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Roy Huntington



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THE ROCK ISLAND STK100 — HEAVY METAL CHANNELING POLYMER

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THROWING DOWN

I just read Alan Garbers' "Eating Crow but Relishing the Taste" in your September issue. I, like Alan, would laugh at those old westerns where it looked like the cowboy was throwing the bullet out of the gun rather than shooting it. Guess I'll join him at the campfire with my plate of crow. However, no mention was made of how accurate shooting like this is. My guess is the pesky Apache on his painted pony was quite safe.

Patrick Carlson

The silhouette is an example of what can be done as fast as I can and still be consistent. I never practice slow just so I can shoot a better group. Written on the paper target it says shot from 21 feet, that's not accurate, the target was 21 feet from the shooting line but I had to move back farther under the shade to get the sun out of my eyes so it was more like 25 feet or maybe a little more. All the shots were from about chest level and at no time on

any of the targets were any sights used, just instinct or point shooting whichever you care to call it. —Jim Martin

DOUBLE RIFLE LOVE

Jeremy included some great one-liners in his writing ("Double Rifles — A Tribute," September issue). Forty years ago I read an excerpt from Peter Capstick. I'll recall a bit as best possible: "There are those who don't think highly of the 12-gauge shotgun in Africa. My experience, though, has been it has about the same effect as brushing ones' teeth with a chain saw." I appreciate the diverse and interesting subjects in this publication. Great work.

Craig Hines



I also thoroughly enjoyed reading this article as his style reminds me of my favorite author, who has been gone for years. His name was mentioned in the article, Mr. P.H. Capstick. I read his articles and still read

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GUNS

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THE FINEST IN THE FIREARMS FIELD SINCE 1955

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PERFECT PACKIN' PISTOL PART 8

RUGER: A HORSE OF A DIFFERENT COLOR

We have looked at 4" Smith & Wesson double-action sixguns and now we finish up with a look at some other revolvers worthy of the title of Perfect Packin' Pistol. Smith & Wesson has long been the King of Double-action Sixguns and always will be, at least in my six-gunnin' heart. Elmer Keith, Skeeter Skelton and Bill Jordan all packed 4" double-action Smith & Wesson sixguns. However, there are definitely some others to be considered.

Smith & Wesson sixguns have always been thoroughbreds, but there are other horses in the stable. One different type is the draft horse, and in the world of sixguns, this title goes to Ruger. Just as when we select a horse, the choice depends on what we expect from the horse. The thoroughbred is not better than the draft horse or vice versa, depending on what its job will be. When it comes to Ruger double-action sixguns, they are the exceptionally strong workhorses. If I was going to carry a double-action sixgun every day in any kind of weather where rough duty would be expected, I would choose a Ruger first.

FOR STARTERS

Ruger's first entry into the double-action sixgun market came in 1971 with the Security-Six, which was soon followed by the Speed-Six and Service-Six. Suddenly Colt and Smith & Wesson faced real competition in the double-action market. By 1985 the Security-Six in all its variations — stainless steel and blued, chambered in .357 Magnum, .38 Special and 9 mm — had sold well over one million units.

Ruger literature for the Security-Six at the time proclaimed: "The first fundamental improvement in double-action revolver design in more than a half-century ... Both reliable and durable, correctly designed and perfectly mated to the .357 Magnum cartridge, with the structural strength to withstand the firing of many thousands of rounds under the most rugged conditions."

The Security-Six was popular with the public, however after more than one million units it was replaced by something even better — the GP100. The GP100 combined the locking system of the Redhawk with the no-tool takedown modular design



Ruger's latest 4" Redhawk handles both .45 Colt and .45 ACP loads (above). It would be difficult to come up with a more rugged everyday packin' 4" .357 Magnum (below) than the stainless steel Ruger GP 100.



of the Security-Six. When the Ruger engineers approached the new GP100, the grip frame was changed dramatically; it no longer existed. Instead Ruger incorporated what they called a "peg system" consisting of a steel stud that allowed the use of recoil-reducing soft rubber grips. These grips also have a built-in hump at the top of the back-strap to aid in controlling recoil especially in rapid-fire situations. Realizing grip feel is highly subjective I can say these grips, with a built-in thumb rest indentation on the top of the left panel, fit my hand very well and definitely reduce felt recoil.

The GP 100 also had a new trigger system which allowed a lighter pull than the Redhawk. The barrel was of the heavy-underlugged style on the 4" version. A look at the GP100 from the top gives the impression of strength. The top strap is thick, heavy and flat while the barrel is not only underlugged, it's also fitted with a heavy rib that is striated from the front of the frame to the back of the front sight. The front sight fits in a dovetail and is held in place by a spring plunger which enters from the front. This changeable front sight is mated with a Ruger square notch



Before Ruger came out with a 4" .44 Magnum Redhawk (bottom), John had his own made.

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rear sight with a white outline which is click adjustable for both windage and elevation. The rear sight is protected by the frame "ears" on both sides, a feature first appearing on the Ruger Blackhawk in 1962.

Ruger also changed the cylinder lockup on their double-action sixguns as compared to the old line Colt and Smith & Wesson revolvers. Lockup is at the rear of the cylinder and with a latch at the front of the frame. The extractor rod is enclosed and protected by the heavy underlug. Colt and Smith & Wesson revolvers released their cylinder by pushing backward or forward respectively on the cylinder release on the left side of the frame while Ruger changed this to a button that is pushed in to release the cylinder. It works much easier for my thumb.

My nearly 40-year-old 4" Ruger GP100 4" Stainless Steel shoots exceptionally well with the Black Hills' 158 JHP clocking out at 1,269 fps and the Speer 125 GDHP at 1,450 fps with both grouping five shots in 3/4" at 20 yards. My favorite cast bullet load for standard weight bullets in the .357 Magnum, the Lyman/Thompson #358156GC over 14.0 grains of #2400 does 1,286 fps in the short-barreled GP grouping in 1-1/4" while my gentle loading of Lyman's #358477 over 7.0 grains of Universal groups in 1" at just under 1,200 fps.

THE REDHAWK

Ruger's first big-bore double-action sixgun — the Redhawk — debuted in 1979/1980 offered in .44 Magnum. Ruger had two great advantages over earlier double-action .44 Magnums, namely, introducing it

at the time of greatest demand and building it around the cartridge rather than chambering some existing model for the .44 Magnum. The result was an exceptionally strong sixgun and this was accomplished without being overly heavy or clumsy. The strength of the Redhawk comes with the threaded area of the frame where it accepts the barrel being very thick, double what one finds in many other sixguns and also having the massive cylinder locked at the rear and front of the cylinder itself rather than at the end of the ejector rod. The heavy-ribbed barrel and equally heavy top strap both give a feeling of exceptional brute strength.

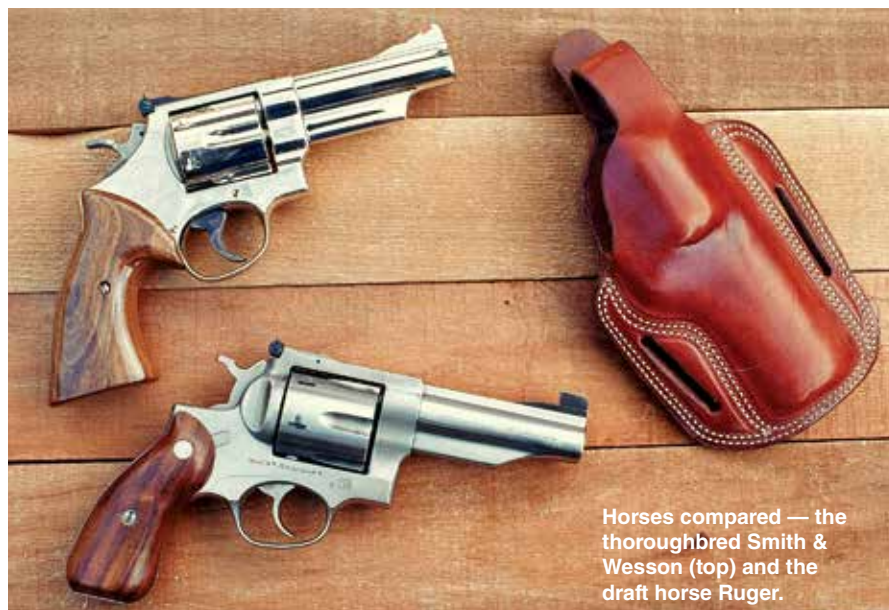
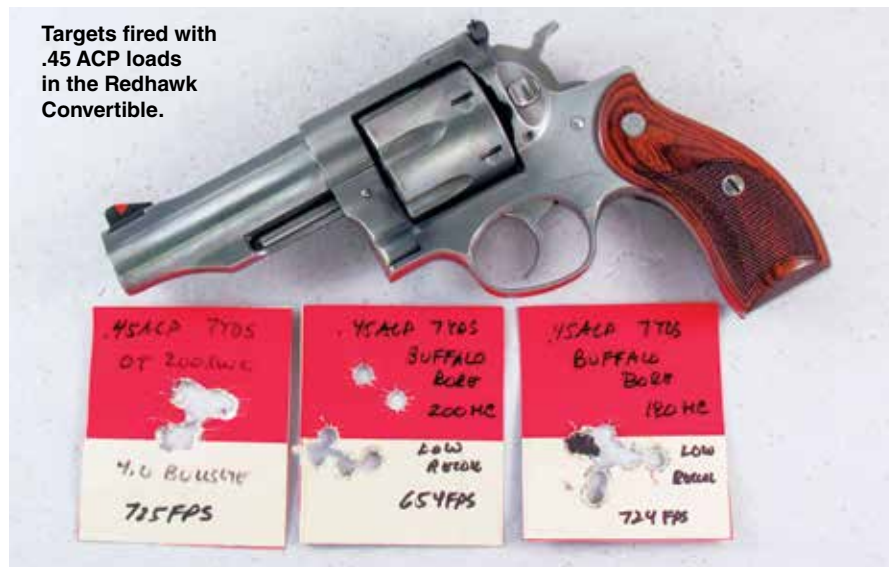
For some reason Ruger did not offer a 4" .44 Magnum Redhawk so I made my own. Starting with a 5-1/2" Redhawk, I had my local gunsmith cut the barrel to 4", recrown it, mount a black post front sight and

slightly alter the grip frame, all resulting in a superb candidate easy to carry, powerful sixgun. This very simple customizing performed on the Redhawk included rounding the front and back corners of the bottom of the grip frame as well as the factory grips. With these custom touches, the Redhawk becomes a candidate for a Perfect Packin' Pistol and will handle the heaviest .44 Magnum loads available, including those with heavy hard-cast bullets offered by Buffalo Bore, Cor-Bon and Garrett Cartridges. With its stainless steel construction and the fact it is built for strength and endurance, the Redhawk is an awfully good choice for the outdoorsman.

In 2007 Ruger saw the error of their ways and began offering a 4" Redhawk in .44 Magnum, then followed up the next year with the same sixgun chambered in .45 Colt. Both of these feature finger-groove rubber grips are a great improvement over the original factory stocks and do much to minimize felt recoil of heavy loads. Then a few years ago, Ruger brought out a 4" Convertible Redhawk. Ruger has a long history of convertible single-action sixguns with two cylinders. However, they took a different path with the Redhawk and came up with a way to fire both .45 Colt and .45 ACP rounds from the same cylinder. The latter requires moon clips and the system works quite well and certainly adds to the versatility of the Redhawk.

For someone who spends a lot of time outdoors in all kinds of weather and has a need for an easy packing, heavy-duty big bore sixgun, it would be hard to come up with one more rugged, ready and reliable than the 4" Redhawk.

Targets fired with .45 ACP loads in the Redhawk Convertible.



Horses compared — the thoroughbred Smith & Wesson (top) and the draft horse Ruger.

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Flying brass, muzzle orientation allow Mas to demonstrate the "shootability" of GLOCK 19.

FINDING THE SWEET SPOT FOR CCW THE "JUST RIGHT" BALANCE AIN'T THE SAME FOR EVERYONE ...

We all remember when Goldilocks entered the three bears' home, Papa Bear and Mama Bear's beds and food didn't suit her but Baby Bear's stuff was "just right." Since this is the handgun column instead of a criminal justice column, we'll disregard the fact Ms. Goldilocks is a juvenile offender *prima facie* guilty of burglary and look instead at the middle ground her needs and choices symbolized.

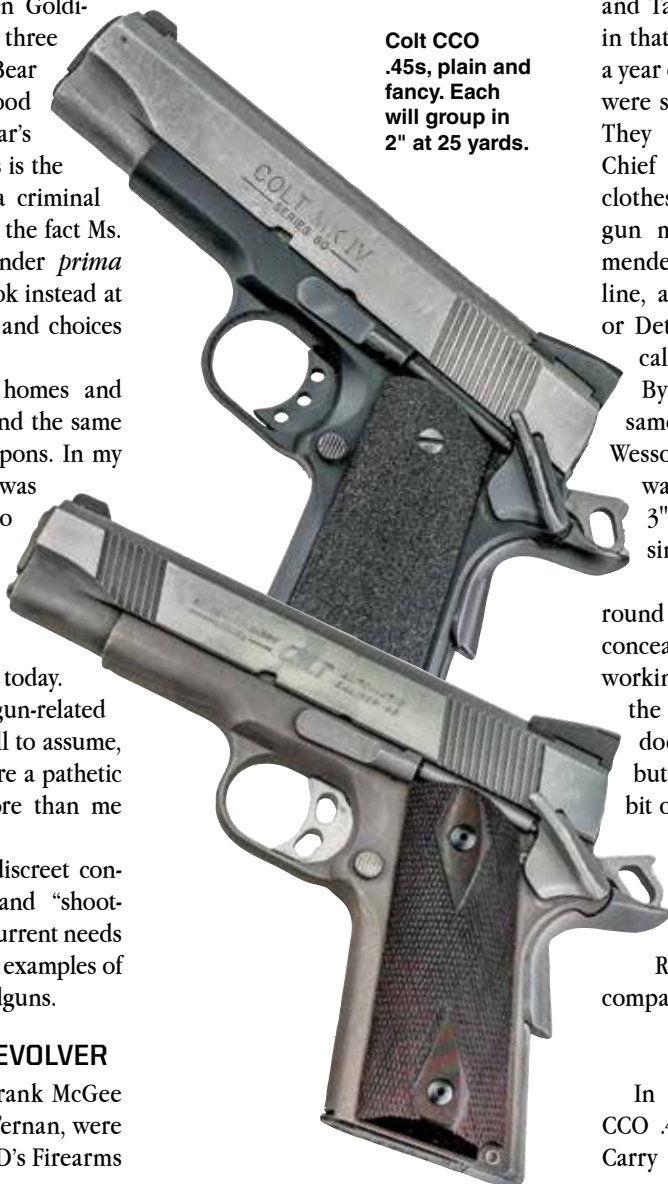
For all of us, there are homes and vehicles too big or too small and the same is true of concealed carry weapons. In my younger days the guy who was satisfied with a .25 pocket auto thought the guy with the snub-nose .38 was paranoid, and the guy who packed a .45 auto thought they were both wimps. We still see something similar today. It's as if there was a rule of the gun-related Internet forums requiring us all to assume, "If you carry less than me you're a pathetic sheeple, and if you carry more than me you're an insecure mall ninja."

It's a balance of comfort, discreet concealability, adequate power and "shootability" at speed. A balance of current needs and abilities. Let's look at some examples of proven "sweet spot CCW" handguns.

THE 3" ROUND BUTT REVOLVER

In the '70s and '80s, Lt. Frank McGee and his successor, Lt. Tom McTernan, were the role model leaders of NYPD's Firearms

Colt CCO .45s, plain and fancy. Each will group in 2" at 25 yards.



and Tactics Unit during times when cops in that city were firing a thousand rounds a year on the streets in the line of duty and were still limited to .38 Special revolvers. They popularized the 3" barrel S&W Chief Special as an off-duty and plain-clothes gun. Before them, another NYC gun maven, Chic Gaylord, had recommended something similar from the Colt line, a round-butt Police Positive Special or Detective Special with a 3" barrel he called "The Metropolitan Special." By the 1980s, the FBI had taken the same approach to the K-Frame Smith & Wesson: Their last issue service revolver was the Model 13 .357 Magnum with a 3" tube and round butt. Great minds, similar directions ...

They were on to something. A round butt grip still fills your hand and conceals pretty well, and if you're not working from an ankle holster or pocket, the extra inch over a true snubby doesn't hurt concealment appreciably but definitely aids in "shootability." A bit of extra velocity from an inch-longer tube helps the .38 be a little more "Special" and a .357 be a little more "Magnum," too. Also very worthy: current Colt King Cobra, Ruger SP101 and Kimber K6 all in the compact 3" .357 format.

THE MAMA BEAR 1911

In the latter 1990s Colt debuted the CCO .45. The letters stand for Concealed Carry Officers, which always struck me

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as strange since it's bigger than the Colt Officers, that were intended for ... wait for it ... concealed carry. This aside, it comprises the 4.25" barrel/slide assembly of the Colt Commander that's been around since the mid-20th Century with the short butt and aluminum alloy frame of the Lightweight Officers. Six- and seven-round .45 ACP magazines are available for it.

When the CCO first came out, fellow gun writer Ray Ordorica dubbed it the ideal concealed-carry handgun. For a 1911 .45 aficionado, I can't disagree. I wound up with two of them, one plain and one fancy. When my lower back goes out and sciatica kicks in, one or another becomes my go-to carry .45. I have a steel-frame version by Nighthawk, the T3, too: they all shoot extremely well, and conceal as easily as snub-nose .38s in the right holsters. The shorter butt costs only one



A stock compact GLOCK 19 Gen5 allowed Mas to win against larger service guns. Shootability in a concealment package.

round of .45 ACP capacity compared to a full-size version.

THE UBIQUITOUS GLOCK 19

There is a reason the G19 is the most popular GLOCK: Listed in the catalog as a Compact and comparable in size to an old-school .38 snubby with Pachmayr grips,

this 16-shot 9mm shoots like a service pistol. When NYPD went auto in 1993, the G19, the SIG P226 DAO and the now-discontinued S&W 5906 were the authorized choices: More of those coppers chose the 19 than both of the others, by far. It was light and compact enough for plainclothes and off-duty carry, yet more than serviceable as a uniform duty gun. I can shoot the smaller 3.6" barrel G26 about as well as the G19 until I get past 25 yards, but for pure speed I can reload the G19 faster and carry it more often than the 26 or the bigger 9mms.

Others in the hotly contested striker-fired polymer pistol market have followed the G19 formula. A good example is the Smith & Wesson Military & Police Compact.

Defensive concealed carry weapons are compromises. Each of us will have different needs and perhaps come to different choices, but the principle remains the same. The middle ground, sometimes, is the most solid ground.



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The Mossberg Nightstick is only slightly longer than this standard 24" nightstick.

MOSSBERG NIGHTSTICK SHORT BUT STOUT

Mossberg introduced the 590 Shockwave in 2017. Featuring a 14" barrel and a Raptor bird's-head pistol grip, the 12-gauge pump gun skirted BATFE regulations.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives has confirmed the 590 Shockwave as a "firearm" per the Gun Control Act (GCA) but it is not a Class 3/ NFA firearm. This only speaks to its Federal status. There could be local/state laws prohibiting the sale or possession of this gun in your state. Consult the laws of your state for clarification. Just as with any other pistol

grip firearm, it's legal to own for anyone over 21 years of age who can legally buy a gun.

The Shockwave's Raptor bird's head pistol grip is uniquely shaped to minimize felt recoil. The shotgun includes all the features making Mossberg pump-actions the choice for millions worldwide — ambidextrous safety, dual extractors, positive steel-to-steel lockup, twin action bars and a smooth operating anti-jam elevator.

Mossberg offers several variants, including 20 gauge. One of the latest renditions is the Nightstick. It varies from the

standard version in having wood furniture instead of polymer while the hand strap on the forend is leather instead of nylon.

It shares the following features with the original Shockwave.

- 5+1 capacity
- 3" chamber
- Heavy-wall barrel
- 14.375" cylinder-bore barrel
- 26.37" overall length
- Bead front sight
- Matte blue finish
- Sling swivel stud on rear of Raptor grip and end of magazine cap.

SHOOTING THE 'STICK

I appreciate the good looks of the traditional wood and leather instead of the black polymer and nylon.

Most people new to the Shockwave will have the urge to shoot it from the hip. Sure, it can be done but requires quite a bit of practice to become proficient using this method. When hip shooting, the normal tendency is to shoot high.

If the Raptor grip is held against the front of the hip, the sling stud will recoil (painfully) into the shooter. Unless the shooter rode the extra-short bus, this is a self-correcting problem.



Thanks to the Raptor bird's-head pistol grip (left) the BATFE classifies the Nightstick as a "Firearm" and not a Class 3/NFA firearm. Sling stud is standard. Safety on all Mossberg shotguns is perfectly placed for easy manipulation and is fully ambidextrous (right).



STILL MAKING HISTORY.

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The Colt Anaconda, once again, makes history.

COLT.COM/ANACONDA



A better technique is to bring the Nightstick to shoulder height, holding it away from the face and fire. A good practice is to extend it roughly as far as you would as if shooting a handgun. The Raptor grip soaks up recoil much better than a standard pistol grip such as found on the Mossberg Cruiser shotguns.

The strap on the forend is not there for looks. It's important to use as it keeps your hand from wandering in front of the short barrel. It is also an aid to recoil management, especially with heavy loads such as buckshot or slugs.

Recoil can be further mitigated using isometric tension by pushing forward on the forend and pulling the Raptor grip rearward. The pump-action can be easily manipulated while at full extension.

FEEDING THE NIGHTSTICK

The Nightstick will handle any 2-3/4" or 3" 12-gauge round.

A longstanding theory is birdshot is best for home defense as it will not penetrate the sheetrock used in common construction. Newsflash — yes, it will, as proved in many tests over the years. While



Leather forend strap (above) is aesthetically pleasing and functional. Removing the magazine cap (below) allows for easy the magazine cleaning. Sling stud is standard.



it will not penetrate a 2X4 stud, buckshot will not likely either.

With this said, I believe #4 birdshot is an excellent home defense round in the Nightstick for several reasons. First, it is readily available for practice at a reasonable cost. Second, it is easier to shoot for people sensitive to recoil and is much easier to control than buckshot. Lastly, at distances encountered in the average home, it is effective. At these ranges Major General Julian Hatcher described the results as "a bloody rathole."

SO, WHAT'S IT GOOD FOR?

I have some acquaintances who view the Shockwave/Nightstick as a novelty. I couldn't disagree more. The variants of the Shockwave really come into their own where space is at a premium. A few of these would include an RV or camping trailer, an aircraft and a boat.

It could also be a handy anti-carjacking device in the front of a passenger vehicle; quick to come into action and easy to manipulate in close confines.

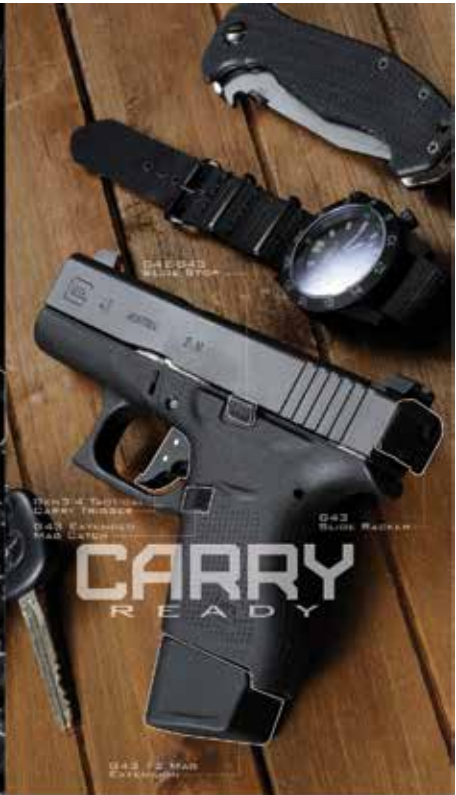
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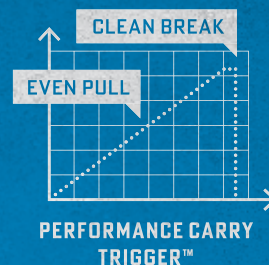
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Duke and Yvonne's home on their Montana acreage.

50 YEARS OF GUN 'RITIN' A LOOK BACK

Hopefully I'll be able to slide this column by our esteemed editor Brent without him noticing it's a bit ego-based. I want to write this as a celebration for my 50th anniversary. Now understand, this is not mine and Yvonne's 50th anniversary; we're only at number 43. What I'm celebrating is this — 2021 makes 50 years since I joined the ranks of American gun'riters. Well, sort of. A lot more time and work was involved before anyone actually took notice of me but 1971 was the year I wrote my very first article.

HOMEWORK

That was an assignment in a "magazine writing class" as part of the journalism school at Marshall University in Huntington, WV. We had to write an article, produce photos for it and actually submit it to a magazine. Mine concerned the cost savings shooters could have by reloading their own revolver ammunition, especially using bullets cast by themselves. Although I wrote the article in 1971 and it was accepted by *Guns & Ammo* magazine that year it didn't actually appear in print until summer of 1972. Regardless it was the first step taken on a path I've stubbornly followed to this day.

In the first two years after college graduation, I wrote another half-dozen articles submitted to, and accepted by, several magazines including *GUNS*. Then I quit. College had been stressful and I was finally free, restless and ready to explore some of our country. I actually crossed the United States from coast to coast a half dozen times,

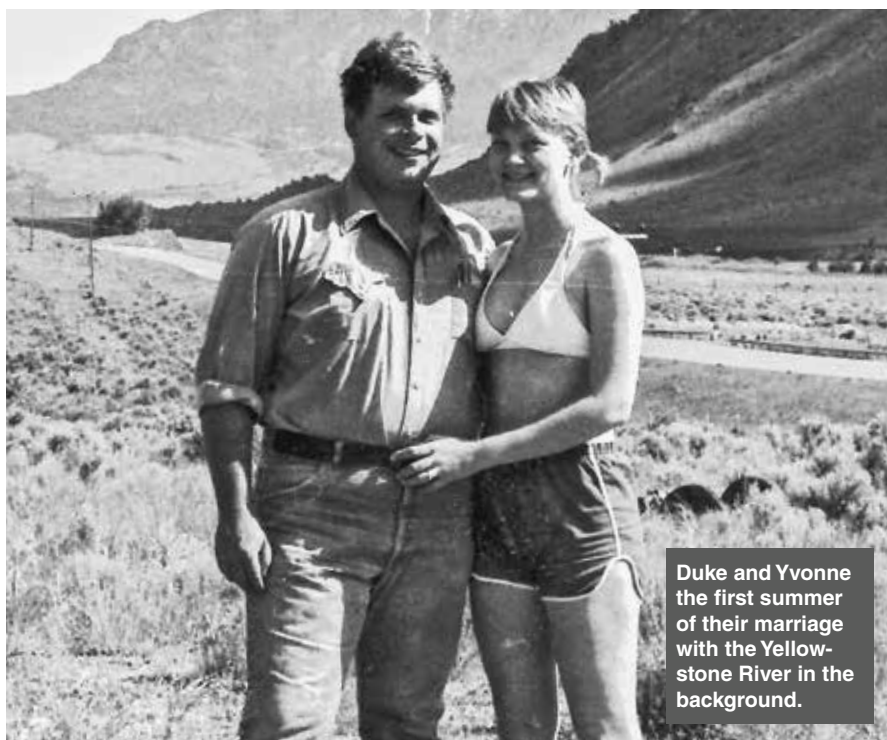
mostly in an old Dodge pickup with a small camper on the back. One year I slept in that pickup for five straight months.

Always I told myself I'd get serious about gun'riting someday. To pay my way in those years, I took such temporary jobs as being a substitute high school teacher, serving on a forest fire crew and driving dump trucks on a road paving crew. My all-time favorite, albeit least paying job, was dude wrangling in Yellowstone National Park.

Then in 1977 something momentous happened. I met Yvonne. She was from

Missouri and also working in Yellowstone. As we dated that summer I told her my plan for a full-time career was to write about guns. I half expected her to flee. At least her folks might lock her away from me if she confided that information to them. Neither happened and we were married on April 1st 1978. (Anyone see irony in it being April Fool's Day?) At the time my entire net worth consisted of a few guns, some reloading equipment, a saddle, a huge dog and an unpaid-for pickup truck. It was another Dodge.

One Saturday morning shortly after our nuptials Yvonne surprised me when she dug out her portable typewriter, set it on the kitchen table and gently indicated



Duke and Yvonne the first summer of their marriage with the Yellowstone River in the background.

it was time for me to get to work. Obviously there was no hope of remaining irresponsible.

Back then it seemed like progress was immeasurably slow but truth was, in 1981 I was able to quit my truck-driving job and dive into gun'riting full-time. A great aid was Yvonne and I were able to purchase our small Montana town's movie theater. In my mind it's the second best job anyone could have. Yvonne took care of theater details but we both ran it at night. My mornings were spent writing and afternoons shooting in good weather or reloading for writing projects during poor weather.

PACK IT UP

By 1986 we realized we needed to move. I was driving outside of town for shooting. Packing up guns, ammo, chronographs, rifle and handgun rests, sandbags and related items every trip ate up time. So we searched for suitable acreage, found what has been our home now for 35 years but regretfully had to sell our movie theater.

I love to tell a story about finding this



Duke is obviously in a happy place when working from his dedicated shooting house!

place. We told the realtor we only wanted to look at places where it would be safe and legal to shoot. The first couple of locations were flops in all respects. Then we drove here and I instantly saw a perfect 300-yard rifle range and told the realtor, "This is it." Yvonne nearly fainted. She said, "We haven't even looked in the house!" So I went in the upstairs door, came out the downstairs door and I turned to him again and said, "Yep, we'll take it."

Since moving here I've written over 2,000 features and columns for magazines and seven books. We have added a large shop, various storage sheds and most important to me — a heated shooting house. Also, over the years we have taken in a host of unwanted dogs, cats and horses that have brought us great joy. So, you can see why I feel like celebrating. 🗡️

Editor's note: And we're so glad you're still at GUNS! —BW

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George noted the age-old military maxim, “God is on the side with the biggest battalions” and added, “... in the last war God displayed partiality too — He always favored the side armed with semiautomatic rifles,” such as the venerable M1 Garand.

SHOTS FIRED IN ANGER TRULY A NATION OF RIFLEMEN?

Shots Fired in Anger (1947) was written by Major (later Lt. Colonel) John B. George. It is an account of his WWII experience, first in training then in combat on Guadalcanal and later with Merrill’s Marauders in Burma. Prior to the war as a member of the National Guard, George was a skilled rifle competitor. Among his achievements was being the youngest person to win the Illinois state championship in the 1,000-yard competition.

For the rifle enthusiast, George’s rifle knowledge makes his observations on training and combat interesting. What I found particularly surprising was his harshly frank and honest opinion of the

shooting ability of the average American soldier. Among his conclusions he notes, “a fine competitive archer would be more effective in combat with his bow and arrow than the average Infantry rifleman armed with an M1 rifle.”

SHOCKED AND DISMAYED

As a young 2nd Lieutenant he was involved in training in 1940–’41 before the U.S. was officially at war. He was shocked at the dismal level of shooting skill among recruits and even more by the military’s apparent lack of interest in improving the situation. He mentions an old maxim about the role of the Infantry — “to shoot and

to walk” — saying they did little serious training in either. He commented, “Rifle shooting instruction in the 33rd Division at Camp Forrest was generally poor. No amount of rationalizing can alter that truth, and there are few excuses.”

Some of the training shortcomings seem almost incredible. Officers would be appointed as rifle instructors who almost literally did not know one end of a rifle from the other. A colonel decided to improve security for 900 Springfield 1903 rifles kept in racks and used for training. He ordered the bolts removed and stored separately in a locker. Apparently he was unaware bolts are not an interchangeable component but are fitted to individual rifles.

George’s training specialty was in heavy machine guns. Initially his troops had no individual weapons — pistols were uncommon and the M1 carbine still in the development stage. He obtained Springfield rifles for the men and after much discussion was allotted two days and 15 rounds per man for training — all the rifle training they would receive before deploying to combat zones.

George sums up his training experience by saying, “Camp Forrest — our training period there — served to give proof to every thinking man in the division that we were indeed poorly prepared for war, that our country was militarily a second rate power, that the great mass of American manhood would require much physical and moral alteration before it could successfully fight against foreign armies.”

During his time in combat on Guadalcanal, George saw soldiers compensate for lack of shooting ability in various ways. One was the use of automatic weapons. Thompson submachine guns were popular despite their weight, the only drawback being the short range of the .45 ACP cartridge. For greater range and penetration of heavy cover

The Thompson submachine gun was very popular with troops fighting in the south Pacific. Drum magazines were heavy and generally used only when guarding static positions, so box magazines were used by troops on the move.





The M1 Garand rifle provided grand service in the fighting on the Solomon Islands as it did wherever it was used.

the BAR was highly prized. Another alternative was not a firearm at all. George noted that while many American soldiers had little shooting experience, they were all skilled at throwing things, having grown up playing sandlot baseball. Hand grenades were widely used and effective weapons.

DRAWN-OUT WAR

If George had reservations about the shooting ability of American soldiers, he had none about their courage and devotion to duty. He sums up by saying, "Our victories in this war were glorious; no one can say otherwise. The only trouble was they took too long to achieve. Battles were held up for days because the fire against the enemy positions was ineffectually delivered by men of insufficient skill. Enemy garrisons under siege were able to hold out longer because their casualties were not as heavy as we could have made them. Too many enemy soldiers were able to stick their heads above ground without getting a bullet in the face, and that made the war last longer — which



The book *Shots Fired in Anger*, the autobiography of Major John B. George, offers frank, front-line insight on the state of our "Nation of Riflemen" leading into WWII.

is just another way of saying that our Infantrymen were lousy shots, which they certainly were."

George hoped America would learn the lesson and avoid making the same mistakes in the future. "We should teach our people how to shoot, not ordinarily, but with skill. Every man, woman and half-grown child in the country should be able to use the simpler Infantry weapons ... most important would be the basic and universally useful training in rifle marksmanship.... The average American wants to enjoy himself while he learns. To enable him to do so it will be necessary to change our present methods of rifle instruction. The answer to

this is to put everything on a 'sporting' or competitive basis."

Lt. Colonel George died in 2009 at age 90. I think he would agree there are far more good rifle shooters today than in 1940. As men, are we as good as those of 1940? I'm pretty sure I know what he would say!

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ALLIANT'S RED DOT AND .45 SIXGUNS AN OLD FAVORITE

For most of my 62 years of Handloading/Reloading, I have leaned to the heavy side of loads. Thousands upon thousands upon thousands of really serious loads, and many with heavy bullets, have been put together for .44 Magnum, .45 Colt, .454 Casull, .480 Ruger, .500 Wyoming Express, .475 and .500 Linebaugh. This was always the norm, however the norm has changed as the hands will simply not handle these heavier loads on a regular basis.

They are kept on hand for hunting and a little testing but they are nowhere near the upper limit of my comfort level. As an aside, the difference between Handloading and Reloading is the former is mostly a search for excellent performing loads with different powders and bullets while the latter is simply

repeating the same load over and over again.

SCALING BACK

I have decided, actually my body has decided, for everyday shooting pleasure I needed something much different than these heavy loads. My goal is no longer how high I can go, but rather to come up with good shooting loads with a muzzle velocity somewhere around 900 fps or less from a 7-1/2" to 8-3/8" sixgun. These are loads that can be shot in comfort while still retaining a power level close to the .45 ACP Hardball load, which has a long-established reputation of success. I wanted loads that were still serious under normal circumstances as there is certainly nothing wimpy about .45 ACP Government Loads.



Red Dot performs well in .45 Colt loads in the Colt Single Action Army and the Ruger Blackhawk.



Good shooting .45 Colt loads assembled with Red Dot in Ruger Bisley Models and the Colt New Frontier.

While maintaining this same power level, they would also be much more enjoyable shooting, or at least on the same recoil level, in a heavy-framed sixgun as in the 1911 Government Model. These loads would not only be comfortable to shoot but also accurate, loads that would serve as everyday packin' loads should we stray off the beaten path, and could also be pressed into service for target shooting. Actually at this power level and carried in a Perfect Packin' Pistol with barrel lengths of 4" to 5-1/2", these loads would also serve for self-defense or concealed carry.

I have been concentrating on loads in all the .44 and .45 sixguns at my disposal with several different powders. For this installment we look at .45s loaded with Alliant Red Dot; Alliant was formerly Hercules. Red Dot was originally designed for shotgun use and has been around for so long it actually predates me by seven years. Alliant has improved Red Dot and as they say it, "now burns significantly cleaner and offers better flow characteristics with the same performance." I have certainly found this to be true and with most loads, provides low extreme velocity spreads. Most like to stay with loads under 50 fps extreme spreads and in many of the loads I have had spreads of less than 30 fps.

The .45 Colt arrived in 1873 and folks are still arguing over whether the original load was 40 grains of black powder or less. Until the arrival of solid head brass in the 1950s, the .45 Colt "Balloon Head" brass would hold 40 grains of black powder and my test with these older examples of .45 Colt brass cases results in muzzle velocities of 850–900 fps or, depending upon the individual sixgun, more. To duplicate these loads with Red Dot I use 6.0 grains and the Oregon Trail 250 RNFP (Round Nosed Flat Point) bullets. In a 7-1/2" Ruger Old Model Blackhawk muzzle velocity is just over 800 fps and is extremely accurate with five shots in 5/8". Dropping down to 5.5 grains results in muzzle velocities from 750–800 fps. In my custom Ruger Bisley by Jim Stroh, muzzle velocity is just over 800 fps and puts five shots in 1-1/4" at 20 yards.

SCHOFIELD

The .45 Schofield was first chambered in the Smith & Wesson #3 Schofield Model in 1875 and featured a brass case slightly shorter than the .45 Colt. Starline now offers Schofield brass and I like to use it for lighter loads in .45 Colt sixguns. Before a large batch of .45 Schofield rounds are loaded, it is best to check



John also uses .45 Wadcutter bullets from Matt's Bullets in .45 Loads with Red Dot and this "Sheriff's Model" Freedom Arms Model 97 (above). John uses both RCBS and Lyman dies for loading the various .45 Cartridges .45 Schofield, .45 Colt, .454 Casull and .45 Auto Rim (below).



to see if they will fit in the .45 Colt sixgun of choice. The Schofield brass has a rim slightly larger in diameter and requires a .44-40 #35 RCBS shell holder. With 4.0 grains of Red Dot and the same Oregon Trail bullet, muzzle velocities in sixguns with Perfect Packin Pistol barrel lengths are a very pleasant shooting 600-650 fps. In the above-mentioned Jim Stroh Ruger groups are just barely over 1" and I get the same accuracy from a 4-3/4" Colt New Frontier.

Red Dot also works well in the .45 Auto Rim with 5.0 grains under the Oregon Trail 250 RNFP just under 750 fps. To duplicate Hardball .45 ACP, the same charge with a 230-grain bullet is used. Finally with the .454 Casull from which I have shot many of those thousands of heavy loads mentioned above, I use 6.5 grains with the Oregon Trail Bullet which clocks out right at 800 fps and a 5/8" group from a Freedom Arms 4-3/4" sixgun. With this load I can enjoy the excellent-shooting .454 as long as I can still pull the trigger.

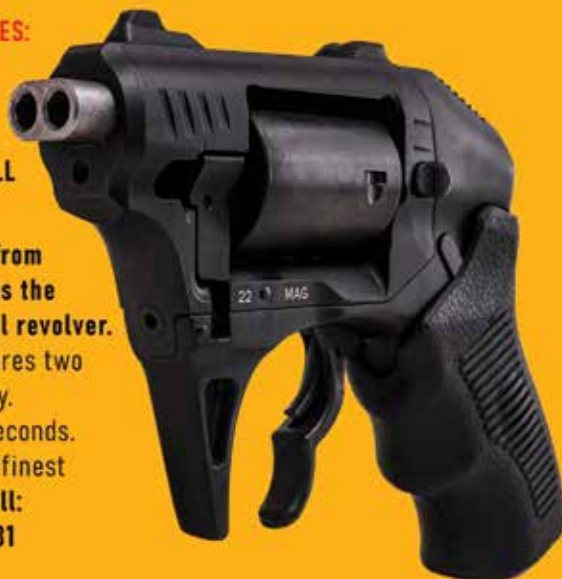
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AIR TO-GO WHERE TO FILL YOUR PCP AIRGUN

If only we could harness the power of air ... in Washington, D.C.

Think about it. By using a microphone as a primer or sorts, or bait if you will, we could lure an infinitely long line of politicians within range of some type of air collection device. Of course, we'd need to develop a way to cool it, as they tend to eject multitudinous volumes of hot air. Boyle's Law would need revisiting, too — the sheer volume could never be compressed into any known containment vessel, at least one adhering to the laws of physics.

Okay, so scratch the unlimited air supply plan. It's simply not feasible. But if you're not quite ready to invest in a home air compressor, there are a few ways to source pre-compressed air locally. You will need a way to store it. Check out containers like the Benjamin Charging System Cylinder or Omega Air Cylinder — they hold enough high-pressure air to refill a PCP air rifle many times. Using a cylinder like

this, the idea is to get it filled periodically and “store” the compressed air at home in a portable tank, using it to refill rifles and handguns.

DIVING FOR AIR

Most dive shops will offer a SCUBA tank filling service. While they specialize in breathable air, which you don't need for an airgun, they have the gear to fill a storage tank with high-pressure air just like you'll need.

You may not get as much pressure as you'd like at a dive shop. Many SCUBA systems run at 3,000 to 3,300 psi and carbon fiber airgun cylinders usually handle 4,500. Call and ask before you go. Shops near me had plans to upgrade to 6,000 psi-capable systems in the near future.

You'll also need to ask about their

valve compatibility. The shops near me use a yoke valve system to connect the fill hose or regulator during use. It's worked well for Jacques Cousteau and all of his admirers, so it's proven reliable. On the negative side, it's not designed for the highest of pressures, like the 4,500 lbs. common to airguns. It's technically possible to connect an adapter to a yoke fill hose system to “convert” this to a DIN threaded connection like the one used on my Omega Air Cylinder tank, but you're really not supposed to fill through that method beyond about 3,400 lbs. per square inch. The key question to ask is whether the shop near you has the gear to support a DIN fill hose.

Do expect to pay for the service. The shop invested a lot of money in expensive (and safe) compressors to do this. Shops near me charge about \$10 to fill a cylinder. Remember, the shop's core business — and how they pay their mortgage — is servicing divers, not airgunners. Don't be surprised when they ask to inspect your cylinder to make sure it's current and up to snuff. Bad things can happen with aged or damaged cylinders. Also, you'll likely be “topping off” a tank, not filling from near



Fire stations use impressive compressors like this one to fill their breathing tanks. If you make nice, maybe they'll be willing to fill your tank too.



Most airguns operate in the 3,000 to 3,600 psi range, so the 4,500 psi storage tank approach works just fine (above). Be prepared to improvise. This homemade rig (below) converts Tom's female Foster tank to a male Foster fitting.



Paintball center filling stations are designed to fill a lot of high-pressure tanks — fast.

zero. Expect to pay the full price, not some partial price for a fractional fill. The labor, equipment overhead and risk still apply.

FIRE!

Guess who uses carbon fiber air tanks just like the ones you buy for airgunning? Firefighters!

Many firehouses have state-of-the-art equipment for filling up those backpack tanks firefighters use. The one near me can fill several tanks at once in armored burst-proof containment cylinders. If a tank blows during a fill, the shrapnel is safely contained — kind of like those nifty bomb squad trucks used to transport suspicious packages.

Another tank fill possibility is your local fire department. However, the tanks they use are often a little bit different. One distinct difference you'll usually see is there's a male/female reversal in play. Fire department SCBA tanks have a male connection on the tank end. The fill whip on the large compressor at the station is a female SCBA connection. So, you'll need to accomplish two things to connect your tank to their compressor. Assuming you use a DIN-compatible tank, you'll first need to account for the female-to-female connection challenge. Then you'll need to deal with the firehouse SCBA to DIN 300 difference. An airgun supply house like Pyramyd Air will sell an adapter to make this work.

Here's the gotcha — fire departments are in the business of fighting fires and rescuing people, not filling air gunners' tanks. That's

not to say they won't, it's just an observation that filling your cylinders will never be their top priority. It's not like your airgun is on fire or anything.

There's also the issue of liability. In a more metropolitan area, you're likely to run into management frowning upon airgun cylinder refills. There's no upside to the local fire chief allowing this, only potential risk. If your tank blows up and hurts someone, it can come back to haunt.

Before you run out and buy an adapter to connect your tanks to firehouse SCBA fill hoses, do some legwork and make a few visits to see if it's even feasible in your area. If you do find a willing participant, first and foremost consider it a favor and don't abuse the privilege. Hey, maybe you can find ways to return the favor by hooking them up with some needed piece of recreational equipment (like an airgun perhaps) for slow times at the firehouse.

PAINTBALL CENTERS

In my local travels, I've found paintball centers to be the ideal solution. They're in the business of filling lots of air tanks almost like the ones we use. They have to

fill multiples at once on busy paintball days between rounds, so they're used to this. They have to charge as well, but you should find the prices very reasonable.

Most paintball marker tanks use the same type of Foster connection common to the airgun world. The only gotcha is we're slightly opposite on the whole male/female thing. Unlike airgun cylinders, most paintball tanks have a male Foster connection. Fortunately, that's not a big deal. My local center had had a box of adapters pre-configured to connect for their female Foster fill hoses to a variety of things including SCUBA K-Valves and 300-DIN connections. I rigged up a male-to-male Foster fitting adapter and was in business for future fills.

At Paintball Charleston near me, topping off both of my cylinders took just a couple of minutes and cost me a grand total of seven bucks. One thing to keep in mind is the paintball event schedule. If you can stop by your local paintball store

during the week when big events aren't in progress, you can be in and out in a jiffy as you won't have to wait in line with dozens of other folks to get air.

Fire? Water? War games? There's bound to be one of these options near you that can service your air-to-go needs.



This Omega 75 cubic foot cylinder fills a lot of airguns before it needs topping off at the local paintball center, SCUBA shop or even fire department!

GUNS OF THE 'ORIGINAL' STORMTROOPERS

Will Dabbs, MD

"A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away ..."

With those 10 simple words in 1977, an obscure 33-year-old filmmaker named George Lucas legitimately changed the world. His classic space opera *Star Wars* enraptured adults and kids alike around the world. I was one of them.

If you can divest yourself of the familiarity we all have with this iconic fantasy, many of the terms are actually pretty silly. Skywalker, lightsaber, Death Star, Darth Vader and Chewbacca are all fairly inane if you think about it. A great deal of the *Star Wars* canon was obviously drawn from fairly pedestrian historical stuff.

Lucas was born in 1944 and grew up watching Saturday afternoon movie serials. WWII aerial combat inspired the X-wing and TIE fighter dogfighting sequences and many of the latent themes were drawn from American Westerns. Amidst the villains, however, we see a pervasive intentional darkness.

Vader's soulless malevolent legions were known throughout the occupied galaxy as Imperial Stormtroopers. The very term conjures imagery of oppression and dread. Forget these supposedly crack troops can't actually hit the broad side of a *bantba*. Their cool white plastic armor also seems vulnerable to anything more vigorous than a stiff breeze. The Stormtroopers are nonetheless the archetypal villains.

However, Lucas' *Star Wars* was not actually the world's first introduction to Imperial Stormtroopers. Back in 1915 the German Empire deployed the world's first real Stormtroopers onto the modern battlefield. Their tactics and weapons shape combat operations even today.

ORIGIN STORY

One year into the First War to End All Wars the planet was reeling from its rude introduction to unfettered war on an industrial scale. Battles morphed into campaigns that shed blood like a

river. It all began as a glorified misunderstanding in June of 1914. A young anarchist named Gavrilo Princip murdered Archduke Ferdinand and his wife Sophie, and this metastasized into the planet's first true World War. Driven by unprecedented advances in military firepower, the war devolved into a protracted bloody grind in the fetid trenches of Europe.

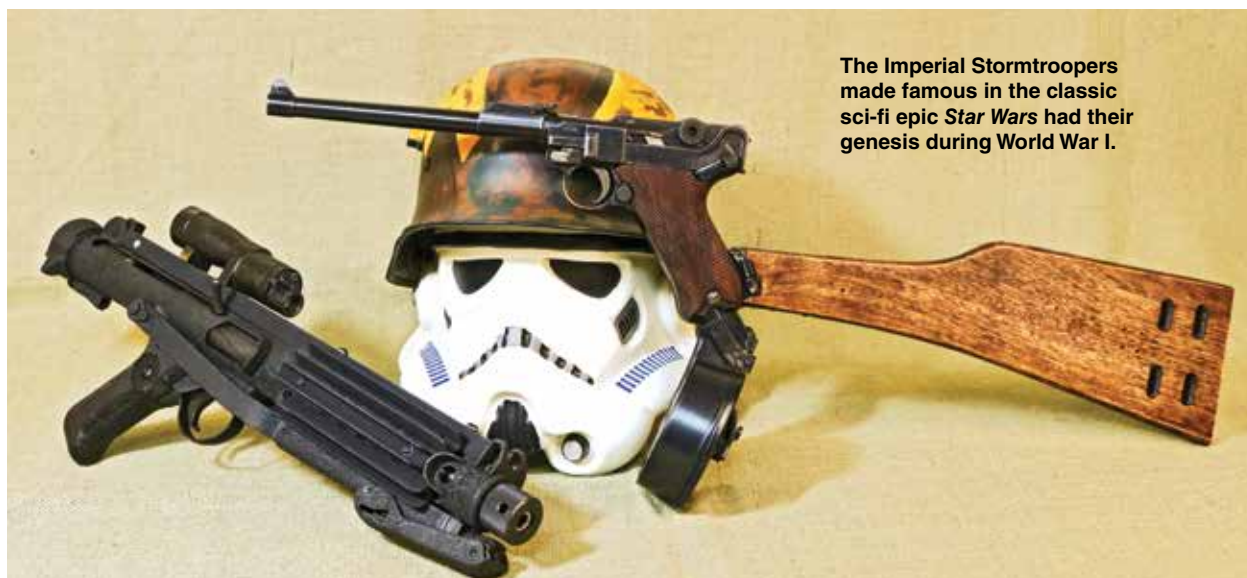
Both sides of this gory conflict burrowed into the ground. Trench systems included such niceties as field hospitals, supply depots, machinegun and artillery emplacements, and communications systems. Between the trenches was a denuded no-man's land of death and chaos. Amidst this bloody stagnant charnel house, military commanders were desperate to regain both the initiative and mobility.

"HOWEVER, IN 1915 IMPERIAL GERMANY DABBLED IN SIMPLER STUFF — SPECIALLY SELECTED SOLDIERS CARRYING SPECIALLY-SELECTED WEAPONS TRAINED IN RADICAL NEW INFILTRATION TECHNIQUES."

This drive to break free of the rancid rot of the trenches eventually led to the world's first tanks. However, in 1915 Imperial Germany dabbled in simpler stuff — specially selected soldiers carrying specially-selected weapons trained in radical new infiltration techniques. Today we might call this Close Quarters Battle (CQB). These elite WWI-era Special Operators were indeed the world's first Stormtroopers.

STURMTRUPPEN

These specialist soldiers were formed into companies christened *Sturmtruppen*. This word literally translates as "shock troops" or "shove troops." The individual soldier was



The Imperial Stormtroopers made famous in the classic sci-fi epic *Star Wars* had their genesis during World War I.

German Stormtroopers burned through vast quantities of hand grenades.



the Sturmman. In the 1930s Nazi Germany resurrected these terms with the *Sturmabteilung* or SA under Ernst Rohm.

Imperial Stormtroopers were specially selected and rigorously trained. Their mission was one of infiltration and close combat, and their attrition rates were astronomical. The *Sturmtruppen* were viewed as elite troops who were generally afforded better food and minimal time in the trenches. They were rock stars brought up from positions of relative safety when and where their unique capabilities could be most effective.

In addition to a unique training regimen, the Stormtroopers availed themselves of some unusual weapons. As their mission was to engage the enemy at close quarters they needed weapons that were compact and maneuverable. In many cases this meant entrenching tools, improvised clubs, maces wrapped in barbed wire, and simply breathtaking numbers of hand grenades.

The firearms wielded by the Stormtroopers ran the gamut from conventional to revolutionary while forming a synergistic whole. Bolt-action rifles in both conventional and carbine lengths provided knockdown power and reach. The MG08/15 water-cooled, belt-fed machinegun was an undeniable boat anchor to hump yet remained technically portable.

Stormtroopers also utilized stocked handguns like the Artillery Luger as well as the C96 Broomhandle. Mauser produced about a million of these C96 pistols. The most radical weapon used by the Imperial German shock troops was the MP18 submachinegun.

THE GEWEHR 98

The Mauser Gew 98 rifle replaced the previous Gewehr 1888 in, you guessed it, 1898. A manually operated, magazine-fed, controlled-feed, bolt-action repeater, the Gew 98 was one of the first combat rifles designed to fire smokeless cartridges pushing Spitzer (pointed) bullets. The internal magazine contained five rounds, and the weapon sported a complicated Lange Visier rear sight named after a German officer named LTC Lange.

The design included two primary bolt lugs as well as a third lug serving as a backup in the event of a failure. Metallurgy was not then what it is today, so this was a legitimate concern with period ammunition. The standard Gew 98 was 49.2" long, while the carbine version spanned 42.9".



The C96 Mauser Broomhandle was a trim and effective close quarters combat tool. When mated to its wooden holster/stock it rendered accurate fire at reasonable carbine ranges.

MG08/15

The original Maschinengewehr 08 Maxim gun on its sled mount fired standard 7.92x57mm ammunition and weighed 152 lbs. The simplified MG08/15 weighed 40 lbs. equipped with a crude wooden shoulder stock and pistol grip. It was intended to accompany mobile troops on the assault. The short-recoil, toggle-locked action was the product of an American-born Englishman named Hiram Stevens Maxim and drove the British Vickers gun as well.

The MG08/15 was the most prolific German machinegun of the war, with MG08/15s allotted six per company or 72 per regiment. Despite its prodigious weight and bulk, the MG08/15 went on to inspire the subsequent MG34 and MG42 General Purpose Machineguns



The Lange Pistole P08 Artillery Luger was originally designed to defend artillery units from Infantry attack. Its salient attributes found favor with early Imperial Stormtroopers.



The Gew 98 Mauser rifle represented the state of the art in its day.

that changed everything about Infantry combat. Even today the MG08/15 has an influence on German culture. The German slang term *Null-acht-funfzehn* (08/15) denotes something ordinary or lacking in originality.

ARTILLERY LUGER

Georg Luger began developing his toggle-locked recoil-operated Parabellum pistol and the 9mm cartridge it fired around 1898. The action was patterned after the elegant but flawed C-93 Borchardt. The gun first saw production in 1900. The Imperial Navy adopted their variant with a 6" barrel in 1904 and the Army followed suit in 1908. While the standard P08 Parabellum featured a 4" barrel, the Lange Pistole 08 Artillery model sported an 8" tube.

Fully tricked-out, the Artillery Luger also included a detachable wooden board stock, an attached leather carry rig and a complicated 32-round snail drum magazine called the *Trommelmagazin*. Thusly configured the Artillery Luger was an effective close combat tool. However, the exposed nature of the action demanded the gun be kept clean for reliable operation.

C96 MAUSER BROOMHANDLE

The C96 (*Konstruktion 96*) was one of the world's first successful semiautomatic combat pistols. Designed in 1893 by

the Federle brothers in the employ of the Mauser Company, the C96 fired the spunky 7.63x25mm bottlenecked cartridge. The most common variant loaded from the top via 10-round stripper clips.

One of the most distinctive aspects of the C96 design was its wooden holster/stock. Opening the pivoting buttplate allowed the gun to be stored within the stock and hung from the belt when not in use. Mounting the stock transformed the C96 into a handy close quarters carbine. In the latter stages of the war, production of Luger pistols could not keep up with demand so the Imperial German Army issued Broomhandles chambered in 9mm Parabellum with a prominent "Red 9" burned into the grips.

MP18

The Italian Villar Perosa was technically the world's first pistol-caliber submachine gun. However, the German MP18 was

THE ITALIAN VILLAR PEROSA WAS TECHNICALLY THE WORLD'S FIRST PISTOL-CALIBER SUBMACHINE GUN. HOWEVER, THE GERMAN MP18 WAS THE FIRST SMG THAT WAS TACTICALLY EFFECTIVE.

the first SMG that was tactically effective. Hugo Schmeisser and Theodor Bergmann working for the Bergmann Waffenfabrik designed the revolutionary gun in 1918 specifically for the Stormtrooper mission.

The MP18 fired 9mm Parabellum ammunition and fed from the same snail drum *Trommelmagazin* used by the Luger pistol. The gun ran from the open bolt, weighed 9.2 lbs. and cycled at around 450–500 rpm. Though meticulously crafted out of quality machined steel, the MP18 laid the foundation for untold millions of inexpensive pistol-caliber submachine guns yet to come.

EPILOGUE

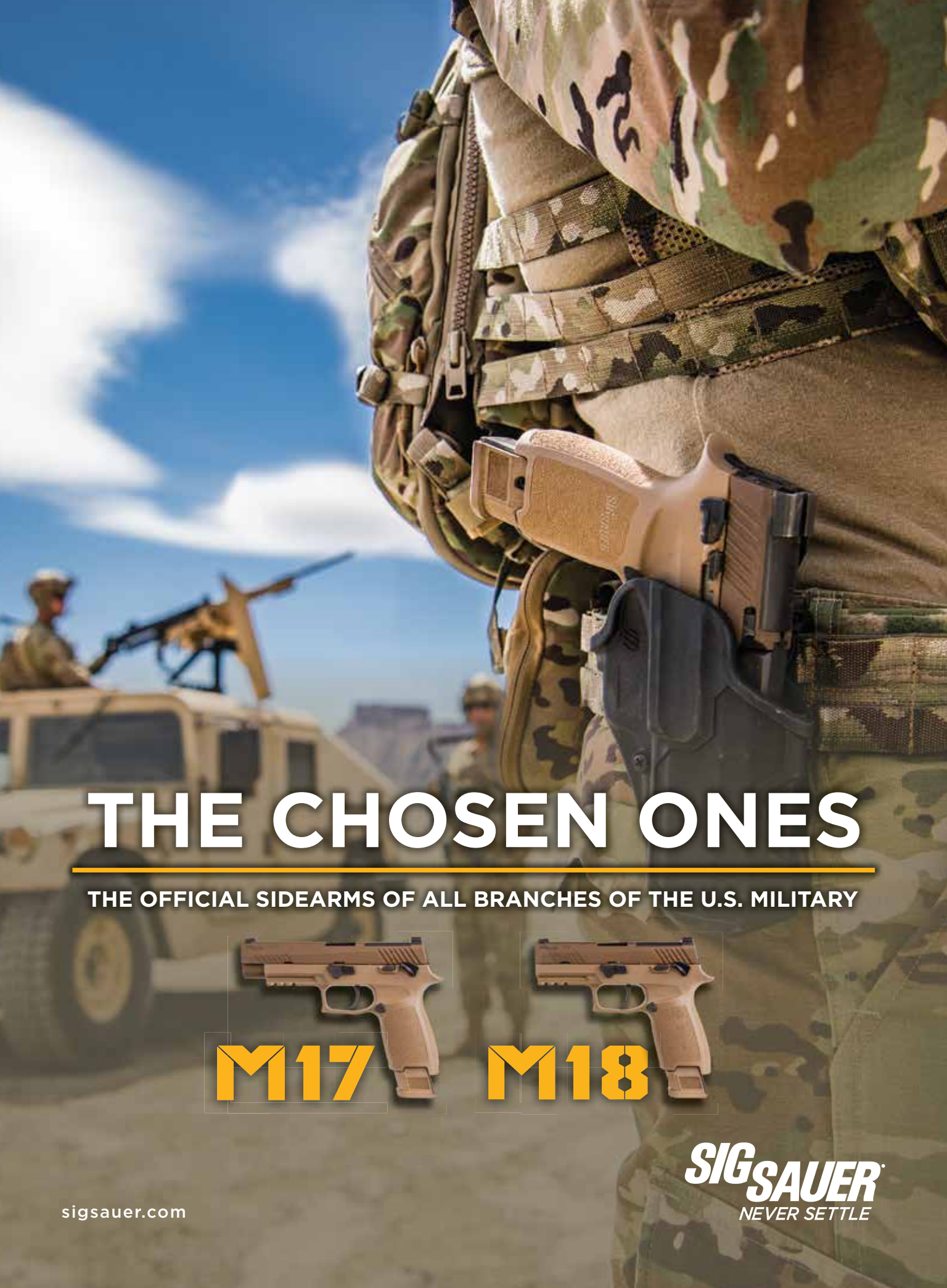
In a prelude to the planetary hemoclysm known as the Second World War, the German Empire and the Central Powers saw themselves overwhelmed by the manpower and production capacity of the Allies. WWI ended on November 11, 1918 with the Treaty of Versailles. The subsequent suffocating stipulations and reparations demanded of a broken Germany set the stage for the rise of the Nazis and the Third Reich.

Despite their defeat, the close-quarters infiltration tactics pioneered by the Kaiser's elite shock troops rewrote the book on Infantry combat. Modern tactics of fire and maneuver orbit around mobility and violence of action. The small-unit doctrine taught at the American Ranger School today had its genesis back more than a century ago with the world's first true Imperial Stormtroopers.



The MG08 Maxim machinegun with its massive sled mount weighed some 152 lbs. It could only be used from fixed positions as a result. Public domain photo: Wikipedia

WorldWarSupply.com



THE CHOSEN ONES

THE OFFICIAL SIDEARMS OF ALL BRANCHES OF THE U.S. MILITARY



sigsauer.com

SIGSAUER
NEVER SETTLE

THE .22 PISTOL

A MUST-HAVE FOR THE SERIOUS HANDGUNNER

CLAYTON WALKER

You might have heard the old phrase, “Beware the man with one gun, for he knows how to use it.” If you ask me, it’s a load of crapola. Instead, I prefer a different, contrary phrase: “The tools make the man.” Would you trust a handyman who shows up at the job site with a single hammer? Can you picture a chef who only owns one piece of cookware?

It is the expert who understands any particular tool comes with its own set of benefits and limitations. And in the realm of shooting, it is the mindset of the novice who expects a gun to be a perfect fit for any role, usage context and user.

Indeed, virtually every skilled shooter I’ve come to befriend has so many guns they need to play real-life Tetris to get all of them in the safe. The guys who can shoot rings around me are always experimenting with different platforms, and each has a knack of assessing the strengths and weaknesses of any particular platform with a keen eye.

To them and I, a collection without a .22 pistol is like a set of golf clubs without a nine-iron, a kitchen drawer without a bottle opener or a pants pocket without a good knife. Once you get used to using one, it becomes hard to ever again deprive yourself of an item so useful.

And yet, once every month or so, I overhear a shooter opine a .22 caliber pistol is “just a toy,” or “not even a real gun.” This makes me apoplectic for several reasons. It’s dismissive of a .22’s ability to develop excellent habits that translate to innumerable other platforms, dismissive of how darned fun it is to spend all afternoon burning through a brick of ammo and perhaps most unforgivable of all, dismissive of its ability to create lifelong shooters.

SERIOUS BUSINESS

First and foremost, I know of no better tool to becoming a good shot than the .22

pistol. Taking recoil almost completely off the table allows a shooter to hone every aspect of handgun shooting beyond recoil control, such as hammering down consistency in one’s sight alignment and trigger press. A .22 will let you know if you’re not following through on the trigger or if you’re somehow pushing the gun laterally in the last moments before your shot breaks. This is all easier to figure out without your reptile brain worrying about a pending explosion.

But the .22 isn’t just a tool to hone

marksmanship. It’s also a great aid for any kind of defensive practice combining movement, manipulating firearms at speed or just trying to get better at any skill we kind of suck at. For example, a .22 revolver is a great teacher when it comes to how fast you can consistently work a double-action trigger and get a good hit. This practice is cheaper and more accommodating with rimfire ammo.

Additionally, dedicated “tactical” .22s such as the excellent Taurus TX-22 and S&W’s M&P-22, are worth their weight in gold. So



The Colt Officer's Model Match and a supply of .22 LR (above) offer both great training opportunities and a world of fun! With rimfire ammo, there's a flavor for every taste (below, left). Always have several brands on hand to learn what your gun likes best. The humble Ruger Mark II (below, right) will outshoot nearly all of its owners.





Quality conversion kits abound for centerfire handguns (above), such as the one SIG makes for its awesome P220. The rimfire pistol needn't be a pricey investment. This H&R 999 (below) was sourced for \$200.



too are the various .22 conversion slides produced for a dizzying array of handguns including GLOCK, the 1911, Beretta and SIG. If you're practicing drawing and firing from concealment or getting your weak hand used to shooting a pistol, rimfire practice allows you to isolate the important variables, lock down good mechanics and then introduce recoil control once you're working from a place of competence and confidence.

SERIOUS FUN

The .22 caliber pistol is not only likely to be the most mechanically accurate handgun in a shooter's collection, but in most cases the gun they shoot best.

For me, this is the S&W Model 41, a handgun seemingly connected to me by some kind of neural link. I think about what I want to do and the pistol allows it to happen. It is not unheard of for these gorgeous handguns

to shoot into 1" at 50 yards, even with many varieties of bulk ammo.

You most assuredly do not need this level of accuracy, just in the same way people don't need a Rolex or a BMW. However, an accurate rimfire pistol is an indispensable piece of kit for anyone serious about discovering where the ceiling is to their pistol accuracy. Take nearly all recoil anticipation off the table and it comes down to just you, the gun and the challenge. Can you shoot the head off a match? Can you split a playing card in half? Can you swat the fly on your target? Nothing's more fun than gilt-edged accuracy that comes super easy.

Moreover, rimfire ammo is cheap, a quality permitting a healthy amount of (safe) goofing around. I have more of a propensity to "play" when I'm not trying to make every round count. As of my writing, we're still firmly in the throes of

the pandemic and ammo hoarders once again roam the earth, which means rimfire ammo has once again ascended to the price of about \$70 a brick on the open market. And yet, this is still a sight cheaper than just about any centerfire caliber under the sun. Try to have the same amount of fun with a 9mm in times like these and you'll have to mortgage your house to afford it!

A SERIOUSLY GOOD FOUNDATION

I think my biggest pitch for owning a .22 is simple: Sometimes, it's not all about us. Sure, you and I might be fine shooting barn-burning .357 magnum loads with heavy-for-caliber bullets through a 20-oz. snub nose, but I guarantee such a tool makes for a poor introduction to shooting in general.

Many of us contribute to shooting-related funds and charities, but here's a way to think globally and act locally: If you don't already have one, buy a .22 just in case a neighbor, family member or new friend has never been shooting and wants to try the whole thing out. A quality rimfire handgun will remove almost all of the intimidating factors of marksmanship and allow new shooters to join in the proverbial reindeer games.

More to the point: Knocking a first can off a post or sending a round through a bullseye is a joy that transcends politics. It is a no-foolin' illustration someone has competently and safely directed raw power to do exactly what they wanted it to. Once a person experiences this, there's no going back. Even the most die-hard liberals, if they have a good time, will turn around with a smile on their face. At such a moment, they get it and more often than not I have found it to result in a seismic shift in how they vote.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Let's recap: The rimfire pistol has the potential to turn the beginner into an intermediate, the intermediate into an expert and makes room at the table for newcomers to begin their own journey into this wonderful little world of ours. In my humble opinion, no breed of gun is a better teaching tool or so dang fun.

If there's a .22 shaped hole in your pistol collection, I'd say it's high time you filled it. But if the merits of the argument I've outlined today still aren't convincing, I'd say find the best shooters you know and ask them if they've got a good .22 handgun you can put some trigger time on. I bet you they do, and I bet you they'll be excited to bring it out! 🏹



STK100

9MM



ALLOY FRAME STABILITY, HI-CAP FUNCTIONALITY

ROY HUNTINGTON

Martin Tuason, Armscor/Rock Island's president, is a shooter and die-hard gun-guy. He's not one of those company presidents who used to work for an appliance company. His family started the company and the Tuason family still runs it, with Martin's enthusiasm helping to keep the fire burning brightly.

"I wanted Armscor to get into the striker-fired market, but not with a plastic gun. That's been done," Martin told me. He explained Dustin Jones, their CFO, really knows the market and researched whether it'd be a good idea to make the move.

"Dustin came back encouraging us to take the leap," explained Martin. "So, we put our heads together and decided — let's do it." And I'm glad they did.

Since a certain other handgun manufacturer entered the market with a

polymer-framed pistol, the market exploded and now virtually all the major players offer some sort of poly-frame "wunder-nine." The shooting public embraced the idea of a lightweight and relatively affordable design but soon found there are also a few challenges.

For one, the grip angle on many of the designs isn't "just-right" for many shooters, requiring them to have to re-learn the feel as they adjust to pointing angles. There's often a "point it, then adjust slightly" feel to things. Those shooters have looked longingly at their 1911s and the classic grip angle, while still wanting the higher capacity and ruggedness of the more modern designs. Enter the STK100.

SUBTLE TOUCHES

Armscor/Rock Island, the world's leading 1911 manufacturer, already knows how to build guns out of metal — they've been doing it for decades. So, as Martin said, "Why not craft the frame of our new gun out of metal, since it's what we do?"

INDEED, WHY NOT?

The result is an innovative "clamshell" frame of CNC-machined aluminum alloy with designed-in grasping surfaces and

(A) The STK100 is geared toward personal protection, offering an integral light-mounting rail. (B) The operator controls include a safety trigger and reversible magazine release. Also shown are the screws holding the 2-piece metal frame together. (C) The aluminum, clamshell beavertail grip mimics the grip angle of the 1911 pistol for superb pointability and recoil control.



The stiffness of the metal frame keeps the fire controls stable, which translates into great accuracy for a production carry gun!



The Rock Island Armory STK100 9mm offers many of the features of a polymer "wunder-nine" coupled with the advantages of a metal frame pistol.



STK100 9MM



GUNS[®]

MAGAZINE

GEAR

AMMO: Speer G2 147-grain JHP
HOLSTER: Comp-Tac L Line
BELT: Galco Casual
KNIFE: CRKT Overland

“THE **STK100** SHOWS A HISTORY OF DESIGN, MANUFACTURE AND SUPPORT THAT COULD ONLY ORIGINATE FROM A COMPANY WITH A LONG HISTORY DOING WHAT THEY DO BEST — MAKING REAL GUNS FOR THE REAL WORLD.”

purpose-built elements, all held together with strategically placed screws. Perhaps most important of all, the grip angle is identical to that of a 1911. The additional sage notion of including a high beavertail allows a much higher grip, helping to effectively combat recoil issues. This combination of the stiffer alloy frame, innovative grip design, grip angle and the beavertail element means the STK100 sits low in the hand and handles like a Formula 1 racecar hugs the track. It's fast to get on-target — and easy to keep there as you shoot.

A 17+1 capacity, 28 oz. weight and 7.9" overall length places it exactly in the “duty/holster/belt carry/home defense” pistol category. While a lightweight, it's not a pocket gun and was never intended to be, yet it fit my medium-sized hands just fine. The ergonomics allows it to be concealed easily with the right garments, holster selection and attitude. Instilling confidence, a full-sized gun is easier to handle and control, especially under stress. And, as noted trainer Clint Smith says, “It's a big gun going into your holster — and a big gun coming back out.”

DETAILS

Carbon steel also plays a big role in the STK100. The slide is Parkerized carbon steel and has replaceable sights. It also comes completely set-up for red dot sight installation. Now might be a

good time to explain this gun didn't re-invent the wheel when it comes to some of the basic elements, so accessories like triggers, sights and such from the likes of APEX, Lone Wolf and others geared toward the GLOCK will fit the STK100. That's both convenient and smart as it opens a huge after-market accessory world to any STK100 owner — immediately.

The aluminum frame also adds stability to the gun that differs quite a bit from most polymer guns. Polymer guns usually have a metal insert of some sort with rails for the slide to run on. In some designs, however, the cross-pins holding action parts in place are secured through the polymer frame. When firing, the frame flexes and while this can help soften recoil it can also affect the relationship of parts. Consequently it's not uncommon for a stock trigger on a polymer frame gun to be soft, gritty, long or otherwise not as good as you might like it to be. Check YouTube to see the slow-motion video of the process and prepare to be astounded to see the degree of frame flex possible when some poly guns are fired. Sorta' reminds me of a horse quivering its skin to scare biting flies off.

The aluminum alloy frame of the STK100, however, keeps action parts in rigid alignment offering a more consistent trigger pull. Right out of the box the trigger on my test gun measured 4 lbs., 6 oz. with a firm consistency usually associated with



The STK100 is both stylish and practical, with a series of lightening cuts and molded-in grip striations in the billet-machined, parkerized carbon steel slide.



The STK100 comes from the factory with the rear sight integral with the removable optic cover plate.



Takedown is simple and very similar to a popular polymer line of pistols you might have heard about from Germany!

metal-framed guns like 1911s, Hi-Powers and others. Keep in mind too, the many after-market action parts available will allow you to easily change the trigger system to something meeting your specific needs or expectations. Plus, the alloy frame will keep the trigger as consistent as death and taxes.

Martin told me the STK100 concept came from the need for a new issue police handgun in the Philippines, Armscor's home country. Martin said he wanted a gun that could run 20,000 rounds and still be able to withstand the rigors of a hard life in the field. The aluminum alloy frame plays a significant role in meeting the job description.

"We essentially took the aluminum frame concept, then grew the pistol around that," explained Martin.

I think the result is clearly a rough-duty field pistol standing up handily to anything a sport or "civilian" shooter could ever toss at it.

SHOOTING

Shooting the STK100 didn't deliver any surprises as much as it reinforced the fact a company's experience manufacturing always pays dividends when introducing a new design. Applying seasoned experience on the production floor with modern engineering concepts often lands a home run, and it did here.

The STK100 was predictable on the range, delivering 1.5" to slightly less than 2" groups at 20 yards and would possibly do better with the right ammo dialed in. I've had no malfunctions of any sort, and since my article on it appeared in our sister publication *American Handgunner*, I've put another 200 or so

rounds through it adding up to about 700 now. FMJ and hollow points through exotic Black Hills HoneyBadger fluted ammo ran just fine and recoil was mild, even with the hot stuff. Everyone who fired the STK100 said essentially the same thing, "I like how easy it is to shoot and it feels good in the hand."

So there you go.

THE WRAP UP

I've tested new guns seemingly designed by appliance engineers who formerly made washing machines. Some have been awkward, had design elements verging on the senseless, chambered in odd proprietary calibers and otherwise advertised the fact they were not invented by "gun people." It's like when a man designs a woman's concealed carry purse. Really? It shows.

The STK100 shows a history of design, manufacture and support that could only originate from a company with a long history doing what they do best — making real guns for the real world.

The STK100 is, in a few words, comfortably in the top of the pack in my experience. It's light, reliable, easy to run, ranks number one in "pointability" to me, is affordable — at \$599 — and has a world of after-market accessories ready for it. And to sweeten the deal, just before we hung up from our phone call, Martin told me, "Look for new models as time passes."

He sounded like he was grinning when he said it.



Armscor.com

60 YEARS OF PLINKIN'

THE GUNS, TARGETS AND AMMO — THEN AND NOW

DAVID FREEMAN

The word “Plinking” — more commonly heard as “plinkin” — is an onomatopoeia, a fancy term for a word which sounds like what it means. I actually heard the sound one time when one of my .22 bullets glanced off the side of a soft drink bottle.

REMEMBER GLASS COKE BOTTLES?

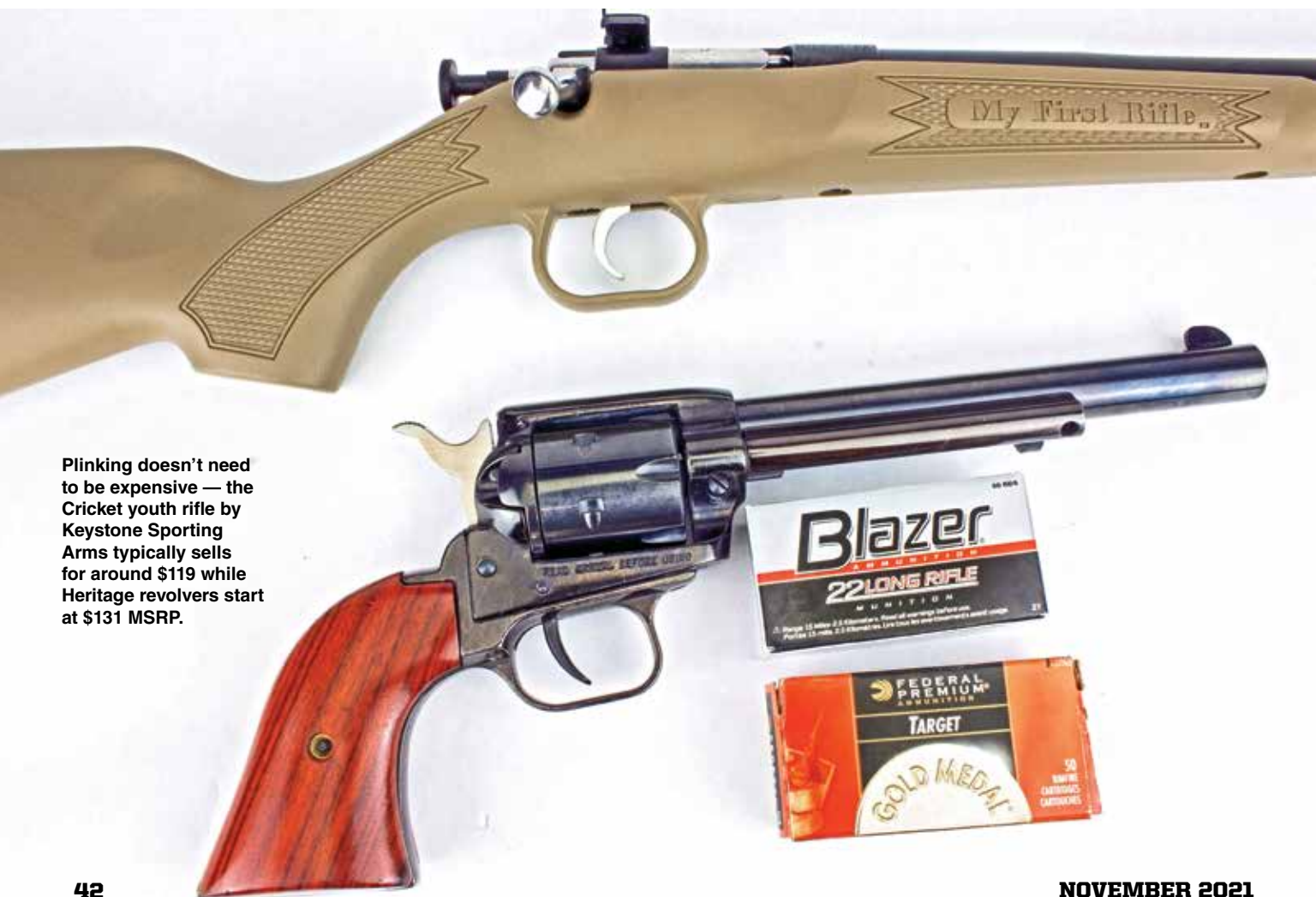
Wikipedia has an entry on “Plinking” and goes so far as to say: “... for many, plinking on homemade shooting ranges is the only way to keep up good marksmanship.” It’s a fascinating pastime,

even more fun than shooting at bullseye targets. Tin cans tumble. Bottles chatter. Jugs full of water go “thunk.” I know, many of us don’t live where we can do this kind of shooting anymore, but we can always hope for someone to invite us to their farm every now and then.

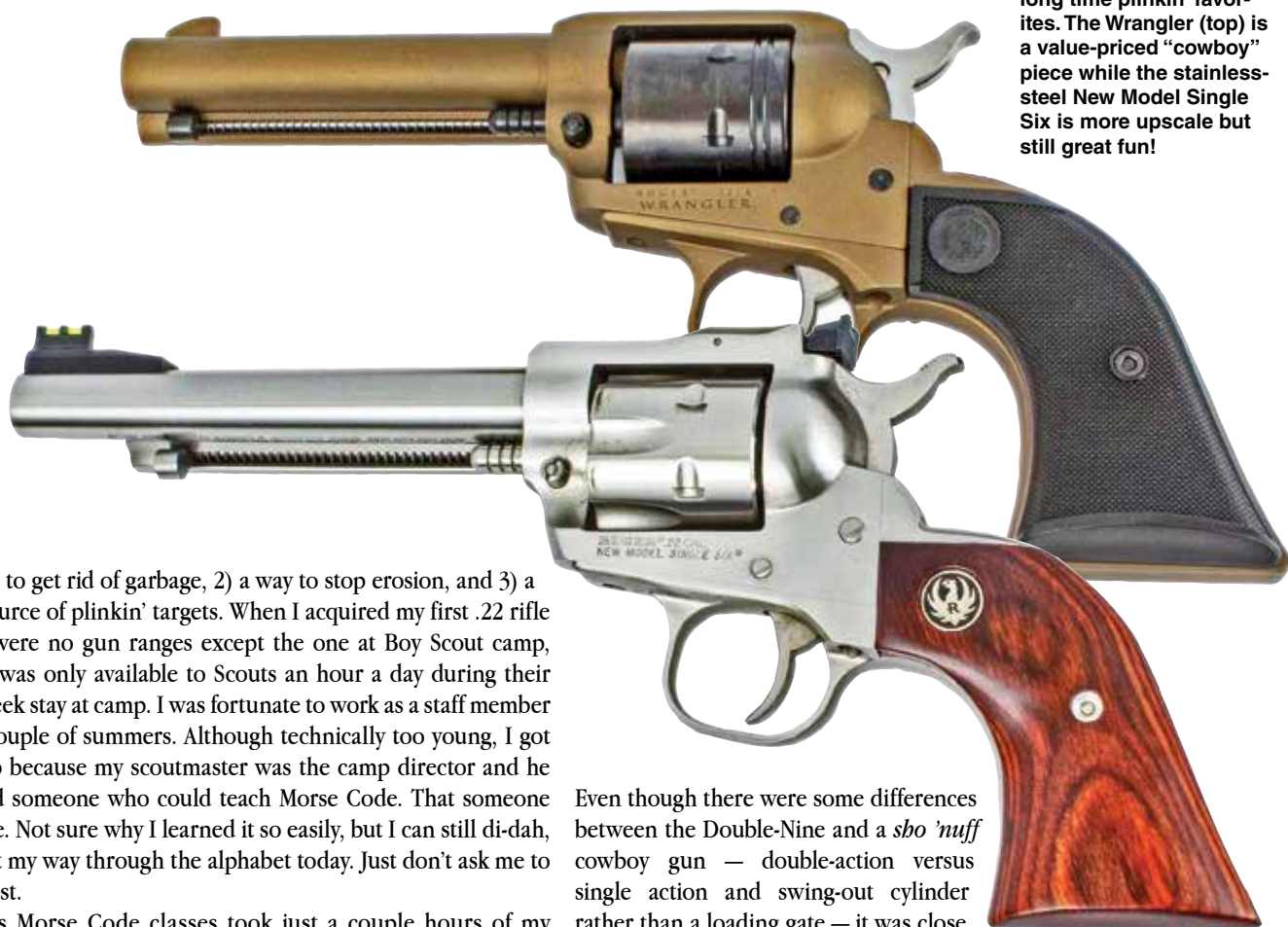
THE GREAT OLD DAYS

In the '60s, everybody who lived in the country had a garbage ditch. The ditches were everywhere because of erosion and filling them with household garbage served three purposes: 1)

Plinking doesn’t need to be expensive — the Cricket youth rifle by Keystone Sporting Arms typically sells for around \$119 while Heritage revolvers start at \$131 MSRP.



Ruger .22 sixguns are long time plinkin' favorites. The Wrangler (top) is a value-priced "cowboy" piece while the stainless-steel New Model Single Six is more upscale but still great fun!



a place to get rid of garbage, 2) a way to stop erosion, and 3) a rich source of plinkin' targets. When I acquired my first .22 rifle there were no gun ranges except the one at Boy Scout camp, which was only available to Scouts an hour a day during their one-week stay at camp. I was fortunate to work as a staff member for a couple of summers. Although technically too young, I got the job because my scoutmaster was the camp director and he needed someone who could teach Morse Code. That someone was me. Not sure why I learned it so easily, but I can still di-dah, dah-dit my way through the alphabet today. Just don't ask me to do it fast.

This Morse Code classes took just a couple hours of my time each day. Much of the rest of the day I spent at the camp's 50-foot rifle range working my way through the NRA Junior Marksmanship stages. I used a Remington 514 single-shot .22 rifle for the required shooting. Near the end of the season, a benefactor offered to replace the camp's somewhat worn-out supply of rifles and the existing ones were offered up for sale to staff members. I paid a whopping \$4 for the Remington and another \$2 for a Marlin 80 missing its magazine — this was in 1960.

Three years later, I walked into a hardware store with a summer's worth of lawn mowing money and paid \$54.95 for a High Standard Double-Nine .22 revolver. I had a driver's license and a 15-year-old Ford F1 pickup. This revolver accompanied me on every trek into the woods until I left home to join the Army.

Even though there were some differences between the Double-Nine and a *sho 'nuff* cowboy gun — double-action versus single action and swing-out cylinder rather than a loading gate — it was close enough for me to be satisfied. And, nine shots without reloading led to some serious plinkin'!

THE DETAILS

If you have 10 or more acres of land in the country, finding a place to shoot is probably not a problem. For those of us who live in town; however, it can be challenging. I'm fortunate in having a friend who has land, including a shooting range, within an hour's drive of me and who welcomes my use of his property for shooting. If you engage in such an arrangement with a land-owner, it's very important to leave no damage or trash behind, keep all gates closed or as you found them and to make sure everything leaving your muzzle impacts into a suitable backstop.

In many locations you may have access to public land such



Store-bought plinkin' targets that can be used again and again, with no worries about broken glass or debris!



The quarry: Typical plinkin' targets can be found in any family recycle bin today. Best of all, they can return there when done.



David's original plinkin' guns he used 60 years ago and still uses today. Top is a Remington 514 single-shot .22 rifle while below it is a High Standard Double Nine .22 revolver.

as a national forest or national grasslands. Target shooting is allowed on most public lands, but there are some rules. One of the rules involves not leaving behind anything you used as a target. For any forest service land you may wish to use, learn the details at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service website — FS.USDA.gov.

One important facet you can't overlook when plinkin' are the four firearms safety rules. Without a designated target, defined shooting stations and range control officers or trainers, countless accidents have happened during informal target practice when fun overloaded judgment. As a review: 1) All guns are always loaded, 2) never point your gun at anything you aren't willing to destroy, 3) keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on target, and 4) be sure of your target and what's behind it. This rule is the easiest to violate when plinking, so take an extra second to be sure and safe!

PLINKIN' GUNS

There are plenty of great firearms choices for plinking fun and you don't have to spend an arm and a leg. For youngsters, Keystone Sporting Arms makes several models of youth .22 rifles under their Cricket and Chipmunk brands. Savage and Rossi both make nice rifles at a plinkin' price point and one of my favorite plinkers, the Marlin 60, has been in continuous production since 1960.

If you want to start killing soda cans with handguns, the options are nearly limitless. Heritage makes a line of inexpensive .22 revolvers and the Ruger Wrangler is both wildly popular and a passel of rootin' tootin' cowboy fun! Kids love them, even 60- or 70-year-old kids. Of course, you can always ramp it up with Ruger's Mark IV series and 22/45s are excellent plinkin' pistols, along with their SR-22 pistols and LCR revolvers which are well-suited for small hands.

Smith & Wesson's M&P line is well represented in .22 caliber in both full-size and compact models while Smith's Victory Model and the Browning Buck Mark are also wonderful for plinkers. There are also imported western-style revolvers from Taylor's, Uberti, Chiappa and others. This past year Taurus introduced the TX22 semi-automatic .22 and GLOCK introduced the G44



Plinkin' with .22 LR has always been inexpensive. In the '60s, .22 cartridges went for a penny a round. Currently, it averages around 9 cents in small boxes, but can be as low as 4 cents per round when bought in bulk.

.22. These two handguns mimic mid-size 9mms, making them good trainers — and just fun to shoot, which is one of the main reasons for plinking in the first place!

DOWNRANGE

It's not likely you'll come across any of the garbage ditches sprinkling the countryside when I was a boy. You can, however, replicate the types of targets found there by scrounging through your own recycle bin before putting it out to the street. Some of my favorite plinkin' targets are the aluminum cans or plastic bottles of soft drinks. Although they're fun to bust, I recommend staying away from glass bottles for environmental reasons. Broken glass is not easy to clean up and presents a cutting risk to humans and animals if left on the ground.

Do-All Outdoors makes self-healing bounce-around targets in various shapes. You can often find these on the shelf at Walmart or you can order them from Amazon. This type of target provides hours of plinkin' fun and when you're done, pick 'em up and throw them in your shooting bag for next time.

What are the rules for plinkin'? Other than obeying all the safety rules, there are none. You can create informal contests among the shooters present, or if you're shooting alone, set challenges for yourself. For me, the goal is always to improve my marksmanship. Plinkin' is also a way for me to explore new guns or bring some of the lesser used guns out of the safe from time to time. That's the beauty of plinkin' — it's flexible to meet your own special set of circumstances. One thing that has always been true for me is plinkin' is a way to build or enhance relationships or to introduce friends or family members to the joys of shooting.



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WORLD'S HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION!

JEFF "TANK" HOOVER

If ever a cartridge were worthy of *Magna Cum Laude* status, the 500 S&W Magnum would hold those prestigious honors! Its reputation goes unchallenged, performance-wise. It plows deep, creating large, permanent wound channels through and through! Weighing over 400 grains, the projectiles begin at ½" before expansion with velocities of over 1,600 FPS!

No wonder it has the distinction as being the most powerful factory handgun cartridge in the world and this title shouldn't be

taken lightly! The 500 S&W Magnum is the equivalent of being heavyweight boxing champion of the world.

Both are heavy hitters, with everyone wanting to be their friend and not necessarily because of their charm or good looks — it's because no one wants to risk being clobbered by the Champ.

TWO FUN GUNS

To test the virtues of the 500 S&W Magnum I used two different guns. Companion guns chambered in the same cartridge is as traditional as the Old West itself as you only need to buy one

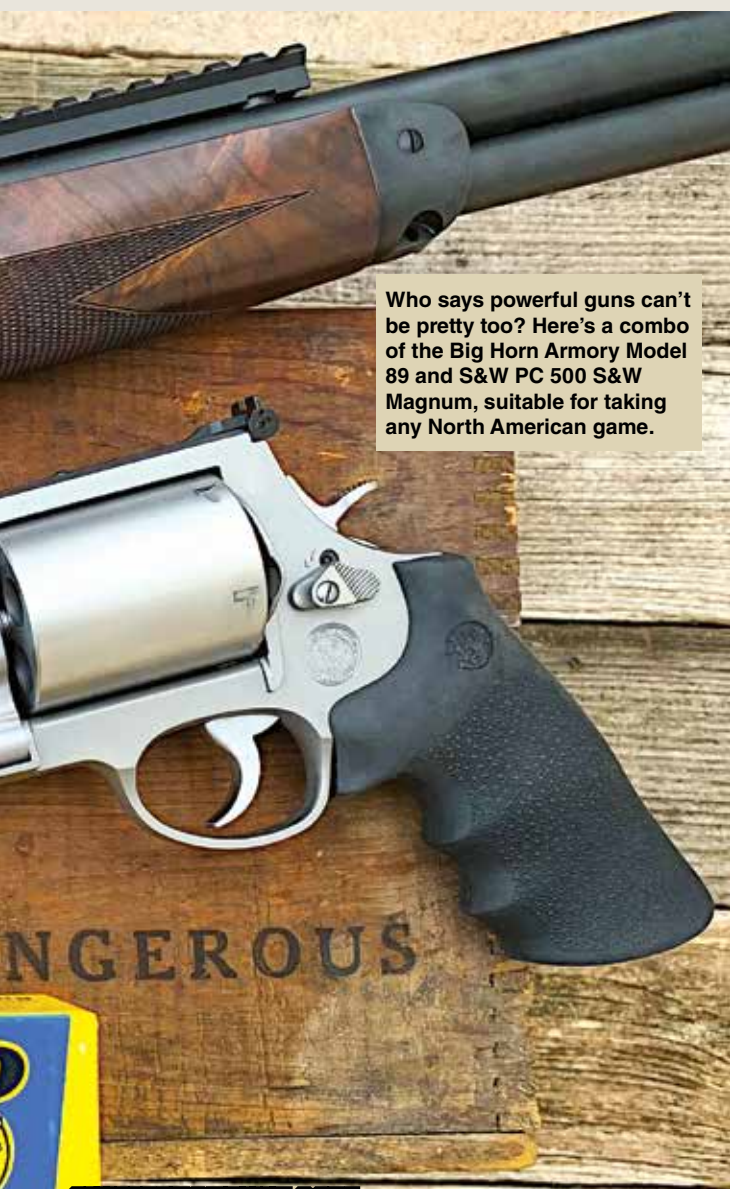


MAGNUM

cartridge caliber for your revolver and lever gun. To this end, the S&W Performance Center Model 500 3.5" revolver paired with the Big Horn Armory Model 89 makes a dandy companion combo. Together they make a dandy dynamic duo of sorts, capable of taking anything walking the earth.

BACKDROP

The 500 S&W Magnum first made its appearance at the 2003 SHOT show. Designed by the folks at Cor-Bon in partnership with S&W, the .50-caliber, semi-rimmed cartridge has two primary purposes. The first is being a handgun cartridge capable of taking any North American big-game species.



Who says powerful guns can't be pretty too? Here's a combo of the Big Horn Armory Model 89 and S&W PC 500 S&W Magnum, suitable for taking any North American game.



Tank showing what the 500 S&W Magnum does best: Make meat! In this case, a Russian sow into chops, sausage and ham.

The second? Simply claiming bragging rights of being the most powerful production handgun cartridge ever produced. If you're going to do something, you might as well do it big! What better reason is there?

X-FRAME EXCELLENCE

Launching a 440-grain hard cast bullet at 1,625 fps from a handgun is spectacular! In designing the new revolver, the engineers at S&W knew they needed a gun large enough to house the biggest of magnums while absorbing some of the recoil generated by the massive slugs. Yet not too large, as to make the gun cumbersome while carrying. After all, if a handgun isn't packable, it defeats the purpose in the first place.

The answer? A new, larger, stronger-framed revolver called the X-Frame. It handled all necessary criteria splendidly, while adding a new frame size to the S&W line-up. The first X-frames sported barrels of 8.38" to maximize velocity and handling characteristics when touching off those half-inch sticks of dynamite. Over time, shorter-barreled revolvers were added.

THE PERFORMANCE CENTER 500

Anything from S&W Performance Center (PC) means it's special and S&W fans know it. Here, guns are slicked-up and tuned, more so than S&W's already high factory standards. Recently, the PC released the most packable of X-frame designs, one sporting a 3.5" barrel in 500 S&W. Obviously, this gun was made more for packing than shooting but shooting we did!

Features include stylish barrel flats, a pinned HiViz fiber optic front sight and an overtravel stop, which combined with a PC-tuned action, makes follow-up shots as fast as possible. The unfluted 5-shot cylinder adds style and heft with recoil-absorbing weight. Soft synthetic black grips complement the brushed stainless finish and really do a tremendous job soaking up recoil. Overall length is 9.875" and dry weight is 56.2 oz. Stainless steel is used for both the barrel and frame, giving them a rugged, rust-resistant finish.



Never be under-gunned with this nice kit for the 500 S&W Magnum — Big Horn Armory Model 89, S&W Performance Center X-Frame, holstered in a Barranti Leather holster and cartridge slide.

BIG HORN ARMORY MODEL 89

In 2008, Big Horn Armory owner Greg Buchel desired to build a rifle strong enough to shoot the 500 S&W Magnum cartridge in a John Browning-style lever gun. Greg knew the slim and sleek Winchester Model 92 would be too small for such an endeavor but wanted the rifle's action smaller than the big-bore Winchester 1886.

So Buchel did what so many others before him had done — he designed his own action, calling it the Model 89 (halfway between Winchester's '92 and 1886). By using 17-4PH stainless steel, a steel three times stronger than originally used by Winchester, it worked. The Model 89 mid-sized action allowed adjustments to be made, moving pivot pins for carriers, release

points for cartridge guides and other critical internal parts for a correct geometry to cycle the 500 S&W Magnum cartridge.

Long story short, Buchel and his group of engineers were successful. On my Model 89 I fitted a Trijicon RM06 red dot sight on the sight rail, as my primary sight. The Skinner Sight peep sight installed on the bolt of the rifle maximizes sight distance to the front sight, providing another tough, durable sighting system.

FEEDING THE BEAST

Buffalo Bore ammunition was used for the factory portion of testing while handloads accounted for the rest. Not



Three shots at 50 feet from a 3.5" 500 S&W Magnum. Some would call it "holding the tiger by the tail!"



Handloads consisted of an MP Molds 385 PB HP bullet as well as a LEE 440-grain GC solid loaded over Hodgdon H110 and Winchester large rifle primer.

surprisingly, the loads — 440-grain hard-cast LFN-GC (long flat nose gas check); 400-grain JFN (Jacketed Flat Nose); 375-grain BARNES XPB; 400-grain Mono-Metal DG (Dangerous Game) — all came in 200–300 FPS slower than factory listings from the 3" revolver while the lever gun pushed it faster by roughly the same amount.

Handloads consisted of cast bullets from an MP Molds 385-grain hollow-point, plain base bullet and a 440-grain solid slug from a LEE double-cavity mold of gas check (GC) design. Loads of 37 grains of Hodgdon H110 was the propellant of choice, sparked by a Winchester large rifle primer. After casting, the bullets were powder-coated and sized 0.501" with my Lee APP press. The bullets were loaded into Starline brass and assembled in my LEE Classic Turret press, using Hornady dies.

Again, not surprisingly, the velocity difference were on the order of 400 fps from the rifles versus revolver.

SHOOTING

Range day was a balmy 26 degrees with tropical breezes of 20 mph. Not surprisingly, I had the range to my lonesome. Shooting the 3.5" PC gun was done at 50 feet for 3-shot groups. I fired double action, as this actually helped me "hold" onto the target better by not anticipating recoil. Plus, I wanted to shoot the way it would be done in the wilderness, if ever charged by something mean and nasty, meaning three shots were fired in roughly three seconds.

Surprisingly, my 3-shot groups went between 1.5" to 2" average. Did my hands sting? Yeah, sorta'. But it wasn't unbearable.

LEVER LOVE!

Shooting the Big Horn Armory Model 89 was obviously more comfortable. Distance was moved back to 50 yards and typical groups went into 1.5" to 2.5" with a few snugging into 1".



Factory loads tested by Tank included these four Buffalo Bore loads. From left to right: the 440-grain hard cast, 400-grain mono-metal, 400 grain-JSP and 375-grain Barnes all-copper bullet. Note: The mono-metal is only for use in the Big Horn Armory Model 89!

The rifle showed no preference, shooting all loads accurately. I'm sure a scope would tighten things up but the red dot is very fast getting on target, perfect for a hunting gun. My handloads shot on par with the Buffalo Bore ammunition accuracy-wise, which left me feeling warm, happy and content.

FINAL WORD

The 500 S&W Magnum is a dandy cartridge. Whether fired from a revolver, or lever gun, it has the power to take anything walking the earth. While easier to shoot and control in the Big Horn Armory Model 89, it's possible to control recoil from such a short-barreled gun as the S&W PC 3.5" revolver.

While not for everyone, the 500 S&W Magnum has a place for those willing to work with it. Once conquered, you'll have the satisfaction of knowing you can handle the world's most powerful factory loaded handgun cartridge in the world.

Short-Barrel CARTRIDGE CONVERSIONS

Concealed carry isn't a new idea

JOHN TAFFIN

In 1856 Smith & Wesson entered into an agreement with Rollin White who held the patent on revolvers with bored-through cylinders. Around 1857-'58, using White's patent, Smith & Wesson introduced the Model #1 as the first cartridge-firing revolver. Meanwhile, Sam Colt could have had the Rollin White patent but felt powder, cap and ball would always be preferred.

Due to White's patent, no one else except Smith & Wesson would be allowed to produce cartridge-firing revolvers until 1869. In 1868 Smith & Wesson entered an agreement with Remington allowing them to convert their percussion pistols to cartridge-firing revolvers using a bored-through cylinder. Sam Colt was now gone but the Colt company was still left out in the cold.

COLT JOINS THE FRAY

Once White's patent finally ran out, Colt began offering Cartridge Conversions on their basic 1860 Army Model. First came

the Richards Conversion in July 1871, followed by the Richards-Mason Conversion in 1872. The latter is easy to distinguish from the former as it has a full-length ejector rod housing running all the way back to the front of the cylinder.

Both of these Colt Cartridge Conversions were built on the cap and ball 1860 Army. The standard barrel lengths for the two Cartridge Conversions were the same for the 1860 Army, namely 8" while the 1871-72 had a slightly shorter 7-1/2" barrel. Were shorter barrels offered? The definitive work on Cartridge Conversions is *A Study of Colt Conversions and Other Percussion Revolvers* by R. Bruce McDowell and on page 283 there is shown a 5-1/2" 1871-72 Open Top Revolver with well-worn ivory stocks. He says of this picture: "Some Model 1871-1872 Open Top .44s have short barrels such as that pictured. The gun is serial number 4138, has a 5-3/8" barrel and Army-size ivory grips with steel grip straps. Most of these revolvers were shipped from the factory with a 7-1/2" barrel, and if shortened, were done so by owners or gunsmiths after they left the factory. Shorter barrels

The Path To The Peacemaker — the 1860 Army, Richards Conversion, Richards-Mason Conversion, 1871-72 Open-Top and Single Action Army; all in 5-12" versions.





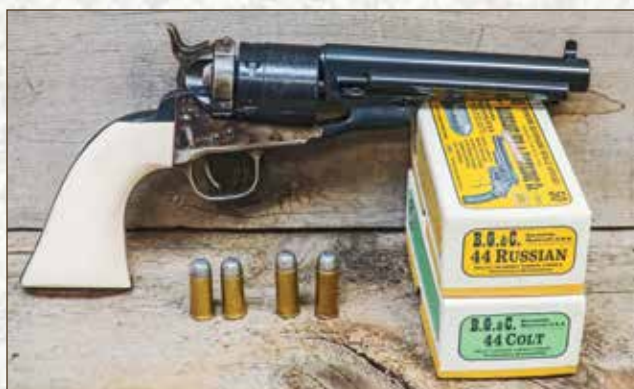
were very popular with lawmen, gunfighters, railroad detectives and others needing to clear leather in a hurry.”

I concur with author McDowell. It is really easy for me to see in my mind’s eye serious sixgunners of that time shortening the barrels of their pistols not only to make them faster into action but also easier to conceal. This revolver mentioned by McDowell is also interesting in that it is not chambered in .44 Colt but has been converted to .44-40. Someone was very serious about a Perfect Packin’ Pistol!

TODAY

Original short-barreled Cartridge Conversions are hard to find, however, thanks to Cimarron Firearms both the Richards and Richards-Mason Conversions are offered in replica form as well as the 1871-72 Open-Top all with 5-1/2" barrels. Both 1851 and 1860 versions, so named because of their grip frame, are offered. The former has the grip frame identical to the Single Action Army while the latter is the same as found on the 1860 Army cap and ball revolver. In addition to .44 Russian/.44 Colt/.44 Special and .38 Long Colt/.38 Special in several variations, Cimarron also offers both a .45 Colt and a .45 Schofield chambered version.

Their current catalog shows the 5-1/2" Richards is available in both .38 Special, which also handles .38 Long Colt and a second version which chambers .44 Special, .44 Colt and .44 Russian. A note here on this chambering — the first Cartridge Conversions and the Open-Top I encountered several years ago were chambered for the .44 Colt. This cartridge has a rim smaller in diameter than found on the Special and Russian. Those cylinders were too small to allow the two latter cartridges to chamber. So, if one wants to shoot all three .44 cartridges, it is necessary to make sure it is a later model with the slightly larger cylinder to accept the rims of the Russian and Special.

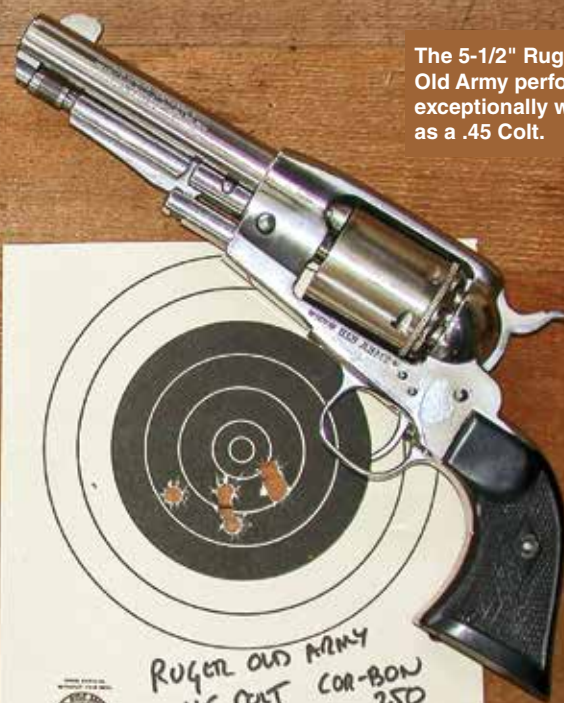
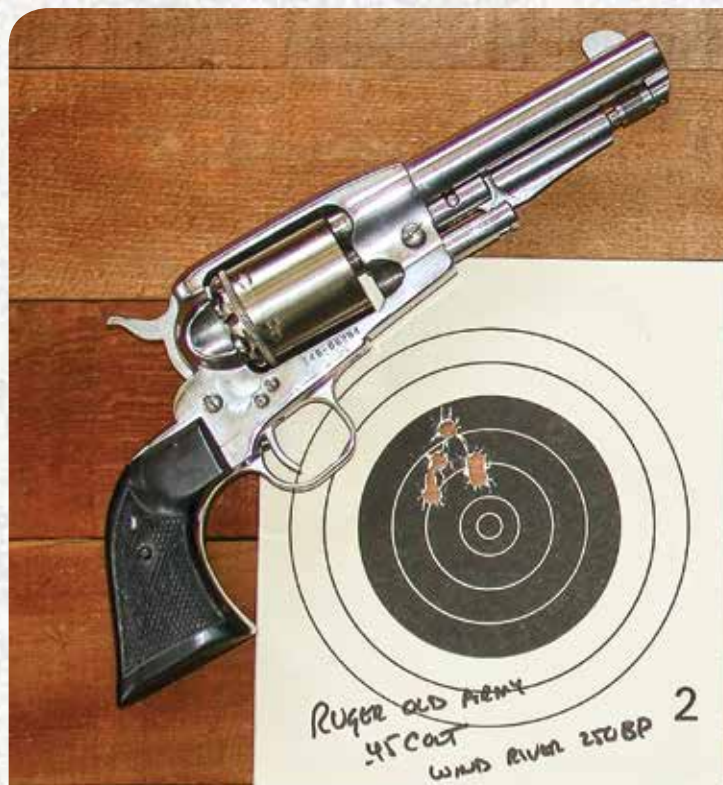


This Richards Conversion accepts both .44 Russian and .44 Colt loads.

Looking at the specifications of 5-1/2" Richards-Mason replicas we find both versions of the .44 model, with one handling .44 Colt and .44 Russian and another accepting all three. The .44 Special is the longest of the three cartridges and any chambered for this .44 will handle the other two also. It is available as well in .38 Special, .45 Colt and a version dedicated for the .45 Schofield/.45 S&W only.

This brings us to the 1871-72 Open-Top, which in the 5-1/2" barrel length version can be had in .38 Special, .44 Colt/.44 Russian and .45 Colt. The interesting thing is this model is also available with a 4-3/4" barrel. All three versions load through a loading gate on the right side and have an ejector rod for removing spent cases just as found on the shortly-to-appear Single Action Army, the first big Colt to have a top strap. Unlike the SAA, the barrel assembly of the Cartridge Conversions and Open-Top are mated to the frame with a wedge pin just as the 1860 Army percussion pistol.

Chamberings can be confusing so it is a good idea to call Cimarron and see exactly what is available and whether the .44



The 5-1/2" Ruger Old Army performs exceptionally well as a .45 Colt.



This Richards Conversion (above, top) and the Richards-Mason Conversion are both chambered in .38 Long Colt/.38 Special. These 5-1/2" 1858 Remington percussion pistols (below) in .44 and .36 are easily changed into Cartridge Conversions using conversion cylinders from Taylor's & Co.



version will handle all three cartridges and if the .45s will accept both the .45 Colt and .45 S&W/Schofield. All of these Cimarron replicas are of excellent quality, nicely fitted and finished and, thanks to Mike Harvey's diligence, exceptionally authentic.

OTHER POSSIBILITIES

Remington percussion pistols can also be made easily into cartridge revolvers by simply adding conversion cylinders. I had Milt Morrison of Qualite Pistol and Revolver shorten the barrels to 5-1/2" on a pair of 1858 Remingtons, one in .44 and the other a .36 cap and ball, and once finished it was only necessary to add conversion cylinders. For the former I have excellent Kirst Konverter cartridge conversion cylinders in both .45 Colt and .45 ACP while with the latter Remington uses one cylinder for both .38 Special and .38 Long Colt. If one is a reloader, easy-shooting loads for practice can be made up using .38 Short Colt brass.

There is something that needs to be noted about .38 Conversions. There is no problem with the Richards, Richards-Mason, or 1871-72 Open-Top. However, if a cartridge cylinder is added to a Remington or Colt .36 (so-named by standards at that time by measuring diameter from top of the lands rather than the bottom of the grooves as is customary today), there will be a problem when trying to fire standard loads. Both of these have 0.375" barrels instead of the normal .38 barrel of 0.357". The original .38 Colt loads used a heeled bullet smaller at the base to fit into the brass case while the remainder of the bullet was the same diameter as the brass to mate with a barrel. To obtain any accuracy with conventional bullets one needs soft cast hollow base bullets that will expand to fit the rifling of the larger barrels. Hollow base wadcutter bullets will work or Buffalo Arms offers soft cast bullets with hollow bases.

I have several conversion cylinders for the 1858 Remington and 1851 and 1860 Army from both Walt Kirst (KirstKonverter.com) and Taylor's & Co. R&D conversion cylinders. Most of these conversion cylinders come with a back plate with six firing pins,

safety notches between chambers and a locating pin in the back of the cylinder to mate with the corresponding hole in the conversion ring/back plate. Kirst Konverter cylinders are available for a long list of replicas in addition to the Ruger Old Army. There are also conversion kits available to change some replica percussion pistols to .22 sixguns.

The workmanship on both the R&D and Kirst cylinders is excellent. A pair of Ruger Old Army 5-1/2" percussion pistols of mine were fitted with R&D cylinders several decades ago. Both were a near-perfect fit and this says something about the quality control of both Ruger and R&D. With most .45 Colt loads, and the conversion cylinders in place, both revolvers shoot just slightly below point of aim at 20 yards and these percussion-turned-cartridge-firing sixguns shoot very well.

FINAL ARGUMENT

Having cartridge firing cylinders fitted to percussion revolvers allows a great deal of versatility without adding extra sixguns. When the cartridge era entered in the early 1870s, many sixgunners had their revolvers converted to cartridge firing by adding a new cylinder. The smart ones held onto their old cylinders just in case they found themselves without ammunition. They could still survive by loading their own in the original cylinders. Thanks to the Old Army and a conversion .45 Colt cylinder, this is still not all that bad of an idea today.

Whether for plinkin or packin', Cartridge Conversions offer a lot of versatility. With the versions I have, I can shoot .38 Short Colt, .38 Long Colt, .38 Special, .44 Colt, .44 Russian, .44 Special, .45 Schofield, .45 Colt and even .45 ACP. That does not leave many bases uncovered.

It has been over 150 years since the first Cartridge Conversions appeared and they only held center stage at Colt from 1871 to 1873 until the Single Action Army appeared. In this day and age with semi-automatic pistols holding 18 or more cartridges, I still find cartridge conversions have a place in my sixgunnin' life. For concealed carry they may not be anywhere near the upper part of the list of practical options, however, they will still certainly work and especially for traveling off the beaten path. In sagebrush, foothills, forests, or mountains, they will still work just fine while giving us a grand connection to the past.

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THE RUGER VAQUERO

MODERN-DAY COWBOY REVOLVER

ALAN GARBERS

When I heard the news Ruger was offering the Vaquero, I was excited as a western history buff could be. Even the name was western!

I wanted a Colt Single Action Army since devouring Louis L'amour novels as a teenager. But as an adult, I never had enough extra folding money after the bills were paid. Yes, there were other less expensive single-action revolvers available, but they just didn't fit the blurry vision in my head. In 1993, I knew the Vaquero was what I wanted.

The advertisements at the time said the Ruger Vaquero was styled after the Colt SAA but with more metal where it counted and a transfer-bar safety. Both were welcome safety features. To make it even more appealing, it was within my budget, especially since my lovely wife was working in the Ruger Prescott, Ariz. plant and she could get me any Ruger product at a discount.

True to form, my luck ran against me. There were thousands of shooters scrambling for the Vaquero and until those orders were filled, employees could not order one at the discounted rate. As fate would have it, we moved out of state before I could order a Vaquero.

It seems amazing in a world awash with high-capacity 9mm semi-automatics and AR-15 rifles, Ruger would even bother to engineer a revolver based on 19th-Century technology. To unravel this anomaly, we need to look deeper into what was happening around the country.

TIMES CHANGE

In the 1980s baby boomers were flocking to cowboy action shooting to compete in cowboy-tactical matches set in miniature western towns while dressed like cowboys, gamblers and saloon girls — and they loved every minute of it. Like a wildfire, clubs sprang up across the country and around the world as shooters embraced their inner John Wayne. The problem? The selection of pistols at the time was limited to the authentic Colt Single Action Army, Italian copies or the Ruger Blackhawk.

While the New Vaquero (top) is closer to the author's 1902 Colt SAA (bottom), the original Vaquero (middle) has more Blackhawk features and the warning label roll stamped in plain view. Ruger has offered several versions of hammers (below) to please competition shooters.





No matter what game
you play, it's hard
to beat two pairs of
Ruger Vaqueros!



To slim down the “New Model” while maintaining Vaquero’s legendary strength, they moved the chambers inward. Original (top cylinder), New (bottom cylinder). Even with fixed open sights and aging eyesight, the Vaquero performs well at 25 feet (below).



Real Colt Single Action Army revolvers are expensive. Some Italian guns were poor copies, low quality and made of soft metals that didn’t hold up to the rigors of CAS. The Ruger Blackhawk was a thing of beauty and built like a tank but didn’t have the classic profile many shooters craved. And, since the Blackhawk had adjustable target sights, its use was limited to just a few shooting categories.

With the sport of CAS growing, and shooters buying pistols in pairs, Ruger decided to offer a Blackhawk with fixed sights and a traditional Colt-like profile, renaming it the Vaquero. It was an instant hit.

While the Vaquero was Colt-like in appearance, the internal workings were pure Ruger and stood up to severe use and abuse. Plus, a change was made to ease loading. On almost all traditional single-action revolvers the hammer must be drawn back to the loading notch to allow the cylinder to turn for loading/unloading. The Vaquero was designed with a free-spin feature activated when the loading gate was opened. Having seen shooters lose their thumb-hold on the hammer on a Colt SAA while loading, I consider this a valuable safety feature.

But, the original Vaquero had its detractors. The company lawyers must have been on the design team as a warning about the dangers of shooting firearms was roll-stamped on the left side of the barrel. Some people complained the heavy-duty revolver had a less-balanced feel than a real Colt and some details frustrated the traditionalists. Ruger was listening.

In 2005 the company introduced the Ruger New Vaquero. The re-vamped Vaquero addressed most of the complaints from the traditionalists.

- The ugly barrel roll-stamp warning was hidden under the barrel.
- The cylinder bevel was increased to reduce holster wear and speed re-holstering.
- The ejector rod head changed to a traditional crescent shape.
- The cylinder diameter and frame were scaled down to the dimensions of the original 1955 Blackhawk, making it almost the same as a Colt.
- The grip frame was reduced to the original pre-XR-3 frame dimensions and black-checked hard-rubber-like grips were offered.

STAYING STRONG

There is a misconception about the cylinder on the New Vaqueros. Since the cylinder diameter was decreased many assume the cylinder wall was decreased, making the New Vaquero weaker than the original. This is not the case. The chambers were moved inward slightly to maintain the chamber to outside wall thickness.

Over the last three decades, the Vaquero has been offered in a variety of calibers, barrel lengths and finishes. One of my favorite Vaqueros was a blued 7½" barreled model with black checked grips chambered in .45 Colt. It seemed I couldn’t miss when shooting my pet Vaquero. In a moment of weakness, I sold it to a friend so he could have a matched set. I have kicked myself since.

The most popular Vaqueros in the cowboy action world are of the .38/357 caliber due to lighter recoil and significant savings for handloaders. The next most popular is the .45 Colt. While some CAS categories require pistols to be .40 caliber or larger, other

To a layman, both versions of the Vaquero look like a Colt. To Colt lovers, that's fighting talk. To Ruger lovers, the Colt SAA is nice, but a Ruger lasts forever!

While factory cowboy loads are usually available, they can get expensive quick. Most cowboy action shooters reload their own cartridges. Alan prefers a .45 caliber 200-grain RNFP bullet in front of 6 grains of Trail Boss or a .358 caliber 125-grain RNFP bullet in front of 4.2 grains of Trail Boss.



shooters just want the nostalgia of experiencing the kick of the caliber the Colt SAA was originally offered back in 1873. As a result, Ruger now limits most of their offerings to those two calibers: .38/.357 and .45 Colt.

The most popular of the Vaquero family are the highly buffed stainless steel models. Ruger developed a polish on their revolvers to match the shine of nickel plating and they are beautiful. I have four and if I could find the now-discontinued stainless Ruger New Vaquero in .45 Colt with the 7½" barrels (KNV45), I would have two more in the stable!

ADDED ANGLE

Other Vaquero offerings are the Bisley and bird's head versions. The Ruger Bisley pays homage to the Colt Bisley, popular for target matches at the end of the 19th Century. On both the Colt and the Vaquero, the Bisley has distinctive grips designed for target shooting. The large grips make it easy to shoot one-handed in CAS matches, so it is popular with those, like myself, who shoot gunfighter or dualist style.

In the last half of the 1800s, many smaller revolvers sported bird's head grips. The unique shape fits small hands well. To me, the pinnacle of this style was the Colt Model 1877, offered in three calibers unofficially known as "Lightning," "Thunderer" and "Rainmaker" (.38 Long Colt, .41 Long Colt and .32 Long Colt respectively). Val Kilmer's portrayal of Doc Holiday in

the block-buster *Tombstone* featured a beautiful ivory-handled model. Overnight, countless CAS shooters wanted to channel their inner Huckleberry and demanded bird's head revolvers. Ruger was paying attention and offered their version.

In looking through the offerings on Ruger's website, you'll notice most models now sport lowered hammers. Ruger is following the market demands. Cowboy shooters work to shorten their stage times. By lowering the hammers, they are easier to cock, shaving fractions of seconds from stage times. In the world of competitive cowboy shooters, fractions of seconds can mean the difference between winning and not even placing!

What's next for the Vaquero as we approach the 30th anniversary? It depends on the market and what Ruger's distributors order. If a distributor feels they have a market for a certain caliber, grip style, finish, or barrel length, Ruger tools up and makes a limited run.

While fate may have denied me of my Vaquero back in 1993, I am at peace. If you have been paying attention you know I have four and would like two more. I am not alone. A general survey of SASS members who own Ruger Vaqueros runs about 80%. It is the top requested revolver by new and veteran shooters alike. What a testament to the quality of Ruger's Vaquero and Bill Ruger's love of the American West.

Ruger.com



Steeped in cutlery history, the Silver Stag Random Point combines a Damascus steel blade with an antler handle guaranteed to warm the cockles.

SILVER STAG RANDOM POINT

CRÈME DE LA CUT!

Many who appreciate finery in a knife will tell you nothing stirs the soul like the old world blend of Stag and Damascus. No matter if you have a deep visual appreciation of the past and want to own one, or use it, or reenact with it — there's something inherently magical about this pairing. Silver Stag Knives specializes in, as their name implies, knives with antler handles in all shapes, sizes, and purposes — and some of these are available with Damascus blades like the Random Point model featured here.

The Random Point is named for its Damascus pattern — which is random — and the deer or elk point gracing the handle. The overall length is approximately 7.0" give or take a little depending on the tine. The 3.25" blade is a straight back design with a hollow-ground belly, a nice

size for light skinning and caping. Silver Stag's Damascus is made from blending two tool steels, 1095 and 15N20 high carbon tool steel, into attractive patterns like the one you see here. A good old-fashioned brass guard (just like the one on Grandpa's classic hunting knife) offers nice finger protection and for the icing on the cake, Silver Stag provides a handmade, leather belt sheath replete with skived leather lacing.

WHY YOU'LL LIKE IT

If you hunt with historic firearms or are a reenactor, the Random Point is the knife

The Random Point's 3.25" Damascus blade is a melding of 1095 and 15N20 high carbon tool steels. The brass guard is a traditional nod to boot.

for you. If you desire a larger hunting knife Silver Stag can fix you up there, too. If you don't require Damascus steel the company's primary steel is D2 semi-stainless, a reliable time-proven performer that finds its way even on modern tactical knives today. It's rare to find a company specializing in such cool, classic cutlery and Silver Stag does it with a passel of spades. Suggested retail for the Silver Stag Random Point is an affordable \$149.

SilverStag.com

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IMPACT SPORT IN-EAR HEARING PROTECTION

Brent T. Wheat

Remember the old visual joke — The universal firearms industry handshake consists of cupping your hand to your ear? Hearing loss isn't really funny but those of us who still remember when sticking empty .38 cases in your ear canal was considered "ear pro," we need both hearing protection and amplification.



The new Impact Sport In-Ear Hearing protection works wonderfully on both counts. This is my first set where the electronics are worn around your neck and I'm actually liking it — no muffs to get in the way, the controls are easier to access than just in-ear protection, you don't lose a single earplug if one falls out and the battery life seems longer. Best of all,

my set has Bluetooth capability so I can hear important phone calls coming in and if you want to listen to music, go ahead. They're also stereo so you can easily determine the direction of incoming sounds. I haven't owned these long but they're quickly becoming my go-to ear pro.

MSRP: \$165 with Bluetooth

HowardLeightShootingSports.com

COLD STEEL CRAWFORD 1

I've got a lot of relatively inexpensive knives along with a couple of high-dollar beauties but I'd have to say the Cold Steel Crawford 1 hits a nice sweet spot of a custom-designed knife at a mass-market price.

Designed in collaboration with designer Wes Crawford, the knife is an "inexpensive version of his pricey custom flippers." In this regard, the knife fulfills its mission in spades!



Featuring a "Wes flipper" integrated into the tang, the knife manually opens nearly as fast as a switchblade. The 3-1/2" Japanese 4034 stainless steel blade has a stout saber grind and wide tangs to keep your hand safe when bearing down. It also has a secondary knife lock to ensure it doesn't collapse even under duress, a nice feature for a true working-class knife.

MSRP: \$49.99

ColdSteel.com

FIX IT STICKS COMPACT PISTOL KIT

Gun writers are always talking about the "ultimate" gee jaw and gimcrack, the latest and greatest new tool to solve all your problems, make your linens whiter, your smile brighter and ensure world peace. However, in this case, please don't roll your eyes when I declare the Fix It Sticks Compact Pistol Kit truly is the one-and-only kit you need in your shooting bag.



Built around the Fix It Sticks Mini All-in-One Torque Driver, it also includes a list of pretty much anything you'd need on the range — or at home — to get your pistol running again, including a .45 bushing wrench, brass rods, cleaning gear and even an Aimpoint Adjustment Bit. If this pocket-size kit can't solve your problem, your pistol is well and truly broken. The only thing it doesn't include is pliers so if you add a set of foldable ones, you'll be ready for whatever the ever-present range gremlins throw your way.

MSRP: \$180

FixItSticks.com

REAL AVID SPEED CLEAN SYSTEM

Not much room to improve the good old traditional patch and cleaning jag system, right? That's what I thought until a package from Real Avid arrived recently.



Their new Bore-Max

Speed Clean system is a forward leap in the technology of gun cleaning. Using a matched set of precision jags, specially-sized patches and their high-quality cleaning rods, the new Real Avid system allow much better clearing of rifle and pistol barrels.

The nickel-plated Speed Brushes are claimed to clean 2x more crud with each pass and I will say they exit the bore really filthy, even in a gun you thought was fairly clean. The high-quality brushes are phosphor-bronze but plated to ensure copper solvents don't eat them alive. Next, you use the tight-fitting jag and Speed Patches, which are claimed to have 4x more bore contact. I'm not sure of a field-expedient method to scientifically assess "total crud removal" but these things do clean like crazy!

MSRP: \$13.99

RealAvid.com

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UNDOING THE MUSKET ARGUMENT

A LITTLE SILLY, A LOT SERIOUS

Dave Workman

While Virginia gun owners are trying to take back their state this month from the radical far-left that pushed through most of Ralph Northam's extremist gun control agenda in 2020, elsewhere around the country anti-gunners will once again fall back on their favorite boilerplate arguments to do the same in your state.

You can have some fun with these people, while teaching them a lesson and making the extremists look really foolish.

Good for the goose ...

I've lost count of the occasions when someone has tossed up the argument that at the time the Second Amendment was written, there weren't modern firearms. The Amendment, they argue, should only apply to muskets and flintlock rifles.

Here's how I've responded to the premise: "Look, if you want to roll back the clock and calendar, I'm game. But remember, if that's where you want to take this debate, there are a few things to consider."

- When the Bill of Rights — for which the Second Amendment is the cornerstone — was adopted, we didn't have television or radio, no cable channels, no web offset presses for mass-producing newspapers or the Internet and social media. So, under your suggestion, they wouldn't be protected by the First Amendment, right?

- We didn't have organized police departments, and if criminals came to your home, you were expected to deal with the problem, not call 9-1-1 for help because they didn't have telephones, either.

- Nobody needed a license or permit to carry a firearm. There were no background checks. It was not unusual to encounter armed citizens doing business in towns and villages, and no one raised an eyebrow.

Naturally, they'll try to ridicule these remarks but the Bill of Rights is an all-or-nothing proposition. It's not a legal buffet from which you can pick and choose those rights you like while discarding those you don't. The Bill of Rights is a 10-course banquet and it's still today's menu, not yesterday's blue plate special.

This would be a good time to remind your opponent the U.S. Supreme Court could be taking on more Second

Amendment cases to further define the parameters of the right to keep and bear arms.

Joe Biden has made a habit of contending the Second Amendment is "not absolute." Five months ago, when he announced his "Comprehensive Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gun Crime and Ensure Public Safety," he told a gaggle of reporters, "The Second Amendment, from the day it was passed, limited the type of people who could own a gun and what type of weapon you could own. You couldn't buy a cannon."

This is demonstrably false. Mississippi River keel boats were frequently armed with swivel guns; small cannons used to fend off river pirates or raiding war parties. Some on the frontier owned cannons to defend their stockades. Privateers sailed with cannons.

Last year, when quizzed about Biden's campaign assertion regarding cannon ownership, a fact checker consulted David Kopel, research director and Second Amendment project director at the Colorado-based Independence Institute.

"I am not aware of a ban on any arm in colonial America," Kopel said at the time. "There were controls on people or locations, but not bans on types of arms."

In 2020, when the Biden campaign was questioned about his cannon allegation, a fact checker wrote in the *Austin American-Statesman* newspaper, "the campaign was unable to come up with an example of a law banning private ownership of cannons, and historians of the period doubt that any existed."

WHERE HUMOR STOPS

The musket and cannon debate is admittedly prone to silliness but opinions such as Biden's suggest a horribly shallow knowledge of

history and no willingness to learn the facts, either among the public or the establishment media. They allow gun prohibitionists, including the president, to get away with such nonsense without challenge.

This is where grassroots Second Amendment activists step in. This column has encouraged readers to write letters to the editor, or be so bold as to write an Op-Ed for the local newspaper. We're heading into late autumn and soon it will



be winter. Of course hunting seasons are under way, but set aside a little time for gun rights research and get busy writing.

There is ample material from which to draw for such a project. The National Rifle Association and Second Amendment Foundation are excellent sources, and one can go on a search engine and simply look for information about "Gun Control" or "Gun Rights" and start studying.

This is not for laughs. You're trying to educate people who haven't made up their minds and the most important thing is to explain how Rights are different from Privileges. When Joe Biden, or some other anti-gunner declares, "Nobody needs 100 rounds for deer hunting," remind them the Second Amendment is not about hunting, it's about prohibiting the government from stepping on your rights.

Keep your writing terse and on topic; short sentences, proper spelling and punctuation. Put your name, address and telephone number on it. Do not plagiarize someone else's work. If you quote someone else, put it in quotation marks and provide attribution.

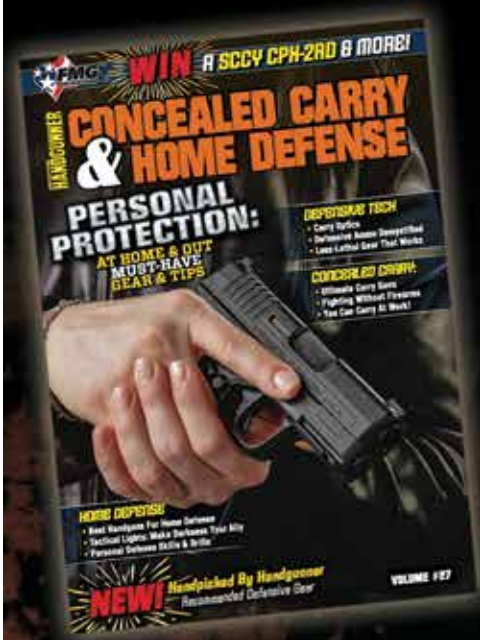
Offer yourself as a source to local reporters. Be someone they will want to contact for the "other side" of any story on guns. Build your credibility by telling the truth, providing honest assessments of situations, understanding firearms and being able to explain the differences between military arms and modern sporting rifles.

One year from this month, America will hold its mid-term elections. If you want things to change, you're going to have to vote and get everyone you know to vote. In 1994, frustrated citizens changed the face of Congress by throwing out more than 50 anti-gun politicians who voted for the Brady Law in 1993 and the Clinton Crime Bill with its 10-year ban on so-called "assault weapons" and original capacity magazines. Bill Clinton was effectively neutered for the rest of his time in office.

The time has come to do it again. If you entertain, even for a heartbeat, any notion the party now in power doesn't want to turn your Second Amendment right into a heavily regulated privilege, you are woefully naïve.

The nomination of David Chipman earlier this year to head the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives wasn't a signal; it was an open declaration of war on America's gun owners. Here we are five months later. Any questions? 🗡️

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PROTECTOR S WILSON COMBAT

The *Protector S* is basically Wilson Combat's standard Protector carbine. If you've been waiting for a top-quality rifle that's available, the Protector S could be the one for you. Chambered in 5.56 NATO in a WC-15 platform, the carbine has a 16" round-threaded barrel and an OAL of 33.25". It weighs 6 lbs., 9.6 oz. empty. Wilson Combat parts include a Tactical Triggerguard, a Recon Profile Match Grade Barrel, a 12.6" M-LOK Rail, a Tactical Trigger Unit and more. MSRP: \$2,050. For more info: (800) 955-4856, ShopWilsonCombat.com



VICKERS TACTICAL FLOOR PLATES FOR THE HK VP9/VP40

TANGODOWN INC.

TangoDown announces an addition to the Vickers Tactical collection — *Vickers Tactical Floor Plates for the HK VP9/VP40*. The VTMPF-010 offers the same features as existing VT/TD plates in the VTMPF series while allowing easy manipulation regardless of conditions. It's a simple but worthy upgrade for your VP9/VP40. MSRP: \$19.25. For more info: (909) 392-4757, TangoDown.com

GLX 2X PRISM WITH ACSS GEMINI

PRIMARY ARMS OPTICS

The *GLx 2x Prism with ACSS Gemini* comes with a new reticle option for the Primary Arms Optics' scope. Designed for 9mm carbines and AR pistols, the ACSS Gemini reticle incorporates all the features of the ACSS and adapts it for a PCC format. Weighing only 11 oz., the GLx 2x Prism is comparable to many full-size red dot and holographic weapon sights, but the ultra-clear 2x magnification and etched ACSS ballistic-compensating reticle provide additional precision at farther distances. MSRP: \$369.99. For more info: (713) 344-9600, PrimaryArms.com



040 ONSET BUCK KNIVES

The *040 Onset* from Buck Knives is a framelock knife for everyday carry. Its 3 3/8" drop-point, flat-grind blade is made of CPM S45VN steel, Bos heat-treated with a Rockwell hardness of 59-61. The Onset has a smooth ball bearing flipper, black textured G10 handle and a removable stonewash finish belt clip. MSRP: \$180. For more info: (800) 326-2825, BuckKnives.com



SOG-TAC AU SOG

The *SOG-TAC AU* is one of three knife families introduced by SOG. With a 3.43" blade made of CRYO D2 steel, it is the first automatic with SOG's XR locking mechanism with an opening on both sides of the handle. The SOG-TAC AU comes in three sizes and multiple blades. The other two knives are the Pentagon OTF and the Pentagon FX. MSRP: \$138.95 to \$166.95 for the SOG-TAC AU. For more info: (425) 771-6230, SOGKnives.com



LR-10/AR-10 .308 CALIBER MAGAZINE LUTH-AR, LLC

The *LR-10/AR-10 .308 Caliber Magazine* from Luth-AR is available but due to high demand, there is a limit of 10 magazines per order. The DPMS style 20-round steel magazine has a manganese phosphate finish. The black plastic follower feeds 20 rounds of ammo reliably. A steel floor plate can be easily removed for cleaning. Fits DPMS Panther LR series rifles (.243, .260, .308 caliber) and other AR-10 / .308 lowers. MSRP: \$34.95. For more info: (763)-263-0166, Luth-AR.com



ACRO P-2 AIMPOINT

The Aimpoint *Acro P-2* is the next generation of the ACRO series of sights. With a best-in-class closed emitter system, the compact Acro P-2 includes a CR2032 battery for five years of constant-on use. Other features are a 3.5 MOA dot size, four night vision settings and six daylight settings, more. Weighing 2.1 oz (sight only), the Acro P-2 is submersible to 115 feet (35 meters). The sight also comes with an Aimpoint T10 Tool. MSRP: \$599. For more info: (877) 246-7646, Aimpoint.us



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KITH CRKT

CRKT's *Kith* is designed by veteran knifemaker Ken Steigerwalt. He takes inspiration from traditional midblock joints and backlock folders to create his front lock design. The Kith's 2.95" high-carbon stainless steel blade with a satin finish is easy to sharpen and takes an edge well. Strong and lightweight, the 2.3-oz. knife with an OAL of 6.75" has a glass-reinforced nylon handle. The unique front lock mechanism uses the liners as springs. MSRP: \$44.99. For more info: (800) 891-3100, CRKT.com



TK16 V2.0 FENIX

The Fenix *TK16 V2.0* delivers functionality and performance. It is a reliable and necessary tool for emergency and tactical applications. Featuring Luminus SST70 LED included with an ARB-L21-5000U battery, this tactical light emits a maximum output of up to 3,100 lumens and throws a beam distance of 380 meters. The TK16 V2.0 has a dual tactical tail switch, a strobe feature and a compact body with stainless steel strike bezel. MSRP: \$99.95. For more info: Fenix-Store.com

BINARY FIRING SYSTEM GEN 3 (BFSIII) FRANKLIN ARMORY

The *Binary Firing System GEN 3 (BFSIII)* from Franklin Armory is a 3-position trigger. In position 3, it fires one round on pull and one round on release. The release round can be canceled by moving the patent pending selector out of Binary mode while holding the trigger back. The system works in most 9mm and .40 Cal Ruger PC Carbine trigger housings. Gunsmith installation recommended. MSRP: \$299.99. For more info: (775) 783-4313, FranklinArmory.com



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Wildlife Research Center's *Scent Killer Gold Hunt Dry Technology Plus* is formulated for maximum performance after it dries so you don't have to hunt with wet clothing. It comes in a special edition Wood Grain Field Bottle. The specialized blend of advanced odor fighting ingredients attacks a wide range of odors, especially human odor! The spray bottle is equipped with a high-output sprayer for maximum coverage to make it even easier to use. MSRP: Starting at \$25.59. For more info: (800) 873-5873, Wildlife.com



PIONEER DEHUMIDIFIER SILENTRY

The *Pioneer Dehumidifier* is the first dehumidifier for a gun case. This product has nano moisture absorption material controlling the humidity level inside the case thus protecting your gun from corrosion. A humidity indicator changes colors to let you know when it's wet or dry. It's reusable too. Just heat it up in a microwave. MSRP: \$30. For more info: GWlife.co



BATTLE BROWN RAZOR MUFFS WALKER'S

Since their introduction, the Razor Slim Electronic Muffs by Walker's have been the go-to hearing protection for pro shooters and enthusiasts. Now, Walker's introduces *Battle Brown Razor Muffs*, a Razor line with a Battle Brown color scheme: Battle Brown Razor Slim Elect Patriot, Battle Brown Razor XTRM and the Battle Brown Razor Slim Elect. All have a 21-23 dB NRR and sound-activated compression with a 0.02-second sound reaction time. MSRP: Around \$50-80 each. For more info: (877) 269-8490, WalkersGameEar.com



RADIANCE CAMPING QUILT ALPS MOUNTAINEERING

The *Radiance Camping Quilt* is designed for use with a sleeping pad. Generously sized for adventurers requiring more space than what is offered by standard-size quilts and sleeping bags. With a top width of 55", the Radiance is 72" long and comes with an oversized footbox big enough for integrating a sleeping pad. Constructed of a nylon ripstop shell, the Radiance Quilt has a 35° F temperature rating with its TechLoft Micro insulation fill. MSRP: \$179.99. For more info: (800) 344-2577, ALPSMountaineering.com



SUBMIT YOUR ENTRY ONLINE:

FRANKLIN ARMORY BFSIII M4 GIVEAWAY

Franklin Armory manufactures quality firearms for sporting, military and law enforcement. The company's firearms use 100% U.S.-made parts and materials. One of their guns happens to be the top prize in this issue's giveaway — the *BFSIII M4*. Chambered in 5.56 NATO, the complete rifle made with Franklin Armory's American-made, high-quality components is equipped with the BFSIII Binary Trigger and other features. It sports a 16" LTW Contour barrel with a 1:7" twist, a 15" FST handguard/upper, an FAI-14 lower, an M4 stock, a low profile gas block, midlength gas system, A2 muzzle device and grip, standard charging handle, salt bath nitride bolt carrier and optic ready sights.

Shield your eyes from the sun when you're outdoors with the Leupold *Payload*. Not your ordinary pair of sunglasses, it's engineered to protect the outdoor athlete. With shatterproof lenses and resilient non-metal materials, Leupold's

Performance Eyewear maintains a clear image, eliminates glare and will stand up to ballistic impact, stress and harsh weather. Featuring Lens Ventilation, In-Fused Polarization, ANSI-certified frames and ballistic-rated lenses, the *Payload* provides the protection and clarity every outdoor athlete needs.

Made for the modern-day warfighter, the *Pentagon FX* comes with multiple accessories from SOG's Universal Mounting System. With an OAL of 9.93", this advanced-design fixed blade with an HRC of 58-61 has removable G10 handles for a lighter profile. The 4.77" spear-point blade is made of CRYO CPM S35VN with a Black Titanium Nitride finish.

Don't pass up the chance to win Franklin Armory's BFSIII M4, SOG Knives' *Pentagon FX* and Leupold's *Payload* eyewear. Go to GUNSMagazine.com/giveaways or send a postcard! —Jazz Jimenez.



PENTAGON FX

MAKER: SOG Knives
(425) 771-6230
SOGKnives.com
VALUE: \$249.95

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

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Many readers have told us it's difficult to find postcards so here's a tip, use index cards, the back of greeting cards or even cereal boxes. A subscriber also shared he was able to buy them at the local post office.



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MAKER: Leupold
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Leupold.com
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BFSIII M4 RIFLE

MAKER: Franklin Armory
FranklinArmory.com
(775) 783-4313
CALIBER: 5.56 NATO
CAPACITY: 30+1, **OAL:** 32"
BARREL LENGTH: 16"
VALUE: \$1,109.99



PICKLE JAR PLINKERS KEEPING THE LARDER FULL!

Both my grandmothers married farmers and always said how good they felt having a cellar full of canned goods for winter. We're talking Mason jars here, along with a freezer full of farm beef. Can't say I disagree ...

Like my Grandmas, I like my cellar well-stocked with filled pickle jars, too! Except mine are filled to the brim with handloads. This gives me a secure feeling, ready for a long winter, dreaming about the upcoming spring, summer and fall and all the shooting I'll be doing. Full pickle jars just have a way of doing that to a person.

PICKLED PLINKERS?

Reaching into the large mason jar, I grab a handful of my favorite plinking centerfire ammo. Having several favorites, today's flavor is 9mm and .38 Specials. With a Ruger dual-cylinder .357/9mm Blackhawk thumb-buster, I can handily shoot both cartridges. How cool is that? Adding a few 9mm pistols, along with my Marlin 1894C lever gun, which could very well be the ultimate plinking gun ever made, I'm in the Promised Land of plinking paradise!

CHEAP TREAT

Scrounging provides free brass and lead for cast bullets. Precious metals? You

bet! All I supply is primers, powder and perspiration for filling my pickle jars with this frugal fodder. Using 4.5 grains of Winchester 231 for both .38 Special and 9mm, with a standard small pistol primer, I'm in for less than a nickel a pickle. That's a dilly of a load I can afford to shoot!

TWO TO TANGO

Checking range buckets, and the firing line, brass is for the taking. We're after 9mm, the most abundant, and .38 Special. Today's greybeards cut their teeth shooting .38s as bald-faced pups, while today's progeny is all about the wonder nines! This generational anomaly keeps me in endless supply of brass for cheap plinking pleasure.

WONDER WHY?

Both cartridges are easy shooting with their low muzzle blast, recoil and what was once easy on the wallet — ahem! Today's induced panic has changed things, wallet-wise, making handloading more prudent than ever.

Wait until prices drop before gearing up, if so inclined. No sense getting hosed at the cash register now. Treat components like stock. Buying low allows reaping the benefits during high demands, i.e., high prices.

There's no denying these cartridges are



Pre-heating your mold allows perfect bullets to be cast on the first cycle.

fun to shoot! The .38 Special is the first cartridge many handloaders start loading for, too. I know it was one of mine. Its abundance and straight-walled cases makes reloading pretty straightforward.

3-STEP PROGRAM

The first die sizes and de-primers the spent primer. The second die flares the case mouth for powder charging and bullet seating, while the third die seats and crimps the bullet. Pretty basic, a sequence performed millions of times by millions of handloaders. Plus, you can go from mild to wild loading this demure cartridge.

NINE LIVES

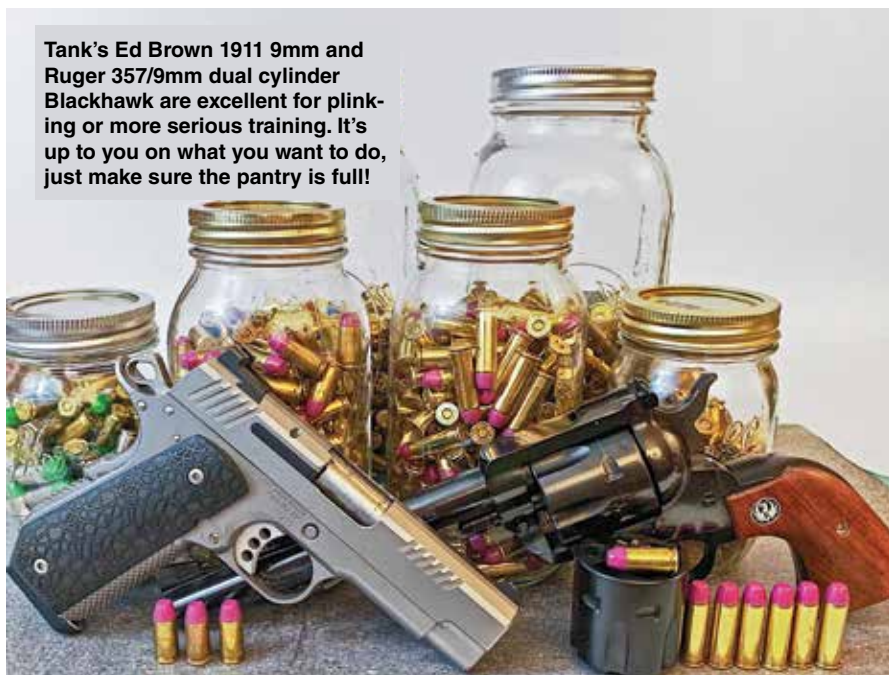
Being the most prevalent cartridge being shot today, 9mm cases are abundant. Most guns have 15-round magazines, but you can load five, or even one for that beginner you're teaching. Teach them to savor the shot, using good semantics on every trigger press. Discourage the spray/pray mentality.

THE PROJECTILE

Using Lee's 358-125 RF, (radiused flat-nose) six-cavity mold, you'll cast a pile of slugs in no time. The bullets drop out at 130-grains, using my wheel-weight (WW) alloy. Designed for the .357 Magnum/.38 Special, sized 0.358", I tried them in my 9mms, discovering they were more accurate than bullets sized 0.356" or 0.357". Experiment, it's well worth it in the long run.

So, if you're looking for a multi-purpose mold for these calibers, this is a good one to get. My Marlin lever gun loves them

Tank's Ed Brown 1911 9mm and Ruger 357/9mm dual cylinder Blackhawk are excellent for plinking or more serious training. It's up to you on what you want to do, just make sure the pantry is full!





Here's a close up of Lee's 358-125 RF bullet cast by Tank. They are an exceptional bullet for .38/.357 and 9mm fodder.



A batch of 358-125 RFs powder coated and ready to bake.



The Lee 6-cavity mold makes a pile of bullets in a hurry. Here's six freshly cast bullets straight from the mold.

too, routinely chewing ragged holes in my targets while cycling better than a blood-doped Lance Armstrong. Using my Dillon 550C press, these rounds are loaded by the hundreds, until failure occurs, as in exhaustion on my part — or until my wife calls for dinner.

SPEEDS

The 9mm clocks out just over 1,200 FPS while the .38 Special meanders along at 970 FPS. For a 130-grain cast bullet, they'll take care of plenty of pest problems for you. The Marlin lever gun pushes these pickle poppers at 1,330 FPS for plenty of punch for varmint patrol.

his books. I have them all in my library. Mr. Clough writes well, and I hope to read more of him in future issues.

Jim Carter

The double rifle article was excellent. It is refreshing to get away from polymer and aluminum. The London and Birmingham gun makers build lasting treasures of walnut and blued steel. Their “museum quality guns” are a bit too ornate for my tastes but unique to the engravers’ art. Could you please do a series of articles on the other types of “British guns” — bespoke or just regular — double square bridge Mauser actions for instance. Matter of fact, I own several Rigbys, Purdys, Holland & Hollands and Westley Richards (their baseball caps only, that is). In the end, what would you rather have hanging over the mantle — walnut and steel or polymer and plastic? Which will pass the test of time?

JCH

Staring at the fabulous Westley Richards double, over and over, made me wonder if perhaps there are others in the gun/shooting fraternity who are most curious about the breathtaking engraving. Would it not be a worthy topic — possibly even for several issues — to show exactly who does this and how. I bet even the AR crew would be interested. Quality in a person or possession never goes out of style. Engraved guns most often represent something most marvelous and best of all — time only adds to the allure. Best to you and the gang.

Joel Monteith

AMERICAN LEGION

I enjoy reading your magazine from cover to cover and read all the articles including the ones about guns I can’t afford or would ever use. People who think a magazine should not cover products they don’t like, I ask them to keep an open mind. Anti-gunners are trying to shut down manufacturers and everything associated with guns including magazines like this one. I want you to tell your advertisers that I, like many others read all the ads also. This is the only way I see new products such as guns, sights, ammo, lights. Please tell them we need this information. One other issue, I’m a vet and belonged to the American Legion for 30 years. I asked everyone in the Legion leadership to speak up for the Second



Amendment. But even the answers I received were not an affirmative response. I urge all Legion members to express their concern with the Leadership. If you don’t get a positive answer, then quit like I did. We fought for all our rights including the Second Amendment.

Kirk Dempsey

OLD FRIENDS

I’ve been listening to the podcast and when Roy, Tom and you are together it seems like I’m listening to old friends. Thank you for that!

Steve Cobb

GUN FISHING?

Regarding a recent *Guncranks* rant (on YouTube) about .22 vs. the .25 — you may need to consult His Honorably Retired Whatever on this (Roy Huntington), but my 69+-year-old remaining couple of synapses fired off a memory that the original rationale for this round was it would feed more reliably than a .22 in the semi-automatic pistols available at the time. Other than this, a couple hundred of them in a bag would make an okay trotline weight.

John R

FAUX THOMPSON

I read with much interest the articles in your August 2021 issue of *GUNS Magazine* about the Kahr Thompson by Mike Venturino and Roy Huntington. As a child, I, like Mr. Huntington, was (and still am) a fan of the old *Combat!* TV series. I was intrigued by his speculation actor Vic Morrow might have carried a dummy gun when he was not actually firing it since he seemed to “fling it around” so easily. In fact, as the show tooled up for production nearly 60 years ago, actor Rick Jason was offered the Thompson, as commissioned officers were usually assigned Thompsons. Jason, however, was an avid hunter and knew what it was like lugging a gun around, which is why he asked for the M1 carbine. Morrow thus inherited the Tommygun. After a couple weeks filming, Vic Morrow complained about the weight of the Tommygun, thus the MGM prop department did, in fact, build a lightweight wood “dummy” Thompson. Also, of note, a wood B.A.R. was also made. Some *Combat!* fans play guessing games trying to determine in which scenes Morrow was carrying the real versus the dummy version.

Mark H Townsend

Faux Thompson



SNUBBIE 38S

Mr. Taffin, I always enjoy your columns and your recent October "Handloading" column on snub-nosed .38s inspired this note. You mention you now limit your .38 Special handloads with cast 158-grain bullets to the old reliable Bullseye and Unique recommendation. I agree, however one can get significant improvements in velocities by the simple expedient of using the 3"-barrel version of the Chief Special. The attached photo shows a 2" and a 3" Chief Special, which are identical except for barrel length and grips. Some years ago, I conducted an extensive chronograph experiment with these two guns and a large assortment of older factory ammunition. Depending on the ammunition being tested, the 3" barrel gave between 54 fps and 105 fps higher velocities than the 2"-barrel version. Thus, without raising pressures, one can obtain significantly higher velocities simply by going with the



Snubbie 38s

3" barrel. As for concealability, the sage Elmer Keith also pointed out the 3" barrel makes the gun easier to conceal than 2" because the longer barrel forces the butt against the side.

Marshall Williams

Marshall, in light of your e-mail about muzzle velocity in 3" guns, you might find these results from this morning interesting. The load was 4.0 Trail Boss; bullets OT180FP, dc180FP, Lyman #358311. Sixguns were a 7-1/2" Remington Cartridge Conversion and the same sixgun with a 5-1/2" barrel. The MVs respectively for the longer barrel were 686-694-747; for the shorter barrel 693-701-770. The short barrel posted the fastest time for each load. Never know until you try!
—John Taffin

THE RULES

I just now read "The 50 Rules" in your *Insider* column in the September '21 issue. I know you're a very good editor, but also an amazing writer. While I know some rules are just a little tongue-in-cheek, I fully intend sharing them with my 16- and 11-year-old grandsons. Some of life's lessons can be quite less painful if avoided. Thanks, indeed.

Tom Stuart

Thanks, Tom. The piece started out as an email and started to develop on its own. Truly, all of those rules were written in blood — a little of mine, a lot of others — sweat and tears. I tried to make them a little humorous but hopefully the heart of the matter shines through. Believe it or not, I still periodically look at my own list and think "Don't forget, dummy!" —BW

CHECK YOUR WIND CALL

Dear Dr. Dabbs, in the summer of 1982 I was a patrol officer in Lexington, Ky. Beautiful weather, window down, shades on, looking cool. Jaw full of Havana Blossom chewing tobacco. I found at 45 mph there was a small square of sky I could spit into that would blow the juice away from the window. Then an errant gust of wind ruined my day. Juice hit me in both eyes. I pulled over and tried to wash it out with water. No go. A small girl and her mom walked by. "Mom, why is that cop crying?" "Look straight ahead and keep walking, darling!"

Ted



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kids had made 42 copies of a term paper the night before. This is why it's not uncommon for my hunting license to end up printed on the reverse side of Draft Revision #18 of "Long-term results of the War of 1812."

RANGE TIME

Act Two begins as we see our hapless hunter violating multiple traffic laws in his urgency to reach the firing range to verify his zero before nightfall. Arriving at the range, he is pleased to find only 50 other procrastinating sportsmen waiting to conduct similar practice.

While impatiently waiting his turn and silently cursing all the other shooters who waited until the last minute without good reason — unlike him, who had a very *good* reason for *his* delays — the hunter gathers his gear only to find he has forgotten his range bag. It's still sitting back on the garage workbench with all the required shooting accessories such as stapler and hearing protection. The hearing protection is easily improvised using dirty old .38 special cases he finds on the ground but holding the targets in place proves more daunting.

Fortunately, he quickly discovers four pieces of chewing gun work marvelously to hold a paper target against the backer board. In fact, he's pleased to note some of the gum even has a bit of flavor left despite the sand and gravel!

Finally composed and ready at the shooting bench, the hunter fires into the twilight and is immediately taken aback to see a large puff of dirt five feet left of the target. Somehow, the gun sights had been bumped hard enough during the preceding 11 months to make the gun less accurate than a network news political prediction. How could this possibly happen to a gun so carefully stored in the corner of a garage without a case, but was only knocked over two or three times in the course of a summer?

He knows this wasn't the right way to treat a fine hunting gun, but he was busy with fishing season at the time and just couldn't get around to cleaning and storing it until later.

Side note — Sadly, years ago, the preceding paragraph was a true statement, though the particular gun in question was a muzzleloader. At least the rust-browning looked more authentic afterward.

MEANWHILE ...

Back at the range, our hunter is now sweating in the cold fall air as the last vestiges of sun disappear below the western horizon and his ammunition supply steadily dwindles. He fires briskly, like John Wayne defending the Alamo, and is eventually reduced to using trash and compact disks from the car for targets. Only a faint grim smile crosses his lips as he shatters an old Barry Manilow CD into a thousand pieces.

Finally, using the car headlights to illuminate the target, our hunter fires his last practice round. He is now sure the gun is ready to make a clean one-shot kill, provided he remembers to hold a point of aim exactly six feet high and four feet northwest at a 72-degree elevation.

The final scene of this yearly farce finds our hunter at midnight, cursing and tearing through the mini barn with a small flashlight clenched in his teeth in a vain effort to find the \$##(@%& hunting backpack. Unbeknownst to him the backpack is exactly where he left it — on the floor of the back closet of the house, where he repeatedly reminded himself not to forget it 11 months prior. Around 1 a.m., memory suddenly returns and he loads his bag with hunting gear, after shaking out the mud, several old leaves and one desiccated apple from the bottom of the pack.

After all the exertion and stress of the preceding hours, our nimrod eventually collapses into bed shortly before 3 a.m., gear and clothes neatly stacked near the door, gun oiled and ready in its case.

Three minutes later, the alarm rings.

After jumping into his clothes, making a quick cup of coffee and grabbing some powdered mini donuts out of a bag in the pantry — coating himself, his clothes and the kitchen in general with white donut fairy dust — he bounds out to the darkened driveway where his buddies are waiting in their idling truck. The hunter is now like a caged bird released into the field, fueled by coffee, adrenaline and donut sugar, raring to go. It is opening morning and there is no more glorious feeling on earth!

As the group excitedly backs out of the driveway, the hunter swears a famous oath that rings across the land from Maine to California: "Next year, I'm gonna get started earlier."

Inside, still in bed, a long-suffering wife just shakes her head, pulls up the covers and rolls over. She knows, even if he doesn't. 🐾



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WAITING FOR DEER DAY

PANIC BECOMES A RITUAL

Soon after these words cross into your frontal lobe, I should be safely nestled among the branches of an old oak tree, waiting, watching and hoping. Perhaps, if the red gods smile, this season I might deliver a trophy Midwest whitetail to the taxidermist even before you can finish reading our matchless magazine and flush the toilet.

Either way, I will certainly be far more relaxed than the moments around the time this column was initially conceived. While trying to whip out my usual 1,500 words of sheer nonsense, I was unbearably distracted by a far more significant deadline looming like a head-hunting linebacker just downfield — the opening day of the deer firearms season.

CIRCLE THE DATE

I certainly don't dread opening day — in fact, quite the opposite. Both of my regular readers already know I consider opening day of the deer gun season, typically the second Saturday in November in our state, something akin to Christmas and July 4th combined but far more special. Unfortunately, with everything else going on throughout the year, I just can't seem to get things organized in the 50 weeks preceding this High Holy Day.

Looking back over the approximate four decades of opening mornings I have greeted the dawn in pursuit of the wily whitetail, it seems my gun and gear were completely ready beforehand only twice. Sadly, the only reason things were prepared in these particular instances was because I never bothered to put them away after the previous season. Regardless, at least things were in order when hunting season rolled around again, unlike the typical fall.

It's almost a sad yearly joke — I set wild and unattainable goals to have boots, backpack, hunting clothes and gun prepared well before opening day. In my mind, I earnestly vow to have all my gear sorted,

cleaned and packed; hunting clothes washed in scentless soap and stored in an airtight bag; tags purchased; gun cleaned, oiled and sighted-in with multiple loads at various distances; boots waterproofed and everything sitting neatly staged by the garage door by 7 p.m. the night before opening day. Suitably prepared, I'll then sit in my favorite chair with a pipe and small

tableau of this yearly drama begins as our hero scrambles from retailer to retailer in search of licenses. This is a necessity because of some malicious conspiracy between outdoor store owners decreeing no vendor should be allowed to keep both buck and bonus doe tags in stock at the same time. If you wanted both, as most hunters I knew did, the quest became a grim scavenger hunt.

This meant flying from store to store to store in an increasingly frustrated effort to find the elusive \$25 dollar slip of gov-



toddy, reading something by Gene Hill or Nash Buckingham before turning in early to be rested and ready for the singular, important day.

REAL LIFE

Instead, a three-act tragedy always unfolds to replace my fantasy. Starting around 3 p.m. on Opening Day-eve, we can follow the trials and tribulations of a hapless nimrod who resembles a short-sighted and obviously dull-witted Magazine Editor. By comparison, "Macbeth" is a rollicking family comedy.

In the decades of ancient pre-history wherein you actually had to purchase a physical deer tag in our state, the opening

erment paper. You would eventually bag the tags after standing in line at the local bait shop/gas station behind an elderly woman purchasing \$300 dollars of lottery tickets using rolled nickels. It would now be 4 p.m. and the November sun was within a hand-span of the horizon, sinking like a broken sash weight.

Fortunately, about 15 years ago when hunting license sales went online, the process became much easier — you'd wait until the morning of the opening day then curse as either the state's website went down for hours or you discovered your computer printer was out of paper after the

continued on page 73



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