's Gothic Line. It's considerably more difficult to envision it as a serious last-ditch edged weapon in the same class as a conventional knife-type bayonet.

One of the main gripes I've heard concerning the MAS 36 is the "too thick" width of the front sight measuring at 0.89" since the front sight width of the M1 Garand — which has, for our money, the gold standard of military iron sight arrangements — is 0.78". Those with a preference for a skinnier blade have a decent argument. What also proved tough for us geezers was the extremely small rear aperture.

If we had our druthers, however, we'd much prefer open ears to protect the front sight rather than the fully enclosed hood that replaced ears on later models such as ours. There are no windage knobs on the tangent-type rear aperture, which has an elevation range to an optimistic 1,200 meters. If a French trooper had a windage issue, he'd require the services of an armorer with specialized tools.

The two-stage trigger pull of our MAS 39 was right at 5.5 lbs. with about three of it on the first stage, along with a bit of creep.



The 17" cruciform bayonet is housed in an under-barrel tube. Pull it out, reverse it and stick away — or fire-roast a hunk of goat!



The 7.5x54 MAS (center) is an efficient, manageable cartridge on a par with the 7.62x51 NATO (right). Both are considerably shorter than the legendary .30-06 (left), but not far behind in terms of ballistic performance.

But again, this is a mass-produced battle rifle and as such, the trigger is serviceable. So bitching about it from the standards of a "pre-lawyer" Remington M700 is pretty silly. The rifle has no safety, incidentally.

Naturally, like any self-respecting military bolt action since Peter Paul Mauser's groundbreaking M98, the MAS 36 is fed from 5-round stripper clips. The receiver's floorplate/follower/magazine spring unit can be removed for cleaning by pressing a pair of opposing buttons.

One of the most eye-catching features of the MAS 36 is, of course, the dog-leg bolt. It's angled forward, almost radically so, which has two main advantages. It simplifies rapid palm-up bolt manipulation and prevents your trigger finger from getting banged by the bolt knob in recoil. It's a short, easy throw, helped in part by the rear-lug construction of the bolt, not too dissimilar from Remington's late, lamented Model 788 sporter.

AT THE RANGE

The FNM ammo proved the best performer, delivering 3-shot groups averaging

just a hair under 3". Our best effort was just under 2" which was gratifying indeed. We should confess our shooting distance was 85 yards instead of the usual 100 as the big range was under repair and deadlines were looming.

The 139-gr. loads clocked right at 2,621 from the MAS 36 22-1/2" barrel. Recoil was negligible, making for a very pleasant experience at the bench. The corrosive Syrian stuff could best be described as problematic, if your definition of "problematic" covers nine of 10 primer ignition failures. So we give up on it and stuck with the FNM instead.

FINAL WORD

The days of getting a nice MAS 36 for under \$300 bucks are history as auction bids generally start well north of there. The odds of a major American ammo company offering 7.5x54 ammo is pretty slim so handloading is probably something more than just an option.

Regardless, the MAS 36 is a pretty cool rifle. It's a lot handier and more user-friendly than its Lebel and Berthier predecessors. 🐐



THE RUGER PC C

A REALLY COOL TOOL FOR DEFENSE AND FUN

WILL DABBS, MD

It's tough to quantify the Ruger PC Charger as it defies ready characterization. The government just calls it a pistol. If it had a happy switch and a folding stock it would be a kick-butt submachine gun. If it had a thermonuclear power source and a hardened iridium chassis it could pass for something from the Terminator. However you choose to classify it, the PC Charger looks cool, runs well and sports scads of real-world utility.

The brain trust at Ruger had already developed the Ruger PC Carbine, a semiautomatic magazine-fed utility rifle chambered for the omnipresent 9mm Parabellum round. Exceptionally popular, the PC Carbine stands guard over many an American

home and hearth. Now, however, the Ruger wizards have shrunk the basic PC Carbine down into something even more maneuverable.

THE 9MM PC CARBINE'S BABY BROTHER

The PC Charger is a unique handgun design. Unlike many modern pistol-caliber offerings, the PC Charger is fairly liberal with the aluminum. The basic chassis is indeed glass-filled polymer but this is a nonetheless substantial, manly gun. While the safety, bolt catch and action will seem familiar to anyone who has ever hefted a 10/22, there are some significant mechanical departures.

**“THE WHOLE SHEBANG WOULD THEN FIT INTO
THE CENTER CONSOLE OF MOST MINIVANS OR SUVs.”**

Right out of the box, the Ruger PC Charger already looks like something from *The Terminator* movies. This front hand stop (right) helps keep you from shooting your fingers off.



HARGER

The PC Charger runs via blowback action with a custom tungsten bolt weight producing an abbreviated bolt travel. This system minimizes felt recoil and mitigates muzzle rise. The bolt is formed from heat-treated chrome-moly steel and will outlive you.

The gun feeds from a standard 17-round Ruger Security-9 pistol magazine. However, swap out the magazine well for the

included GLOCK mag adapter and the world is your oyster. I effected this exchange with a single Allen wrench in maybe five minutes. Long high-capacity GLOCK stick mags or those crazy huge drums are now on the menu. Magpul makes a simply spanking 27-round stick magazine a crack-addled chimpanzee couldn't damage with a crowbar.

The magazine release is a reversible button readily accessible with the support hand. The fixed charging handle reciprocates with the bolt and is also easily reversible. There is ample Picatinny rail up top for optics and plenty of M-LOK space for cool-guy stuff. The PC Charger includes a generous aluminum hand stop up front as well to help keep your sensitive digits away from the bitey bits.



The charging handle reciprocates with the bolt and is easily reversible.

READ INSTRUCTION MANUAL
BEFORE USING FIREARM



Will's kitted-out PC Charger is equipped with a Mepro Foresight augmented electronic gun sight, Gemtech Lunar 9 suppressor and a Streamlight TLR-1 HL.



The Ruger PC Charger breaks down easily into two stowable components without tools. Even with a snuffer and holographic sight, it would easily fit into the center console of your truck.



“WITH SUBSONIC BLACK HILLS AMMO AND A GEMTECH LUNAR 9 SUPPRESSOR IN ITS LONG CONFIGURATION, THE PC CHARGER WAS COMFORTABLY QUIET.”

The rear aspect of the weapon includes a pair of sling sockets and a spot of vertical rail for mounting a pistol brace. The Pistol Stabilizing Brace is the coolest invention since Edwin Traisman put pressurized cheese in a can. (Traisman, one of mankind's truly epic visionaries, invented Cheez Whiz in 1952.) The FS1913 brace from SB Tactical would be the perfect fit. Interestingly, the gun also comes from the factory broken clean in half.

The PC Charger pistol is a stubby enough rascal already. However, jack the bolt to the rear, retract a little catch, give the forearm a quick twist and this already-small gun breaks down into something markedly smaller. The whole shebang would then fit into the center console of most minivans or SUVs. The stubby little 6.5" heavy barrel is threaded 1/2x28 for a sound suppressor as well.

HOW DOES SHE HANDLE?

The Ruger PC Charger is a substantial gun with an unconventional personality. With all the cool-guy stuff installed you can tell this is a serious firearm and not just a range toy. This equates out to a handy yet controllable defensive tool.

Out of the box I found the gun to run best on a single point sling held outstretched and tight. The PC Charger's modest recoil and superlative ergonomics allowed me to run the gun quickly and well using slight forward tension to stabilize the weapon.



Add a pivoting pistol brace from SB Tactical and you can take the practical utility of the PC Charger as a defensive tool to the next level.

The gun naturally ran swimmingly throughout our time together. With subsonic Black Hills ammo and a Gemtech Lunar 9 suppressor in its long configuration, the PC Charger was comfortably quiet. Take the Lunar 9 to its compact configuration and split the PC Charger in two and you can easily carry it in a small day pack or large glove box. It takes maybe 30 seconds to put the gun back into operation from a standing start. In these uncertain times packing a defensive firearm with 28 rounds onboard that looks like a Star Wars blaster can offer some proper peace of mind.

DENOUEMENT

The Ruger PC Charger is the very image of the compact modular pistol-caliber utility gun. Nine millimeter Parabellum ball is just dirt cheap so practice doesn't break the bank. Modern defensive ammo like the HoneyBadger from Black Hills Ammo puts some serious fangs into Herr Luger's ubiquitous century-old pistol cartridge.

There are lots of different ways to throw 9mm rounds downrange. Most any modern polymer combat handgun will pack just as much ammo at half the size and a fraction of the weight. However, those are "most any modern polymer combat handguns." By contrast, the Ruger PC Charger is as rugged as Margaret Thatcher's constitution and just as intimidating. Hardcore, versatile, compact and cool, the Ruger PC Charger will reliably secure your home or person and look good doing it. 🦊

www.ruger.com
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Traditions **NITROFIRE** Muzzleloader

BRENT T. WHEAT

PHOTOS: ROB JONES
THE IMAGESMITH, LLC



**The changing
face of
'charcoal burners'**

I was alone at the edge of the big woods. The temperature was just above freezing, slowly rotting the layer of snow blanketing the ground as a warm front had brought drizzle to the Midwest. The clash of warm air against cold, wet earth set the perfect stage for fog. As I settled against a tree to watch a remote field, visibility began to lower like a great gray theater curtain.

There was just the slightest hint of wind, the breeze a physical presence carrying the pervading dampness down into your bones.

An hour of indeterminate waiting later I noticed a fat doe slowly feeding down the edge of the field. She appeared like an apparition from the increasing gloom, slowly moving down the rows of corn stubble while pawing the snow in search of greenery underneath. It was a perfect setup.

I was just inside the tree line and she was completely unaware of my presence. After waiting for her to feed within range, I carefully, slo-o-owly cocked the hammer on my traditional Hawken muzzleloader, winching at the loud click of the sear engaging. I then sat up in my shooting position waiting for the final outcome. She continued pawing, oblivious.

A few moments later, I gently brushed the set trigger and the hammer fell. The #10 brass percussion cap popped but there was no expected kick or blossom of smoke and fire. As I began to furtively drop the gun from my cheek to re-cap and try again, there was an unexpected “boooooom” as acrid smoke filled the air. I had experienced my first “hang-fire,” likely due to the cloying dampness.

After reloading, I dejectedly walked into the field just to make sure I hadn’t somehow accidentally hit the doe. Following her tracks a bit, it was obvious she had suffered no worse than a fright. Resigned to another day with no venison, I began the long, slow, soggy stalk back to my truck.

During this trek two decades ago, I finally decided a modern in-line muzzleloader was my next purchase.

STATE OF THE ART

I’ve loved hunting with charcoal-burners since realizing years ago our state, like many, offered a dedicated deer season for muzzleloaders above and beyond the “modern” gun season. For years I hunted with my reproduction Hawken .54 caliber and shot a lot of whitetail, including several hanging on my walls but I’ll be the first to admit it’s not the most efficient method of harvesting





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MAGAZINE



Traditions **NITROFIRE** *Muzzleloader*

The Traditions Nitrofire muzzleloader, using Firestick technology, is set to change the face of black powder hunting.

“... THERE IS A SERIOUS, **INDUSTRY-CHANGING DEPARTURE** IN THE LOADING PROCESS — IT USES **FEDERAL FIRESTICK ENCAPSULATED CARTRIDGES** TO PUT A BOOM IN THE BEAST.”

game. It's awfully slow to load, not exceptionally accurate and as I saw firsthand, very sensitive to wet weather.

While I sometimes switch back and forth depending on the mood of the day, after years of hunting it's readily apparent my modern in-line muzzleloader is far superior in every sense except the nostalgia factor.

Modern in-line guns still stuff powder and bullet from the front end but use a #209 shotgun shell primer (some even use centerfire primers) to ignite the propellant. As most hunters use modern lead/brass bullets housed in plastic sabots along with pre-measured synthetic propellant pellets, I believe modern in-line muzzleloaders have reached the peak of efficiency and accuracy.

This seemed obvious, at least until I saw the Traditions Nitrofire series, a joint development project of Traditions, Federal Ammunition and Hodgdon Powder.

The new gun looks similar in appearance to the other high-performance modern in-line guns from Traditions but there is a serious, industry-changing departure in the loading process — it uses Federal Firestick encapsulated cartridges to put boom in the beast.

SIMPLE AND RELIABLE

While in-line muzzleloaders are very reliable, they still aren't perfect. The breach block sealing the south end of the barrel brings along a few fiddly problems and there is still a chance, though reduced, for water infiltration. Even pre-measured powder pellets leave room for inconsistency due to uneven bullet seating pressure and depth.

Don't get me wrong — modern in-lines are very efficient and some exhibit incredible accuracy, especially for shooters willing to spend time to wring out their gun to the max. Yet there are shortcomings of the technology and this is where the Nitrofire arguably sets a new standard, taking muzzleloaders to an even higher level of simplicity and accuracy.

In fact, there has actually been a bit of an online backlash from a few cantankerous charcoal shooters because the concept is almost *too* easy to load and shoot effectively.

The gun remains a muzzleloader because the bullet can only be seated via the muzzle but the sealed propellant charge is simple to load or remove from the breach in the event you want to climb into a tree stand or end a fruitless day. For those of us — actually, every one of us if we're being truthful — who don't harvest game every single time out, the ease of unloading without firing a shot is a huge benefit by itself.

The Firestick cartridge looks like an unmarked plastic .410 shotgun shell minus the primer. Before firing you insert a standard #209 shotgun primer into the Firestick cartridge and the now-ready propellant payload loaded into the breach of the Nitrofire. Cock the hammer, drop the trigger and 100 or 120 grains of new Hodgdon “Triple 8” black powder substitute sends your bullet downrange.

FIRST LOOK

Our pre-production test gun came from Traditions with a 3-9x40 Traditions duplex-reticle scope already installed. It also came with a care package of Traditions accessories that, although the subject of another entire story, are so much

The business end of the Nitrofire. Seat a bullet from the front, load a Firestick from the rear and go shooting!



The fully encapsulated Fire-stick looks and loads like a .410 shotgun shell, right down to the #209 primer.

better than the box-store junk in my own possible bag as to be laughable. If the gun is a "10," the accessories are an 11!

The Spanish-manufactured Nitrofire is attractive and looks very much like a single-shot centerfire rifle. On my particular iteration (there are several versions) the barrel and receiver sport a soft gold Premium Cerakote finish while the stylish .50 caliber 1:28" chromoly-steel barrel is fluted and tapered. The action is matched up to a lightweight synthetic stock finished in water-dip Go Wild Rockstar camouflage and solid rubber butt pad. Don't worry, the camo is anything but wild and certainly not something you'd see on stage — except, perhaps for a Ted Nugent show — but will match my Midwest winter woodlands perfectly.



Standard #209 shotgun primers ignite the Hodgdon Triple 8 black powder substitute.

Overall fit and finish are impeccable with the action locking up tighter than Hillary Clinton's sense of humor. The only flaw noticed was a small "booger" on the right-side wrist of the stock where the water-dip camo had suffered some small indignity during production. It wasn't really noticeable except to perfectionists and gun writers looking for something to mention.

OPERATION

If you've ever fired a single-shot shotgun, you know how to operate the Nitrofire. There is an action-release at the front of the trigger guard, a cross-bolt safety at the rear of the trigger guard and an exposed hammer so it's evident if the gun is ready to make noise. The production guns come with the Elite XT

NITROFIRE

The Nitrofire features an accuracy-saving recessed muzzle crown.



Ease of operation: The team of Traditions, Federal Ammunition and Hodgdon Powder makes the Nitrofire a new peak of muzzle-loader simplicity.





Accurate? You
be the judge!

Muzzleloader

Trigger System, which ours didn't. Regardless, our standard trigger was crisp and averaged 3.1 lbs. on the Lyman digital trigger pull gauge.

LOADING NOTES

A steel ring inside the barrel prevents the bullet from traveling too far rearward and offers another benefit — you know exactly when the bullet is properly seated. This is a critical factor in muzzleloader accuracy but with other guns, even when your ramrod is marked, it's still a slightly ambiguous process to make sure the bullet is seated the same way every time. With the Nitrofire, there is no doubt or variation.

The cartridges themselves are claimed to be totally impervious to moisture. As time was short and the gun had to be shipped to the photographer for its “glamor shots,” I didn't dunk it in the nearby drainage ditch to find out. However, the claim seems reasonable.

THE BIG SURPRISE

The powder cartridges came in a plain, unmarked pre-production package so I'm not sure whether they were 100 or 120 grain. The bullets used were the .45 caliber 250-gr. Traditions Smackdown Carnivore in a plastic sabot. This bullet has a .262 ballistic coefficient and features a hard plastic tip.

Fortunately, the factory scope was already dialed-in and I quickly began using my limited ammo shooting for tight groups rather than chasing impacts around the target. After expecting fair-to-middling initial results, one of the first 3-shot targets yielded a vertical 0.76" by 1.15" group just at the left of the bullseye. Wow! I realize it's only 50 yards but producing a one-hole group with a brand-new out-of-the-box “front-loader” is pretty eye-opening. Once the gun is back from the photographer, I can't wait to take it back to 200 yards and see how much

havoc I can rain on the local bucks. I'm confident they won't be happy with the results.

DOWNSIDE

Yep, for all the accuracy, convenience and fun, there is one fly in the ointment — several states don't recognize the Nitrofire as an official “muzzleloader” since the powder goes in from the breach. You'd likely be okay (“check local listings”) to use it as a regular “modern” rifle but might get into some legal hot water if using it during muzzleloader-only seasons. Fortunately, as this technology spreads throughout the industry, laws will likely change.

WHY YOU'LL LIKE IT

If you're looking for a simple, weatherproof and impeccably accurate muzzleloader for hunting, the Traditions Nitrofire deserves your first look. This technological partnership will undoubtedly change the direction of the in-line muzzleloader industry and usher in a host of competitors. Once the laws catch up, the Nitrofire will be the standard all other manufacturers will try to achieve.

Ultimately, will I give up my rust-brown Hawken with the hand-rubbed walnut stock and occasionally finicky ignition system? Not likely, as I sometimes feel especially curmudgeonly and want to hunt with my favorite anachronism. However, when I get “serious” about filling the freezer, the Nitrofire will get the call.

MSRP as tested: \$699

Federal Firesticks: \$25/10



www.traditionsfirearms.com
www.federalpremium.com
www.hodgdonreloading.com

POURING YOUR OWN SLUGS

GET STARTED CHUNKIN' DIY LEAD



The Lee Load All II makes loading simple and economical. Here it's flanked by some of the other components Tank used for his handloaded slug rounds.



A sampling of targets from Tank's slugs: (left to right) MP sabot, Lee 7/8 oz., Lyman 0.674" RB, Lee 1 oz. drive key slug. Doing it yourself is easy and fun.



Here's a close-up of the molds and projectiles Tank cast, loaded and shot. Molds from Lyman, Lee and MP-Molds worked exceptionally.



The use of 20-gauge fiber wads allows the same plastic wad to be used for different sized slugs. Shown left to right, MP sabot, Lee 7/8 oz., Lee 1 oz. and Lyman .674 RB.

JEFF "TANK" HOOVER
As a bullet caster, nothing beats heaving large hunks of cast lead projectiles at a target and watching the results. These heavy projectiles get their power from weight, which is the main component of momentum, but speed — not so much. The heavier an object, the more resistance it takes to slow it down once in motion, like plowing through bone and muscle of some animal you want brought down.

While we all dream of having expensive big-bore rifles capable of shooting large, heavy bullets, most of us already have a big-bore boomer in our arsenal. Your 12-gauge shotgun is nothing more than a .72 caliber rifle when loaded with slugs.

WHY SLUGS?

You may be asking yourself, in this day of modern, high velocity rifles, why even mess with a slug gun? The answer is simple — for those living on the East coast (uggh, me), it's the only "modern" gun allowed during firearms season. These limitations stretch out to the Midwest as housing developments encroach into once open hunting land.

Being a self-proclaimed DIY type, I never had a desire to use shotgun slugs because I never loaded a shotgun slug in my life. Sure, I've cast bullets by the thousands and then handloaded them in pistols and rifles for my own hunting and shooting purposes, but never a shotgun shell.

GETTING STARTED

Solid projectiles for slug loads include roundball, Lee drive-key slugs and sabot style slugs, hourglass in shape and looking like gigantic air gun pellets. Roundball (RB) molds are available from many mold makers. For our purpose we'll need a mold dropping an RB at 0.674" to be used in 12-gauge guns.

The Lee drive-key style slug mold has very competitive pricing (around \$25) and works like a charm. Last is the MP Molds sabot-type slug mold. It casts two slugs at a time and is the Cadillac of molds in my opinion.

LOAD 'EM UP

Loading shotgun shells with slugs is not too different than loading metallic cartridges. With used shells, you need to de-prime, size the brass and prime. A measured charge of powder

is added, followed by a wad, your projectile and then a crimp is applied to the hull.

CRIMPING

Shotgun shells have two basic crimping methods: a fold crimp and rolled crimp. The fold or star crimp requires the use of some sort of press. I used a Lee Load-All II as it was the cheapest, costing just over \$50 and does a great job. I love Lee equipment for the very fact you don't need to put out a lot of cash to get started in a new handloading adventure.

For a roll-crimp, look no further than Amazon to order an antique looking "apple peeler"-style gadget. It clamps to your table and works perfectly to apply a roll crimp to your shells the way they did the beginning of the last Century with black powder paper-hulled shells. It adds a touch of nostalgia doing it this way, something we all love.

LOAD DATA

Another nice benefit of using Lee equipment is they always provide load data with their products for beginners. Sure, as you gain experience and knowledge, you'll want to venture off, buying more books on the subject, but for the time being, Lee will let you dip your toe into the basics of loading functional ammo.

And this is exactly where we're at with this article. I'm dipping my toe for the first time into slug/RB loading so we can learn together and see how easy it really is to load up some solids for your shotgun.

MY LOADS

I used Accurate Arms #5 from the Lee load data sheet. Maximum charge was 42 grains for the 7/8 oz. slug so I started at 40 and worked my way up, just as I would for any other load data for loading metallic cartridges. For hulls I ordered Focchi 2-3/4" 12-gauge primed hulls. They are clear, making it easy to see what projectile you've loaded.

Claybuster CB1138-12 12-gauge wads were also ordered through Amazon. This hull is a replacement for Winchester WAA12R.

For the Lee 1 oz. slug and MP-Molds sabot slug I stayed with 40 grains of AA #5 with the same components used above.

I also used Hodgdon Longshot for my loads, staying with 36 grains for all slugs, again using the same components listed above. I used both fold and roll crimp, for comparison's sake. I really didn't notice a difference accuracy wise. Fold crimp with the Lee Load All II is easier and quicker.

FIBER WAD BOOST

I use both 12- and 20-gauge fiber wads as filler to give the ability to use the same plastic wad with the different sized slugs. Since slugs are of varying heights, they often need a little boost to bring them to the top of the plastic wad and the 20-gauge fiber wad fits perfectly inside the 12-gauge plastic wad. You can simply peel these fiber wads to the height you need with your fingers. You'll figure out how thick you need it pretty quickly.

The MP-Molds sabot slug was the perfect height for the plastic wads I used. I could have ordered different ones, and may do so in the future, but the fiber wads worked fine in a pinch. I used the 12-gauge fiber wads to boost the plastic wad over the powder charge. Again, this method worked wonderfully.



This photo shows how the Lee Drive Key mold works. A bargain at \$25, you don't need to spend a lot to cast your own slugs.

THE GUN

I used my TC Encore frame with a rifled TC 12-gauge slug barrel. Being a break-action design, it gives the looks and feel of a big-bore single-shot rifle if you have enough imagination. I mount an old Weaver 2.5X fixed scope on the barrel for a sleek, compact carrying slug gun.

Too bad it's not a double, eh? Then we could really pretend it's an African double rifle!

SHOOTIN'

Shooting was done at my range at 50 yards. Targets consisted of 2" orange squares as aiming point.

For a first-time loading slugs I think my results were pretty good. All 3-shot groups ran between 2" to 2.5" with the MP-Mold sabot being the most consistent and accurate, averaging 2" or better.

Roll crimp vs. fold crimp didn't appear to make a difference but I will experiment more over time. The majority of loads would snug the first two shots close together while the third shot would wander a bit. If I stuck with two shot groups, most groups would be in the 1.0" to 1.5" range — not too shabby!

The Lee drive-key slugs were consistent, with the 7/8 oz. slug shooting just a smidge better than the 1 oz. slug. The RB brought up the rear accuracy wise but was still in the 2" to 2.5" range and would easily be MOA whitetail out to 50 to 60 yards.

CONCLUSIONS

I'm definitely hooked on casting/loading my own shotgun slugs. It's just another tool to hang on my tool belt to be a more independent, and hopefully, knowledgeable shooter when it comes to shotgun shell loading.

More importantly, it is a fun activity and economical to boot. You should give it a try. Lee makes it very economical to do so. You'll be free to sling huge hunks of lead with your shotgun with the self-satisfaction of doing it yourself.

www.leeprecision.com
www.mp-molds.com

Smith & Wesson M&P 9MM EZ

JOHN TAFFIN

Being on the Cutting Edge is a very good feeling. We have a long list of very powerful sixguns and semi-automatics available to us as well as wrist-wrenching and hand-numbing ammunition to go with them. There is a place for all of this, especially when hunting mean critters who have the ability to bite, claw and stomp us.

However, for the past decade or so the most activity has been found in self-defense sixguns, semi-automatics and ammunition. Many of those who choose to take charge of their own protection are also those who have naturally weaker hands or who simply

have grown older with the attendant weakening of muscle tone. This group, of which I am definitely a member, have been discovered by the firearms and ammunition manufacturers and the good feeling I mentioned is the fact we were there first.

S&W was paying attention to the problem and their first answer was the M&P 380 Shield EZ. With the S&W announcement of this new self-defense pistol I found one already in the showcase at my dealer, Buckhorn Gun. The “EZ” stands for the easy-to-rack slide. Anyone who has been around semi-automatic pistols for a while knows some slides can be very difficult to operate manually and as we grow older this becomes even more of a problem. The



The 9mm Shield EZ (top) is only slightly larger and 5 oz. heavier than the .380 Shield EZ.



Wildly popular .380 gets a big brother

M&P 380 Shield EZ not only features an easy-to-rack slide but an easy-to-load magazine, solving a second problem often found with semi-automatic pistols.

THE 380

The 380 Shield EZ has a capacity of 8+1, a barrel length just over 3-1/2" and a very easy packing weight of 18-1/2 oz. The frame is polymer while the slide and barrel are both stainless steel with an Armornite finish. Sights are excellent with a white dot front sight matched up with an adjustable-for-windage white dot rear sight. Available with or without a manual thumb safety, I went with the ambidextrous thumb safety. The addition of an excellent trigger, easily operated grip safety and two magazines gives us a perfect concealed carry personal protection pistol. Almost. Combined with its easy-to-operate slide and easy-to-load magazine, it's also chambered in the easy shooting .380 ACP. There is no doubt in the past decade or so we have seen the arrival of excellent .380 ACP loads, meaning we are no longer relegated to nothing but full metal jackets. However, no matter how you slice it, a .380 is still a .380 and the argument continues as to just how good a self-defense round it is.

I do not feel at all uncomfortable carrying a .380 with today's ammunition whether it is the Shield EZ or the Walther PPK. However, there is no doubt the 9mm is not only a better choice, we also have a greater proliferation of excellent self-defense loads with this larger nine. Apparently, there were enough

The S&W 9mm Shield EZ (above) offers ease of operation in an effective self-defense package. While it would appear to be striker-fired (below), the S&W 9mm Shield EZ is actually hammer-fired.



requests to S&W, or maybe they were just planning it all along, as we now have the same basic Shield EZ chambered in 9mm and it's not much larger than the original. In fact it has the same length barrel and is only slightly longer to accommodate the 9mm cartridge. This also means the action had to be changed to handle the 9mm loads. Neither the frame, nor the barrel, nor the slide are interchangeable on the two S&W Shields.

THE NINE

The M&P9 Shield EZ is part of the M&P M2.0 group of semi-automatic pistols. It comes with two 8-round magazines

featuring an assist tab to facilitate loading. It also has a Picatinny-style equipment rail to accommodate lights and lasers. The grip angle of the Shield 9mm, as with all M&P pistols features an 18-degree grip angle to facilitate natural ease of pointing. Realizing grips and grip frames are highly subjective I will say this Shield feels awfully good in my hand — it just feels it was meant to be there. A very easy-to-access safety is part of the grip which is textured for shooting security. It is naturally depressed by the hand as this pistol is gripped for shooting. In the past I have encountered grip safeties that were very difficult for me to depress with my standard grip.

In addition to the grip safety the M&P 9 Shield is available with the ambidextrous thumb safety. I literally grew up with a 1911 and I prefer a grip safety on any pistol that can be had with one. I ordered my M&P 9 Shield and just as with the .380 I went with the ambidextrous thumb safety. Just as with the .380 version the frame is polymer and the barrel and slide are both stainless steel with an Armornite finish. This Shield EZ is less than 5 oz. heavier than the .380 version, weighing in at 23.2 oz. The sights are excellent being of the white dot-style with the rear sight set in a dovetail and drift adjustable for windage. The trigger features a tactile and audible reset and the pull measures 5 lbs. on my Brownells Trigger Gauge. This happens to be the same as on the .380 Shield. Looking at either one of the Shields, one might think they are striker fired. Field-stripping the pistol, which is quite easy, will show instead there is an internal hammer.

EASE OF OPERATION

Is it as easy to operate the slide on the 9mm Shield EZ as on the .380 Shield EZ? Almost, I find very little difference between the two. Racking the slide is aided by the full-length scallops on both sides of the frame below the rear sight and there are also



John's test targets fired at 10 yards. This isn't a target pistol, but at a very-concealable 6.8" OAL, packs 9mm firepower into a small package nearly anyone can operate.

abbreviated scallops on the front of the slide below the front sight. I find it easy to operate the slide by using either set of scallops or by simply grasping the slide with thumb and forefinger on both sides below the front sight. The front of the slide has been "de-horned" with no sharp or rough edges. The grip frame is finely textured on both sides and the front strap as well as below the grip safety. This makes for a very secure gripping feeling.

The 9mm Shield EZ was fired with a variety of factory ammunition, 12 different loads in all from 115 to 147 grains and also both JHP and FMJ versions. The Shield 9mm performed flawlessly with all varieties of ammunition with no failures to feed fire or eject. The obvious question is how does the felt recoil of

The Shield EZ was tested with a variety of 9mm factory ammunition and suffered no malfunctions, a crucial factor for a self-defense pistol.



The 9mm version of the shield EZ has a capacity of 8+1 rounds, such as these 100-gr. HoneyBadger rounds from Black Hills Ammunition.



the 9mm Shield EZ compare to the .380 Shield EZ? I would say the .380 is very easy to control and the 9mm, even though it is not as light shooting as the .380, is also still quite easy to control. Like most 9mm pistols, except for the compact and ultracompact versions. I was able to fire this latest Shield extensively without discomfort. Plus P loads were somewhat snappy however they did not cause any problems.

ACCURACY

Normally when I test a sixgun or semi-automatic my goal is to see what size groups I can come up with, and the smaller the better. However, with smaller pistols, especially those designed for concealed carry and self-defense use, I take a more practical direction. This is not a target pistol and coupled with the fact my testing was done in Southwest Idaho in January definitely led to a more practical direction. My targets of choice, since I did not have any steel plates, were 4" orange-colored stick-on targets shot at a self-defense distance of 10 yards. My best results were with Black Hills 124 FMJ at 1,071 fps; Black Hills 147 JHP, 949 fps; Speer 124 Gold Dot HP; American Eagle 115 JHP, 1,137 fps; and the SIG SAUER 115 FMJ clocked out at 1,057 fps. Old habits are hard to break and I could not resist shooting at my standard rectangular targets at 15 yards also. The Black Hills 125-gr. HoneyBadger load features the "Phillips screwdriver" bullet and has proven to be quite effective when tested as a self-defense load. It also results in less felt recoil than other loads in the same weight range. The above-mentioned American Eagle load put five shots in 1-1/2" proving to be the most accurate load for this particular 9mm. The sights as they came were close enough to point of aim it was not necessary to try to adjust for windage.

CARRY

Unless one has very large pockets such as found in a heavy jacket or specially designed tactical vest, the M&P 2.0 Shield EZ 9mm is best carried in a belt holster. I have found a denim vest



Even with strength or dexterity problems, cleaning isn't a problem as the S&W 9mm Shield EZ field strips easily.

ordered in the tall size works very well for carrying concealed. There is a front pocket on each side large enough to hold a pistol such as this Shield. The extra-added bonus is when I am sitting the pockets lay on my legs and the pistol, or pistols, are very easy to access.

Now we have both the .380 Shield EZ and the 9mm Shield EZ, can the .45 ACP Shield EZ be far behind? MSRP: \$479

www.smith-wesson.com

Remington .44-CALIBER NEW MODEL ARMY

THE HISTORY OF ONE IN 230,000

WILL DABBS, MD

First Lieutenant Theophilus Millhouse was most thoroughly miserable. He had been born and raised in Connecticut where the world was cool and brisk. This August day in Mississippi in 1864 the humidity was so thick you could rip off a chunk of air and gnaw on it.

Millhouse answered to Brigadier General Andrew Jackson Smith. They were pushing south from Holly Springs past Abbeville toward Oxford. The war criminal Nathan Bedford Forrest had been up to mischief and General Smith purposed to teach the rebels a lesson not soon forgotten.

They found the town of Oxford devoid of men of military age. Grant and Sherman had been here two years prior and used the university as a field hospital. Grant had ridden his horse through the front doors of the Lyceum, the administrative building anchoring the University of Mississippi.

This day Lt. Millhouse and his men were in a foul temper. Word had just arrived of a cavalry attack by Forrest's troops on their

base of supply in Memphis. Clearly outwitted, Smith and his men vented their frustrations on the pastoral little Southern town.

At Smith's behest Millhouse had his rampaging bluecoats fire the courthouse, the square and the surrounding homes. The weeping of the rebel women could be heard above the crackling flames. Once the center of the town was fully involved the Federals retraced their steps north. When marching abreast in the little community of Abbeville near Hurricane Creek a symphony of shots rang out from the adjacent wood line.

A modest contingent of rebel Infantrymen got off several volleys supported by a pair of field pieces before melting into the dank surrounding swamps. When the smoke cleared Lt. Theophilus Millhouse lay in the hot Mississippi ooze, his glassy eyes staring lifelessly toward the blue heavens. His men pressed on for Holly Springs, further driven in their mission to find Forrest.

BURIED TREASURE

A gun buddy named Jeff Houston was running a backhoe improving the drainage of a piece of Mississippi woodland. He took big scallops of earth and set them aside, cumulatively enhancing the local hydrology. One chunk of dirt seemed peculiar. Shutting down his machine he pulled the massive clod apart with his hands until it yielded a bounty.

The pistol was clearly a .44-caliber Remington New Model Army, a common issue handgun among Federal troops during the American Civil War. The brass trigger guard is remarkably well-preserved. The barrel was trying to dissolve but the iron frame fared a bit better. The stocks are completely gone. Despite

This U.S. Government-issued Remington New Army revolver was found near Will's house while out digging a drainage ditch. The other artifacts all came from the surrounding area as well.





This modern replica (above) from Dixie Gun Works is a spot-on reproduction of the 1864-era original.

a cumulative 155 years hidden underground, this heavy Union combat pistol remained in surprisingly good shape.

Jeff cleaned the weapon but left it otherwise untouched as he dug it out of the ground. The gun now occupies the position of honor on the wall of his superb full-service Oxford gun shop titled, appropriately enough, Rebel Arms. When first I saw the gun hanging in the shop I sensed a story in need of telling.

THE REMINGTON NEW MODEL ARMY

Remington-Beals Model Revolvers were 6-shot percussion pistols produced by Eliphalet Remington and Sons starting in 1861. These heavy .44-caliber handguns were typically, somewhat inaccurately, called 1858 Remingtons after the patent date stamped on the barrels. The Remington competed with the 1851 Colt Navy and cost some 50 cents more per copy, about eight bucks today. The top strap securing the upper portion of the frame made it a much more robust design.

Most of the New Model Army revolvers sported 8" barrels. Trivial differences in hammers, cylinders and loading levers characterized various production runs but all of these guns were mechanically similar. While Jeff's government-surplus pistol will never again burn powder, Dixie Gun Works will hook you up with a simply splendid facsimile that most certainly will.

YET MORE CIVIL WAR IMAGERY

Dixie Gun Works offers a bewildering array of reproduction rifles and pistols all at reasonable prices. Such guns typically sell for less than their fixed ammunition counterparts and, in the free states at least, ship straight to your door without the hassle of a Federal Firearms License. I built my New Model Army from a kit.

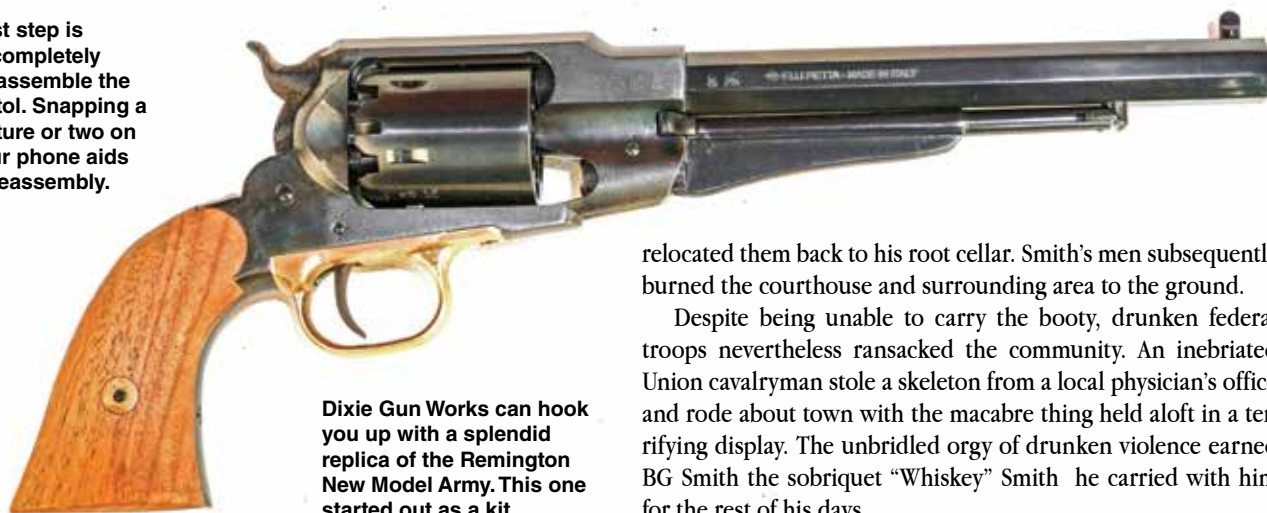
This old Remington combat pistol is in surprisingly good shape considering how long it languished in the hot Mississippi soil.



The steel has suffered tremendously but the brass bits look almost new.



First step is to completely disassemble the pistol. Snapping a picture or two on your phone aids in reassembly.



Dixie Gun Works can hook you up with a splendid replica of the Remington New Model Army. This one started out as a kit.

These kits require a modest modicum of mechanical aptitude to complete. The barrel and rammer assembly are polished and blued from the factory. However, the frame and trigger guard are left as rough castings. To finish out the gun, you smooth up the unfinished areas with a sanding drum and wire wheel on a Dremel tool and shape the furniture to fit. I used a fiber-reinforced cutoff wheel sparingly to knock down the major casting flashes and gnarly bits.

You could successfully undertake the whole project with hand tools and elbow grease, but a Dremel tool and bench sander make it much easier. Take your time and the end result is showroom gorgeous.

Once you have the build complete it is time to take the old girl out for a spin. The sights are typically set for 50 to 100 yards so most of these old guns shoot a bit high at 25. The built-in ramrod is effective and easy to use. Clean up everything when you're done lest the corrosive nature of black powder reduce your spanking new smoke pole to scrap.

NOW BACK TO 1864 ...

My corner of Mississippi is awash in military history. I live about 12 miles from Oxford. Local lore has it when General Smith was approaching, one of my then-neighbors hitched up his wagon and made the day-long trek behind a mule to the Oxford square. He loaded up the land records from the courthouse and

relocated them back to his root cellar. Smith's men subsequently burned the courthouse and surrounding area to the ground.

Despite being unable to carry the booty, drunken federal troops nevertheless ransacked the community. An inebriated Union cavalryman stole a skeleton from a local physician's office and rode about town with the macabre thing held aloft in a terrifying display. The unbridled orgy of drunken violence earned BG Smith the sobriquet "Whiskey" Smith he carried with him for the rest of his days.

This local man who had secured the land records owned slaves. After the war his slaves killed both him and his wife and fled. Family members who later went through the home securing their possessions found the land records in the basement. This is purportedly the only reason land ownership in Lafayette County, Mississippi, can be traced before the Civil War.

RUMINATIONS

Right down the road from where I sit comfortably typing these words, Americans slaughtered Americans, each side believing their cause to be righteous and just. Thorny issues of slavery and states' rights drove the carnage, and a generation was sacrificed to the cause. It is attributable solely to God's Providence we not only survived but prevailed.

Oxford, Mississippi, is my little corner of heaven. We enjoy a deep, rich history, a storied Southern university, a thriving ammunition plant and the best food and friendliest people you'd ever want to meet. We also have a splendid gun shop called Rebel Arms.

If ever you're passing through the area, Google Rebel Arms and go say hi to Jeff. The Remington New Model Army he found while out digging a drainage ditch is displayed prominently on the wall. Some 230,000 of these old guns rolled off the line during the Civil War. Historical records document but a single Federal KIA during this minor skirmish near Hurricane Creek in 1864. Apparently my buddy Jeff found his pistol.

www.dixiegunworks.com

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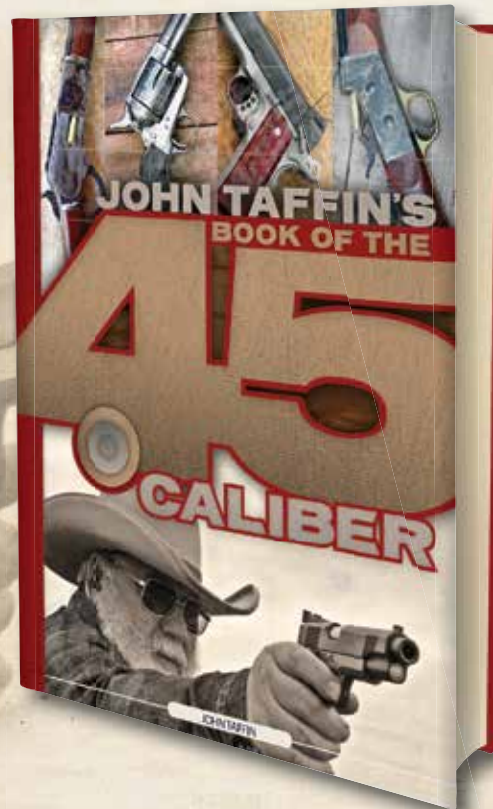
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LAPUA AND SK RIMFIRE

AN OLD NAME IS NEW TO U.S. RIMFIRE FANS

DAVID FREEMAN

I tend to collect rimfire ammo like John Taffin collects six shooters. In recent years I've enjoyed shooting .22s more and more, and love to try different ammo to see what works and what doesn't.

When I think of Lapua, I think of long-range, high-powered and very accurate centerfire rifle rounds, with visions of Marine snipers making 2,500-yard shots to save the troops. But .22? While recently talking with the folks at Capstone Precision Group, the distributors for Berger, Lapua, SK and Vihtavuori here in the U.S., they surprised me by sending along a nice supply of .22 ammo.

BACKGROUND

Nammo Group is a Norwegian company owned by the governments of Norway and Finland with four business units, one manufacturing Lapua centerfire ammunition and components in Lapua, Finland and SK and Lapua rimfire ammo in Schönebeck, Germany. Lapua also operates a rimfire testing facility in Mesa, Arizona and is opening another one in Marengo, Ohio. This investment proves they are serious about meeting the needs of rimfire shooters.

SK Ammunition website lists nine different .22 caliber offerings and I had four of these to try: Standard Plus, Flat Nose Match, Rifle Match and Long Range Match, along with Lapua Center-X. According to the specs, they all have 40-gr. bullets pushed by 2.59 grams of powder. Except for the Flat Nose, they all look the same.

RESULTS

With so much new .22 ammo on hand, I thought it would be fun to test the SK ammo with the open sight Remington 514 single-shot .22 rifle I have owned for 61 years. I also popped a Simmons scope on a Marlin 60 and for handgun testing I chose a Ruger Mark III Hunter with a Pursuit Red/Green Dot sight. In addition to these three guns used for accuracy testing, I shot



The SK Flatnose Ammo was accurate and utterly reliable to shoot in a Ruger Mark III Hunter topped with a Pursuit red/green dot sight.



This group of five Long Range match bullets (above) is indicative of how all the brands performed in David's old single-shot Remington 514. David had five representative types (below) of the nine different .22 cartridges SK manufacturers in its plant in Germany.



E AMMO

The H&K HK416, GLOCK G44 and Taurus TX22 all digested several hundred rounds of Lapua and SK rimfire ammo with consistent accuracy and no malfunctions.



multiple rounds of the ammo through a suppressed Heckler & Koch HK614 pistol, a GLOCK 44 and a Taurus TX22.

Chronograph readings from the GLOCK, the HK614 with its 8.5" barrel and the Remington 514 with a 24" barrel didn't show a lot of variation in velocity between the ammo types. The Flat Nose Match and Long Range Match edged the others out slightly as handgun velocities through the G44 were in the high 800s to low 900s. The HK's 8.5" barrel added 50–70 fps to each lot. The rifle readings were all in the 1,050 to 1,090 fps range.

For accuracy testing I set up targets at 25 yards and shot from a bench using a sandbag rest. Starting with the Remington 514, I fired five shots with each type of ammo at a separate target, then switched to the Marlin 60 and did the same. With the Mark III Hunter, I fired 10 rounds at each target instead of five. Why 10? No particular reason except the Hunter is just plain fun to shoot with optics mounted.

CONCLUSIONS

Not only does the ammo perform well, it's consistent from shot to shot. In a lifetime of shooting various brands of .22 ammunition, this hasn't always been the case and I am now an SK fan. It's a little pricey compared to some other manufacturer's bulk ammo offerings, with retail prices ranging from 9 to 14 cents per round, but still beats 9mm by a long shot.



Except for the Flatnose Match loading, appearance is similar among all five cartridges. David found performance to be similar as well.

If pushed to say which of the ammo types performed the best, I'd lean toward the Flat Nose Match, but honestly every group on every target was something to brag about for the shooter, the gun and the ammo. I left the range smiling.

We fired approximately 1,000 rounds in five different guns during the afternoon and had not one failure to feed, failure to eject, failure to lock back a slide or failure to ignite. Not one! When was the last time you did that with .22 ammo? 

www.sk-ammunition.com

GLOCK 44

WAYNE VAN ZWOLL

BIG G FINALLY EMBRACES RIMFIRE!

Gaston Glock was making things from high-strength polymer 20 years before his Austrian factory turned out a marketable poly-frame pistol. It was his 17th attempt so he called it the GLOCK 17. Since the 1983 debut of the G17, GLOCK has sold 18 million auto pistols, all centerfires. Now, with the G44, they have finally brought out a factory .22.

NOT THE GUY?

You could say I'm an odd one to report on a GLOCK. Many moons ago I picked up a 1917 Colt DA and a pair of half-moon clips clutching six fat, age-tarnished .45 rounds. Years and various N-Frames and Peacemakers later, revolvers grudgingly



The G44 (above, left) is clearly of G19 lineage, but its "hybrid" slide keeps loaded weight to 16 oz.! The G44 ships with two 10-shot magazines (below), nearly identical in outside dimensions to the G19.



gave way to 1911s I assembled from parts. Astonished these functioned, I found they also fit my farm-hand paws and pointed obligingly where I looked. Other autos — S&W's 39, Browning's Hi-Power — then caught my eye.

But not the GLOCK.

FOR THE MASSES

Like telephones without dials and trucks without manual hubs, GLOCKS were not transparent and their frames didn't pass the magnet test.

The world is full of more progressive shooters, who glommed onto GLOCKS in the '80s and now have vast collections. Many of them know a lot more than I do about defensive handguns of all types and shoot them better.

But the newest GLOCK didn't emigrate from Austria to serve only the enthusiasts. The G44 is a .22LR pistol very suitable for the unskilled proletariat and people new to firearms. You don't need dark shades, ripped biceps and a week's growth of stubble framing a mission-specific grimace to like this handgun. A novice can have fun with this GLOCK.

The G44 made its debut in early in December 2019 at Foxhall, a rural resort and shooting center near GLOCK's U.S. headquarters in Smyrna, Georgia.

The GLOCK 44's length and height match those of the 9mm G19 though the .22 is 0.08" slimmer. The G44's 10-shot magazine has the outer dimensions of the G19's but with load-assist buttons on both sides. A 6.85" steel and polymer slide rides hardened steel guides. With GLOCK's signature polymer frame, it holds total weight to 14.74 oz. Loaded, the G44 scales within a decimal of 1 lb. — about half the weight of a loaded G19! A screw-adjustable, square-notch, white-outline rear sight complements a sturdy white-dot front blade. Those bold white accents and a low line of sight make for natural pointing, fast aim. Sight radius is 6.22".





A rimfire version of the GLOCK 19 (above), the GLOCK 44 has a poly/steel slide keeping the weight to 15 oz. To fit all hands, the GLOCK 44 (left) comes with a pack of backstraps, interchangeable with the GLOCK 19.



The 44's rear sight is adjustable, low and trim with a bold white outline making quick aim easy.



Field-stripping a G44 is a cinch without tools. A threaded, suppressor-ready barrel is sold separately. "Okay. I pulled one," Wayne said, but five (below) of the G44's first six shots over bags at 25 yards nipped into 1.3".



DESIGNERS SPEAK

Jacob Witten had a hand in the G44's design. "This pistol is southpaw-friendly," he said, "with an ambidextrous slide stop and a reversible magazine release. Its lightweight hybrid slide — four polymer parts and one of steel — not only makes the gun lively and easy to hold, it's essential to reliable functioning! Getting the numbers right as regards slide mass and spring tension is crucial in a blow-back mechanism."

Brian Peterson, with Federal Cartridge, helped oversee testing. "We ran more than 12,000 rounds through this pistol. It cycled reliably with Long Rifle loads at advertised speeds of 1,050 fps to 1,550 fps. Of course, chronographed velocities are much lower from a 4" pistol barrel than from 16" to 20" rifle barrels used to develop ballistics tables."

GLOCK VP Chad Mathis added: "If memory serves, we tried more than 140 types of ammo. A few subsonic loads left the G44 at a walk and proved impractical. Shooters who install our threaded barrel and a suppressor will bump pressures enough to ensure function farther down the velocity scale."

Technical Services Manager William Carmichael emphasized the G44's "G19 feel," making it an ideal understudy gun. "The grip and mag well are the same size. You can practice loading as with a 9mm. Use the same holster and belt pouches. Have a backstrap adapter on your G19? You can use it on the G44 too — they interchange." GLOCK provides four adapters with each G44: two with a beavertail top, two without, in sizes enlarging grip circumference by 0.08" and 0.16".

The G19 is GLOCK's best-selling pistol, according to National Sales Manager Bob Radecki. "So we already had a winner in form and function. Our goal was to bring new shooters to the family but also give GLOCK owners a familiar gun to use in practice. The means to the end was a handgun with the looks, feel, controls, reliability and accuracy of the G19 but an appetite for .22 ammo."

"Like centerfire GLOCKS, the G44 has a hammer-forged Marksman barrel," added Scott Drobnick, who heads GSSF operations. "Hexagonal rifling gives bullets a 1-in-16 spin." He pointed out the ghost-hole loaded-chamber indicator just as the Foxhall bus, swiping light rain from its windscreen, arrived to haul us to the range.

LOTS OF LOADS

The GLOCK team had brought plenty of guns and Federal high-speed .22 ammo. Staccato crackling became a rolling tide of gunfire, drowning the pings of bullets on steel targets. I hewed faithfully to my task as photographer for at least five minutes. Then, as the light was dead and shooters were having all the fun, I grabbed a G44 ...

Three weeks later my gun dealer received a G44. I waited patiently for Washington's mandated local background check to follow federal clearance. This new redundancy blankets not just handguns but Ruger's 10/22 and other "semi-automatic assault rifles."

Enough of the absurd. Our sheriff's department was prompt with an okay.

ARRIVAL

The pistol arrived in a foam-padded polymer case, with two magazines and a manual with clear explanations and images of



“ACCURATE, RELIABLE, EASY TO SHOOT. THE G44 IS ALL ABOUT FUN — **A HARD GUN TO PUT DOWN AS LONG AS THERE ARE BULLETS IN THE BOX!**”

parts, operation and disassembly. I field-stripped the G44 easily without tools into its four main components: frame, slide, barrel and recoil spring assembly. Re-assembly was a snap.

The G44 has GLOCK’s “Safe Action” trigger. The trigger tongue (“trigger safety”) must be pressed with the trigger. A firing pin safety blocks the firing pin from moving forward until the trigger’s rearward movement lifts it free of its channel. A safety ramp in the trigger housing supports a bar engaging the rear of the firing pin to lock it until trigger movement slides the bar down the ramp, off the pin. When the trigger returns to the ready position, the firing pin safety and trigger bar re-set.

Trigger travel (0.49”), is conveniently short for a DA pistol. Listed at 5.8 lbs, the break on my test gun came in at 6.1. It’s a smooth trigger, easy to manage with my weak hand. As on other GLOCKS, my big fingers could use just a tad more vertical space in the guard.

SHOOTING THE G44

At the range, the G44 was feathery in hand but also well balanced. People with limited strength — or having to fire with the weak hand — will appreciate this pistol! There were no hiccups in function with five high-speed loads of different brands and bullet types. Two standard-velocity loads cycled as smartly. Ditto Eley Contact subsonic for autos, even Eley’s Subsonic Hollows! One experimental German load with a lead-free bullet failed to run the slide fully rearward.

Benching the G44 across bags, I fired a 25-yard group with

Federal high-speed solids. Naturally, I pulled a shot. Arrggh! I fired another. The best five of six nestled inside 1.3”, about as close as I hold a 4” pistol these days. My wobbles kept the pistol from shooting better, but I’m convinced it can.

GLOCK VP Josh Dorsey summed up the G44: “It gives rimfire enthusiasts what the GLOCK faithful have enjoyed in 9mms for decades. It’s anyone’s first pistol: accurate, reliable, easy to shoot. The G44 is all about fun — a hard gun to put down as long as there are bullets in the box!”

Update — A short time after the release of the G44, *GUNS* received three reports of cracked slides after firing. While I’ve not seen these pistols in person, the photos look authentic. I’ve not witnessed catastrophic failures with the G44 or any other GLOCK. A colleague who’s fired roughly 1,000 rounds from his G44 reports a few light primer strikes with one brand of ammo, occasional reluctant seating with another bullet but otherwise continued reliable function. He did not clean his pistol for several hundred rounds, though he notes GLOCK advises cleaning the gun after 100 shots. As some .22 ammunition is quite “dirty,” leaving significant residue in autoloaders, cleaning makes sense. I’ve written GLOCK for an update on G44 failure reports but they have not responded at press time.

MSRP is \$359 and a suppressor-ready barrel (threaded 1/2x28) sells separately.

www.plink44.com

This eye-popping version of Olamic Cutlery's Soloist tactical folder is a work of art in state-of-the-art Titanium and premium Bohler M390 stainless blade steel.



OLAMIC SOLOIST A SINGULAR, SPECTACULAR BLADE

Sometimes a knife grabs your eyeballs and won't let go. Such is the case with Olamic Cutlery's Soloist tactical folder. Located in Visalia, California, this small family-run company is headed by Eugene Solomonik and they are a creative force to be reckoned with. Their motto is "Never The Same" and their specialty is taking a basic line of knives and putting

them out in an explosion of different themes and finishes. We featured Olamic Cutlery in the July-August issue of our sister publication, *American Handgunner* but we wanted to do a deep dive into their new "Soloist" model here in *GUNS*.

For starters, this is a large tactical knife at 10.25" overall — 6.25" of the total in the strikingly curvaceous Titanium frame.

To customize this version of the Soloist, Eugene and the gang added cool "chunked" grooves in the handle for grip and brilliant fluorescent orange Cerakote spot-color to add pop to the frame's Titanium back spacer and Torx screws. The Soloist's aggressive, Beak-like modified Wharncliffe blade is top-shelf Bohler M390 stainless steel and locks up tight as a drum by way of a frame-lock mechanism on the back. The blade rolls out slick as ice on a caged ball bearing system and the adjustable thumb stud and pocket clip are chunked to match the frame.

WHY YOU'LL LIKE IT

Nothing is overlooked in the presentation, quality of materials or fit 'n finish of the Soloist. It's a knife that stands out in the crowd and sends those who dare test its mettle running for their lives. While the company's knives are technically not "customs" since more than one person works on building them, they have every attribute known to deserve the moniker. Olamic Cutlery's knives aren't inexpensive. Typically a Soloist will run you around \$795 but, simply stated, it's what the good stuff costs — and Olamic Cutlery has a voracious customer base that keeps them coming back for more.



This version of the Soloist features a sturdy frame-lock mechanism for securing the blade and a chunked Titanium pocket clip to match the handle.

www.olamiccutlery.com

BEWARE GUN AND AMMUNITION TAX SCHEMES

A NEW WEAPON TO PENALIZE GUN OWNERS

Anti-gun municipal politicians have seized on a new financial weapon in their crusade to discourage gun ownership and to drive firearms retailers either out of town or out of business.

It's the "gun violence tax" — better known among 2A activists as the "Second Amendment tax" or, more appropriately, "Tyranny Tax" — and it has so far dug itself in like a tick in Cook County, Illinois and two cities in Washington State. This fall it might be coming to a city or county near you.

The formula is simple. This tax slaps a \$25 fee on the sale of each firearm and adds a 5-cent charge on each round of centerfire ammunition and 2 cents on each round of rimfire ammo. This means an additional dollar on the price of a 20-round box of rifle or handgun cartridges, \$1.25 on a typical 25-round box of shotgun shells and two bucks on the price of a 100-round plastic box of .22 Long Rifle ammunition.

Seattle, which is "Ground Zero" of Northwest gun prohibition politics, adopted the tax back in 2015. Three years later, the Tacoma City Council, despite overwhelming opposition at two public meetings, followed suit. The tax was sponsored by three officials including Mayor Victoria Woodards. Just to underscore how closed-minded she was about this tax, during an interview with KCPQ reporter Brandi Kruse, the mayor was asked what she would say to the law-abiding gun owner who isn't responsible for the criminal acts of others:

"That's like saying, 'My car is in the driveway and I only drive it two days a week, not seven days a week, but every time I go to the gas station, I still have to pay the tax when I fill it up.'"

Does this make sense to you? Not to me either, and not to local radio host Dori Monson at Seattle's KIRO, who called it "a ridiculous analogy."

But this is how these anti-gun-rights public officials think, and how they

explain it to their essentially close-minded supporters.

Tacoma's tax is scheduled to take effect July 1.

Just for the record, the Seattle gun tax consistently has pulled in declining revenues. Where the "sales pitch" forecast was between \$300,000 and \$500,000 annually, the actual revenues were \$103,766 the first year, \$93,220 the second year and \$77,518 the third year. Meanwhile, the number of



homicides climbed from 18 during the first year of the tax, to 32 during the third year.

The Tacoma council knew all of this but still adopted the tax. It's not about public safety or even about reducing so-called "gun violence." This is about reducing gun ownership, and they know it.

STOP THIS FOOLISHNESS

Is there a remedy to this nonsense? A way to prevent it altogether? Yes, but it's going to require gun owners, wherever you are, to "get in the game," — the political game.

Pericles, the Greek philosopher, is reputed to have put it best in 430 BC: "Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you." Let this sink in for a moment.

LETHARGIC LOT

Gun owners as a group have traditionally been a lethargic lot when it comes to

protecting the Second Amendment. Only in recent years has this started to change. Too many people presumed if they went along with licensing and registration schemes, background checks, the imposition of "red flag" laws and so forth, nobody would come after their guns.

Then along came far-left Democrat former presidential candidate Robert Francis "Beto" O'Rourke, who — in a fit of what can only be described as a Freudian slip of candor — declared during a 2019 debate, "Hell, yes, we're going to take your AR-15, your AK-47." It was a game-changing moment, because suddenly gun owners figured out once people like O'Rourke start taking privately owned firearms, they're not going to be satisfied with just the semi-auto rifles scaring the snowflakes.

All this brings us around to the remedy, one we've repeated before in these pages — you have to vote. You must be registered to vote and you need to break out of your apathy and vote.

Last November, Virginia's legislature fell under control of Democrat and they've been a busy bunch. This situation happened when only about 40 percent of the Commonwealth's voters actually turned out to vote. Forty percent is a lousy turnout; disgraceful when a major constitutional right hangs in the balance of an election outcome.

Gun owners in Tacoma are already eyeballing the next municipal election. Likewise, Virginia gun owners will have to find good candidates and support their election next time around.

In many, if not most states, judges and state Supreme Court and Court of Appeals justices and judges also run for election. Gun owners must recruit good pro-rights candidates for those positions and get them elected, which translates to "throwing the bums out."

If you hope to protect and restore the Second Amendment to its rightful status — a constitutional protection with teeth — you can no longer expect someone else, some organization, to carry your water.

Don't be like gun owners who were part of the 60 percent of Virginia voters who sat out the election last November. Take some advice from Woody Allen: "80 percent of life is showing up."

It's now show time.



MTM CASE-GARD IN-SAFE HANDGUN STORAGE CASE

David Freeman

The new In-Safe Handgun Storage Case is exactly what I needed to organize my gun safe in a way to make room for more while keeping my handguns organized, protected and easy to find. The cases feature a protective base composed of a soft, closed-cell foam pad, an attractive, slimline shape and two snap latches. They are sold as a 3-pack unit and currently available in two sizes: 9" for standard 1911 and smaller handguns and 12" for larger handguns.

The cases are transparent to make it easy to see the contents and since they're stackable, I use Avery file labels on each case for a quick reference to what's inside. The slimline design uses at least 50 percent less space than traditional handgun cases and the foam pad keeps guns from sliding around in the case. I found the large size easily accommodates my larger handguns or even two smaller ones. MSRP: \$16.95 (9")



www.mtmcase-gard.com

LYMAN 50TH EDITION RELOADING HANDBOOK

Mike Cumpston

The *Lyman 50th Edition Reloading Handbook* is now available with 528 pages of loading data and well-grounded chapters on every aspect of metallic cartridge reloading. Page count is up by 64 over Lyman #49. New cartridges include 12 rifle rounds such as the 6.5 Creedmoor and a trio of large-bore AR 15 cartridges. There are also two additional handgun rounds — the .32 S&W and the .32 Federal Magnum.

New and improved Lyman reloading tools are well represented with detailed photographs throughout. In keeping with the Lyman/Ideal legacy there is a comprehensive chapter on bullet casting. Cast bullet loads are included in the individual Rifle and Pistol caliber datum. Since Lyman does not manufacture bullets, primers, or powder, the data covers a wider range of these components than frequently occurs with handbooks from companies that stick with their own products. The selection of smokeless powders is well considered and eclectic. MSRP: \$33.99 (hard-bound) and \$19.99 (paperback)

www.lymanproducts.com



LEUPOLD PERFORMANCE EYEWEAR

Brent T. Wheat

How good can you make a magazine editor look? With most other periodicals, you could probably put lots of lipstick on the pig and get passable results. In my case, I long ago quit trying to appear stylish. However, as soon as I slipped on a pair of new Leupold Performance Eyewear, I instantly felt younger, more handsome, slimmer and even my credit rating improved.

Seriously — I never worried about looking good on or off the firing line because frankly, most protective eyewear is butt-ugly. However, the new line of Performance Eyewear is both stylish and effective.

After considerable time on both the shooting range and South Florida fishing

flats, I can attest Leupold eyewear is comfortable, lightweight and the polarized lenses offer great protection and vision. The Guard-Ion Hydrophobic coating resisted fogging on early morning boat runs and the

Diamondcoat Scratch Resistant Coating has lived up to its name even when .224 shell casings bounce off it. MSRP: \$159.99

www.leupoldshop.com



MITCH ROSEN EXTRAORDINARY GUNLEATHER

Brent T. Wheat

With each passing year I better understand the value of spending a little more money initially to buy the best quality possible rather than mess around with the folly and aggravation of cheaper products — and so it goes with Mitch Rosen Extraordinary Gunleather. I recently got an “Uncle Sal’s Decision II SF” holster for my Colt Gunsight CCO and after slipping my gat into the leather sheath, I realized this is the holster my first-rate gun has always deserved.

The USD II is a fully-lined slimline inside-the-waistband holster with sight rails. If leather could be called “mil-spec,” the Mitch Rosen product would certainly fill the bill as the material and construction is both stout and wholly flawless. I’ve not found it lacking in any respect and based on construction quality, I’ll probably still be using this holster decades from now at the old folks home. (It’s concealed, after all!)

Gun leather is too often an afterthought, but if you want true professional-grade equipment, you can’t go wrong with Mitch Rosen. MSRP: \$230

www.mitchrosen.com



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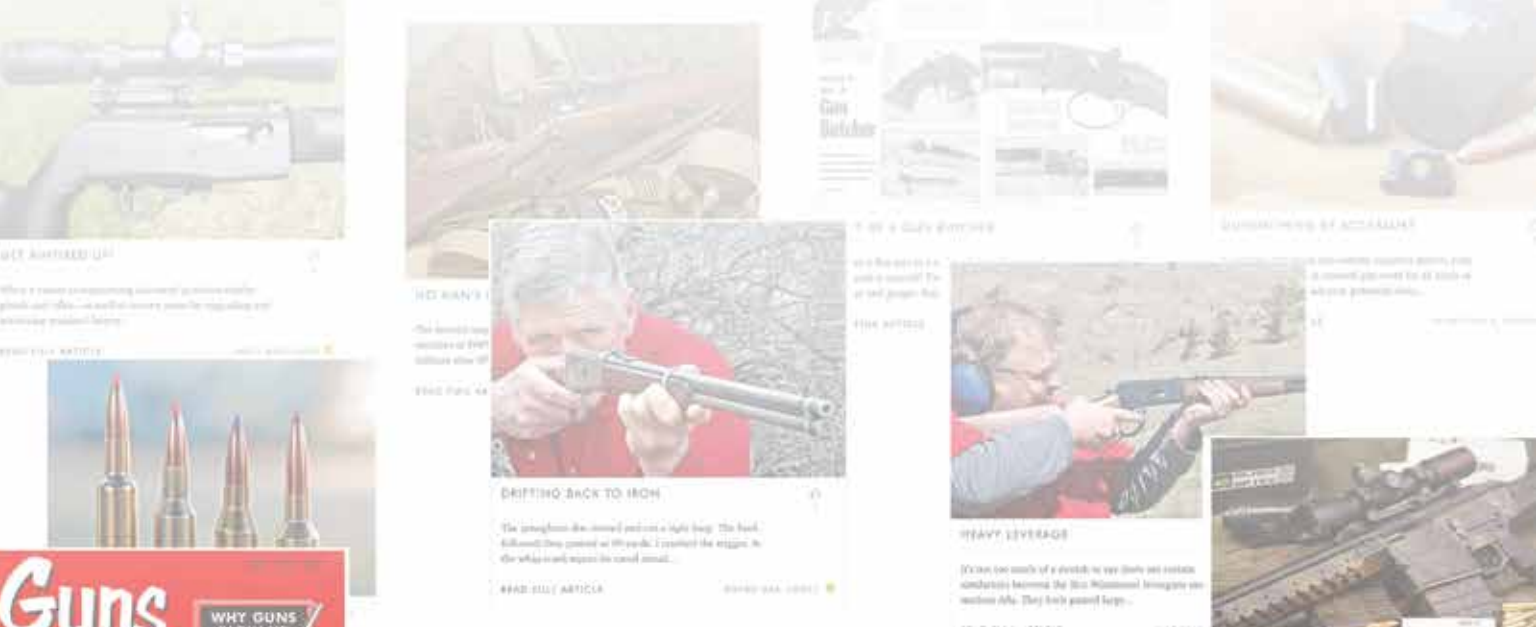
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Guns

WHY GUNS BLOW UP

CAN WOMEN OUTSHOOT MEN?

For decades in 1955 the answer was yes. And it's still true today. Here's a fun look back at R. D. Grant five-page article in the July 1955 issue of GUNS.

READ FULL ARTICLE

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ROCK RIVER ARMS

Protect yourself and your family with Rock River Arms' compact BT92152. The BT-9 pistol with SBA3 arm brace in 9x19mm has a billet aluminum lower with a GLOCK-compatible flared magwell and integral winter trigger guard. The upper receiver is extruded aluminum A4. The 4.5" barrel is chrome-lined chrome moly with a 1:10 twist. With an OAL of 23.5" with the brace extended, the BT92152 is equipped with a Smith Vortex Flash Suppressor, an RRA 2-stage trigger and an aluminum, free-float handguard that's M-Lok compatible. Hogue rubber grips and a 17+1 GLOCK-compatible magazine are included. For more info: (309) 792-5780, www.rockriverarms.com



VAPOR RS470
TENPOINT CROSSBOW TECHNOLOGIES

According to TenPoint Crossbow Technologies, the Vapor RS470 is "the world's most technologically advanced crossbow ever produced." Delivering speeds of up to 470 fps, the Vapor RS470 measures a narrow 6.5" wide and weighs half-pound less than previous TenPoint flagship models. It features the ACUslide and Auto-Brake Gear systems allowing silent cocking as well as safe and controlled de-cocking of the crossbow. For more info: (330) 628-9245, www.tenpointcrossbows.com



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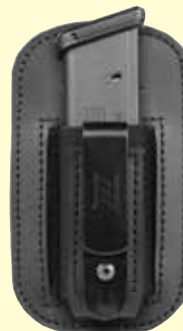
The PC Charger from Ruger is a 9mm pistol based on the popular PC Carbine Chassis model. The PC Charger maintains many features of the original, including an easily interchangeable magazine well that accepts the Ruger Security-9, SR9 and GLOCK double-stack magazines, a dead blow action with a custom tungsten weight for shortened bolt travel and reduced felt recoil and muzzle rise, a reversible magazine release and charging handle and more. The standard model has a 17-round capacity. A 10-round model is also available. For more info: (336) 949-5200, www.ruger.com



COMP-TAC HOLSTERS FOR THE STI STACCATO
STI FIREARMS/COMP-TAC

Comp-Tac Holsters For The STI Staccato are now available. Comp-Tac's International Holster and Blue Duty Holster Series fit the pistol. Both are optics ready and offered on the STI website. The former, an OWB holster with modular mounting, is a popular choice for competition shooting. The latter has a thumb-release bale designed to work with most red-dot optics (specifically the STI Staccato with a Surefire X300). Comp-Tac worked directly with STI International to develop the holsters for the STI Staccato 2011. For more info: (512) 883-2819, www.staccato2011.com; (281) 209-3040, www.comp-tac.com

FLEX IWB MAG CARRIER
N8 TACTICAL



The FLEX IWB Mag Carrier from N8 Tactical adapts to multiple magazine sizes and styles. It combines function and comfort in a compact, easy-to-conceal leather platform. Features include a 3-layer comfort backer with a moisture-proof neoprene core. It can secure magazines

for single-stack 1911s as well as those for double-stack compact handguns. Whether you have a GLOCK 17, an XDM, a SIG P365 or a Springfield Armory Hellcat, the FLEX IWB Mag Carrier is for you. For more info: (888) 732-5011, www.n8tactical.com



RUBBER GRIPS FOR KIMBER K6S REVOLVERS
HOGUE INC.

Hogue Inc. has released Rubber Grips for Kimber K6s Revolvers, specifically for the DASA and DAO. The mono grips will be offered as an upgrade to the small frame revolvers' factory grips. The Hogue grips for the K6s have finger grooves leading into a gentle palm swell designed to naturally fit the hand. They are textured with Hogue's Cobblestone pattern for a non-slip, non-irritating grip. For more info: (800) 438-4747, www.hogueinc.com

SOFHOLD AMERICAN PATRIOT GUN MAGNET

SOFOHOLD

With the *SofHold American Patriot Gun Magnet*, your handgun can be within reach when you sleep, drive or work! The magnet has over 50 lbs. of pulling force, so it can secure even heavier guns. Covered with soft, premium leather, the magnet won't scratch your piece. The magnetic gun mount is compatible with GLOCK, Colt, Beretta, Browning, KelTec, Remington, SIG SAUER, Smith & Wesson and more. For more info: www.sofhold.com



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BLACK RING VERSION OF THE FREEDOM RDS

LEUPOLD & STEVENS

Leupold & Stevens, Inc. recently introduced the *Black Ring Version of the Freedom Red Dot Sight (RDS)*. The Freedom RDS originally sported the company's trademark Gold Ring around its objective bell. The Black Ring Version has an all-black finish. Features include a 1-MOA dot reticle supported by Leupold's Motion Sensor Technology (MST). For more info: (800) 538-7653, www.leupold.com



PLINKERTON CIMARRON FIREARMS

Introduced as an entry-level .22 LR six shooter in 2008, Cimarron Firearms announced the return of the *Plinkerton* single-action revolver. Ideal for shooters of all ages, the .22 caliber Plinkerton is a comfortable target platform. It has a steel-lined 4.75" barrel just right for plinking, steel-lined chambers in the cylinder and a Colt-style front sight. The revolver sports a non-reflective matte-black finish and checkered plastic grips with the Cimarron rider on the medallion. The trigger and hammer are traditional single-action-style. For more info: (877) 749-4861, www.cimarron-firearms.com



TIDAL FORCE TOPS KNIVES

Put together cleavers and karambits the right way and you end up with an interesting tool. This is what TOPS Knives came up with — the *Tidal Force*. With an OAL of 9.87", it's ideal for daily tasks, food prep or self-defense. Made of TOPS Knives' heat-treated 1095 RC 56-58 steel, the blade is 4.87" long, 0.19" thick and with a gray traction finish. The handle is burlap Micarta. The Tidal force comes with a black Kydex sheath and a leather dangler. For more info: (208) 542-0113, www.topsknives.com



TRAIL CAM SECURITY BOXES

STEALTH CAM

The *Trail Cam Security Boxes* from Stealth Cam will protect your cameras from would-be thieves or unwanted bears in the woods. The boxes are made of powder-coated steel with dual teeth plates to prevent them from sliding up and down mounting trees. Padlocks or security cables can be used to avoid theft. The two-piece box comes in two sizes and fits 10 of Stealth Cam's camera series. For more info: (877) 269-8490, www.stealthcam.com



HOME DEFENSE KIT PEPPER SPRAY LAUNCHER

SABRE RED

The *SABRE Home Defense Kit Pepper Spray Launcher* with live and practice projectiles is designed to deter a home intruder by creating an even greater distance between you and the threat. It's accurate up to 66 feet — releasing up to seven projectiles of SABRE maximum-strength pepper powder that bursts on impact up to 175 feet. The area will be saturated with a 6-foot pepper cloud thus increasing the chances for escape. For more info: (800) 325-9568, www.sabrered.com



LEVEL-RIGHT PRO REAL AVID

Real Avid's *Level-Right PRO* is a simple-to-use scope and reticle leveling tool. The system ensures proper scope reticle alignment to a rifle's bore axis. This will prevent left- or right-drift of the bullet's point-of-impact when shooting past the zeroed distance. The tool provides essential reticle alignment for predictable point-of-impact when exceeding a rifle's zeroed distance. The Level-Right PRO comes with a precision alignment grid, a rechargeable reticle light and standard barrel and Picatinny rail attachment mounts. For more info: (800) 286-0567, www.realavid.com



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Savage Arms 110 HIGH COUNTRY GIVEAWAY

You can fire the longest shots and get the biggest bulls with the *Savage 110 High Country Rifle*. It's just the thing you need to bring food to the table in case of even more difficult times. A spiral-fluted 22" barrel and bolt as well as a Model 110 action within the AccuStock internal chassis maximize the rifle's accuracy. Other features include a user-adjustable AccuTrigger, an AccuStock rail system, TrueTimber Strata synthetic stock with overmold surfaces, a threaded muzzle and more. The Model 110 stainless steel barreled action, bolt handle, receiver, barrel, trigger guard and magwell are all PVD-coated. Weighing 8.1 lbs., the 42"-long rifle comes with a detachable box magazine.

If you win this giveaway, you can mount the *Swarovski Z3 4-12x50* to the 110 High Country Rifle to hit even more prey. The

1"-scope is slim yet big on detail. Its most striking feature is the 50mm objective lens. Thanks to the large lens diameter and 12x magnification, the scope works best in poor light and over longer distances.

TOPS Knives' *Fieldcraft 3.5* is a smaller, slightly slimmer version of the Fieldcraft by Brothers of Bushcraft, an all-around, hard-use knife. The 3.5 has TOPS' modified Scandi grind, black traction coating, tan canvas Micarta handles and a Kydex sheath. The Fieldcraft 3.5 has a 3-5/8" blade and is ideal for use as a bushcrafter, hunting knife, camp knife and even a fixed-blade EDC.

These prizes will come in handy if we have to hunt for food. So join now! Click on www.gunsmagazine.com/giveaways. You can mail a post card too! —Jazz Jimenez

If you are unable to enter online, mail a postcard with your name and address (no envelopes please). Entries must be received before September 30, 2020. Limit one entry per household.

GUNS Magazine
GOM September 2020
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FIXIN' MESSES, MEMORIES & I FORGET ... GD (GUN DEMENTIA) IS REAL!

It's early April as I write this and everyone's donning surgical masks and gloves, bottles of hand-sanitizer hoisted, ready for fast-drawing the Coronavirus. We're under lockdown, allowed to venture to the grocery store, pharmacy, or getting carryout. Liquor stores are open, perhaps to aid in further numbing our restricted brains?

Businesses considered non-essential are closed, effectively crashing the economy. What hits hardest for me is the closure of my shooting range. What nincompoop decided ranges aren't essential?

A SILVER LINING?

Begrudgingly, the range closure provides the perfect opportunity for doing a much-needed project I've been avoiding for some time — the cleaning and organization of my gunroom.

CAUSE & EFFECT

The older I get the faster time goes by. To maximize time, I take shortcuts in my workshop. I think, "Why put it away? I'll finish loading these cases tomorrow ..." Ah, yes, tomorrow, the well-intentioned date of

procrastinators.

As sincere as I am, other priorities get assigned — honey-do lists come to mind. Or, "better" ideas "pop" into my brain, side-tracking me. This reality is the lifeblood for handloaders! Welcome to my world. It's how things get out of control — quickly!

Suddenly, my bench is piled high and deep, from various dies, bullets, primers and other paraphernalia, waiting patiently, screaming, "Load me!"

BIG DIG SEARCH & RESCUE

After six cups of coffee, I roll-up my sleeves and attack my benches. I start putting all dies away and throwing out empty powder bottles, primer boxes/trays and other debris. Long, lost tools start appearing, like my micrometer, calipers and chamfering tool.

My bench tops are almost visible. Wow! I pick-up discarded shipping boxes, plastic "parts" bags, bullets, primers and bullet cases, finding several more tools/parts I hadn't seen in years.

JUGGLING CASES

My safe was practically full the day I got



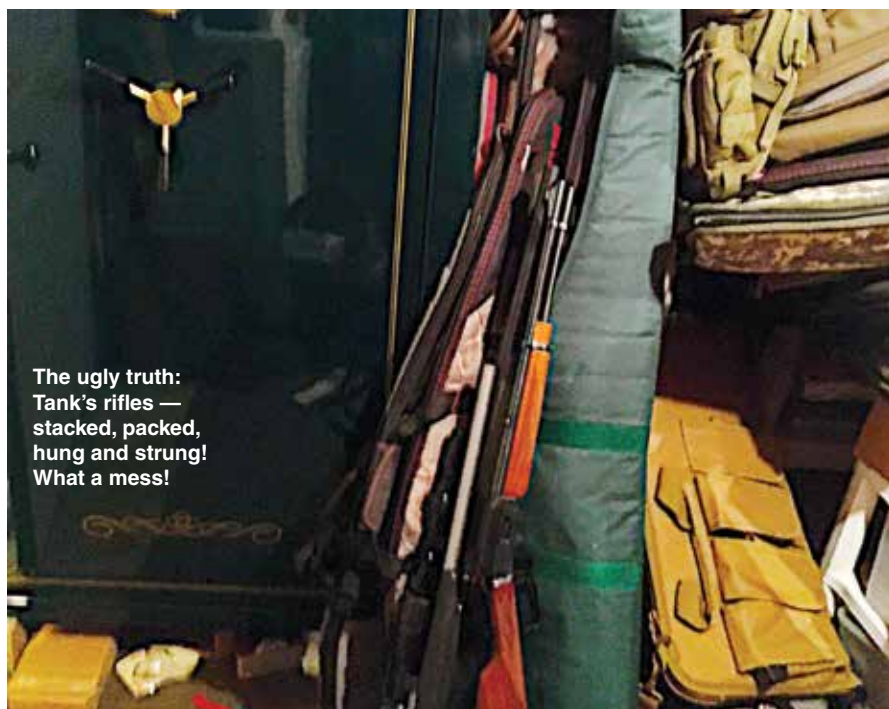
Relief is on the way from gun-racks.com.



it. I know — stupid. When the rifle slots filled-up, I started squeezing guns between the racked ones, barrel down. Sound familiar?

Next, I started hanging cased rifles from nails in the wall. Over time, they breed, voraciously. So much for "safe" sex?

I had so many cases piled-up and hanging around, it took forever trying to



The ugly truth:
Tank's rifles —
stacked, packed,
hung and strung!
What a mess!



Simply drilling holes and screwing a piece of 1/8" steel bar behind the striker plate of your door frame adds a lot of strength to keep guns in and trouble out.



A locking steel utility cabinet is perfect for safely storing ammunition. Tank got this one from a large home improvement store.

find the rifle I wanted. I was starting to show signs of (GD) “Gun Dementia.”

Unknowing people think GD is the lost, blank stare portrayed while feigning amnesia when caught by your wife with a new gun. It's not. GD is caused by naively thinking you'll remember the case you put a particular gun in. As cases multiply, it becomes a tortured memory game of sorts.

Severe bouts lead to not only the case being forgotten, but the gun itself. It's happened several times to me! Don't fret, finding “newly found” wonders are fun. One day you're searching for a gun, and surprisingly gasp, “Hey, cool! Where'd this come from?”

THE SPIN-AROUND SOLUTION

There had to be a better way! Enter www.gun-racks.com to the rescue. Specializing in Lazy-Susan style rotating rifle racks, they're just the ticket for people like you and me! I ordered a 22" circular base rack, having 17-rifle slots, and received it within a week. The top pedestal is magnetic, holding the rifle barrels in place.

The rack is easily assembled, looks great and utilizes the least amount of space. My rack miraculously fills up. I swore I only had seven to eight rifles hanging from the wall. Damn, did it again!



By simply spinning my Wheel-O-Fortune, I quickly grab the rifle I want. I'll eventually build a cabinet, using marine-grade plywood, around the rack-o-plenty — one of these days ...

SECURITY!

I make my “gunroom” as difficult as possible for anyone to break into. Already having a steel, exterior door, complete with 3" deadbolt, I reinforce the striker plates with a piece of 16" steel plate. I use 3" screws to secure the plate to the doorframe studs. I also replace the 1" striker plate and hinge screws with 4" screws.

Even Editor Brent, using his favorite “batting ram” from his SWAT days would have a difficult time breaching this door now.

THE ARMORY

Lastly, I purchase a steel, lockable cabinet for my “test ammo.” I bolt the cabinet to the wall, so it can't walk away. I made the most of my ceasefire. My guns are accessible, and my shop, clean and secure, for now ...

Hopefully, we'll never experience another pandemic lock-down — I'd much rather be shooting!

GUNS[®]

MAGAZINE

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2020**

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website design, social media posting, SEO, ftp, WordPress, search-engine techniques, proofreading and have the ability to subsist on Ramen noodles and carryout food for days on end.

THE BENEFITS

If you can handle all the challenges, there are many benefits of being a gun writer. First is the paycheck. You actually get paid for messing around with guns and then spilling ink about the adventure! Sometimes you can even afford the ammo and gasoline used during the trip to the range — after receiving the paycheck 12 months later *and* provided you were shooting within 10 miles of home *and* only shot a single magazine of ammunition. Some gun writers have even been known to become wealthy, defined as “not having bill collectors calling after 11 p.m.” This, however, is the exception rather than the rule.

You also get free guns occasionally, though not nearly as often as most readers suppose. You *will* get to use lots of guns

for a short “T&E” (Testing and Evaluation) period but even here the fun is tempered by countless hours spent fighting with package delivery services, scrounging for return boxes and constantly cleaning up foam packing peanuts that somehow mysteriously end up in the cat box and washing machine.

Regardless of the downsides, you will receive the accolades and respect of fellow gun enthusiasts. They look up to the gun writer with awe and respect, though it is often concealed beneath a veneer of indifference or outright hostility. It is sometimes comical to see a reader trying to avoid a maudlin public display of respect and veneration when meeting

a well-known gun scribe at the range. Sometimes they even threaten you with a cleaning rod in an effort to conceal their profound admiration.

THE TAKEAWAY

It's not easy to become a gun writer and even tougher to land a place on the “masthead” of a big magazine or major website. It takes years of practice, learning, skill building and paying dues before the big break comes. But when it does, the rewards cannot be measured in mere dollars.

By the way, you should also master irony. For instance, it's ironic the synonyms for the word “mere” include meager, measly, scanty, insufficient and paltry. 

IN OTHER NEWS:

Gun stocks (not the wood or plastic things attached to firearms, the kind you buy through a stock broker) really hit their stride in recent weeks. Even though the overall stock market tanked like New Coke when the pandemic first hit, most publicly traded firearms manufacturers saw their stocks climb as sales spiked to record levels. Now, as of this writing, the country is still burning with widespread violent inner-city protests and firearms stocks have further climbed. On the latest numbers released in May, Sturm Ruger saw a 37 percent increase in first-quarter sales, while Smith & Wesson stock climbed 28 percent when the riots started. As there are still several months of warm weather and a looming Presidential election, it's anyone's guess as to what the future holds — though no one seems too optimistic. However, cynicism about the short-term prospects for society aside, the gun industry is financially quite healthy at the moment. Funny how personal danger



The Springfield SAINT .308 Pistol
— lots of boom in a small package!

suddenly wakes people up to the basic idea “self-defense isn't a partisan matter.”

“Pistol craze” getting hotter — It seems every manufacturer these days is racing to bring out smaller and smaller “pistols” which are essentially cut-down shotguns and rifles but meet the BATF legal definition of a handgun. The guns are certainly a hoot to shoot (especially if you like ear-shattering

muzzle blasts and spectacular, Instagram-worthy fireballs), convenient to stow and carry, plus they are so dangerously sexy-looking even crusty old gun writers say “cool!” I just picked up a stubby little .308 “pistol” today which will soon grace these pages and I can't wait to hit the range. I might be deaf and blinded by the time I return, but it'll sure be fun! 

HOW TO BE A GUN WRITER

WIN RESPECT, ACCOLADES — AND PERHAPS A BEATING

As the Lord High Editor and Ruling Despot of *GUNS Magazine*, I frequently get emails asking, “How do you become a gun writer?” The actual, technically correct answer is “Have compromising pictures of the magazine’s Chairman of the Board wooing a common farm animal,” but as most would-be gun journalists aren’t practiced in the art of blackmail nor photo manipulation, I am often forced to give some harebrained suggestion such as “learn to write.”

In an effort to answer this common query once and for all, I will share a few suggestions for the budding gun journalists out there. If you fit into this category, I invite you to study the ideas and apply yourself to the pursuit with vigor. Just don’t apply these principles to His Lordship or disturbing photos of you might show up at your local news outlet and/or major religious denomination.

FOR STARTERS

Obviously, to write successfully about firearms, you first must have a thorough knowledge of guns. If you still have difficulty making the distinction between a Remington 870 and any species of North American salamander, you might consider another line of work with lower standards, such as network news reporter. The same goes for hunting journalism — if the word “icky” appears whenever you discuss field dressing game animals, you might not be ready for prime time. Overt fear of the dark or aversion to personal arterial bleeding are also disqualifications.

On the other hand, if you are currently an expert competitive shooter or hunter you are likely already an accomplished liar, in which case you can skip straight to the major gun magazines.

YOUR MISSION

The basic goal of firearms journalism is to give the reader information they need, while sharing experiences of the things you have seen, heard, felt, tasted and smelled. Of course, if you have shooting buddies like mine, you should consider leaving out the smell part because some readers don’t have strong stomachs.

Your words must leap from the page, grab the reader by the throat and compel them to follow along further. If you’re really good, your words might even blindfold them, throw them into the trunk of a car and demand ransom.

A great piece of writing transports the reader, allowing them to undergo the visceral enjoyment of every missed shot, broken scope and hopelessly jammed rifle. Transcend prose can even cause severe intestinal distress without having actually drank the water at hunting camp.

REQUIREMENTS

A writer needs some level of expertise in the use of words. For instance, I know a noun is a word appearing in most sentences and frequently advocated by high school English teachers. Verbs are action words, while pronouns are words you are no longer allowed to use unless they are one of the official 4,396 government-recognized alternative genders. Don’t worry about split infinitives — these are urban legends

invented by the Trilateral Commission or maybe Methodists. Dangling participles are actually a type of tree-dwelling snake.

Spelling is another highly important skill. Here’s a professional “insider” tip — after you are finished writing a story, tap the “F7” key on your computer. If done deftly, magical computer fairies will clean up the gross spelling errors in your manuscript, though they still won’t crank out 1,500 words by Friday.

One of the most important concepts of writing is Topic. Without a topic, you end up like a troop of Boy Scouts earning their riflery merit badge — full of enthusiasm but spraying words all over the place. Topics are often difficult to locate and pin down, tougher than making a double on quail or beating Rob Latham’s split times. In fact, I would rather bet my financial future on defeating Mr. Latham head-to-head while armed only with a Jennings .22 than try to pluck a theme from thin air after sitting down at the keyboard, with a headache, six hours before deadline.

In today’s journalism world, you should also be well-versed in photography, videography and video editing, audio editing,

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