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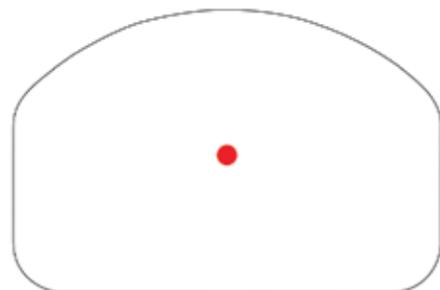
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Vol. 66, Number 12, 792nd Issue



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VOTE!

I was just listening to the Podcast concerning the November 3rd election. When you speak next on elections please remember to say something about all the rest of the offices up for vote. Here in Texas during the '18 election we were able to keep Ted Cruz but a lot of the down-ballot offices were lost to the Democrats. The Dems voted straight while the Republicans voted for the office. This allowed the Dems to flip many state and local positions.

Al Sherrill

Great point and this letter just might end up in Crossfire as a reminder! —BW

SMIFF, SNIFF

I just finished the video you posted with Jim Shepherd ("Gun Cranks Live!" August 8). Let me say it was simply outstanding. I loved the variety of topics you covered and the comments regarding the NRA as well.

I am hoping you invite Mr. Shepherd again and soon. The four of you obviously have a good rapport and this is the ONLY talk show I watch/listen to. It pleases me no end to see ex-cops can provide good talks, good articles and keep it interesting as well as real.

*Mike Barr,
General Curmudgeon and Old Fart*

Anyone with the title "Old Fart" in their signature line shall hereafter be considered an Honorary Gun Crank! —BW

NOT A KORTH FAN

I just read the article on the Korth .44 mag revolver. It is a fine-looking piece but



there are a number of revolvers on the market capable of launching .44 bullets at Magnum velocities. Why is this one a dinosaur slayer? This Korth is no different than the others. The price is \$5,300 dollars, really? Only about 10% of the population could afford one. I'm sorry but I can't justify paying that kind of money.

Mike Franklin

One big goal here is to keep things interesting and you gotta' admit the Korth is an interesting piece of hardware. The dinosaur theme came from my wife — when I opened the box with the revolver before sending it on to Dr. Dabbs, she commented, "What the heck is that thing for?" I replied, "It's for hunting dinosaurs..." She seemed satisfied so I told Will the story and the rest is literary history. —BW

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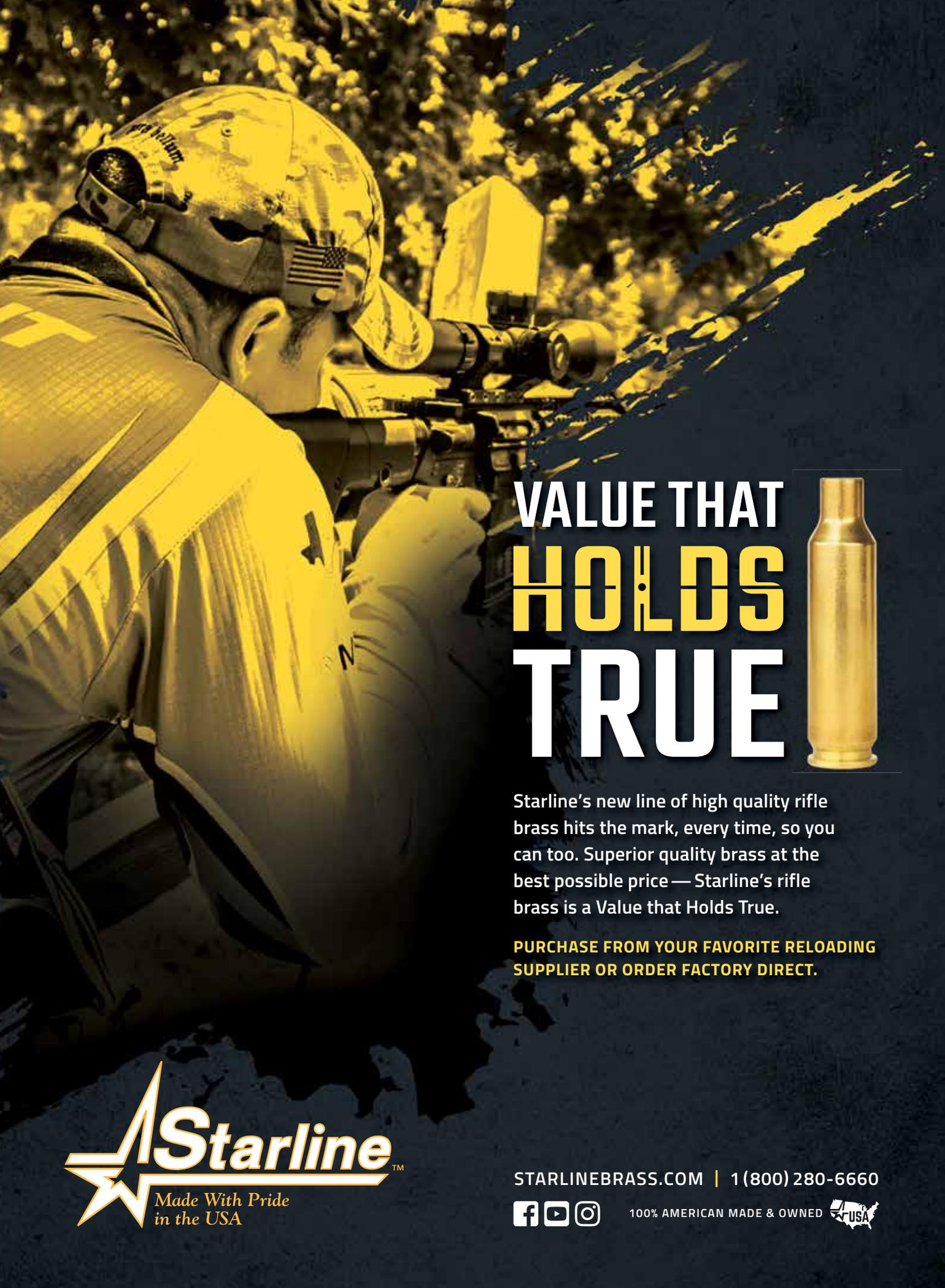
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WHICH ROAD TO TRAVEL? EVERYTHING HAPPENS FOR A REASON

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I — I took the one less traveled by. And that has made all the difference.” — Robert Frost.

Anyone who cannot look back down their personal Road of Life and see many, many roads — which ones were chosen and the effect it had on life — has just not been paying attention. I will say there’s no such thing as chance or coincidence. Everything happens for a reason. We may not understand the reason at the time, we may never understand it but it’s always there.

BEGINNING

The first fork in the road I remember came in fourth grade. One day my teacher said she would like me to spend a couple weeks with the fifth graders. After those two weeks she asked if I would like to go into the fifth grade permanently. There was the choice. Should I stay on the road marked fourth grade or did I fork off into

the fifth grade? I chose the latter. For the rest of my school days, I was always one grade ahead and graduated after 11 years, instead of 12. Was it a good or bad choice?

I was not ready for college by any means and lived in the area containing the general offices and main plants of five tire companies. I had just turned 17 and after graduation, went to the office of one of the tire companies. I took the test required, scored high and told I could have my choice of any job. They then looked at my birth date and informed me they could only hire people who were at least 18 years of age. There’s a reason there somewhere and I soon found it.

ANOTHER CHANGE

A construction company was hiring order boys and I got the job. The salesman would write up the orders and we would go all over the building to fill the orders and bring them to the shipping department

where they would be delivered the next day on a fleet of eight bright red Reo trucks.

Because of this job I met a fellow who would become a lifelong friend and he introduced me to the best gun shops and gun shows. His name was John also and is now a retired LEO living in Florida. Because of him I bought my first .22 Marlin 39A and soon followed it with the .22 Ruger Single-Six. Then came the .38-40 Colt SAA, .45 Colt SAA, .357 Blackhawk Flat-Top, .44 Magnum Blackhawk Flat-Top and others. At the time I kept a running gun tab at Boyle’s Gun Shop.

The second thing happened after I had been there a few months. The boss came to me and said, “I want you to be foreman of the men charged with unloading everything that comes into the building.” I’m just 17 and was asked to be the foreman of men, the youngest of which was about 32. These men were all black working for minimum wage as there were few real opportunities for black men yet in the 1950s.

I was told my job would be to assign them to their various tasks and just stand there with a clipboard to check off everything. I was only 17 but smart enough to realize these guys were not going to work for me if

By the winter of 1956–57 John had the first three early Ruger single actions offered — the .22 Single-Six, the .357 Blackhawk and the .44 Magnum Blackhawk.



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Doug Koenig

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I didn't do anything but stand there with a pencil. So I worked right alongside of them and two things happened: I gained their respect and with hard work, built myself up to the point I could pick up 500-lb. bars of pig lead or put a 200-lb. keg of nails on my shoulder and walk up three flights of stairs and back down again. Now I can barely pick up a fork and forget stairs.

ANOTHER ROAD

I was working hard every day, paying my Mom room and board, buying everything I needed for myself and definitely buying guns. I was as happy as happy could be.

It was my habit to go to church with my mother. The church had a large youth group but no one ever approached me. I found out later it was because I looked older and my Mom, who had been a teenage bride, teenage mother and teenage widow all in the space of less than two years, was now in her late 30s. She looked younger and I looked older so they thought I was married — to my mother!

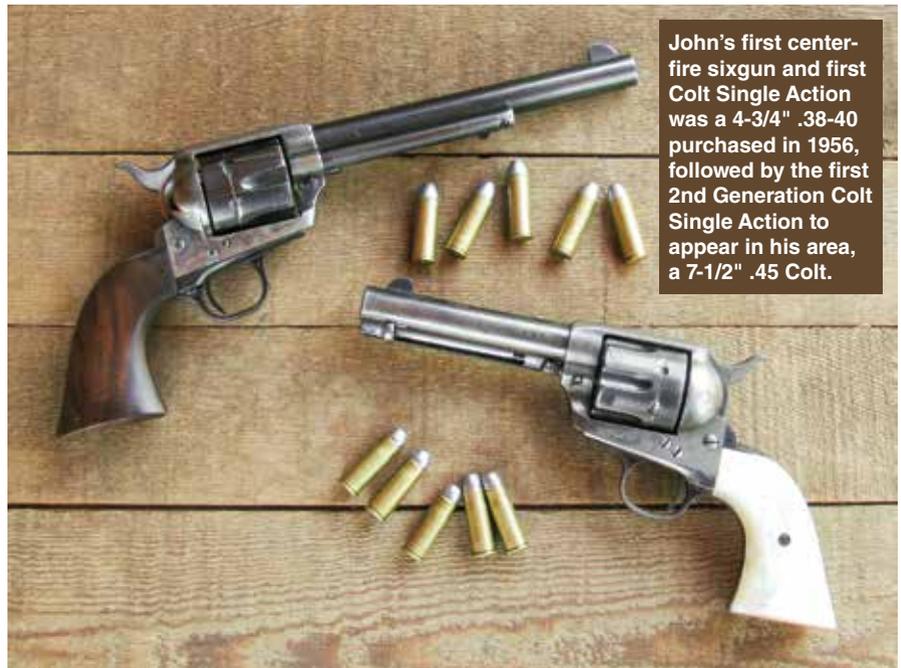
One particular morning my mom wasn't feeling well and I arrived at church early where an usher put me into a Sunday school class. At the same time, there was a young girl who went to church with her father on the other side of town. This particular day she and her father had an argument so she came to my church. She normally only came to the Sunday night youth group but when the usher shoved me into Sunday school class, there she was.

Up to this time I had no time for girls. All my expendable money went for guns and shooting. I had never dated through high school and this young blonde made a real mistake — she paid attention to me. One look at her and I was totally smitten by the young girl who now is known as Diamond Dot. Was it coincidence we both wound up in the same spot at the same time? We were married the following February, now going on 62 years ago.

HOOK OF KISMET

We were both earning about \$200 a month and wanted to have a family. This meant Dot would have to quit her job and we would have to live on half this amount. I loved my job but had to find something different. How was this going to happen?

We had been out shopping on a hot Saturday afternoon and decided to stop by the apartment to put the milk and meat in the refrigerator. In the 1950s many cars were



John's first center-fire sixgun and first Colt Single Action was a 4-3/4" .38-40 purchased in 1956, followed by the first 2nd Generation Colt Single Action to appear in his area, a 7-1/2" .45 Colt.

“ONE LOOK AT HER AND I WAS TOTALLY SMITTEN BY THE YOUNG GIRL WHO NOW IS KNOWN AS DIAMOND DOT.”

set up so you could start it, remove the key from the ignition and it would still keep running.

I did a very stupid thing — I took the key out, left the motor running and handed the keys to Dot. I don't have the slightest idea why I would leave the car running since we didn't have air conditioning anyhow. Dot placed the milk and meat into the refrigerator, came back out and I asked her for the keys. I could tell by the look on her face what just happened. The car was running and the keys were in the locked apartment!

The back door of our apartment opened onto a balcony-type porch about 10 feet off the ground so we rarely locked it. All I had to do was shinny up the porch post, go in the back door and retrieve my keys. I could still shinny in those days.

As I got up to the banister and prepared to step over, I put my foot on a clothesline hook to help me over. I was wearing moccasins and the sharpened hook went into the bottom of my foot. Blood was flowing, so I wrapped it in a towel, retrieved the keys, went back out to the car and had Dot

drive me to the hospital to get bandaged and a tetanus shot. I was told I would have to be off work for at least a week. Was there a reason for all of this?

REASONS

I found out on Monday morning when Dot called me from her office at the factory to tell me they were hiring. Since I was now over the age of 18, I was hired making three times what I had been making. Now we could start a family of our own. If Dot had not left the keys in the apartment perhaps none of this would've happened. The downside to my new job was unlike the one I loved, I hated every minute in the place. I worked the night shift six days a week and there was simply no joy in going to work — *but* as I have tried to teach my children and grandchildren, there are things in this life we do, not because we want to, but simply because we have to.

I dreaded going to work and my only thought was “Why am I here?” Was there really a reason? Had I taken the wrong fork in the road? *To be continued*



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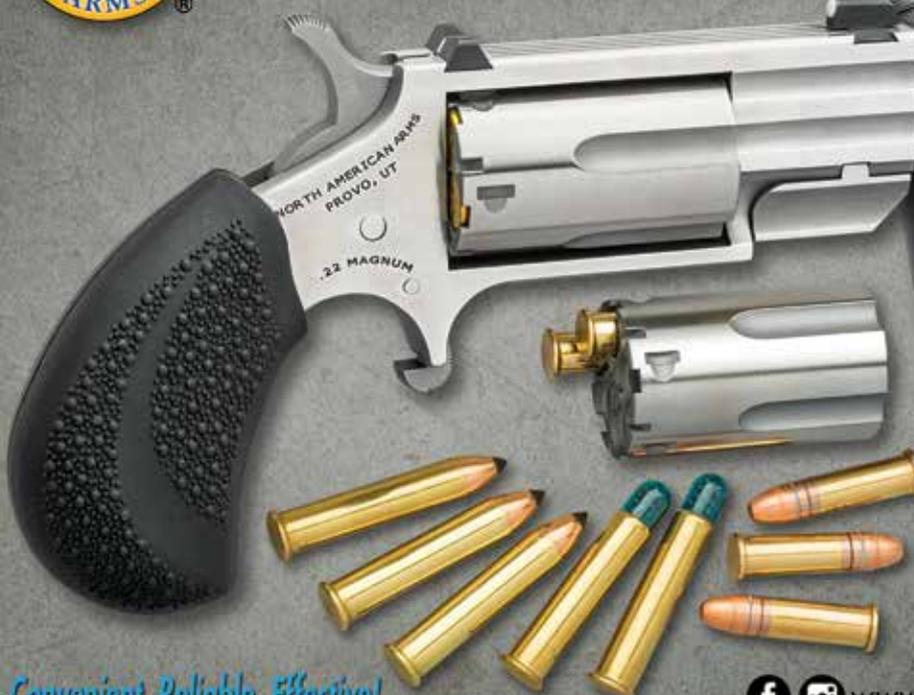
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CAST BULLETS FOR .44 WCF LEVERGUNS CHOICES, CHOICES ...

Today we have a large choice when it comes to .44-40 (.44 WCF) leverguns. Replicas are available patterned after the Model's 1860, 1866, 1873 and 1892. I have a replica '92 with an octagon barrel and several other versions, as well as the first three models mentioned above all chambered in .44 WCF. Marlin has also offered their 1894 in several versions chambered in .44-40. We ordered two of these with 24" octagon barrels when they came out in the closing decade of the last century.

Diamond Dot's has been cut to 19-1/2"

for ease of handling and the ability to still hold 10 rounds, while I've kept mine at the original length. This Marlin makes a dandy close-range hunting levergun, every bit as good as the .44 Magnum. These rifles have the older cut rifling rather than Micro Groove so they are not so selective when shooting cast bullets.

PLAYING FAVORITES

A longtime favorite .44 WCF load of mine is actually the first load I tried more than 60 years ago. It consists of the Lyman #42798

bullet, patterned after the original from the 1870s, over 10.0 grains of Unique for 1,421 fps and 1-1/8" group for three shots at 50 yards. A slightly milder load coming in 200 fps slower while exhibiting the same accuracy, is assembled using 8.0 grains of Unique. The shorter barreled version with this latter load also shoots exceptionally well, with the same accuracy, at a muzzle velocity of 1,171 fps.

The Model 1892 is a very strong action and in my old Lyman Cast Bullet Manual there are cast bullet loads for the .44-40 in the Winchester '92 consisting of the #42798 (now #427098) bullet at 1,900 fps and the 215-gr. #429215GC at 1,850 fps with both assembled with #2400. Obviously, these were accepted loads at the time and they didn't have to take a backseat to any .44 Magnum load.

ROSSI RETINUE

I've had one of the early Rossi .44 Magnum leverguns since it first came out and soon added a companion M92 in .44-40. The Rossi is a less expensive alternative to



Cast bullets in the 200-gr. weight range compared to a 200-gr. jacketed .44 Magnum bullet (above, left). For an easy shooting .44 WCF levergun/sixgun combination, John matches up an Uberti Model 1873 with a Colt Single Action.



the original Model 1892 Winchester with a retail price about one-third, as much as a good used original Winchester 1892, and about half as much as the imported replica 1866 or 1873 leverguns. Sights are the standard elevation-adjusting style on the rear mated with a front post fitted into the barrel band. The rear sight can be adjusted laterally by tapping the sight to the right or left in its dovetail slot.

The action on the .44-40 is much smoother than that on the early .44 Magnum. The following are very pleasant shooting loads for the .44-40 Rossi 20" levergun. Groups are three shots at 50 yards and all loads are assembled with the Oregon Trail 200-gr. Round Nosed Flat Point hard cast bullet. I might say here these bullets have been offered in not only 200-gr. weight but also 225 and 240 grains as well as diameters of 0.427", 0.429" and 0.430", allowing loads to be custom tailored to any particular sixgun or levergun.

Here then are the muzzle velocities and three-shot groups at 50 yards using the Oregon Trail 200 RNFP in the Rossi



Both Lyman and RCBS offer .44-40 "regular" bullet molds or those with crimping grooves.

— 7.0 grains of WW231 gives 1,076 fps and a 7/8" group; 5.3 grains of N100, 1,017 fps, 1-1/4"; 8.0 grains Unique, 1,195 fps, 1"; 10.0 grains of Unique, 1,377 fps and 8.5 grains of Universal comes in at 1,145 fps both with a 1-3/8" group. I also shoot a lot of black powder in the .44 WCF and with this bullet over 35.0 grains of Goex FFg for 1,220 fps and a most satisfying 1-1/4" 50-yard group. A most pleasant shooting load, especially for youngsters getting started is assembled

with this same bullet over 4.8 grains of Hodgdon's Clays for right at 925 fps and an accurate shooting 1" group — almost as pleasurable as shooting a .22 levergun.

REPLICAS

The .44 WCF is offered in replicas of the three original Winchester Models 1860, 1866 and 1873. These leverguns, with their old-style toggle-link action, are not nearly as strong as the Model 1892 and I treat



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Targets fired at 50 yards with the replica Model 1873 Winchester.

them accordingly. Using the above mentioned Oregon Trail 200 RNFP in the Model 1873 and loaded over 5.5 grains of N100, results in a muzzle velocity right at 1,050 fps and a most pleasant shooting and accurate group of 1" for three shots at 50 yards. A similar load is assembled with 7.0 grains of WW231 for the same velocity and a slightly larger group.

The original .44 WCF bullet as illustrated in the Lyman #42798 does not have

a crimping groove that can be a problem when loading cartridges for use in a levergun tube. The above-mentioned Oregon Trail bullets do have a crimping groove and both Lyman and RCBS offer cast bullet designs now with a proper crimping groove, the #427666 and #44-200FN respectively. A most excellent bullet especially for hunting is the Lyman 215-gr. gas-checked, flat-nosed bullet. As might be expected, it's #429215.

DOWN TO BRASS TACKS

Reloading the .44-40 presents very few problems especially since we now have Starline brass with a case mouth not prone to buckling as early examples of brass. The cartridge itself is tapered precluding the use of a carbide sizing die. However, I spray lube all cases before sizing whether I am using a steel die or carbide die as with the latter it reduces the effort necessary for sizing. Loading on a progressive press is also no problem.

RCBS offers two types of reloading dies for the .44-40. One set is their standard steel sizing die set in the green box while the other comes in a tan box marked as a Cowboy Die Set. The latter is especially designed for cast bullets. The original set works for both types of bullets. However, the Cowboy Dies are designed to handle cast bullets a little more efficiently. If I had only one, I would go with the original but I prefer to have both sets and load accordingly.

WE DISAGREE

One could easily say the .44 WCF is old and ancient and not worth bothering with. My friend Mike Venturino and I would both dispute this as the cartridge is not only a step back into the past, it's also still a most viable choice. With the right loads, it is accurate and is certainly more than adequate for close-range hunting just as it was in the closing quarter of the 19th century.



Cast bullets for the .44 levergun work with smokeless powder, black powder and black powder substitute.

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THE .356 TSW PROMISING CARTRIDGE BACK FROM THE DEAD

A victim of poor timing and marketing, the promising .356 TSW (Tactical Smith & Wesson) cartridge may be on the verge of a comeback.

In the early 1990s I was seatmate on a jetliner with Tommy Campbell of Smith & Wesson and he told me about their about-to-be-introduced .356 TSW (Team Smith & Wesson) cartridge. A 9mm with a super-strong 21.5mm case, it easily “made major” in IPSC practical shooting matches and generated high pressure taking maximum advantage of recoil compensators.

WINNING

His company was going to market the .356 TSW as a match-winning pistol and Tommy saw obvious advantages for self-defense and law enforcement as well. He told me Federal was making the ammo but they needed more companies to produce it to get IPSC approved. I approached Peter Pi Sr. at Cor-Bon and they got on board. One of their loads was a 124-gr. JHP at 1,450 feet per second out of a service pistol barrel,

duplicating the legendary 125-gr. .357 Magnum ballistics. This .356 load proved devastating in the slaughterhouse.

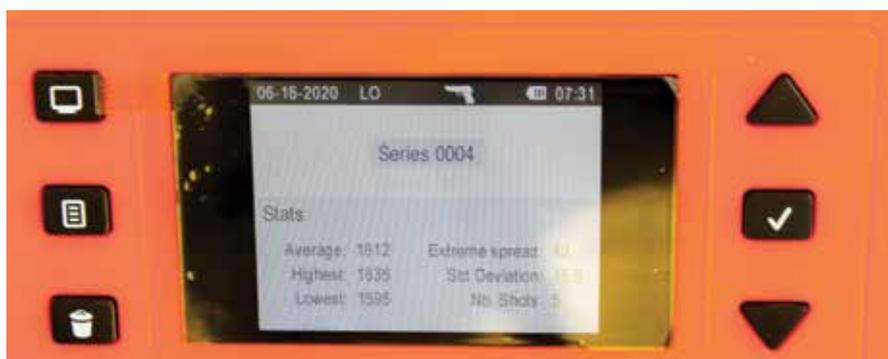
Alas, S&W marketed it mainly as a competition-winning sport pistol but changing IPSC rules sank it in the competition arena. They changed the name to .356 Tactical Smith & Wesson and made a short run of Performance Center guns including compacts and about 300 J-Frame Model 940 variants. It didn't help Federal's main duty load was a 147-gr. at 987 fps — mere 9mm subsonic ballistics. Alas, only a handful of

people recognized its advantages over the then-ascendant bottle-necked .357 SIG or a couple more straight-walled cartridges in a 9mm auto-size platform. The .356 meant no worry about the gun-stopping case neck separations plaguing some brands of early .357 SIG ammo in the cartridge's early days. However, there weren't enough buyers and the .356 TSW disappeared, leaving a very small coterie of *aficionados* including me.

Then, enter Scott Sullivan.

THE MAN BEHIND THE REBOOT

Scott Sullivan is a retired military man and gun enthusiast who did see the useful attributes of the .356 TSW and did something about it. Sullivan convinced Cor-Bon, now



The .356 cartridge turned up very impressive velocities on the LabRadar (above) of over 1,600 fps. S&W made several guns for the .356 TSW, ranging from a J-Frame (below, left) to a 5906 (right). All are now collectors' items.

under new management, and Underwood to manufacture the ammunition. Robert Hayden, Jr. at Starline agreed to make some strong .356 brass and he credits Randy Lee at Apex for convincing Hornady to produce some, too. He reached out to Claudio Salassa, a master gunsmith and manager at the Briley barrel company who'd had a hand in the .356's development, along with Paul Liebenberg and Tom Campbell. Scott paid for Claudio to build barrels chambered for the round. The Gen 3 S&W pistols, the most popular original host of the .356, were long gone so Scott ordered the barrels for the most popular platform of today: the GLOCK pistol, specifically the G17 and G19. They come with ISMI recoil springs at 20 and 22 lbs., and Lone Wolf recoil spring guide rods. The kits are geared for Gen3 GLOCKS, with an adapter offered for Gen4; they don't make it for Gen5 at this time.

SATISFYING THE NEED FOR SPEED

On a LabRadar chronograph at my range, the new .356 loads churned up some impressive performance. Out of a 4.5" G17 barrel, 1995 production Cor-Bon 124-gr. averaged 1,432 feet per second (fps), and 2019 production Underwood 124-gr. averaged 1391. Cor-Bon's new 115-gr. Sierra JHP averaged 1,612 fps for a tad over 650 foot pounds of energy (fpe). Underwood's current similar loading with a 115-gr. Nosler JHP turned in an average 1,568 fps. Recoil was snappy but manageable, about like a .357 SIG or a hot-loaded .40 S&W, or a wee bit more. All recovered Starline brass appeared normal.

With these loads, the .356 loses little with shorter concealed-carry barrel lengths. We got a 1,526 fps average out of 115-gr. Cor-Bon from a 2017 test production run through the 3.5" barrel of a



All in the family: The .356TSW (middle) offers more speed and power than a 9mm (left) while avoiding bottleneck case problems inherent with .357 SIG (right).



An array of past and present .356 TSW loads supports the new G19 conversion.

1990s vintage S&W PC Compact. The 4.0" barrel of a GLOCK 19 .356 conversion delivered an average of 1,569 fps with 115-gr. Cor-Bon and 1,540 fps with 115-gr. Underwood. The stubby barrel of a Performance Center 940-format revolver gave us a stunning 1,458 fps with Cor-Bon and 1,422 with Underwood, both with 115-gr. JHPs. For perspective, the last time I shot

a 125-gr. .357 Magnum through a 2" barrel revolver, it chronographed in the 1,220 fps range and kicked harder.

For more perspective, we tested two other calibers. Winchester .357 SIG Ranger-T from a 4.25" S&W M&P averaged exactly its promised 1,350 fps and Speer 124-gr. +P 9mm Gold Dot from my Langdon Beretta LTT's 4.7" barrel averaged 1,251 fps.

Scott Sullivan knows this will be a niche cartridge forever but he wants to keep the useful niche filled. The kit, and ammo, are both available on GunBroker. Scott told GUNS, "It can be searched there with GLOCK 356, GLOCK 356 TSW, or GLOCK 356 TSW. Cost is \$305 on GB plus \$20 shipping. Shipping cost is waived for public safety and military personnel. Also available direct for \$300 shipped if someone calls me or emails me."

I'm glad to see the .356 TSW available again.



Scott Sullivan's drop-in .356 TSW conversion barrel in GLOCK 17. The kits currently only work in GEN 3-4 guns.

RUGER PC CARBINE

AN OLD IDEA DONE WELL

Carbines using the same ammunition as a pistol are nothing new, even semiautomatic carbines.

The Marlin Camp Carbine was introduced in 1985 and had a fair amount of success until it was discontinued in 1999. Two versions were available: The one chambered in .45 ACP used 1911 magazines and the 9mm version used Smith & Wesson Model 59 magazines. Of course Colt and other manufacturers offered 9mm carbines based on the AR-15 platform.

Several years ago there was a resurgence in the popularity of pistol caliber carbines. IDPA, ISPC and USPSA have all added a class of pistol caliber carbine courses of fire to their official matches.

Introduced in December 2017 the Ruger PC (pistol caliber) Carbine has proven to be one of the most popular.

ON THE BENCH

The receiver is CNC-machined from a 7075-T6 aluminum billet with a Type III

hard-coat anodized finish and has an integrated Picatinny-style rail. Like the Model A Ford, you can have it in any color you desire as long as it's black. Camouflage and the flat dark earth model shown here are dealer exclusives although they are not hard to find.

The 16.12" barrel is cold hammer-forged chrome-moly steel with a 1:10 twist. While the barrel has a heavy contour, five flutes help reduce weight, translating into quick handling. The muzzle is threaded for muzzle devices including suppressors and a thread protector cap is included.

The adjustable rear ghost ring sight, in combination with the protected blade front sight offers a fast and accurate sighting system.

The glass-filled nylon synthetic buttstock features a proprietary texture on the pistol grip area and the forend, providing a sure grasp. Sling attachment points are on the rear of the stock and the forend. The stock is capped with a soft rubber buttpad

and has three 1/2" spacers to accommodate different statures, clothing, gear, etc.

Utilizing the proven 10/22 trigger components, the crisp trigger pull has minimal overtravel and positive reset.

FEATURES

The PC Carbine takes down for storage or transport simply by locking the bolt back, pushing a recessed lever in the forend, twisting the sub-assemblies and pulling them apart.

The PC Carbine uses Ruger SR-series or Security-9 magazines even though the SR-series releases from a notch in the front of the mag and the Security-9 releases from the side. Clever.

Going a step beyond, Ruger recognized the most popular pistol is still the GLOCK and includes a magazine well which will accommodate GLOCK magazines. Switching the mag well can be accomplished easily in less than five minutes. Magazine wells that fit Ruger American Pistol magazines are available at ShopRuger.com.

Both the magazine release and charging handle are reversible. The carbine comes with the charging handle on the right side but I change it to the left side so I can



maintain a firing grip while charging the carbine.

The carbine comes with a manual, one SR-Series 17-round magazine, hex wrenches for rear sight adjustment, tools for buttplate spacer adjustment and charging handle removal and the obligatory gun lock.

DOWNRANGE

I went to my range with several of each of the following: SR-Series, Security-9, GLOCK 19 OEM, PMAG 15-round and PMAG 17-round magazines. To further gauge reliability, I took several different brands and types of 9mm Luger ammunition. I fired the carbine with fully loaded magazines, mixing the different types of rounds between mags to see if any had a preference for a particular type. They didn't.

Firing from 25 yards, tearing the center out of a B8 repair center was so routine it became monotonous. I tossed some previously emptied adult beverage containers onto the berm and had great fun making them jump in the air only to repeat the process as soon as it landed. Sometimes — okay, twice — I was able to get a second hit before the can landed.

A friend who accompanied me, after



Adjustable rear ghost ring sight offers a fast and accurate sighting system.



GLOCK magazine well with magazine inserted.

seeing me empty several Ruger magazines remarked it was too bad the carbine wouldn't accept mags for his GLOCK. Hold my coffee!

After quickly changing the magazine wells I handed him the carbine and he inserted one of his G17 mags. After shooting the Ruger PC Carbine, and when he finally was able to stop grinning, he remarked, "I've got to get me one of these!"

CONCLUSIONS

If the above isn't enough to make you sit up and takes notice, the PC Carbine represents a bargain at the suggested retail price of \$649 — and I've seen them on sale for as low as \$550.

Reliable, accurate, modular, loaded with features and a great price. What's not to like? 

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The Carbine will accept magazines from (left to right) Ruger SR9, Ruger Security-9, GLOCK and (not pictured) Ruger American Pistol.



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BIG-CASE .22 CENTERFIRES AHEAD OF THEIR TIME?

Big-case .22 centerfires have fallen out of favor in recent years. My subjective definition of a big-case .22 is those with water capacity starting at around 40 grains. This category includes the .224 Weatherby (38 grain), .225 Winchester (40 grain), .22-250 Remington (44 grain), .220

Swift (47 grain) and .223 WSSM (55 grain). The list illustrates the sad state of affairs for big-case .22 as most of these cartridges are dead or dying. About the only one still able to sit up and take nourishment is the .22-250 Rem. Fortunately and all things considered, it's probably the best in its class.



HISTORY

Varmint shooting and varmint cartridges really got going in the 1930s, sparked by the .22 Hornet. For wildcatters it was a heady time as hardly a month went by without a new wildcat being announced. Winchester shook up the boys with the .220 Swift and its astounding velocity claim of 4,140 fps with 48-gr. bullets. Frankly it was too much too soon and the poor Swift got more bad press than good.

Maybe as a reaction, the .250 Savage case necked to .22 became highly regarded, with seldom a critical word heard. It was as close to a standard as a wildcat could get. In the early 1960s Browning chambered its fine Safari grade rifle in .22-250 even before factory ammunition was available. It was almost an anticlimax when Remington made it a factory round in 1964.

“GOOD” OLD DAYS

Varmint shooting through the '60s and '70s mainly involved shooting eastern groundhogs, western rockchucks, hawks (!),

The handsomest .22-250 Dave ever owned, a Kimber 84M (above). With spectacular walnut and a fluted, stainless steel barrel, it sports a 8 – 25 x 50 Leupold. Barrel twist is 1:14, unsuitable for longer, heavier bullets. Browning A-Bolt chambered for the .223 WSSM cartridge with Sightron scope (below). The cartridge never really caught on despite impressive ballistics.



eagles (!) foxes and coyotes. A day's shooting likely involved maybe a dozen rounds fired so factors such as barrel heating and barrel life were not big issues. With small targets at uncertain ranges high velocity and flat trajectory were qualities shooters appreciated.

During the 1970s fur prices were high and a good coyote winter pelt was a valuable commodity. I had some friends who had a profitable sideline shooting coyotes over winter. To maximize value they tried to avoid exit holes. The .22-250 was their standard, though I also heard of .220 Swift and .22-250 AI rifles along with various wildcats based on the .243 Win. case.

CHANGES

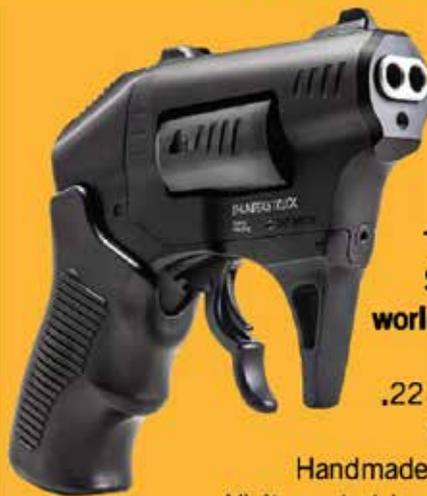
From about the early '80s to the present day, varmint shooting has changed significantly. You don't hear much about eastern groundhog shooting; apparently those lucky enough to have access to such shooting are also smart enough to keep it to themselves. Coyote fur prices seem to have recovered somewhat but there doesn't seem to be much participation in coyote calling.



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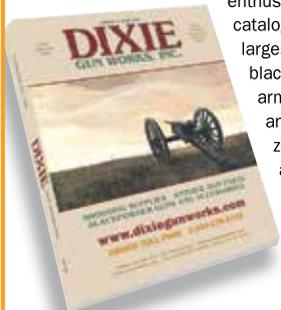


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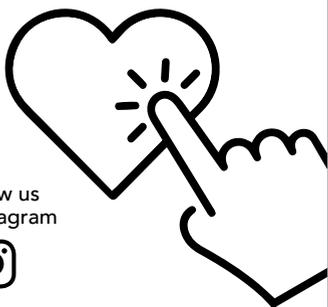
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Maybe it is a matter of keeping a low profile. Mention coyote shooting these days and you can count on a lecture about the balance of nature and how dare you kill something you don't eat. I imagine some of the more sensitive readers haven't recovered from the mention earlier of shooting eagles and hawks. Personally I've never done either but I can recall a time when it was both legal and practically a civic duty.

GOPHER SWITCH

Varmint shooters are more likely to shoot over vast colonies of pocket gophers, ground squirrels, "squeakies," call them what you will. They seem to be especially prevalent wherever ranchers irrigate their grass, and the numbers have to be seen to

be believed. In such cases 500+ rounds a day are routine. Barrel heating, barrel life, ammunition cost and even recoil become factors.

For such shooting I haven't seen a .22-250 in use for years. The barrel heats so quickly it just isn't practical. Even the .223 Rem. is considered a bit much. The .221 Fireball, .22 K-Hornet, .17 Fireball, .204 Ruger and various wildcats such as the Tac Twenty all have a following. In a really busy town I'm just as happy with a .17 HMR or .22 WMRF.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

The interest in longer-range shooting and the development of longer, heavier, more ballistically efficient bullets has given



Small, medium and large case .22s (above, left-right): .221 Fireball, .223 Rem., .22-250 Rem., .223 WSSM. The large case cartridges have fallen out of favor for varmint shooters. Ruger 77 Target model in .204 Ruger (below). The .204 is an excellent cartridge combining medium case capacity with high velocity.





This little critter — call him pocket gopher, ground squirrel, picket pin, squeaky or what have you — introduced high-volume varmint shooting and the demand for smaller, more-efficient varmint cartridges and a trend away from big case .22s.

big-case .22s a new lease on life. More shooters are giving cartridges such as the .22-250 serious consideration as deer cartridges. There's nothing new about the concept — people were hunting big game with Swifts back in the '30s and '40s. What is new is better bullets and a desire among many shooters to hunt with light rifles with light recoil.

The main issue in using longer, more efficient bullets in .22-250 is barrel twist. Of course with a custom barrel one can specify twist, contour, throating to exactly suit your needs. The typical rifle buyer doesn't want to go to this trouble so what is available off the rack? According to data I found online, twist rates for the .22-250 cartridge are all over the map: Remington, Sako, Tikka, Weatherby Vanguard and Winchester use a 1:14 twist while Kimber, Savage, Thompson-Center use 1:12. The Ruger American uses 1:10 and the Browning X-Bolt, 1:9.

Tikka reportedly did a short run of T3s in .22-250 with 1:8 twist at the request of a distributor but apparently not a large number and those have long since been sold. To its credit, Tikka offers a choice of twists in the T3 in .223 Rem. My own stainless .223 has a 1:8 twist and I have seen others marked as having a 1:12 twist. I've heard of but never seen a 1:10 twist option.

I'm thinking a 75-gr. .22 bullet at 3,200 fps would be a very useful, flat-shooting and light recoiling deer rifle. When I finally buy or build one, I'll report the results. 🏹

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THE .40-82 WCF ANYTHING BUT EASY

Naturally we clearly remember the "firsts" in our lives — first gun, first car, first date, etc. I remember fondly my first experience with an antique lever gun because it started my career on a path still followed today: learning the ins and outs of safely shooting old and obsolete guns and their cartridges.

Back in the late 1970s a friend, knowing

of my handloading and bullet casting experience, asked if I would load some .40-82 cartridges if he supplied brass, dies and bullet mold. His lever gun was a nice Winchester Model 1886 .40-82 manufactured in the late 1880s. It was a family heirloom but had not been fired in decades due to the lack of factory ammunition. His request sounded like an easy way to introduce

myself to Winchester lever guns. The experience turned out to be more complicated, but more educational, than expected.

THE LOADS

The mold supplied was an Idea/Lyman #406169 that dropped a 0.408" bullet weighing 260 grains of the wheel weight alloy I had on hand. I lucked out because the groove diameter of old .40-82 measured 0.408" instead of the nominal 0.406". Cases supplied were RCBS .45 Basic with a length of 3.25". Those were hacksawed to just over the .40-82's length of 2.40" then trimmed to the final spec. Next, a now-forgotten charge of a likewise forgotten smokeless powder was dumped in 20 cases. Bullets were seated and crimped and I was ready to shoot.

Only I wasn't! The rounds were too fat to chamber. It had not occurred to me the .45 basic case walls increased in thickness from case mouth to case rim. Thinning the case walls was the cure so RCBS tooling for the chore was acquired. Again I thought everything was a go. It wasn't. Every shot fired gave a click-bang. The click was the hammer falling. The bang was the powder charge firing a second or so later, meaning it wasn't igniting properly. At least the bullets passed through paper targets point on. Some research revealed an old remedy for poor powder ignition was to fill the case atop the powder charge with corn meal. The fix worked and the old rifle began to



This photo shows a .40-82 in comparison to several other popular Winchester Model 1886 factory chamberings (left to right): .38-56, .40-82, .40-65, .45-70 and .45-90.



shoot beautifully. In fact we took it hunting and I shot an elk with it.

COLLECTING

As I began to assemble an array of vintage Winchesters, for my own Model 1886 slot I wanted a .40-82. What I finally landed was one made in 1887 as indicated by its serial number. However, it was not a prime specimen. Its buttstock and receiver actually were very nice and it even had a Lyman No. 21 side-mounted peep sight. The problem was the barrel. While bore condition was very good, it had been shortened from 26" to 20" with the magazine tube cut correspondingly. Also, someone had roughly filled the original barrel sight's dovetail and cut another one a few inches ahead of it but left it empty. Because of those problems the price was right.

CLEANING UP

In my mind the idea was to restore it someday with an intact .40-82 barrel and magazine tube. In the meantime I wanted to enjoy shooting it. Times had changed a bit. I knew to slug the barrel first — it was a whopping 0.409", so I had custom mold maker Steve Brooks (brooksmoulds.com) cut a set of blocks for a 0.410" bullet with a gas check shank. From my favorite 1–20 tin to the lead alloy I favor, the mold dropped them a mite heavy at 280 grains. A batch of .45 Basic cases were cut and inside reamed as before.



Duke's Winchester Model 1886 .40-82. Note the filled sight dovetail and new cut one a few inches ahead of it.



Duke had custom bullet mold maker Steve Brooks cut a set of blocks for a slightly oversize .40-82 bullet because his Winchester's bore was likewise oversize.



Duke's altered Model 1886 .40-82 (top) with a 20" barrel shown for comparison with a new Japanese Winchester Model 1886 .45-70 with its standard 26" barrel.

Between my first .40-82 and the one I purchased there was a new smokeless powder introduced. The powder was Accurate 5744 and it revolutionized all my thinking about smokeless powders in voluminous cases. Because it easily ignites in large cases there is no filler necessary. To my great pleasure, 100 yard groups from my .40-82 were outstanding from the very beginning. When I pull the trigger properly, most are in the 2" to 3" range at 100 yards. My favored 5744 charge of 25 grains pushes those 280-gr. bullets out at about 1,390 fp. All ideas about getting a replacement barrel for my cut down '86 were forgotten.

Other shooters might prefer more glamorous '86 chamberings like .45-90 or .50-110. I've even had such but it's the .40-82 I've kept.

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LEUPOLD & STEVENS OPTICS FROM SURVEYING TO SCOPES

“You can’t go there now! The passes are closed!” So spoke locals in the middle of their northern Wisconsin winter. But the farm had sold — 160 acres, the new house, the dairy cattle and machinery. The \$18,000 auction bid wouldn’t cover the labor of wresting arable ground from boreal forest or reward a life so Spartan the IRS once responded skeptically to a tax return: “No one can survive on this little.”

They’d nurtured dreams of other places. An invitation from Oregon had triggered the sale. In stiff wind-driven heavy snow, they left. The Chevy sedan was packed with all they owned.

Beyond Minnesota the weather relented. They trailed plows through the Rockies. In the shadow of the Cascades, snow gave way to greensward splashed with rhododendron

scarlet. Another world. The farm family from Wisconsin bought a relative’s house just east of Portland, a city which 60 years earlier had attracted Frederick Leupold.

THE START

German immigrant Leupold had first worked for C.L. Berger & Sons, a Boston firm building surveying instruments. Keen to establish his own business, he moved west. In 1907, with help from his brother-in-law Adam Volpel, he opened a one-man shop in Portland to repair drafting and surveying equipment. The enterprise soon outgrew its fourth-floor room in the old Phoenix building on the corner of Oak and Fifth.

In 1911 the young fellow installed a new German dividing machine yielding precise graduated circles on survey instruments. Alas, street vibrations compromised its

accuracy and about this time a fire in the building caused widespread smoke damage. Leupold moved his shop to a residence near his home at Northeast 70th Avenue. There he worked long hours but also studied Spanish, learned to play the flute and cultivated a flower garden.

STEVENS ARRIVES

Enter John Cyprian “Jack” Stevens from Kansas. Born in 1876, Stevens led a more pedestrian life. A civil engineer with a degree from the University of Nebraska, he worked for the U.S. Geological Survey before moving to the Pacific Northwest. In 1910 he left government employ to start his own civil engineering practice.

The inventive Stevens saw a market for a water-level recorder that could be left unattended for more than the eight days covered by current models. He came up with a recorder that needed checking just a few times annually, a boon to hydrologists working in remote places. To put his Type A recorder into production, he signed a royalty contract with the Leupold & Volpel shop to market the device. After working abroad at hydroelectric plants, Stevens returned to Portland in 1914 and became a partner in what then became Leupold, Volpel & Co.

Steady if anemic growth carried the firm and its 40 employees through the Depression without a layoff.

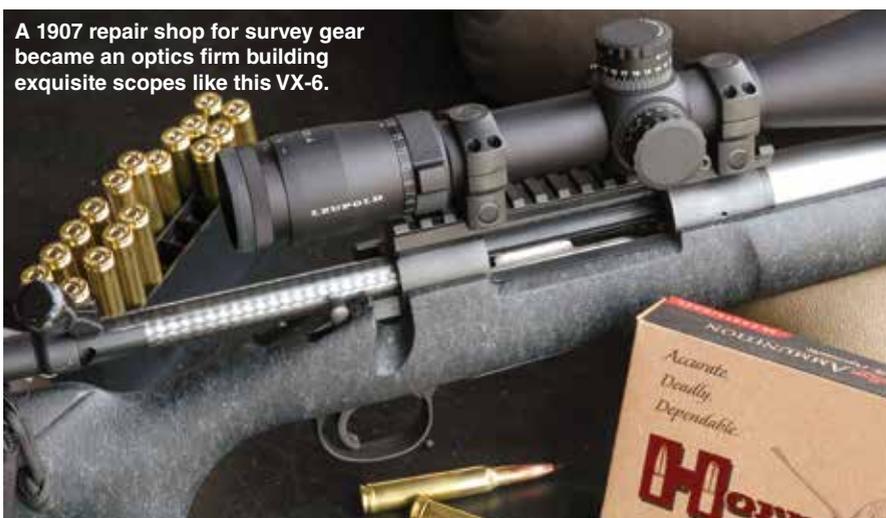
CHANGES AND WAR

Adam Volpel’s death in 1940 prompted another company name change. By the outbreak of WWII, Leupold & Stevens Instruments had moved to a bigger building and added a second story at 45th and Glisan Streets where it produced bomb fuses, sextants and Pelorus.

Frederick Leupold died in 1944. His sons Marcus and Norbert, with Jack Stevens’ son Robert, were already active in the company, Robert and Norbert having pursued other careers before joining the firm in 1939 and 1943. Marcus, a talented pianist, had turned down a music-teaching career at age 22 to work at Leupold, Volpel & Co. Legend has it he decided to build a better rifle scope after missing a shot on a deer hunt. During the war he and his crew developed what would debut in 1947 as the Plainsman, a 2.5x scope with a 7/8" tube. It wasn’t air-tight, so it fogged. A redesign without internal adjustments reduced fogging.



Leupold’s first 1" scope was a 4x in 1954. This M-8 4x, a fine hunting sight, came a decade later.



A 1907 repair shop for survey gear became an optics firm building exquisite scopes like this VX-6.

Marcus Leupold then borrowed wartime technology from the Merchant Marine. To keep optics clear on its vessels, engineers had evacuated air from tubes and replaced it with nitrogen. In 1949 Leupold became the first American manufacturer with a nitrogen-filled, fog-proof rifle scope. It was also hailed as the first with a leak-proof tube, along with ocular and objective bells.

PIONEERING EFFORTS

The company was committing to products Frederick Leupold could hardly have imagined.

By 1951 Leupold had announced its 2.5x and 4x Pioneer scopes with fixed reticles. Micrometer-style thimbles near the tube's center adjusted windage and elevation on a 2.25x Riflescope. Leupold offered a High Power Converter to bring magnification to 8x in the 2.5x Pioneer and the 2.25x Riflescope. The 4x Mountaineer, first in Leupold's line with a 1" tube, appeared in 1954. It was followed three years later by the 8x Westerner. Both had internal adjustments. The 8x Pioneer, announced about the same time, did not. A 6x Mountaineer came in 1958. By the next year all Pioneers had been discontinued.

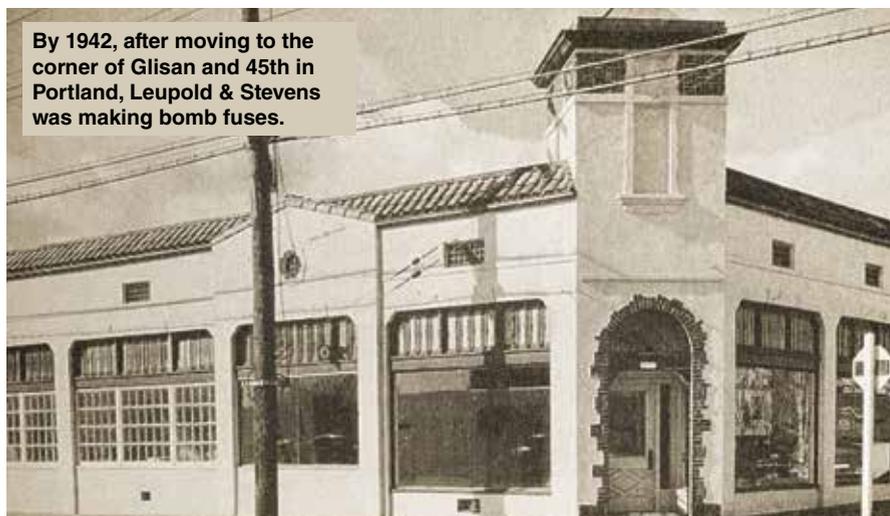
TAKING UP SLACK

To help market its scopes, Leupold hired Jack Slack in 1953. An avid rifleman and hunter, Slack shared the field with the luminaries of his day. "Jack O'Connor insisted early on," he once told me, "that external scope adjustments would become obsolete. And he urged scope-makers to adopt the 1" tube long before it became standard." Jack Slack would marry Marcus Leupold's daughter, Georgia.

During a career at the company, he helped design several flagship items. While scopes fashioned after the Lyman Alaskan didn't bring a flood of orders, the Leupold Vari-X II and Vari-X III have become two of the best-selling scopes ever.

As Marcus Leupold explored ways to make better and more innovative rifle scopes, Jack Stevens continued to invent hydrologic devices. By the early '50s he'd patented 17. But a stroke in 1953 left him physically impaired and in 1960 Leupold & Stevens sold its line of forestry surveying instruments to narrow its manufacturing focus.

The same year it introduced the M-7 series of rifle scopes, first a 3x and a 4x. A



By 1942, after moving to the corner of Glisan and 45th in Portland, Leupold & Stevens was making bomb fuses.



Frederick Leupold's son Marcus pivoted the company to hunting optics with a rifle scope in 1947.

3-9x variable arrived in '61. All had a short tenure, giving way to the M-8 line in 1964 and the Vari-X II short months later. These included a fixed-power 7.5x and a variable 2-7x. In '69, after moving its offices and manufacturing plant to Northwest Meadow Drive in Beaverton, Leupold would add 8x and 10x M-8s. The next decade would bring more.

DUPLEX SUCCEEDS

One of Leupold's most successful features, the Duplex reticle, appeared in 1962. Prominent legs or bars direct the eye to a slender crosswire in the center. With elegant simplicity, it affords both fast and precise aim. It's been widely copied and is by far the most popular hunting reticle in the U.S. Incidentally the "Duplex" moniker still belongs exclusively to Leupold though like "Frigidaire" and "Xerox" it is often used carelessly to reference similar products.



Jack Slack married Marcus Leupold's daughter Georgia. A rifle enthusiast, he spent his career at L&S and was key to many innovations.

Such is the result of pioneering something so good it becomes ubiquitous!

In 1970 the last vestige of the original Leupold & Volpel partnership disappeared with the closure of the survey instrument repair and rental shop.

FULL CIRCLE

Shortly thereafter I met a young woman whose family had carried its dreams to the City of Roses from a snowy Wisconsin farm. Portland would bring me other relationships too — with gunmakers, fellow competitive shooters and rifle enthusiasts of whose prized collections I'll not again see the like. The lady is still with me. Leupold still makes superb rifle scopes just off the Sunset Highway. The rhododendrons still bloom while mountains lie deep in snow. But old Portland as I recall it — surely as Frederick Leupold found it — is no more.

THE .22 LR IT CAN ALMOST KILL YOU!

The argument is background noise anyplace two or more gun guys are gathered. Could you, should you ever, use a .22LR as a defensive weapon? Everybody's got one. Most of us have several. How would the humble little plinking gun perform against something warm, bipedal and angry?

Easy to tote and even easier to shoot, the .22LR is America's cartridge. It's inevitable a few of those zillions of rounds unleashed each year might find their way into something gooey. I've seen a few unfortunates ventilated with those zippy little 40-gr. bullets. Here's what it looks like up close and personal.

CASE STUDY #1 – TALE OF THE TOE

Our hero clearly took his TV time very seriously. I made his acquaintance in a busy urban ER amidst the gore, filth and tragedy that define the place. He was clearly not the product of a sensible diet and ample aerobic exercise. This fateful day he had fumbled his TV remote and it skittered underneath his Barcalounger.

Groping about blindly he found not his remote control but rather something else unexpected. Amidst the petrified pork rinds, rodent nests and sundry rancid detritus, his

mitts closed around the familiar grip of his old .22 pistol. The little light came on above his head, albeit dimly. "So *that's* where I left it," he probably thought.

Hefting the dust-encrusted heater, he turned it over in his hands. He had placed the gun in the spot some months back for "protection" and forgotten it was there. Now he couldn't for the life of him recall if he'd left it loaded or not.

Were we to find an unfamiliar firearm, those of us clutching this sacred tome would undoubtedly point it in a safe direction, cycle the action with our trigger finger well clear and thusly verify whether or not the gun was prickly. Not so, our hero. This man adopted his best tactical two-handed sitting hold, centered the front sight on his right great toenail as it was propped upon his coffee table — and squeezed the trigger.

The bullet perfectly center-punched his

nail, transited his distal phalanx and proceeded to blow out his television across the room. As I tidied up the carnage, we discussed basic gun safety and the lamentably lofty price of new plasma screen televisions. Perhaps in the aftermath, he'll take up reading.

CAST STUDY #2 – A CLOSE THING

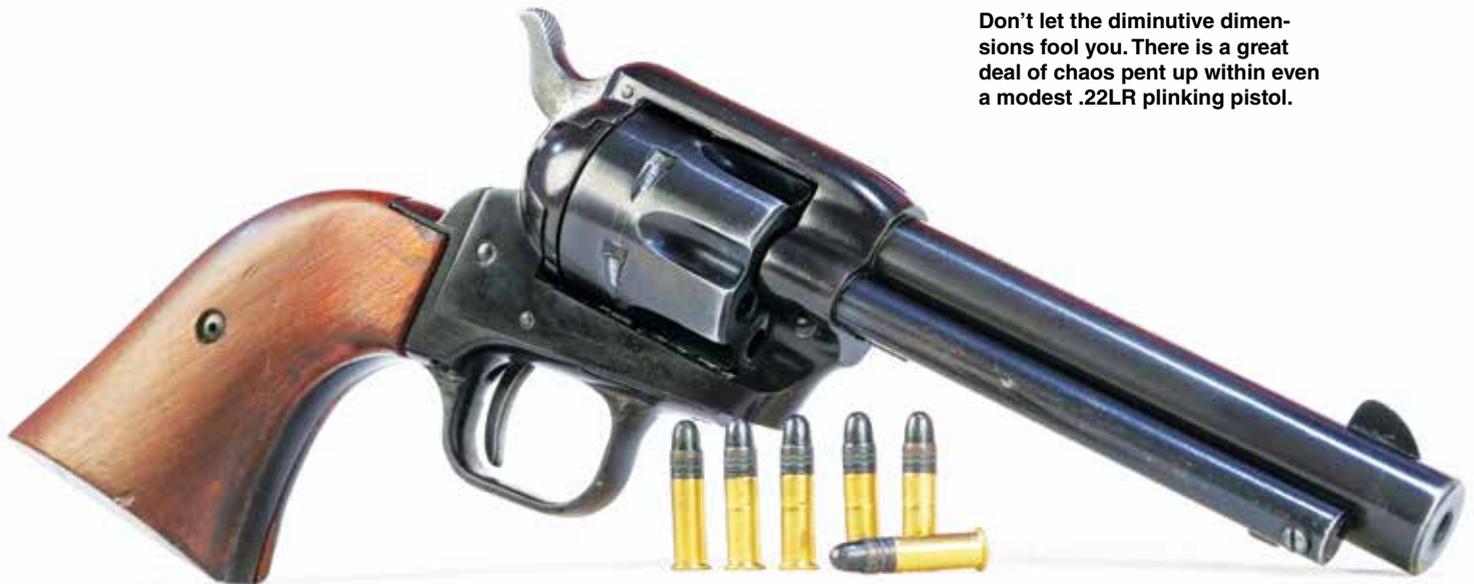
This gent was out riding four-wheelers with a pal, a borrowed .22-caliber revolver retained within a horizontal shoulder holster for snakes and the like. The day's festivities complete, the guy loosened his shoulder rig and began manhandling his ATV back onto the trailer. Leaning forward to gain purchase, he gave the heavy vehicle a mighty heave.

Unbeknownst to him, some bit of the four-wheeler's superstructure caught on the grip of the pistol, twisting it sideways in

Doc Dabbs says, "You see some of the most fascinating things in an urban emergency room."



To clear a pistol of this sort you point it in a safe direction and work the action while keeping well clear of the trigger. Alas, apparently not everybody knows this.



Don't let the diminutive dimensions fool you. There is a great deal of chaos pent up within even a modest .22LR plinking pistol.

the holster. Simultaneously another something brushed the hammer, retracting it far enough to light the cartridge but not far enough to engage the sear. There resulted a muffled pop.

Thus begins a most remarkable journey. The 40-gr. solid lead bullet entered the man's left chest and transited laterally and upward, skimming past his heart by precious millimeters and thoroughly perforating his left lung through-and-through. The bullet then creased the back of the right lung before crashing mightily into the inside of his right shoulder blade.

At this point, the long-suffering projectile, still in possession of prodigious energy, took a sharp turn south. It drilled a hole through his right lung from top to bottom and perforated his diaphragm, the

thin sheet of muscle separating thorax from abdomen. Now the round began finally to tire of its lamentable wanderlust.

The bullet, now tumbling aimlessly spent itself ignominiously in the poor guy's entrails. What followed was a fair amount of chaos. A frenetic evac in the pickup terminated at the local ER with IV fluids, chest tubes and action aplenty followed by a lovely ride in a helicopter. When finally he awoke much about his anatomy had been most vigorously rearranged.

The gent ultimately survived and thrived, his continued sojourn along this mortal coil the symbiotic result of a skilled surgeon and a most benevolent God. He still treks about the Southern woods with a gun in tow but remains now a bit more careful. This seems a common refrain for those with whom I



Toenails make terrible targets — you'd think you wouldn't have to explain this to people.

an acquainted who have received an unexpected second chance at life.

THE DOCTOR REPORTS

When it comes to practical gunfighting, penetration is everything. It really doesn't matter how much manifest malevolence you have packed into your expanding JHP social bullets, if they don't punch deep they're not going to be effective. Make no mistake, however, the humble .22LR exhibits penetration aplenty.

So ventilate your beverage cans, plink alongside the grandchildren and while away your pastoral Saturday afternoons turning rimfire rounds into noise. Legions of rugged Americans have productively invested decades doing just the same. However, never underestimate the destructive power pent up within a humble brick of rimfire blasting bullets. The Lilliputian .22LR will just barely kill you. 🗡️



Despite its small stature, the tiny little .22 rimfire in the center is still plenty spunky to cause grievous bodily harm or worse.



THE MODEL 58 WINCHESTER

INEXPENSIVE SIMPLICITY

Payton Miller

Generally, when shooters of a certain age regurgitate the old line, “They don’t make ‘em like they used to,” they’re talking Golden Age Smith and Colt double-action revolvers or a pre-64 Winchester anything. I’m as guilty as the next guy in this regard, particularly for Colts and Winchesters — they will always be iconic brand names as far as I’m concerned.

But the only Winchester I grew up with as a kid was my Dad’s Model 58 .22 single shot. Still got it, still shoot it. And as cheap (okay, bad word, let’s go with “inexpensive”) as it was — even by Depression Era standards — it was a whole lot of rifle for not much dough. The patent date was August 29, 1898, and the designer was no less than John M. Browning. It was basically an “inexpensive-ized” version of Browning’s Model 1902, slightly re-jiggered in terms of production costs to fit in with the

economic realities of the time. The actual production run of the M58 was 1928 to 1931 and they made just under 39,000 of the things. Winchester didn’t exactly dress them up — gumwood stock, no buttplate, no serial number and a tiny straight bolt.

RIMFIRE MEMORIES

My first experience with the rifle was watching my Dad use it on a marauding skunk who’d busted into our pigeon coop in the mid-1950s. I was an awestruck 5-year-old at the time and the M58 seemed to me to be the Hammer of God. It decisively ended the skunk’s egg-sucking career although the entire backyard was eye-wateringly and uninhabitably fragrant for the next couple days. Dad generally used Shorts for this sort of thing, figuring low volume was preferable to whatever power boost he’d have gotten with a Long Rifle.

Dad had gotten the rifle in a swap with a childhood buddy sometime before the war. The original MSRP was \$5.50. This figure may sound laughably low until you stop to consider the dollar’s actual buying power in the early ‘30s (greenbacks were tough to come by back then). Five and a half bucks in 1930 dollars would roughly be the equivalent of around \$84 today.



One of the Model 58’s single-shot successors was the Model 67 (bottom) a beefier, walnut-stocked item — in standard trim — featuring a 27” barrel.



With a 3-lb. weight, 18" barrel and a 33" OAL, the little gumwood-stocked Model 58 was originally priced at five-and-a-half Depression Era dollars.

Still, it's a pretty good deal for a name-brand .22 with no alloys or plastics and sporting a barrel put together by real old-school pros. Once you factor in the collector aspect, it's not too tough to understand why an M58 in excellent condition might bring upwards of \$800 (or more) today.

I think it's a stone classic — a gold-plated example of "bang for your buck," All-American cool. So why do I like it so much? Well, it's tough to be objective about the first .22 you ever shot. The fixed sights are tiny but the trigger is remarkable even now — a very crisp "just under" 3 lbs. In a remarkable show of synchronicity, the darn thing has a minuscule curb weight "just over" 3 lbs., about 9 oz. more than your basic GI 1911!

ACCURACY

We're talking a chubby 18" straight-taper barrel (0.593 at the muzzle) and an overall length of 33". Oddly enough, the rudimentary sights did simplify my search for the "right" load which every .22 has waiting somewhere. The critical thing with fixed sights is this — how tight the rifle groups with a given load is less important (within reason) than the closeness of the relationship between Point of Aim and Point of Impact. When I shot the rifle years ago, I found the sweetest compromise — in this case, 40-gr. Winchester Super-X Power Points — I pretty much stuck with it, although I did find a few "close enough for government work" alternatives.

ROUND ROUND-UP

With the exception of Winchester Super-X 29-gr. HV Shorts, everything I ran through the rifle recently was in the Long Rifle category. Unless I was to inherit a pallet of .22 Long ammo, I couldn't see any earthly reason to justify using them. In terms of power and accuracy, they really



A dead-center hold in the center of the orange oval produced this 5-shot, 30-yard group (above) with Winchester Power Point .22 LR ammo. The bent bolt of the Model 67 (top) featured a "man-sized" bolt knob and dwarfs the Model 58 (bottom). Both have a manual cocking feature.



don't measure up to the Long Rifle and are pretty much an obsolescent 19th-Century holdover. True, the excellent Aguila Super Sniper 60-gr. subsonic employs a Long case but only to give the heavyweight concoction a manageable OAL.

BACK HOME ON THE RANGE

When shooting for groups at 30 yards, whatever challenges there are to accuracy are due solely to the M58's barrel-mounted V-notch rear sight. Getting things aligned with the brass blade front and the target

itself was easy when I was a teenager. Keeping everything in reasonable focus is something of a chore now. Winchester LR Power Points still grouped the tightest, but "tight" for me now isn't what tight once was. The Winchester Shorts, incidentally, impacted a touch lower (see target photos).

Other loads I tried included Remington 40-gr. Subsonic and Aguila's 60-gr. Super Sniper subsonic and very snappy (1,700 fps) 30-gr. Super Maximum. All would have been small-game getters at the distances I'd still have any business shooting at rabbits and squirrels at with those sights — which I'd estimate at 40 yards and under.

Since I've had decades of being spoiled by scoped or receiver-sighted .22s, I was a bit chagrined at the results. I then remembered all the critters my Dad had taken were all closer than 30 feet. In his eyes, the little rifle was a tool for eliminating pests, not a dedicated hunting arm. And speaking of eyes, when mine were good enough to actually hunt with the M58, I can't recall having taken anything cottontail-sized or smaller at much over 30 yards anyway.

MAKING IT RUN

The "manual of arms" here is about as simple as it gets. Turn the bolt up, pull it back, thumb a round in the chamber, close the bolt, pull back the cocking knob and let fly. Rinse, repeat. The little rifle is even easier to take down and clean.

Back off the captured takedown screw on the forend and remove the barrel/action. Then pull out the little bolt and you can clean from the rear. I like to use a solvent soaked .22-caliber Bore Snake because I'd rather not submit the pristine 90-year-old bore to the tender mercies of a cleaning rod from either end.

I don't shoot the little rifle as much as I should I suppose. But I'm keeping it clean and oiled for the appearance of any sharp-eyed grandkids in the future.

The Ruger American Competition pistol takes everything righteous and wholesome about the Ruger American line of guns and upgrades it for match work or home defense.



WILL DABBS, MD

The new Ruger American Competition pistol builds upon Ruger's inimitable legacy of quality American-made firearms at reasonable prices. The Ruger American line of combat handguns reflects the current state of the art in tactical pistol design. Featuring all the bells and whistles along with impeccable quality and a very pleasant MSRP, this new competition pistol offers some remarkable versatility.

BALLISTIC PHILOSOPHY

What makes a good competition pistol? If you're running against a clock the gun needs to be accurate, handy, maneuverable and dead nuts reliable. Misses count against you, and malfunctions make the difference between sweet victory and the dreaded "And also participated" list. Now hold the thought.

What makes a good defensive pistol? If you're gunfighting for real then the gun needs to be accurate, handy, maneuverable and dead nuts reliable. Misses threaten those you love most in the world and malfunctions make the difference between living to see tomorrow and an attractive marker along with a moving memorial service.

A pistol for competition or home defense need not be concealable or particularly lightweight. You'll not be humping such a handgun on a 50-click forced march through the Hindu Kush. You'll seldom pack this gun farther than across the room. This

RUGER **AMERICAN** **COMPETITION** **PISTOL**

**AFFORDABLE SPORT,
PLINKING, DEFENSE
AND UTILITY SEMI-AUTO**



pistol is much more about shooting than concealing.

The flower of modern American engineering prowess has been unleashed on this thorny problem. The same design parameters driving pistol competition also produce a simply superlative defensive weapon. In the Ruger American Competition we find these kernels of greatness. Well-reasoned, elegantly executed and reasonably priced, this new Ruger heater is all that and a bag of chips.

PERTINENT PARTICULARS

The Ruger American line of combat handguns is time-proven and cost-effective. Featuring rugged polymer frames and generations of institutional knowledge as a foundation, these tactical tools are suitable for Law Enforcement, concealed carry, or general defensive use. This latest Competition model builds on all of this and takes it to the next level.

The pre-tensioned striker system guarantees reliable ignition while retaining a pleasant, predictable trigger pull. The slide stop is replicated on both sides of the gun and the magazine release is a legit bilateral pushbutton. Scads of automatic safeties keep the gun inert until you are ready to fire.

The modular wrap-around grip system includes three interchangeable grip modules to accommodate different hand sizes. I have big monkey mitts so the large version fits me best. Interestingly, with the large grip module in place the gun won't quite fit back into its fitted plastic carrying case.

The 5" stainless steel competition barrel features a rugged black nitride finish and a relatively slow 1:16" twist. This means enhanced accuracy with the sorts of lightweight bullets with which we train while still shooting laser-straight with the serious social stuff as well. The fully-adjustable rear sight is serrated to help manage glare while the front sight includes a fiber optic light tube for easy acquisition.

The ported stainless steel slide offers reduced weight for faster lockup and plenty of gripping grooves both front and rear. The rear slide deck comes from the factory cut for direct mounting of a micro red dot. The dust cover sports the obligatory length of Picatinny rail for accessories. Once nicely tricked out, the Ruger American Competition is comparably ready for the range, the glove box or the night stand.

PRACTICAL TACTICAL

The Ruger American Competition feels great in the hand. The grip rides intentionally high to lower the bore axis and mitigate



Modern Ruger pistols reflect the current state of the art (left to right): Security-9, American Competition and the Ruger-57.



The controls are well-reasoned and bilateral.



At 12 meters from a simple rest, the Ruger American Competition shoots plenty straight.

muzzle flip. Aggressively textured grip stippling locks the gun in place without abrading unduly. The extended barrel and slide help keep the muzzle under control.

The superlative nickel-Teflon-plated 17-round magazine is adequate to deal with any reasonable problem and the gun comes with a spare. Scant divots on the bottom of the grip allow purchase in the unlikely event a mag gets sticky. Mine drops cleanly away with the stroke of the magazine release. The end result is a gun that shoots straight and runs fast. I would rely upon this pistol without hesitation.

DENOUEMENT

The Ruger American Competition pistol offers quite literally anything you could want in a competition handgun at a stock gun price. When compared with more posh offerings all the nifty bells and whistles essentially get thrown in for free. The MSRP is \$579, but the street price will obviously be lower.

A concealed carry gun is designed to be small and comfortable to tote at the inevitable expense of handling and accuracy. The Ruger American Competition, by contrast, is 100 percent performance-driven. Whether running in a match or investigating why the dog won't shut up at 2 o'clock in the morning, this new Ruger Competition pistol is top-tier practical firepower.



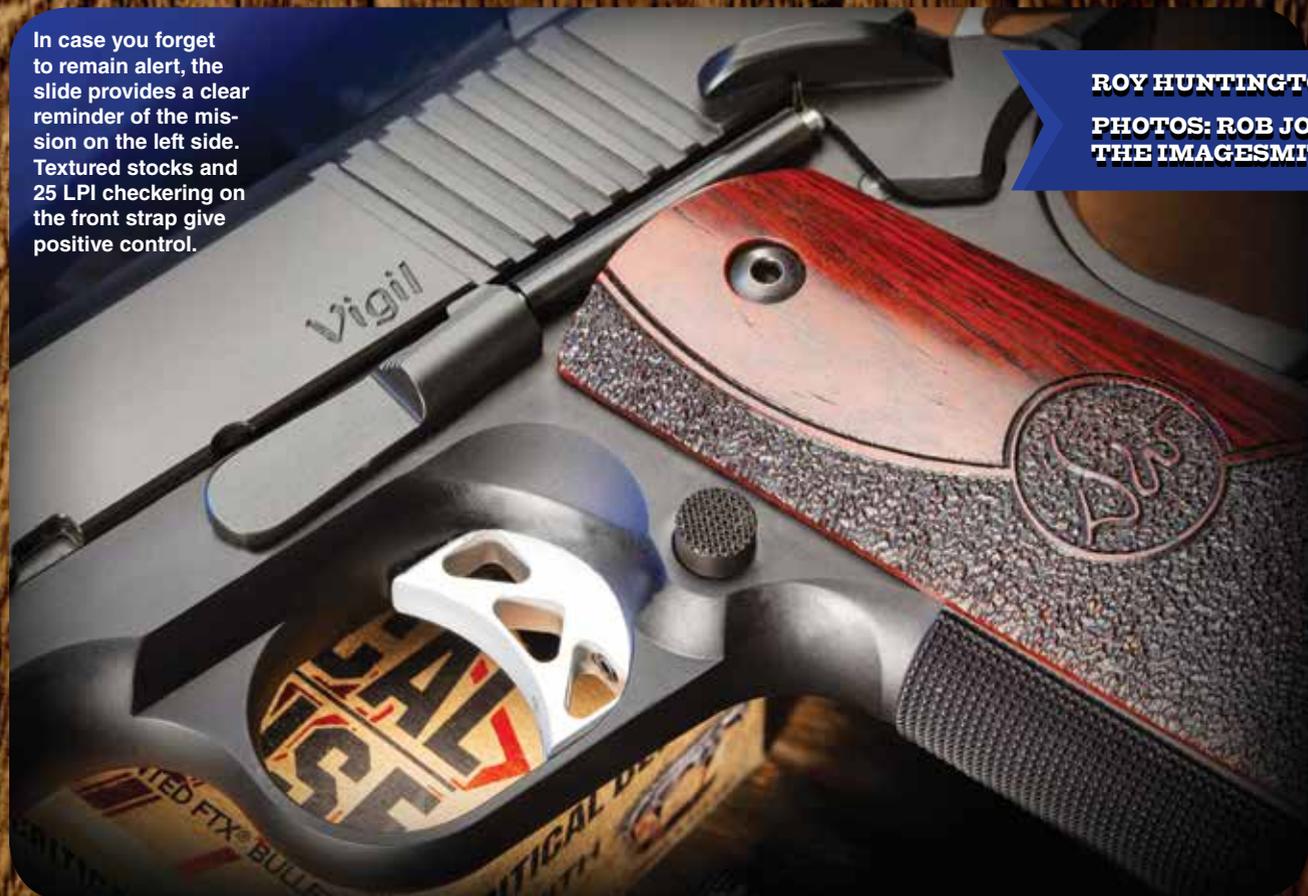
Vigilanti Semper: Always Vigilant. The Dan Wesson Vigil CCO (Concealed Carry Officers) is ready right out of the box for serious social engagement.

Dan Wesson VIGIL CCO 9MM

In case you forget to remain alert, the slide provides a clear reminder of the mission on the left side. Textured stocks and 25 LPI checkering on the front strap give positive control.

ROY HUNTINGTON

PHOTOS: ROB JONES,
THE IMAGESMITH, LLC



VIGILANTI SEMPER: ALWAYS VIGILANT ...

It's difficult to imagine the name of a gun being more appropriate to the gun in question. "Vigil" — "... a period of keeping awake during the time usually spent asleep, especially to keep watch." The classy way the Dan Wesson Vigil CCO (Concealed Carry Officers) keeps you company, virtually effortlessly, dutifully standing watch with you, is a sort of modest chat with you about the name. While "Devastator" or "Annihilator" may exude a certain flamboyance — if not style — the quiet authority of the Vigil's platform speaks louder than any click-bait moniker might.

Since their introduction of the 1911 by Dan Wesson in 2000, they've justifiably earned the reputation of offering the quality of highly refined custom guns — and often more — at about two thirds the price. Consequently, when the Dan Wesson company became available in 2005, CZ snapped them up to build a

foundation using the iconic revolver maker's name — and to continue to hone the art of their 1911.

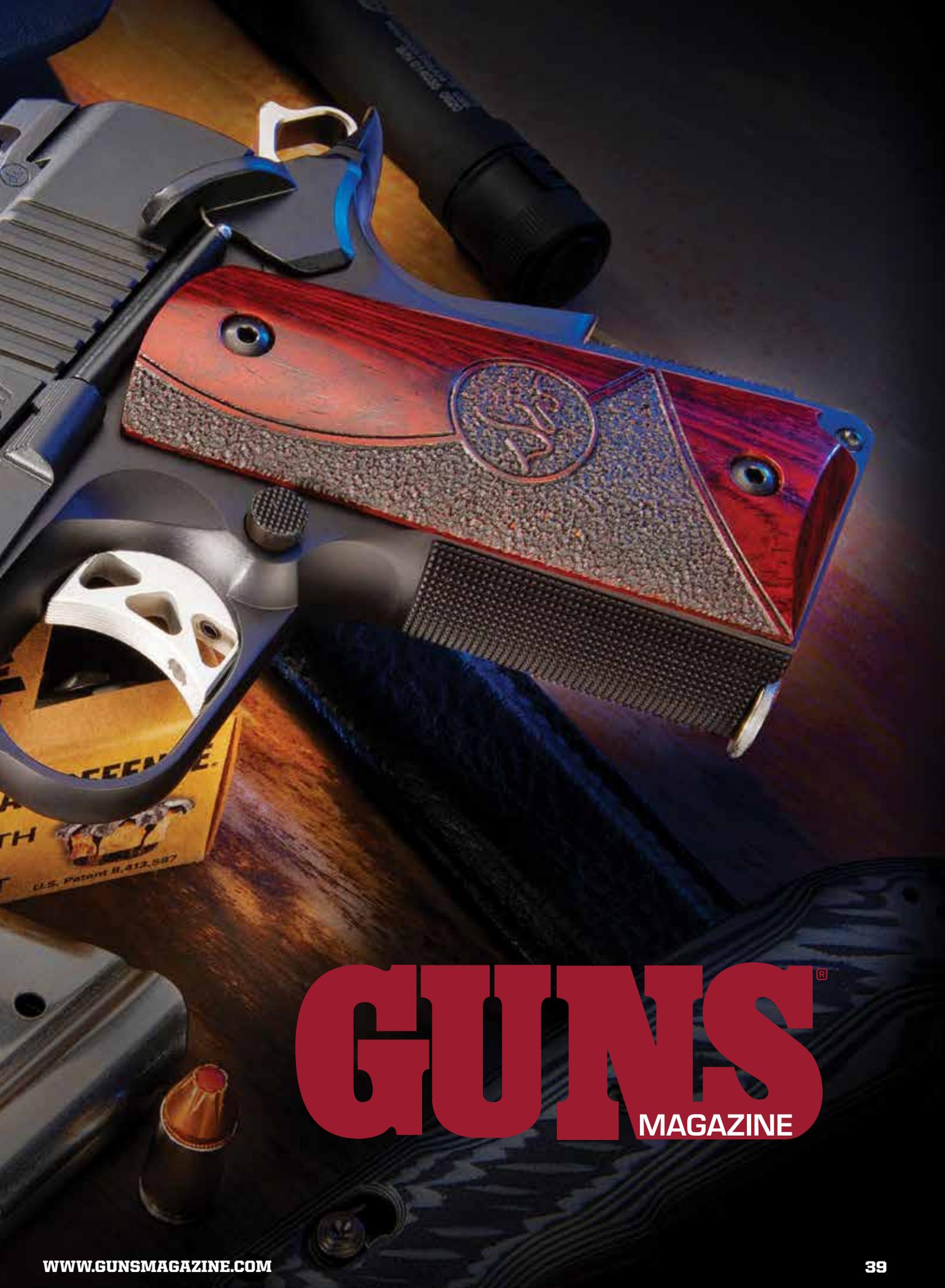
The path from ground-breaking revolver designs to sending high-quality 1911s out the factory door is a trail full of surprises — and accidents of fate.

LINEAGE

Dan B. Wesson II was the great grandson of famed D.B. Wesson, co-founder of, yes, Smith & Wesson. From 1938 to 1963, Dan worked for S&W and was in charge of quality control. When S&W was bought by Bangor Punta (a low-point, indeed), Dan left and founded the Dan Wesson firearms company. Launching his own line of upscale DA revolvers to compete with the S&W and Colts of the era, he pulled the lever on the slot machine of business. Indeed, when I was a reserve on the Chula Vista PD in

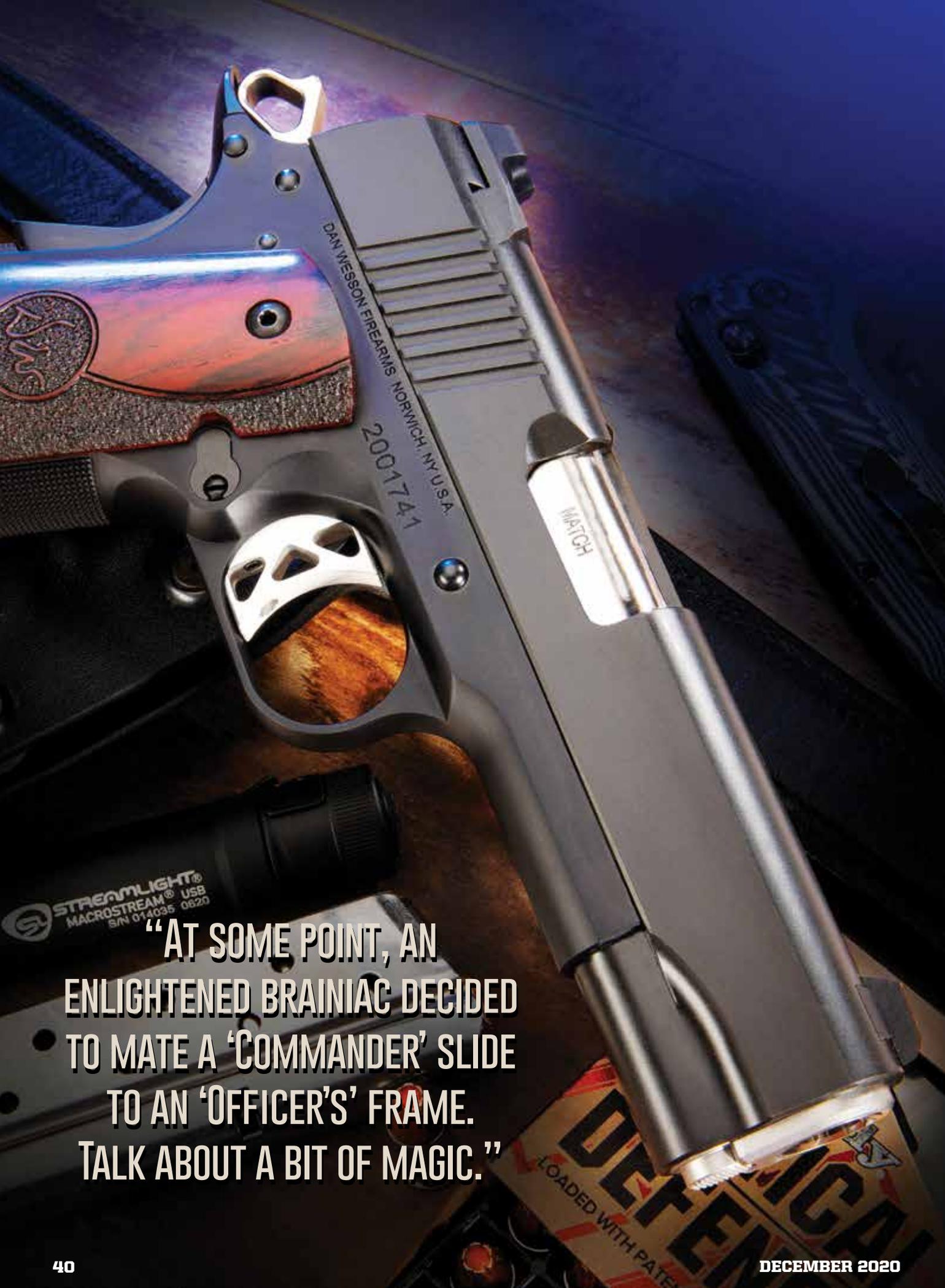
Dan Wesson
VIGIL
CC0 9MM

The cocobolo shadow stocks offer good looks and a positive — but not abrasive — surface. The Dan Wesson initials look sharp, too!



GUNS[®]

MAGAZINE



“AT SOME POINT, AN ENLIGHTENED BRAINIAC DECIDED TO MATE A ‘COMMANDER’ SLIDE TO AN ‘OFFICER’S’ FRAME. TALK ABOUT A BIT OF MAGIC.”

the middle 1970s and the revolver was king, other cops stared if you carried a Dan Wesson. Ask me how I know.

Dan Wesson's first revolver was designed by gunmaker Karl Lewis. Karl had a very successful career at Browning and High Standard, and had also designed the Colt Trooper revolver (which cosmetically resembled the first DW revolvers at some level), and even the Army's break-open 40mm Grenade launcher.

Karl had evidently also invented a changeable barrel system for revolvers Dan Wesson put to good use.

As happens, the business had ups and downs but established itself as being great innovators when it came to revolvers, developing large bore models and more. Dan Wesson died in 1978, and the company struggled to keep afloat. In the middle 1990s, it was sold and moved to Norwich, NY, where it resides today. Under new ownership then, the 1911 models began to be developed in 2000, and revolver production was brought back. When the Dan Wesson company was sold in 2005 to CZ, suddenly the small company had the backing of the largest manufacturer of guns in the world behind them. Since acquiring the DW brand, CZ has invested in the company and today's revolvers and 1911s showcase what solid design and stringent quality control can deliver.

THE CCO CONCEPT

Around 1975, the Rock Island Arsenal (military) made a compact 1911, calling it the "General Officer's Model Pistol." It was very limited in run and made specifically to be issued to general officers of the Army and Air Force. The pistol was not available to the civilian sector, but I recall them being shown in the firearms press and we all wanted one badly. It was a bit like today's Officer's ACP size 1911 — only nobody could have one.

A bit later Detonics introduced their Combat Master, essentially rewriting the book on compact 1911s. And, you could actually buy one. This sort of started a run on various chopped and downsized 1911s and was also about when the famous Star PD was imported. The aluminum-framed, short-slide 1911-style .45 ACP rocked the industry and even Jeff Cooper approved.

Around 1985, Colt developed the "Colt Officer's ACP" and in '86 introduced a lightweight version. I bought one of the very first and after Terry Tussey customized it, I carry it to this day. At about 24 oz., it's a tad lighter than the Vigil (at 29.5 oz.) but has a shorter slide. This trend though had a downside — it was hard to get these short slides to run 100 percent and it often took the administrations of someone like Tussey Custom to make them work right.

At some point, an enlightened brainiac decided to mate a "Commander" slide to an "Officer's" frame. Talk about a bit of magic. Suddenly, the longer slide at 4.25" donated some much needed reliability to the package, while still celebrating the tidy concealability of the Officer's frame. It wasn't long before many jumped on the bandwagon. Some were done well and some missed the train entirely.

PERFECTIONISM

Dan Wesson built a reputation for being a perfectionist and, like Sir Henry Royce of Rolls-Royce fame, strove for perfection in everything he did at DW. He devoted himself to constantly improving the revolver designs. I can attest in-line changes constantly occurred since even revolvers from the same era I've



The stainless match-grade barrel has a reverse crown, while the front sight offers a Tritium insert for all-night efficiency.



The rear of the Vigil CCO is all business: wide beavertail safety, polished skeletonized hammer and tactical rear sight stout enough to poleaxe a water buffalo!

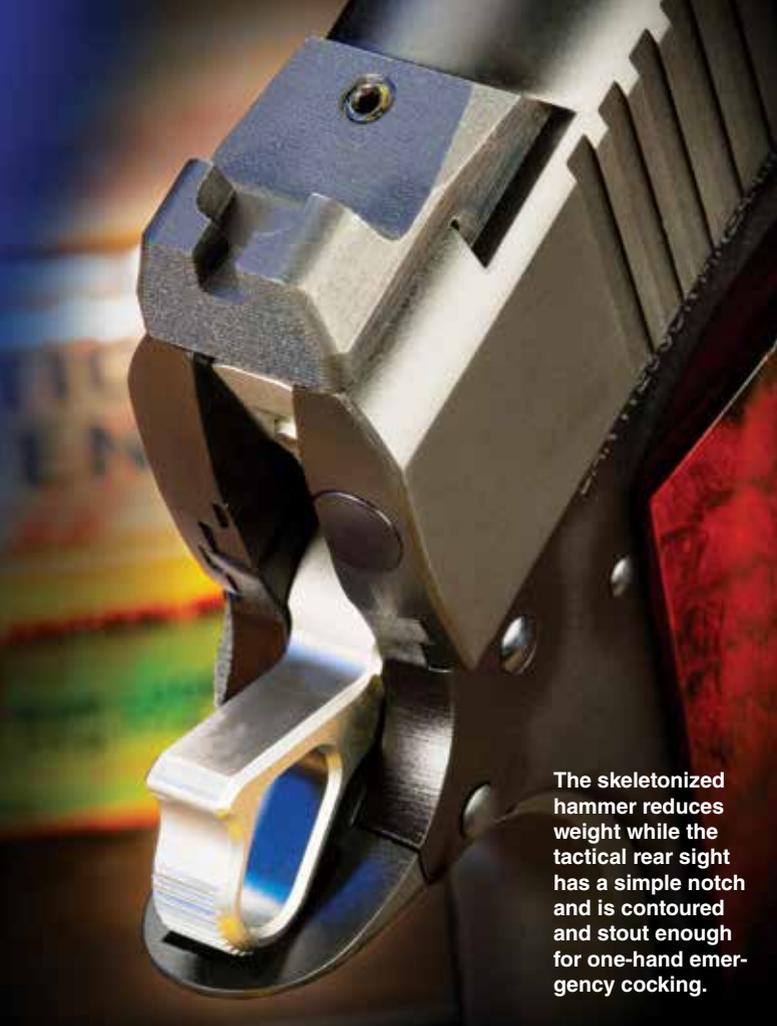
worked on often display small "improvements" in design, operability and even style. This "call for perfection" still exists in the Dan Wesson brand and is forcefully endorsed by the CZ home company.

In the case of the Vigil CCO — our test gun is 9mm, but a .45 ACP is available — this quality sparkles through even at the modest MSRP price of \$1,298. If I didn't know better, I would have assumed this gun should cost in the neighborhood of \$2,400 or more. The DW 1911 brand is, honestly, that good.

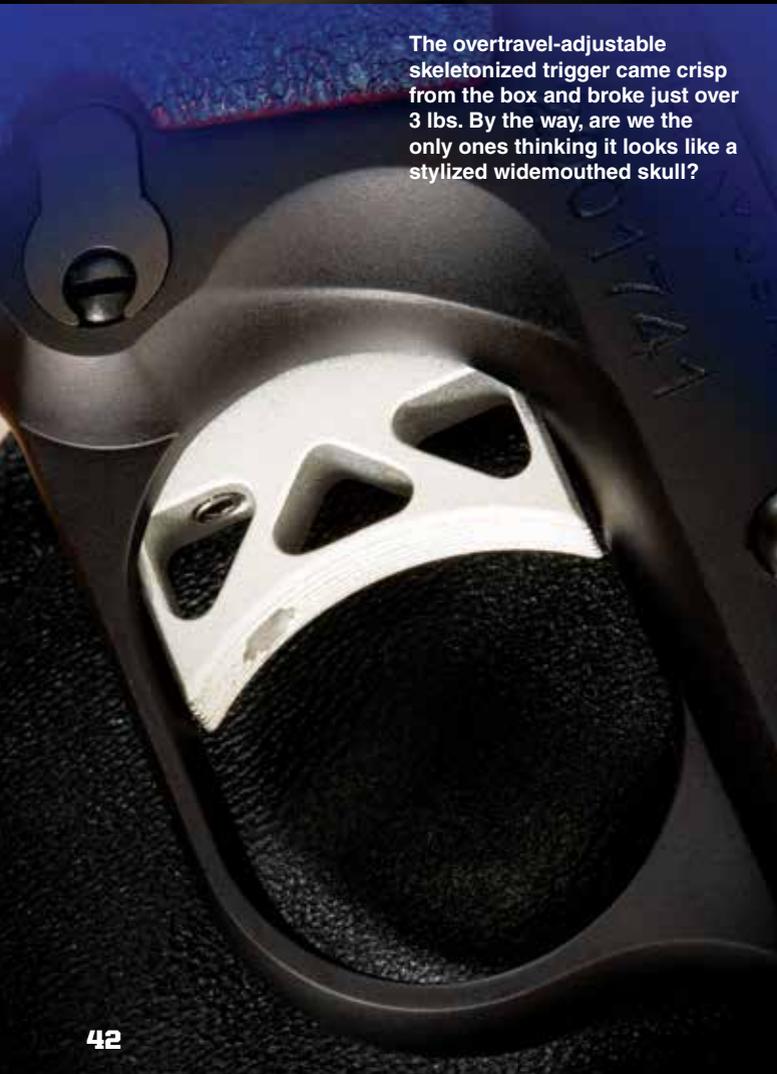
After honing the 1911 design to meet DW standards, they are now exploring the boundaries of engineering, materials and design. In the case of the Vigil COO the mating of the forged stainless slide (black Nitride coated), stainless barrel and forged aluminum alloy frame (black hard-anodized) makes a package spanning the chasm between sub-compact and full-size. If a handgun can be "just right" — you're looking at one now.

PLENTEOUS FEATURES

Like any "custom" auto, the Vigil is chock full of high quality specialty parts. The barrel, a match-grade one, has a reverse crown and a fully supported feed ramp — important even for a 9mm. Sights are a fixed front Tritium and all-black, serrated rear. This gun is accurate enough to take advantage of the excellent sights, too. The trigger is single action, of course, of medium length, with a serrated face and is a crisp 3 lb. 11 oz. in this gun.



The skeletonized hammer reduces weight while the tactical rear sight has a simple notch and is contoured and stout enough for one-hand emergency cocking.



The overtravel-adjustable skeletonized trigger came crisp from the box and broke just over 3 lbs. By the way, are we the only ones thinking it looks like a stylized widemouthed skull?

I honestly thought it was less, it's so good.

It has the standard 1911 furniture of a thumb safety (left side), *de rigueur* extended beavertail grip safety and — praise be — is a “Series 70”-style gun. With no firing pin safety, I suspect it contributes neatly to helping to accomplish the marvelous trigger break. It comes with two 8-round magazines of excellent quality, having witness holes so you can leer at the number of rounds you have remaining and either feel smug — or concerned — as situations dictate.

The grips are a business-like polished custom Cocobolo having a unique application of texture in just the right areas to enhance your purchase. They are attractive and functional — something about the “always striving to improve things” idea I suspect.

When you work the slide on the Vigil — it's easy in 9mm — you have the feeling of handling a well-fitted custom 1911 costing much, much more. The trigger is crisp, the action reliable and the controls all snick and click as designed. Just as importantly, when you move the safety once, or press the trigger, when you do it again later they feel the same. With many factory guns, and even some custom builds, a “3.5”-lb. trigger falls there now and again — then 4.2, 5.3, 2.8, etc. at other presses. A thumb safety may be sure and clicky once, then mushy, gritty and disappointing other times. It's the small things — which are really big things in the long run. And, it's the long run that bodes well for the Vigil.

SHOOTING

I used the test sample for a short “First Look” video we did on the FMG Publications YouTube channel. It was the very first time I had fired the gun and knew it needed more attention as it was pleasant and accurate, simply exuding quality. Benching it, I found even with my aging eyes, good quality ammo like SIG, Black Hills, Hornady, Federal, etc. were remarkably consistent, with nothing going over 2" at 25 honest yards. As a matter of fact, most hovered in the “1.5” or better” range. Had I been able to fit my “grip scope mount” on it (alas, it's made for a full-sized frame), I'm betting big bucks this gun would easily shoot into 1" with many loads.

The Vigil ran like the proverbial top, the mags were easy to load, recoil was mild, I could run the slide effortlessly and the 29-oz. weight was “just enough.” It kept me on target but was light enough to be delightful to carry. My 100-yard metal torso gong rang repeatedly shooting off-hand, and even my 80-yard 10" rounds clanged regularly. This is simply a terrific gun, for an honest price.

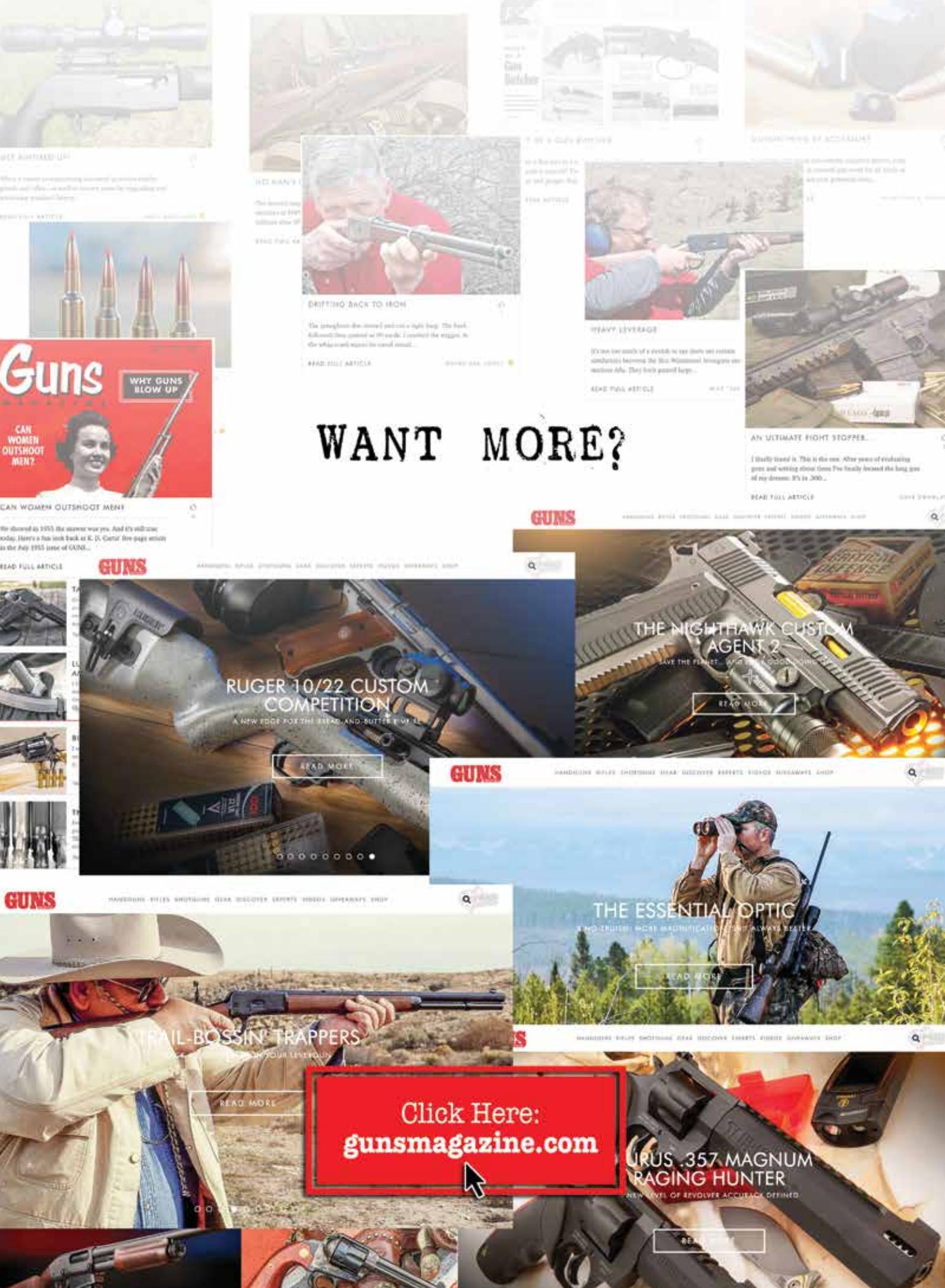
THE RUNDOWN

In the “you gets what you pays for” category the Dan Wesson Vigil CCO delivers more than you bargained for. Isn't it always a delight when you get more than you were promised? If you're looking to retire your .45 ACP “something” for an accurate, softer shooting, easier-on-the-body home defender and weekend pal, you may have found it. If there's a local action-shooting match, a fun couple of hours shooting steel, some trigger control practice and maybe a companion for a trip to town in your future, the Vigil will watch over things.

I promise.



www.danwessonfirearms.com



GET JUSTIFIED UP
When it comes to preparing yourself for a possible
shoot-out, there are a few things you should know
before you head to the range.



DRIFTING BACK TO IRON
The strength of the barrel is a key factor. The best
barrel is the one that is the most accurate. It is the
whole barrel system that counts.

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HEAVY LEVERAGE
It's not too early to start thinking about
contingencies for the 2020 election. You
should be ready. They have good legs.

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I finally found it. This is the one. After years of evaluating
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of my dreams. It's in 200...

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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 E. J. Cantel's five-page article
in the July 1955 issue of GUNS.

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BROWNING

Double Automatic

GREG MOATS

AN INGENUOUS CLASSIC

As a youth perusing outdoor magazines, the Browning advertisement for the “Double Automatic Shotgun” really captured my attention. Compared to the Auto 5, the Double Auto was svelte and as a two-shooter was intriguing. They were, and are, the enigma of the shotgun realm and certainly one of the grandest autoloaders to ever grace the field or range. Ironically they were not a commercial success and almost 50 years after their discontinuation they are still under-appreciated.

SECOND GENERATION GENIUS

The Browning Double Automatic was the creation of Val

Browning, John Moses’ talented and under-acknowledged son. The Double Automatic was Val’s baby alone and when he passed away in 1994, even though he had accumulated 48 patents of his own, he is still firmly ensconced in his father’s shadow.

From 1920-1935 Val oversaw the production of Browning firearms being made by *Fabrique Nationale Herstal*. Foremost among these products was the popular A5 shotgun, a long-recoil-operated shotgun in which barrel and bolt remain locked together and move approximately 3” to the rear upon firing. They provide a two-impulse recoil old timers often referred to as a “double shuffle.” This dual-impact-recoil is exacerbated if





The Double Auto is the fastest shotgun to reload, which — like rapid barrel replacement — may be an uncalled-for virtue. As a test, Greg did it in 1.74 seconds!

the friction ring is not set appropriately. Remington and Savage both made clones of the A5 and the original Browning design was pretty much the only operating system for semi-automatic shotguns for the first half of the 20th Century.

Then, in 1952 Val Browning received a patent for a “speed loading” mechanism he integrated into his new shotgun and started production of the radically designed Browning Double Auto. Since the barrel only moved about 1/2" it was christened a “short-recoil-action” shotgun. Eliminating the “double shuffle” effect of the A5, his new design considerably reduced the felt recoil of the 12-gauge cartridge.

FIRST FAILURE

Initially Val took his new gun to the European market where it was a dismal failure, so much so many “histories” of the Browning Double Auto claim production didn’t start until 1955, the year he introduced it to the American market. Whether the Serial number records reflect the exact number of guns produced or not, between 1952 and 1958 the numbers were assigned at a rate of 3,600 per year. Assuming the production numbers were contiguous, 10,800 guns were produced prior to their offering in America in 1955.

Perhaps it was the prestigious Browning name or the noticeable decrease in felt recoil, but for whatever reason the American market seemed more receptive than the Europeans, even though the gun only fired two shots and not the five of the A5 or Remington offerings. Historians and writers have speculated perhaps Val was anticipating conservation efforts would eventually restrict the magazine capacity of all hunting guns, plus there were no target games requiring more than two shots. *Quien sabe?* A look at contemporary production guns shows the trend toward low capacity didn’t catch on.

Simultaneously the death knell for the short-recoil-action was being refined by High Standard and Remington. In 1953 High Standard brought to market the first gas operated shotgun marketed through Sears as the J.C. Higgins Model 60. In 1956 Remington brought out their first gas-gun, the Model 58 and in 1963 they captured and dominated the semi-auto market with the 1100, still in production today!

POSITIVE TRAITS

While the proliferation of gas and inertia operated shotguns have made the short-recoil-action archaic, Val Browning’s pride and joy still has a lot going for it. It is unique mechanically and ergonomically.

It has the shortest action of any semi-auto ever made. The Double Auto’s action measures 6-5/8" from front to rear compared to 8" for the Beretta 391. Even the small, scaled-frame Remington 11/48 28-gauge measures 7-3/4"! The short frame keeps the bulk of the weight between the hands, generally making a gun swing better.

Left to right: The “Twelvette” came in Dragon Black, Autumn Brown, Velvet Gray and Forest Green while the Standard (Steel) model came in traditional blue. The Double Automatic has the distinction of being the shortest action of all semi-autos and has no pins or buttons visible, giving it a “sleek” appearance.



Another unique feature of the Double Auto is it has no magazine. The second round sits on the shell carrier and is visible in the open loading port on the left side of the receiver. You can tell at a glance if the gun is fully charged.

The lack of a magazine does away with the fore end cap. This “sleeks” the appearance of the gun and until the currently produced Browning Maxus, the Double Auto was the only auto-loading shotgun ever produced without a fore end cap.

The Browning Double Auto is the only repeating shotgun with no visible pins or buttons on the action. This enhances its appearance. Two internal pins run parallel with the action and hold the trigger housing in place. Removing the trigger group requires taking the butt stock off the gun to gain access to these pins.

SPEED LOAD

The Double Auto is the fastest shotgun to load in existence. When the bolt is locked to the rear, the gun is loaded by simply inserting a cartridge into the loading port. This automatically activates the shell holder and feeds the round into the chamber. A second round can then be placed in the port on the shell holder. For a right-handed shooter, this can be accomplished while holding the gun by the pistol grip. To drop the bolt on an empty chamber for storage, there is a carrier latch at the bottom-front of the action that can be pushed forward to release the bolt.

The gun also has a unique, ambidextrous safety. Early A5s had a sliding lever protruding down in front of the trigger located inside the trigger guard. While ambidextrous and quick, it was distinctly hazardous, particularly if the shooter was wearing gloves or just had thick fingers. Subsequent “improvements” to the A5 replaced the safety with a traditional cross-bolt button. Val improved upon his father’s design by placing a vertically sliding block behind the trigger, mounted on the backside of the trigger guard. The safety can be deactivated with either hand without requiring the trigger finger to be placed inside the trigger guard.

TYPES

The Double Auto was made in three versions. The initial model was manufactured with a steel receiver. These are referred to as the “Standard” Model and were manufactured from 1952–1960. A “Lightweight” model was manufactured from 1952–1956 at which point it was rechristened and marked “Twelvette.” In 1957 an even lighter model, the “Twentyweight,” was introduced. Both the Twelvette and Twentyweight have aluminum-alloy receivers with various names such as “Duralumin” and “Hiduminium.” According to Ned Schwing, there were 65,000 Twelvettes manufactured. If one believes the rather murky estimate of a total of 67,000 Double Automatics being manufactured, it doesn’t allow for the existence of many Standards or Twentyweights.

The steel version was offered only in traditional blue and the Twentyweight came in an anodized black with gold-filled engraving. The Twelvettes on the other hand were offered in a variety of colors. According to Browning lore, Val made up a number of different colors as sample guns and sent them out to his two biggest dealers — Sears and Montgomery Ward — to see what the public thought. Some of the dealers sent them back claiming no one wanted to hunt with anything but a blued gun. Val ordered the returned guns destroyed but a few survived.



The safety is easily activated and ambidextrous. The Double Automatic has the shortest action of all semi-autos and has no pins or buttons visible, giving it a “sleek” appearance.



Barrel removal can be accomplished in a matter of seconds (above), though not many understand why “speed re-barreling” was touted as a critical benefit by Browning. Since the gun has no magazine, the second shot rides on the shell carrier (below). Glancing at the loading port tells the shooter immediately if the gun is fully charged.





The Browning Double Automatic was the only semi auto shotgun made with no fore-end cap until the recent Browning Maxus, giving it a sleek profile.

PINK DOUBLE?

Val then asked his employees what colors they thought would be most popular with the public. Their input resulted in four "official" colors being offered: Dragon Black, Velvet Gray, Forest Green and Autumn Brown. From a collecting standpoint, Black and Silver are readily available while Green and Brown are rarely encountered. Royal Blue, Oxblood Red, Golden Yellow and even Pink are extremely rare versions escaping factory destruction or were never returned by Sears and Wards.

Barrels for the Double Auto were available in 26", 28" and 30", with the Twentyweight having a 26-1/2" tube. The lightest Standard model runs 7 lbs. 6 oz., the Twelvette is 6 lbs. 12 oz. while a Twentweight is a meager 6 lbs. even. They are a pleasure to carry afield.

The Double Auto is the only gun Browning ever produced with a unique "recessed" rib. This is a solid, non-ventilated rib with a deep channel cut down its length to reduce weight. Traditional ventilated ribs were also available.

TAKE IT FOR A SPIN

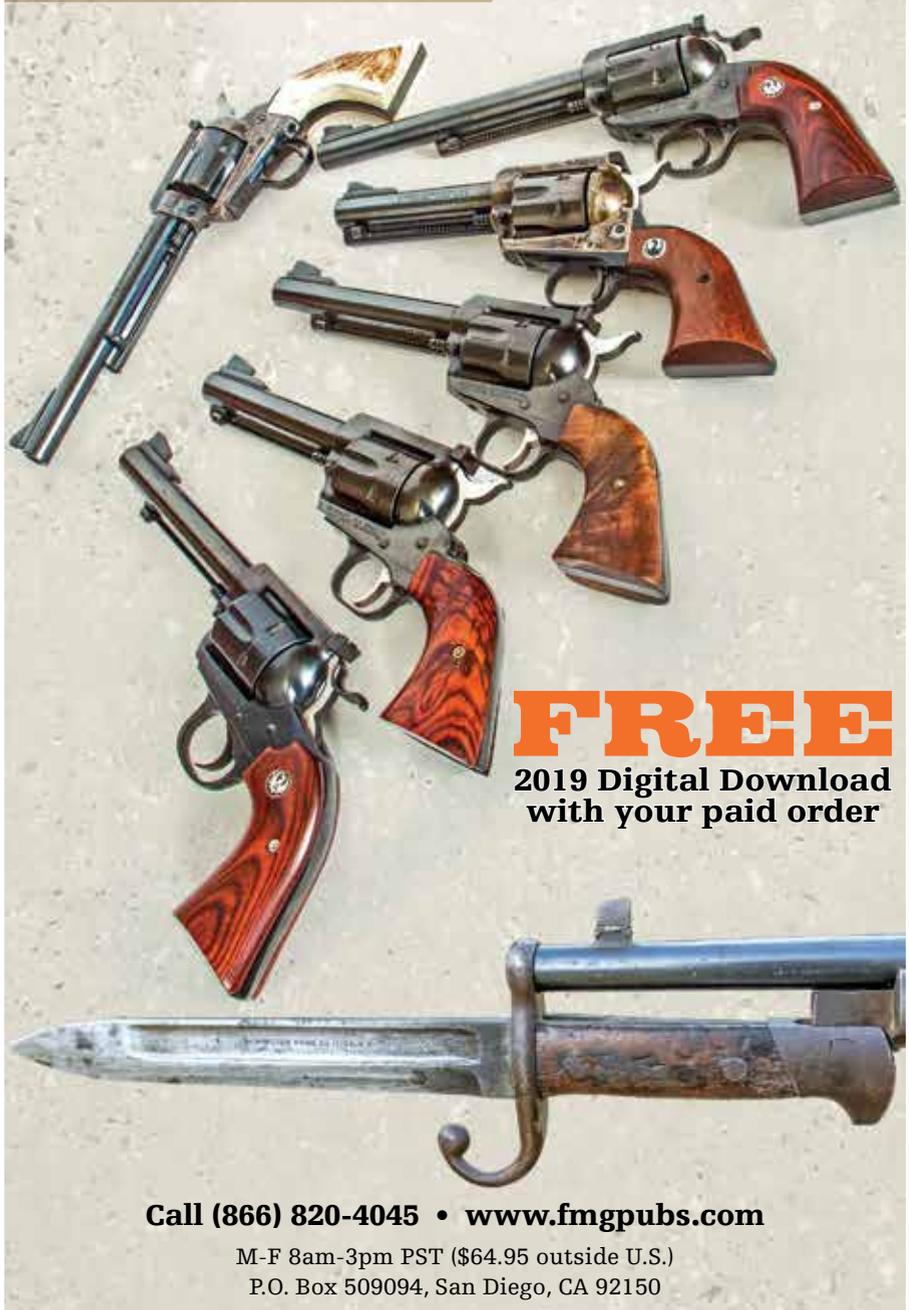
Perhaps the Double Automatic's preeminent asset is its handling dynamics — the shotgun is neither "whippy" nor "sluggish." With the Browning Double Automatic, the stars seemed to perfectly align concerning overall weight and how it's distributed.

If engraved metal, hand fitted parts and checkered wood brings a gleam to your eye and quickens your pulse, you'll find the Browning Double Automatic a gratifying acquisition. The challenge is you'll be hard pressed to buy only one.



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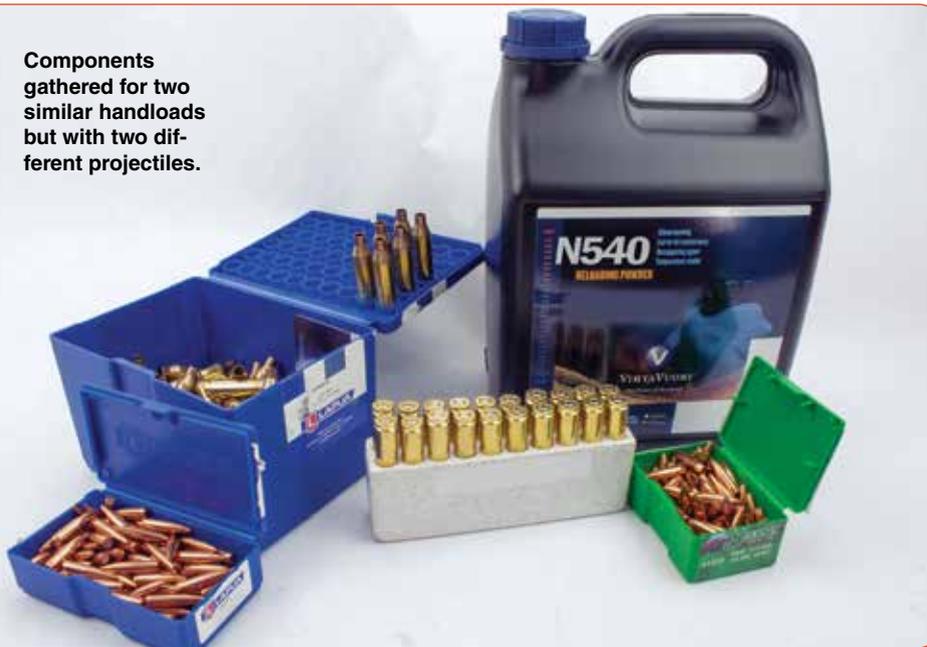


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Components gathered for two similar handloads but with two different projectiles.



RIFLE RELOADING BASICS

"AS IT TURNS OUT ..."

DAVID FREEMAN

Have you been loading handgun cartridges but not bottleneck rifle cartridges because they seem more complex and require more equipment? I fully understand, having walked through the same scenario myself. My reloading setup came with extra stuff I never used, things like case trimmers and chamfer tools. My handgun cartridges never need any trimming and chamfering.

My physics college professor used the phrase "as it turns out" to explain things I thought were going to be complicated. Loading rifle cartridges is such a thing. You think it might be complicated but as it turns out it's not, especially if you start with new or once-fired brass, which I recommend for your first ventures.

IN THE BEGINNING

Let's walk through a project using factory new brass for one of my deer rifles, a .243 caliber Savage Axis II. We will load two types of bullets close to the same configuration I have in some factory ammo. This will allow me to compare loads for

speed and accuracy. My rig is a Lee Precision Breech Lock Challenger Press, an affordable single stage press and I'm using Lee Reloading dies. The .243 die set has two resizing dies, one Full-Length Sizer and one Collett Neck Sizer, which is to be used for bolt action rifles with the brass coming from your gun only. Because I'm using new brass, no resizing is needed for this operation. I will mention if you're using brass that has already been fired and needs more than just neck resizing, you will need case lube. I promise your brass will get stuck in the Full-Length Sizer if you don't use case lube along with it.

Priming bottleneck cases can be done on the press. This is probably easier when you're decapping used brass. Since I'm using new brass, I find it faster and easier to prime my brass using my RCBS 90200 Hand Priming Tool. If you don't have an off-press primer, I suggest picking up a Lee Precision 90700, Auto Bench Priming Tool, available from Amazon for about \$30. You can get a complete set of shell holders to go with it for another \$17 and this will greatly speed up your priming operation whenever you're using new brass.

"My reloading setup came with extra stuff I never used, things like case trimmers and chamfer tools. My handgun cartridges never need any trimming and chamfering."

The Lee Precision Collett Die Set (left) handles the task when using new or once-fired brass. The Ultimate Rifle 4 Die Set (rifle) has all the dies needed to reload a particular caliber.



David uses the MTM Case-Gard R-50 rifle ammo boxes to organize his rifle loads.

.243 Factory 90 gr. Lapua FMJ



This is the control target group fired with Lapua factory loaded .243 90-gr. bullets.

.243 90 gr. Sierra HPBT
34.7 gr VN540



This group was created with David's handloaded Sierra HPBT over 34.7 grains of VN540.

BULLETS

For my first .243 load, I'm using Lapua 90-gr. OTM Scenario bullets and Vihtavuori VN540 powder. The reloading data from the Vihtavuori 2020 Reloading Guide recommends a starting load of 34.9 grains and a maximum of 39.2. It just so happens the 34.9 grains corresponds with the 28.3 cc dipper in my Lee Precision 15 dipper powder measure kit. It always makes loading a powder charge easier. So it turns out the only die I'm using from my die set is the bullet seating die. With a little adjustment, I have the bullets seating so the overall length of the cartridge is the 2.638" specified in the reloading chart. I measure this with a digital caliper. Running each of the cartridges through the Factory Crimp Die takes just a few minutes.

LOADING TWINS

After loading 20 rounds with the Lapua Open Tip Match bullets, I load 20 more cartridges with a 90-gr. Sierra HPBT bullet. According to my reloading chart, the same powder charge is slightly above the minimum charge for this round so I continue to use the 28.3 cc dipper. The boat tail bullets drop into the case mouth easily and just a slight adjustment to the bullet seating die results in the 2.689" max length for this load.

I'm hoping my handloads will perform just as well, if not better, than the Lapua factory rounds with a 90-gr. FMJ bullet. It's more

fun to take a deer with a cartridge you created yourself, don't you think? With my scope dialed in at 50 yards using a sandbag rest, I fire five rounds of Lapua 90-gr. FMJ factory ammo through my chronometer into a test target. The factory rounds averaged 3,037 fps coming out of the barrel and created a nice 1.5" grouping just below and to the right of dead center on the target.

The handloaded 90-gr. Lapua Open Tip Match bullets left the barrel at an average speed of 3,244 and impacted practically in the same target location with a slightly tighter group. The Sierra 90-gr. Hollow Point Boat Tail bullets averaged almost 200 fps faster velocity with four of the rounds impacting practically in the same hole and the fifth slightly below the cluster.

RESULTS

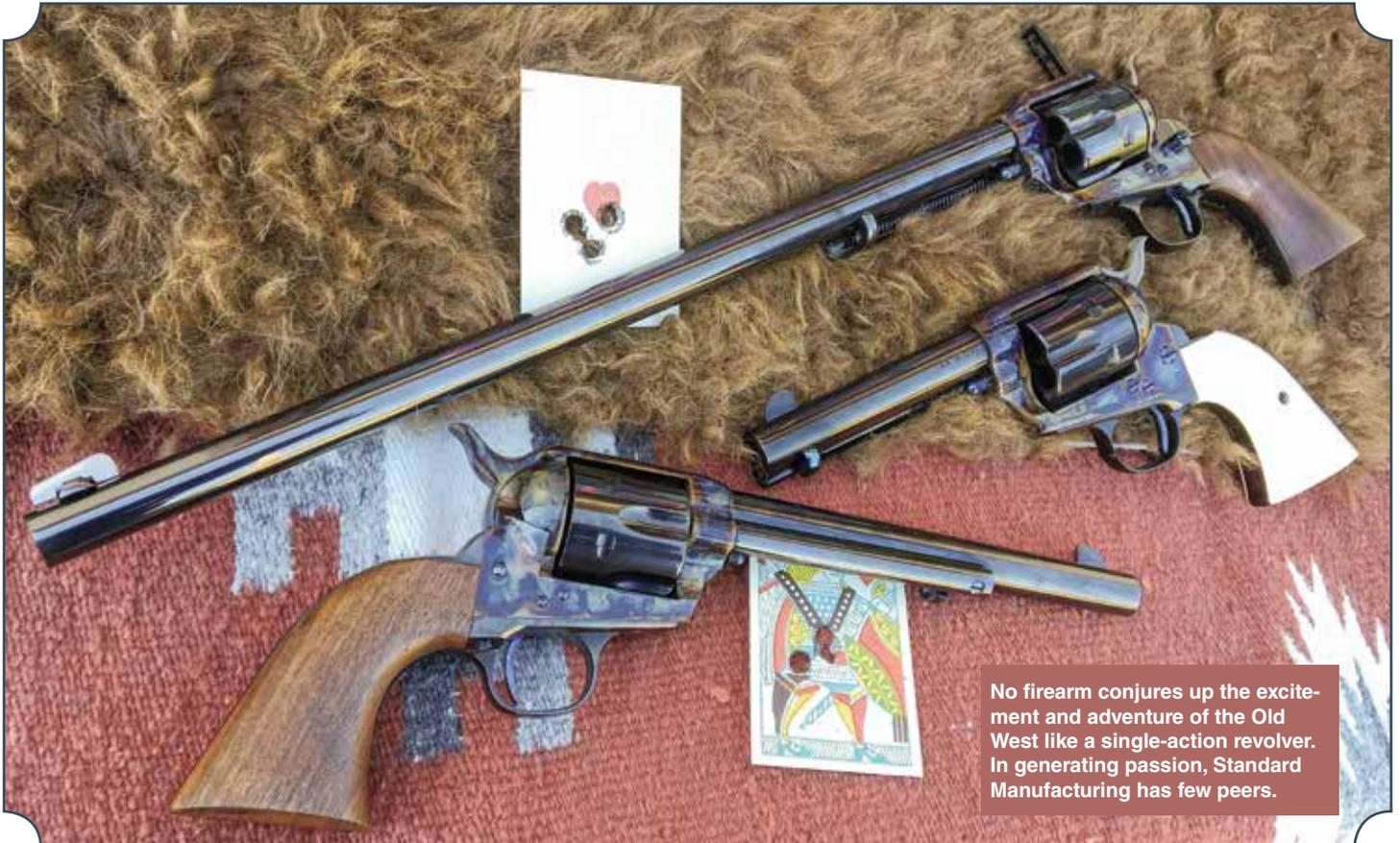
The result of this exercise is two sets of handloaded cartridges fully ready for deer or hog hunting with my Savage Axis II XP rifle. As it turns out, reloading for the rifle, in this case was easier than loading handgun cartridges. When throwing in used brass, it's a different game but it's still not difficult. There are just some extra steps involved in preparing the brass, such as 1) inspecting the brass and throwing out any split or otherwise damaged cartridges, 2) trimming the case down to size and perhaps chamfering the opening, and 3) resizing the case as needed using a case lubricant, even if you're using a carbide die.

HEIRLOOM STANDARD MANUFACTURING REVOLVERS

ALAN GARBERS

CASE-HARDENED COWBOY ARTISTRY

Standard Manufacturing shouldered its way into the single-action revolver market a few years ago and has been romancing the shooting world ever since. Their business model is to produce the finest level of precision and detailing in a revolver to make shooters and collectors fall in love with an icon of the Old West all over again. Their goal isn't to copy the Colt Single Action Army, known as the Peacemaker to many, but to produce their own version without compromising anything. Many would say they achieved their goal. But, if you've been watching the single-action market, this is yesterday's news.



No firearm conjures up the excitement and adventure of the Old West like a single-action revolver. In generating passion, Standard Manufacturing has few peers.



The Standard Manufacturing 1872 revolver (top) is closely based on an original 1st Generation Colt Single Action Army (bottom).

What you may not know is Standard Manufacturing has assembled a team of gunsmiths and machinists who love the legacy associated with the revolver they are producing. Along with their passion for making history, they have been given a great deal of leeway when it comes to making variations of their Single Action Revolver (SAR).

Many of these firearms are produced in limited runs or even one-off. I, like most shooters, never knew such a thing existed until I got a call from my friends Mike Short and Jeff Lawrence at Badger Creek Firearms to see their most recent purchases.

Mike Short and Jeff Lawrence are partners in Badger Creek Firearms in Mooresville, Ind. They love buying, selling and collecting firearms of the Old West. They are also a dealer for Standard Manufacturing and their enthusiasm for Standard's iconic revolver infects many who walk into their small store. Because of Mike and Jeff's special relationship with Standard Manufacturing, they often are the first to know when a limited run or one-of-a-kind piece is going to be available. Several of these unique firearms have found a place in their private collection.

THE STANDARD MANUFACTURING TARGET (BUNTLINE) REVOLVER

The original Buntline revolver is part of western folklore and got its name from dime western novel writer Ned Buntline. According to legend, Buntline presented five iconic gunmen of



The traditional bone and charcoal color-case-hardening process used by Standard produces beautiful blues, pinks and purples while hardening the steel frame.

the Old West the extra-long barreled Colt Peacemaker as a form of tribute. Those five men included Wyatt Earp, Bat Masterson, Charles Bassett, Neal Brown and Bill Tilghman. This story has been debated over the last century but one thing is true, Colt did possibly produce 31 long-barrel revolvers in 1876. Of these, a dozen are believed to exist in their original form.

The defining feature of the Buntline is an extra-long barrel. Normal Colt SAA revolvers could be ordered with 4-3/4", 5-1/2" and 7-1/2" barrels. The Buntline was produced with 10", 12" and 16" barrels. Instead of standard groove and blade sights, the



The Standard Manufacturing Target Model with a 16" barrel is meticulously based on the extremely rare original 1876 Colt Buntline.

"Buntline" featured a rifle-style front sight and a flip-up elevated rear sight. They also featured a modified hammer screw which served as studs to attach a special skeleton shoulder stock.

It goes without saying any remaining example of the original Colt "Buntline" is extremely rare. On December 3, 2010, Rock Island Auction Company offered serial number 28813. The revolver was chambered in .45 Colt, had a 16" barrel and included the original shoulder stock. It sold for \$368,000 plus a buyer's premium. In September 2012 serial number 28826 sold for \$546,250 plus buyer's premium.

Yes, Colt did produce other Buntline revolvers with the rise of the TV westerns, but none of them have the elevated rear sight, rifle front sight, or shoulder stock studs.

After this, imagine my surprise when Mike Short gingerly placed a Standard Manufacturing Target Model (Buntline) on the padded mat in front of me. It was correct in almost every way including black-powder frame, elevated rear sights, rifle style front sight and shoulder stock mounting studs. Like the original, the caliber was .45 Colt. The color-case hardening was done by the historically correct bone and charcoal process. The grips were one-piece walnut.

The attention to detail was amazing. The hours spent producing a one-of-a-kind firearm boggled my mind. Even more



The Standard Manufacturing 1872 is chambered in one of the original "cowboy" calibers, the .44-40 Winchester. Mexican Loop holster provided by Cochise Leather.

fantastic was the fact they were not planning on making any more. But, as I write this, Mike was able to convince (beg) them to produce one more "Buntline" for Jeff but in .44-40 Winchester.

THE 1872 SINGLE ACTION REVOLVER

The Colt Single Action Army was in development in 1871, refined and tested in 1872, and started shipping in 1873. Over the last 147 years, Colt has stopped and started production a few times but for the most part, a Colt SAA made in 2020 is identical in almost every way as one made in 1873. The same cannot be said for the many reproductions made by Ruger, Uberti, USA and others. In most cases, reproductions are slightly beefier in cylinder wall thickness and in other key areas. The common consensus among collectors and shooters feel this reduces the potential for accidents from improper use. The difference between a real Colt SAA and another manufacturer's isn't much measured in thousands of an inch, but it is enough to drastically increase the pressure and stress it can handle. The layman isn't going to notice the difference but purists claim it changes the balance and feel of the firearm.

Standard Manufacturing also adds a tiny bit extra of steel where it counts. In this litigation-happy world who can blame them?

Imagine my surprise when Mike Short told me Standard



The Standard Target Model features the unusual flip-up elevated rear sight, modified hammer screw for mounting a shoulder stock and rifle-style front sight like the original.

Manufacturing recently made one and only one revolver to Colt's original 1872 measurements and he had it in his possession.

One of the first questions was why. Conspiracy theorists could go crazy with the reasons why Standard would produce such a firearm, especially with Colt's ongoing struggle to meet the demand for the SAA and reducing calibers and options available in their catalog.

Like the Buntline, the cost of tooling up and producing only one revolver is prohibitive, so one does wonder why, and how.

According to Standard Manufacturing, their head Gunsmith, Peter Rhodes, who has dedicated his life to making the best single actions on the market, had taken the dimensions from an original assembled 1872 Colt Single Action.

The Standard 1872 model is not an exact copy of the 1872 Colt SAA. First, it's chambered in the Winchester .44-40, not the original .45 Colt. It doesn't have a pinched frame rear sight. The ejector is crescent-shaped like later models, not a bullseye shape like originals. I'm sure there are other slight variations but I am not about taking a caliper and micrometer to Mike's prized revolver.

What it does have is the coveted original-style black-powder frame, 7-1/2" length barrel, one-piece walnut grips and genuine bone and charcoal color-case hardening. It is a thing of beauty.

THE FUTURE

So what's next for Standard Manufacturing? I asked Shayne Lucey, manager at Standard Manufacturing. "We are currently making only the guns you see on the website. Every once in a while something 'special' rolls off the line and we quickly place it with dealers like Badger Creek Firearms, who have built a strong relationship with us. Standard Manufacturing has limitless capabilities, and the work we have done thus far proves as such."

I admit his response isn't exciting as it could be but both Shayne and Mike hinted Standard was working on a limited run of Single Action Revolvers featuring birdshead grips. There's also talk of offering a Sheriff's model sporting a 3" barrel and no ejector. If news such as this isn't enough to quicken your pulse, I don't know what would!

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SWAT LEATHER, YOU VARMINT!

SAVVY GUNFIGHTERS CHECK THEIR HOLSTERS — AND SADDLE SOAP

WAYNE VAN ZWOLL

In the Garden of Eden, it is written, Adam and Eve wore “garments of skin.” Hide-scraping tools confirm leather dates to early hominids, who learned how to flesh and preserve it, transforming skin into commodity. They made it pliable and stiff, its surface rough and slick. They shaved, stitched and colored it. Many moons later, leather blessed Hollywood. From Tom Mix and William S. Hart of the silent flicks to Gene Autry and Hopalong Cassidy (William Boyd) in the '30s, to durable Matt Dillon (James Arness) in *Gunsmoke* — which ran two decades after a 1955 debut — saddles and gun-belts dealt on-screen action. The Old West came alive with hoof-thunder and belching Peacemakers. Heroes and villains owed much to cowhide.

NO REPLACING IT

These days leather loin-cloths serve a shrinking market. But beyond cradling big iron and keeping your pelvis off Dobbin's spine, leather has many uses — especially for shooters. Leather belts carry ammo in leather pouches while snugging trousers in place. A leather shooting coat is the rifleman's girdle. In my youth rifles wore leather scope caps and lace-on cheek-pieces. The finest long guns still have leather butt-pads and travel in leather-bound cases. Elk hunters ride into the Rockies clutching leather reins in leather gloves. They climb in leather boots and pack game out on sawbucks cinched to mules by leather rigging. On safari, leather gaiters keep grass awns out of hunting shoes . . .

Leather's allure has much to do with its ties to people and adventures of times long past. Leather carried “Wild Bill”

Hickock's 1851 Colts, the revolvers of William Bonney, the Earps, the Dalton Gang and Bat Masterson. Its Hollywood tenure has outlived westerns. Don Johnson's shoulder holster in the TV series *Miami Vice* became as distinctive as the show's cinematography. When the pilot aired in 1984, Galco had been producing shoulder rigs for 14 years — 11 as The Original Jackass Leather Company in Chicago, where founder Richard Gallagher sewed horsehide holsters for the police. When *Vice* producers had to hide Johnson's Bren 10 under his Armani suit, they tapped Gallagher, then in Galco International's new Phoenix digs. The Jackass shoulder holster became the Miami Classic.

With all respect to Kydex, leather is still, arguably, the best holster material. It can be molded by the gun to fit like skin. Its rough inner surface grips and caresses steel, securing but compliantly releasing it. A hard, polished exterior slips easily against clothing and sheds water like glass.

THE PROCESS

To become leather, animal skin first endures caustic salts, leaving it hard as particle board. Wet-salted hides are stacked as many-layered sandwiches and left to cure for a month or so. Brine solution acts more quickly — 16 hours for skins in vats. A water bath removes saline residue and blood. Hair, loosened by lime solution with a little sodium sulfide, is cleaned off in a machine. Scraped, stretched, dyed, sand-papered and treated with heavy metals, skin smells as foul as it looks. Acid solution counteracts swelling caused by the lime. “Bating” enzymes render the skin pliable.



Aside from holsters and slings, saddles, bridles and breeching, leather is traditional scabbard material — and arguably still best.

Tanning prevents decay. The word derives from vegetable tannins fueling a process taking weeks, even months. Shrink- and stretch-resistant, water-repellant leather results. Chestnut, hemlock and oak are popular tannin sources stateside, though 80 percent of fibers come from other plants. Vegetable-tanned leather is commonly bleached, then immersed in Epsom salts, oils, glucose, and finally emulsions of soap, grease and wax.

Chrome tanning is faster. The leather shrinks to become long-wearing and heat-resistant. A salt-and-acid bath pickles bated skins before they're tumbled in a base solution of chromium sulfate. Finished within a day, chrome-tanned leather may then undergo an additional bath, or even vegetable tanning.

Splitting and shaving leather reduces its thickness. Sandpapering and buffing nix imperfections. Buffing the flesh side of leather raises the nap, yielding suede. Rollers compress leather to add firmness — and a glossy finish enhanced by waxes, shellacs, varnishes and resins. "Full grain" leather has not been mechanically surface-treated to remove flaws. Once a mark of high quality because only scar-free skins were spared surface finishing, full-grain leather isn't so uniformly perfect now. "Top-grain" is the counter designation: leather sanded, buffed, rolled to improve its appearance. Shiny "patent" leather results from several coats of varnish. "Bridle leather" is high-quality leather impregnated with oils and hard-finished with wax — processes making it costly.

THE FIRST DATE

Even after molding to a specific handgun during manufacture, a holster must be trained to hug it. You're smart to seat the pistol gently until the leather, like a shy teenager, decides hugging is okay. Knife sheaths need more break-in time because knives are lighter. They're also sharp. A friend once thrust his knife through a virgin sheath when he joined them prematurely. Wetting leather to make it supple helps it conform but moisture left to brood won't do steel or leather any good.

CARE AND FEEDING

Care of leather is mind-numbingly simple: Store it where air can circulate to keep mildew and rot at bay, but where it won't get hot or dry out quickly. Erin Hutchinson of Danner emphasizes cleanliness — brushing off dirt before it can penetrate and abrade. "Scrub full-grain leather with our Leather Cleaner on a damp cloth; rinse with a wet cloth, let the surface dry — not with heat or in direct sunlight. Then apply a wax or oil preservative, depending on the leather." Hutchinson says suede or rough-out leather should be gently brushed free of

dirt dry, without using cleaner. Then spray on a suede-specific waterproofing."

A fellow who's made saddle-bags for Harley-Davidson stresses wet leather must be air-dried slowly. "The idea is to keep it fed and supple as moisture leaves. Don't over-oil." DeSantis recom-

mends you apply no dressing to its holsters, lest they become soft. For leather holsters and belts with hard finish, you can't go wrong with wax-based products like ordinary shoe polish. Hunting boots scrubbed by wet grass, however, can lose wax quickly. For boots daily enduring wet conditions, I like Sno Seal, and grease from boot-makers Danner and Irish Setter.

Retired outfitter Ron Dube, who ran pack-strings into Wyoming mountains for decades, tells me: "There's little time to tend leather properly on hunts. Best you can do is keep it clean and as dry and well-conditioned as each day allows. We hung tack at night under a tarp, dried boots away from heat, stuffing them with newsprint to absorb moisture within. Before and after hunting season, my crew gave all leather a thorough saddle-soaping, then rubbed in Farnam's Leather New, a neatsfoot oil we applied as a spray. I still use neatsfoot oil to protect leather and keep it supple."

Neatsfoot, by the way, is a generic term appearing in the name of many leather treatments. "Neat" derives from an Old English word for cattle. Neatsfoot oil is rendered from the shin-bones and feet (not hooves) of cattle. It softens, conditions and preserves leather. Mink oil, while it penetrates leather, is also acidic. Many reports claim it makes leather too soft and shortens its useful life. Dube told me continual soaking with any oil can cause leather fibers and stitching to break down. This observation squares with mine. Legendary Pacific Northwest bootmakers White, West Coast (Wesco) and Danner offer recrafting services to replace heels, soles and stitching and recondition uppers exhausted by hard life in the field.

NOT PERFECT

Storing firearms in scabbards and holsters is a bad idea, even if the leather is dry. Salt (tanning) and moisture residue you can't detect ravage steel over time. Neither does ammunition age gracefully in leather loops and pouches, as vegetable-tanned leather turns brass green with verdigris.

Not everyone likes leather. "When you pack a pistol in Florida heat and humidity," one patrolman told me, "you need a light-weight holster that doesn't cling to your body." Sweat makes leather smell bad, and it's not as easily cleaned as polymer. Also, gun oil eventually degrades leather.

Then again, an Arizona ranger with a big iron blasting Texas Red before he cleared Kydex would hardly sound right. 



Worn leather, wear-polished Colts. If you don't drool, check your pulse! These SAs need leather.



Stock too short? Butt-plate too hard? Galco's leather boot slips on. Velcro on the toe tab secures it.



This "summer special" has rough-out leather for inside carry. Spray leather conditioner sparingly.



Heat, sunlight and neglect dry out (ruin!) leather. Salvaged soon enough, Danner boots can be rebuilt.



THOMPSON/CENTER PERFORMANCE CENTER LRR .308 WIN.

MULTIPLE CALIBERS, SAME CHASSIS



A NightForce NXS 2.5-10x42 scope (above) was mounted on the LRR in Warne horizontal rings. Length of pull and comb height (below) may be adjusted via large dials on the aluminum chassis. It also sports plenty of fore-end slots for accessories.



MARK HAMPTON

Living in a rural area has its advantages and disadvantages. We don't have any large sporting goods stores nearby. Fortunately for many of us who like to shoot, there is a small shop just down the road with the largest selection of ammo and reloading components you can imagine. I ran down to the shop the other day for some primers and started visiting with the polite young man behind the counter.

SHOOT FOR THE MOON

When I asked him how's business he quickly replied, "Great!" What's the driving nature behind this brisk buying movement? Again, the young man was quick with an answer, "long-range shooting." He went on to explain most all components being sold — brass, bullets, powder and primers — would be utilized by long-range shooting. Even more surprising, he informed me over 75 percent of the business was generated by some form of long-range shooting.

Well, it's easy to see competitive games such as PRS, F-Class and others are driving the market in the long-range shooting arena. Just look at the plethora of equipment being introduced for the demand of this segment of shooting. Recently *GUNS* ran a nice article on T/C's LRR — a Performance Center offering in 6.5 Creedmoor. If you want to balance your 6.5 Creedmoor with some versatility, this time let's look at the .308 Winchester.



Mark had fun banging away at long-range steel plates on his Missouri farm with the T/C LRR .308 Win atop a BOG DeathGrip shooting tripod.



Good accuracy with the Federal Premium 168-gr. Berger hybrid Hunter, Black Hills 168-gr. BTHP and Hornady's 155-gr. A-Max (above) proved the rifle isn't picky about its diet. One 10-round magazine (below) is supplied with the rifle.

Having multiple calibers in the same platform makes sense especially when a multitude of accessories are consistent and easily interchangeable. Besides, your muscle memory gets accustomed to shooting one particular platform so switching to another caliber for a different application is not a game-changer. Most important of all attributes — both of our test rifles in 6.5 and .308 Win. shot extremely well.

FEATURES GALORE

The Performance Center T/C LRR is loaded with features including a unique chassis system with adjustable cheek pieces and butt plate thanks to dials situated in the innovative aluminum chassis. Shooters can adjust both length-of-pull and comb height to their liking. The butt pad even moves up or down and rotates. This rifle is tricked out specifically for long-range shooting with its 20 MOA Picatinny-style rail. The rail itself is almost 6.5" long providing a lot of flexibility on scope placement and the 5R rifled barrel is deeply fluted. My test gun came with a 21.5" threaded barrel with muzzle brake installed. I really appreciated the Performance Center adjustable trigger.

The gun is fairly heavy, weighing 11 lbs. before mounting any optics. This dissipates most all of the recoil from the .308 Win. You want to mount accessories? Knock yourself out with the liberal Magpul slots in the handguard.

The pistol grip is a standard AR-style, Hogue rubber grip with finger grooves — very comfortable. The rifle is shipped with one 10-round magazine. The two-position safety is located directly behind the bolt and the bolt knob is large and fluted. Another nice feature with the two-position safety — the bolt can be manipulated with the safety on.

For optics I chose a NightForce NXS 2.5-10x42 scope. This compact unit looks as if it were made for the LRR rifle. The scope tested featured an MOAR 30 MOA reticle making it a great optic for hunting or long-range shooting. The clarity is superb and I can see why so many shooters gravitate to NightForce.

FEEDING THE BEAST

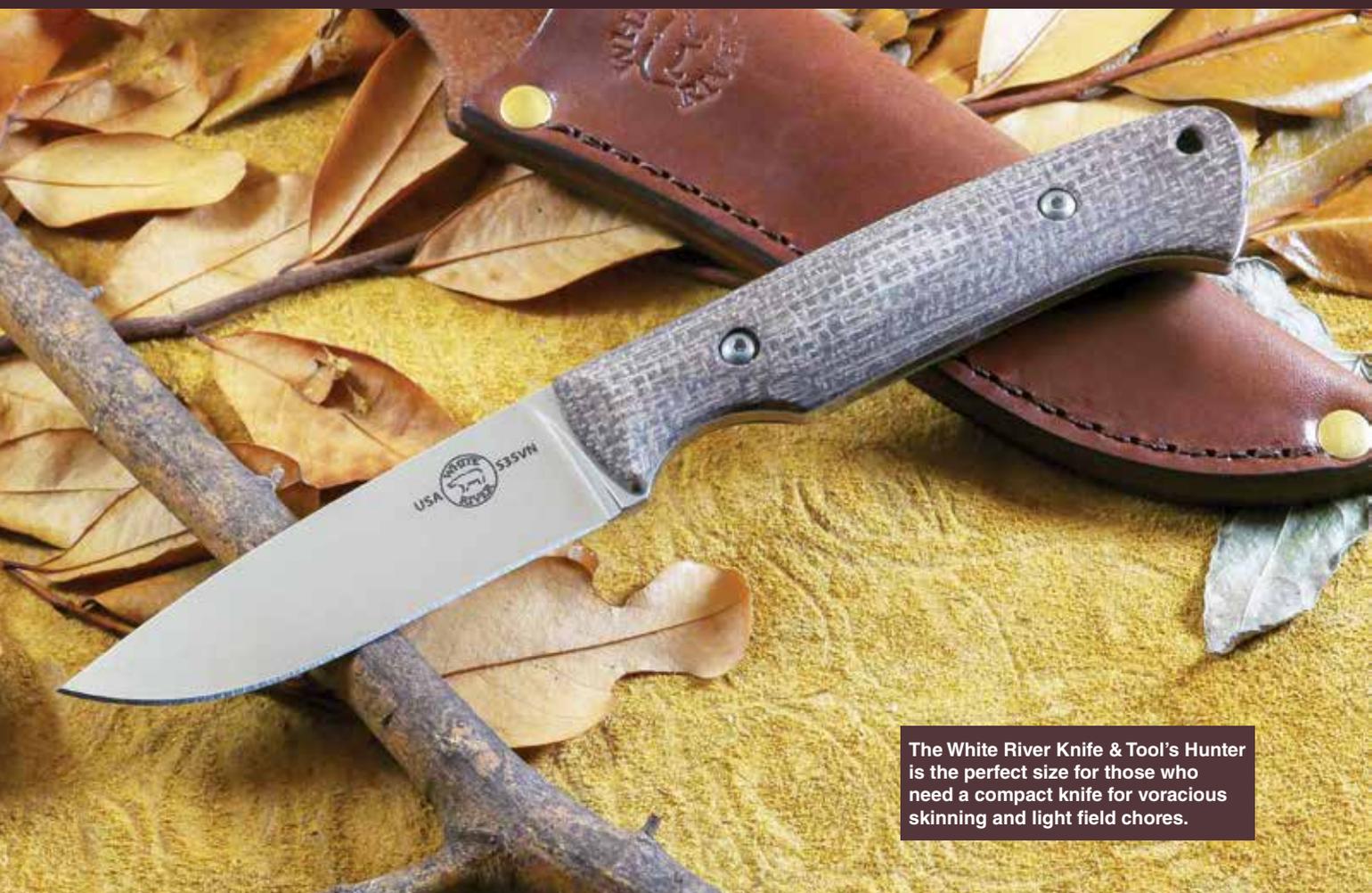
For ammo I grabbed three factory offerings — Federal Premium 168-gr. Berger hybrid Hunter, Black Hills 168-gr. BTHP



and Hornady's 155-gr. A-Max. My wife and I both shot the LRR at the range with all three brands of ammo. Due to the weight of the gun and effective muzzle brake, recoil was almost non-existent. The bolt was smooth and we did not experience any failures with feeding. The stock was adjusted to fit me first and when it came Karen's turn to shoot, a few minor adjustments and the comb and length of stock fit her perfectly too. Right out of the box this LRR begin to shoot good groups and it wasn't picky about loads. After a range session on paper, Karen and I both wanted to take the LRR to our farm for some steel shooting. We have a variety of targets set out to 500 yards at different intervals.

END RESULT

Whether you're interested in competitive games like the Precision Rifle Series or just want to enjoy some recreational shooting pleasure, the Performance Center T/C LRR has a lot to offer with a sack full of features. With an MSRP of \$1,211 and a street price for less, the LRR makes a great choice for an entry-level rifle. Available in .243 Win., 6.5 Creedmoor and .308 Win., you can sure enjoy shooting sessions with three great calibers — all in the same platform.



The White River Knife & Tool's Hunter is the perfect size for those who need a compact knife for voracious skinning and light field chores.

WHITE RIVER HUNTER HUNTIN' HONEY!

Back when hunting lodges became more prolific and one-day hunts became more popular, a down-sizing trend began to take root in sporting fixed-blades. Larger hunting knives simply weren't needed if you weren't going to clear a camp site to accommodate extended hunts in the wild, or could afford the comfort of a lodge. White River Knife & Tool's Hunter model exemplifies the breed of light hunting knives today.

Designed by custom knifemaker Owen Baker, Jr., White River's Hunter is a handy 8.5" overall, 3.5" of the length in a mid-sized Drop Point blade, the preferred style for skinning game. The blade steel is primo CPM S35VN stainless steel which is often chosen by custom knifemakers for their wares. The 5.0" handle has a deep finger choil for sure grip and the purchase is further enhanced with grippy black Burlap Micarta scales. The welted, deep



The Hunter's welted brown leather belt sheath lets you grab-and-go, plus you can add a lanyard to the base of the knife if you prefer.

carry brown leather belt sheath is a star in itself — well designed with just enough handle exposed to make a sure pull and, if preferred, you can add a lanyard loop to the base of the Hunter's handle. Weight is a svelte 4.3 oz.

WHY YOU'LL LIKE IT

White River Knife & Tool built their reputation on offering high-performance outdoor knives for hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts. With its top shelf blade steel this modest-sized fixer can not only skin like a house afire but also perform light Bushcrafter duty when needed. The fit and finish is right up there at the top for factory knives and the sheath is incredibly well made. Furthermore, the Hunter's suggested retail of \$180 won't drag you down for a hunting knife built to pass down for generations. If your hunting needs don't require a lot of heavy field chores, the White River Hunter may be just what you've been looking for.

www.whiteriver.com

NOW WHAT? WIN OR LOSE, WE HAVE TO KEEP FIGHTING!

Due to magazine lead time schedules, at the time of this writing the November election had not yet occurred. In the weeks ahead moving into the holidays and a new year, we're either celebrating how the anti-gunners took one on the jaw, or bracing because the next couple of years are going to be an extended version of "Hell Week."

TIME TO STAND UP

Either way, it's up to Second Amendment advocates to defend their rights. Some months ago, responding to a comment on social media, I observed blowing off steam on Facebook is not a substitute for voting. I'll amend this now to also suggest it's not a substitute for genuine boots-on-the-ground activism, either.

Politicians don't pay much attention to Internet outbursts but they do pay attention to a thousand letters and emails. A few hundred telephone calls really impress them as does a good turnout of citizens wearing NRA caps or jackets at a "Townhall" gathering.

We've seen this from the other side. Ten or a dozen people wearing bright red "Moms Demand Action" T-shirts is hard to ignore when they're all sitting together. Fifty people wearing NRA caps or "Second Amendment First Responder" patches from the Second Amendment Foundation will be noticed, too.

There's a trick to this worth remembering. If you and fellow gun owners plan to attend a public meeting, be there early and fill the forward rows of seats so you're the people the politicians see staring at them.

STILL SPUNKY

Earlier this year, when thousands of beleaguered citizens showed up at state capitols demanding a return to some semblance of normality, it demonstrated there is still plenty of spunk in the American spirit. If you were there, you felt it. If you watched, you understood it.

Gun owners were a big part of those demonstrations. They learned who their

friends were in government — and also their foes.

But those demonstrations provided another lesson. Grassroots activism does not require a big organization, or people in expensive suits leading such events. Average people put those together and they can do it again.

FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS

Your first order of business in 2021 is to work with friendly state lawmakers to

\$1,000 a day for failure to comply.

If an agency can book prisoners into city or county jails and take fingerprints in the process, they can damn well accommodate honest citizens. Precautions can be taken, such as wearing protective masks and providing gloves for employees taking the prints.

Equally important is such legislation should limit the governor to a single emergency declaration that cannot be extended beyond 30 days without a two-thirds majority vote by the Legislature. We saw



introduce and pass legislation making it illegal for any governor to close gun shops and shooting ranges under any emergency or disaster, whether natural or man-made.

It's not too early to start. December is a month when lots of interest groups work with various state lawmakers on proposed legislation.

If the pandemic panic of 2020 taught us anything, it showed us some governors believe they can shelve the Constitution under the guise of public health concerns by declaring gun stores and ranges "non-essential." There is nothing "non-essential" about the exercise of a constitutionally delineated fundamental right.

Such legislation must include a stipulation no sheriff's department or municipal police department can suspend, even for one day, the process of accepting and processing new applications for concealed carry licenses or permits. Violations should be expensive; perhaps fine the agency

too many governors, drunk with power, continually move the goal posts during the "re-opening" process — it cannot happen again.

This is the United States, not a police state.

MAKE YOUR OWN CANDIDATE

If lawmakers are sheepish about this, immediately start recruiting someone to run against them in 2022. Start raising money to fund the campaign and make sure early on these candidates are properly vetted so they won't become an embarrassment.

In Virginia, you don't have to wait! Your legislative elections are in November 2021 — just 11 months from now — and it's time to start recruiting and grooming candidates to take back the legislature and the governor's office in Richmond. Don't forget the office of attorney general will be on this ballot, as well. This is not just about

reversing an outrage; it's about teaching a lesson to anti-gun Virginia Democrats they will never forget.

After accomplishing this, make sure every gun control measure adopted by Ralph Northam and his legislative cronies is immediately and unceremoniously repealed. All it takes is for every gun owner in the Commonwealth to vote!

ITEM NUMBER TWO

If your sheriff, mayor, members of the city councils and county commissions stood against shut-down orders in your state, support them and vow to help get them re-elected. Help raise funds for their campaigns. Invite them to social gatherings to share their ideas and hear yours.

On the other hand, if your elected officials rolled over, or even adopted some of their own county or municipal orders, recruit good men and women to unseat them at the next election.

Most important in this process is the ability to work together with people who share the same goals, but may have different ideas about how to accomplish things. This means no angry outbursts, arguments or name-calling, especially on social media.

You and your friends might want to consider approaching other like-minded citizens to start a PAC (Political Action Committee) for the purpose of coordinating activism and raising funds to pay for it. Check your state laws about PACs, and do things squeaky clean.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKING

The next few months will provide opportunities to affect change in your state. The next year will offer even more challenges for those always fighting the proverbial good fight.

In an ideal world, we would never have to worry about our rights. But this is the real world, and we've all got to be on our game because no matter how many we win or lose, the other side has an insatiable hunger for our Second Amendment rights.

The pandemic panic earlier this year should have convinced every 2A rights activist the real disease is public apathy and fear. Those who would rule rather than serve spent every waking hour trying to convince people they would get sick.

It's time to make those people sick instead.

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PLANO RUSTRICTOR ALL-WEATHER 2 RIFLE CASE

I've been a long-time fan of Plano weapon cases. They offer heavy-duty protection similar to the "big name" cases at a much nicer price. Honestly, I don't know if I'd shove one out of a helicopter for a Spec Ops mission in Afghanistan, but they'll otherwise work fine for any normal earth people — or even traveling hunters!

Plano has now come out with the All-Weather 2 series of cases that include Rustrictor technology. By some kind of magic, the foam inside the case emits vapors stopping rust and

corrosion in its tracks. Testing this magic with a freshly sanded piece of carbon steel, we've noticed no corrosion during the humid Midwestern summer. With airline-approved watertight security, they're also a bit lighter than the "Tactical" series so they're easier to move around. The AW2 52" is now my go-to long-range rifle case.

MSRP: 52" is \$199.99

www.planomolding.com



MTM PREDATOR SHOOTING TABLE

This isn't a new product by any stretch but every time I head to the range for a product review, I'm so happy I own an MTM Predator Shooting Table. Shaped like a traditional shooting bench, the table folds into a lightweight, compact package that's easy to transport and stow in my garage. Best of all, it offers a quick, stable surface anywhere on the range or even in the field.

The 30" tall table also has three molded-in gun barrel notches so you can stand up long guns and there are even grips for easy carrying. In addition to sighting-in and general shooting range duties, the table works well as an indoor cleaning bench to avoid having to explain why your gun solvent ate off the finish from the kitchen table.

Retail price: around \$60

www.mtmcase-gard.com

HSM LOW RECOIL AMMO

Recoil does tend to induce flinch, even if you've been shooting for years. When you're talking about the 300 Win Mag or 7mm rounds, even experts will get a sore shoulder after enough rounds.

If you're looking for hunting rounds with a little less brain-scrambling "ommph," HSM Ammo offers seven calibers in their line of low-recoil rifle ammo. Featuring premium Sierra bullets and with a claimed 53 percent reduction in felt recoil, the rounds are



otherwise very similar to "normal" ammo in accuracy and terminal ballistics.

Aside from offering faster follow-up shots on game and less headache after a long day at the range, the low-recoil ammo is also great for introducing less-experienced shooters into the world of center-fire rifles. Personally, our Mark I shoulder couldn't tell if the recoil reduction was 52 or 53 percent but it was noticeable.

MSRP: starting around \$35/box

www.hsmammunition.com

HAWG HOLSTERS

Personally I like inside-the-waistband holsters best for concealed carry but there is always the problem of keeping holster and pants secure and within alignment. This problem is officially solved now I've found HAWG Holsters.

They are attractive carbon-fiber-pattern Kydex holsters fitting 250 different models but this isn't the most noteworthy feature — the Ulticlip 3 is. The clip is designed to



catch your trousers instead of your belt and once engaged, you're more likely to get a certain news network to finally admit

they're all communists than to separate the holster from your pants. There is also a version for attaching to the belt.

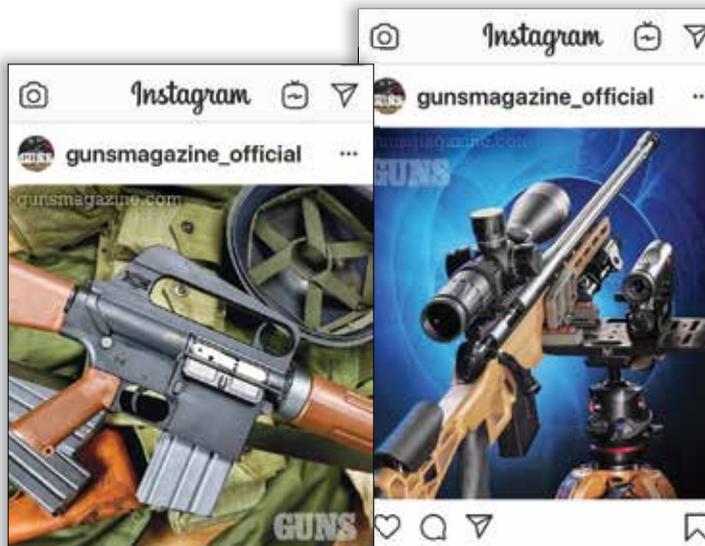
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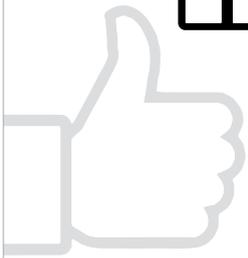
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Winning this giveaway package will make your personal defense situation solid. Don't hesitate to join. Go to www.gunsmagazine.com/giveaways. You can send a post card too. —Jazz Jimenez



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.41 MAG SLUGS FROM A TO ZINC?

Like most of my obsessions, it started by thumbing through a gun magazine — certain articles grab our attention, refusing to let go. I was reading about the .41 Magnum over 30 years ago. Described as the middle magnum, it fit perfectly between the .357 and .44 Magnum and was declared a great field caliber.

HISTORICALLY SPEAKING

Developed by Elmer Keith and Bill Jordan for law enforcement officers in the early 1960s, it was supposed to be the answer for underloaded .38 Special duty rounds. Problem was, it was too much of a good thing — its muzzle blast and penetration too much for duty use. Factory ammo was pushing a 210-gr. jacketed soft point near 1,500 fps.

A lower velocity .41 Magnum load was designed, lowering velocities to 1,100 fps but officers complained of lugging the heavy N-Frame guns made for it. However,

the .41 magnum excelled as a hunting round. Elmer loved it for hunting, saying its flatter trajectory made hits easier than his beloved .44 magnum.

GUN SHOP RAT

Whenever checking my business establishments as a young copper, I paid particular attention to the local gun shops,

always keeping an eye out for anything .41 Magnum. Funny thing — I never saw any. Seems guys who bought 'em, liked 'em, never trading them in.

Closest I came was buying .41 Magnum brass at a gun show for a great price. I bought it and several bullet molds before actually getting my first .41 Magnum handgun more than two years later but I had ammo loaded and ready. I finally got a Blackhawk in the early '90s when Ruger decided to make a run of .41 Magnum Blackhawks.



The cast of characters includes (L-R): 189-gr. zinc slug, RCBS 210-gr. SWC, Lyman 410459, Saeco 230-gr. SWC, LBT 250-gr. WFN and Todd Corder's 270-gr. LFNGC slug.



Tank bought these zinc bullets from Midsouth Shooter's Supply. Tank says he might just try casting the non-traditional bullet material in the future.



Tank uses his Ruger Bisley Hunter with a Leupold 4X scope to get the most accuracy out of the .41 Mag, alongside his Marlin 1894 with Skinner peep sight.

After the first, the gates opened up and I started seeing them after I stopped looking. Of course, I never passed on any I saw.

STRAIGHT SHOOTER

The .41 Magnum seems to have inherent accuracy. All of mine seem to shoot accurately. Maybe it's the powder capacity to bore-size ratio, or the low number of runs keeps the tooling in spec longer? Maybe the manageable recoil has something to do with it? Maybe a combination of all three? Either way, I've always found the .41 Mag an accurate cartridge.

THE MOLDS

The first mold I obtained was an RCBS 210-gr. SWC. An accurate bullet, I shot it the first couple of years along with the "Keith" slug, Lyman 410459. I found a "used" double cavity, followed by a 4-banger, to speed-up production rate. I happily shot bullets from these molds for years over 20 grains of 2400, Elmer's load, for nearly 1,500 fps.

About 7-8 years ago, I won an online bid for a rare 230-gr. four-cavity Saeco Keith mold which drops beautiful "Keith" style bullets, the only difference being a slightly heavier nose profile.

LBT

In the early '90s I learned about a company called LBT and their radiused flat-nosed designs in Long Flat-Nose (LFN) and Wide Flat-Nose (WFN).

Veral Smith designed these bullets to keep more weight on the outside of the

Tank's love for .41 Magnum guns is well-placed — they're inherently accurate!



cartridge case to allow for more powder capacity inside. Along with his efficient bullet lube, higher velocity and better accuracy were obtained with the heavier bullets.

I borrowed friend Dick Thompson's 250-gr. WFN mold and cast a lifetime's worth of slugs with it before mailing it back to him. Loaded over 17 grains of 2400 gives you 1,300 fps from most revolvers and all the accuracy you can hold.

CUSTOM MOLDS

Lastly, I have a mold from Todd Corder that drops a 270-gr. LFNGC design bullet. Todd had Lee Precision make a run of his

design and sells them. It is a great design and shoots extremely well in my guns with the same 17 grains of 2400 at 1,300 fps.

ZINC?

A couple of winters ago I received a sales ad from a popular shooting supply house listing Zinc .41 caliber bullets for \$7 a hundred. The price was too good to pass, plus it piqued my interest so I ordered six bags. Taller than my 270-gr. Corder bullets, the Zinc slugs only weighed 180 grains but boy did they shoot!

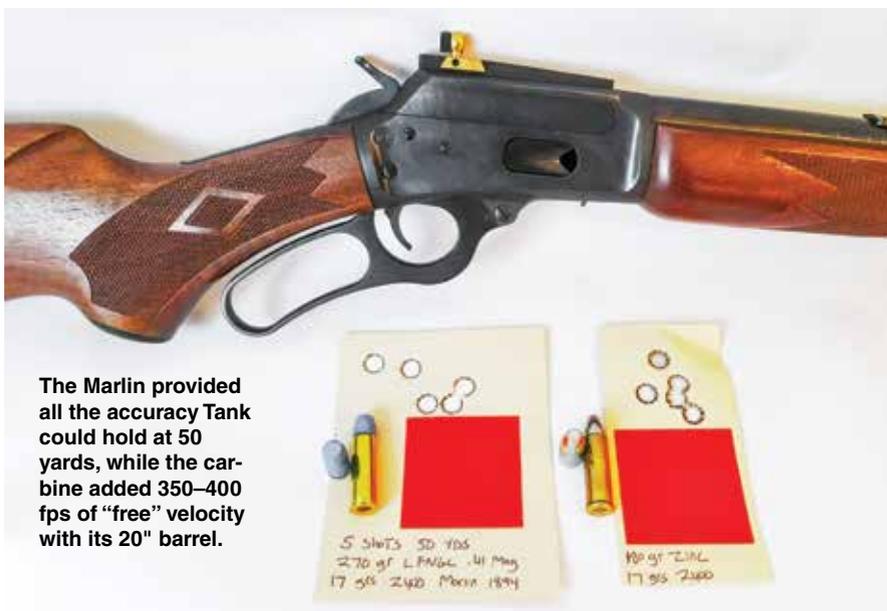
As a confirmed bullet caster, I've melted my fair share of wheel-weights (WW) for alloy. You always separate the lead WW from the Zinc WW as zinc and lead won't mix. It ruins your whole pot of alloy if they melt together.

When loaded over 17 grains of 2400, velocities run just over 1,300 fps from handguns and are extremely accurate. I just might have to experiment with casting zinc bullets in the future, so stay tuned.

It will give me something to do with the buckets of separated zinc WW I already have, plus I like the results — and you never know when some ranges might call for lead free ammo.

FRIENDLY ADVICE

The .41 magnum, the middle magnum, is a good one. If you happen to stumble across one, grab it, because you never know when you'll see one again ... especially if I see it first!



The Marlin provided all the accuracy Tank could hold at 50 yards, while the carbine added 350-400 fps of "free" velocity with its 20" barrel.

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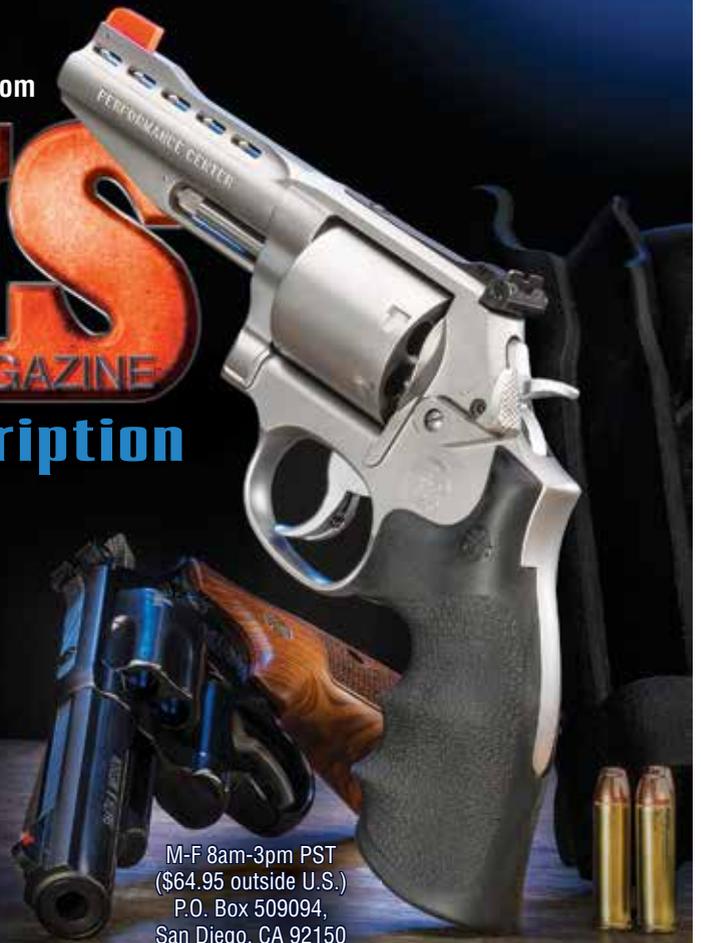
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of the stalls. Nothing happened as I quickly left the bathroom but I often wonder if my little put-on planted enough doubt in their minds to stop them from requesting my wallet or worse.

Of course, it's never a bad idea to turn around or leave as quickly as possible if things begin to look dicey. It is better to find another restroom or go outside to the bushes than turn your back on someone who is spending an inordinate amount of

it and undoubtedly drawing unwanted attention. I've seen cops hang the gun itself off a hook by the trigger guard, which is only slightly less dangerous than handing it to the nearest toddler. All these concerns leave the inside-the-pants method the only safe choice.

THE TECHNIQUE

To perform, you hold your firearm in one hand while undoing your various belts, zippers, support garments and other stuff I don't want to know about with the other hand. Then, as you lower yourself into

“THE EFFECT OF A HANDFUL OF LOOSE 9MM ROUNDS BOUNCING AROUND ON TERRAZZO IN AN OTHERWISE SILENT BATHROOM IS SIMPLY BREATHTAKING!”

time in front of the mirror picking his teeth for no obvious reason — he doesn't care about hygiene, he's waiting for potential witnesses to leave.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

There is one other great restroom mystery of gun life we shall address: What should you do with a handgun while conducting a sit-down transaction inside a stall?

There are several thoughts on this maneuver. The most common technique is to place the gun on the toilet tank but this is a very bad idea. First, many public restroom toilets don't even have a tank in the first place, rendering the point moot. Secondly, regardless of how careful you are, it is very easy for the gun to slide off the slick porcelain surface and go noisily clattering to the ground. Finally, more than one person has left a gun sitting on the toilet when they exited the stall.

Hanging your holster from your belt over a hook (if provided) is another option but there is still the good possibility of the gun falling to the ground, possibly damaging

a sitting position, place the gun into the basket formed by your pants or undergarments, taking great care not to point the muzzle at any part of your body.

Though it seems improbable, this is actually a fairly secure position for the weapon. Even when you move, the gun will usually remain in place or, at worse, start to silently slide down a pants leg.

Once finished, you reverse the process to re-dress. One huge benefit is you will never leave your gun behind.

While you're dealing with your gun, don't forget spare magazines, speed loaders or loose ammo. Nearly every long-time shooter has gone to the restroom and had ammunition go rattling across the floor after forgetting what was in their pants pockets. The effect of a handful of loose 9mm rounds bouncing around on *terrazzo* in an otherwise silent bathroom is simply breathtaking! Always check your pockets!

Unfortunately, we must here end the lesson because we're running out of room — which is too bad because I still had some killer “dump pouch” material ready to go. 🐾

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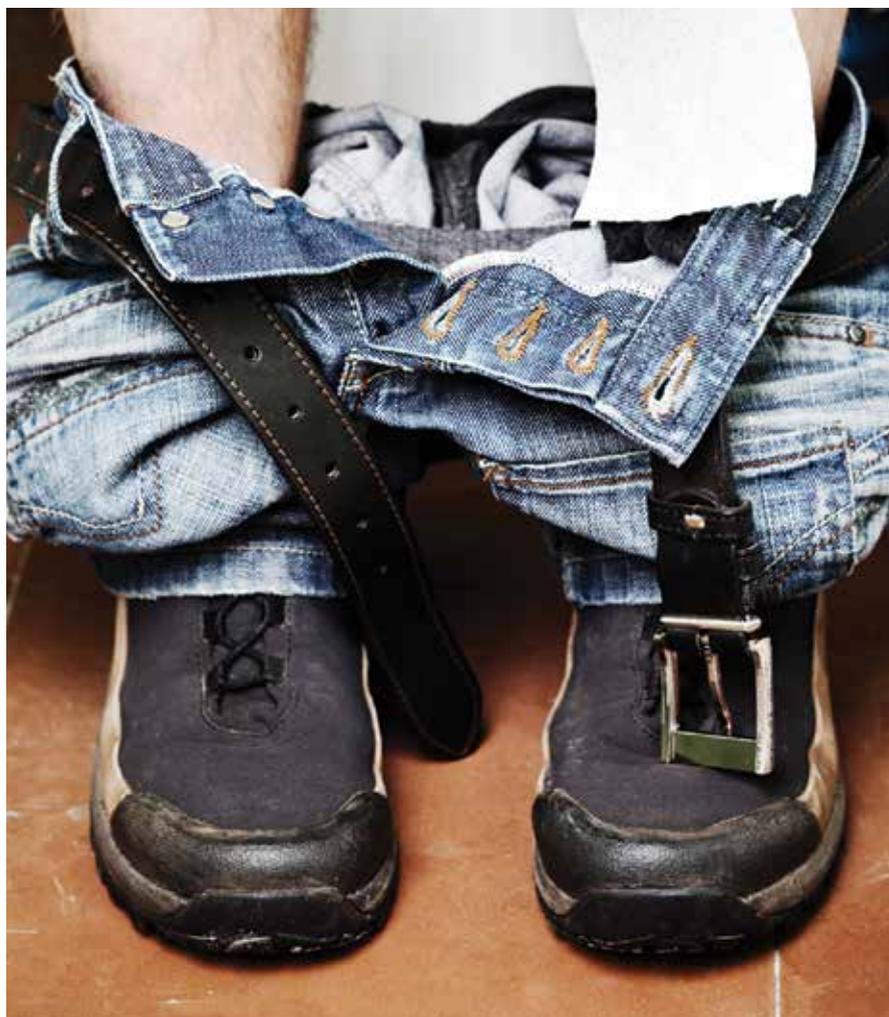
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SURVIVING ON THE THRONE

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In days of yore, the King was always worried about being killed by his foes while sitting atop the throne. It's still a problem today but in a much different vein.

You will quickly guess where I was sitting when the inspiration to this column struck.

THINKING SPOT

I had just retired to my favorite contemplation location atop the cool white porcelain when a thought suddenly occurred: Using the restroom is an everyday human activity fraught with self-defense problems but it's something seldom discussed. I immediately realized this was a grand idea for a column.

"Besides," I thought, "just imagine the bathroom humor possibilities."

First, we are talking solely about public restroom facilities. If you're concerned

about an attack in your own home, you should reconsider your living arrangements or contact the nearest reality television program. A hybrid of the situation is the danger faced living in a barracks or dorm, but this column won't cover assault by shaving cream, water bucket and digital camera.

WHY?

The reason for violence in public bathrooms is simple: You are obviously indisposed and not in a very good position to fight back. The dirtballs of the world know this well. In fact, one of the more tragic cases I assisted with during my time at the Cop Shop was a minister murdered at an interstate rest area simply because the suspect wanted to know what it felt like to kill someone. The bad guy was caught and

eventually given a nice all-expenses-paid execution by the state — unfortunately, it didn't do anything to help the minister or his family.

The first step to staying safe in the restroom is simply being aware. In nearly every restroom attack I can remember having covered during my career, the victim saw the suspect(s) in the area prior to the incident. Regardless, they continued onward with their important mission, happily ignorant in the belief they would never personally become a crime victim.

If you are making a pit stop and there are creepy people hanging about, you need to reconsider the urgency of the visit. The danger is dramatically increased during late night and early morning hours since this is prime hunting time for the felons and perverts of the world.

Buddies and I have discussed, humorously and otherwise, the proper safety protocols and positioning in a restroom. Our learned debates eventually agreed if men are conducting stand-up operations, you are safest inside a restroom stall with the door shut and secured, especially if alone.

TRAVEL IN A HERD

It is always a good idea to travel with a partner when using a public restroom, especially during late hours or in more isolated locations. Women are obviously way ahead of men on this point although I'm fairly sure it isn't for tactical reasons. A group of three or more is even better since it becomes profoundly more difficult for even two attackers to achieve control. In any group, one person is usually finished before the other(s) but the Speed Racers of the world should deign to remain inside, fussing with hand washing or grooming in the mirror to make sure his or her partner can complete their visit unmolested.

FAKE IT

A good bluff can be handy at times. One time during a late-night visit to a truck stop, two suspicious looking young men entered the restroom where I was blissfully ignoring my own rule and standing alone at the line of urinals. Though I was indeed armed, I didn't like the odds so I blurted out, "Hey Bill, I'll be outside when you're done," to my imaginary partner inside one

continued on page 73



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