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FEBRUARY 2022, VOL. 68, NUMBER 2, 806TH ISSUE



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EMISSARY

Good looks, great
quality, greater
performance!



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PRINTING PROBLEM

Not sure if I'm the only one but I just sat down to read my December 2021 issue and it's missing pp. 59-66. Love your mag so could you post these missing pages on your web site?

Mike DeNatale

Hi, Mike. Unfortunately, you're not the only one. Something happened with our contract printer and they sent out a batch of magazines that didn't pass quality control. We're sending you a replacement magazine and apologize for the inconvenience. —BW



NEVER GIVE IN

I was deeply concerned about your article "Ham'r Time" (GUNS cover story, November 2021). In our present political climate, I found it destructive to our right of firearm ownership to encourage skirting the law. I thought

I would be reading an article about lawful assembly of an AR. I understand it is lawful to build an 80% receiver but with all the attacks against firearm



ownership, why throw fuel to the fire? The article could have used a regular lower receiver. I am not for registration or the Feds' further snooping,

but I do want to keep my rights and do not want to encourage some overzealous left wing kook — who does not know which end of the tube a round exits — taking away any more freedom!

Larry Pettigrew

Skirting the law? No. There is no "skirting the law" going on here. Period. It's been perfectly legal to build your own firearm (from scratch if you like) in this country since before the founding. This type of logic — voluntarily choosing to avoid things that might upset our enemies — is a truly spectacular way to give away all of our constitutionally protected natural rights on a silver platter.

Why stop there? We also ought to turn in our ammo to the ATF. Using legal ammo might offend someone out there who's hell-bent on ending gun ownership in this country. While we're at it, we need to stop buying and using AR15s. They look scary to our opponents, but maybe if we avoid them, the gun banners will leave us alone.

If you feel building your own firearm is irresponsible, you're entitled to your

continued on page 73



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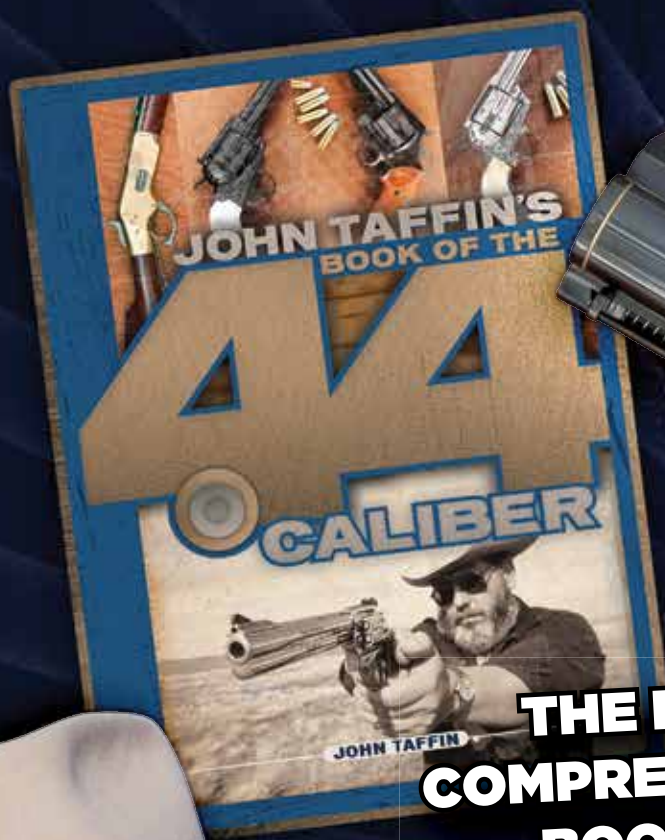
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CALIBER

Beginnings — The Colt 1860 Army .44 (top) with a shorter 5-1/2" version and a true 3" belly gun.

BIG BORE BELLY GUNS

PART 1

KEEP IT CLOSE

John Taffin

Today they are most often known as pocket revolvers or sometimes snub-guns. However, several eons ago in the pre-politically correct days when I was a teenager, they were known as belly guns. This has several meanings such as "easy-to-conceal," "for use at very close distances" and even "shot from the hip or at 'belly' level." For our purposes here we will define BBBG (Big Bore Belly Gun) as a single- or double-action six-gun with a barrel shorter than 4" and chambered in a cartridge more powerful, and with a larger bullet diameter, than the age-old .38 Special.

At mid-century, most belly guns were thought to be 2" .38 Specials such as the Colt Detective Special or the Smith & Wesson Chief's Special. These were guns of choice as backup for peace officers and quite often the main armament of detectives. They also fit well in pocket, purse, backpack, kit bag and hunters often carried them should the chance of a grouse present itself. I have found the Chief's Special to be invaluable for carrying in situations where it was absolutely imperative it not be known I was armed.

BEGINNINGS

Every Western movie, whether "B" or "TV," gives the impression every Western town was filled with men openly carrying firearms. Actually, the opposite was true as many towns had ordinances against the carrying of firearms, so quite often sixguns were carried quite discreetly and out of sight. Walker/Dragoons and the follow-up Colt 1860 Army were not that easy to conceal so gunfighters had to correct the situation.

The Mormon gunfighter and peace officer, Porter Rockwell, may have been one of the early proponents of Big Bore Belly Guns as he often cut back the barrels of Dragoons and 1860 Army .44s to make them easier to conceal and faster to reach if needed.

El Paso Marshall Dallas Stoudenmire also favored an 1860 Army with the barrel cut way back to 2-7/8" and converted to fire .44 cartridges. James Hume of Wells Fargo, who captured Black Bart, also carried a cut-down Colt 1860 .44 as a hideout gun.

When Colt brought out the Single Action Army in 1873, it had a 7-1/2" barrel. Most sixgunners were satisfied with the power afforded even if the Colt was quite large. However, enterprising shooters on both sides of the law decided

they could make improvements. Many examples have been found with the barrels cut back as far as 2" and some even went so far as to remove the barrel altogether. These sixguns were for very up close and personal situations.

It did not take Colt long to start offering Sheriff's or Storekeeper's Models without ejector rod housings and very short barrels. This would continue into the 2nd Generation with the 3" Sheriff's Model .45s and then as the 3rd Generation came along both .45 and .44 examples were offered.

In 1877 Colt brought out their first double-action six-guns with the .38 Long Colt Lightning and .41 Long Colt Thunderer. These were also soon offered without ejector rods and short barrels for easy concealment. Meanwhile Merwin, Hulbert & Co. offered their superbly engineered Pocket Army in .44-40 and in both single- and double-action versions.

RANGER UP

The Texas Rangers in the first half of the century were often quite flamboyant. They definitely dressed the part with brush jacket, fancy boots, a white Stetson and especially took great care in selecting their sidearms. Manuel T. "Lone Wolf" Gonzauillas was such a ranger and he had several sets, pairs of sidearms along with suitable holsters. At times he carried a pair of Smith & Wesson .44 Specials, a pair of .45 ACP 1911s with the front of the trigger guard cutaway and also a pair of Colt Single Actions with the front of the trigger guard removed.

He also went for Big Bore Belly Guns in a big way. A pair of 2"-barreled Colt Single Actions were covered with Indian signs and fitted with grips having inlaid semi-precious stones. He also used a highly customized Colt 1917 .45 ACP with a shortened butt, 2" barrel with ramp front sight and the front of the trigger guard cutaway. He always made the most impressive sight.

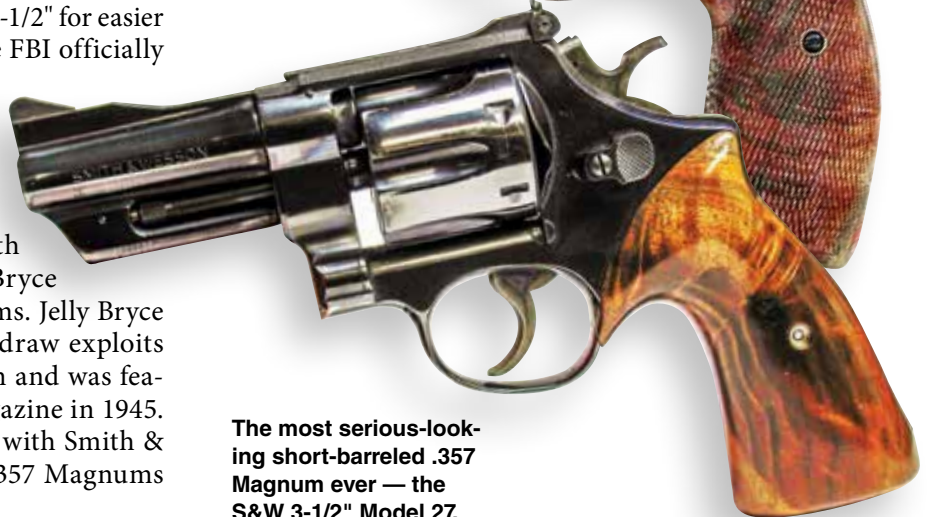
CHANGES

Smith & Wesson changed the face of sixgunning forever in 1935 with the introduction of the original .357 Magnum. The first .357s produced had 8-3/4" barrels and examples were sent to Elmer Keith and J. Edgar Hoover of the FBI. Keith wrote his up in the *American Rifleman* and had the barrel cut back to 6-1/2" for easier handling. It was just about this time the FBI officially began to be armed and the .357 Magnum had the barrel cut back to 3-1/2", even with the ejector rod.

To my sixgunning eyes this is the most serious-looking revolver ever produced. The FBI also went for it in a big way with agents such as Hank Sloan and Jelly Bryce soon carrying 3-1/2" S&W .357 Magnums. Jelly Bryce received a lot of attention for his fast draw exploits with the new short-barrel .357 Magnum and was featured drawing and shooting in *Life* magazine in 1945. Many police departments followed suit with Smith & Wesson providing hundreds of 3-1/2" .357 Magnums



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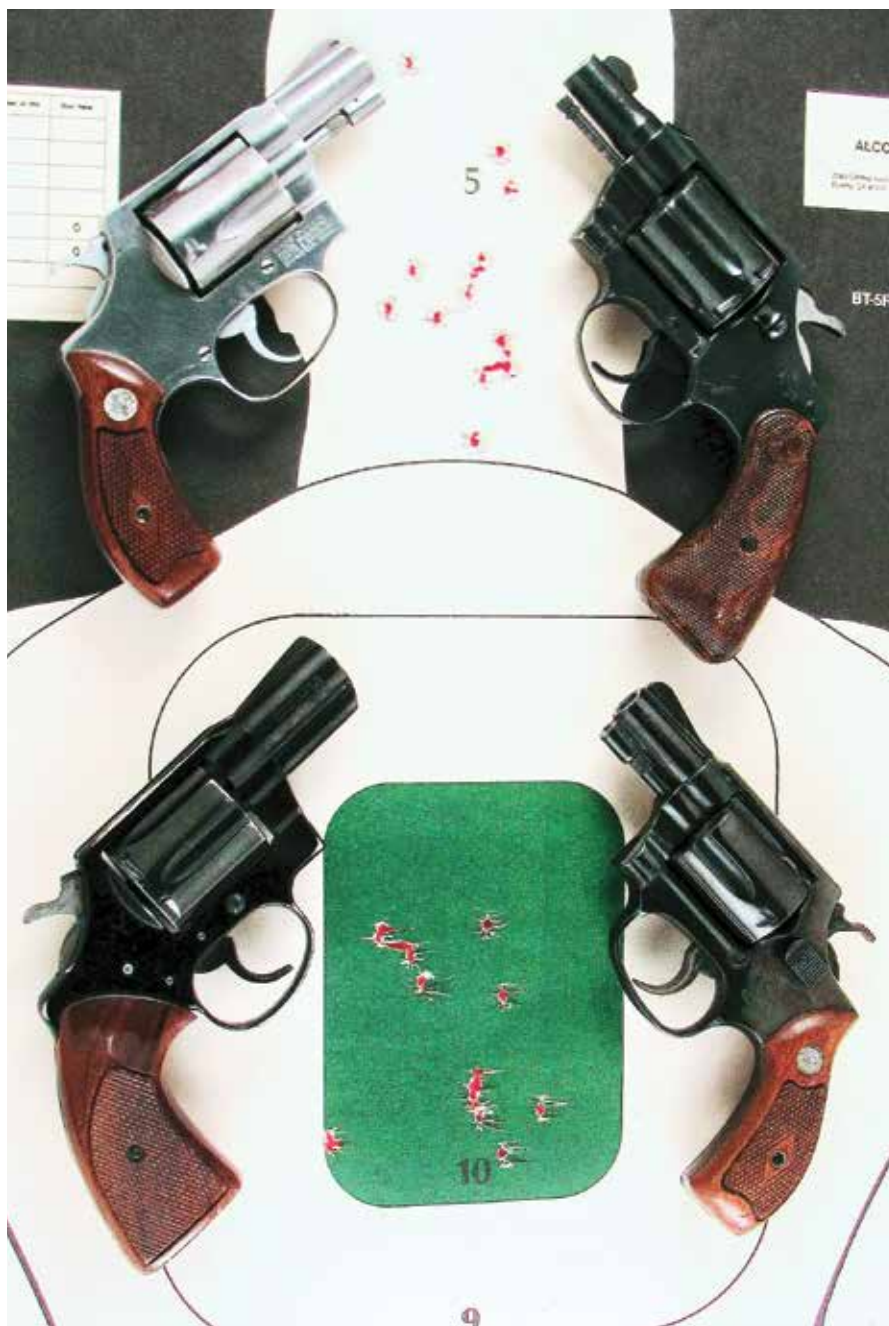
Perhaps the most famous 3-1/2" Magnum was purchased in 1935 by an active-duty lieutenant in Hawaii. Six years later we were at war and the lieutenant was soon to be a general and was easily spotted by his troops as his symbol of leadership was a pair of ivory-stocked sixguns. One was a blued 3-1/2" Smith & Wesson .357 Magnum while the other was a fully engraved, nickel-plated Colt Single Action he had purchased in El Paso in 1916 before accompanying Black

Jack Pershing into Mexico after Pancho Villa.

George S. Patton called the .357 Magnum his "killing gun," however, there is no record of him ever using it in such a way. He did take out two of Villa's officers with his .45 Colt in 1916.

TODAY

Today 3-1/2" .357 Magnums are highly desired by both shooters and collectors. There are three basic categories, namely the original Registered Magnums, the Pre-Model 27 versions,



The most popular belly guns in the 20th century were the S&W Chief's Special and the Colt Detective Special.

“

HE FELT, CORRECTLY, METALLURGY HAD IMPROVED TO THE POINT WHERE THEY COULD MAKE A SMALLER .357 MAGNUM.

and the Model 27s. I have the last two, however, the first version has escaped me and is definitely now too valuable and at too high a price for me to search out.

Chief Border Inspector Bill Jordan began lobbying Smith & Wesson for a lighter .357 Magnum. He felt, correctly, metallurgy had improved to the point where they could make a smaller .357 Magnum. He suggested the Military & Police as the basic platform. Smith & Wesson responded using special heat-treated M&P frames with full-length cylinders to fill out the frame window and a heavy 4" barrel. Bill Jordan called the new "Combat Magnum" the answer to a peace officer's dream.

However, just as with the original long-barreled .357 Magnum, there were shooters wanting the Combat Magnum made easier to conceal. Once again, Smith & Wesson listened and cut the original barrel length of the Combat Magnum from 4" to 2-1/2" and put a round butt on the grip frame. The result in the 1960s was the smallest BBBG available.

For carrying all day, the 4" Combat Magnum cuts about 1/2 lb. off of the weight of the original .357 Magnum and this makes a huge difference at the end of the day. The 2-1/2" version is even better at this. In fact some peace officers began to carry the 2-1/2" Model 19/66 as their backup gun.

GUNS



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

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THE TREND-SETTING DETECTIVE SPECIAL TOO GOOD TO GO AWAY

Massad Ayoob

The still-popular genre of the small-frame snub-nose .38 Special revolver was quantified in 1926 by Colt. The company's savvy ambassador J. Henry Fitzgerald had been customizing Colt revolvers into "Fitz Specials" with short barrels, bobbed hammer spurs, and cutaway

trigger guards. A large police department, said to be Detroit, ordered a bunch of small-frame (D-Frame) Police Positives with 2" barrels (but no other Fitz mods) in 1926 and Colt made this variation standard as the Detective Special. It was on gun dealers' shelves around the country by 1927.

Soon, "Detective Special" had become a generic term for a snub-nose

.38 Special. Most gun experts called it simply "the DS." S&W offered a 2" barrel on their Military & Police, but with a service-sized frame it was at least 5 oz. heavier. The truly compact .38 Special market was owned by the Colt Detective Special until the five-shot J-Frame Chiefs Special was introduced by S&W circa 1950. Colt still kept pace, though — in the same year they introduced the Cobra, the first aluminum-frame revolver, a lightweight version of the Detective Special weighing just under a pound which started a sub-genre of its own.

Smaller than the Detective Special and cheaper, the little J-Frame S&W

“**SOON, 'DETECTIVE SPECIAL' HAD BECOME
A GENERIC TERM FOR A SNUB-NOSE .38 SPECIAL.**”



Mas' earliest personal DS (bottom), a 1930-production gun issued by the NJ State Police, compared to the most classic configuration (top) in nickel and ivory with a Tyler-T Grip adapter.

quickly vaulted to the forefront of popularity in the snub .38 market. However, the Detective Special still had strong fans. There were good reasons.

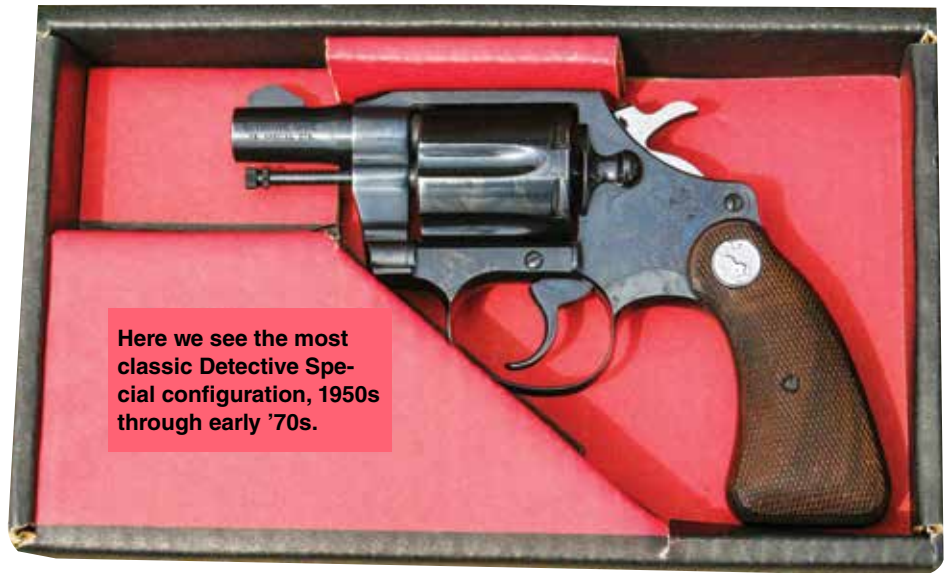
THE COLT ADVANTAGE

Most who paid extra for a snubby Colt were in line with Judge Mills Lane, who said he chose the brand because what he called “Judge Colt” held six rounds and the J-Frame Smith, only five. It was just one cartridge, but in the revolver days it was a 20% advantage and nothing to sneeze at. Some of the more discerning shooters chose it because, at least in its post-WWII generation, it had bigger sights which were much easier to see. The Colt’s longer trigger pull gave it more mechanical advantage and a lighter (albeit two-stage) DA trigger pull. Some aficionados felt they were slightly more accurate than their S&W counterparts due to the Colt’s 1:14” rifling twist and solid cylinder lockup when the hammer fell.

NYPD was a good example. In 1978 Lt. Frank McGee, head of the Firearms & Tactics Unit there, told me nearly 90% of the street cops chose S&W over Colt for their 4” service revolver but some 30% picked the Colt for their 2” backup/off-duty gun. Vern Geberth, head of the Bronx Homicide Task Force and author of the authoritative

text on homicide investigation, carried a DS. The same choice of snub was made by Bill Allard, who accumulated the most gunfight kills on the Stake-out Squad, and Ralph Friedman, the department’s most decorated detective ever who used one or the other of his two Dick Specials in several of his 15 gunfights. When NYPD issued HKS speedloaders, those who’d chosen 4” Smith and 2” Colt were happy to find both revolvers could be fed with the same loaders.

It even found its way into fiction. Richard Prather armed his popular private eye Shell Scott with one. Movie stars from Humphrey Bogart to Glenn Ford wielded Detective Specials on the silver screen.



Here we see the most classic Detective Special configuration, 1950s through early '70s.

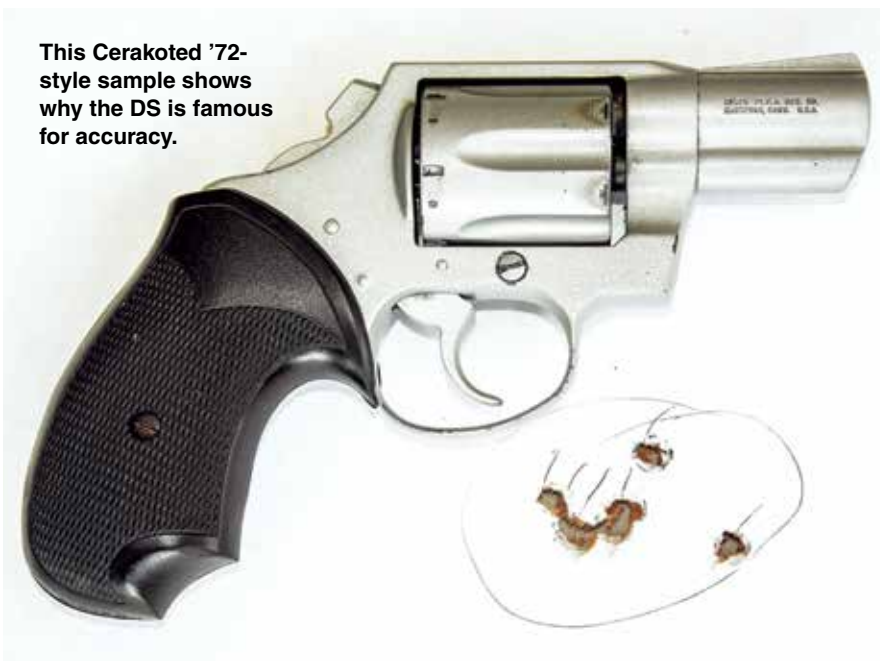
GENERATIONS

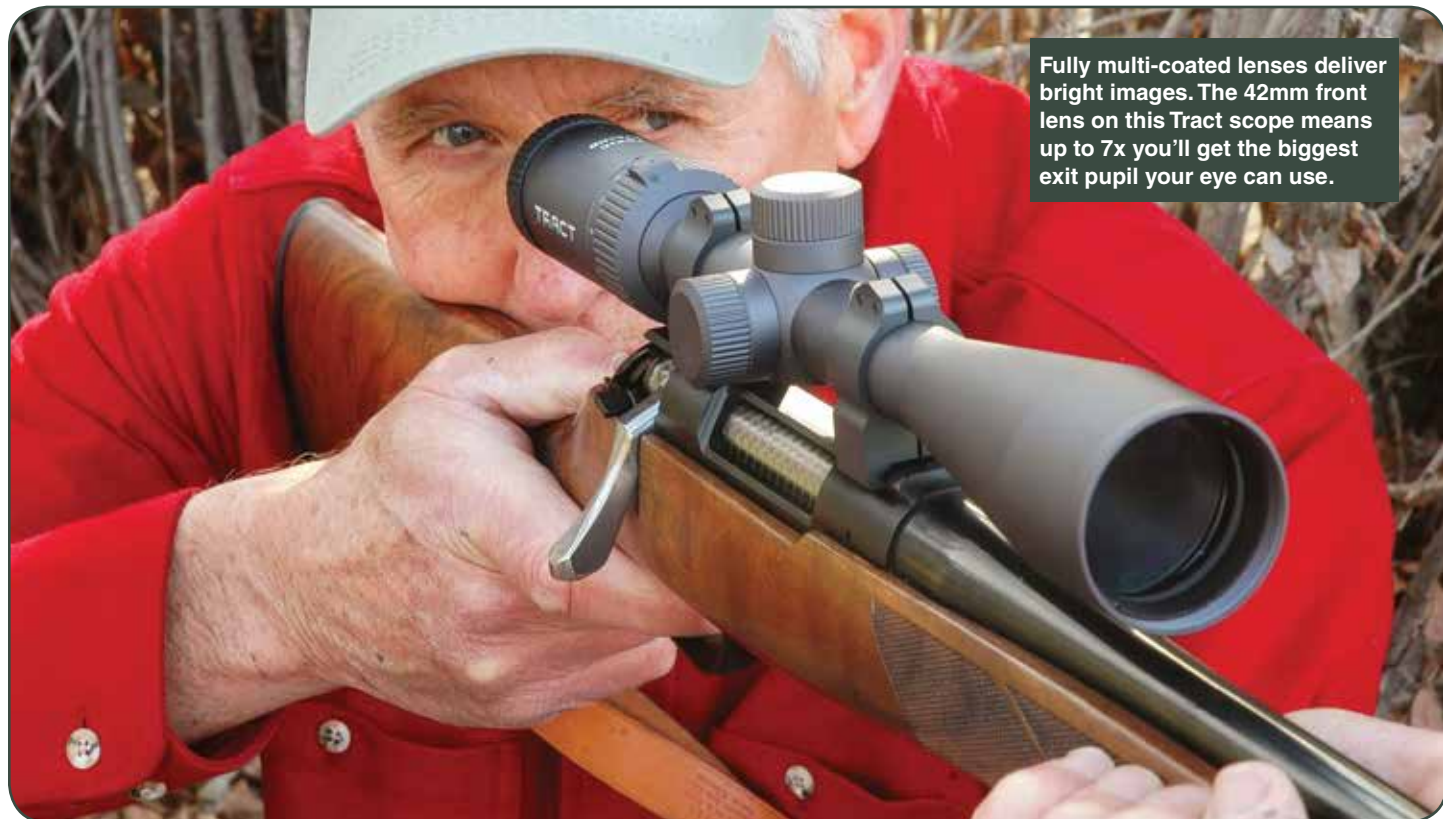
The very first DS had the square butt of the parent Police Positive, but by 1933 Colt had gone to what became an iconic rounded butt configuration. After WWII, the DS got the big, blocky sights that would win favor with serious shooters, and soon a longer ejector rod giving them one more advantage over the competition. Circa 1972, Colt revamped the gun with a heavier barrel which also shrouded the ejector rod. It had a long, sleek ramp of a front sight, but ungrooved, which a lot of us found caused too much glare in daylight shooting. It became popular to have it grooved by gunsmiths like Bill Laughridge and Grant Cunningham, cut to a more “shootable” shape.

Labor-intensive, the Colt finally lost enough competitive ground due largely to its higher price and was discontinued in the mid-1990s. In the late '90s Colt brought out three new stainless versions with new actions: the DS-II, the SF-VI, and — chambered now for .357 — the Magnum Carry. All were short lived but in 2017 Colt brought it back as — confusingly — the Cobra. Not surprisingly, Colt fans call it the “new Cobra” to distinguish it from the classic lightweight version. With a smooth single-stage pull, it also has an enlarged trigger guard, which unlike its predecessors works well in a gloved hand. It is currently available in several variations.

Obviously, the Colt Detective Special was too good a revolver to die. **GUNS**

This Cerakoted '72-style sample shows why the DS is famous for accuracy.





BIG, BRIGHT, SHARP, FLAT AND CLEAN THE KEY ELEMENTS OF A SIGHT PICTURE

Wayne van Zwoll

The bull could have popped up across the canyon, early. But glassing had yielded only a raghorn elk looking in vain for love. We'd plunged into the timber, down a north slope. The sun had broiled away the shadows when we started back up a draw, grappling for handholds of buffalo berry and nettles.

He blasted from an aspen windfall at perhaps 30 feet. "Shoot!" I screeched. The fellow was quick with his 7mm. Scrubby Doug-fir limbs swallowed whale-tail rear tines.

"He filled the scope," gasped my hunter, still heaving from the climb. I'd heard it before, from men who'd managed to miss anyway. But at least one of these two bullets had struck and I told him so.

We scrambled up into rocks still oozing dust and found the bull dead.

My client in that steep Utah gut

proved a scope can deliver very fast aim. Faster, even, than iron sights. No need to align a reticle — just paste it where you want the bullet to go. Because it appears in the same plane as the target, your eyes don't waste time focusing.

Still, the myth scopes slow you down has survived generations who should have dismissed it. And I've seen animals escape hunters who failed to catch aim

with their scopes soon enough. How come?

A scope should deliver a big, bright, sharp image as soon as you cheek the rifle. It's painfully true any hunter whose sight picture doesn't measure up is largely responsible for it.

BIG

Field size is almost exclusively a function of magnification. Want a field generous enough for fast hits in thickets? Carry variable scopes set no higher than 4x. You'll have time to bump it up if a long shot or a small target calls for more power. Just twice in 50 years have I needed more than 6x.

Modest power also affords you less critical eye relief. Take advantage of it by installing the scope well forward, so you must slide your cheek ahead when mounting the rifle offhand. You'll get a full field of view quickly and enough eye relief when sitting and prone to protect your brow.



Adjusting the ocular lens to ensure a sharp reticle doesn't affect the target focus. No need to repeat until your eyes change.



Wayne's Krieger-barreled M70 wears a Leica 2-1/2-15x Amplus 6 scope — a six-times power range!

Moose are tall; you can see them far off. But long shooting is seldom needed. This bull fell at 70 steps.



BRIGHT

All but the least expensive scopes these days feature fully multi-coated lenses. It means every lens surface, inside and out, has been treated with rare earths to enhance light transmission across a range of wavelengths. An uncoated glass surface can lose 4% of light to reflection and refraction. Multiply this by all air-glass interfaces in a scope and you understand the dim images hunters endured before Zeiss used magnesium fluoride to hike light transmission in the 1930s. Insist on fully multi-coated optics!

Brightness also depends on exit pupil, the diameter of the pencil of light reaching your eye. EP is a function of magnification and front (objective) lens diameter in millimeters: $EP=D/M$. The lower the magnification and the bigger the lens, the brighter the image. Your healthy eye dilates to about 7mm on a dark night; figure 6mm in the dimmest shooting light. Old eyes lose their flexibility, further reducing the dilation limit. An EP bigger than your pupil's diameter won't boost brightness. A 3-9x36 scope set at 4x delivers an EP of 9mm. At 6x, the

EP is 6mm — and the image appears just as bright. At 9x, the 4mm EP limits brightness at dawn and dusk, when your eye dilates to a diameter bigger than 4mm.

I've never seen a hunter miss a chance because his scope's power dial was set too low. Legions have muffed opportunities because the dial was cranked up, throttling both light and field of view and in some cases making eye relief so critical the hunter lost time seeing anything through the scope.

SHARP

Sharp sight pictures also begin inside the scope, with top-quality glass, then careful lens finishing. Lens grinding and polishing account for most of the time invested in building a scope. But what you see through those lenses also depends on how you focus them.

Increasingly, hunting scopes wear focus/parallax adjustments. Early on, these were sleeves on the objective bell you indexed to the shot distance to bring the target into sharp relief and nix parallax — the apparent shift of the target behind the reticle if you moved your eye off the scope's optical axis.

Now such adjustment is usually provided in a more convenient dial on the left-hand side of the turret. Hunting scopes without a focus/parallax ring or dial are typically set for sharp focus at 100 or 150 yards.

You can focus a scope's reticle with the eyepiece (ocular housing). Traditionally, this was done by loosening a lock ring and spinning the eyepiece in or out on the fine threads that secured it to the scope tube. Now scopes have "fast-focus" or "helical" eyepieces without a lock ring. Adjustment is quick and easy. Strangely, I hardly ever see a hunter adjust the eyepiece on a new scope or one on a borrowed rifle!

FLAT

Looking at a deer, you perceive depth: the thickness of its body and the more distant background behind the beast. A 3-D perspective is natural. Field curvature induced by a lens or lenses is not. A wide-angle or "fish-eye" lens in a camera crams more height and breadth into the frame than you'd see looking at the field's center with your naked eye. But this peripheral information has a cost: distortion. The center appears thrust at

you; all around it recedes as if the entire field were a globe.

Solution: Keep magnification at 2-1/2x, no matter how much field you gain by dialing lower. A 2-1/2x scope has a field of roughly 40 feet at 100 yards, enough to show you a generous patch of hillside. At 200 yards you'll see most of a herd of elk. At 50-yard jump-shooting distance, you'll pick up a running animal as quickly as with iron sights, assuming you've installed the scope intelligently.

CLEAN

Hewing to a 2-1/2x lower limit, you'll also avoid the distraction of a front sight or suppressor. You can see more of the target with a scope than with iron sights, as the reticle obscures less than does a front bead, much less than an open rear sight. Why erase the advantage by adding muzzle hardware to your field of view. Or festooning the reticle with tentacles? A cluttered sight picture retards aim.

You're smart to use a simple reticle, bold enough to catch your eye in any light but without extraneous lines, bars, dots and tics. These have a place in long-range competition but serve no function under the conditions most game is shot. They drag your eye inside the scope, where it's tasked with deciphering instead of aiming.

Dust, water and scratches on exterior lenses are also clutter, though they're out of focus and often not even apparent as you aim. They also reduce brightness. Hygroscopic lens coatings to bead water are now commonly applied during scope manufacture. Scratch-resistant coatings are more recent. Both help keep your field of view clean and bright. Lens caps make sense if you hunt often in rain or snow. I pocket a Kleenex to dab dust and moisture off glass. A daily spray of lens cleaner, gently dried with a Kleenex in circular swabs, has much to recommend it.

Your hunting scope has more magnification and features than you'll likely use killing game. But what's always in play is what you see when you aim. A field that's big, bright, sharp, flat and clean hikes your odds for a hit. **GUNS**



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THE ESSENTIAL OPTIC



The M1A1 paratrooper Carbine might look cool, but is not nearly as effective as the standard version in practical use.

THE M1 CARBINE A TRUE AMERICAN LEGEND

Denny Hansen

The U.S. Carbine, Caliber .30 M1 — usually referred to as the M1 Carbine or simply .30 Carbine — was adopted by the United States in September 1941.

The first 10 carbines were made in November 1941 as tool room models. Serial numbers 1–5 were manufactured by Inland and numbers 6–10 were made by Winchester. The carbine was the most produced American small arm of World War II and remained in service in the United States from 1942 to 1973 — a service length only exceeded by the M16 family of weapons.

Originally a division of General Motors, Inland Manufacturing made more M1 Carbines than any other manufacturer. Out of approximately 6.5 million M1s, Inland produced 3.5 million. The current Inland Manufacturing facility is located just two

miles away from the original plant in Dayton, Ohio.

VARIANTS

Although the M1 is the mostly frequently encountered version, there is also the M1A1 paratrooper Carbine with folding stock, the select-fire M2 Carbine and the M3 carbine which was an M2 carbine with the M2 infra-



red night sight or “sniperscope.” The M3 did not have iron sights. The sole manufacturer of the M1A1 paratrooper Carbine was Inland.

The last M1 model produced had several improvements over previous models, including: adjustable rear sight instead of the earlier “L” flip sight, Type 3 barrel band incorporating a

bayonet lug and a round bolt versus the earlier flat bolt.

Early models had push-button safeties but on the later versions, a lever replaced the button. The change was made because of reports soldiers were accidentally hitting the push-button mag release when taking off the safety in preparation to fire — not a good thing. I have both types on personal carbines and have no real preference for either type. With the push button, push to the left for “fire” and to the right for “safe.” With the lever, rotate it to the rear for “fire” and straight down for “safe.”

The rear of the stock has a slot cut into it for attaching a sling. The sling is held in place with an oiler; a cylindrical tube, and the screw-on cap has a small dipstick to apply lube.

By contemporary standards, the sights are hard to pick up quickly. But the small aperture on the rear sight offers a very fine sight picture and is capable of good accuracy. The rear sight is adjustable for windage via a knob on the right side. Elevation gradations are set nominally for 100, 200, 250 and 300 yards. The front sight is not adjustable and consists of a 0.086”-wide blade. Both sights are protected by wings.



M1 Carbine is as tough as the granite boulder it's resting on. Robust, reliable and sufficiently accurate, it's a piece of American history.

The most commonly encountered magazine supplied with the carbine is a 15-rounder that does not lock the bolt to the rear when the last shot is fired. I have seen some M1s with an M2 mag catch for use with 30-round "banana clip" magazines. If so equipped, the bolt will lock back after the last shot is fired with the 30-round mag.

A button on the charging handle manually accomplishes locking the bolt to the rear for administrative purposes. When the charging handle is pulled to the rear, push the button and it will lock into a corresponding slot on the receiver. To release, simply pull back on the charging handle and let it go home under spring pressure.

FIELD STRIP

Disassembly of the carbine is easily accomplished. First, loosen the screw on the barrel band, depress the band spring attached to the stock, slide the barrel band forward, and lift off the upper handguard. Lift the barreled action out of the stock.

Push out the pin at the front of the trigger guard from left to right and slide the trigger group rearward off the frame. Remove the recoil spring and guide by pulling it back and lift it out of the receiver. To remove the operating slide, line up the slide with the two notches on the barrel and receiver and rotate it out. The bolt can now be removed. No further disassembly is normally needed or recommended.

Reassemble in reverse order. It actually takes more time to read this than it takes to field strip the carbine.

Like most firearms of the era, the barrel must be cleaned from the muzzle. Take care not to damage the rifling at the front of the barrel.

FEEDING THE M1

Normally used with 110-grain FMJ ammo for reliability, I have had excellent performance using Hornady 110-grain FTX Critical Defense. I also cast 115-grain bullets (Lyman mold # 311359) with a gas-check sized to .308 diameter.

Because the .30 Carbine headspaces on the case mouth, the length of the case is critical for reloaders as the



Top carbine (above) has M2 mag catch for use with 30-round magazines and will hold the bolt back after last shot is fired. M1 on top (below) uses button-type safety. A lever safety replaced the button on later versions. Both are shown in the "safe" position.



tapered case will stretch when resizing. Proper trim length is 1.280" to ensure good function.

SUMMARY

Whether for a collector or shooter, the M1 Carbine is a light, fast-handling gun. It can put meat on the table or be used for self-defense with equal aplomb. Above all, it's a genuine piece of American history.

The Diamond Anniversary of the M1 Carbine was 10 years ago, and it will likely still be with us for its Centennial Anniversary.

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AFRICA RIFLES

TIPS FOR THE TRIP

Dave Anderson

For many hunters Africa has been a “one of these days” destination. The current pandemic with its restrictions on travel mean we don’t — at least I don’t — take such things for granted. The wise proverb “it’s later than you think” has never seemed so appropriate. When and if travel becomes routine again, do the things you always planned to do. If hunting in Africa is one of them, a few reminiscences may help.

WATCH ME

The first head of African game I shot was a springbok. Professional hunter (PH) Naftali Amvolongo and I stalked to within about 60 yards, and I shot from the sitting position. I lost the scope image for an instant as the rifle recoiled

but with my left eye I saw it fall in its tracks. As we got up to it I made some remark about how quickly the springbok had dropped at the shot.

Naftali just smiled. “I wasn’t watching the springbok. I was watching you. You kept both eyes open when you shot. You reloaded right away, ready to shoot again if you had to. You hit him (he indicated the bullet strike on the shoulder) right where I wanted. I’m very happy.”

On a guided hunt the first shots you fire will not be at game but at a target. The ostensible reason — and it is important — is to ensure the rifles are sighted in. There is another reason, just as important to the outfitter and guide. They want to see if you can handle a rifle safely and get a sense of how well you handle and shoot it. They might

not be blatantly obvious about it but they are watching closely from the time you open the rifle case.

STAY SAFE

The safety aspect is just common sense. The guide doesn’t want you to shoot him, or his tracker or driver. He doesn’t want you to shoot yourself either but that’s a bit further down his list of worries. I carry my rifle with magazine loaded, chamber empty. I load the magazine the first day at the range, top it off as needed and don’t unload until it is time to pack the rifle away for the trip home.

The PH’s word is law on whether or not to shoot; and when. I would never chamber a cartridge until the PH gave the go-ahead. I remember setting the rifle on shooting sticks and chambering a round but the game, a blesbok I think, stepped partly behind a tree. While waiting for it to reappear I set the safety on my Ruger 77, probably the only time I used the safety



Gemsbok (oryx) are courageous animals and have killed even lions in battle. They have a deserved reputation for being hard to kill. This one was taken with one shot at 300+ yards with .300 Win. Mag. and Black Hills 180-grain Barnes TSX.



Hunting in Namibia means covering a lot of big open country. Although game can generally be stalked to within 200 yards, Dave (above) likes a flat-shooting cartridge in case a 300+ yard shot is necessary. Another springbok (below) taken with Dave's favorite Weatherby Ultra Lightweight in .257 Weatherby with Weatherby factory loads and a Leupold 4.5-14 x 40.



Dave with professional hunter (PH) Naftali Amvolongo and a springbok, the first game Dave shot in Africa. Not a record book trophy but a good representative male taken with a Ruger 77 .300 Win. Mag.

in Africa. Maybe it was an excess of caution, but who knows, I could have had a heart or panic attack from the excitement and dropped the rifle. Better safe than sorry.

Actually the strict rules from years of handgun practical shooting competition have become ingrained. Muzzle control is monitored by range officers. Any laxness in muzzle control, even during a fast-moving stage of fire, results in immediate disqualification. Regardless of whether you compete or not, practice muzzle control until it becomes a subconscious skill.

At a match before a firearm leaves the line, it will be viewed by both the shooter and the range officer to ensure it is unloaded, the idea being two sets of eyes are better than one. When

returning to the truck after a walk, I would always have someone confirm the chamber was empty before sliding the rifle back in its scabbard. I remember the PH liked the idea and planned to make it a practice with future clients.

THE BIG DISCUSSION

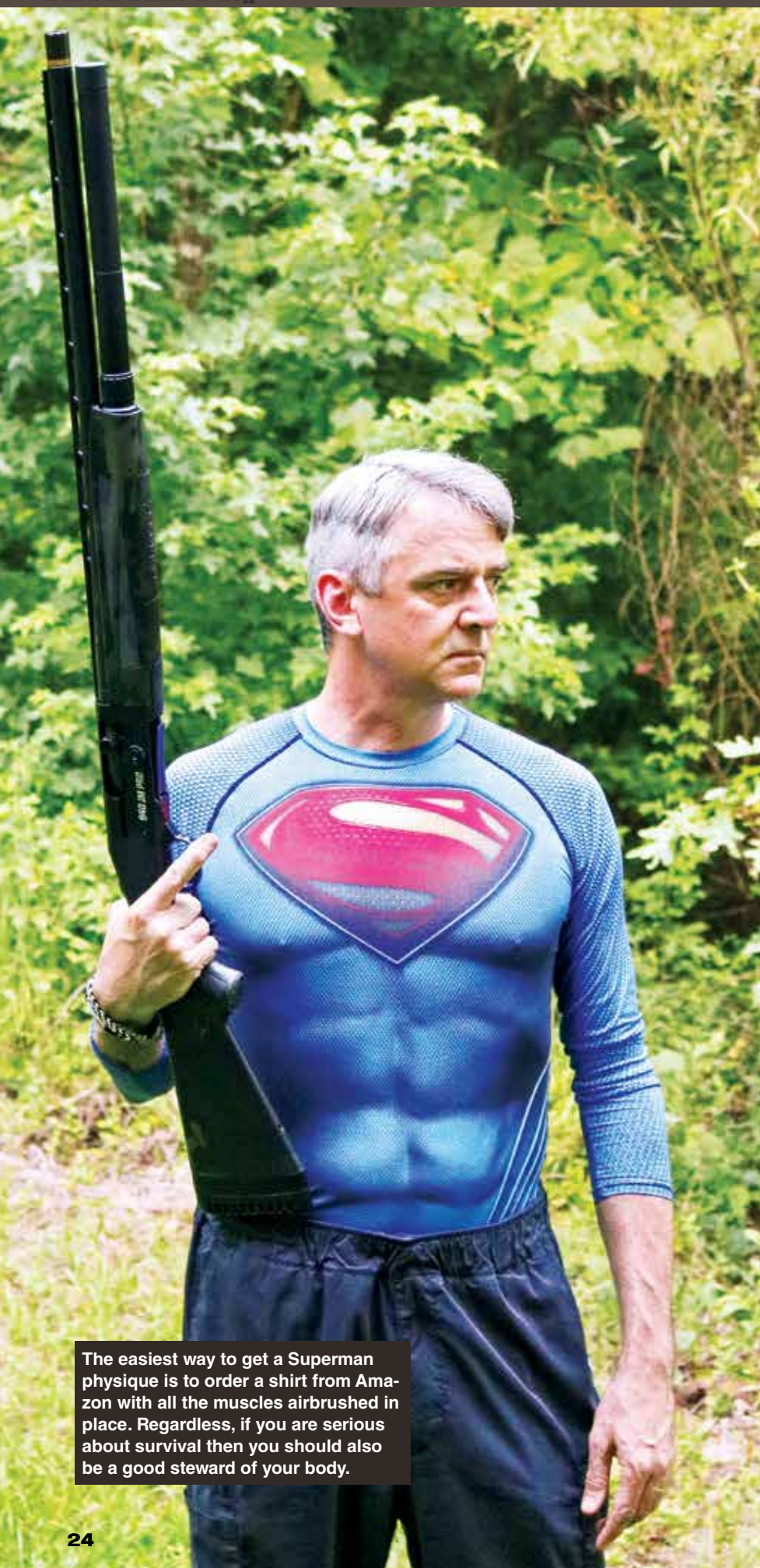
Cartridges for African plains game is an endless topic. PHs in my experience don't care much about cartridges. They do care a great deal about bullets. They prefer to see their clients using tough, heavy-for-caliber bullets that won't blow up on the surface and which usually provide an exit hole. Personally I've shot most of my plains game with a .300 Win. Mag. using Black Hills factory ammo loaded with

Barnes TSX bullets and have seldom needed more than one shot.

Several PHs have told me they see more problems with too much gun than too little. One PH said when a client shows up with something like a .416 he knows he is in for trouble. For big and dangerous game, yes, but not for plains game where you may be firing two or three shots a day. Even if the client doesn't flinch on day one, he probably will by day three.

What they recommend is a .30-'06, .308, 7mm or .300 Mag. A PH told me the best shooting he had ever seen was by a client using a 7mm-08 Rem. If I was going back tomorrow I'd take my Brno ZG 47 in 7x57 Mauser, although I reserve the right to change my mind!

GUNS



The easiest way to get a Superman physique is to order a shirt from Amazon with all the muscles airbrushed in place. Regardless, if you are serious about survival then you should also be a good steward of your body.

SMOKING IS VERY BAD FOR YOU ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU'RE THE ONE ON FIRE!

Will Dabbs, MD

If you care enough to spend your hard-earned money on such a rarefied tome as this magazine, you obviously have given at least some thought to the concept of self-reliance and personal defense. We fret endlessly over carry gear, sighting systems and, stopping power. To be prepared for a defensive encounter, it behooves us also to invest a little thought in maintaining this remarkable human machine.

The human body is the most extraordinary mechanical contrivance ever devised. It metabolizes, reasons, avoids danger, produces art, builds stuff, tears things up and procreates. Like any machine, however, to operate at peak efficiency the human body requires regular maintenance.

They told us in medical school about 85% of what determines how healthy we are later in life is established at the moment of conception, so you should choose your parents carefully. While genetics do play an undeniably large role, there yet remains a great deal of life over which we have quite a bit of control. Most of this is made manifest in our lifestyle choices.

MAKE THE SCAVENGERS WORK FOR IT

Aging is inevitable. Your telomeres shorten, your joints degrade, your eyesight weakens and stuff you once took for granted no longer operates at peak efficiency. However, that doesn't mean you have to just give up and die.

Regular exercise can take many forms. Uncle Sam saw to it I can no



longer run. Jumping out of airplanes and 10k ruck runs in boots took their inevitable toll. However, my bride and I walk for an hour a day five days a week. It's easy on the knees and helps keep the heart and lungs in tune. It's also great RMT (Relationship Maintenance Time). We solve quite a few problems while out enjoying the Mississippi sunshine.

Don't eat so much garbage. Sometimes it seems two-thirds of my professional life is spent addressing self-inflicted wounds. There are legitimate endocrinological problems that promote obesity but not many. Most of it is a basic lack of personal discipline. Replace food with exercise and set modest, easy-to-reach goals. A pound a week is a solid sustainable accomplishment. A year later there's 50 lbs. less of you. If you can't do it on your own, go see your doctor.

THE APEX PREDATOR

We recently broke 350,000 COVID deaths in America. SARS-CoV-2 was sufficient to trash the economy of the entire planet. During that same period we lost 480,000 Americans to cigarettes, and nobody cares. The Left wants to shred the U.S. Constitution over a dozen or so black rifle fatalities, but cigarettes kill more Americans in a year than we lost in all of WWII and they really can't be bothered.

Lung cancer, heart disease and diabetes complications are the major players in my experience. However,

Many don't think twice about dropping a holy fortune on some bit of survival gear (above) or other but Will notes if we're serious about self-reliance, we should invest comparable effort in keeping our human machine fit and in tune. Will doesn't smoke but is a great fan of Zippo lighters (below) and always carries one when venturing far afield. Key safety tip: Don't try to refuel in the middle of your commute!



today I'll give you another reason not to smoke. You don't want to catch on fire and be thrown from a speeding car.

'TWAS A DARK AND STORMY NIGHT ...

Our hero presented to the busy urban emergency department where I lost my youthful innocence. He was badly burned over his lap, chest, arms, hands and face. He was also broken absolutely to pieces. He looked as though he had run through some kind of machine. Surprisingly, he was both conscious and lucid. My first questions was, "Wow. What happened to you?"

He had been driving down the Interstate alone when he retrieved a Marlboro along with his trusty Zippo. Try as he may, he couldn't get the lighter to perform. As nicotine dependence is one of the most powerful physiological addictions extant, he was in no mood to wait until he reached his destination. He therefore retrieved his bottle of Ronsonol lighter fluid and proceeded to recharge his Zippo enroute while driving with his knee.

This is a pretty high performance task and the traffic was thick, so he naturally spilled the volatile stuff everywhere. When he subsequently went to activate his cigarette he quite unexpectedly set himself alight. Stuck inside a speeding car and now fully conflagrated he did what any reasonable person might do under similar circumstances — he opened the door and leapt into the ether.

It's honestly a miracle the poor guy survived. The violence of his ejection did thankfully extinguish the flames though at great cost to his person. But for the grace of God he did not spill his brains on the asphalt or end up underneath a semi-truck. There's no telling what became of the guy's flaming car.

So plan well, prepare thoroughly and train hard. Life can be pretty relentless at times, and it behooves us all to face its many manifest challenges soberly. Above all else, however, just don't smoke. Otherwise you might find yourself bouncing along the Interstate on fire.

GUNS

CASE HARDENING REDUX MAKING A COLT SAA GREAT AGAIN

Mike “Duke” Venturino • Photos: Yvonne Venturino

Having owned many hundred firearms over the years, I’ve never felt a need to have any refinished. Honest wear doesn’t bother me so long as guns’ bores are bright and mechanical function is correct. Damage from neglect is a different matter. I always avoid the latter while eagerly snapping up the former.

THE PRIZE

A few months back I encountered a Colt SAA that called for an exception to my rule. Back about the turn of the current century, Colt again offered .32-20 as a caliber option with the 3rd Generation Single Action Army. The move was obviously spurred by the immense popularity of cowboy action competition. Evidently, the new .32-20s didn’t

sell all that well because after a few years Colt quietly dropped .32-20 again.

All this said, try to find one! I have only seen a few for sale on Internet sites and had never actually viewed one personally. My hankering was for a .32-20 SAA, one with a 7-1/2" barrel length, which seems to be the rarest of all. I finally encountered one listed in a classified ad on an Internet forum.

It was just what I wanted except for one wart. Its owner said when he received it, the color case hardened frame was covered in light surface rust. Leaving it this way would eventually result in pitting. The only option was to remove the rust with a chemical that also removed the frames’ colors. I don’t blame the gent at all because the rest of the SAA was pristine. Furthermore, he

had it priced correspondingly low due to its frame now being gray instead of attractively colored.

It’s a little-known fact certain chemicals can remove the colors of color case hardened steel without actually affecting the steel’s hardness. The various lead removing cloths sold by several companies warn about rubbing them on color case hardened parts. Even consistent exposure to sunlight can fade color case hardening.

My mindset was thus — I’d buy the Colt .32-20 and shoot it plenty to ascertain whether it was suitably accurate. Then, I’d decide to move it on or keep it. “Suitably accurate” wasn’t the word for this SAA .32-20. It shoots like a laser beam! My decision then was to leave it be or have it recolor case hardened. I finally voted for the latter. This SAA has Colt’s beautiful Royal Blue on the



Duke’s 3rd Generation .32-20 came with its original frame coloring removed by a previous owner due to light surface rust.

Duke’s 3rd Generation .32-20 after it was re-color case hardened by Clear Creek Armory. Note also color case hardened hammer and fancy walnut one-piece style grips.



barrel, cylinder, ejector rod housing and grip frame. All parts exhibit fine quality fit and polishing. It deserved to look good again.

This is where my friend, Bill Fuchs, doing business as Clear Creek Armory in Ten Sleep, Wyo. enters the story. I had Bill do some one-piece style grips for me along with other SAA repair work in 2020. Bill not only makes grips and does repairs, he can also do full restorations and custom modifications. Naturally it includes color case hardening. After determining this .32-20 was a keeper, I sent it to Ten Sleep.

PROCESSING

There are two basic methods of applying coloring to rifle and handgun parts. One is done by a chemical process. For instance, the replicas coming from Italy and Vaqueros from Ruger have this finish. Then there is true color case hardening in which parts are packed in bone meal, baked at high temperature and then quenched in distilled water. I've watched it done and it's quite an



Close up of Duke's 3rd Generation Colt SAA .32-20 (above) with its new color case hardening. Close up of the same gun (below) with its frame colors removed.



involved process. An experienced eye can discern the two types of coloring at a glance. Incidentally, using the bone meal process means parts and frames must be held in fixtures. Otherwise the high temperatures can cause warping.

Clear Creek Armory uses the bone meal process. When I sent the .32-20 Colt to Bill I also asked for him to color case harden the hammer. Colt did this on blued/color case hardened SAAs until near the end of 1st Generation production. Afterwards they just brightly polished both sides of the hammers. I've never known any SAA lover who doesn't prefer color case hardened hammers.

Bill Fuchs is nothing if not a considerate man. Knowing my affection for fancy wood grips he had saved a piece of exquisite walnut just for me. With fancy walnut one-piece grips added to the now attractively colored hammer and frame, my formerly dingy Colt .32-20 is now a fine shooting show-piece. I had Yvonne take before and after photos so you readers can see for yourselves.

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.35 REM. CAST BULLETS FOR LEVERS

GAS CHECK IS KEY

John Taffin

Leverguns are still my favorite rifles and my favorite leverguns are Trapper Models. Trappers are leverguns with a shorter than normal barrel length, usually 16-1/4". At one time Marlin and Winchester both offered any barrel length within reason the customer wanted and there are pictures in the Brophy book on Marlins of .44-40s with both 12" and 15" barrels. Today, rifle barrels less than 16" are regulated by the federal government and require a special license.

MICRO PROBLEMS

All the .35 Rem.-chambered Marlins I have ever experienced have Micro-Groove barrels and this can sometimes be a problem with cast bullets. There are several factors when it comes to using cast bullets, including the hardness of the alloy, the muzzle velocity and most assuredly whether or not it is a gas-check bullet. Several years ago I was talking to my retired gunsmith friend, Bob Baer, and he was saying how Micro-Groove barrels just would not shoot cast bullets. Bob has produced many custom Ruger Single Actions and Marlin Leverguns.

I didn't say anything about his comment concerning cast bullets, I simply shot a target and sent it to him. He called immediately when he received it. "How did you do this?" The target was three bullets virtually in the same hole shot at 50 yards. I mentioned the three things necessary to get similar results. This particular Marlin, a .444, uses a gas-check bullet weighing 300 grains and driven to a muzzle velocity of 2,000 fps.

The *Oxford Dictionary* spends no little space to define the word frustration. When it comes to cast bullets in rifles, frustration can be defined in two words, namely Micro-Groove. This can easily be illustrated with the results from shooting one load through three

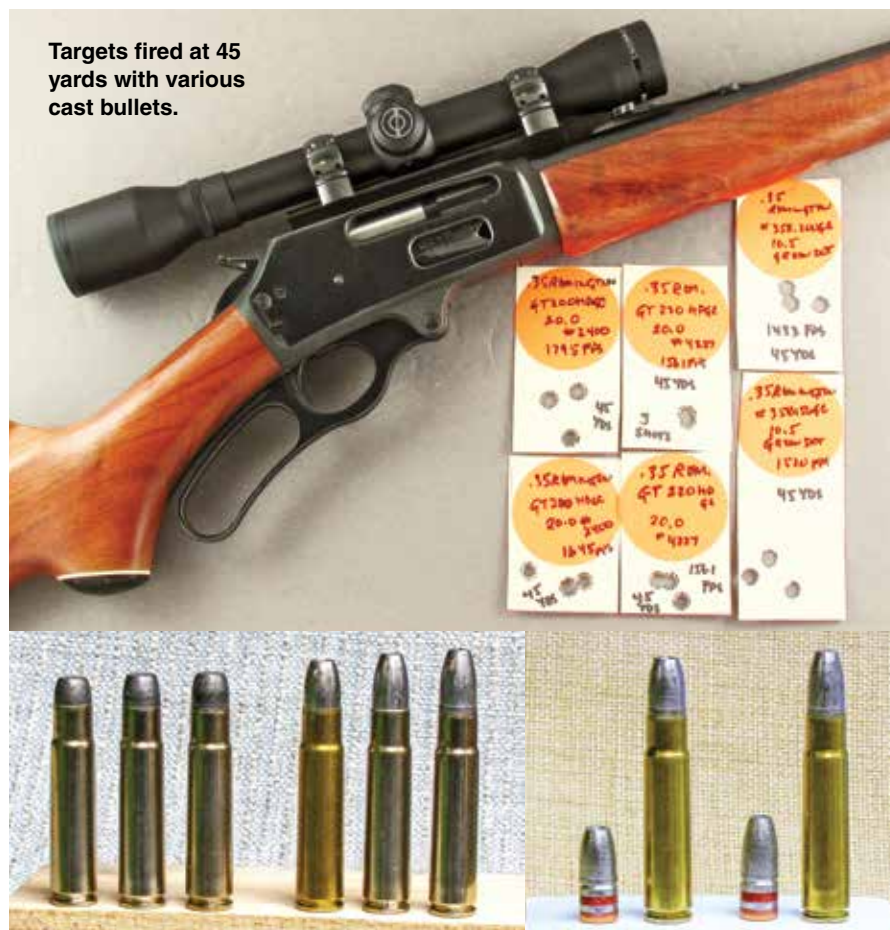
different Marlin .35 Remington leverguns, all with Micro-Groove barrels. I used the same bullet, same brass, same powder charge and same primer for all the loads used.

With my pistol-gripped 20" Marlin fitted with a 4x scope, this particular load put three shots in 1-5/8" at 100 yards. Switching to my Trapper Marlin with a Williams Receiver Sight, I used the same load to put three shots in 1-1/4" at 40 yards. However, when I tried my third Marlin, which has a 20" barrel and fitted with a Lyman Receiver Sight, I got keyholes, bullets that hit the target sideways, at 45

yards. Same loads, same style rifles, but drastically different results.

RELOADING

Reloading cast bullets in the .35 Remington is accomplished pretty much the same way as I do with jacketed bullets, but I double the steps by adding two special Lee dies to my Lee .35 Remington dies. I first use the Lee Universal Expanding Die to open the case mouth to easily accept cast bullets. This prevents shaving of lead as the bullets are seated. Bullets are seated with the standard seating die, however, it is backed off to avoid crimping. Once the bullets have all been seated over the proper powder charge, I then use the Lee Factory Crimp Die. This is a Collet die and squeezes in with four sections rather than one circular crimper. It is very easy to set and well worth the extra time and effort to reload cartridges.



Experimenting with overall cartridge length using dummy rounds (left) will help to find the proper length for feeding and chambering in the Marlin .35 Remington. GT Bullets (right) offers hollowpoint gas check bullets in both 200- and 220-grain weights.



Green Dot and Red Dot are used for accurate easy shooting loads (above) using Lyman's #358156 GC, CPBC 187WSFNGC and Oregon Trails 180 FN. Accurate #5744 works well using cast bullets (below) in the .35 Remington. Notice the Lee Universal Expanding Die and Factory Crimp Die.



Bullets of choice include the Lyman #358156 GC, NEI #358.200 GC, CPBC 187-grain WFNGC and two gas-checked hollowpoint from GT Bullets weighing 200 and 220 grains. Before loading actual rounds I make up dummy rounds to make sure they will feed through the action and chamber. It is often necessary to experiment with overall length as some bullets seated in the crimping groove will not chamber. Powders of choice for using cast bullets include Alliant's #2400, Hodgdon's IMR 4227, Accurate #5744, Accurate #2015 and for milder loads Alliant's Red Dot and Green Dot.

My Custom Trapper .35 Rem. is mostly shot at distances of 50 yards or less. This is a gun designed for relatively up close hunting in heavy brush or timber and is perfectly suited for deer, feral pigs, black bear and at reasonable ranges, will certainly handle elk. I have long used RCBS .38 cast bullets starting back in the late 1970s in Long-Range Silhouetting. Their #35-180 FNGC Silhouette was specifically designed for the .357 Magnum and .357 Maximum.

Loaded over 20 grains of #2400 results in a muzzle velocity of 1,770 fps and a 3/4" group for three shots at 45 yards. The heavier RCBS #38-200 FNGC I believe was originally designed for the .35 Remington. Loaded over the same charge of 20 grains of #2400 results in 1,740 fps and three shots in 1-1/8". Either of these loads would be fine for close-range hunting. Another bullet that does well with this same powder charge is the GT Bullets HPGC. I use both the 200- and 220-grain bullets for muzzle velocities of 1,660 fps and 1,585 fps respectively for groups right at 1".

The Lyman #358156GC was originally designed by Ray Thompson in the 1950s and remains probably the best standard-weight cast bullet for use in .357 Magnum sixguns. Loading it in .35 Remington brass over 10.5 grains of Green Dot yields just under an easy-shooting 1,500 fps with groups well under 1".

GETTING LONGER

Switching to the 20" .35 Remington Marlin and shooting at 100 yards show excellent performance with the GT Bullets. Both the 200- and 220-grain HPGCs loaded over 20.0 grains of #4227 yields very easy shooting muzzle velocities of 1,600 fps and 1,560 fps and groups right at 1-1/2" for three shots. At 50 yards using the same rifle it is a rare load that doesn't stay well under 1". This includes the RCBS #35-200FNGC with 20.0 grains of #2400 and a muzzle velocity of 1,775 fps; RCBS #38-180 FNGC, 20.0 grains of #2400, 1,755 fps; GT200 GCHP and 220 GCHP over 20.0 grains of #2400 for 1,750 fps and 1,800 fps respectively. My most accurate load has proven to be the 187 CPBC (Cast Performance Bullet Company) over 30.0 grains of Accurate #2015 for 1,725 fps.

Cast bullets in the .35 Remington can give some very enjoyable shooting and starting with gas-check bullets will avoid a lot of problems. You should always check the overall length needed to both feed through the action and chamber before loading up a large batch of ammunition. With any of these cast bullet loads, both the rifles and I will last a lot longer.

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THE .30 LUGER

THE ORIGINAL “HOT NUMBER” FOR THE *PISTOLE PARABELLUM*

Payton Miller

When it comes to the absolute embodiment of cool, Germany's Luger has been at the top of the heap since its adoption. It's been around for 123 years, yet it still manages to somehow look futuristic. The *Pistole Parabellum*, as far as the German Army was concerned, became the 9mm Pistole 08. As such, it held the unofficial title of “Most Prized Souvenir” throughout two world wars.

It's not hard to figure why. First there was the beautiful, hand-fitted workmanship married to an artillery-strong toggle-link action. The term “artillery-strong” is only slightly an exaggeration. In a 1969 article in *Guns & Ammo* by Hans Tanner (“The Fabulous Luger”), it's described like this:

“The Luger action is of particular ingenuity and tremendous strength. It was borrowed from the concept of Sir Hiram Maxim ... The essential principle of the Maxim-Borchardt-Luger action is the toggle lock or ‘knee-joint.’ This is composed of three longitudinal elements in line, jointed so that when in line they resist thrust in compression, but when deliberately forced out of line they permit easy longitudinal movement.”

Of course, all this beauty and workmanship translated to increased production time and money, which was a major factor in the eventual development and adoption of the far less sexy — but undeniably less-expensive to manufacture — Walther P-38 just in time for WWII.

BY THE NUMBERS

Then there was the cartridge factor. Although most shooters today reflexively associate Georg Luger's classic sidearm with the now world-standard 9x19, things didn't start out that way. The 9mm Parabellum was a high velocity number by pistol standards, but it

was the earlier .30 (or 7.65) iteration setting the commercial market on fire prior to The War to End All Wars. The .30 was potent indeed, although heavier and a couple hundred fps slower than the 7.63 Mauser — but in a sleeker, sexier, more commercially appealing platform. Yes, of course the C96 “Broomhandle” is a marvelous artifact, still futuristic and Buck Rogers-y after all these decades, but the Luger was ... well, The Luger.

Our particular .30 specimen was a product of DWM and featured a 4" barrel. It's owned by our shooting buddy John Wightman, who may not be the

embodiment of an obsessive Luger fanatic but who picked up a lot of neat stuff as a kid and — more importantly — never got rid of any of it. All totaled, DWM made nearly 1 million Lugers, or about 38% of 'em.

Generally speaking, collectors usually rate fit and finish of DWM-manufactured guns between Mauser and Erfurt but, such ratings are — to my awestruck eyes — pretty meaningless. Lugers of any source or vintage have one thing in common: Up to 125 years after the fact, they still seem sleek and timeless, even today. If ever any pistol deserves the term “classic,” it's this one.

.30 CALIBER COOL

Here's a pretty concise rundown on the .30 Luger courtesy of the 2006 11th Edition of *Cartridges of the World* by Frank Barnes (edited by Stan Skinner):

“Introduced in 1900 by Deutsche Waffen und Munitionsfabriken, the



At 25 yards, the DWM .30 — despite V-notch period sights — delivered a nice 5-shot group.



The well-cared for pistol has weathered the years better than the ammo! The Luger's action is "hell for stout," although the V-notch rear sight (below) can be problematic for older eyes.

7.65mm was designed by Georg Luger for the Luger Automatic pistol. The cartridge is still used chiefly for the Luger pistol although some SIG, Beretta, Browning and Walther P-38 pistols are chambered for this round. It was adopted as standard issue by the Swiss, Brazilian, Bulgarian and Portuguese issue but none of them currently for frontline service.

"General comments: This is another bottlenecked rimless cartridge similar to the .30 Mauser but shorter and not as powerful. It is not noted for great stopping power because of the small-diameter, lightweight full-jacketed bullet. It is used for rabbits and the like, provided the bullets are properly placed. The only manufacturer still offering this cartridge is Winchester. Bullet diameter is 0.308".

All Lugers are pricey but those in .30 caliber are considerably more so. Back in 1982, Interarms was bringing in a new commercial .30 from Mauser called "The Parabellum" in 4" and 6" trim based on the old Swiss-pattern American Eagle and packed in a velvet-lined presentation case. The \$625

MSRP back then sounds like a stupendous bargain today.

TALE OF THE TAPE

Shooting our .30 specimen was a delight. I've been hearing guys complain about the trigger pull on Lugers for most of my adult life, but this one — at a rela-

limited. We had some 1940s-era military surplus and some Winchester/Western commercial stuff purchased in the late 1980s. Both featured the usual 93-grain FMJ projectile. The military stuff averaged 1,107 fps with an extreme spread of just under 100 fps. The Winchester stuff was a bit hotter at 1,205 fps with an ES of 80 fps.

Just for grins, we clocked some 124-grain surplus 9mm (1950 vintage Czech stuff) from our Ehrfurt Luger and got 1,066 fps with an ES of 40 fps. Twenty-five-yard accuracy from a sandbag rest with both guns was slightly in favor of the 9mm in terms of group size, although the POI/POA relationship favored the .30.

Factory ammo in .30 Luger in any persuasion is very tough to come by, so if you intend on much range time, you'd best do some serious component scrounging before hitting the reloading bench.

Yes, the 9mm is the "coin of the realm" and has been since the introduction of the P-08. But a "thirty-something" Luger is still a heck of a lot of fun.

GUNS



Commercial but cool: Our DWM Luger and a well-aged box of Winchester .30 Luger ammo.

tively clean 4.5 lbs. — was pretty darn manageable. However, the traditional deep V-notch/tall blade combination takes a bit of getting used to for those accustomed to large Patridge sights.

Our supply of .30 Luger ammo was — as you might guess — somewhat

MUCKY MUFFL

TRYING — AND FAILING — TO KILL



The business end of the FA556-212 (above) after a year on the mucky bottom of the lake *and* after going red-hot into the lake water quench instantly! A little surface rust was the only apparent damage. Will's tricked-out HK416 assault rifle (right) is the apex predator among black guns. It comes standard with the SureFire FA556-212 suppressor, a truly unkillable can!



ER MANGLING

A SUREFIRE SUPPRESSOR



Will Dabbs, MD

For a time when I was a soldier, I flew helicopters as part of the Lead the Fleet program with the U.S. Army Aviation Test Activity. These were the most high-time aircraft in the inventory. Our mission was to rag these planes out mercilessly. If something was destined to fail, it should fail with us first — at least this was the theory.

I've never had such fun. Second only to writing for *GUNS Magazine*, it was the coolest job I've ever had. As an aside, a sister organization was called the Airframe Qualification and Test Directorate (AQTD). They actually answered the phone "Aqua-Toad."

Uncle Sam invests a great deal of effort and treasure doing destructive testing on the gear our warriors will use to smite the enemies of our great nation. I also recently verified — inadvertently — military test protocols indeed result in nearly bulletproof gear, at least with snuffers.

SATAN'S SOUND SUPPRESSOR

The SureFire FA556-212 is the sound suppressor to the stars in a modern gun world covered in a thin patina of snuffers. I have a

business building them myself. If you want to eat at the cool kids' table at your local shooting range, you'd better have something sexy and cylindrical hanging off the snout of your favorite gat. Amidst all those many-splendored cans, the FA556-212 reliably stands apart.

The FA556-212 is a paltry 6" long and weighs an even pound. It was designed specifically to complement the 10" barreled HK 416. SureFire doesn't make this can anymore, but they offer upgraded versions made with the same secret sauce.

These SureFire suppressors are the real freaking deal. U.S. Army Special Operations Forces took these cans to war in Iraq and Afghanistan. They are rugged enough to be left on the weapon all the time. Soldiers are

trained to kill people and break things. They're like big hairy toddlers with night vision goggles and automatic weapons. If Delta Force can't destroy these suppressors, be assured we won't either.

MY FA556-212

I came into my FA556-212 via a circuitous route. My can was part of a package deal brokered by a dealer friend with a state police SWAT team. I bought this suppressor along with a de-milled high-mileage HK416 assault rifle. It cost considerably more than my first car, but there are a lot of things it will do my old car wouldn't.

When I bought this rig, the upper half was caked in filth. The suppressor looked like it had been dragged behind the space shuttle. It took me an hour with my cleaning gear to uncover the gun underneath all that grunge. I imagine when they decided they were getting new weapons, these particular SWAT guys just went out and burned a tractor trailer-load of ammo through the guns before disposing of them as surplus. Once I had the parts cleaned and resurrected, I built them up on

my old transferable M16 lower receiver (bought for the princely sum of \$600 back in 1987).

The suppressor already had the finish cooked off. It also sported a massive dent in the side. If I had to guess at a lifetime round count for the thing I would conservatively estimate it to be about as much ammo as the U.S. Marine Corps

burns in a fiscal quarter. All this happened before I even met it.

THE CRUCIBLE

This thing is the Methuselah of cans. It's been ridden relentlessly and put away dripping. With that as a foundation, I went to work.

This is a blasting gun — meaning an exclusive diet of the cheapest, filthiest steel-cased Russian ammo I can find. It is the star of the show when my kids' college buddies come home to visit for the weekend. When unleashed with this rifle, my young friends run it like a hamster in a daycare.

This is the weapon designed specifically for Delta Force. It is the gun that killed Osama bin Laden. This is the most rarefied M4 variant in the world. It is the holy grail of black rifles. Its performance does not disappoint.

All up with the suppressor and a top-flight EOTech Holosight-cum-magnifier, the overall package is shockingly heavy. However, it keeps the weapon on target with minimal effort. On rock and roll it is also surprisingly fast. I'd guesstimate it runs 50 to 100 rounds per minute faster than a comparable GI M4. The spunky rate of fire combined with a bunch of uninhibited trigger fingers and a pile of cheap blasting ammo sourced pre-COVID equal simply breathtaking amounts of heat. We could have cooked pork chops on the suppressor.

At some point I took the can off, likely just to show the kids how it attached. These SureFire suppressors sport a cool quick-detach mounting system. You press in a spring-loaded catch and rotate a locking collar to release the suppressor. Then just give the can a quick tug and it pops right off. I had to wrap the thing in an old shirt lest it burn my skin off.

Once everyone got a peek at the muzzle I reattached the suppressor and passed the rifle to a buddy along with



Aside from a little brown grunge on the near end (left), Will's trusty SureFire can was no worse for the wear despite spending a year and a half underwater.



The big dent is a mystery. Will has no idea where it came from and was already present when he bought it.





Success! It took an hour underwater sifting through tons of muck, but the can suffered no long-term ill effects.

“AS SOON AS HE TOUCHED THE BOTTOM, THE WHOLE LAKE SILTED IN DARKER THAN ANDREW CUOMO’S SHRIVELED LITTLE HEART.”

a freshly loaded magazine. The kid arrayed himself at our favorite firing point — a comfortable spot overlooking a modest lake with an uber-safe 65-foot backstop wrapping around like an amphitheater — and lined the weapon up on a target some 68 meters distant. He then squeezed the trigger and promptly shot the can off into the lake.

I had failed to secure the mount properly. The smoking hot suppressor plopped into the water maybe 15 feet from shore. The water is about 10 feet deep. There it sat undisturbed ... for one and a half years.

THE RESCUE OPERATION

A friend with scuba gear finally came to the rescue. The whole operation took nearly an hour underwater. As soon as he touched the bottom, the whole lake silted in darker than Andrew Cuomo’s shriveled little heart.

We put my buddy on the end of a rope, got him arranged on the proper azimuth, and then let him feel his way through the bottom of the lake. There were stumps

and natural debris aplenty. He found a couple of ventilated Coke cans, a broken industrial tape measure and about a zillion discarded shell casings. He also eventually found my sound suppressor underneath about 10" of silty mud slurry on the lake bottom.

THE VERDICT

So what adverse effects did unimaginably violent heat transients followed by 18 months underwater have on my trusty SureFire can? Absolutely nothing. I shook the mud and water out, latched it securely onto the muzzle of my rifle, and blasted another 30 rounds downrange on rock and roll.

I’m 55 years old and well past my prime. My days of legit action and adventure are but a vague memory. I’ll never have call to use such a weapon for real again. However, if I do, I can assure you this SureFire suppressor is undeniably up to the task — that thing is frankly unkillable. **GUNS**

SureFire.com

EM



A custom-milled forged slide features distinctive tri-top cuts with forward lightening grooves and a flattened top strap with full-length 40 LPI serrations to diffuse glare.

ISSARY

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

TRI-TOP TRIPLE-THREAT!

Roy Huntington

Photos: Rob Jones
The Imagesmith LLC



Other standard features include a skeletonized hammer for fast lock times and a Tactical Rack U-Dot rear sight.

If I see an eye-catching classic Packard from the 1930s, I always look at it carefully. I'll spend an inordinate amount of time admiring the finish, the fit of the panels, the elegant lines, the proud radiator shell — the works. Then, if I see another of exactly the same year and even the same color five minutes later, I'll do it all over again. What do I do at a car show? I look at every single Packard, often again and again, then take one more look at each one as I walk away. You might do it with airplanes, sail boats or attractive women perhaps? Are we even allowed to say that any longer? What has the world come to?

So why then do people fail to understand a penchant for looking at, shooting and otherwise messing about with 1911 pistols? Like a Packard, they are not all alike (even the same model from a single maker). Each is at least slightly different — trigger pulls, fit, finish, etc. — or in some cases even hugely different. Show me a hundred 1911s and I'll show you a hundred different guns, even if it's the same production run of a single model from the same manufacturer. Each will likely have its own personality. Like those Packards.

"Oh, that's just another 1911" simply doesn't apply, unless the fellow mumbling under his breath suffers from an apocalyptic collapse of any sense of artistic longing or, dare I say it — common sense? We do what we do with guns because it's fun, compelling; even intriguing in many cases. Why miss out on the subtle indulgence of pondering the particulars in those oh-so-familiar yet still undeniably unique lines from Mr. Brownie's imagination? Just say yes — don't say no.

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

EMISSARY TRI-TOP TRIPLE-THREAT!





GUNS[®]

MAGAZINE



A tritium front sight comes standard on the business end, complementing a rail for light/laser mounting while the 5" 1:16 bull barrel and full-length guide rod ensure maximum accuracy and reliability.



The solid, flat-faced trigger (above) resides in an oversized square trigger guard to fit gloved hands. The Emissary is focused primarily on self-defense and doesn't come with a beveled magwell (below). It does come with two 8-round magazines standard.

TO WIT

I never tire of enjoying being exposed to Springfield Armory's offerings. From polymer to steel, they're often quite subtly innovative or even downright ground-breaking. Quality of construction is always top-tier and practicality of design is always mated with an artistic sensibility, keeping the final results pleasing to the senses but never losing contact with practical use.

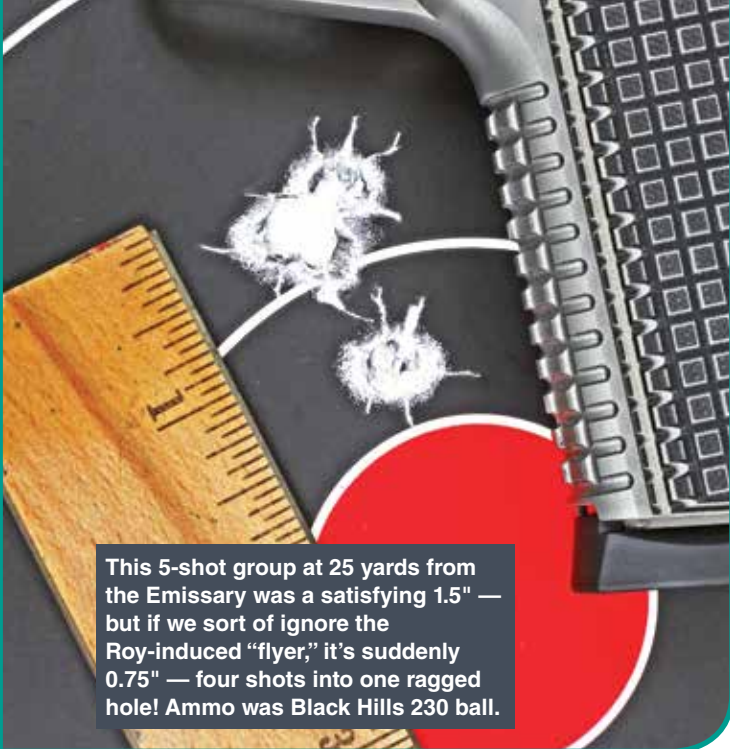
The new 1911-style Emissary lives up to both the reputation of Springfield and to the origination of the name. "Emissary" comes from the Latin *emissarius*, which could mean a "scout" or "to send out." Today's meaning most often tends toward describing a person sent on a special mission, particularly a diplomatic one. I confess when I thought of that last, I laughed out loud, as drawing the Emissary in defense of a life might just indeed qualify as a diplomatic mission? It brings particular meaning to the saying "...speak softly and carry a big stick." Diplomatically, of course.

According to Springfield Armory's Mike Humphries, Media Relations Manager, "Springfield Armory brings the experience and skill sets of all its 1911 building skills to the development and design of every offering in that line. All of the skills built by decades of high-quality 1911 production — from Springfield Custom to production — go into every 1911 offered." I think that experience is really showcased in the Emissary.

A SOLID BASE

I've always found their sort of front-line defensive and target guns, like the Range Officer series and others, to be predictable, accurate and sound. The Emissary ramps up the technical/mechanical excellence with an artistic sensibility so important when urging a design to be all it can be.

Mike continued in his note to me, "The goal with the Emissary was to take the classic 1911 platform and give it a new style and look. But what's really interesting is



This 5-shot group at 25 yards from the Emissary was a satisfying 1.5" — but if we sort of ignore the Roy-induced "flyer," it's suddenly 0.75" — four shots into one ragged hole! Ammo was Black Hills 230 ball.

this look combines ultra-modern styling cues — like the grenade-pattern checkering and Tri-Top cut slide — along with a retro custom-vibe through the squared trigger guard and serrated sighting plane atop the slide."

I think the Emissary navigates two paths. On one hand, it's a 1911 appealing to many polymer-framed pistol fans due to its edgy styling. But on the other hand, it's also attractive to traditionalists who fondly recall the custom guns of the 1980s. The two-tone look and squared guard would have been right at home on the cover of *American Handgunner* in 1985. And that's a good thing.

At its heart, the Emissary is, as Mike calls it, "A rock-solid defensive style 1911." With the addition of the rail and the bold, "Tactical Rack U-Dot" sights (with a tritium front), heavy bushing-less barrel and excellent ergonomics, it's not only a great shooter but eye-catching enough to cause a ruckus at the range.

ESSENTIAL DETAILS

The historically-rich two-tone look comes from a forged stainless steel frame and forged rust-blued slide. Forgings machine beautifully, while lending a strong underlying strength to things. The detailed machining highlights the talents of the people making the Emissary, offering a pairing of attractive attributes and real-world function. For instance, the bold "Grenade Pattern" texture machined into the front strap and rear flat (thank you!) mainspring housing extends across the VZ Slimline G10 grips too, teaming up to encourage an unbreakable grip on the gun. Wait until you try it.

The all-steel construction and 40-oz. heft means the Emissary relaxes into your grip soundly with just a hint of muzzle-heaviness causing the front sight to settle fast. A full 5" bull match-grade barrel with a flush-fit crown means no separate bushing to fuss with and the full length guide rod captures the recoil spring when you take things

down. Rifling is 1:16" and if this gun is any indication, the combo of a match bull barrel and rifling rate is a great combo. Ours delivers reliable 1.25" to 1.75" groups at 25 yards, depending on ammo — simply amazing in a bone-stock factory produced 1911.

The skeletonized hammer keeps the action snappy and fast, and the long but flat synthetic trigger is light and extremely comfortable. If you haven't tried a flat trigger, you have a treat in store. In the old days a squared trigger guard was to accommodate a finger-forward grip, but Springfield says the Emissary's is to help contain a gloved shooting finger. It'd work fine for either use. The feature does make holster selection something you need to pay close attention to as they'll be more limited than for standard designs.

The "Tri-Top" does a couple of things. First off, it looks great and the lightening cuts "texture" extending across the angle sort of flow into your palm if you reach over the slide top to rack it. The clearance also presents the flat front of the rear sight better to manage an emergency slide rack by hooking it on a belt or boot heel.

SHOOTING

What's to say? The 3 lb., 3 oz. trigger pull (average of 10 tries) is as crisp as it sounds. The bold sights are easy to see and when I use my "good" glasses equipped with an old Merit Optical aperture system, I'm able to see a very clear sight picture. Groups at 25 yards seemed to favor around 1.50" but I was pleased by several chasing 1". There was a memorable one at 0.75" if I closed my eyes to the one "flyer" 0.5" away! Best groups were with Black Hills 230-grain ball but I had some excellent surprises using Armscor 230 ball too. It ate everything I put through it, including HP defensive ammo. The Emissary is a sterling shooter and makes anyone look better than they really are. Just watch that trigger press.

Call the Emissary a true "do-all" 1911. From home/personal defense, weekend competition, informal — or formal — target shooting, even small-game hunting, it'd handle it with aplomb. Keep in mind, as Mike Humphries told me, "The Emissary is still a production gun, despite its custom-style features. We gave it some really cool, custom-style upgrades you'd see from a small builder. But we're able to do it with a production gun and commensurate pricing." At \$1,279, the performance, build quality and accuracy left me gob-smacked. If I'd handled this gun blindfolded I'd have guessed a \$3,500 custom job.

DEPARTING FEELINGS

I think Steve Kramer, VP of Marketing for Springfield Armory, said it best to me. "This new addition to the 1911 family of pistols at Springfield provides an excellent option for a defensive handgun — with an additional measure of refinement."

Indeed.

There's no need to compromise when you can stay within a budget — and still get the best, eh?

GUNS

Springfield-Armory.com

GST-9 80% ARMS 9MM

Tom McHale

No, this isn't a Gary Smalley or Tony Robbins pep talk. I'm talking about building your own pistol at home. In most states, it's perfectly legal to build your own firearm for personal use, provided you're legally eligible to own a gun and don't plan to sell it.

While I might endeavor to construct one from rocks and deadfall, I figured I'd make use of modern technology and entrepreneurial creativity so I talked to the folks at 80 Percent Arms. As the name implies, they're in the business of selling "not quite firearms." These 80% blanks are partially finished gun components. In the case of their GLOCK-compatible pistol kits, it means the frame as it is the normally serialized part defining a legal firearm. For rifles, it's the lower receiver. The idea is simple. You

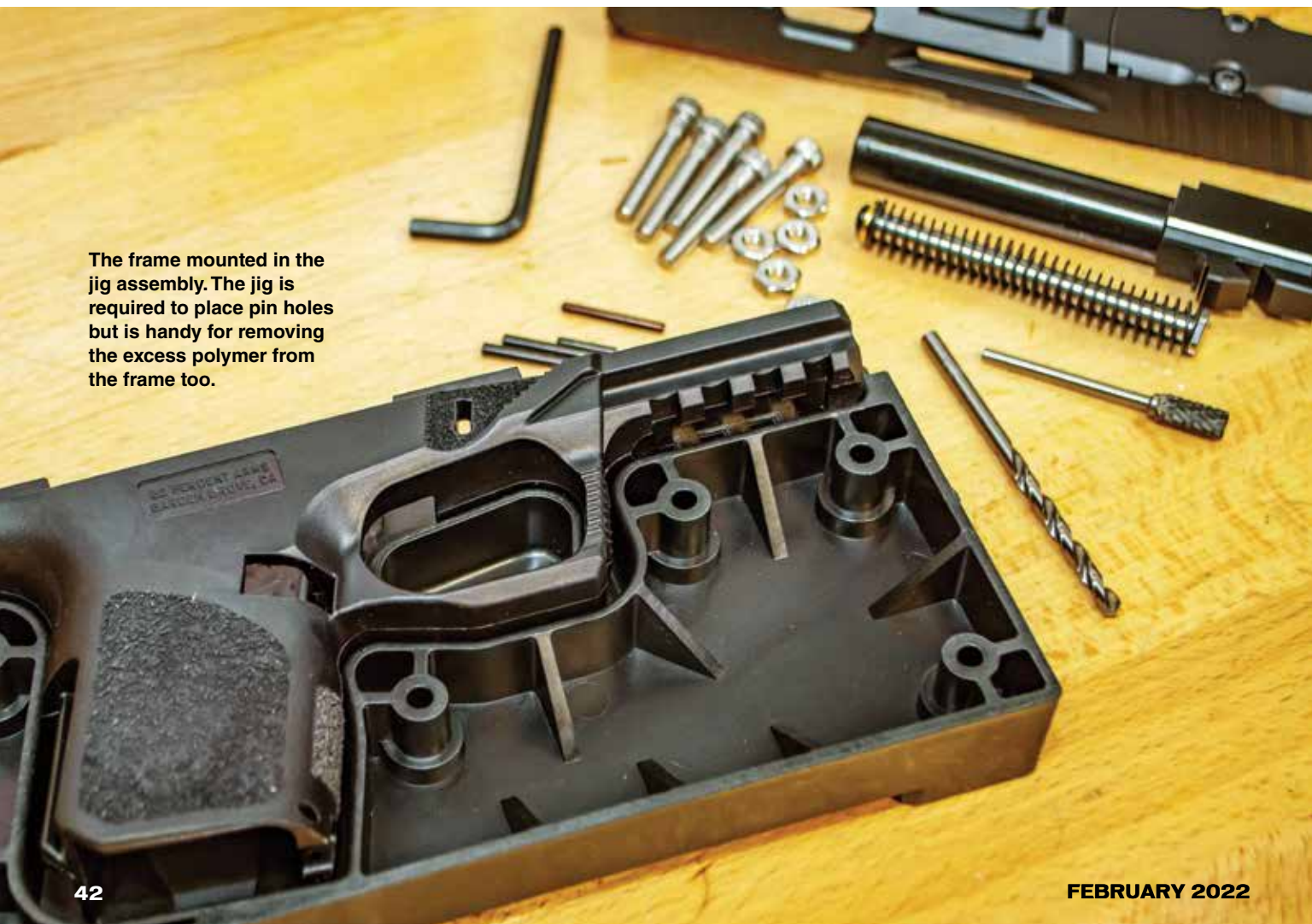
receive a hunk of polymer in the mail that looks like a pistol frame, but cannot be assembled into a pistol until you complete the manufacturing process.

When I want to impress my shooting buddies, I describe how you have to "mill the frame" yourself to complete the 80% blank. Between you and me, it's not really "milling" but drilling, shaping and a bit of sanding. This frame is polymer after all, so no CNC machines or cutting oil are required for this project. If it makes you feel better, you can use the Dremel tool gunsmiths warn you to keep far from your guns. You're welcome.

MAILBOX NIRVANA

Since we're not talking about actual firearms, you can get all this gear shipped straight to your home. Mine ended up in the mailbox by the street along with the bills

The frame mounted in the jig assembly. The jig is required to place pin holes but is handy for removing the excess polymer from the frame too.





BUILD YOUR OWN PISTOL

and a Bed, Bath and Beyond sale flyer.

You'll need to order two items to make your own pistol: the frame kit and a jig kit. The frame comes with the polymer blank and separate magazine extensions for 15- or 17-round configurations. If you like, you can order parts like barrel, slide, trigger components, etc. at the same time or you can supply your own. If you've ever wanted to assemble a premium pistol using hand-picked aftermarket components, this is the way to go. All of this is available via regular mail direct-shipped to your home since they're just parts.

For this build, I went whole hog and ordered the 80 Percent Arms GST-9 Pistol kit. It comes with everything

you'll need including the frame, magazine extensions, trigger kit, slide lock hardware, barrel, recoil spring assembly and slide. It's all there except the pins and rail blocks which are included with the GST-9 jig kit. I should note the GST-9 is no bare-bones pistol. The slide is serrated, scalloped on top, and features cutouts that lighten weight and make it look, well, awesome. The slide is also cut for optics and features a set of GLOCK-style front and rear sights if you want to stick with "irons." I was pleasantly surprised, and impressed with the sexiness of the GST-9 components.

The jig kit contains a frame to assist in perfect placement of holes you'll drill and the polymer you'll remove.



Tom used his new drill press, well, because it was a new toy. Thanks to the protruding drill guides, you can get equally good results with a hand drill.



Tom used wire cutters to remove most of the material before shifting to the included cutting bit.

This package also includes the pins for internal parts and the all-important rail blocks, front and rear. This dual packaging is likely done to ensure no one is shipping firearms around illegally, even though nothing included is a firearm in a legal sense.

MILLING MADE EASY

There are three operations you must do to the blank to make it complete and ready for assembly: “mill” the excess polymer from the dust cover area under the future muzzle, cut and sand excess polymer from the top of the frame and drill all the required holes in the frame.

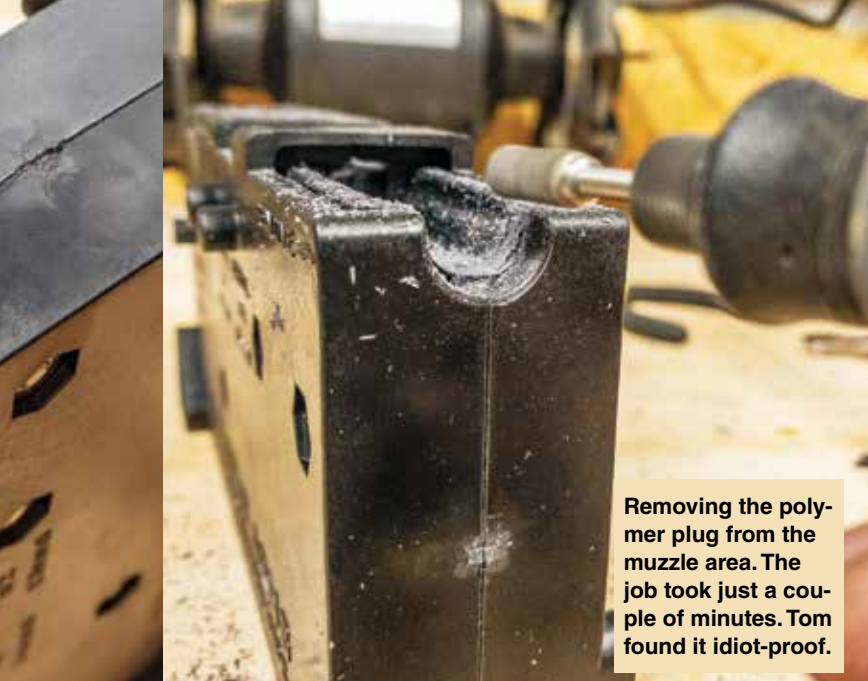
I chose to leverage all the help I could get and use the jig for everything. Starting with the holes, I used the included drill bits and my tabletop drill press to bore out trigger and trigger-assembly-housing holes in the frame. The jig assists in drilling a perfectly straight and vertical hole, but I was itching to use my press, so I did it. You



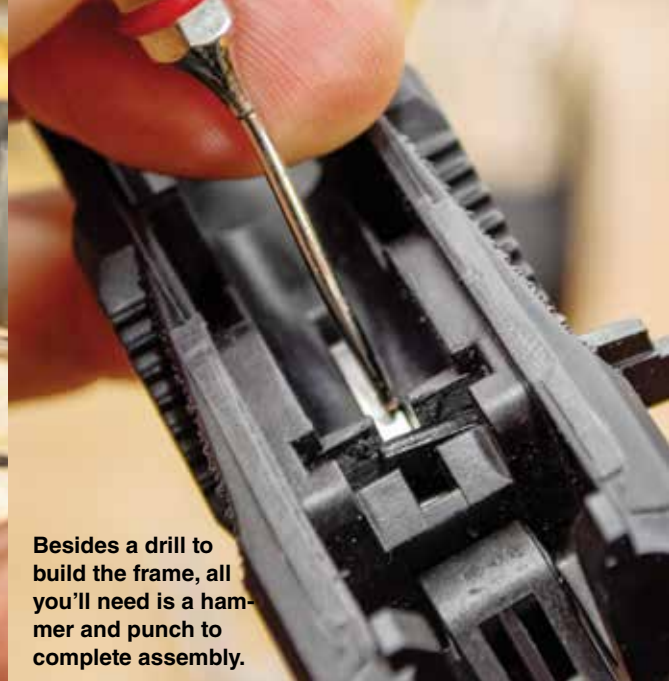
The jig comes with drill and cutting bits, pins and the frame rails (not shown.)



A few quick and dirty 10-yard break-in groups before formal accuracy testing showed the pistol shot just fine from the first shot.



Removing the polymer plug from the muzzle area. The job took just a couple of minutes. Tom found it idiot-proof.



Besides a drill to build the frame, all you'll need is a hammer and punch to complete assembly.

can just as easily use a hand drill with perfect results. You'll get two sizes of bits and the jig is clearly marked so you drill the right size holes in the right places. You cannot mess this up!

Next, I had to remove excess polymer from the muzzle area and in two areas on top of each side of the frame. To reduce the "milling" required with the included cutting bit you can use on a Dremel tool, cordless drill or screwdriver, I snipped excess plastic away first using wire and end cutters. I trimmed the top-of-frame tabs almost flush and cut a "V" in the semi-circular block in the muzzle area which left relatively little material to grind away. Using the included bit on my Dremel tool, I took everything down to the level required. Last, I used wet fine-grit sandpaper and a felt polishing wheel on the Dremel to smooth things out.

At this point, you've made, in terms of the law, a firearm. Even though it's a piece of plastic, it can be readily assembled into a pistol so treat it as such. Don't sell it, and if you've robbed a bank or committed another felony, you can't possess it.

ASSEMBLY

If you buy the full GST-9 kit, you'll need nothing but either a 15- or 17-round magazine, depending on which grip module you install. Or, since they're easy to swap, how about both? If you build your own from chosen parts, be sure to order GLOCK Gen 3-compatible components. The GST-9 frame works with Gen 1 through 3 extras.

Rather than go through the entire assembly process here (it's standard for GLOCK-compatible pistols), you can see exactly how it's done on our YouTube channel (FMGPubs). For now, know you're looking at just a couple of minutes work to drop in a trigger assembly, install the slide lock, slide-stop, magazine release and rails. That's it. The only tool required for parts assembly is a punch to set the pins. It's also handy for holding slide stop and magazine catch springs while you install those parts.

“
**IF I CAN DO THIS AND
ACHIEVE OUTSTANDING
RESULTS, YOU CAN TOO!**”

DOES IT SHOOT?

While I was confident the GST-9 was safe, I had no idea what to expect with handling and accuracy. The pistol is very light thanks to the generous slide cutouts and would make an excellent carry gun. Regardless, recoil was soft and easily absorbed by the polymer frame. Taking full advantage of the built-in optics cut in the GST-9 slide, I mounted a Trijicon SRO red dot sight. The combination was butter — a smooth handling pistol facilitating fast hits on target.

I tested four varieties of Federal ammo with the GST-9: Syntech Defense 138-grain, Syntech Action Pistol 150-grain, Punch Self-Defense 124-grain and NATO 124-grain. The results from some quick 20-yard, five-shot group accuracy testing? Stunning. In the order above, I measured groups of 1.36", 1.46", 1.6" and 1.42". Remember, I built this frame in my garage! This is a testament to the quality and consistency of the jig setup to some degree, but primarily a huge validation of 80 Percent Arms' barrel and slide assemblies.

Consider me impressed! If I can do this and achieve outstanding results, you can too!

GUNS

80PercentArms.com
FederalPremium.com



The Colt M1877 (bottom) styling is easy to trace to its big brother, the Colt Peacemaker (SAA).

COLT M1877 REV

THE DOUBLE-ACTION TAKING THE OLD WEST BY STORM

Alan Garbers

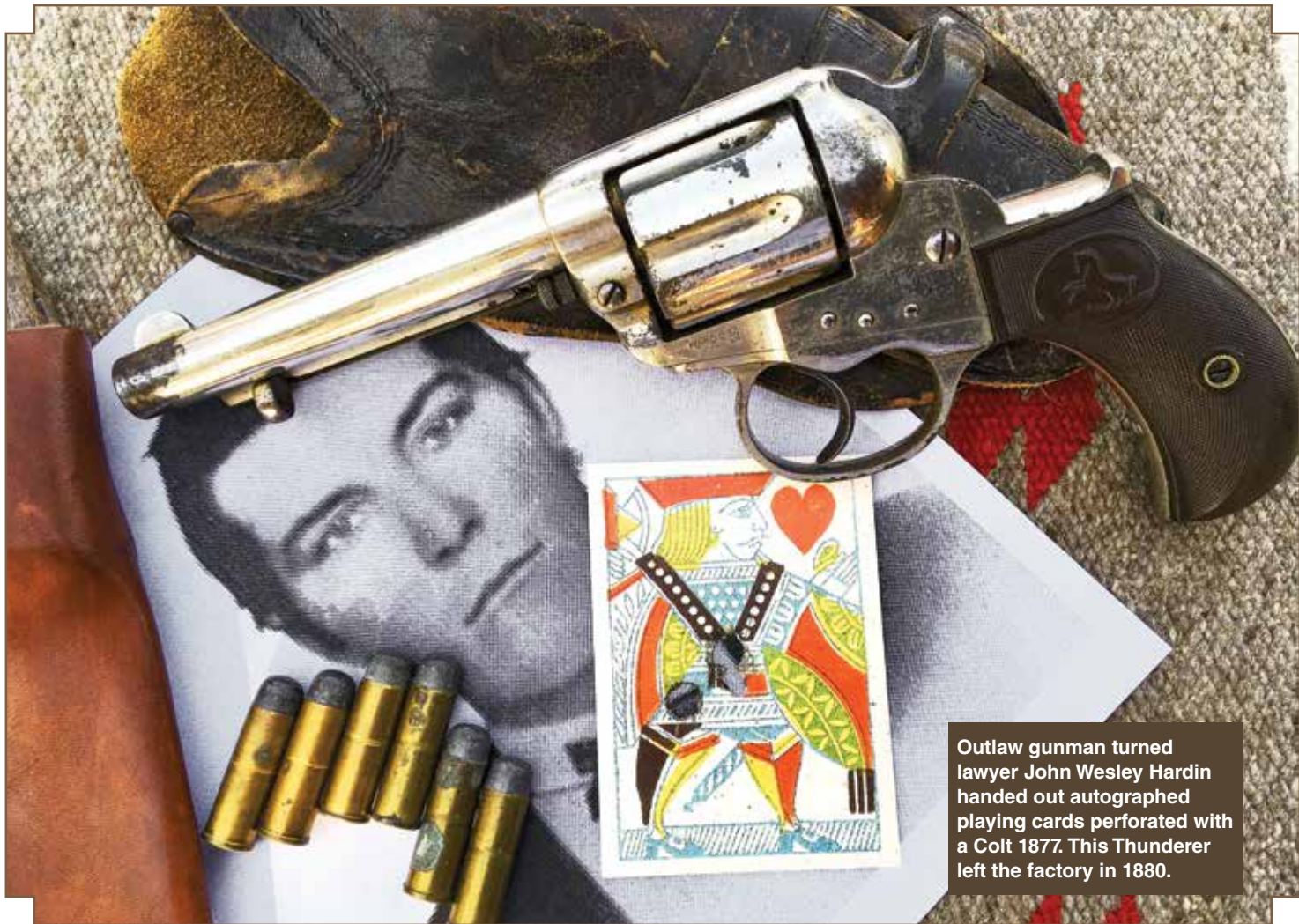
What did Doc Holiday, Billy the Kid, Pat Garrett, Pearl Hart and John Wesley Hardin have in common? They all carried Colt's Double Action, Self-Cocking Central Fire Revolving Pistol. Catchy, isn't it? Obviously, Colt didn't waste money on their marketing department in 1877. If the name is too much of a tongue twister, how about we use the name Kittredge, one of Colt's biggest distributors, called it — the *Colt Lightning*. The moniker was used for the .38 Colt version while *The Thunderer* was given to the more powerful .41 Colt version and *The Rainmaker* for the exceedingly rare .32 Colt version. Many collectors refer to all versions as the M1877.

BEGINNINGS

The M1877 was a long time coming. Webley had been importing their double-action revolvers in the U.S. since roughly 1873. Still, many in the firearms industry, as well

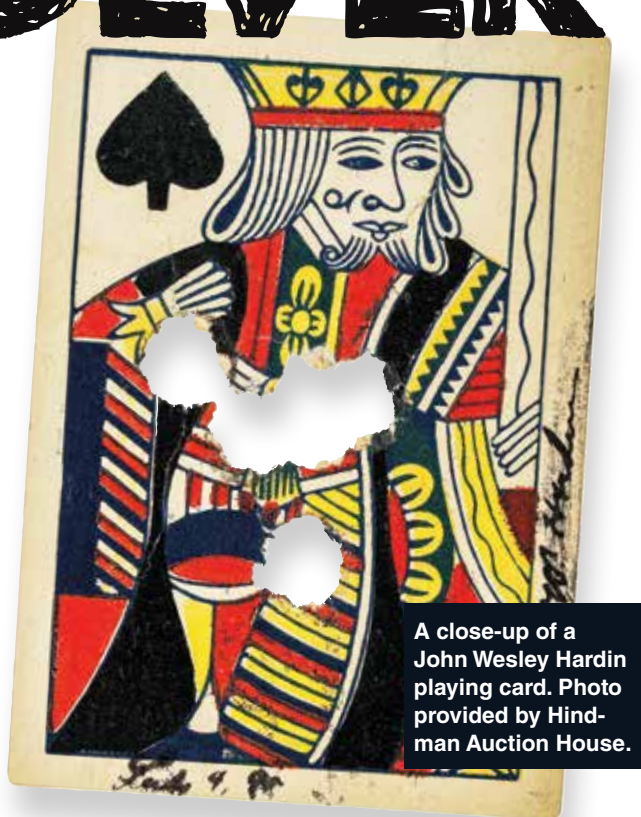
as in the military, felt rapid-fire handguns were a waste of ammunition. If it wasn't for one man, Colt London Agency manager Frederick von Oppen, it might have been even longer before Colt plunged into the double-action market. Some historians feel this boils down to one key thing — how the U.S. Army waged war vs. how European armies waged war. In the 1870s, the focus was on westward expansion and the U.S. Army was busy fighting the indigenous tribes west of the Mississippi. With few exceptions, the battles were quick and in small numbers. Civilian and military combatants wanted the reliable precision a deliberately aimed single-action revolver provided.

The colonizing conquests of the European nations waged war differently. In many cases, the enemy was a living wall of human flesh. European officers wanted a large-caliber revolver with rapid-fire capabilities. And, in most cases, the officers were expected to provide their weapons. While



Outlaw gunman turned lawyer John Wesley Hardin handed out autographed playing cards perforated with a Colt 1877. This Thunderer left the factory in 1880.

OLIVER



A close-up of a John Wesley Hardin playing card. Photo provided by Hindman Auction House.

the Colt Single-Action Army in .45 Colt was the weapon of choice for the U.S. Army, it was soundly rejected in London.

Oppen repeatedly asked for a large-bore double-action revolver to counter the other offerings eroding Colt's market share in London. The management at Colt didn't relish the idea of tooling up for an entirely new revolver design. Yes, they did win a government contract for their new single-action revolver, but even it was a leap forward from their previous open-top designs.

In desperation, Oppen sent competitors' revolvers across the Atlantic so the Colt designers could see what they were up against in the European market. In response, Colt sent back what some think was a clumsy attempt at making the Colt SAA in double action. Oppen rejected it outright.

AMMO PROBLEMS

One of the problems was the ammunition of the day. It took a heavy hammer blow to set off the newly designed centerfire cartridge. It took an even stronger trigger finger to pull a trigger, turn the cylinder and cock a heavy hammer spring, all while maintaining a steady sight picture.

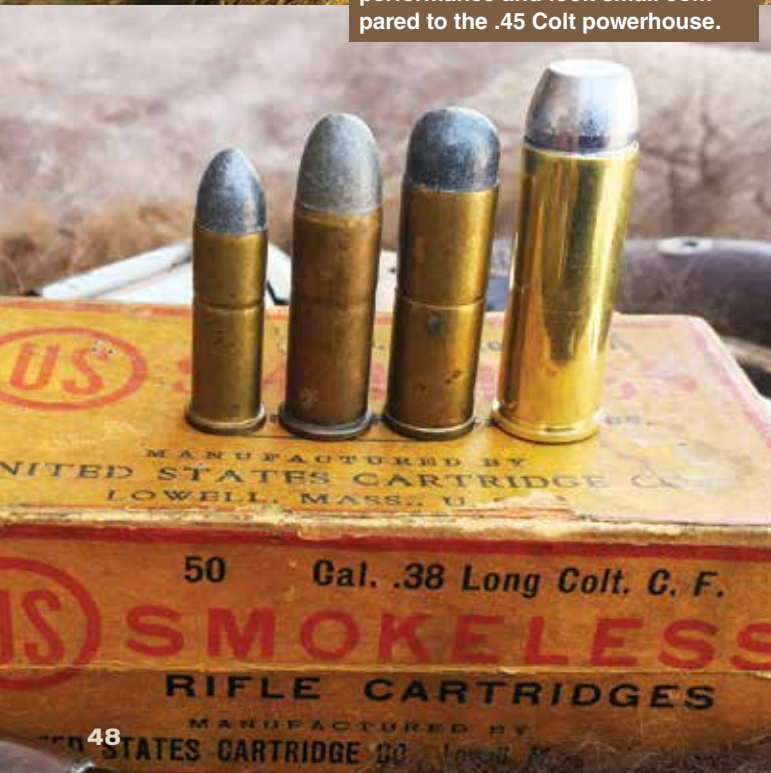
Colt turned again to the master designer of the popular Colt's Army Revolver, which Kittredge had dubbed *The Peacemaker*. Years went by, but in 1877 Colt sent Oppen their new offering — it looked like a scaled-down version of the Peacemaker. The plow-handle grips had been replaced with bird's head grips, a design which made a



The M1877 originally was offered with an acid-etched caliber panel on the barrel.



The later M1877s were roll-stamped on the frame. By today's standards, the .32 Colt, .38 Colt and .41 Colt (below, left to right) have lackluster performance and look small compared to the .45 Colt powerhouse.



THE COLT M1877 GAINED A BAD REPUTATION AS BEING PRONE TO BREAKING AND BEING IMPOSSIBLE TO FIX. THE M1877 WAS COLT'S FIRST DOUBLE-ACTION, SO THERE WAS A STEEP LEARNING CURVE FOR THEIR ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT.

double-action revolver easier to grasp and shoot.

The first version was chambered in .38 Colt, an anemic cartridge compared to the heavy-hitting .45 Colt, but compared to most revolvers of the day it was a powerhouse. A .41 Colt version soon followed.

The public's reaction was mixed. Cowboys and frontiersmen liked the simple ruggedness of the Colt Peacemaker, even if it did have to be manually cocked for each shot. But others saw the advantage of a self-cocking revolver. Outlaw turned lawyer John Wesley Hardin decided two double-action revolvers were better than one. His landlady told stories of him prancing around his room, clicking away as he practiced his shooting skills. Other stories tell of Hardin giving shooting demonstrations with playing cards and then signing them. Unfortunately for Hardin, his Colt shooting skills didn't prevent him from being shot in the back of the head in an El Paso saloon in 1895.

The Colt M1877 gained a bad reputation as being prone to breaking and being impossible to fix. The M1877 was Colt's first double-action, so there was a steep learning curve for their engineering department. The designers worked hard to keep the style elements of the popular Colt Single-Action Army. Still, in doing so, the lockworks were as complicated and temperamental as the Peacemaker was simple and reliable. In fact, within a year, Colt released the M1878, a newly designed, more robust double-action chambered in the .45 Colt and .44 WCF cartridge. But, for all its faults, the M1877 appealed to many shooters because of the smaller frame and grips. Women especially liked the M1877 for this very reason but many professional gunmen also relied on them.

Police officers preferred the compact versions of the Colt 1877. This Lightning shipped to Chicago in 1886.



COLT'S
 NEW, DOUBLE ACTION, SELF-COCKING, CENTRAL FIRE, SIX SHOT
 CONSTABULARY REVOLVER.
 380 cal. 4 1/2-inch Barrel.
 3 1/2 inch Barrel, without Side Rod, as adopted by the Chicago Police, 1892.



The Drawing is full size.
 WEIGHT 2 lb. 3 oz.

Taking the 38 cal. Express Cartridge
 containing 18 grs. of Powder,
 as especially made for this Pistol.

Price, as sold ...	\$4	00
in 2 1/2 inch Barrel	\$3	00
Grip, to order	\$1	00
Nickel Plating	10	00
Cartridge, per 100	8	00

Pistol and Heavy Stocks made to order.

Colt advertised the use of their revolver (above) by the Chicago Police in 1892. The Cimarron Lightning (below, top gun) looks and handles like the original in many ways but falls short of being an exact replica.





The Colt M1877-packing Pearl Hart (above) failed at being an outlaw but succeeded at capturing the imagination of America. As much as 78% of the 4-1/2" barrel Lightning made from 1900–1906 were tobacco guns, purchased with tobacco tags or coupons (below). Photo from the collection of Mike Short.

COPPERS CARRY

The M1877 appealed to another group as well. According to an article by firearm historian Dr. RC Marohn, metropolitan police officers were looking for a smaller-framed revolver they could keep concealed but still packed a punch. His research found many citizens in the late 1800s and early 1900s were uncomfortable with law enforcement officers carrying weapons. The shorter-barreled Lightning was the perfect blend of power and concealment. The use of the M1877 by police officers is well-documented by examples either stamped or inscribed by departments or individual officers. The 1896 Colt London catalog claimed the Chicago Police Department adopted the use of the Lightning in 1892 and advertised it as the Constabulary Revolver. But Marohn could not find evidence showing the CPD ever officially made it standard issue.

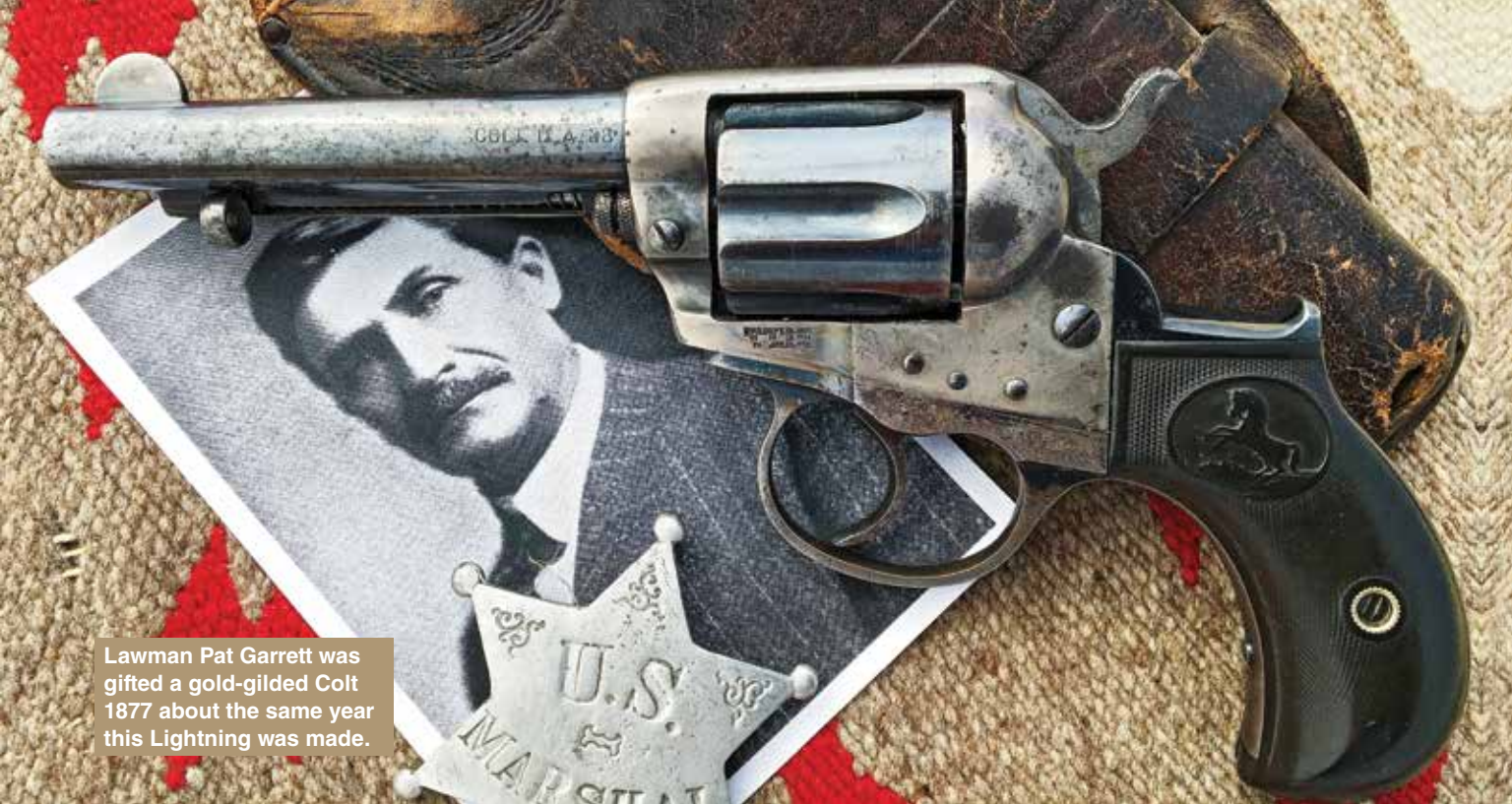
It is easy to see why the M1877 would be popular for concealment. Many were sold with a 1-1/2" to 3-1/2" barrel with no ejector and could easily fit in a coat pocket, boot, or even under a bustle.

The Colt M1877 had been in production for almost a quarter of a century, and Colt was offering more advanced double-action revolvers when in 1900 the production numbers spiked for several years. To some, the sudden demand for an outdated design is puzzling until they connect the dots. Pulp fiction of the Wild West was filling the heads of readers with the excitement of the vanishing frontier through the exploits of Billy the Kid, Pearl Hart, John Wesley Hardin and others who belted on the M1877. Plus, the Lightning had the look of the famous western icon, the Peacemaker.

UP TO SNUFF

To add to the craze, Continental Tobacco, the mega-corporation who owned a staggering amount of tobacco brands, started offering a Colt Lightning as a "present" to their patrons around 1900. Tobacco was often sold in twists and to prevent store owners from counterfeiting lesser grade leaf in place of their product, tobacco companies placed a colorful tin tag on the twist. To encourage brand loyalty,





Lawman Pat Garrett was gifted a gold-gilded Colt 1877 about the same year this Lightning was made.

tobacco companies sent out premium catalogs with a wide range of presents that could be had free by sending in the correct amount of tags. For 1,800 tags, one would receive a genuine Colt Lightning revolver!

To understand the impact on the tobacco market, look at the numbers. From 1900-1906 Colt manufactured approximately 46,500 M1877 revolvers, and roughly 58% were chambered in .38 Colt. Of those, 12,789 were shipped out blued and sporting a 4-1/2" barrel and an ejector. Here is the exciting part: 9,285 were purchased by Floradora, Continental and other tobacco companies. If you see a Colt Lightning with a serial number between 115500 and 160000, blued, with a 4-1/2" barrel and ejector, there is a 78% chance it was given out as a prize by a tobacco company!

IN A TWIST, THE FALLIBLE COLT 1877 OUTLIVED THE REVOLVER MEANT TO REPLACE IT.

THE END

In a twist, the fallible Colt 1877 outlived the revolver meant to replace it. The Colt 1878 ended production in 1905 while the spunky 1877 went on four more years.

Collectors could quickly fill a room with all of the variations sold during the M1877's run. Barrels ran from 1-1/2" to 10", with and without ejectors. Grips varied from the common hard rubber to rosewood, pearl and ivory. Nickel was common as a finish, but blued examples are also readily

found. Earlier models had an acid-etched panel showing the caliber on the left side of the barrel. Sadly, in many cases, the panel is worn or buffed away during refinishing. Later versions had the caliber stamped in the same location.

Finding a battered or broken M1877 isn't hard. Finding an excellent example that hasn't been buffed, sanded, scrubbed, or refinished is very difficult. While models are generally cheaper than an original Colt Single Action Army, the prices keep climbing. The Lightning .38 Colt version is the most common. The Thunderer .41 Colt version is a little harder to find. Only a few hundred of the Rainmaker .32 Colt versions were sold and are a prize for any collector of the M1877. In all cases, condition and originality are key-value factors. Keep in mind almost all M1877 revolvers were proofed for black powder, not modern smokeless powder.

TODAY

If you like the look and feel of the M1877 but don't want to risk ruining a piece of history, there are many similar-looking revolvers out there but most are full-framed and not the more petite frame of the originals. Cimarron Firearms offers a close copy of the original M1877. In keeping with their target audience of cowboy-action shooters, and to avoid the mechanical problems of the original, the gun is single-action only. Still, the birdhead grips are perfect for shooters with smaller hands. Cimarron blends traditional and modern in their caliber offering as they come in .38 Special and the original .41 Colt.

I fully admit I am a fan of the M1877 and will rush past six tables of crisp new firearms to check out a worn Thunderer or Lightning. Their style has a refined western Americana appeal that whispers to me like a sultry lover. So, the next time you're at a gun show and see a pearl-handled, nickel-plated, acid-etched M1877, walk right on by and leave it for me.

GUNS

THE TAURUS G3 T.O.R.O.

THE BUDGET OPTIC-READY OPTION



Tank used TRUGLO's TRU-TEC red dot sight for testing (above). Plate #2 was a perfect fit. The G3 T.O.R.O. (below) comes complete with cover plate and four additional plates, covering practically every red dot sight out there.



Jeff "Tank" Hoover

Imagine heading to the indoor range with your no-frills buddy. Nothing's better than a day of shooting, right? Your buddy's a down-to-earth, jeans and plaid flannel shirt kind of guy and shoots guns like himself. Nothing fancy — just rugged, well-priced, run-of-the-mill shooters.

Like most ranges, the firing line is dim, while the range itself is well lit. You both unpack, settle in, ready to shoot. The command is given, "the range is hot" so you and your buddy both start shooting. During the next ceasefire, as the targets come back, you do what everyone does and peer over at your buddy's target.

Each of his smaller targets show tight, neat groups. Way smaller than yours. Hmmmm ... he notices you staring at his target and simply winks. He's shooting his new gun, the one he tried to tell you about on the way over but you only listened half-heartedly. He even mounted a red dot sight on it, just like yours. He asks if you want to try his gun ...

A REVELATION

Picking it up, your fingers and hands instantly feel the generous stippling. It's perfectly located, providing a wonderful grip. You notice something else too — is that a palm swell? Subtle, it feels great! There are also two indentations, fore and aft each side of the frame, perfect for indexing your grip each time you pick up the gun.

You're genuinely excited! But you never let on, because after all, he's your buddy. You place several 2" orange squares on your blank target backer and send it down-range. Again, the command is given, "the range is hot!"

A torrent of gunfire starts as you insert a loaded magazine and rack the slide to chamber a round. Even racking it seems much smoother and easier than your gun. Raising it, you find the red dot sight and it magically finds the square you're aiming at. Steadying the dot, you start your trigger press.

The first half of the press is met with little resistance, as the second half slowly and smoothly starts picking up weight. Before you know it, the trigger crisply breaks to unleash the striker.



Silk purse at a flannel shirt price — Taurus is becoming the new working man's gun with its quality, list of features and competitive pricing.

Even Tank's handloads shot well in the Taurus G3 T.O.R.O. The gun ships with both a 15- and 17-round steel magazine.

THE BIG REVEAL

The voice in your head says, "Darn, this is nice! What a smooth trigger!" You're genuinely impressed with the way the gun feels and shoots. You've never shot better. As the lights are turned up for the ceasefire, you make out the factory markings ...

The gun is Taurus' new G3 T.O.R.O., or Taurus Optic Ready Option. Wow! Who would have thought a Taurus would shoot and feel so good? Let me tell you, things have changed at Taurus and the G3 series is just one example.

EXAM ROOM

The Taurus G3 T.O.R.O. is the real deal! Roughly the same size as a GLOCK 17, but with a 0.49" shorter barrel,

the G3 is well-built and shoots like the big boys with a small-boy price tag. It has the best trigger on any factory striker-fired pistol I've ever shot and there's something really cool about the trigger.

Technically, the G3 is a single-action, striker fired pistol. However, should the chambered round fail to fire, you have re-strike capability. The trigger resets forward, allowing the shooter to pull the trigger again, in double-action mode, without having to rack the slide.

This is great for training, as you can use one of the newer clip-on GPS units such as those from Mantis which synchronizes with your smart phone for endless "dry fire" practice. These units show how steady your hand is during your trigger press, showing where your

hits would have landed on your smart phone screen.

With today's ammo shortage and cost, it's a great way to train, without having to rack your slide after every trigger press, defeating the "true feel" of shooting.

PLATE GATE PERFECTION

Taurus ships the G3 T.O.R.O. with a cover plate installed, along with four different mounting plates for about every red dot sight available. I used a TRUGLO TRU-TEC MICRO sight as my red dot for testing. This sight comes with a cross-bolt base, which is easily removed.

Base Plate #2 works perfectly for this sight. Just place the plate into the mortise and set the sight on top, aligning the witness studs to the holes in the sight, then install your screws and you're ready to go — simple!

THERE'S MORE ...

Remember those indentations on the frame? They're called "Memory Pads" and they provide witness points, each and every time you draw your gun and establish grip. They instill confidence because you know a consistent grip is the cornerstone for repeatable accuracy.

The frame also has an integrated Picatinny rail allowing the installation

The G3 T.O.R.O. breaks down like most striker fired pistols.

of an auxiliary light/laser of your choosing for either illuminating or zeroing-in on your target during low light conditions.

Other features include a windage-adjustable serrated dovetail rear sight

with post front sight. A loaded chamber indicator lets you know at a glance if the chamber is loaded. A traditional thumb-safety adds extra security as well as the striker block and trigger safeties.

A Teflon coating on all moveable parts ensures smoother operation and it is very noticeable. Front and rear cocking serrations and scallops on the magazine extension provide enhanced gripping ability during slide manipulation and magazine removal. The slide is finished in a tough and durable Tenifer matte black coating, like more expensive guns.

Weight is 34.2 oz., overall length 7.28", width 1.2" and height 5.2". The G3 T.O.R.O. ships with both 15- and 17-round blued steel magazines.

SHOOTING

I used orange 2" squares on a blank target backer (sound familiar?) for sighting-in the TRU-TEC red dot sight, setting my target at 50 feet while using SIG SAUER 124-grain full-jacketed ball ammo. My first shot was about 10" low with windage being almost perfect.



The 1791 Gun-leather Optic Ready Multi-Fit is perfect for the G3 T.O.R.O.

Adjusting the TRU-TEC's elevation with the provided screwdriver, I fired again. Elevation was perfect but I was 1" to the right. A final windage adjustment had me on target, the last three rounds clustering into a 1" group. Tracking adjustments were perfect for the TRU-TEC sight.

Shooting for groups, SIG SAUER 124-grain FMJ ammo averaged 2" for 5 shot groups. Black Hills 100-grain HoneyBadger ammo averaged 2.5" while their 115-grain JHP EXP shot under 2" groups. Handloads consisting of MP Molds 140-grain radiused flat-nosed powder-coated slugs, over 4.5 grains of 231 consistently shot 2" groups.

Shooting was from the bench, fore-arms perched on a 6"x6" wood block for stability. This is my sighting-in/accuracy testing routine. Needless to say, the accuracy of the G3 T.O.R.O. is impressive! Using a Lyman trigger scale, the trigger averaged 4 lbs., 10 oz. for five pulls, while being very smooth and crisp.

The 1791 GunLeather Optic Ready (OR) Multi-Fit Belt Holster is perfect for the T.O.R.O. as a CCW rig. Designed for red dot sights and made of top-quality steer-hide, this double-slotted holster keeps the G3 T.O.R.O. strapped tight against your body. The low-cut front accommodates all optic sights while still maintaining retention qualities.

SUMMATION

If you enjoy packing a budget-priced quality shooter, the Taurus G3 T.O.R.O. is the gun for you. Don't take my word, try one out. You'll be as impressed as I was. I won't be sending this gun back, either. It carries comfortably and conceals nicely with my plaid-flannel shirts ...

My daughter likes it and shoots it well too. She's already talking about taking it with her to Veterinary school this fall. The G3 T.O.R.O.'s price and quality make getting another one doable, and to me, that's as high a compliment as you can give any gun.

GUNS

MSRP: \$449

TaurusUSA.com
TRUGLO.com
Mantis.com

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John Taffin

The first successful repeating lever-action rifle was the 1860 Henry. B. Tyler Henry was Oliver Winchester's shop foreman at New Haven Arms and the Henry rifle used a .44 Rimfire cartridge known as the .44 Henry. Even today, Winchester .22 Rimfire cartridges have an "H" head stamp for Henry. However, in 1860 Winchester didn't know if he wanted to put his name on the new endeavor. It proved successful enough that the next version was known as the 1866 Winchester. The 1860 loaded from the front of the magazine somewhat like today's .22 rifles while the 1866 was improved using King's patent for a loading gate on the side of the receiver, and it also received a forearm which the 1860 Henry did not possess.

The third improvement in these early Winchesters came in 1873 when the brass receiver changed to iron and then steel, and a new cartridge emerged. The .44 Rimfire was replaced by a Centerfire cartridge which was known as the .44 Winchester Centerfire (WCF). Today it is mostly referred to as the .44-40 and the Winchester 1873 is known in many circles as The Gun That Won The West.

SPECS

The .44 WCF cartridge used an inside-lubricated bullet rather than the outside-lubricated bullet of the .44 Rimfire. Being a centerfire, the .44 WCF was not only reloadable but Winchester also marketed reloading tools. The case was lengthened to 1.3" and instead of being a straight-walled

The .44 WCF Or .44-40

A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME



Having a rifle and pistol in the same caliber was important on the frontier! Two excellent .44-40s are this Uberti Model 1873 and Third Generation Colt Single Action.



Three Generations of Colt Single Action Army .44-40s, also known as the .44 Winchester Center Fire (WCF).

.44 as others, the .44 WCF is a tapered case with a slight bottleneck. The .44 WCF in the Winchester 1873 arrived the same year as the .45 Colt in the Colt Single Action Army and it is very close to being a .45 case necked down to .44. This may have been done for greater case capacity or ease of chambering or both. Whatever the reason, the .44-40 is one of the all-time great cartridges. Original Winchester Model 1892 and Marlin 1894 lever guns were also offered in .44-40 and some experts tell us the “.44-40” designation came from the fact Marlin did not want to stamp “.44 Winchester” on their rifles.

When I started shooting seriously in the 1950s, levergun fanciers were grabbing up Model 1892s for conversions to both .357 and .44 Magnums and Arizona’s Ward Koozer did a brisk gunsmithing business with these conversions. These made excellent companions to the new magnum sixguns from Ruger, the .357 and .44 Blackhawks, but it seemed a shame to convert the grand .44-40s to the Magnum chambering. In addition to the above-mentioned lever guns a “Model 1892” emerged and sold for \$39.95 in the 1950s. This was the *El Tigre* produced in South America under special licensing from Winchester. I have experience with only one *El Tigre* and it is an excellent rifle rivaling the quality of the real Model 1892. When I purchased my excellent example about 10 years ago it cost nearly 20 times what it did in the 1950s.

The Model 1892 would last until 1931 with over one

... SOME EXPERTS TELL US
THE ‘.44-40’ DESIGNATION
CAME FROM THE FACT

**MARLIN DID NOT
WANT TO STAMP
‘.44 WINCHESTER’ ON
THEIR RIFLES**

million being manufactured. Just as with the Model 1873, the Model 1892 was available as a carbine with a 20" barrel; rifle, 24"; and a musket, 30". The special options of the Model 1873 carried over into the 1892 with both round and octagonal barrels offered, several styles of sights, standard walnut or fancy grade stocks and crescent or shotgun style butt plates.

I now have two early Winchester 92s, the *El Tigre*



This Uberti/Cimarron is in "original finish" and has been fitted with an 1860 Army grip frame.



Replica 1866 Winchester in .44-40 have proven to be excellent shooters.

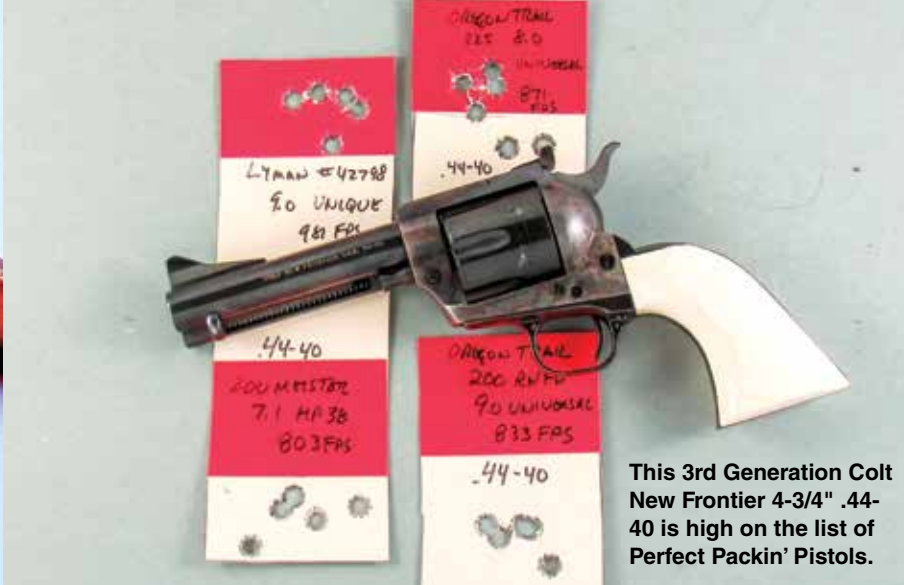
and an original, both chambered in .44 WCF. I might mention the *El Tigre* was built as a military rifle and as such has a 22" barrel, sling swivels and a ladder-type rear sight. I don't think I will be shooting it out to the 1,000 yards marked on the rear sight. Interestingly, the *El Tigre* outshoots the Winchester. The four .44 Winchesters — 1860, 1866, 1873 and 1892 — are all an important part of our nation's firearms history. The 1873 may have been the Gun That Won The West, however, the 1892 is just about the handiest rifle ever made. Think of it as a Perfect Packin' Pistol in rifle form.

KISSIN' COUSINS

Someone at Colt apparently took a good look at the .44-40 cartridge and realized the cartridge case for the .44

WCF at a length of 1.300" was awfully close to the 1.285" of the .45 Colt and users of Winchester 1873s would probably be very interested in having a sixgun using the same ammunition. It appears the first .44 WCF-chambered Colt Single Action arrived in 1878. Those Colt Single Actions chambered in .44-40 or .44 WCF or .44 Winchester Centerfire, as preferred, were simply marked on the barrel with "COLT FRONTIER SIX SHOOTER"; when the Bisley Model of 1896 was so chambered "(BISLEY MODEL)" was added in front of the above inscription, and by 1923 .44-40 had been added behind the same inscription on the Single Action Army. Of the approximately 357,000 Colt Single Action Army sixguns produced from 1873 to 1941, approximately 150,000 were .45 Colts and about 71,000 were chambered in .44-40.





This 3rd Generation Colt New Frontier 4-3/4" .44-40 is high on the list of Perfect Packin' Pistols.

Colt also chambered their Model of 1878 in .44-40. The 1878 was Colt's first big-bore double-action sixgun and except for the double-action mechanism and Smith & Wesson-style grip frame, the Model of 1878 operated the same as the Single Action for loading and unloading — that is, it had a loading gate and an ejector rod. Barrels were marked the same as on the Single Action Army. In the late 1890s Colt would introduce the swing-out cylinder, double-action New Service revolver and this would also be chambered in .44-40.

Three years after Colt introduced their double-action Model of 1878, Smith & Wesson countered with their Double Action First Model and then followed with the .44 Double Action Frontier in 1886. Chambered in .44-40, the Double Action Frontier would last until just over 15,000

were manufactured by 1913. As with all other Smith & Wesson frontier revolvers, these are black powder guns with the frames made before 1900. Remington introduced their big-bore single action revolver as the Model 1875 chambered in .44 Remington and then in 1879 added the .44-40 chambering. When the Remington Model 1890 arrived without the characteristic web under the barrel found on the 1875, it was chambered only in .44-40.

TODAY

While the .44-40 chambering was a significant cartridge offered in Colt Single Actions as well as their Model 1878 and New Service double action sixguns prior to WWII, it has not been so widely offered in post-War guns. The so-called 2nd Generation Colt Single Actions arrived in the mid-1950s and the only ones chambered in .44-40 were those offered in the Peacemaker Centennial Commemorative set with a 7-1/2" barrel .45 Colt blued or case-colored and the .44-40 in a nickel-plated Frontier Six Shooter with the same barrel length. The 3rd Generation Colts arrived in the mid-1970s and since then both the Single Action Army and the New Frontier were both offered in .44-40.

Colt Single Actions chambered in .44 Special use the same barrel dimensions as found in the .44-40 Colts so it is no problem to add .44-40 cylinders to .44 Special Colt Single Actions. Today most .44-40 Single Actions are found in Uberti replicas from Cimarron.

Smith & Wesson chambered the .44-40 in their New Model #3 but only rarely and then it was chambered in the .44 Double Action Frontier in 1882. The .44 Special Triple-Lock was very rarely chambered in .44-40 on special order only. In more modern times Smith & Wesson offered their Wagon Train Commemorative in .44-40. Ruger produced a few .44 Magnum Super Blackhawks with an extra .44-40 cylinder and the original Vaquero was also offered in .44-40.

The .44-40 cartridge normally has a 200-grain bullet while the .44 Special has pretty much been standardized with a 250-grain bullet. This can be a problem with fixed sighted sixguns, however, the adjustable sighted New Frontier solves the problem of two different weight bullets having different points of impact.

GUNS



For Cowboy Action Shooters and all levergun fans, the 1860 Henry and 1866 Winchester are both available in .44-40.



A.G. Russell's Wharnecliffe Swayback Jack is a powerhouse of a pocketknife sporting a thick 0.125" blade of Bohler M390 Microclean stainless "super steel."

A.G. RUSSELL SWAYBACK CLASSIC JACK!

Pat Covert

He is with us no more but A.G. Russell's legacy continues to build, thanks to knife designs he left behind. Russell is an icon in cutlery history, known as one of the greatest cutlery sellers of all time, but truth be known, he enjoyed designing knives most of all. In that role some of his greatest achievements were taking traditional patterns and adding his own touches to them while still staying faithful to the original. A perfect example is the A.G. Russell Wharnecliffe Swayback Jack featured here.

Russell's Wharnecliffe Swayback Jack is 3-5/8" closed, a standard size found on the majority of the old pocketknife patterns, but the nickel silver bolster atop the handle is longer than typical, offering a stouter handle around the blade pivot. Think of it as

a Semi-Barlow. Typical pocketknives this size have a blade thickness of 0.10" — A.G.'s Swayback Jack checks in at 0.125" for tortuous cutting power further aided by its stainless Bohler M390 Microclean "super steel" blade. The Swayback Jack opens up to 6-5/8" via a strong backspring that could kick a door down. The handsome smooth bone scales are bright white, giving the handle a crisp, vibrant look. Fully opened the gracefully curved flow from base to tip are akin to a bird in flight. Fellow gun owners will like the *coup de grace* — a bullet-shaped escutcheon on the front scale.

WHY YOU'LL LIKE IT

Wharnecliffes and their Sheepsfoot brethren are the hardest-working blades in the knife stable. Everything from electrician knives to heavy duty rope knives sport this blade. Russell's



Here you can see the extra-thick 0.125" blade steel lurking between the Swayback's nickel steel bolsters and liners. Powerful stuff it is.

Swayback Jack is just as onerous as it is elegant. If you never owned or handled a Swayback, the uncommon backward curve of the handle will surprise you in its comfort and firmness of grip. Better yet, you get all this goodness delivered in a black fleece-lined zipper pouch at a very reasonable MSRP of \$145.

GUNS

AGRussell.com

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DEMAND CREDIBLE ANSWERS

MAKE THE POLITICIANS JUSTIFY GUN CONTROL

Dave Workman

How many times have you heard or read this: “If people shouldn’t need photo ID to vote, why should it be required to buy a gun?”

Too many left-tilting reporters and politicians quickly dismiss this question as redneck rhetoric, but don’t let them get away with such dismissive condescension. It is a legitimate question because we’re not talking about guns, we’re talking about rights and all constitutionally protected rights are equal, especially the ones enumerated in the federal and state constitutions.

ALL ARE EQUAL

The right to keep and bear arms may be treated like the ugly second-cousin at a family picnic but it is just as important and deserving of respect as the rights of free speech, the press, religion, the presence of legal counsel during police interrogation and the right to an attorney when prosecuted in a court of law.

So, you bet this is a question politicians should answer and not with some song-and-dance response that doesn’t really answer your inquiry. Don’t let them get away with it.

Question: If there is a waiting period on gun purchases, why not on other court-recognized rights?

As Joe Biden is fond of saying, “C’mon, man!” Why should a law-abiding citizen have to wait any longer than it takes for a NICS check to be conducted before he/she can walk out of a gun shop with a newly purchased firearm? It’s a serious question deserving of a serious answer. Good luck with that.

The National Instant Check System was created to allow quick exercise of the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms. When the proposal

was initially explained by the people working at Capitol Hill during the first Clinton administration, they put politicians on the spot by noting credit card companies even 30 years ago could verify someone’s credit history, so why can’t the country create a system by which gun dealers can verify a would-be gun buyer’s qualification to purchase a firearm?

The alternative pushed at the time was a national waiting period. The NICS check derailed that idea but it’s back because anti-gunners aren’t con-

with the acrobatic talent of an Olympics-class gymnast.

RADICAL RHETORIC

Imagine the public reaction if a psychological evaluation were required for anyone seeking, say, an abortion. This language is part of gun-control bill H.R. 127, introduced in January by Texas Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee:

(2) **PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION** — A psychological evaluation is conducted in accordance with this paragraph if —

(A) the evaluation is conducted in compliance with such standards as shall be established by the Attorney General;

(B) the evaluation is conducted by a licensed psychologist approved by the Attorney General;

(C) as deemed necessary by the licensed psychologist involved, the evaluation included a psychological evaluation of other members of the household in which the individual resides; and

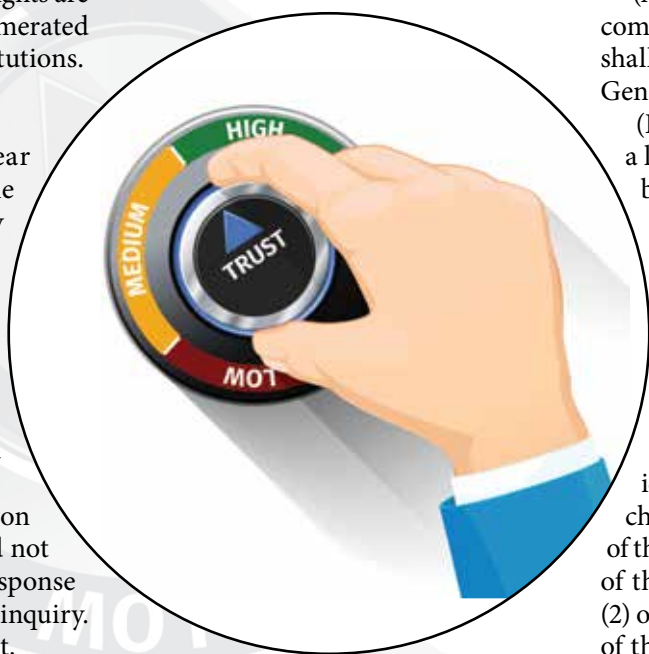
(D) as part of the psychological evaluation, the licensed psychologist interviewed any spouse of the individual, any former spouse of the individual, and at least two (2) other persons who are a member of the family of, or an associate of, the individual to further determine the state of the mental, emotional, and relational stability of the individual in relation to firearms.”

Yes, there would be a deafening public uproar. Network news anchors would go for the jugular of the proponent(s). Protests would erupt. The idea would be demonized.

But a right is still a right.

Question: If background checks are required to purchase a firearm, why shouldn’t they be required for _____ (fill in the blank)?

Expect this for an answer: “Well, guns are different?” How so? Remember, we’re



cerned about crime so much as they are about inconveniencing law-abiding gun buyers.

Question: If you are required to get a permit before buying a gun, why shouldn’t a permit be required to _____ (fill in the blank)?

No matter how many times one repeats this, it still escapes gun control/prohibition advocates that “a right, is a right, is a right.” It’s not okay to treat one constitutionally protected right one way, and another protected right differently.

Anti-gunners dodge this question

not talking about firearms, we're talking about rights and therein is the dilemma politicians — especially the liberal ones — cannot bring themselves to face. It makes them cringe. 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.

KEEP THE FOCUS

When you confront a politician about the Second Amendment, you're the one who must make sure the conversation stays on track. "We're not talking about guns, Senator, we're talking about rights."

Expect some politicians to lose their tempers. Others will simply be speechless, and suddenly remember they've got a committee meeting. Still others might try to shut you up. It may be the rare one who tells you straight to your face, "You're right, and I'm doing everything I can to protect those rights. This bill is nonsense."

However, possibly the most

I'M NOT REGISTERED TO VOTE. I DON'T WANT MY NAME ON A LIST."

embarrassing question of all is not one you ask of politicians seeking your vote — it's the question you ask fellow gun owners, the ones who always complain about the way things are.

Are you registered to vote, and did you vote in the last election?

Follow that up quickly with, "Whom did you vote for?"

This correspondent has asked this question at gun shows and the responses

have often been mind-numbing.

"I'm not registered to vote. I don't want my name on a list."

"I can't remember who I voted for." Yeah, right.

If we're going to combat the stupidity of the gun prohibition mindset, we've also got to fight just as energetically against election-losing apathy within our own ranks. Nobody forgets to vote.

It is simply not enough to get angry and unleash your frustration on social media. Telling nobody special on Facebook "He should be impeached!" is just wasted space. It's an empty observation, easy to write down and "send" but far more difficult to fulfill by voting in an election.

You've got to have a plan, a goal and be willing to get off the couch and go for it. Right now in state capitols across the country, legislatures are meeting or preparing to meet. You've got all of these politicians in one spot. They should be easy to find. All you need to do is look — and then start asking questions.

GUNS

YOUR NEXT DIY PROJECT IS HERE!

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prime



CHIEF UPLAND O/U GAME VEST

I don't do a lot of upland game hunting but when I do, I learn yet again why a high quality, comfortable vest is important. The wrong one can turn a long day in the field into a plodding, sweaty ordeal. A well-designed one can turn the same hunt into an enjoyable afternoon stroll while you relish the sight of working dogs and the heft of a fine shotgun. Go ahead, ask me how I know.

Chief Upland is a small family owned company and their penchant for what's right, what works — and quality of construction — sings out when you don this vest. It's chock-full of features and corresponding benefits (highly customizable) and once on is light, comfortable and can tote your game, shells, gadgets and water (in a built-in bladder holder), so you can concentrate on a good hunt rather than fighting your equipment! Less than \$300 or so depending on the options you choose.

ChiefUpland.com

HELTON FORGE "PERSONAL KNIVES"

Billy Helton, the creator of these delightful cutters, is both an old friend and an accomplished custom knifemaker across the board. If you've never owned a custom knife, it's time to treat yourself to one from Billy. This pair of smart-looking knives are sort of hand-sized and come with what I'd call a "cowboy cross-draw" sheath. I like the almost horizontal carry and being fixed blades, they are fast and sure.

The rounded blade is a sort of do-all shape and could handle cleaning your deer or cutting the hose out front for repairs. I favor the flat-tip models as they are handy for scraping, cutting boxes open and even general cutting chores. These are of forged 32100 ball bearings and all you'd ever need in a knife. Billy's knives start at around the \$150 mark and go up to the heavens from there. You'll be delighted, I assure you.

HeltonForge.com





DIAMOND D'S SIMPLE SHOULDER RIG

For some reason unfathomed by me, shoulder rigs seem to have gone slightly out of favor. It's time they return and Diamond D's aptly named "Simple Shoulder Rig" can help lead the way. Famous for their "Guide's Choice" chest-carry field holster, Diamond D does superlative work in both design, manufacture and raw materials selection. The "simple" in the name of this rig spells a history of excellence in design and function in the real world. Simple is, I assure you, always a good thing.

Constructed of high quality leather and hardware, the rig is made for autos only and offers a magazine pouch on the off-side, along with hold-down straps for the holster and mag pouch. I think those are essential in a shoulder holster. My own sample carries my Hellcat comfortably, well-concealed yet accessible while driving, sitting, walking or even operating the tractor here. A gentleman's carry method if ever there was one! MSRP: About \$245

DiamondDCustomLeather.com



PEPPERBALL COMPACT

Spray OC or "Pepper" spray has its place for sure, especially in a bigger delivery container than your typical purse-sized sprays. You've likely seen the YouTube vids of a can of "bear spray" bellowing out clouds of OC as hikers flee in the other direction. Great, but for pocket carry, I've found the small sprays often just don't deliver the goods far enough.

Pepperball's very nifty new "Compact" model delivers an OC "pepperball" up to about 30 feet, or three times the distance a typical spray can manage. Common nitrogen gas is the propellant, and while the Compact is a one-shooter, you can get reload kits of two propellant charges and two balls if you ever deploy it. When fired, a pepperball strikes a target, rupturing, and means a face-full of OC on a bad guy. Take that, you creep! At about \$25 it's cheap insurance.

shopPepperBall.com



.300 AAC BLACKOUT **O.F. MOSSBERG & SONS, INC.**

Mossberg is expanding their MVP Patrol bolt-action rifle series with a .300 AAC Blackout (300 BLK) offering. Joining the 5.56mm NATO/223 Rem and 7.62mm NATO/308 Win chamberings, these

multi-purpose MVP rifles is for target shooting, hunting, home defense and plinking. The MVP Patrol rifles have patented designs that accept and reliably feed from both AR15-style magazines (300 BLK/5.56mm) and M1A/M14 and AR10-style magazines (7.62mm). MSRP: \$613. For more info: (800) 363-3555, Mossberg.com



B-SERIES PRECISION LITE **SAVAGE ARMS**

The bolt-action *B-Series Precision Lite* models are perfectly balanced rifles for target shooting. The B-Series action is housed in an exclusive Modular Driven Technologies (MDT) one-piece aluminum chassis with an

adjustable cheek riser and length-of-pull spacers. This B-Series rimfire has a button-rifled barrel with a carbon fiber wrap. The carbon fiber heavy barrel profile and aluminum stock allow for a center-balanced rimfire rifle. The new rifles will be available in .22 LR, .17 HMR and .22 WMR. MSRP: Starting at \$949. For more info: (800) 370-0708, SavageArms.com



TRIJICON RMR MOUNT **FOR SIG SAUER P320** **TANGODOWN**

TangoDown's *Trijicon RMR Mount for SIG SAUER P320 Models* (Part # SSM-03) provides a stable platform to mount your RMR optic. Combining the SSM-03 with your RMR and premium backup iron sights (offered separately) will set up your P320 for competition, EDC, or duty use. The SSM-03 is made from the same ordnance-grade steel with a rust-resistant Melonite finish like TangoDown's other optic mounting plates. Mounting fasteners are supplied that have a pre-applied Vibra-Tite VC-3 thread locking compound. MSRP: \$78. For more info: sales@tangodown.com, TangoDown.com



S300 **AMEND2 MAGAZINES**

The Amend2 *S300* is a hybrid grip module that allows the user to use their SIG SAUER P320 Slides and Fire control units, but with P365 magazines. This means you can quickly swap a full-size carry gun for a sub-compact carry gun, and swap back whenever needed. This is possible through the modularity of the SIG SAUER P320 platform. Constructed of polymer, the S300 includes a proprietary magazine release and can be used with 10-, 12- and 15-round P365 magazines. It accepts full-size and compact P320 slides, as well as sub-compact P320 slides with the addition of a threaded barrel and comp. MSRP: \$59.99. For more info: (208) 557-8734, Amend2Mags.com



QUELL SUPPRESSOR **WILSON COMBAT**

The QUELL Suppressor from Wilson Combat is rugged, compact and offers exceptional sound reduction. It is 6.9" long with a diameter of 1.5". With a Magnum-caliber rating, the QUELL is ideal for use with any carbine or rifle. Weighing 15.9 oz. (19 oz. with the suppressor mount), the QUELL is made of 100% hardened 17-4 PH stainless steel and sealed with circumferential welds for structural integrity. MSRP: Starting at \$874.95. For more info: (800) 955-4856, shopWilsonCombat.com



BLACK KING MR-30 **D&L SPORTS INC.**

The *Black King MR-30* from D&L Sports has been the only rifle to win the Triple Crown of tactical shooting. It also won the international sniper match in Bulgaria and was featured in the Shooter cinema series. The MR-30 is available in compact fast-action models and long-range 2,500-yard models. It is offered in 6mm 338 Lapua Magnum and 6.5 Creedmoor. MSRP: From \$5,000 to \$9,500. For more info: (928) 636-1726, DLSports.com

REBEL HOLSTER FOR THE TAURUS GX4 VERSACARRY

Versacarry's *Rebel Holster for the Taurus GX4* is now available. It is an optics-compatible holster for OWB and IWB carry. The Rebel has a raised protective backing with closed-cell padding to give users added comfort. It has a custom-molded polymer front to securely hold the firearm in place, as well as a high quality leather backing for stability. MSRP: \$59.99 for OWB; \$69.99 for IWB. For more info: (979) 778-2000, Versacarry.com



CMR-301 RAIL MASTER PRO CRIMSON TRACE

The *CMR-301 Rail Master Pro* from Crimson Trace is a laser sight + tactical light system for rail-equipped rifles and carbines. It provides 1,000 lumens of illumination and a powerful green laser for precision targeting in variable lighting conditions. The CMR-301 is user programmable and may be operated with a pressure pad or tail cap. Fits standard AR-type modern sporting rifles with M1913 Picatinny or similar accessory rails that's at least 2-3/4" long. MSRP: \$314.99. For more info: (800) 442-2406, CrimsonTrace.com

ATACS SPORT EARBUDS WALKER'S

Walker's *ATACS Sport Earbuds* includes the latest in sound suppression/enhancement technology and operational control. Bluetooth 5.0 connectivity pairs the earbuds to your phone via the Walker's LINK 2.0 app, providing remote control of the listening mode settings as well as auto shutoff times, volume control, battery level, ambient mute and social media links. MSRP: From \$89.99. For more info: (877) 269-8490, WalkersGameear.com



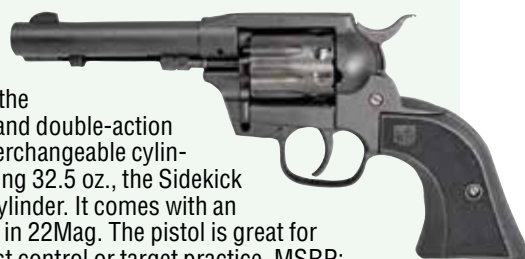
CALIFORNIA-COMPLIANT ALTOR PISTOL ALTOR CORP.

A 9mm *California-Compliant Altor Pistol* is now available. The 6.125" barrel meets the California minimum of 6"; OAL of 10.625" also meets the CA minimum of 10.5". The Altor pistol has a total of six parts but only two connect to load and fire. All metal parts are 100% stainless steel while synthetic parts are premium polymer. MSRP: \$199. For more info: (602) 441-4077, AltorCorp.com



DIAMONDBACK SIDEKICK DIAMONDBACK FIREARMS

Diamondback Firearms introduces the *Diamondback Sidekick*, a single- and double-action rim-fire revolver with a swing out, interchangeable cylinder. With an OAL of 9.875" and weighing 32.5 oz., the Sidekick is chambered in 22LR with a 9-shot cylinder. It comes with an additional 9-shot cylinder chambered in 22Mag. The pistol is great for self-defense, hunting small game, pest control or target practice. MSRP: \$320. For more info: (321) 305-5995, DiamondbackFirearms.com



HENRY LEVER RAIL AND GHOST RING SETS XS SIGHTS

XS Sights is now offering *Henry Lever Rail and Ghost Ring Sets* for Henry .45-70 round barrel rifles. Made of anodized aluminum, the XS Lever Rail is CNC machined for durability to withstand years of hard use. This Picatinny-style rail is lightweight, easy to install and accommodates XS Ghost Ring sets or any optic from scout scopes to red dot sights. MSRP: \$71 for the Henry Lever Rail; \$110 for the Ghost Ring. For more info: (804) 343-3608, XSSights.com

HUDSON BAY AXE COLD STEEL

The Cold Steel *Hudson Bay Camp Axe* has subtle and significant design updates to improve performance and functionality. It has a quick-change locking mechanism securing the axe to the handle without driven wedges. The poll is split allowing a broken handle to be easily removed and a new one installed. Weighing 44.2 oz., the Hudson Bay Camp Axe has a 1055 carbon steel blade measuring 4-1/8" from toe to heel. Handle material is hickory; OAL is 27". MSRP: \$74.99. For more info: (877) 269-8490, ColdSteel.com



TEXAS STAR PLINKING TARGET BIRCHWOOD CASEY

The *Texas Star Plinking Target* will make training sessions productive and exciting while getting the greatest return out of your ammo. It is a reactive target to build the shooter's speed, boost his ability to acquire targets quickly and train him to engage multiple targets with precision and confidence. The Texas Star stands 4' tall and offers five 6"-diameter targets that pivot backward on impact and are easily reset. The assembly is made of AR500 steel for durability and disassembles easily for transport. MSRP: \$349.99. For more info: (877) 269-8490, BirchwoodCasey.com

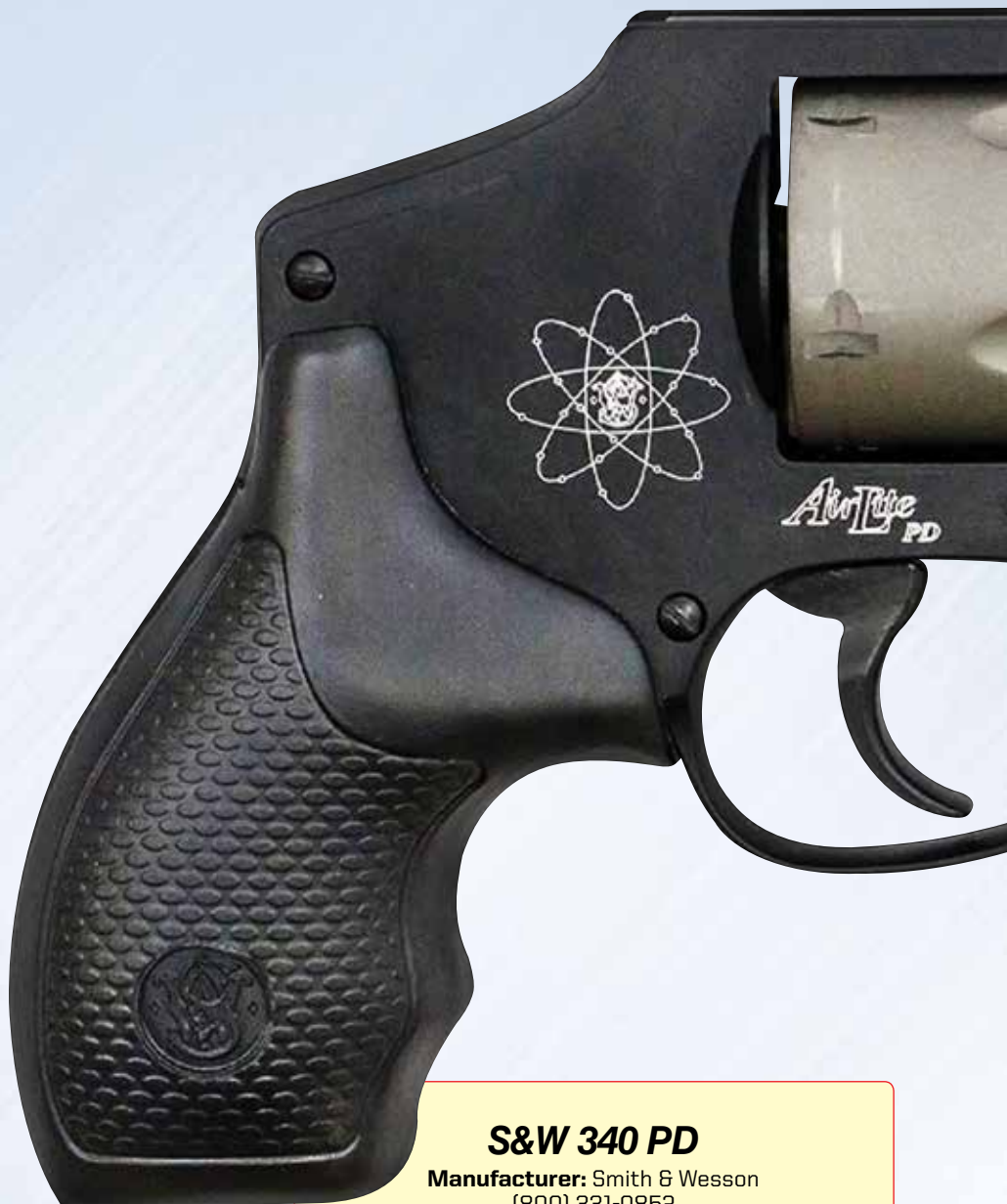


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If you are unable to enter online, mail a postcard with your name and address (no envelopes please). Entries must be received by February 28, 2022. Limit one entry per household.

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.



S&W 340 PD

Manufacturer: Smith & Wesson
(800) 331-0852

Smith-Wesson.com

Caliber: .357 Magnum, **Capacity:** 5, OAL: 6.31"

Barrel Length: 1.875", **Weight:** 11.8 oz.

Value: \$1,075

CUSTOMIZATION BY MAG-NA-PORT

(586) 469-6727

Magnaport.com

Value: \$372.50



CKAGE GIVEAWAY



MAG-NA-PORT CUSTOMIZED S&W 340 PD GIVEAWAY

TOTAL VALUE \$1,447.50

This is *GUNS Magazine's* February issue and we're giving away a gun you'll absolutely love — the Smith & Wesson 340 PD. This small revolver was designed to fire a full power round and is reliable, simple and easy to use. Available in various calibers with three hammer designs, the Smith & Wesson J-Frame is one of the most popular, small-frame, defense revolvers on the market. It has a lightweight scandium alloy frame for easy carry, a titanium alloy cylinder, a stainless steel barrel, a snag-free enclosed hammer and a HIVIZ Fiber Optic Green Front Sight.

We know you'll love it because this gun was actually used by Editor Roy Huntington for an article for *GUNS*. You'll love it even more because Roy sent it to Mag-na-port to be customized. Editor Roy says, "Mag-na-port is known for their innovation, craftsmanship and dedication to making any factory gun better! So be surprised when classic Mag-na-port ideas magically turn this stock S&W J-Frame into something really special. We thought it'd be fun to keep you guessing, so let your imagination run rampant because what's really going to happen will likely be even cooler!"

The Mag-na-port process done on the S&W 340 PD will include general smooth up, combat trigger conversion, polishing screws plus the installation of a longer firing pin from Cylinder & Slide.

If you win this giveaway, you'll be in for a real treat! Remember what Roy said, "be surprised!" So enter now! All you have to do is go to GUNSMagazine.com/giveaways. You can also mail a post card! —Jazz Jimenez

GUNS

MP'S 358-180 RFGC BULLET MOLD

A MULTI-PURPOSE MARVEL

Jeff "Tank" Hoover

When it comes to casting bullets and handloading, versatility is my favorite word.

Being versatile means something can fill-in, or be substituted for, several different purposes rather than being specialized for a specific task. We all love powders filling this niche for several different calibers, right? Unique comes to mind here, performing well in cartridges from the .32s to the large .500s.

Bullets can be the same way. Of all the calibers, I think the .358 may have the most cartridges with this diameter. I recently bought a new mold. Surprise, surprise, eh? This four-cavity master-piece has the ability to cast solids and three different hollow-point designs, all weighing around 180+ grains and dropping out at 0.360". Think of the possibilities.

MP MOLDS 358 180. GCHP

The mold comes from Slovenia and its four cavities make it a casting machine. It comes with four different pins, allowing you to cast solids, pentagonal hollow-points (HPs), and two different round HPs with different depths, depending on how much expansion you want. It is of a Gas Check (GC) design so you can drive it faster with softer alloy, without leading your barrel. As you see



MP-Molds 358-180RFGC is very versatile, capable of loading (left to right) .38 Special, .357 Magnum, .357 Maximum, .35 Remington and .358 Winchester, to name a few.

the options are endless between solid or HP designs. Now start thinking about the different calibers you can load, and you really have versatility. Don't you love it? I sure do!

In solid form, bullets drop at 187 grains. The solid will drive straight and true, while providing the best penetration. The wide, flat meplat, or nose flat will cause a large, permanent wound channel, too. Solids are great for heavily muscled game like pigs to penetrate the tough gristle plate.

Loaded in .38 Special, .357 Magnum, .357 Maximum, or 350 Legend, it carries enough weight to be effective in all these calibers. Plus, it can be used in .35 Remington, getting almost 2,400 FPS, for a flat-shooting, hard-hitting option. The short and often forgotten .358 Winchester can drive these bullets over 2,500 FPS. Wow! It's one of my favorites.

THE LOADS

Starting with .38 Special, we have a heavy load for magnum-sized guns



Shown are the insert pins allowing for different hollow points. A solid option is also possible.



only. It's based off of Elmer Keith's famous load using the 358429 over a stiff charge of 2400. With this bullet, we're going to use 13 grains of Alliant 2400. Velocity is over 1,250 FPS from my 6.5" old model Blackhawk revolver.

It shoots 1" groups at 25 yards on my good days. I would have no qualms taking deer-sized game with this load. Out of my Marlin 1894C, velocities crank up to over 1,600 FPS.

The .357 Magnum does well with 14.5 grains of 2400, breaking 1,400 FPS with the same accuracy as the .38 Special. Out of the Marlin 1894C, it jumps up to over 1,800 FPS and is extremely accurate.

Out of my Ruger .357 Maximum, loaded over 20.5 grains of 4227, I get 1,630 FPS. My TC Contender carbine launches them at 2,000 FPS with all the accuracy you could want!

The .35 Remington is a favorite of mine because of its efficiency and my love for Marlin lever guns. Loaded with 38 grains of H335, we can get almost 2,400 FPS. That's smokin'! Loaded with HP slugs, it is a devastating deer hammer.

The .358 Winchester does even better. With 47 grains of H335, velocity is over 2,600 FPS, with no leading. Pretty cool, huh?

As you can see, this one mold feeds all these calibers without missing a beat. I sure don't feel cheated shooting these loads. Far from it! I'm feeling the satisfaction and excitement of being self-sufficient plus you'll save yourself some money doing it yourself.

I know I've excluded the .356 Winchester and .35 Whelen, as great as they are. Maybe we'll cover them on another day? However, with this mold and my lead and powder, I have an

One mold for all — (above, left to right) Powder-Coated, Sized and Gas-Check applied, and different hollow points. Tank uses his Dillon 550C (below) to crank out loads by the thousands. In this case, some hot-loaded .38s with this slug.



unlimited source of available ammunition. The .35 caliber cartridges really bring out the effectiveness of cast-bullet cartridges.

COST EFFECTIVE

Here's something to consider when you start tallying up the cost of reloading equipment. I've saved enough money over the years handloading to have bought my equipment 20 times over, while having the satisfaction of shooting ammo made from my own two hands — something no amount of money can buy!

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a decrepit trailer at the junkyard. He and his residence smelled like skunk, badly. I loved it.

Trappers are required by oath to carry some type of firearm to dispatch animals and protect themselves from bears, wolves or hostile natives, particularly those wearing knickers and carrying clubs. As my parents were even less thrilled about providing me with the lever-action .22 I coveted, I had to come up with another plan.

WEAPON OF CHOICE

After due consideration, I came up with a simple, rugged, reliable armament for the modern young trapper on the go — the RBMK-1. In everyday parlance, this translates to “Rat Bat, Mark One.” As my parents and all responsible people everywhere agreed I shouldn’t and couldn’t be trusted with a real firearm in the middle of town, I started carrying a Louisville Slugger with which to dispatch the hapless rodents. I seem to remember it was a “Powerized” Hal McRae-autographed model, but regardless, it worked fine.

I can only imagine the growing, recoiling horror from readers of younger age. Using the bat wasn’t pretty and probably did cause some kind of deep mental scarring — I ended up as a gun writer, after all — but I did what was necessary. Yes, I bludgeoned countless muskrats into the great cattail patch in the sky. It was a different time.

Later on, I moved to Conibear traps which handled the distasteful task much more quietly. My RBMK-1 went back to Little League duty, though I did sometimes smirk at its secret while at bat.

IT’S OVER

Sadly, my trapping career came to an abrupt end early one November morning. I made the rounds and in a span of 10 traps, I found three medium-sized ’rats clutched in the steel jaws. I proudly rode home through the pre-dawn neighborhood carrying the late, lamented rodents.

Since the kitchen table in the formal dining room was off limits for

skinning, I did not have any place to prepare my ’rats and sold them whole. During the day the animals would be left in the shade of the patio which served as a natural morgue, at least until I could come home from school and catch a ride to the buyer.

I arrived home the fateful morning especially full of myself. With this haul, I had earned enough money to buy the new Daisy pump BB gun I figured might be useful for the upcoming deer season. Thinking my parents would also be proud of my self-sufficiency, I placed the muskrats where everyone could view the accomplishment.

Going inside, I passed my mother as she walked into the kitchen. Reconstructing the incident, I realized in my hurry to get ready for school, I had failed to inform her of the rodents prominently displayed on the window ledge over the kitchen sink.

My still-sleepy mom saw the animals the moment she reached to fill a glass of water. Looking up, she noticed the three furry rat-like faces, yellow incisors bared in a death grimace, glaring at her from a few inches away in the darkness.

The results were instantaneous and impressive. Several neighborhood car alarms went off, our dog was later found hiding inside the piano and several kitchen cabinet doors were permanently sprung off their hinges. Even though I was in my room, it was also the day my hearing loss began in earnest.

As shrieking faded into the distance, I ran into the kitchen and saw several hair curlers still suspended in mid-air and what appeared to be a high-speed splatter pattern of water on the window glass. Mom was nowhere to be seen and I quickly did likewise.

Later, when I explained what happened, my parents were actually proud of my achievement, though several years had passed. Immediately after the incident my traps mysteriously disappeared while I was at school, taking along with them my Mountain Man dreams — which was fine because by then I had already decided to become a big-game guide.

After all, a .177 pellet with 10-pumps packs *quite* a punch.

GUNS

opinion. But I won’t discourage a legal, constitutional activity for fear people who want us dead and gone might be offended. That’s snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. —Tom McHale

NOT WHAT YOU THINK

What is the purpose of the five-pointed star with spikes on the bottom left corner of p. 50 of the November 2021 issue?



I’ve already discussed this but we continue to get a few letters so I’ll revisit: The pentagram is part of the central symbol on the flag of Ethiopia. It “represents the unity and equality of the different nationalities and the people of Ethiopia.” —BW

OOPS

Just received my copy of the Dec 21 issue of GUNS. On p. 54, bottom photo — the caption reads “giant forest hog.” This is not the giant forest hog but rather a wild boar shot in Texas. Just wanted to give you a heads-up in case you receive communication regarding this photo.

Mark Hampton

1911 AND DUKE

I understand Duke’s fondness for the 1911, I have seven of them myself, and his fondness for the FN High Power. Both invented by John Browning — the latter given its final tweaking by FN’s Dieudonné Saive. I have a High Power in .40 SW and it’s a real comfortable gun to shoot also. Duke’s got good taste in guns.

Dave Schmidt
GUNS

TALES OF THE SUBURBAN TRAPPER

A MINI-MOUNTAIN MAN MAKES MAYHEM

Brent T. Wheat

I was recently at one of the mega-outdoor retail stores trying to spend a gift card. While browsing through the mountains of neat stuff, alternately dismayed because I already owned everything I could possibly want but secretly wishing the gift card had come in a five-figure denomination, I found an aisle full of unexpected merchandise: trapping gear.

Even as an outdoors enthusiast, I had kinda assumed trapping had already been relegated to the overflowing trash heap of wholesome things now politically unpopular. In fact, nowadays trapping often seems to be spoken in the same tone of voice as “Nazi Germany” and “Joe Biden.” This is why I was very surprised to find Conibears, double-springs and trap wax resting among the “Beach Wear” and eco-friendly, 80% recycled BPA-Free water bottles (“Now with less carbon!”).

The oily steel jaws tripped the double-set-trigger of my memory and right there in the store, just a few feet from the gourmet coffee shop, I was transported back to a time in my misbegotten youth when I still believed career opportunities existed for mountain men. In my pre-teen years, ravenous from a steady diet of Huck Finn, John Wayne movies and gun magazines, I dreamed constantly about riding into the mountains in search of pelts and high adventure. This resulted in one of the more unusual endeavors of a relatively unusual childhood: I became a young suburban trapper.

PERSONAL HISTORY

My parents were professional people who had worked hard to move up from their modest beginnings. They strove to give my brother and me more than

we deserved as they grew to appreciate the finer things in life, which rarely included hunting and fishing. However, for reasons yet not understood, I craved a different existence and secretly wished we were poor mountain people subsiding in a dirt-floor shack 40 miles from the nearest road instead of our Upper Middle Class existence in a nice subdivision.

While the other kids in the neighborhood traded baseball cards and threw footballs, I went feral — snagging fish in the drainage ditch, building lean-to’s in the neighbor’s wooded fencerow and



occasionally setting the nearby cornfield ablaze attempting to cook a pilfered can of soup over an open fire. It was a glorious life kids today aren’t allowed to experience, at least not without a helmet, knee pads, fireproof uniform, safety briefing, coach, assistant coach and parental booster club.

Around my 12th birthday, I made a wonderful discovery — the nearby hardware store sold traps. Eureka! I was on my way to becoming a *real*

trapper. After pestering all the neighbors for paying chores — I cleaned every garage, mowed every yard and walked every dog in the neighborhood, whether they needed it or not — I was the proud owner of several new Victor foot traps, much to the consternation of my mother and amusement of my father.

Finally, I was a trapper with portfolio but needed someplace to pursue the wily muskrat, beaver, mink, elk, caribou or whatever else I could bag. Unfortunately, my parents weren’t thrilled with the idea of giving me bus fare to Canada so by default, I was forced to trap in the drainage ditch near my house.

The tiny creek was a shallow affair slogging through a prominent golf course. It offered approximately a mile of riparian habitat chock-full of bank-destroying muskrats but there was one problem with this lush ecosystem — it was infested with a troublesome nuisance species: golfers. I quickly realized late-season linksters took a dim view of a kid interrupting their game by popping up in the middle of the fairway carrying deceased muskrats.

Thus, checking the traps required running the creek in the pre-dawn before school and before the groundskeepers arrived for work. Every morning I would get up early and pedal my bike to the course. Sauntering along in the inky pre-dawn blackness without the benefit of a flashlight — it would have given away my secret profession — I found most of my traps sprung because 12-year-old self-taught trappers don’t have a high success rate.

However, the occasional dullard muskrat would make a fatal mistake and end up being sold to the fur buyer. Selling my hard-won animals was another unique experience as the buyer was a cantankerous man who lived in

continued on page 73

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