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The Springfield Armory
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TWO LETTERS OFF

In the August 2020 edition of *GUNS Magazine*, the article "Colonial Marines M41A Pulse Rifle" by Will Dabbs mentioned the creature effects in the movie *Aliens* were done by Stan Wilson. It was actually Stan Winston.

Larry S.

Yep, you're the third movie buff to mention it! As a result, I've threatened Doc with a cash donation in his name to Bernie Sanders. —BW

.22 ADD

In the September issue ("SK and Lapua Rimfire Ammo") it states the various .22 rounds have 2.59 grams of powder. With that load the bullets would travel significantly faster than the 1,090 fps listed. I don't think 2.59 grams (40 grains) of powder would fit in a .22 rim fire case.

Larry Stovich

I think you've already heard this mucho times but I'm just getting around to reading it. I think Mr. Freeman certainly meant the

LR loads used 2.9 GRAINS rather than the impostor 2.9 GRAMS! An easy mistake when trying to meet a deadline!

Steve via email

The Lapua website lists the metric bullet weight alongside avoirdupois (as is common with European manufacturers) and it was reported as load data. To both .22 rimfire reloaders out there: don't use 2.9 grams of powder in anything. In the future, we'll remember nothing is ever given in grams except illegal drugs! —BW

MAS KUDOS

I want to thank Mr. Ayooob for his recent article in *GUNS Magazine* which showed empathy and options for those of us shooters who are chronically infirmed. I had back surgery 20 years ago and simply cannot carry anything on my belt. Mr. Ayooob nailed both the weight factor and most importantly the balance factor as pain generators in his article. I am now motivated to move from pocket carry and try some other options. Thank you.

David Rylak

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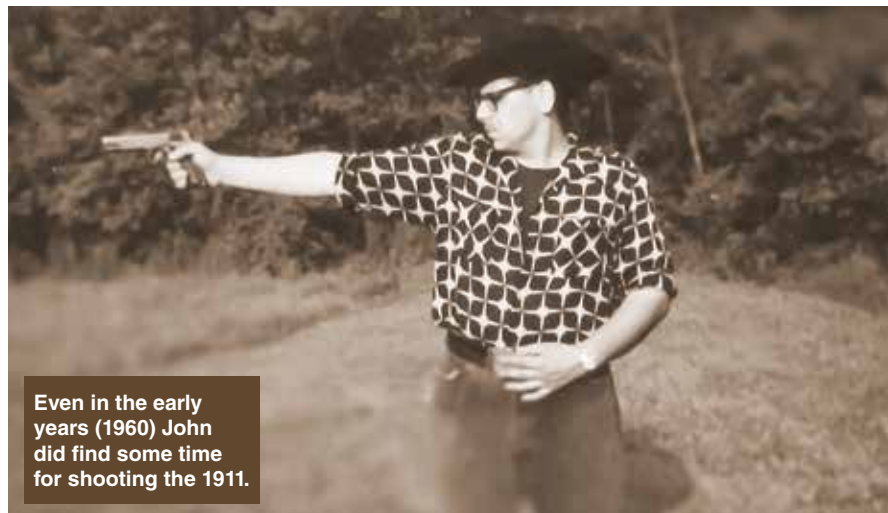
CHANGE HAPPENS, EVEN TO A SIXGUN EXPERT

“The best laid plans of mice and men go oft awry,” said poet Bobby Burns. John Steinbeck took this as his theme for his novel *Of Mice and Men*. Unfortunately, it’s too often true.

I started my sixgunnin’ life with single-actions and expected to end it the same way. My very first handgun in 1956 was the Ruger .22 Single-Six. Just as so many other young fellows my age, I felt it was the best way to start. My second single-action, and first centerfire, was a circa-1900 Colt Single Action Army .38-40 with a 4¾" barrel. It was a typical example of “used but not abused” — the case hardening had faded on the frame and the checkering on the rubber grips was well-worn, however it was a beautiful example of a well-cared for Colt Single Action even though it was nearly 60 years old.

THE COLLECTION STARTS

When the Colt “2nd Generation” Single Action Army sixguns arrived in my area in late 1956, I added a 7½" .45 Colt to my growing accumulation of single-actions. This was my first “concealed weapon.” It wasn’t chosen for such duty because it was



Even in the early years (1960) John did find some time for shooting the 1911.

the best choice but simply because it was the best choice of what I had. I had learned the old trick of placing it in the waist belt with the loading gate open to keep it from slipping down. Worked just fine!

I soon added two more Rugers as they became available, the .357 Magnum Blackhawk and the .44 Magnum Blackhawk. The latter was a real eye-opener! Earlier I had read reports of the new Smith &

Wesson .44 Magnum by Elmer Keith and Maj. Hatcher. Keith said the recoil would not bother a “Seasoned Sixgun Man” and was not as bad as shooting a .38 Special Chiefs Special. Hatcher took the opposite extreme and said firing it was like getting hit in the palm of the hand with a baseball bat.

When I shot the .44 Magnum Smith & Wesson, in this case a 4" version, I definitely swung more towards Hatcher’s assessment than Keith’s. Because of this when I purchased my first .44 Magnum; I went with the Ruger. If anything, it was worse than the 4" S&W .44 Magnum. The Ruger Blackhawk went straight up under recoil moving backwards in my hand and the hammer dug a hole between the thumb and trigger finger. I hung the .44 Blackhawk on a peg in my bedroom and went back to happily shooting the Colt SAA and Ruger .357 Magnum Blackhawk.

RARE BREED

Now with all these early years of shooting sixguns, semi-automatics were not totally ignored. In the 1950s and early 1960s, one rarely ever saw semi-automatics in gun shop display cases. Those found were mostly military surplus .45 ACP 1911 Government Models. Every one of us had two guns thanks to the NRA. Both the 1903 Springfield bolt action .30-06 and the .45 ACP Government Model were made



Even Ruger is now part of the 1911 scene and yes, John really appreciates them.



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John's ultimate test of any handgun is whether or not it is worthy of engraving, ivory stocks and carved leather. The Colt 1911 passes with honors.

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When I moved my family 2,500 miles west to Idaho the Government Model was under the front seat of our 1965 Ford Station Wagon. When I traveled north and across the Lewis and Clark Highway to the University of Montana for three summers of graduate school, the same .45 ACP rode in my belt in the small of my back. In both cases it was loaded with military surplus ammunition. However, by the time I started graduate school in 1969, something else had happened which would start moving the semi-automatic pistols from acknowledgment to total acceptance and appreciation. It was the Gun Control Act of 1968, or as it is "lovingly" known, GCA68.

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

When this law was passed no one really knew what the effect would be. It was much like the so-called Affordable Care Act in which it had to be "passed so we would know what's in it." Virtually every department store, grocery store and even drugstore had a gun department in those days. Since we had no idea what was really coming, I went to one of the local department stores to see what I should purchase before the law went into effect. The closest store had three

Colt Commander semi-automatic pistols, one each in .45 ACP, 9 mm and .38 Super. I really couldn't afford even one of them so, figuring three would not be any worse than one as far as my finances were concerned, I bought all three.

This was my first encounter with the .38 Super. However I had read Jeff Cooper who called it a perfect Trail Gun. The .38 Super first arrived around 1929/1930 and the early guns were described as flatter shooting and more accurate than the standard .45 ACP 1911. Something had obviously happened since then as this .38 Super would not stay on a piece of notebook paper at 25 yards.

The problem was the barrel. They had changed the barrel and for some reason Colt had gone from using the mouth of the case for headspacing to the very small rim at the back of the case. I sent it off to Bill Wilson and he installed a properly dimensioned barrel and groups shrunk immediately to 2" or less. It began my love affair with the .38 Super which has yet to abate.

STEINBECK RETURNS

It was 50 years ago and I still kept mainly shooting single-action and double-action sixguns. However, in recent years the best laid plans of mice and men have kicked in. Whereas in the early years — and mostly thereafter — I found single-actions the most

pleasant to shoot followed by properly stocked double actions, everything has now changed.

At this stage of my life my hands have become much more tender. (I wonder if Major Hatcher was my age when he tested the .44 Magnum?) I now find the single-actions have reversed their role and now they are the most uncomfortable to shoot, followed by the double-action sixguns.

Now, lo and behold, I find semi-automatics — 1911s chambered in .45 ACP, .38 Super, 9 mm and even 10 mm — the most easy shooting.

TODAY

I still shoot single-action and double action sixguns, however I am much more careful about the recoil level of my loads these days. In fact, for most uses I now load .45 Colt, .44 Magnum and .44 Special at the same level as .45 ACP Hard Ball, namely a 230-gr. bullet at about 800 fps. Heavy loads are shot very sparingly and in fact they are rarely ever needed.

Sixty-five years ago I recognized and acknowledged the semi-automatic pistol for what it was. Today I have a deep appreciation for semi-autos, and yes — if it is possible to love an inanimate object, semi-automatics have joined single- and double-action sixguns in my shooting love life. 🦏

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Hogue grips on a late model K-22 (top) fit most hands better than “splinter” stocks on its 1930s predecessor (bottom).

FIT VERSUS FEEL NO, THEY'RE NOT THE SAME THING ...

Ever since there have been gun writers, there has been the advice, “Choose the handgun that feels the best.” I may have been guilty of it myself in my early years, to which I can only say, *Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*.

If I want something to feel good in my hand, I'll pet a kitten or find some Waterford crystal to run under my fingertips. What we should be looking for in a handgun, if we seek maximum performance, is *fit* as opposed to *feel*.

I learned early the S&W J-Frame or Colt D-Frame revolver with the factory “splinter” stocks of the day felt great in my hand but would twist in my grasp upon recoil and force me to re-grip every couple of shots. The same was true with larger-frame wheelguns. Grip adapters and better stocks solved the problem but even there I found subtle differences. Pachmayr grips felt better but I shot better with Hagues, so I started switching to the latter.

DETERMINING FIT

Let's define “fit.” Can we reach all the parts we need to manipulate without shifting our grasp? Can we get enough hand around the girth of the grip for a solid

hold, but still have room for the support hand — without our hits or speed suffering when shooting one-hand-only? For good shooting, trigger control is the heart of the beast which makes trigger reach a key factor in fit. On the gun, it's measured from the point at the center of the backstrap where the web of the hand rests, to the center of the face of the trigger.

On the hand, it's measured from the center of the web of the hand in line with the long bones of the forearm to the chosen point of contact for the finger on the trigger. Depending on the gun and the shooter, it might be the “pad” of the finger (think, “the whorl of the fingerprint”) or the distal joint on the palmar surface the old-time double action revolver shooters call “the power crease.” I have learned to live with either (and have to, on GLOCKs or the first shot from a Beretta 92), but prefer the power crease because it gives me more leverage.

GRIP ANGLE

Grip-to-barrel angle is important too. As a young guy shooting .22 bulls-eye matches, I loved the exquisite workmanship of the Smith & Wesson Model 41 but it felt like a T-square in my hand. I had to deliberately

“Splinter” grips (left) can squirm in the hand; Pachmayr Compacts (right) change both grasp and trigger reach.



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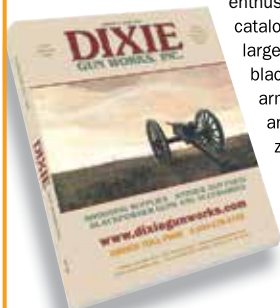
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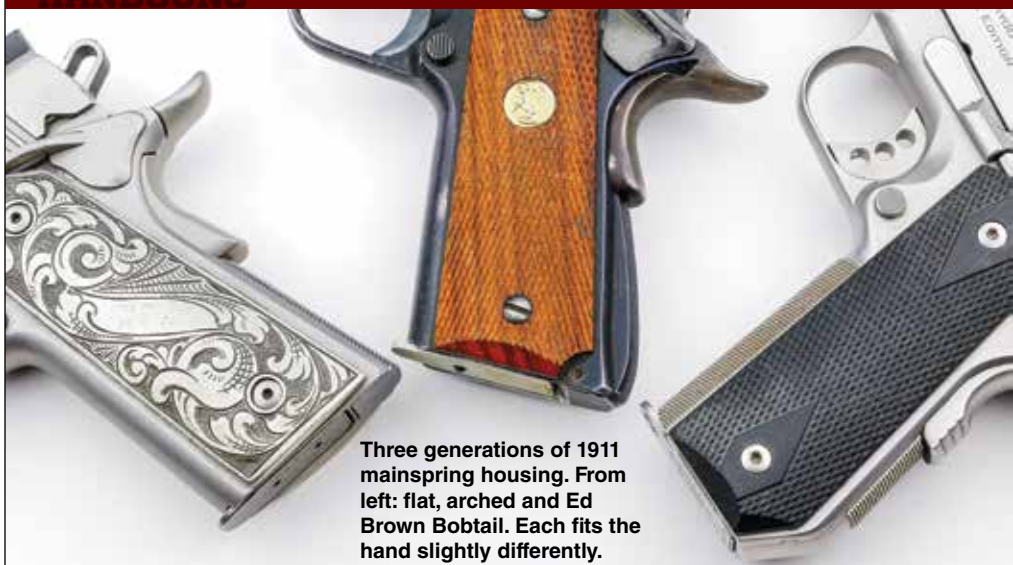
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HANDGUNS



**Three generations of 1911
mainspring housing. From
left: flat, arched and Ed
Brown Bobtail. Each fits the
hand slightly differently.**

cock my wrist to shoot it; the steeper angle of the High Standard Supermatic "pointed" more naturally for me so it's what I went with. It's probably one reason I'm comfortable with GLOCKS, which have a similar Luger-esque grip angle. It's not just about point-shooting, either. For aimed fire, if the gun "comes to line of sight by itself" you'll always be faster with it.

You can adapt to a gun that doesn't fit you well but you may never reach your peak performance level or comfort level. There was a period when the police department I served issued the Ruger P90. Now, the P90 was a rugged, reliable beast, a Kalashnikov of .45 autos. It was amazingly accurate and came with a surprisingly good pull. But it fit my hand like a brick with a trigger. I was reminded of something my mentor Bill Jordan once wrote: "The Border Patrol campaign hat never quite fit our heads, but eventually our heads came to fit the hat." The P90 was like this for me. I managed to win a state shoot for cops with it one year when the rules required the issued weapon, but I had to really work at it and when I got permission to carry a 1911 .45 auto in uniform again, I jumped at the chance.

Speaking of 1911s, I started with the flat mainspring housing in 1960 and apparently habituated to it. The arched 1911-A1 housing never felt quite right but I didn't shoot any worse with it. The round-butt 1911 pioneered by Ed Brown feels better yet to me but I can't really see a performance difference between the three when shooting. It can get very subjective.

FIGURING FIT

When you dry-fire the new gun you're thinking of buying, snap it up to firing



**Tyler-T grip adapter on J-Frame S&W
(right) greatly improved "fit" over standard
stocks (above, left). This shooter finds
trigger reach optimal on his Sarsilmaz
SAR 9 (below).**



position and see if the sights are on target. Press the trigger back and see if the sights stay on target, but this is just the start. It may take hundreds of rounds, preferably timed and scored, before you can say decisively, "This shoots better for me!"

How amenable the gun feels just holding it can fool you. A gun that doesn't feel so great may shoot better for you. This is the puppy you want to follow you home — and don't worry about the feel, because shooting better feels good!

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BROWNING AUTOMATIC 5

JOHN BROWNING'S LAST IS CONSIDERED HIS BEST

In my last two shotgun columns I wrote about John Browning's first two shotgun designs: the lever-action Winchester 1887 and the Winchester pump-action 1897. This month we'll take a look at his third — the world's first semiautomatic shotgun, the Browning Automatic 5, most often called the Auto-5 or simply A-5. The name of the shotgun designates it is an autoloader with a capacity of five rounds, four in the magazine tube and one in the chamber.

HISTORY

The Auto-5 was produced continually for almost 100 years from 1900 to 1998 by several makers including FN, Remington (Model 11) and Savage (Model 720). The Remington Model 11 was the first autoloading shotgun made in the U.S. and was produced from 1905 to 1947.

The shotgun was used to deadly effect by both peace officers and outlaws during the prohibition era and the military bought almost 60,000 Model 11s during World War II.

The Remington was also used to train aerial gunners in World War II. I remember my dad telling me how they would drive around a large circular track with two "automatic shotguns" mounted on a truck, following a second truck launching clay targets. The purpose was for the gunners to get a sense of firing at a moving target, from a moving target, at different angles of attack. He said for a farm kid, it was the most fun he had while in the Service.

THE LOOK

The shotgun has a distinctive high receiver, earning it the nickname "Humpback." The

top of the receiver goes straight back level with the barrel before dropping to the stock, making the A-5 easy to identify.

The A-5 can be loaded by placing four rounds into the tubular magazine. Apply the safety. When the bolt handle is retracted it stays to the rear then a button on the right side of the receiver is pushed, chambering a shell and closing the bolt. The shotgun can be "topped off" by placing another shell in the magazine.

The A-5 is a long-recoil action. When a chambered shell is fired, the barrel and bolt recoil together to re-cock the hammer. As the barrel returns to its initial position, the bolt remains behind and ejects the spent shell. The bolt then returns forward and feeds another shell. This type of long-recoil action was the first of its kind and patented by Browning in 1900.

RUN THE GUN

I have heard several people say the one problem with the Auto-5 is it's somewhat finicky about ammo. The most common complaints are ejection problems with light loads and excessive recoil with

buckshot and slugs. Both can usually be corrected in a few minutes.

The A-5 has a system of a friction piece and ring that retard the barrel's rearward travel. The friction piece and ring are set based on the type of load to be fired through the gun.

On one side of the ring is a bevel while it is flat on the reverse side. For heavy loads the side with the bevel fits on the friction piece in front of the recoil spring. For light loads, remove the friction piece, ring and recoil spring. Replace the ring with the flat side towards the muzzle, replace the recoil spring and the friction piece. Setting these rings correctly is vital to good performance and to ensure a long life to the shotgun.

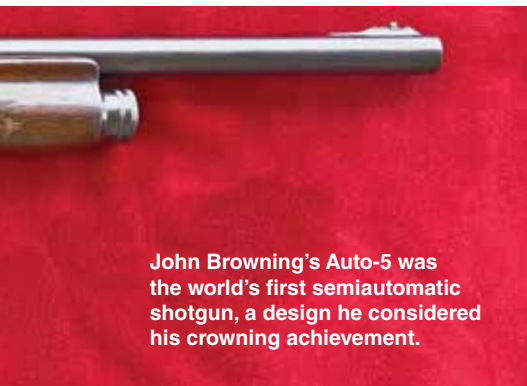
THE WIDOW MAKER

People who believe the safety inside the trigger guard of an M1/M14/Mini-14 is unsafe would almost certainly become apoplectic of the safety on an Auto-5.

On the early guns the safety was positioned slightly forward of the trigger and was pushed to the rear for "safe" earning it the nickname of the "widow maker" or "suicide safety." Gun Safety Rule 2 was, and remains, especially important. Somewhere around 1928 Remington changed it to the now-familiar cross-bolt safety behind the trigger.



Early production guns had a bird's head pistol grip. On Denny's gun, a rubber recoil pad replaces the original steel butt plate.



John Browning's Auto-5 was the world's first semiautomatic shotgun, a design he considered his crowning achievement.

Removing the barrel is like any other shotgun. Unscrew the magazine cap and lift the barrel out. To replace it, however, it is important to push the barrel down hard until it stops inside of the receiver before replacing the magazine cap. Just screwing on the cap will likely leave the barrel out of battery.

For hunting, it's possible to cut a dowel of appropriate length so the magazine will only hold three rounds to be in compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

If you want to go the other way and increase the capacity, the threads at the end of the magazine tube are the same as on modern Remington shotguns. Therefore, a magazine extension for a Model 870/1100/11-87 will work.

FIRST YEAR GUN

The shotgun shown here is my personal Model 11 and its low four-digit serial number places it in the first year of production (1905). The previous owner of this shotgun apparently did not know or appreciate it was a first year production piece because the barrel has been shortened to 18.5". A custom front sight consists of a professionally installed bead on a post fitted into a dovetailed ramp.

The stock has the old bird's head type pistol grip with checkering and the wood shows a lot of grain. A rubber recoil pad has replaced the original steel butt plate. The forend is also hand checkered.

It has been said Browning believed the Automatic 5 was his crowning achievement — high praise itself for this shotgun.

While original FN-made Auto-5s have become somewhat scarce, the Remington guns are still seen quite often and going for around \$500. This is more than a fair price for a great shotgun still carrying a lot of history with it.



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Sako 85 Finnlight .243 and a nice whitetail buck, one shot with a 95-gr. Nosler Ballistic Tip bullet. Scope is a Swarovski 2.5-10x42, the 42 referring to the objective lens diameter in millimeters.

METRIC MAYHEM

U.S. RIFLE CALIBERS MIX SYSTEMS OF MEASUREMENT

The metric system (or “SI” for those who wear a man bun) may be the standard throughout most of the world but it hasn’t made much inroad in the U.S. There are exceptions, of course. Scientists use the metric system for its “logic” and in order to be consistent with their colleagues in other parts of the world. During the ’60s Vietnam vets learned to express distances in “clicks” while college kids, at least according to legend, learned about grams and kilos from the drug trade.



Two 7x57 Mauser rifles, the top Brno ZG-47 has a 1:220mm twist equivalent to 1:8.66. The recently made Winchester 70 at the bottom has a 1:9.5 twist. They both work well with any 7x57 cartridge.

MIXING IT UP

American riflemen freely use metric as well as Imperial terms. Remington had a whole metric series with the 5mm, 6mm, 6.5mm, 7mm and 8mm cartridges. Americans cheerfully mix the two systems, for example naming cartridges 6mm-.284/6.5-.300 Weatherby Magnum, or even mixing metric with years as in 6mm-’06 or 6.5mm-’06.

Rifle barrels are measured in two basic ways, bore diameter and groove diameter. Bore diameter is the interior diameter of the barrel as it comes from the drilling machine. A .30-’06 barrel, for example, has a bore diameter of 0.300", as do many other .30-calibers such as .30-30 Winchester,



Tikka T3 .223 has a 22.4375" barrel, or in metric terms a 570mm barrel. What matters is with its Boyd thumbhole stock the rifle shoots five-shot groups at 100 yards of around 1/2".



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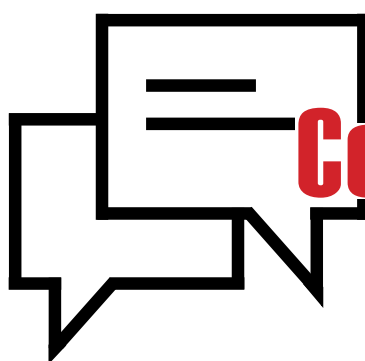
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.300 Savage, .300 Weatherby. Typically the rifling grooves are cut slightly deeper as bore size increases. With .22 caliber bores, the rifling grooves are generally (not always — in the shooting world there are exceptions to about everything) cut to a depth of 0.003". Since grooves are cut on both sides of the bore the total depth is 0.006", so the groove diameter is 0.006" larger than bore diameter. Bullet diameter usually is the same as groove diameter.

GROOVY

Barrels with bores above .22 cal. up to about .284 cal. generally have groove diameters 0.007" larger than bore diameter, while those with above .284 groove diameter is usually 0.008" larger than bore diameter. Remember there are always exceptions, and of course most factory barrels today are made by cold hammer forging or button rifling rather than with cut rifling.

Most of our centerfire .22 cartridges such as .222 and .223 Rem., .22-250, .220 Swift and others have a nominal bore diameter of 0.218", a groove diameter of 0.224", and fire 0.224" bullets. For cartridges such as .243 Win., 6mm Rem., 6mm Creedmoor, .240 Wby. the bore/groove dimensions are 0.236" and 0.243". For American .25-caliber cartridges the numbers are 0.250"/0.257". The various .270 cartridges have a bore diameter of 0.270", groove diameter 0.277". The .30 cal. cartridges have a bore diameter of 0.300" and a groove diameter of 0.308".

Some common metric sizes converted to inches (to three decimal places): 5mm = 0.197"; 6mm = 0.236"; 6.5mm = 0.256"; 7mm = 0.276"; 8mm = 0.315"; 9mm = 0.354".

The 6mm/0.236" diameter is particularly interesting as it has a long history in America. Way back in the 1890s the U.S. military developed and adopted the 6mm Lee Navy cartridge — very much over the objections of the "Old Guard" who were horrified enough at such small bores as the .30-40 Krag replacing their beloved .45-70.

THE OTHER DIRECTION

Now let's convert the other way, changing popular bullet inch diameters to metric: 0.224" = 5.69mm; 0.243" = 6.17mm; 0.257" = 6.53mm; 0.264" = 6.71mm; 0.277" = 7.04mm; 0.284" = 7.21mm; 0.308" = 7.82mm. A reloader who has taken the time to plow through these numbers is likely thinking, "Hold on, this can't be right! The box of bullets I



Dave's favorite deer rifle, a Sako 85 Finnlight .243. Informally, it has a 20" barrel (actually 20.27" or 515mm) and weighs 6 lbs. out of the box (actually 6 lb. 2.8 oz or 2.8 kg).



It would seem 6mm is equivalent to .243 and so on, but the metric numbers refer to bore diameter (equivalent to .236) while the inch terms refer to groove/bullet diameter. The 139-gr. bullets? Because they're actually a nice round 9 grams.

just bought says 6mm .243, or 6.5mm .264, or 7mm .284. Are you suggesting bullet makers can't read a conversion table?"

Not at all, it's just they have another goal, which is for you the buyer to get the right bullets for the cartridge you are reloading. If you have a 6mm Rem., Creedmoor or Lapua, just get bullets marked 6mm in the weight you want and don't fret the actual bullet diameter is 6.17mm.

Speaking of bullet weights, some of the unusual bullet weights we have are due to metric roots. By "unusual" I mean bullets for 7mm cartridges with weights of 139 gr. or 154 gr. Why not just go to 140 or 150 gr.? Well, the European practice is to measure weights in grams. A 5-gram bullet is equivalent to 77 grains. Other examples: 6/93 gr., 7/108 gr., 8/123 gr., 9/139 gr., 10/154 gr.

GOING THE DISTANCE

Standard barrel lengths on American-made rifles are usually 18, 20, 22 or 24" long so why do European-made rifles have oddball barrel lengths? Tikka T3 rifles

generally have 22 7/16" barrels in standard cartridges, 24 3/8" for magnum cartridges. They are even numbers, but in metric terms — 570mm and 620mm respectively. My much-loved Sako Finnlight .243 has a 20.27" barrel and weighs 6 lb. 2.8 oz. In metric terms it has a 515mm barrel and weighs 2.8 kg. Actually I don't care, I just think of it as a 6-lb. rifle with a 20" barrel.

TWISTING IT UP

Barrel twist rates are one area in which American measurements seem to dominate. Twists are generally measured as one turn in "X" inches. A 1:10 twist is one rotation of the bullet in 10". The system is so well known we just say twist is 1:8, 1:12 and so forth. European makers do use metric terms such as one rotation in 220mm equivalent to 1:8.66. My Sako Finnlight .243 is shown as having a 1:10 twist (1:254mm) though I suspect it is actually 1:250mm (1:9.84). Since the U.S. is by far the biggest market for sporting rifle sales, it makes sense to use terms Americans are used to.

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THE .38 WCF DUKE'S "TODAY'S FAVORITE"

People sometimes ask, "What's your favorite gun?" Or sometimes it's, "What's your favorite cartridge?" I always reply, "You mean today? I change my mind about it often." Today, as I write this column my favorite cartridge is .38-40, actually introduced as .38 Winchester Centerfire (.38 WCF). The proper date was 1879, not 1874 as sometimes written. The introductory firearm was Winchester's Model 1873 lever gun. Other rifle manufacturers followed, such as Marlin with their Model 1894 lever gun, Colt with their Lightning pump action and even Remington with a more modern pump-action named Model 14½.

SIXGUNS

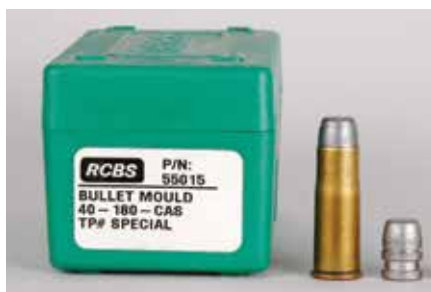
Smith & Wesson made a few top break Model Three .38-40 revolvers and even some later swing-cylinder N-Frame Hand Ejectors. Both types of S&Ws are so rare as to be nigh on invisible. Colt added .38-40 as a chambering in their Single Action Army revolver in 1884. Contrary to S&W's luck with the cartridge, it became the SAA's third most popular in regards to numbers prior to the end of 1st Generation production in 1941. Today my favorite revolver is an SAA made in 1926 and sent to a hardware store in Salt Lake City, according to its factory letter of authenticity. The letter also relates it left the factory with a 7½" barrel, blued and color case hardened finish with the type of grips unknown. It still wears the same barrel, has some blue and frame colors remaining and its grips are modern hard rubber replacements for its originals, whatever they were.

COUNTING THE REASONS

Why is SAA .38-40 so well esteemed by me currently? During this first half of 2020 not only have we been locked down here on "Rancho Venturino" due to the pandemic but I've suffered from some severe lower back troubles. The only shooting I've been able to do has been by sitting on a chair and firing out the window of my shooting shack. For recreation, I've been taking three Colt SAAs at a time and



Duke's favorite revolver is this .38 WCF/.38-40, 1926-vintage Colt SAA with 7½" barrel.



Duke's favorite .38 WCF/.38-40 handload uses RCBS bullet #40-180CAS.



These two Colt SAA .38 WCF/.38-40 revolvers show the caliber has been marked two different ways over the lifetime of the gun.

spending a few hours plinking at some steel plates at 25 yards. To make it interesting, I've fired a mix of chamberings — .38 Special, .38-40, .44 Special, .44-40 and .45 Colt — also with a variety of barrel lengths from 4 to 7½".

You readers must have guessed I hit steel most often with my 7½" .38-40. In truth I did, but actually shot well with all my .38-40 SAAs of which there are six others. Colt reintroduced .38-40 SAAs in 1993 and made them well into the 21st century. By my standards, all have been good revolvers with consistent barrel groove diameters of 0.400" and cylinder chamber mouths of 0.401". They have been some of the most accurate single action revolvers of my considerable experience.

Interestingly, until very late in the 1st Generation Colt caliber stamped their SAAs .38 WCF. Towards the end the marking was changed to .38-40. When reintroduced in 1993 the latter marking remained. However very late in the 20th century some SAAs ordered from the custom shop again carried the .38 WCF marking. I have them both ways. Also I have them with blue and color case hardened finish and fully nickel-plated.

THE ANSWER MAN

As much as I like SAA .38-40s (also .38-40 lever guns, but it's for another

column), there are two questions that deserve asking. One is: Why did Winchester introduce it in the first place? In actuality its case is merely the .44 WCF/.44-40 (introduced 1873) with its neck squeezed down from taking 0.425" bullets to taking 0.400" ones. (Diameters of factory-loaded lead bullets in the 1870s.) Original factory bullet weight for .44 was 200 grains and bullet weight for .38 was 180 grains.

My second question is: Why was this cartridge named .38? As said above, its bullets are true .40 calibers and Winchester's black powder factory loads only carried 38 grains of powder instead of 40. Logically, it should have been named .40-38 WCF. Of course people in charge of naming metallic cartridges from the very beginning have seemed a half-bubble off normal.

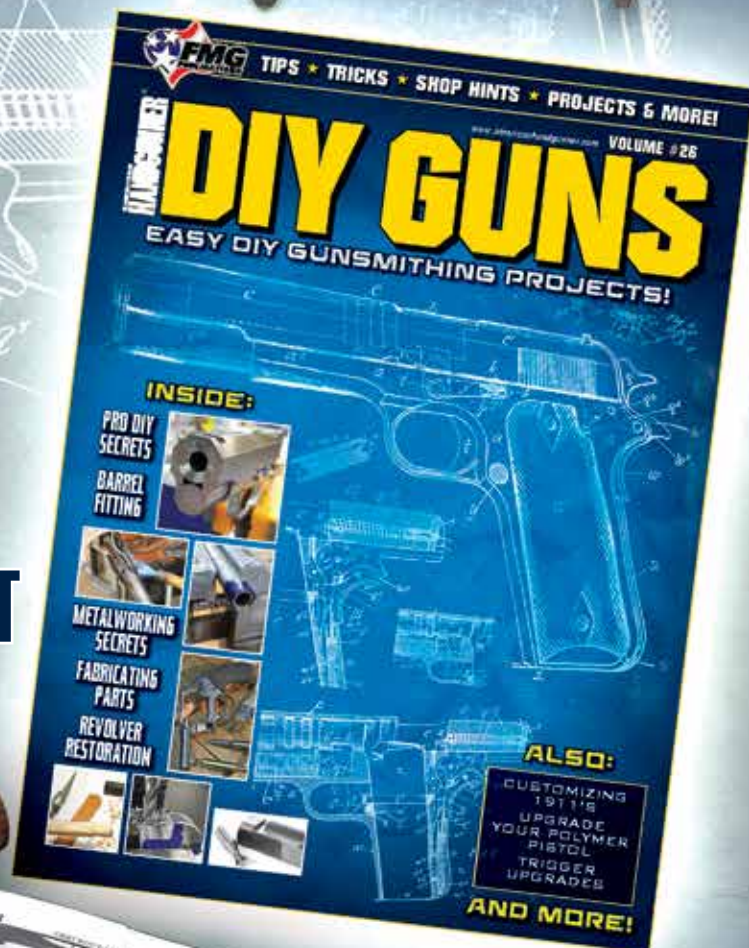
Of the big three ammunition manufacturers today — Winchester, Remington and Federal — only the first makes .38-40 factory loads with 180-gr. jacketed soft-point bullets. Black Hills may be a smaller ammo manufacturer but their .38-40 factory loads with 180-gr. lead RN/FPs are exceptional. Now in my golden years I favor only one .38-40 handload — 175- to 180-gr. RN/FP cast lead bullets over 5.5 grains of Hornady's Trail Boss powder. At 750 to 850 fps depending on barrel length it's not very powerful but suits my needs completely.

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CAST BULLETS IN .44 MAGNUM LEVERGUNS THEY REALLY *DO* WORK!

There are several factors involved when choosing a cast bullet for use in the .44 Magnum levergun. First is Overall Length (OAL). If the bullet makes the loaded round too long, it will not feed through the action. The shape of the bullet is also important. For example, Keith bullets often will not feed and/or chamber because their shape requires crimping over the front band. Another factor is diameter, especially the diameter in front of the face of the case mouth. A wide, sharp-shouldered bullet may feed through the action but not enter the chamber and if the diameter is too large even after entering the chamber, it might not seat deep enough to close the action.

Any cast bullets chosen should be used to make up several dummy rounds to cycle through the action and chamber. However, even if the bullet meets all of the necessary criteria for feeding and chambering it still may not shoot well. Two things to consider are bullet hardness and whether or not it has a gas check. In most of my experiments, I have found both of these are critical for obtaining the desired accuracy. Softer bullets without a check can be used, but only with very light loads.

NUMBER ONE WITH A BULLET

My most-used cast bullet in .44 Magnum sixguns over the past six decades has been the Lyman/Thompson #431244 Gas Check and the Keith bullet — in this case the H&G design, the closest available to his original design. The former will work through the action and chamber in the Marlin and Winchester Model 1894 along with the Rossi and Browning Model 92. However, it will not work in the longer action of the Marlin 336. With the Keith bullet seated over the front shoulder, it will work in all except the Rossi/Browning.

I am particularly fond of heavyweight bullets, those weighing around 300 grains in .44 Magnum sixguns, but what about their use in leverguns? I have 10 cast bullets on hand weighing from 290 grains up to 325 grains with all but two of them having gas checks. I loaded up dummy rounds using all of these bullets and then tested for feeding

and chambering through the guns listed previously. The results showed the Marlin would feed and chamber nine rounds and the Winchester all 10 rounds; the Rossi, two rounds and the Browning only one round. Obviously, the last two are not good choices if one wants to shoot a lot of heavyweight cast bullets. The only round to feed and chamber through all four leverguns was the Oregon Trail 300-gr. FP which does not have a gas check.

MICROGROOVES IN TIME

"Cast and 3/4-jacketed bullets proved impractical in the .44 rifle." Those words by my friend the late John Lachuk are found in an article from the 1960s and pertain to the .44 Magnum Marlin 336T levergun. Later on, another good friend of mine would lament the ability of the Marlin .444 to handle cast bullets. In both cases these leverguns had Micro-Groove barrels. I accepted the first statement and loaded all of my first .44 Magnum levergun loads with jacketed bullets only. By the time I got my first .444 Marlin I had learned something about cast bullets combined with Micro-Groove barrels.

The original statement is true as far as it goes. Trying to push cast bullets at Magnum velocities in Micro-Groove barrels does prove to be impractical. Slow them down and they normally will shoot fine at close range. However, cast bullets can be made to work

just fine at Magnum velocities but bullets must be carefully chosen. I have found several factors contribute to cast bullets shooting well in Marlin barrels including a hard bullet alloy and, most assuredly, a gas check on the base of the bullet. I have also found these two combined with a somewhat heavier bullet also aid in accuracy.

Sixgun-levergun combinations are quite popular today, perhaps even more so than they were 125 plus years ago. Back then, it was all cast bullets but they were not driven very fast and there were no Micro-Groove barrels. Today, we have many very fine .44 Magnum sixguns that will shoot just about any cast bullet well but this is not true for rifles. If one wants a cast bullet load for both sixgun and levergun, much time can be saved by first finding a load that works well in the rifle and chances are very high it will also work just fine in the chosen sixgun. Reverse the process and the probability of success goes way down.

ON THE LINE

Following are test results from an 18½" Marlin Model 336 Carbine with a Microgroove barrel. Groups are three shots at 50 yards with a 4X scope in place: Lyman/Thompson #431244GC loaded over 20.0 grains of #2400 results in a muzzle velocity of 1,624 fps and a 1" group; the SAECO 240 FPGC over the same charge of 20.0 grains of #2400 is 50 fps faster at 1,674 fps and a tighter 5/8"; while the heavier NEI 429.295 GC loaded with 21.5 grains of WW296 clocks out at 1,547 fps and a 1" group. A 295-gr. bullet at 1,550 fps is a very potent load on game.



John has used both Marlin and Winchester .44 Magnum leverguns for decades, with the Marlin 336 going back well over 50 years.

Both the Lyman/Thompson and the NEI are semi-wadcutters and must be crimped over the front shoulder for trouble-free feeding and chambering. Another long-time favorite cast bullet of mine going back about 40 years is the SSK-designed 310-gr. FP over 23.5 grains of WW680 (my stock of this old powder is about gone) for 1,600 fps and just over 1" at 50 yards with this same Marlin rifle. This load can also be duplicated with 21.5 grains of WW296 or H110.

I also shoot a lot of serious cast bullet loads through the Winchester 94AE Trapper with receiver sights. The Trapper version of the .44 Magnum Model 1894 has a 16½" barrel, full magazine tube and has been very popular as a woods gun. It packs easily and also goes well with pick-up trucks and jeeps as the short barrel and compact size makes it imminently more practical than a long-barreled bolt-action, especially for the 4x4 riding farmer and rancher.

Just as with most .44 Magnum levergun loads my powders of choice for full-house loads are #2400, H110 and WW296. With the Lyman/Thompson #431244GC over



The gas-checked flat-nosed bullet will normally perform better in leverguns than Keith-style bullets.



Semi-wadcutter Keith-style bullets may need to be crimped over the front shoulder to feed and chamber.

20.0 grains of #2400 results in 1,550 fps and a 1-1/2" group with iron sights at 50 yards while the NEI 429.295GC over 21.5 grains of WW296 shoots into the same group size with a muzzle velocity of 1,550 fps. Again, a very potent hunting load.

DOWNSIZING

We don't always need full house loads for the .44 Magnum leverguns. For lighter applications I have had good results with the hard-cast 240-gr. bullets from Oregon Trail. Using both Universal and Unique in 8.5 and 10.0 grain doses resulted in good groups at 50 yards of 2" or less. Ten grains of Universal with this bullet gives a muzzle velocity of 1,350 fps and accuracy right at 1", which is quite unusual for cast bullets and Micro Groove rifling.

For the 20" Rossi Model 92 I have also had excellent results with the Oregon Trail 240-gr. SWC. With 7.5 grains Unique the muzzle velocity is right at 1,150 fps with three shots going into 3/4" at 50 yards and 7.0 grains of WW231 is even slightly tighter at 5/8" with a muzzle velocity of 1,075 fps. 



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If you can handle a yardstick, you can handle the FX Wildcat MkII air rifle. The bullpup design makes it feel light and easy to handle as the weight is close to your body.

THE FX WILDCAT 'AIRPUP'

THIS PUPPY CAN RUN WITH THE BIG DOGS

Tom McHale

I'd describe the FX Wildcat MkII Air Rifle much like I would one of my all-time favorite football running backs.

Years ago, Mike Alstott ("The A-Train") played the position of Bruiser in Chief for the Tampa Bay Bucs. His build was interesting: He looked twice as wide as tall — a classic fireplug. He was able to pack copious amounts of maneuverability and power into the fullback-position package.

Bullpup-style airguns are similar in many ways. The FX Airguns Wildcat MkII air rifle is short and stocky like the A-Train but also handles effortlessly and is always ready to unleash plenty of power. This particular model is a .25 caliber but you can also get a Wildcat (MarkIII's are hitting the streets now) in .177, .22 and .30 caliber.

PREMIUM BULLPUP

The FX Wildcat MkII packs the heavy stuff close into the body. When you think about it, a bullpup design makes a lot of sense for airguns — especially larger caliber airguns. While

an airgun barrel doesn't have to be as sturdy (and heavy) as a centerfire, it has to carry other gear like the air cylinder, often up front. This .25 caliber rifle uses lots of air to fling its jumbo pellets so a large air cylinder has to reside somewhere. With its bullpup design, the weight is distributed in front of, and behind, the pistol grip. *Ipso facto e pluribus unum*, the weight of the rifle is tucked in close to the body so it handles beautifully.

The "put important and heavy stuff in the back" design keeps the overall package at just 31". This is impressive when you consider everything packed into the Wildcat MkII and MkIII rifles. The 230-bar (3,336 psi) air reservoir packs enough compressed air to give you 50 to 60 shots before you need to top off the air supply.

The 21" barrel rides just forward of an eight-round rotary magazine. Like many other airguns, this one uses a side-lever bolt to set the trigger and advance the magazine. The magazine operates like a ratchet-driven socket wrench. Teeth on the exterior of the magazine "disc" advance pellets into position. The system is about the most reliable magazine operation I've found. The action is effortless and you can cycle the action without removing the rifle from your cheek.

The trigger is beautiful and adjustable for nearly everything. You can move the trigger face up and down. You can move the trigger back and forth to fine tune the length of pull. You can adjust the travel for the first stage of the trigger press and you can adjust the weight of the second stage and break. From the factory, the trigger on this particular Wildcat MkII measured — well, I don't know what it measured because it was somewhere less than the 8-oz. starting graduation on my trigger weight scale. Let's just go with a trigger sensation and weight description of "superb."



You can fill the 3,336 psi air reservoir with a hand pump but it'll go a lot easier using a compressor or large filling tank.



The rotary magazine works brilliantly. It couldn't be easier to load and the ratchet drive is near flawless.

The fill port uses a probe system — not my favorite method. Either I'm spastic or you really have to position and fit probes and their seals perfectly to get them to work. To be clear, this is a knock on the probe system as a whole, not this rifle. Give me a positively locking Foster connection any day.

AIRPUP PERFORMANCE

The .25 gives you a great balance of capacity and power. Regular pellets weigh in the 25- to 30-gr. range so they carry varmint levels of energy and do a better job of not blowing all over the place with a moderate crosswind. I have to admit the 12-year-old boy in me also likes the authoritative feel and impact "thud" on the target with the bigger .25 pellets.

On the range, this Wildcat MkII bullpup shines. I spent some time with the FX Wildcat MKII using three different .25 caliber pellets: JSB Exact King 25.39-gr., H&N Sport Barracuda Hunter 27.47-gr. and H&N Sport Barracuda 30.86-gr. I chronographed the Exact King at 830.5 fps and the Barracuda Hunter and Sport Barracuda at 823.5 and 792.3 fps.

I started with targets at 25 yards and fired groups of five while waiting for reasonable pauses in the 6-8 mph crosswinds. All three pellet brands printed groups of about a third of an inch with the Exact Kings averaging 0.33". Since those results were impressive, I moved targets out to 50 yards where I measured the first group at 0.62".

What's not to love? This package is accurate, powerful, and handles more like a pistol than a rifle. It's got plenty of power for small game hunting, silhouette shooting, or just plain plinking, all in a package shorter than a yardstick.

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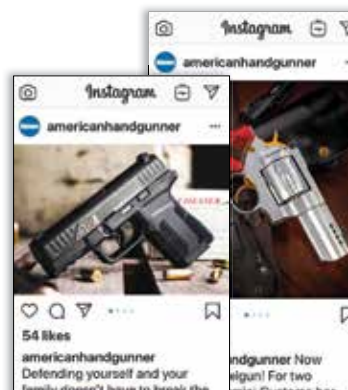
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.257 Roberts	.270 Winchester	7mm RUM	.300 Weatherby	
.25-06 Remington	.270 WSM	.308 Winchester	.300 RUM	
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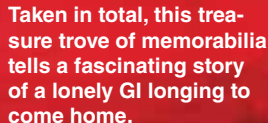


[instagram.com/americanhandgunner](https://www.instagram.com/americanhandgunner)



I had seen some cell phone snaps. The rifle was clearly a

In the flesh the gun was stubbier than a WWI-vintage G98 and the straight bolt handle was my first clue it wasn't one of the ubiquitous Kar98k's carried by the Wehrmacht throughout their many-splendored forays of wanton destruction. The weapon was in perfect condition and appeared unfired. Both



This unfired Czech G24(t) was brought back by an American GI after WWII. It is a tangible connection to one of the most pivotal periods in human history.



the steel and furniture were liberally festooned with *waffenamt* proof marks.

Included with the weapon was a bayonet in a pristine sheath with matching frog dyed inexplicably deep blue. There was also an SA dagger and a box full of personal effects. Taken in total all these artifacts painted a most fascinating picture.

DETECTIVE WORK

The vet in question was this sweet lady's uncle, now long dead. Like most heroes of his generation, he didn't speak a great deal about his service overseas. The material in the box showed he was assigned to the 333rd Engineer Special Service Regiment, part of Patton's 3rd Army.

Poring through the box was like going back in time. There was his DD214 form ushering the man honorably out of military service in 1947. A German language tour guide included a foldout map intended to help guide the occupying Axis legions — whenever they weren't busy enslaving and murdering — around Paris. Carefully preserved letters home expressed powerful and passionate emotional bonds between people now long passed. Studying it all was a somber, almost holy experience.

THE RIFLE

Google knows all. The rifle was actually a Czech G24(t). The Czechs produced a Mauser-derivative rifle called the vz.24 from 1924 until 1942. Designed shortly after WWI, the vz.24 was widely exported, seeing active service in places like China, Spain, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Ecuador and Paraguay. When the Germans occupied Czechoslovakia in 1938 they seized tens of thousands of these superb military rifles along with the machinery to build more.

From 1938 until 1942 the Czechs were forced to build redesignated G24(t) rifles for the Germans. *Gewehr 24* was the German nomenclature. The "t" is short for *tschechoslowakisch*, the German term

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for “Czechoslovak.” The German version of the gun featured slots for a standard Wehrmacht sling and a bolt-disassembly disk mounted in the buttstock.

As production evolved and pre-war parts stocks were consumed, the G24(t) began to take on a more Germanic personality. The flat butt plate was replaced with the cup sort of the Kar98k and the beautiful walnut stocks were supplanted by the cheaper laminated kind. By 1924 the Povazska Bystrica plant was converted to produce Kar98k rifles and the G24(t) died a natural death.

This particular copy looks like it just slid out of a box at a gun store. The bore is unspoiled and the finish is literally perfect. The Germans serialized and marked every single piece of their weapons. While the Nazis were busy imprinting serial numbers on their firing pins, we Americans were churning out up to 65,000 M1 Carbines per day.

THE DAGGER

The Nazis were rabid about their heraldry. While they are rightfully reviled as some of the most committed villains in all of human history, they rocked some

undeniably cool uniforms. Part of the martial tradition involved the widespread issue of ceremonial daggers.

This dagger was issued by the Sturmabteilung or SA. SA thugs who answered



The G24(t) fed from the top via the same five-round stripper clips used by the Kar98k.



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to the reprobate Ernst Rohm were known as Stormtroopers or Brownshirts. When Hitler's friend Rohm became a wee bit too powerful, *der Fuhrer* ordered the SS to kill him. The subsequent blood purge in the summer of 1934 cemented Hitler's grasp on power and became known as the Night of the Long Knives.

This particular dagger was a private-purchase item produced by a company called Robert Klaas in Solingen-Ohligs, Germany. These blades spanned the spectrum from pedestrian to ridiculously ornate with everything in between. As this was the typical run-of-the-mill variety it was likely owned by some working class Nazi thug rather than the more rarefied sort.

RUMINATIONS

I stood in the parking lot behind the clinic and rendered an opinion on these artifacts as best I could. Then — this sweet lady asked if I would accept the whole lot as a gift. I was honestly rendered speechless, something my wife can attest is a fairly infrequent thing.

Nowadays there is just so much blasted moral ambiguity in the world. Overpaid

sports figures kneel before our nation's banner, while rampaging hooligans burn our cities to the ground claiming arson is a righteous form of political protest. Old heroes like this guy fought, suffered, and died so today's generation can embrace such foolishness.

To peruse such holy stuff as this is to glimpse an entirely different world. Ration books speak to a time of want simply

unimaginable today. The German tourist guide reflects a period in human history wherein entire people groups enslaved and murdered others in the satanic pursuit of racial purity. To possess such things is much more stewardship than ownership. It is to be the custodian of tangible history. 

Special thanks to www.worldwarsupply.com for their assistance.

The straight bolt handle immediately distinguishes the G24(t) as something other than a typical Nazi Kar98k rifle.



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The ALTOR single-shot pistol (above) — one of the most unusual, and inexpensive, single-shot “self-defense” pistols on the market. For loading, a machined recess on the breech face (below left) engages the cartridge rim, here a 9mm. The small trigger is also the barrel latch. The cross bolt safety (below) is shown here in the off-safe position and the barrel also turns out of battery to offer more safety.



ALTOR PISTOL

WEIRD BUT WONDERFUL?

J.B. WOOD

Yes, it's weird. It's also beautifully made and it works, every time. The ALTOR pistol is a single-shot, available in 9mm and .380 Auto. Striker-fired, it's a double-action — sort of. It also has a useful purpose as a last-ditch back-up for serious carrying.

FOR STARTERS

The firing system is unique. As the small trigger is pulled rearward to cock the striker (firing pin), a bevel on the grip-frame pushes your finger off at the end of the stroke. The striker is released to go forward and fire. Thus, there is no figure to "trigger pull." An easy pull-back of about a half-inch, and it fires.

There are two good safety systems. A cross-bolt push-button directly blocks the trigger movement. Also, you can depress the trigger slightly and then turn the barrel a tiny click clockwise (from the rear). This will block the striker from any forward movement. With this safety used, even a drop on a hard surface won't fire it.

The trigger is also the start of the loading procedure. You depress it slightly and turn the barrel unit about a quarter-inch clockwise (again from the rear). The barrel is then taken off, exposing the breech face in the grip-frame. There, a carefully machined recess will engage the rim of a 9mm or .380 cartridge. My test gun was the 9mm version.

Now, bring the barrel back against the grip-frame and turn it to the left until it stops. They've made it easy to see when it's right — the word "TOP" in big letters will be centered on top. It is now ready to fire. For carrying, set the two safety systems.

The barrel unit and breech block are stainless steel while the grip-frame is polymer. Empty, the whole thing weighs only 10.2 oz. The other numbers: length, 6.75"; height 3.75". The width is

just a hair over one inch, 1.1" to be exact. Barrel length is 2.25". While we're doing numbers, the MSRP for the 9mm is \$129 and \$119 for the .380 version.

SIGHTS — IF YOU WANT THEM

There are square-picture sights, about 2.25" apart, on top of the grip frame. Considering the firing system, they can be ignored. Or, carefully taken off by using a brand-new file. Really, this is essentially a point-and-shoot-pistol.

Even with ordinary full-jacket 9mm, the lightweight gun has pronounced felt-recoil. I protected my ancient hand-bones with Grip Swell gloves. Will the ALTOR pistol keep five shots in the 8" black of a 100-yard sight-in target? Yes, but the distance was about 15 feet but the size of the black circle corresponds with center-of-mass on a combat target.

And, as they say, you won't notice the sharp recoil in a serious social situation. Actually, with the barrel unit being the heaviest thing, there's not much muzzle flip. Most of the force is straight back. After a few shots, you learn the best way to let the finger slip off the trigger without disturbing the aim.

KEEP IT HANDY

With no trigger guard to deal with, carrying provisions are simple. Just slipping it through the belt will do and the small finger-placement projection on the front strap will keep it from slipping down. Or, if you wear boots, a little circle of leather fastened inside the top of one boot would be just right. Any convenient pocket will do, of course.

Careful manufacturing, dependability and a low price. Hey, the ALTOR pistol is not so weird after all!



SPRINGFIELD ARMORY SAINT VICTOR .308 PISTOL



The two-piece “blast diverter” (above) “optimizes the gas system” and “promotes reliable operation” but mainly keeps the not-inconsequential boom pointed downrange. The Springfield Armory SAINT Victor .308 Pistol: power, portability and precision.

I t's no secret the world isn't a very nice place right now. In fact, by the time these words hit subscriber mailboxes and the newsstand, things might even be worse — though I'm not exactly sure how the world could get more “bat-excrement-crazy” than right now.

Regardless, as someone who has a bunch of dedicated guns for serious social purposes, I'm pretty well set if interpersonal violence would make an inopportune visit into my life. I make this point just to highlight I'm wholly and thoroughly



POWER AND ACCURACY IN A SMALL PACKAGE

BRENT T. WHEAT

PHOTOS: ROB JONES/THE IMAGESMITH, LLC

satisfied with all the self-defense guns I currently own.

And then, Springfield Armory's new SAINT Victor .308 Pistol came into my life.

THE DETAILS

At its most basic — even though Springfield will cringe at this description — the SAINT Victor .308 Pistol is essentially a chopped-down AR10 rifle, albeit with a “pistol brace” in place of a shoulder stock

plus lots of other quality accoutrements and improvements. The direct-impingement gun features a 10.3" CMV Melonite barrel with 1:10 twist, crowned with a proprietary two-piece blast diverter to keep the significant fire and brimstone facing forward. Both parts of the receiver are forged 7075 T6 aluminum anodized with Type III black Hardcoat and held together with Springfield's Accu-Tite Tension system. Other enhancements include a Melonite-treated

HPT/MPI BCG using a 9320 steel bolt and pinned gas block, tungsten buffer and nickel-boron flat GI trigger.

The furniture includes an M-Lok free-float aluminum handguard with Springfield-patented locking tabs: a forward handstop, an SB Tactical SBA-3 pistol brace and BCMGUNFIGHTER Mod 3 pistol grip. There is also a QD receiver end plate and the gun comes with one 20-round Magpul PMAG Gen M3 magazine. Length ranges



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MAGAZINE

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

SAINT VICTOR

.308 PISTOL



**“ZERO MALFUNCTIONS
WERE NOTED, EVEN WITH
NO EXTRA LUBRICATION
OF THE BCG.”**

The Springfield Armory SAINT Victor .308 pistol puts major-league firepower into an arm-length package.



With an overall stowed length of just 28" the pistol is perfect for carry in and around a vehicle, while 20 rounds of .308 make for comfort in an uncomfortable world!

from 28.24"–30.5" and it weighs just a shade over 8 lbs. "dry." The MSRP is \$1,363.

HOW ACCURATE?

I topped the gun with a Premier Arms red dot and went to work at the range, but let's forego the preliminaries and jump straight to the conclusion — I'm shocked. After two days and nearly a case of ammo, I discovered the gun definitely had dietary preferences. Using Black Hills Ammunition Black Gold 125-gr. Hornady GMX, I routinely had three-shot, two-hole groups at 80 yards from a rest, including one measuring .544 center to center. This from a "pistol" with a 10" barrel!

Why 80 yards? First, because it's roughly 3/4 of a city block and a reasonable engagement distance for a gun such as this.

Recoil is noteworthy in the pistol, not because it's excessive, but for those who normally shoot a .556 AR-rifle, your first few shots will result in a "Whoa ..." moment. After all, you're putting out nearly 2,500 ft lbs. of energy downrange with each trigger pull in a relatively light gun. Newton's law still applies. Muzzle blast is likewise significant but what else would you expect? Fortunately, the two-piece muzzle device sends all the hot love downrange instead of back at the shooter or more typically with muzzle brakes, back at his range partners.

TIGHT QUARTERS COMFORT

Where the SAINT Victor .308 pistol shines is situations where maneuverability or compact storage are prime considerations. Lots of manufacturers, including Springfield, make .223 pistols

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

SAINT VICTOR .308 PISTOL



Secondly and more important, somebody had already moved a heavy picnic table to the line and left it there, almost as if they knew I was coming. Work smarter, not harder I always say!

Meanwhile, 168-gr. rounds such as the Black Hills Hornady ELD-M did okay — as in grouping in the 1.5-2" range. Note I'm being a little facetious when I'm saying a 1.5" group was *merely* okay. Checking in with the folks at Springfield, they had no specific direction on preferred ammo but were happy I was getting great groups.

No kidding? In other news, Faith Hill is somewhat attractive and people with dirt on the couple from Arkansas tend to have shorter lifespans.

Regardless, there's no denying my particular gun is a tack-driver with the light bullets. I would have been happy if this had been a full-sized AR10, but in a pistol, such accuracy is neighbor-unbelievable — which is the very reason I went to the range twice just to make sure!

Zero malfunctions were noted, even with no extra lubrication of the BCG. More powerful cartridges in AR-platforms tend to perform better due to increased kinetic energy available to make things work but lots of lube is always a good thing in this entire family of rifles. Regardless, with the SAINT Victor .308 pistol, my small bottle of oil stayed in the range bag waiting for difficulties to arise, such as failing to go into battery — and the oil is still sitting there unused.

A The 168-gr. bullets still offered acceptable accuracy, demonstrated by these two groups of three shots which perfectly grouped together in 2-2-2 progression. They also went left 2" (the target was upside-down on the line). **B** The SAINT Victor .308 pistol doesn't come with sights but the Primary Arms SLX MD-25 red dot mounted forward on the receiver did yeoman's work without bulk. **C** The most popular .308 Win load is the 168-gr. bullet (left) but Brent's Springfield SAINT Victor .308 clearly preferred the lighter Black Hills Gold 125-gr. Hornady GMX (right). **D** It seems improbable for such a gun focused on compact size but with 125-gr. Black Hills ammo, Brent got great groups including this three-shot 0.544" cluster at 80 yards.

and they work well in these roles. But now, with the SAINT Victor .308 you can have "serious," *I'm not messing around* firepower in a gun shorter than your granddaughter's Chipmunk rifle.

I primarily carry the gun inside my vehicle. As the truck is too big to park in our residential garage, I must take weapons out of it each evening just in case some local hophead decides to break in overnight and harvest the loose ashtray change. This security concern previously meant lugging a full-sized rifle or shotgun in and out of the house every day, which in turn meant I didn't carry a long gun all the time. Silly me, especially in today's ugly social climate.

Now with the SAINT Victor .308, I grab the tiny black gun case — it actually looks more like glockenspiel road-case than something holding a firearm — and move it to and from my truck with ease. The gun is so small I can easily and discreetly grab it in the event I stumble into a situation where people are being dragged



from their vehicles by “non-violent social justice protesters.” Unfortunately, like many places, the major U.S. city in my backyard has had several cases of this recently.

Having quick and easy access to such a diminutive gun capable of quickly throwing lead downrange in wholesale quantities — twenty .308 Win rounds — is very comforting in an uncomfortable world.

DON'T COME KNOCKING

Another prime use for the SAINT Victor .308 Pistol is home defense. With a 28" overall length (with pistol brace collapsed to its shortest position), the gun is nearly

you should automatically disqualify the .308 Win as a home defense gun but simply noting you should consider your circumstances beforehand and adjust accordingly.

However, this specific concern aside, there are many more situations where having a short, portable yet powerful gun like this is a godsend. As mentioned, the SAINT Victor .308 is perfect for carrying in a vehicle regardless if you're driving a full-size truck, utility vehicle or even a four-wheeler. In fact, if I were a rancher, this gun would probably win the competition for my EDC rifle of record. Having personally put down animals up to the size of errant

“HAVING QUICK AND EASY ACCESS TO SUCH A DIMINUTIVE GUN CAPABLE OF QUICKLY THROWING LEAD DOWNRANGE IN WHOLESALE QUANTITIES — TWENTY .308 WIN ROUNDS — IS VERY COMFORTING IN AN UNCOMFORTABLE WORLD.”

as maneuverable as a traditional pistol but packs more energy into one round than some popular pistols pack into their entire magazine. Other than a pistol-grip shotgun (which brings significant shortcomings, especially beyond room distances) there is no faster way to put lead downrange unless you're driving a tri-axle dump truck.

CONTRAINDICATION

My only caveat in this self-defensive love-fest would be overpenetration. While some pundits poo-poo such worries about overpenetration in an emergency scenario, it's not hard to imagine a .308 bullet penetrating the walls of an apartment then traveling onward through several more until striking an innocent toddler or visiting Supreme Court Justice. I'm not directing

beef cattle with the .308 Win, it has all the power you'll need for most situations — if you do your job and put the bullets where they need to go.

If you are a cop, the SAINT Victor .308 might be close to the mythical all-round patrol weapon. Powerful yet easily maneuverable around vehicles and during building-clearing movement, it also allows you to engage targets at reasonable ranges. It won't replace a full-size rifle for battling a sniper 400 or 500 yards away, but honestly how many of those incidents occur versus the common street-to-house gunfight or even an active-shooter incident in a large building.

THE TAKEAWAY

No gun is perfect or fits into every situation. However, if you need considerable power in an easy-to-manuever package, the SAINT Victor .308 Pistol might fill the bill better than any of the alternatives. You can always count on Springfield quality and taken in total, you probably can't build a similar pistol much cheaper or any better. Spend a little of your accumulated lunch money and you'll end feeling a little safer in a world gone crazy — a great tradeoff in my book.

A The nickel-boron coated flat GI trigger works contributes the noteworthy accuracy of the shorty .308. **B** The BCMGUNFIGHTER Mod 3 pistol grip is comfortable and offers internal storage. Even better, the trap door won't accidentally open at an inopportune moment. **C** Nope, it's not a shoulder stock, it's an SB Tactical SBA-3 pistol brace. With five positions and closed length of just over 6" it offers stability with minimal size.

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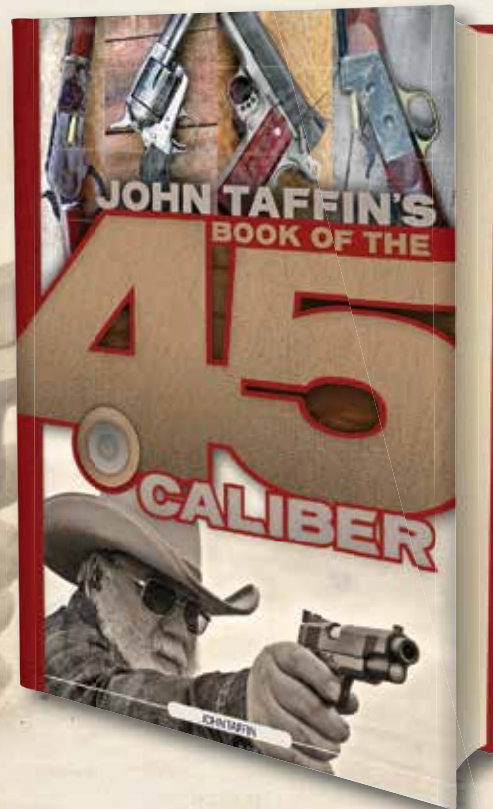
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His Pump'r Thump'r in .375/9.3x62 helped John Dustin take dangerous game including lion and elephant.

“‘YES, YES,’ SIGHED JOHN, AS IF HAVING TO EXPLAIN AGAIN WHY BREAD COMES WARM FROM A TOASTER, ‘MY PUMP’R THUMP’R ISN’T BARRELED FOR *THAT* .375.’”



John Dustin's "Pump'r Thump'r" is a Remington 7600 re-barreled to .375/9.3x62. A potent pump for snarling beasties!

KEEPING UP WITH CARTRIDGES

BUY A BIGGER GUN SAFE — OR A NEW BARREL!

WAYNE VAN ZWOLL

That can't be right," thought I, but another count yielded the same sums. Just the first 18 years of this century have coughed up 50 new centerfire rifle cartridges. During the entire 20th century, from the debut of the Mannlicher-Schoenauer rifle to the Remington 700 in .300 Ultra Mag, there were 80 new cartridges.

Yes, the numbers just happened to come out even and yes, totals depend on exactly what's counted, but — all this to say we've had a blizzard of cartridges lately. Fifty in 18 years! Just 88 from the advent of smokeless powder and the Dalton gang's bank raid in Coffeyville, Kansas, to the year Bill Gates left as Microsoft CEO and America Online agreed to buy Time Warner!

DO THE MATH

You'd have to snare three rifles a year to keep pace with new chamberings now. Finding those rifles can itself test your resolve. I borrowed a Ruger in .376 Steyr, but after returning it I have yet to see another. The .475 Turnbull appeals to me; outside Doug Turnbull's shop, however, it's a ghost. A rifle in .400 H&H has proven elusive too.

The 6mm Creedmoor, 6.5 PRC and .300 PRC arrived at once, like a gaggle of relatives surprising you at your door. Good news only if you can do something with them. The days when I had time to explore wildcat rounds seem as distant now as the need for wildcats.

MAKE YOUR OWN

My itch for a 6.5 PRC came after a glimpse of the Hornady cartridge and a visit to SAUER's plant in Germany. But no U.S. rifles were so chambered but then the wildcatter's path came to mind — why not re-barrel? A standard short action wouldn't work but enter an idle Weatherby Vanguard in .300 WSM, a cartridge much like the 6.5 PRC below the shoulder. I phoned John Krieger, who knows more about barrels than anyone else I can think of. "It should work," he agreed.

It did. The new barrel, contoured to match the old, snuggled nicely in the original stock. The rifle feels the same and shoots even better.

Krieger barrels have earned high praise, not only on custom rifles but in ballistics labs. Held to 0.0001" groove tolerance, the cut-rifled bores are hand-lapped. Uniformity is checked with an air gauge, a moving probe using air pressure to "feel out" variance to 50 millionths of an inch! John is fussy about throats too. "A parallel throat is like a piston sleeve. It can't be oversize, but must accommodate all bullets," he notes.

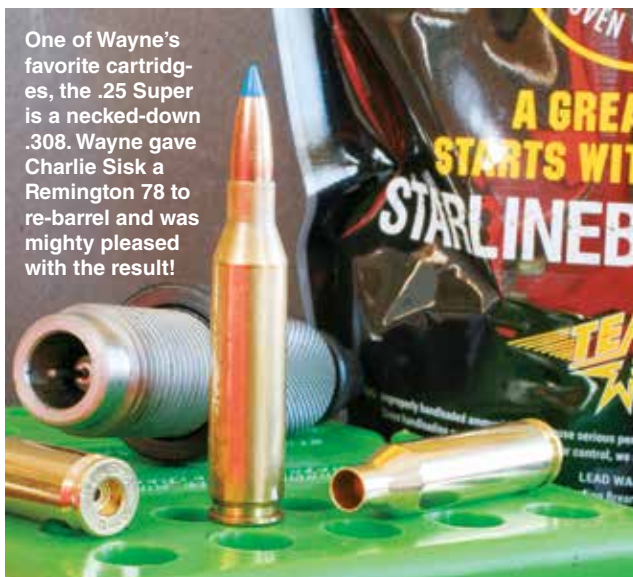
As long throats keep a lid on pressures, Roy Weatherby used them to hike velocities, maintaining accuracy with close



The .450 Alaskan adds muscle to a Winchester 71 in .348, however, re-barreling a 71 now dismays collectors greatly!



When choosing a load for a re-barreling/re-chambering project, make sure the box accepts loaded rounds!



One of Wayne's favorite cartridges, the .25 Super is a necked-down .308. Wayne gave Charlie Sisk a Remington 78 to re-barrel and was mighty pleased with the result!

tolerances. Of course, muzzles matter too. Krieger lops an inch from each barrel before crowning, as “bore finishing can leave a flare.” His barrels are also cryogenically treated, to relieve stresses imposed by turning and rifling. The 6.5 PRC project reminded me how a new barrel is, in effect, a new rifle.

A new or rechambered barrel is still the only road for wildcatters but now you’ll be hard-pressed to come up with a useful round yet unexplored. Indeed, performance overlaps have given way to downright duplication! So with factory offerings galloping by at a rate of 50 every 18 years, why invent?

PUMP AND A THUMP

“It’s a slide-action .375.” A rifleman with the savvy and tools to do much of the gunsmithing we mortals farm out, John Dustin is no slave to tradition.

I shifted the phone to my bagel-free hand. “What for?” I asked stupidly, as if a new rifle required purpose.

“Dangerous beasts,” he replied patiently. “Five haymaker hits lickety-split.”

Hmm. The only slide-action centerfire rifle still in common use is Remington’s 7600, offspring of the 760 Gamemaster introduced in 1952. Its mechanism, sized for the .30-06, can’t digest the long, belted .375 H&H. Needlessly I pointed this out, noting pump guns, while fast with repeat shots, can’t match the reliability of bolt rifles.

“Yes, yes,” sighed John, as if having to explain again why bread comes warm from a toaster, “My Pump’r Thump’r isn’t barreled for *that* .375. But it is reliable — and quicker with five shots than any bolt gun.” He added each bullet carries two tons of muzzle energy, “almost what you get with 300-gr. factory loads in the .375 H&H.”

Like me, John had admired the handling qualities of the old 760. “A few years ago,” he went on, “I bought a 7600 in .308, set the barrel back two threads to shorten the throat, tuned the trigger, installed one of my JD Quietbrakes. The rifle shot into a minute of angle.”

THE ‘WHY’ ANSWERED

A leopard hunt with a few frantic moments prompted John to think about a pump for dangerous game. To meet legal and practical requirements, it needed at least a .375 bore. Remington had barreled the 7600 for the .35 Whelen, which could be opened to .375 but the 9.3x62, a European round dating to 1905, had essentially the same head diameter with 5 grains more capacity. Bumping the neck from .366 to .375 was easy. Dave Skiff at Pacific Tool and Gauge made a reamer for John’s wildcat. Hornady sent custom dies.

“I bought a new wood-stocked 7600 in .30-06,” said John, “then shaved the comb for iron-sight use and installed a Pachmayr Decelerator pad.” He also opened the forend to accept the .375 Pac-Nor #5 barrel he’d chosen. “It’s heavy enough to keep the muzzle down in recoil and speed follow-ups.” Dustin also added a JD Quietbrake then fitted a Williams ramp front sight. An XS rear aperture clamps to the Weaver scope base under his Burris 1.5-6x, in low rings. Finally, he tuned the Pump’r Thump’r’s trigger.

John tried a variety of bullets in the .375/9.3 with an eye to fault-free feeding and the hardest hits possible given length limits imposed by the 7600’s magazine. He settled on 300-gr.



Sierra GameKings for thin-skinned game, driving them 2,450 fps with 60 grains of Varget. “I started with lighter bullets around 2,600, but the Sierras delivered the best accuracy and flew about as flat. The charts show 2,500 ft lbs. at 350 yards!” Testing solids, he came to favor 300-gr. Woodleigh and Hornady bullets. He told me he coated all bullets with molybdenum disulphide as loads with uncoated bullets must be reduced to keep pressures in bounds.

BIG GRAY PROOF

Given the Pump’r Thump’r’s intended use, John practiced shooting as if at dangerous beasts bent on mayhem. “All offhand and close.” His drill: five aimed shots in six seconds. “I broke five clay pigeons at 30 yards in eight seconds.” Yes, they were stationary but do the math: His Remington hurled 20,000 ft lbs. of heavy-bullet energy about as fast as even skilled hunters can fire three aimed shots from a powerful bolt gun! John and his new rifle were soon bound for Africa.

In parts of Zimbabwe, elephants are so plentiful they must be culled. Permit in hand for a tuskless animal, John got his chance early after tracking a small herd. The lead cow had no ivory. She turned and faced him at 15 steps — and collapsed instantly when the Pump’r Thump’r sent a Hornady DGS through her brain. “I ran up and fired another shot to the spine,” said John, “but it wasn’t needed.” The first bullet had exited the back of the skull. “We recovered the second. It had severed the 8” spine and traveled the depth of the elephant. It held its shape and weight. I could have reloaded it!”

The Pump’r Thump’r would see other action, which for want of space I can’t recount here but it reminded me an ordinary rifle with a new barrel is really a new rifle!

"You asked for it so we built it!"

~ Roy Huntington
Publisher



The world's best handgun magazine teamed up with Les Baer Custom to create an exclusive celebration of both the classic John Browning 1911 design — and the custom touches readers have asked for!

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KALAHARI

Just hearing the word *Safari* conjures visions of deepest, darkest Africa in all her splendor. A magical continent hosting a mind-boggling array of animals we've never seen before, all in their natural state. We think of hefty bolt-action rifles and double guns with cigar-sized cartridges stuffed into wide leather culling belts. Yes, the word Safari has a special, mysterious meaning.

NOW – OR NEVER?

After booking your Safari and you're in-country, the best description I've seen, and exactly how I felt, is from the 1996 movie *The Ghost and the Darkness* starring Val Kilmer.

Kilmer portrays British Lt. Col. John Henry Patterson who is sent to oversee a bridge project over the Tsavo river. The scene involves Kilmer entering Africa by train while sitting on a bench mounted on the cow catcher at the front of the train.

He watches in wonderment at each species of animal he passes and gives a short rendition of each critter from the reading

and familiarizing he did before the trip, learning everything he could about the captivating wildlife Africa has to offer.

His sense of amazement, wonder, respect and awe is beautifully captured in the scene. I promise you, this is the feeling you'll have when you start seeing Africa for what it really has to offer. It's exactly how I felt on my first ride in the "bucky" during my first morning hunt.

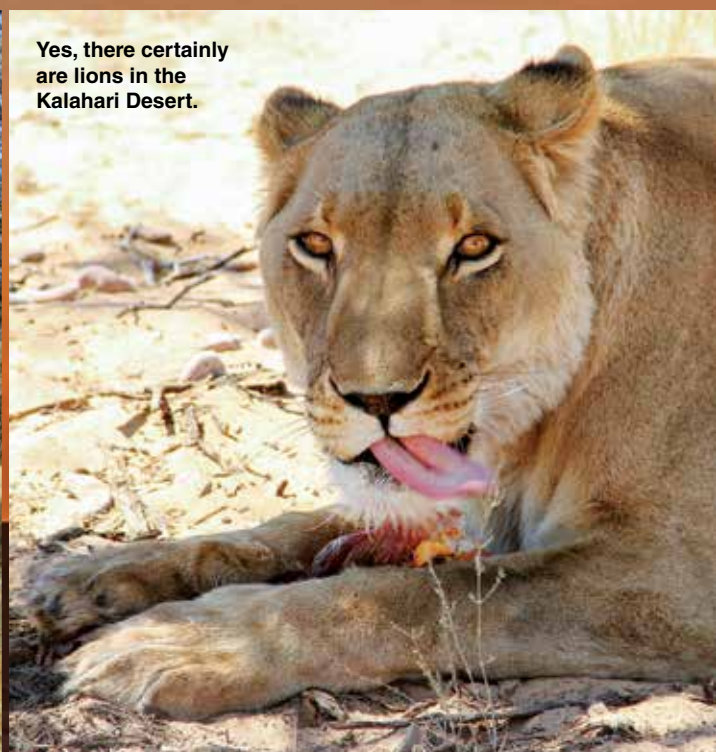
DREAMS COME TRUE

While always dreaming of going on a faraway Safari, I never really thought it would happen. But the planets aligned themselves and at the age of 56, I was booking a flight to Botswana. GUNS Field Editor John Sheehan is a PH (professional hunter) for an outfit called Kudu Safaris in the heart of the Kalahari Desert in Botswana.

International hunting was closed for five years due to Government restrictions, but in 2019 hunting reopened due to a new political regime. This is a good thing, as it allows foreign hunters



Tank with his Kudu bull.



Yes, there certainly are lions in the Kalahari Desert.

JEFF "TANK" HOOVER

SAFARI

MAKING YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE

to spend dollars which in turn goes to helping the Government pay for more game wardens, animal research and habitat. It's good all-around for everyone, including the animals involved. If not for hunting, the game ranches would cease to exist, replaced by sheep and cattle.

I booked my hunt with Kudu-Safaris and cannot say enough great things about this outfit. Richard and Carol Pascall are wonderful hosts and run an excellent camp. Accommodations are first-class, clean, comfortable and cozy. Hot showers, great food consisting of game we took, along with daily laundry are part of Kudu-Safaris' offerings.

FLYWAY BYWAY

One of my biggest obstacles, and a common one, is the long flights involved getting to Africa. I have no fear of flying, I was simply worried about squeezing my large frame into an economy class seat for an 8-hour flight to London and another 11-hour flight to Gaborone, Botswana.

The bottom line? It was a very enjoyable experience. International flights use planes with slightly larger seats, with more leg room than domestic flights. The flights are usually scheduled at night so you try and grab a few winks. A few cocktails, as well as a nice meal, does wonders. I was soon relaxed, sleepy and comfortable.

Besides — you're going to Africa! You'll be dreaming of all the wild and exotic animals you'll be seeing. After my wonderful experience, I'd hang onto the outside wing of the plane to get back to the continent again. It's so terrific. Honest.

FINALLY, MAGICAL AFRICA

Driving down the long lane consisting of compacted sand to our base camp, my senses were in overdrive. Seeing herds of wildebeest, impala and springbok confirms I'm actually in ... Africa! The Kalahari Desert is just as it was the day Earth was born. The landscape is made of mostly acacia bush and trees.

Everything in Africa is tougher! It needs to, to survive the



Here's Tank, PH John Sheehan and Barrond with an Eland bull.

toughest conditions imaginable. Long-standing dead Acacia and camel thorn stand like spooky Halloween trees, a testament to their strength and durability. Even dead, they breathe their last life-breath into wonderful evening fires. Horns of red hartebeest, wildebeest, kudu and impala litter the desert floor in testament to the tough conditions showing death equals survival for the living.

Africa demonstrates the food chain there is more apparent than anywhere else in the world. Animals eat each other to survive. This makes them more hyper-vigilant of their surroundings and an intense sense of survival-mode kicks in when they're injured. African game is tough because it needs to be tough to survive. I have much respect and admiration for the beauty and tenacity African game exemplifies.

MY HUNT

Hunting consists of riding on top of a padded bench-seat in the “bucky,” a Toyota Land Cruiser — famous for durability and guts in the African outback. After a day of driving up and down the dunes, you'll understand the name. It adds to the experience, as you never know what lies beyond the next dune. You may go over four or five dunes and see nothing, but on your sixth as you peek over the crest, there may be hundreds of wildebeest — or gemsbok — or springbok. It's simply astonishing.

Your impala hunt can quickly turn into a red hartebeest stalk, or just as quickly become a waterbuck hunt. You just never know what will happen around the next turn or as you pop over the next sand dune. I know I saw more game animals on my first day of hunting than I've seen my whole life of hunting in the states.



The Toyota Land Cruiser, or “bucky” as it's called. From here nature's most beautiful sights will be seen.

Just as all hunters are animal lovers, you'll love just watching these splendid creatures.

PH Sheehan is knowledgeable, funny, entertaining and just plain fun to be around. He will get you on the game animal you want, making sure it's of trophy class, one you will be very happy with.

I chose not to travel with guns and used the camp gun, a Sako .308 bolt-action with integral suppressor. It has a Leupold 3X9 scope on it and we shot Hornady 180-gr. round-nosed bullets in handloaded ammunition. It performed splendidly on everything from a 1,400-lb. Eland bull to an 80-lb. springbok.

THE DAY IS DONE

African sunsets are a thing of beauty to be admired and enjoyed. It's nature's way of telling us another great day has ended and tomorrow brings new adventure. Of course, having

**Giraffes are here!
How cool to see
them in the wild?**





Native tracker Barrond stumbled onto a pangolin during the hunt. A rather shy and scarce critter, the scales are made of keratin. It was released after the photo was taken.

a "sun-downer" consisting of your favorite beverage, while sitting around a cozy campfire reflecting on your day's experiences, is the perfect way to unwind and relax.

Ruark said of the campfire, "This is the real Africa," meaning the time you take to reflect and enjoy what you have just experienced, to dream of tomorrow. Africa is full of excitement and heartbreak and you simply never know what the future will bring.

A favorite activity while enjoying our "sundowner" was watching the waterhole approximately 150 meters from our firepit. Baily, the camp wonder dog of vizsla decent, would start barking as we watched shadows morph into animals seeking water. A splendid way to end the day, indeed.

MEMORIES LAST FOREVER

Since returning from Africa, I've replayed hundreds of memories from my trip. Better than any book, or movie, our own personal memories are the best show on earth. I have no regrets from going on my Safari. My biggest regret would have been to never make the effort to go in the first place.

Step out of your comfort zone for the magnificent experience of a lifetime! If you don't make the effort, nothing's ever going to change. Legend has it if you see the Southern Cross asterism in the African sky, you will return. I made sure I saw it every night as I retired to my room.

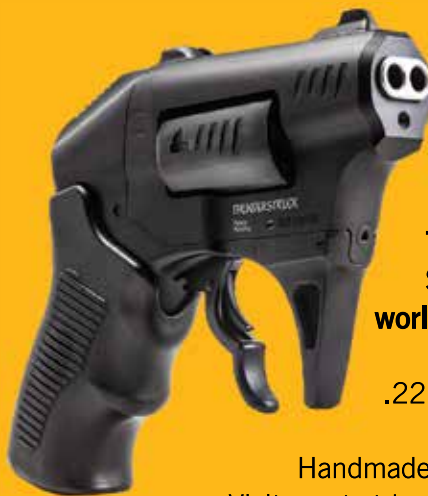
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CZ 457 BOLT ACTION

A TACTICAL TIME MACHINE

WILL DABBS, MD

I saved my pennies and bought my first BB gun, a no-frills lever-action Daisy, from our local Otasco at age seven. The first handgun was an 1851 Colt Navy .44 bought in kit form. The AR-15 cost me a year's indentured servitude in a local print shop in 10th grade. I bought my first two machineguns on my 21st birthday. (I'm old. They were cheap then.) Then I tried on a military uniform and the metaphorical gloves came off.

Tanks, howitzers, belt-fed machineguns both on the ground and in the air, grenade launchers of a couple of flavors and a helicopter gunship or two added spice to the mix. Nowadays I own my own

gun manufacturing business and make a decent living writing about the stuff I love. Suffice it to say my right to keep and bear arms is well exercised.

Why all this jabber about exotic places and sexy toys? Because no matter how rarefied this addiction gets, there yet remains something gratifying about settling in behind a quality bolt-action .22 rifle and transforming rimfire cartridges into noise. With some warm spring weather, an infinite supply of Winchester subsonic ammo and a CZ 457 suppressed .22 rifle I think I could ventilate stuff until I just starved to death.

RIMFIRE REFINEMENT

Like most things in life, a bolt-action .22 rifle can be done haphazardly or it can be done well. The CZ 457 is definitely the latter sort. A c-note would land you an antique beater from the local pawn shop capable of grouping inside a coffee can lid at a quarter

football field. By contrast, this new CZ rifle will centerpunch pennies at the same range until you grew weary of doing it.

CZ sells a version of this remarkable rifle with a beautiful walnut stock and an unadorned barrel but it's just a bit too "1972" for me. This CZ 457 is upgraded for the Information Age—a threaded barrel, polymer furniture and refined particulars.

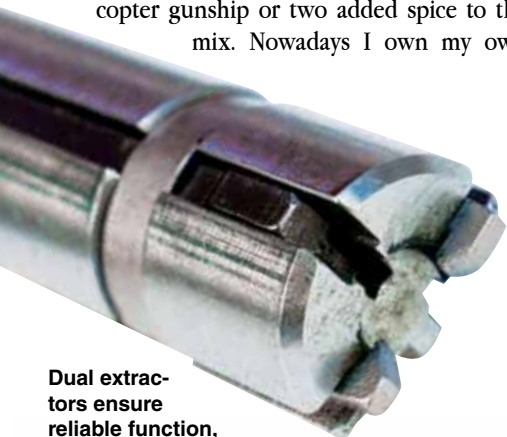
The barrel is free-floated and precision-crafted. The bolt throw runs through 60 degrees to leave room for a scope and the bolt has dual extractors that help produce a prodigious rate of fire for a bolt-action rifle. The thumb safety rides on the right rear of the receiver for easy access while you're locked into the gun. The integral 11mm scope mount seamlessly accepted the fixed-power Bushnell scope I found in my gun room.

The buttstock is indestructible polymer with a twist. Unlike the furniture on many rimfire guns, this rig is scaled for grownups. The stock comb accommodates me perfectly and the wrist fits my big monkey mitts like it

was born there. Settling in behind this stock makes the rifle feel like a serious high-power target gun. There are three standard sling studs to accept sling swivels and a bipod.

The detachable polymer magazine holds five rounds and is painless to load. The magazine release is a modest thumb tab at the front of the mag. The baseplate protrudes just the tiniest smidgeon below the stock. There is a bolt release button on the left rear of the action facilitating disassembly.

The adjustable trigger should hang in the Louvre alongside the Mona Lisa, Venus de Milo and the Winged Victory



Dual extractors ensure reliable function, even in a hurry.



The CZ 457 is a top-tier bolt-action .22-caliber target/utility rifle, delightfully rugged and incredibly accurate.

ION .22 RIMFIRE

of Samothrace. There is no discernible take-up or overtravel and the break will just melt your heart. Lay the rifle on target, mind your breathing, place your finger on the trigger and then just think hard to set it off. The resulting synergy of precision action, manly stock and beautiful trigger drops them right where you want them.

THE CAN

Silent Legion makes the sound suppressor. Their Rimfire Direct Thread can is 5" long and weighs a paltry 2.7 oz. The suppressor is made from aluminum and hardcoat anodized black. The front cap is readily removable with the included cool tool, so maintenance and cleaning are easy-peasy.

This Silent Legion snuffer produces a whopping 40 dB sound reduction. These numbers can be confusing as the decibel scale is logarithmic rather than linear. Suffice it to say this can is just freaking amazing. Stoke the gun with subsonic Winchester M22 ammo and you could zap a tree rat without alerting his buddy happily munching acorns alongside him.

The standard 1/2-28 threads will fit any standard .22 rimfire weapon. I use mine on a Walther P22, a threaded Ruger 10/22, a PPK/S .22 and this superlative CZ bolt gun. The suppressor is all but weightless and you



could just about lose it in the pocket of your hunting jacket.

THE SETTING

I mounted the scope, took my trusty beanbag shooting rest (made from old blue jeans by the most awesome daughter in the universe) and grabbed a brick of Winchester subsonic .22s. I headed out to my backyard shooting range and left the ear muffs inside. I settled into an Adirondack chair and invested five minutes establishing a proper zero.

At 25 meters I could legit cover my



The 60-degree bolt throw offers a rapid rate of fire and clearance for a scope.

groups with a dime. The rifle fits me well and the trigger breaks like a prom queen's heart. Once I had the rifle and the scope in tune I started exploring my environment.

I can't put my finger on exactly why, but it's undeniable fun just shooting stuff. Stumps, tree trunks and the occasional errant plastic water bottle felt my unfettered wrath. Then I directed my attention to my epic improvised metal target array.

One plate came from AR500 Armor and cost me money. The others are a derelict steel CO₂ tank and a pair of my wife's old worn-out cooking pots, all of which were free. Each item dangles from my target stand 68 meters from my firing point and has its own distinctive timbre. Once I got rolling I could ring all four in quick succession and produce a discordant, oddly pleasant cacophony. Then came the inexplicably weird part.

THE TACTICAL TIME MACHINE

The day was quite literally perfect — a typical 72-degree Mississippi springtime with a scant westerly breeze and an expansive cloudless cerulean sky. The temperature was such I could have reposed comfortably outside in nothing more than a loincloth had decorum allowed. I got cranked up mid-afternoon.

After what seemed perhaps 10 minutes, my feet floated amidst a veritable sea of

empty rimfire cases and I was late for dinner. No kidding, I burned through about 250 rounds. It seems I loaded the five-round magazine some 50 times and never even noticed. My ears didn't ring and recoil was literally undetectable. I actually shot one of the pots until it tore loose from my target stand. Apparently I shot this rifle more than two hours and never even noticed the passage of time. The barrel and can were unpleasantly hot to the touch. It was surreal.

DENOUEMENT

You may have plenty of guns. You may own Otto Skorzeny's FG42, George Washington's personal flintlock service pistol, a transferable minigun and an operational helicopter upon which to mount it. However, no matter how many triggers you have squeezed, this simple yet elegant bolt-action rimfire will still get your blood pumping. I frankly got lost in the thing.

This Czech-made CZ 457 is not necessarily cheap as .22 rifles go but it still costs less than your typical plastic pistol. Rugged, laser-beam accurate and beautifully executed, this is the .22 plinking and utility gun for grownups. It will remind you what drew you into this odd little hobby in the first place.

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SIG SAUER®

JOHN TAFFIN

365 SAS

SIG'S "SIGHTLESS" CARRY GUN



The 10+1 SIG SAUER P365 SAS (middle) compared to two Classic Pocket Pistols, the six-shot Colt Detective Special (top) and the five-shot S&W Chiefs Special (bottom). John says the SIG is the easiest to shoot.

“Watch your front sight! Watch your front sight!”

How many times have I heard this statement in my 72 years of shooting handguns? It certainly did not begin with me as I recall reading older books as a teenager that emphasized the same thing. The first firearms had no front sight, no rear sight — it was just point and shoot. With the arrival of the first successful revolvers, sights were very crude and it took some real effort to watch the front sight.

Sights can become a problem for concealed carry, especially with pocket pistols. SIG SAUER realizes this and has come up with their “Sightless” Model 365 SAS (SIG Anti-Snag). It is a true pocket pistol chambered in 9mm with no front sight and no visible conventional rear sight. However, it is not sightless — it simply has a different sighting system. With the P365 SAS, SIG SAUER has done just about everything possible to provide a pistol that can be drawn without any problem between pistol and pocket material.

PEDIGREE

Before we look at the P365 SAS, let’s take a quick look at its ancestry. First came the P365, which was then upgraded to the SIG SAUER P365XL. I had this to say about the 365XL: “This little pistol is definitely in the running for the coveted title of PPPP, or Perfect Packin’ Pocket Pistol.”

It combines a black Nitron coated stainless steel slide with a black polymer grip. The P365XL incorporates XRay3 Day/Night sights — a green-dot front sight set in a post and mated with a square-notch rear sight with a white dot on each side of the notch. Both sights are set in dovetails to allow correcting windage, while different-height front sights are available to adjust elevation for a particular load. I found the sights very easy to acquire and especially appealing in low-light situations. The P365XL is optic ready and

removal of the rear sight assembly allows the installation of Romeo Zero and RMSc optics. There is also an integral accessory rail on the glass reinforced grip module in front of the trigger guard.

Cocking serrations are found behind the front sight and under and to the front of the rear sight for easy slide manipulation. The trigger is an "X Signature" flat profile which I found much easier to work than safety triggers. There are no external safeties and operation of the P365XL is much like a double-action-only revolver — there are no decisions to make as it is simply ready to go when the trigger is pulled.

Controls found on the left side of the frame are the slide lock lever and takedown lever. The magazine release is also on the left side behind the trigger guard and can be changed to the right side for left hand operation. For comfortable shooting there is a compact beavertail matched with the grip frame textured all the way around. There is a cutout under the grip frame where it meets the trigger guard and this cutout is enough for me to be able to get all three fingers on the grip.

Weight is just under 21 oz., barrel length is 3.7" and the P365XL came with two 12-round 9mm magazines. The original P365 had a magazine capacity of 10 rounds and the XL grip module is only ½" longer to accommodate the two extra rounds. Both

10-round and 15-round magazines are available from SIG SAUER.

SAS ARRIVES

The P365 SAS goes back to the 10-round capacity of the original P365 and comes with two magazines, one of which is flush-fitting and the other with a small finger-riding extension on the front of the base. Life is full of trade-offs and while the flush-fitting mag may be slightly better for concealment, the extended version is definitely easier for shooting.

There are two other assets aiding easy shooting. The non-safety trigger is so much kinder to my trigger finger and measures 7# on my Brownells Trigger Pull Gauge, **The Flush-Mounted FT Bullseye Fiber-Tritium Night Sight (right)** as found on the SIG SAUER P365 SAS. Note there is no front sight (below), but the system uses non-snag fiber optics to give precise sight picture on a target.

The SIG SAUER P365 SAS (below) compared to the slightly larger P365XL.



much less than found on most double-action revolvers. To aid in the control of 9mm loads, both the slide and barrel are ported at the location where there would be a front sight on any other pistol. The porting definitely helps, however with +P loads the back of my hand definitely feels the extra recoil and is slightly irritated on the left side when shooting. Nothing painful, however I do know when I fire the heavier-recoiling hot loads. In a serious situation I doubt very much it would even be noticed.

“I EXPECTED THE LEARNING CURVE FOR THIS SYSTEM TO BE QUITE STEEP BUT IT WASN’T.”

SPECS

SIG SAUER classifies the P365 SAS as a Micro-Compact. The striker-fired 9mm pistol has a black polymer grip frame with a Nitride-finished stainless steel slide and a carbon steel barrel. There is an accessory rail molded into the frame in front of the trigger guard however I cannot see adding anything to go against the natural smoothness of this little pistol. “Little” is a barrel length of just slightly over 3" with an overall length of just under 6", height of just barely 4" and an overall width of 1". At 17.8 oz., it's over 3 oz. lighter than the P365XL.

The SIG Anti-Snag Slide Treatment means there is nothing — and I do mean nothing — on the slide to catch on clothing or the interior of a pocket. Both the slide stop and takedown lever are flush fitted into the frame while the front of the slide and the frame are tapered to prevent any problem holstering or placing the SAS in the pocket. Both sides of the grip frame as well as the



front and back straps are finely textured to aid in control. Even the sides and front of the extended magazine are textured in the same way.

WHAT'S MISSING?

This brings us to the main feature which initially caught my eye. Actually, my eye could not see what is not there — there is no front sight or a conventional rear sight. Instead the front top of the slide is totally smooth and on the back of the slide we find what SIG SAUER calls a Flush-Mounted FT Bullseye Fiber-Tritium Night Sight. Flush-fitting means exactly what it says and the sight sits in the frame, not on top of it. The sight picture is not found by lining up a front sight in a rear sight but rather by looking at a solid green dot inside of a green circle, hence the Bullseye name. The “front sight” is inlaid in the top of the slide. This is totally different than any other sighting system I have ever encountered.

I expected the learning curve for this system to be quite steep but it wasn't. With very little practice I am able to bring the pistol up and the green dot inside of the green circle is right there. It only took one shot for me to discover how to use this Fiber-Tritium Night Sight. Whatever is my intended target, and for most of my test-firing I went with 4" orange circles at 7 yards, I found very quickly having about 1/3 of the target above the top of the slide works just about perfectly for me.

With this sighting system I have no problem keeping my shots within 2". I test-fired the SAS with a complete line of SIG SAUER 9mm ammunition as well as the Black Hills HoneyBadger, all of which grouped far better than would ever be needed in a self-defense situation. Of the SIG SAUER ammunition I had excellent results with the 115-, 124- and 147-gr. Elite V-Crown JHPs as well as the slightly-less-recoiling “365” 115-gr. V-Crowns which are specially designed for concealed carry. With a little practice I was able to group the 147-gr. JHPs in 1", which is again more than would ever be needed in a situation for which this little pistol is designed.

I believe it was Clint Smith who said a carry pistol should be, “Comforting not Comfortable.” I find this little pistol is both. 🦋



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10



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Q

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A man in military-style clothing, including a camouflage cap and a tan jacket, is looking through binoculars. He is standing in a forest with green trees and a blue sky in the background. A rifle is slung over his shoulder. The text 'THE ESSENTIAL OPTIC' is overlaid in the center, with 'AND TRUTH IS MORE MAGNIFICANT THAN ALWAYS BEING' below it. A 'READ MORE' button is at the bottom.

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TAURUS MODEL 856 DEFENDER AND UL

PRICE AND FUNCTION COMBINED

The Taurus 856 line is derived from the venerable Taurus Model 85, one of the Brazil-based gun company's most popular revolvers. The M85 itself bears a striking resemblance to certain snubbie Smith and Wesson .38 Special revolvers, likely due in part to a shared joint ownership in the 1970s.

The added -6 in the model number signifies the 856 models are all 6-shot as opposed to the Model 85 being a 5-shot revolver. Taurus has done a fine job of making several attractive versions of the UltraLite with the 2" barrel and the newer Defender with the 3" barrel.

MISTAKES

Prior to the 856 UL, I owned a couple of Taurus revolvers similar in size and features. One was a .22 Magnum with a polished black finish and gold hammer, trigger and cylinder release. It was a very attractive handgun, but the trigger pull in double-action mode was off the scale. For this reason, I let the gun go.

Later I had another Taurus revolver in the same form factor, a .327 Federal Magnum 6-shot revolver. I'm almost ashamed to tell you what happened to this gun but following the trend of gunwriter confessions I've seen in our pages lately, I confess to having unknowingly knocked it into a trash can. I only discovered

it missing after the trash had been taken to the street and picked up. The Model 856 UL I reviewed is my replacement — only it's a .38 Special instead of .327 Magnum because Taurus stopped producing .327 Magnum revolvers in the past year or two.

I think it's a mistake but I'm not privy to their sales numbers. My new one is just as pretty as the first .22 Magnum. The finish is matte black rather than polished but with the gold hammer, trigger and cylinder latch it's just as attractive. The rubber grip fits my hand well and looks good on the gun. It also does a good job of absorbing recoil.

The 856 UL DA/SA models are rated for +P ammo, making them an excellent choice for personal defense. The snubby weighs 15 oz. and has an overall length of 6.55" and a height of 4.8".

The newer Defender came about because some revolver fans wanted a 3" barrel. It weighs 20 oz. with dimensions almost the same as the snubby except for the length of the barrel. Both guns are 1.41" wide at the cylinders. The snubby is made of carbon steel in some color schemes and stainless steel in others. They are available in black, silver, burnt orange, azure and rouge or



The Taurus 856 Ultra-lite series includes the 2" barreled ULs and the 3" barreled UL Defender series.

This 3" Defender sports a matte stainless steel frame with black rubber Hogue grips.

DAVID FREEMAN

TRALITE

black anodized, oxide or matte with several grip options. If you don't like the grip, Hogue has others as does Pachmayr.

SEE IT, HIT IT

The Defender models feature a factory-installed post front sight with an integrated tritium vial. The face of the sight surrounding the tritium is bright orange resulting in one of the fastest acquisition front sights I've seen on a revolver. The 3" barrel provides a slight increase in muzzle velocity and longer sight radius yet the gun is still short enough for deep concealed carry. The DeSantis pocket holster I got for carrying the 856 UL snubby works just as well for the Defender.

The Defender comes in four standard models, all featuring the ergonomic Hogue rubber grips. These include a stainless-steel frame with matte finish, an ultralight aluminum alloy frame with matte finish, a stainless steel frame with black Tenifer finish and an aluminum alloy frame with hard coat black anodized finish. Because I received my Defender during the Coronavirus lock-down and associated panic gun buying, my choices were limited. I got the stainless steel matte finish with black grips which I promptly swapped out for some checkered gray/black striped Pachmayr 61252 G-10 Tactical Pistol Grips.

The hammer on both guns has a wide, checkered thumb rest and the triggers are smooth and wide. Trigger pull on both guns is just under 12 lbs. double-action and around 6 lbs. single-action. Although the guns are both called UltraLite, they are made from steel and absorb recoil pretty well.

UPGRADE

Taurus also offers the Defender 856 in two upgrade versions featuring special grips and finish treatments. The two-tone model has a stainless-steel matte finish frame and barrel with a black cylinder and aggressively textured VZ grip in matching gray and black. If you like hardwood grips, you can opt for the Tungsten Cerakote model Defender 856 with a stylish Altamont walnut grip.

I'm comfortable carrying the Defender as a primary carry gun at times. I have to say my attitude toward carrying a six-shot revolver for personal protection has mellowed. Because these guns have a transfer bar safety, carrying six rounds in them is safe. A .38 caliber hole equals 9.6mm so it's plenty of bullet.

All of the major manufacturers make defensive rounds for the .38 Special and I particularly like Speer Gold Dot, Hornady XTP, Hornady Critical Defense and Federal HydraShok. I'm not too fond of shooting +P ammo but the guns are fine with it. While some scoff at the .38 Special for self-defense, if this is the gun you feel comfortable carrying and shooting, then all the talk about bigger, more powerful guns with more ammo is moot.

RESULTS

I shot the 2" UltraLite several times before getting the Defender. It's not a tack driver, but it doesn't need to be. I can put all six rounds in a 9" circle from five or six yards firing single- or double-action. Satisfied I could defend myself, I began carrying the 856 UL in a pocket holster primarily as a backup, but occasionally it was the only gun when leaving the house briefly for a foray to the fast-food drive-thru or to visit the grandkids. The 3-incher isn't much different as far as carrying goes. The orange/tritium front sight on the 856 Defender is easy to pick up with my eyesight. For this reason, I am able to shoot tighter groups using the same ammo

as with the snubby. I shot them both with a variety of defensive rounds, one of which was a +P load and one was Hornady's Critical Defense Lite, which my wife carries in her S&W LadySmith revolver.

QUALITY QUESTION

Should you be concerned about Taurus quality? In a word, no. Their quality has improved significantly over the last 10 years and poor designs removed from the market. With a brand-new plant in southern Georgia churning out the popular G3 line, Taurus fortunes appear to be on the upswing.

Some gun buyers are wary of the prices Taurus is able to offer for their guns, thinking low price means low quality. The real story behind Taurus' ability to price their revolvers affordably is their ability to make all their parts and guns in-house in South America where their cost of labor is significantly less than here in the States. I've been a long-term owner and user of numerous Taurus products and I've never experienced any problems with their guns. Besides, they offer a lifetime warranty.

Either of these Taurus revolvers will make a good option for concealed carry, home defense, stashing in your truck console or for fun shooting at the range. Price on them will run between \$350 to \$450 depending on the configuration you pick.

The Defender's front sight is highly visible with a tritium dot surrounded by a sea of orange.

The checkered, non-slip, wide hammer tab makes shooting the revolvers in single-action mode a breeze.

The wide, smooth trigger face on the 856 series is very comfortable.

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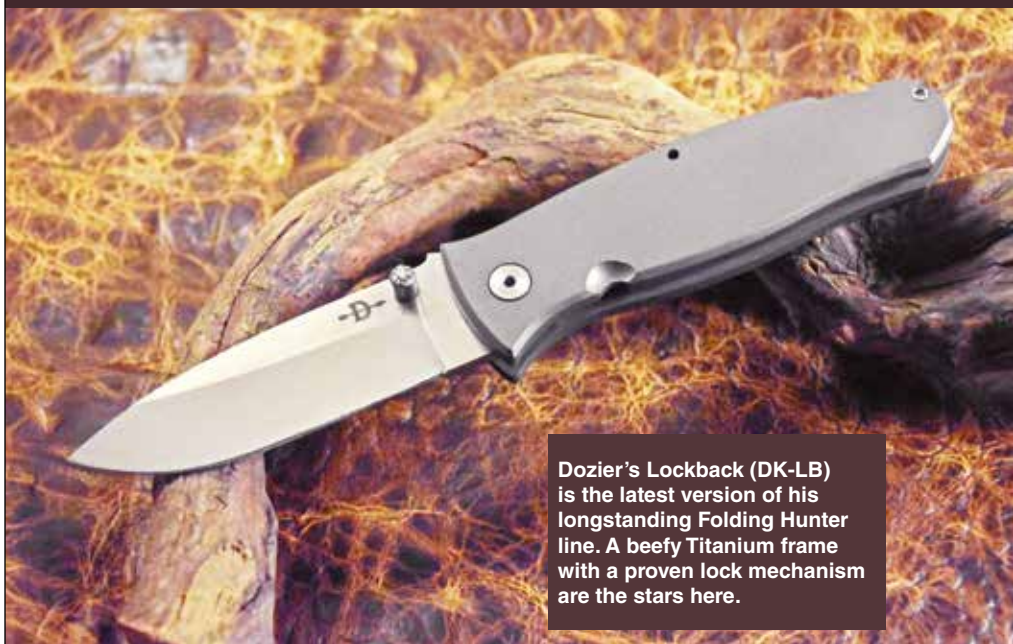
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Dozier's Lockback (DK-LB) is the latest version of his longstanding Folding Hunter line. A beefy Titanium frame with a proven lock mechanism are the stars here.

DOZIER TI LOCKBACK TITANIUM-TOUGH LOCKBLADE

Arkansas knifemaker Bob Dozier doesn't flood his folding knife line-up with new designs. Instead, he offers customers different versions of tried and true ones. His popular Folding Hunter started as a small liner-lock, large and medium size versions followed, then he added models with different scales — Stag, Jigged Bone and Micarta — and on their tail came different locking mechanisms. His latest is a Lockback version of the Folding Hunter.

The Dozier DK-LB is 7.4" overall with a 3.25" blade of the knifemaker's favorite D2 semi-stainless steel. The satin-finished Drop Point-style blade has a deep hollow-grind,

perfect for skinning and opens via a thumb stud. The frame is made of thick 0.156" gray anodized Titanium slabs, nicely curved to fit the palm.

Titanium handles are almost unheard of on a lockback, reflecting Dozier's insistence on building long-lasting, bullet-proof knives whether fixed or folder. The lockback detente and tab are located on the base and out back is a Titanium pocket clip positioned for tip-up carry.

WHY YOU'LL LIKE IT.

Lockback mechanisms, made famous by the Buck 110 in the '60s, are sturdy and dependable — Dozier's DK-LB adds even more durability due to its Titanium frame. I like the design because the detente and tab for unlocking the blade are so easy to locate, you can do it with your eyes closed. The lock is not hidden inside the frame and requires no flipping around in the hands to locate.

Dozier's folders are all handmade by the knifemaker in his St. Paul, Arkansas shop, so they are true customs. The Dozier DK-LB is priced at \$500, typical for a custom with a Titanium frame. It's hard to argue against the idea Bob is the King of D2 steel because he makes it sing with every release!



The lock detente and tab are unassuming but are very easy to locate compared to many other locking mechanisms.

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THE RED MENACE

IGNORING 244 YEARS OF CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

The “Red Flag” menace is a reality in more than a dozen states and there could be even more on the way by the time you read this since the concept seems to be all the rage. And it is, after all, an election year so politicians want to appear to be “doing something to prevent tragedies.”

“Red Flag” is something of a generic term. It is actually an Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO), so listen or look for this term in any news stories about such measures.

These anti-rights laws — which they truly are in many cases — are perhaps well-intentioned but poorly executed. The idea behind them is not so much protecting the community as it is disqualifying as many people as possible from owning or possessing firearms, even if the situation only lasts a few months.

Last summer, Fox News Senior Judicial Analyst Judge Andrew Napolitano declared in an essay published in the *Washington Times* and on the Fox News website, “Red Flag” laws do not pass constitutional muster.

“The concept of a ‘red flag’ law — which permits the confiscation of lawfully owned weapons from a person because of what the person *might* do — violates both the presumption of innocence and the due process requirement of proof of criminal behavior before liberty can be infringed,” Napolitano asserted.

When the former judge wrote about Red Flag laws, he left out a couple of important things. First and foremost, how do gun owners avoid being victimized?

STAYING SAFE

Do you frequently engage in verbal chest thumping on social media (i.e. “I will not comply!” or “Send only unmarried cops to get my guns.”)? Those kinds of remarks can get you on somebody’s radar — an angry sibling, former mate, co-worker with a grudge, one of your children’s teachers or even the neighborhood busybody. Three words apply: Knock-It-Off.

Are you the keyboard commando who routinely accuses senators, congressmen or some other official of “treason”? This word

is one of the most abused, overused and obviously misunderstood terms in the dictionary. It’s not treason to hold an opinion differing from your own and nobody put you in charge to determine who is a traitor.

These are comments which might get you into trouble so turn over a new leaf, learn some diplomacy and avoid presenting yourself as a loon.

How many stories have you read since late last summer about individuals who were arrested for talking about launching an attack on some persons or entities? It’s not much of a stretch to imagine falling victim to your own poor Internet behavior. If you suddenly find yourself being disarmed, you become yet another “example”

of a “typical gun owner.”

Incidentally, those cases of intervention and arrest get plenty of media attention because they want to demonstrate such laws work.

WORKING FOR REAL CHANGE

Secondly, how can gun owners defeat such laws? This takes homework and vigilance. If you know, or know of, some individual who has been “red-flagged,” find out the circumstances. Be willing to acknowledge some people really shouldn’t have firearms and their behavior in person or in a chat room just might be genuine evidence of a loose screw.

However, if someone is unfairly or falsely accused and is penalized as a result, the person’s fundamental rights have been violated.

Make this a First Amendment issue. Find

“... ‘RED FLAG’ LAWS DO NOT PASS CONSTITUTIONAL MUSTER.”



outrageous quotes from celebrities and politicians — especially those who support “Red Flag” laws or gun control in general — and use them to destroy their credibility while pointing out the hypocrisy. Write letters to the editor, put together an Op-Ed for your community newspaper and use such quotes with documentation. Don’t make up something and expect to get away with it.

When writing about “Red Flag” laws, concentrate on due process. Without due process, no person should be deprived of life, liberty or property.

DOES IT REALLY WORK?

There is something else to consider — “Red Flag” laws are used to seize firearms, while the individual typically remains free, where he or she continues to be the alleged danger to themselves or other persons. Never neglect making this point and then ask, “Just how stupid is that?”

Truly dangerous persons shouldn’t be free to walk the streets where they might arm themselves with some other weapon. In Seattle last summer, a recidivist offender

attacked another man with a baseball bat and nearly killed him. The victim suffered possibly permanent injuries.

There are no background checks on baseball bats. Anybody can purchase one because they are available in sporting goods stores all over the map. Make a note of it in your letter or Op-Ed, and refer to the FBI Uniform Crime Report for any given year, which shows more people are murdered with blunt objects annually than are killed with either rifles (including semi-autos) or shotguns.

Still, nobody is going around demanding background checks for little leaguers or high school athletes — because this has never been about preventing crime, but about disarming people.

In case you wish to check, the FBI Uniform Crime Report is easy to find via any search engine. Perhaps even more alarming, you will find far more homicides are committed with “knives or cutting instruments” than either rifles, shotguns or even blunt objects. Anybody can walk into a hardware store or cutlery shop and

purchase multiple knives. All it takes is cash or a credit card.

BASIC RIGHT

In his essay last summer, Judge Napolitano reminded readers a cornerstone of our criminal justice system is a person is to be presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. “Red Flag” laws turn this basic notion upside down.

Napolitano continued: “The presumption of innocence puts the burden for proving a case on the government. Because the case to be proven — might the gun owner be dangerous? — if proven, will result in the loss of a fundamental liberty, the presumption of innocence also mandates the case be proven beyond a reasonable doubt.”

There appears no doubt in some cases, “Red Flag” warnings and investigations have been warranted. On the other hand, there remains considerable doubt every such case is justified and it’s up to you to share your concerns publicly when such incidents arise. Even more importantly, be smart so you’re not one of them! 🔫

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Brent T. Wheat

A friend of mine made an astute observation: “You buy rifle scopes on faith. They all look good on paper and coming out the box but you quickly find out if it’s worth a damn.” He was absolutely right.

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I got to use the Huron in west Texas and the hype matched

performance. Though I didn’t take any game, at the range the superb glass was fantastic both at twilight and noon, while the scope itself survived dusty and violent jeep rides without any change in zero. If you’re ready to upgrade from a “box store” scope, the Huron line would be a major step up — without having to sell a kidney!

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Brent T. Wheat

Mounting a rifle scope is one of those processes where do-it-yourself rigs and projects abound. The most commonly used procedure is to put a small level across the turrets of the scope but it’s widely-recognized turrets commonly aren’t square with the reticle. If you don’t get the reticle leveled, it leads to all kinds of frustration when trying to zero or shoot.

The Real Avid kit uses what I call the proven “reverse” procedure. In essence, the kit includes everything you need to shine a light backward through the scope, shining an image of the reticle onto a leveled grid positioned behind the gun. Rotate the scope into alignment, tighten down the mounting screws and you’re ready to go regardless of which direction your turrets are pointing. All the kit components are high quality and with care, will outlast your shooting career.

MSRP: \$69.99



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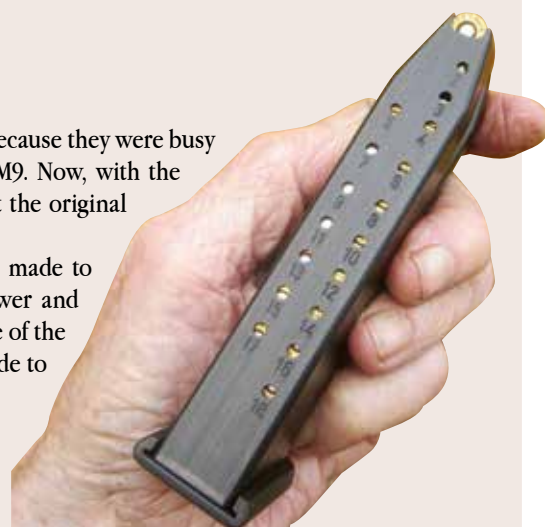
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J.B. Wood

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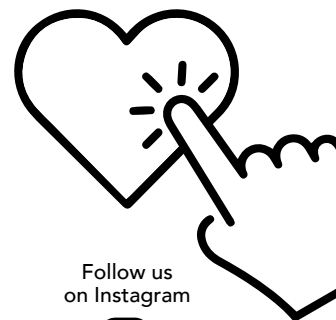
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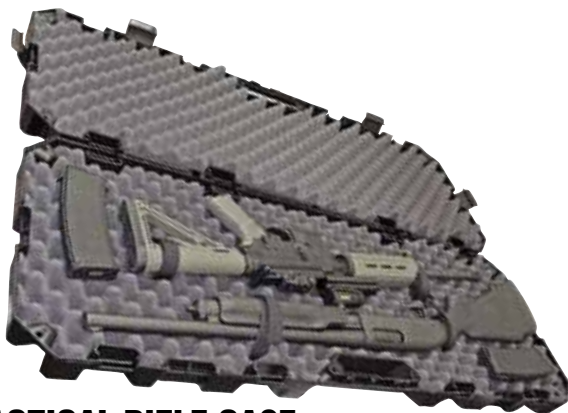
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MODEL 61121 BEAR & SON CUTLERY

Bear & Son Cutlery's Bear Edge brand introduces the Model 61121, a black-and-red assisted sidliner. The knife measures a little over 8 1/2" when open and weighs 3.9 oz. Its hollowground 3 3/8" tanto blade is made from 440 stainless steel with a black finish. The blade features a spring-assisted system and a sidliner lock. The Model 61121 has a lanyard hole for additional carry options and a glass breaker for emergencies. For more info: (256) 435-2227, www.bearandsoncutlery.com



TACTICAL RIFLE CASE MTM CASE-GARD

MTM Case-Gard's Tactical Rifle Case is designed to protect rifles and shotguns during transport and allows them to be stacked for storage. With plastic molded construction, it fits most rifles or shotguns up to 42" long. The case includes rugged snap latches for a secure lock, quality foam padding for maximum protection and multiple internal tie-down and padlock points for security. For more info: (937) 890-7461, www.mtmcase-gard.com

ELEVATE LITE HAWK

HAWK's Elevate Lite is a harness to keep you safe and comfortable when you're up in a treestand. The safety harness features a padded waist and shoulder straps for comfort. Quick release buckles with adjustable leg straps ensure fit. The Elevate Lite is in a Chaos Camo pattern and comes with a lineman's belt, tree strap, suspension-relief strap and carabiner. Weighing under 2 lbs., it has a maximum weight capacity of 300 lbs. For more info: (877) 269-8490, www.hawkhunting.com



TT26 MAXPEDITION

Maxpedition's 26-liter TT26 backpack is designed for the modern woodsman. It has two entry points into the main compartment plus a top zipper for quick access to contents from above. A full-length frontal zipper allows you to see contents of the main compartment, vital to an organized emergency kit. The TT26 is ideal to use while hiking or traveling, yet is also great in an urban setting. For more info: www.maxpedition.com



RMP SERIES GREY MAN TACTICAL

Grey Man Tactical's RMP Series or Rigid MOLLE Panel provides ease of transportation, organization and concealment for firearms, hunting and overland gear and more. The RMP is built with injection-molded Glass Reinforced Nylon Polymer for strength and to prevent sagging when mounting heavy items. Panels for vehicles, backpacks, cases and safes are available to fit your needs. They are offered with locks and a covert cover to conceal everyday gear. For more info: (985) 290-3161, www.greymantactical.com



SUBMIT YOUR ENTRY ONLINE:

ALTOR SINGLE-SHOT, SELF-DEFENSE PISTOLS GIVEAWAY

ALTOR Corp. describes this unique pistol as “perfectly simple and simply perfect.” Alex Malcolm, the company’s owner and president, envisioned it as a reliable American-made handgun fitting anyone’s budget. *GUNS* Publisher Roy Huntington designated it his “official tractor field rat gun” after testing it for *American Handgunner Insider* (Sep.-Oct. 2020, p. 82). Roy wrote, “... the ALTOR shows excellent workmanship, using high quality reinforced nylon polymer and 416RS stainless for the barrel and metal bits. Thanks to CNC machining, it all fits together perfectly and works as designed.” Just because it’s inexpensive doesn’t mean quality has been sacrificed. The ALTOR pistol has a total of six parts and only two connect to load and fire. Offered in .380 ACP and 9mm Luger, it’s a simple striker-fired operation. Lightweight and ambidextrous, the ergonomic design

makes it easy to hold and carry. There must be something to the ALTOR pistol then even if it looks different from most handguns. Even J.B. Wood seems to be impressed. Turn to pp. 34–35 to read what he has to say about it.

Our other prize is a pair of handsome folders with frame locks from Columbia River Knife & Tool — the *Gulf* and *Burnout*. The blades of these CRKT knives are made of 8Cr13MoV steel with a Stonewash finish. Handle is G10 for the Gulf; carbon fiber and G10 overlay for the Burnout. Both are must-haves for everyday carry.

There simply is no reason to turn down a chance to win two ALTOR pistols, yes two — one in 9mm and another in .380 ACP — plus two fine knives from CRKT. So hurry up and enter this giveaway. Go to www.gunsmagazine.com/giveaways or mail a post card. —Jazz Jimenez



ENTER TO WIN!



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

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

SKINNER SIGHTS RUGER AMERICAN RIMFIRE RAIL JUST LIKE THE BIG BOYS!

Andy Larsson — head honcho and chief floor sweeper at Skinner Sights — has the uncanny ability of knowing what shooters want, before said shooters even know it. This ability means Andy is acutely aware of what's needed to solve issues shooters aren't aware of yet, but are happily solved with Andy's designs. In other words, he makes things easier for us.

INNOVATIVE CONSUMPTION

Like most of us, Andy grew up consumed with guns, handloading, hunting and any other activity associated with guns. As a sophomore in high school, he showed his mettle after buying an Italian Bodeo revolver. Only Problem? It was chambered for the 10.35mm cartridge. Where would Andy get ammo?

Starting with .303 British cartridges, Andy used his school shop-department lathe, cutting the brass and turning the rims down

to size. An assortment of dies allowed him to size the brass to fit the cylinder chamber. For bullets, it was back to the lathe where Andy made a mold for casting lead slugs. Black powder was used as his propellant. The loads were accurate and he shot them for years until eventually trading the gun.

SCOUT RAIL FOR RIMFIRE AMERICAN

I told you about Skinner Sights DIY Scout System rail for the Ruger American rifle in the May 2020 issue of *GUNS*. Andy now added the same rail, in either silver or black, for the Ruger American rimfire rifles — and it's slick!

The rail allows mounting of a scope either traditionally, or forward Scout Rifle-style, also giving your rifle a rear peep sight and adjustable AR15-type front sight option. The rail uses the drilled/tapped holes

already in the Ruger American rimfire rifle action/barrel but does require the additional drilling/tapping of two more holes in the barrel.

I added one of Andy's 1-6x24 scopes and was ready to sight in. After two shots, and a few turns of the ½ MOA turret knobs I was zeroed at 25 yards. This scope also features a 1 MOA red dot for low light conditions and a BDC reticle.

Like all Ruger American rifles I've shot, this one proved just as accurate. Shooting at 25 yards, it was no problem putting five shots into less than 0.4" with various types of .22 ammo. This trio consisting of the Ruger American rimfire rifle, the Skinner Sights rail combined with the Skinner Sights scope is a wonderful, well-balanced combo great for any professional plinker, hunter or anyone looking for some fun.

WORK BACKGROUND

Andy started his varied work career while in college as a sporting goods clerk in a hunting/fishing store. He gravitated toward the shop gunsmith with his machining background. Majoring in theology, Andy became



Groups of 0.4" or better were the norm with the rail-equipped Ruger American rifle and various brands of ammo. Winchester X box seemed to be a favorite — 10 shots under 0.5" at 25 yards.



Skinner Sights Scout Rail for the Ruger American rimfires and a Skinner Scope turns a basic rifle into a more versatile shooter while adding style and pizzazz.



The Scout Rail has an AR15 style front sight that's easily adjustable for height. The full rail allows both traditional and forward Scout Rifle-style mounting of scope.

a minister after graduating college. During this time, he also became a tent maker to supplement his salary.

Andy also worked as an ammo loader and sales rep for Tim Sundles' Buffalo Bore Ammunition. His niche had always been machine shop work and the self-taught machinist/gunsmith was making Bullseye pistols for himself and eventually others.

Word of mouth spread of his designs and Larsson was offered a job by a well-known, revered custom gun maker. Andy turned the generous offer down because he didn't want to tear away from his Montana roots to relocate. Can you blame him?

SIGHTS TO SET EYES ON

Andy was eventually offered the opportunity to purchase Skinner Sights 10 years ago from Dr. Skinner himself, and the rest is history.

More than the products a company puts out are the stories of the men who design them. By telling you of Andy Larsson's extensive background, you can see why his company is successful. He's laid the groundwork, so we don't have to.

Not just an iron sight, or even peep sight company, Skinner Sights has expanded to bases, bases with peeps, rails with both front sights and peep sights, scopes, garment bags for guns, and takedown Winchester-clone model 1892 and 1886 kits.

I admit to purchasing one of Andy's "Bush Pilot" take-down M1886 carbines, as well as a few of his Scout rails, scope and numerous peep sights. To say I'm pleased with the quality would be an understatement. Andy knows what he's doing, and his products show it.

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on bagging a rabbit or guarding the hen house from marauding raccoons. I thought the gun beautiful because I knew it had belonged to my great-grandfather.

After many years spent residing in the closet of my beloved grandfather, the rifle finally arrived in my hands. The day it came to my house, it was given a cursory wipe with an oily rag and a few speculative throws to the shoulder, then rather unceremoniously stowed in the gun safe. I knew there should have been more introspection, more time spent simply holding, peering down the sights, checking and re-checking it, but there wasn't.

Dad had been gone a while, and now suddenly, grandpa. By family accord, I was next in the line of owners for the rifle and the thought caused both joy and ache I didn't want to examine too closely at the moment.

In this enhanced photo, you can see in spite of the gun being a Winchester, the barrel is clearly from J. Stevens Arms Co.



THE DAY

The rifle remained hidden away for nearly a year until the annual fall cleaning of the gun locker. I retrieved the old .22, took it in my hands and sat down at the desk to just look and think. My great-grandfather had died years before I was born and to me he was mostly faded pictures and rare stories from my grandfather. In fact, it seems likely the gun had actually been passed down even farther owing to its age, but those stories were lost sometime in the last century.

However, while finally giving the rifle the contemplation it deserved, I felt a renewed sense of connection in knowing my great-grandfather and likely more had carried it for practical and pleasurable matters in the hills of southern Kentucky and later Indiana. Thus formed the obvious idea — I was compelled to carry on the family hunting tradition with this rifle at least once.

THE EXPERIENCE

First was the problem of cleaning a firearm that had seen store-bought gun

solvent very few times in its life. The action scrubbed up nicely while the bore was rough. I was afraid to get too aggressive in cleaning lest it turn into a musket. Just a few minutes of range time verified accuracy was not great, minute-of-barn perhaps, but getting close to the typical squirrel would not prove a huge problem. The difficulty would be making a good clean shot to fulfill the legacy of this rifle because there would undoubtedly be spectators, even though I was technically alone in the woods.

A week later the rifle and I hunted in the hills of southern Indiana, chasing the few squirrels not napping on an unseasonably warm day. After passing up the shot earlier in the morning, I trudged back to the car in the still, crunchy, cicada-laden afternoon heat, bothered about my empty game pocket. I was perturbed because this day — for a writer of gun stories — was destined to become preserved in words and

bagging a squirrel would have been the easy end.

Arriving at the truck hot, thirsty and sour, it was apparent I had forgotten the real point of the adventure. On an impeccable Technicolor day, I had been afield with my ancestors, using the same piece of steel and walnut they had carried in their hands across decades. I was simply another point along a great familial line — this should be a nourishing thought even for the unromantic soul.

THE UNDERSTANDING

Ultimately, larger insight slowly arrived like an evening fog. Putting away the rifle in the scabbard I realized one solitary hunt, one animal taken does not close a chapter or even a whole story. We are truly mere guardians of guns, caretakers for the object and the ghosts riding along. In my case, the rifle will be carefully maintained and fired occasionally, then handed down to the next generation, and the next, to write their own stories.

I just hope they have better luck. ➤

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THE RIFLE

WE DON'T OWN GUNS, WE CARE FOR THEM ...

“Easy, easy ...” I thought while watching the squirrel dig for some morsel buried under the forest duff. When his head came back up, there would be a steady pull on the trigger and with a tiny bit of luck, I would score.

THE HUNT

My prey didn't cooperate. Instead, he sauntered along, shuffle-scrampering with his head down for a few more feet. I watched intently as he moved about, unconcerned and unaware of the danger lying just a few yards and one bullet away. He continued the stop-move-stop pattern until my arms ached from holding the rifle and I was cross-eyed from staring. I could have thrown a hasty shot several times but I wanted to be sure of a good hit.

Today, there could be no misses or cripples, only a sudden crack and the slight poignancy at the harvest of game. Today, I would slowly stand and walk over to the fallen animal and feel ethical and honorable because I had hunted well.

Something stirred his interest and he stopped, head held high and watching. I could feel the smooth time-worn steel of the trigger on my finger as the pressure grew. Within seconds the sear would break, the bullet would fly true and the contest would end. However, the squirrel scampered away when it heard the external hammer of my rifle being manually lowered.

I had not fired because the animal had meandered too far, putting it past the self-imposed range I had already determined for this gun after the previous morning spent on the shooting range. Though it's tough to pass on a shot, this defeat was not particularly tormenting because it was early and the hunt today was not about the animal itself, the scenery or bringing home a full game bag. It was about the gun.

THE RIFLE

In my hands was an undistinguished slide-action .22 caliber rifle, a Winchester Model 1906. It looks like most other guns of a similar advanced age, the blued steel faded

to a rich brown patina with silver-worn spots on the sharp corners. The wood is battered and a bit oil-soaked around the action but not unsightly.

The rifle isn't in the best of shape nor the worst. It was a working man's gun, cared for enough to stay functional but not babied. It had likely been purchased at a hardware store or ordered from the Sears Catalog and arrived via railroad and horse at its final destination.

By serial number the rifle was manufactured sometime in 1907, the first year of production. Giving it a more thorough once-over, I was surprised and intrigued to find the barrel almost-imperceptibly marked “J. Stevens Arms and Tool Co. Chicopee, Mass. U.S.A.” The likely reason was first-year rifles were only chambered in .22 Short, so some enterprising soul swapped out a Stevens barrel chambered for the .22 LR. From 1908 until 1936 when production ceased, the guns chambered all the .22 rimfire cartridges.

Though a centenarian, the rifle is still mechanically sound. It is a plain, utilitarian, inexpensive firearm from a simple time when dinner might have depended

continued on page 73

Brent's great-grandfather's Winchester Model 1906, commonly referred to as “The Rifle.”



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