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KRIZ

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## COLUMNS

APRIL  
2020  
Vol. 66, Number 4,  
784th Issue



COVER PHOTO BY  
ROB JONES/  
THE IMAGESMITH, LLC

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# GUNS

## CROSSFIRE

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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#### TAFFIN AUTOGRAPH

I love the magazine, BEST gun magazine of the 4-5 to which I subscribe! John Taffin and Mike Venturino are my favorites.

John Taffin's new book, *Book of the .45 caliber*, as per the full page ad on page 25 of the February 2020 issue, is on my "To-buy List." If I buy this book, what is the possibility of getting John's autograph in the book?

Chris Haynes

*To keep things easy for everyone and save shipping costs I will send a peel-off stick-on label with my autograph as they want it. They*

*will need to send me a SASE. This is what Elmer Keith did with his last book and it seemed to work well. Wolfe will have some autographed copies which will probably be higher in cost as they have to ship them to me by the case, I sign them and ship the case back to them. —John Taffin*

#### 1903 SOFTY

I discovered the 1903A3 I bought in the 1970s was not Remington made. It does have a Remington WWII 2-groove barrel but the receiver is stamped National Ordnance. Now I have reviewed claims National Ordnance receivers are "soft," that is, improperly heat-treated. My research indicates this only happened in receivers

with serial numbers less than five million, though my receiver s/n is over five million.

I have never shot the 1903 and would like your opinion as to its safety. Could I take it to a gunsmith and have him do a Rockwell hardness test? Could the 'smith do a headspace check, fire the gun 10 times or so and re-do the headspace to verify it is still in limits? Or should I do nothing?

Anthony Barbuto

*As for the National Ordnance 1903A3, my very first military rifle was one, bought in 1971. I fired it hundreds of times with no problems.*

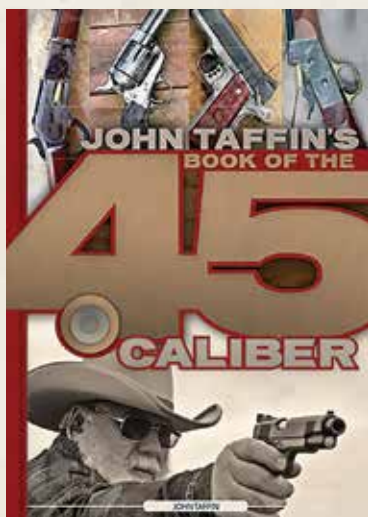
*However, to be on the safe side I would have a gunsmith check it if you have one in your area. My guess is he will say it's fine. —Mike Venturino*

#### A PHONY INVOICE?

I wanted to make you aware I have received an unrequested invoice from an organization calling itself (name deleted). Although my subscription to *GUNS* does not expire for six months, according to my most recent magazine label, (name deleted) sent me an invoice for 12 issues at a price which is much higher than what I have paid in the past — \$49.95 to be exact.

I am a senior citizen and imagine some, brought up in an era in which trust and

*continued on page 32*



**GUNS**  
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THE FINEST IN THE FIREARMS FIELD SINCE 1955

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## KEEP SHOOTIN' PART II: LONG GUNS

In Part I last month I explained change is inevitable and as we grow older, things we do not necessarily desire are forced upon us. Our hands and wrists change and determine just what we can handle when it comes to sixguns and semi-automatics. We don't escape change when it comes to the long guns either.

Several years ago I awoke one morning ready for a day of shooting. I had gotten dressed and suddenly felt a pain that started to get worse and worse. That was 6 a.m. and

by 10 a.m., I was in surgery, given less than a 20 percent chance to survive. The pain was found to be the artery to my heart had split. I do not know why I made it but I did and feel totally blessed.

Anytime something like this happens, it's definitely a life-changing experience. For many years I had enjoyed shooting heavy loads. Afterward, I did not think it would be a good idea to continue. So, when such changes come, what can we do to keep shooting?

### ADD WEIGHT

One of the most obvious ways to reduce felt recoil is to add weight to our firearms. Henry offers two .44 Magnum leverguns, one much heavier than the other. I have also had some leverguns, especially those chambered in .45-70 rebarreled with heavier octagon barrels. Until this past year from the time of my surgery I had not shot anything heavier than a .243 rifle but I wanted to shoot something heavier. Finally, I saw the solution.

Ruger began offering a stainless steel Target/Varmint rifle with a heavier-than-normal stock and also a heavy barrel. Total



The Marlin .32 Magnum is exceptionally pleasant shooting and is backed up by a pair of custom .32 Magnum Rugers by Andy Horvath.



HSM offers low recoil loads in several calibers.



The addition of a muzzle brake made this heavy .308 Ruger even easier shooting.

# Get JOHN TAFFIN'S Book of the .45 Caliber



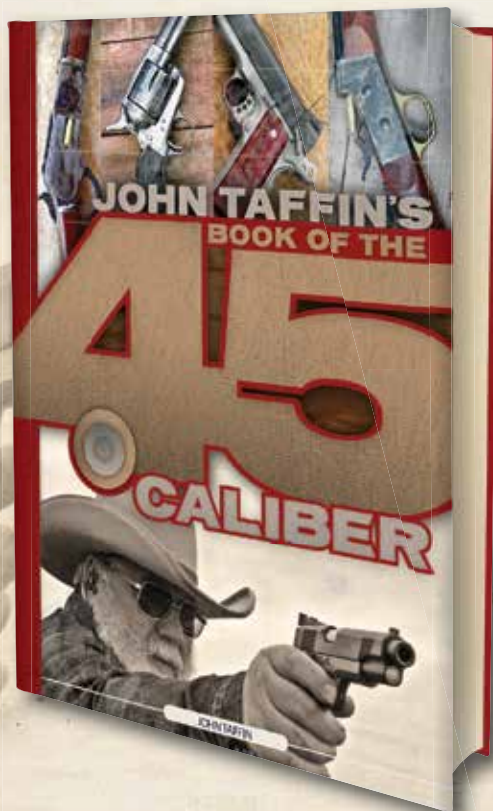
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weight as it came was over 9 lbs. By the time I scoped it, added a bipod and made one other change which I will speak of shortly, the weight went up to over 11 lbs. and felt recoil was even less than the .243. The extra added bonus is the fact with Black Hills 168-gr. .308 Winchester loads it will group 3 shots in 1" at 200 yards.

## MUZZLE BRAKES

One of the other changes I made to the Ruger was the addition of a muzzle brake. This probably helped more than anything else to lower felt recoil. I first ordered a Ruger muzzle brake, however, when it arrived I found the diameter was too small to fit the larger than normal diameter barrel so this one went on a Ruger Mini-30. This little semi-automatic carbine chambered in 7.62x39 is not what one would call a heavy recoiling rifle. However, the addition of the Ruger muzzle brake made it exceptionally pleasant shooting.

## RECOIL PADS

With my Springfield Armory M1A1, I told my gunsmiths at Buckhorn to find the thickest, softest recoil pad they could



The .30 caliber M1 Carbine offers low recoil but is still effective against small game and in self-defense applications.

come up with. They had to shorten the stock somewhat and remove the metal butt plate to install a deluxe Decelerator pad and this, coupled with the muzzle brake, really makes shooting the M1A1 a pleasant situation. Most older rifles originally fitted with recoil pads probably need them replaced as rubber hardens over the years and becomes about as useful as a steel butt plate. A brand-new soft rubber pad will do wonders.

## LOADS

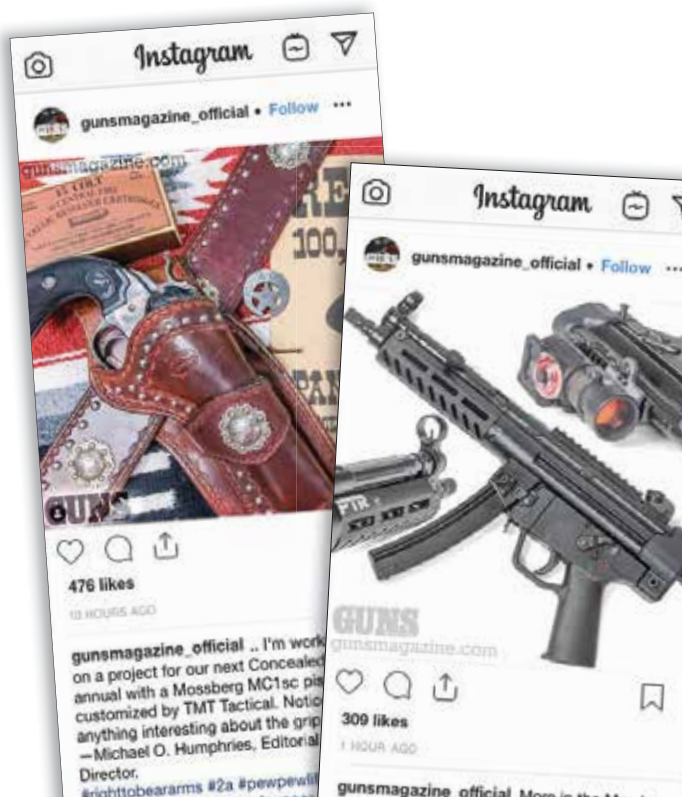
Just as with sixguns, we can extend our rifle shooting life by changing our loads. Companies like HSM of Montana offer a

whole series of Low Recoiling Rifle ammunition loaded with Sierra Bullets to produce over 50 percent less felt recoil. For example their 150-gr. bulletted .30-06 and .308 loads are loaded at, or slightly below standard .30-30 loads with both loads clocking out under 2,400 fps and definitely providing less felt recoil.

One of the real thumpers I have is the little 18-1/2" Remington Model 600 chambered in .308. The HSM load clocks out at 2,260 fps in the Model 600 and I do not feel concerned at all shooting this load off my shoulder. In the Encore Contender .308 with a 15" barrel, length includes the muzzle brake, velocity is at 2,050 fps, or about where

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# “... IT'S NOT THAT IMPORTANT *WHAT WE SHOOT* BUT SIMPLY THE FACT WE JUST *KEEP SHOOTIN'*.”

my .30-30 long-range silhouettes loads were 30-plus years ago. When shooting off sandbags the muzzle rises less than 1" when the Encore is fired. For handloaders, many reloading manuals offer starting loads that are about in this same range.

## CALIBERS

Again as with handguns, there is much we can do by changing calibers to produce less felt recoil. Is a .300 Magnum really necessary for your hunting chores, or will a .30-06 or .308 do just fine? And if the recoil felt from these two are too much, there are low recoil loads. Instead of a .308 there are two other chamberings on the same cartridge case which I find exceptionally easy to handle and also able to handle anything that walks in my hunting areas.

These are the .243 Winchester and 7-08. If the standard factory loads are more than

desired we can look to HSM again. Their .243 loaded with the 85-gr. Sierra clocks out at 2,100 fps and puts three shots in 1" at 100 yards while the 7-08 load with a 140-gr. Sierra has the same muzzle velocity and also shoots just as accurately. I use both of these loads in a pair of Ruger Compact Model 77s and find them both exceptionally pleasant to shoot.

We have many other choices in easy shooting calibers such as the 6.5 Swede and .250 Savage. In leverguns, the .357 Magnum is just about the handiest little carbine to have and unlike the .41 and .44 Magnum, doesn't do a job on the shoulder. There is also the exceptionally easy shooting M1 .30 Carbine, available on both the used market and several companies are now offering new versions. It is much easier to shoot, certainly works for small game and varmints and, as originally designed, self-defense.

## FINALLY THE .22

Finally, and just as with handguns, there are .22 rifles. Most of us started with a .22 rifle and if our time does not come too quickly and if we keep on shooting the chances are very good we will wind up the same way. Whether we shop the used gun market or prefer new there is virtually no end to the grand .22s being offered. In addition to the Marlin 39, there has been a long list of Ruger 10/22 iterations. Aside from the Marlin leverguns and Ruger semi-automatics, there are many bolt-action rifles, foreign and domestic, offered in .22 Long Rifle and .22 Rimfire Magnum. Both are exceptionally good cartridges for small game and varmints and I wouldn't feel terribly under-gunned in a self-defense or survival situation with either.

Just as with handguns, it's not that important *what we shoot* but simply the fact we just *Keep Shootin'*. 🔫

## A good day at the range...we make it easy.



The advertisement features a collage of images related to shooting sports. At the top left is the MTM CASE-GARD logo with the tagline 'QUALITY SHOOTING SPORTS ACCESSORIES'. Below the logo is a photo of two people at a shooting range. To the right is a close-up of hands holding a green brush and a bullet. Further right is a photo of a man smiling while aiming a rifle. Below these are three more photos: a man aiming a rifle, a man aiming a rifle, and a woman aiming a rifle. At the bottom left is a small logo that reads 'AMERICAN FAMILY OWNED • MANUFACTURING IN THE U.S.A. SINCE 1968'. At the bottom right is the text 'MTM MOLDED PRODUCTS COMPANY - (937) 890-7461 - WWW.MTMCASE-GARD.COM'.

## MIX-N-MATCH SHOOTERS TALES OF THE "FRANKENGUN"

In Mary Shelley's timeless novel, Dr. Frankenstein created his eponymous monster from body parts stolen from the grave and reanimated. Shooters have been known to do something similar, though the parts don't necessarily come from no-longer-functional donors and often work out better for all concerned than Dr. Frankenstein's creation.

Let me share with you some "Frankenguns" of my acquaintance that worked out just fine.

### REVOLVERS

In the early days of "police combat" revolver competition, the 6" barrel .38 was the max you could use. Colt versus S&W was the handgun world's version of Ford versus Chevy or Coke versus Pepsi and it was the Colt's slightly greater accuracy versus the Smith & Wesson's more "even" one-stage double-action pull. The Colt

Python's barrel tapered a thousandth of an inch toward the muzzle, driving the lead bullet tighter into the rifling grooves, which on the Colt were a 1:14" twist compared to the Smith's 1:18.75. The Colt seemed to better stabilize 148- to 158-gr. lead slugs.

Gun-savvy cops were grateful when Bill Davis, late of the California Highway Patrol, pioneered the concept of putting a Python barrel on a K-Frame S&W. The result, known variously as a "Smolt" and a "Smython," combined the best of both brands. The NRA managed PPC competition soon caught onto this and changed the rules. They required in Distinguished or Service Revolver competition, the gun had to have its barrel made by the same company that manufactured the gun. My own Davis Custom Smython, via my good friend Chuck McDonald, is a treasured part of my collection even though it was soon supplanted by "PPC guns" with

monster Douglas and Apex barrels and mounting BoMar or Aristocrat sight ribs.

I came to own some of the latter, Frankenguns in their own right, made by legends like Ron Power and Andy Cannon. My single sweetest, though, may have been a pre-war Colt Official Police tuned to single-stage DA by master Python mechanic Reeves Jungkind. The massive barrel was an inch and a quarter under its Aristocrat rib, but it always put the bullets where I aimed them.

### AUTOLOADERS

WWII hero Jim Clark Sr. became, in the early 1950s, the first and still the only civilian to win the National Pistol Championship in bullseye shooting without the benefit of having been funded by a military team. One of the great master gunsmiths, he was also the man credited with creating both the long-slide 1911 and a 1911 which could feed the blunt, rimmed .38 Special wadcutter revolver cartridge. An inch would be amputated from another 1911 slide to go onto the one of the chosen Colt .38 Super, a 6" match grade .38 Special barrel would be

Python barrel on K-Frame Smith. The "Smython" is a classic Frankengun.

Massive Apex barrel, Aristocrat sight rib and Reeves Jungkind action turned this old Colt Official Police .38 into an awesome PPC match gun.

John Lawson created this early Ayoob Special, a Combat Commander .45 with a 5" ported Bar-Sto barrel, S&W micrometer sights and Hoag beavertail safety.





The amputated slide from one 1911 was grafted on the front of another by Jim Clark, Sr. to create this long-slide Colt .38 Special wadcutter gun.

magic to make it all work with 100 percent reliability — not to mention a 2.5-lb. trigger pull.

By the time I could afford a Clark Custom long-slide, my bullseye days were long over but there were some PPC matches where it was allowed in Open Semi-Auto class. Mine won me a bunch of local PPC matches and also some falling plate shoots. It's a most specialized piece of equipment, one of the finest firearms I own and I will always cherish it. Jim has left us, and just as sadly so has his son Jim Jr., but the family legacy of fine bespoke firearms lives on with his daughter Kay Clark-Miculek, his son-in-law Jerry Miculek, and the outstanding crew at Clark Custom.

## A SPECIAL GUN

The first "Ayoob Special," built by the late, great John Lawson in Tacoma, was kind of a Frankengun. I had bonded with my first Colt .45 auto, a 5" GI surplus model, at age 12 in 1960. By the '70s, I had discovered the 4.25" all-steel Combat Commander balanced a little better for me but seemed to



Smith + Colt = Smolt, courtesy of the great gunsmith Bill Davis.

muzzle jump. I installed a 5" barrel in one, planning to have the exposed part of the barrel Mag-na-ported, but it turned out the barrel lugs weren't compatible between the Government Model barrel and Commander slide, and it broke. I sent it to John, who installed a 5" barrel properly fitted, and it went thence to Larry Kelly at Mag-na-port — sure enough, muzzle jump was less than with the longer, heavier Government. It later

got a Bar-Sto barrel, also ported, to enhance accuracy. I have it still, a sweet reminder of what was then state-of-the-art in a carry and competition .45.

Mix and match: I can confirm from personal experience that, at least sometimes, the concept works — and we've only touched a tip of the Frankengun iceberg.

[www.clarkcustomguns.com](http://www.clarkcustomguns.com)



## HANDLOADING WITH ACME “LIPSTICK” BULLETS

### PART I: SIXGUNS

**M**y copy of the *Oxford Dictionary* defines “Acme” as “the highest point; the peak of perfection.” In the old Road Runner cartoons Wile E. Coyote was always getting products from a company called Acme. These were designed to catch the high-speed little bird, however, they definitely were not at the highest point as they never worked.

#### THE NEW ACME

Now, Acme is being applied to a relatively new line of bullets and in this case the name is definitely apropos. I have been shooting hundreds upon hundreds of Acme Bullets in both sixguns and semi-automatics the past couple months and if they are not at the highest point, the peak of perfection, they are certainly exceptionally close.

Acme Bullet Company itself labels them as “Lipstick” Bullets due to the bright red coating. This is a HiTek coating applied to cast bullets of a 92-6-2 alloy with the 92 representing 92 percent lead and the others tin and antimony. Acme says the coating is

bonded to the bullet on a molecular level and completely encapsulates it. Acme lists several benefits to the coating.

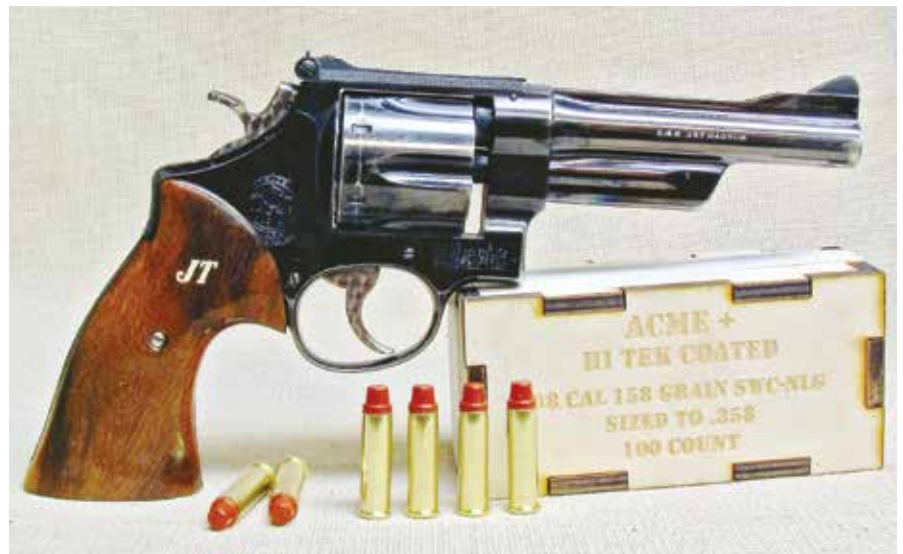
It prevents lead-to-bore contact which, of course, virtually eliminates any leading.

Since there is no wax or lube on the

bullets, there is less smoke, making them very range friendly especially if shooting indoors

The coating helps facilitate feeding in semi-automatic pistols and can be shot through polygonal rifling.

They also claim higher velocities without leading and I also experienced higher velocities than expected. An example of this was their 158-gr. SWC coated bullet loaded over 14.0 grains of #2400 in .357 Magnum brass which gave



Acme's 158 SWC .38 was loaded in John's custom Smith & Wesson Model 27.

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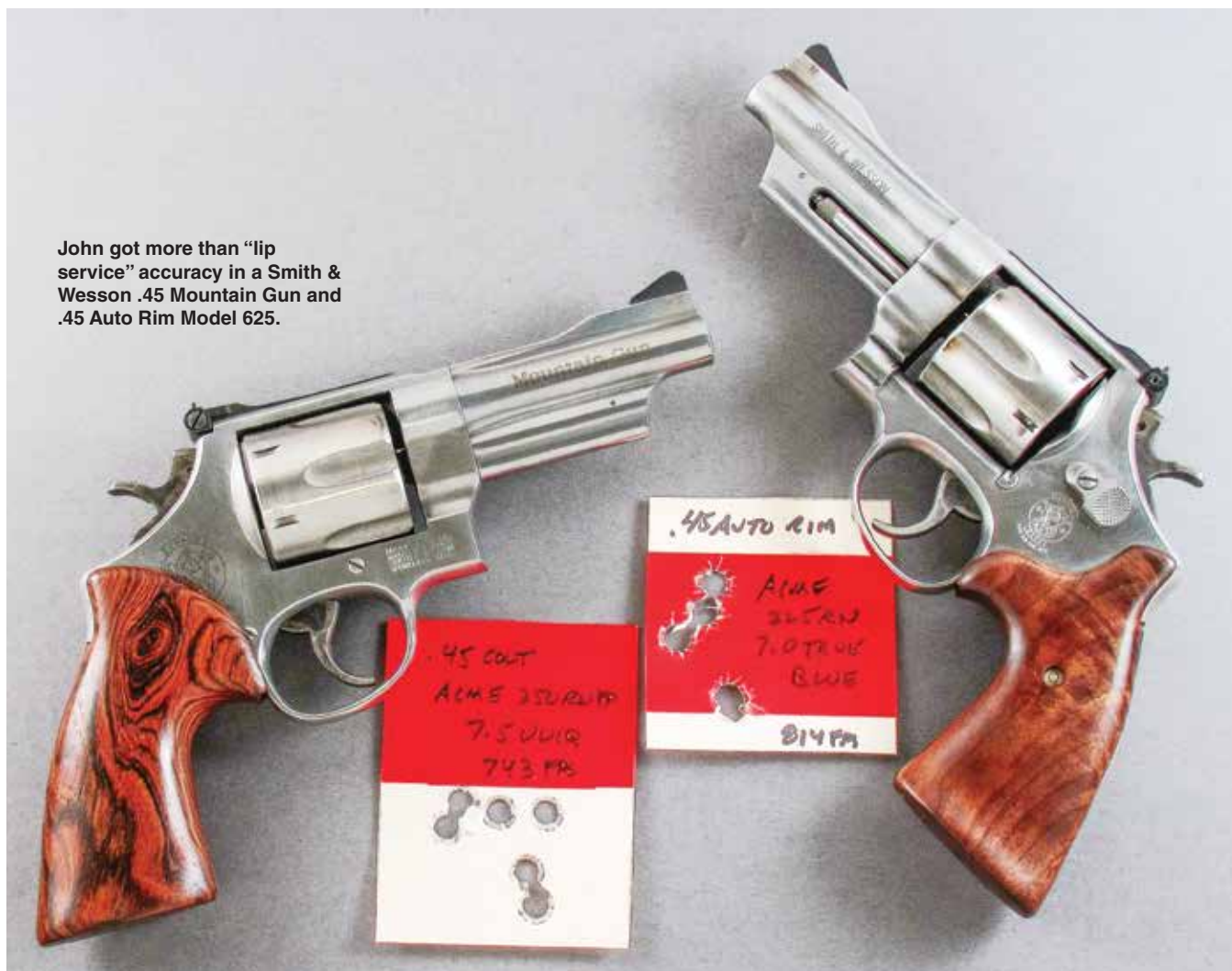
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John got more than “lip service” accuracy in a Smith & Wesson .45 Mountain Gun and .45 Auto Rim Model 625.



“MORE THAN ONCE I HAVE LOADED A LARGE AMOUNT OF AMMUNITION AND FOUND 500 BULLETS ACTUALLY TURNED OUT TO BE MORE LIKE 496 BULLETS.”

me muzzle velocities right at 1,465 fps in a relatively short 5-1/2" length barrel.

#### NO DROP SHIPPING

If you have ordered many boxes of bulk bullets shipped to your home address, you have probably experienced the same problem I have. This is a universal problem and it seems to make no difference whether the bullets are shipped by USPS, UPS or FedEx. When the packages arrive at my door I find them sitting on the porch with the cartons broken open and bullets spilling out. This does not happen with Acme Bullets.

First their bullets in lots of 100 are enclosed in a sturdy plastic bag and placed in a wooden box. These wooden boxes are also tacked shut so it takes a little effort to pry them open. They then place these boxes in the shipping carton and any unused space is filled with packing. My mailman was probably not very happy with me or Acme for my last shipment, however, three Priority Mail boxes each weighing over 30 lbs. arrived at my doorstep in perfect shape.

Another problem that often happens with bulk bullets is the count. More than once I have loaded a large amount of ammunition and found 500 bullets actually

turned out to be more like 496 bullets. This does not happen with Acme. Every lot of 100 I have loaded finds me with 2-3 extra bullets. Not only do I not run out of bullets before I run out of brass, I also have these extra bullets for taking pictures.

#### PLEASING ACCURACY

Currently I have been using Acme bullets in diameters of 0.358" for use in .357 Magnum loadings, and aside from the higher-than-expected muzzle velocity I also was quite pleased with the accuracy. Most of my sixgun reloading thus far with Acme bullets has been with 0.452" diameters for



Not only are they great bullets, they come packed in a laser-cut wood box, protecting the bullets far better than the typical cardboard box of other companies.

use in the .45 ACP, .45 Auto Rim and .45 Colt. We will also look at .45 ACP loads in Part II that will cover semi-automatics. For this part my loads in .45 ACP in full moon clips and .45 Auto Rim have both been used in Smith & Wesson revolvers as has the .45 Colt loads.

My loads of choice for the .45 Auto Rim are assembled with Acme 225-gr. round-nose and 225-gr. flat-nose bullets. These are designed for the .45 Colt, however, they work just as well in the .45 Auto Rim. The .45 Auto Rim cartridge dates back to the early 1920s and is nothing more than a .45 ACP cartridge with a thick rim added. This rim allows the use of .45 cartridges in the cylinder of a .45 ACP revolver without the use of moon clips.

One of my favorite Perfect Packin' Pistols is a Smith & Wesson Model 1955 which has had the barrel cut from the original 6-1/2" to an easier carrying 4". With its heavy barrel, this sixgun looks much like a 4" .44 Magnum. Both of these Acme bullets loaded over 7.0 grains of True Blue are in the 800-830 fps range of the original .45 ACP Hardball loads and provide very tight groups right at 1". With the 230-gr. Acme "Lipstick" bullet loaded over 5.5 grains of Sport Pistol and shooting through a 6-1/2" barrel Model 1955, groups are in the same muzzle velocity range and also provide the same tight groups. All of these loads are good choices for everyday carry, at least for me.

## BRING ON THE COLTS

Switching to the .45 Colt, my loads are assembled with the typical 255-gr. SWC and 250-gr. RNFP bullets offered by several suppliers of cast bullets. However, this time instead of the lube grooves being filled with lubricant, the entire bullet is coated with Acme's "Lipstick" coating. Unlike .45 ACP bullets, these bullets have crimping grooves.

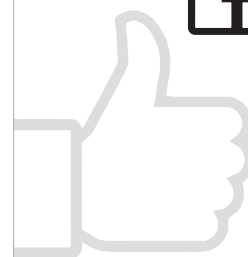
Both of these bullets were loaded over 7.5 grains of Unique and 7.5 grains of True Blue. Depending upon the sixgun, muzzle velocities range from about 725 to 800 fps. Several years ago, in fact long before The Clinton Lock appeared on S&W revolvers, one of the Classic sixguns offered by Smith & Wesson was the HEG .45 Colt. This double-action revolver reminiscent of those provided by Smith & Wesson in the early part of the 20th century has a very slim 6-1/2" barrel with a tall Patridge gold bead front sight.

With either bullet or either powder charge mentioned, it shoots very well with muzzle velocities closer to 800 fps and excellent accuracy. For normal everyday use with either .45 Colt or .45 Auto Rim sixguns, all these loads suit me just fine. They will certainly handle anything I am likely to come up against in any place I frequent these days. In our second installment we will look at Acme Bullets in semi-automatic pistols.

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## CHANGEOVER CHALLENGES WHY I SOLD MY .44 SPECIALS

**H**ey John Taffin, remember a couple years ago when I told you in a column I was sort of eating crow? I've made it no secret to me the .44 Special isn't anything special — no better and no worse than .45 Colt, .45 Auto-Rim, even the .44 Russian or .45 S&W Schofield. And, I know to you, it is special.

### .44 TRIO

What sparked the column was the fact I'd bought three Colt SAA .44 Specials shortly before writing. Two were nickel-plated of 3rd Generation manufacture (1980). They wore 4-3/4" and 7-1.2" barrels. The third one was 5-1/2" barreled, blue/case colored from 2nd Generation. It was made in 1961 and lettered as an original .44 Special. We both know there are a lot of bogus 2nd Generation SAA .44 Specials about. Usually they started as .38 Specials/.357 Magnums and were re-barreled and re-cylindereed with once abundant .44 Special parts. I know for I've done a couple this way myself. You may have also done the same thing.

So I'm sort of reneging on the helping of crow I was going to eat. Why? I've sold two of those three .44 Specials, keeping only the one made in 1961. Why? It's because I'm so smart. I successfully completed one of those rare — get to

have my cake and eat it too — situations. Selling those two .44s raised a bundle of cash for me but I still get to enjoy shooting several Colt SAA .44 Specials.

### MIX-N-MATCH

How's that? Well, we both know Colt only made one barrel for its .44s whether they were .44 WCF (.44-40) .44 S&W Special or .44 S&W Russian. By a factory spec chart, dated 1922 given to me by a long-time Colt collector, the .44 barrel dimension was 0.426"/0.427" across its

**By switching cylinders Duke can shoot .44-40s or .44 Specials in his SAAs at whim.**



grooves. I actually slugged the barrels of all three of the above mentioned .44 Specials. All were 0.426".

Back in the spring I was getting my favorite rattlesnake revolver loaded for warm weather. It's a 3rd Generation "Sheriff's Model" with a 3" barrel. Loaded with shot loads — either my own handloaded ones or factory CCI loads — it's perfect for a snake gun. Something clicked as I loaded it. By barrel marking, it was sold as a .44-40. I have had a .44 Special cylinder in it so long I actually forgot it was marked .44-40.

Cylinder interchangeability is one of most single action revolvers' greatest features. Also settling in my handgun racks were two 3rd Generation Colt .44-40s. So the bright light flashed on — all I had to do was find .44 Special cylinders, ensure they fit properly in my SAA .44-40s and I would be able to shoot .44-40 or .44 Special rounds in those Colts at my whim.

### SIMPLE BUT DIFFICULT

Brilliant! Right? Actually it wasn't quite so easy. First, I actually had to find .44 Special cylinders. Colt hasn't made them for several years. Furthermore, while both of my SAA .44-40s had 4-3/4" barrels, one was nickel-plated and one was blue/case colored. Oh well, this is why they invented the Internet, isn't it? Several months passed before proper 3rd Generation .44 Special cylinders were located and purchased. Both were new/unfired and I was further lucky both perfectly fit in and timed correctly in their respective sixguns. There was one other little hitch in this giddyup — the blued



**Duke added auxiliary .44 Special cylinders to his Colt SAA .44-40 sixguns.**

cylinder just didn't look "right" in its new sixgun. The blue/case colored Colt .44-40 had been beautifully engraved, even with gold filled lines around cylinder and barrel.

Some research with the Colt's former owner got me the name of the engraver. It was a fellow I already knew — Brian Gouse (234 Montana St., Hinsdale, MT 59241). Brian had photos of his work so we met at a Montana gun show where I handed over the blued .44 Special. A few months later he handed it back; engraved with gold inlay and well-polished in the white. Next it was handed over to another Montanan, Al Springer (www.snbgunrestorations.com), who blued it perfectly to match the engraved Colt. These new .44 Special cylinders and the engraving with gold inlay ate up some of the bundle of cash raised by selling two .44 Special SAAs but it was worth it.

## GENERATIONS

Some uninitiated reader might be wondering why I have not gotten a .44-40 cylinder for the 1961 vintage Colt .44 Special. One reason is Colt didn't make

Duke slugged the barrel of his .44-40 Colt SAAs. They both measured 0.426" across their grooves.



2nd Generation .44-40s except for the 2002 Peacemaker Centennial Commemoratives and those were nickel-plated. The second reason is cylinders of 2nd and 3rd Generation Colt SAA production are not interchangeable short of replacing some internal parts. A custom 2nd Generation .38 Special

or .357 Magnum cylinder could be rechambered to .44-40. Maybe someday.

So now, when I go down to my private steel target range for an afternoon's plinking, it matters not which cylinders are in my .44 Colt SAAs. I've got both bases covered.

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## SPEED RACER

### GET YOUR HUSTLE ON WITH A BOLT GUN

**W**hile bolt-action rifles have largely been superseded for military use, they dominate the hunting fields.

The reason for this is a topic for another day but for now, I want to focus on the issue of cycling the bolt efficiently to reload after firing a shot.

#### FINISH WHAT YOU START

Reloading should be a conditioned reflex. A shot sequence shouldn't end when the shot is fired, it ends when the rifle and shooter are ready to fire again if necessary.

It seems a lot of hunters never shoot at all except from the bench. When I'm shooting from the bench to sight-in or test equipment I have the habit, as do many shooters, of reaching across with the left hand to grab the fired case as it is being ejected and set it back in the box. I've actually seen hunters fire at a game animal, then carefully pick the fired case from the ejection port and pocket it before the animal is even down.

But who am I to talk? I recall something similar when I was young and thoughtless. I fired three shots at a fast-running whitetail with a Winchester 70 .270. The first two missed; at the third shot the deer did a spectacular end-over-end flip. Almost before it came to a stop I was scrounging in the snow looking for the fired cases. It would have really reinforced the lesson if the deer had got up and run off. In fact it had been killed almost instantly but it was still one of my

dumber moves.

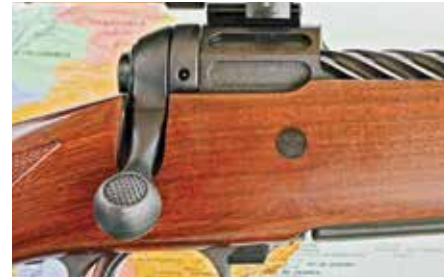
#### FACTORS IN SPEED

The point here — the shooter's mindset and conditioned reflexes are key elements in reloading. The shooter's commitment to making the process a conditioned reflex is the most important factor. Nonetheless, the rifle itself is a significant component. Some factors to consider include the location of the bolt handle; bolt lift, both in terms of degrees of rotation and effort required; bolt throw; length of the bolt handle; and rifle fit, in particular length of pull and the material used for the butt plate or butt pad.

In my experience, no bolt action is easier or faster to cycle than the century-old Lee Enfield No. 1 Mk III. With a Lee I can easily fire an aimed shot every two seconds. If you really want to go fast, grasp the ball of the bolt with thumb and first two fingers, and pull the trigger with the ring finger. With this method I've got down to 0.75 to 0.80 between shots, admittedly with not much accuracy — but I suppose a platoon of soldiers all firing in this manner might be effective in countering an enemy bayonet charge.

#### WHAT ATTRIBUTES MAKE THE LEE SO FAST?

- Bolt location. When the shooter is gripping the stock with a finger on the trigger, the bolt knob is directly above the hand.



A great feature of the Savage 110 (and variants such as this Model 11) is the excellent location of the bolt knob, almost as ideal as the Lee-Enfield.



A long bolt handle ideally located, short (70 degrees) bolt lift, short bolt throw, and superb workmanship on Dave's favorite rifle, his little Sako Finnlight .243.

- Bolt lift is very easy due to the cock-on-closing design. The only effort required is for primary extraction of the fired case, and to clear the locking lugs. Bolt rotation is approximately 70 degrees compared to 90 degrees for most two-lug actions.

- Bolt throw is relatively short for two reasons: The .303 British cartridge case is shorter than other military rounds of its era (2.222" versus 2.471" for the 8mm Mauser and 2.494" for the .30-'06). The rear locking lugs of the Lee saves the additional distance needed to clear the front locking lugs from their recesses in the receiver ring.



Dave's Remington 700 Mountain Rifle in .280 Rem. He considered changing to a longer bolt handle but since this rifle kills every deer he's fired at, he's afraid of angering the red gods!



The Lee-Enfield No. 1 Mk III, designed before 1900, is still unsurpassed in speed of reloading. The bolt knob is above the shooting hand and it has a short, easy bolt lift and throw.



Speed guns — fast-cycling bolt actions (from top) Sako Finnlight .243 Win., Savage 11 .260 Rem., Kimber Montana .223 Rem.

## TODAY'S GUNS

Since it is unlikely we are all going to go back to a rifle designed before the first Roosevelt became president, what about the rifles of today? One obvious difference is the Lee's cock-on-closing design is passé. All modern bolt-actions of which I'm aware use cock-on-opening, a feature I like but which does lead to a heavier bolt lift.

What about actions with reduced bolt rotation, e.g. 60 degrees instead of the more common 90 degrees? Since the cocking piece has to be moved the same amount for reliable ignition, these actions can have heavier bolt lifts. It isn't always so, as high quality workmanship (and sometimes longer bolt handles) can negate the issue. The big advantage of such actions is

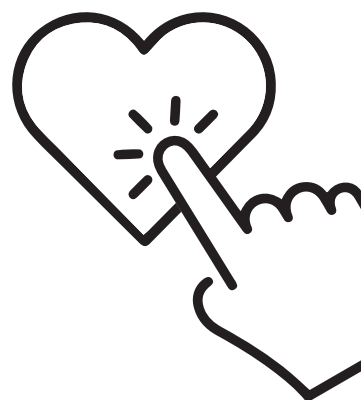
greater clearance between bolt handle and the scope eyepiece.

## STAND BACK

With standard or magnum-length actions you may have to move your head slightly so the bolt doesn't hit your shooting glasses. Short actions with shorter bolt throw allow you to cycle the action without moving your head. And regardless of recoil, I want a soft rubber recoil pad to keep the rifle firmly on my shoulder while reloading.

For me, my Sako Finnlight short action .243 checks all the boxes. Bolt knob well located for quick access; short bolt lift; a long bolt handle and excellent workmanship for easier bolt lift; short bolt throw; excellent stock fit and a soft recoil pad.

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## CLERKE FIRST REVOLVER

### THE SKUNKOPOTAMUS OF COMBAT HANDGUNS

In the 1970s the hair was long, the gas was rationed, the interest rates were astronomical and the prevalent fashions could foment blindness if unduly gazed upon. In addition to all this pervasive grooviness, the '70s also saw the glorious genesis of the absolute worst defensive firearm in all of human history. This steaming pile of ballistic doodoo was curiously titled the Clerke First.

#### IN THE BEGINNING

The 1968 Gun Control Act (GCA) arose in response to the assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Prior to the '68

GCA, Americans just ordered their firearms through the mail. Afterwards guns had to pass through a federally licensed firearms dealer. The '68 GCA also codified restrictions on which cheap guns could be legally imported.

These rules were intended to exclude the infamous Saturday Night Specials. This nebulous pedestrian term refers to any inexpensive small handgun that readily lends itself to nefarious applications. To meet the importability threshold, a gun had to have a barrel at least 3" long and be a minimum of 4.5" in overall length. There was also a point system based upon such



Look familiar? As a wild-eyed youth Will burned through many a cap gun sporting identical technology.

stuff as caliber, weight, construction and sights along with an associated aggregate overall cutoff for importability.

The '68 GCA excluded a great many handguns previously legal to import. The Walther PPK, for example, didn't make the cut. The subsequent PPK/S sported a larger frame and an extra round in the magazine and did meet the criteria. This was likely the only example extant wherein a gun got better because of a gun control law.

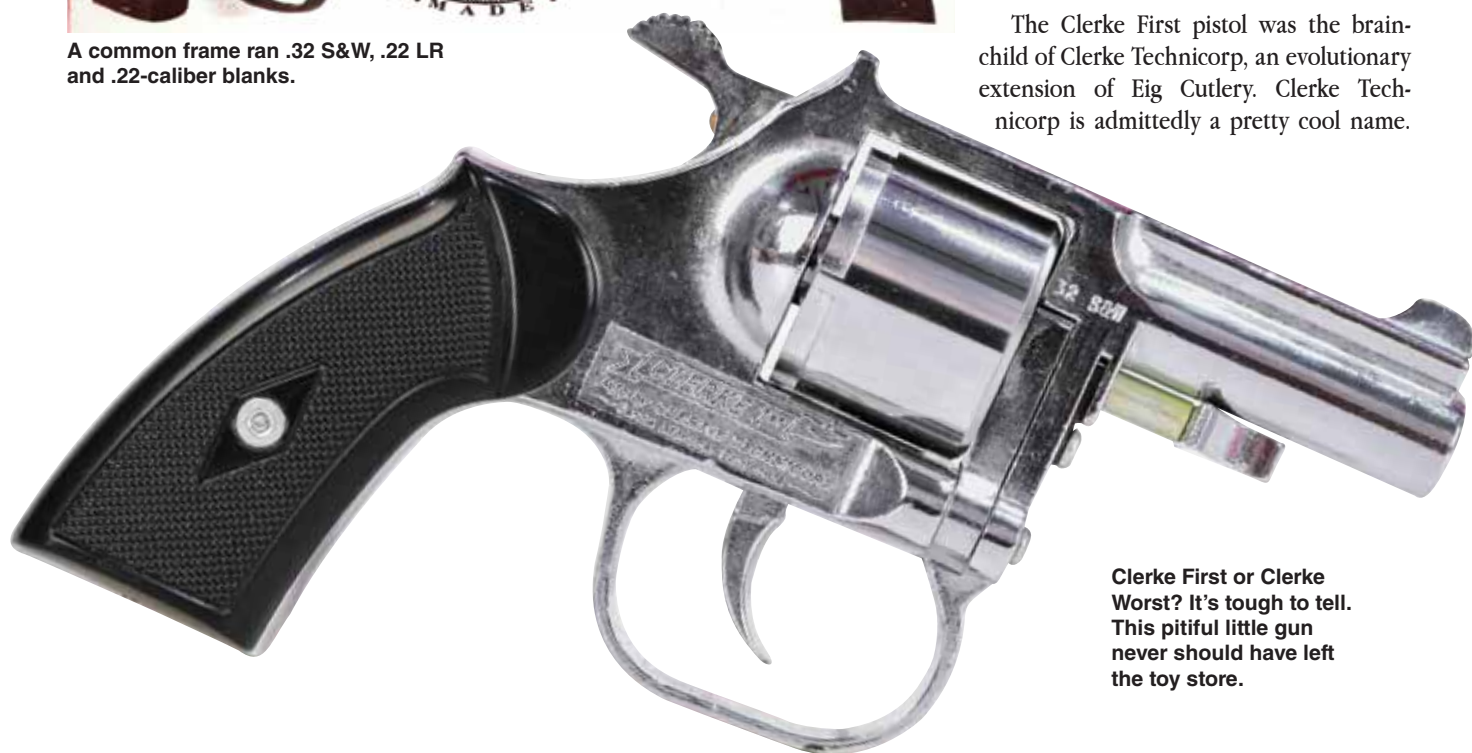
With a substantial slice of the market now left unaddressed, the indomitable engine of capitalism went to work filling it. The end result was the American-made Clerke First revolver. To call this repugnant pistol "crap" would be offensive to feces.

#### GROSS ANATOMY

The Clerke First pistol was the brain-child of Clerke Technicorp, an evolutionary extension of Eig Cutlery. Clerke Technicorp is admittedly a pretty cool name.



A common frame ran .32 S&W, .22 LR and .22-caliber blanks.



Clerke First or Clerke Worst? It's tough to tell. This pitiful little gun never should have left the toy store.



The cylinder is held in place with what appears to be a brass rivet, through which an easily lost spring-loaded pin is inserted. The pin (inset) also serves as the extractor.



However, when the brain trust finished with the company title apparently their creative well was pretty much spent. The gun's action began life as a starter pistol and really degenerated from there.

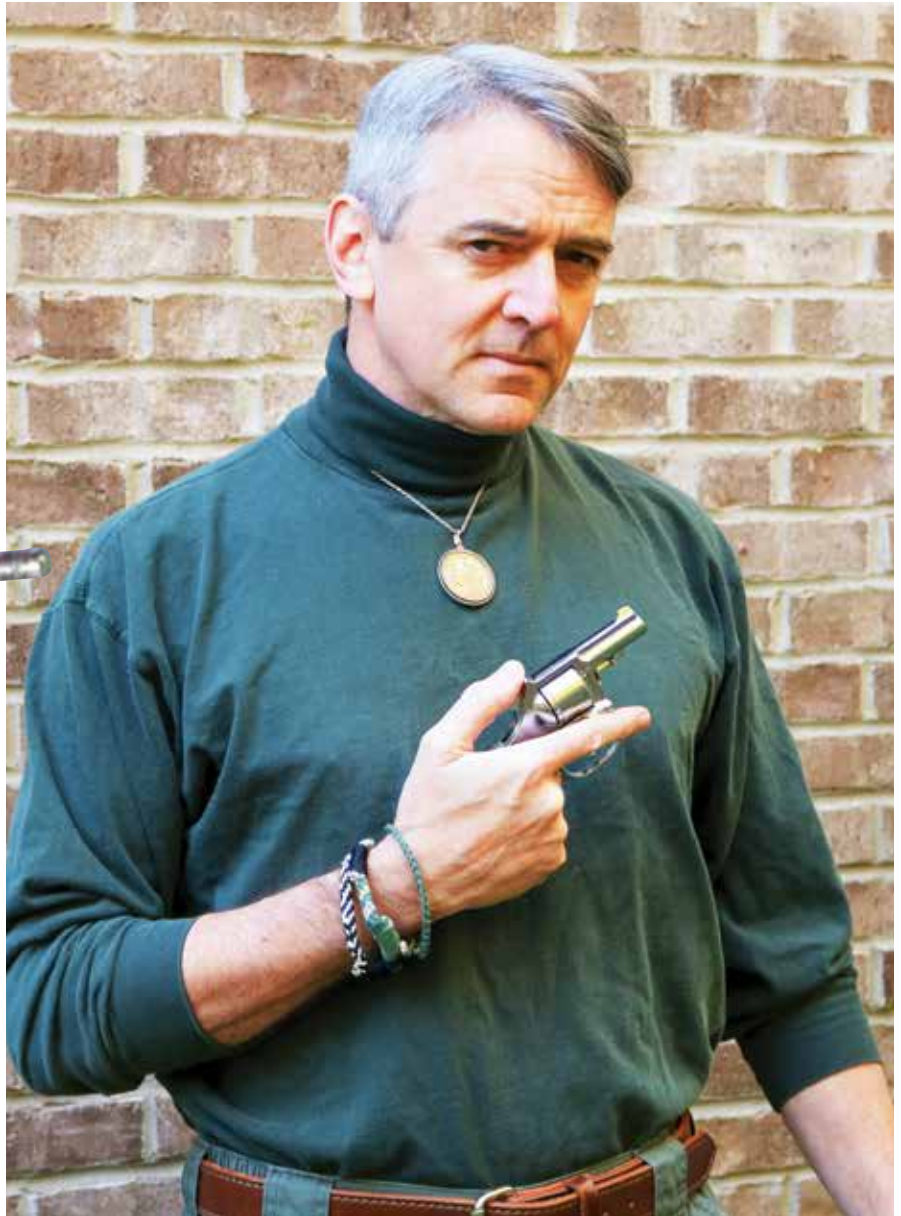
The frame is cast from some sordid sort of pot metal. The trigger and hammer will look familiar to anybody who played with cap guns as a kid. The cylinder is held in place with a rivet. The entire gun is finished in a blinding silver chrome and the grips are black plastic. There was an all-black version as well.

The sights are small, fixed and worthless. The action operates in both single- and double-action modes but is just stupid heavy. There is no ejector.

## MANUAL OF ARMS

To run the gun you remove the ejector pin from the front. It is held in place by a spring-loaded detent. A friend who ran a gun shop back in the day said folks were losing these pins all the time. My buddy said he got nearly the purchase price of the gun for a replacement pin. He refused to stock the pistols.

Once the pin is removed, the cylinder will swing out to the right. To remove the empties you push the cases out from the front one at a time using the pin. Drop in five fresh rounds, pivot the cylinder back in place and replace the aforementioned pin. Now you are — technically at least — packing heat.



The '70s called and they want their crap back. The Clerke First is typical of the odd, confused decade — Will says if not for the stabilizing influence of Lynyrd Skynyrd and Led Zeppelin, the whole planet might have imploded!

## WILL THE POOP COLLECTOR

I bought my Clerke First revolver new-in-the-box off gunbroker.com for \$99. The gent from whom I purchased the gun said he bought three of them on a whim several decades back for \$20 apiece. Dealer cost in the early '70s was \$15.

The side of the box sports three check boxes for .32 S&W, .22 LR and Starter Pistol. The frame and works were common to all three. My gun has not been and never will be fired yet it still rattles like Nancy Pelosi's brain when you shake it. I sought the gun out simply because it was so irredeemably wretched.

## COGITATIONS

You get a sort of gestalt as initially you paw over the Clerke First revolver. The pistol looks and feels like it belongs in a toy box. I've read after a few dozen rounds the gun gets as loose as a congressman's morals.

The Japanese Type 26 revolver is extremely well made but horribly designed. The cylinder spins freely, so you never can be sure if the chamber under the hammer is actually going to shoot or not. By contrast, the Clerke First is just homogenously ghastly throughout. In a pinch, were I to choose between the Clerke First revolver and a baseball bat, I'd be mightily tempted by the bat.



This compact 2-1/2x Leupold has generous field of view and eye relief — and a delightfully short eyepiece permitting a well forward mounting.

## DRAWING FIRST BLOOD

### SCOPE LENGTH: THE NEGLECTED MEASURE

Shooters sift rifle scopes by price, power, dials, reticles, lens diameter — but what about length?

#### SCARFACE

"It stung. The blood was warm, trickling down my nose. I won't do that again!" This account of recoil's kiss seems almost spurious. How can anyone planning to fire a rifle more than once guarantee an unblemished brow? Mine is mostly scar tissue!

Such a disconnect makes sense when you consider the standard length of a rifle-stock now is 13-1/2", a good measure for the mythical average shooter. My 37" arms and tendency to crawl on the comb beg a longer pull. My head is in the red zone for scopes mounted to suit many riflemen.

No one I know mates up perfectly with a 13-1/2" stock in summer and winter attire from every shooting position. We adapt to conditions, holding the rifle imperfectly most of the time, but well enough to kill game or nip a 10-ring or the edge of a steel plate — and to see a useful scope field. The eye relief of a scope (distance from rear lens to eye that delivers a full field of view) is somewhat forgiving. The lower the magnification, the less critical the ER. But ideally you position the scope so when you cheek the rifle, your eye naturally falls near the center of the range of acceptable ER.

#### REAL ESTATE CRUNCH

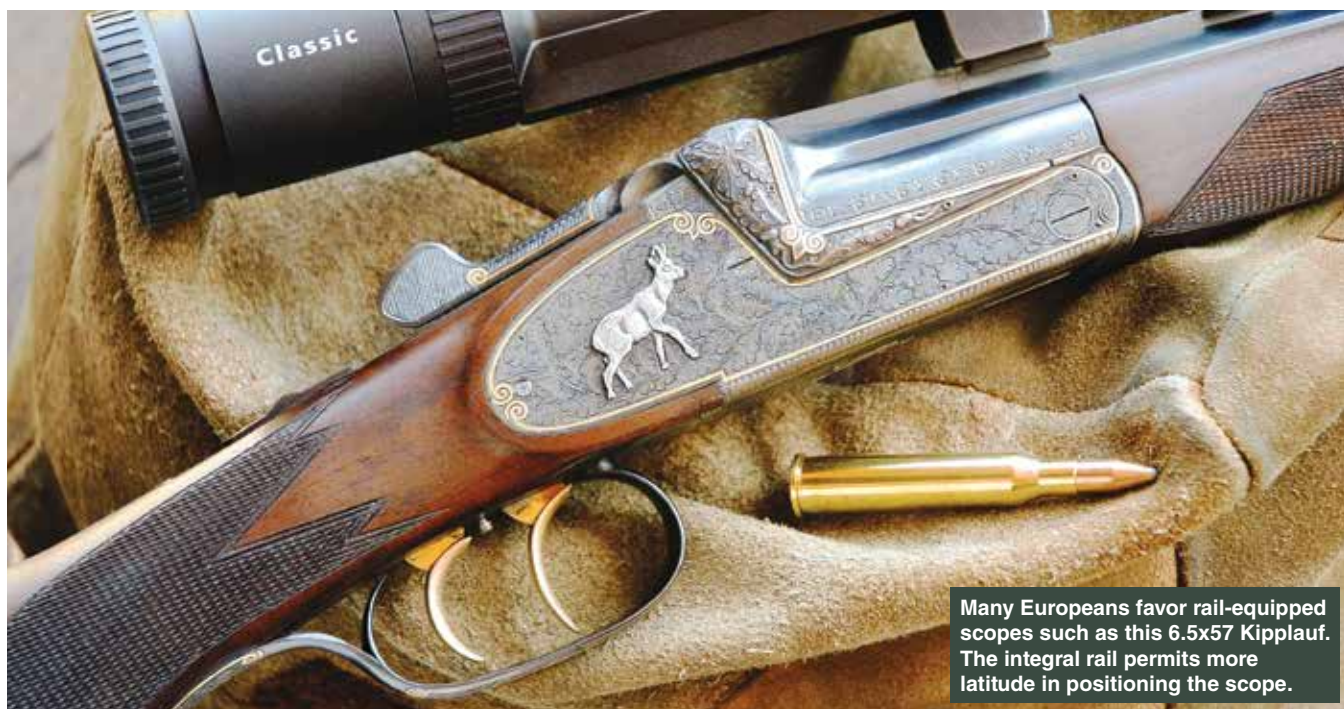
Locating a scope on the rifle to this end is getting harder, for two reasons: Ocular assemblies are getting longer, and free tube — the area available to put the rings — is shrinking. Meanwhile, rifle receivers are much the same length, and holes for scope base screws in much the same places as ever.

Diminished free tube comes courtesy internal design changes reducing overall scope length and big turrets with parallax/focus knobs, batteries for reticle illumination and "trajectory-matched" elevation dials. Ocular assemblies have grown with the new internals and ever-wider power ranges.

Given static ring location, scopes are



The grin is genuine — so too the blood on Wayne's brow. From prone, even a well-positioned scope on a 6.5 Creedmoor can cut skin with a scope rim!



edging rearward, poised to maim the innocent. Long-armed stock-crawlers like me are running out of Band-Aids.

You can push a scope ahead in its mount only to the point of rear-ring contact with the eyepiece or power ring in the rear or, less commonly, front-ring contact with the turret. Of course, extension bases and rings or a Picatinny rail can help you get proper eye relief and protect your brow. To those of us who still care how sporting rifles look,

these are cosmetic disappointments. More to my liking is the European solution: a scope with an integral rail accepting clamps securing it to base or rifle. This arrangement is hard to find stateside.

## DON'T EVER CHANGE ...

Another fix (you knew this was coming) — the fixed-power scope. In a fit of experimentation, I just took a tape measure to scopes on rifles in my rack. Length of ocular assemblies ranged from 1-3/8" on an old Weaver B6 to 4" on current Swarovski Z6 and Z8i scopes. Lest you scoff at the B6, thin as a garden hose and clear as pond water, I've used it recently on an equally ancient Savage 340 in .222 to drill a group smaller than its tiny objective lens. But to bring comparisons into a single era, I also taped an M8 6x Leupold. Its eyepiece measured 2-5/8". Shortest oculars on variables belonged to Weaver 2-7x and Leupold 2 1/2-8x sights: 3-1/4".

Incidentally, these figures are from scopes whose reticles are focused for my eyes. Why does it matter? It doesn't on vintage scopes with ocular housings rotating on a threaded tube secured by a lock ring. The length of such an assembly doesn't change as you adjust it to focus — as it moves rearward, it clears more tube so the scope can be repositioned to compensate. But most scopes these days feature fast-focus (European) eyepieces

with internal helical threads. As you bring the lens closer to your eye, the housing stays fixed on the tube. Running the lens rearward increases the effective length of the assembly.

## PUTTING IT TOGETHER

A week ago, I was sucking air scurrying up a brush-choked coulee. A gap in dawn's shadows had given me away; the buck was climbing fast. As he hooked around a promontory, I scrambled up the side of the cut, flopped prone and hoped he'd pause. He did, at 300 yards or so, showing just a sliver of rib. He dropped at the shot, a solid "whuck!" following the snap of my .25-06.

As with my other hunting scopes, the ocular lens of the 3-10x Swarovski hangs almost directly above the rear guard screw of my Holehan-built Model 70 — farther forward than most hunters would put it. But for a quick shot, uphill, prone, it's perfect. I get a full field of view from other positions too. At 4x, eye relief is forgiving, and I've yet to need more magnification on game 300 yards off.

The overall length of scopes matters little on the sight-free barrels popular now. But if, like me, you think a hunting rifle naked without an open sight, you'll appreciate a scope with an objective bell which doesn't bump the sight when the scope is mounted low and well forward — another thing for traditionalists to ponder. 



Long eye relief and short eyepieces were once the rule. On this Heineke Springfield, sight and scope could both be used without moving the head on the stock.

## RUGER GUNSITE SCOUT REMAINING TRUE TO COL. COOPER'S CONCEPT

Colonel Jeff Cooper is probably most remembered for the development of the Modern Technique of the Pistol along with the American Pistol Institute, now known as Gunsite. As a Marine, Cooper was a rifleman at heart.

Starting in the late 1960s Cooper began the concept of a "Scout Rifle" and continued to refine it until his death in 2006. Cooper envisioned it as capable of being used for self-defense, as well as hunting. If you could only have one rifle, a Scout would fill the bill.

### A SCOUT DEFINED

There are several online groups dedicated to the Scout rifle. They run the gamut from embracing the original concept to those interested in a short AK-type rifle.

Apparently some folks think anything you can mount a forward scope on magically becomes a Scout. They point to the fact the Scout rifles continued to evolve, but I remain more of a purist

The original Scout rifle's distinguishing features are:

- Magazine-fed bolt action. Detachable box magazine and/or stripper clip charging is desirable but not mandatory.
- Unloaded weight of 6.6 lbs. with a maximum weight of 7.7 lbs.
- Overall length of 39" or less.
- Forward-mounted long-eye-relief telescopic sight of low magnification.
- Reserve iron sights desirable but not mandatory.
- Good trigger.
- Fitted with a practical sling (such as a

Ching Sling) for shooting and carrying.

- No more power than the .308 Winchester is necessary.
- Built-in bipod is desirable but not mandatory.
- Should be able to shoot into two MOA or less at 200 yards (4").
- Magazine capacity not to exceed five rounds.

Developed in conjunction with Gunsite, the Ruger Gunsite Scout Rifle (GSR) is true to Jeff Cooper's concept. The rifle features the Gunsite name rollmarked on the receiver and engraved on the grip cap of laminate stock models.

### THE DETAILS

The 16.1" free-floated, cold hammer-forged barrel is capped with a Mini-14/SR-556 type flash suppressor. Overall length is 38.5" with a weight of 7.1 lbs. The forward-mounted Picatinny rail allows for mounting an intermediate-eye-relief scope.



The GSR Stock has three 1/2" spacers to adjust the length of pull to accommodate different statures, clothing or gear, a critical feature for an "all-around" rifle!



Denny's personal Ruger Gunsite Scout Rifle set up with a Vortex Viper PST 1-6X24 scope and Galco Safari Sling.



The Vortex Viper PST is suitable for everything from close quarters to long-range shots. It offers 10 intensity levels of illumination with off positions between each setting.



Experience has taught Denny to choose Magpul magazines (bottom) over the factory steel Accuracy International mag.

Ruger's patented integral scope mounts, machined directly on the receiver, provide a stable mounting surface for traditional over-the-receiver mounting. The gun's iron sights consist of a ghost-ring adjustable rear aperture sight and a Mini-14 type non-glare, protected blade front sight.

The laminated wood shows a lot of grain on samples I have seen and has checkering on the forearm and pistol grip. The stock has three 1/2" spacers to adjust the length of pull (LOP) to accommodate different statures, clothing or gear.

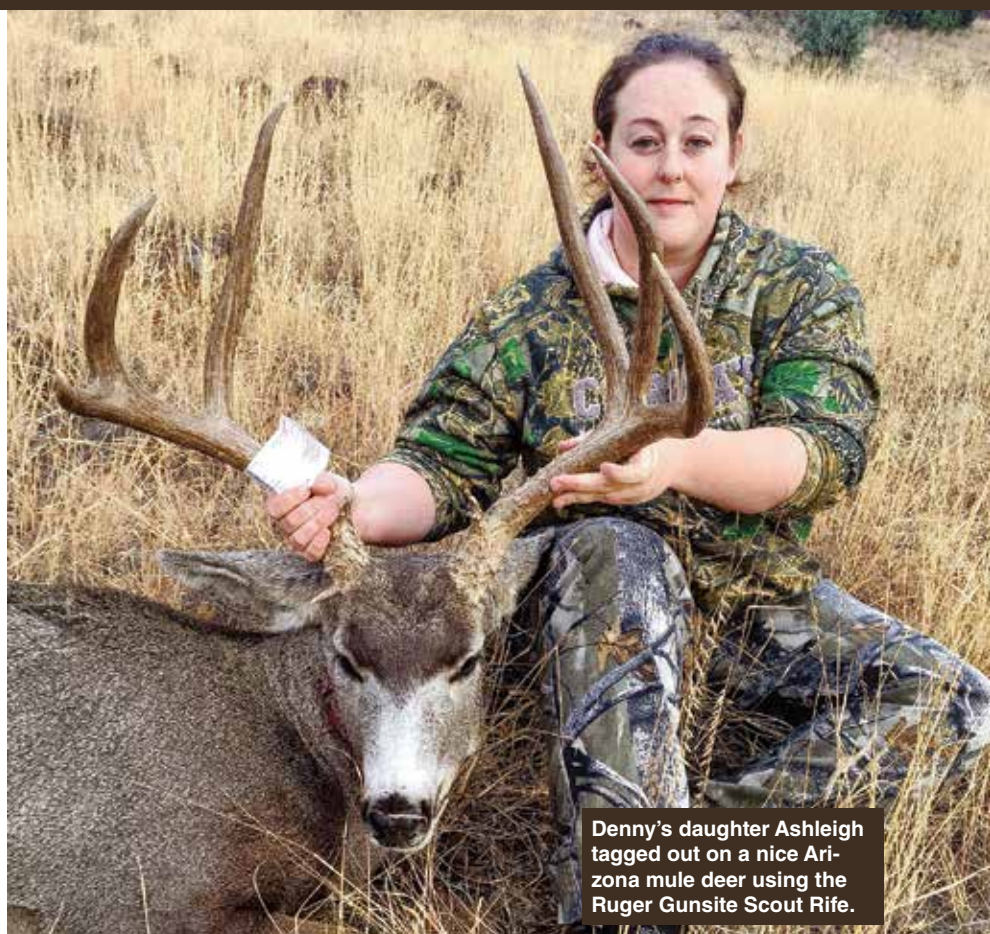
The bolt has a non-rotating, Mauser-type controlled round feed extractor. The bolt handle is round and smooth and measures 0.760" at its widest point. I appreciate the aesthetics of a checkered bolt but proper technique calls for running the bolt from the shoulder after firing a shot and a smooth bolt is more practical.

The GSR uses a three-position safety, where forward is "fire." In the center "safe" position, the bolt can be worked to load/unload but cannot be fired. In the most rearward "safe" position, the bolt is locked.

The Ruger Gunsite Scout Rifle used for this report is my personal rifle and set up with a Vortex Viper PST 1-6X24 scope and Galco Safari Sling.

## SCOPE AND MAGS

The Vortex Viper PST is suitable close quarters to long-range shots. The reticle offers shooters highly functional, intuitive and detailed hold points, yet remains



Denny's daughter Ashleigh tagged out on a nice Arizona mule deer using the Ruger Gunsite Scout Rifle.

uncluttered for clear viewing. An illumination dial is located just behind the power ring and has 10 intensity levels with off positions between each setting.

The magazine used is the blued Accuracy International (AI) type and the rifle is supplied with a single 10-round magazine. Five-round magazines are available for hunting. The magazine release is a lever in front of the trigger guard. While AI magazines have become the benchmark in the industry, I have experienced the floor plate becoming disengaged and spilling the spring, follower and rounds on the ground. I have begun using the excellent Magpul PMAG 7.62 AICS short action magazines in both 5- and 10-round capacities. The polymer magazines are lighter than the steel AI mags, won't dent or rust and are extremely rugged.

## IN THE FIELD

My grandson Austin took his first elk with the GSR and my daughter Ashleigh wanted to use it for an upcoming deer hunt. I wanted to work up a handload for her which would be effective but still soft shooting. The result was a 165-gr. Hornady

SST on top of 42.0 grains of IMR 489 in Black Hills Match cases. Chrono results from a 20-round string averaged 2,495.8 fps with an extreme spread of 21 fps.

A three-round group at 100 yards measured 0.944". I'm sure a good rifleman could do better but it's well within minute-of-deer and I was very happy with it considering it's a stock Scout. My daughter was successful in her hunt, taking a nice Arizona mulie with the load.

## THE ALL-AROUND RIFLE

The GSR will also serve well as a self-defense rifle. Several years back at a local gun store, a young shooter protested, "But it can only hold a total of 10 rounds!" I asked him how many rounds he needed since it was unlikely he would be called on to defend the 38th Parallel by himself against an invading horde of screaming Chinese.

The Ruger Gunsite Scout Rifle will serve admirably in any role most people would find themselves, be it hunting or self-defense.

[www.ruger.com](http://www.ruger.com)  
[www.vortexoptics.com](http://www.vortexoptics.com)

# THE HK VP70Z

## REMARKABLY RAREFIED RUBBISH

Will Dabbs, MD

Dieter Wiess had been an auto mechanic in Frankfurt before the world ended. The Soviets swarmed across the border just after midnight on a Thursday in February of 1974, literally paving the way with tactical nuclear strikes on communications and logistics nodes in his hometown. His being out of Frankfurt on holiday was the only reason he had survived. Everybody he cared about died in the fireball.

NATO finally stopped the Warsaw Pact armored spearheads in western France with its own nuclear weapons. Now six weeks later both sides paused to catch their collective breath. In Soviet-occupied territory the NKVD was an omnipresent threat.

Dieter had literally nothing for which to live for so he unleashed his insensate hatred on the invaders. He killed his first Soviet soldier with a shovel. Then he met a few like-minded patriots and got organized. An American Special Forces team had been operating in the area until they were compromised, captured and shot. Before they were caught, however, they had passed on a cardboard box filled with strange plastic pistols.

Each Heckler and Koch VP70 sported a detachable shoulder stock and a radical polymer frame. The box contained five pistols, spare magazines, and a case of 9mm ball ammunition. It warmed Dieter's heart these partisan guns were actually made in West Germany.

Dieter struck out after curfew with the sleek ray gun-looking weapon stuffed into the pocket of his trench coat. He didn't really have a plan. He would kill the first Russian he



The blowback operated HK VP70Z is the very image of simplicity. The recoil spring telescopes around the barrel.

found and take his weapon. He would keep on going until he got to the Kremlin, at which point he would figure out something else.

### WE CAME TERRIFYINGLY CLOSE ...

The HK VP70 was originally designed as a partisan weapon equipping unconventional operators like Dieter in the event of World War III in Europe. These sleek polymer pistols were designed to be cheap to make and easy to use. Thank the Good Lord we never had to use them.

The revolutionary HK VP70 debuted in, you guessed it, 1970, at the apogee of the Cold War. Originally intended as a machine pistol, the VP70 came in two variants. The VP70M (Militar) features finger grooves on the front of the grip and is cut to accept a detachable polymer shoulder stock. The stock contains a fire control mechanism offering semiauto fire along with a 3-round burst function. In burst mode the gun cycles at 2,200 rounds per minute.

The VP70Z (Zivil) variant is semiauto only, has a smooth front strap, and will not accept the shoulder stock. There were





400 VP70Z variants chambered for 9x21mm and marketed to the Italian civilian market. The Italian government severely restricts guns chambered for military calibers hence the 9x21mm. These Italian pistols would accept the shoulder stock but would not fire bursts.

The safety on the VP70Z is a simple crossbolt oriented just behind the trigger. What looks like a safety on the military version is just a non-functional plug. The detachable buttstock also serves a holster in the manner of the C96 Broomhandle or stocked Browning Hi-Power.

The VP70 is lightweight at 29 oz. empty and thoroughly reliable. It runs via unlocked blowback, so there really isn't much to fail. This does, however, result in a fairly impressive charging weight to get

the gun into action. The recoil spring telescopes around the barrel in the manner of the Walther PPK.

The double-column, double-feed 18-round magazine operates like a submachine gun and was paradigm shifting. The magazine release is a thumb-activated paddle after the European fashion, but it still runs okay. The slide does not lock back over an empty magazine.

The gun also features a revolutionary sighting system. The rear sight is conventional enough, but the front sight consists of a hollow ramp with a groove cut in the center. The end result is a weird negative space sort-of affair that runs well and is indestructible.

The gun's rakish lines landed it several sci-fi movie roles. The most memorable was as the standard-issue United States Colonial Marine handgun in the epic James Cameron movie *Aliens*.

### THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

Remember, the VP70 was designed to be an inexpensive but reliable partisan weapon with which to prosecute World War III. As a result the gun was designed to be as simple as possible. This meant a radical double-action-only striker-fired trigger. While this same basic concept would be perfected 12 years later and monetized by Gaston Glock into the most successful combat handgun of the modern age, the HK version was way too much, way too soon.

The trigger on the VP70 is conceptually awesome but functionally hideous. The pull weight is measured in short tons. No kidding, I can't get through a full 18 rounds without taking a breather. The trigger is long but consistent and stacks noticeably at the end. One final massive grunt at the terminus finally drops the striker and fires the

The HK VP70Z (above, right) eventually spawned such rarefied polymer-framed handguns as this ZEV OZ9. The VP70Z featured a simple crossbolt safety behind the trigger. Pulling down on the latch (below) located within the trigger guard allowed the slide to be pulled back, up and off.



weapon. It's the worst trigger I have ever squeezed.

Shooting the VP70 is neither fun nor particularly satisfying. The VP70 pioneered the striker-fired ignition system and polymer frame we all enjoy these days. However, the wretched trigger doomed the gun to obscurity.

### RUMINATIONS

HK has a gift for combining mass production techniques with impeccable quality to produce some of the finest combat firearms in the world. The MP5 is a perfect example of a stamped steel SMG incorporating both precision and reliability. The VP70, however, was an epic fail.

VP stands for Volkspistole ("People's Pistol") and it was indeed a valiant effort. Had the Soviet hordes come pouring through the Fulda Gap, the VP70, despite its many manifest flaws, would have no doubt wrought holy heck on the Russian dogfaces forced to do the Politburo's dirty work. Fortunately, the VP70 is little more than a curious Cold War trinket.



The otherwise unadorned HK VP70Z was sufficiently radical to earn itself a billet as the issue handgun for the U.S. Colonial Marines in the James Cameron sci-fi epic *Aliens*.

continued from page 8

authority were more respected, might send the money, believing they were dealing with FMG Publications. I don't know if what they are doing is illegal, but certainly smacks of fraud in my book. At least I thought you should be made aware.

Gary Gillespie, MD

*I can't call these people "scammers" because their lawyer might call it "libel" in a legal proceeding — so I won't. However, this company is using the questionable business practice of offering a magazine subscription at a very highly inflated rate, using intentionally confusing or official-looking correspondence. If you pay them, they will purchase a subscription in your name at regular prices and pocket the significant difference. They are NOT associated with FMG Publications in any way. Our corporate office has informed this particular company we won't fulfill orders coming from their business. To get the "real deal" on a subscription, simply visit [fmgpubs.com](http://fmgpubs.com) or call (800) 933-9116!* —BW

## STAY PRICKLY!

So what is the gun the senior lady is holding on page 26 of the February 2020 issue?

Charles Lano

*The gun is a UTAS UTS-15 pump shotgun. I thought Mom looked pretty serious with it as well!* —Will Dabbs

*So far, that picture is in the running for my favorite GUNS photo of all time!* —BW

## NEW NATIONAL HOLIDAY

Almost 50 years of reading gun magazines and never felt motivated enough to write to one. *GUNS* is my favorite and Will Dabbs is quickly becoming my favorite writer. His comment "if we had any real sense as a nation, we would celebrate John Moses Browning day," made me simply want to say, "Amen, brother."

Michael-Shannon McDowell

## OLDER THAN DIRT CLUB

Dr. Dabbs' recent *Shooter's Rx* column hit much too close to home as I am officially a member of the prestigious "Older than Dirt" club. I marveled at his knowledge of my medical disparities without having ever examined me. The one issue I have was only partially addressed when he spoke about having arthritis. My problem as a shooter is the tip of my trigger finger has decided to take a 45-degree bend to the south. Prolonged trigger time has me scraping the

inside of the trigger guard. The left hand is only slightly better. Any suggestions how to make this a happier adventure?

Eric Strange

*Ouch. That's rough, bro. A proper hand surgeon could potentially address this surgically if it was important enough to you. Not sure what the insurance considerations might be. It would likely be an easier sell if it's painful.*

*I suspect that's joint erosion secondary to osteoarthritis. I saw a lady with a bad case in the clinic this morning. Worst case he*

*might fuse the joint but get the alignment back where you want it so you could run a gun comfortably.*

*Life is all about choices. I had eye surgery to adjust my focus so I could shoot without glasses and have been very pleased. This might be a hard sell for a hand man. He or she might just laugh and tell you no. However, I'd have that chat if it seems worth the trouble.* —Will Dabbs

## IT DOESN'T GET EASIER

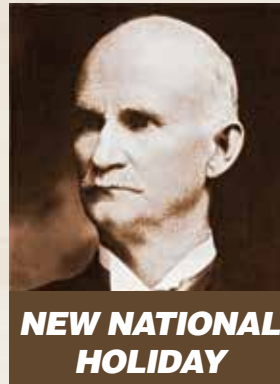
Excellent article and timely for me as I just attained 75 years. I too had a serious back injury when I was 33. In my early 70s I found I could no longer bench press even light weights then I discovered that by putting a 18"x18"x4" stiff foam pad under my head, I could bench without the pain in my back between my shoulders. Also I am starting to find racking my 1911 Kimber more difficult. Racking my S&W Shield is even worse. I have been looking at the S&W EZ Shield 380 and think it might be a good way to go.

Dean Osborne

## IT'S ALL TAFFIN'S FAULT!

Love the magazine and guys like Duke & Taffin! I would like to suggest a new section called "Taffin's Fault." LOL. John's articles keep costing me money when he reviews certain guns and I get that urge to buy one. I've already bought a Metro Arms 1911, Rossi 92 357 magnum, Ruger Blackhawk Convertible, Ruger Security 9 Compact and a Ruger American in 22 Magnum. It's all John's fault for giving great reviews and tips on the guns.

Bill Dyne



## Letters To The Editor

*Thanks for the kind words but just imagine how much \$\$\$\$ I cost myself! — John Taffin*

### LIKING THE CROSSBOW

I was glad to read in the Feb 2020 Letters to the Editor that you only received one negative letter about Mark's review of the Ravin R26 (*Editor's Note: The tally is now three*). I liked the article and I am planning to buy a Ravin at the end of this season. Over the years, I've had some wrist, elbow and shoulder injuries that have prevented me from practicing with a traditional bow so I was glad to see a fellow hunter endorsing a crossbow as an alternative solution. Keep up the good work (and the variety)!

*Joe Davies*

### STOP BUGGIN' ME!

Sometimes I swear you have my car bugged. My friend "Smalls" and I like to go pawn shopping to see what we can turn up. On our most recent trip across North Carolina, two of the main guns we discussed were the stainless Rossi R92 with a 20" barrel in .357 Magnum and the Ruger PC9. I opened your magazine this month and Mr. Taffin is discussing his Perfect Packing Rifle, a stainless Rossi R92 with 20" barrel in .357, and Duke (who I NEVER would have guessed would cover a modern plastic rifle) is talking about the PC9. You never cease to surprise me. I've been subscribing for about a decade now and love every issue. Thanks for all the great content!

*Shawn Dain*

P.S. We hit 26 Pawn and Gun stores that day and didn't find a thing, but sure had some good conversations, hope you were still listening in!

*Yes, your car has been bugged by the crack GUNS Wiretap Division — you really need to stop singing those Michael*



### LIKING THE CROSSBOW

*Bolton songs at stoplights! We also need to discuss your personal hygiene routine using the rearview mirror. Other people can see you! —BW*

### IT'LL BE DIY

In Mr. Taffin's article on page 31 of the Feb 2020 issue he shows a picture of a NexPander and how he uses it. I have checked a number of sources for reloading supplies and cannot locate the item. Can you ask Mr. Taffin to advise please.

*Gene McMasters*

Just finished reading John Taffin's hand-loading article for 7.62x39 in the Feb 2020 issue. He mentions a neck expanding tool called the NexPander. I have searched the internet and not found one hit on this tool. Is it an obsolete item? Looks to be a hand-held tool versus one that screws into a press like the Lee universal expanding die.

*William Gaylord*

*I'm thinking these are no longer being made but any machinist could make one easily. —John Taffin*

### THE HAT WASN'T SO BAD ...

Wanted to give a heads-up to Duke Venturino. I recently saw a show called *Strange Inheritance* from 2015. The inheritance was drawings of natives from the early 1900s that had survived the battle at Little Bighorn. One of the Indians claimed to have shot Custer as the troopers charged across the river.

I think Duke can find the show online. Years ago I took a cheap shot at Duke's hat so I figure I owe him. In a cold rain a couple of days ago I went to pick up a take-out order for lunch and the guy at the restaurant broke up over my hat. It is a camo boonie with one side pinned up with a revolver expert pin from the local police dept back in the '70s. Keep up the good work.

*David Walker*

### ANOTHER TAFFIN FAN

Wanted to express to you how much your publication is enjoyed! It is in a deadlock with my other favorite, *Leatherneck!* I really take pleasure in reading articles by Mr. Taffin. He, and of course the other fine writers on your staff, really do a wonderful job! As an Arizona guy, it's nice to see a magazine publishing articles on classic firearms, especially western themed



### IT'LL BE DIY

pieces! I continue to pick up interesting and useful tidbits from the assortment of work presented. My only regret is I didn't run across Mr. Taffin's work much sooner.

Mark Taylor

Mark, thanks for writing. Fellows like you keep me shooting, reloading and writing! Good Shootin' and God Bless. —John Taffin

### RED RYDER RIDES AGAIN

I enjoy *GUNS Magazine* and haven't had cause to say much because I've either agreed or admitted I've learned something from every article. I was a 15-year-old lad when *The Rifleman* first aired in 1958 and having a prized Red Ryder, I taught myself to shoot just like him because Chuck Connors was a hero. Because I had to work until 1 a.m., I would use the old wooden light pole for a target every night, aiming at the darker shape from the hip, rapid-fire, listening for hits. I'd count 10 hits and end my night's shooting. On Sunday afternoon, when I met up with the guys from the area for the junkyard shoot, they didn't think it was strange. We just shot cans and that was it. Yes, I became a very good shoot-from-the-hip guy but only target shooting. This "Tall Tale" is to let you know even us scrawny short lads could do everything our "Heroes" could do, but "Wanted, Dead or Alive" is another story. Thanks for your Red Ryder trip down memory lane and thank you for your magazine.

Charles Braughton



**DON'T TELL ANYBODY  
ABOUT THE .40!**

*I'm sitting here chuckling, thinking about all of our collective adventures ... and mis-adventures ... with those 'Ryders! —BW*

### DON'T TELL ANYBODY ABOUT THE .40!

I have a bone to pick with Massad Ayoob. I grew up reading his articles and he was my late father's favorite gun writer. In the February 2020 issue, he let the cat out of the bag on the .40 S&W! As an FFL holder, I have been *quietly* buying .40s to sell for my business. The day my issue arrived, I won a GLOCK 22 on an auction site for \$216!

The ride to the bottom for the .40 S&W is a

perfect example of how people follow and do not lead. People who are loyal to the .40 have just been smiling!

William F. Hastings Jr.

### LEVER LOVE

The "Perfect Packin' Rifle" story by John Taffin in the February 2020 edition was a joy to read. Lever-action rifles are my favorite right beside single-action revolvers. I hunt with a Winchester 1894 Timber Carbine chambered in .450 Marlin. The barrel is 18.5" and the weight is perfect. I have walked many miles in the woods carrying this rifle and it's perfect for such adventures. I also

### RED RYDER RIDES AGAIN





## LEVER LOVE

have a Winchester 1892 in .357 magnum with a 20" barrel. I enjoy shooting it more than any other lever gun I own. Recoil is minimal, but power and accuracy is superb. Thank you, John, for writing another fine article. I hope the Perfect Lever Gun series of articles is long-lived.

G.W. Holt

*Thanks for the kind words. I am planning to do a series of levergun loads for my reloading column in the coming months. My favorite rifles are leverguns and my favorite leverguns are the short, easy-to-pack and handle Trappers. Your .450 Marlin can handle anything that walks. —John Taffin*

### KID PROOF?

I recently purchased some 45 ACP self-defense ammo in plastic boxes. This is fine ammo, performs very well and was well worth the price but the plastic boxes are very hard to open! I am 61 years old, in good health, work with my hands in assembly and maintenance but it took me 10 minutes to open the first box. I handed my wife a box, along with my 1911 and told her to make believe someone was breaking into the garage, and she needed to load a magazine right now. Her solution was to get the meat hammer out of the kitchen cabinet! With Smith & Wesson making handguns geared to the elderly, I think the ammo manufacturers need to look at their packaging.

Paul Chaney

*I forwarded Paul's letter to the ammo manufacturer for their consideration.*

*Maybe we'll start to see EZ-open ammo for shooters with hand problems. —BW*

### M4 CONTOUR

Why do barrel makers use an M4 barrel contour? Most of us don't need a grenade launcher and more seriously, this adds another vibration node. Increasing harmonics cannot increase accuracy. The only explanation I have seen is that M4 barrel blanks are cheap.

Jens Jensen

*You're correct — more barrels are made in M4 contour, therefore competition drives the prices down. Price is an important factor for most buyers and a cheaper barrel makes for a less expensive gun. There is strong demand for the M4 barrel because it's "military" and that's a positive thing for the majority of shooters. Of course, most folks aren't really looking to wring ultimate accuracy out of their gun; they're primarily looking for reliability and are happy as long as the gun has reasonable "minute-of-bad-guy" accuracy. Fortunately, we are seeing more manufacturers offering other barrel profiles for the shooters who want to wring the best accuracy out of their gun. —BW*

### HAIR TRIGGER

Started with *GUNS* in 2003 and love your magazine. I have a question for maybe John Taffin or Duke. In 1973 I bought a second gen SAA in .45 Colt for \$200. This gun has a hair-trigger. I never thought about it before, but what do normal Colts have for a trigger pull? Is this normal? Why would someone

have such a light trigger pull?

Greg Odenabl

*A "hair trigger" on a Single Action can be very dangerous. I prefer to not go below 3-4 lbs. and factory triggers are usually set higher than this. You might have a gunsmith check yours out. It is possible the top of the trigger is worn or broken off or the hammer notch can be worn or broken. —John Taffin*

### FROM A LEFT-COASTER

Re: January 2020. A good issue, especially *Handloading*, *Think Tank* and *GUNS Insider*. As an inmate of "San Franfreako," you can't imagine how bad it really is here ...

Fred W. Davis

### TRUER WORDS ...

From time to time I see in various gun magazines a reference to science fiction writer Robert Heinlein's quote "An armed society is a polite society." It is from his novel *Beyond This Horizon*, published in the late 1940s. In it everyone goes armed. Everyone has rayguns (now would be called lasers, I suspect) except for our hero who carries a Model 1911. However, I believe there is a far stronger quote in support of gun rights which I never see in any gun mag. It is found in A.E. Van Vogt's early 1950ish novel *The Weapons Shops of Isber*. In the book each weapons shop has a sign prominently displayed stating, "The Right to Buy Weapons is the Right to be Free." Perceptive truth to me!

Mike in Mesa



# THE M1 IN THE BEGINNING — THE ADVENT OF GARAND

## It wasn't always smooth sailing for Mr. Garand's U.S. battle rifle

**MIKE "DUKE" VENTURINO  
PHOTOS: YVONNE VENTURINO**

**N**ow, in the 21st century, M1 Garands are highly revered, receive much adulation and are considered World War II's best battle rifle. However, it might surprise some readers to learn such a wonderful rifle did not arrive on the scene without problems and stiff competition. It did not simply travel from John C. Garand's drawing boards to Springfield Armory's machinery and into troops' hands without complications. Years of development went into the M1's creation and during this time other weapons designers were investing their time and effort into competing with Mr. Garand. Their names were Pedersen and Johnson.

### MR. GARAND'S OPUS

Canadian born John C. Garand went to work at Springfield Armory in the early 1920s and by the mid '20s was tasked with developing a semi-auto main battle rifle for the U.S. Army. Practically everyone who ponders the M1 Garand in its final form simultaneously thinks ".30-06" but more specifically it was U.S. Caliber .30 M2 Ball. This particular permutation of U.S. ammunition fired a 150-gr. FMJ bullet at approximately 2,740 fps muzzle velocity.

The first prototypes of Mr. Garand did no such thing. They chambered an experimental .276 round sometimes also referred

to as .276 Pedersen — named for the other famous weapons designer. The .276 fired a 120-gr. bullet at about 2,700 fps. Also interesting is the bullets were not 0.276" though it was the bore diameter of the rifles meant for it. Their groove diameters were nominally 0.284" as were the bullets in the .276 Pedersen rounds. So when considered by today's cartridge terminology, the experimental cartridge was actually a 7mm.

One day in 1932 must have been a dismal one for Mr. Garand. His brand-new rifle was ready for submission and official testing. At this time the U.S. Army Chief of Staff was General Douglas MacArthur but he rejected it primarily because of its .276 cartridge. General MacArthur made many mistakes in his legendary career but this wasn't one of them.

One reason was the United States had enormous stocks of U.S. Caliber .30 ammunition left over from World War I. Another reason was if America's main battle rifle became a .276, what about all the .30 caliber M1918 Browning Automatic Rifles (BARs) and M1917 and M1919 Browning machine guns in service? Would or could they be rebarreled? Or, should the U.S. Army supply two different, full-sized rifle cartridges to its combat units? Mr. Garand was instructed to return to the drawing boards and make his rifle accept .30-06.

### MEANWHILE, JOHN PETERSON ...

All this time another Springfield Armory employee, John Pedersen, was working on a .276 rifle designated T2E1 (fancy talk

World War II M1 Garands were only made by the Springfield Armory (right) and Winchester Repeating Arms (left). Springfield Armory outproduced Winchester by a factor of seven to one.



The M1 Garand replaced all these .30-06 weapons as the primary U.S. battle rifle in WWII. From top: Model 1903, Model 1917, Model 1903A3 and the M1 Garand.

“ It might be disturbing for some readers to learn such a wonderful rifle did not arrive on the scene without problems and stiff competition. ”

for experimental). Whereas Mr. Garand developed a gas system for his rifle — where gas from fired rounds was collected and then fed back to operate a piston system for semi-auto function — Mr. Pedersen invented a delayed blow-back, semi-auto action where the force of the cartridge

firing pushed back a toggle system. Blow-back was a system used by most submachine guns and semi-auto handguns of the era. To imagine how a jointed toggle system operated, consider the famous “Luger” pistols.

However, firing small pistol cartridges is

one thing and high-pressure rifle rounds is another so Pedersen had to develop a delay in the toggles so chamber pressures were lower when they operated. Functioning was still spotty and didn't become perfect unless cartridge cases were waxed. This didn't go over well with army brass.

Personally I've only seen and handled one Pedersen .276 rifle but never fired it. Some knowledgeable firearms people think if the cartridge extraction problem could have been worked out, the rifle would have been a great success. For instance, its 10-round, non-detachable box magazine could be loaded from the top by means of five-round stripper clips. As the magazine was contained within the stock, M1s were a bit thicker and heavier than a .276 Pedersen. Regardless, Springfield Armory's interest in it died with General MacArthur's anti-.276 decree.

#### THE JOHNSON RIFLE

In regards to Melvin Johnson's semi-auto M1941 rifle, I have some shooting



At the eight shot in an M1 Garand, its en-bloc loader was ejected with a unique noise some claimed clearly alerted enemy soldiers the gun was empty.

Shown here at left is the Model 1941 Johnson and at right is a T2E1 Pedersen.



experience. A friend offered me the loan of his M1941 and I soon found the Johnson did have some beneficial points. One was its 10-round rotary magazine could be loaded with single rounds or by means of five-round stripper clips. Its long, thin barrel with no protective wood made for a lighter rifle than the M1 while probably making it more susceptible to damage in combat. Shooting the M41 beside my M1 Garand left me unimpressed. It just was not a tight grouping rifle albeit upon returning it to its owner we found the stocks screws could be tightened somewhat.

### HITTING THE BEACHES WITH THE M41

Unlike the Pedersen rifle, Mr. Johnson's Caliber .30s did see combat. The USMC actually had a battalion of ParaMarines in 1942 fighting in the Solomon Islands and they carried M1941s into combat. After the ParaMarines were disbanded they traded their Johnson rifles for M1 Garands.

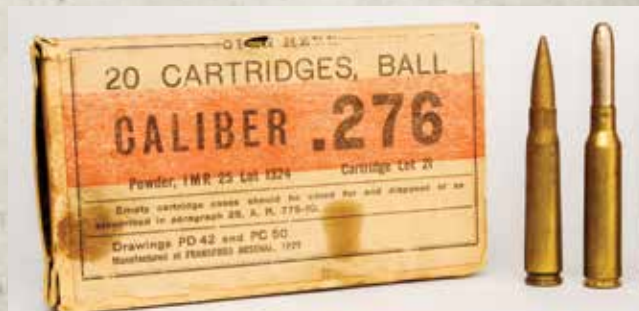
Most readers know the M1 uses a barrel port for bleeding gas



This was the M1 Garand's primary competition — the M1941 Johnson. It did see combat in USMC ParaMarines' hands in 1942.



The Johnson M41 could be loaded with single rounds or five-round stripper clips.



Shown here is a box of the experimental .276 cartridges — the originally designed caliber for the M1 and what the T2E1 Pedersen rifle was chambered for.

into the operating piston but the first version didn't. When Garand's rifle was accepted as the M1 in 1936, the first 40,000 or so were called the "gas trap" version. They had 22" barrels with a "trap" on the end for catching gas. Early in 1940 M1s were redesigned to the gas port system. As "gas trap" M1s were returned to armories for repairs or refurbishing, they were converted to "gas port" versions. Very few escaped conversion and I know of only one privately owned.

#### FROM MY COLD, DEAD FINGERS

Many experienced military riflemen in both U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps resisted giving up their bolt action Model 1903 Springfields in favor of semi-auto M1s. Their primary complaint was they wouldn't be as accurate as bolt actions and they would be ammo wasters. In truth, off-the-rack M1s probably couldn't shoot as accurately as comparable '03s but after some combat use, veteran troops came to love the fire superiority an American unit had over bolt action-carrying enemies.

What about ammo wasters? Yes, in the strict sense. An acquaintance participated in metal detecting in some European battlefields. He told me they often found a few rounds of .30-06 and an empty en-bloc loader in the bottoms of old foxholes. A GI would lose count of rounds fired and during a pause pop out whatever was remaining in their M1s and load up a fresh en-bloc loader.

Finally, what about the claim the sound of the M1 flinging out its empty en-bloc loader telegraphed to enemies the soldier's gun was empty? Many poo-poo it as mere legend but I prefer to believe my late Uncle James "Buffy" Virse.

#### HELL IN PARADISE

He was a rifleman in the USMC's 3rd Marines, fighting on Bougainville and Guam. On the latter island he was involved in the mopping up phase. After the island was declared secure, there were still hundreds of Japanese soldiers roaming the dense jungles. Combat ranges were in feet, not yards. To prevent a Japanese soldier — eager to die for the emperor — from charging at the pinging sound of the loader ejecting, the Marines worked in teams. One man always had a loaded rifle.

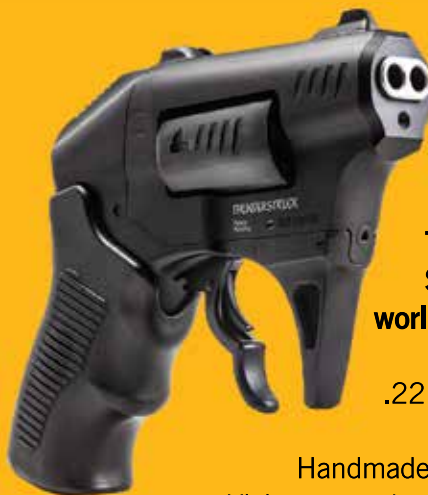
The last time I saw Uncle "Buffy" in the early 1990s he asked me to find him a good M1. He died suddenly before I could do so.



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# WEATHER



Wayne didn't care for the comb nose and wrist but the air-weight stock steadied the Backcountry quickly, as he demonstrates here during dry fire.

# BY MARK V ~~BACKCOUNTRY~~ 6.5 RPM

**WEATHERBY'S  
NEW  
3,200 FPS  
5-LB. MARK V!**

**WAYNE VAN ZWOLL**

**PHOTOS: ROB JONES/THE IMAGESMITH, LLC**

No. You don't need .264 bullets to hit steel plates three sheep pastures yonder, or to topple a deer. It just seems this way. These days cartridge R&D has become a race to new six-fives — the 6mms and .25s, 7mms and .30s have slipped into shadow. The latest 6.5mm is Weatherby's second in three years!

You'd think this diameter is a new discovery, but it dates to the 1890s.

## **ORIGINS**

Bullet diameters shrank and velocities increased with the development of smokeless powder. For reasons lost over the

decades, six and a half millimeters emerged as just the right size for bullets, at least in Europe. Italy armed itself with the 6.5x52 Mannlicher-Carcano in 1891. The 6.3x53R Mannlicher was picked up by Dutch and Romanian infantry units in 1892. Sweden equipped soldiers with its own 6.5x55 in 1894. The 6.5x50 Arisaka of 1897 saw no military service until it was chambered in the Model 38 rifle eight years later. Greece adopted the 6.5x54 Mannlicher-Schoenauer, which, like the 6.5x55 Swedish, would log a brilliant second career prowling the world's game fields. The 6.5x53.5 Daudeteau, developed for the French Navy in 1895, was less fortunate. After a brief tenure with Uruguayan troops, it joined the 6.5x58 Portuguese Vergueiro in mothballs.



# WEATHERBY MARK V

## BACKCOUNTRY 6.5 RPM





# GUNS<sup>®</sup>

MAGAZINE



The Weatherby Mark V Backcountry in 6.5 RPM — A lightweight, fire-breathing dragon for long hunts and long shots! Adam Weatherby (below) got this buck with a 140-gr. AccuBond from a Backcountry Ti rifle in 6.5 RPM.





The McMillan Tan Cerakote barrel, trigger guard and receiver nicely match the stock. The bottom of the magazine features unique topographic map graphics.

The empire builders of the 19th century hung their destinies on bigger bullets. Great Britain settled on the .303 British, with a .311 missile, in 1888. The same year Germany chose the 7.92mm ("8mm") Mauser with a .318 bullet, shifting to the .323 "JS" spitzer in 1905. The U.S. fielded the .30-40 Krag in 1892, then followed up with the .30-03 and .30-06, all with .308 bullets.

## NEWTON'S FALL

Early hunting cartridges stateside favored .25 and .30 bores. Before WW I, the brilliant wildcatter and firearms inventor Charles Newton famously fashioned the .250 Savage and powerful .30 Newton. But about the same time, he also designed the first noteworthy 6.5 west of the Atlantic. The .256 Newton, on a .30-06 hull shortened .05 sent 129-gr. .264 bullets over 2,760 fps.

But nothing Newton did brought him the success he deserved. Despite the impressive speed and clear utility of his .256, it died after a stint in Western Cartridge's ammunition stable. Not until 1959 would a U.S. firm trot out another 6.5. The .264 Winchester Magnum and the follow-on short-action 6.5 Remington Magnum in the mid-'60s both flopped. The country again turned its back on six-fives.

## BUT WEATHERBY DIDN'T ...

"We set out to develop a cartridge that would fit in our slim six-lug Mark V action, but take full advantage of every bit of space," said Weatherby's chief, Adam Weatherby. "Our engineers came up with a flat-shooting 6.5 that sends a 127-gr. bullet at over 3,200 fps and a 140 at over 3,000." With nearly a ton-and-a-half of energy at



The fluted barrel (above) keeps overall weight at 5.3 lbs. By choosing the Ti version, you can have a long-range rifle tipping the scale at a featherweight 4.9 lbs. The crisp TriggerTech trigger (below) is adjustable down to 2.5 lbs.



the muzzle, those bullets carry 1,500 ft.-lbs. nearly 500 yards!

The new 6.5 Weatherby RPM (Rebated Precision Magnum) differs from the company's signature cartridges in several ways. It has no belt. Like the .284 Winchester of 1963, its body is bigger in diameter than

its .473 rim, which fits standard bolt faces. Unlike the .284, developed for short rifle actions (also the 6.5/284 wildcat Norma adopted in 2002), the RPM case is 2.60 long, 0.10 longer than the brass of most belted cartridges for .30-06-length actions. Result: magnum powder capacity without the bolt

head and heavy action of a rifle built for the spawn of the .300 H&H or .404 Jeffery. The 6.5 RPM is a perfect fit for Weatherby's nimble six-lug Mark V series, first produced stateside in 1996.

Another RPM departure — Junctions of its 35-degree shoulder are not radiused. Roy Weatherby's early case designs owe much to fellow California wildcatter R.W. Miller, who in 1940 was working with the .300 Hoffman and experimenting with radiused shoulders. The *American Rifleman's* E. Baden Powell suggested limiting bolt thrust by reducing case taper. The resulting case design was called PMVF: Powell Miller Venturi Freebore. In 1944 the two men went into business — a year later they sold out to Hollywood Tool and Die. After Roy carried a .270 PMVF on a hunt, he wanted the same profile for Weatherby cartridges. Miller demurred. Enter George Fuller, who had made the reamer for the .220 Weatherby Rocket.

### NUMBER THREE

The third distinction claimed by the 6.5 RPM is really in the rifle. It has no extended “freebore.” Roy made sure bullets from his magnums left the gate faster than the competition. Giving bullets an easy start before they met the rifling kept pressures in check. Despite claims freebore can impair accuracy, Weatherby (and other) barrels so bored have turned in snug groups. In fact, Weatherby now guarantees all Mark V rifles to shoot into a minute of angle! But the RPM was designed without the freebore imperative.

“The 6.5 RPM enabled us to build

magnum reach and power into an agile, lightweight rifle,” said Adam. He's used the cartridge on hunts already, in a Weatherby Backcountry Ti — a six-lug Mark V tipping the scale an ounce shy of 5 lbs. A careful 425-yard shot with a 140-gr. AccuBond dropped a Montana black bear during the 2019 spring season. Come fall, Adam used the rifle and 6.5 RPM load to tag a mule deer buck in Wyoming. Later, in a new Carbonmark Elite rifle, this hot 6.5 added a pronghorn to its tally.

In my view the 140-gr. AccuBond is a superb bullet for the RPM — accurate, chalk-line flat in flight and with upset and

penetration qualities making it suitable to game as big as elk. Keeping the barrels of 6.5 RPM rifles at 24, the crew at Weatherby's Sheridan, Wyoming plant gave those bullets the launch they deserve. The length also throttles blast and puts the Mark V's balance point where it belongs.

### A WIZARD RIFLE

The wand-like feel of the Backcountry I wrung out at the range last week was due as much to its stock as to the trim receiver and slender barrel. Not a Ti model, this rifle weighs 5.4 lbs. A Burris Veracity 2-10x42 in Talley rings added 26 oz. — more heft than appropriate for a rifle this light. But it's a fine sight, and came quick to hand. So equipped, this Weatherby still weighs less than 7 lbs.

### TALE OF THE STOCK

Manufactured by AG Composites, the Backcountry's air-weight stock has a “3D Hex” recoil pad with “energy diffusing lattice” — no cosmetic threat to a Pachmayr Decelerator. For all its zap, the rifle is a pussycat in recoil, a credit to the 3D Hex and to the shape of the comb. The rest of the stock impresses me less. The top of the wrist droops quickly, as if forced in a steep arc by the comb nose riding up over it. The nose is too far forward, fighting the heel of my big hand ahead of my thumb! Smaller paws will feel its intrusion too. The grip is properly slim but with no flare at the



The eye-catching 3DHEX recoil pad is both attractive and effective. The patent-pending design cuts both recoil and muzzle flip.



Only the 140-gr. AccuBond load was available for testing but it worked well. It's Wayne's choice for all-around use.



The barrel is threaded for the Weatherby AccuBrake ST and includes a thread protector if you choose to leave it off.



The AG Composite carbon-fiber stock is stiff, light and weatherproof. The short-throw (54-degrees) bolt is spiral fluted to keep crud from impeding action.

bottom — it wants to shed my palm.

The forend lacks Weatherby's signature angular lines: No reverse tip. The belly is rounded, not flat. Appropriate for a light-weight rifle, this shift begs completion. Absent is the elegant taper of classic stocks as on the Mannlicher-Schoenauer carbines, which brought the 6.5 bore to Africa, famously in the hand of F.C. Selous and W.D.M. Bell. The Backcountry forestock seems a tad tall up front, where it's about as broad at the receiver ring. The slender barrel is dwarfed by the shelves on either side.

### THE HARD STUFF

Now this pebble is out of my shoe, I can pivot to the metal. It's darned near perfect. The six-lug Mark V seduced me years ago when I bought a .25-06 in walnut. The rifle shoots teeny groups and a few seasons back downed an exceptional whitetail. Weatherby has since upgraded the action with a stainless TriggerTech trigger externally adjustable to 2.5 lbs. The 54-degree bolt lift — courtesy the three pairs of interrupted-thread lugs — lets you attach a scope in very low rings. The fluted, hand-lapped barrel has the four-groove 1-in-8 rifling of Weatherby's 6.5-300. The muzzle wears an AccuBrake ST. (Threads are 1/2-28, 5/8-24 or 11/16-24, depending on barrel contour.) A Black Cerakote finish on the Backcountry's fluted bolt, bolt handle and safety contrasts nicely with the McMillan tan Cerakote on the barrel,

receiver and bottom metal. Weatherby wisely held to an internal magazine with hinged floorplate. Despite the slightly larger diameter of the 6.5 RPM cartridge, the box holds four rounds.

### WRINGING IT OUT

My first three-shot group fired from sandbags in variable breeze measured 1.4. Subsequent knots matched it closely. While I allowed a minute between shots, the barrel warmed quickly. The third 140-gr. AccuBond often edged away from a tight pair. In my last trio, the first two holes touched. Surely this rifle will meet Weatherby's sub-MOA mandate!

The trigger yielded consistently, breaking like a tiny icicle. Feeding was smooth and certain, bolt travel delightfully slick and wobble-free. Severely rebated cartridges like the old .425 Westley Richards prompted concerns the bolt might override the rim, to catch the case forward of the extractor groove. The 6.5 RPM is not so radical in design and the Mark V action is essentially jam-proof. I couldn't make the bolt override the rim!

### ON THE OTHER END

Ballistically, Weatherby's newest 6.5 offers great reach and versatility. Down-range, its 140-gr. bullets hit as hard as — and fly flatter than — 139-gr. spitzers from most 7mm Remington Magnum loads! And they do it from a svelte rifle unmatched in

weight and profile by any magnum I know! Adam tells me while Norma is producing Weatherby-branded belted cartridges, RPM ammunition will be loaded at the Sheridan facility.

I'm sweet on the 6.5 RPM. Weatherby seems to have met its goal of packing magnum reach and power into a sleek, quick-handling rifle with a standard bolt face. This is no mean feat!

### YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW

The 6.5x68 and .264 Winchester were big medicine in their day, when the 6.5x55 Swede and its 19th-century cousins defined the 6.5 bore — but the standard is outdated. Beginning in 2002 with the .260 Remington (handicapped by the similar and versatile 7mm-08 announced 20 years earlier), 6.5mm rounds have proliferated.

The 6.5 Creedmoor (2009) accelerated the trend. Seven years later Weatherby trumped ballistic also-rans with its 6.5-300 Magnum. The 6.5 Weatherby RPM matches magnums of yesteryear, in a series of svelte, eager rifles sure to appeal to hunters who range far and find game in steep places.

I'm sweet on the round and gun. Weatherby seems to have met its goal of packing magnum reach and power into a sleek, quick-handling rifle with a standard bolt face. This is no mean feat! MSRP: \$2,499



[www.weatherby.com](http://www.weatherby.com)

# Rimfire *Memories*



The Nylon 66 was the first non-wooden stocked rifle David remembers. His friend got one for his 14th birthday and David developed a severe case of green-eyed envy!



These .22 revolvers, some .22 Short and .22 Long Rifle ammo and a few targets make for an afternoon of fun and inexpensive shooting.



Shooting a .22 with a silencer always brings a smile — afterward! — to David's youngest granddaughter's face.

## DAVID FREEMAN

The year was 1962. My friend Bobby Norman got a Remington Nylon 66 for his birthday. We rode our motorcycles out to Hurricane Creek Bottom to shoot it. To say I was envious is an understatement — my .22 rifle was a bolt action single-shot and to add to my envy, Bobby's motorcycle was a Honda Dream 305 while mine was only a 150.

### A DIFFERENT DAY

Fourteen-year-olds with guns and motorcycles? The idea probably horrifies some, but it was fine then because our parents *parented* and we were taught responsibility at home, in school, in church and in our neighborhoods. Motorcycles in those days didn't require license plates or a driver's license, in case you're wondering.

I caught up with Bobby in the gun department a few months later when I went into the Western Auto store, plopped down a hard-earned \$50 and walked out with a High Standard Double Nine .22 revolver. A few years later when Bobby was a Marine and I was an Army helicopter pilot, I flew over to Camp Lejeune in a Huey one weekend and gave him a ride. Kind of made the Honda Dream a little insignificant, huh?

### MAKING MEMORIES

Funny how I remember those guns almost 60 years later. However, it's not just the guns so much as the relationships



The Honda 305 Dream was a popular motorcycle for young people in the 1960s, back when risk was considered a normal part of life.

# A lifetime of shooting, one bullet at a time

forged around them and the trust involved in allowing us to have them. I still have the High Standard Double Nine and enjoy shooting it.

My point is simple — if you want to share the shooting experience with family and friends while building a low-cost gun collection, rimfire is the way to go. It's economical shooting too. There was a time when .22 ammo was expensive but I saw boxes of 50 rounds on the shelf at Cabela's the other day for \$1.99.

There are tons of .22 rifles selling for under \$150, including semi-automatics from Mossberg, Rossi and Marlin. Semi-automatic .22 pistols start around \$200 with a lot of choices in the \$200 to \$250 price range. A good .22 is so affordable these days you might want several.

### KIDS AND GUNS

Unfortunately, the practicality of kids under 18 owning these affordable .22s and shooting them on their own has pretty much gone bye-bye with the Nanny State taking over so many aspects of raising our kids.

Here in Texas there are fallbacks indicating the whole world hasn't gone crazy. A graduate of the Texas Parks & Wildlife's Hunter Education program who is nine years old or older can hunt with a firearm without an adult in the immediate vicinity. In other words, Dad can drop the boy or girl off at the tree stand or on the other side of a dove field and let them hunt. If the kid has their card with them, a game warden isn't going to be upset.

Being a country boy, here's another one I like — a child engaged in an agricultural enterprise is free to tote a gun



Low cost .22 semi-autos are fun and educational choices for shooting with family and friends. (Top-bottom) Colt Gov't Model 22, Ruger SR22, S&W M&P 22, another SR22.

necessary to protect crops or farm animals. This little section in the Texas Penal Code means country boys and girls are pretty much the same as when I was young regarding guns.

### TEACH YOUR CHILDREN WELL

Our family has taken responsibility to train our young ones in the safe handling of firearms starting at a very early age. Any of them who want to shoot can be assured a parent, grandparent or uncle will be more than happy to take them shooting and provide any coaching they may require or desire. What are their favorite guns to shoot? The boys continue to like cowboy guns and we have plenty of them with the Heritage, Ruger and Legacy revolvers.

They love the 1911s. We have Colt and Rock Island .22 1911s. The girls typically like the smaller guns like the Ruger SR-22 and S&W M&P Compact. Sure, they shoot the larger calibers, too, but we keep an eye on the ammo cost around here and take a lot more rimfire ammo to the range than we do centerfire.

If you're not shooting with your kids and grandkids, who will? Since we don't now have the freedoms many of us enjoyed in our youth, the shooting sports could die with our generation. The only answer is adult interaction with youngsters, teaching them gun safety and providing them guns to shoot under supervision. I encourage you to be proactive wherever there is an opportunity, even if you have to make the opportunity.

### GROWING OLDER, NOT UP

I leave you with this last observation. Yesterday a friend whom I hadn't seen in four or five years invited me to meet him at the range to catch up. Without saying it, we knew such an occasion involves each of us bringing a few arms we'd like to show off. I had a couple of guns I had been reviewing for magazine articles. He brought three guns. One of them was a Heritage .22 revolver. Some part of us just seems to never grow up. I knew right then I should have brought my new Wrangler.

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# Swaging SATISFACTION

## ROLL YOUR OWN .223 BULLETS FROM .22 LR CASES

**DENNY HANSEN**

I have been reloading for over 45 years and casting my own bullets for almost as long. The main reason I got into loading and casting, like many others, was to make my shooting dollars go farther. Over the years my first single-stage RCBS Rock Chucker — which I still use for some cartridges — has morphed into much more equipment. It has become a major investment.

One of the more expensive items was a set of four swaging dies from Corbin Swaging Products which can turn fired .22 Long Rifle cases into jacketed .223 bullets. The dies are not

inexpensive but they will pay for themselves many times over in the coming years. How soon will depend on how much you shoot.

For example, a box of 100 FMJ .223 bullets for reloading run about \$13 per hundred, or \$130 per thousand. Your cost for your homemade bullets: Free. Figuring two cents for primer and three cents for powder, the cost for 1,000 fully-loaded cartridges is only \$50. If you're lucky enough to find .223 ammo on sale, 1,000 cartridges will cost around \$300 before tax and shipping costs.

The dies can be used in a standard single-stage press or one designed specifically for swaging. I use the latter.

### MAKING BULLETS IN 10 STEPS

Step One: Gather spent .22 LR rifle cases from the range.

Step Two: Anneal cases so they can be swaged easily. I use an oven set at 500 degrees for 45 minutes.

Step Three: Boil cases in mixture of Dawn, 1/2 cup vinegar and a pinch of salt. This removes tarnish, making them easier on the dies and also removes the caustic primer mix in the rim.

Step 4: Lubricate the cases and then run them through the Jacket Maker die. I use Dillon Case Lube as the aerosol spray that covers well. This step removes the rim and a fully formed jacket ejects from the top of the die with each pull of the handle.

Step 5: Using lead wire or cast cores, form the cores by swaging them to the appropriate weight in the Core Swage die for the bullet you want to produce when the jacket is added. I've settled on 60-gr. bullets. Any imperfections in the core will be forced out and excess lead will be pressed through bleed holes in the die. Another quick spray of lube makes the process easier.

Step 6: Seat a core in a jacket with just enough force so a slight lip forms inside the jacket.

Step 7: Forming the point will produce an open tip bullet. An enclosed tip, FMJ-type bullet may be formed by putting the bullet in the Point Forming die upside down but I have found this shape does not improve feeding and is less accurate. A steel pin fitting into the die pushes the bullet out when the press handle is raised.

Step 8: It's desirable to remove any residual lube from the bullets. I use a Lyman Cyclone tumbler with water, polishing compound and small stainless steel pins for a high luster.



After gathering spent .22 cases, they are annealed then boiled in Dawn detergent, a 1/2 cup vinegar and a pinch of salt to remove tarnish and caustic primer.



To remove any residual lube from the bullets, Denny uses a Lyman Cyclone tumbler with water, a polishing compound and small stainless steel pins for a high luster.



Step 9: (optional): If used in a bolt-action, the bullets are now ready to load. If they are going to be used in an auto-loader I suggest rolling a cannelure onto the bullet to prevent bullet setback as it is chambered. I roll the cannelure 0.246" from the base of the bullet. This results in an overall cartridge length of 2.16", assuming the cases have been trimmed to the suggested length of 1.75".

Step 10: Go to the range and take satisfaction in shooting a bullet you made, basically for free minus the cost of the dies.

### PERFORMANCE?

I recently had my first chance to shoot the bullets into gel. It shed the majority of the jacket within 9" but the core penetrated

to 15". Originally 60 grains, the recovered bullet retained most of its mass and weighed 55.8 grains.

Accuracy? At a carbine course at Gunsite on the York range I fired a five-round group measuring 0.52 from 75 yards. At 200 yards the group grew to just under 3".

The terminal effect on jackrabbits and coyotes can be described as explosive.

Caveat: While these bullets are excellent for plinking, practice, varmints and training, I would caution against using them for self-defense. Something like the 62-gr. TSX round from Black Hills Ammunition would be better suited for this role. 

[www.corbins.com](http://www.corbins.com)

# KRONOS SEMI-AUTOMAT

## EUROPEAN DESIGN WITH **BAR** ROOTS

**FRANK JARDIM**

**B**efore the emergence of numerous AR-platform hunting rifles in serious large-game calibers, the universe for semi-auto hunters was pretty small. In the post-WWII era, three sporting semi-autos from Remington, Browning and — much later Benelli — found commercial success. However, sales always lagged far behind traditional bolt actions, which were considerably less expensive and considered to be generally more reliable and accurate.

By 2015, Remington had discontinued their Woodmaster, which was not on par with the others and may have tarnished the reputation of the whole breed of traditional, non-military based semi-auto sporting rifles.

### BRING ON ANOTHER

The Kronos, designed and built by F.LLI. Pietta, is mechanically similar to the excellent BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle) but with unique features of its own. Alessandro Pietta explained, “It looks like a BAR, but it’s better. My brother



The Kronos Rifle uses a three-lugged rotation bolt head like those in Pietta shotguns.



The short-stroke gas system of the Pietta is very similar to the Browning BAR.



# IC RIFLE

Alberto led the Kronos project. He designed it after studying all the other semi-auto rifles on the market, taking his inspiration from what he saw as their better qualities."

Like the BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle), the Kronos operates with a short-stroke gas piston transferring energy to a heavy link riding on a central guide rod below the barrel. The link is connected to the bolt carrier by dual bars to balance the force for a smoother and more consistent action. The rotating bolt head locks into a steel barrel extension, and both rifles are similar to common shotguns such as the Remington 870 where the bolt lock-up happens in the barrel rather than the receiver. This allows the receiver to be made of a lighter material. In the case of the Kronos, it's a piece of billet-machined aluminum alloy.



The push button safety, bolt hold-open and magazine release are clustered around the trigger guard.



The Pietta Kronos Rifle, an Italian .30-06 semi-auto ready for the range or deer woods out of the box.



One of Frank's best groups recorded with an SME target camera system. The trigger isn't great, but for a semi-auto hunter, it's workable.

## ADVANTAGES

The Italian import comes in .308 Winchester and .30-06 Springfield so it can take most of the world's large game and has traditional sporting rifle lines for those who don't want their hunting trips to go tactical. Practically speaking, like all gas-operated rifles, its main advantage is softer recoil and faster follow-up shots. The recoil attenuation alone helps make you a better marksman. Painful recoil induces involuntarily flinch — why take a beating from your hi-powered rifle if you don't have to?

Unlike the BAR, the Kronos gas system is not designed to be readily adjusted by the user. The Kronos system is factory regulated by Pietta based on their testing with major brands of ammunition to find the gas piston size to handle the widest range of loads reliably. Technically, the Kronos gas system can be adjusted by the somewhat complex installation of a smaller gas piston but most shooters would never need to do so.

## TALE OF THE TAPE

The Kronos is light (7.4 lbs.) and fast handling at 42" with the 20" barrel. It comes with adjustable, high visibility, three dot (green and orange) fiber optic sights. The sight radius is a little short but the sight picture is extremely easy to pick up, especially

in dim light. Out of the box the rifle is ready for the woods, with quick detachable sling swivels, a thick, soft, recoil absorbing, micro-gel foam, butt pad and a four-round detachable magazine. They make a nine-round magazine too if you're expecting trouble.

The stocks are varnished walnut, checkered and sculpted to improve your grip. The exaggerated sweep and bottom swell of the pistol grip are especially good for people with big hands, helping you hang onto the rifle in rapid fire. For purposes of customizing the stock fit to the shooter, it comes with two extra plastic stock shims to raise or lower the height of the comb. Not included, but also available, are optional butt pads to adjust the length of pull.

Workmanship is excellent. This is no surprise in light of the excellent quality of Pietta's historic replica firearms of the American Civil War and Old West eras. The Kronos is a blend of old school and modern materials: 4140 steel, blued barrel with hammer-forged rifling, fiberglass reinforced techno-polymer for the barrel half rib, trigger guard and magazine base, aluminum alloy receiver and classy walnut stocks.

### KEEP 'ER CLEAN

Like all gas piston guns, you want to keep lubricants away from the piston itself so they don't gum up the cylinder. Some ammo burns dirtier than others but field stripping the gas system is an easy process similar to dismounting a pump-shotgun barrel. You unscrew the front sling-swivel base and the front handguard slides right off, exposing the whole system to your solvent-soaked toothbrush.

### SCOPE IT UP

Many American hunters will want to mount a scope so Pietta facilitates the process with seven tapped and plugged holes on the receiver. Brownells.com had the correct Weaver bases (part # 48470), that are the same ones used on the Browning BAR. I hate to test a rifle without a scope, possibly making it look bad because of my crappy old-man eyesight. Therefore, I installed a nice Vortex Diamondback 1.75 to 5X power scope. This is not one of their premium models but at a price point less than \$250, it's a lot of optic for the money. I believe a powerful semi-auto doesn't need a scope more than 5X because you want a broad field of view to keep your target in the glass for a quick follow-up shot.



Convenient drilled and tapped holes on the receiver allowed mounting of a perfect deer hunting scope, the Vortex Diamondback 1.75 to 5X.



Ain't 'Merican — the sculpted rear sight and overall lines definitely show European design influence. The checkered forend improves grip for rapid fire.

### AMMO TEST

Some hunting ammunition bench rest testing at 100 yards showed this rifle and marksman capable of delivering five-shot groups better than 2.5 MOA — more than precise enough for typical hunting.

The most accurate load was Black Hills Ammunition Company's Black Hills Gold 178-gr. ELD-X bullet delivering a 1.81" group at an average of 2,471 feet per second. Hornady's 150-gr. Super Performance GMAX bullet's best group was 2.12" and a scorching 2,893 feet per second velocity, 50 feet per second faster than some old military 150-gr. FMJ ball ammo I used to sight in. The heavy-hitting Winchester 190-gr. Long Range AccuBond Big Game bullets shot about 3" groups with an average velocity of 2,554 feet per second. Each of these diverse loads ran through the rifle without flaw.

### ONE SHORTCOMING

Overall, I give the Kronos high marks as a versatile and powerful semi-auto hunter

with one significant critique. In fairness, this is not meant to be a target rifle but you will find the Krono's trigger-pull excessive. The one I test measured at 8.25 lbs. and was a little gritty at the start, making it feel rather like a two-stage trigger. After a day of shooting, the gritty quality disappeared leaving a decent, but still heavy and overly long trigger-pull. At the bench, I felt the trigger was holding the gun back from delivering the full measure of its accuracy potential.

However, for me, this trigger isn't a deal breaker in a .30-06 semi-auto rifle.

I spent a day shooting this rifle and was no worse for the wear afterward. In addition, when I switched from bench shooting bullseye targets at 100 yards to fun, off-hand, rapid-fire drills on gallon water jugs set out from 50 to 100 yards, I never noticed the heavy pull. I suspect I probably wouldn't notice it over my heavily beating heart on the opening day of deer season either. MSRP: \$1,394

[www.piettausa.com](http://www.piettausa.com)



If you are one of a steadily increasing percentage of Americans who use the New Behavioral Insights on modern TVs, they look passed help.

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## WANT MORE?

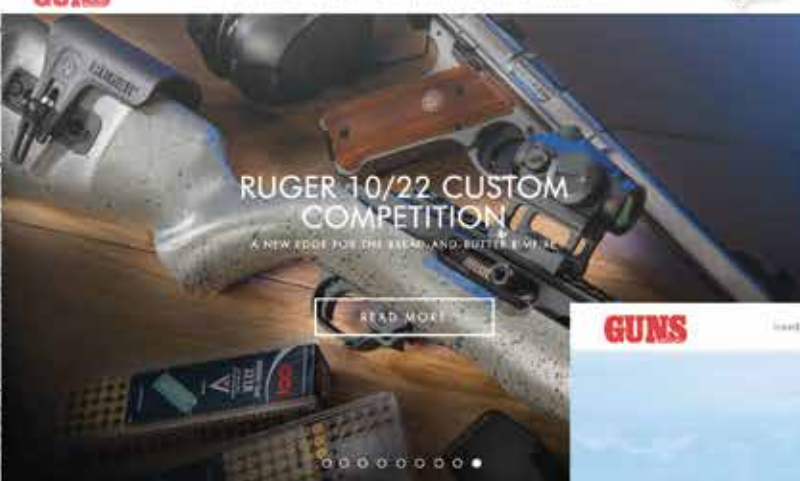
I finally found it. This is the one. After years of reading your and writing about them I've finally located the long gone of my dreams. It's in 2000.

**Abstract**



**ETRS**

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RE

# MANTIS X10

## ELITE SHOOTING PERFORMANCE SYSTEM

A PRACTICAL AND AFFORDABLE TRAINER-IN-A-BOX!

### BRENT T. WHEAT

**"I** can help 94 percent of shooters improve in 20 minutes." Sounds pretty presumptuous and smacks of those Get-Rich-Quick or Lose-50-pounds-in-two-weeks TV commercials, doesn't it?

I don't know the key to making you wealthier or thinner, but if my own experiences and the Mantis marketing literature rings true, I *can* make the majority of shooters noticeably better in such a short period of time. All I need to do is slap a Mantis X10 Elite-equipped gun into your hand and let the magic happen.

### WHAT IT IS

The Mantis X10 is a non-descript black plastic doodad about half the size of a matchbox. You clip it to your practice firearm using the accessory rail and wirelessly connect it (via low power bluetooth) to your Apple or Android portable device.

Once the system is running, the little

black box starts sending a wide range of data to your mobile device, which then analyzes and displays the results. Regardless if you're using a rifle, shotgun or pistol, dry or live fire, or even a CO<sub>2</sub> powered gun, the Mantis X10 provides all sorts of useful information about every facet of your weapon manipulations. It records, analyzes and interprets every detail, guiding you to better shooting with each shot. The only thing it doesn't do is make julienne fries or clear the dinner dishes!

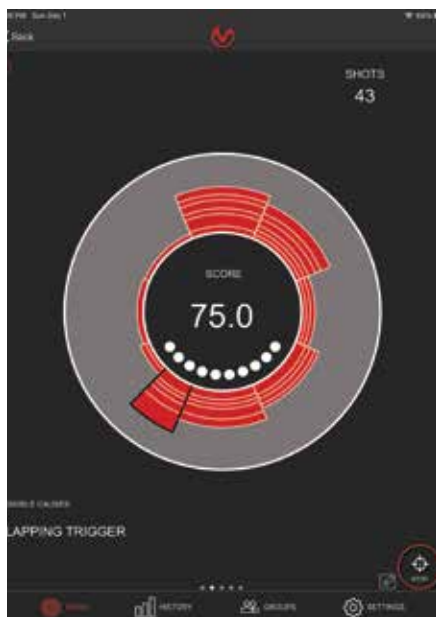
### WHAT ELSE CAN THERE BE?

There are devices and systems on the market doing similar work but none of them offer the combination of small size, ease of use and *reasonable cost* delivered by the Mantis X10. Aside from the lengthy list of training benefits, a major selling point to my exceptionally *frugal* (i.e. cheap) mind — the whole shootin' match lists at \$249.99.

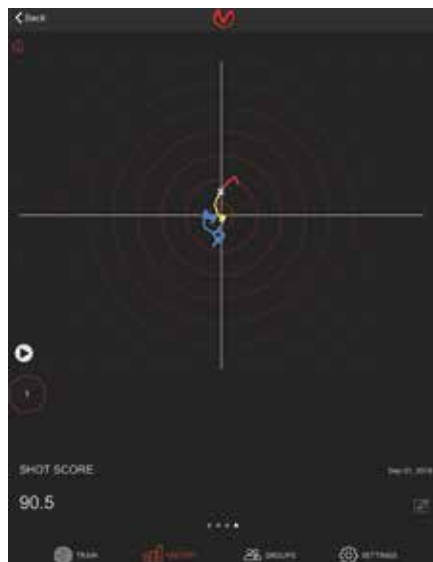
For this price you get a sophisticated weapon data recorder and an equally



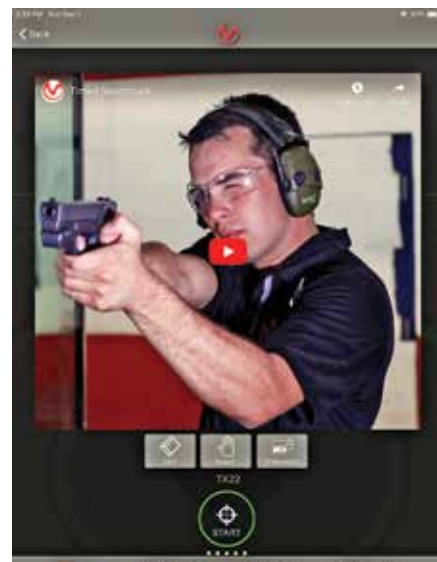
This is your ultimate goal — a trigger pull ranking above 90 percent. If you do well, the software lets you know!



What you don't want to see — a poor shot. The software analyzes what went wrong and offers helpful suggestions. The circle graph lets you know where your shots trend.



Wanna know your muzzle trace? The Mantis X10 shows you — blue is before trigger pull, yellow during and red after the shot.



The app also offers plenty of video instruction to help you use the software to maximum effect.

cutting-edge software program to examine every facet of your weapons handling and offers coaching tips and drills. Pardon the pun, but you get a lot of bang for your buck!

## TAKING IT FOR A SPIN

Once you've set the system up — which literally takes about 10 seconds — the app offers all sorts of training options. Open training analyzes your trigger pull and timing, which is the mode I use the most. I keep an unloaded new Taurus G3 sitting on my office shelf with the sensor mounted, ready to use for dry practice whenever the whim strikes. The G3 is a great choice because it fires without a magazine and doesn't require recocking. Using this set-up, I manage to get dry-fire practice almost every day without leaving the confines of my cell, er, editorial suite.

From open training you can progress



to using a shot timer, doing a compressed surprise break drill, train with primary or support hand only, reload drills, holster presentations, cadence drill, hostage taker drills and more. Mantis says additional

features will be offered with software updates.

## SEE THE RESULTS

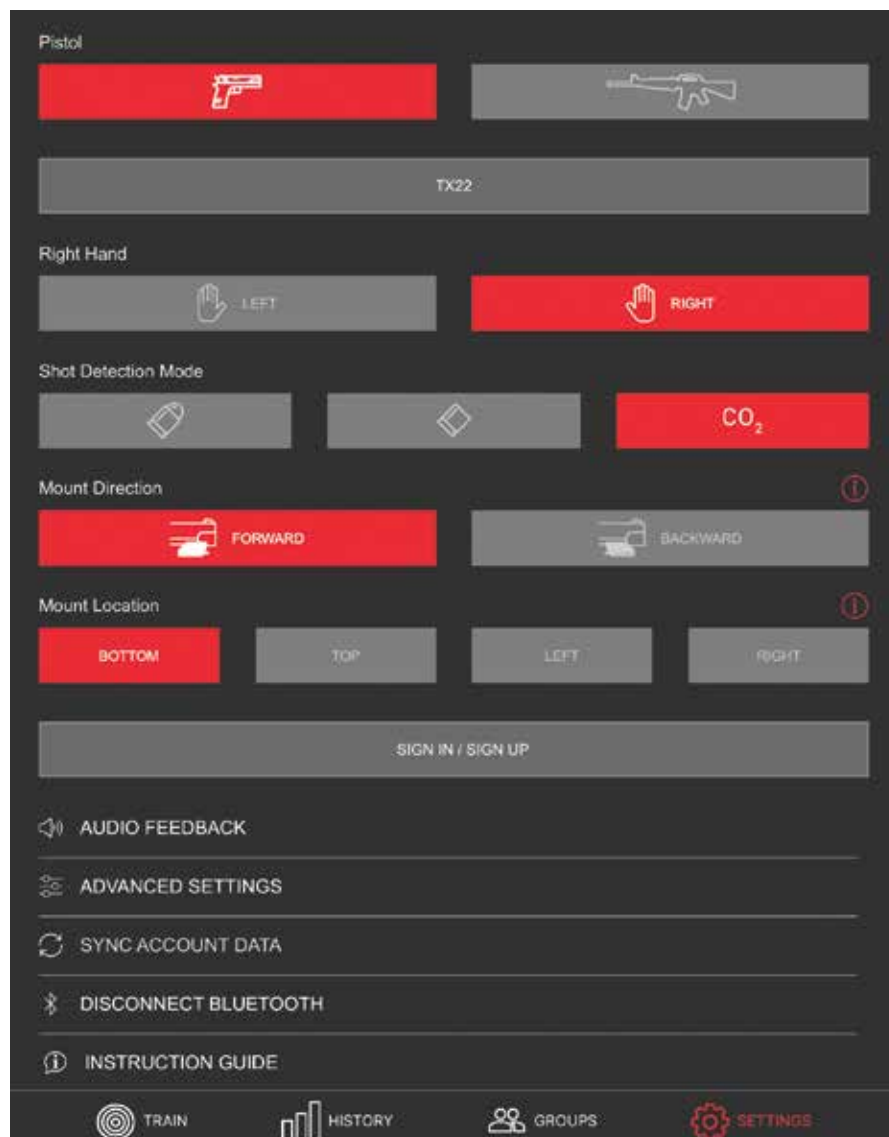
After each shot, the app displays and grades your results. If you don't get a "great shot" rating, it will offer suggestions such as "grip too tight" while brandishing all sorts of parameters such as your muzzle trace before and after the shot, timing and trigger control analysis. All this information is displayed in several different ways and stored for future comparison. There is even a voice feedback mode so you don't take your eyes off the target and you can add your own personal notes to the training session.

## PERFECTION ACHIEVED?

For all my gushy, over-the-top enthusiasm, there are a couple of minor caveats. First, it's a simple system but you do need to spend some time learning how to use the software. It also occasionally fails to register shots, especially during dry practice, but this doesn't happen enough to be annoying.

The biggest question is — does it work? It's hard to say definitively without long-term scientific testing but based on my own not-inconsequential training experiences as both teacher and student, I'd say there isn't any way it *can't* help you become a better shooter.

It's not a magic pill, but consistent use of the Mantis X10 Elite to support your training will undoubtedly lead to improved skills. For firearms trainers, it would also be invaluable to help illustrate marksmanship deficiencies and resolve those occasional, "No, I didn't do that!" arguments. I consider it a must-have personal training tool for anyone serious about their marksmanship.



Setting up the app on a phone or tablet is simple and adapts to almost any weapon. You can have dry or live fire practice using a pistol, rifle, shotgun or even air weapons!

[www.mantisx.com](http://www.mantisx.com)



# THE TIMBERWOLF SUBCOMPACT **10**mm

## THE CANNON YOU CARRY

### WILL DABBS, MD

**L**one Wolf Distributors cut their teeth designing and producing top-quality aftermarket accessories for GLOCK pistols. For more than a decade they have been the go-to guys for threaded barrels, specialized guide rods, grip plugs, drop-in custom slides and a zillion other well-reasoned accessories designed to optimize your favorite polymer smoke pole. Now, Lone Wolf also offers some radical new complete pistols.

Their newest 10mm subcompact creation packs unprecedented power into a package you can actually tote underneath shorts and a T-shirt.

### WAR STORY

It's the most studied gunfight in history. Former Army Ranger Michael Lee Platt was one of two bank-robbing murderers pulled over in an otherwise quiet Miami-Dade County neighborhood

“ HOWEVER, SHOULD YOU EVER HAVE TO USE  
IT FOR REAL, YOU’LL BE THANKFUL FOR ALL THE POWER. ”

by FBI agents in April of 1986. When the smoke cleared both felons were dead as were two of the agents. Another five agents were wounded. The gunfire was so extreme locals later said they thought they were filming an episode of Miami Vice.

The tactics have already been explored in profound detail. The most extraordinary bit, however, was the remarkable physiology of Platt's reaction to his gunshot wounds. Despite suffering a lethal injury early on, Platt went on to fire 42 rounds out of his Mini-14 and a half dozen shots through a pair of .357 revolvers.

In the opening moments of the fight Platt caught a 115-gr. 9mm Winchester Silvertip bullet in his right arm just above the elbow. The bullet passed across the humerus and through the biceps. Along the way it severed the brachial vessels, spilling energy as it went.

Partially spent, this projectile then entered Platt's chest between the fifth and sixth ribs. Tumbling vigorously the round tore through the right lung and came to rest about an inch short of his heart. Despite the severity of this injury, Platt kept fighting for another four minutes and subsequently killed the two FBI agents.

At his post-mortem evaluation it was determined Platt had lost 1.3 liters of blood into his right lung. A typical adult human only has about five liters total. This wound was fatal and would have ultimately stopped him, but not in the first five minutes when it really counted.

My own experience in an urban ER has demonstrated this as well. I have seen several thugs die from well-placed center-of-mass gunshot wounds a full 15 to 30 minutes after they were initially shot. During the interim they were capable of fomenting a great deal of mischief.

So what is the point to all this gory discourse? It behooves those of us who frequently pack handguns of questionable power to appreciate just how ineffective our tools might be if we to use them for real. A .380 ACP pocket pistol might be easy to tote but there is certainly no guarantee a Bad Guy is going to be terribly inconvenienced if you unleash it on him. With this in mind Lone Wolf Distributing set out to build the most powerful concealed carry handgun the current state of the art could contrive. The end result is their custom Timberwolf Subcompact (TWL-S) 10mm pocket cannon.

## EARLY ADOPTERS

Faced with such disappointing performance from the 115-gr. hollowpoint ammunition of the day, the FBI adopted the Smith & Wesson Model 1076 in 10mm Auto. While this howitzer of a handgun had all the right numbers, longevity was spotty and the thing was a boat anchor to tote. This quandary resulted in the .40 S&W cartridge that subsequently took American Law Enforcement by storm.

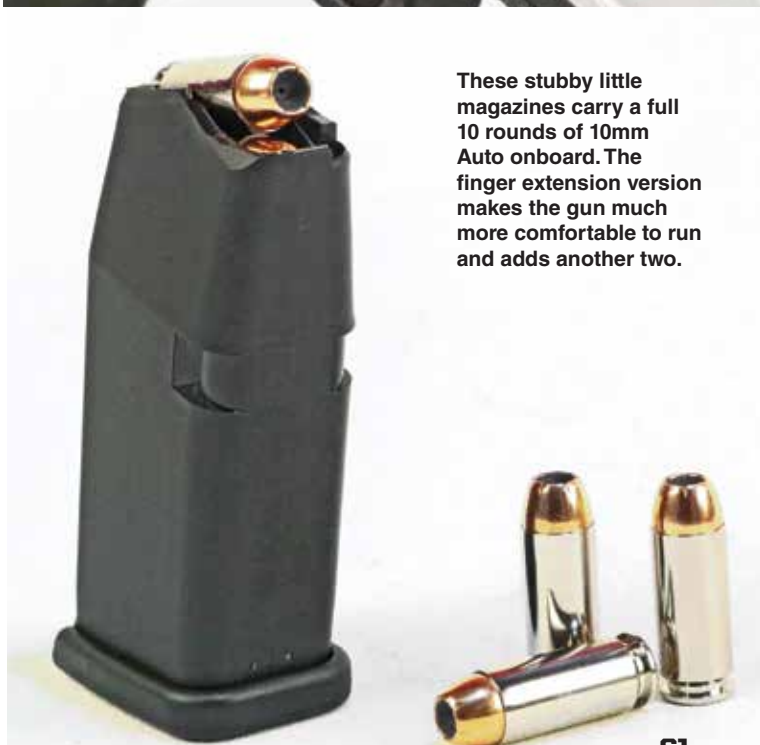
Advances in bullet design now allow American cops to coax .40-caliber performance out of 9mm pistols. However, if modern bullets make 9mm good, those same modern bullets make the



The back plate proclaims the gun's Lone Wolf parentage. Top-end tritium night sights keep the gun pointed in the right direction.



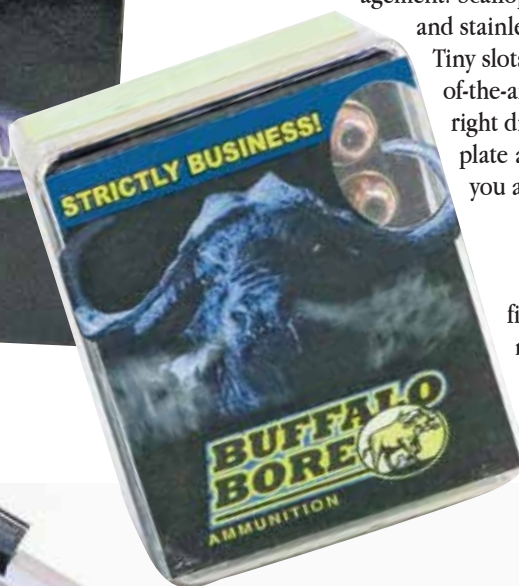
The stainless steel slide is indestructible and sports a series of tiny grooves down the top to help minimize glare.



These stubby little magazines carry a full 10 rounds of 10mm Auto onboard. The finger extension version makes the gun much more comfortable to run and adds another two.



SIG, DoubleTap and Buffalo Bore all make superb high-end antipersonnel rounds in 10mm Auto.



10mm Auto great. Simply put, the 10mm Auto is an undeniably big, heavy, mean round.

### PERTINENT PARTICULARS

Everything is Physics. Cram an enormous cartridge into a tiny gun and it will suck too much to shoot it often or well. In the case of the Timberwolf TWL-S, the solution was to mate a subcompact frame with a full-length slide. When packing a concealed handgun, the size of the grip is typically the limiting reagent. You can shove a full-sized slide down your drawers with no one being the wiser but a long fat grip is inevitably going to “print.”

In this case the big slide offers extra mass, nice barrel length and a proper recoil system, all key attributes for recoil management. Scalloped grip grooves make the gun easy to cycle and stainless steel construction makes it indestructible. Tiny slots along the top help decrease glare and state-of-the-art tritium sights keep the gun pointed in the right direction, even in hard dark. A Lone Wolf back plate also offers a cool toothy wolf staring back as you align the sights.

### WHERE IT ALL BEGINS

The real magic happens in the frame. When first you heft it, you can just tell this gun will never work. The polymer frame is too short for proper purchase. Equipping a 10mm Auto heater with such a tiny gripping surface seemed to be the formula for



misery on the range — then I slapped the extended magazine in place and the little light came on over my head.

These stubby little double stack magazines pack a full 10 rounds of 10mm Auto chaos. Add the Lone Wolf finger extension baseplate and the number goes to 12. The little extra bit of gripping space makes the gun fit perfectly in the typical adult hand. The end result really does something I never thought possible — packing 10mm Auto power into a package small enough to hide and carry comfortably.

The polymer grip is nicely pebbled and the magazine release is easily reversible. The trigger is classic GLOCK with a predictable take-up and nice crisp break.

### TRIGGER TIME

The 10mm Auto cartridge is a monster and you certainly know you're shooting it. However, the TWL-S is also undeniably effective. The raked grip-to-frame angle orients the line of recoil along your forearm to minimize muzzle flip and the dimensions of this compact little pocket howitzer fit me nicely.

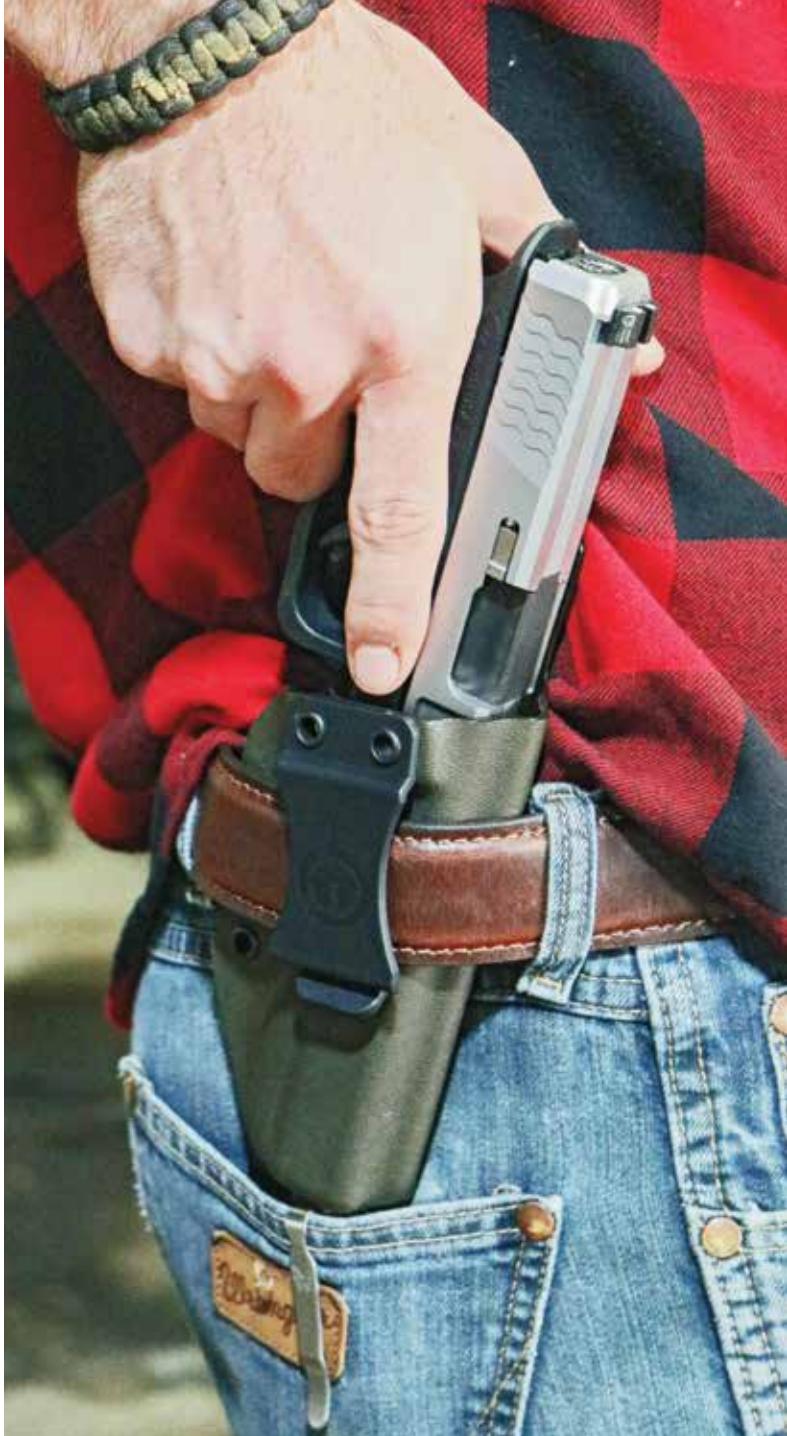
Reliability was flawless with everything we fed it, while the slide locked back over an empty mag every time. Magazines drop free cleanly so the manual of arms is the same as with most polymer-framed pistol. The slide release and magazine catch stick out just enough to grab without getting in the way.

At reasonable handgun ranges the Lone Wolf TWL-S will reliably group within a soup can lid. I burned up a substantial stash of 10mm Auto ammo during our time together and I can attest this gun does indeed have a manly comportment. This isn't the gun you will use to kill a lazy afternoon at the range while happily ventilating discarded Coke cans. However, should you ever have to use it for real, you'll be thankful for all the power.

### PHILOSOPHY

The debate over caliber versus stopping power has raged ever since the invention of gunpowder. Now after countless

**At 15 meters from a simple rest, the Timberwolf TWL-S drops them right where they need to be.**



**The Lone Wolf Timberwolf TWL-S combined with a superb Gunfighters Inc. carry rig equals legit 10mm Auto power you really can carry concealed.**

real-world examples and untold gallons of blood spilt, we still don't really have the definitive answer. It's safe to say if you are ever called upon to use your defensive firearm for real, you will want the biggest, baddest, meanest gun money can buy.

In the world of concealed carry pistols, however, you just aren't going to get much more effective than the 10mm Auto Timberwolf TWL-S. The pistol harnesses state-of-the-art materials science and recoil systems to make such a powerful pistol fully portable. To be effective a defensive handgun needs to be available, reliable and accurate. This new gun from Lone Wolf is all this and more.



[www.lonewolfdist.com](http://www.lonewolfdist.com)



The neo-retro A.G. Russell Vest Pocket Semi-Skinner combines old ideas with modern design and fabrication, making for a cool, unique pocketknife.

## A.G. RUSSELL VEST POCKET SEMI-SKINNER CUTLERY WIZARD LEFT A COOL FOLDER DESIGN BEHIND.

When cutlery genius A.G. Russell passed way in October of 2018, he left behind a legacy of being both a pioneer entrepreneur and visionary designer. A unique trait of Russell's design talent was his ability to take a knife pattern and add personal touches making it unique in its own way — which is what we have here. The A.G. Russell Vest Pocket Semi-Skinner combines a lockback design with a semi-skinner blade style usually relegated to fixed-blade hunting knives and, true to A.G. form, it works!

There are other throwback styling cues on the Vest Pocket Semi-Skinner. The blade has an old-school long-pull nail knick and the 3" handle has stainless steel bolsters and a "bag-handle" which gives it a Trapper feel — plus there's an ovate stainless steel

escutcheon as a crowning touch. The rest of the equation is fully modern. The elegant 2.6" semi-skinner blade is made of premium CPM-S35VN stainless steel and the handle scales are very contemporary Carbon Fiber. All the stainless steel on the handle has a satin, brushed finish, including the folder's sturdy locking tab at the rear base. The whole neo-retro package weighs in at a svelte 2.5 oz.

### WHY YOU'LL LIKE IT

For starters, the Russell Vest Pocket Semi-Skinner is both stylish and unique. Can you field dress a quail with it? Sure, but most likely this is an EDC you will enjoy using and showing off to friends. While traditional pocketknife designs are



A.G. Russell had a knack for adding unexpected styling cues, like the semi-skinner blade style, and pulling them off to perfection.

a dime a dozen, they can't hold a candle to the Russell Vest Pocket Semi-Skinner's cool. The build is rock solid and fit-n-finish and is as nice as you'll see on a production knife. MSRP on this little dandy is a very reasonable \$99.95, a small price to pay for the curious smiles you'll get around the water cooler or break room.

[www.agrussell.com](http://www.agrussell.com)

# "You asked for it so we built it!"

~ Roy Huntington  
Publisher



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# STARTING AT THE BOTTOM

## GETTING TO THE ROOTS OF

### "GRASSROOTS" GUN-RIGHTS POLITICS

**W**e're going to have a conversation here, and before going any further, nothing you are about to read is meant to offend you, nor should you be offended.

If it does light your fuse, we're in trouble already. You see, it's one thing to read something infuriating but inciting fury is only part of the process. You've got to channel this energy into activism and for that you'll need a plan.

And before you can create a plan, you need intel.

#### GET STARTED

The proverbial "long winter of discontent" is fading into spring, and with the changing of the season will come the end of most state legislative sessions, more disagreeable rhetoric along the presidential campaign trail and an opportunity for gun owners to clearly identify the differences between the Good Guys and Bad Guys.

This fall's elections for state and federal offices may well be the most important elections in your lifetime. Doubt this at your own peril. Therefore, here are some questions you need to answer right now and if you don't know the answers, start "hitting the books" because the final exam comes in November and it carries a straight pass-fail grade.

Here's the square of it — regardless your opinion about any other subject, if you're going to protect your Second Amendment rights in 2020, all other considerations must take a distant back seat in November. Understand this: The majority party sets the agenda, names committee chairs and controls the discussion. Forget what your senior citizen group, your union, the PTA or some other group says about voting for those interests. If you own firearms and want to keep them, get busy now.

If your vote allows some anti-Second Amendment pol into office, your rights

aren't just in jeopardy, they could be toast and there is no walking it back.

#### DO YOU KNOW?

Who are your two U.S. Senators and what do you know about them? C'mon, this should be easy. Every state has two United States Senators. This fact, along with the creation of the Electoral College, may well be the smartest thing those Founding Fathers really did.

But do you know their interests? What's their most important issue? Veterans?



Health care? Transportation? Education?

Are either of your senators up for election this year? If one of them is running for re-election, now is the time to be researching their gun rights voting record. Check online at a couple of places such as [votesmart.org](http://votesmart.org) or [OnTheIssues.org](http://OnTheIssues.org).

In which Congressional District do you live? You don't know or aren't sure? This you should know like your home address, because in effect, it is your home.

Who is your congressional representative? This is important because they are up for election in the fall. If this individual is a solid Second Amendment vote in Congress, work hard to help get him/

her re-elected. On the other hand, if you're represented by someone willing to step on your rights, support his/her opponent, volunteer for them, ring doorbells, put up yard signs, recruit other voters. Above all, educate them.

#### ON A STATE LEVEL

In which legislative district do you live? This is not the same as your congressional district. This is your state legislative district, typically smaller than your congressional district. But it's where you have a big voice. Make sure you are registered to vote in your current district.

Who is your state senator, and what do you know about him or her? He or she may be up for election in November. See our advice about voting for your congressional representative. You need to know this person's name and contact information, whether they are running for re-election or not.

Who is your state representative/assemblyman, and what do you know about them? Ditto on the advice about your congressional representative. You might be shocked to learn just how many gun owners do not know who represents them in the state capitol. They should all be up for re-election this year. If you're not happy about your state's gun laws, change the people who passed these laws, then work to change the laws.

#### COUNTY COUNTS

In which county do you live?

This may seem trivial, but it's not.

The county is an important political environment. County councils or commissions are the government and you need to know who you're voting for because anti-gun council members or commissioners can go to state capitols and testify as elected officials, even if they are not officially representing the county.

Who is your Mayor, and what do you know about him/her? If you live in an incorporated town or city, there's a council and mayor. It is imperative from a grassroots perspective to know who this person is and be acquainted. Ideally, this individual may actually call on you for advice about gun-related issues.

Do you attend meetings? Do you even know the schedule? Gun control activists show up at council meetings all the time, even if it's just to sit in back and listen, or engage elected representatives one-on-one. You need to be there to counter any of their erroneous information, and learn to be diplomatic about it. Instead of blurting, "That's a &\*&#! Lie," you can get much further in a conversation with observations such as, "Well, you know that's not quite accurate," then explain what's wrong and have facts at hand to prove it.

## "DON'T BE 'THAT GUY'"

### LOOK THE PART

Do you dress appropriately for meetings? When attending a city council meeting or legislative session, it is incumbent upon the grassroots activist to consider his or her appearance, especially if planning to testify. Leave the camo and "message" T-shirts at home. Case in point: Years ago this correspondent was in a meeting with a local member of congress. Several other gun owners were in the room, but the guy who made the lasting impression was the fellow who showed up in bib overalls and rubber boots with a rather ratty-looking beard who said he could just as easily kill someone with a bolt-action rifle as he could with a semi-auto. Don't be *that guy*.

You need to learn the art of conversation. We didn't say "compromise." Be willing to listen, and give some thought to what you say in response, before you say it. Be the reasonable adult in the room when some official is looking for such a person. Too many activists start off with a chip on their shoulder and clearly look for trouble. Leave it to the opposition to come off as a bunch of extremist loons, and rest assured they're capable of doing it. Then, when you explain how it's impossible to agree with your opponent because his or her idea is not only nuts, it will not pass constitutional muster, you will have better odds of prevailing.

And *prevailing* is what this battle is all about.

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**GUNS**  
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## MEOPTA OPTIKA HD 10X24 BINOS

I'll grant you I'm not an optics expert and have a hard time telling multicoating from a muffuletta. However, to my degenerating (or is it degenerate?) Mark I eyeball, the new set of Meopta Optika HD 10x42 binos offers some really impressive viewing.

During this test, my wife thought I'd lost my mind when she saw me holding two sets of binos up to my eyes while peeping at the backyard bird feeder. However, it was the only way to give a literal side-by-side comparison of the Optika lenses against a comparable "bigger" brand. The results were pretty conclusive — the Meopta binos offered better clarity and contrast against a far-better-known competitor's model in a smaller, lighter package.

The unit appears armored and robust enough for long-term field use. I liked the fast-focusing knob, which was far slicker and easier to operate than any other optics in my modest collection. Verdict: I've found my new go-to hunting binos!



[www.meopta.com](http://www.meopta.com)

## AXEON OPTICS SHOTLIGHT



We all want a \$600 forend light for our home defense shotgun, along with a \$3,000 custom 1911 and \$5,000 scope for our tack-driving "tactical" rifle. However, most of us also remember little Timmy's insulin supply is low and there are threats of serious marital discord if one more "toy" shows up in the den.

In light of this real-world, everyday-life conflict, anyone who is being honest — definitely *not* gun writers — will admit they don't always buy the most expensive top-of-the-line accessories. The key is to find stuff that will work for your purposes and is durable enough to survive the intended usage.

To this end I submit the Axeon Shotgunlight. This light fits the end of the magazine tube on Mossberg 500, Remington 870 and Winchester SXP shotguns and offers an adequate 120-lumen beam for target ID. With a street price of around 35 bucks, it's not something you'd take to Iraq but for most of us with a home defense shotgun, it'll work just fine.

[www.axeonoptics.com](http://www.axeonoptics.com)

## CROSSBREED ARK RESISTER BAG



Need to protect your delicate missile components, critical documents or prize-winning beef jerky? In any case, you might check out the ARK Resister bags from CrossBreed (the holster people). They're actual repurposed missile shipping bags with some seriously unique properties, making them incredibly handy for those of us who want to safely store things for the proverbial rainy day.

The laminate bags are water, dust and dirt-proof and offer the highest EMP and electrical resistance rating of any protective bag. They are also puncture resistant to 30 lbs. and have 60 lbs. of tear strength. They're mil-spec and can be vacuum-packed and heat-sealed, or cut down and fashioned into smaller bags using a hot iron. At 19.5x22" and about \$16, they might just be what you need to keep guns, electronics — or the aforementioned dried meat — safe from the ravages of a cruel world.

[www.crossbreedholsters.com](http://www.crossbreedholsters.com)

# TOPS KNIVES CAMP CREEK

This was my first TOPS knife and falls squarely under the heading of “Where have you been all my life?” The Camp Creek model was actually made for TOPS’ president Leo Espinosa as a one-off hunting knife but the design proved so popular they added it to the TOPS lineup. It’s a high-end hunting/camp

knife built from uncommon CMP S35VN steel, chosen for superior edge retention and stainless qualities.

The handle has 3-color camo G10 scales and a tan Kydex holster but what obviously sets it apart is the unique “Nessmuk-like” profile designed for hunting and camp chores such as skinning animals, cutting

wood and prepping food. I haven’t yet caped a grizzly or performed an emergency backcountry appendectomy but for slicing both summer sausage and kindling, it has performed exceptionally well. At the reasonable MSRP of \$220, I’ve owned far more expensive knives with far less performance! 🔪

[www.topsknives.com](http://www.topsknives.com)



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## **S333 THUNDERSTRUCK**

**STANDARD MFG. CO, LLC**

Designed for personal protection, the *S333 Thunderstruck* from Standard Manufacturing simultaneously fires two .22 magnum rimfire cartridges with each pull of the trigger. This results in firepower with very little recoil. The S333 features a redundant firing system and a blade-style safety on the trigger. Compact and lightweight, the S333 is made from 7075 aircraft grade aluminum with a high-strength steel cylinder and barrels, and features a titanium firing pin and cylinder inserts. This ideal carry gun has red-dot front and rear sights and a polymer grip. For more info: (860) 225-3401, [www.stdgun.com](http://www.stdgun.com)



## **GWII DELUXE "GRANDE CALIFORNIAN"**

**PIETTA USA**

Pietta USA introduces the next generation of the popular "Californian" single-action series. The *GWII Deluxe "Grande Californian,"* available in .357 and .45 LC, is engraved with a combination of Victorian scrollwork and sunbursts on the blued barrel. It also features a rich color-casehardened frame and is accented with a one-piece, diamond-checked grip. For more info: [www.piettausa.com](http://www.piettausa.com)

## **AMERICAN COMBAT PISTOL (ACP)**

**WILSON COMBAT**

The *American Combat Pistol (ACP)* features the latest generation forged slide, frame and barrel handfitted by Wilson Combat pistolsmiths with machined Bullet-Proof parts. With a capacity of 8 rounds, the ACP has an OAL of 8.7" and weighs 41.6 oz. empty. It has a full-size carbon steel frame, a 5" stainless match-grade barrel, a contoured magazine well and a 5" carbon steel slide. A new Eagle Claw grip and slide surface offers a non-abrasive, tactile grip. The American Combat Pistol is offered in .45 ACP and 9mm Luger. For more info: (800) 955-4856, [www.wilsoncombat.com](http://www.wilsoncombat.com)



## **STEALTH**

**NELSON HOLSTERS**

The *Stealth* is an IWB holster designed by Nelson Holsters. Its neoprene backing cover (in a material similar to under-armor clothing) wicks away moisture from the body and keeps your gun sweat free. The *Stealth* is comfortable to wear and like all other Nelson holsters is made of 100 percent Wicket & Craig leather and handmade in the U.S.A. For more info: (828) 729-3415, [www.nelsonholsters.com](http://www.nelsonholsters.com)



## **1911 .45 CAL. MINI**

**RW MINIS**

RW MINIS' *1911 .45 cal. Mini* is a 1/3 scale, all-metal replica. Weighing 0.9 oz., this non-firing model is 3.75" long. Its slide pulls back and locks open and realistically moves when pressed. The 1911 .45 cal. Mini replica has a spring loaded trigger, a selectable safety/firing mode, functioning Beaver Tail Trigger Safety, a removable magazine with three brass rounds and a mag release button. For more info: (262) 689-7008, [www.rwminis.com](http://www.rwminis.com)

## SIG SAUER LEGION SERIES

### HOGUE KNIVES

The *SIG SAUER LEGION Series* adds to Hogue's expanding SIG line of knives. Hogue partnered with SIG SAUER to deliver a line of SIG-branded knives with the SIG shield. Each knife matches the finish of SIG SAUER firearms including the chevron medallion, matte black hardware, checkered frame texture and gray Cerakote blade finish. Flippers, manual folders, fixed blades and tomahawks are available within the LEGION Series line. In picture is the SIG EX-T01 Legion Tomahawk. For more info: (800) 438-4747, [www.sigknives.com](http://www.sigknives.com)



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## LAR-15M CAR A4 .350 LEGEND

### ROCK RIVER ARMS

The *LAR-15M CAR A4 .350 Legend* offers advantages for modern hunters using straight wall cartridges. It delivers power and accuracy as well as reduced recoil. The .350 Legend features a 16" chrome moly (also available in stainless steel) cryo-treated barrel with a 1:16 twist and is equipped with an RRA military style brake. The RRA two-stage trigger provides a crisp break and is housed in the RRA winter trigger guard for full dexterity while wearing gloves. The RRA LAR-15M .350 Legend comes standard with a 6-position Operator CAR stock, overmolded A2 pistol grip and a 13" free-float handguard. For more info: (309) 792-5780, [www.rockriverarms.com](http://www.rockriverarms.com)



## AR-15 PISTOL KIT

### DRG MANUFACTURING

DRG Manufacturing offers the premium *AR-15 Pistol Kit* directly to consumers via White Label Armory. It includes everything needed to build an AR-15 5.56 pistol with a 7.5" barrel, except the lower receiver. AR-15 rifle, AR-9 rifle and AR-9 pistol kits are also available. These work with any standard lower receiver from a forging or billet. The kits come with a forged upper receiver, lower parts group, a buffer tube and stock. White Label Armory also offers 80 percent lowers that ship directly to the consumer and finished lower receivers that need to be transferred through an FFL dealer. For more info: (847) 847-4311, [www.whitelabelarmory.com](http://www.whitelabelarmory.com)



## TRU•TEC MICRO OPTIC

The *TRU•TEC Micro Optic* from TRUGLO, Inc. is a field-proven, pistol-compatible red dot weighing just over 1 oz.

It can be used on a competition pistol slide as well as a turkey shotgun. Made of lightweight aircraft-grade aluminum, the TRU•TEC Micro Optic features a 3-MOA dot reticle, Picatinny-style mount, a 1-MOA windage/elevation adjustment and 10 brightness settings. TRUGLO has developed several new models in this series recently: TRU•TEC Micro with 45° Mount; TRU•TEC Micro with rear sight dovetail adapter for GLOCK pistols; TRU•TEC Micro with Green Dot; and the TRU•TEC Micro with RMR Footprint. For more info: [www.truglo.com](http://www.truglo.com)





## FACTION SERIES

**RIVAL ARMS**

Rival Arms' *Faction Series* are comprehensive kits for DIY fans to transform their GLOCK pistols' performance and appearance. Each kit includes parts needed to build a precision slide assembly as well as upgrade the receiver. In addition to the components in the kits, all key metal hardware also receives a distressed-look Cerakote finish in Battle Bronze or Ready Red. These finishes are on the stainless-steel slides, threaded barrels and thread protectors, as well as flared mag wells. The Faction Series kits are currently available for the G17 and G19 GLOCK pistols. For more info: (309) 944-5341, [www.rival-arms.com](http://www.rival-arms.com)



## MOLLE PADDED BALANCEPOINT SLING W/ PUSH BUTTON SWIVELS

**GROVTEC**

GrovTec's *MOLLE Padded BalancePoint Sling w/ Push Button Swivels* combines the features of a traditional Y-Harness and a sling. The sling allows hands-free carry of both rifle and small accessories. Ranchers, property owners and cross-country shooters can comfortably lug their rifles balanced on their backs while having both hands free for other tasks. Smaller tools such as a knife, rangefinder or a monocular can be mounted on MOLLE strips on the front of padded shoulder straps. Sewn-in push button swivels make mounting and dismounting easy. For more info: (503) 557-4689, [www.grovttec.com](http://www.grovttec.com)



## ZELOS SPARTAN BLADES

The *Zelos* from Spartan Blades is a lightweight automatic folder. It has a 3.25" CPM S35VN drop-point blade and a machined frame to provide a lockup in the

open position. Features include blacked-out hardware and a high-tech carbon fiber pocket clip. With an overall length of 8", the Zelos weighs 4.576 oz. For more info: (910) 757-0035, [www.spartanbladesusa.com](http://www.spartanbladesusa.com)



## GEN II 2-IN-1 HOLSTER & MAG

**REMORA HOLSTERS**

Remora's *Gen II 2-in-1 Holster & Mag* has a light, pliable outer skin, a soft internal lining and a removable swivel clip. Made from a non-slip material, a GEN II holster is put together with Marine-grade thread. It will not move or shift out of position once in place. The Gen II 2-in-1 Holster & Mag's soft lining allows smooth unholstering. Without the swivel clip, the holster can be used ambidextrously and adjusted according to the user's cant and carry preference. With the swivel clip, the holster becomes draw-side specific for IWB. For more info: (239) 316-7770, [www.remoraholsterstore.com](http://www.remoraholsterstore.com)

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### GRIZZLY BOND ARMS

The Bond Arms *Grizzly* is a single-action, double-barrel pistol chambered for .45 Colt and 2.5" .410 shells. It has a stainless-steel finish, extended rosewood grips featuring a grizzly bear and fixed sites with a push-button cross-bolt safety and rebounding hammer. The trigger guard is also removable. The Grizzly features a 3" barrel and includes a leather holster. For more info: (817) 573-4445, [www.bondarms.com](http://www.bondarms.com)

### FLIP-R-SPIN TARGET TARGET FACTORY

Target Factory introduces a new target design, the *Flip-R-Spin Target*. This indoor/outdoor range target is actually a 3-in-1 target as it can be deployed on the ground or as a vertical spinning or horizontal spinning target. With its unique 3D 2.5" diameter "Target Ball" concept, it always self-resets. The Flip-R-Spin is environment friendly, recyclable and meets new U.S. Forest Service target material restrictions. For more info: (602) 828-3601, [www.target-factory.com](http://www.target-factory.com)



### COWBOY BELT BIGFOOT GUN BELTS

The *Cowboy Belt* from Bigfoot Gun Belts is embossed with a floral design. The pattern on the surface of the leather enhances the appearance as well as adds texture. It comes in light brown, dark brown or black leather. The leather is U.S.-sourced full-grain English bridle, with two layers of 14-oz. or 18-oz. leather enclosing a spring steel core running from the buckle to the seven belt holes. The belt is stitched together with TEX 270 military-grade nylon thread. The edges are beveled, burnished and painted to ensure a uniform appearance and smooth feel. For more info: (208) 209-7321, [www.gunbelts.com](http://www.gunbelts.com)



### 300 HAM'R STARLINE BRASS

Starline Brass has added the *300 HAM'R* to its line of high-quality brass. Originally named the .30-30 AR, the 300 HAM'R was developed for improved terminal performance in the AR-15 platform while still using the standard 5.56 bolt carrier group. The 300 HAM'R has a substantial velocity and energy advantage over calibers such as the 300 Blackout and 7.63x39 that gives it a 30-30 performance out of the AR-15. This cartridge has been used for hog and deer hunting and even for plains game in Africa. For more info: (800) 280-6660, [www.starlinebrass.com](http://www.starlinebrass.com)



### XOLOTL CRKT

Inspired by an ancient Aztec deity, the *XOLOTL*, (pronounced *show-low-tl*), is a knife for today. It takes up just a little space but swings out fast with its flipper opening and spear-point blade. A liner lock holds the blade in place. The blade has one

sharp and one false edge that meet in a strong spear point ideal for slicing. A sternum-shaped clip allows for discreet carry in a pocket or on MOLLE systems. For more info: (503) 685-5015, [www.crkt.com](http://www.crkt.com)

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# STANDARD MFG. S333 THUNDERSTRUCK PACKAGE

From the proud creator of the DP12, the 2017 NRA Golden Bullseye Awardee for Shotgun of the Year, comes another firearm — the S333 *Thunderstruck!* Standard Manufacturing's new handgun is *GUNS Magazine's* giveaway gun for this issue. The S333 Thunderstruck is ideal for personal protection because it can simultaneously fire two rounds of .22 Win Mag with each pull of the trigger. It can thus fire as many as eight rounds in only three seconds! By combining standard ammunition and birdshot, each pull of the trigger will deliver a combination of firepower and light recoil. This

ergonomically designed double-barrel, double-action revolver has an articulated safety integral to the trigger. A deliberate pull of the trigger is required before the transfer bar will clear from the firing pins and hammers. The S333's barrel is made of high-strength steel; the frame is 7075 aircraft-grade aluminum with an anodized finish; the grip is polymer.

There's no better way to carry your new S333 Thunderstruck than in a holster specially made and designed for it — the S333 *Belt Holster*. Also included in the giveaway, this right- or left-handed holster can be worn either inside or

outside the waist band.

The *Slacker* from CRKT is a low-profile folding knife designed by renowned knife-maker Ken Onion. Featuring field strip technology allowing it to be disassembled for cleaning without tools, the Slacker can be used even for dirty jobs. The knife has a satin-finished drop-point blade and textured aluminum handle.

You know the drill by now, right? Go to [www.gunsmagazine.com/giveaways](http://www.gunsmagazine.com/giveaways) to enter. If that's not your style, get a stamp and send us a postcard! I hope your name will be the one that's picked.

—Jazz Jimenez



## S333 THUNDERSTRUCK

**MAKER:** Standard Mfg. Co. LLC  
(860) 225-6581

**CALIBER:** .22 Win Mag, **CAPACITY:** 8  
**BARREL LENGTH:** 1.25", **OAL:** 5"

**WEIGHT:** 18 oz.

[www.stdgun.com](http://www.stdgun.com)

**VALUE:** \$429

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www.stdgun.com  
VALUE: \$29.95



Tank's tribute gun to Mag-na-port inventor Larry Kelly, built by son Ken Kelly starting with a Ruger Super Blackhawk Hunter in .45 Colt.

The jeweled hammer, trigger and cylinder, along with other polished parts are a Mag-na-port trademark.

## HONORING LARRY KELLY A SPECIAL GUN COMMEMORATING A SPECIAL MAN

More than hunks of machined steel, guns bond us with the past like the proverbial time machine. Picking one up magically transports us “back there” hunting with grandpa again, or perhaps fighting on a WWII battlefield as we feel the familiar heft in our hand.

Some guns help us memorialize, or honor significant people whose influence made a difference in our lives.

### AMERICAN DREAM

Every dedicated handgun hunter knows who Larry Kelly was. His amazing story is

one to be repeated if you don't know it. At 19, Larry was married, had two children and was living in a cold, wet cinderblock garage he built. Having no formal training and limited education, Larry supported his family working odd jobs.

Obsessed with hunting, he developed a reputation as a knowledgeable guide and was referred to a recently relocated

businessman wanting to rabbit hunt. Sitting around the fire, the businessman asked Larry what kind of work he did. Larry confesses to his lack of training and limited education, doing what he could to get by.

Impressed with Larry's honesty, determination and drive, the businessman offered Larry a job. Specializing in Electrical Discharge Machining (EDM), Larry was a natural and thrived, but his love of hunting and guns still prevailed.

### MERGING WORK WITH LOVE

Part of Larry's work involved making fuel valves for the Apollo Space Program. One day, the thought struck — “If it works for fuel valves, why couldn't the same process be used on gases produced from cartridges?”

Larry developed barrel porting, reducing the effects of recoil and muzzle-flip by utilizing the gases produced from burning powder. The gas ports were successful and Larry started a new company.

### MAG-NA-PORT INTERNATIONAL

Starting with a small, part-time shop, Larry's business snowballed. Later, son Ken, and daughters Donna and Doreen, would run the business while Larry hunted the world over, promoting his Mag-na-ported handguns. This brilliant marketing



A before and after (left) comparison showing how the barrel rib was turned down, giving it a sleek, stylish contour.



Larry Kelly's signature on Tank's tribute barrel makes this shooter special indeed. Here it rests next to Tank's two most commonly used cast bullets.

allowed Larry to hunt worldwide from all the business success! All handgun hunters want to be like Larry Kelly, or at least have a gun like his!

## LARRY KELLY TRIBUTE GUN

The past four years, *mi amigo* Doc Baranti and I have visited Ken Kelly. Wanting to honor Larry, a tribute gun was designed. A Ruger Hunter in .45 Colt, both favorites of mine, was the perfect candidate. I had seen Ken's work on a Guild Gun a few years back and wanted the same treatment for my tribute to Larry.

## THE WORKS

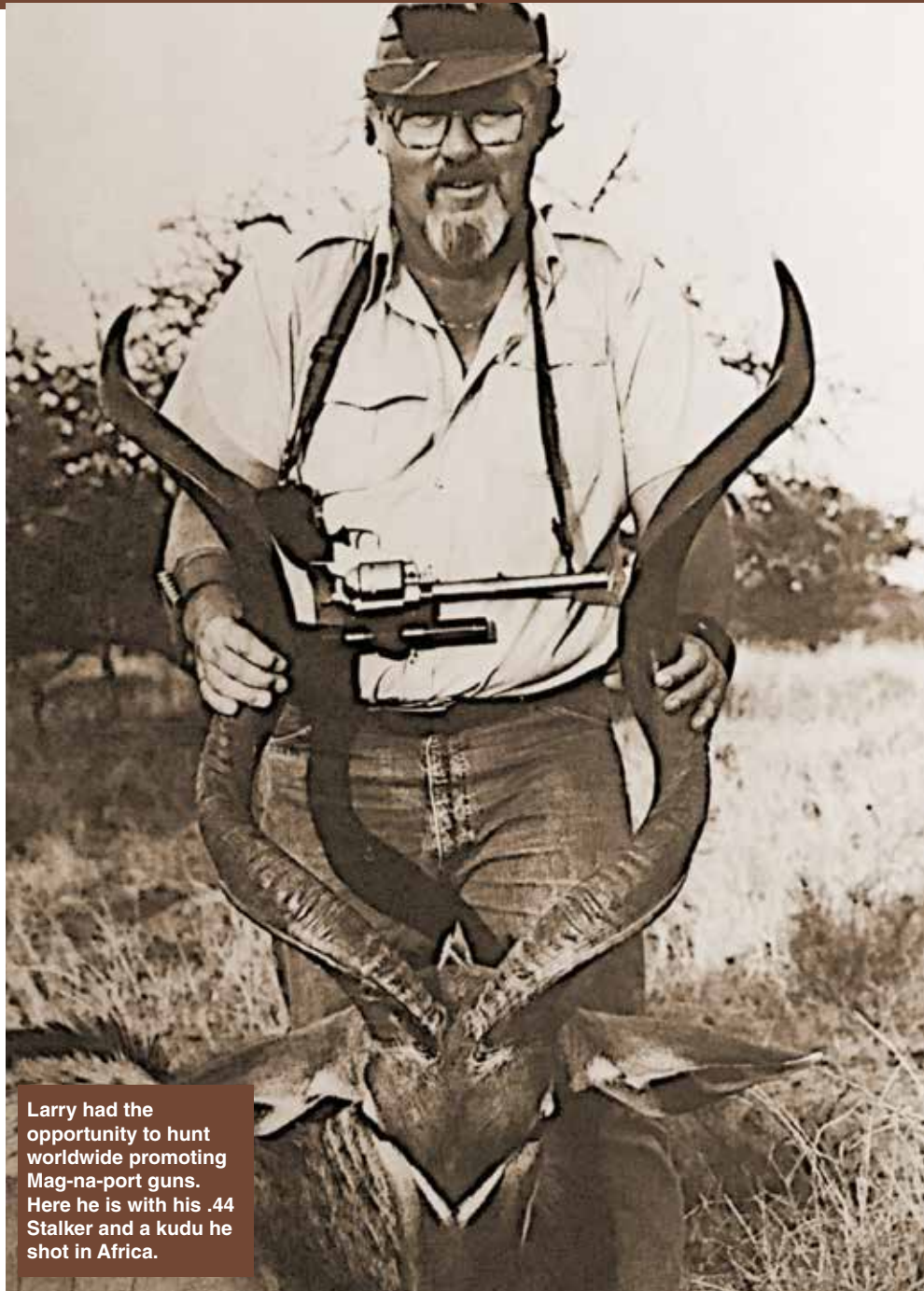
Ken turned the Hunter barrel rib down, until just a hint remained, leaving a classic profile. Keeping barrel length 7.5" saved the nifty Ruger front-sight plunger system, as well as maintaining the long sight-radius. Sights include fiber optic front sight with flat top cage which maintains a traditional sight-picture with the square notch rear-sight blade — hand painted by Ken's mom 20 years ago.

## MOTOR CITY MOTIF

Motor City, home of Cadillacs, chrome bumpers and high polish are integral in this culture. It's only natural for the "Cadillac" of guns to display the same qualities. Highly polished stripes, pins, screws and components, partnered with jeweled trigger, hammer and cylinder stylishly accent the gun. Of course, the barrel is Mag-na-ported.

## ACTION!

Ken used an EDM machine to put his dad's signature onto the barrel, providing another extra-personal touch. The same polishing on the outside was applied to the innards, providing an ultra-smooth action/



Larry had the opportunity to hunt worldwide promoting Mag-na-port guns. Here he is with his .44 Stalker and a kudu he shot in Africa.

trigger job Ken is known for. The trigger breaks at a crisp, creep-free 2-3/4 lbs. The muzzle is inverse crowned and the whole works velvet honed.

## FEEDING

The gun will be fed a steady diet of my favorite handloads consisting of home-cast bullets featuring Lyman/Ideal 454424 "Keith" bullet over 20 grains of 2,400, sparked with a Winchester LPP, housed in Starline brass as the main course.

LBT 320-gr. LFNGC bullets will get the nod for really big critters, using 22 grains

of H110 in Starline brass, ignited with CCI 350 primers. Both loads get over 1,200 FPS in this gun with all the accuracy you could wish for. Groups of 2" at 50 yards are the norm, when I do my part.

## FINAL TRIBUTE

When hunting solo with my Tribute gun, I'll never be alone. My mind will replay Larry's hunting exploits, part of me pretending to be like him. Having the gun built by Ken truly makes it special.

[www.magnaport.com](http://www.magnaport.com)

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they have easy access to an endless food source such as our bird feeders.

We didn't mind the cute rodents eating waste seed off the ground but the morning I watched four of the tiny raiders work in concert, like Army Rangers on D-Day, to climb and empty the largest feeder right after it had been filled, it was time to take action. Even soft-hearted Honeybunches agreed the herd needed thinning.

A week of trapping proved incredibly ineffective and the use of poison has unwanted environmental effects so eventually it was up to me, the mighty hunter, and his air rifle.

After few casual but successful efforts with the lesser vermin, I ended up stymied by the leader of the pack, a larger-than-normal ground squirrel I named "Kong." He alone

was probably responsible for \$100 worth of expensive safflower kernels going to waste. I publicly declared it was now *Mano-A-Mano*, kill-or-be-killed, mostly grown-man-versus-three-ounce-rodent, affair.

Ultimately I won but it took several days. In the meantime I discovered hunting in a suburban backyard can be an exhilarating experience provided you have the emotional makeup of a grade-schooler and the imagination of someone who read far too many African hunting novels as an adolescent. I do, and did.

Sitting silently in a patio chair, using the picnic table as a blind, I kept myself rooted in place by slipping completely into a safari fantasy world where every rustling maple leaf concealed a cape buffalo and the

ground squirrels themselves were deadlier than a gut-shot leopard. The brown plastic of my gunstock turned into oiled Circassian Walnut and the golden BBs in the tube magazine became asparagus-sized cartridges, ready to stop any marauding elephant intent on stomping the petunia bed flat.

The whole thing was great fun for a professional small boy masquerading as a magazine editor. Unfortunately, Honeybunches didn't get the same delight out of playing her part as my faithful native gun bearer — her sarcasm dropped an unlucky passing songbird in mid-flight after I explained she'd look great in a loincloth and leopard-skin halter top.

And she would! I thought all wives loved compliments. 

## IN OTHER NEWS

As these words are written, the whole gun world is only days away from the annual Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trades (SHOT) Show in Las Vegas. Many of our readers already know it's the

trade-only World Series/Paris Fashion Show/Indy 500/Fourth of July for the firearms and hunting industry.

Most long-time attendees feel the huge show (60,000+ attendees, one of the top

25 trade shows in the U.S.) is simply too much, crammed too close together and literally impossible for even a large team of reporters such as the ace FMG crew to handle — but we all keep going anyway because nobody wants to miss out on all the big stories. Besides, if we don't attend some of the lavish press parties, some other poor miscreant from "Bill Jones Gun and Plumbing Blog" would be forced to eat our share of shrimp and could suffer a painful bellyache!

In case you were wondering about the previous quip, there are many parties and receptions but not as many as you think and not like the glory days of the '80s and '90s. I could tell stories about some of those, but the statute of limitations hasn't expired yet on a few of the better examples!

In all seriousness, right now is when the gun industry gets focused on doing business and it would take an entire magazine just to cover the press releases streaming across our transom in the last week. Even more, there are the "double-top-secret" guns which we can't reveal just yet but only *GUNS* and a few other leading publications have gotten copies into their grimy little mitts to share with our readers.

One thing I can promise — gun aficionados can take heart because "the great circle of (firearms) life" is set to begin anew and you'll be seeing lots of neat stuff in the coming months, so keep that subscription fully loaded! 



**GUNS Editor Brent T. Wheat was fortunate to spend a few minutes hanging out with legendary trainer and author John Farnam and his wife Vicky at the 2019 SHOT Show in Las Vegas.**

## THE MAN-EATERS OF SUBURBIA

### DANGEROUS GAME IS SOMETIMES A STATE OF MIND

A quick flash of movement near the corner of my vision brought an involuntary head swivel and instant frustration. The quarry briefly appeared, and with lightning speed, disappeared into the jumbled undergrowth of its cluttered habitat, sprinting among the thousands of dark pockets of concealment. I was concerned he might be gone for days or worse, perhaps turn the tables on the man carrying the rifle — indeed, the hunter might become the hunted.

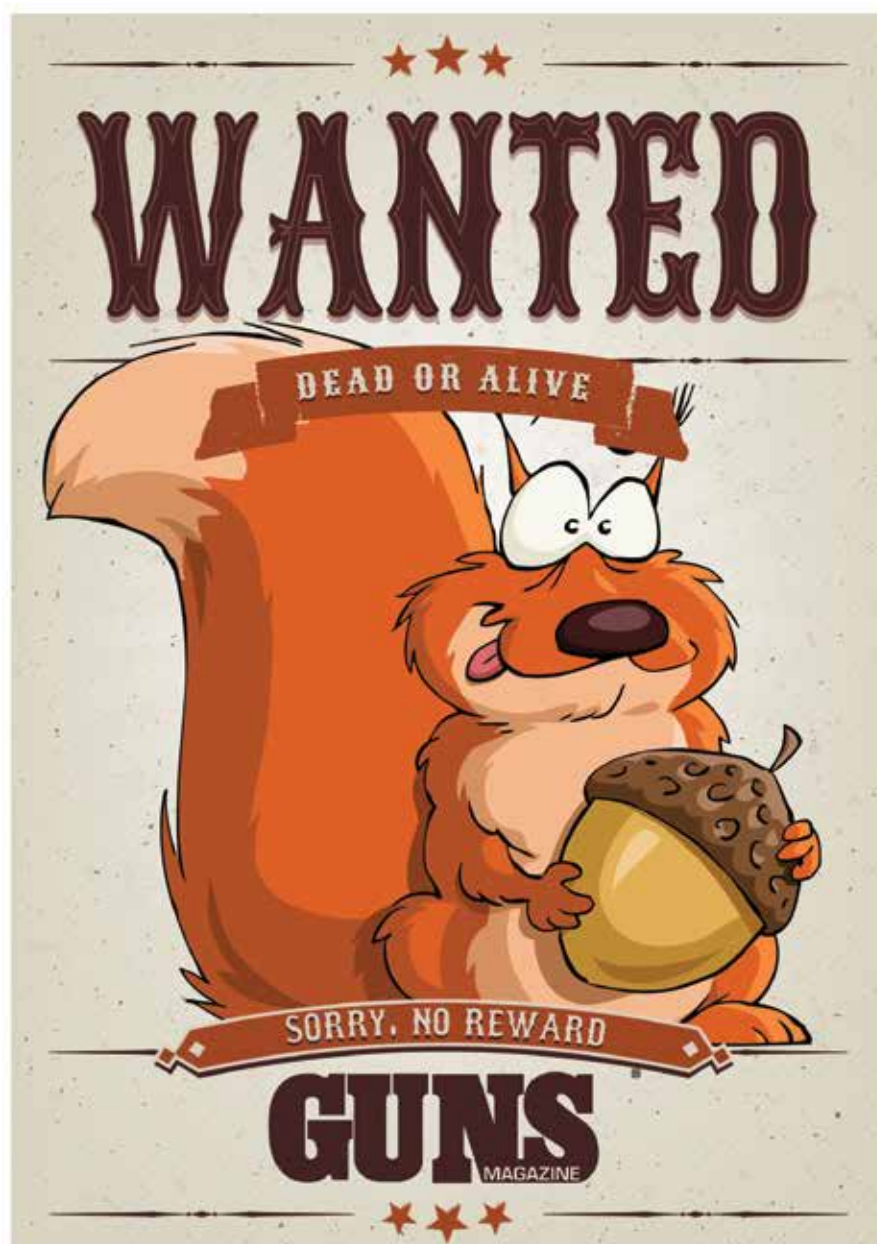
For three days I had singularly stalked this elusive prey. Occasional brief sightings confirmed the unusually large male was still in the area and continuing his raids. The situation was ticklish and intolerable within my area of responsibility — the only reasonable end game was to take the animal using whatever means necessary.

Thus we came to the final day of my safari. I grew increasingly perturbed at my inability to bring an end to his rein of terror, even though no small amount of resources had been thrown into the fray. I sought the counsel of other experienced hunters but came away with no epiphany, no brilliant solution or even further insight to this thorny problem. The usual solutions were not working and I began to doubt my own ability to defeat a true Alpha male.

Other, smaller and more-inexperienced animals had easily fallen to my skills earlier during the hunt but this was an entirely new game. I began to feel like British engineer Colonel John Henry Patterson who hunted — and was hunted by — a pride of man-eating lions near Kenya's Tsavo bridge in the early 1900s as they routinely lunched on the laborers building the Uganda railroad, also known as "The Lunatic Express."

Colonel Patterson spent the better part of two frustrating years trying to cancel the lifetime subscriptions of the lions who had found the workers so toothsome. Patterson's book, *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo*, was a best-seller in 1907 and is still a good read for lovers of the classic Victorian writing. It was also made into a mediocre 1996 movie, *The Ghost and The Darkness*, starring Val Kilmer and Michael Douglas.

The same doubts and troubles dogging Bwana Patterson also plagued Your



Obedient Servant during this decisive hunt. Would my light rifle provide enough stopping power, or should I switch to a .416 Rigby? Could I organize a drive using the natives? What would Ruark do? Will the BBs damage the fence if I miss?

Admittedly this last question only applies to my particular situation because I was hunting at my backyard bird feeder and my quarry was the size of an overstuffed Twinkie snack cake. You see, the villainous creature wreaking havoc was a standard-issue chipmunk, size Extra Large.

We feed birds in our backyard. Over a couple of years we've turned our little suburban estate into a veritable avian smorgasbord and delight daily in watching the birds eat, bicker, bathe, fight and frolic around the feeders and our gardens. All was fine and dandy, at least until the day I noticed the ground squirrels.

I actually enjoy watching chipmunks, at least until they reproduce in numbers defying imagination. This happens when

*continued on page 81*

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