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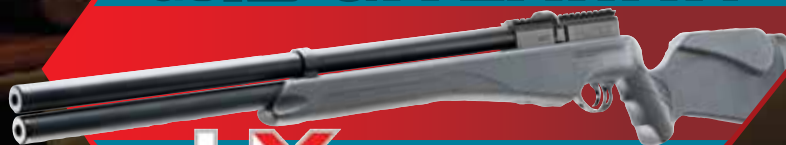
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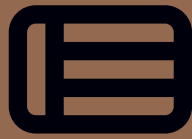
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CIMARRON
AMERICAN
No. 3

TIMELESS BEAUTY
OF A REPLICA

Roy Huntington



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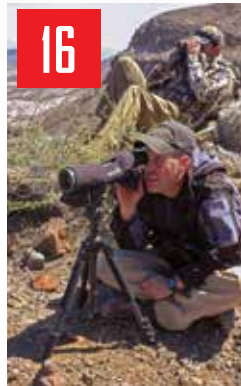
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DON'T HAVE A MELTDOWN!

I have been using powder-coated bullets for Cowboy shooting for several years, purchasing them already coated then I read one of Tank Hoover's pieces on powder coating at home. I obtained some powder from Eastwood, cast up a bunch of bullets with crimp grooves for .44-40, swirled and shook them in the powder, put them in the toaster oven at 400 degrees — and they melted on the cookie sheet!

It took me a little time to figure out what had happened. Some years ago I was fiddling with BPCR using a Sharps reproduction in .45-70. My alloy was lead and tin as suggested by Mike "Duke" Venturino, sans antimony. I also used the alloy for casting 44-40 bullets while I was shooting the Black Powder Cartridge category in SASS. Have not done any casting for a few years as I switched back to smokeless simply because the time to clean up the brass and guns after a shoot became too much of a burden. There was about an inch of the alloy in the bottom of my Magma pot when I lit it off. I then threw in a bunch of mixed stuff I had acquired over the years. Heck, this is for Cowboy loads, certainly don't need match quality. Instead of dropping a 200-grain bullet, my mold was dropping them at 173 grains. This should

have set off the alarm bells but, "They're for Cowboy shooting."

Checking the oven's temp with both IR and mechanical thermometers proved the oven to be at the correct temperature. Then the light finally came on. The alloy was so tin-rich the melting point was down in the mid-300 degree range. Not too good when 400 degrees is necessary to cure the powder coat. Cast a batch with pure lead — bullets drop at 214 grains from the same mold! Thought I'd pass it along to save someone else from the same mistake. Before powder coat, alloy melting temp didn't mean much because we lubed the bullets. Now we're bakin' 'em!

Brad Glas

OLD BETTER THAN NEW?

Your recent piece on the .38 special as a trail gun (*Campfire Tales*, April 2021) hit me where I (used to) live. When I was young (a long time ago) the .38 special had a reputation as an all-around gun and was regarded as quite powerful. I opine the old .38 special was significantly more powerful than its much-diminished current rendition.

Some years ago I chronographed .38 special ammunition dating from ca. 1960. One box was Winchester-Western

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GUNS

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PERFECT PACKIN' PISTOL PART III THE .45 COLT

The origin of the .45 Colt goes back to the early 1870s. When the military called for tests to select a new sidearm, Colt produced the 1871-72 Open Top. This revolver looks much like the original 1860 and as the name suggests did not have a top strap. As cartridges go, both the Smith & Wesson .44 American and the .44 Colt as tested were not very powerful offerings, using bullets of approximately 210 grains at a muzzle velocity of 700-750 fps.

The military panel was not satisfied and requested Colt come up with not only a new revolver, but a larger, more powerful cartridge as well. By 1873 William Mason of Colt designed the Single Action Army .45 Colt. By the standards of the day — even to this day — the .45 Colt was and is a powerful cartridge. The original loading was a bullet of approximately 255 grains with a muzzle velocity of somewhere around 850-900 fps.

Smith & Wesson sixguns chambered in

.45 Colt will be found to be very rare until well after WWII. If the chambering is rare, those with 4" barrels are virtually nonexistent. The original Triple Lock, produced from 1908 to 1950, was mostly found in .44 Special. However, there are 23 examples known to be chambered in .45 Colt with 6-1/2" barrels.

With the arrival of the 2nd Model Hand Ejector in 1915, the .45 Colt was more prevalent with 727 manufactured with the standard 6-1/2" barrel length and only one, which was shipped in 1916, was chambered in .45 Colt with adjustable sights and a 3-3/4" barrel. I do not know of any 3rd Model/1926 Model Smith & Wessons being chambered in .45 Colt. This would change with the new series of short-action sixguns beginning in 1950.

SMITH & WESSON

In 1950 Smith & Wesson introduced the 1950 Target chambered in .44 Special and



The Mountain Gun loves its new heavy barrel, as witnessed by these targets.

.45 ACP/.45 Auto Rim. S&W Historian Roy Jinks reports the beginning of a limited production in .45 Colt in 1953. In 1955 the .45 ACP/.45 Auto Rim 1950 Target was improved with a heavier barrel, target stocks and a target hammer. The target trigger and the rifling was also changed to better handle cast bullets. The 1950 Target was very rare in .45 Colt though Elmer Keith had one with a 4" barrel. When his guns were auctioned in 2015, this particular one sold for almost \$15,000.

The 1955 Target saw a few .45 Colt versions until 1977, the 125th Anniversary of Smith & Wesson. Strangely enough, the Commemorative Revolver now known as



Smith & Wesson's Model 25-5 (right) has a thicker barrel than the two Mountain Guns on the left.

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the Model 25 was produced in .45 Colt. Smith & Wesson did everything right on this revolver — almost.

The cylinder was too short to handle many available .45 Colt cartridges. This was changed with the Model 25-5, which was not only available in 6-1/2" and 8-3/8" barrel lengths but the 4" .45 Colt became a standard offering for the first time. They are beautiful sixguns with what was known as Smith & Wesson's "Bright Blue" finish, the same as on their .44 Magnum. Unfortunately, many of these will be found with oversized chamber mouths requiring bullet diameters of at least 0.454" to produce any accuracy. Proper handloading allows these .45 sixguns to perform well.

OVER THE MOUNTAIN

In 1988/1989 Smith & Wesson began producing stainless steel .45 revolvers. There is a lot of confusion around this production with both .45 ACP and .45 Colt versions offered with each chambering sometimes marked as Model of 1989 or Model of 1988. Examples of both chamberings have been found with each of these two Model markings. At least Smith & Wesson was now on the right track. A whole list of stainless steel .45 Colt Model 625 Smith & Wesson sixguns were produced including a 4" slim-barreled Mountain Gun and a heavy barreled 4" under-lugged offering.

I purchased one of the early stainless Mountain Guns in .45 Colt and was quite pleased with it. So much so, when I saw a used one in a gun shop, I decided to make mine a pair. The only problem was the



The barrel of this S&W Mountain Gun was replaced with a heavy underlug version after a defect was discovered while trying to decide why it wouldn't shoot straight.

second version would not shoot at all well. I tried measuring the chamber throats and custom tailoring bullets and checking the cylinder/barrel alignment and ... nothing worked. Then as we were carefully examining the inside of the barrel, it appeared there was a very slight bulge.

Contacting Smith & Wesson brought the word there were no more slim Mountain Gun barrels available but they did have 4" heavy underlug barrels. This sixgun went off to the factory to have the new barrel installed and now it performs exceptionally well.

CARRYING THROUGH

We have seen Elmer Keith had a 4" .45 Colt Smith & Wesson but I have no idea how often he used it, if at all, and I do not recall

ever reading about it in any of his writings. I do know John Linebaugh, creator of the very powerful .475 and .500 Linebaugh cartridges for his custom five-shot Ruger Bisley Models, carries a .45 Colt as his everyday sixgun. When specifically packing a sixgun for hunting, John goes with one of his custom revolvers but for everyday packing purposes, his number-one choice is a well-worn Smith & Wesson 4" Model 25-5 chambered in .45 Colt. For most uses, and especially for concealed carry, the 4" .45 Colt suits him just fine.

Since receiving the recalcitrant .45 Colt sixgun back from Smith & Wesson, I am now fortunate to have examples of all three 4" barrel configurations. The Mountain Gun with its slim barrel is the easiest to pack, the heavy underlug is the easiest to shoot while the Model 25-5 with its .44 Magnum-style barrel makes a good compromise. It is also exceptionally attractive and eye-pleasing with its deep Bright Blue finish and BearHug Skeeter Skelton-style stocks.

Years ago Dave Scovill set out to improve the Keith bullet, originally Lyman's 454424 casting out at about 260 grains. For some reason Lyman "improved" this Keith bullet to #452424, which is not only lighter but has a smaller shoulder. Scovill's design, now the RCBS #45-270SAA, maintains all of Keith's specifications for a proper .45 bullet. From my alloy it casts out at around 280 grains and loaded over 8.5 grains of Unique, 6.0 grains of Red Dot or 6.0 grains of Clays, results in right at 800 fps from the 4" barrels of my Smith & Wesson .45 Colt Sixguns — making it an ideal combination for an everyday packin' load.



Still a powerful round despite pushing its 150th birthday, the .45 Colt is still widely carried for self-defense against two- and four-legged varmints.

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~ Roy Huntington
Publisher



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In the early 1980s, the combined wisdom of Jeff Cooper and Whit Collins created the 10mm Auto cartridge. Dornaus & Dixon introduced their Bren Ten pistol as Norma, their initial commercial loading for it, a 200-grain FMJ bullet running at 1,200 feet per second at 37,500 lbs. per square inch pressure. The Bren didn't survive, but three things happened to save the 10mm — 1) Colt chambered their Government Model for it as the Delta Elite, keeping it available to shooters; 2) The FBI, briefly, adopted the 10mm in the form of the Smith & Wesson

Model 1076; and 3) Folks who were in the land of big, people-eating bears realized large-diameter bullets with enhanced velocities were good prevention against becoming Purina Bear Chow, with more bullets giving you more chances.

POLICE AND DEFENSE HISTORY

When the FBI talks, cops listen: The FBI Academy is to law enforcement as Harvard Business School is to business. The state troopers of Virginia and Kentucky adopted the S&W 10mm as did a number of smaller



The first-in-class 10mm — Mas' personal Bren Ten.



The common belief the 10mm equals the .41 Magnum may have come from these Winchester Silvertip loads. The rounds are very close in performance.

LE agencies. However, the FBI load for the 10mm was a 180-grain JHP around 1,000 feet per second and in 1990 S&W and Winchester jointly introduced the .40 S&W with the same ballistics in a shorter cartridge, allowing both smaller pistols and greater cartridge capacity. The .40 S&W became a national police standard faster than any preceding cartridge and pushed the 10mm off-stage. The same was also true in the armed citizen sector. The popularity of the 10mm quickly faded in both arenas.

The original JHP load for the 10mm was a 170-grain at 1,300 foot-seconds from Norma. It tended to shoot through and through the perpetrator without fully expanding and distributing its inherent power. By the time we had loads like the Cor-Bon 135-grain at 1,400 feet per second and what became the most street-proven load, the Winchester Silvertip with a 175-grain bullet at 1,290 feet per second — actually exceeding the .41 Magnum version of the Silvertip by 40 fps — the tide of the .40 S&W had swept the 10mm largely out of the picture and out of the “street performance data pool.”

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

I was one of the first who reported in the gun press that in early shootings of bad guys, the 10mm just hadn't done so great because of the loads in early use. Some critics said I was just bitterly expressing NIH (Not Invented Here) syndrome. *Au contraire*. The Police Standards and Training Bureau in my state told me I was the first cop within their borders who had registered a department qualification with the 10mm (a Bren Ten) and actually carried it on duty. I stopped carrying it when I realized the ideal ammo for The Job wasn't available then and spare magazines



No fear: This slender young woman easily handles the recoil of the 10mm Springfield Armory XD(m). Recoil management is a matter of technique and training, not size!



Bare logic for bear defense: The GLOCK 20, the most popular 10mm pistol, holds 15+1 rounds.

weren't going to be forthcoming, so I went back to a .45. I almost took a custom Delta Elite to Africa in late 1987 but chose a .44 Magnum instead because ammo wouldn't be available there, and I wanted more power. I never had occasion to regret the choice.

In 1998, I had two landmark experiences. I was named Outstanding American Handgunner of the Year and my younger daughter Justine and I won the National Sub-Junior Team Handgun Championship. It was parent/child: Justine, 13, shot a custom Springfield Armory .45 with +P loads and I shot my Mark Morris Custom Carry-Comp Colt Delta Elite 10mm with Black Hills 165-grain JHP at 1,300-some feet per second. If I could keep only one of those moments, it would have been me and my kid, and I still own and cherish the Morris 10mm. I carried it often when I was traveling with my family: its flat trajectory and 100-yard power retention made it the equivalent of a .40 caliber carbine. I never taught with one, though — on the road, you can't replenish less-popular calibers with your particular choice of ammunition.

The peak of 10mm popularity came in Alaska. The state's super-trooper Jeff Hall — gunfight winner, master martial artist and top-level firearms instructor — once said with tongue only slightly in cheek the Ruger Super Blackhawk .44 Magnum was the official Alaska outdoorsman's handgun, but today, gun dealers in Alaska tell me the GLOCK 20 autoloader in 10mm has taken over the role. The deep penetration harming the 10mm's performance



Big medicine: The 10mm is available in a very wide variety of loads, from explosive expander to deep penetrator.

in its original police/self-defense loads turns out to be just what you need when attacked by giant bears. It has proven itself such in some documented human-against-raging bruin shootings.

I presently have five 10mms in my armory — two are S&Ws, a Model 1026 decocker-only double action I won in a match and a shorter-barrel Model 1076 I acquired as an exemplar gun for a case I did as an expert witness for an ex-FBI employee. The Morris Custom Colt, of course, remains. There is a rugged GLOCK 20 there, with fixed sights, and a Springfield Armory XDM with 5.25" barrel and adjustable sights. When I actually need a 10mm, it's either the Springfield or the Morris Custom because their adjustable sights allow me to dial in for point of aim/point of impact with whichever of the wide variety of 10mm loads I've chosen for the given purpose.

The 10mm rose, and fell, and rose again and I think it's here to stay for several good, often special purpose, reasons.

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NO MOTION PICTURES!

STILL LIFE IS ALWAYS BEST

The bull had dropped right away. The sharp image of crosswire on rib had yielded to the brief but violent blur of recoil. I'd cycled the bolt fast. A moment's hiatus. The Kimber was still again, braced against an ancient fir. Through the scope, the lattice of snow-caked alders and conifers was suddenly fired by sun-piercing cloud and fog.

SEARCHING

A postcard image, this snowscape was also absent landmarks. I'd taken care to register in my mind's eye the elk's position, but no distinctive feature brought me back to it. Keen to ensure the beast was not wounded and scrambling off, I'd scanned the second-growth. Acres of it sprawled on a slope hemmed by old-growth forest. Now ... just where had the bull stood?

Take a deep breath. Look where the barrel points. Keep your eyes still. It was then I caught the slight shiver of a young pine. A minute later it shook again. I waited, watched, then threaded my way through the bush 80-odd yards to the tree. The bull lay there, dying — he'd kicked the pine reflexively.

You can't see movement well if you're moving. An animal — squirrel, rabbit, deer,

elk — stands as still as a stone to confirm a possible threat. That's why essentially color-blind creatures get the best of hunters who aren't.

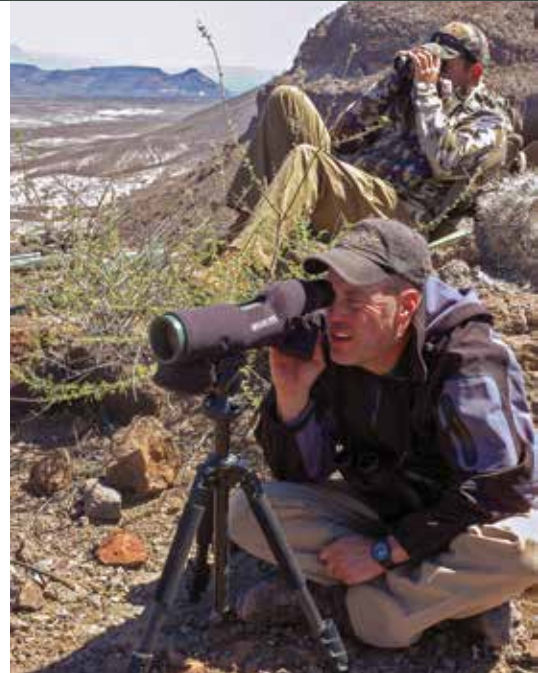
FREEZE FRAME

A still image is invaluable. It helps you identify a small arc in a thicket as an ear, a spot of light as reflection from an eye. A shadow in the grass becomes a coyote, a wink in falling leaves the flick of a buck's tail. Of course, magnification helps you see these details in the first place. But if the binocular, spotting scope or riflescope is bouncing in the breeze or yielding to every muscle twitch and heartbeat, making small things big won't help you sift game from background.

An accurate rifle and ammunition help you hit, assuming good marksmanship. In the same way, bright, sharp optics help you see, provided you know how to look. Steadying your glass is the first step.

BINOS

A binocular is useful only if you recognize what it shows you. Panning across a hillside, you're unlikely to see a Stone's ram partly hidden by a rock. A glance through a bino held shakily with one hand won't alert you



Keep a low profile when glassing. With a partner, trade scope for bino periodically to rest your eyes.

to a buck in a mahogany thicket across the canyon. Movement is as much a handicap as streams of water or a spattering of snow on the objective lenses. Any distortion makes an image harder to dissect. Instead of arresting your eyes, the ram's horn, the buck's nose become part of the background.

No, it's not rocket science. Hold the binocular still with both hands. Refine the focus. Read what the glass shows you as you might read a page of a book, moving



Binoculars aren't just for distance but even at short range, you'll recognize detail only if they're still.

your eyes only enough to cover the field of view. Shift to an adjacent patch of mountain or cover, steady the glass, again read what you see. Pause long enough when still-hunting or climbing to let your pulse subside. Bracing your elbows helps you see more clearly. Swarovski has introduced a brow rest to help you support its newest NL Pure binocular. It adds a third point of body contact and does trim shake from the image.

RAMPING IT UP

While you need magnification to look far, adding power increases the visible motion in your field of view. At modest distances you may identify more detail with an 8x binocular than with a 10x of like quality. For years I hunted with a 7x35 B&L Zephyr. Its light weight and modest size complemented a generous 5mm exit pupil (think — bright image) and power enough for



Swarovski sells a unique forehead brace — another contact point — to help you steady its NL Pure binocular.



This lightweight, compact Meopta ball head has all the adjustment you need, along with a quick-detach plate.



At a quick glance or with bouncing optics, you might miss the 350-lb. lioness almost entirely exposed at 2 o'clock.

glassing up pronghorns and bighorn sheep. I found it easy to hold.

These days, 6x and 7x Porro models have been supplanted by 8x and 10x roof-prism binoculars. Optically, they're superior. With 32mm and 42mm objectives, they're also heavier than my old Zephyrs. The added magnification pairs wells with the trend to looking more and walking less on hunts, and shooting at long range. But these binos aren't any steadier in my hands. The heaviest can be a burden on the trail and tiring to hold without support.

Compact spotting scopes with magnification as low as 12x are designed to ride in a daypack and use without a tripod in a pinch. But when modest power suffices, a binocular trumps a spotting scope. It's much easier to hold. Also, using both eyes, you have better depth perception, a broader field and less eye fatigue. Like image motion, squinting tires your eyes and limits effective time in any optic.

SPOTTING SCOPES

Tripod-mounted spotters with 65mm to 85mm objectives and 20x to 45x magnification stretch your vision beyond the reach of a binocular but can wear you out during long glassing sessions.

Carbon fiber (CF) tripods are light, offer great stability and add cost. Three of the best CF models I've used are from Vortex and Meopta, makers also of fine spotting scopes. Meopta's collapses to 18" and its quick-attach base and ball head accepts an adapter so you can take photos with your

smartphone. Extended, it lifts your scope 70", so you can glass standing. Vortex's new 7½ lb. Radian reaches 67" and will support 55 lbs. — think, rifles — on its ball head.

A squeeze-grip, ball-in-socket head is a snap to use and you can lock it instantly anywhere within its wide range of movement. But lighter, more compact, less costly heads may serve as well. Given the durability, versatility and prices of CF tripods, and the myriad head options, you're smart to think of all a tripod might do for you, and visit your top pick in the flesh, for a test-run of the controls one-handed.

LOCK AND ROCK

Riflescopes are only as still as the rifle. Bipod, sling or shooting sticks, limb, rock or CF tripod can rein in the wobbles. They won't negate the effect of a flinch or horsed trigger, or ensure against the unexpected. Twice I've braced my rifle against the trunk of a big tree only to have bark slip as the trigger broke. Bipod feet can slide; tripod legs can suddenly telescope. A sling can creep over your triceps. Body position is still the most controlling element of a shot — as low as practical, and balanced of its own accord over Mother Earth, your torso is best equipped to keep motion to a minimum. Artificial support bears a rifle's mass more ably than it bears yours.

Through the lenses of the binocular, spotting scope and riflescope, you'll see many motion pictures. These are worthless images. In optics, a still image offers your best chance to spot game and kill it. 🦏

APPLIED PYROMANIA

GOOD FUN, UNLESS YOU'RE A BEAVER ...

Trust me, I'm a professional. Blowing stuff up is one of the few marketable skills I retain from the military. While the practical applications for high explosives in both martial and commercial endeavors are well established, such volatile stuff also makes a simply splendid way to kill a lazy Saturday afternoon with your kids.

My rural farm and my wife are the only two good investments I have ever made. I was ever-deployed someplace saving the world, and my bride is a fastidious money manager. As I have never really understood the stock market, we leveraged our nest egg into a modest piece of rural Mississippi dirt.

The farm is a big wooded valley sporting

rugged old growth forest. Slicing through the middle is a small year-round creek. This creek was originally subdivided by a dozen robust beaver dams.

The local Soil Conservation Service came out and surveyed the place for free. They told us where to site a permanent dam and divined its manifest geological particulars. Aside from seemingly limitless piles of dead terrorists, this represents one of the precious few examples wherein I got some tangible return on the frankly breathtaking volume of taxes Uncle Sam demands. Now all that remained was to remove the fruits of the beavers' toil so we could move in with a track hoe and dirt pan.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Pre-9/11 it was easier to buy explosives than it was to purchase a handgun. At least in the Deep South, all you needed was a driver's license and an excuse. A quick trip to a neighboring town to meet a licensed explosives dealer did the trick. No kidding, back then we did the deal, paperwork and



Before 9/11 it was strikingly easy to buy binary explosives, detonating cord and blasting caps. Like everything else in life, it's massively more complicated nowadays.

all, in the parking lot of a church. Ah, the good old days.

These were binary charges. The solid component came in a green plastic cylinder looking eerily similar to your kids' bottles of bubble stuff. The liquid bit came in a separate container. When separated these two components were fairly inoffensive. Once onsite you simply opened the screw top off the explosive charge, poured in the liquid and replaced the cap.

A dirty little secret is it's actually quite easy to improvise explosives from industrial farm chemicals. The challenge is acquiring the material needed to precipitate a



Blasting caps look vaguely like cartridge cases. These are each crimped onto a length of time fuse, lit — and then the fun starts!



***Castor canadensis*, the North American Beaver, is a tree-eating machine. Will noted the industrious little monsters killed 27 of his wife's dogwood trees in a single season. One paid the ultimate price ...**

high-order detonation. In this case, blasting caps and det cord did the deed.

Blasting caps look vaguely like cartridge cases and can be fired via an electrical current or a length of time fuse. Detonating cord is simply magnificent stuff. Det cord has a PETN explosive core, resembles thick clothesline and is waterproof.

To prep these charges for detonation, you wrap a length of det cord around the charge and secure it in place with duct tape. You then form a bight in the other end of the det cord around a blasting cap and secure it with duct tape as well. We then bored a hole deep into the beaver dam using a hefty steel rod.

You need to get the explosive underneath whatever it is you want moved. You then snake the det cord out someplace dry and affix the cap. Though Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer would likely spontaneously conflagrate at this revelation, my two young sons aged 6 and 10 helped me rig my charges. With meticulous supervision, they even did one each solo. Nonetheless, they remain productive law-abiding adults today.

SHOWTIME

We always used at least two minutes' worth of time fuse. You need sufficient time to ignite the fuse and then walk to a safe place while getting a little bit bored. Once the charges detonated the kids were free to run up to the smoking hole and get showered in copious falling mud and goo. A grand time was had by all.

About halfway through this exercise the kids scampered up to the site of our most recent shot and began screaming in glee. I ran over to join them in time to encounter the world's most profoundly unfortunate beaver. Apparently the poor inquisitive rodent had meandered over to see what all the fuss was about — just as two of our trunkline charges detonated. The resulting blast launched the creature some 30 meters up into the tree line, leaving him most undeniably demised. We laughed until our faces hurt.

Ours has become an awfully soft culture these days. The very mention of guns and the manly arts is adequate to precipitate the screaming habdabs in many of the less durable members of society. However, I can attest an afternoon spent with two little boys, a case of binary explosives and a handful of superfluous beaver dams can make for some mighty fine memories.

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OLD WEST BIG FIFTIES HIT 'EM HARD WITH A HALF-INCH!

From the advent of metallic cartridge ammunition unto this day, .50 caliber rifles have won the hearts and minds of American riflemen. A remarkable variety of rifles chambering the huge .50 BMG are floating about nowadays. Likewise, there was no shortage of .50 caliber rifles in the Old West.

BUILDERS

They were built by all the premier rifle manufacturers of the time. For example, the famous Sharps "buffalo rifles" of the 1870s were made for three lengths of .50 caliber cartridges. Remington only chambered for one .50. However, their factory turned out 900,000 military and sporting No.1 (rolling blocks) by 1877. A significant portion of them were .50-70s so they were likely only second to the U.S. Government in making .50 caliber rifles. Three different .50 cartridges bore the Winchester name between 1878 and the early 1900s, none of which set great sales records.

The U.S. Government got the .50 caliber ball rolling in 1866 with a conversion of leftover Civil War .58 caliber rifle-muskets to shoot a .50 cartridge of 1¼" case length. Military spec loads for the .50 Gov't were

450-grain bullets over 70 grains black powder — hence the nickname .50-70. The first .50 Gov't was the Model 1866. It was followed later by Models 1868 and 1870. They were used all over the west.

Sharps Rifle Company grabbed the government's idea and literally stretched it. Their rifles also chambered the .50-70 but they also developed a .50 with a 2" case. It went nowhere and is virtually unknown. The third was a .50 with 2½" case famous today as .50-90 Sharps, although the Sharps factory always loaded it with 100 grains of black powder. Remington had to stick with the .50-1¼" case because the long hammer spurs of their No.1s wouldn't allow passage of longer cases. Their factory loads came with 400- and 450-grain bullets, both over 70-grain powder charges.

WINCHESTER

Winchester cornered the repeating rifle market early on but had difficulty in coming up with a .50 caliber repeater. In 1878 they gave it a try with their Model 1876. Case length had to be reduced to 1.94" and bullet weight was only 312 grains. However, the 95-grain powder charge did give it some oomph. In 1887 Winchester gave .50s



The Murderer's Row of Old West .50 caliber cartridges. From left: .50 Gov't (.50-70), Winchester .50-95, Sharps .50-90 (aka .50-100) and Winchester .50 Express (aka .50-110).

another try in their strong Model 1886. Using a 2.40" case, they were able to fit 110 grains of black powder under 300-grain bullets. The round was called logically .50-110 but it seems rifles for it were caliber stamped .50 Ex (Express). Winchester's .50 Express made it into the smokeless powder era and wasn't dropped from Winchester's catalogs until 1919.

There is no lack of bogus information about Old West fifties. For instance, despite original factory records proving no Sharps rifles were ever chambered for a .50 cartridge with 3¼" case, misinformation about such existing still abounds. Actually Winchester did chamber their single shot (aka



This Colt Lightning .50-95 wears British proof marks. Collectors today call it a "cat gun," because it was likely intended for lion or tiger hunting.



Duke shooting a Uberti/Cimarron Model 1876 .50-95 with black powder handloads.

"Model 1885 High Wall") for a .50 with 3¼" case for a short while.

SHORT IS BETTER

There is also the fallacy .50s were long-range cartridges. They weren't; their bullets were short and wide. Long range bullets were longer and of lesser caliber. Fifty caliber rifles were meant to smack large animals *hard*! Out west there were bison, elk, grizzly and moose, and there were horse-mounted native warriors of all sorts roaming the west. A .50 caliber hit on a warrior's horse effectively put him out of the fight.

Interestingly, some Winchester Model 1876 .50-95, Model 1886 .50-110 and even Colt Lightning pump action .50-95's carry British proof stamps. They were imported to Africa and India for hunting lions and tigers. Collectors today call them "cat guns" and they bring premium prices. The .50 caliber *oomph* factor in a repeating rifle was important to big cat hunters.

NO SPEED DEMON!

Velocities given by Old West .50 calibers are not impressive compared to the .50 BMG at 2,700 fps. The .50 Gov't gave about 1,250 fps and Winchester's .50 Express could break 1,500 fps.

Starting in 1981 I became a Big Fifty shooter and handloader with a modern Shiloh Sharps Model 1874 .50-90. Since then, I've gained experience with a few dozen Old West .50s and I've shot whitetail deer, mule deer, elk and bison with them. We who appreciate those Old West big bore rifles should give thanks to manufacturers like Shiloh and C. Sharps, and importers such as Cimarron Arms, for making available modern replica Big Fifties!

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HANDLOADING THE .45 ACP PART II CAST BULLETS

I load and shoot large amounts of cast bullets of several types in my 1911s. As outlined in the first installment of this series, all of my .45 ACP rounds — and I do mean *all* — are loaded the same way. First, all brass is sized using the Lee Undersized Carbide Sizing Die, then case mouths are expanded just enough to accept the bullet using the Lee Universal Expanding Die and then, after placing the proper powder charge and seating the bullet without crimping, I turn to the Lee Factory Crimp Die. All of this ensures reloads will function in any 1911 I happen to use.

There are so many excellent powders applicable to the .45 ACP as well as a long list of bullets. In fact, one could fill a book with nothing but .45 ACP loads. I started back in the late 1950s using commercial cast round-nose bullets and powder that's no longer available. What follows are some of the current powders and bullets I am using so let us take a look at some of the cast bullets I use beginning with the above-mentioned 200-grain SWCs.

SWC

While I started using 7.5 grains of Unique, I have since mostly pulled back slightly to 7.0 grains resulting in loads

about 30 fps less in muzzle velocity. The Lyman #45260 in the hollow-point version over 7.0 grains of Unique results in 1,050 fps and a five-shot group of just over 1" while in the standard non-hollow-point bullet with 7.5 grains of Unique — that I now use more sparingly — muzzle velocity is over 1,075 fps with 1" groups. These results are from a Springfield Armory 5" TRP 1911.

Switching to the #45-201 from RCBS and the Oregon Trail 45-200 SWC, both over 7.0 grains of unique and fired in the same TRP, result in 1" groups and muzzle velocities of 1,088 and 1,053 fps respectively. For an easier-shooting load, I go with 5.0 grains of W231 with any of these bullets for just over 825 fps. I have been using the Lyman #452460 cast bullet probably longer than any other design starting with a single-cavity mold, moving up to a double cavity and the latest being a four-cavity design. The latter drops bullets very quickly, however at this stage of my life my hands get tired very quickly from the weight of the steel mold.

This #452460 bullet has proven to be accurate with several different powders. I have shot it a lot in the Springfield Armory Range Officer. With 5.0 grains of W231 the



John uses these three Alliant powders with the Lyman #452460 bullet.

muzzle velocity is 800 fps with a group of just over 1"; 5.0 grains of Red Dot, 900 fps, 7/8"; and 5.0 grains of Bullseye results in 855 fps and just over 1". So it seems the magic number for this bullet and these powders is 5.0 grains. There was a time when it was difficult to find a 1911 that would function flawlessly with SWC bullets. This does not seem to be the case with currently offered 1911s and I have tried these loads in well over a dozen such pistols with nary a problem.

ROUND NOSE

To duplicate the profile of the hardball loads I look to the Lyman #452374RN and/or the RCBS #45-225RN. For target shooting or casual plinking I have found the long standard load of 3.5 grains of Bullseye to be both easy shooting and accurate with a muzzle velocity just under 700 fps. This is



Cast bullets and the .45 ACP go together like peanut butter and jelly, as demonstrated in John's Colt Combat Elite.



The Springfield Armory TRP is a favorite of John's for testing the .45 ACP — and you have to keep it well fed!

the proverbial load one can easily shoot all day in comfort through a standard 1911 while making the alloy-framed pistols much more enjoyable.

Moving up to 5.0 grains of Bullseye results in loads much closer to factory hardball giving a muzzle velocity of 850 fps and groups just over 1" in the Ruger SR1911 Target Model. A slightly closer duplication to factory hardball using the RCBS #45-225RN can be obtained with 5.0 grains of W231 for 830 fps and a 1" group from the Springfield Armory TRP. Oregon Trail offers a 225-grain flat-nosed bullet that also works very well at factory hardball muzzle velocities. Either 5.0 grains of Bullseye or 5.0 grains of W231 will duplicate factory hardball loads.

KEITH, AGAIN

Recently I have discovered a cast bullet that unexpectedly works exceptionally well in .45 ACP loads. In the 1930s Elmer Keith designed what he considered the perfect .45



This Colt Gold Cup is clearly happy shooting a diet of cast .45 ACP bullets over a variety of powders.

Colt bullet. This was first offered by Ideal and carried on by Lyman. It is the #454424 and weighs around 255 grains from my alloy. Several years ago Lyman took a step I know Keith would not approve of — “improving” his design and giving it a new designation as #452424.

This newer bullet when cast of type

metal drops out of my mold at 217 grains. Looking at it closely, I thought “why not try in the .45 ACP?” Bullets were sized at 0.452" and seated with the front shoulder inside the case and then crimped with the Lee Factory Crimp Die. Unlike the 200-grain SWC loads mentioned above, this bullet does not have a tapered nose, being more blunt in design. I was pleasantly surprised to find it works in every 1911 I tried, including both Government Models and Commanders, with never a failure to feed and chamber. This is excellent news as the blunt-nosed bullet delivers extreme shocking power.

This bullet takes up more powder capacity, so when using Bullseye I back off on the powder charge to 4.5 grains instead of the normal 5.0 grains for duplicating Hardball loads. This gives me a muzzle velocity of 850 fps with groups just over 1" from the Springfield Armory TRP. Call it a modernized version of the original Hardball.



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.450 BUSHMASTER RUGER AMERICAN RANCH RIFLE

TUB-THUMPING BOLT-ACTION

The .450 Bushmaster is descended from the “Thumper” concept popularized by Jeff Cooper. Cooper was not a fan of the 5.56x45mm NATO round and envisioned a need for a large-bore cartridge in a semi-auto rifle to provide one-shot kills on big game animals at 250 yards.

Bushmaster Firearms worked closely with Hornady and the .450 Bushmaster “Thumper” was born.

SMACKDOWN ROUND

Hornady's load for the .450 Bushmaster (.450 BM) consists of a 250-grain FTX bullet leaving the muzzle at around 2,200 fps with almost 2,700 foot-pounds of energy. This actually exceeds the ballistics of the .45-70 Government round loaded with the Hornady 250-grain MONOFLEX bullet.

In recent years, there have been reports of elk and even bison taken with the .450 BM. The cartridge is capable of taking any

big game in North America.

RUGER AMERICAN RANCH RIFLE

Ruger introduced a rifle chambered for the .450 BM. With Ruger's expertise in AR-type rifles, they could easily have gone with the platform the cartridge was designed for. Instead they opted to go with a bolt-action rifle from the popular American Series, specifically the American Ranch Rifle. I think it was a good choice.

The American Ranch Rifle is a short, handy rifle, measuring only 36" from muzzle to buttpad. Due to the large bore size removing more steel, this rifle is slightly lighter than other Ranch Rifles, weighing in at 5.5 lbs.

Also contributing to its light weight is the Ranch Rifle's synthetic stock. The stock color is close to Flat Dark Earth and has texturing with unique serrations on the forend and pistol grip area. The pistol grip

cap is black with a red Ruger logo. The black buttpad is a soft, but not spongy, rubber. Sling studs are located at the front and rear of the stock.

The barrel and action are matte black, though the bolt handle is blued. The one-piece bolt has three heavy lugs and bolt throw is 70 degrees, providing good scope clearance, while dual cocking cams allow the action to be worked effortlessly for the shoulder. The bolt handle is smooth, which equates to fast, efficient manipulation.

The tang-mounted safety is well placed below the bolt and can be used with equal aplomb by either a right- or left-handed shooter. A cocking indicator directly above the safety extends from the bolt when the rifle is cocked.

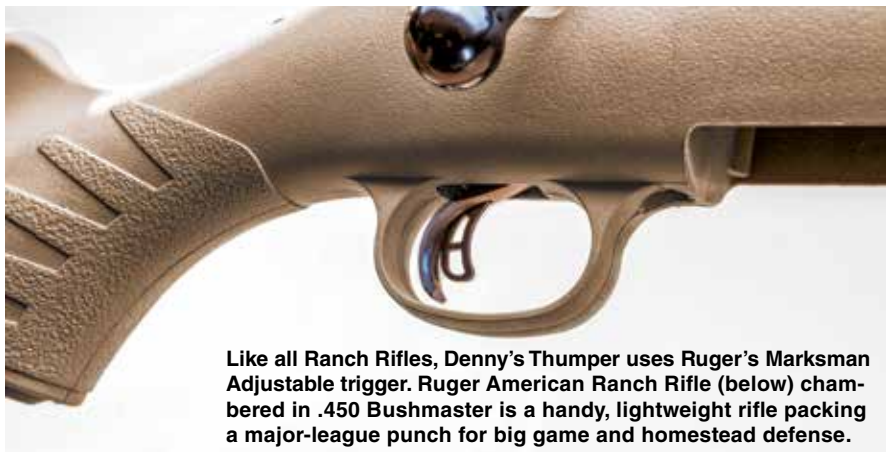
The rifle has Ruger's Marksman Adjustable trigger, which is user-adjustable between three and five lbs. The trigger pull on the test rifle broke cleanly and consistently at 3.5 lbs. as measured by a Lyman Electronic Trigger Pull gauge.

The cold-hammer-forged barrel is 16.1" with a 1:16 twist. The muzzle is threaded (11/16x24) for use with a suppressor or other muzzle device and comes with a cap to protect the threads when a muzzle device is not installed.

Sights are not provided with the Ranch Rifle but it has a factory installed 5" aluminum Picatinny rail, so the user can mount the optics of his/her choice.

The magazine is made from a tough polymer and a spring-loaded magazine release is incorporated into the front of the mag. The magazine well has a slight bevel to aid in inserting the mag.

Due to the diameter of the cartridge, magazine capacity is three rounds for a total on-board capacity of four rounds. The tip of the cartridge is approximately 1/2" from the front of the magazine but due to the



generous length of the feed lips — $1\frac{3}{4}$ " — the cartridge stays in place until it is guided smoothly onto the feed ramp.

RANGE EVALUATION

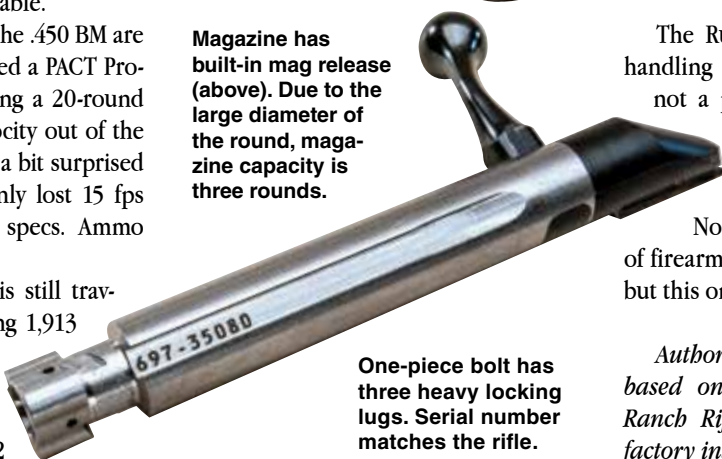
Overall fit and finish were quite good, but machining marks were visible on the inside of the receiver on the sample rifle. Although the bolt functioned smoothly, it operated with a grating sound due to the machining marks — not like fingernails on a blackboard, but still noticeable.

Factory specifications for the .450 BM are based on a 20" barrel so I used a PACT Professional chronograph — firing a 20-round string — to establish the velocity out of the Ranch Rifle's 16" tube. I was a bit surprised to find the shorter barrel only lost 15 fps from the factory published specs. Ammo was Hornady 250-grain FTX.

At 100 yards, the bullet is still traveling at 1,856 fps and packing 1,913 foot-pounds of energy. This drops to 1,560 fps and 1,352 foot-pounds at 200 yards, and 1,296 fps and 932



Magazine has built-in mag release (above). Due to the large diameter of the round, magazine capacity is three rounds.



One-piece bolt has three heavy locking lugs. Serial number matches the rifle.

foot-pounds at 300. At 400 yards, the bullet has gone transonic and the drop is over six feet.

I shot the Ranch Rifle for groups from prone using a Harris bipod. I fired five three-round groups and came up with an average group size of 1.36". The smallest group was 0.79" measured center-to-center. With the big .45-caliber holes, it was almost a one-hole group. Not bad at all.

SUMMARY

The Ruger Ranch Rifle is a light, fast-handling rifle. Chambered in .450 BM it's not a precision rifle by any stretch of the imagination but is sufficiently accurate for the task at hand and will take any game in

North America. I send the majority of firearms I test back to the manufacturer, but this one is a keeper. 

Author's note: Above evaluation was based on an early version. Production Ranch Rifles in .450 Bushmaster has a factory installed muzzle brake.

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The Weatherby Mark V Ultra Lightweight in .257 Wby. is light, flat-shooting and hard-hitting for deer-sized game.



Pronghorn antelope taken at over 300 yards in Wyoming with a Weatherby Vanguard in .257 Wby. with Zeiss Victory scope using Weatherby 80-grain Barnes TTSX factory ammo.



Dave shot this impala 60 years after Roy Weatherby first killed an impala with his .257 Wby. The rifle is a Weatherby Mark V Ultra Lightweight with Leupold scope using Weatherby factory 100-grain TTSX ammo.

IN PRAISE OF THE .257 WEATHERBY SOMETIME EXTREME IS GOOD!

“People stop and stare, they don't bother me. For there's nowhere else on earth that I would rather be, Than in Africa, with my Wottherby ...” (to the tune of “On The Street Where You Live”).

My .257 Weatherby, that is. Actually, I like the .257 for hunting in most locations, but I associate it most with Africa — which is odd since many consider it on the light side for African shooting.

MAKE MINE MEDIUM

My liking for the .257 Weatherby is a bit out of character. I like medium things — medium cartridges, medium barrel length, medium rifle weight. I don't care for extremes and I find controversy for its own sake boring. It's a terrible weakness in a gun writer. The easiest way to fame and recognition is to adopt some extreme view. Make some idiot statement like, “the .30-06 is the most overrated cartridge ever and we'd be better off if it had never existed.” You'll get lots of hate mail but at least you'll be known!

People like to ask, “What is the best cartridge for whitetail deer?” They get annoyed when I say I don't give a hoot. I could easily list 50 or a hundred cartridges I'd happily use for deer hunting. I care about bullets — and even more about shot placement.

Shooting ability is the single most important factor in hunting big game. People mostly shoot their best with rifles not too light and not too heavy, using cartridges adequately powerful but with moderate recoil. Becoming a good rifle shot takes time, effort and money, which I guess is why people would rather not talk about it.

REASONS

So why does this maven of the medium like the .257 Weatherby? Maybe medium can get boring. Sometimes, like Ricky Bobby in *Talladega Nights*, “I want to go fast!” If



Two of Dave's speed demon rifles. Top, the Weatherby Mark V Ultra Lightweight .257 Wby. paired with a pre-'64 Winchester 70 "Westerner" .264 Win Mag. Both have Leupold 4.5-14 x 40 scopes.

speed is what you want the .257 Weatherby can provide. It was the fastest commercial quarter-bore when Roy developed it in the 1940s.

It is still the fastest 75 years later. Factory loads of 100-grain bullets with various .25-cal. rifles have approximate muzzle velocities as follows — .250 Savage 2,800 fps, .257 Roberts 3,000 fps, .25-'06 Rem. 3,200 fps, .257 Weatherby 3,500 fps. Handloading can generally add about 100 fps to these figures.

The load most often used in my Ultra Lightweight is the 100-grain Barnes TSX in Weatherby factory ammunition. It is rated at 3,570 fps muzzle velocity and in my Mark V's 26" barrel it actually exceeded 3,600 fps. Weatherby velocity claims in my experience are realistic and when chronographed, generally achieve or exceed claims. I also used 80-grain TTSX bullets in factory cartridges (no longer available) at nearly 3,800 fps from the 24" barrel of a Vanguard and 3,860 in a 26" barrel.

The advantage of high velocity is a flat trajectory, which helps compensate for errors in estimating range. Depending on the load, the .257 Wby. lets the shooter hold

dead-on to well over 300 yards, knowing the bullet impact will be no more than 3" high or low. In this modern era of laser rangefinders a flat trajectory isn't as big a deal, but it's never a bad thing.

When I bought my first .257, it was available only in the Weatherby Mark V. This has always been a bit pricey for the average once-a-year deer hunter. When Weatherby began offering it in the more modestly priced Vanguard line, it proved very popular. Weatherby made another smart move by offering ammunition (loaded with Hornady 100-grain Spire Point bullets at 3,600 fps) at a moderate price.

LOAD IT UP

Currently the most interesting .257 load offered has the Hornady 110-grain ELD-X bullet at 3,400 fps. Weatherby rifles use a 1:10 twist, as do most current .25s. A faster twist would allow the use of even more ballistically efficient bullets but this ELD-X with a G7 BC of 0.234 (G1 BC 0.465) is certainly no slouch and would be my choice of current .257 offerings.

The Mark V has a 26" barrel while the

Vanguard sports a 24" barrel. In my rifles the shorter barrel costs about 70 to 80 fps muzzle velocity depending on the load. I consider this inconsequential but it is up to the individual to decide, as is the decision on which model to choose.

THOU SHALL NOT ...

Personally I like the Mark V, probably because I coveted it as a penniless youth. The Vanguard in my opinion is every bit as good as the Mark V and is the best value in a hunting rifle currently available. Recently Weatherby has been adding and dropping models faster than I can follow. I see my favorite Mark V Ultra Lightweight and Vanguard Back Country are no longer in production. From the current Mark V lineup I'd likely select the Weathermark LT although if the bank account was looking especially good, I'd go for the 6.3-lb. Backcountry. In the Vanguard line, for pure value nothing beats the basic Synthetic model although I do like the looks and lighter weight of the First Lite and High Country models.

L2A3 STERLING SUBMACHINE GUN

STAR OF THE BLOODY BATTLE FOR GOOSE GREEN

Will Dabbs, MD

In 1982 British and Argentine forces faced off across some of the most desolate terrain on earth. The British had grown weary of policing the world and the Argentines smelled opportunity. In April, Argentine amphibious forces landed on the Falkland Islands followed the next day by a similar conquest of South Georgia, another nearby British dependency. However, the Argentines underestimated the implacable resolve of the Iron Lady.

THE STAGE

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was having none of it so she dispatched a naval task force to oppose the occupation. However, global power projection is a tedious, expensive and time-consuming enterprise. By late May British forces had landed and were arrayed opposite the Argentines.

The Argentines had made good use of this time. Their defensive positions were sited in depth and fortified with interlocking fields of fire. The stage was set for a potential bloodbath of Napoleonic proportions.

Five hundred men of the British 2 Para supported by naval

gunfire from HMS Arrow and 8 Commando Battery of the Royal Artillery faced off against the Argentine 12th Infantry Regiment. A set-piece assault against fixed fortifications is the chemical formula for chaos. Additionally, the BBC World Service had actually revealed the attack before it kicked off. Despite overwhelming odds 2 Para's commander LTC Herbert "H" Jones gave the order.

The terrain was rolling and devoid of trees. Scant grass and copious peat bogs made for slow going, no cover and poor camouflage. Biting wind, freezing drizzle and thick fog added a generous layer of misery atop it all.

The Argentine Task Force Mercedes consisted of 1,083 men under the command of LTC Italo Piaggi. His order of battle included fast-firing anti-aircraft cannon, three 105mm pack howitzers and on-call air support in the form of Pucara ground attack aircraft from the nearby Stanley aerodrome.

Both sides lost aircraft and took casualties in the frenetic combat following. With the overwhelming weight of Argentine fire threatening to crush the British attack, LTC Jones readied his Sterling submachine gun. What followed was old school battlefield valor.

The ridgeline was crisscrossed by 11 trenches just dirty



The British Sterling SMG served as the host for the BlasTech E-11 Blasters (left) used in the movie *Star Wars*.

with Argentine defenders and dug-in heavy automatic weapons. When the attack faltered, LTC Jones moved to the head of his battalion and led the assault himself. Without regard to the murderous fire pouring in from multiple sources Jones charged the enemy positions — single-handedly — engaging Argentine defenders with his L2A3 SMG.

THE WEAPON

The L2A3 Sterling SMG was an evolutionary development of the WWII-era Sten gun. Sten is a *portmanteau* reflecting the initials of the gun's designers, Reginald Shepherd and Harold Turpin, along with the Enfield factory where the gun was developed. Crude, rugged and cheap, the Sten helped rearm the English Army left bereft of weapons after the Dunkirk evacuation.

British Tommies frequently referred to the Sten as the “Stench” gun and it was a desperation weapon pure and simple. The most basic versions consisted of only 47 parts and cost \$10 apiece in 1942 (\$155 today). The open bolt 9mm design was sound enough but the double-column single-feed magazines performed poorly.

Once the British caught their breath, they launched a program to improve the reliability and ergonomics of the Sten. George William Patchett, the chief firearms designer at Sterling Armaments Company, subsequently designed the Patchett prototype in 1944. The British Army ordered 120 copies for trials.

These early Sterlings saw action with the Paras in the defense of Arnhem during Operation Market Garden in September of 1944. They also served with Commando units operating in Occupied Europe. Colonel Robert Dawson of No. 4 Commando carried a Sterling during Operation Infatuate in November of that year.

DETAILS

The Sterling is a pressed-steel open bolt selective-fire 9mm SMG of superlative design. The bolt features spiral cuts to clear battlefield crud from the action and the side-mounted magazine allows for a low profile when firing from the prone. Sterlings are also designed to feed from Sten magazines as needed. The Sterling's 34-round double-column, double-feed magazine is likely the finest SMG magazine ever contrived.

The Sterling magazine sports a gentle curve to accommodate the geometry of the 9mm Parabellum round and is readily disassembled. It also features a roller-bearing follower ensuring a smooth uninterrupted flow of ammunition into the action. The end result is an unusually reliable and accurate close quarters tool.

The Sterling's 6-lb. weight and sedate 550 rpm rate of fire make the gun exceptionally controllable. Two- and three-round bursts are painless with a disciplined trigger finger. The L2A3 represents the apogee of open-bolt 9mm subgun design and remains a personal favorite.

THE REST OF THE STORY

“H” Jones was badly hit during his uphill charge toward the entrenched Argentine positions. He was then seen to tumble back to the base of the hill. Jones immediately got to his feet and resumed the attack.

Flanking an enemy trench Jones came under withering



The L2A3 Sterling is eminently controllable with even rudimentary technique. It is a superlative close combat tool and remained in British service from 1953 through 1988.



The Sterling magazine sports a roller bearing follower and is simply superb.

fire and was hit again while engaging the Argentine troops at close range with his Sterling. He fell dying mere feet from his objective. Jones' personal example inspired the rest of his battalion to take up the attack and thoroughly demoralized the Argentine defenders.

As a result of Jones' selfless bravery, the Paras subsequently seized the entire trench system. They took the nearby British communities of Darwin and Goose Green as well. The Paras secured nearly 1,200 prisoners and set the stage for the ultimate British conquest of the Falklands.

The military government of Argentina fell and was replaced by a burgeoning democracy. Margaret Thatcher's conservative government was re-elected the following year in a landslide. LTC Jones was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross, England's highest military award for bravery. LTC Jones demonstrated to the world the iron will of men like Nelson, Wellington and Kitchener lived still in modern British warriors.

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CROSSFIRE

continued from page 8

standard-pressure 158-grain round nose lead at an advertised 870 fps from a 6" test barrel; the other was an equally old box of Remington Hi-Speed 158-grain round nose lead bullets at an advertised 1,060 fps from a 6" test barrel. The 6" revolver ballistics essentially equaled the advertised ballistics from a 6" test barrel.

Since you also mentioned the 38/44, I have a bit of trivia. As you mention, the first 38/44s were Heavy Duty models with 5" barrels, and the 6 1/2" barrels did not come out until the following year when the 38/44 Outdoorsman appeared. The test barrels established for 38/44 ammo ballistics were 5", not the 6" test barrels used for the standard pressure .38 Spl. This changed shortly before the 4-V barrels were standardized.

Marshall Williams

Thank you for such an informative letter. Most interesting to arrive now as I just finished loading 1,000 .38 Specials with Red Dot, Clays and WW231 with most using the old Cramer 160-grain SWC hard cast bullet. —John Taffin

IT'S OK AFTER ALL

In your April 2021 edition of *GUNS Magazine*, Brent Wheat replied to Captain Darrell Haynes' letter regarding Wheat's comment in the Feb. 2021 edition about being stranded in Wichita, Kansas. Wheat mentioned he liked the Hard Rock Hotel. I've lived in or near Wichita for all but five years of my life. I haven't gotten out much lately and wondered what I'd been missing out on. A Googling of Hard Rock locations indicates the closest one anywhere near Kansas is in Tulsa, OK.

Now I'm wondering where Brent was really stranded.

Roger Neugent

My face is red; after your letter I began wondering about incipient long-term memory loss. A few minutes poking around into my email archive and I discovered the event I referenced was in Tulsa, Oklahoma, not Wichita!

I've been to events in both places in the last few years but it was Tulsa where I almost got stranded in a snowstorm. Hopefully I will be forgiven for the lapse as both are lovely towns only 129 miles apart and

— here's the real issue — airports pretty much all look the same.

On a related note, yesterday I was speaking to a well-known editor at another publication and we both decided Hell had indeed frozen over because, after all the event and trade show cancellations of the last year, we are both wistfully looking forward to our next airplane flight! The tune will undoubtedly change the first time I crowd back into an airline seat, next to a screaming baby! —BW

PAMPERED PRECISION

I enjoyed reading the "Baby my Scope?" article by Wayne Van Zwoll in the April 2021 issue. I have a question: I see some companies advertising scope-ring lapping tools to smoothe the inside of the rings. Are uneven/warped scope rings really an issue, especially with high quality rings, or is this just another gimmick?

James Cox



To lap, or not to lap, steel scope rings — a good question, Jim! I don't routinely lap, as stamped and machined rings made now have shown me no need. They're held to close tolerances and they lack the machine marks and sharp edges occasionally found on older scope rings. As you may know, convention once had it split rings had to be kept in pairs, halves oriented as received to ensure against

slightly off-axis positioning, thus marring the scope tube. I have it on good report matching halves are no longer necessary on CNC'd rings. If I come into rings of the era that produced \$50 scopes and 20-cent gasoline, I do check alignment by feel before installing them. If there's a burr or sharp edge, I touch it with a stone to ensure it doesn't scrape scope finish. A palpable "overbite" would be cause to get out the lapping kit. Ring misalignment (a skewed base or off-axis screw holes in the receiver) is another reason you might lap. Barring these issues, lapping most new rings seems to me akin to lapping bolt lugs into their seats. It's a step toward perfect union with the scope tube. With high-quality steel rings, I don't think it necessary or, in most cases, noticeably helpful. —Wayne

BLACK POWDER BLOWGUN?

I read David Freeman's excellent article about the Pietta .36 caliber 1851 Navy Colt Revolver in the Feb 2021 Issue of *GUNS*. I was interested because I have the same gun with a brass frame I assembled from a kit. I am puzzled by one thing: How did he get

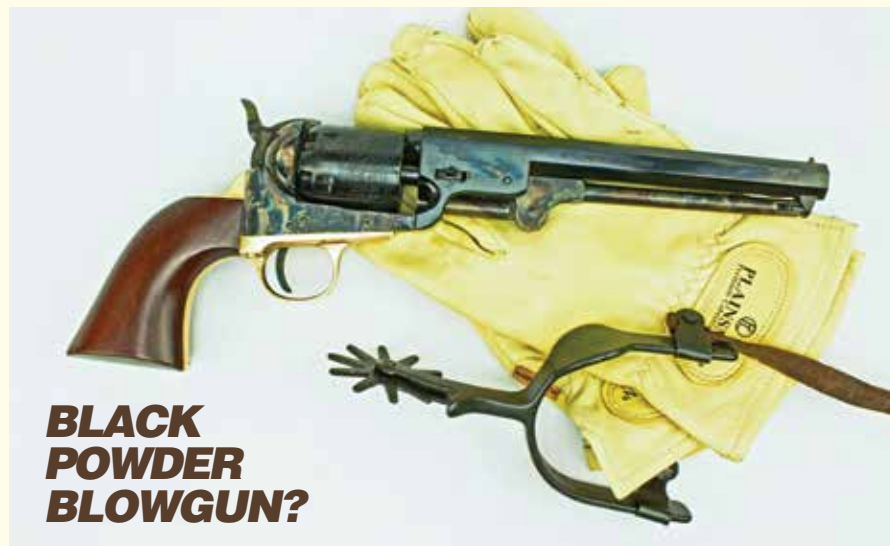
his gun to shoot accurately with .38 Special ammo in the conversion cylinder? My gun shoots very well with Hornady 0.357" pure lead balls and 20 grains of Pyrodex. I typically get 6-shot groups of about 3" at 25 yards. I believe the bored diameter of this revolver is about 0.365" but the .38 Special ammo uses 0.357" projectiles. I pushed a 0.357" diameter JHP bullet into the barrel and it slid all the way down and out the

muzzle. So, how did you get your .38 Special bullets to engage the rifling in your gun?

Paul D. Ruffle

Your question had me pulling out my digital caliper for some measurements. The bore on my Pietta measures 0.36". The .36 caliber Hornady lead balls I have on hand

continued on page 63



BLACK POWDER BLOWGUN?

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BIG HORN ARMORY AR500

JEFF “TANK” HOOVER

The voice on the phone sounded familiar. “Hey, Tank! I’ve got an assignment that, ah, no one else wants . . . er, I mean, an assignment right up your alley!” It was *GUNS* Editor Brent Wheat.

I take the bait; his presentation perfectly cast like a black hula popper to a lurking large-mouth bass. And I was hungry — who wouldn’t want to shoot an AR-style pistol capable of shooting a

bullet with 4,000 ft/lbs. of smack-down energy? The gun we’re talking about is Big Horn Armory’s (BHA) AR500 chambered for the most powerful cartridge in existence for AR-platform guns — the 500 Auto Max!

BIG-BORE, BECAUSE ...

Anything starting with the number five, caliber-wise, is big, right? It’s unnecessary for a large-bore bullet to rely on expansion

A PREPOSTEROUSLY POWERFUL PISTOL



for performance, especially when it starts out at ½". As Sir Samuel Baker stated a few centuries ago, a bullet's weight and diameter are constant while velocity is a diminishing variable.

FROM LEVER TO SEMI-AUTO RIFLES

BHA was founded in 2008 by Greg Buchel, while pursuing what was to be named the Model 89 lever gun in .500 S&W, their flagship firearm. In 2017, Big Horn expanded their line with the AR500 Auto Max, the most powerful short-range, semi-auto rifle based on the AR10 platform. Capable of driving 400-grain bullets in excess of 2,000 fps, the AR500 is able to stop anything from pachyderms to Peterbils — and we know Peterbils are always in season, especially on the Jersey Turnpike during rainstorms!

Released in 2018, it wasn't long before customers started requesting the AR500 rifle in a more convenient pistol-size platform, which brings us up to BHA's current release. The pistol version lacks nothing but length from the rifle, making it handier to wield in tight confines.

For outdoorsmen, this means hunting blinds, tree stands, or stalking in thick cover. Law enforcement/security/military personnel can add this tool as a powerful breaching weapon, able to clear ballistic glass, automobile doors, or other tough barriers as well as handling dangerous animal complaints. What better bear-stopper than a 500 Auto Max pistol? I can't think of any.

AR PISTOL PLATFORM

To get the real nitty-gritty on the AR500, I spoke directly to Greg Buchel. He told me, "the .500 S&W has a rated pressure

AR-15 single-stack steel magazines are used for reliable feeding of the large 500 Auto Max cartridge.



ARMORY INC.
AUTO MAX
BYOMING, USA

They don't get any bigger! The Bighorn Armory AR500 fires the biggest cartridge of any AR-platform gun, the 500 Auto Max. Big medicine in a small package! Photo: Big Horn Armory. An AR-10 lower is broached to accommodate the AR-15 sized magazines (right). The flared magazine well assists in loading magazines.





The bolt-face was opened up to accept the 500 Auto Max head. Extractor and ejector were strategically placed for optimal performance.



The 500 Auto Max (below) dwarfs the .45 Colt and .480 Ruger cartridges. It's a beast and that's why Tank loves it!

The 500 Auto Max (above right) is actually just a .500 S&W cartridge with the rim turned down for use in a semi-auto.



of up to 60,000 psi, so to contain this level of pressure, and the accompanying bolt thrust of a case this size, we clearly cannot wrap an AR-15 size receiver around all this ballistic energy.

"We knew we had to start with the AR-10 and use a DPMS-pattern, with the end result being a gun we call the AR500. We also knew we'd have to alter the bolt from .308 size to accommodate the larger case head of the .500 Auto Max from 0.480" to 0.520". The .500 Auto Max is a rebated rim, the rim being 0.008" smaller than the case," Buchel stated.

BHA engineers positioned the extractor and ejector in ideal locations for reliable function within the bolt face, while also adjusting the extractor to mate perfectly with the rim of the cartridge.

The 10" 416 stainless-steel Green Mountain barrel has a bullet stabilizing 1:24" twist, the most efficient length for the 500 Auto Max. It's given a rugged, surface-hardening and corrosion-resistant nitride bath for a durable finish. The muzzle is threaded 3/4X28 for the accrue-ment of your choice but comes with a muzzle brake installed.

"AMERICANS LIKE THINGS BIG, AND RIGHT NOW THE AR500 CHAMBERED IN THE 500 AUTO MAX IS AS BIG AS IT GETS FOR THE AR PLATFORM."

The adjustable gas block allows fine tuning of the gas flow for reliable cycling for bullet weights from 300-grain loads to 600-grain sub-sonic loads and everything in between.

The upper receiver has a full-length rail, extending the length of the handguard. The ejector deflector provides ample clearance for the large, heavy brass of the 500 Auto Max as the ejector tosses the brass with authority 6 to 7 feet at 3 o'clock.

The handguard is a free-float, M-Lok pattern, with a full-length Picatinny rail. At the end of the handguard are integral sections of the rail at the 3, 6 and 9 o'clock positions for any accessories such as light, laser, etc. you may want.

The lower receiver has ambidextrous selector and bolt catch, but no ambidextrous magazine release. Magazines for the AR500 are AR-15 sized, despite the upper and lower being AR-10 size. This is due to feeding geometry and characteristics being better from the AR-15-sized magazines. The steel magazines come in both 5- and 9-round, single-stack configurations.

The AR-10 lower has an AR-15 magazine well broached into it and a standard AR-10 buffer with a proprietary action spring. This mix/match of parts may sound strange but when put together, it works, cycling these powerfully behemoth rounds without a hitch.

Lastly, the BCG is nickel-boron coated to reduce friction and protect it from the elements, while making it easier to clean.



The lineup of 500 Auto Max Ammo is impressive! Left to right: Two rounds from Steinel, three from Buffalo Bore and last two from Underwood.

CALIBER CONVERSION

The 500 Auto Max is the creation of BHA's Greg Buchel and Tim Sundles, head honcho of Buffalo Bore Ammunition. The 500 Auto Max is simply the .500 S&W with the rim turned down to basically rimless status so it can function reliably through the AR platform. In fact, the .500 Auto Max can chamber and fire in any revolver or single shot chambered for the 500 S&W.

For handloaders, the same reloading data is used, as well as the same dies and shell holder, for the .500 S&W. However, the 500 Auto Max requires a taper crimp as the cartridge headspaces off the case mouth. Ammunition is available and currently shipping from Buffalo Bore, Steinel and Underwood Ammo.

Compared to the .50 Beowulf, the 500 Auto Max pushes same weight bullets 2,300 fps faster for incomparable results.

WHY A .500 AUTO MAX?

When asking Buchel who his best customers are, he responded, "just regular firearm enthusiasts who enjoy shooting the biggest and *baddest* guns around!" And he's right! Shooting the AR500 Auto Max is exhilarating! Watching the rifle berm explode in a shower of dirt clods as the huge bullets strike is a firsthand lesson in energy transfer and momentum.

Better yet is shooting items such as cinder blocks, old propane tanks or abandoned automobiles to conduct your own ballistics tests. Need to demo a brick wall? Why not do it the fun way? The 500 Auto Max is up for the job. Shooting this beast from the hip is also exhilarating, pressing the trigger as fast as you can, sending huge hunks of lead downrange and watching them destroy whatever is in your shooting path.

AT THE RANGE

I added a Rock River Arms Hi-Rise One Piece Cantilever mount and an old, reliable Weaver 2-10X40 scope to achieve utmost accuracy. The trigger of the AR500 Auto Max was crisp and creep-free, breaking at just over a measured 3 lbs.

After taking two shots to zero the scope, I placed my target stand at 100 yards and commenced firing 3-shot groups with several different loads from Buffalo Bore, Steinel and Underwood.

Everything shot within 2", with most running around 1.5" for 3-shot groups at 100 yards. A few groups were 1" or less.



Typical accuracy from the AR500 Auto Max pistol at 100 yards. Groups ranged from 0.9 to 2" as these groups demonstrate. Great accuracy for such a powerful pistol.

This is extraordinary accuracy, especially from such a short, powerful pistol!

THE FINAL WORD

The BHA 500 Auto Max pistol is a great way for people to enjoy a compact gun without the taxing paperwork involved of owning an SBR — being classified as a semi-auto pistol, with fixed-blade stabilizer bar, has its merits.

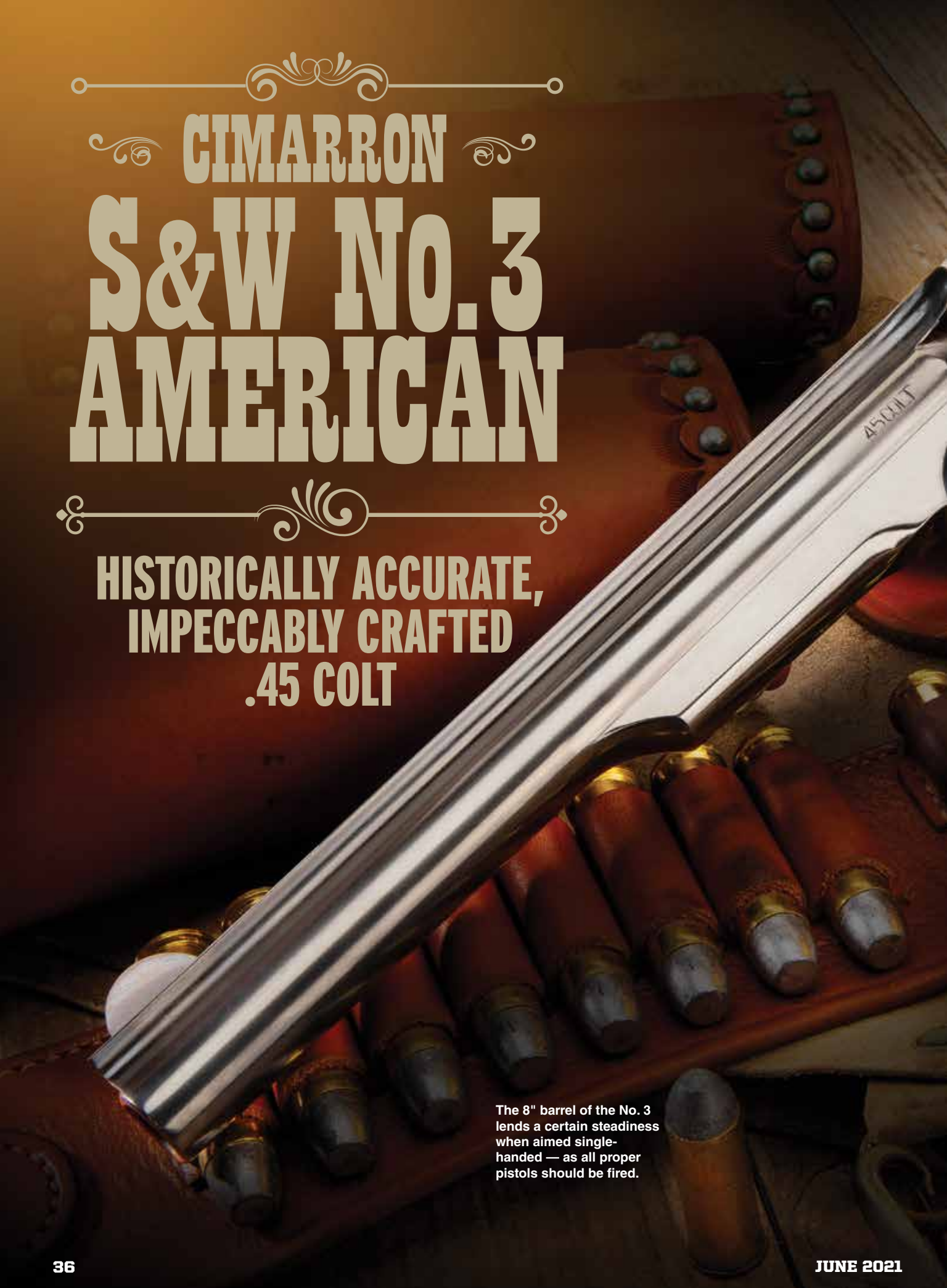
For handloaders, loading 500 Auto Max is as easy as following load data for the .500 S&W, only using a taper crimp die, instead of a roll-crimp die.

Lastly, shooting the AR500 Auto Max is *fun*! Americans like things big, and right now the AR500 chambered in the 500 Auto Max is as big as it gets for the AR Platform. So, go out and have some fun — knock down a cinderblock wall, shot by shot, or shoot a bear, bison, or Buick. I guarantee, whatever you shoot, it's not going anywhere but down!

MSRP: \$2,199



BigHornArmory.com



CIMARRON S&W NO. 3 AMERICAN

HISTORICALLY ACCURATE,
IMPECCABLY CRAFTED
.45 COLT

The 8" barrel of the No. 3 lends a certain steadiness when aimed single-handed — as all proper pistols should be fired.



ROY HUNTINGTON
PHOTOS: ROB JONES/THE IMAGESMITH, LLC

Quick ... “The first big bore, cartridge-firing center-fire sixgun in the old West.” What gun would you think of? Why, the Colt Single Action of course.

And you’d be wrong, of course. Here’s why —

History at S&W had them developing the No. 1 revolver in 1859 using the ground-breaking .22 Short RF cartridge. This was the first time a metallic cartridge was chambered in a bored-through cylinder and it was an instant hit. The idea of a .22 Short as a defensive gun seems quaint today, but think about it — no muzzle loading chores, fewer mis-fires and the convenience of easy loading and more “cartridges” right at hand. Thousands of these unique “upward tilting barrel” revolvers were carried in the Civil War as back-up guns, also finding their ways into the coat pockets of countless civilians.

As time passed the public wanted a bigger caliber and eventually the No. 2 Army, a sort of biggie-sized No. 1, was developed chambered in .32 RF. It also had the tilting barrel feature. But if you squint your eyes a bit, you can see the beginnings of the outlines of the No. 3 lurking in plain sight.

Then, in 1870, S&W introduced the No. 3 in .44 American and presto, Western history was destined to be changed. The U.S. Army awarded a contract to S&W for the gun, and Russia also bought some 41,000 chambered in what was called the “.44 Russian” to differentiate it from the .44 American. Sales were

brisk. The No. 3 was eventually chambered in .44 Henry, .44-40, .32-44, .38-40 and .45 Schofield.

ARMY CHANGES

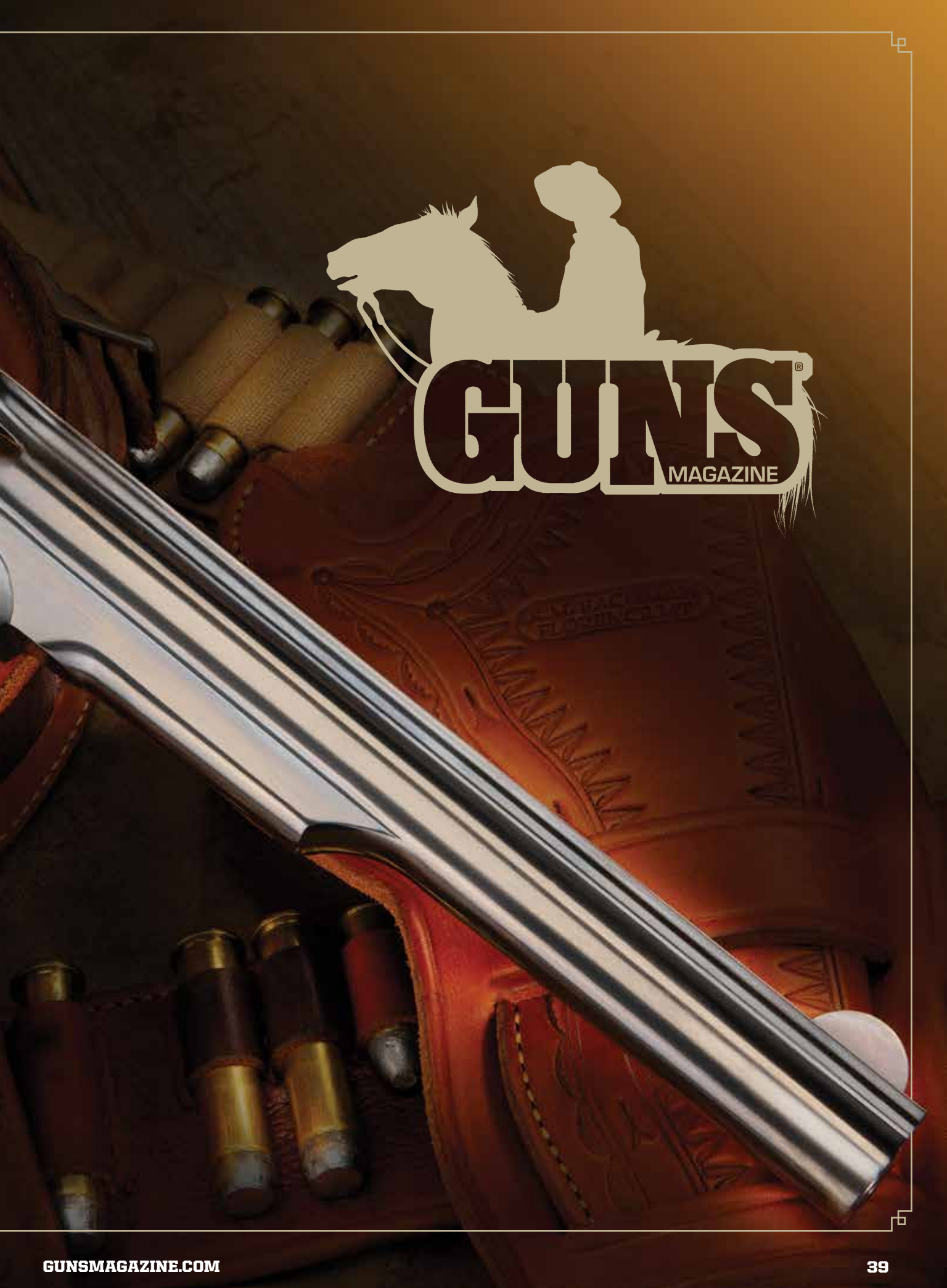
The various No. 3 Models can be confusing but if you think of them as being the same gun with very minor changes, it can calm the nerves somewhat. A big change involved the ones designed by Major George Schofield (there’s the name) in 1875, consisting of changes he felt were needed to make it a more battlefield-worthy revolver. One change allowed a cavalryman to open the revolver with one hand and tilt the barrel by flipping it, ejecting the empties. Then a reload, and you’re back in the fight. The standard No. 3 requires two hands to unlock and open the action.

The Army also wanted S&W to chamber the “Schofield” in .45 Colt but alas the cylinder wasn’t long enough for the full-size Colt cartridge. S&W instead offered a “.45 Schofield” (.45 S&W) cartridge — a shortened .45 Colt. But alas, with so many Colt SAA revolvers in use chambering the full-sized round, and the fact the Colts could shoot either, the Army eventually dropped the Schofield design from general issue use. It might interest you to know the wholesale price at the time was about \$14 or \$278 in today’s money.

Many of these military guns were sold and became very popular with both the good guys and the bad guys, while the military still

CIMARRON
S&W NO. 3
AMERICAN





GUNS[®]

MAGAZINE



Cimarron lengthened the No. 3's cylinder a tad to accommodate the longer .45 Colt cartridge. Originals were .44 American and .44 Russian.

kept many in stock for back-up issue. These were used in the Spanish-American War and the Philippine-American War.

Names like Jesse James, Bob Ford, John Wesley Hardin, Pat Garrett, Theodore Roosevelt, Virgil and Wyatt Earp, Billy the kid and others carried No. 3 revolvers. We're pretty sure Wyatt and Virgil had No. 3s at "That Gunfight" in Tombstone. Wells Fargo and Company bought thousands of the surplus Schofields, cutting the 7" barrels to 5" and re-stamping them with "W.F. & C" turning them into instant collectibles today. But, alas, beware of fakes.

Believe it or not, production of the No. 3 variants continued until 1915. Before the advent of general sales of the Colt Single Action, the No. 3 was clearly the best game in town, which may explain its long legs.

Perhaps one of the biggest legacies of the No. 3 design is the fathering of the first big-bore DA sixgun for S&W, the famous top-break S&W .44 Double Action First Model. Able to be fired single or double action, the top-break design, external hammer, well-shaped grip and .44 Russian and .44-40 chambering introduced the first high quality big bore DA revolver for the brand. The rest is history, and we owe all of the famous S&W DA revolvers we love today to that gun. And perhaps, in due course, to the No. 3.

CIMARRON

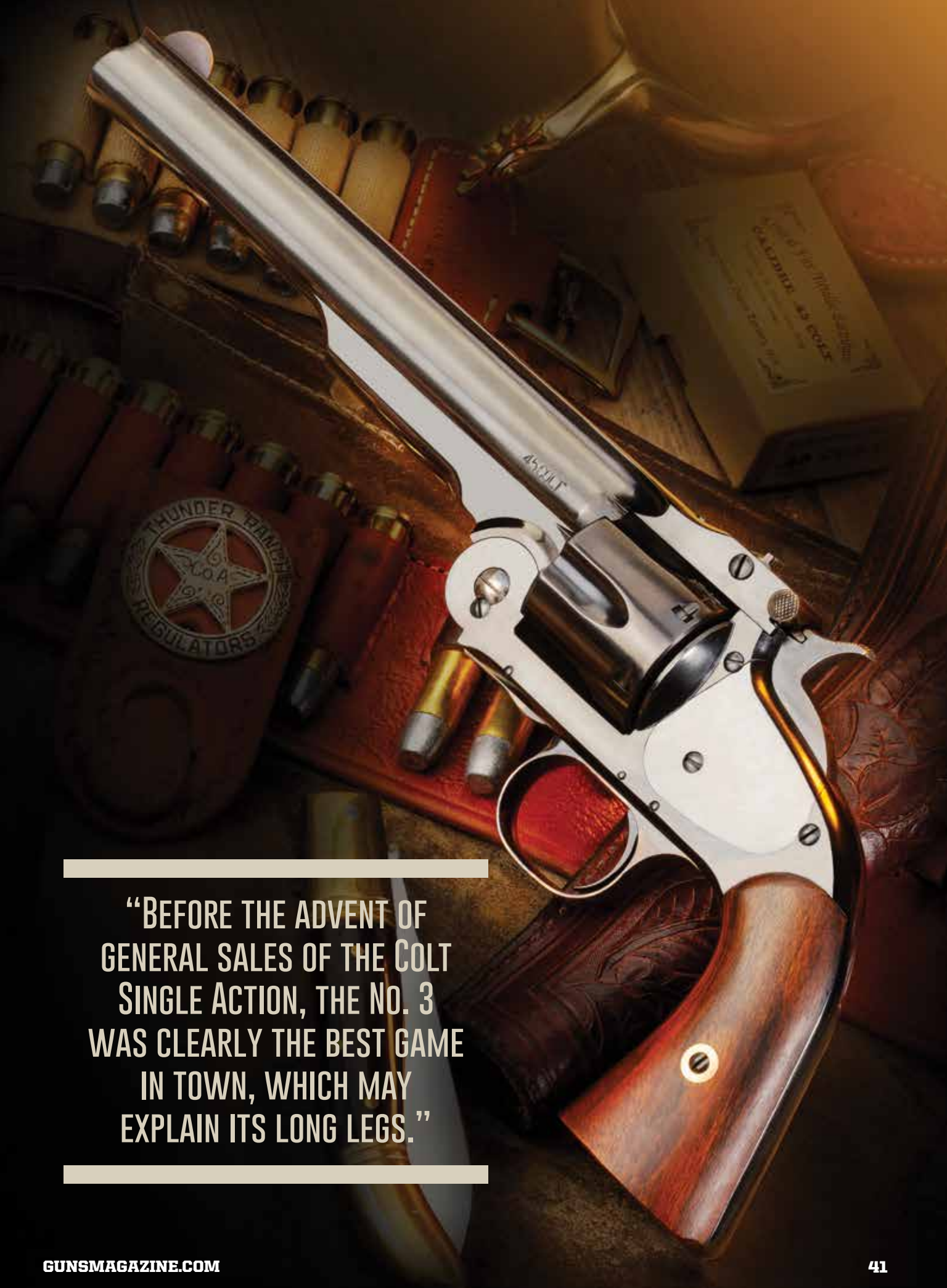
It simply gives me no end of genuine pleasure to talk about this fine company and the people behind it. Mike Harvey, owner and president, started with a modest gun store in Texas and

during a turn in business, discovered the imports from Italy replicating famous old west firearms. But Mike being Mike, his penchant for authenticity drove him to Italy where he met and befriended Aldo Uberti. Since the beginning, Mike and the team at Uberti worked hard to properly replicate the original design, feel and quality of the various classic old west designs. It sounds easy but it wasn't.

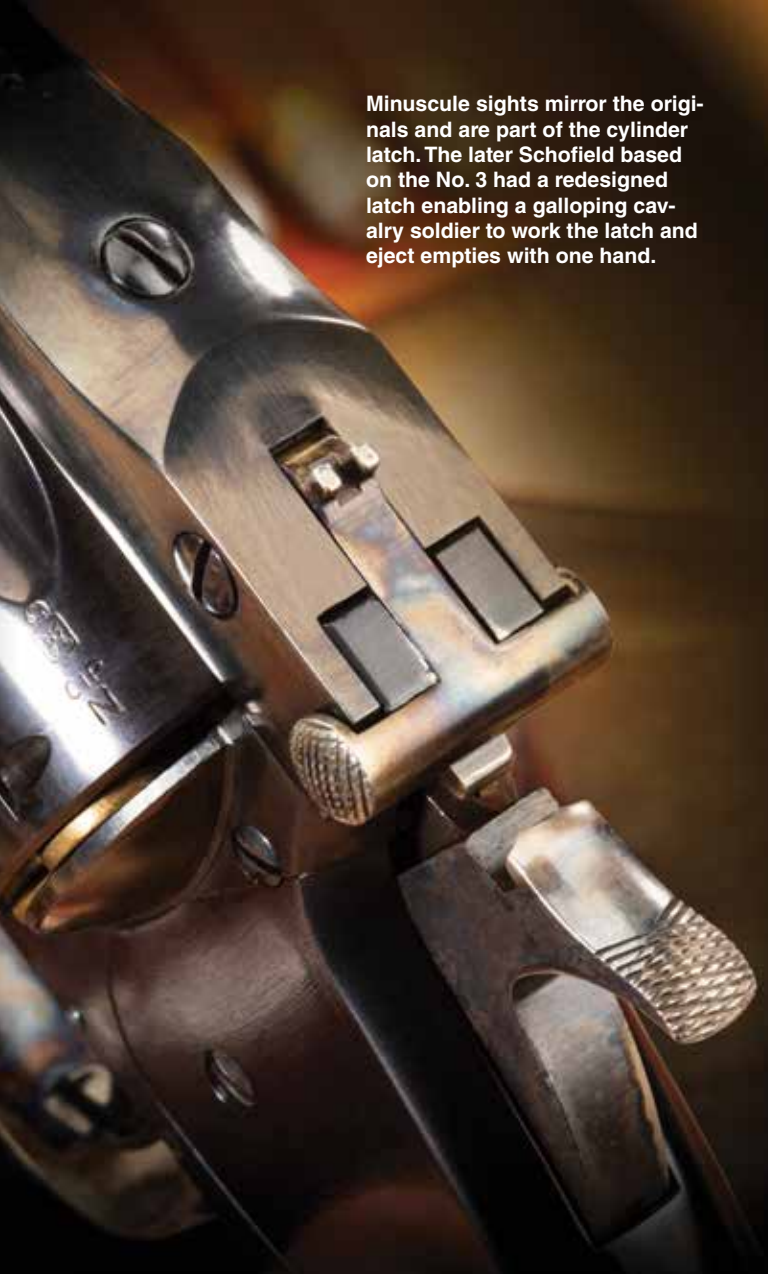
Mike's personal collection of authentic old west firearms paved the way for Uberti to bring in the first truly authentic Colt Model P (SAA). The Italian "clones" of the time (in the early 1980s) looked generally like a Colt Single Action but there were serious flaws in cosmetics, design and engineering. The top straps were much too thick, almost twice those of an original Colt and the flats, curves and evidence of the delicate hand workmanship of the original Colt artisans was often lacking. While the Uberti team was excellent, they simply had no experience with the originals.

Mike fixed that. He made sure Uberti was able to reverse-engineer one of Mike's very early Colts down to the last pin. Since then, Mike has made countless trips to Italy to meet, work with and help them hone the many models Cimarron has introduced over the years — he even has his own desk at their factory!

Mike's passion for the old guns and keeping his products as authentic as possible essentially helped change the way Americans see the Italian guns. Mike's demand for high quality, authentic builds and correct finishes pushed other companies



“BEFORE THE ADVENT OF
GENERAL SALES OF THE COLT
SINGLE ACTION, THE NO. 3
WAS CLEARLY THE BEST GAME
IN TOWN, WHICH MAY
EXPLAIN ITS LONG LEGS.”



Minuscule sights mirror the originals and are part of the cylinder latch. The later Schofield based on the No. 3 had a redesigned latch enabling a galloping cavalry soldier to work the latch and eject empties with one hand.



The magic of the design is the fact it was not only the first large bore centerfire cartridge revolver in the U.S., but it ejected the empties simultaneously, making loading fast and easy too.

here and in Italy to up their game. I have no issue at all saying if it wasn't for Mike's personal commitment, today the rich round-up of high quality imported guns like Cimarron's simply wouldn't exist. Mike doesn't just "buy what's there" and import it — he continues to work with a broad cross-section of companies outside the U.S. to assure the various models he offers are all correct in every respect.

As proof, you only have to look at movies like the *True Grit* remake, *Unforgiven*, *Lonesome Dove*, *The Lone Ranger*, *Young Guns II* — and too many others to list — to see Cimarron gets it right. If you're like me, when I see a movie showing guns out of sync for the times it takes away from the whole experience. Cimarron's line-up makes it easy for history to repeat itself — correctly.

OUR NO. 3 AMERICAN

Think of our test gun as a first generation No. 3 but with a couple of slight changes to accommodate the .45 Colt cartridge. Under Mike's close watch, Uberti has replicated the original as closely as possible while lengthening the cylinder to handle the longer .45 Colt round, as well as the original .44-40, .44 S&W and Russian and the .44 Special. From

looking, I believe they didn't lengthen the cylinder "window" but shortened the bushing flange or ring at the front of the cylinder to fit inside.

Details include period correct color case hardening on the hammer, top latch and trigger guard. The original-style grip frame and accurate two-piece walnut grip is here too. You can also get one with correct markings for a military-issue version. The finish is a deep, rich bluing coming out more black and looking like minty originals I've seen. Nickel is also offered and was very popular in the day due to the black powder cartridges used and the tough life on the trail.

Barrel lengths are 8" (our test gun) and a very handy-to-tote 5" model. I wanted first-model authenticity so I asked for the longer barrel, but a shorter one may be in the cards too. I also think they're particularly handsome and fierce-looking with a 3.5" barrel. Mike, are you listening?

One of the nearly miraculous things Mike accomplished is to figure out ways to keep the myriad of mandated Italian proof marks out of sight, or at least as much as possible. Early imports were littered with the "approval" stamps from a dozen or more tests the revolvers had to pass in order to be approved



Safety first ... carrying with an empty chamber under the hammer is the proper way for the No. 3 — just like the original.

for sale. I've seen those guns and it often looked like some kid got a metal stamp kit and went to work with crowns, swords, letters and numbers. Mike's methods to hide these hideous attacks on the glory of these designs pays dividends in personal enjoyment for us. When you hold any Cimarron firearm you have to peer very hard in order to decide if what you're holding is a rare and wondrous original — or an authentic reproduction.

SHEER DELIGHT

Shooting something like the No. 3 is the whole thing, isn't it? To hold it, cock it and touch it off is to relive a past still very much alive in our history, legends and just plain wishful thinking. The click of the hammer engaging the sear, the cold trigger against your finger, the heft lent by the long barrel and the easy rolling in your hand when the big bullet leaves the barrel — all grabs at the heart. If you don't feel it, I'm sorry for you.

This gun was never meant to shoot tiny groups on targets way out there. Although, even with the minuscule original-style sights — complete with sun glaring off them — I was able

to coax 1.75" groups to appear at 25 yards. In all honesty, if I had better eyes and it had better sights, who knows what this amazing gun could do? I had not planned on targeting this very much, mostly just wanging at steel, but *this changes everything* as they say. It's also all modern steel, so as long as you don't get silly, you could certainly load it with ammo suitable to protect your skin or to shoot a wily pig or three. But do carry it with five and then hammer down on an empty chamber!

Suffice to say, when this No. 3 sits on my desk, I feel like I need to pick it up, point it with a fierce scowl, and cry out, "Unhand her, you ruffian, or I shall have to shoot!" No ... really. You will too. I feel a new cowboy Slim Jim holster in my future. I live in Missouri, and, well, Jesse James "worked" here and loved his No. 3, and ... and ... and.

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Cimarron-Firearms.com
Black-Hills.com

THE 300S

WHY NOT CHOOSE OUR FIRST .300?



At last — an elk!
One 180-grain
Core-Lokt from
Wayne's 99 in .300
Savage killed this
fine six-point.

Savage

WAYNE VAN ZWOLL

A swatch of color reined me in. Over the next hour several elk winked in and out of timber below but the slope was rock-rolling steep. I dared not move. Then, an aspen shivered. The cows eased by it, passed my K4's crosswire in a gap not much wider than a Harley, then vanished.

The aspen kept shaking. Suddenly a long antler slammed it down.

I descended a few more yards, sliding on my hip. One more cow glided through the gap, only her top half visible. The bull denied me even a chance — a blink in the slot. I almost cried.

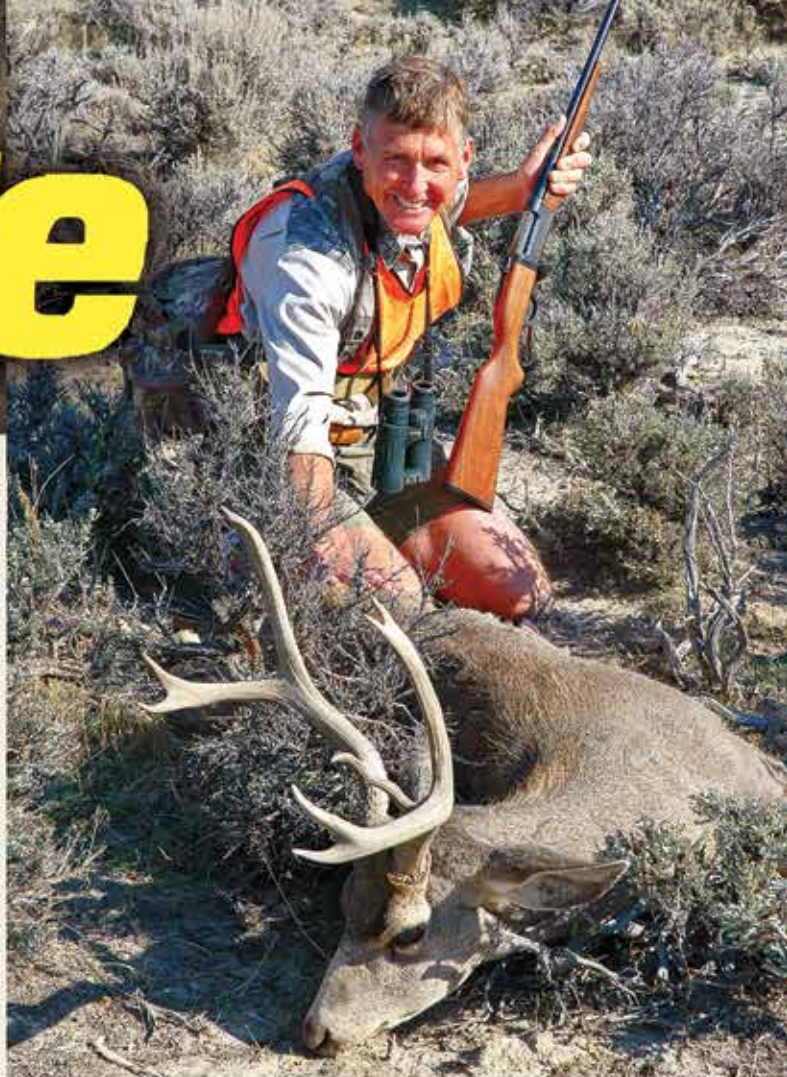
THINGS CHANGE

Suddenly, charitably, elk emerged in a grassy slip between hogbacks. Bald heads. Then — antlers! The bull stopped behind a fir. I was out of "almosts." As soon as his chest cleared the tree, I fired. A 180-grain round-nose Remington Core-Lokt trundled out the muzzle at 2,370 fps. The bull took one more step and fell on his nose.

It was my nod last autumn to the .300 Savage's 100th birthday. No fire-breather, this stubby, light-recoiling .30 is quietly efficient, a deadly round with a storied past. I'd used it earlier on deer, pronghorns and caribou. To be honest, though, I hadn't expected the big bull to collapse instantly. Not that I'd bought into the myth only magnums upend elk. Indeed, a survey just before WWII showed the .300 Savage was a popular elk cartridge, in ballistic step with the .30-40 Krag if not the .30-06 and clearly superior to the ubiquitous .30 W.C.F. (30-30). In Savage's Model 99 rifle, it would topple North America's toughest game for nearly eight decades.



The .300 Savage, the first, somewhat forgotten member of the .300 tribe. This blunt 180-grain Core-Lokt upset perfectly for a one-shot bull elk kill at 120 yards.



Wayne killed this buck with a .300 Savage Model 99, rousting the deer from its bed at 20 yards.

ROOTS

The Model 99 and our first .300 appeared concurrently 28 years after Arthur W. Savage, then 35, invented the Savage No. 1, a hammerless lever-action cycled with the little finger. A spool magazine held eight cartridges. A musket-style stock cradled a 29" barrel. Savage submitted his repeater to ordnance trials but it lost to the Krag-Jorgensen bolt gun, which became the official U.S. service arm in 1892.

However, convinced of the merits of his rifle, Savage reconfigured it for sportsmen. He reduced magazine capacity to five for a trimmer profile and opened the lever for three fingers. Patents in 1893 described a prototype rifle in .32-20. On April 5, 1894, he formed the Savage Repeating Arms Company in Utica, New York. The next year, Marlin Firearms Company supplied tooling and built the first Model 1895 Savage rifles, bored for the new .303 Savage. Its .308-diameter 190-grain bullets flew as fast as lighter bullets from early .30 W.C.F. loads and so hit harder. A hunter in British Columbia claimed 18 kills using a box of 20 cartridges, with two grizzlies in the count.

The 1895 was catalogued with 20", 26" and 30" barrels in .303 only. About 6,000 rifles were built between 1895 and 1899, when Savage modified the action. The new Model 1899 appeared in .30 W.C.F. a year later. So similar was the new rifle to its predecessor for \$5 Savage would fit the earlier version with a new bolt, hammer, sear and hammer indicator. In 1903 the .25-35, .32-40

and .38-55 filled out the cartridge roster. All were dropped in 1919.

Savage's first catalog, circa 1900, listed the Model 1899 for \$20. They appeared with barrels of 20" to 28". Barrel contours had letter designations — A for round, B for octagonal, C for half-octagonal. The 1899-F saddle-ring carbine was a hit. The CD Deluxe and H Featherweight arrived in 1905.

ADVANTAGES

The 1895's mechanism was almost fully enclosed. In lock-up, its bolt abutted the steel web at the rear of the forged receiver so it protected the shooter better than did other lever guns in the event of case failure. Still, loading was easy through the ejection port. As iron sights gave way to scopes, the 1895's side ejection became a notable asset. A coil mainspring — more durable than leaf springs then common — was first-ever on a commercial lever gun.

A through-bolt held butt-stock to receiver more securely than did wood screws in tang extensions. The receiver protected the magazine. Unlike tubes, this spool didn't contact the barrel, so had no effect on accuracy. With cartridge weight between the hands, balance was unaffected by cartridge count, shown in a window. Savage's magazine permitted use of pointed bullets.

Rifle sales could turn on testimonials, like the 1901 letter from Teddy Roosevelt hailing his Model 1899 as "the handsomest

and best turned out rifle I have ever had." Given T.R.'s affinity for 1886 and 1895 Winchester, such praise got a warm reception. The company also touted the '99's accuracy, gracing its 1903 catalog with a 10-shot, 100-yard group 1-5/16" across.

THE MODEL 99 ARRIVES

In 1920 Savage re-introduced its Model 1899 as the Model 99. The action was little changed, but this "new" rifle chambered the truly new .300 cartridge, in barrels rifled 1-in-12 (later, 1-in-10). By some accounts, the .300 Savage was to wring .30-06 vigor from the short lever mechanism yet because of its stubby 0.221" neck, the 1.871" Savage case fell well shy of matching the capacity of the '06's 2.494" hull.

Hunters didn't seem to mind the 250 fps gap. In the M99, the .300 Savage sold to the walls and remained the rifle's most potent chambering for 30 years. It also blessed

other rifles. I have a Remington 81 auto-loader and a 760 pump in .300 Savage. It appeared briefly in Winchester's Model 70 bolt-action. Around 1950, the U.S. armed forces considered the .300 Savage as a stand-in for the .30-06 but its 30-degree shoulder balked in some self-loading mechanisms. A slightly bigger case, with a 20-degree shoulder, evolved as the T-65. This became the .308 in 1952, the 7.62 NATO in '55.

Arthur Savage didn't live to see a 99 in .308. By the Battle of Britain, he'd prospected for oil, run a tire company, farmed California citrus and died in 1941.

FORERUNNER

The .300 Savage preceded, by five years, the .300 H&H and was 25 years ahead of Weatherby's .300. While these and subsequent magnums outmuscle it, the .300 Savage punches above its weight — and the M99 is a sturdy, reliable rifle.



Remington chambered its Model 760 Gamemaster pump in .300 during its first year (1958) only.



Crawling within 100 yards, Wayne heart-shot this Wyoming pronghorn with a .300 Savage 99.



The .300 Savage (above, left) falls far shy of the .30-06 in case capacity but the velocity difference is only 350 fps. In 1920 the .300 Savage appeared in the Model 1899, tweaked later that year and re-named the Model 99. This 99 (below) is a later version as evidenced by the tang safety.



Once, I borrowed a 99 in Canada's far north to hunt caribou. Spotting a bedded bull a mile across featureless tundra, I hiked in a great arc to sneak up behind it, closing to iron-sight range. The bull died without rising, the best barren-ground specimen I'll ever take.

I tried to buy the rifle. "Sorry," said its owner. "It goes to my Inuit guide." I cringed. This pristine Savage would soon have a salt-water finish, its steel patched by rust, its walnut scarred by ice, sled dog claws and canoe gunwales.

Ninety-nines in .300 Savage have served me on the desert too. Bellying across Wyoming sand with many pauses, I inched within 100 steps of a fine pronghorn and shot it through the heart. The same rifle crawled with me through sage after a mule deer I'd watched bed on a distant ridge. Making like a lizard, I couldn't see more than a few feet ahead when an antler tip came clear. Eye to the aperture sight, I lifted a foot and let it fall to earth. Again. The buck rose. My soft point struck him at 20 steps.

Yes, I adore the Model 99 — and in truth can't say I've ever needed more cartridge for hunting on this continent than our first .300.

SavageArms.com

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SHORT-BARRELED

NAVIGATING THE LEGAL CONFUSION

JEFF DINGLE

***E**ditor's Note: The information in this article is based on Federal law but should not be taken as legal advice. State and local laws may also vary.*

I've always been a fan of shorty shotguns. Not sure why, but when other people at the gun shows were looking at the Gold Cup 45s, I was looking at Remington 870s, the shorter the better. Years ago I had the chance to meet and talk to Jim Wilson, the builder of the famous Wilson Witness Protection Remington 870, the first "production" really short shotgun. I've been a fan ever since.

While Wilson Arms (not the later Wilson Combat) really set the bar for "shorties," the popularity was restrained by the perceived illegality of the weapons and the difficulty and cost in getting ATF approval and stamps to legally possess the firearm.

THINGS HAVE CHANGED

Simply speaking, the following weapons are regulated by the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, more commonly known as "ATF" under

the National Firearms Act (NFA):

- A shotgun having a barrel or barrels of less than 18" in length;
- A weapon made from a shotgun if such weapon as modified has an overall length of less than 26" or a barrel or barrels of less than 18".

Unfortunately, it's not quite so clear-cut.

To clarify some terms, short shotguns now legally fall into three categories — "Short-Barreled Shotgun" (SBS), "Any Other Weapon" (AoW), and now most recently the "Shockwave." Both the SBS and AoW require an ATF tax stamp to buy and transfer ownership, but an SBS is a \$200 stamp and an AoW is a \$5 stamp. The Shockwave does not require a stamp at all. So what's the difference?

The rules are complicated and often don't seem to make sense.

An AoW is a smoothbore designed to fire shotshells, has a barrel less than 18" and a pistol grip — *not* a stock. By ATF definition, it is not a shotgun as a shotgun is shoulder-fired. Therefore, a 12-gauge with a pistol grip cannot be a shotgun.

Of course there's a catch. You can't just take the stock off and shorten the barrel. The weapon is a shotgun if it *ever* had a stock,



All the same — or not? The Ithaca Model 37 Stakeout (bottom) is regulated under the NFA, but the Mossberg 590 Shockwave (middle) and Remington 870-TAC aren't. The reason: The magic of "26."

SHOTGUNS



even for a minute. Putting a stock on an AoW makes it an SBS (and is a crime to do so).

THE SBS

By definition, a “short-barreled shotgun” or SBS is a shotgun having one or more barrels less than 18" in length and any weapon made from a shotgun (whether by alteration, modification, or otherwise) if such weapon as modified has an overall length of less than 26". The 26" rule is important, because according to the ATF, any weapon with an overall length of less than 26" is “concealable.”

To review — an SBS is a shotgun with a barrel less than 18" and has a stock. An AoW has a shotgun receiver, a barrel less than 18", an overall length less than 26" and does not and has never had a stock. ATF rules also require you cannot possess an AoW or SBS or the parts to build one until your paperwork has been processed and you have the required tax stamp in your possession.



Great for close-quarters defense, a “Shock-wave” (above) is easy to move around — but remember, concealing such a gun makes it an “AoW” under the NFA. Jeff’s Ithaca M37 Stake-out (left) requires an “Any Other Weapon” (AoW) registration under the National Firearms Act, but fortunately the tax stamp is only \$5.

THE FUN BEGINS

Now to really confuse things — the Shockwave Raptor is a “birdshead” or “hogleg” grip manufactured by Florida-based Shockwave Technologies. When installed on a Remington 870 or a Mossberg 500/590 along with a 14" barrel, it becomes a “firearm” — *not* an SBS or AoW. It is not subject to National Firearms Act (NFA) rules and does not require a stamp.

HISTORY

In 2011, Len Savage of Historic Firearms Inc. floated the idea you could take a Mossberg “Cruiser” firearm, which isn’t technically a shotgun according to the ATF due to the pistol grip and alter the barrel and grip lengths without creating an NFA firearm as long as you maintained an overall length above 26". Shockwave spoke with Len a couple of times about the idea then designed the Raptor Grip, which is just long enough to allow you to use a 14" barrel and remain over the magic 26" overall length.

After almost a year of waiting, Shockwave received formal acknowledgement from ATF the “firearm” was not subject to NFA rules in mid-2012.

Why? Remember the 26" rule? The rules/law state by definition an SBS has to be concealable and have a total length of *less* than 26". The Shockwave grip extends the overall length to 26½".

So the Shockwave grip and 14" barrel is not an SBS because it does not have a stock and therefore cannot be a shotgun *and* is more than 26" in length *and* is not an AoW because at an overall length of 26½" is not legally concealable. It is simply a “firearm”

and not subject to NFA rules or a stamp.

One important note: If you conceal a Shockwave-based firearm, it becomes an AoW and you legally must apply for and obtain a Tax stamp.

Both Remington (870 TAC-14) and Mossberg (580 Shockwave) offer factory pump firearms with a 14" barrel and the Shockwave Raptor grip. Remington also offers the V3 TAC-13, 13" barrel (but with a 26½" overall length) semi-auto firearm.

DO IT YOURSELF

Can you build your own? Of course! But you must be very careful to follow the rules. First, the receiver must come from a pistol-grip shotgun that never had a stock. Even though the end result is a non-NFA weapon, ATF advises if the firearm ever had a stock it is a modified shotgun, requiring a \$200 stamp.

Second, the barrel must be at least 14" to obtain the overall length necessary. Factory Remington 14" barrels are readily available from Remington and aftermarket retailers, often for less than \$140. Mossberg offers factory 14" barrel kits as well. It’s important to note a Remington 14" barrel on an 870 is a direct swap requiring no additional parts, but a Mossberg 500/590 conversion requires the replacement of the forearm and slide assembly to accommodate the shortened barrel.

As always, check state and local laws to make sure these firearms are not prohibited in your location!

ShockwaveTechnologies.com
Remington.com
Mossberg.com

I saw the two green points shining back at me in the beam of the headlamp I'd just turned on—but it wasn't until I made out the dark bulk behind them I realized what was on the side of the trail ahead. Living and hiking in the mountains, I'd seen this shape before. "Bear," I thought to myself. Not good, but not the end of the world.

Then, in the bluish light of the LED, I saw a black catlike form scramble up the tree behind her. I can see it now, still hear the scratching sound her cub's claws made on the bark as it clambered up—whether it actually made such a sound in the moment or not. What I don't remember is pulling out the big stainless sixgun or laying the wide Bisley hammer back over a cylinder-full of 335-grain hardcast solids.

A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

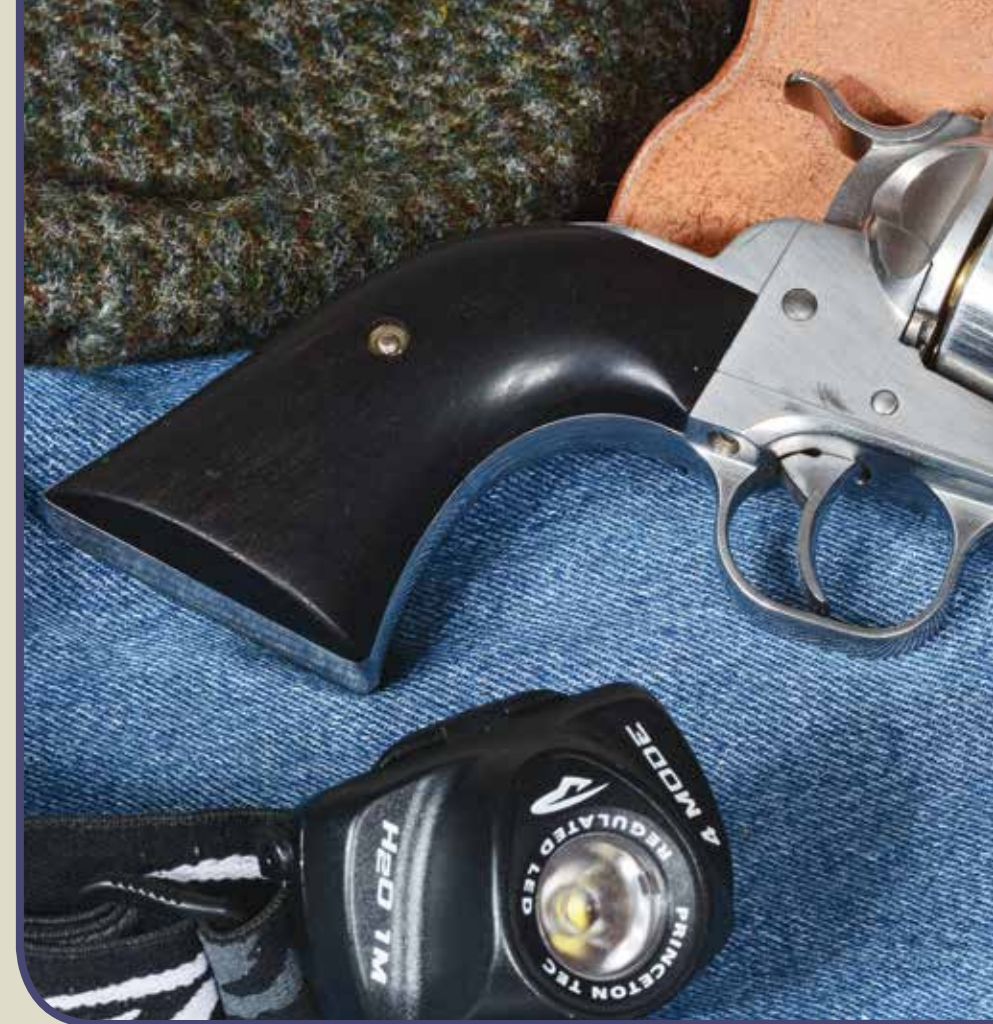
It was my first time out bowhunting and when darkness caught me miles away from my car, I'd disassembled the takedown recurve and stowed it in my pack. I then walked down the closed gravel road in the dark, the gray of the road and the dark blue of the sky standing out enough from the black woods to keep me headed the right direction without a light. I'd hiked quite a bit in the dark and except for my family giving me a hard time, I'd never really given it much thought. At least until a little voice in the back of my head—you know, the one telling you you're wrong—told me to turn on the light.

I backed off to give Mama Bear room and considered my options. There was a trail behind me splitting off to head north, the wrong direction, and dead-ended several miles away at a state road on the far side of a mountain. I looked at my phone: no service, no way to call for a ride even if I hiked the several miles uphill to get there.

Ahead of me, the ground fell off downhill to the left side of the road—where she was—and rose steeply, impassable, on the right. There was one way out and it went right past where Mama Bear had staked her claim.

THE GUN

I bought the Old Model Vaquero almost 20 years ago when it was just a Vaquero, alongside my old college shooting buddy who bought its twin from a gunshop whose doors are now closed. Polished stainless steel, with 4¾" barrels, faux ivory grips and chambered in .45 Colt, the two sixguns were one digit off from being sequential serial numbers. Close to broke, we bought a single box of 20 cartridges and split them. I promptly took my



Ode to a BOONDOO

new thumb buster—loaded with the last six rounds from the box—with me to Mississippi when I went to see my grandfather.

GRANDAD

Born in California to a veteran of the Spanish American War, my mother's father was raised in a rambling way, growing up in Kentucky and Florida before settling in Mississippi, but he never lost his love of the West. His house—more specifically, his studio, where he painted and where my cot was usually stationed when we visited—was fascinating from the powder horn and barbed-wire collection on the wall, to his oil lamps and the Winchester I always begged him to show me. I don't remember what he said about my Vaquero but I know he approved.

If I have any doubt about it, I can look around my own office at his Stetson up on the top of a bookshelf or the couple pairs of rattlesnake rattles and a foil-wrapped packet of .30/30 cartridges I inherited from him.

Nonetheless, the Vaquero remained a bit of a novelty for a few years while I mostly shot M1911s until I snagged a writing assignment on Bowen Classic Arms and dropped the Vaquero off with Hamilton. Returned with a fine, brushed finish, the newly lightweighted gun now had a 4" barrel, useable front sight and a low, fast-cocking Bisley hammer. The grips were replaced with Persinger ebony grips made in El Paso and fitted to the newly decked frame. It was almost too pretty to shoot.

Almost. I put several hundred rounds of Black Hills and Hornady through it but



Jeremy's Vaquero, customized by Hamilton Bowen and the star of many adventures.

JEREMY D. CLOUGH

CKING GUN

IN A HARD PLACE WITH A HANDFUL OF STEEL

never quite mastered the gun. What I didn't understand at the time was how much grip consistency affects accuracy with a single-action, where the gun is recoiling through your hand as the bullet exits the barrel.

Grip it hard, the bullet goes low; loosely, it goes high. I finally learned this about 10 years ago, when I made the decision to put a thousand rounds each through three guns I didn't shoot all that well. After enough weekly or twice-weekly trips to the range, depleting the large stock of ammo a friend had loaded for me on his Rock Chucker, I could finally hit consistently with the big

Ruger, gleefully slamming 255-grain SWCs into my steel spinner until it cracked. At the insistence of another shooting friend, this one from law school days, I shot my first cowboy action match with it. I placed an enjoyable second to last, just ahead of him.

LOADING UP

By then I wasn't afraid to scuff the Vaq up anymore and after a couple less serious encounters of the ursine kind, I decided the extra power of +P .45 Colt rounds was preferable to the .45 ACP I

usually carried in the woods. At Bowen's advice, I stoked it with Grizzly Cartridge Company's 335, which I chronographed at a freight-train like 1,089 fps.

And there it was, in my hand, cocked. I was the most scared I've been in my adult life, more scared than riding shotgun at Road Atlanta in a Porsche racecar dropping down Turn 12 at a buck-twenty, more scared than when I was serving legal papers on people, alone, in downtown Atlanta as a law student, more scared than walking down the stairs in the dark for the first time holding my newborn son.

SHAKEN BUT NOT STIRRED

Scared, but not shaking. With no other option, I breathed a prayer, short and packed with condensed intensity, and began my one-step-at-a-time trip past Mama Bear, now out of sight on the other side of the brush lining the road. Desperately not wanting to shoot this bear, I had decided if she charged I would fire a warning shot first to try to turn her. Considering the extremely short distances involved — 20 feet or less — the decision likely would have cost me a mauling, if not my life.

She let me pass, but followed me through the dark for a hundred yards. At some point I'm sure I gently lowered the hammer and re-holstered but it was no time soon. In the car on the way home, I called my mother who'd long been worried about my hiking habits. "I think it's time to re-evaluate my decision-making paradigm," I said drily.

STILL HERE

The old Vaq is still loaded with 335s, their big, broad meplats almost flush with the end of the cylinder — fresh ones, of course. There's a little play in the cylinder now, which is striped with irregular lengthwise scratches from many trips in and out of its holster. There are some fine cracks in the grain of the ebony, too, and if you look closely I'm sure you can find a dull red speck or two in the crevices of the dove-tailed front sight where it's hard to wipe the moisture out. This after all the times it's been rained on, alongside with me.

Sometimes when I pick it up, I think of my grandfather long since passed on to his reward, or my other friends — the one with its partner who moved to Texas and largely out of my life, the other who had lost his vision and with it his dreams of cowboy shooting.

And those two bright green eyes — I think about those a lot.





MAS 49/56 SEMI-AUTO

RANGE DAY WITH FRANCE'S INFANTRY IMPORT

PAYTON MILLER

From 1951 to 1979, the *Fusil Automatique M. 1949* served as the official French service rifle. As such, the slab-sided MAS 49 saw extensive service, most notably in France's conflicts in Indochina and Algeria, the Suez Crisis and various civil wars in Syria, Chad and Lebanon.

The upshot of this historic preamble? The French have had a huge amount of experience in what are often referred to as "brushfire wars," not to mention major conflagrations. They've also been pretty good at them, although not always successful in the long run. Then again, what major European country has?

LINEAGE

Back in November of last year, we covered the MAS 36, which had the distinction of serving as France's final bolt-action service

rifle prior to the semi-auto MAS 49 — although both served concurrently to varying degrees. The MAS 49 features a direct-gas impingement system fed from a 10-round detachable box magazine and is chambered to the same 7.5x54 service round — ballistically a shade less powerful than the 7.62 NATO (.295 vs. .308) and featuring a 139-grain spitzer rated at 2,700 fps.

The specimen we got our hands on was the 49/56 variant — a shortened and lightened version of the longer and heavier MAS 49, obviously designed to be "para- friendly." More than 275,200 of the 49/56 were produced until both the MAS 49 and 49/56 were replaced in the late 1970s by the FAMAS 5.56 bullpup series.

Dimensionally and weight-wise, the MAS M49/56 is similar to the bolt-action MAS 36, weighing 9 lbs. with an OAL of 40.2" and a free-floated 20.8" barrel. One thoroughly useless but nonetheless cool feature of our rifle was the grenade launcher working in conjunction with a folding grenade sight. Since WWI, the French have been more enthusiastic about rifle grenades than other

All the bells and whistles:
The MAS 49/56 set up with an APX/L806 scope and the correct knife-style bayonet — a distinct improvement over the MAS 36 bolt action. Photo: Rock Island Auction Company





Doug Fee draws a bead thru the MAS 49/56's receiver sight. Recoil is negligible and the power level is only slightly less than 7.62 NATO.



The rifle grenade sight flipped up and ready for use! Handy if you've got grenades. Unfortunately, we didn't.

major powers. But, unless you have access to some (extremely unlikely), the grenade launcher/sight arrangement is simply an intriguing conversation piece. The compensator, however, works and works well.

Our MAS 49/56 still had the original boot-like rubber sleeve over the rear of the butt for those occasions when a trooper stuck the butt into the ground to launch a grenade (few were dumb enough to fire one when shouldered; at least more than once). From the more pedestrian bullet standpoint, the aperture sight is graduated to 1,200 meters — a bit optimistic maybe, but who can say?

Besides the benefits of semi-auto fire, two enhancements the 49/56 has over its turnbolt predecessor is it has an integral side rail for mounting a 3.85X APX/L806 scope. The 49/56 also accepts a proper knife-type bayonet, as opposed to the medieval cruciform toadsticker on the MAS 36.

Other features/controls include a large serrated magazine release catch situated on the right side of the receiver just above the magazine. The bolt-knob itself is a curious white plastic arrangement which is, nonetheless, large enough to manipulate easily with the entire hand. The unobtrusive safety lever is on the right side of the receiver just forward of the trigger guard. The metal features a dull phosphate finish throughout.



The 7.5x54 MAS cartridge (left) is a bit taller than the 7.62x51 NATO (right) and features a 139-grain spitzer at 2,700 fps.

RANGE TIME

Due to the fact 7.5x54 ammo isn't very easy to find even in the best of times, our range menu was somewhat limited. As with our previous sessions with the bolt-action MAS 36, we relied on Portugal's Boxer-primed, noncorrosive 139-grain FNM stuff — and we felt darn lucky to get it! Due to the difficulty in obtaining anything ammo-wise, we were unable to find any of the excellent Serbian-made Prvi Partizan stuff, the only other source of new 7.5x54 we're aware of.

The trigger broke at a nice militarily crisp 6 lbs. plus, with a surprising small amount of takeup. The fat front sight is wide enough to promote a 6 o'clock hold. It's protected by ears and is adjustable for elevation. The rear is a windage-adjustable peep sight.

At 100 yards our best 5-shot group was 2-3/4" with one notable 1-1/4" 3-shot cluster within. Chronograph results averaged 2,590 fps with an extreme spread of 62 fps. All in all, the same ammo ran slightly slower (31 fps) than it did through the slightly longer barrel of the bolt-action MAS 36 but grouped a bit tighter.

Recoil was extraordinarily mild, thanks to the rifle's cartridge, weight, gas action and compensator. Although it ejected forcefully, it kicked the brass pretty much to the same spot 10 feet away and was quite kind to those cases. Many 49/56s were converted to .308, but such conversions have, for the most part, been unsatisfactory. Best stick with the original chambering even though the ammo is admittedly tough to find.

TAKEAWAY

It appears the MAS 49/56 has become highly desirable over the years. We've seen specimens with "beginning bid" numbers exceeding two grand at auction. If you're lucky enough to get one, however, it's unlikely you're going to turn it into a "safe queen" waiting for it to further appreciate. The rifle is just too much fun to shoot.



Smith & Wesson MODEL 25

The .45 Colt in a Modern Sixgun

DICK WILLIAMS

While I have long been fascinated with N-Frame Smith & Wesson revolvers, I came to the party only after seeing the movie "Dirty Harry." Prior to the movie, all my shooting was done single-action, influenced no doubt by having grown up in the 1950s watching cowboy shows on television.

DO YOU FEEL LUCKY?

Once bitten by "the most powerful handgun in the world"-bug, I realized double-action revolvers produced outstanding results when first cocked before pressing the trigger. Even with a superb action job, it was difficult to maintain a precise sight picture throughout the long double-action trigger pull of the large-frame Smiths. Much of my handgun silhouette shooting and big game hunting in Colorado and Wyoming during the '70s and '80s was done with a 6.5" barreled Model 29 but always fired single-action.

As the years went by and Father Time reminded me more frequently I wasn't indestructible, I recalled perhaps the greatest fight-stopping handguns in American history were .45 caliber, not the least of which was the venerable .45 Colt. These were available in N-Frame Smiths and looked exactly like my .44 Mag Model 29s but were easier to handle with factory loads.

Not to sound like a fairy tale, there came a day on one of my

frequent visits to the North County Shooting Center in southern California when I saw my future S&W Model 25 with 4" barrel in the display case. A brief examination of the gun confirmed the finish, timing and double-action trigger pull were excellent. Negotiations were over in seconds, but of course California required another 10 days to decide I could take the gun home.

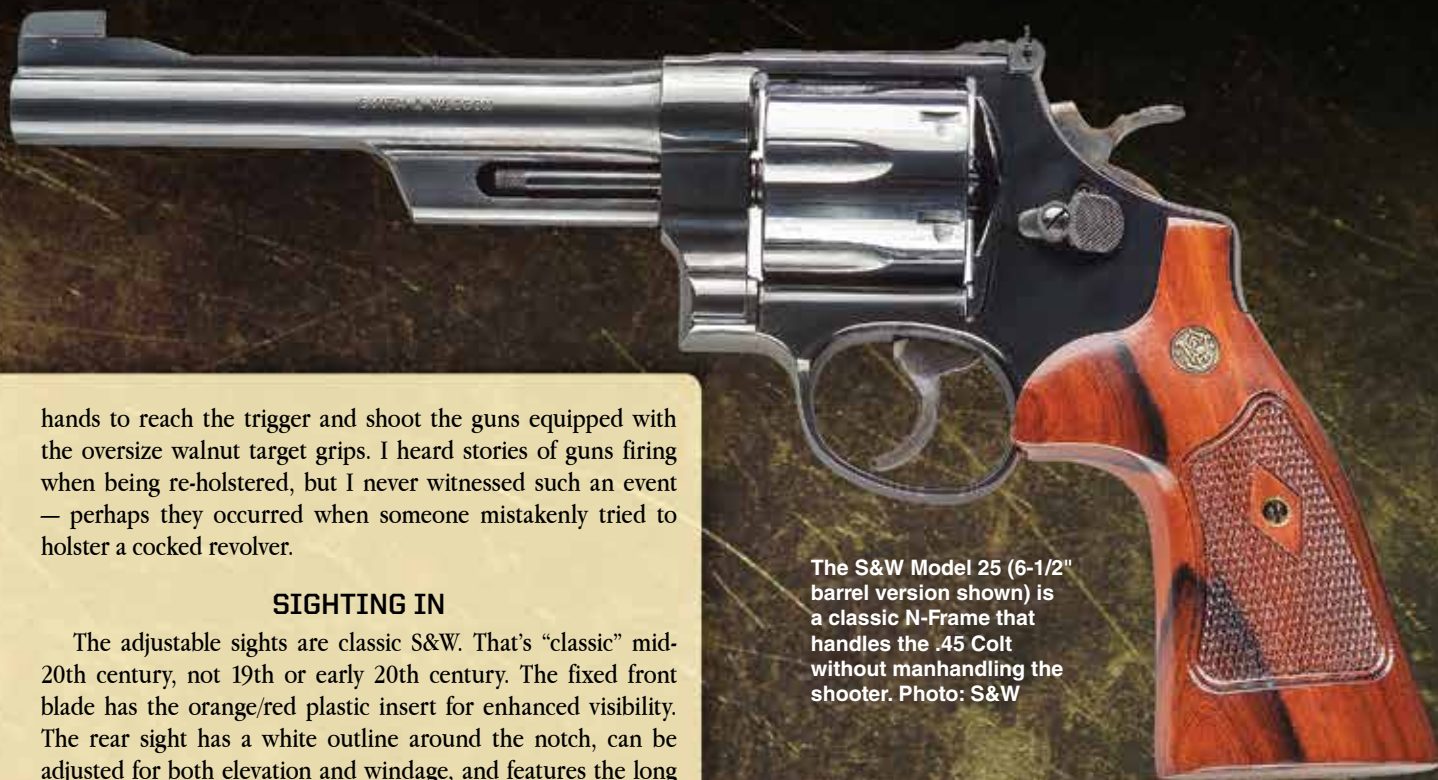
TAKING STOCK

Except for the action job and the Hogue rubber grips, the gun is "as issued" by Smith & Wesson. The Hogue grips are relatively narrow with an open back and finger grooves. The stippled sides provide enhanced controllability for fast follow-up shots. Most importantly, they fit my hand perfectly with the open back allowing proper finger placement on the wide serrated trigger. If I had ordered the gun from the factory, I would have requested the smooth combat trigger but the double-action pull is so smooth I had no trouble maintaining a good sight picture throughout.

The trigger is slightly narrower than the trigger guard, ensuring it can't catch the edge of the holster when the gun is returned to leather. "Back in the day" when handgun hunters and recreational shooters fired big bore Smiths single-action, wide checkered trigger shoes became popular as they allowed the trigger to be pressed slightly sideways while still causing the hammer to fall. It made things easier for those with smaller



In "Lonesome Dove," Capt. Augustus McCrea believed the revolver made the large fighting knife an unnecessary item but Dick thinks pairing of a big knife and large caliber revolver was rather common — and comforting — in the old west.



The S&W Model 25 (6-1/2" barrel version shown) is a classic N-Frame that handles the .45 Colt without manhandling the shooter. Photo: S&W

hands to reach the trigger and shoot the guns equipped with the oversize walnut target grips. I heard stories of guns firing when being re-holstered, but I never witnessed such an event — perhaps they occurred when someone mistakenly tried to holster a cocked revolver.

SIGHTING IN

The adjustable sights are classic S&W. That's "classic" mid-20th century, not 19th or early 20th century. The fixed front blade has the orange/red plastic insert for enhanced visibility. The rear sight has a white outline around the notch, can be adjusted for both elevation and windage, and features the long tang mounting into a matching machined slot in the frame's top strap. Windage and elevation adjustment screws take the same-size screwdriver, something I've always appreciated in a gun designed to go afield, not just the range.

The hammer is the old-school wide target spur, aggressively checkered to facilitate manually cocking for single-action fire. On an N-Frame Smith, this is an excellent "win/win" feature. Because it's not a pocket pistol, you don't need a reduced size hammer, but when you're out in winter weather at an informal match or a late fall deer hunt wearing gloves, it's a real asset.

The firing pin is mounted in the hammer rather than in the frame like the pre-"keyhole in frame" Smith & Wessons. When the trigger is pulled fully to the rear, either double- or single-action, the firing pin protrudes through a small hole in the frame striking the cartridge primer. When the trigger is released, the firing pin retreats/rebounds to a safe position behind the breech



A major factor in successful handgun shooting is seeing the front sight. The M25's orange insert helps in the diminished light conditions predators favor.



While a speed loader is the fastest way to fully reload a revolver, it doesn't allow for partial reloads, the preferred "load as you shoot" technique.



Hammer-mounted firing pin and absence of "key hole" in the frame reveal some of the old school features of the Model 25, while the stippled Hogue grips facilitate shot-to-shot recovery.



The compact design of the Milt Sparks-style holster allowed Dick to make it comfortably through a full day of training drills at the Gunsite Academy in Arizona.

face. The firing pin doesn't actually "float," but it can move vertically. Spring pressure keeps the firing pin low in the hammer. If for any reason the pin isn't lined up exactly with the firing pin hole when the hammer falls, the pin strikes an angled ramp in the frame that guides the pin up the ramp to and through the hole and allows it to strike the primer.

I've been told a frame-mounted firing pin system is stronger and safer but I'm not sure I buy into this. With the hammer at rest, the vulnerable parts are contained inside the frame, so unless you're walking around with a cocked revolver, everything is protected. The only advantage I've found in a frame-mounted system is it's easier to block the hammer with your support-hand thumb when decocking the revolver or if a game animal moves after you've cocked the gun and you're waiting briefly for a better shot.

BACK TO SIGHTS

Let's talk a bit more about the front sight. The top surface of the orange plastic is smooth, meaning it's quite reflective in bright sunlight. On testing day, the sun was extremely bright, causing a glare off the top of the insert and making it quite difficult to see exactly where the upper edge of the front sight ended so groups tended to expand vertically. While shooting long-range steel in Colorado on a sunlit day, I sprayed the front sight black to cover the orange ramp. When handgun hunting deer, I prefer having the orange strip visible since the most productive hunting is in the lower light levels of early mornings or late afternoons. In addition, it was likely I would be moving in and out of timber.

In a recent writers' event at Gunsite Academy, I had a chance to work the Fun House with the Model 25. I went through all the drills with the big Smith & Wesson riding comfortably in a Milt Sparks-style strong-side holster shooting DoubleTap 255-grain hard cast semi-wadcutters. Although we "cleared" the house during the daylight hours, changing light conditions became a decisive factor as we went from the bright sunlight of an Arizona afternoon in July to the deeply shaded areas inside the house. As we grow older, our eyes need more light to see well plus we adjust to changing light conditions less quickly.

At first, there were dark targets I couldn't identify at all. As my eyes adapted, I could see some targets but was unable to determine whether they were holding weapons or not. Once I could tell whether the intruder was armed or not, the orange front sight came into play and I could see well enough to make a decisive shot. Of course the best answer is "always have a flashlight."

NO REGRET

While I'll admit my purchase of the Model 25 was an act of passion rather than careful planning, I would not be reluctant to carry the big revolver full-time for both self-defense and hunting. Had my "attackers" been made of other than paper and steel, there is no doubt in my mind as to the outcome. I don't think any handgun caliber has decisively ended as many fights over a 150-year time span as the old .45 Colt and most of those were before we learned the advantages of a large meplat making the initial entry.

Old fashioned — yes. Still effective — heck yes!



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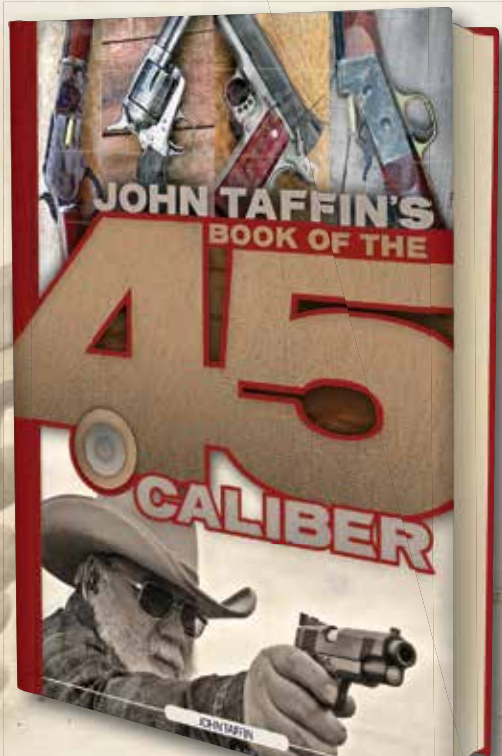
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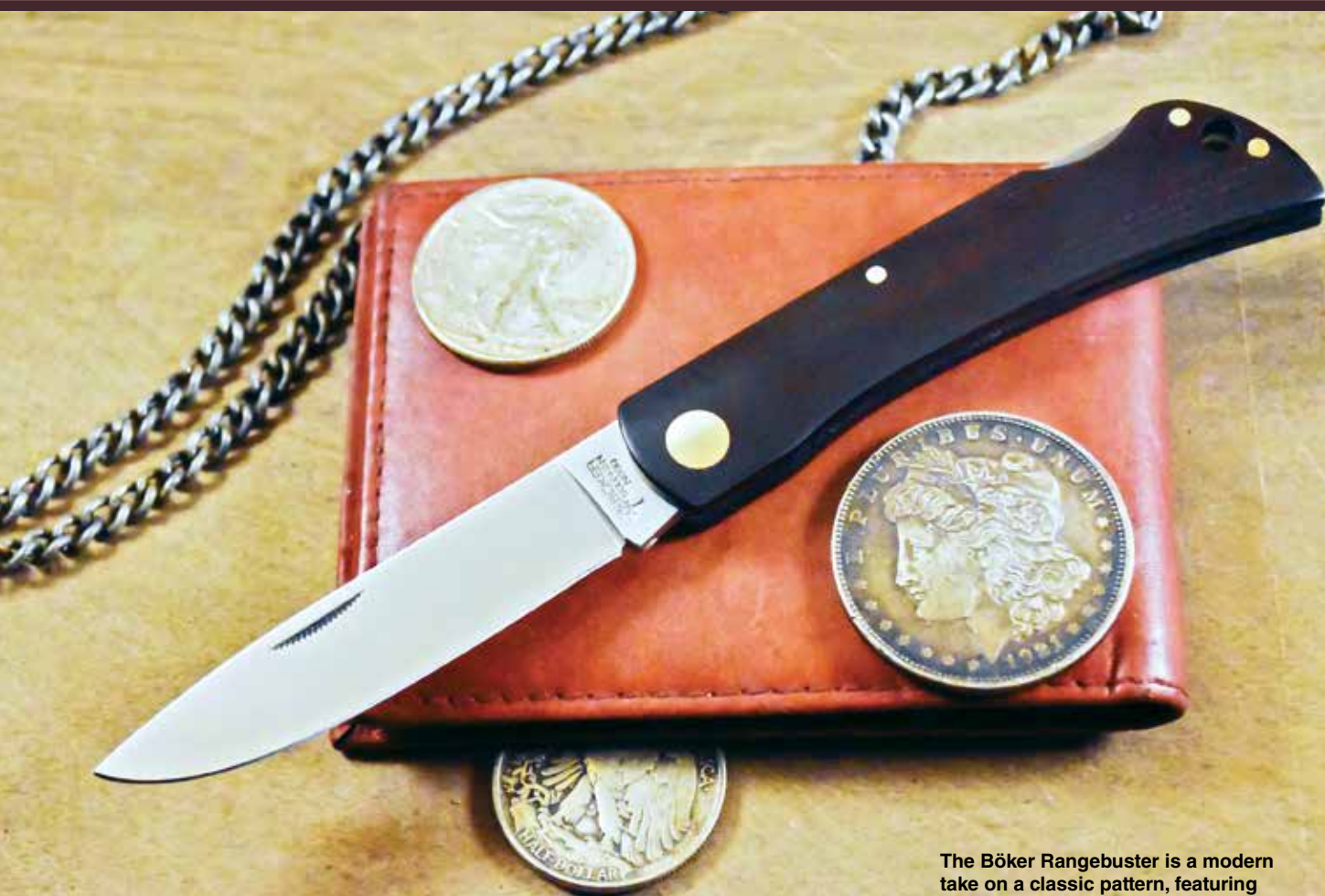
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The Böker Rangebuster is a modern take on a classic pattern, featuring elegant styling, upscale steel and a superb degree of fit and finish.

BÖKER RANGEBUSTER

ELEGANT FARMER'S KNIFE IS UPSCALE CLASSIC

One of the oldest members of the traditional pocketknife family, the Sodbuster has a foggy past. It derives its name from the hardscrabble folks of the Dust Bowl era in the late 1930s, often referred to as “Sodbusters” — but some say the knife resembles the much earlier Clasp Knife dating back to Roman times.

Regardless, the Sodbuster is mostly thought of as a humble farmer's knife and most are manufactured today in inexpensive synthetic Delrin handles. Böker Knives has changed all that with their slick, elegant Rangebuster — a thoroughly modern take on the old yet still popular pattern.

The Böker Rangebuster, 6.73" in overall length, has a much more stylish profile. While many of the originals have a straight blade spine, the Rangebuster has a graceful 3.03" drop point of upscale N690 high-end

stainless steel with a traditional nail nick for opening the blade. The classic brass bird's eye pivot is still there but the 3.75" handle sports more graceful curves and a wider, flared base.

A lock-back mechanism has been added and liners have been shucked for a rigid, nicely contoured and polished maroon linen Micarta frame. The fit and finish are impeccable and the blade locks in place with the profound “snick” you expect in a fine traditional pocketknife. The Rangebuster is far from a farmer's knife.

WHY YOU'LL LIKE IT.

The Böker Rangebuster is a downright handsome knife. It's an everyday carry standing out in a crowd of modern silver and black fare. While it doesn't have a pocket clip, its slim width and 1.52-oz. weight will



While traditional Sodbusters were typically slip joints, Böker has added a lock-back mechanism to assure the deployed blade locks rigidly in place.

be well hidden in the pocket and won't drag your britches down. The Rangebuster's upscale N690 cuts like the premium steel it is and if you need it to act like a workhorse, it will plow with the best of them. Made in Solingen, Germany where Böker's best knives are made, suggested retail for the Rangebuster is \$229.

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A CASE WORTH WATCHING

WHY ELECTIONS MATTER

Dave Workman

A federal court case out of California which might ultimately wind up before the U.S. Supreme Court offers proof beyond a reasonable doubt elections matter, especially when it comes to the presidency and U.S. Senate — so always vote.

The case in question is *Duncan v. Becerra*, with a remarkable history, considering its origin. California, and more importantly the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, has not been friendly to gun owners or the Second Amendment. However, this one could provide some balance to the books.

SLAP DOWN

Liberal judges and Democrat politicians may try to skirt Supreme Court rulings in the *Heller* and *McDonald* cases, but a slap down of a cornerstone, trophy California statute — the ban on high-cap magazines — would be devastating and impossible to ignore.

More than two years ago, federal District Court Judge Roger Benitez handed down a stunning opinion that California's ban on so-called "high capacity magazines" is unconstitutional. It was a staggering rebuke of Golden State gun control.

The state immediately appealed to the Ninth Circuit, where just over 16 months later a three-judge panel with Judge Kenneth Lee writing for the majority, issued an opinion upholding Benitez' 2019 decision. Siding with Judge Lee was Judge Consuelo M. Callahan, while Judge Barbara M. Lynn from the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas, dissented.

Judges Benitez and Callahan are George W. Bush appointees to the federal court. Judge Lee is a Donald Trump appointee. Judge Lynn was appointed by Bill Clinton. All four jurists are certainly good people whose qualifications to sit on the federal bench were good enough for the U.S. Senate. They just have obviously different perspectives on firearms law.

Following the Lee decision, California petitioned for an *en banc* rehearing, a hearing before a full court panel of judges. In the past, this strategy has typically resulted in a reversal on gun issues. However, Trump managed to fill some vacancies on the Ninth Circuit. The intent was to bring some balance to the court and this may be Trump's lasting legacy. In addition to Judge Lee, President Trump appointed nine judges to the Ninth Circuit.

SURPRISING ARGUMENTS

Especially interesting in then-California Attorney General Xavier Becerra's explanation for his appeal, was this paragraph in his statement to the press:

"LCMs have been used in many horrific mass shootings around the country, including the shooting at the Borderline Bar and Grill in Thousand Oaks in 2018, and the shooting at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino in 2015."

A cursory check of the facts about those shootings revealed the following. Killer Ian David Long, who opened fire at the Borderline Bar and Grill in Thousand Oaks on Nov. 7, 2018, used a legally purchased .45-caliber GLOCK 21 pistol and seven high-cap magazines banned under existing California statute, as noted by Wikipedia. For Becerra to argue the magazine ban is an effective tool against mass shootings and use this case, is dumbfounding because the incident proves the magazine ban didn't work!

Jump back to July 28, 2019 and the 41st annual Gilroy Garlic Festival. Enter Santino William Legan, armed with a semi-auto rifle fitted with a 75-round drum magazine. Instead of an argument supporting California's magazine law, this case is more damning evidence it hasn't worked to prevent tragedies.

COMMON SENSE: BENITEZ

This case has allowed the judges to display some of the "common sense" so often cited by the gun prohibition lobby as necessary to the regulation of firearms; a proposition on shaky ground from the outset because the keeping and bearing of arms is a constitutionally enumerated and protected fundamental right, not a government-regulated privilege.

"If a law-abiding, responsible citizen in California decides that a handgun or rifle with a magazine

larger than 10 rounds is the best choice for defending her hearth and home," Judge Benitez observed, "may the State deny the choice, declare the magazine a 'nuisance,' and jail the citizen for the crime of possession? The Attorney General says that is what voters want in hopes of preventing a rare, but horrible, mass shooting. The plaintiffs, who are also citizens and residents of California, say that while the goal of preventing mass shootings is laudable, banning the acquisition and possession of magazines holding more than 10 rounds is an unconstitutional experiment that poorly fits the goal. From a public policy perspective, the choices are difficult and complicated. People may cede liberty to their government in exchange for the promise of safety. Or government may gain compliance from its people by forcibly disarming all. In the United States, the Second Amendment takes the legislative experiment off the table. Regardless of current popularity, neither a legislature nor voters may



trench on constitutional rights. ‘An unconstitutional statute adopted by a dozen jurisdictions is no less unconstitutional by virtue of its popularity.’”

COMMON SENSE: LEE

Judge Lee is no less articulate when it comes to dealing with California’s ban on “large-capacity magazines” (LCMs). In his 67-page majority opinion, the 45-year-old jurist made it clear early on, “Firearm magazines are ‘arms’ under the Second Amendment. Magazines enjoy Second Amendment protection for a simple reason: Without a magazine, many weapons would be useless, including ‘quintessential’ self-defense weapons like the handgun ...”

Near the conclusion of his opinion, Judge Lee reminds us, “We understand the purpose in passing this law. But even the laudable goal of reducing gun violence must comply with the Constitution. California’s near-categorical ban of LCMs infringes on the fundamental right to self-defense. It criminalizes the possession of half of all magazines in America today. It makes unlawful magazines that are commonly used in handguns by law-abiding citizens for self-defense. And it substantially burdens the core right of self-defense guaranteed to the people under the Second Amendment. It cannot stand.”

WHY WATCH?

Duncan v. Becerra could provide the U.S. Supreme Court an opportunity to hammer down on an issue remaining elusive — to more clearly define what the Second Amendment protects

and what it may not.

If this case does advance to the high court, which also has three justices appointed by Trump, it could be used to upend decades of increasingly extreme gun control, not just in California but across the country. This is why elections matter.

“IF THIS CASE DOES ADVANCE TO THE HIGH COURT, WHICH ALSO HAS THREE JUSTICES APPOINTED BY TRUMP, IT COULD BE USED TO UPEND DECADES OF INCREASINGLY EXTREME GUN CONTROL ...”

And this brings us around to November 2021 and the Commonwealth of Virginia. This fall, Virginia voters have an opportunity to take back their legislature in Richmond and the governor’s office. Two years ago, an abysmally poor voter turnout allowed anti-gun Democrats to take power and they used it.

Gun rights activists across the country can support efforts to restore a pro-Second Amendment state government in the Old Dominion. It may not be your state, but it is still part of the United States and the fight to restore the Second Amendment must begin somewhere — Virginia offers gun owners the opportunity.

STEP INTO THE WILD WEST!

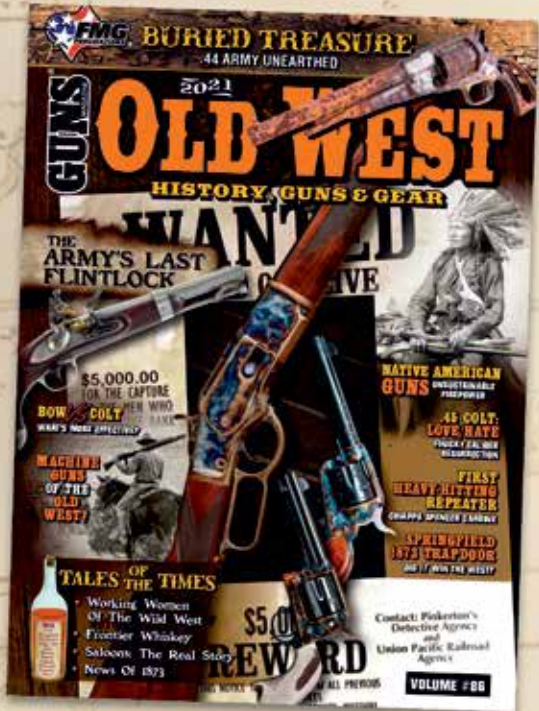
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So, get this edition, sit back, pour a whiskey (but not the frontier stuff — it was rotgut terrible), and enjoy a taste of the Old West.

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STREAMLIGHT WEDGE

It's just a little weird, it's wildly wonderful and wholly a new favorite: the Wedge light by Streamlight.

This is an Everyday Carry (EDC) LED light unlike any I'm familiar with. With the shape and heft of a folding knife, this slim 5.4" USB-rechargeable pocket rocket is easily carried in your pocket just like a favorite blade. Built from machined, anodized aircraft aluminum in coyote or black, the light would probably even serve well as a small impact weapon though you'll not see this usage mentioned anywhere among the Streamlight documentation.

What you will see is light — lots of it! The "normal" setting on the thumb-friendly rotary switch is an industry-typical 300 lumens, claimed to run for three hours on a lithium polymer

battery though I've not tested this particular aspect. The really shocking part is when you push the switch forward to what Streamlight calls THRO (Temporarily Heightened Regulated Output) — you get 1,000 lumens of light for up to 35 seconds. I defy anyone to not say "Whoaaa!" when hitting the switch for the first time.

In my abuse-and-neglect-riddled prior treatment of Streamlight USB-rechargeable lights, I've found they are nearly bulletproof and the Wedge looks like they've raised the bar even further with a new trendsetter.

MSRP: 149.95

Streamlight.com



FIX IT STICKS MINI ALL-IN-ONE TORQUE DRIVER

A torque wrench is one of those things we all "know" we need, yet secretly we believe our Mark I certified fingers can determine when a bolt is tightened adequately.

That's why the Fit It Sticks line of pocket torque wrenches are important and I keep a set in my shooting bag to make sure everything is snugged up "to spec" before shooting. The only issue — I hesitate to say "problem" — is keeping the various specific wrenches together and organized for use. Fortunately, the new Mini All-in-One-Torque driver solves the dilemma..

The Mini works unlike other Fix It Sticks torque wrenches in there are five markings at 5 ft.-lb. intervals ranging up to 25 ft.-lbs. It doesn't make a "click" when you reach a certain setting, instead an indicator lines up on the stationary half of the tool. Now, you just need a T-handle or other 1/4" driver, along with the appropriate bit for your screwhead, to verify screw tightness faster than you can talk about it.

MSRP: \$55

FixItSticks.com

PROLIX LUBRICANT

Okay, so it's another miracle cleaner-lube-protectant. I get bottles of this stuff crossing my desk all the time. The upside is all of them work to a decent degree. The downside, at least for a writer, is differentiating between the various products.

You won't have this problem with ProLix Lubricant. The second you spray it, the unique aroma immediately lets you know there is something different at work. There is certainly a bit of citrus somewhere in the bouquet, mixed with a not-unpleasant solvent smell.

Okay, it has a nice-ish smell — but does it work?

So far in my testing, it's been gangbusters. I keep a spray bottle in my armory and it works to clean powder residue and carbon like nobody's business, while also lubricating the various mechanical giz-zards of my shootin' irons. In three months of testing, so far there is no gummy buildup and things look great. Heck, it's even biodegradable!



ProLixLubricant.com

PROLIX XTRA-T DRY LUBE

Xtra-T Dry Lube is the companion piece to PrOlix Lubricant. I do have to point out to the PrOlix folks having a cleaner/lube and a dry lube — both of them liquid — is a bit confusing, but aside from the marketing issue, this secret sauce is my new fave.



Xtra-T is a thickish blue liquid you'd be tempted to call "gun oil." However, if you rub a couple of drops of the greasy kid stuff between your fingers, you'll see it's much more robust than typical gun oil. In fact, you'd imagine it would be too thick to allow decent cold-weather operation — but you'd be wrong. My Midwestern winter-time tests show no decrease in performance even in finicky .22 LR semi-auto pistols.

It's a weird amalgamation, bordering on voodoo — an oil that almost feels like a grease when you apply it to metal, yet doesn't slow things down or get sticky. It just sits there and lubricates/protects while clinging to metal like Nancy Pelosi does to hypocrisy. She may be bad, but this stuff is oh-so-good!

PrOlixLubricant.com

CROSSFIRE

continued from page 31

measure 0.35" and they drop right through my barrel. That's why we use packing around them. My .38 caliber bullets measure 0.359" at the base and fit snugly in the barrel. They don't drop through but I can blow one through like a blowgun.

Theoretically, the .38 Specials should be more accurate but I didn't save my targets or notes so will need to make another range trip to make some comparisons. Darn, I'll have to shoot the gun again!

—David Freeman

USE ENOUGH GUN

I enjoyed the article by Dave Anderson regarding killing a velociraptor. It is an interesting mental exercise. A few years ago, I bought a book, *rexGun* by Dr. Stephen W. Templar. It is a serious treatment of the usefulness of modern firearms for large extinct dinosaurs. Some of my hunting buddies thought I was a little weird for "wasting my money" on a book like this one. Thanks to Dave Anderson, I'm feeling vindicated.

Joe Cascarelli



USE ENOUGH GUN

SUBSTITUTE ARS PART DEUX

Brent, Tom and Roy discussed possible AR-15 ownership difficulties in the near future and what other types of guns could be used in place of them. They all

continued on page 70



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SLIDE SPIDER GRIP FOR SPRINGFIELD XD-S MOD.2 OSP

ARACHNIGRIP

ArachniGRIP is offering a *Slide Spider Grip for the Springfield XD-S Mod.2 OSP* (Optical Sight Pistol). Designed to make slide operation easier, the 3-piece slide grip is designed to work with or without the optional Crimson Trace micro

red dot sight. The additional gripping surfaces of the Slide Spider give the shooter added stability and control without risking damage to the optic. The Slide Spider grip is available for most semi-auto pistols. MSRP: \$19.95. For more info: (303) 506-7747, ArachniGRIP.com



SLX MD-20 MICRO-DOT PRIMARY ARMS OPTICS

Primary Arms Optics has just released the budget-friendly *SLx MD-20 Micro-dot*. It improves on previous micro dots with an enhanced emitter providing a very bright reticle with a 50,000-hour runtime on medium settings. Part of the SLx product line, the MD-20 integrates new technologies like AutoLive, Primary Arms' motion-controlled illumination system. The micro dot is housed in a durable aluminum body and features a zero-parallax lens. MSRP: \$149.99. For more info: (713) 344-9600, PrimaryArms.com

DR920 SHADOW SYSTEMS

The Duty-Role 9mm *DR920* from Shadow Systems is a working gun for law enforcement, military or anyone who prefers a larger frame and full-length top end. It has a match-grade barrel that's conventionally rifled, spiral-fluted and comes threaded or unthreaded. The DR920's slide is designed for



manipulation under stress, with directional serrations in front and rear, as well as topside serrations on Elite models. Shadow Systems' optic cut allows for most brands of red-dot optic to be mounted directly to the slide. MSRP: From \$799. For more info: (469) 458-6808, ShadowSystemsCorp.com

C908 HOLSTER FALCON HOLSTERS

The *C908 Holster* is the product of decades of experience in holster making, suggestions from field tests and feedback from customers. This compact Kydex and leather belt holster combines comfort and shape stability. Handmade from genuine Italian leather and genuine U.S. Kydex, the C908 will fit your handgun perfectly. It's easy to mount and stable on the belt because of durable belt loops. MSRP: \$74.95. For more info: FalconHolsters.com



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BOSS BUCK

Fatal Funnel and Final Destination are new premium food plot blends from Boss Buck. Fatal Funnel is a high-yield and diverse seed mix for DIY whitetail plots made with a hand-selected blend of clover and chicory. Final Destination keeps bucks browsing all winter with Boss Buck's sugar beet and turnip seed blend. The company also introduced the Cottonseed Deer Attractant. It creates a long-lasting mineral site so a deer herd will be visiting all season! MSRP: \$29.95, \$34.95 and \$12.99. For more info: (877) 269-8490, BossBuck.com



HD 360IR GUNEYE

GunEye's *HD 360IR* is a remote targeting gun camera with S3 technology. It attaches to the rail of a gun or rifle to capture videos and connect to a user's smartphone to display real-time imagery. The HD Model 360IR allows you to acquire the target via a phone app while keeping you out of harm's way. The system combines a camera, night vision, video/audio recording with GunEye's Secondary Sighting System S3 Technology. MSRP: \$389.99. For more info: (321) 626-1184, GunEye.com

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Hogue added the *Heavy Grit* option to their Wrapper Adhesive Firearm Grip line. Heavy Grit is for those seeking a more aggressive grip texture on their polymer frame pistols. Shooters previously resorted to custom stippling to increase grip and performance but this compromised their firearm's factory frame. The Wrapper adhesive system is an alternative that will provide superior grip and hold while preserving the original condition of the firearm. MSRP: \$14.95 and \$9.95 for the DIY. For more info: (800) 438-4747, HogueInc.com



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Stealth Cam's *Reactor Wireless Trail Camera* captures quality images and videos and features the latest in wireless data transmission technology. Easy to set up, it provides fast image and video transfer from remote camera locations to anywhere with a network connection. With the Stealth Cam App, users can download photos and videos and more without being on-site. MSRP: \$199.99. For more info: (877) 269-8490, StealthCam.com



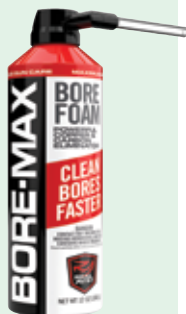
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PR2-MIL AND PR2-MOA LEUPOLD & STEVENS, INC.

Leupold & Stevens, Inc. announced the launch of its new PR2 reticle for their Mark 5HD Rifle Scope Line. Two styles are available: the *PR2-MIL* and *PR2-MOA*. Developed with input from top U.S. competitors and professional shooters, the PR2 reticles are designed for long-range speed and precision. The reticles will reduce reticle clutter and speed up performance when shooting long-range precision rifles. MSRP: \$1,999.99 for the Mark 5HD PR2-MIL. For more info: (503) 526-1400, Leupold.com



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The *Renegade X* provides water protection and content compression for backcountry adventurers to keep gear dry and secure in any environment. It's constructed of 70D nylon ripstop with waterproof coating and taped seams. Features include an air-control bottom fabric, strong nylon webbing cinch straps and a roll-top closure with quick-release buckles. The *Renegade X* is available in Coyote Brown in four sizes. MSRP: \$29.99 to \$49.99. For more info: (800) 344-2577, AlpsOutdoorZ.com



UXTM UMAREX[®] **ORIGIN .22** *Giveaway*

The Umarex Origin .22 is your first step into the world of pre-charged pneumatic shooting. It's one of the many tools you'll be glad to have in your survival gear. With the Origin, you can spend less, pump less and shoot more. Its pre-pressurized tank requires just 13 pumps of the included 4,500-PSI hand pump to send a round at full power. It cuts pumping down by half so you can shoot more. Among the Origin's features are

a compact side-mounted cocking lever, a combination Picatinny and Dovetail optics mounting rail and a two-stage adjustable trigger. The Origin comes with two 10-shot auto-indexing rotary magazines. It's ideal for hunting small game and varmints!

The *Axeon 4-16X44 EDR Scope* is lightweight yet loaded with features. This high-power riflescope satisfies target shooters and small game hunters with its Etched Dot Reticle. The EDR is precise, set to 2 MOA between dots with a side-adjust parallax. Axeon riflescopes come with flip-up lens caps to keep the dust off lenses. Rimfire and airgun shooters will appreciate the set of 11mm dovetail rings included with the scope.

Another prize in this package is the *Razel GT* from CRKT. With an OAL of 7.56", it's an everyday carry folder with a stubby profile but with a blade that deploys at incredible speed. The Razel GT's 3.02" blade is made of 8Cr13MoV steel with a satin finish.

The Umarex Origin with the Axeon scope and the Razel GT knife are great prizes all! Join for a chance to win! Go to GUNSMagazine.com/giveaways or mail a post card. —Jazz Jimenez



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UmarexUSA.com
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VALUE: \$369.99



Tank's Lever-Scout, built on the Rossi Model 92 in .454 Casull — practical, versatile and ultra-reliable when facing any North American game.

ROSSI R92 RE-DO TANK'S LEVER SAGA CONTINUES

A while back I wrote up the stainless-steel Rossi R92 lever gun, chambered in .454 Casull. Being so impressed with its good manners, it was purchased. There's no higher accolade for a gun writer. However, as good as the rifle is, I wanted to customize it, building it to my specifications in a Lever-Scout sort of way, sort of.

Traits I wanted were a dual sighting system that could easily be changed in the field, preferably without tools, while being ultra-reliable. Also, a simple rifle sling would be necessary when both hands were needed for other chores/tasks in the field, but keeping the rifle readily accessible.

The first thing I did was to remove the buckhorn rear sight. As much as I loved the sleek and traditional sight, my eyes have trouble using such sights now. I'm much more comfortable and I shoot better with a good peep sight for a back-up sighting system. I wanted a red dot sight as my primary sight system.

SKINNER SIGHTS RAIL (SSR)

After removing the factory rear sight, four drilled and tapped holes are exposed for installing the SSR. The SSR is tapered, following the barrel contour. Make sure the thinner end is facing toward you when screwing it on your barrel. This provides a flat surface for mounting either an intermediate-eye-relief (IER) scope, or red dot sight of your choice.

I went with a Trijicon RM06 red dot sight with finger knob base, for easy on/off mounting in the field. Should I choose to use the R92 for longer range shooting, I have the option of mounting an IER scope. It's all about versatility.

STEVE'S GUNZ

Enter Steve's Gunz, a small one-man shop specializing in Rossi lever gun accessories, sights and any other custom improvements you could want for Rossi (and other) lever guns. The coolest thing I got from Steve killed two birds with one stone — their bolt-mounted peep sight that removes the unsightly, unnecessary safety Rossi lever guns now come with.

Removal of the safety was simple and quick, entailing drifting out a pin from the bolt. If you can whack a punch with a hammer without hitting your thumb,

you're qualified to do this. Once the pin is removed, the safety unit pulls out.

Simply plop the Steve's Gunz Peep Sight into the vacant hole, making sure retaining pin holes align, and drift the pin back into the bolt. Elevation is adjusted by screwing the peep sight in or out to raise/lower your point of impact (POI). Final setting is locked-in with a large nut.

You'll gain approximately 6" of sight radius when adding this peep sight, translating into better accuracy while getting rid of the unsightly and unnecessary factory safety. Windage adjustments, if needed, are done by drifting the front sight. My groups were cut in half using the peep sight, compared to the buckhorn sight, with 3-shot groups at 50 yards running 1/2" to 3/4".



Tank removes the factory buckhorn rear sight for the Skinner Sights rail, giving him more options.

STEEL PLUG SATISFACTION

Steve's Gunz also provides a stainless-steel magazine follower to replace the plastic follower Rossi uses. The stainless-steel follower enhances movement inside the cartridge tube as cartridges feed through it. The last thing you want is for the plastic follower to swell, crack or hang-up while hunting in the cold weather.

SPARE AMMO?

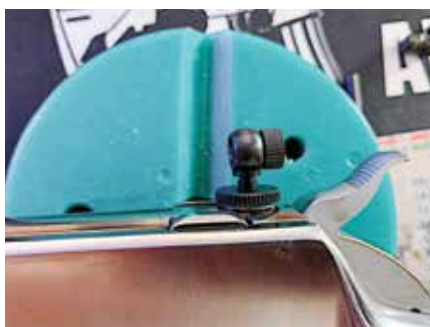
I want my "do everything" gun ready to go at a moment's notice. This includes having a source of spare ammo at the ready for those "grab and go" moments. I went with function, style and reliability with a Barranti Leather buttstock cuff holding 10 extra cartridges in beautifully worked leather. It definitely added to the rifle's good looks.

NO HANG-UP SLING

For carrying my Lever Scout, I wanted a simple, lightweight sling and Simply Rugged's Alaskan sling is about as simple and rugged as they come. With quick release



Removing the factory safety for a Steve's Gunz Peep Sight (above) is easy and improves the sight system. Installed, the Steve's Gunz Peep is a neat and clean addition (below).



mounts, the sling is quickly removed/attached in seconds while providing ease of carry and stability while shooting.

LEVER SCOUT STRATEGY

The Trijicon Red Dot will be my primary sight and the Steve's Gunz Peep will make a dandy back-up sight. The peep sight is a marked improvement from the factory buckhorn rear sight. It's just friendlier to older eyes.

Being chambered in .454 Casull, I have a wide range of power levels exceeding 2,000 fps loads with 300+ grain bullets, to lighter "standard" (cheaper) .45 Colt loads, in either factory or handloaded ammunition.

Either way, there's no denying the versatility of the rifle and loads, always a good thing when you're miles from the nearest store. These alterations are easy, giving your lever gun a personal touch while adding versatility and improved performance — and making the gun "more yours." 

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sounded like good ideas, but I was surprised they didn't mention the SKS or AK as a replacement. Or do you think these types of guns would be included in a so-called "buy-back"?

I think they'll try to stop any kind of "scary-looking" gun, so the SKS/AK would definitely be in that category ... not that any of them could even fire the darn things! —BW

SUBSTITUTE ARS

I just had to write that Guns Podcast #69 hit it out of the park! Being a seasoned citizen, I totally relate to the .30-30 as a go-to rifle for when things go south. Back in the day we always carried a Winchester Model 94 in a hard case in the trunk of the squad car. We had Garands in the LEC (law enforcement center) but I never recall them being shot except on qualification days. Being a rural force, the M94 was called on for dispensing deer, cattle or horses hit by autos if they were in a spot hard to get close enough for a revolver round.

As I write this I have two go-to levers in the safe. A Marlin 336 in .30-30 and a limited run Marlin 94 in .44 Mag with a 16 1/4" barrel. Both have sling swivels and rear aperture sights. The .30-30 is better ballistically than the 7.62x39 that everyone raves about and if the .44 Mag is impressive in a handgun, it flat out blows the doors off in a carbine!

Buck

SHORTY SHOOTER

I served in the Air Force in Vietnam from '66-'67 and '68-'69 and since I was an overage in my aircraft shop, I was loaned out to the Air Police and pulled guard duty many times. I associated with many Air Police personnel and some K-9 guards. I carried an M16 and was allowed to keep my ammunition at work as well as my Quarters.

Here is my question. I am wondering if you know what the K-9 handlers were issued for their weapons? Their M-16s were shorter since they had to control the K9 with one hand and fire one-handed. We called them AR-14s but I am sure this was not the military

name for them. I was reading your article about the IDF Mekut'zar carbine and it brought back those memories since their rifles are shorter. Do you know what the military term for those shorter M16s were?

Bob

The carbines were almost assuredly XM177s. If I recall correctly the XM177E1 had a 10" barrel while the XM177E2's was 11.5".



Most Army pukes called them CAR15s. I think the USAF designated the guns the GAU-5A or GAU-5A/A. These carbines sported sliding stocks and a stubby sound moderator/flash suppressor. They served as the evolutionary basis for today's M4 Carbines.

As you likely know, the USAF was the original proponent of the AR15/M16.

Early USAF M16 rifles lacked a forward assist and had an open 3-prong flash suppressor. The wing nuts used these slick-sided M16 rifles until about 2001. The subsequent Army-issue XM16E1 had the forward assist but retained the 3-prong flash suppressor. The later M16A1 had the closed birdcage flash suppressor.

I recall working with an Air Force combat controller in the desert someplace back in the 1990s who had a cool M4-style weapon. His rifle had round plastic bandguards and a stepped 14.5" barrel but a slick-sided upper without a forward assist. In all my travels I never saw a GI-issue weapon like that anyplace else!

—Will Dabbs

VELOCIRAPTOR PART TWO

I loved the article by Dave Anderson. I cannot fault his logic for "hunting" dinosaurs or his choice.

I have to agree with the movie. A jungle gun needs to be short. Short means fast on target. Short is a get-off-me gun. Why do you think early British tiger hunters in India used mobile tree stands (elephants) to hunt from? They had bolt action rifles with limited rounds, like the Ruger guide gun, though longer. Besides better visibility (less limbs in the way), it was so a wounded tiger couldn't get to them.

A trained soldier with a bolt action rifle can lay down a respectable, keep-down rate of fire. If I remember right, the top British mad-minute competitors circa WWI could achieve a rate around 13 rpm with their rifles topped off and stripper clips ready. A pump-action shotgun could come close to double that with a detachable box magazine, but an extended tube would limit the 60-second actual rate of fire.

Back to the movie. I would take the head shot. Pump. Assess. Decide. Five rounds left. How many raptors in the enclosure? He mentioned it, but I haven't watched it in a year or two. Four or five?

Kevin Steffen

ROLL ON ROLLING BLOCK

I am looking for someone who builds repro #1 (not Hepburn) Rolling Blocks, but have had no success. Mike Venturino advised me several years ago to get a SAA from U.S. Firearms — I did by way of Doug Turnbull — best advice on a firearms purchase I ever received. I'm wondering if Mr.

SHORTY SHOOTER



Venturino could help me out once again? I think I want one in .44/77.

Rick Bell

This one is tough. Used to be Lone Star was there, but the fellow accidentally shot himself. Then there was John King in Kalispell, MT but he retired. There's a fellow in Silver City, NM. I can't remember his name right off but I'll try to drag it up and send it along. —Duke

MARK I THINGY

Dr. Dabbs' story about the US M16 reconditioned IDF Mekut'zar Carbine (April 2021) explained away the wrappings in the photos shown on the firearm(s) as an "elastic band thingy."

Can you guys pin the description of nomenclature down a bit more definitively for me and offer possible suggestions on where to purchase them please? I've checked with IDF surplus stores and the like but am so far coming up shorthanded. Those "thingy" things would solve a multitude of "thingies" for me on several of my builds.

Peter J. Bertini

Zabal.org is one-stop shopping for the "Thingy, Elastic Band, Mark I, OD" as well as most any other cool-guy IDF kit. That's where I landed my stuff.

—Will Dabbs

MISTAKEN IDENTITY?

I don't know when it started, or why someone thought it a good idea, but I would love to see it ended in my immediate future. "What?" you might ask: splitting stories and even (what the heck!) letters to the editor, into greatly separated parts of your publication. Why can't I simply read an article from start to finish without having to skip through the magazine to try to find it? This has annoyed me for all of the five decades I have been reading magazines, and it will continue to until such time as I either no longer read those publications, or die. Come on guys!

Tim Knipp

I'm not clear what you're referring to — GUNS stories almost never have a "jump" (journalism jargon for moving the



A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

remainder of the story to another non-sequential page) aside from letters. We are one of the few magazines in the world that doesn't use jumps. Unfortunately, we must do it with letters since they are one of the last pieces to be laid out due to timing.

—BW

A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

In the April mag I really enjoyed the Dave Workman article as to the changing use of certain phrases and catch words in the anti-gun movement. He is quite right in the way the anti-gunners change words and phases to suit the changing climate of gun banning. They do

use what is more palatable to the general public.

I am asking we gun owners and gun writers to not use similar terminology when we converse or even publish articles in magazines. I am aware this will be a daunting task but I think we can change the narrative if we try. A great example is when

hunters say they "harvested" some game animal instead of "I killed a 10-point this morning." "Harvested" denotes a crop that was planted and reaped! Let's call killing what it is and not play the game of changing the words and how they are used in order to placate the anti-gunners.

Harry Kinsley

I've actually written the same essential thought in the past because I've concluded it is a wrong idea to try sanitizing hunting in an effort to make it more socially acceptable to people who dislike hunting, hunters and guns. When we're encouraged by wildlife agencies to cover our game during transport, or hide it in the enclosed bed of a pickup with the canopy lid closed, we're sending a message we know what we do is wrong so we need to conceal it.

I grew up in an era when we had "big buck" contests at sporting goods stores, and we ran photos of successful deer and elk hunters on the front page or in the sports page of our local weekly newspapers. Nowadays, we'd be burned in effigy.

—Dave Workman

MARK I THINGY



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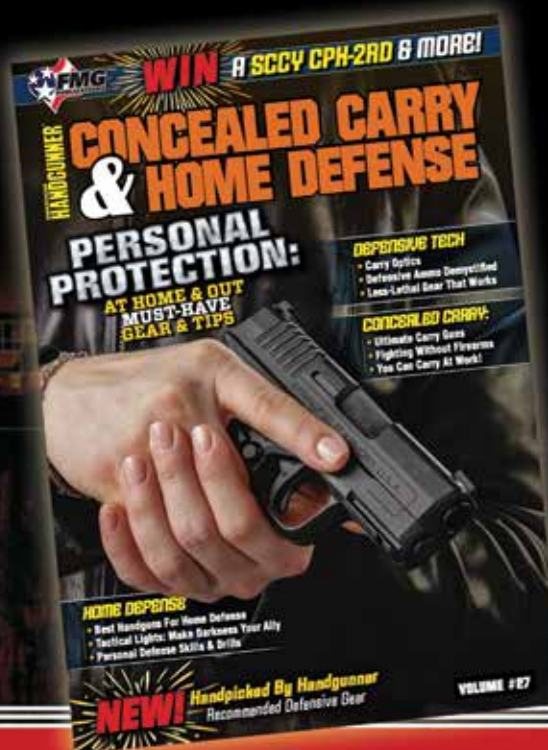
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2021

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Thus, here we are — I had no real practical need to learn reloading. And, frankly, as a young cop full of the aforementioned enthusiasms, I also had a family, mortgage, multiple hunting dogs, a couple of boats and a trailer camper so I also couldn't really afford another addiction.

On the hunting side, up until the last decade, our state only allowed shotguns for deer hunting so everything from birds to big-game was done with a scattergun. As rifled-slug loading is one of the more arcane of the reloading arts, there were few practicing it and I didn't happen to know any of them. Coupled with the fact most shots at any game in my area are likely to be under 100 yards *in extremis*, there really wasn't any major reason to launch into such an all-consuming hobby as reloading.

So there, I've admitted it. I feel horribly ashamed and even tore off a corner of my Man Card as penance for this major shortcoming of my shooting character. However, I am trying to make amends.

IT'S TIME

After sidestepping scores of reader questions about reloading, I finally decided it was time to jump into the deep end of handloading with both feet. So far I've been in contact with all of our *real* resident experts, picking their brains bare and working with our industry partners to obtain the necessary supplies and equipment.

Having started down this long and ultimately rewarding road, I suddenly realized — as always — my timing couldn't have been worse. We're in the middle of the most explosive growth of the reloading hobby ever experienced and while ammunition is scarce, handloading supplies are 10 times so. I even had to resort to a time-worn tradition — shameless begging — to score a pound of powder.

Our corporate friends eventually took pity on the wretched editor and came through with a few things to get me started, thus my first working set-up was a Lee Loader. For the unaware, this is a nifty little self-contained kit to reload one specific cartridge without using a press and offers a great way to get started in the hobby. I've immensely enjoyed building .270 ammo with the kit, though I'm still a little leery of pounding home — gently — the primers with a mallet. Fortunately, the

kit is time-tested, safe and I'm a fast healer.

As with any hobby I attempt, I quickly went from "rank amateur" to "rank amateur with credit card burning a hole in his pocket." Within hours of building my first cartridges, I made plans to own a dozen motorized progressive presses, cast my own bullets and build a world-class library of literature augmented by the latest computer programs to keep it all organized. I planned to check all my cartridges for concentricity and, if necessary, shave the bullet one-thousandth of an inch at a time on a CNC machine for utmost, pinpoint accuracy. In no time at all, I would be an expert and part of this great fraternity.

**"IT MUST BE TRUE
GOD LOOKS OUT FOR
CHILDREN, FOOLS
AND DRUNKS —
AND EDITORS."**

BUT WAIT ...

It must be true God looks out for children, fools and drunks — and editors. Of course, editors tend to encompass all these categories, but regardless, a higher power was looking out for me and my credit rating because none of the equipment or supplies I desired, nay *coveted*, were available. I feverishly scanned catalogs and websites, constantly dismayed at the "Backordered — unavailable" flashing whenever I tried to purchase some gim-crack or doo-dad I didn't really need and had no idea how to use.

Meanwhile, today, I continue pounding away — and wincing periodically as a primer is seated — with my faithful Lee Loader.

So, there you have it. I'm not the man some might have thought, but I believe it will turn out okay. Eventually I'll be like the rest of you, hip-deep in melting wheel weights and occasionally finding errant grains of H4831 floating in my morning oatmeal. The oatmeal might prove a little bitter and crunchy, but on that day, I'll finally be a "real" shooter!



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FALSE PRETENSES HE'S NOT WHAT HE SEEMS

I've been the Lord High Protector of the *GUNS* realm for a couple of years now and it's finally time to fess up to both regular readers of this corner — I'm a fraud. Let me explain.

First off, I'm not talking about my writing credentials, though some might argue the point.

In specialized "affinity" media such as gun magazines there are generally two types of writers. The first are those who are literal subject-matter experts with deep, deep expertise who can also string words together in a mostly coherent fashion. The second type are those who might be a little more proficient with the written word but perhaps don't have the depth of experience as an "expert." I definitely consider myself more of the second ilk, though our magazine is certainly blessed with an abundance of writers who are world-class both on the firing line and at the keyboard.

RESUMÉ

In my case, I consider myself a generalist. I've shot just about every kind of gun in a variety of situations, had a wide array of both training and real-world experiences but in most shooting-related things, I would only consider myself fair-to-middlin' in terms of knowledge. Fortunately, what I lack in court-rec-

ognized shooting expertise is made up with a bit of literary skill, coupled with an active imagination and a complete, world-class gift of what is nicely referred to as "bovine excrement."

I've made no secret about the fact on the outside I'm a late 50s male but the inside controls are actually being operated by an eight-year-old child. I'm full of what favorite writer Patrick F. McManus called "wild and terrible enthusiasms" and as such, I have tried perhaps every shooting endeavor known to man and even a few I might have invented, such as the ill-advised attempt to reload your own CO₂ cartridges.

Fortunately, I'm a quick healer.

Part of the problem is the fact I'm never happy with the toys and tasks at hand. When I'm tinkering with the innards of a gun, my inner child — I call him "Skippy" — wants to be doing something else like bug collecting or fishing. Not just fishing, but trotline fishing using bar soap as bait, at least since I read this little nugget of information 40 years ago in some forgotten outdoor magazine. Then, Skippy wants to go camping, and sign up for a BPRC competition then whittle something using my new knife, then rebuild the Coleman lantern and on and on and on, until he finally wants to get back to tampering with the original gun. In this way, I have lots of fun but it's not really conducive

to gaining years of experience in one or two particular subjects.

I might be the epitome of the proverbial "Jack-of-all-trades but master of none."

So, I've got a pretty wide though not necessarily deep background with guns. I've blown stuff up with the Navy SEALs, pointed guns at a number of people during my cop shop career — mostly intentionally — and spent lots of time in gun stores, deer stands and duck blinds during a lifetime quest to generally try everything at least once, including some basic gunsmithing. Fortunately, I'm a quick healer.

MEA CULPA

All of the previous information was not a backhanded attempt at proving spurious machismo but simply to set the stage as I lay my soul bare before the shooting world and admit my major shortcoming, one that has caused me no end of personal shame. I've hidden this for years and now, in the late-summer of my journalism career, I must stand figuratively naked and quivering on the stage of public opinion to finally come clean. Here goes — I don't reload.

There, I've said it. I know several readers just crumpled the magazine, thrown it aside in disgust and probably even a few have actually spat upon the page. I'd guess several people are also saving this column for use in the outhouse in case they run out of toilet paper, but judging by several hunting camps

I've visited in the last two years, this is already common practice.

Before you start writing nasty emails claiming I love Avocado Toast, Progressive Feminist causes and man-buns, let me explain (though I will admit to somewhat liking avocado toast if the mood strikes me).

WHY

Until the last 10 or 15 years, most of my shooting experience was either career-related as a cop or in the hunting field.

As anyone with law enforcement experience knows, hand-loading is strongly frowned upon for duty ammunition. If you happen to shoot someone with ammunition you or a friend loaded, you're in for a world of trouble starting with departmental rule violations, moving onto state and federal lawsuits and then maybe even a quick trip to criminal prosecution. As a cop, factory ammo is the only allowable game in town for professional use so we confined ourselves to using the shiny stuff from Anoka and East Alton.

Likewise, our practice budget wasn't unlimited but I was blessed to have all the ammo we reasonably wanted to shoot.

continued on page 73



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