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ON THE COVER:
THE KELBLY KODA
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APRIL 2022, VOL. 68, NUMBER 4, 808TH ISSUE

COLUMNS

8 CROSSFIRE

Agreeing to Disagree
GUNS Staff

18 HANDLOADING

Alliant Sport Pistol Powder
John Taffin

22 RIFLES

Single- and
Double-Stage Triggers
Dave Anderson

24 DEFENSIVE RIFLES

WMD Guns .300 BLK
Denny Hansen

26 MONTANA MUSINGS

The Last Rifle
Mike "Duke" Venturino

28 OPTICS

Harsh Reality
Wayne Van Zwoil

30 SHOOTER'S RX

The Tokyo Raid
Will Dabbs, MD

60 KNIVES

Esee Xancudo
Pat Covert

70 THINK TANK

A Ruger Russian-American?
Jeff "Tank" Hoover

74 GUNS INSIDER

I Got Shot!
Brent T. Wheat



DEPARTMENTS

32 SURPLUS AND CLASSIC

Church of Carbine Collecting
Will Dabbs, MD

62 2A DEFENSE

Virginia Did It, So Can You!
Dave Workman

64 QUARTERMASTER

- Benchmade Claymore Folder & Pen
 - Colt Post-War Book
 - Hunter's Supply Cast Bullets
- Roy Huntington**

66 NEW PRODUCTS

68 GUN OF THE MONTH

72 ADVERTISER INDEX

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36

KELBLY KODAA Custom Rifle Out of the Box
Serena Juchnowski

54



10

CAMPFIRE TALESBig Bore Belly Guns — Choices
John Taffin

14

AYOOB ON HANDGUNSTiger McKee Chopper
Massad Ayoob

34

SHOOTOUT: BOLT VS. SEMISemi is Always Better, Right?
Jeremy Clough

36

KELBLY KODAA Custom Rifle Out of the Box
Serena Juchnowski

42

COLT OR S&W? THE MODEL 1917Teaming Up for WWI Guns
Payton Miller

46

KNOB CREEK REQUIEMThe Greatest Shoot is Gone
Frank Jardim

50

GUN FAMILY VACATIONThe Happiest Place on Earth
Jameson Parker

54

ATI NOMADPractical. Even Highly Tactical!
Will Dabbs, MD

34



42





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continued on page 29



.460 LOVE

Have to say *Wheelgun Wednesday* is certainly something I look forward to, especially when it involves hunting with revolvers. Mark Hampton is spot-on about the .460 as a great big game round. I love .45 caliber revolvers and have owned just about all of them at one time or another.

I own two .460s and at one time thought they were too much for deer. So I either hunt with Ruger .45 Colt or my favorite scoped Freedom Arms 83 in .454. I have hunted with handguns for I dare say 50-plus years and never seem to cease learning. I always like to "go big or go home" for the most part.

I ditched the 357s and .44s long ago for the .45s. Two weeks ago I had a weak moment and took out a favorite Ruger .45 Colt loaded with a 300-grain XTP. Muzzle velocity is in the 1,150-1,200 range. I took a 40-yard supported shot at the biggest buck I have ever seen in all my deer hunting and I lost him. It was solid quartering shot which is usually successful for me, but obviously the .45 did not have enough for complete penetration or perhaps expansion.

Mind you, most of the deer I shoot would have been 100-lbs. lighter than this bruiser.

That same round in my leverguns delivers 1,550 fps and just flattens deer. Same with my 454 revolver in that velocity range. My conclusion: Bring enough gun with at least 1,500 fps and a heavy bullet. I am going with the .454 or breaking out the .460s for the just-in-case next encounter.

Mike Harmon

INTERESTING CONCEPT

Been saying for years tiny red dot sights belong on the front of a pistol! A red dot belongs in the front — this gives it a reference sighting plane down the full length of the slide. Try this, mount a red dot up front with double-sided tape, now compare finding the dot up front and finding the dot rear mounted.

Ellis R. Sisk

Interesting concept I hadn't considered. It might make holsters or holstering a problem but your concept seems reasonable. I'll grab some double-face tape and give it a try! —BW

KUDOS

I thoroughly enjoyed the February issue of GUNS Magazine. From big bore belly guns, snub noses revolvers, .44s and M1 carbines, it was packed with great articles.

I really enjoyed Wayne Van Zwoll's article on rifle scopes. I have never really read the high-tech, long-range articles on super-expensive 1,000-yard sniper scopes and complicated reticles. His article was excellent. It was easy to understand and made me feel better



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BIG BORE BELLY GUNS PART III

CHOICES FOR TODAY

John Taffin

Local gun shops are great places to find BBBGs and two worth looking for are the out-of-production Smith & Wesson L-Frame .44 Specials. The Model 696 is an all-steel, five-shot, heavy-barreled .44 Special while its companion Model 396 Mountain Lite is the lightweight version. Due to its much lighter weight, mine is equipped with finger-grooved rubber grips for controllability. Both are fed diets of factory loads or handloads using the Speer 200-grain Gold Dot JHP.

Taurus also offers or has offered several versions of BBBGs with my most-used being the 3" stainless steel Model 441. My five-shot Model 441 has been tuned to perfection by Bill Oglesby and also fitted with high visibility sights consisting of a V-notch rear sight paired with a large bead front sight. This is my office gun, always in easy reach while I am working at the computer. It's loaded with the same ammunition used in the Bulldogs and S&W .44 Specials.

HEAD FOR THE HILLS

Most of the belly guns described thus far are mainly for every day carry, however, there are some BBBGs that are exceptionally comforting when traveling off the beaten path in sagebrush, foothills, forests and mountains. Ruger offers what is probably the most powerful factory-produced double-action BBBG — the Alaskan Model with a 2-3/4" barrel and chambered in .454 Casull. It is definitely a handful and the finger-grooved rubber grips are highly appreciated. If one does not need the extreme power of the .454, it is also offered in .44 Magnum. Ruger just recently began offering two new .357 Magnum Big Bore Belly Guns in the 3" GP-100 and the smaller sized 2-1/4" five-shot SP101. The latter is a handful especially, however, if ever needed in a serious situation the recoil will not be noticed. A third BBBG is their high-cap



This pair of Ruger Vaqueros have been turned into belly guns chambered in .44-40 and .45 Colt.

belly gun, the eight-shot, 2-3/4" .357 Magnum Redhawk.

My friend, the late Larry Kelly of Mag-na-port, was also a pioneer in offering Big Bore Belly Guns. In the early 1980s he began offering Combat Mini-Magnum Conversions on S&W double-action sixguns such as the Model 29/629.44 Magnums, Model 25 in .45 Colt, the .41 Magnum Model 57 — in fact, any N-Frames! Barrels were cut from the frame end as well as the muzzle end, resulting in a 2-1/2" to 3" barrel length. After the barrel was cut, it was given a special deep-dish crown, fitted with a new Baughman-style front sight and Mag-na-ported. For easier handling, the grip frame was round-butt and fitted with Pachmayr Compac grips. This conversion is still offered by Larry's son Kenny — now successfully heading up Mag-na-port — and he also offers this conversion on the Colt Anaconda.

Gary Reeder offers a full line of double-action BBBGs such as the

Alaskan Survivalist chambered in .44 Magnum or .45 Colt, the aptly named Urban Survivalist in .44 Special, and Da Brute, which offers the largest calibers in any BBBG, namely .475 and .500 Linebaugh. He also offers his own original cartridges, the .500 GNR and .510 GNR. Gary is willing to make any double-action BBBG based on a Ruger Redhawk or Super Redhawk in any chambering that is safe. He starts with the basic Redhawk or Super Redhawk. However, the original cylinder is replaced by a brand-new custom five-shot cylinder.

SINGLE ACTION BIG BORE BELLY GUNS

As discussed earlier, Colt has offered the Sheriff's Model sans ejector rod in all three generations. However, it is no longer cataloged. USFA also offered an excellent nickel-plated Sheriff's Model but this is also a dead end as they have now closed their doors. However, all is not lost as a custom sixgun-smith can

A man wearing a tactical cap, glasses, and a headset is holding a handgun in a ready position. The background is a warm, yellowish-orange gradient.

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Bill Oglesby turned this Taurus .44 Special into a very efficient five-shot belly gun.



turn a standard model into a Sheriff's Model by shortening the barrel, removing the ejector rod housing and cleaning up the side of the frame that has the receptacle for the ejector rod. EMF offers their Great Western II in a 3" Sheriff's Model chambered in .45 Colt or .357 Magnum. Cimarron Firearms' 3-1/2" Thunderer comes complete with the ejector rod in .45 Colt, .44-40, .44 Special and .357 Magnum. The Taylor's & Co. version is the stainless Runnin' Iron in .357 Magnum and .45 Colt.

Freedom Arms has the finest factory-produced single-action sixguns ever and their Model 83 was at one time offered with a 3" barrel without an ejector rod in .454. They currently offer the Model 97 in .45 Colt or .44 Special with a 3" barrel, ejector rod and round butt. Buffalo Bore has standard-pressure Heavy Loads for both cartridges with 240- to 255-grain Keith-style bullets at 1,000 fps. A short-barreled Model 97 chambered in either caliber with Buffalo Bore loads will handle most situations whichever arise this side of Alaska.

Gary Reeder also offers custom single-action BBBGs such as the Back-packer in .45 Colt or .44 Magnum and the Ultimate Back-Up in .41GNR. Just as with his double-actions, Gary can make anything that is safe using a five-shot cylinder on a Ruger Blackhawk

platform. Gary turned Diamond Dot's 7" Schofield Model .45 into a 3" Border Special complete with engraving and mastodon grips. Ruger from time to time has offered shorter-barreled sixguns mostly through selected distributors. However, I have had a couple Vaqueros, both .45 Colt and .44-40, converted into BBBGs by shortening the barrel and fitting them with Birds-head grip frames. Two other favorite single action BBBGs are a Ruger Blackhawk converted to .44 Special with a 3" barrel and a .44-40 Italian replica single-action given the same treatment, except in .44-40 by Milt Morrison. Both are very easy packing little-big .44s.

CHOICES

All this brings us down to the task of actually choosing a Big Bore Belly Gun from all the many options. I could certainly get by with any of the single- or double-action sixguns discussed. However, what would be my best choices?

We actually have two categories to consider. One is a sixgun that would be used primarily for self-defense while traveling in civilization, while the other would be for utilization far from the beaten path where it might be needed against tough, nasty four-legged critters that bite, scratch, gore or stomp. For the

first category from the used gun list, I would go with a .357 Magnum 2-1/2" S&W Model 19/66. It is easy to conceal, very portable, sufficiently powerful with a large list of ammunition options. Looking at the new gun market, my choice would be the relatively new 3" version of the Ruger .357 Magnum GP100. The Ruger GP has been offered for several decades in 4" and 6" versions and has proven itself to be utterly reliable and virtually indestructible.

For traveling foothills, forests and mountains, I would go with something larger depending upon just where my feet would take me. There are larger cartridges offered than the .454. However, in my golden years this is the upper end of my ability to handle a sixgun well. This leaves me with the choice of the Ruger Alaskan 2-3/4" chambered in .454 and fitted with rubber finger grooved grips that I find absolutely necessary for handling the power of the cartridge in this relatively-small sixgun. This same gun has also been offered in the easier-handling .44 Magnum.

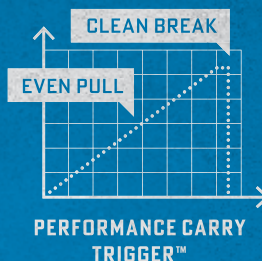
Life is full of trade-offs. For me, the longer barrels are much easier to shoot. However, the shorter barrels are much easier to pack and definitely quicker into action. As in so many cases, we pay our money and we take our choice — and choice is highly subjective. **GUNS**



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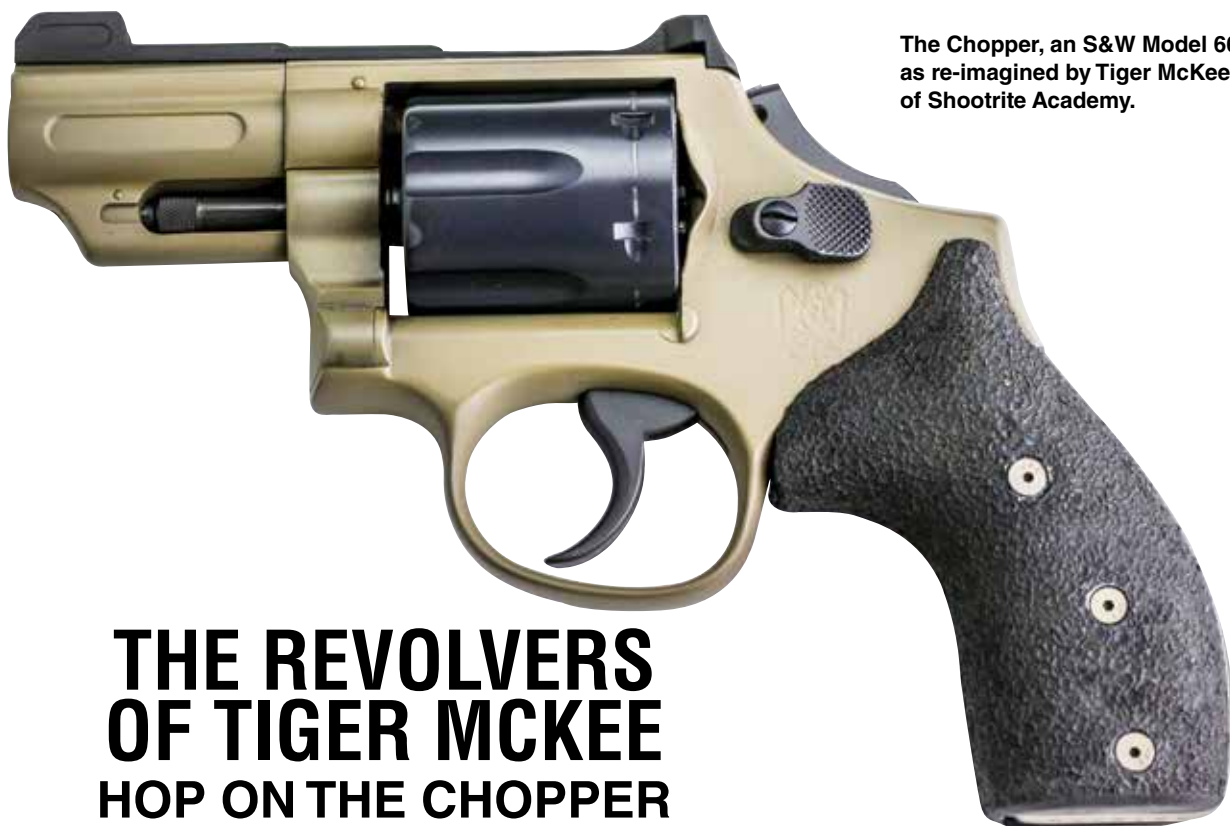


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The Chopper, an S&W Model 66, as re-imagined by Tiger McKee of Shootrite Academy.

THE REVOLVERS OF TIGER MCKEE HOP ON THE CHOPPER

Massad Ayoob

The big white dot of the front sight centers on the target as your finger rolls the trigger back, so smoothly it feels like an oiled ball bearing. The recoil of the .357 Magnum round is more reassuring than painful and the stippled grip doesn't move inside your grasp at all as the trigger slides smoothly back forward, the white ball already centered again on the shot group forming downrange.

You are shooting a "Chopper," a sweet Smith & Wesson revolver made all the sweeter by the ministrations of one Tiger McKee.

If you're well acquainted with the handgun world, you already know the name. Tiger McKee is a world-recognized authority on defensive shooting, as evidenced by the fact he writes the *Tactics & Training* column for this magazine's sister publication, *American Handgunner*. He earned his fame with two classic guns of his generation, the 1911 .45 pistol and the AR15 rifle, but admits to a love for revolvers. For a number of reasons, he thinks they're good choices for armed citizen carry — and he improves them.



Muzzle re-shaped and counterbored. Note protective sight wings.

MEET THE TEST GUN

The Chopper featured here is one of a pair he built for Roger Caudle, a regular customer who already owns two or three McKee revolvers. It began as a Model 66-1 from the good ol' days before internal locks, with a 2.5" barrel and S&W's micrometer adjustable sight. It looks a lot different now.

Tiger explains, "I started out taking square butt, 4" barrel K-Frame revolvers and turning them into the 3" round butt configuration everyone wants now and can't find. That left the 'Smith & Wesson' designation on the left side of the barrel and the caliber designation on the other side no longer centered, and I wound up milling the sides of the barrel flat. That solved the aesthetic issue, and also seemed to improve the balance of the gun. The balance element is the reason I do it on guns that are already the desired barrel length."

This Chopper has distinctive sights. Tiger added an XS Big Dot front with tritium dot in the front, and the big, rugged fixed rear sight Cylinder & Slide Inc. makes to replace factory S&W adjustable sights. The humongous front sight is flanked by thin steel protective



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wings. The reshaped barrel is pleasantly sculpted, its muzzle re-crowned for accuracy and counter-bored for protection. Tiger has made this 66 a “triple lock” with a spring-loaded ball bearing on the crane, giving the Chopper a three-point cylinder lockup. Tiger does a “melt” rounding of all sharp edges on the revolver. The backstrap of the grip-frame is lightly stippled and so are the Hideout grips from Brownells. The most expensive and time-consuming part of the full Chopper job, Tiger says, is reshaping and narrowing the trigger guard to allow faster access by the index finger. The gun is finished in Gun Kote, this sample being Magpul FDE for the frame and Magpul Stealth Gray for trigger, hammer, cylinder and traditional style cylinder release.

Another nice touch — the front edges of the cylinder are chamfered, allowing for smoother re-holstering; an important and often overlooked subtlety.

Which leaves the trigger work. Ah, the trigger work ...

THE CHOPPER IN ACTION

Externally, he radiuses and polishes the trigger itself (“For fighting, not target shooting,” as he puts it), and bobs the hammer. Tiger explains, “All metal-to-metal contact points are honed and polished. I’ve had a lot of people help me learn to tune one, like Roy Huntington. Correct tolerances are critical. The springs are Wolff. I use their standard hammer spring — a little lighter than factory but still giving positive ignition even with the hardest primers. I put in a 14-lb. rebound spring for faster trigger return.”

On the Chopper’s first of many range runs, I invited along Alan Davis and his son Owen. Alan is a many-time Stock Service Revolver division champion in major IDPA matches, and his first reaction to pulling the Chopper’s



Added lock on yoke, unique barrel treatment are seen here.

trigger was “Ooh. This is nice!”

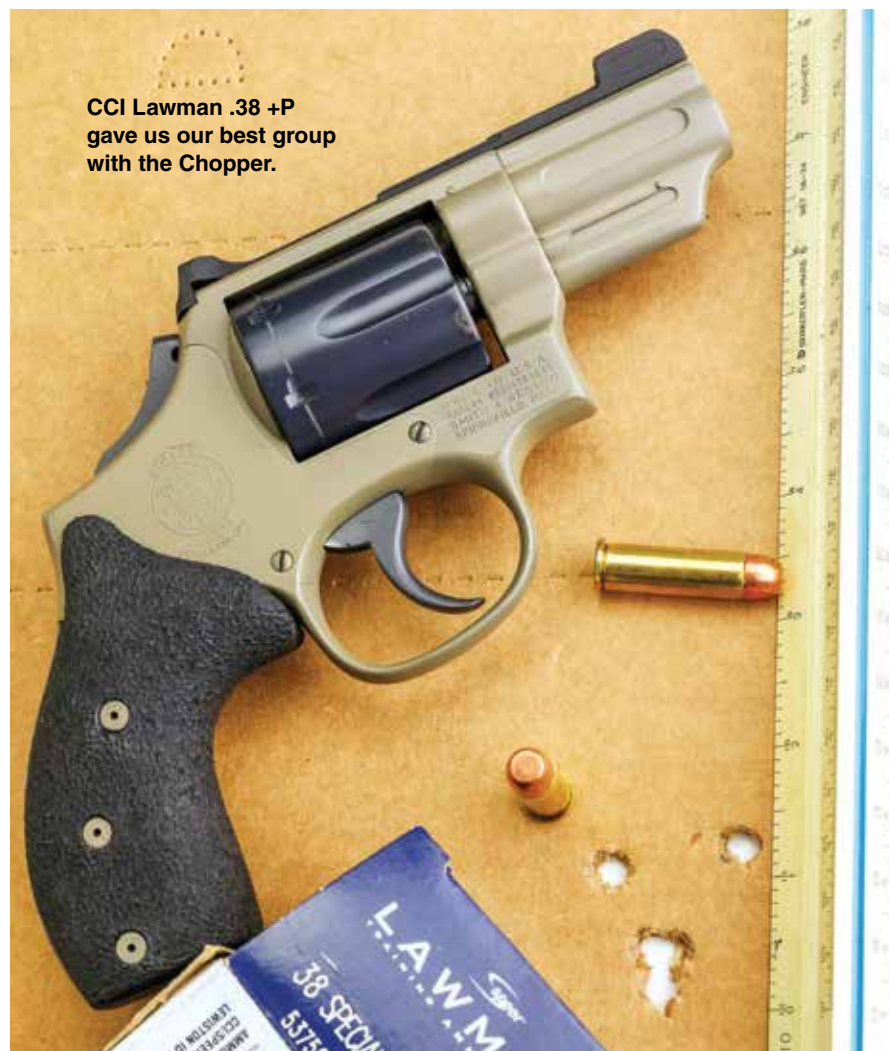
My sentiments exactly. The trigger is hospitable to the finger, reset is indeed fast and the DA pull runs around 10 lbs. but feels a lot less because it’s so smooth. Like J.H. Fitzgerald, the legendary Colt guy who created the famed Fitz Special, Tiger leaves the bobbed hammer’s single action capability in place — sub-3 lbs. — for the customer who thinks he just might one day need a crisp short pull for a precision shot. You start the trigger back until enough of the stubbed hammer has risen for the support hand thumb to catch it, or he’ll make it double-action only, your choice.

We found ourselves shooting way low putting the Big Dot all the way into the U-notch of the rear sight, “ball in basket,” the way we shoot S&W Nightguards and 340 M&Ps so equipped. With the front sight up higher, we were on target, and Owen was soon going six for six on the falling plates. A call to Tiger elicited the info this particular customer preferred a sight picture with the Big Dot up out of the notch and the tritium dot level with the top edge of the rear sight. Two lessons: Don’t trust the other guy’s sights ’til you’ve shot the gun, and — Tiger McKee will make your gun exactly the way you want it.

The work ain’t cheap, but it’s so much in demand he has a four- to six-month wait time. From what I saw and felt shooting it, it’s worth the wait! You can reach Tiger McKee to discuss what you want through Shootrite.org or write him at Shootrite, 98 Lois Lane, Langston, Ala. 35755.

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John Taffin

Sport Pistol is a relatively new powder from Alliant designed specifically for handgun use. Alliant especially designed this powder for precision and action shooters. Its major attributes are clean-burning, excellent charging and case fill, low muzzle flash, and with the availability of so many polymer-coated bullets today, the claim is it is also optimized for use of these bullets and will not

dissolve polymer coatings at the base during ignition.

LOAD 'EM UP

During the dreary days of January/February, I spent a lot of time loading both semi-automatic and sixgun cartridges, well over 1,200 rounds, with Sport Pistol and was ready when Spring started teasing us in March. A look at my records shows seven days were spent testing several powders and new bullets and over 2,100 rounds fired

during March's better days. Since this powder was designed for competition use, the most obvious place to start was with four 1911s chambered in .45 ACP. Studying the Alliant data and choosing several different bullets, both cast and polymer-coated, proved to be quite beneficial as to results.

Using both the 230-grain Acme and 230-grain Syntech coated bullets, I decided to go with 5.5 grains of Alliant Sport Pistol for my testing. This load proved to be an excellent one



The Colt Gold Cup .45 lives up to its reputation with targets fired with Sport Pistol loads.

not only for accuracy but for use as an everyday carry load. Muzzle velocities were mostly from 880–900 fps with the Acme load producing loads right at 1" for five shots at 20 yards in the Ruger SR 1911, Springfield Armory Range Officer and the Colt Gold Cup. The Syntech load produces the same accuracy results with muzzle velocities just slightly less at 860–880 fps.

NEW DESIGN

Custom gunsmith Dave Lauck has come up with a newly designed 200-grain .45 ACP bullet. This all began over 20 years ago when Dave was on a hunting trip with Col. Cooper. One of the most popular designs, and one of my favorites, is the Hensley & Gibbs #68 which is basically duplicated by the RCBS #45-201. This is a 200-grain semi-wadcutter bullet with a full caliber cutting shoulder and a flat point. The problem with some semi-automatic pistols is this bullet will not always feed reliably, or if it does, a shooter who pays attention can feel it doing what Dave calls stumble. The slide



John used the Ruger SR 1911 Target Model 10mm with Sport Pistol and cast bullets and Coated bullets from Acme and Syntech.

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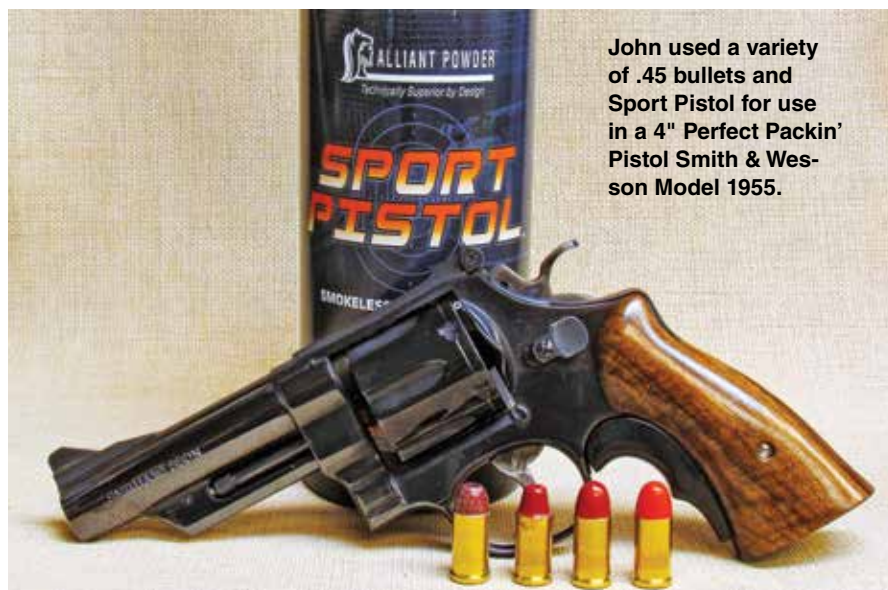
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hesitates in closing.

The Lauck bullet maintains the full cutting shoulder; however, the nose is rounded for positive feed. I have been using this bullet in several .45 semi-automatic pistols and for testing Sport Pistol I loaded it over 6.0 grains. It performed well in all .45 pistols including the three mentioned above and also a Kimber Stainless Target II. Muzzle velocity is from 930–960 fps depending upon the pistol and Dave and I both believe Col. Cooper would be well pleased with this design.

Acme describes their polymer-coated bullets as “Lipstick” bullets. They also have a 200-grain SWC bullet that follows along the lines of the above-mentioned Hensley & Gibbs and RCBS versions. Loaded over 5.9 grains of Sport Pistol, it gave excellent accuracy in all the abovementioned .45 pistols with muzzle velocities at 900–930 fps. The Kimber .45 put five shots into 7/8", which is better than I can shoot. Switching to the RCBS #45-201 with the same powder charge of 5.9 grains



John used a variety of .45 bullets and Sport Pistol for use in a 4" Perfect Packin' Pistol Smith & Wesson Model 1955.

continued the excellent results with muzzle velocities from 975–1,000 fps and an average group for all four pistols under 1-1/4" for five shots.

AUTO RIM

The same Acme polymer-coated bullets and loads, 200-grain SWC

with 6.0 grains of Sport Pistol and the 230-grain RN over 5.5 grains, were also loaded in .45 Auto Rim cases for use in .45 ACP/.45 Auto Rim sixguns without having to use moon clips as normally required with .45 ACP brass. Both loads gave excellent accuracy in a classic Smith & Wesson 1950 Target

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A variety of bullets were loaded in .45 ACPs using Sport Pistol powder.

Model. Muzzle velocities for the heavier bullet are just under 800 fps while the 200-grain SWC clocked out at over 950 fps. Again, either one of these are good choices for everyday carry for my use. They also work well in a shortened Smith & Wesson 1955 Target Model with a 4" barrel. Muzzle velocities drop around 50–60 fps; however, this makes for an excellent Perfect Packin' Pistol.

Searching for pleasant shooting loads in Magnum sixguns, I turned to soft-swaged hollow-point bullets. Speer's 158-grain .357 LSWHP over 6.0 grains of Sport Pistol clocks out at 1,050 fps from a weather beating 5-1/2" stainless steel Ruger .357 Magnum NMFT while Hornady's 240-grain LSWCHP .44 bullet loaded over 5.0 grains gives an accurate and very pleasant shooting 725 fps when loaded in .44 Specials.

In addition to all of these, Sport Pistol has also been used in 9mm, 10mm, .40 S&W and .38 Super, all with excellent results. The latter shoots exceptionally well with the Hornady 125 JHP over 5.0 grains for right at 1,150 fps. Groups are under 1" in a Colt Stainless Steel Custom 1911 in this one of my all-time favorite 1911 chamberings.

When I started reloading, we had very limited choices for powder. Alliant was then known as Hercules and we could choose from Bullseye for target loads, Unique for standard loads and #2400 for heavy loads. These are all still very good powders but I like the fact Alliant gives us so many choices today. Sport Pistol has proven to be one of the best for standard loads. **GUNS**



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Kevin Michalowski's 3 Favorite Things (USCCA Expo 2018)

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TAURUS .357 MAGNUM RAGING HUNTER

SINGLE- AND TWO-STAGE TRIGGERS

MAYBE ONE SHOULD BE IN YOUR FUTURE?

Dave Anderson

Triggers on most current bolt-action hunting rifles are single stage. To fire the rifle, the trigger finger applies continually increasing pressure on the trigger until it suddenly releases, or “breaks.” Such triggers have been the standard since roughly the end of WWII. Many shooters have never used any other style.

Prior to WWII, hunting rifles generally did not have very good triggers. With many designs, the trigger itself engaged the sear when the rifle was cocked and had to be dragged out of the sear notch against strong mainspring pressure. This was not necessarily considered a fault. A heavy trigger pull was safer against unintentional discharge, especially when the hunter might have cold hands. Since practical accuracy was limited by the open iron sights found on most hunting rifles, hunters didn’t give a lot of thought to trigger quality.

DOUBLE SET

Shooters obsessed with accuracy, then as now, were trigger fussy. Serious accuracy enthusiasts often went to “set” triggers. Double-set triggers had two triggers, one behind the other. Pulling one trigger, usually the rear one, set the other trigger for a very light pull, usually measured in ounces. A light pressure on the set trigger fired the piece. Single-set triggers had one trigger that was pushed forward to set the mechanism, after which a light pressure would fire the rifle.

We shouldn’t think the shooters of the prewar era weren’t aware of the virtues of a quality single-stage trigger. Anyone who has ever fired a cocked Smith & Wesson revolver has experienced a single-stage pull about as good as it gets. With properly fitted components, the trigger release of a cocked

revolver is a joy. Increase pressure on the trigger and the shot breaks with almost imperceptible trigger movement and over travel.

TWO STAGES

Designers of military rifles had a different solution, a two-stage trigger pull. This effectively divided the trigger pull into two parts: “first pressure” and “second pressure” to use the British military terms. First pressure would move the trigger back roughly 1/4" to 1/2" until it reached a positive stop. While confirming sight picture, the shooter would take up the second pressure to a relatively crisp release with minimal farther trigger travel. Two-stage triggers were standard on most bolt-action military rifles for as long as such rifles were in service.

When I was reading gun magazines in the early ’60s, it was more or less settled wisdom to consider single-stage triggers superior, while two-stage triggers were as out of place on a sporting rifle as a bayonet lug. Actually the two-stage trigger was a clever design and served the needs of military rifles quite well. It was a good safety feature for soldiers often new to shooting; substantial sear engagement helped ensure against the rifle firing from heavy impact, for example, when being used in hand-to-hand fighting. The long trigger pull with two separate components was some assurance against unintentional firing. Protecting soldiers from being accidentally shot by their comrades is one thing military leaders and individual soldiers agree on.

GAME ON

How did the two-stage trigger serve in the heat of battle? In his wonderful account of his WWII service in the British 14th Army (“*Quartered Safe Out Here*”), author George MacDonald



Shooting 1911-style pistols in competition got Dave accustomed to the two-stage concept with an initial pressure to take up trigger slack followed by a crisp trigger break.



The Lee Enfield service rifle in its various models had a typical military two-stage pull — a long first-stage pull to a positive stop, followed by a short, crisp second stage.



Dave bought this used early '70s-era Remington 700 in .243 but a previous owner had fiddled with the adjustment screws of the trigger to the point it was unsafe. A Shilen trigger solved the problem.

Fraser writes of a pitched battle with large numbers of soldiers in full view. “*There wasn’t much time, but enough: to pick a target, hang for an instant on the aim to make sure, take the first pressure according to the manual — and then the second.*” Later he recounts how technique gets forgotten in the rage of battle. “*First pressure and second pressure is all very well for the first five shots, but by the time I was at the bottom of my magazine I must have been snatching the trigger ...*”



The excellent two-stage trigger of the Weatherby Vanguard can be adjusted for weight of pull with the screw on front of the trigger housing.



CZ is one of the few rifle makers to still offer a set trigger. This model 550 in 9.3x62 lets the shooter set the trigger by pushing it forward, after which a light pull (13.5 oz. in this case) fires the rifle.

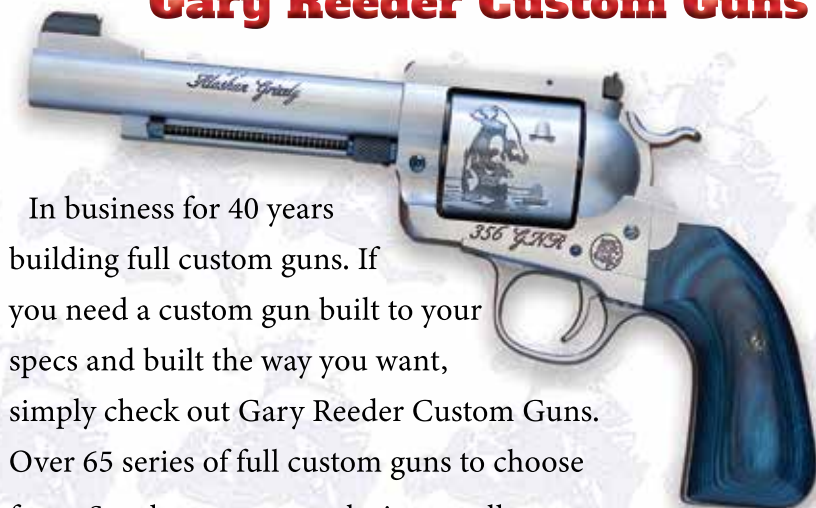
Currently two-stage triggers are making something of a comeback. The Weatherby Vanguard and some Ruger, Steyr and Tikka models have two-stage triggers, as do some replacement triggers for AR rifles. These triggers have a short, smooth, first stage and a crisp second stage. I like the feel of these triggers much better than older designs such as the Lee Enfield. They let manufacturers provide us with triggers both safe and quite light — several examples I've purchased have very good trigger releases in the 3-lb. range right out of the box, and can be adjusted to around 2 lbs. After hundreds of thousands of live and dry fires with my 1911-style competition pistols, taking up trigger slack followed by a crisp trigger break — “prep-press” — has become almost second nature. What might be called the modern two-stage trigger has a lot going for it. Maybe we've been wrong all these years!

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WMD GUNS .300 BLACKOUT

WHEN A WHISPER ISN'T A KABOOM!

Denny Hansen

One thing making the AR-15 platform so popular is its modularity — you can mix, match and accessorize your rifle to your heart's content. It's like Barbie for men!

I have exactly one AR that has not been “customized” in some way — an original Colt SP-1. For a while, I replaced the Delta rings with round ones so I could add a quad rail to it but nothing else was changed. Out of nostalgia more than anything else, I went back to the original triangular handguards.

Several years back I had a rifle chambered in .300 BLK. I reload for every caliber I own and after much deliberation decided I didn't want to add another and sold the rifle. I've regretted the decision ever since.

Having several completed lowers sitting around, I decided to turn one of them into a .300 BLK.

I decided to use Lancer Systems' lower for the “build.” The unique thing about this receiver is there is a take-down pin at the bottom of the trigger guard allowing for different sizes of funnel-type magazine wells. I used the medium size, as it offers a quick reload without becoming too bulky.

WMD GUNS TO THE RESCUE

I contacted WMD Guns about receiving one of their excellent uppers for the



Lancer Systems lower receiver was used as the foundation.

project. Wynn Atterbury of WMD was enthused about the project and agreed to send one to me. I received the upper receiver within two weeks.

The forged upper receiver has a 16" barrel and is fitted with a 15" M-LOK handguard. The rifle has a mid-length gas system. The top rail runs from the rear of the receiver to within an inch of the muzzle with a total of 56 M-LOK slots so there's plenty of real estate for a wide variety of accessories. A brake attached to the muzzle has three large slots on each side and three holes at 12 o'clock.

The upper features WMD's proprietary NiB-X (Nickel Boron eXtreme) finish. This coating is tougher than hard chrome with a coefficient of friction near Teflon with excellent lubricity. This coating requires little wet lubrication and so it cleans easily after shooting, while protecting against the elements.

NiB-X is offered in a matte silver/gray appearance, distressed, or polished to a

near chrome look. I opted for the matte silver/gray finish. It gives the rifle a classic two-tone look and is fairly unique for an AR-15-type rifle. I personally find it aesthetically pleasing.

A BRIEF HISTORY

The inimitable J.D. Jones, while working under S.S.K. Industries (a company he started), invented the .300 Whisper caliber in 1992 as a wildcat cartridge. The parent case Jones used to make the .300 Whisper was the .221 Remington Fireball necked up to accept .30 caliber bullets. The end game was to use a heavy bullet traveling at subsonic velocities with a silencer.

The .221 Remington Fireball is identical to the .223 Remington except the .223 is longer and uses more powder. By doing this, the .300 Whisper in an AR-15 platform can use the same bolt-carrier group and magazines as a standard 5.56mm/.223 Rem rifle.

Now look at the more recent and



Completed rifle equipped as evaluated. Denny likes the classic two-tone look.

commonly known .300 AAC Blackout (.300 BLK). The caliber's name partly comes from the company that "invented" it — Advanced Armament Corporation (AAC). So what is the difference between .300 AAC Blackout and the synonymous .300 Whisper? Without boring the reader with things like the measurement of the barrel throat, etc., the answer is not much really.

The largest difference is the .300 Whisper started as a wildcat round and AAC went to the trouble of getting the cartridge recognized by the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute (SAAMI) as a standard round.

As a sad side note, J.D. Jones never received any royalties and little recognition for his efforts. Partly in homage to J.D., Black Hills Ammunition lists the cartridge as the .300 Blackout/Whisper.

So much for the history lesson.

AVOID THE KABOOM!

The .300 BLK cartridge will chamber in a 5.56 rifle, but in no way, shape or form should you ever try to fire it. The .22-caliber bore simply isn't big enough to handle the .30-caliber projectile of the .300 BLK round and all that pressure needs to go somewhere once the primer is struck — the results can be devastating.

When I had my first .300 BLK rifle I avoided this by using only Lancer magazines — both the original and Advanced War Fighter — in the rifle. I have never placed a 5.56 round in them or a .300 BLK round in any other AR mag.

I can almost hear someone saying, "Just pay attention to what ammo you're putting in the gun." I agree with this in a perfect world but I often shoot with family members, including grandchildren, where there are probably three or four ARs on the range.

WMD Guns upper receiver has their proprietary NiB-X finish with a matte silver/gray appearance.



Using a noticeably different magazine minimizes the chance of a kaboom.

RANGE TIME

I attached an Aimpoint Micro T-2 to the top rail. The T-2 has a 2 MOA dot so it covers 2" at 100 yards, 4" at 200 yards and 6" at 300 yards. This suits me fine as I rarely, if ever, shoot farther with anything but a precision rifle.

The "trick" to shooting smaller groups with a red dot sight (RDS) is to lower the intensity. While this doesn't actually change the size of the dot, it gives the illusion of a smaller dot for greater accuracy.

I went with the ammo I had on hand for the .300 Blackout, the Black Hills Ammunition 125-grain TMK (Tipped Match King). This load develops 2,100 feet-per-second and 1,224 foot-pounds of energy at the muzzle. I obtained a rough zero at 50 yards and then fine-tuned the T-2 at 100 yards.

Shooting from the bench, I shot four 3-round strings. My best group measured 1.5" while the average group size was 1.8". Not too shabby for my first time out and using an RDS instead of a conventional rifle scope.

I found the muzzle brake to be quite effective though, like all brakes, very loud.

CONCLUSIONS

I don't have a .30 caliber suppressor at the moment, but I plan to resolve the problem in the near future to fully utilize the potential of the .300 BLK.

WMD not only offers parts and assemblies, but entire guns and NiB-X coatings.

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This is Duke's Springfield '03 "last rifle" with the newer Montana Vintage Arms B5 scope mounted.

THE LAST RIFLE COULD YOU PICK ONE?

Mike "Duke" Venturino
Photos: Yvonne Venturino

When a young fellow was visiting — a distant relative by marriage — he asked a question that caused me great thought. The gent wasn't a "gun guy" but was working on his PhD in history, so we did have some common ground for discussions. He also wasn't anti-gun as are so many who make academia their livelihood.

Upon walking into my gun vault for the first time, he was rather amazed by the wide variety of firearms stored there. My rifles range from percussion muzzleloaders to ARs. I should have expected he wouldn't ask the usual, "Which one is your favorite?" In a more insightful manner he asked, "Which would be the last rifle to go?" I couldn't really give him a definite answer at the time. If he had asked which Winchester lever gun, or Old West "buffalo

rifle," or World War II submachine gun would be the last sold, I might have had a ready answer. I know I would have if he had asked about handguns.

TOUGH ANSWERS

But — last rifle? The young man never got an answer. However, after mulling the matter over on those nights when sleep seems slow to come, I've finally decided. It would not be an AR as if I'm preparing for the great apocalypse. Neither would it be one of the Old West lever guns and single shots of which I'm so fond. Initially I thought my last rifle would be a 1952 vintage Winchester Model 70 .308 Featherweight. I've had it over 40 years, took it with me to Africa once and have seldom missed a game animal with it.

If I had to depend on a single rifle for bringing home vittles, putting down predators after one of our dogs or cats or cleaning out "gophers" — actually ground squirrels — invading our

hayfield, I'd pick one of my U.S. Model 1903 Springfield .30-06s. Actually, it wouldn't be just any '03. I have several including 03A3s and even one genuine 03A4 sniper rifle. Those Springfield '03s are one and all collector's items.

My keeper '03 is a "parts" rifle. This means it was put together out of surplus and/or modern-made pieces. The action actually is original Springfield Army with serial number indicating manufacture well into the 1920s, which in turn means it is "safe" as opposed to a lower serial numbered one with perhaps brittle receivers. Its barrel date is 1942 and its stock is obviously of new manufacture.

A TRUE MUTT

I acquired it at a Montana gun show about 15 years ago from a fellow with whom I was acquainted. He was packing the '03 around hoping to find it a new home due to his wife about to have their first child. He said he bought the barrel still in cosmoline wrapping and had it installed by a gunsmith of our mutual acquaintance. I forgot to ask about the stock's heritage. As a project, it wasn't quite finished because it lacked a barrel band and fore-end cap with bayonet lug and stacking swivel.

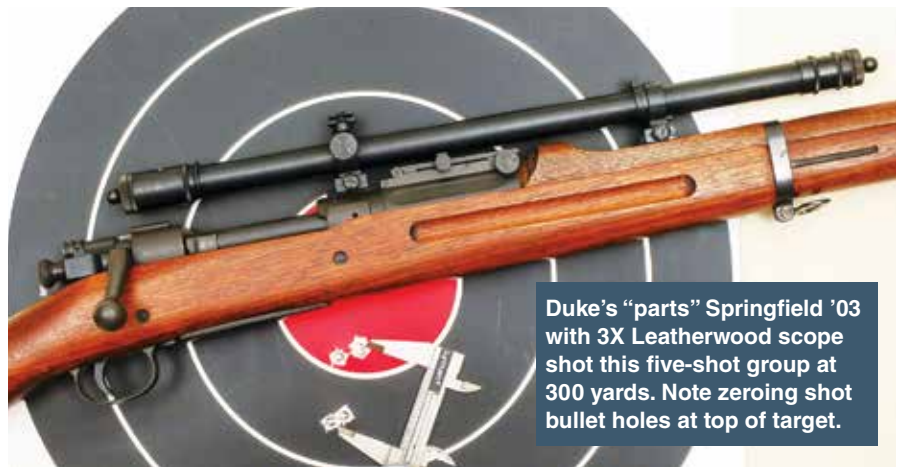


Duke shooting what he considers would be his last rifle.

He had never fired it.

It was mine in one of those New York minutes. Needed parts were quickly found on GunBroker.com. Why did I want such a parts rifle? One reason was it had no collector value. Otherwise, whereas I have no spare parts for the Model 70, I do have plenty of '03 parts on hand. At the time, new 3X long tube scopes were coming over from China and so I figured this '03 would make a great facsimile of the U.S. Marine Corps target/sniper rifles of early World War II fame. Those were actually equipped with Winchester A5 or Lyman 5A telescopes of similar length.

The rifle and scope were turned over to Rocky's Gun Works of Logan, Mont. along with a photo of the USMC rifle I wanted duplicated. Rocky mounted the scope, dishing out the '03's forearm just as in the photo. With practically no handload development, this rifle quickly showed it was capable of about one to 1.5 MOA groups out to 300 yards, the longest range on which I can shoot paper targets on my property. Furthermore, it



proved a fine cast-bullet rifle both with heavy and light projectiles.

CASTING ABOUT

Why did I concern myself with cast bullets? Because, as recent shortages have proven, jacketed bullets can become scarce. I will never run out of bullets if I have a bullet mold and a bucket of lead alloy. Perhaps an article on loading a .30-06 for its full spectrum of uses would be good material for a future article.

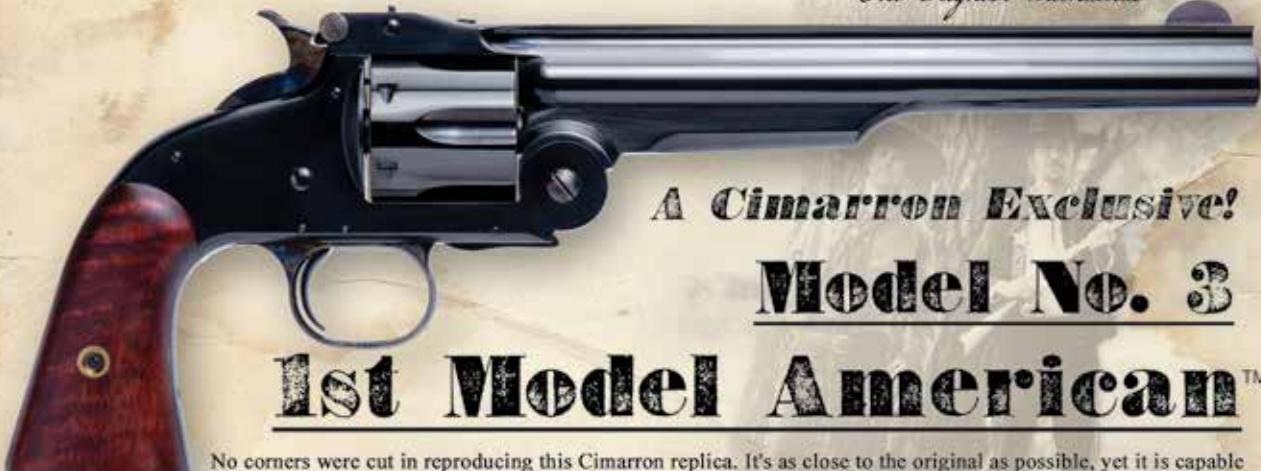
One snag did develop in my plan. After a few hundred .30-06 loads, the soft Chinese steel in the scope mounts gave way but by that time, my friends at Montana Vintage Arms of Belgrade had introduced their B5 scope. It's a virtual copy of Winchester A5 or Lyman 5A scopes so one of those fine 5X scopes is what my "last rifle" wears now.

Reality is — I will be probably gone long before my vault's last rifle. **GUNS**

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HARSH REALITY

THE HARD TRUTHS YOU MUST LEARN

Wayne Van Zwoll

Counter-intuitive truths abound in optics. Years ago I was surprised to find, in a riflescope at a gun show, a broken crosshair. It was stout. In the day before glass-etched reticles, I had yet to see a fine crosshair so breached. Wouldn't a strand of spider web, hailed in target scopes, separate more readily? Uh, no. For its weight the web strand is stronger. Weight matters because in recoil it translates to inertia: resistance to change. A very lightweight reticle moves instantly with the scope as bullet launch slams the rifle back. A heavy reticle hesitates, testing its tensile strength against the implacable tug.

What about current reticles? They're mostly lightweight metal or foil. Dick Thomas of Premier Reticle recalled, "by the late 1970s we had tungsten wire that could be drawn down to .0001, about 1/30 as thick as human hair." Leupold has made its Duplex of .0012 platinum wire flattened to .0004 so the outer "posts" appear thick. Burris has used .0035 wire, flattening, then twisting it to make the middle appear thin. Premier Reticle, a Virginia company that has supplied reticles to every major scope-maker except Zeiss, has twisted ribbon wire to form the plex profile.

Another way to fashion a plex is by photo-etching metal foil. Chemicals

strip all the material around the etched pattern. While wire reticles can be soldered to their mount, the foil is only .0007 thick so must be cemented. Proper tension matters. Too little, and recoil will whip the foil; too much, and it will yield to temperature extremes. Foil reticles can burn apart if the scope is pointed for a time toward bright sun.

BOB AND WEAVE

Denied working mischief on lightweight scope reticles, inertia now has its way with big scopes, freeing them from the grip of the rings during recoil. Observed a pal who builds fine custom rifles: "It's an affliction visited upon me by clients who have lots of money and are accustomed to paying to get the best. They order heavy, powerful scopes because they cost a lot. No matter, the rifle will see service on beasts the size of Volkswagens inside 50 yards. Trying to secure a 2-lb. optic with a bell the size of a coffee mug against the bounce of a .458 Lott dents my supplies of ammo and aspirin."

High magnification makes scopes heavy and bulky, as it calls for big front glass to ensure bright images in dim light. Pie-eyed objectives also raise the sight-line, pulling your cheek off the comb. A 4x scope is bright despite modest glass up front, and has a generous field of view. Hunters with piles of



Accurate bullets and quarter-minute Magnum rifles beg optics for "quarter-minute aim." Targets this small require magnification impractical for hunting.

game to their credit — notably Jack O'Connor, Warren Page, Bob Hagel — recommended it even after the debut of classy, lightweight variables like Leupold's Vari-X series. A 4x suits me. In 55 years hunting, I recall just twice needing more powerful glass. To sum — more is not better, as regards scope magnification for big game hunting.

Variable power offers choice. But it is also, well, variable! Fundamental to improving accuracy, consistency and predictability is the elimination of variables! While variable scopes are now sealed and sturdy, and any point-of-impact shift across the power range is negligible (non-existent with front-plane reticles), fixed magnification has other advantages. It holds you to a single perspective, which helps you quickly gauge distance. It makes for a lighter, simpler, less costly optic. And you've nothing to fret about or adjust on the trail. I've found hunters prone to fussing with scopes don't shoot as well as those who just aim through them. The hard truth is, with any variable scope, you can use just one power setting at a time!

Not all that's new is popular. The Tracking Point sight flopped. Perhaps it's the weight, profile, images.



A REASONABLE ZERO

The prospect of long shots at game has many hunters adopting long zeros, or turrets whose knobs index quickly for dead-on hold far away. Laser rangefinders and bullets of high ballistic coefficient make hits possible at very long range. But the long zero is a trap; bullet paths arc highest above sight line at the ranges most game is shot. The longer the zero, the higher that mid-range gap. A 130-grain .270 bullet at 3,100 fps strikes only 1.4" above sight line at 100 yards when zeroed at 200. A 300-yard zero puts it 3.5" high at 100, and 4.3" high at 200! It compels you to adjust aim for most shots. A 200-yard zero lets you hold center to 250 yards. No thinking required.

Hand-in-glove with the trend to long shooting and powerful scopes is an intuitive shift to smaller targets. "Aim small, miss small." But in truth, you needn't see the intended strike-point to hit it! After all, your target is not a target face or an animal but a spot in the middle of the X-ring or on the beast's front rib. Shooting an iron-sight match, each rifleman sees only "the black," which comprises several scoring rings. A center hit comes when the black is in the middle of the front sight, the front sight in the middle of the rear aperture. With a scope's crosswire, you need only quarter the black to hit the X-ring, a whitetail's chest to center its melon-size vitals. No need to see behind the crosswire. (An illuminated dot reticle will hide more of the target than necessary if it's too bright: reduce the brightness in dim light or dark cover!) Fluorescent "sticky dots" sold as targets are too small to see behind many reticles in low-power scopes at even 100 yards. Better — a half- or quarter-sheet of unmarked typing paper on a brown box. It's easy to divide evenly with a reticle. Using low-power scopes, I've shot one-hole groups on these targets.

TOUGH LESSON

My first poke with a centerfire rifle was hardly so pleasing. When the Krag's steel butt hammered my clavicle, I expected the oil can atop the plowed furrow to cartwheel. It didn't



Can they possibly hold? Blaser's compact QD clamps on the R8 rifle's hard barrel steel secure scopes during violent recoil. Replaced, they return to zero. Amazing?



Swarovski's dS scope is state-of-the-art, with electronic controls. Optically superb, it's complex, heavy.



Crisp, audible clicks are helpful only when you zero. You'll want bright, sharp, fog-free images always!

even quiver. In this duel, Sunoco non-detergent emerged the victor. "Maybe it isn't sighted in," I muttered. Rifles, I'd heard, must be sighted in, or even the best marksmen will miss.

"Maybe," nodded the farmer. He scratched his chin and pocketed the cartridge in his hand. "How did it look in the sights?" I scuffed my toe in the dirt. The Krag's long Navy barrel had bobbed as if riding breakers. I had mashed the trigger. Truly, unless a rifle is zeroed, even perfectly executed shots will miss. But it was also clear my wobbly aim had given that oil can its reprieve. "We'll try again. Before you can hit, you must know why you miss."

Choosing naivete over hard truth has a price. That day it was a second cartridge.

GUNS

CROSSFIRE

continued from page 8

about the straightforward, simple reticle scopes I prefer. I no longer feel optically inadequate because I like my 3x-9x scopes. I will never shoot outside of this power range.

M.C. McClintock, NC

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WHAT HE MEANT WAS ...

I believe Dave Workman accidentally mis-stated his intended point on page 63 of the January 2022 issue. In the first paragraph he writes concerning liberal politicians, "Too many of them cling to the notion owning a gun, much less carrying that firearm for personal protection, is a protected right, not a government-regulated privilege." I believe Dave meant to say "Too many of them cling to the notion owning a gun ... is a government-regulated privilege, not a protected right." Let's not confuse the issue.

Robert Givens

Yeah, that confuses me as well. It was supposed to be the other way around! My humble apologies to the readers, and congrats to the sharp-eyed Mr. Givens who stayed awake while I slept through that day's lesson in English composition.

—Dave Workman

So did the editor! —BW

.....



READERS SHARE THEIR GUNS

On your podcast last week (*GUNS Magazine Podcast Episode #110*) on the old family heirlooms, you said you would like some pictures of some of the old guns. My grandfather moved from Wentworth, Mo. in 1923 by covered wagon to northeast New

continued on page 65



The Boeing B29 Superfortress was the most capable heavy bomber of World War II. The Superfortress changed the scale by which the military destroyed things.

BOMB TOKYO

EVEN TODAY, OPERATION MEETINGHOUSE IS UNIMAGINABLE

Will Dabbs, MD

We humans are quick to immortalize significant superlatives. The world's largest rubber band ball weighed 8,200 lbs. The planet's longest pizza stretched some 1.32 miles. The most candles extinguished by a single fart was five. In the spring of 1945, however, American aircrews operating over Japan set another, darker record.

THE SETTING

March 10, 1945 was a Saturday. Adolf Hitler had but 51 days to live. On the other side of the world, wartime Tokyo hummed along as it normally had. Men and women toiled in myriad tiny cottage workshops churning out the myriad bits of kit needed to keep the massive Japanese war machine hurtling toward oblivion. At least that's what the historians tell us.

During World War II strategic bombing was just finding its legs. For the first time in human history, the planet was tasting total war on an industrial scale. Existential fights between nation states are as old as man. In 1945, however, we finally had the tools to take it to the next level.

The carnage was easily justified. Japan started the war at Pearl Harbor with the cold-blooded murder of 2,403

Americans on December 7, 1941. Three years later, veritable rivers of blood had been shed to get Army Air Corps B29 Superfortress heavy bombers within range of the Japanese homeland. The American people were whipped up into a proper frenzy. We wanted some payback.

The B29 represented the single most expensive weapons program in military history at the time of its deployment. Each massive 99-foot bomber cost \$639,000 back in 1945. That's about \$9.3 million today. For that money the American taxpayer got an airplane sporting a dozen .50-caliber machine-guns, cruised at 220 mph and carried up to 20,000 lbs. of bombs.

General Curtis LeMay owned these things and he experimented with a variety of tactics and bomb loads in an effort at maximizing the big shiny bombers' destructive potential.



Operation Meetinghouse utterly incinerated 16 square miles of Tokyo in a single evening. Several of the attacking bombers were lost to updrafts caused by the intense heat.

Conventional attacks from great altitude using high explosive general purpose bombs or incendiaries were typically so inaccurate or dispersed as to be relatively ineffective. After several raids of several flavors by B29s on the capital city of Tokyo, the Japanese had suffered some 1,292 deaths. This lulled the Japanese authorities into a false sense of security.

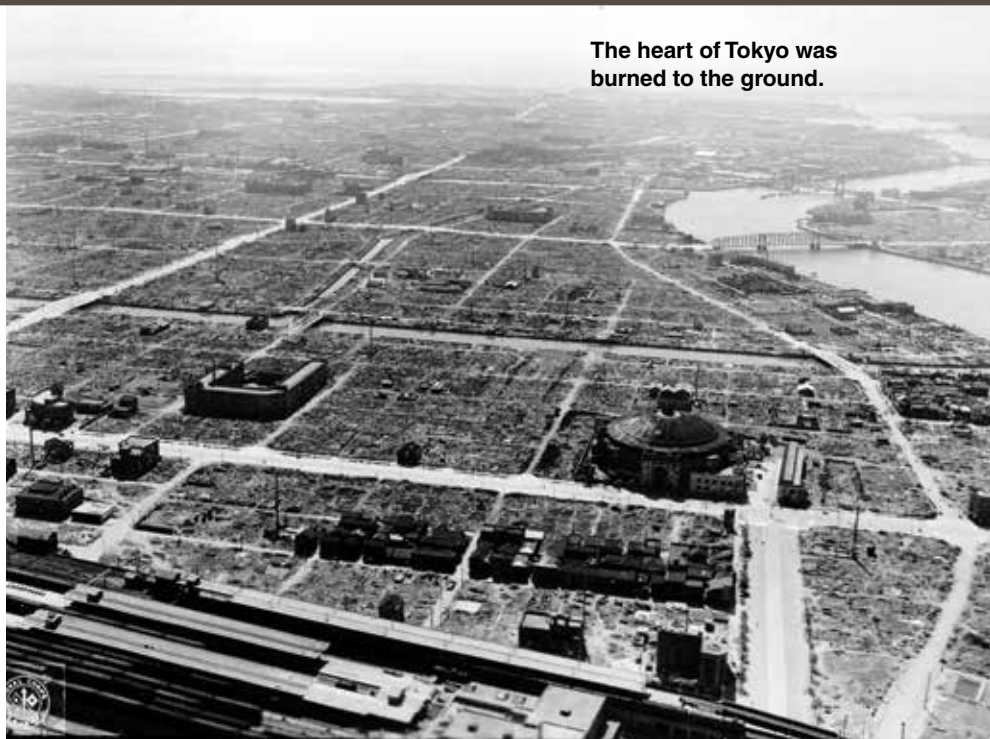
One million seven hundred thousand of Tokyo's total population had been evacuated to safer areas outside the city. However, many poor rural peasants had moved in to take their places. On this particular weekend, Tokyo, Japan, was the most congested space on earth.

TACTICAL DETAILS

Previous attacks had taken place from high altitude in daytime via large formations. This raid, code-named Operation Meetinghouse, would be flown by a stream of individual aircraft operating between 5,000 and 7,000 feet in total darkness. Two hundred seventy-nine Superfortresses made it to the target carrying 1,510 tons of ordnance. Their altitudes were carefully selected to be above the effective small arms range yet below the optimal altitude for large-caliber anti-aircraft guns. Japanese night fighters were caught completely unawares. At 12:08 a.m. on March 10, the first pathfinder aircraft appeared over the city carrying M47 white phosphorous bombs.

These first aircraft, operated by the best crew available, painted a gigantic flaming "X" across the middle of Tokyo. A stream of follow-on planes packing M69 incendiary cluster bombs aimed for assigned portions of the "X." When combined with prevailing surface winds of between 45 and 60 miles per hour, the end result was apocalyptic.

The M69 was simply diabolical. Developed by the Standard Oil Company at the behest of the Office of Scientific Research and Development, the M69 consisted of a 3" plain steel pipe of hexagonal cross section that was 20" long. Each incendiary bomblet weighed about 6 lbs. and was filled with jellied gasoline. M69s were packed 38 to a cluster munition. Upon impact with



The heart of Tokyo was burned to the ground.



It is estimated at least 100,000 people perished in Operation Meetinghouse.

the ground, a black powder charge fired the flaming filling some 100 feet into the air with predictable effects.

THE BUTCHER'S BILL

The resulting firestorm obliterated 16 square miles of Tokyo, destroying some 267,171 buildings in the process. More than a million Japanese were rendered homeless. Around 100,000 people died ... in about three hours. Operation Meetinghouse sets the record for the most human beings killed by other humans in such a brief time. It was worse

than the nuclear strikes.

Firemen gave up in the first half hour. Ninety-six fire engines were incinerated. Macadam and glass were liquified in the heat. The rivers running through Tokyo boiled. Rescue workers toiled day and night for 25 days collecting the bodies.

Follow-on aircrews had to go on oxygen to avoid the stench of burnt flesh. A dozen Superfortresses were lost with the loss of 96 aviators. The Japanese surrendered five months later. Modern man has forgotten the true nature of total war.

GUNS

THE SACRED CHURCH OF CARBINE COLLECTING

FINDING THE LINE BETWEEN HOBBY AND DELIRIUM

Will Dabbs, MD

In March of 1997, thirty-nine members of the Heaven's Gate religious cult intentionally overdosed on vodka and phenobarbital before securing plastic bags over their heads. Among the group was Thomas Nichols, brother of Nichelle Nichols. Nichelle Nichols is the actress who played LT Uhura on the original *Star Trek* series. Their stated goal was to "Evacuate the Earth" and join space travelers purportedly zipping through the cosmos on the nearby Hale-Bopp Comet.

Immediately prior to this bizarre mass suicide, the cult members had obtained alien abduction insurance. At their final communal meal, they all wore identical black shirts and sweat pants as well as matching Nike Decades athletic shoes. They also sported custom armbands reading "Heaven's Gate Away Team." Each member had exactly \$5.75 in their pockets.

The point is sometimes folks' religions can seem a might strange. So it is with an obscure Internet-based theology orbiting around the nuances of M1

carbine collecting. I'm not a Bishop, a Pastor, or even a Youth Intern in this strange cult myself. I'm more like the guy who sweeps the floor and cleans the toilets. However, I have picked up enough along the way to speak their curious language.

SOURCE MATERIAL

The M1 carbine was the most-produced American military firearm of World War II. In 1938 the Chief of Infantry asked the Ordnance Department to develop a light rifle with which to arm mortarmen, radio operators, truck drivers and similar support troops. The formalized requirement was approved two years later. By then the world was going thoroughly sideways.

Work had been ongoing at Winchester on similar projects for some time. Ed Browning, John Browning's half-brother, had been working on a replacement for the M1 Garand which would fire a full-sized .30-06 rifle cartridge. This proposed M2 rifle was found to be insufficiently reliable. After Browning

died in 1939, David "Carbine" Williams was brought in to refine the design.

David Williams was serving time in the penitentiary for killing a law enforcement officer but had an obvious penchant for firearms. The warden even allowed Williams to maintain the guards' weapons in the prison machine shop — that would certainly seem weird today. After his release, Williams tweaked Browning's M2 and ended up with a reliable short-stroke, piston-driven weapon that shaved two full pounds off of the weight of the Garand.

Because of the ongoing effort with the proposed M2, Winchester had not planned to submit a contender for the Light Rifle trials. With encouragement from Major Rene Studler at the Ordnance Department, Winchester engineers miniaturized the M2 action to accommodate a straight-walled 7.62x33mm cartridge. This unique .30 carbine round was derived from the 1906-vintage rimless .32 Winchester Self-Loading cartridge.

A group of half a dozen Winchester designers created a working prototype for the Light Rifle competition in just 13 days. This radical little weapon orbited around a miniaturized version of David Williams' short-stroke, piston-driven action. The resulting M1 carbine was officially standardized in October of 1942.

American industry ultimately churned out some 6,121,309 copies of



An all-original Rock-Ola carbine like the one below is just stupid expensive. Most carbines have been corrupted by the arsenal rebuild process.

the tidy little carbine from 10 major contractors. At the peak of production we were building 65,000 carbines a day. The typical GI carbine cost the government around \$45 back during the war. That would be roughly \$675 today.

HOLY DOGMA

The guys and girls who made these guns were trying to equip the fastest-growing war machine in human history. They weren't overly concerned about matching parts or stock car-touches. However, they did put markings on absolutely everything big enough to sport one. This has led to a most fascinating collectors' milieu.

Most all original carbines were rebuilt at some point at an American arsenal. As part of this process, worn parts were replaced and upgraded components added. Nobody working at these arsenals cared about markings or parts provenance, so rebuilt carbines are typically a mixed-and-matched amalgam of components from a variety of manufacturers. Original, unmolested carbines that have not undergone the rebuild process are therefore markedly more rare and more valuable than the rebuilt sort.

Early carbines had high wood stocks, stubby Type 1 barrel bands, L-shaped flip sights and pushbutton safeties. High wood stocks differ from the later sort in that they have an elevated strip of walnut along the raceway for the slide. Early barrel bands were



The top rifle sports a round bolt, an adjustable rear sight and the four-rivet hand-guard characteristic of late-model guns. The early run rifle on the bottom has a simple flip sight, a two-rivet handguard and a flat bolt. Normal people don't care, but carbine nerds sure do.



Behold the unpardonable sin: This gun was once tapped for a scope mount but Will missed it when buying the rifle online.

thin where later versions were slightly wider. The latest Type 3 bands also included a bayonet lug not found on the previous sort. The simple flip sight was later upgraded to a nice adjustable version. Having the pushbutton safety and pushbutton magazine release side-by-side was a recipe for disaster, so subsequent upgrades included a rotating safety lever instead.

GENESIS

The Inland Division of General Motors was the most prolific manufacturer having produced 2,632,097 rifles. Of the major manufacturers, the Rock-Ola Manufacturing Corporation had the smallest run at 228,500. Rock-Ola carbines earn extra cool points because they were made by a jukebox company and have "Rock-Ola" stamped across the back. Inland made all 140,000 M1A1 paratrooper carbines in two major wartime lots.

Even during initial production, parts were often mixed and matched

from different suppliers based upon availability. Some Quality Hardware Manufacturing Corporation receivers were subcontracted out to Union Switch and Signal. A batch of these receivers was actually marked "UN-QUALITY," something likely not to inspire confidence in end users. Winchester, IBM, Underwood, Saginaw Steering Gear, National Postal Meter and Standard Products rounded out the team.

Vast numbers of carbines were shipped to our Allies overseas and later re-imported for sale to civilian shooters. These rifles have obnoxious import marks engraved into their barrels to help preserve the value of expensive originals. While no carbines are cheap these days, the holy details do drive value. A mismatched beater might go for a grand on GunBroker, while a perfect vintage M1A1 with a known D-Day provenance fetched \$20,125 at a recent auction. Such are the vagaries of this peculiar niche religion. **GUNS**

This magnificent specimen is an all-original 1st-run M1A1 paratrooper carbine (above) manufactured in December 1942 in the second full month of production. It is a jewel in any proper carbine collection.





SHOOTOUT:

Bolt Vs. Semi

Semi-auto always win, right?

Jeremy D. Clough

Most of us have come of age with the AR and with modern carbine doctrine teaching the use of the rifle in place of a pistol since it provides a higher hit probability and increased power. This usually includes focus on multiple shots, reloads and other handgun-like manipulations. While this has its place, it's a dramatic departure from the historical use of the rifle as a powerful weapon capable of delivering a single, dispositive shot. I've generally been in the black rifle camp, but a recent trip to Gunsite Academy made me rethink what we really need in a rifle. Hedging my bets, I took two guns, a black gun and a traditional bolt action.

TAKE YOUR PICK

The PTR91 and the Ruger Scout Rifle could not be more different. A semiauto clone of the classic G3 battle rifle, the PTR has Trijicon fixed tritium sights, collapsible buttstock and KeyMod mounted flashlight, slung on a Magpul two-point sling. Compare this to the bolt-action Ruger with its wood stock, leather sling and 4x Leupold scope. Only the .308 chambering and 16" barrels were the same.

Over parts of three days, I shot both guns at paper and on steel, including two rifle courses — the Scrambler, an eight-station timed course with targets ranging from 60 to 100+ yards, and Military Crest, a similar course with steel placed from 200–280 yards. Here's what I learned.

First rounds hit matter, no matter what you're doing. If you miss while hunting, don't expect the animal to stand in the open so you can take a second shot. The same thing applies in self-defense, except the time you spend missing is more time for the other guy to shoot at you. Spoiler alert: he may not miss.

Action type may not be as important as you think. My first run on the Scrambler was with the PTR, the next with the Scout. I did not miss a single shot on either run. Any time under 100 seconds is considered good: I clocked 75 seconds with the semi-auto PTR — and 62 with the bolt-action Scout, nearly two seconds faster per target!

ONE SHOT, ONE STOP

Unlike the lighter cartridges fired by modern sporting rifles, a single solid hit from a .308 is likely to do what is needed. Transitioning from one target to another — either by pivoting or running to the next station — requires a certain amount of time during which there is often ample time to manually cycle an action. Hit it right and fast and the added speed of a semiauto never comes into play. It



The 16" PTR91 has been modified with a collapsible A3 buttstock, KeyMod fore end, 900-lumen Crimson Trace light, PWS muzzle device and Trijicon tritium sights, Magpul sling and an extended cocking handle.



The two .308 rifles Jeremy used at Gunsite could not be further apart: the PTR91, a semiauto clone of the G3A3 battle rifle (left) and a bolt-action Ruger Scout rifle.

is exceedingly rare for a self-defense situation to involve the number of shots or multiple targets competition and training may lead you to believe is normative.

SPEED RACER

So why was the bolt gun faster? Scopes don't let you shoot better, they let you see better and make it easier to verify you're on target. Reducing the aiming process to two focal planes (crosshair and target) instead of three (front sight, rear, target) reduces the time required for the eye to go from target to sight, to sight and back until you know you can break the shot. The scope was just faster.

This doesn't mean iron sights are inaccurate. With the HK-style diopter and post sight on the PTR, I was shooting around 4" at 100 yards and was able to make first round hits on several targets on Military Crest, including the first one at 280 yards. I did not, however, get all first round hits as I did with the Scout. Up close and in low light, the tritium Trijicons would definitely have an advantage over the scope. But at any significant distance, glass wins.

SLINGS

Beyond the time required for target acquisition, however, was the time required to get into position and get stable. Breath control certainly matters and having a reasonable degree of physical fitness also helps. But the biggest thing I learned about stability involves slings. Apparently they're not just for transitions. Either using a hasty sling or a sling loop to essentially strap the upper arm to the forend of the rifle, some well-placed tension makes a tremendous difference in turning a big wobble into a manageable wobble.

Shooting either standing or seated, or even alongside an irregularly shaped rest, the steadying tension of the sling made it possible for me to make hits at ranges I did



Just like the extended cocking handle on the PTR, the Hornady rubber bolt-ball on the Scout rifle makes for a much more secure surface to grasp.

not previously believe I was capable.

This was true no matter which sling I used. I had added a leather Rhodesian sling to the Scout rifle and carefully adjusted the length of the front loop, and it performed as it was designed to do. The quick adjustable Magpul Dynamics sling on the PTR, while designed more for transitions and CQB, could also quickly create a front loop, which could be used in the same way. However, it often took me a couple tries to get the loop the correct size for the position from which I was shooting.

I also learned the PTR's collapsible stock in no way affected my accuracy. While a better cheek weld would have been nice, as you lean into the rifle you take up the play inherent in a collapsible or folding stock. There goes another myth.

The black gun has its place, and I still think there are circumstances under which its rate of fire is preferable. But on this summer's test run, the bolt gun won convincingly.

GUNS



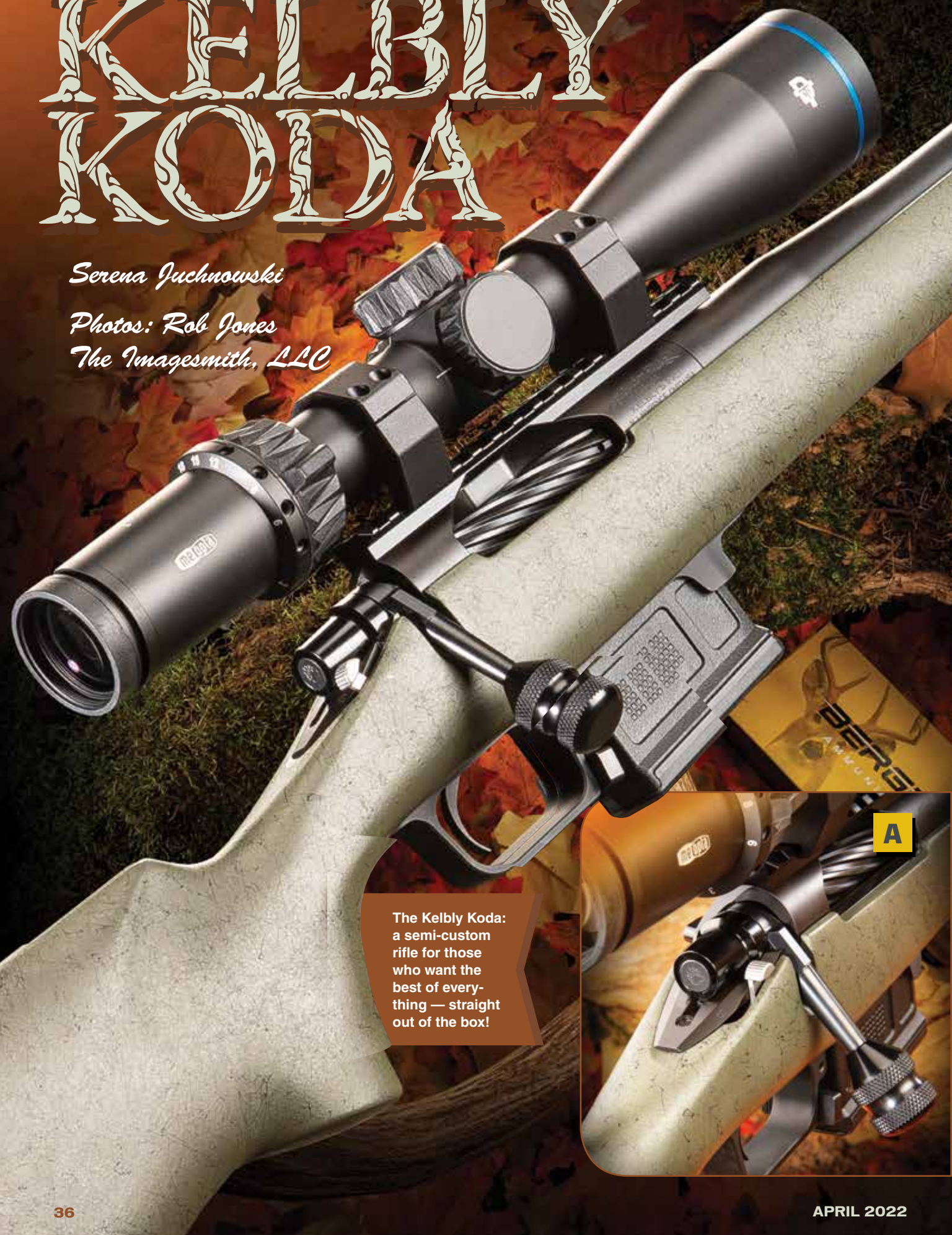
An extended cocking handle on the HK91 is a lot easier to run in a hurry.

PTR-US.com
Ruger.com

KELBLY KODA

Serena Juchnowski

*Photos: Rob Jones
The Imagesmith, LLC*



The Kelbly Koda:
a semi-custom
rifle for those
who want the
best of every-
thing — straight
out of the box!

Ultimate is thrown around a lot but not too many things live up to the hype. The “ultimate defensive handgun,” the “ultimate long-range rifle,” the “ultimate — *insert use or firearm type here.*” Opinions fly, families split, friendships splinter ...

Okay, maybe it's not so dramatic but everyone has their favorite. For me, the Kelbly Koda is my new “ulti-

capable of hitting targets out to 1,000 yards when you want to impress your buddies or challenge yourself.

I learned about Kelbly's through my experience as a competition shooter. This small, family-owned business in North Lawrence, Ohio made its mark manufacturing rifle actions for benchrest and other disciplines in the 1980s but has recently begun offering

Hunters have successfully harvested for centuries with all sorts of rifles. If you look far enough back, all rifles were custom due to the lack of interchangeable parts. In today's world, custom often has to do more with style and aesthetics than quality, improving the perceived value of a firearm over its usability. It was clear from the outset the Koda was designed with the hunter in mind, from the stra-

THEY ALREADY BUILT YOUR CUSTOM RIFLE!

mate” go-to long-range hunting rifle and knocking it off the podium would take quite a gun. Imagine all the features of a custom rifle in an affordable ready-to-purchase package — no need to upgrade, swap out barrels or triggers, as all parts are top of the line!

The Koda gives shooters and hunters a custom-quality rifle at a much lower price than if they were to upgrade a rifle themselves. This also lowers the barrier to entry into ultra-rifles, providing shooters who don't have the desire, resources, or knowledge to trick out their own firearm. Though designed with hunting in mind, this rifle is fully

production rifles. Best of all, nothing I have seen can hold a candle to their work.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

At first glance, it's just another hunting rifle but hefting it unveiled a different story. Kelbly's actions have claimed over 90 World Accuracy records — they work — and come with a lifetime warranty. Given their reputation, I expected a quality action but didn't know what to expect of the full package.

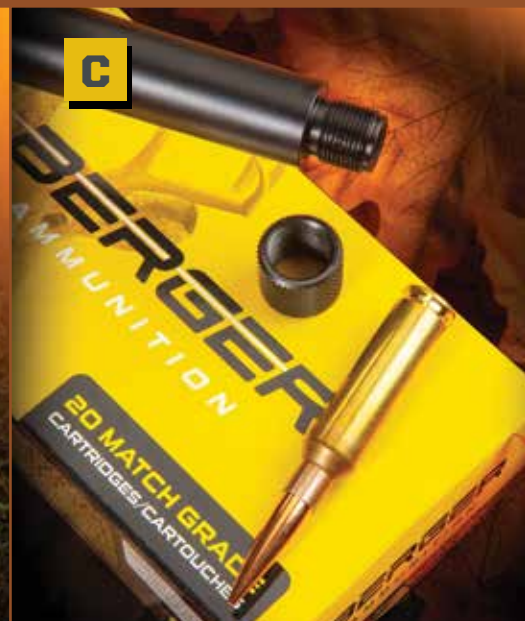
The combination of “custom” and “hunting” tends to leave me dubious.

tegic placement of QD sling mounts to the notch carved out of the top of the stock to allow the bolt to slide out freely without nicking the finish.

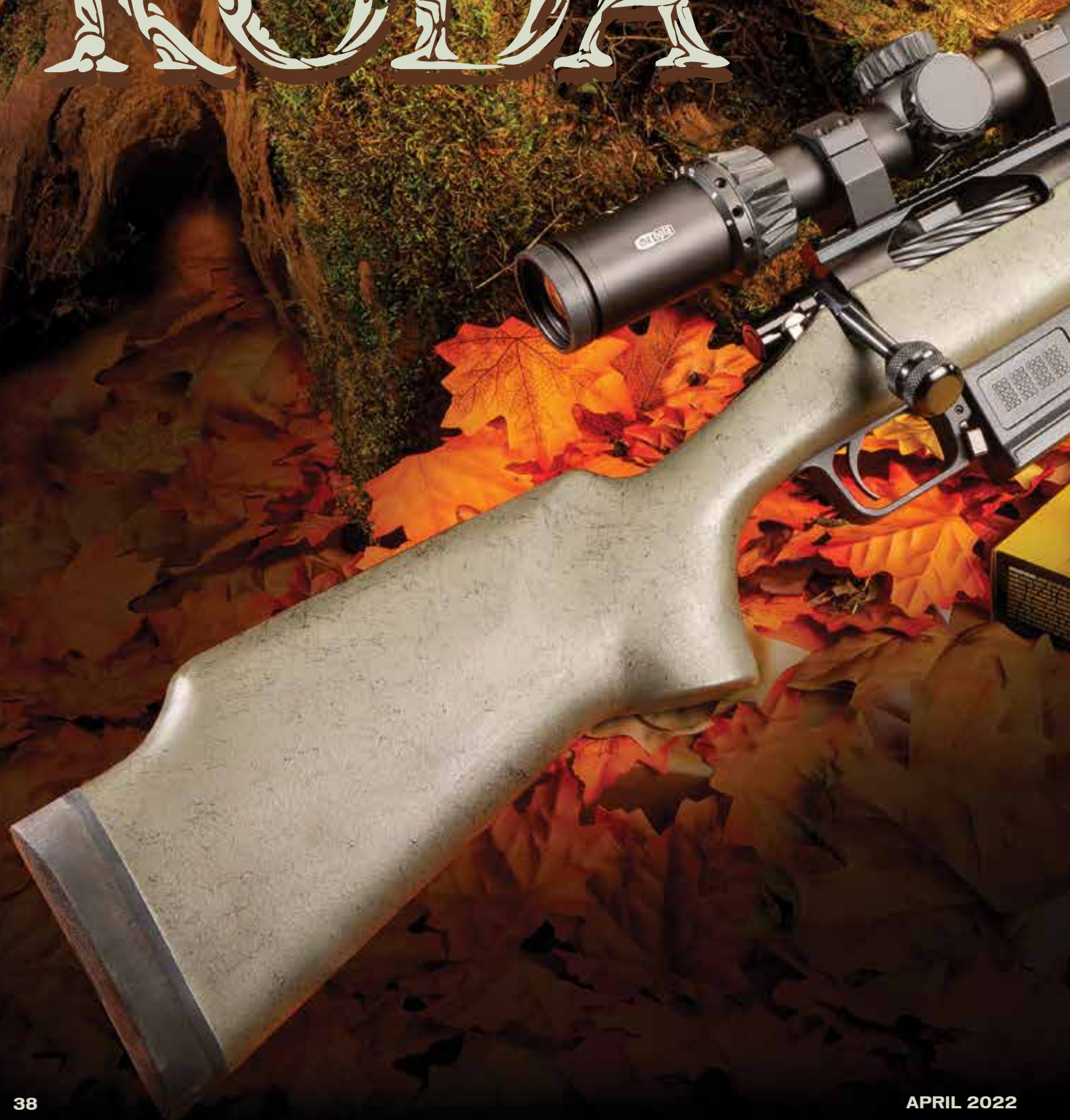
ACTION AND BARREL

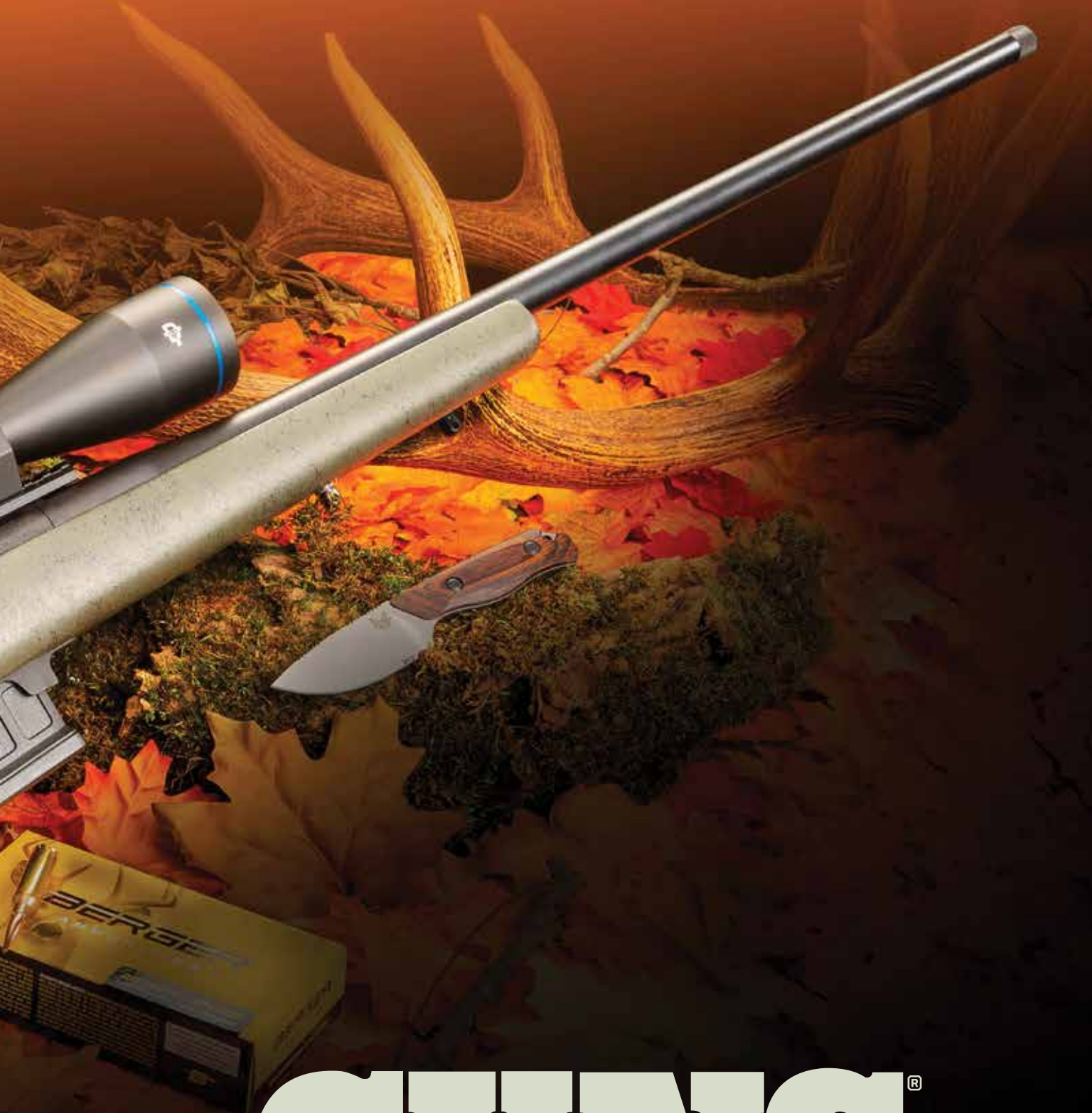
In essence, the operation is smooth as melting butter. Built around Kelbly's Atlas Tactical action, the rifle's true worth lies within its action design. You can lift the bolt handle with one finger and send the bolt flying to the rear of the gun with little pressure — this can actually be done with your pinkie! A knurled oversized bolt knob makes it easy to grab and maneuver, especially

(A-B) Based on Kelbly's Atlas Tactical Action, the Koda bolt handle lifts with one finger while the knurled oversized bolt knob offers positive engagement in all conditions. (C) The Krieger match-grade stainless-steel barrel is threaded for a suppressor or brake and gave better-than-advertised groups with Berger's 135-grain Classic Hunter and 156-grain EOL Elite Hunter ammunition.



KELBLY KODAK





GUNS[®]

MAGAZINE

GEAR LIST — **Ammo:** Berger 6.5 Creedmoor 156-grain EOL Elite Hunter, **Knife:** Benchmade Hidden Canyon Hunter, **Antlers:** Involuntarily donated by a Pennsylvania Elk

with gloves on or in colder conditions. The body is made of 416R steel, the bolt out of 4140. The Koda is muzzle threaded ½-28 for a muzzle brake or suppressor.

All metal on the gun is black nitride finished for extreme durability, corrosion resistance and slick bolt cycling. This includes a Krieger match-grade hand-lapped cut-rifled stainless-steel barrel. The free-floating barrel has a recessed flat target crown and a #4 heavy sporter contour. Kelbly's also holds +0.001" headspace, so they don't require the barrel or gun back to chamber a new barrel for it. The action is skim bedded, just like all of Kelbly's custom rifles. Skim bedding adds a thin epoxy between the barrel/action and stock, filling all gaps for a secure fit. This increases accuracy as the action and stock aren't constantly moving under recoil, ensuring shot-to-shot consistency.

THE STOCK

Surrounding the barrel and action is a Grayboe Composite Stock in olive green and black swirl. It's quite a fancy name for the color scheme, but the style is certainly appealing. Imagine coating spiderwebs in black paint and delicately decorating a pristine green surface. The stock will certainly blend

into most hunting environments and is not loud or overly colorful. The swirl is slightly raised, offering a grip rarely seen on smooth stocked rifles. For me, the rough raised-pattern finish stirred images of the wilderness.

Though not adjustable, the Monte Carlo style stock has a raised cheek piece and fits both my small stature and everyone else who handled the gun. It's almost like the gun version of *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*, a book-turned-movie



The Meopta Optika 6 3-18x50 SFP scope features a Dicro-Tech reticle designed for hunting. The Patent-pending coating adjusts color tone and intensity to varying light conditions without use of a battery.



Serena taking the Kelbly Koda out for a spin off the bench at 200 yards. Using Berger ammo, the gun shot even better than promised — less than ¾-MOA! Photo: Serena Juchnowski



The rifle comes with a Magpul 5-round detachable box magazine. With a slight amount of lubrication around the magazine well, the mag dropped out easily — no tugging required.

following a group of friends with very different body shapes who all magically fit in the same pair of thrift-store jeans. The rifle comes with a Magpul 5-round detachable box magazine that only extends half an inch below the trigger guard so it's not cumbersome or in the way. The magazine secures with an audible click and is released by a small lever forward of the trigger guard easily reached with the rifle shouldered. The released magazine will fall with gravity's help and was a bit stiff at first but some lubrication around the magazine well eliminated the issue.

TRIGGER

Finishing out the package is a 2.5-lb., non-adjustable single-stage Bix'N Andy trigger complete with a top safety. The trigger pull is crisp and smooth, but must be deliberate. There is zero creep, the trigger doesn't move until you apply the proper amount of pressure. Two-and-a-half pounds makes for a safe but not overly heavy trigger pull. The break is crisp and satisfying. Curious about the reset but conscious of firearm safety, I ensured the rifle was empty before running the bolt with my finger on the trigger. I could just barely feel the reset with full concentration. Some

may argue for an adjustable trigger, but 2.5 lbs. prevent negligent discharges and is a relatively common weight for a hunting trigger.

The Koda is currently available in 6.5 Creedmoor and 6.5 PRC, but only in a right-handed configuration. I opted for the 6.5 Creedmoor. Though Ohio hunting laws only allow straight-wall hunting cartridges, I still looked at this rifle as if I were to hunt with it, especially out West.

The stock accommodates multiple styles of sling carry, with two quick-detach (QD) sling mounts on the side of the rifle and one at the rear near the buttstock. Two traditional sling swivel mounts dot the underside of the fore end — one for a sling, another for a bipod. Aftermarket QD attachments allow you to switch to a traditional sling swivel on the buttstock rear as well. This ability to customize frees you from traditional fixed restraints and allows for adjustments mid trek if need be. The rifle itself weighs 7 lbs., 13 oz. and adding a scope and rings brought the total weight to 10 lbs. — still very manageable.

RANGE TIME

For this experiment, I mounted a Meopta Optics Optika 6 3-18x50 SFP scope on the pinned 20MOA

Picatinny rail. I'd never used a Meopta scope before and was fascinated with their DicroTech reticles. Designed for hunting, their patent-pending coating adjusts color tone and intensity to varying light conditions without use of a battery. To my surprise, the colors did change. Scanning the range and woods, the colors shifted slightly with shadows and changes in the environment. I tried the BDC Dichro reticle and would still personally prefer a larger dot for hunting as the BDC version tended to disappear at further ranges.

Kelbly guarantees sub-MOA accuracy with match-grade ammunition and this gun met expectations. I shot groups from a 200-yard bench with Berger 135-grain Classic Hunter and 156-grain EOL Elite Hunter ammunition. Both shot well, but the rifle liked the 135-grain ammo better. Using the ShotMarker e-target system, I was able to determine average velocity at the target and group size. A 5-shot group with the Berger 135-grain ammunition measured 1.52" (0.72 MOA) in width and 1.17" (0.56 MOA) in height at 200 yards. Velocity at the target averaged 2,467 feet per second (fps) with a spread of 9.2 fps. A 5-shot group with the 156-grain ammo measured 2.05" (0.98 MOA) in width and 1.54" (0.73 MOA) in height. Velocity at the target averaged 2,358 fps with a variation of 6.4 fps.

Accuracy remained at further distances. I repeatedly hit a 12x12" steel plate at 1,000 yards with no issues. Recoil was relatively mild, kicking my elbows about on the bench, but my shoulder saw no ill effects.

I'm not sending this rifle back. At \$2,449, it's pricier than the average hunting rifle at your sporting goods store but well worth it for the lifetime warranty and top-of-the-line components. Yes, I checked. You can run over your rifle and Kelbly's will still cover the damage, though they'd be unhappy. If you're looking for a custom-quality, extremely accurate hunting and all-around long-range rifle with a family of support behind it, look no further than the Kelbly Koda.

GUNS

Editor's Note — Kelbly sponsors Serena during Palma competition but was not consulted for this article.

THE MODEL 1917 REVOLVER



Our smaller-handed shooters preferred the S&W M1917 (top) but Colt purists are always gonna love a Hartford product (bottom), no matter what!



Both 1917s feature 5.5" barrels. Colt's New Service platform (bottom) is about a quarter pound heavier than the Smith 2nd Model Hand Ejector (top), thanks in part to the Colt's beefier barrel.

Both Colt and S&W contributed WWI Sixguns

Payton Miller

When the United States entered World War I on April 6, 1917, much of the weaponry desperately required was in short supply, most specifically some of the more advanced items. This included Browning's groundbreaking Model 1911 pistol.

So, to fill the gap, the government contracted with Colt and Smith & Wesson to supply roughly 300,00 large-frame double-action revolvers with a cylinder shortened for the 1911's .45 ACP service cartridge. Both featured a 5.5" barrel.

HARTFORD VS. SPRINGFIELD

Colt's contribution was essentially a Model 1909 New Service with a weight of 2.5 lbs. Smith & Wesson's entry was essentially a 2nd Model Hand Ejector weighing 4 oz. less than the Colt.

For this story we managed to luck into one of each,

courtesy of our shooting buddies Nils Grevillius (S&W) and John Wightman (Colt). Both specimens have had — through the years — more than one owner since production ceased in 1920. And, not surprisingly, there had been some minor alterations to the original guns.

The Smith's original front sight had been replaced and our Colt had seen its original issue wooden stocks replaced by black hard rubber panels. Other than this, both guns were dead stock, right down to the "Property of United States Government" stamp on the underside of the barrel.

The triggers on both guns were in keeping with the usual Colt/Smith results from the era. The single-action pull on the Colt was a fairly manageable 4-¾ lbs., while the double-action pull stacked horrendously to the break point at a little over 17 lbs.

The Smith's single-action pull broke at 2 ¾ lbs. while the double-action pull was an infinitely smoother — in comparison to the "stagier" Colt — 12 lbs. So, in terms of

The Other “AR”

Unless you're working toward Jerry Miculek's speed reloading exploits, moon clips — full, half or quarter — can have their downside. They can get lost or bent and they can be a royal pain in the butt to pry the empties out without a reasonably efficient “de-mooning” tool.

This isn't spot news. The .45 Auto Rim — introduced in 1920 — was designed to get around this problem by the simple expedient of adding a rimmed case to the .45 ACP. The only other solution was to stick with moon clips or get one of the later-model 1917s where a shoulder was cut into each charge hole to enable reliable ignition without a moon clip. Problem was, the “shouldered” guns could fire standard .45 ACP but you still had to kick out the empties from the front of the cylinder with a pencil or rod — not much of an improvement speed-wise from using the ejector rod on a Colt Single Action Army.

Idaho's Buffalo Bore Ammunition Company offers three excellent standard-pressure .45 Auto Rim loadings. They include a 200-grain JHP at 1,000 fps, a 225-grain Wad-cutter at 950 fps and a very serious 255-grain Hard Cast Flat Nose at 850 fps.

And if this isn't enough big-bore horsepower for you, the company also offers a trio of sharply invigorated Plus-P loads in the same bullet weights and configurations but between 150 and 200 fps faster. These are obviously designed for later .45 ACP revolvers and would turn the current Model 625 into a big-bore beast.

Sensibly, we elected to stay with Buffalo Bore's standard pressure stuff, figuring what they delivered was plenty stout for the pair of WWI warhorses we had on hand.

GUNS



trigger manageability in either mode, the Smith was the clear winner. But in all fairness, neither gun as issued would pass muster for a modern DA revolver competition.

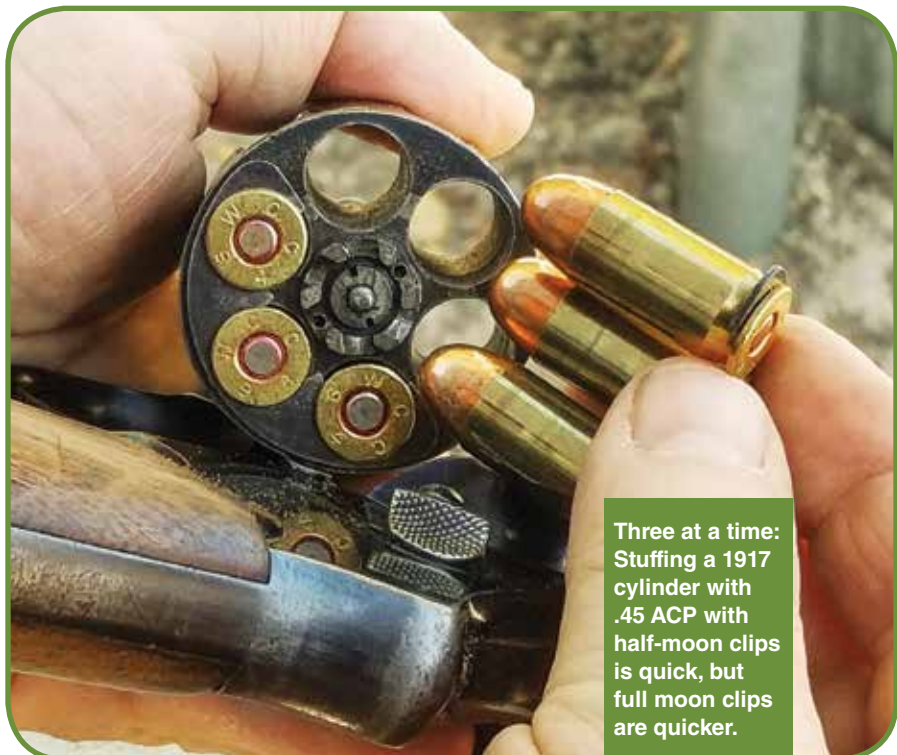
VIVE LA DIFFERENCE!

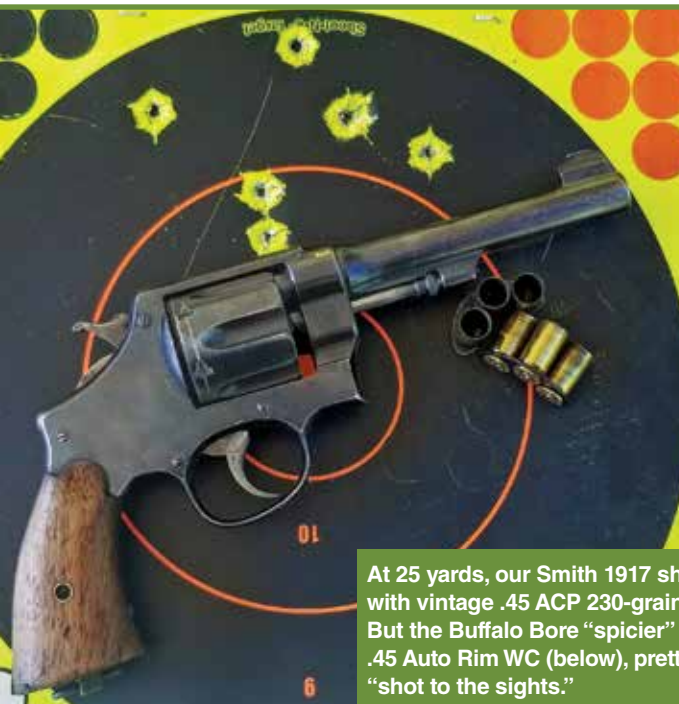
Our smaller handed shooters preferred the Smith. Cosmetically, the Smith had a nicer finish. Although not critical on a military arm, it did give the S&W a leg up in terms of civilian appeal after the horrors of the Western

Front became just a bad memory.

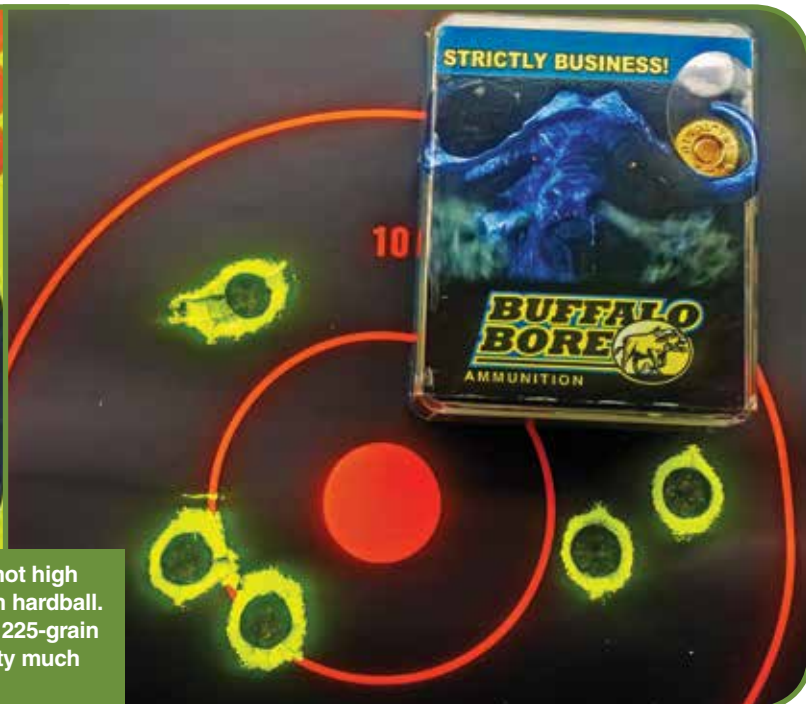
Other Smith vs. Colt signature operational features were what you'd expect from guns of the era: Left to right cylinder rotation on the Colt, a naked ejector rod and a pull-to-open cylinder latch. For the Smith, of course, you have right-to-left cylinder rotation, semi-shrouded ejector rod and a push-to-open cylinder latch.

Both guns featured the obligatory threaded lanyard ring on the butt. For a military handgun, lanyards were most





At 25 yards, our Smith 1917 shot high with vintage .45 ACP 230-grain hardball. But the Buffalo Bore “spicier” 225-grain .45 Auto Rim WC (below), pretty much “shot to the sights.”



definitely not a mere affectation, particularly if you were on horseback.

Of course, we shot ‘em both using some vintage GI issue .45 ACP 230-grain hardball, along with some Magtech 180-grain JHPs and — once we got tired of moon-clipping — some Buffalo Bore .45 Auto Rim stuff.

SHOOT ‘EM IF YOU GOT ‘EM

The small sights on both guns made shooting good groups at 25 yards something of a challenge, but the top performers were the Magtech 180-grain JHPs from the Colt and Buffalo Bore’s 225-grain .45 Auto Rim wadcutters from the Smith.

It’s worth noting everything we shot seemed to generate more felt recoil than we’ve ever noticed from a 1911 auto. This appeared to be as much a function of the narrower backstrap and grip angle of the M1917 revolvers as much as anything.

Okay, from a combat-desirability aspect — not to mention carryability — both the Smith & Colt 1917s were “round guns,” bulkier and heavier than the 39-oz. Model 1911 auto, a classic “flat gun.” But they were critical additions to the sidearm shortage of WWI and I am gonna guess any soldier in desperate need of a handgun would most



For total “functionality,” moon clips — usually full (6) or half (3) — are required to run a 1917 with .45 ACP. One way around this is to use .45 Auto Rim ammo (left). Photo: Roy Huntington



likely have been grateful as heck for a 1917.

Of course, revolvers still played a role in WWII — most specifically the Smith .38 Victory Model and the Colt Commando, while Smith’s J-Frame lightweight aluminum-framed Aircrewman put in a limited appearance in the early days of the Cold War.

Truth be told, handguns — aside from serving as badges of rank — were fairly low on the list of essential weaponry. But as Jeff Cooper once said: “Handguns don’t win wars, but they do save the lives of men who fight them.”

GUNS

BuffaloBore.com

THE KNOB CREEK MACHINE GUN SHOOT

Requiem for an All-American Tradition

Frank Jardim

It's all over now, but for 50 years the machine gun shoots held at Knob Creek Gun Range in West Point, Ky., were wildly popular with full-auto enthusiasts and spectators alike. If 20th century military guns — especially machine guns — were your thing, the Knob Creek event was the place to be.

Machinegun people are a tiny subset of the gun community. For them, the event was also a grand social affair and an opportunity to show off to both their peers and the spectators on the firing line. Visitors, everyone from grandmothers to toddlers, would don hearing protection and crowd the waist-high security fence 20 feet behind the firing line to watch. I have no doubt at least one example of every machine gun ever produced was shot on that line at one time or another.

BUYERS AND SELLERS

When I started attending about 15 years ago, spots on the firing line and even vendor tables were nearly

impossible to get. They were so coveted, rumors claimed they had to be inherited. Whether you needed a transferable MP5 submachine gun, demilled parts kit for a M1910 Russian Maxim water-cooled machine gun, breech block for a World War II M3 anti-tank gun, brand new Double Star AR, parts to restore a sporterized M1903 Springfield rifle or a cocking handle for a Colt “potato digger” machine gun, the “Creek” was where you were most likely to find it. This was the show where really amazing things showed up.

For example, I was helping at a friend's table when an attendee walked by with a WWII tank flamethrower of the type fitted in the bow machine gun mount of an M4 Sherman. It was purchased on the spot for a couple hundred dollars. It seems impossible the seller could have walked through half the show without the rare treasure being snapped up, but it speaks to how intense these Knob Creek events were. The sheer quantity and variety of things for sale caused sensory overload. Combined with the heavy crowds, often shoulder-to-shoulder in the aisles, it was near impossible to see the whole thing in a 12-hour day.



A real fixer-upper — the typical target after its rendezvous with the bullet hurricane when the line went hot.



On the line at Knob Creek, if you weren't shooting or maintaining weapons, you're loading magazines and ammo belts.

BIGGER IS BETTER

At one event, someone set up 20mm Oerlikon anti-aircraft gun, complete with its naval deck mount and gunner shield. Those automatic cannons once festooned U.S. Navy ships and probably accounted for more German and Japanese aircraft than any other ship-mounted weapons system. Today, very few registered, functional examples exist.

Mini-guns, the modern electrically driven gatling guns of aviation fame, made regular, awe-inspiring appearances on the firing line. They sound like a loud buzz because, at more than 2,000 rounds per minute, the ear cannot distinguish the individual shots. They were always a crowd pleaser, especially at night, firing tracers that

streaked downrange in a thick unbroken line as if drawn across the darkness with a neon-red magic marker. World War II tanks would show up sometimes, clank their way onto the range and blast away with their cannon and machineguns. There were anti-tank rifles taller than a man and cannons big and small. Vietnam-vintage Huey UH-1 helicopters, usually flying paying passengers above the range, occasionally armed up with door gunners and M60s to make strafing runs at "Vietcong" washing machines and water heaters downrange. There were even flamethrower demonstrations using genuine vintage military models — not the toy ones they sell today — that projected a stream of fire a shockingly long distance. Their jellied gasoline fuel glued flame to everything it

came in contact with and continued to burn for minutes after the operator released the wand's trigger.

SWISS ON WRY

The first half hour of every hour was devoted to shooting up the scores of hard targets dragged out on the 300-yard range during the ceasefires. Many automobiles, old appliances, 55-gallon drums and boats, laboriously collected in the six months preceding each bi-annual event, were literally shot so full of holes they resembled sculptures rendered in grey Swiss cheese. Swiss cheese is not grey, but fire-charred metal is. To enhance the spectacle, the range staff expertly rigged some targets to explode and burn in a most impressive fireball and mushroom cloud fashion! Tracers sometimes set fire to others not so rigged.

The range always went hot with an abrupt and roaring din, which continued with unabated ferocity for several minutes before breaking down into more sporadic firing. With a hundred spots on the firing line, and a conservative average rate of fire of 800 rounds per minute, I estimate 25,000 rounds of ammunition could easily be used up in the first "mad minute" of a shooting session. I imagine it sounded like standing among the machine gun battalions on the Somme battlefield in World War I as they dished out murderous supporting fire.

Few outside of the military have ever seen belt-fed machine guns in action and virtually nobody gets to see vintage water-cooled heavy machine guns fired unless they seek out the experience. British soldiers sometimes used their Vickers heavy machine guns to boil water for tea. When the steam gets hot enough, it can't be contained and jets out of various bushings and seals on the water jacket — its loud hiss, concealed during the din of gunfire,



So you need a transferable WWI Vickers, two BARs and a Thompson? You were in luck at the Knob Creek Gun Show. Carnage on a grand and glorious scale, it was claimed "every machine gun ever produced was shot on that line."



Early in the day you could still get right up to the fence behind the firing line to watch but later it was five-deep. Here, a haze from burning detritus shredded by withering machine gun fire hangs over the impact area.





WWII classics ready to “Rock and Roll” include: M2 carbines, M2 Heavy Barrel .50 caliber and M1919 .30 caliber light machine guns — over \$100,000 worth of historic machineguns.



Cannon muzzle-blast momentarily bathes the audience in light at Knob Creek. The night shoot always had a rock concert-like atmosphere — minus the dope and booze.

continuing as an epilogue long after the line goes cold.

GALLERY OF CARNAGE

In the early afternoon, after the range crew inspected the impact area and cleared it of hazards, the public was allowed to walk downrange and inspect bullet-riddled targets up close. The terminal effects of the bullets are fascinating but I wasn't the only one looking for the hefty tungsten penetrators from .50 BMG armor piercing rounds frequently found, perfect and unscarred, laying on the ground where they ran out of steam. They make great center punches for metal work.

If you didn't own a machine gun, you weren't limited

to watching and shopping. There were always various shooting matches for rifle, pistol or shotgun and visitors could rent a wide assortment of machine guns and shoot them under supervision on the lower range. If you desired a more tactical shooting experience, for \$50 — which include the use of the range's UZI and ammo — there was the Jungle Walk submachine gun course. It was a screaming deal and slots filled up fast.

The Knob Creek Gun Range is, and always has been, a family business, and the events reflected their traditional family values. Guys brought their wives and kids to the shoots and made a day of it. First-time visitors, especially if they were big city types, were often surprised when owner Kenny Sumner got on the PA system to welcome them personally and ask for their attention while a prayer was read followed by the national anthem. The “bombs bursting in air” was emphasized with coordinated cannon shots from the firing line. As respect was shown for God and country, nearly everybody stopped where they stood, took off their hats and listened in silence. I sometimes wondered if the few that didn't were just obtuse, or genuine commie atheists. Perhaps it was a mix of both.

GONE SILENT

While their epic machine gun events are over for good, as a local I can still enjoy the Knob Creek Gun Range for what it's always been — a great outdoor range and one of the best gun shops in the country. I'm thankful I got to go to as many of their shoots as I did. I'm also thankful to the Sumner family, whose ceaseless toil in planning and preparations throughout the year made it possible for the rest of us to have such great, All-American weekends of gun fun.

GUNS

GUNSITE ACADEMY

A better family vacation spot

Jameson Parker

I used to take my then-young children shooting and hunting but firearms never really took with any of them. However, time, the Chinese Communist Party's little joke on the world, "mostly peaceful" rioting in cities near them and various recent unnerving personal

encounters have prompted three out of four of my children to call me, asking advice about guns, shooting and most important of all — training. My fourth, my oldest daughter, is married to a man who keeps guns and was raised with them so she's less concerned.

When it comes to training, the top of my list is Gunsite.

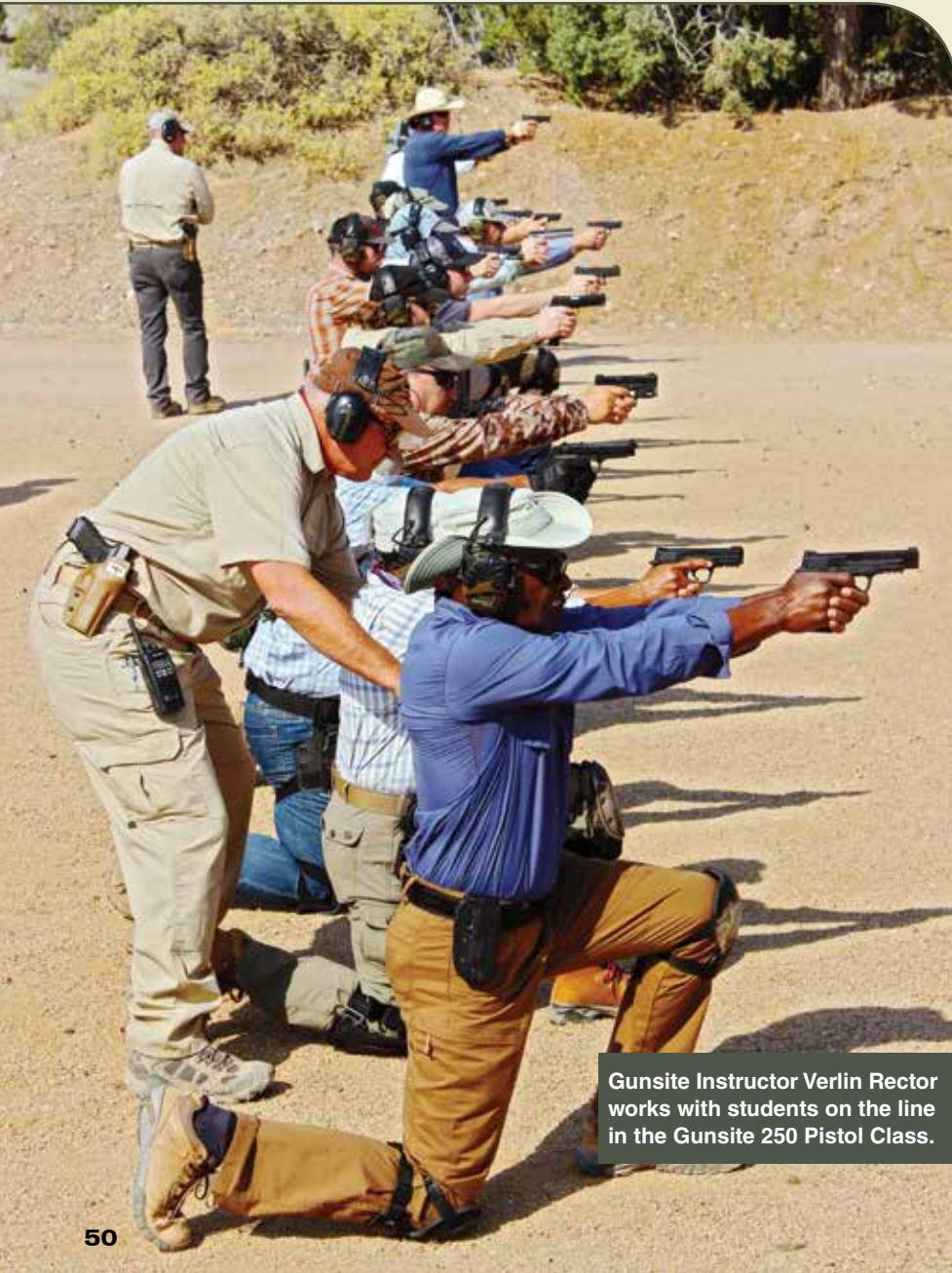
BETTER THAN A MOUSE

A friend of mine calls the Gunsite Academy in Paulden, Ariz., "The happiest place on earth," — D*****land be damned — and for shooters this is indubitably true. It's also one of the most intensive and grueling shooting schools I have ever encountered. When my oldest son and I decided to take their basic introductory 250 Pistol class, the natural stress, both physical — five days of nine-hour-a-day training, plus a night shoot on Thursday — and psychological, was compounded by an unprecedented heatwave. Temperatures over the five days ranged between 101- to 108-degrees and in case you think Mother Nature doesn't have a distorted sense of humor, the heatwave broke immediately after.

The two most famous examples of oxymora are "military intelligence" and "family vacation," but Gunsite manages to give the lie to the latter. Out of 15 students in our class, there were three father-son combinations and two married couples yet other than gunfire, the most frequently heard sound was laughter. Any school where students can enjoy themselves in spite of pressure to perform and 100+ temperatures is doing something very right.

BACKGROUND

Much has been written about Gunsite's founder, the late Jeff Cooper, and the development of the modern pistol technique. Other men contributed to the modern pistol technique (notably a deputy-sheriff named Jack Weaver) as popularized by Col. Cooper, and it has continued to evolve ever since. However, no one did more than the colonel to methodically study the mechanics of shooting and to popularize it as both sport and — primarily — for practical defensive use. Nor had anyone ever



Gunsite Instructor Verlin Rector works with students on the line in the Gunsite 250 Pistol Class.

before seriously codified the teaching and offered it to civilians as well as law enforcement and military. Prior to Gunsite — originally called The American Pistol Institute — civilian men and women and even legends such as Annie Oakley, Captain Adam Bogardus and Adolph Toepperwein taught themselves based on personal and sometimes painful experience. Police departments and the military taught their officers and soldiers techniques based primarily on what earlier generations had done, and both law enforcement and the military are famously resistant to any kind of innovation.

There were a few exceptions, notably a pair of British law enforcement officers in Shanghai between the World Wars named W.E. Fairbairn and E.A. Sykes, who were fortunate enough to have lived through many close-quarters shooting incidents and who wrote about what worked and what didn't in his book *Shooting to Live*. But as late as the mid-1970s, major metropolitan police departments were still using revolvers and teaching their officers to step out to the right in a crouch shoot instinctively, without the sights, one-handed. Jeff Cooper and his Gunsite Academy transformed all that. I very much doubt there is a law enforcement agency or military anywhere in the world today not teaching at least some variation of what Colonel Cooper taught, and many agencies from around the world have sent their elite team members to study at the academy.

GETTING STARTED

Don't think of the introductory 250 pistol class as intended exclusively for beginners. In our class there was a couple from California, neither of whom had ever fired a handgun before and they deserve credit for jumping right into serious training before purchasing one. At the other end of the spectrum were two USPSA members, one of whom was a Grand Master while the rest of us wallowed around somewhere in-between. What is emphasized and taught carefully in the 250 class, in addition to the four golden rules of safety, are the basics — the five steps of drawing; proper grip; presenting the gun in a straight line without bowling

The Gunsite 250 Pistol class — “basic” in name only — builds marksmanship fundamentals but also teaches positional shooting, basic room clearing and other techniques. Photo: Brent T. Wheat



Mano-a-Mano — Jameson and his son get a little competitive on the firing line at Gunsite during their “family vacation” at the world-famous academy.



The author's son James and instructor Verlin Rector practice live-fire room-clearing techniques on the square range.



or poleaxing; focusing on the front sights; trigger press and reset; followed by administrative, tactical, and emergency reloading; clearing stoppages; and again and always, the four golden rules of safety.

But after that, those basics are gradually incorporated into increasingly difficult drills and scenarios culminating with Col. Cooper's own "El Presidente" drill — turning and firing controlled pairs into multiple targets, reloading, and firing again, all of it against the clock. This is followed by clearing a house of multiple threats and innocent bystanders, and fighting through a rocky wash with hidden targets, some of which are threats, some of which are "no shoot." All of it requires quick decision-making and precise shooting.

Such things might be regarded as basics for beginners at Gunsite but at most schools they would be the final test for experienced shooters. It is fun, stressful, exhilarating and extremely educational. You can understand why law enforcement agencies from around

the world send their people there. In this era of "defunding the police," the opposite approach should be taken — law enforcement agencies should receive extra funds to send their officers to Gunsite.

THRILL RIDE

After the intense adrenaline rush of clearing the "Fun House" of inanimate paper targets instead of real people with real guns, if it doesn't convince you police aren't paid nearly enough, you

Using a plastic blue gun, Instructor Gary Smith demonstrates clearing a room in the Gunsite Fun House, one of two indoor simulators on the sprawling facility.



All instruction at Gunsite starts at the classroom building before students disperse to their assigned ranges. Photo: Brent T. Wheat



Gunsite is huge — encompassing 26 ranges from contact distance out to 2,000 yards, along with multiple “shoot” houses and outdoor simulators. Photo: Brent T. Wheat



The famed Raven over the front gate at Gunsite Academy. Aside from teaching students from around the world, some people have even gotten married here! Photo: Brent T. Wheat

aren't paying attention. For the record, I was “killed” on my attempt. To my delight, my son was warier and survived.

One of the most diabolical — excuse me; I meant demanding — exercises is a speed drill with rotating targets. It begins at three yards with targets turned sideways to the shooters. When the targets are first rotated to face the students, each shooter has to draw from the holster and make a perfect head shot. When the target is rotated the second time, each shooter must draw again and perfectly place a hammer-pair into the upper chest cavity. The targets remain facing the shooters for three-and-a-half seconds, then rotate away. No sweat.

But then you move out to five yards, then seven, then 10, then 15, and it gets a little trickier. Then you go back to the three-yard line and do it all over again, but this time the

speed is reduced to two seconds. On the third round, the speed drops to one-and-a-half seconds, at which time there were notably fewer holes in each target with the exception of the two USPSA shooters, both of whom had the speed of snakes — irritable snakes with bad intentions.

All of these drills are done multiple times over the five days, to teach the students and allow a little practice before being conducted for a final evaluation. In the intense temperatures of the unusual heat wave, the drills took a lot out of the students and instructors both. The instructors deserve a lot of credit for keeping their sense of humor and the students' spirits up.

TAKEAWAY

Five days at Gunsite are expensive. However, driving with my son on our

way to and from the range, I thought about it and I've come to the conclusion I don't see how they manage to stay in business. It's a 3,000-acre facility. Each class has three instructors, each of whom must be paid, housed and fed. The ranges — 26 of them, from handgun to three long-distant ranges out to 2,000 yards — must be maintained. The mechanical targets must be maintained. The roads to each of the ranges must be maintained and, if a monsoon strikes or a heavy snowfall comes, repaired. There are office buildings and office personnel. There are classrooms, restrooms and ancillary buildings to maintain. There is a pro-shop with two full-time staff members. There is a full-time gunsmith, a graduate of the prestigious Yavapai College gunsmithing program. There is a campground. All of those cost money.

Fortunately, the recent immense increase in first-time gun-buyers has resulted in a correspondingly substantial increase in the number of civilian students who are the academy's bread-and-butter, which speaks well of America's gun owners.

This was the first time my son and I had shot together in over 30 years, and to say we had fun is to understate it considerably. We're already making plans for another family vacation when we return to the happiest place on earth sometime later this year. When it's cooler. A lot cooler. We're thinking about winter, with fond hopes for a blizzard.

GUNS

Gunsite.com

ATI NOMA

Maybe simple *is* better?

Will Dabbs, MD

You're hard at work beta-testing whoopie cushions and fake dog doo at the Fartco Novelty Company Inc. Though it was the glamor that first drew you, after 17 years even this seems like a grind. The new battery-powered flatulator is performing well but it's been a long day. You're looking forward to a quiet evening with the family — then you feel a scant rumble through the floor.

You direct your attention outside. Smoke rises on the horizon and you see crowds of terrified people fleeing

some unseen menace. An electric buzz runs through the office as fear spreads over your coworkers like a contagion. But not you. You've prepared your entire life for this moment.

In a flash you're downstairs and atop your moped. In the heady excitement of the moment you intentionally eschew your helmet. Given this has all the makings of a proper apocalypse you'll take your chances with the traffic wardens.

Traffic is snarled, but you are immune. You bounce the curb and cut through sundry yards and parks puttering past terrified victims who lacked your foresight.



The FN SCAR 16S and the ATI Nomad 12-gauge are on opposite ends of the spectrum but the cheap single-barrel shotgun might be the better general-purpose survival gun.

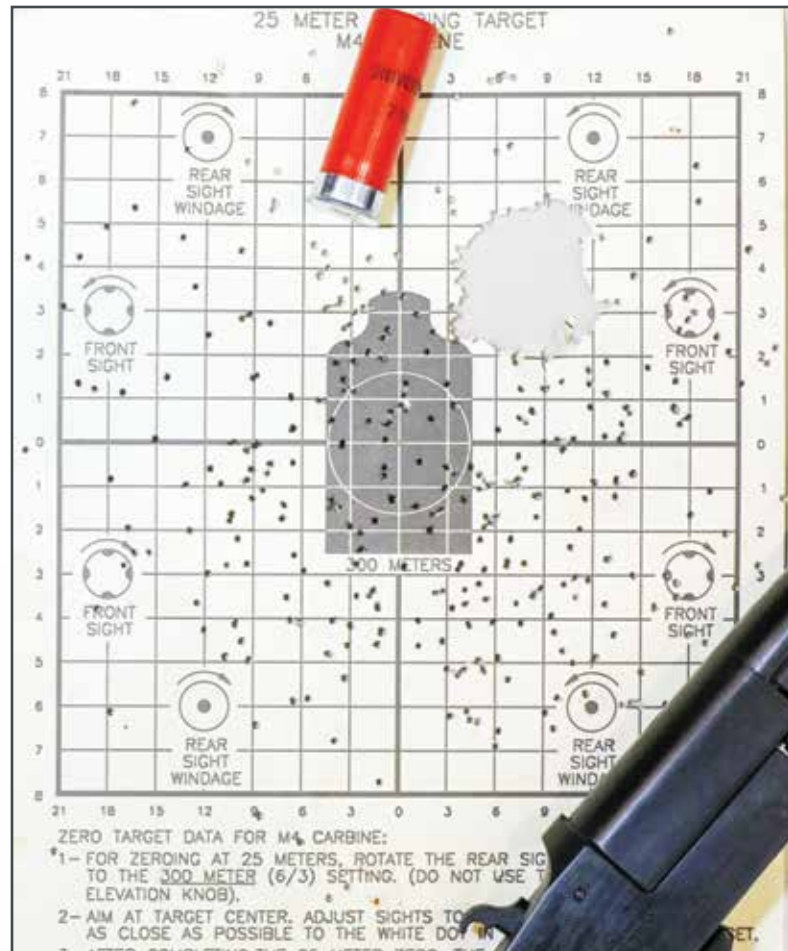
...D vs. SCAR

Nineteen minutes later you pull up at home.

Your family has drilled for this and they are waiting on you. The government-surplus Hummer is packed and ready to go with food, water and fuel enough for at least three weeks on the road. Your wife even had time to throw together a few tuna fish sandwiches. The kids are strapped into the back, and your bride has the shotgun. You slip into your body armor and throw open the door to the gun safe. There in the front row resides a tricked-out FN SCAR 16S alongside a Nomad single-barrel break-open 12-gauge shotgun. The Hummer is already cubed out, and you've only got room for one. Which gun do you grab? The kids are getting impatient and the plaintive cries from the street are growing closer.

PRACTICAL TACTICAL

Who are we kidding? Of course you take both. Strap junior to the roof if need be, but now doomsday has finally arrived, you're not going to split hairs over ordinance. However, what if you really could only take one? For a real-deal bugout survival defensive situation, are



To paraphrase Dirty Harry Callahan, at a typical 8-meter engagement range, the ATI Nomad 12-gauge, even loaded with cheap 7-½ birdshot, would take a man's head clean off.





The ATI Nomad collapses back onto itself for easy portage or storage.

you better off with the \$4,500 black rifle or the no-frills single-barrel shotgun that only set you back a c-note? I would assert the answer, as painful as it is for guys like us to hear, is the shotgun might be the better choice.

The tricked-out SCAR 16S with a Holograph, magnifier, tactical light and sound suppressor legitimately costs more than four grand all up. For this simply breathtaking investment you get unflinching reliability, decent stealth, proper combat accuracy and a prodigious magazine capacity. The SCAR chassis serves with American Special Operations Forces deployed downrange as I sit typing these words. It is one epically cool rifle. It will reliably make you stand out in a crowd. Now hold this thought.

By contrast, the ATI Nomad is stripped-down and austere. The 18" barrel folds back onto the buttstock and the resulting package is so easy to store it could conceivably ride in a book bag. Even amidst the current ammo drought you can still find 12-gauge rounds. Buckshot and slugs will drop most anything that walks, gallops or slithers. Cheap birdshot will keep the cooking pot stoked with tree rats or bunnies and wing shoot subsistence birds.

This weapon is the heir apparent to your granddad's favorite farm gun, which means it doesn't scare people or mark you as special. Under certain circumstances this attribute could itself be quite valuable.

TECHNICAL DETAILS — THE SCAR 16S

SCAR stands for Special Operations Forces Combat Assault Rifle and it is indeed the apex predator among the world's modern military weapons. A thoroughly state-of-the-art design, the SCAR orbits around an aluminum receiver and includes ample polymer furniture. The GI-issue SCAR-Heavy fires 7.62x51mm. The SCAR-Light is 5.56x45mm. The SCAR 16S is the semi-auto civilian version of the military SCAR-L.

I happened upon my SCAR at a Law Enforcement auction for seized guns, so I got it at a good price. However, a cheap Rolls Royce is still expensive. You don't get into a SCAR cheap unless a relative dies and leaves you one.

The SCAR runs a short stroke piston-driven action inspired by the Armalite AR180. This design keeps heat and crud upfront and away from the gun's entrails. It is



The primary strength of the ATI Nomad 12-gauge is its ammo versatility. Different loads can be configured for different applications.



The buttstock on the FN SCAR 16S is more complicated than the U.S. Tax Code, but it is undeniably effective. The rigid charging handle (below) on the FN SCAR 16S is reversible and reciprocates with the bolt — watch your fingers!

inimitably reliable as a result. The gun is designed to be easily disassembled and maintained in an austere environment.

There is plenty of rail space for optics and accessories. The buttstock is more complicated than the human female but remains eminently practical. The stock is easily adjustable for both length of pull and comb. It also folds with the push of a button. The SCAR comes with a nice set of folding iron sights that stay out of the way when not in use.

The charging handle on the SCAR reciprocates with the action and is readily reversible without tools. This means you can take a boot to it in the unlikely event the action ever gets sticky. However, that also means the handle zips back and forth when firing. With a bulky optic installed, it is easy to rap your fingers while charging the weapon.

The SCAR 16S accepts standard STANAG M4 magazines and drums. The end result is versatile, effective and cool. In the world of Modern Sporting Rifles, literally nothing is finer.

THE ATI NOMAD 12-GAUGE

By contrast, the ATI Nomad is as simple as kindergarten art class. If you can tie your own shoes without assistance, you can run the Nomad. It's just stupid-proof.

Pull back on the trigger guard to break open the action, drop in a shell, close the action, and cock the hammer manually. Now point the gun at something you dislike and squeeze. Repeat as necessary.

The Nomad doesn't have a safety. The manual hammer is all the safety you need. Don't cock the gun until you're ready to shoot and you'll be fine.

To fold the gun up for storage you just open the action and then wrap the muzzle back to the toe of the buttstock. The steel is nicely blued, the furniture is polymer and nigh indestructible. The sights consist of a simple



brass bead and a groove in the top of the receiver. It's not complicated because it doesn't need to be complicated. The Nomad comes with a set of steel sling swivels on the bottom and the chamber is cut to accept 3" shells.

American Tactical offers the Nomad in three different gauges and various barrel lengths. The gun is also available as part of a turn-key survival rig with its own backpack.

The real strength of the Nomad is in its ammunition versatility. Birdshot is available most anywhere at a good price. Buckshot and slugs, at appropriate ranges, offer unquestionable downrange authority. There are even less-than-lethal options should the need arise.

PRACTICAL TACTICAL

The SCAR 16S will ventilate a man-sized target out to half a kilometer or so and look cool doing it. Magazine changes set the standard for everything else and the gun is one of the most reliable autoloading weapons I have ever fired. With the suppressor and optics in place, it is a room-clearing machine. However, whenever brandished in public it does invariably draw a crowd.

By contrast, the Nomad tucks into a proper day pack without anyone being the wiser. It packs plenty of down-range thump against predators whether they walk on two legs or four. It is also a much better tool for dropping birds on the wing or harvesting a rabbit than the fancy black rifle.

Forgive my seeming a pansy, but the Nomad kicks like Chuck Norris doing the Can-Can. The gun is extremely lightweight and Physics can be a cruel mistress. However, it works, every single time.

More importantly, however, the Nomad lets you move around in crowds without creating a scene. Scary black rifles are fun on the range, but amidst a street liberally





The ATI Nomad 12-gauge is arguably the simplest firearm on the planet. There is little on the gun to break.



The FN SCAR 16S is one sexy rascal — however, all the tactical bling makes you conspicuous and costs more than your first (and probably second) car.

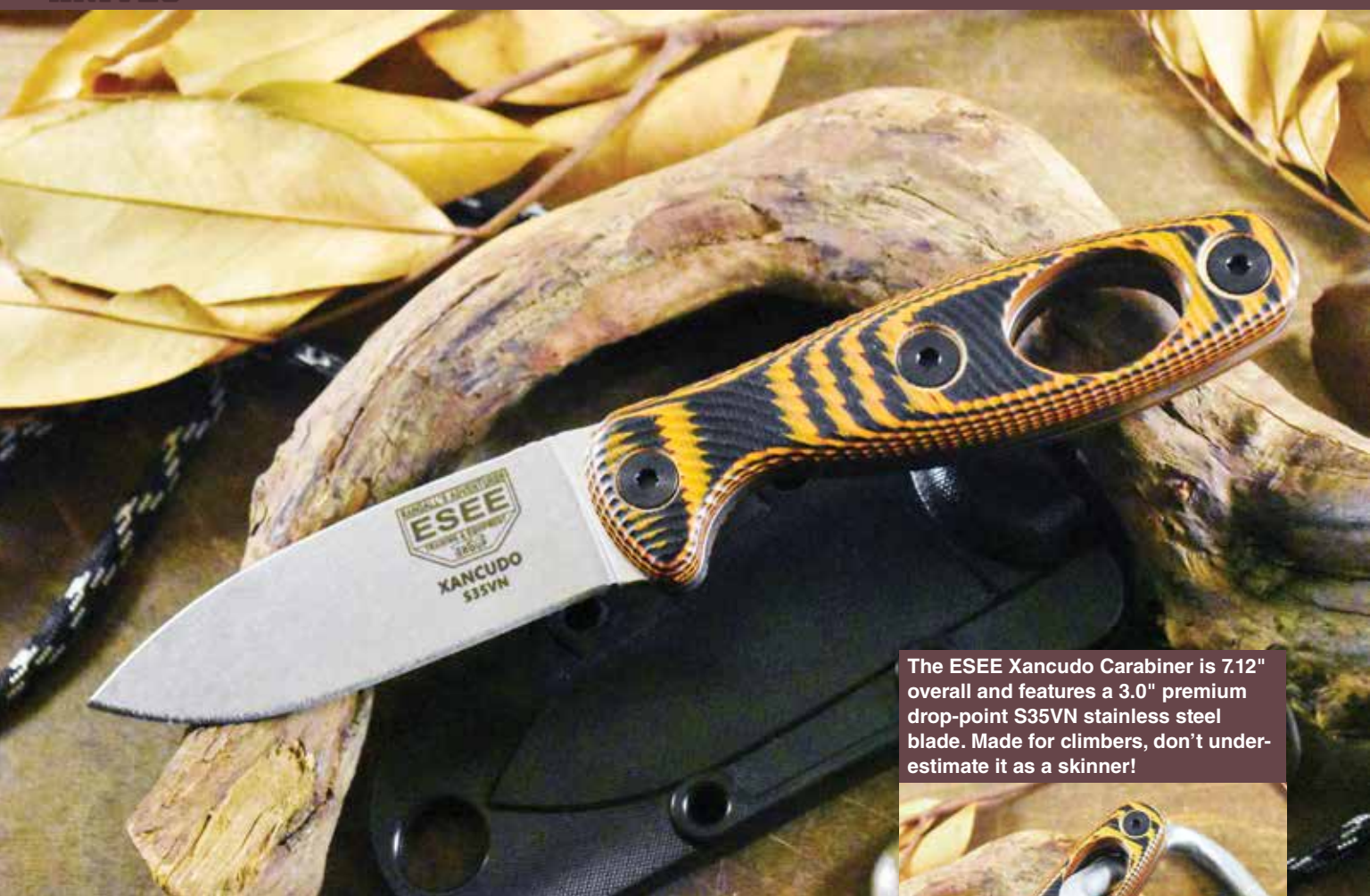
populated with flaming dumpsters and rampaging anarchists, it is the Nomad that helps you retain your anonymity. Anybody who has ever been in one for real appreciates the best fight is the one you never have to have.

DENOUEMENT

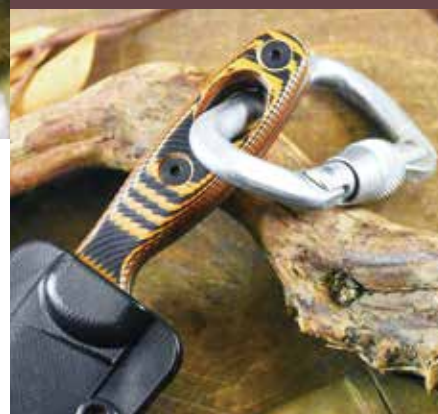
So sure, if you have the space, grab both. The SCAR 16S reaches out way beyond where the humble 12-bore stutters and dies while being markedly more intimidating. However, there's a lot of stupid stuff you can drop a hundred bucks on these days. In fact I have dumped this sum taking my family out for dinner and movie back when the kids would bring along a friend or three. In the ATI Nomad you will find a robust single-barrel shotgun your kids' kids won't wear out and will eat a wide variety of ammo. The argument could be made it is indeed the better defensive gun.

GUNS

AmericanTactical.us
FNAmerica.com



The ESEE Xancudo Carabiner is 7.12" overall and features a 3.0" premium drop-point S35VN stainless steel blade. Made for climbers, don't underestimate it as a Skinner!



Climbers of all types will enjoy this feature. The ovate hole in the Xancudo's handle is made for attaching a carabiner as shown here

ESEE XANCUDO FIXED CLIMBERS HELPER

Pat Covert

Followers of ESEE Knives are keenly aware founder/owner Jeff Randall and crew are big into rock climbing — they even offer classes and wilderness expeditions as part their sister company's Randall's Adventure Training agenda. The Xancudo (with a "Z") has been a hot folder in the ESEE line for quite a few years, so popular they decided to do a fixed-blade version of the knife. Enter the Xancudo, which has many of its folding sibling's styling traits and more.

The Xancudo is 7.12" overall and features a 3.0" S35VN stainless steel blade. ESEE has had great response from their previous two knives of this same blade length but the Xancudo's styling, with its deep-set finger choil and drop-point blade, has its own

unique personality. It's also available in two-layered orange/black G10 handle styles — a plain-handle version and the Carabiner offshoot with an oval cut-out for climbers who wish to attach it to a rope or gear. The knife's upscale S35VN steel is a departure from the ESEE Knives norm of high carbon steel, but welcome for those who sweat a lot and encounter other corrosive elements along the trek. Weight is a svelte 3.8 oz. and the Xancudo Carabiner comes with a black high impact molded sheath with a belt loop attachment.

WHY YOU'LL LIKE IT

Rarely are fixed-blade knives made specifically for mountain or rock climbers so the ESEE Xancudo Carabiner will delight a decent chunk of the outdoor market oft ignored. ESEE's

other knives with 3" blades have been popular with those who prefer a fixed-blade EDC and, weight-wise, this is the lightest of the trio. The Xancudo is not limited to climbers by any means. The drop-point blade is perfect for skinning game and the blade's S35VN steel cuts like a house on fire — plus it's very durable to boot. Finally, at \$186 suggested retail, you can have a knife with ESEE's legendary lifetime guarantee. Sweet!

GUNS

EseeKnives.com

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VIRGINIA DID IT SO CAN YOU!

Dave Workman

Six months ago, gun-owning voters in the Commonwealth of Virginia did what this column said they could do — and told them how — and they took their state back!

You will recall how this column said it would take hard work and required getting off the couch to vote. The far-left media pundits never saw this coming and they're still trying to figure out what happened.

SURPRISE, SURPRISE

Sure, Terry McAuliffe figured he could still waltz into the governor's office after infuriating parents over his remarks about how they shouldn't be involved in what their children are being taught in school. Of course, he expected gun owners to be their frequently lethargic selves and skip voting.

Parents turned out by the tens of thousands but the election was swung by angry gun voters who wanted pay-back for what Democrats did in 2020 — after they took over the House of Delegates and pushed through gun control measures that led a majority of Virginia counties and many towns and cities to declare themselves “Second Amendment Sanctuaries.”

Alan Gottlieb, chairman of the *Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms*, put it bluntly: “Old Dominion gun owners were not about to allow anti-gun Democrats enjoy another two years of power after what happened in January 2020. They knew what Terry McAuliffe's return to Richmond would mean for their Second Amendment rights. His party's politics of attacking gun owners, and their outrageous record of eroding gun rights brought gun owners to the polls to say enough is enough.”

So, Republican Glenn Youngkin is now Virginia's governor. Additionally, the Lieutenant Governor is Winsome Sears and the state Attorney General is Jason Miyares, another Republican. It was a clean sweep.

NOW ...

This was six months ago. Just over six months from now, the mid-term elections will be held and gun owners have an opportunity to put the run on the anti-gun far left by defeating the people who are their legislative allies. Gottlieb said it best on the day after last November's Virginia election, telling Old Dominion gun owners: “You gave every gun owner in America a reason to be excited about the upcoming 2022 midterm elections.”

On that same day, readers should recall how voters in Minneapolis

month, this column warned readers about a group called the “National Democratic Training Committee,” which makes it clear they want to put far-left candidates into every level of politics, from school boards and town councils to county commissions and state legislatures. These people are serious.

Your job, your responsibility, is to pay attention now to anyone planning to run for office this fall. Get involved in your local precinct caucus. Pay attention to what your neighbors are saying and if gun rights versus gun control comes up, be there to keep everybody honest and correct any lies about guns.

The U.S. Supreme Court will soon



soundly rejected an effort to defund and dismantle their city's police department. In Seattle, voters rejected candidates for mayor and city attorney who were determined to reduce their police agencies.

If those voters could do it, so can you. All it takes is to make sure your voter registration is up to date, and now is a good time to get this out of the way. Find and recruit good candidates to replace those officials in state legislatures and Congress who are determined to disarm you.

DO-IT-YOURSELF

If you can't find someone, become a candidate yourself; start putting together a platform, campaign committee and start raising money. Last

hand down a ruling on a right-to-carry case challenging New York's Draconian carry permit law. This column listened to the oral arguments back in November when attorney Paul Clement stressed to the nine justices no American should ever have to show a special need in order to exercise a constitutionally enumerated right to carry a firearm in public for personal protection. It was a powerful testimony on behalf of the right to keep and bear arms.

If Clement can make this argument before the Supreme Court, you can certainly make your case at a precinct committee meeting, at a local city council session or to a candidate who wants your vote.

As campaigns warm up, find out when there will be a meet-and-greet in



“THEY KNEW WHAT **TERRY MCAULIFFE’S** RETURN TO RICHMOND WOULD MEAN FOR THEIR **SECOND AMENDMENT RIGHTS.**”

your area. Attend these meetings and be prepared to ask specific questions. You're not there to debate or start a fight, you're there to question these people because they work for you, not the other way around.

Be prepared to ask these questions: “If you continually vote against my rights, who speaks for me? If you want to ban a type of firearm, why do you insist you support the Second Amendment? Why should I vote for you?”

Be sure to have a companion who can record or video the meeting, especially if you're participating. Get it on record. Be polite and behave yourself in the process.

JOIN AND BE HEARD

Now is the time to also be contributing to the gun rights organization of your choice. Become an active member of your local gun club and encourage the group to put together a candidates'

night later this summer. If a candidate doesn't respond, don't support them. If they show up just long enough to make a boilerplate speech then rush off, they don't want to be around long enough to be questioned. Don't support these people, either.

Virginia gun owners got in the game last fall. They proved their votes count, and set an example for the rest of the country. They didn't duck out on the first requirement of citizenship: Be a citizen.

This country is currently 15 months into an unfriendly administration, supported by a Democrat majority on Capitol Hill who doesn't care about your concerns. In 1994, U.S. voters flipped Congress, tossing out more than 50 politicians who voted against their gun rights. It's time for gun voters to do it again and take away any momentum for more restrictions on your Second Amendment rights. If it happens, look for longtime pols including Nancy Pelosi and maybe even Chuck Schumer to retire.

Virginia did it. So can you! **GUNS**

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BENCHMADE CLAYMORE FOLDER & LONGHAND PEN

ROY HUNTINGTON

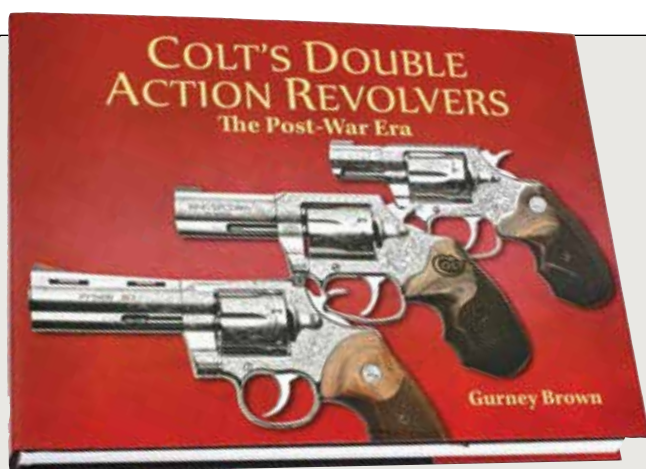
Named after the famous “Claymore” directional mine, this brawny but lightweight automatic slices with a 3.6” CPM-D2 serrated steel blade, Green Ranger “Grivory” grip and tips the scales at only 3.5 oz. It’s got a reversible tip-up pocket clip and is a tidy 5” closed. At \$230 MSRP it’s a pocketful of cut for not a lot of green.

Match it with Benchmade’s hot new Model 1120 Longhand Tactical Pen. Who says penmanship is dead! Crafted from stainless steel and featuring the rugged “AXIS” bolt action system, the Longhand can be had “silver” or “black” for high- or “low-” profile jobs. It’s only 4.6” long so rides easily in your shirt pocket but stays put in your hand.

Both of these have lived in my pockets for a couple of months now and frankly, I can’t think of a way to improve either one!

MSRP: \$230

Benchmade.com



COLT'S DOUBLE ACTION REVOLVERS THE POST-WAR ERA

ROY HUNTINGTON

Author Gurney Brown knows Colts. His past books, *Seven Serpents — The History of Colt's Snake Guns* and *Colt's Python — King of the Seven Serpents*, were sell-outs and immediately became the go-to source for the models. His latest, covering Colt DA revolvers from the post-war period forward, covers more than 50 models. Iconic guns like the Official Police, Cobra, Trooper, Agent, Diamondback, Anaconda, King Cobra and more are well-covered.

One of my favorite Colts, the Viper (a lightweight D-Frame model) is rare as hen's teeth but is well covered and some of the mystery is explained. Ever heard of the Colt “Peacekeeper”? Not the SA Peacemaker, but a DA revolver based on the Trooper? Gurney shows it off and explains how it all happened.

Gurney spent over two years pouring over Colt sales records, price lists, catalogs and trips to the Colt Archive in Hartford. This latest book is beautifully printed and showcases Gurney's talents and knowledge. A must-have if you love Colts!

MSRP: \$84.95

BlueBookOfGunValues.com



HUNTERS SUPPLY CAST BULLETS

ROY HUNTINGTON

I love shooting lead bullets but don't cast my own very often. With the reloading accessory “pandemic” we're just easing out of, it's refreshing to see a company with plenty of product to ship. Hunters Supply specializes in a good range of high quality cast bullets, from .30 caliber to .50 caliber. But what caught my eye right off was their interesting line-up of cast lead “bullets” for air rifles!

From .25 Caliber (49 to 100 grains) up to and including a 420-grain .50 caliber air-rifle bullet, these can turn an air rifle into a real hunting arm. My own experience shooting their 48-grain HP and 49-grain FP through my AirForce .25 caliber air rifle was eye-opening. Unlike conventional waisted pellets, these “real” bullets have amazing killing power all out of proportion to their caliber — and they are accurate.

Their cast bullets for firearms are consistent and predictable and the air gun bullets open amazing doors for precision air rifle shooters. I can't recommend them enough.

Hunters-Supply.com

GUNS

Mexico. My dad was three years old at the time. The family moved back to Huntsville, Ark. in 1936. I remember as a kid visiting grandmother's and the old falling block shotgun was always leaning in the corner of the porch. We never knew much about it. She gave it to me before she died but did not tell me any history other than it was my grandfather's.

Rick Woodbridge, DVM

.....

MORE READER GUNS

I just finished listening to you and Roy talk about hardware store guns. Loved it! At 72, I've seen and handled many such guns over the years. First gun fired was dad's hand-me-down H&R 1900 single-shot 12-gauge — around age 10 — what a kicker!

Regarding hardware guns, attached is an old double I inherited. Interested in your thoughts.

John P. Reinhart



.30 LUGER

Your recent item "The .30 Luger" (February 2022 issue) interested me considerably as I am a fan of the .30 Luger.

When I was a boy, 1940s-'50s, 9mm Lugers were common and it seemed half my friends' fathers were WWII vets who brought one home as a souvenir. The .30 caliber Lugers were unpopular and I recall a time when several U.S. companies offered newly manufactured replacement 9mm barrels. Seems a shame as, notwithstanding the .30 Luger's smaller-diameter bore, it was and is quite a good pistol cartridge. Just how good is hard to discover, but a 1983 *Gun Digest* article, "Holes in the Stopping Power Theory" by Leon Day contain clues.

MORE READER GUNS



Mr. Day filed a Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA) request and obtained copies of the original documents reporting the results of the Thompson-LaGarde tests. He discovered the report conflicts with

continued on page 71



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AR50A1 ARMALITE

ArmaLite's *AR50A1* is a single-shot, bolt-action rifle chambered for the .50 BMG cartridge. It features an octagonal receiver and uses ArmaLite's V-Channel chassis. With an OAL of 58.5" and weighing 37.1 lbs., the

rifle is highly accurate for long-range shooting. A massive muzzle brake makes recoil manageable. It has a 30" barrel made of chrome moly black nitride, a single-stage trigger and an ArmaLite AR-50 stock and muzzle. MSRP: \$3,985. For more info: (623) 780-1050, ArmaLite.com



590S SERIES MOSSBERG

Mossberg introduces the *590S Series* of 12-gauge pump-actions. The guns in the series are capable of cycling 1.75", 2.75" and 3" shotshells interchangeably without an adaptor. They are offered in two full-length stock options and two

versions of the bird's head-gripped Shockwave. Based on Mossberg's 500 pump-action platform, 590 tactical guns have non-binding twin action bars, positive steel-to-steel lock-up and anti-jam elevator, dual extractors and more. MSRP: From \$605. For more info: (800) 363-3555, Mossberg.com

LEVAR RATCHETING CHARGING HANDLE SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

The patented LevAR Ratcheting Charging Handle gives users a 3:1 mechanical advantage over traditional charging handles and clears stuck cartridges with ease while keeping your muzzle pointed safely downrange. You no longer have to slam the butt of the gun against the ground to free stuck casings. Simply deploy the ratcheting arm and pull back to eject the casing. MSRP: \$99. For more info: (800) 680-6866, store.Springfield-Armory.com



BG-AK BATTLEGRIP TANGODOWN INC.

TangoDown announces more colors for the *BG-AK BattleGrip* (with storage plug) as well as the *BG-AKOE BattleGrip* (without storage). These AK grips, now available in Bakelite Orange, Dark Red and Dark Plum, have a comfortable, ergonomic shape. MSRP: \$21-\$27. For more info: sales@tangodown.com, TangoDown.com



GIRSAN MC9 EAA CORP.

EAA's *Girsan MC9* with integral built-in optics allows for a steady, smooth focus on target with zero shaking or distortion. The Fast Target Acquisition Red Dot Optic (FAR-DOT) mounts even without an optics adaptor plate. With an OAL of 7.5" and weighing 1.4 lbs., this 9mm pistol comes in a Standard or Match model with three interchangeable backstraps for a customized grip. A rail in front offers attachment of lights or lasers. MSRP: \$568. For more info: (321) 639-4842, EAACorp.com

WARCAT IWB HOLSTER WARCAT TACTICAL

The *Warcat IWB Holster* has a slim, minimalist design. It's smooth and shaped for comfort and comes with the Warcat Claw & Wedge Kit. The kit reduces printing by adjusting the holster tighter to your body. The claw keeps the grip turned toward you while the wedge adjusts the frame inward. Warcat holsters are made from a molded polymer that's 20% lighter, 40% tougher and 80% more heat resistant than other molded holsters. MSRP: \$17.76. For more info: (208) 618-8618, Warcat.com



FIREARMS GUIDE 12TH EDITION FIREARMS GUIDE

Published since 2009, the *Firearms Guide 12th Edition* is for industry professionals and enthusiasts. It has the most extensive firearms, ammo and air guns reference manuals published online. In photo, the *Firearms Guide Flash Drive Edition*. MSRP: \$99.99 for the combo; \$29.95 for the activation card. For more info: FirearmsGuide.com



GLOCK 17 GEN5 T4E UMAREX USA

The *GLOCK 17 Gen5 T4E* was designed with this tagline — Paint. Compete. Perform. It is the first officially licensed GLOCK paintball marker from Umarex USA. The .43-caliber GLOCK replica developed and manufactured in Germany is a CO₂-powered pistol made for paintball sports and training. The 8-round magazine holds either paint- or powder balls in .43 caliber. It also accommodates a 12-gram CO₂ cartridge that can be used without tools in seconds. MSRP: \$349.99. For more info: (479) 646-4210, UmarexUSA.info

32-ROUND (9MM) GEN 2 MAGAZINE FOR GLOCKS ETS GROUP

The ETS Group announced the release of their *32-Round (9mm) Gen 2 Magazine for GLOCKS*. Made of clear polymer, the magazines can be used for the GLOCK 17, 18, 19, 19X, 26, 34 and 45. Made from advanced polymers for extreme impact resistance, the magazines won't crack or break when dropped and won't become brittle over time. Available in Clear, Orange or Blue. MSRP: \$21.99. For more info: (855) 887-5452, ETSGroup.us



BORE WEEVIL 2.0 BIRCHWOOD CASEY

The *Bore Weevil 2.0* is based on Birchwood Casey's popular Bore Weevil retractable cleaning system for long guns and handguns. The 2.0 continues the basic operation of the original but allows fast, efficient cleaning of rifle, shotgun and handgun barrels where cleaning rods are not feasible. MSRP: \$14.99. For more info: (877) 269-8490, BirchwoodCasey.com



ADJUSTABLE CO-WITNESSING MODULAR RED DOT ADAPTER MOUNT OUTER IM- PACT

Outer Impact introduces the *Adjustable Co-Witnessing Modular Red Dot Adapter Mount*. It allows shooters to use a variety of red dot sights on any rifle with a Picatinny rail. With this product, shooters can also dictate the height of the optic or level of co-witness they prefer. MSRP: \$149.95. For more info: support@outerimpact.com, OuterImpact.com



SPETSNAZ ENTRENCHING SHOVEL SERIES COLD STEEL

Cold Steel offers the *Spetsnaz Entrenching Shovel Series* for multiple field uses and survival scenarios. The series include the Special Forces Shovel and the Trench Shovel. Modeled after the Soviet-era Spetsnaz military entrenching tool, these shovels can be used for digging trenches and pits, clearing vegetation and building field shelters. The Special Forces Shovel has a hardwood handle and weighs 36.3 oz. The Trench Shovel has an American Ash handle and weighs 25.7 oz. MSRP: From \$31.99. For more info: (877) 269-8490, ColdSteel.com



PREMIUM WEIGHTED DON'T TREAD ON ME TEMPLAR KNIFE

The large, dagger-style *Premium Weighted Don't Tread On Me* knife weighs 8.6 oz. and is made of aluminum zinc oxide and CNC'd inside. Its 3.55" blade is Black oxide stonewashed powder D2. This Templar knife comes in three sizes (Large, Slim and Small) and six blade styles (Dagger, Tanto, Drop, Dagger Serrated, Tanto Serrated and Drop Serrated). MSRP: \$109.99 for Small; \$129.99 for Large and Slim. For more info: (833) 855-6433, TemplarKnife.com



MASTER GRADE HOODIE REAL AVID

Real Avid announces the debut of an apparel line that has something for everyone. The line includes the *Master Grade Hoodie* as well as five T-shirts and a long-sleeved shirt. The hoodie is made of pre-shrunk 80% cotton, 20% polyester blend ideal for cool weather. The T-shirts are made of 60% cotton, 40% polyester mix. Two women's shirts of cotton/polyester/ rayon are also available. MSRP: \$59.99 for the hoodie; \$19.99 for the shirts. For more info: (800) 286-0567, RealAvid.com



SUBMIT YOUR ENTRY ONLINE:

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If you are unable to enter online, mail a postcard with your name and address (no envelopes please). Entries must be received by April 30, 2022. Limit one entry per household.

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.



XR920 ELITE WITH THREADED BRONZE BARREL

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ShadowSystemsCorp.com
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HS507C X2

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Holosun.com
Value: \$399



**TOTAL
VALUE:
\$1,915**



X300U-B

Manufacturer: SureFire
(800) 828-8809
SureFire.com
Value: \$329

SHADOW SYSTEMS XR920 GIVEAWAY PACKAGE

Born out of a custom request for law enforcement, the new *Shadow Systems XR920* is the crossover pistol that's quicker out of the holster with a full 17+1 capacity. It has a compact slide on a full-sized frame, with interchangeable backstraps that fundamentally change where the pistol points to fit your natural point of aim. The XR920 has directional serrations in the front, rear and topside of the slide, a match-grade, spiral-fluted, threaded-bronze barrel and a flat-faced, drop safe aluminum trigger. Its patented multi-footprint optic cut directly mounts most major RDS optics. Fits G19 holsters.

The *HS507C X2* from Holosun is an open reflex micro red dot optical sight. Designed for pistol applications,

optics in the 507 series are rugged and feature the Holosun Multi-Reticle System (MRS) to help you focus on your target.

SureFire's *X300U-B* — popular with law enforcement and the military — generates 1,000 lumens of light to create a far-reaching, high-intensity beam. All the better to see your target at night.

The *GUNS April 2022* giveaway — with a total value of \$1,915 — features the Shadow Systems XR920 with Holosun's *HS507C X2* and SureFire's *X300U-B*. Enter now for a chance to own this awesome package! Remember, you won't win unless you join! Go to GUNSMagazine.com/giveaways or mail a post card. —Jazz Jimenez

GUNS



THE RUGER AMERICAN & RUSSIAN CASTAWAYS

COMRADES IN ARMS FOR THE 7.62x39?

Jeff "Tank" Hoover

Every time I shoot a Ruger American rifle, I'm amazed by its accuracy. How Ruger's engineers designed a basic entry-level-priced rifle capable of shooting as good, if not better, than rifles costing five times the price of the American

is amazing.

I can't help grinning when less-expensive rifles like the American outshoot their more expensive brethren — and it happens a lot with guns bearing the Ruger insignia. It's why I love them. Besides, it's fun driving my friends nuts when my peanut-butter-priced Rugers outshoot their caviar-priced shooters, proving price doesn't necessarily mean better accuracy.

NEW CALIBER?

Having great experiences with my Ruger Americans, I decide to order another one (my 4th) in a caliber I have no experience with. I'm talking about the 7.62x39 Russian. Never shot it, never had the desire to shoot one — until now. Like many things, I'm a day late and a dollar short but the cartridge grabbed my attention when giving it a closer look.

Being not much bigger than the 300 BLK I have, it provides nicer ballistics, velocity-wise. I liked its efficiency; it doesn't need a lot of powder to achieve respectable velocities. During today's powder/bullet crunch, efficiency is particularly nice.

THE AMERICAN WAY

What can I say? Ruger's American Ranch rifle is the perfect configuration for a truck or trail gun. Its short 16.1"

barrel and rugged synthetic stock make it easy to maneuver in tight quarters. Its five-shot detachable magazine makes it convenient to load when ready to shoot, too.

Its adjustable trigger, 70-degree bolt throw and full-diameter bolt body make manipulation smooth and positive. The secret to the American's accuracy is the patented integral bedding block. When the barreled-action is snugged down, it free-floats the barrel. The cold hammer forged rifling helps things too.

The tang safety is convenient, as is the 5/8"-24 threaded barrel, easily accommodating the addition of a suppressor. Scoping is easy with the factory-installed Picatinny scope base. I mounted an old Weaver compact 2.5-7x33 scope on the gun, its compact size balancing well with the rifle.

FACTORY STANDARD

Testing included shooting three groups of three-shots at 100 yards using 6" Shoot-N-C targets. Factory fodder consisting of TulAmmo steel-cased 122-grain FMJ bullets averaged 1.3" DoubleTap 125-grain Rifle Defense, 1.53" and Hornady 123-grain SST shot the best at 1.17."

Who says the 7.62x39 isn't accurate? Not me! Maybe in a rat-a-tat-tat Kalashnikov, but surely not in a Ruger American Ranch rifle. Pleased with the accuracy, I wasn't flabbergasted. After all, this is my 4th Ruger American rifle.

RUSSIAN CASTAWAYS

Checking my cast of characters shows I have several .32 caliber bullet molds for my .32 handguns. Dropping out at 0.314" make them usable for the 7.62x39 Russian by simply sizing them down to 0.311". Molds included MP



Bullet choices (left to right) — MP Molds 132-grain HPGC, MP Molds 142-grain HPGC, Lyman 314440 and Lee CTL312-1602R. The most accurate load (below) consisted of the MP Molds 132-grain HPGC with 22 grains AA 1680.



The Ruger American Ranch rifle in 7.62x39 is a compact, rugged rifle perfect as a truck or trail gun.



Here's a sampling of how the Ruger American shot the cast bullet loads.

Molds 140- and 150-grain HPGC style molds. In hollow point (HP) form, they weigh 132 grains and 142 grains, Powder Coated, and Gas Checked (GC). I also have a Lyman 314440 mold dropping a very blunt, round-nosed design, with GC I call the "Flying Fist."

Lastly, I ordered a Lee CTL312-1602R mold. Bullets were sized and GC applied using my Lee APP press. I've started using Sage Outdoors aluminum GCs as they're cheaper and don't seem to affect accuracy. Who doesn't like less-expensive handloads?

There are several good powders

available for the Russian round, but I keep things easy, sticking with AA 1680. I use 22 grains with all cast bullet weights, Winchester LR primers, achieving just over 2,100 FPS, which is all I am looking for. Accuracy-wise, the 132-grain HPGC from MP Molds was the most accurate, shooting around 1.4" groups at 100 yards. If I could only choose one mold, it would be this one, as the option of solid or HP configuration is as easy as swapping mold pins.

The 142-grain HPGC groups

consistently in the 1.5" range. The Lyman 314440 shoots basically the same, maybe a hair larger. This is the bullet to use where deep penetration is needed. Lastly, the Lee CTL312-1602R bullets stay under 2".

These cast bullet loads provide economical, efficient and viable loads to shoot in the American rifle. These loads will easily take deer-sized game and I look forward to doing so this fall with this combination. After all, we're all brothers in arms.

GUNS

CROSSFIRE

continued from page 65

LaGarde's later statements of what happened. It further appears General Hatcher had only Lagarde's statements to rely on when he invented his relative stopping power theory and he worked from inaccurate information.

In the actual tests, the first of two

over any beef animals and large calibers did so after a few shots, the single animal shot once with a .30 Luger was the only animal that fell. All the others had to be killed in the usual slaughterhouse manner.

Among the information Mr. Day reported was the performance of the .30 Luger: It shot a 92.5 grain bullet at 1,420 fps for 415 ft. lbs. of muzzle energy. The barrel length was not given, but possibly was 4.5". The .30 Luger produced the highest muzzle energy of any cartridges tested.

Marshall Williams

.....

AGREE TO DISAGREE

Your comment (Insider, "Tales of the

Suburban Trapper") in the February issue putting trapping, Joe Biden and Nazis in the same context was a bit over the line, even for you guys. I can usually put up with the liberal jabs you and some of your writers deliver

each month but that was over the line. May I remind you our last president was a liar, cheat and a draft-dodger. I may be a Democrat but I'm none of the above. I'll keep reading your mag but had to vent. The trapping article was a good change of pace except for that comment.

David Buchold

Thanks for writing but sorry — I'm unrepentant. And, judging by poll numbers, a majority of the country agrees with me. I'd say Joe is probably a nice guy, but I do not and cannot support his agenda or job performance so far.

I would also like to note it's wonderful we're allowed to speak our minds publicly and "agree to disagree" in this great country. So, in other words, I disagree with your opinion but of course, I'll utterly defend your right to express it. —BW

Dave later replied and I had to share his response as a reminder on how things should work — "Thanks for the reply, too bad our politicians can't agree to disagree in a civil manner like we did." —BW

GUNS



beef animal shot with the .30 Luger fell 30 seconds after being shot once through the lungs. The bullet penetrated completely through the animal and was lost. Although LaGarde later reported no small calibers knocked

The companies listed have featured advertisements in this issue.
Look to them first when you are ready to make a purchase.

ADVERTISER	PAGE	ADVERTISER	PAGE
Armstrong	11	Kimber Mfg. Inc.	13
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<i>American Handgunner</i>		MTM Case-Gard	65
Subscription	63	Ruger	7
Bravo Company	2	Spartan Blades USA	23
Cimarron Firearms Co.	27	Springfield Armory	76
Colt's Manufacturing Co.	9	Standard Manufacturing Co. LLC	5, 17
DeSantis Holsters	15	Taurus Holdings	19
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seemed prudent. As I started to dial my cell phone, I suddenly realized a dispatch of “man shot on the police firing range” would bring medics, fire department, police and sheriff’s department, soon followed by local and regional media, a host of random “red light chasers” and probably a food truck, marching band and Dog the Bounty Hunter with full camera crew. I really didn’t feel like being the star of such a nine-ring circus so I just loaded up the truck — admittedly very rapidly and haphazardly — and drove myself to the hospital.

DRIVE TO SURVIVE

On the way, I called a friend who was working as the afternoon supervisor on the police department. When I told him of my situation, he was incredulous. “Pull over now and I’ll drive you in!” he exclaimed. In my best John Wayne manner, I said “Naw, it’s just a fl-fl-fl-flesh wound and I’ll meet you at the ER. I’m f-f-f-fine.” I mostly meant it.

We both arrived at the ER at the same time and meeting in the parking lot, I could tell he was impressed with my bloody shirt and rampant machismo, or something analogous.

One enjoyable moment was when the young nursing student at the front door, charged with enforcing COVID mask protocols and temperature checks, blurted out the classic, “Are you okay?”

Well, um, not really, but thanks for asking.

I was officially declared a “GSW,” medical shorthand for “Gunshot Wound” and hustled inside for various tests, but only after I bled a little on the admittance desk. One medical tip — if you encounter a long wait at the ER, try mentioning you’ve been shot. They will move you right to the front of the line just behind the heart attack victims. It made the day go by much quicker than I expected.

As I was quite healthy in the grand scheme of things, it was exciting to witness all the medical drama as the Guest of Honor. I’d have enjoyed it more if not

for the whole hot-lead-in-my-guts thing.

THE DIAGNOSIS

After a couple of hours and a battery of tests, the ER doctor entered the trauma room where my wife and I were practicing our lamentations to happily announce, “Well, today is your lucky day!”

“Pardon me if I don’t share your enthusiasm,” I said curtly.

She went on to explain, after consultation with both the local surgeon and regional trauma experts in nearby Capital City, an operation wasn’t necessary. It turned out a chunk of metal — likely a part of the thick head portion of one shell casing — had entered my abdomen but stopped one millimeter from burrowing into what is technically known as “the guts.” If the piece had entered with just a smidgeon more gusto, I’d have been winging my way south to a Level One trauma center for emergency surgery. I grudgingly went along with her perspective regarding my fate.

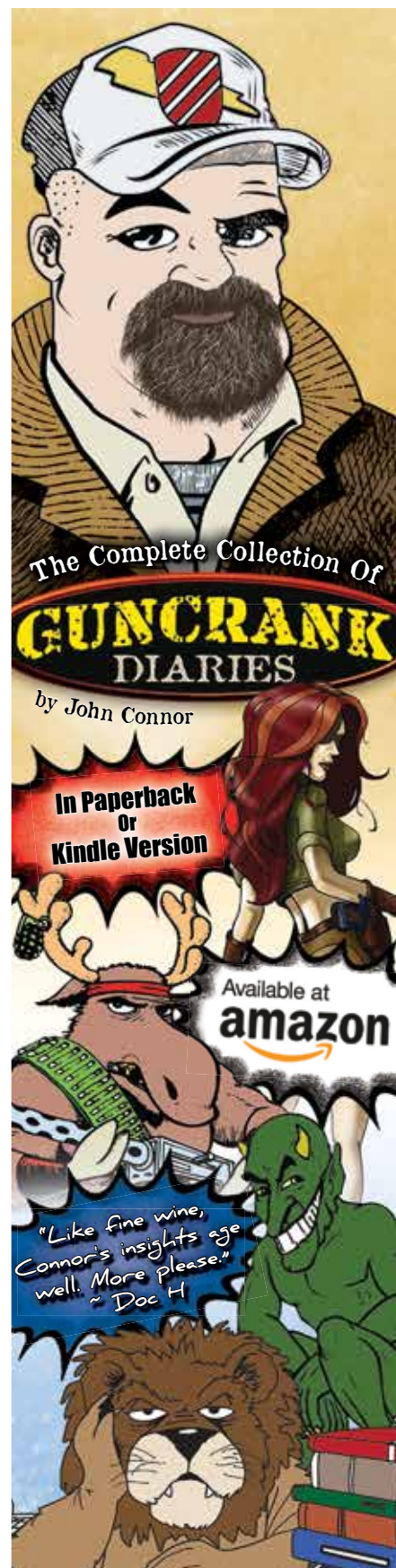
Surprising to me was the fact no treatment was necessary aside from keeping the wound clean and watching for infection. I later discovered, by asking every single doctor of my acquaintance, including a PhD in Crop Science, it was standard procedure to leave shrapnel in place as there is often a greater danger of complications from surgically rooting around than just leaving it alone. Thus, with a new tetanus shot and a butt-full of antibiotics, I went home.

AFTERMATH

I’m fine, though occasionally an odd movement will bring a reminder twinge of one formerly fine spring afternoon. The piece of brass is still there and my doctor tells me it will likely someday surface on its own — an event I simply can’t wait to experience. Physically there are no other after effects, though occasional bouts of hypochondria have me wondering when the brass will suddenly migrate to someplace important and instantly kill me.

At least it gives me something real to worry about beside deadlines and flukes.

GUNS



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GETTING SHOT

I DON'T MEAN A VACCINATION!

Brent T. Wheat

Whenever your workday involves evaluation by two trauma surgeons, you probably should have stayed in bed. Let me explain.

SUNSHINE AND LOLLIPOPS

One day last spring, I pulled into the range and was pleased to see it empty. By virtue of being honorably retired, I have access to our non-public police shooting range whenever the department isn't using the facility. After setting up targets and my portable shooting table, I got the gun-that-shall-remain-nameless from its case. All was ready to test fire the latest "revolutionary" firearm "that will change the industry" — at least this week.

I loaded up a couple of magazines and shoved one into the gun. The sun smiled down, a gentle wind blew and I think a bluebird flew past as I dropped the bolt into battery and shouldered the gun.

Click. Hmm. I immediately ran the bolt and tried again. Click. Growing confounded, I ran the bolt one more time. As my fingers released the operating lever, things got interesting.

As the bolt picked up the next round from the magazine there was a demonstration of common high school physics — two objects cannot physically occupy the same space at the same time.

In this case, the two objects were cartridges. The first had stubbornly remained sitting in the chamber while the newcomer insolently slammed into its rear. The round in the chamber exploded while the second, not wanting to miss out on the fun, likewise detonated.

THE BIG BANG

Instantly I knew something had gone massively wrong. My chest and hands

were numb, my shooting glasses had been knocked askew and my ears were ringing in spite of hearing protection. It was then I noticed several jagged shards of brass sticking out of my forearm.

"Dang it," I thought to myself with a calm I didn't know I possessed. It was immediately apparent I had experienced an out-of-battery detonation, something I had seen before and knew not to be wholly uncommon. "Okay,"



I thought, "it happens. Hitch up your foundation garments, safe the gun and pick the brass out of your arm." No big deal.

Remembering my training from the Cop Shop days, I thought it prudent to inspect myself for other injuries because I've known people who have been shot or seriously injured and didn't even know it at first. I told myself I was being overly dramatic for such a mundane event but performed the self-check anyway.

My stomach felt a little numb but I thought it was just due to the concussion of the not-inconsiderable blast. Rubbing around under my shirt and

feeling no bits of metal or other debris, I nonchalantly thought "Hmmm, I must have spilled my water bottle when this happened."

Then I realized I didn't have a water bottle with me.

In horror, I saw my three left fingers were slicked with bright red blood — my blood, the sweet, sweet precious fluid, the very essence of life. It's one of my most important possessions, something I really don't want to see anywhere outside of a test tube at the doctor's office. Now it was slowly spreading across the front of my khaki shirt. Such things get your attention.

"Well," I thought almost matter-of-factly, "I've been shot in the stomach with a large-caliber bullet." Then the magnitude of my predicament struck me.

DRY MOUTH

As a practicing hypochondriac who is wholly capable of turning a minor gas pain into a fatal case of liver flukes, this realization positively set me over the edge. In a split-second, I *knew* I was dying and the thought made me inexplicably angry rather than upset or afraid.

A few seconds later good sense returned and I got scared spitless.

Fortunately, after a minute or so of panic and hyperventilation, I suddenly remembered what a nameless instructor told me long ago: "If you're worried about how bad you're hurt, you're not hurt that bad." It was strangely calming advice.

I then lifted my shirt and examined the new 3/8" belly button just above the factory original. It was bleeding, but not gushing or spurting so loss of blood — at least externally — wasn't an immediate problem. I had concerns about the damage done to my innards but after a few seconds of studying my pulse rate, breathing and checking for signs of liver flukes, I decided it might be serious but not immediately.

Getting down to business, I knew I needed help and a call to 911

continued on page 73

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