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The Henry Side Load Lever Action is both beautiful and devastating, ready to strut its stuff on the range or an Alaskan willow thicket.



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SUPERHUMAN TAFFIN

In the March, 2020 "Crossfire," one of my favorite gun writers, John Taffin, reported he shot more than 800 rounds of .454 Casull in one day through his Freedom Arms revolver.

A couple of years ago, I was delighted with my new Freedom Arms Model 83 revolver. Realizing it would offer some stout recoil, I laid in a pair of padded shooting gloves before taking it to my range. After running some ammo through two other handguns, I decided to finish with the .454 Casull. The good news: Some of my fillings

were only loosened and didn't fall out. The bad news: The palm of my new right hand shooting glove was now ripped open and useless. I took that as a harbinger it was time to go home.

May I respectfully inquire which phone booth John uses to don his cape and "S" outfit before shooting .454 Casull??

*Chet Peterson
Lindsborg, Kansas*

You are smarter than I was! I'm still paying the price!!! Good Shootin' and God Bless. —JT

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'CORDIALLY, GORDON BOSER' TALES FROM THE .40 PAST

A few weeks ago I received a packet of information from one of our readers. As so often happens, this proved to be a gold mine of information. One of the things the reader sent along was a copy of a handwritten letter written to his father dating back 70 years. The letter was from Gordon Boser and is here reprinted for posterity. Boser was a gunsmith and a sixgun wildcatter dating back to the 1940s, known for his work with the .40 sixgun cartridge, which was definitely in the Magnum category. One major warning as you read this letter — **DO NOT** even consider using some of the .44 Special loads he references. Here is the reproduced letter:

Springville, N.Y.,
February 4, 1949

Dear Sir:

Your letter of the 10th at hand and note your comment on #5066 as used in the .45 Colt Long Ctg. I assume that you might go as high as 8.3 grains of this powder with #454424 bullet, and this would be the equivalent of 8.5 grains of #5. I used the .45 Colt very much in years gone by and found it extremely accurate, but not as good a killer when handloaded as the .44 Special. Although it is superior to the .44 in factory loads. I recall using the WRA .45/60-300 grain bullet ahead of as much

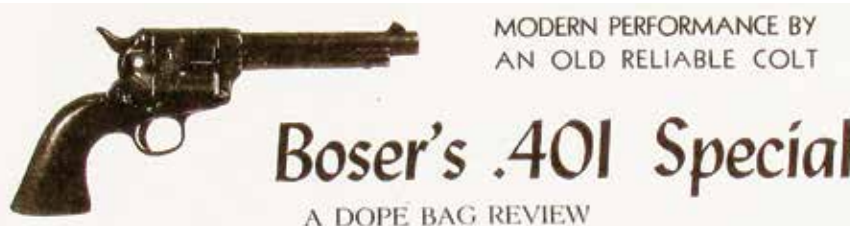
as 8.5 grains Unique and a velocity of 850 fps and this was a very powerful load. Still it lacks the power of the .44 Special with the Thompson Gas Check 225 grain #431225 hollowpoint backed by 20.5 grains #2400.

That .401 you mentioned is still at hand and is the most powerful arm of the short gun type I ever seen. It beats the .357 Magnum by 30% and my best .44 Special safe load as well. Using the Boser #403185-192 grain solid, 1-15 bullet ahead of 19.0 grains #2400. This bullet makes a dent in a 1/4" steel plate. That makes the top .357, .44 Special, or .45 Colt loads looks sick.

It's quite a long story. All of the changes wrought in the old Single Action Army, non-breakable action, etc., stronger parts, the development of more than 500 loads, all new dies, duplex and straight charges and many bullets over a period of 10 years. I used the WRA .401 rifle cases and had to build a jig to cut them off to 1-1/4" length. I built molds for experimenting and finally adopted a 200-grain, wide hollowpoint and 18.5 grains #2400 as the top chuck, deer, and fox load.

I used a .38-40 Colt Single Action Army 5-1/2" barrel with a groove diameter of .0402". The cylinder was a Colt SAA .357 Magnum cylinder chambered for this case with bullet throats of .0404" and sized my bullets .0403". I also worked over .303 Savage cases with a great deal of cutting, reaming and sizing. The heavy bushing, etc. making the arm adequate for the high pressures, were built over a great period of time as the need became apparent. I also had to have loading tools made up for the cause.

I would say that even if one could get a barrel and cylinder, which cannot be done in view of the fact the old SAA is gone for good. It wouldn't be worth the trouble. I say this because soon S&W will bring out their Model 1926 .44 Special and for this you can get the Remington non-cannelured cases and load a .44 Special load of 215 grains of #2400 behind the Keith #429421 or 20.5 grains behind the Thompson #431225 HPGC or as much as 22.0 grains behind the Thompson-Boser #431205 hollowpoint. That is good enough for anything you will ever use a pistol on. This too, would eliminate all the trouble and expense of building up a .401.



AFTER FOUR YEARS of experimental firing with more than two hundred different game, target and heavy field loads, Gordon Boser's .40 caliber revolver development, the .401 Special, has had ample opportunity to prove itself. Latest in the affections of the non-professional Springfield, New York, gunsmith and dealer who devotes his mechanical talents and shooting interest almost

bullet No. 403185. He fired some good groups with it including one which shows all shots in one ragged hole of 3/4 inch outside measurement. In making this group, Boser fired offhand at 25 feet. He scored 99 x 100 at 25 yards with it. He killed a crow in a tree 60 yards away with this load, and fourteen chucks up to 90 yards. He also had six misses and three no-kill hits up to 168 yards. In all,

Boser's .401 Special report from the *American Rifleman* (above) in 1943. The original handwritten letter from Gordon Boser in 1949 (below).

Springville N.Y.
Feb. 4 - 49
Jr H.D. & Harman D.D.S.
200 Oakridge & Jones Bldg.
Iowa City Iowa.
Dear Sir:
yours of the 10th. at hand and note your comment on #5066 as used in the .45 Colt Long Ctg. I assume that you might go as high as 8.3 grs. of this powder with that #454424 bullet S.D. 185" and this would be the equivalent of 8.5 grs. #5. I used the .45 Colt very much in years gone by, & found it extremely accurate, but not as good a killer when hand loaded as the .44 Spec. Altho it is superior to the .44 in factory loading. I recall using the WRA .45/60-300 gr. bullet ahead of as

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The .44 Special loads mentioned above should be attempted only by the most experienced handloader and start at least 2.0 grains below the above-mentioned charges and work up. Only new select cases should be used, bullet sized 0.001" over groove diameter.

I suggest you write Ray Thompson, Box 216, Grand Marais Minnesota mentioning my name and asking for samples of those gas check, hollowpoint bullets. These are the most advanced design obtainable and they eliminate leading, and incidentally uniform velocities and pressures result. The designs as a whole are conducive to the finest accuracy and full killing power.

Thanking you for your letter and inviting your further communication in case I can help you.

I am cordially
Gordon Boser

This letter is definitely a gold mine of sixgun information, however again I caution DO NOT follow his recommendations for loading the .44 Special. When this was written .44 Special cases were of the balloon-head or folded-head variety which had more case capacity than today's solid head brass. However, you will notice his loads are above Elmer Keith's Heavy .44 Special loads when using this older brass. Keith used 18.5 grains under his #429421 bullet which is three grains less than recommended by Boser. When solid head brass appeared in the early 1950s Keith cut his charge to 17.0 grains.

Boser also mentions the return of the .44 Special S&W Model 1926 in this letter from 1949. A very few 1926 Models were made after WWII, however just one year later the finest double action .44 Special sixgun ever produced arrived as the S&W 1950 Target.



Boser's bullet #401452 is still used by John in the .38-40.



Shooting results with #401452 in Colt Single Action sixgun.



Good results from the #401452 in the Colt New Service .38-40 revolver.

This sixgun was used as the platform for the .44 Magnum, however it took special heat treating and a longer cartridge case to handle loads close to those mentioned by Boser in this letter.

Boser designed a special bullet, Lyman #401452 for his .401 Special. This bullet weighs just under 200 grains with my alloy. It is a semi-wadcutter design as it was and is Keith's #429421. I use Boser's .401 bullet in the .38-40 today. In the early 1960s the then-well-known mail-order company Herter's brought out their .401 Powermag, a single action sixgun produced in Germany. This was a bull-strong revolver also offered in .357 Magnum and .44 Magnum, and was also very close in performance and design to Boser's .401 Special. He also designed a

.44 Special bullet, Lyman #429360. I have found this bullet to not be as accurate as the Keith bullet. I also noted the high praise Boser paid to Ray Thompson's bullet designs. I concur totally. His gas checked bullets are still some of the best available for .357 Magnum, .44 Special, .44 Magnum, .45 Colt and .45 Auto Rim.

Magnum sixgun cartridges did not just appear out of the blue. Before the .357 Magnum there was Keith's Heavy .38 loads and he also spent nearly 30 years pushing his Heavy .44 Special loads. We have also mentioned John Lachuk's .44 Lancer and Boser's .401 as well and there was Pop Eimer's earlier version all of which laid the groundwork for the .44 Magnum and .41 Magnum.

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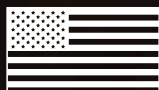
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CHANGING PLATFORMS DIFFERENT JOBS REQUIRE DIFFERENT TOOLS

My old friend John Bianchi, the master holster-maker, quantified *Bianchi's Law* — same gun, same holster, same place, all the time. It makes sense for most armed people in most applications. After 43 years of carrying a badge, I can't say "laws are made to be broken," but I will say we tailor the tool to the task and it might mean changing guns.

In my case, I test guns for gun magazines. Carry guns need to be carried to assess printing, comfort, etc. They need to be shot under pressure as much as possible so I'll try to shoot a match with one or use it as a demo gun in class. Shooting in front of paying students will pretty much give you your daily

adrenaline requirement. The rest of the time, my daily carry is predicated on what I'll be carrying, where and what I'll need to do with the gun. For years I changed guns every training tour to keep up with everything out there. In 2018 I got sloppy and complacent — except for "test guns," I wound up with essentially three formats for the whole year.

STRIKER-FIRED AUTO

I take time off from teaching from mid-December to the end of January to get caught up on writing, business stuff, etc. At this time I shoot the most GSSF matches with my lovely bride, a princess of polymer pistols, so first quarter 2018 was mostly all

GLOCK for me. I spent most of the time with a Gen5 G19. Sixteen rounds of 9mm Winchester 127-gr. +P+ or Speer Gold Dot 124-gr. +P "takes the worry out of being close" and it's easy and discreet to carry.

Things to remember in a striker-fired world — "point gun, pull trigger" works as well for anyone who gains control of your pistol as it does for you. Consider a retention holster. Be rigid about trigger finger protocol. The finger is only inside the trigger guard when you are in the very act of intentionally firing the pistol! I'm a fan of the extra safety net provided by the Striker Control Device created by Tom Jones and the late Todd Louis Green which replaces the back plate on a GLOCK slide and — when the thumb is applying pressure to it — locks the trigger and prevents firing if something interdicts said trigger. It's available from taudevgroup.myshopify.com. I wish it was available for every striker-fired auto out there and not just the GLOCK.

Handguns like the GLOCK are the easiest to learn to shoot, and shoot well. It's a case of "the good news is they're easy to shoot, and the bad news is — they're easy to shoot."

SINGLE ACTION AUTO

My favorite of all shooting matches is the Pin Shoot in Michigan the second week in June. Blasting heavy bowling pins three feet back off a table requires powerful rounds and doing so at winning speed demands a shootable gun. The general choice of champions is the single-action 1911 in 10mm, .50 GI or — most commonly — .45 ACP. Having bonded with the Colt .45 auto at age 12, it's a natural for me and for most of second quarter 2018 in the run-up to the match, I tried to carry and teach with a 1911 .45 to get the most trigger time I could.

I generally wore a Springfield Armory Range Officer .45. It is in my opinion the best buy in an all-around sub-\$1,000 pistol of its kind: extremely accurate, utterly reliable and user-friendly with its short, easy (4.5 lbs. in the case of this specimen) trigger pull. Flat and thin for its power level, it carries with surprising comfort inside the waistband. Things to bear in mind with this type of pistol: It should be carried cocked and locked. Cocked gives high probability of a center hit with the first shot due to the sweet trigger pull, locked with the thumb safety engaged gives you a proven life-saving edge if an opponent

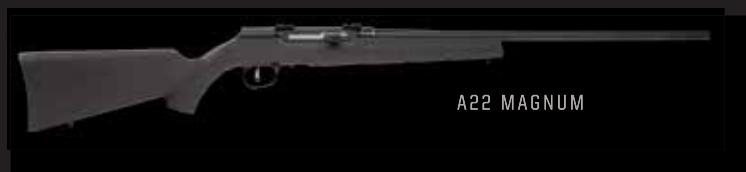


Mas spent most of 2018 with (top to bottom) the G19.5, Wilson Beretta Compact Carry or Springfield Range Officer .45.



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momentarily gains control of the weapon. However, keep it on safe, with your thumb on the lever ready to drive it down to the "fire" position until you are certain firing is necessary. And, in the same vein, practice pushing the lever back up to "on-safe" as soon as you lower the muzzle at the point the firing is done.

DOUBLE ACTION HAMMER FIRED AUTO

Anyone who says the DA auto is an ingenious solution to a non-existent problem either doesn't understand the problem or doesn't plan to take prisoners. Cop or armed citizen, you'll typically have to draw the gun and perhaps take dangerous people at gunpoint a lot more often than you'll have to fire in self-defense. The longer pull for the first shot is one more safety net but it does require being able to perform two different trigger pulls.

Ideally, if trigger reach allows, get the distal joint of your finger centered on the trigger. It will give way more leverage and better control. Do a Google search for world champion Ernest Langdon's excellent video, "Fear Not the Double Action Shot." No need to change finger placement when the gun goes to cocked mode after the first shot — distal joint on a cocked pistol's trigger is how Brian Zins won a half-dozen national bullseye championships. Key with the DA auto — condition yourself to decock every time you're done firing, especially before you re-holster!

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ACME 'LIPSTICK' BULLETS

PART II: SEMI-AUTOMATICS

In Part I last month we looked at Acme's "Lipstick" bullets used in sixguns; now we switch to using them in some of my favorite semi-automatics. Just in case you missed Part I we will review just a little bit about what Acme Bullet Company is all about.

PERFECT LIPSTICK

The Acme Bullet Company itself labels these as "Lipstick" Bullets, due to the bright red coating. This is a HiTek coating applied to cast bullets of a 92-6-2 alloy of 92 percent lead and the others tin and antimony. Acme says this coating is molecularly bonded to the bullet and completely encapsulates it. There are several listed benefits for these coated bullets including such things as preventing lead-to-bore

contact, virtually eliminating any leading; since there is no wax or lube on the bullets there is less smoke which makes them very range friendly, especially if shooting indoors; the coating helps facilitate feeding in semi-automatic pistols and they can be shot through polygonal rifling.

TEST BATCH

For testing Acme Bullets in semi-automatics, I used five different bullets in .38 Super, four in 9mm, and two in both .45 ACP and 10 mm. I even loaded some in .40 S&W for use in a pistol I have probably not shot for at least two decades, namely the Ruger P91. In their catalog Acme lists only two bullets for use in the .38 Super, namely a 150-gr. and 160-gr. RN bullet. However, I found those designed for the 9mm work just

fine in the .38 Super. All of the 9mm bullets are sized to 0.356" while those for the Super are at 0.357", the .45 ACP bullets are at 0.452" while the 10mm bullets come in at 0.401".

TALE OF THE CRIMP

Loading for semi-automatic pistols requires a little more effort than for sixgun loads. With the latter I get along fine with three dies — full-length sizing/decapping, expanding and seating/crimping. However, when I use a progressive press for revolver loads, I use all four stages and separate the seating and crimping into two operations. With a progressive this requires no extra effort, just one extra die. Switching to loading for semi-automatic pistols, I find separating the seating and crimping into two operations always results in better loads. In addition I used a Lyman Cartridge Case Gauge to check the dimensions of my load, which virtually assures the rounds will chamber easily.

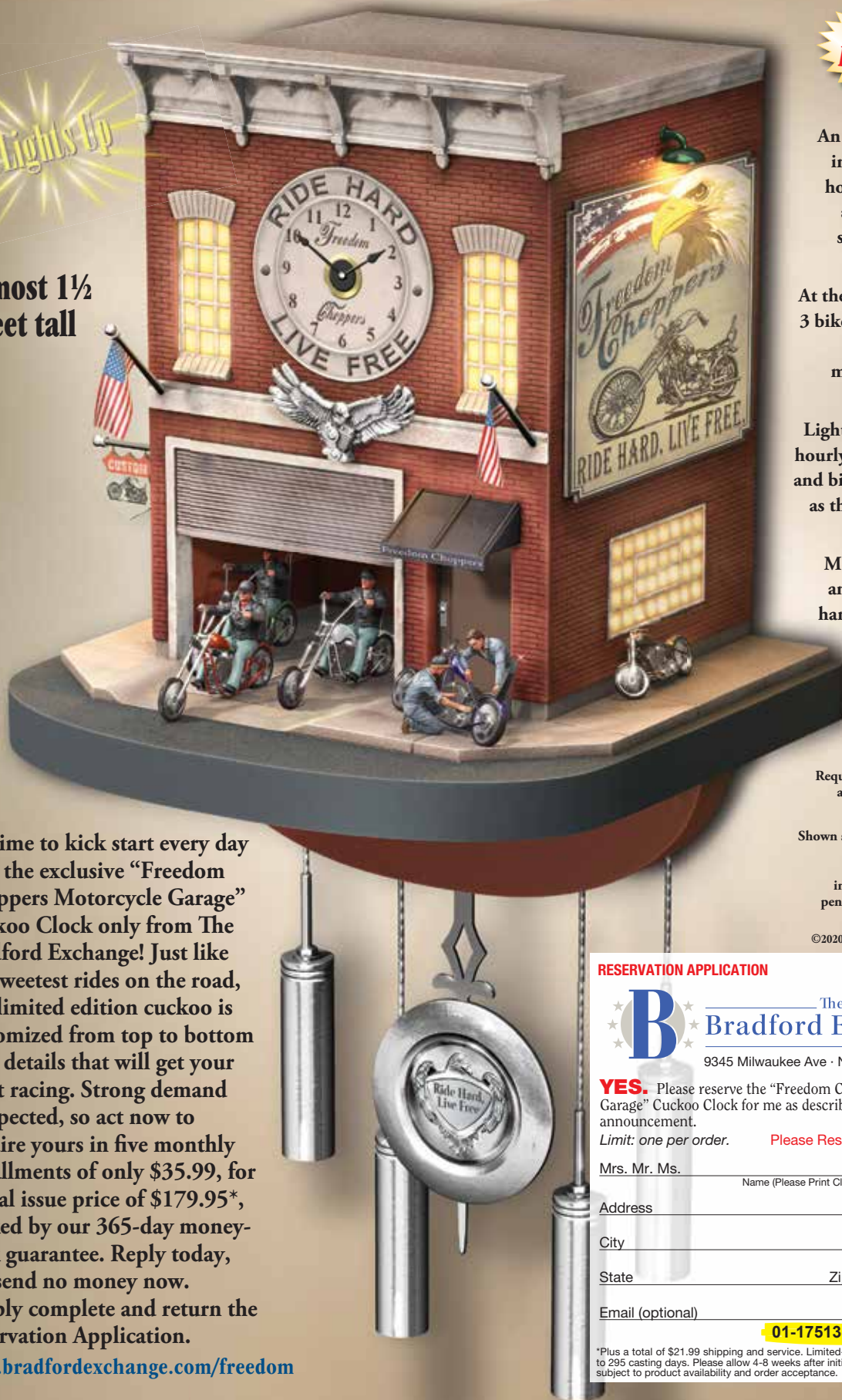


Targets fired with Acme bullets in the Kimber and Springfield Armory 9mm pistols.

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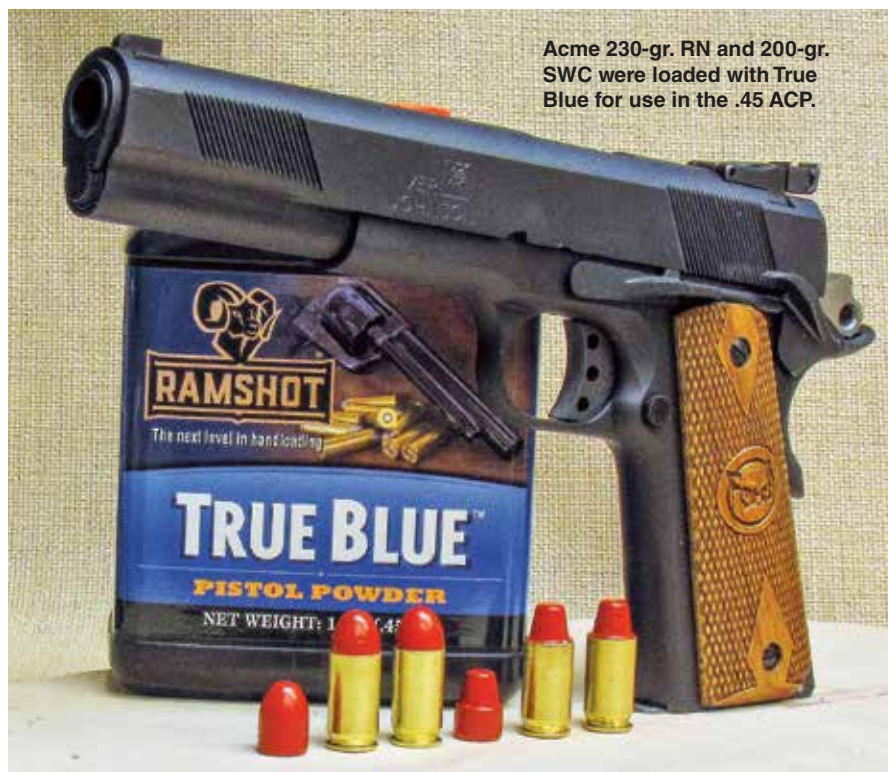
Acme 180- and 200-gr. bullets were loaded over with Unique for use in the 10mm.

For every one of these semi-automatic pistol rounds mentioned, I use my standard set of dies but only seat the bullet without crimping. Once I have a good batch of cartridges with bullets seated to the proper length on my Rockchucker I then run each round through the crimping stage using the Lee Factory Crimp Die. This die is very easy to set and as with the Cartridge Case Gauge, helps to ensure cartridges are the proper dimensions for easy feeding. I also use the .45 ACP Lee Factory Crimp Die for crimping bullets without a crimping groove in .45 Auto Rim cases. Another valuable Lee accessory I have found is the .45 ACP Carbide Minimum Sizing Die. This helps to ensure a tight bullet to case fit.

For use in the .45 ACP I use both the Acme 200-gr. SWC and the 230-gr. RN. The former is one of my favorite designs for use in the .45 ACP and I have been casting this bullet from both a Hensley & Gibbs #68 and an RCBS #45-201 mold for decades. This was also one of Jeff Cooper's favorite .45 bullet designs. Loaded over 5.9 grains of Sport Pistol results in a muzzle velocity of right at 940 fps with groups just over 1" in a Colt 1911 Combat Elite. It also outshoots my home-cast RCBS bullets. This same bullet over 7.0 grains of True Blue is right



A variety of Acme bullets were loaded for use in the .38 Super Springfield Armory Mil-Spec.



Acme 230-gr. RN and 200-gr. SWC were loaded with True Blue for use in the .45 ACP.

at the same muzzle velocity and shoots even tighter groups from a 6" Iver Johnson Long Slide.

SUPER LOADS

For the .38 Super — which to me with semi-automatics is what the .44 Special is

to sixguns — I assembled all my loads with a long-time old favorite standby, namely Unique. With 5.5 grains of Unique the 124-gr. RN clocks just over 1,100 fps and the 122-gr. RN increases the muzzle velocity significantly coming in at 1,185 fps. Both shoot groups just over 1" in the Springfield

Armory 1911 Mil-Spec .38 Super, while the latter load at 1,175 fps in a Kimber Stainless Target II groups right at 1".

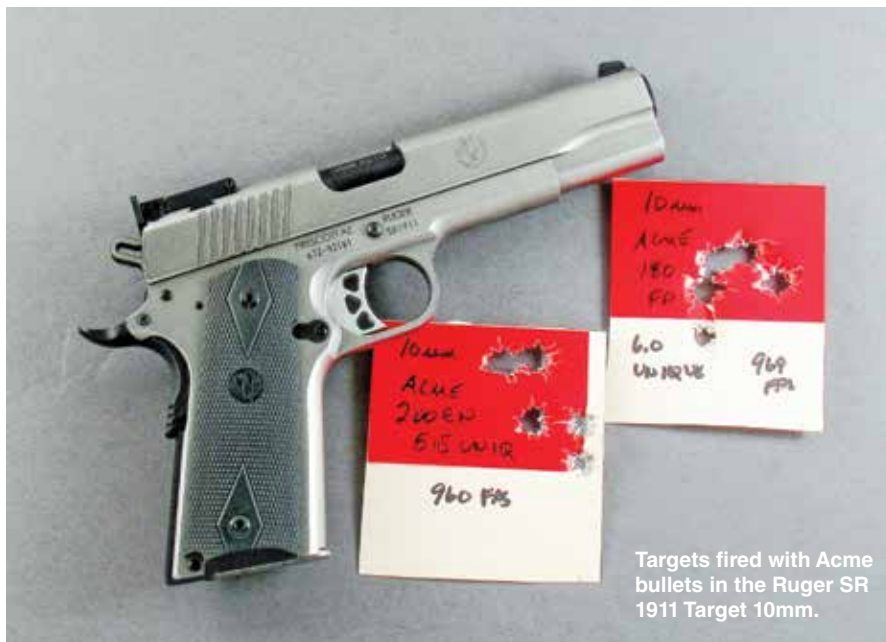
WONDER NINE

Switching to the 9mm resulted in some very impressive groups using Sport Pistol powder. One of these was the 115-gr. RN Acme over 4.8 grains of Sport Pistol. In a pair of Springfield 9mms — a Stainless 1991A1 Range Officer and a Kimber Stainless Steel Target II — this load clocked at just over 1,200 fps with all loads just over 1". One of the best groups, probably the best group, I have ever had from a 9mm came from the Acme 147-gr. FM over 3.8 grains of Sport Pistol at just over 1,000 fps. In the above mentioned Springfield Armory Range Officer this load put five shots in 5/8" at 20 yards. This is one of those *stop when you are ahead* situations as I don't guarantee I could do it again.

TOP 10

Switching to the 10mm I went back to Unique using 6.0 grains under the Acme 180-gr. FP and 5.5 grains with the 200-gr. RN. With the Nighthawk Long Slide, loads

clocked out at 1,015 and 1,000 fps respectively with 1" groups. Both of these loads shot equally well in the Ruger SR1911 Target Model with muzzle velocities right at 960 fps. No doubt both of these bullets could be driven faster, however, they are right at my range for everyday carry loads.



Targets fired with Acme bullets in the Ruger SR 1911 Target 10mm.

The full line of Acme products can be found at www.acmebullet.com. I don't think you will be disappointed in the performance of their "Lipstick" bullets. 🔫

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GEEZER GUNS

GLASS HELPS "SEASONED CITIZENS" KEEP SHOOTING

An old saying goes, "Don't let your mouth write checks your butt can't handle." In bygone days I used to brag to my friends in the BPCR Silhouette game, "I don't need no stinking scopes." This was because the NRA divided BPCR Silhouette into two separate but equal games — scoped and iron sight. The rules are the same except for sights so the two divisions can be fired side by side. Scores are divided with iron sight shooters against iron sight shooters and scoped shooters against scoped shooters.

The point was to keep as many people

shooting as possible because many of the old-timers were dropping out due to aging eyes. I wasn't having eye problems so I'd make fun of my compatriots who fired every match with their scoped rifles. All of a sudden in my late 60s seeing those tiny silhouettes at 200, 300, 385 and 500 meters through my iron sights got very difficult. My buddies got the last laugh.

THE SUN SETS ON IRON

Along with the BPCRs most of my World War II firearms collection has iron sights

— either open or aperture types. Seeing their sights was a story of progression. In the beginning, the 18" barrels of my M1 Carabines didn't put the front sight far enough away for my eyes to focus upon but I could still see front sights on a 24" barreled Model 1903 Springfield. Then they got blurry too, but I could still see the thin-blade front sight on my Model 1896 Krag infantry rifle with its 30" barrel. Then, it grew blurry too.

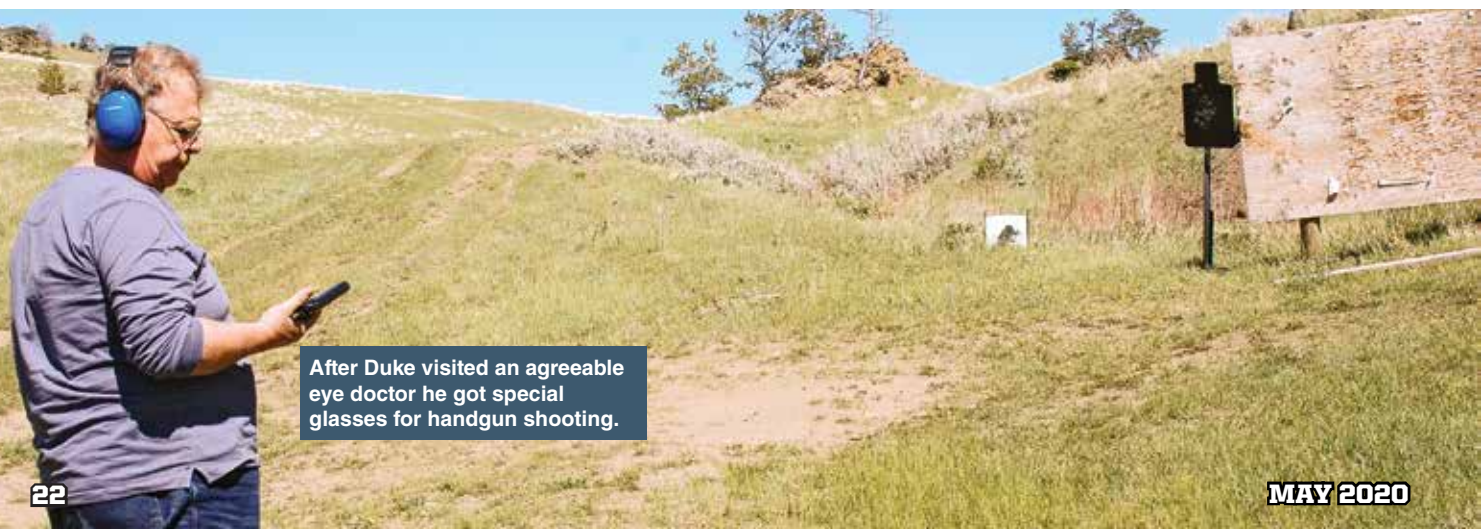
TURNING A PAGE

So what does an old geezer like me do to keep shooting some of my favorite firearms? You turn to optics, either the type you put on guns or the ones you put on your face. Actually, the ones on my face came first. They were needed for handgun sights. When the sights of my Colt SAAs, S&W Hand Ejector .44s, and various World War II military pistols turned blurry I turned to special glasses. My idea was to call around locally to eye doctors and ask this question, "Would it be possible to bring in an unloaded handgun so the doctor could fix me up with glasses specifically for seeing their sights?" In this day and age I was expecting to run into some balky receptionists. However, I was forgetting this is Montana. The gal on the phone said, "Hang on a minute and I'll ask the doctor."

He agreed. In an attempt to add a little flash to the occasion I took with me a nickel-plated Colt SAA .45. When I uncased it the doc said, "Oh, that's nice!" and things went well from there. He made me a set of glasses with which handgun sights are razor sharp albeit the rest of the world is a bit blurry. Blurry targets can still be hit if sights are sharp. In those days I was active in the cowboy action game so I worried about transitioning from my single actions to lever gun sights. There certainly wasn't time to take off one set of glasses and put on another.



This combination M1 .30 Carbine handguard/rail (above) turned one of Duke's M1 Carabines into a Scout Carbine. Duke found these scope rings and bases from Accumounts. They can be fitted into military rear sight bases, making it possible to fit scopes such as this 4X Leupold Scout scope.



After Duke visited an agreeable eye doctor he got special glasses for handgun shooting.

I needn't have worried. A lever gun's front sight is about the same distance away as single action revolver's sight and a fairly spacious peep sight aperture needs no attention because the eye automatically centers the front sight. So my special shooting glasses served me well.

GLASS ON GUNS

Next come optics on the guns. Of course most sporting rifles nowadays come drilled and tapped for scope mounting. This genre of rifle is a no brainer but how about vintage military rifles? Most have open rear sights and less-than-target-grade fronts. For instance, I'm sweet on M1 .30 Carbines. Of course they all come with peep rear sights but there is a better way to make them accurate shooters.

This is where the Scout Rifle movement has helped. The current Inland Mfg. Company of Ohio, makers of new M1 .30 Carbines, offers a handguard with rail. I bought a 4X Leupold Scout Scope, mounted it on their rail handguard and now have a "Scout M1 Carbine." It makes a delightful



In his late 60s Duke finally admitted he needed one of those "stinkin" scopes on his BPCR Silhouette rifles. Note how tiny those targets are to the naked eye.

plinker/small game carbine.

SADDLE IT UP

An outfit I found on the Internet named Accumounts Inc. offers scout scope mounts accompanied by rings easily fitted to many types of bolt action and military rifle rear sight bases. The raising ladder part of the sight is dismounted by drifting out a pin and the Accumount base pins fit right in their place. I did this with a Swedish Model

1896 and a Japanese Type 96 Arisaka, both chambered for 6.5mms of their respective nations. Instantly — well, almost — I had retro-Scout Rifles.

The whole point of this column is if you really love to shoot, and (like me) prefer non-run-of-the-mill guns, then don't give up when your eyes age. There are ways to keep shooting.

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PRE-'64 WINCHESTER MODEL 70'S THEY'RE DESIRABLE – BUT IS OLDER *REALLY* BETTER?

The Winchester Model 70 is America's most iconic bolt-action rifle and to collectors the most desirable M70s are the "pre-'64" rifles. According to Roger C. Rule's superb book *The Rifleman's Rifle* (a must-have for any M70 enthusiast), the receiver with s/n 0001 was made January 20, 1936, assembled into a complete rifle and released for sale to the public January 1, 1937. The receiver with the highest known s/n, 581471, was made October 18, 1963.

FAMILY TREE

The "Great War" of 1914–1918 profoundly affected the sporting rifle scene. Military service introduced thousands of young American men to bolt-action rifles and the .30-'06 cartridge. Remington had made

millions of 1917 Enfields for the military. After the war they astutely built the Model 30 sporting rifle on the same basic action.

Sales of the Remington M30 got Winchester's attention. Around 1922–1923 Winchester started work on a bolt-action sporting rifle in .30-'06 (and its newly designed cartridge, the .270 Win.). The new Model 54 rifle was introduced in 1925.

The M54 did reasonably well, selling a bit over 50,000 units from 1925–1936. Use by both hunters and target shooters revealed a few shortcomings. The safety and bolt handle design were not well suited to use with telescopic sights, which were just starting to become popular. Target shooters disliked the military-style two-stage trigger pull and the lack of a separate bolt stop.

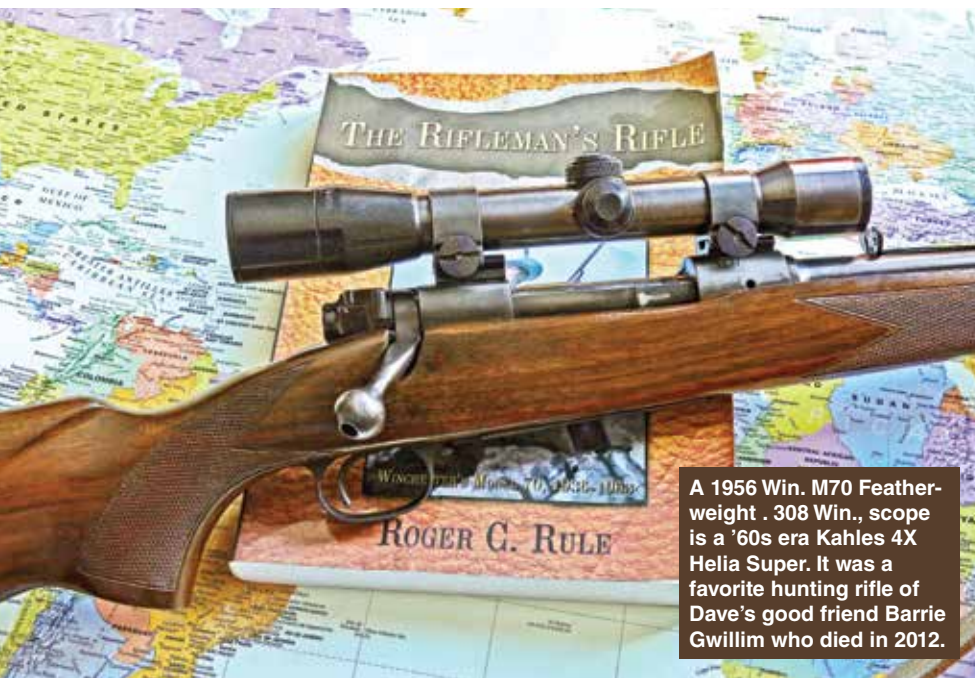
In the early 1930s Winchester set a goal to make a first-class target rifle. Changes included a separate bolt stop, an excellent single-stage trigger, redesigned safety and bolt handle, relocating the forward guard screw and generally improving quality and appearance. The redesign was introduced as the Model 70.

TIME ON THEIR HANDS

The Great Depression played a part in creating the Model 70 legend. Sales of discretionary consumer goods took a terrible beating. Most families could barely afford necessities. Firearms manufacture was labor-intensive and required a highly-skilled workforce. Companies desperately wanted to keep their best workers (who were generally the oldest) and those workers wanted to keep their jobs.

During this time there was no incentive to rush the work, quite the opposite. Those skilled workers were given the time to carefully fit, tune and adjust actions and triggers, polish and blue metal parts, to select the best stock blanks to shape, finish, and hand checker. Prewar Model 70 rifles were virtually custom made. This dynamic was not unique to Winchester — Colt, Smith & Wesson, Savage and other guns from the same era show the same exceptional workmanship.

World War II suspended manufacture of sporting arms as the firearms industry went all-out to supply the armed forces of America and its allies. When peacetime production resumed the American economy had been transformed. The postwar economic boom pumped money into every level of society.



A 1956 Win. M70 Featherweight .308 Win., scope is a '60s era Kahles 4X Helia Super. It was a favorite hunting rifle of Dave's good friend Barrie Gwillim who died in 2012.



Maybe the most valuable Model 70s of all time: s/n 1 & 2. The guns are currently offered as a non-breakable pair by Sportsman's Legacy (www.sportsmanlegacy.com) for the low, low price of \$1,750,000 firm!



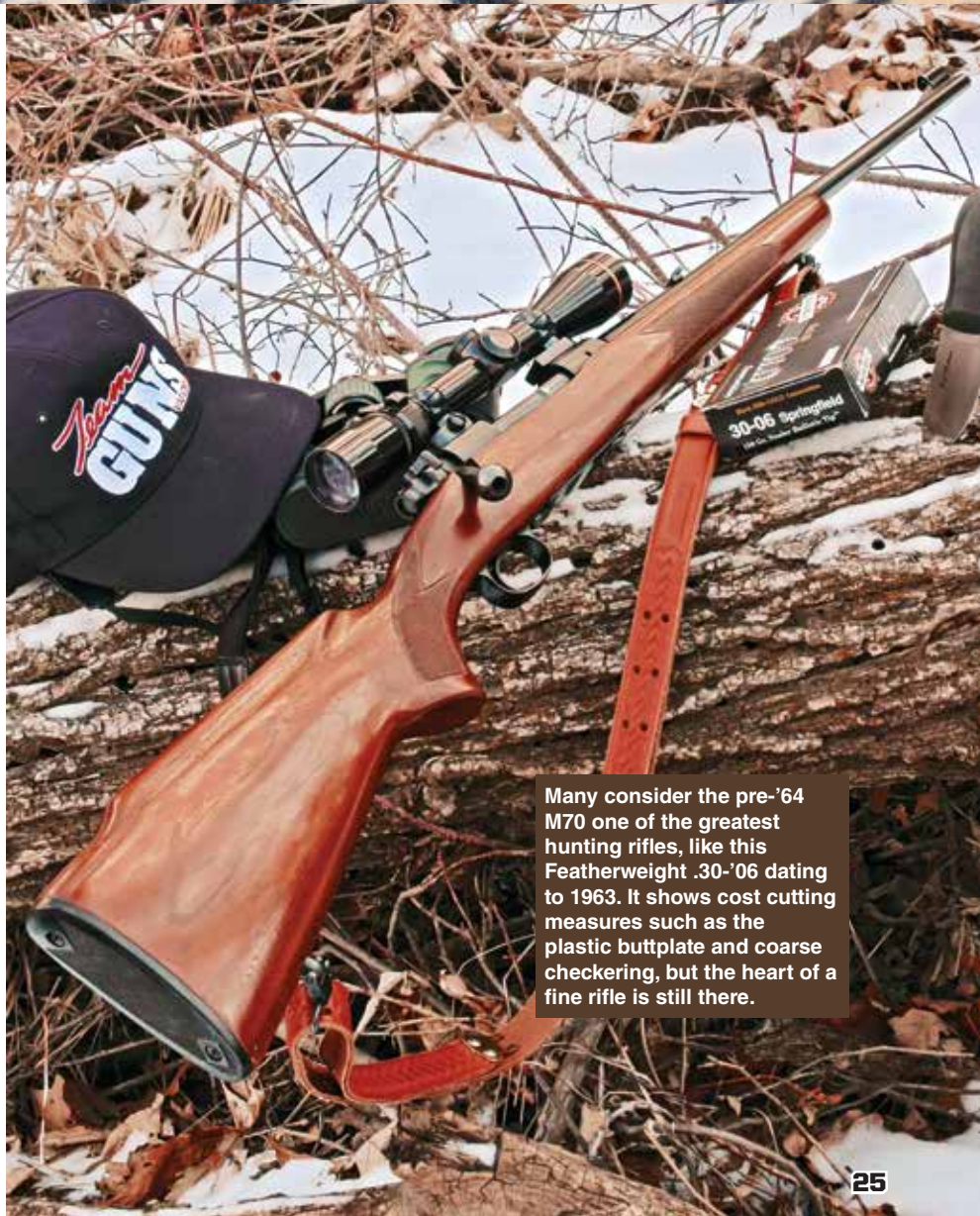
This custom .30-06 by the late Keesey Kimball was built on a pre-'64 Winchester 70 action — Obermeyer barrel, Blackburn bottom metal, custom English walnut stock.

Demand for consumer goods, firearms included, was unprecedented and Winchester was selling every gun it could make while doing its best to ramp up production — and found itself running into a bottleneck.

The skilled gunmakers from the 1930s were reaching retirement age in the 1950s and proving very hard to replace. Every manufacturer, whether making automobiles, airplanes, or kitchen appliances needed skilled workers. Tool and die makers and machinists were in great demand and the demand was reflected in wages. The inevitable result was a slow decline in the degree of fit, finish and polishing as the '50s progressed which is why rifle enthusiasts boasted of their “pre-war” or “pre-1950s” Model 70s.

FALLING OFF

The decline could be seen in the amount and quality of the checkering, in heavier trigger pulls and actions less smooth and slick. Nonetheless Winchester never compromised on the quality of its steel, the machining of receivers or the accuracy of its barrels. The sad fact was a labor-intensive manufacturing process could not compete in price with the more modern techniques introduced after the war by Remington, to say nothing of the millions of modestly priced military surplus rifles. By the '60s Winchester realized they were actually losing money on every rifle produced.



Many consider the pre-'64 M70 one of the greatest hunting rifles, like this Featherweight .30-06 dating to 1963. It shows cost cutting measures such as the plastic buttplate and coarse checkering, but the heart of a fine rifle is still there.

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Let me quickly tell you who I am and why you might want to listen to what I have to say. My name is Jason Hanson. I'm a former CIA Officer and a *New York Times* bestselling author. Because of my background, I've had to survive in some pretty

rough environments. Now I use what I've learned to teach people, just like you, how to protect themselves and their families during times of crisis. In fact, I've been lucky enough to share these strategies with millions of people all over the world via appearances on Fox News, the NBC Today Show, Shark Tank, and Good Morning America, to name a few.

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A 1959 Winchester ad gives a hint about the competition: "Don't put your trust and good money into a cobbled-up rifle made from old, imported military actions ..."

A NEW BEGINNING

The "new" Model 70 introduced in 1964 was a good rifle in many ways, accurate, very strong and better than the earlier model at handling escaping gas in the event of a case failure. It outsold the earlier model by a considerable margin and the reduced manufacturing costs meant Winchester actually made a bit of a profit. But to most shooters it was unattractive, especially when it had to compete with the memories of those pre-war classics.

We know now modern techniques such as CAD/CAM design and manufacture would give us better designed, better made rifles than ever. But in 1964 the future looked bleak. Not only collectors, but also hunters wanting a practical sporting rifle started snapping up every pre-'64 rifle available.

CURRENT VALUES

Today it seems the M70 market is going in two directions. Shooters who want a high quality hunting rifle are more likely to select a current production model. It seems prices for well-used pre-'64 M70s in popular cartridges have stabilized or even fallen. At the same time pre-'64 M70s with strong collector appeal are going up in value. Factors such as condition, chambering, model, famous past owners and military use are increasingly important.

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A three-position magazine cut-off switch rests between the tubes, allowing you to easily choose between loads such as slug and buck. No "select slug" drills here!

KELTEC KSG BULLPUP WHO'S A GOOD BOY?

In 2011 KelTec introduced the KSG — a pump-action bullpup shotgun holding 14 rounds via two tubular magazines.

On first seeing the KSG I was immediately reminded of the Neostead shotgun made in South Africa. Like the KSG, it held shells in two tubes although the Neostead's tubes were located on top of the barrel instead of under it and each magazine held six rounds instead of seven. Unlike the KSG and other shotguns, manipulation of the slide-action is exactly opposite of what we're used to as chambering a round occurs on the rearward stroke. It was never imported into the United States as it did not meet BATFE's standard for a sporting shotgun.

Still, the KSG is fairly unique, and I placed an order for one when I examined a sample at the 2011 SHOT Show.

PUG UGLY

Made from plastic, steel and with a pressed sheet metal action cover, the shotgun will not win any beauty contests. I have no problem with this as it was designed from the ground-up as a fighting shotgun — and fighting is never pretty.

The KSG has an overall length of 26.1" with an unloaded weight of 6.9 lbs. and cylinder bore barrel of 18.5". My early example is marked for 2-3/4" shells but current versions are chambered for 3" shells. No sights are included.

Being a bullpup, the shells are inserted at the rear of the shotgun. A selector switch between the two mag tubes has three positions. Pushed to the right side (as viewed from the top), it blocks feeding from the left tube. Pushed to the left, shells are fed from the right tube. When set in the center, both tubes are blocked from feeding. Shells are ejected downward from the loading port.

The safety is a standard cross bolt type. Pushed to the left is "safe," pushed to the right is "fire." The action release is conveniently located at the front of the trigger guard and is ambidextrous.

A 12" T-marked Picatinny rail sits above the barrel and a 6" rail is molded into



Denny's KelTec KSG is pug-ugly but ready for whatever trouble a bad guy chooses to bring!

the forearm. Trigger pull is approximately 5 lbs.

MANUAL OF ARMS

Most pump shotguns can be held with the primary hand and reloaded easily by sliding the shells along the lifter and into the magazine tube. The easiest way to load the KSG is to hold it with the support hand, turn it upside down and load with the right hand. This allows a quick glance into the action to aid loading. Adding a "tactical" sling will help support the ungainly scattergun.

PICK YOUR POISON

With the two magazine tubes, two different types of shells can be loaded, e.g., buckshot in one and slugs in the other. Under no circumstances should a less-lethal round be loaded in one magazine with lethal ammo in the other. Under stress there is simply too much of a chance of inadvertently selecting the wrong magazine.



“... IT WAS DESIGNED FROM THE GROUND-UP AS A FIGHTING SHOTGUN — AND FIGHTING IS NEVER PRETTY.”

Due to its compact size, the KSG is ideal for home-defense and any place where space is at a premium such as an RV. The short length also makes it easy to use from a modified retention position.

Demonstrating it to a private shotgun class, one attendee said it extended far enough a gun grabber (not the Einstein type) could still seize it. I told him it was possible but the easiest solution would be to pull the trigger, work the action and repeat as necessary.

SETTING YOUR SIGHTS

Most red dot sights sit too high on the rail, causing one to raise their head and not get a proper cheek weld. My KSG wears a set of Magpul MBUS backup sights and I can get a good cheek weld with them. I use

the large “ghost ring” aperture on the rear sight. Although these sights fold, since they are the primary sighting device, they are left in the raised position. I have them sighted in for 50 yards for use with slugs.

MANUAL OF ARMS

One thing to point out is the support hand should be held close to the end of the forend or it will be pinched by the receiver and keep the action from being completely cycled. This puts the support hand very close to the muzzle. A vertical foregrip at the end of the forend to act as a stop — to prevent a hand from wandering in front of the muzzle — might be a good idea.

I would also suggest putting one of the rubber ladder-type rail covers on the forend's rail. This prevents it from

becoming a cheese grater when the action is vigorously worked — and the actions of all pump-actions shotguns should be run with enthusiasm.

You should add a good tactical light for positive identification before shooting at anything. I use an Elzetta Model B132 emitting 650 lumens in an Elzetta Picatinny mount. No, it won't light up the entire street but if the bad guy is leaving, that's a good thing — it's hard to make a case for self-defense if you pursue him.

If you are looking for a shotgun rivaling most semiautomatic pistols in terms of ammunition capacity, check out the KelTec KSG. You may be pleasantly surprised. 🖱

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FX POCKET CHRONOGRAPH

HOME ON THE RADAR RANGE

Tom McHale

Hold on to your shorts people — the world of chronography is about to get turned on its collective head.

I wasn't sure if "chronography" was a legitimate word, but Merriam-Webster says it is, so here we go. Oh, in case you're wondering, I'm using the term to describe the process of measuring the velocity of projectiles, like pellets and bullets. Yes, even though this is an "Air Power" column, we're going to talk about those fast and fiery projectiles too.

TINY BUT POWERFUL

I've been using a nifty little, and I do mean *little*, device from the folks at FX Airguns to measure velocity of various air rifles and handguns. The FX Pocket Chronograph is not much larger than a 20-round box of handgun ammo. Officially it fits into a 2.75"x2.75"x1.7" box and weighs just over 4 oz. according to our kitchen scale, so it's unapologetically portable.

I can fit it in some shirt pockets and easily in my crowded shooting bag. It's designed for airgun use as it measures velocities of moving objects up to 1,300 fps or so which means it works with all sorts of air rifles and handguns including Airsoft trainers firing those plastic BBs. It can also measure things like crossbow bolts and paintball markers. What it doesn't measure is the velocity of fire and brimstone ammunition. Don't tell the folks at FX but I've tried. Must be something about the muzzle blast. If you'll hold the thought for a hot second, things are about to change.

The FX Pocket Chronograph is a Doppler radar unit. Yes, I said radar — meaning there is nothing to place downrange. Meaning no embarrassing, "I shot my chrony again ..." incidents. Which means it doesn't matter if it's sunny or shady and you can use it indoors. Heck, you can use it in the dark if you want; just be sure you're shooting at a safe backstop.

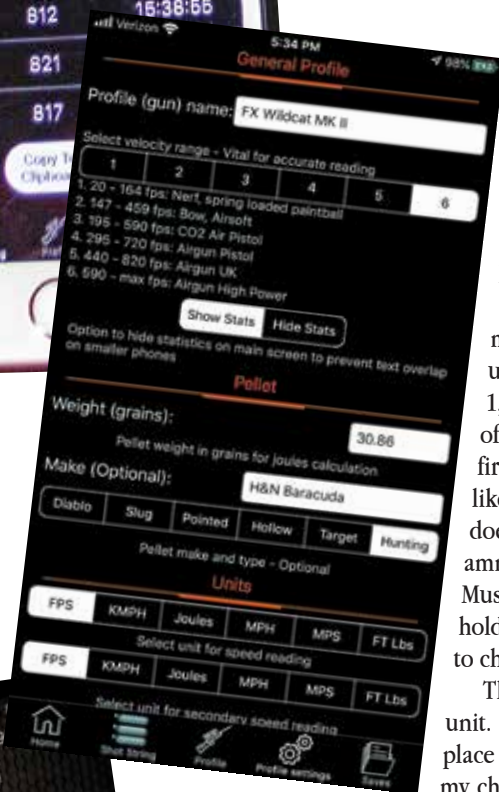
POWER IT UP

The device itself is powered by three AAA batteries. I loaded mine up when it arrived and have been using it for months with no need for a re-stock of Energizers. To operate the Pocket Chronograph, just hit the onboard power button and power up the companion app on a smartphone or tablet. Within a second or so, the two sync up and you're ready to shoot. When you stop to think about this design, it makes a lot of sense.

Why reinvent the wheel on "already invented, present and accounted for" things like a color display, keyboard and a powerful computer to crunch the numbers? The smartphone in your pocket is perfectly capable of doing all this stuff and more. Using the app, you can build profiles for each

The chronograph works by pairing with your smartphone (above) via Bluetooth. The phone does all the heavy number crunching and stores the info for reference purposes.

The software allows setup of profiles so identify each gun and pellet combination. The main viewing screen (left) on the app shows the last shot velocity and constantly recalculates shot-string data.





The unit hangs from the barrel of your gun using rubber bands. It seems like a hinky method of attachment, but Tom says it works great.

gun and ammo type and define as much detail as you like such as projectile weight and shape. Of course, you can also tweak sensitivity settings and choose your preferred units of measurement.

On the firing line, just place the barrel an inch or so over the unit and make sure the muzzle is even with, or slightly forward of the face of the device. When you shoot, the radar picks up whatever is moving directly in front of it and presents the output on the smartphone app. It's sensitive to position, so you won't have to worry about nearby shooters fouling up your readings. As I write this, the FX folks have shipped the units with a barrel adapter taking the place of the original tripod mounting plate. The idea is you can simply hang the whole thing from the muzzle with a couple of rubber hands. It sounds hinky but it's a smart idea.

The benefit is you eliminate the need to place the box on the bench and make sure your airgun is in the correct position for a reading. When it's hanging on the barrel, just point forward and shoot. I've tried the device with air rifles, air

handguns and even the new SIG SAUER ProForce M17 Airsoft Training Pistol. It works like a champ across the board.

THE APP

The software tracks shot strings as you go and calculates the requisite velocity figures with each new reading. At the top of the string-view screen, you'll see velocity average, fastest reading, slowest reading, extreme spread and even the standard deviation is updated on the fly. It's another free benefit of designing the system to work in conjunction with your smartphone. As you've probably already guessed, you can save your results for future review. The history is stored in the app but there is a copy function allowing you to paste the shot string data into another application of your choice. No exporting or custom cables required.

The FX Pocket Chronograph is a full-featured velocity measurement system. The best part is its price point. It lists for just \$199.99, which is in the same ballpark as a decent optical chronograph you have to place downrange in the line of fire. Gotta love technology.

HOLD ONTO YOUR SKIVVIES

Oh, and the bit about holding onto your shorts? As I write this, FX is currently working on their centerfire version using the same technology housed in the same form factor. As you read this, it should have been released. It's going to create quite a stir in the handgun and rifle market. Until now, we've had two options for chronographs — the optical units are time tested and reliable but they're finicky as ambient light conditions change. They can also be persnickety with certain types of projectiles and unusual bullet polishes or coatings. There's also the issue of having equipment downrange. Most indoor ranges won't allow it, which limits use. Other options use radar like the FX Pocket Chronograph, but the price point is somewhere north of \$500. We're in for a treat. 



The FX Pocket Chronograph weighs just 4 oz. and is about the size of a small box of ammo.

www.fxairguns.com

THE COLT POLICE POSITIVE SPECIAL

COLT'S "DELIGHTFUL D"
STILL MAKES THE RATE

Payton Miller

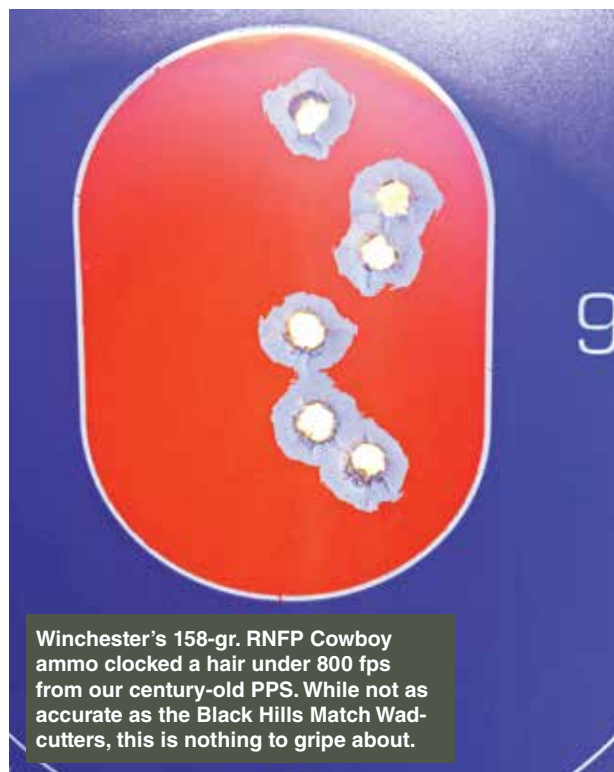
Ask Colt revolver fans to list as many D-Frame models as they can and chances are the results will include fairly well-known names — many decidedly snaky. We're talking Cobra, Diamondback, Agent, Viper, Detective Special, etc. But the granddaddy of the D-breed was the Police Positive, introduced in 1905. The 1908 Sears Roebuck catalog lists it at \$14. The optional "pearl handle" jacked the MSRP up by an additional \$2! Here's a bit of the accompanying copy:

"Has a splendid grip, smooth working action, blued steel finish with fancy rubber handle, but may be fitted a pearl handle ... It is the revolver which is adopted by police departments of New York and other large cities."

Naturally, those on the side of law and order weren't the only fans of the Police Positive. A nickel-plated 4" specimen once owned by Chicago's Al Capone went for a cool \$109,080 at the Christie's Antique Arms, Armour and Collectors auction in 2011.

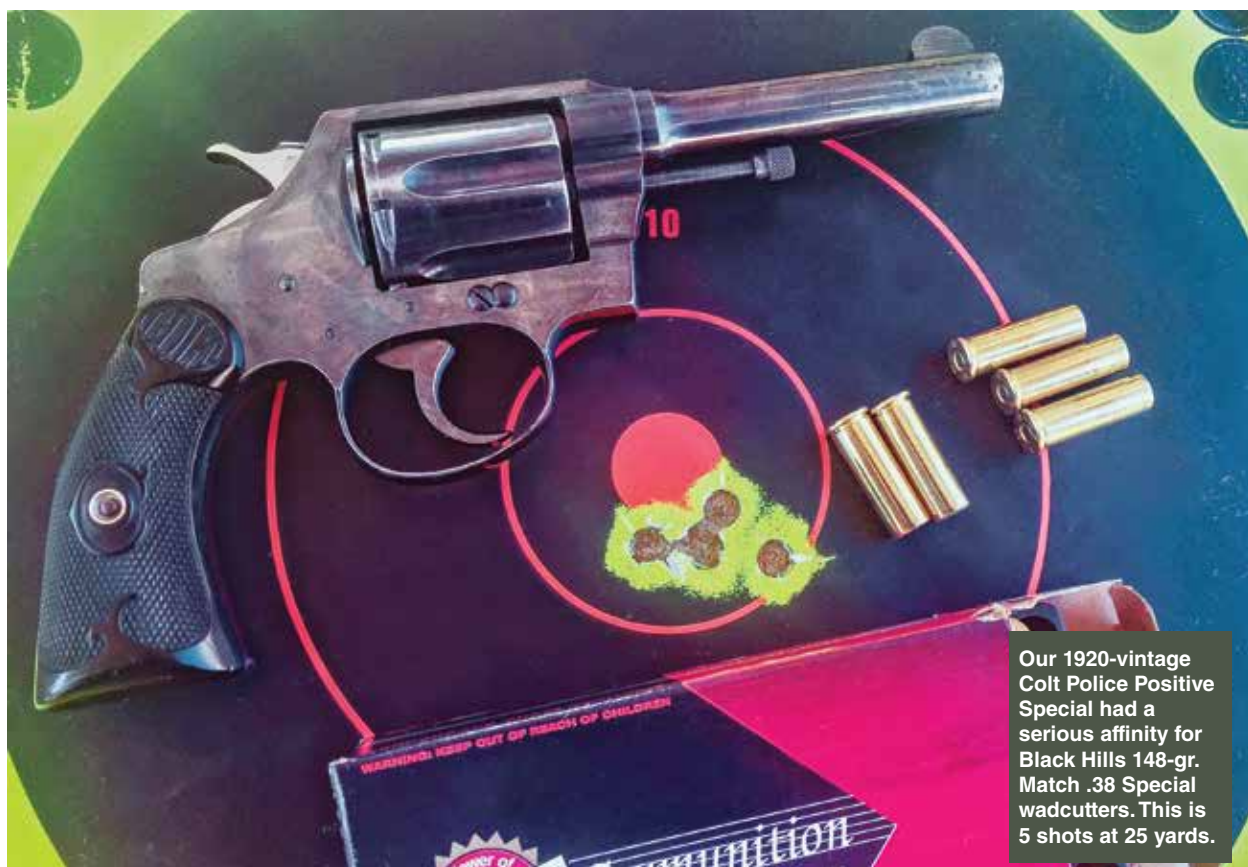
WHAT'S IN A NAME?

While arguably not as sexy as "Python," "Peacemaker" or even "Official Police," the name "Police Positive" refers to Colt's



Winchester's 158-gr. RNFP Cowboy ammo clocked a hair under 800 fps from our century-old PPS. While not as accurate as the Black Hills Match Wadcutters, this is nothing to gripe about.

"Positive Lock" which prevented discharge if the gun were dropped on its hammer. A period ad claimed the firing pin was blocked and "released only when the trigger is intentionally pulled." Today's shooters should bear in mind being able to safely load a cylinder "all the way around" was still a relatively exciting concept around the dawning of the 20th Century.



Our 1920-vintage Colt Police Positive Special had a serious affinity for Black Hills 148-gr. Match .38 Special wadcutters. This is 5 shots at 25 yards.



Smith & Wesson's Model 10 (top) is larger and heavier than Colt's Police Positive Special (bottom). But both were state-of-the-art in their day.

The specimen I got to shoot was a First Issue (1920 vintage) Police Positive Special, featuring hard rubber grips. Those gave way to checkered walnut in 1927 with the Second Issue guns. The "Special" iteration came into being in 1908 to differentiate a somewhat beefed-up version with a slightly longer cylinder capable of handling the potent .38 Special and .32-20 Winchester. The original Police Positive was chambered to the .32 and .38 Colt New Police and was discontinued in 1947, while the Special soldiered on until 1995. It's not hard to see the reasoning behind the .38 Special upgrade to the Police Positive series. It provided a significant power boost over the .38 Colt New Police which is essentially the .38 S&W.

There was an adjustable sighted 6" Target version (also available in .22 LR) and a 2" Banker's version as well. But there's no mistaking any of them for anything but



a vintage Hartford, Connecticut, product — 6-shot capacity, left-to-right cylinder rotation, naked ejector rod and a pull-to-release cylinder latch. And, as we discovered with our specimen, an impressive potential for accuracy.

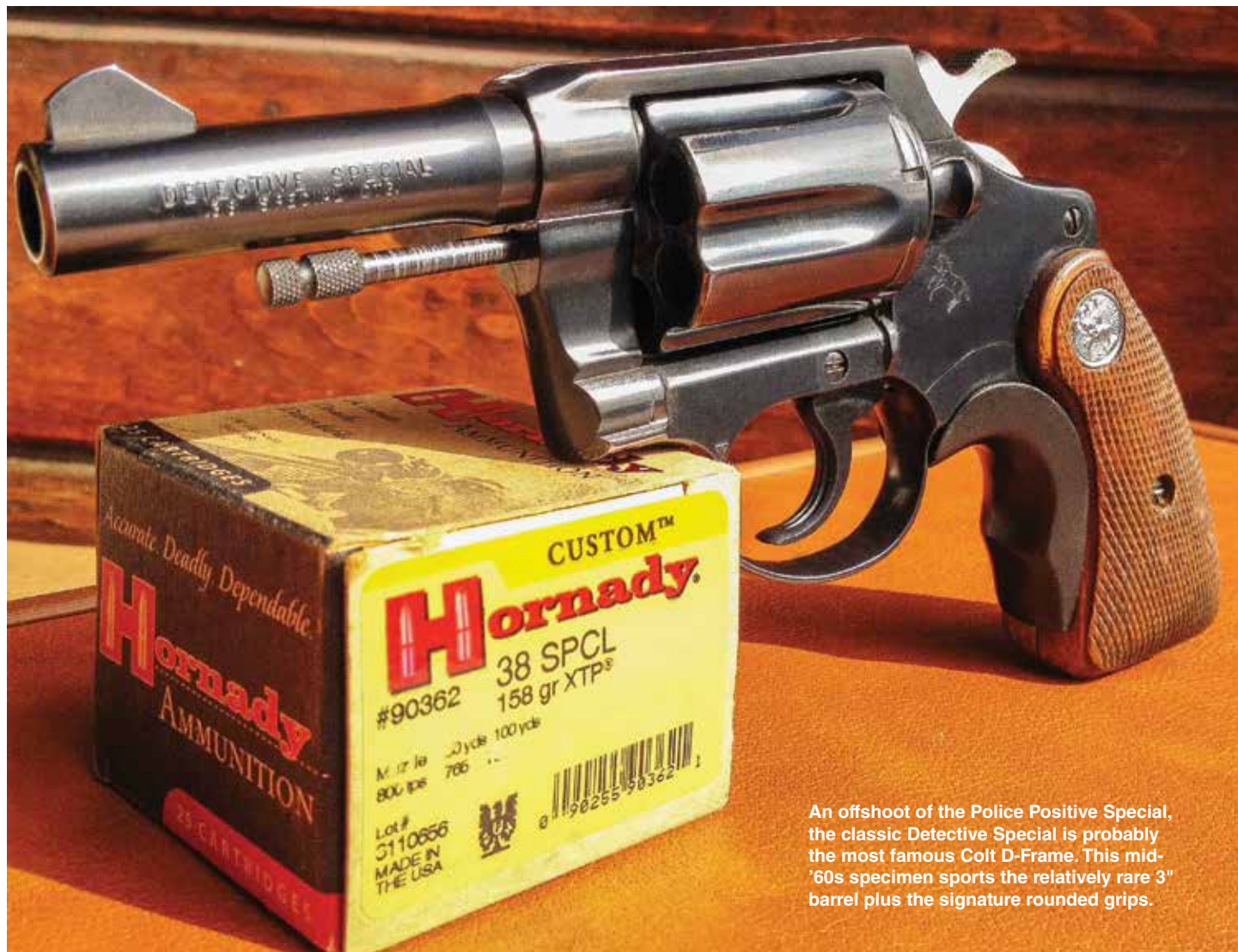
THE LAST OF ITS KIND

In 1977 Colt "updated" the Police Positive Special for the last time. One of the visible cues differentiating it from earlier versions was a shrouded ejector rod. Although this makes sense in a hard-duty gun, it did — in my opinion — remove a lot of the classic Hartford charm from the gun.

About 25 years before Colt brought the curtain down on the Police Positive Special — 1969 to be exact — it was listed at \$93.50 (blued). By comparison, the larger blued Official Police was going for \$110, while the also-heftier competition Model 10 was bringing S&W a somewhat friendlier \$76.50. It might partially explain S&W's eventual dominance in the LE market.

LIGHTWEIGHT PACKER

Here's a by-the-numbers "packability" comparison — the unloaded weight of a 4"



An offshoot of the Police Positive Special, the classic Detective Special is probably the most famous Colt D-Frame. This mid-'60s specimen sports the relatively rare 3" barrel plus the signature rounded grips.

K-Frame Smith Model 10 is 30.5 oz. while Colt's preeminent duty revolver, the .41-Frame Official Police weighs in at 38 oz. in its 4" iteration. Our little Colt PPS? A mere slip of a thing at 23 oz.. It's not much of a shock when you stop to consider it's essentially an early-series 4" Detective Special with a square butt. Being an absolute delight to carry is only one of its charms, as I soon discovered.

FEEDING THE OLDSTER

My ammo menu for checking our Police Positive Special's range performance was somewhat limited. I wanted to at least make an attempt to stay within the bullet weight parameters of what was in vogue when the gun was made. I also wanted to do so at standard-pressure "stress levels." I use Plus-P stuff frequently but I usually avoid shooting it in small frame guns this old. If it would've been a modern D-Frame, say a later Detective Special, I might have given the high-test stuff a spin. But why beat up a classic like this?

My three loads were Winchester 158-gr. Cowboy lead RNFP, Black Hills 148-gr. Match Wadcutter and Remington 130-gr. FMJ. I figured the Winchester stuff would be a pretty close approximation of most pre-war "service loads," while the Black Hills stuff would be a good bet for demonstrating the little Colt's accuracy potential. The Remington FMJs? These are pretty much a dupe of the service ball load used by pilots packing (usually) S&W K-Frames like the Victory Model in WWII. What I like about them is they're "bulk-pack practice" cheap and pretty accurate in most guns. Plus, they're "FMJ clean." Most 4" guns I've used them in generally produce velocities a bit over 900 fps — what I got with the Police Positive Special.

The 158-gr. Winchester stuff produced a 6-shot 2.5" group at 25 yards while the Black Hills Wadcutters crowded 5 shots into a spectacular cluster at just under 1.5". The Remington 130-gr. was almost on a par with the Winchester 158s.

Normally I'm the first guy to piss and moan about tiny, fixed U-notch-rear/

blade-front vintage sighting arrangements like this one, but I'm gonna keep my mouth shut here — good bifocals and a nice group or three will do that! Whatever long-ago Colt craftsman regulated these sights knew what he was doing.

MAKING IT GO BANG

Trigger-wise, the Police Positive Special really shined in single action — 3.5 lbs. double action? Well, we're talking about 11 lbs. Not "stagey" with the mid-hitch I remember from most old Colts but with quite a bit of takeup. As much as I love them, shooting one makes you realize why most serious DA guys (say, Ed McGivern) preferred Smiths. The best bet for effective double-action shooting with the old PPS was to take up the slack and pull straight through quickly.

The long-ago ad probably said it best when claiming the Police Positive was "The safest, simplest and most dependable revolver you can buy."

I'll "buy" it.



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FRANCHI MOMENTUM

*High-tech rifle/scope combo
makes the grade in New Mexico*

HOLT BODINSON

When a convergence of technology in the firearms world reached my doorstep, it was a surprise. The combination of a brand-new rifle by Franchi mounted with a 3rd generation Eliminator optic by Burris arrived as I was on my way out the door to participate in a mule deer cull hunt in the mountains of New Mexico. The combination of a new rifle, a new optic and New Mexico mule deer was irresistible.

FROM FRANCE WITH LOVE

Franchi is a famous and familiar brand. Founded in 1868, the Luigi Franchi Company developed an early reputation for the quality of their Holland & Holland type double-barrel shotguns seen in the hands of many of Europe's outstanding competitive shooters.

Being a Franchi shotgunner myself, the company caught

me by surprise when they burst on the scene recently with a refined centerfire rifle, the Momentum. It comes in three different configurations and 6 common chamberings: .243 Win., 6.5 Creedmoor, .270 Win., .308 Win., .30-06 and .300 Win. Mag. The 6.5 Creedmoor and the .300 Win. Mag. are supplied with 24" hammer-forged, chrome-moly barrels, the other calibers with 22" barrels. MSRP starts at \$609.

EUROPEAN STYLE

The Italians have a flair for styling and the black synthetic stock of the Momentum is elegant indeed. Franchi calls it "ergonomically-designed to be an extension of the body, regardless of shooting position" and there are some neat features. The forearm is virtually flat with fully wrap-around checkering. It's great for a solid rest and off the bench, your hand naturally curls around and cradles the forearm with your fingers gripping the deep grooves running parallel to the barrel. Ergonomic? I'd say so.

The Franchi Momentum/Burris Eliminator combo brought home the venison on Holt's high country mule deer hunt.



THE ITALIAN TRIGGER JOB

Ah, the Italians do like crisp triggers though, and the Momentum's trigger is precisely adjustable with a single screw from 2-4 lbs. Franchi's trigger is almost worth the price of the gun. Other gun makers should take note. Mated to the trigger is a two-position safety which permits unloading the rifle with the safety on.

PRECISION FEATURES

Two design features of the Momentum enhance its precision performance. The massive, spiral-fluted bolt features three locking lugs which distribute stress better to the action than a two-lug system and provides a quick, 60-degree bolt lift. The other accuracy-enhancing feature is the modern, stressless action bedding. Instead of a single recoil lug, there are two metal bedding lugs in the stock mating with two slots machined into the front receiver ring. These features add up to a sub-MOA rifle right out of the box.

THE OPTIC

What blew me away in terms of technology was the scope riding the Momentum, a Burris Eliminator III — their 3rd generation, laser-range-finding, trajectory-compensating, 4-16x50 rifle scope with an MSRP of \$2,039. It was too good to be true.

I've always sighted my big game rifles in using the time-tested point-blank range system. In most hunting calibers, the system works just fine at 250 or 300 and even out to 400 yards in some cartridges. The Burris Eliminator III changes all that.



The Eliminator draws power from a CR 123 battery (above) which is good for 5,000 ranging cycles. Holt mounted the Eliminator "On" switch on the forearm right at his fingertips. The Momentum's 3-lugged bolt (left) enhances accuracy by better distributing stress on the action while providing a 60-degree bolt lift.

Programming your cartridge and altitude offset into its memory, you press a button and the scope ranges the target out to +750 yards on a non-reflective target. In milliseconds, it automatically calculates the drop and up-or-down angle of the shot and generates an illuminated red dot as your precise aiming point on the vertical axis of the reticle. Even better, the scope displays a 10 MPH windage offset in the upper corner of the eye piece image.

ON THE MOUNTAIN

For the mule deer hunt, the Momentum came chambered for the 6.5 Creedmoor — brainchild of ballisticians Dave Emary and Dennis DeMille of Hornady. It was originally designed as match/target cartridge with very tight chambering tolerances. What Emary and DeMille solved was the problem of Principle Axis Tilt, caused by excessive throat dimensions permitting bullets to yaw while engaging the rifling.

Commonly, traditional throats measure from 0.003" to 0.010" larger than the projectile diameter. The design team tightened the tolerance in the 6.5 Creedmoor chamber to only 0.0005" over projectile diameter, ensuring the bullet entered the lead squarely and engaged the rifling in a straight in-line fashion. The rest is history.

GOING UP THE MOUNTAIN

Our New Mexico hunt was arranged through Colorado Buck outfitters, on a 19,000-acre ranch managed for elk and mule deer





Employing technologically advanced firearms and optics of the gun/scope combo, Holt made a clean, humane kill at over 300 yards with one shot.

hunting outside Cimarron. Buck had noticed a declining quality in the mule deer trophies taken and had organized our hunt to cull any buck at least 3 years old with three or fewer points on at least one side. With this limitation, I expected it might be a tough hunt. It proved otherwise.

At camp, I met an old hunting partner John Barsness and we sighted in our Momentum/Eliminator combo with Hornady's 143-gr. ELD-X load, a sleek, plastic-tipped game bullet with a G1 BC .623 rating and muzzle velocity of 2,700 fps. The hunt was on.

The next morning found John and I in the care of our guide, Dwayne, working through a high mountain burn. John and I had amicably decided I would take the first shot since I had an Arizona Coues deer tag burning a hole in my pocket.

As luck would have it, the first buck we spotted was sporting a very deformed rack, with 2 points on one side and a weird, 3-point sprout of an

antler on the other. He was an old gray-faced mulie, walking several hundred yards to our front.

I got down on the bipod as quick as a cat, punched the Eliminator on switch, viewed the laser report of 311 yards, waited for the little red dot to indicate the aiming point, led the walking buck a hair and pulled the trigger. The bullet drove through his left ribs and came to rest under the hide of the right shoulder. The hunt was over. With the core intact, the retained weight of Hornady's ELD-X bullet measured 105-grains — I could not have asked for better performance.

FINAL THOUGHTS.

The Franchi Momentum and Burris Eliminator III combination proved to be a successful formula for matching high-tech design and performance with the human interface, allowing a humane kill by eliminating aiming-point errors. While the 30.4-oz. Eliminator brought the total platform weight up to 9.25 lbs., I'll gladly pack a few more ounces on a hunt costing thousands for the assurance of placing the first shot on target.

And the 6.5 Creedmoor as a hunting cartridge? I bought both the rifle and the scope!



Hornady's 143-gr. ELD-X bullet exhibited outstanding performance with a retained weight of 105 grains.

www.heycoloradobuck.com

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~ Roy Huntington
Publisher



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.45-70

SIDE GATE LEVER ACTION

The new Side Gate Lever Action, packed with big-bore power and carbine-handling, offers two ways to load — fast and faster!

BIG MEDICINE — NOW FASTER TO RELOAD!

BRENT T. WHEAT

PHOTOS: ROB JONES/THE IMAGESMITH, LLC

That's the stuff dreams are made of," John Wayne whispered softly inside my cranium.

As a practicing Hopeless Romantic, I couldn't help but think of John Wayne's penultimate words from *Big Jake* as I opened the nondescript white cardboard box. I was definitely channeling Richard Boone's bad-guy character "John Fain" while unsealing what I believed would be a treasure even better than the one found in the Sierra Madre.

Unlike Boone/Fain, I wasn't confronted by piles of worthless newsprint, disappointment and a great comeback growled by The Duke. Instead I saw a golden glow, peeking from behind a black flannel wrap, coming from a singular lever-action rifle. Hoisting the fine metalwork and carefully finished walnut from the box, I couldn't help but think about a 12-year-old budding writer who would have given his life savings — \$12.95, mostly in nickels — and his lucky fishing pole to even touch such a special-looking firearm so steeped in the old west persona, if not history.

This gun actually inspired such a moment of wistfulness within an aging soul and I couldn't wait to see if reality matched the dreams.

TWO FOR ONE

The Side Gate Lever Action is one of the new models in the growing Henry portfolio, a reworking of their classic lever-action model. As fans of the Henry rifles are already aware, all of their previous guns sport removable-tube magazines which have both benefits and drawbacks. With this newest iteration, Henry has added the classic side-gate loading port typically found on Winchester rifles to leverage the advantages of both types of loading systems.

FROM THE TOP

In 1860, after three years of work, Benjamin Tyler Henry unveiled the rifle bearing his name. It was a rimfire lever-action chambered for the .44 Henry black powder

cartridge and held 16 shots. Shooting a 200-220-gr. cast lead bullet, the rifle was based on the earlier "Volcanic" rifle built by famed gunmakers Horace Smith and Daniel Wesson. The Volcanic was itself a modification of Lewis Jennings's patented design which — you guessed it — was based on the earlier Volition Repeating Rifle designed by Walter Hunt of New York. Not ironically, the largest stockholder of the Volcanic Repeating Arms Company was one Oliver Winchester, who apparently learned a thing or two about rifle manufacturing in the process.

Winchester obviously went onto fame and fortune while the Henry rifle ended up in history's dustbin of "almost."

The Henry was adopted in small numbers by Union troops, particularly cavalry, in the civil war and later played a role in the Indian Wars of the western U.S. along with a few skirmishes overseas. Confederate General John Mosby is credited (among others) with saying "It's that damn rifle they can load on Sunday and shoot all week." Apparently many Native American warriors loaded their Henry rifles on Sunday, June 25, 1876 when they used them quite effectively at the Battle of Little Bighorn over the next two days.

The doors at the New Haven Arms Company closed and manufacture of the Henry rifle ceased in 1866 after approximately 14,000 guns were shipped.

TODAY'S COMPANY

The modern Henry Repeating Arms Company was started 136 years later in 1996 by Louis Imperato from Brooklyn, New York. The company has no affiliation or lineage to Benjamin Tyler Henry or his New Haven Arms Company but Imperato liked the name and history so he trademarked it for his new gun company.

Louis Imperato passed away in 2007 and the company is now headed by his son Anthony. It has grown into the leading builder of lever-actions and is one of the top five firearm manufacturers in the U.S. with plants in Bayonne, New Jersey and Rice Lake, Wisconsin. The company currently

A There are no "lawyer" safeties on the Side Gate Lever Action. Instead, there is a transfer bar preventing the hammer from meeting the firing pin unless the trigger is pulled. **B** The hardened brass receiver possesses all the strength of steel but with far better looks. The action is similar to the venerable Marlin 336. **C** Want a little bling with your practicality? The Side Gate offers a solid brass buttplate which is surprisingly comfortable when firing full-power loads.

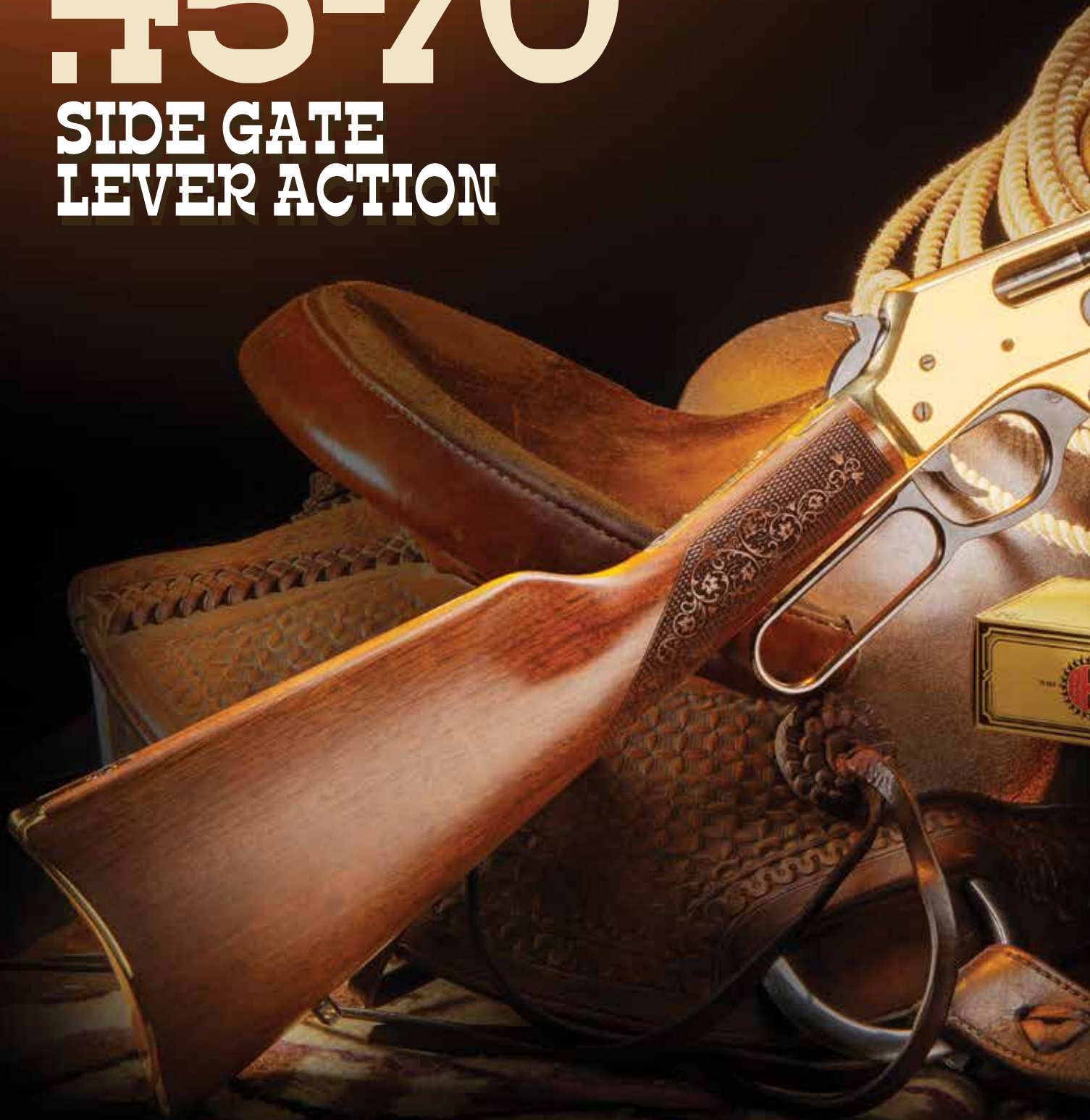




HENRY®

.45-70

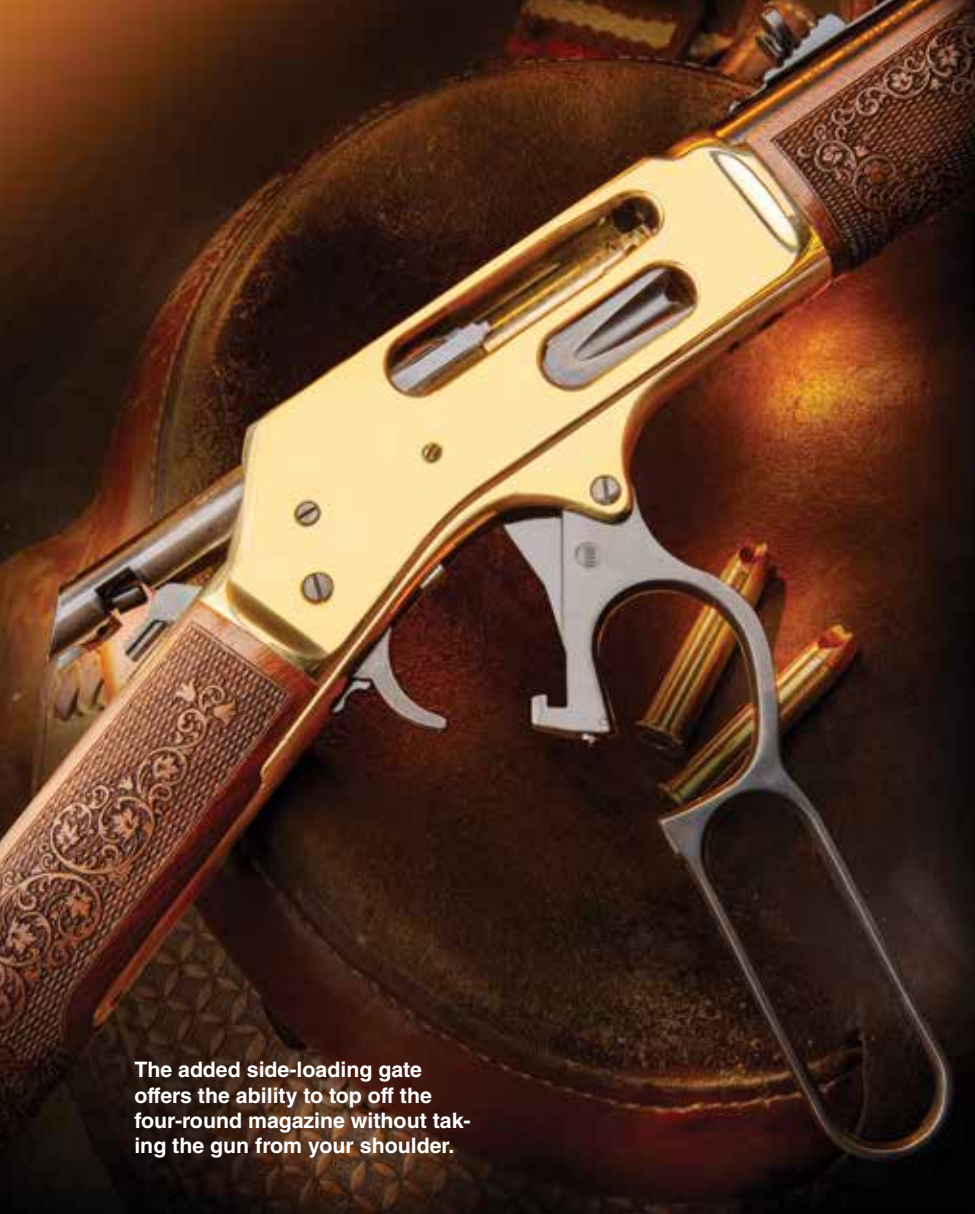
**SIDE GATE
LEVER ACTION**



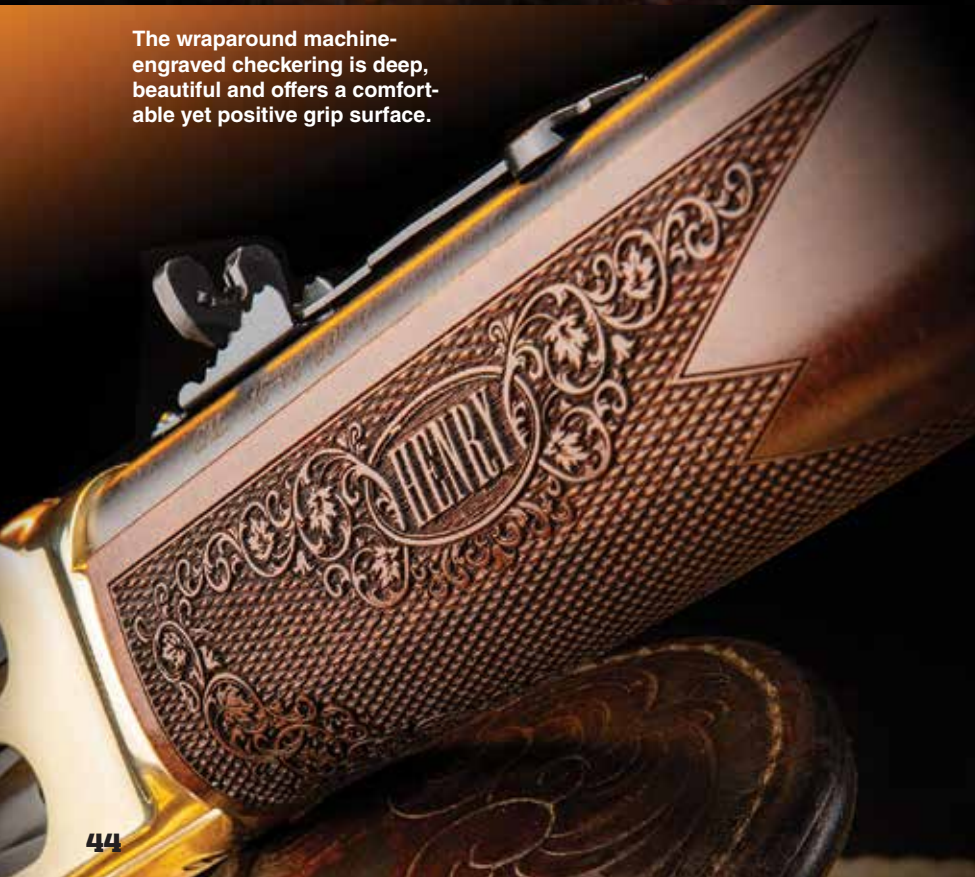


GUNS[®]

MAGAZINE



The added side-loading gate offers the ability to top off the four-round magazine without taking the gun from your shoulder.



The wraparound machine-engraved checkering is deep, beautiful and offers a comfortable yet positive grip surface.

makes a wide variety of .22 rimfire, centerfire rifles, shotguns, commemoratives and even a replica of Benjamin Henry's original namesake.

Aside from good looks and a reputation for quality at a reasonable price, the guns are popular with U.S. shooters because of Henry's dedication to the company motto of "Made in America or Not Made At All." The company is also known for their extensive line of commemoratives and support of non-profit organizations such as the Boy Scouts of America.

TAKE ENOUGH RIFLE

Our test rifle was chambered for the shoulder-thumping .45-70 round. Originally adopted by the military in 1873 it still does considerable business today among people who mess around with the "bitey" stuff in North America — bear, cats and hogs — which is why the "guide gun" concept is often executed as a short-barrel lever-action in this caliber. A guide gun gives you over 2,000 grains of large-caliber persuasion in a quick-firing, reliable, easy-to-manipulate weapon for close quarters encounters where the hairy beasts do their most resolute mayhem. It's also just the ticket for extra-large hooved mammals such as elk or moose at shorter ranges, especially in places where visibility is measured in single-digit arm-spans.

General accuracy is fair-to-middling in most guns while the only thing the cartridge isn't really good for is long-range shots unless you're adept at geometry. Typical bullet drop is about 50" from 300 to 400 yards and really starts to "rainbow" from there. Aside from .45-70, the Side Gate Lever Action is also available in .30-30 Winchester, .38-55 Winchester and .35 Remington, making it an eminently suitable carbine for medium-sized game.

THE DETAILS

On first and second glance, the modern Henry center-fire rifles appear mechanically similar to a Marlin 336. Not currently having a Marlin 336 at hand to dissect, I resorted to the infamous gun experts of the internet where I learned the Marlin and Henry actions are exact duplicates *and* in no way similar, so take your pick. Based on subsequent research with some of our own expert staff writers, they're awfully close mechanically, which isn't a bad thing by any stretch.

Our test gun weighed in at a shade over 7 lbs. and the fit and finish are excellent,

above-average compared to other mass-market competitors and something for which Henry is noted. The only flaw was a slightly “boogered-up” action screwhead on the left side, something more noticeable due to the overall finish quality. The deep wraparound machine-engraved checkering is especially nice. The action was fairly smooth out of the box with only an occasional bit of resistance at the last 1/4" of the cycle. Trigger pull was short and quite crisp, averaging just a hair over 4 lbs. in 10 pulls using my Lyman digital trigger pull gauge.

The gun sports a 19.8" round steel barrel with an ivory-bead front ramp backed by a deep semi-buckhorn rear sight. There is no safety but an internal transfer bar keeping the hammer from the firing pin unless the trigger is pulled.

LOADING'S THE THING.

All in all, the gun looks great, is tight but well-fitted mechanically and performs as expected. As noted, the big difference between this and other centerfire Henry models is the seemingly redundant side-loading gate.

Henry rifles have previously used a tube magazine, much like my well-used Marlin Model 60 — twist the knob under the muzzle, pull out the brass loading tube, add cartridges and re-secure the whole assembly. This makes it easy to unload after a day at the range and isn't excessively time consuming when reloading, but it definitely involves removing the gun from your shoulder. This has been one of the main kicks against otherwise using the high-quality Henry .45-70s as dangerous-



The ramp front sight offers a traditional-style white bead. Below the barrel rests the knurled tube-magazine loading knob for loading and unloading.

CONFRONTING DANGEROUS GAME AT TAG, YOU'RE IT! DISTANCES IS WHERE THE SIMPLE SIDE-GATE LOADING PORT CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE TO YOUR LIFE INSURANCE AGENT AND NEXT-OF-KIN.

Accuracy was on par with most .45-70s (usually considered a 2-4 MOA gun) — a 1.9" five-shot group at 50 yards on a gusty day from a portable table and sandbags with Hornady's 325-gr. FTX LEVERevolution rounds. I was also pleasantly surprised with myself after managing a 4.2" group of five rapid-fire shots offhand at the same distance.

Recoil was — as expected — “noticeable” with the Hornady, Remington Express and Sellier & Bellot 405-gr. soft points though it was actually pleasant to shoot and grouped well with some old Ultramax 405-gr. Cowboy Action rounds I found at the bottom of the ammo closet!

Our gun came with a high-quality Henry Weaver 63B scope mount to fit the four pre-drilled holes atop the receiver. If you're using one of the other smaller calibers offered it would be a useful accessory. However, I felt topping a .45-70 carbine with a scope would be a little bit like putting a canoe rack on a Porsche 930 — doable, but not in keeping with the spirit of things.

game rifles or in cowboy competitions.

WHY IT MATTERS

Confronting dangerous game at *tag, you're it!* distances is where the simple side gate loading port can make a big difference to your life insurance agent and next-of-kin. With a little practice, you can reload or top off your four-shot magazine without even taking the gun from your shoulder, keeping it ready for whatever mayhem life throws your way. Such things are impossible when using a tube-reloading system and therein the Henry side gate models can now enter consideration for “serious” work. I suspect this option will probably be added to Henry's All-Weather Lever Action and the all-steel Lever Action .45-70

DON'T HATE ME BECAUSE I'M BEAUTIFUL!

I'd say the only potential issue with this gun for field use is the fact it's simply *too* pretty! With the hardened brass receiver,



The ramp-style semi-buckhorn rear sight has both course and fine adjustment for elevation. The receiver is also factory-tapped for the optional Weaver 63B scope mount.

deep bluing and crisp checking of its well-grained walnut stocks, it's a gorgeous gun. However, the Side Gate's great aesthetics certainly won't prevent the gun from working well over the long haul.

The brass receiver is supposedly as durable as steel and the gun uses other parts from Henry's tested line of .45-70s. Therefore, if you won't lose sleep over possibly marring the golden receiver or otherwise screwing up the head-turning good looks, the Side Gate will make a great field companion, especially when you need “big medicine” in dicey situations. In more civilized settings, it will certainly draw positive attention at the range or a cowboy action match.

Beauty, brawn, a reliable pedigree and a fair price — what more could you ask? Regardless if you are a cynical big-game hunter or a hopeless romantic, it's easy to fall in love with the Henry Side Gate Lever Action! MSRP: all calibers are \$1,077. 

www.henryusa.com

THE LONG AND SHORT OF **.22 AMMO**



160 YEARS OF RIMFIRE MAGIC



CCI Suppressor ammo works great but the Taurus TX22 handles practically every brand of .22 rimfire reliably, with or without the Tactical Innovations TAC 65 suppressor.

DAVID FREEMAN

The other day I picked up one of my dad's old cigar boxes from a shelf in my ammo closet and was surprised at how heavy it was. Opening it, I found it was nearly full of .22 ammo I'd evidently thrown together for an outing with some of the grandkids but had just forgotten about. Some of it appeared to have come from my dad's house when we cleaned out his stuff some years earlier. One of the shelves in front of me was loaded with .22 rounds so it wasn't like I was missing it. However, the variety of stuff in the box got me thinking.

David picked up this cigar box full of .22 ammo in his closet and started thinking about the variety of ammo available.

CHOICES

When I was a kid, 50 cents bought a box of .22 Shorts, tax included. Those Shorts were great for plinkin' with my High Standard Double Nine revolver or my Remington 514 single-shot rifle. For something serious like squirrel hunting, I opted for .22 Long Rifle hollow points. Sometimes I shot .22 Longs simply because it was the only thing on the shelf at the hardware store.

Fifty cents for a box of ammo! Those days are long gone, but prices are coming down again. Some days I bought .22 Shorts because I only had two quarters and Longs or Long Rifles would have cost 10 or 15 cents more. Shorts are great for short distance target practice, and they're relatively quiet. We never used hearing protection in those days.

WHY THREE?

Ever wonder why we have three .22 rimfire cartridges? The .22 Short was developed in 1857 for the Smith & Wesson Model 1. There's a bit of history here because the Model 1 was Smith & Wesson's first revolver and the .22 Short round was the first rimfire cartridge to replace the cap & ball in commercial revolvers. This first .22 cartridge had a 29-gr. bullet pushed by 4 grains of black powder. It wasn't called Short until the .22 Long



came along in 1871.

It's interesting to me in these days of "is 9mm really enough?" the .22 Short was originally developed for self-defense. As stronger handgun cartridges became popular, the .22 Short was more or less relegated to recreational shooting in shooting galleries at fairs and arcades.

When the .22 Long was developed, it also used the 29-gr. bullet but with more powder than the .22 Short. It was still originally a black powder cartridge and although it was designed with revolvers in mind, several rifles were developed to use this cartridge for hunting small game.

The J. Stevens Arms & Tool Company extended the case of



A variety of manufacturers of .22 Shorts, Longs and Long Rifle provide options for almost any rimfire shooting task.

the .22 Long and added a 40-gr. bullet to produce the .22 Long Rifle, commonly called LR. The .22LR cartridge was available beginning in 1888, in Stevens Arms #1, #2, #9 and #10 break-top rifles. The superior hunting and target shooting characteristics of the LR round initially rendered the .22 Long obsolete, but mystery of mysteries, we still have them today.

Most of the popular pump and lever action rifles of the time were chambered just for one type of .22 rimfire. Of course, most single-shot rifles would handle whichever one you choose to shoot. As the rifle models matured, some of the tube-fed rifles began to handle all three, even mixed together. Examples were the Winchester Model 1906, Marlin Model 20, Marlin Model 39A and Remington 572 Fieldmaster. Today, I have a Henry

lever-action rifle which will handle Shorts, Longs and Long Rifles interchangeably though I'm perplexed as to why I would need this capability unless facing an end-of-ammo scenario and still needing dinner.

The .22LR is by far the most popular today with bullet weights ranging from 20 to 60 grains and all kinds of styles — lead, copper plated, round nose, hollow points — and even shotshells for dispatching rats or snakes.

MAGNUM, TOO

Most discussions about .22 cartridges include the big brother of the lot, the .22 Winchester Magnum, also called the .22 WMR, .22 Magnum or .22 Mag. There is often confusion because of the



The .22 ammo is cheap and many manufacturers offer promotional bulk packages. What other caliber can offer 1,400 rounds of shooting fun for \$70 bucks?

David's Hi-Standard Double
Nine revolver digests .22
Shorts, .22 Longs and .22
Long Rifles without regard to
which is under the hammer.



different names but there is no difference. They're all the same, it's just marketing/branding hype.

You can't chamber a .22 Magnum in a .22 rifle, and you can only shoot them in a .22 revolver if you swap out cylinders. While the bullet diameter is nearly the same, the cartridges are bigger. Bullet weights in the .22 Magnum range from 30 to 50 grains with velocities ranging from 1,500 to 2,200 feet per second. The Magnum cartridge hits harder over longer ranges with more muzzle energy making it a better choice for varmints unless they're very close. I love shooting .22 Magnum handguns with my grandkids because they are loud, have a lot of muzzle flash but very little recoil.

SO MUCH VARIETY

My stash of .22 cartridges, some of them going back years, got me to wondering just what was in there. I found some old boxes of .22 Shorts made by Remington and Winchester. The oldest box



The Henry lever-action .22 rifle can handle Shorts, Longs and Long Rifles interchangeably through its tubular magazine.

I have in my collection is a box of Federal Hi-Power .22 Longs in a box the company used from 1967 to 1972. These cartridges are copper plated, wax lubricated and were manufactured in Minneapolis. I'm thinking those were my dad's. My CCI stash has CB Shorts and CB Longs. These have conical bullets and very light power loading, great for revolver plinking at close range. The regular .22 Shorts add some gusto to the plinkin' game and a little more accuracy. Some of the boxes are labeled high velocity and others low velocity. I found a box of Longs made with primer-only and a 20-gr. bullet, made by Mexican manufacturer Aguila. In fact, I have several boxes of Colt-branded .22LR, with the Rampant Colt on the box, but actually made by Aguila.

RANGE TIME

So many differences — I had to go shooting! Instead of a typical ammo or gun evaluation, my goal was just to have fun. But I can't help it. My mind just works in organized patterns, so I took my Taurus 992 revolver with a 6" barrel and both .22 and .22 Magnum cylinders. I lined up .22 CB Short, .22 HV Short, .22 CB Long, .22 Long, .22 Long Rifle and .22 WMR cartridges. They were all CCI except for the Short HV which were Remington. Firing them in order, 9 rounds each type, each at a separate target 10 yards away, I was successful at getting my rounds on target, regardless of cartridge type. The Longs and Long Rifles grouped the best, but I'd have been killing squirrels or rabbits with any of them. I think the most fun was the sound — super quiet, quiet, sort of quiet, kind of loud, loud and real loud!

VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE – AND SHOOTING!

Much of my stockpile was the result of a severe shortage back in 2012–2014, and when it eased up I just started buying .22 ammo whenever I could. Starting with CCI, Winchester and Remington, I've got Russian-made .22 ammo by Vostok, German RUAG's Geco ammo and CCI's Christmas offering of Clean .22 with red and green poly-coated lead round nose bullets. I won't say .22 ammo is cheap, but it's a lot less expensive than 9mm and other centerfire calibers, so have some fun and shoot some .22.



Susan used a Benelli Super Black Eagle to bag this North Dakota turkey while The Mule and Kaylee waited nearby.

HOW TO TRAIN A MULE

BUILDING AN OUTDOOR FAMILY

KAYLEE FELEGE
AS TOLD TO RAY FLECK



Kaylee enjoyed the turkey hunt so much she wanted to taste the feathers! The idea was obviously vetoed.

Although this is all about me, others are involved. Mom and Dad are biologists. Mom is a wildlife biologist, Dad is a general something-or-other biologist. Both teach at the University of North Dakota. Both have the letters "PhD" — Piled Higher and Deeper — after their names on science-type papers. Mom and Dad are very active outdoors people. They go to Churchill, Canada to band geese and avoid Big White Bears. They both are avid hunters. They go into the swamps down south somewhere to kill feral hogs, tasty and invasive things.

Enter all-important me and these sorts of activities present a challenge. I'm not yet able to carry a 12-gauge with slugs to make Big White Bears take notice or avoid the 10,000 volt fence. The fence around the compound mostly keeps out the Big White Bears. I might be able to navigate the swamp but hogs are only slightly less aggressive than Big White Bears and I might be a distraction (my job).



Raising kids in the outdoors makes for a happy family and the next generation of shooters and hunters.

ON TO THE ADVENTURE

In the old chauvinist world, Susan (aka Mom) would not be faced with the disruption event labeled “Kaylee” (Me!). Mom would be at home and dad (Chris) would be out doing “guy” things. I, Kaylee, am here! Mom and Dad both do not want to stop doing field work, nor stop killing food.

Enter the adventure — keep the family in the field without damaging me! The old way would be for one parent to stay home (probably Mom) and the other to go afield. Mom’s response to the assertion her outdoor days were over? “Why couldn’t my identity just be expanded? Sure, life would change, but giving it all up . . . not interested,” she said. Mom is kind of competitive, she had the PhD-thingy before she was 30.

RAY THE GHOST WRITER TAKES OVER

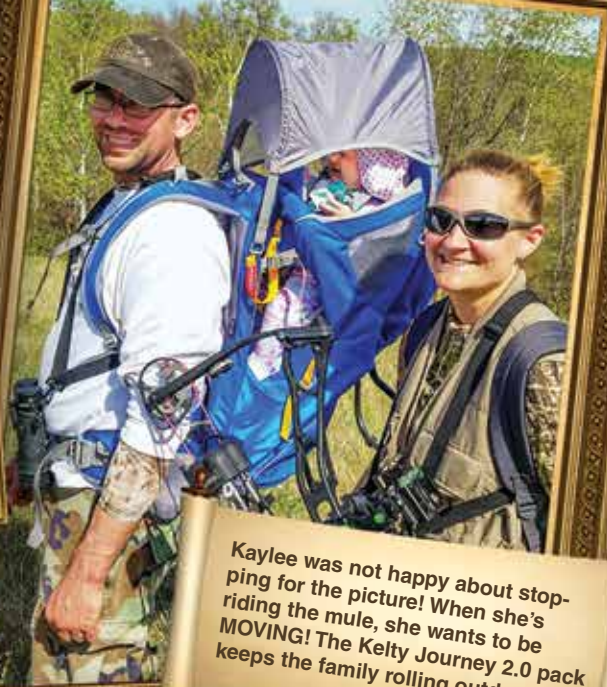
Such a major life change/challenge is what this is about. What does it take to keep a family in the field? Team work is a must, along with the right equipment. Most important, though, is attitude! Consider a quote from Susan to illustrate: “realistic expectations, and a redefined definition of success which may look different than your average hunter’s: time together in the great outdoors as a family.” Chris adds: “You can’t have your child hunting and fishing their whole life if you don’t start them early.”

The first learning adventure was ice fishing on Devils Lake, ND when Kaylee was 5 weeks old. The plan included a fish house, a heater and a plan kept frost bite away. On the 4th trip, pike larger than Kaylee were acquired. Kaylee seems to agree with me on ice fishing. It is boring — she slept most of the time. Next up: Susan’s first spring turkey hunting expedition to western North Dakota when Kaylee was 3 months old.

WHAT IT TOOK TO MAKE IT WORK

Dad had to be willing to assume the role of primary caregiver — often. Susan is a first-class stalker of wild lunch with her bow but stalking game is a time-consuming activity. Chris had primary care for hours, which included diaper changes. Dad also needed to be trained as a mule so he could haul Kaylee around in the pack. “The Mule” also needed to tote more than the normal amount of clothing for Kaylee, plus lots of diapers and cleaning stuff. Kaylee was dressed in white zippered sleepers to minimize insect exposure. While in pursuit of her bird, Kaylee got the fun of a diaper change with a full wipe-down at 40F. She resented it.

Chris and Kaylee hiked with Susan sometimes and other times napped in the truck — sending Susan pictures every so often so



Kaylee was not happy about stopping for the picture! When she’s riding the mule, she wants to be MOVING! The Kelty Journey 2.0 pack keeps the family rolling outdoors.



Kaylee, Rat (left), Dodger (right) and Dad “The Mule” (background).

Mom knew they were ok. When the turkey died, Chris and Kaylee could hear the shot and they soon were in the field alongside Susan. They celebrated her first gobbler — Kaylee wanted to taste the bird’s feathers but the idea was vetoed. They all reveled in their first family turkey hunt and their success at doing it.

CHANGING WEAPONS

A handgun is easy to haul. A handgun would be a good tool for hunting while also including Kaylee. Hunting with a handgun presents just as much of a challenge for ethical hunting as a bow, and is way-more challenging than long guns. Susan is very attached to her bow and is resisting my efforts to convince her to give handgun hunting a go. Fortunately, she has her concealed-carry permit so she’s not against handguns.

THE LONG AND SHORT

An addition to the family does not need to be a disruption event — the new arrival is just a “change event.” The difference being all involved must have the right attitude and be willing to do what it takes.



The Cimarron "Wild Bunch" 1911 is a faithful copy of the original M1911, perfect for use in the Wild Bunch matches. Photo: Alan Garbers



SASS Wild Bunch shooting matches have created a market for modern reproductions of the (top-bottom) Winchester 97, the Winchester 92 and the Colt M1911. Photo: Alan Garbers

THE GUNS *Of The* Wild BUNCH

POPCORN AND GUNFIRE OFTEN GO TOGETHER

ALAN GARBERS

It has been 50 years since the movie *The Wild Bunch* hit the silver screen. Before you conjure up images of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid blowing up railroad cars, redirect your thoughts to the other Wild Bunch, the movie starring William Holden, Ernest Borgnine and Ben Johnson.

I don't want to spoil the plot for those who have never seen the movie but it's key to our story. The movie is set against the backdrop of the Mexican Revolution in 1913 and follows an aging band of misfit *desperados* looking for one last grand haul in a changing world. Their first attempt becomes a miserable but violent failure, which pulls them into their second attempt. To everyone's amazement, it's an overwhelming success. But, in the process, a cost is extracted, and by the end of the movie, the ill-fated antiheroes can no longer tolerate the price they paid and seek to right their wrong.

THE RISE OF THE ANTIHERO

At the time, the movie shocked and yet delighted the viewing public. After 60 years of sterilized westerns featuring larger than life heroes like John Wayne, Hopalong Cassidy, Roy Rogers and Gary Cooper, *The Wild Bunch* had antiheroes whom many identify with to this day.

In most westerns, the good guys didn't die because they were good. The bad guys died or went to jail because they were bad and when anyone did die, the violence and gore was either implied or hidden. *The Wild Bunch* was just the opposite. The wounds and death were shockingly realistic. Blood flew like a Quentin Tarantino flick. Even women were not immune from the graphic novel-like gore as the anti-hero used them for human shields or exacted revenge as a jilted lover.

Filmed in 1968 during the height of the Vietnam War, director Sam Peckinpah tried to show war and killing wasn't fun, clean, or sterile as shown in other westerns of the time. He felt the excessive use of violence would shock and appall the audience and turn them away from the violence raging in Southeast Asia. Perhaps true for a few, but the general public delighted in the blood and guts as it sprayed on the screen, which bothered Peckinpah and movie critics both.



"Cholla" (aka Alan Garbers) gets ready to ventilate some varmints at the rifles stage of a SASS Wild Bunch shoot. Photo: Provided by Tex



Wild Bunch matches aren't just for the boys — here Sarah Kelly drops the hammer on a Winchester model 1873. Photo: Provided by Tex. An original advertisement for the 1969 anti-hero movie *The Wild Bunch* (below) starring William Holden, Ernest Borgnine and a host of other big names.

In the decades following, the movie developed a cult following. According to Wikipedia, "In 1999, the U.S. National Film Registry selected *The Wild Bunch* for preservation in the Library of Congress as culturally, historically and aesthetically significant. The film was ranked 80th in the American Film Institute's 100 best American films and the 69th most thrilling film. In 2008, the AFI listed 10 best films in 10 genres and ranked *The Wild Bunch* as the sixth-best Western."

If watching *The Wild Bunch* wasn't enough entertainment, along the way the Single Action Shooting Society (SASS) decided to hold Wild Bunch three-gun shooting matches. While many firearms were featured in the film, SASS focused on the key firearms used by the protagonists in the movie — the Colt 1911 pistol, the Winchester 97 shotgun and the Winchester 92 lever-action rifle. Not ironically, all three designs came from the fertile mind of John Moses Browning.

THE COLT 1911

The Colt M1911 needs little introduction. It would be impossible to name another firearm that has been in production as long, and by so many companies, and has such a large following. Colt military and civilian 1911 production was nearly 3 million pistols and countless other manufacturers still produce the versions of the 1911/1911A1 today.

While the silhouette of the pistol has remained constant, many variants have emerged over the last 100 years. From



enhanced sights and skeletonized triggers to custom grips and grip safeties, manufacturers have kept the 1911 design fresh and exciting. Among many Wild Bunch competitors, the Ruger SR1911 is especially popular.

On the flip side, many other shooters like to remain true to the original M1911 as portrayed in the movie. In 1913, the Colt M1911 was fresh on the market and hard to purchase — or steal — which was a major movie plot point.

THE WINCHESTER MODEL 97

The Winchester Model 97 has a long and storied history. In reality, it is an improved version of the Winchester Model 93, a shotgun made for black powder at a time when the industry was rapidly turning to smokeless powder. To make matters worse, the Model 93 suffered from mechanical issues.

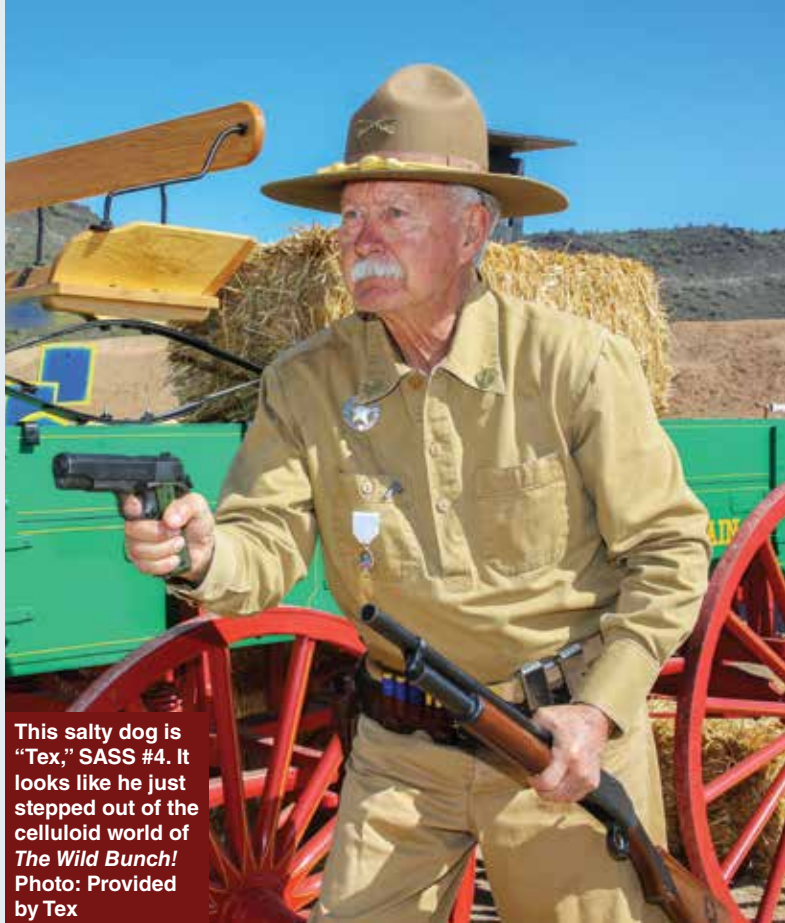
The Model 97, like the Model 93, was a pump-action shotgun with an exposed hammer but it was a huge improvement over the Model 93 and became an instant hit with hunters, lawmen, and the military. No other exposed-hammer shotgun approached the popularity of the Model 97, with over a million being made over its lifetime when production ceased in 1957.

The Model 97 doesn't have a trigger disconnect, which made it popular in the trenches of WWI. Without the disconnect, the gun could fire as fast as the action could be worked without releasing the trigger. In the fields of WWI, upland game hunters-turned-soldiers supposedly stood watch with the Model 97 where the quick-acting reflexes of grouse and quail shooters helped them blast German grenades lobbed from enemy lines.

The Model 97 is a key firearm in *The Wild Bunch* as can be seen with devastating effect from the bloody beginning to the gruesome end.

THE WINCHESTER MODEL 92

The Winchester Model 92 lever-action rifle is beyond a doubt the most filmed "cowboy" rifle in history. The reason is easy. The production of the Winchester Model 92 ran from 1892 until 1941 when wartime production changed Winchester's priorities. In short, Hollywood could buy all the new rifles they wanted for decades. It's no wonder we see the Winchester 92 get slammed to the ground, scratched across rocks and bashed to bits in fight



scenes. To paraphrase a Doritos slogan — "Destroy all you want; we'll make more."

In the Golden Age of westerns, few knew the most commonly seen rifle on the silver screen hadn't even been invented yet during the time being portrayed. The Model 92 looked cowboy and nothing else mattered.

John Wayne carried one in countless films. It didn't matter if he was portraying 1869 in *The Searchers*, 1875 in *True Grit*, or 1901 in *The Shootist*, the rifle in his hands most of the time was the Model 92.

WILD BUNCH MATCHES

Competing in the SASS Wild Bunch matches is addictive. The action is fast, close and exciting. The steel targets are big and in your face, giving the impression no shooter could miss. But, as soon as the shot timer starts, the mantra of getting a good sight picture is often forgotten!

To make things even more interesting, the shooter must shoot the targets in a pattern and sequence changing from stage to stage. This tests not only marksmanship but also memory.

Since it's a fun game, many shooters follow the lead of our antiheroes. In the opening scenes of the movie, the gang disguised themselves as U.S. soldiers in uniforms to rob a railroad office. Don't be surprised if competitors wear sergeant stripes, campaign hats and canvas spats!

Contrary to the fierce and bloody violence shown in the movie, Wild Bunch matches couldn't be any friendlier. Everyone is there to shoot cool guns, have fun with friends (old and new) and take home memories.

Watch the movie then attend a SASS Wild Bunch match and you'll see why their motto is "Come for the shooting, and stay for the friendships."



Wild Bunch matches attract young and young at heart shooters. The action is fast and furious using weapons from over 100 years ago. Photo: Provided by Tex

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY HELLCAT 1200

PROFOUNDLY POWERFUL. SEDUCTIVELY SMALL.



The U-Dot rear sight looks like a grinning Cyclops as you look through Will's Shield Reflex Mini Sight. It's rugged and offers a 22,000-hour run time on a single battery.



WILL DABBS, MD

The world shifted just a bit on September 25, 2019. Did you feel it? It wasn't one of those silly Instagram events like Kim Kardashian brushing her teeth or yet another iteration of AOC's denigrating America. This one was deeper and more profound — Springfield Armory figured out how to stuff as many rounds as you might find in a full-size Browning Hi-Power into a concealed-carry pistol capable of riding comfortably underneath a pair of shorts and a T-shirt. They call it the Micro Compact Hellcat, and it is one revolutionary piece of iron.

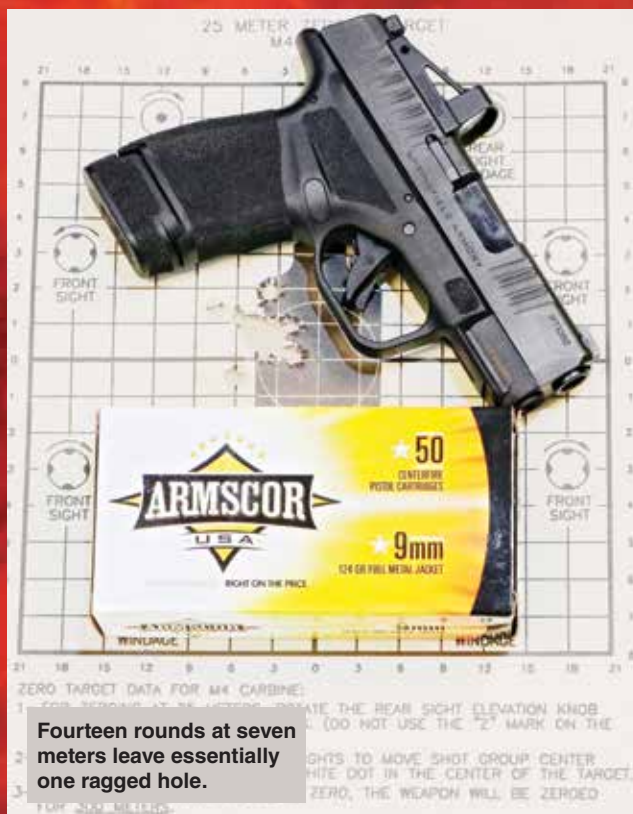
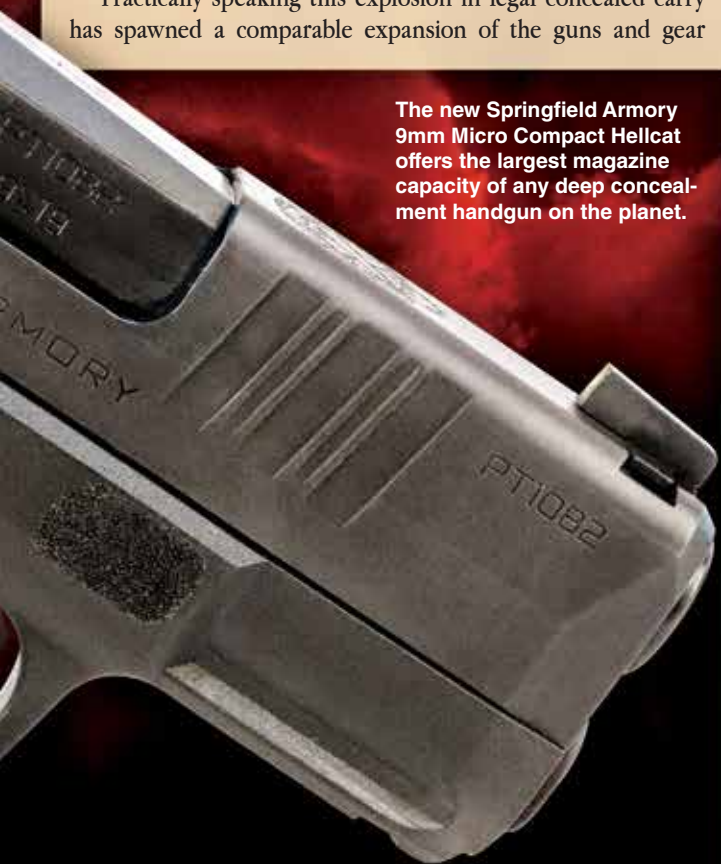
ORIGIN STORY

Vermont is the only state in the union allowing law-abiding Americans to carry a concealed handgun without some sort of silly writ since the Founding Fathers birthed this great experiment in democracy. It's hard to believe this same state could produce the likes of Bernie Sanders but this is a conversation for another time. However, in the past 20 years there has been a gradual but inexorable nationwide shift toward allowing private American citizens to exercise their God-given rights as Thomas Jefferson originally intended. The end result has transformed the firearm marketplace.

Thirteen states including my own currently embrace constitutional carry. This means so long as you are 21 or older and have a clean record, you can legally pack a concealed firearm without asking anybody's permission. To my enslaved brethren in New York, New Jersey and California I would say, from my heart — I'm truly sorry your states *suck*.

Practically speaking this explosion in legal concealed carry has spawned a comparable expansion of the guns and gear

The new Springfield Armory 9mm Micro Compact Hellcat offers the largest magazine capacity of any deep concealment handgun on the planet.



needed to support the practice. Previously the industry standard was a pistol about an inch wide carrying maybe half a dozen rounds. It turns out we can actually do way better.

TECHNICAL STUFF

The Hellcat is a preternaturally slim striker-fired deep carry-pistol occupying the same space as their previous single-stack XD-S guns. In fact, the Hellcat is actually skinnier than a GLOCK 43 yet carries more than twice the onboard ammo. There are two Hellcat variants, both in 9mm Parabellum. The basic sort sports slide gripping grooves front and back as well as on top rear aspect of the slide. The OSP (Optical Sight Pistol) has the rear slide deck cut for a micro red dot sight. Mine sports an awesome Shield Reflex Mini Sight-Compact.

The front iron sight is a generous tritium dot while the rear is a white semicircle. Imagine a Cyclops smiley face and you have the sight picture. It is fast, intuitive and cool. The optics mount still includes a rear iron sight as well. You never know when your batteries might precipitously die and this keeps your gun from dying along with them.

The frame features what they call a pressure-activated grip made up of scads of tiny pyramids. The higher ones are squared off on the top so as not to abrade your skin unduly. The deeper versions are left sharp to enhance your grip the tighter you squeeze. None of it is visible without a proper magnifier. They also include the neatest little parking spaces for your trigger finger on both sides of the gun for all those times when you aren't just about to unleash chaos.

There is a bit of abrasive stuff on the end of the guide rod acting as a standoff. Should you ever have to press the gun up against something firmly before firing, the slide won't come out of battery and deadline your piece. This seems a small thing right up until it's not.



The new Springfield Armory 9mm Micro Compact Hellcat (above) occupies a comparable space as a single stack GLOCK 43 yet carries more than twice as many rounds.



CrossBreed totes the gun comfortably even with the red dot sight and 14 rounds onboard.



The Springfield Armory grip safety is gone and I frankly mourn its passing. However, this gun has a bevy of safety mechanisms both inside and out keeping the gun running smoothly, safely and well. The Micro Compact Hellcat just isn't going to go off unless the trigger is pulled. There is, naturally, a standard optics rail on the dust cover and a loaded chamber indicator telling you the state of your gun at a glance.

The gun comes with two patented magazines and three floorplates. The 11-round version sits flush with the bottom of the grip. It can be configured with a flat floorplate for maximum stealth or a pinky extension for better control. The extended magazine carries 13 rounds though I honestly cannot fathom how. It is visibly smaller than a Hi-Power box with the same capacity. I have moderately large hands and the 13-rounder fits me perfectly.

HOW DOES SHE RUN?

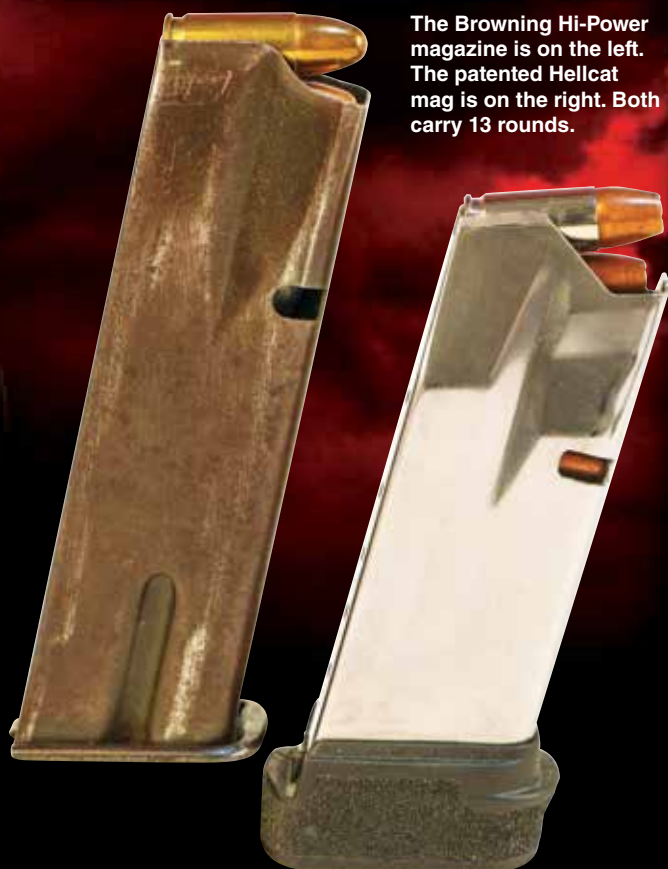
In a word, swimmingly. I pack a Springfield Armory XD-S in .45 ACP as my EDC gun these days. The new Micro Compact Hellcat rides just as discreetly in the same holster and prints no worse while packing more than twice as many rounds.

The Hellcat is so small I can comfortably tote the gun in a Crossbreed IWB holster even with the red dot installed and about forget it's there. The gun fits my hands nicely and the red dot compensates a great deal for my seasoned eyes. The pistol will just about hide in the palm of your hand.

At a typical defensive range of seven meters I can put 14 rounds through what is essentially a big jagged hole. All Springfield Armory guns are accurate and this one is no different. The grip fits my moderately large hands perfectly while the undercut trigger guard and high beavertail help mitigate muzzle flip and



The double-stack Hellcat (left) is about the same width as a single stack GLOCK 43 while packing more than twice the ammo.



The Browning Hi-Power magazine is on the left. The patented Hellcat mag is on the right. Both carry 13 rounds.

tame recoil. I fed the gun a little bit of everything I could find and it ate it all flawlessly. The day a Springfield Armory firearm is unreliable is the day I will vote Democrat.

The reversible magazine release is in the perfect spot and the slide stop is easily accessed. However, with the red dot installed I find it much easier to just draw my hand against the red dot to drop the slide on a fresh magazine. The Micro Compact Hellcat carries like a pocket pistol yet performs like a service gun.

RUMINATIONS

The SIG SAUER P365 occupies a similar market space to the new Springfield Armory Micro Compact Hellcat. Both guns are about the same size, carry well and run great. Both guns also carry inimitable street cred. However, Springfield does earn the bragging rights — their standard included magazine carries one more round.

The unstoppable engine of capitalism has driven the American gun industry to ever-greater rarefied levels of performance. Concealed carry is technically the law of the land from sea to shining sea and the market for quality concealed carry gear grows daily. In the Micro Compact Hellcat we appreciate the current state of the art.

I thought I was something special, packing a trim polymer-framed concealed carry pistol holding six rounds in the magazine. Now Springfield Armory gives you a total of 14 in exactly the same space. It kind of makes those of us who amassed a serious collection of single stack concealed carry guns look sort of silly in retrospect. It's the sort of math anybody can understand. 

www.springfield-armory.com
www.shieldpsd.com

BROWNELLS BRN-PROTO AR15

A WORKING PIECE OF HISTORY YOU CAN OWN

WILL DABBS, MD

"In the beginning, God made ..."

Thus begins what is, in my opinion, history's greatest piece of literature. The inspired prose following defines humanity's place in the universe, elucidates our timeless plight, and then illuminates the subsequent path to salvation. However, all this incredible stuff started with a single phrase. Everything of significance has to start someplace.

At risk of flirting with blasphemy, Brownells has recently come out with a spot-on reproduction of the very rifle which started the whole "black rifle" craze. Sporting historically perfect retro features along with Information Age reliability and

performance, the BRN-Proto is the gun for which geeks like me have been clamoring for decades. The BRN-Proto is a fully functional representation of Gene Stoner's first prototype AR15. Just hefting the thing is like stepping into a time machine.

EVOLUTION

The M16 rifle has served with distinction as the primary weapon of the United States military for more than half a century. No other American shoulder arm even comes close. The M1903A3 Springfield certainly earned its acolytes, and the M1 Garand is considered a holy icon by its fanatical disciples. However, for raw years of service and number of bullets tossed downrange nothing holds a candle to the M16.

Early detractors decried the diminutive 5.56x45mm cartridge



The new BRN-Proto is the spitting image of Gene Stoner's first prototype AR15. Lithe, svelte and cool, this nifty little rifle is a great addition to any seasoned collection.

Magazines have evolved considerably as well. These box mags developed from left to right.



The bolt carrier is hard chrome plated like the originals and is locked rearward by a trigger inside the carry handle.



The lower receiver has to include the Brownells manufacturing info, but it is otherwise spot-on.

a “Poodle Popper.” They thought the adoption of a .22-caliber military round was a sure sign of the coming apocalypse. However, several zillion dead terrorists later, I think we can all agree this zippy little cartridge will reliably do the deed.

The M16 brought with it unprecedented firepower. Weighing about two-thirds what its predecessor the M14 did, this tidy Space Age gun remained controllable on full auto. In its evolved form, the M16 was also quite reliable if properly maintained. Now fast forward half a century and we have hung a lot of

ancillary weirdness onto this lithe little rifle.

Today’s M4A1 can dispel the darkness and offer precision mid-range target engagement at speeds previously unimaginable. However, all this Information Age awesome spawns from some common evolutionary material. To appreciate what Brownells has done we set the way-back meter to 1958.

GENESIS

In 1958 the tiny little Armalite Company submitted 10 AR15 rifles for analysis by military testers. They also included 100,000 rounds of ammunition and a hundred 25-round straight box magazines. Those early AR15 rifles were simply scaled down versions of the 7.62x51mm AR10 guns then in production under license by the Dutch firm *Artillerie Inrichtingen*. Like those early





“ DESPITE ITS RETRO PEDIGREE, THE BRN-PROTO WOULD STILL BE A FINE CHOICE SHOULD YOU FIND ZOMBIES STAGGERING UP YOUR LITTLE CUL-DE-SAC.” ”

AR10s, these prototype AR15s had their trigger-shaped charging appendages up top nestled within the carrying handle.

The results of these trials showed seven Infantrymen armed with AR15s could produce the same volume of fire as 11 troops packing heavier M14 rifles. They could also carry twice as much ammunition for the same weight. Everybody involved seemed thrilled with the little guns except the guys who made the serious decisions. They saw the little toy-like plastic weapons as excessively radical in a world still defined by stained walnut and parkerized steel. In frustration, cash-strapped Armalite sold the

rights to the AR15 to Colt for \$75,000 and a 4.5 percent royalty on guns produced.

Colt took the first prototype AR15 chassis and tweaked it to make it more easily manufactured. This meant moving the top-mounted charging handle to the familiar T-shaped version we all know and love today as well as equipping the gun with triangular polymer handguards. Along the way the front sight base grew a bit and the furniture went from brown to black. The new Brownells BRN-Proto AR15 now brings all the pre-M16 1959 awesome right to your gun safe.



The family resemblance to this rare original 1950s-era Dutch AR10 from Will's collection is obvious.



The new BRN-Proto is the spitting image of Gene Stoner's first prototype AR15. Lithe, svelte and cool, this nifty little rifle is a great addition to any seasoned collection.

ANATOMY

Many have tried, but nobody else has even come close. The charging handle on the BRN-Proto is indeed a trigger set within the carrying handle akin to the 1956-era AR10 which spawned it. The round forward hand guard is brown and pirated from the AR10 just as was the original. The bolt carrier group is hard chrome-plated and the muzzle sports a proper three-prong duckbill flash suppressor. The powers-that-be at the time said this open-ended design caught unduly on brush. However, it remained mighty handy for prying the wire off of ammo crates.

The gun obviously runs via a direct gas impingement system. Brownells even whipped up some 25-round straight box magazines to make the reproduction complete. When first you heft the BRN-Proto AR15 you really can see what all the fuss was about.

The markings on the left side must include Brownells' identifying information but the receiver is otherwise perfect. The slab-sided lower receiver includes the little plus sign on the right like the originals and the magazine catch is left unfenced. For the gun nerd truly committed to his craft, you will note the forward pushpin is not retained within the receiver and the aft portion of the assembly includes the roll pin hole originally designed to stake the buffer tube in place. The fact I notice stuff like this goes a long way toward explaining why I have so few normal friends.

The handguard slip ring isn't tapered and the buttstock lacks a cleaning kit compartment. Both sling swivels pivot as they should. I think the brown plastic furniture seems to create a

The open-tipped duckbill flash suppressor is period authentic.



pleasant aesthetic dissonance when compared to the slate gray finish on the metal bits, but perhaps I am overthinking it. My wife opined the doodoo-colored stocks made this the ugliest gun she ever beheld. I suppose opposites do indeed attract.

This little gun feels absolutely anorexic when compared to a modern M4. The forearm is skinny and the gun lacks all the harsh Picatinny corners and detachable widgets defining modern tactical weapons. There is a sleek sensuality to the piece. The BRN-Proto AR15 just oozes retro cool we all seem to crave so these days.

HOW DOES SHE RUN?

It is amazing how maneuverable these unadorned black rifles were back in the beginning. The gun swings like a Ruger 10-22 and carries about the same. Throw it across your shoulder on a sling and you can almost forget it's there.

The controls work just like those on the M4 and the 25-round box magazine lasts almost as long as do the modern polymer versions from Magpul. The mags do not drop free but it does loosen up over time just like the originals. The bolt release is right where it should be.

The iron sights are period authentic and hearken back to a previous era when combat weapons were much less sparkly. The front sight post is twist-adjustable for elevation, while the rear is a flip-up sort with two different apertures adjustable for windage. Both sights may be moved with a bullet point.

Takedown and cleaning offer no surprises. The vertical charging handle is indeed a cool twist. Just like the originals, keep the BRN Proto tidy and it should outlive you.

Despite its retro pedigree, the BRN-Proto would still be a fine choice should you find zombies staggering up your little cul-de-sac. The top-mounted charging system precludes the addition of an optical sight to the carrying handle. However, it is comparably accessible from either side and handier than the later sort.

IMPRESSIONS

Running the BRN Proto is like stepping back in time. Meticulously researched and perfectly executed, Brownells fills a slot in the AR15 pantheon which couldn't otherwise be obtained at any price. Now, however, American collectors can add one of these previously unobtainable rifles to their own collection at a reasonable cost. The gun runs as well as much more modern iron yet reliably turns heads at the local range. I just love mine.
MSRP — \$1,624



www.brownells.com



The Spyderco Mantra 3, with its Carbon Fiber frame and patented Compression Lock, carries on the tradition of the Mantra series in fine fashion.

SPYDERCO MANTRA 3

A NEW CUT ON A CLASSIC

Several of Spyderco's earliest folders have been in their line for decades, attesting to the success of the brand. The Mantra series is now on its way to this distinction with the introduction of a new Carbon Fiber version. The Mantra 3 utilizes Spyderco's patented Compression Lock which, at first glance, looks to be a liner-lock on the upper rear handle spine — but Spyderco informs us on their website such comparison is far from the case.

The Spyderco Compression Lock looks like a relocated frame-lock but is quite different in the way it locks up the blade.

"In a Compression Lock, the blade's tang ramp faces upward toward the handle's spine, rather than toward the butt of the handle," the company's web text reads. "When the blade is opened, the lock bar is sandwiched between the ramp and the knife's stop pin." The Compression Lock is easy to locate as well. There's no peering into the frame — the locking leaf is easily visible on the spine.

The Mantra 3 was preceded by two Titanium frame models and this one is derivative of the model 1. I was a fan of the Mantra 1 model due to its ideal size and shape for an everyday carry. The handle checks in at 4.25", which ideally fits a wide range of mitts and the rear spine has a nicely curved palm swell.

The 3.25" satin finished Drop Point style CPM S30V stainless blade has a gently re-curved cutting edge which can perform a wide variety of daily chores. The obligatory Spydie-hole in the blade makes for easy access, even with a gloved hand or you

have the option of a flipper opening tab on the upper rear frame. The frame slabs are actually a Carbon Fiber/G10 laminate and are textured for an enhanced grip. The whole package weighs in at a lightweight 3.0 oz. Additionally, there is a reversible, deep pocket wire pocket clip for tip-up carry.

WHY YOU'LL LIKE IT

First off, it's a near bullet-proof knife — one major reason Spyderco has had such stellar success over the decades they've been in the cutlery business. Secondly, like all Spyderco knives it's ruthlessly sharp right out of the box. For my money, the Mantra 3 is a perfect blend of comfortable handling, broad utility and attractive design. Additionally, you'll appreciate the Spyderco Compression Lock the more you use it.

In short, for an everyday carry it's the whole package. MSRP for the Mantra 3 is \$234. For this price you're getting an EDC companion pedigreed for a long lasting friendship.

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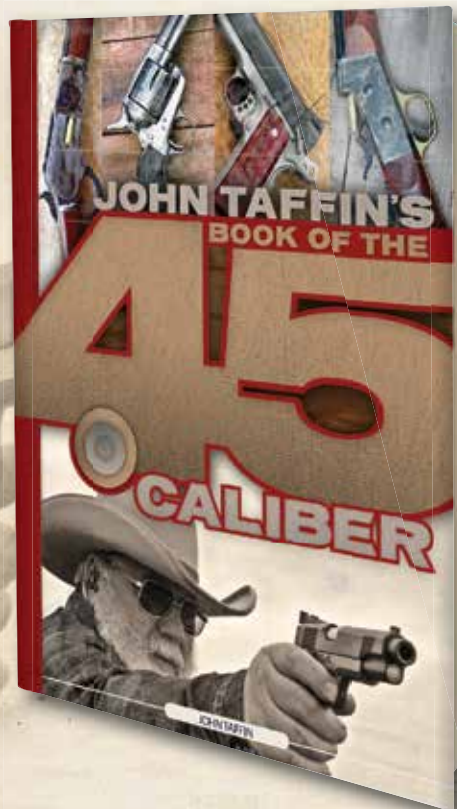
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GUIDE TO THE NATIONAL POLITICAL CONVENTIONS

WHAT TO LOOK FOR, WHAT TO KNOW

The Democratic National Convention will be held July 13-16 at the Fiserv Forum in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and the destination is deliberately political. The reason — the Badger State was one of those “taken for granted” by Hillary Rodham Clinton in 2016 and she lost there.

The convention will draw a reported 3,769 delegates. According to Wikipedia the nomination will be secured by the votes of 1,885 of those delegates. There will be speeches by the bushel and if you're a gun owner concerned about protecting the Second Amendment, listen for these terms from any candidate, guest speaker and particularly the nominee: Gun Safety, Gun Reform and Gun Responsibility, especially if used in the same sentence with “while protecting Second Amendment rights.”

As if anybody mouthing this rhetoric in Milwaukee will have the slightest concept of Second Amendment rights. You've heard it before, “I support the Second Amendment, but ...”

THE WATERS RUN DEEP

Perhaps the depth of far-left hostility toward the Second Amendment and American gun owners became clear when the former president of the Brady Campaign spoke at the national gun rights rally last November in Washington, D.C.

Dan Gross, who left the Brady Campaign about three years ago, stunned the small but energetic audience when he told them, “I'm here because I've seen how all of you, decent, responsible, law-abiding gun owners, are relentlessly, and, I believe, unfairly, demonized.”

“I've seen firsthand how an ideological hatred of guns and the people who own them is more important to some people than the actual goal of saving lives,” Gross added a moment later to raised eyebrows and dropping jaws.

This column subsequently spoke with Gross via telephone. In a refreshingly candid conversation, Gross stood by his words. It must have been shattering to some of his former colleagues at the Brady Center. At the time, Gross had been working with firearms

instructor and rights activist Rob Pincus on a new project showing some promise.

FAIR AND BALANCED?

Balance what you will hear from speakers at July's Democratic convention with what you may hear in August when Republicans gather for their convention in Charlotte, N.C. on Aug. 24-27. The convention will be

traveled — perhaps where the footsteps of our fathers and their fathers, who placed their liberty and the liberty of their children and grandchildren on a much higher level than creature comforts, might be found. Or — we can sit back on our apathies and let someone else essentially vote away our rights. There is no viable third option.

Take some advice from a man who has been dead more than two thousand years. The Greek philosopher and leader Pericles reportedly had written around 430 B.C., “Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you.”



held in the Spectrum Center and there will be somewhere around 2,500 delegates.

Make up your own mind whether one party wants to eviscerate the Second Amendment based solely on what is said at the two conventions. Examine the respective party platforms and how they address the right to keep and bear arms.

AT A CROSSROADS

As a nation, we're approaching the proverbial fork in the road. The poet Robert Frost put it in proper perspective in “The Road Not Taken.” We can take the road less

We are there. Whether Pericles actually said it matters much less than the fact politics has indeed taken an interest in you. Pretending it hasn't happened doesn't change the situation and all the lame excuses won't make a difference.

EXCUSES, EXCUSES

My favorite excuse is “I don't want my name on a list.” Got a car? Own a home? Carry credit cards? Do you have a driver's license? Do you have insurance? Your name is on more lists than you can imagine so stop kidding yourself.

Then there's, "I don't want to be called for jury duty." Simply brilliant — voluntarily give up your opportunity to explain jury nullification to a room full of captive listeners.

"I'll be on a hunting trip." Fine, get an absentee ballot.

Dan Gross showed a lot of backbone showing up at a rally of gun owners. It took no small degree of courage and whether you like him or not, he deserves your respect. When we chatted, he admitted to apprehensiveness as he waited his turn at the microphone. Nobody knew in advance he was going to speak. He just showed up, but after all, "just showing up" is a big part of life. Now it's your turn.

It doesn't take any courage at all to vote but sometimes it takes a bit of grit to stand up and be counted, to draw a line in the sand and tell the blue state bullies you're done talking and you're through backing away.

NINETY DAYS TO A RECKONING

You've got a little more than three months to decide whether your rights are worth a few minutes of time to fill out a ballot. Study up on the issues, and find out about the people running for office in your district and state. This column has spent the last year explaining how this is done. Prove we haven't been wasting our time.

There are somewhere north of 100 million law-abiding gun owners in the United States. If you are one of them, your vote counts and their votes count but only if those votes are cast intelligently and not "in protest." In order to change something, first you have to win and then you've got to protect what you've won.

Watching the conventions in Wisconsin and North Carolina should provide all the incentive necessary to get you up on your feet. You will accomplish nothing on your knees.

There have been times lately when it seemed like the gun prohibition lobby was ready to pour urine in the graves of gun owners and the Second Amendment. But think back to the evening of November 8, 2016. The anti-rights gun control crowd expected Hillary Clinton to stroll into the White House. They got the surprise of their lives, because of you and people like you, who left the comfort of their easy chair and voted.

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THE CCI PATRIOT PACK

Will Dabbs, MD

In the pages of *GUNS* you will find unvarnished patriotism of the sort responsible for taming the frontier, spreading liberty across the globe and ruthlessly spanking the Nazis. Here we take our meat red and our freedom unfiltered. One of the neatest ways to express such red-blooded ideals is CCI's .22LR 300-round Patriot Pack.

What makes the Patriot Pack so freaking cool are the 40-gr. solid bullets sheathed in red, white and blue polymer.

These polychromatic projectiles don't foment any particularly enhanced downrange chaos or run any cleaner or better

than the standard black sort. However, these things are as American as fast cars, pretty girls and nuclear bombs.

The Patriot Pack costs almost the same per round as comparable unadorned ammo. So go ahead, ventilate a soda can, drop a few tree rats, or shoot a little smiley face into a handy paper plate. It's like high velocity freedom. With the CCI Patriot Pack you can express your love for our great nation every time you pull the trigger.



www.cci-ammunition.com

CROSSBREED SUPERTUCK HOLSTER

Brent T. Wheat

I wasn't prepared to like the CrossBreed SuperTuck Holster. From the start it looks stiff, ungainly and is — frankly — a huge piece of leather, Kydex and spring steel. In fact, I've been known to derisively call it a "back brace" or something similar when confronted by rabid CrossBreed fans.

Those fans always said, "Just give it a try; wait until you break it in." Sure, sure . . .

Then I tried one. After only a few day-long carries, I've seen the light. This is coming from a guy who wasn't exactly sure how to put the darn thing on but now is quickly becoming a believer.

The huge expanse of leather really is comfortable even against bare skin and keeps the gun from gouging you, while the kydex and clips keep things both secure and concealed. To



say I was surprised is an understatement.

I don't plan on throwing away all my other holsters in favor of the CrossBreed SuperTuck, but I'd certainly suggest you likewise give it a try. Don't be like me — wrong!



www.crossbreedholsters.com



WILDERNESS TACTICAL LIMITED STRETCH SLING

Will Dabbs, MD

Wilderness Tactical Products makes my favorite ankle holster and they also make what is arguably the most well-reasoned weapon sling on the market.

The secret to the new Wilderness Tactical Limited Stretch Sling is its patent-pending stitching. There's 1.25" elastic webbing that

makes up the body, but this is too stretchy in its raw form. As a result Wilderness Tactical reinforces the webbing with 2, 3, or 5 rows of longitudinal stitching to mitigate stretch. The sling can be optimized for Shockwave-style pistol-gripped shotguns, conventional rifles, or PSB-equipped pistols.

The basic design is a Giles Sling. If you've not used one before, the design

comes from Giles Stock, a former SWAT cop and Gunsite instructor. The sling attaches front and rear and forms an adjustable loop. Slip the loop over your head and around your weak shoulder (the left side if you're shooting right-handed). Thusly configured the gun can hang in front for instant access or in back to seem less threatening. Either method leaves both hands free. A stitched-in, tri-glide buckle allows instant adjustment on the fly. 

www.thewilderness.com

CCW BREAKAWAYS

Will Dabbs, MD

I love playing with firearms, but I hate carrying them and have tried most every conceivable carry option. If the objective standard is comfort, then they all pretty much suck. Enter CCW Breakaways.

CCW Breakaways are pants with a pair of reinforced adjustable holsters built in. Fold the bottom up and secure it with Velcro to optimize the holster for your particular carry gun. Just slide your hand into



your pocket, grasp your hidden handgun, and pop your wrist forward to breakaway the garment and present your firearm.

The holster is big enough to pack a serious handgun, but the gun's weight is a consideration. I found it worked better with my G42 and G43 and similar-sized heaters. The pants exhibit better quality than the sort you'll find at a clothing store, all for about \$75. CCW Breakaways can help keep you comfortably prickly. 

www.ccwbreakaways.com

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WANT MORE?



We discussed in 1955 the answer was yes. And it's still true today. Here's a fun look back at K. J. Connel's five-page article in the July 1955 issue of GUNS...

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RENEGAUGE

SAVAGE ARMS

Savage Arms introduces the *Renegaugue*, its first semi-automatic shotgun. The 12-gauge semi-auto is for field use and offers hunters and competitors both fit and function. The Renegaugue has patented parts and designs including the Dual Regulating Inline Valve (D.R.I.V.) system that allows the shotgun to regulate the gas cycling the action. Both low-brass target shells and Magnum hunting shells will cycle the action with the same reliability and without any adjustment from the shooter. In picture, the Renegaugue Waterfowl. For more info: (413) 568-7001, www.savagearms.com

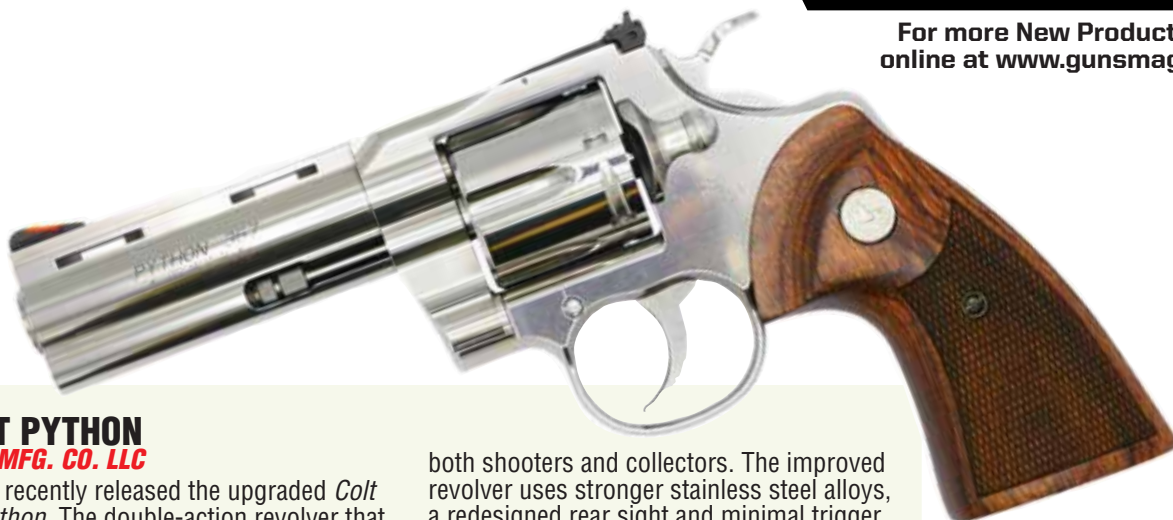
TRINITY OVER/UNDER SHOTGUNS

TRISTAR ARMS

TriStar Arms introduces its new line of *Trinity Over/Under Shotguns*. The shotguns have CNC-machined aluminum or steel receivers hand detailed with old-world craftsmanship. Both the lightweight aluminum frame and 24-carat gold inlaid steel-frame models feature deeply checkered, oil-finished Turkish walnut furniture, fiber-optic front sights and five Beretta Mobil chokes. For more info: (816) 421-1400, www.tristararms.com



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COLT PYTHON COLT MFG. CO. LLC

Colt recently released the upgraded *Colt Python*. The double-action revolver that debuted in 1955 returns in stainless steel in 4.25" and 6" barrel lengths. It is chambered in .357 Magnum and also accommodates 38 Special cartridges. The new Colt Python has been tested to meet the demands of

both shooters and collectors. The improved revolver uses stronger stainless steel alloys, a redesigned rear sight and minimal trigger action parts. Features such as a recessed target crown, a user-interchangeable front sight and an updated Walnut grip were also added. For more info: (800) 962-2658, www.colt.com

CCP M2 WALTHER ARMS

Walther Arms' *CCP M2* in .380 ACP is the first polymer pistol with Softcoil gas technology. Together with Walther's fixed barrel semi-auto system, the technology reduces felt recoil and allows the slide to be easily manipulated regardless of hand strength. Tool-less takedown and a fixed barrel make the CCP M2 easy to clean. Other features include an ergonomic design, an external safety, front and rear slide serrations and a reversible magazine release. For more info: (479) 242-8500 ext. 507, www.waltherarms.com



VICKERS TACTICAL MAGAZINE RELEASE TANGODOWN INC.

The *Vickers Tactical Magazine Release (GMR-007)* from TangoDown is for GLOCK 43X and 48 models. Made of the same bullet-proof material and offering the same features as other GLOCK improvements in the GMR series, the GMR-007 can be used regardless of finger size or length. Its unique shape prevents unwanted magazine release if placed on a hard surface. Installation by a Certified GLOCK Armorer or Gunsmith is recommended. For more info: (909) 392-4757, www.tangodown.com



BUFFALO HUNTER STACKED LEATHER KNIFE PUMA KNIFE CO.

Handmade by skilled craftsmen, the *Buffalo Hunter Stacked Leather Knife* from the Puma Knife Co. has an OAL of 10" and a blade length of 5.7". Weighing 7.7 oz., the knife's blade is made of 1.4116 German Cutlery Steel with a Rockwell hardness of 55-57. The

handle is leather wrapped with a brass pommel and bolster. The Buffalo Hunter comes with a suede brown leather sheath and a lanyard strap. For more info: (913) 888-5524, www.pumaknifecompanyusa.com



MC2c **MOSSBERG**

Mossberg has added the *MC2c* to its series of handguns. With a 3.9" barrel and an OAL of 7.1", the MC2c Compact 9mm pistol is a good size for concealed carry or home protection. Its frame is glass-reinforced polymer; slide is stainless steel. Integrated into the slide is the Mossberg STS (Safe Takedown System). The MC2c is offered in two frame variants (standard and cross-bolt safety) with black DLC or bead-blasted stainless steel slide finish. TRUGLO Tritium Pro Night sights are optional. All MC2c models come with 13-round flush and 15-round extended magazines. For more info: (203) 230-5300, www.mossberg.com



LONG RANGE **HYBRID TARGET BULLETS** **BERGER BULLETS**

The 7mm 190-gr. *Long Range Hybrid Target Bullet* boasts a high ballistic coefficient and a jump-tolerant hybrid ogive profile. The 7mm 190-gr. LRHT is ideal for F-Open competitive shooters and is tailored to cartridges like the 284 Winchester, 7mm WSM, 7mm SAU, 7mm Remington Magnum and more. For more info: (660) 460-2802, www.bergerbullets.com



RAMPAGE 360 **WICKED RIDGE**

The *Rampage 360* from Wicked Ridge is a value-priced crossbow with a built-in cocking device. The cocking device, an ACUdraw or ACUdraw 50, allows the user to accurately cock the crossbow and shoot an arrow up to 360 feet per second. The Rampage 360 measures 15" wide and delivers out-of-the box accuracy. Pre-sighted at 20 yards with a 1-bolt assembly, it comes with a 10-point multi-line scope and a 3-arrow instant detach quiver. For more info: (330) 628-9245, www.wickedridgecrossbows.com



COMFORT **FLEX DELUXE** **VERSACARRY**

Versacarry has added an IWB holster to their Comfort Flex line. The *Comfort Flex Deluxe* provides comfort while securely holding the firearm in place. Made from water buffalo leather with a polymer insert, the holster has a forward cant for an easy draw and a draw-tension adjustment to custom fit the holster to your firearm. For more info: (979) 778-2000, www.versacarry.com



MANTIS X10 ELITE **MANTIS**

The *Mantis X10 Elite* is a black plastic gadget about half the size of a matchbox. Clip it to your practice firearm using the accessory rail and wirelessly connect (via bluetooth) to your Apple or Android device. Once running, the box sends data to your device, including recoil and holster draw analysis. The Mantis X10 Elite records, analyzes and interprets the info to help you become a better shooter. For more info: (630) 551-8171, www.mantisx.com

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S&W M&P9 SHIELD EZ HOLSTERS **CROSSBREED HOLSTERS**

The S&W M&P9 Shield EZ Holsters are available from CrossBreed. Owners of the M&P9 Shield EZ can choose from eight models: the SuperTuck, the Reckoning, Freedom Carry, SnapSlide, DropSlide, Purse Defender, Modular Belly Band and Last Ditch. Each holster is custom fit to the pistol and suitable for multiple carry styles. For more info: (888) 732-5011, www.crossbreedholsters.com



DVG-1 & DVG-1RD RED DOT PISTOL SERIES **SCCY FIREARMS**

SCCY introduced the DVG-1 & DVG-1RD Red Dot Pistol Series to its lineup for 2020. The DVG Series of pistols are striker fired with a Quadlock Barrel System and 10+1 capacity. Chambered in 9mm Luger in a sub-compact footprint, the DVG pistols are available with or without a factory installed CTS-1500 Red Dot sight. Other features include forward slide serrations, a flat 5.5-lb. trigger with minimal pre/post travel and an enhanced grip texture. In picture, the DVG-1 with and without the red dot sight. For more info: (386) 322-6336, www.sccy.com

DOWN&OUT XL GROUND BLIND **GSM OUTDOORS**

The Down&Out XL Ground Blind by HAWK conceals as well as offers comfort in cold, wet weather. It only takes less than five minutes to set up and one minute to take down. The blind has a 96" diameter six-panel folding design with a 78" peak height. Panels are made of heavy duty 600-denier and No-Shine Cordura camo fabric. For more info: (877) 269-8490, www.gsmoutdoors.com



VAPOR LINE **WARNE MFG. CO.**

Warne launches the Vapor Line, lightweight and durable products designed for easy installation. The Vapor Line includes 1" and 30mm rings in three heights, 2-piece Weaver-style bases for most popular rifles and MSR mounts in both zero and 20 MOA. All Vapor line products are made from 6061 T6 aluminum and come with Warne's lifetime warranty. For more info: (800) 683-5590, www.warnescopemounts.com



QUELL TITANIUM RIFLE SUPPRESSOR **WILSON COMBAT**

The lightweight QUELL Titanium Rifle Suppressor from Wilson Combat will fit any non-Magnum caliber carbine or rifle. Made of 6Al-4V Titanium, the QUELL is 6.9" long, 1.5" in diameter and weighs 9 oz. It's built on Wilson Combat's 5-Axis, CNC machines to exacting tolerances. QUELL's "K-Type" fixed baffle stack produces sound signature reduction and proves durable against the high heat of modern service carbines and high round count rifle platforms. For more info: (800) 955-4856, www.wilsoncombat.com

SCCY CPX-2 RED DOT PACKAGE

According to Will Dabbs, SCCY is a “remarkable company with a strange name.” The idea of founder and CEO Joe Roebuck, SCCY is pronounced “sky” but the acronym doesn’t stand for anything. SCCY’s handguns come with features you might expect from a pistol costing twice as much. The blurb on the company website thus rings true: “When it comes to value, the SCCY’s the limit.”

Take the case of the *CPX-2 Red Dot*, our top prize in this issue’s giveaway. The CPX-2 RD has a 3.1" barrel machined from bar stock with seven lands and grooves having a 1:16 right-hand twist. The receiver is made of 7075-T6 aircraft-grade, heat-treated aluminum alloy; slide is quality stainless steel. The grip and frame are Zytel polymer with ergonomic finger grooves. Other features include an all-steel recoil system, a double-action only hammer firing system, a double-action trigger with a 9-lb. trigger pull and more. Two double-stack, 10-round magazines with finger extension base and two additional flat magazine bases are included. And don’t forget you can zero in on your target with the

Crimson Trace CTS-1500 already installed on your CPX-2 RD. The 3.5 MOA Red Dot with built-in backup sight automatically dims to adapt to ambient light conditions.

Carry your new SCCY pistol in Versacarry’s *Comfort Flex Deluxe* holster. It’s an IWB non-collapsible design made from water buffalo leather and includes an embedded polymer layer for strength and rigidity. The back has a closed-cell foam padding that provides comfort and acts as a sweat barrier between the leather and skin. The holster has a forward cant for an easy draw and adjustable draw tension to custom fit the holster to your firearm for a secure carry.

There’s one more prize in this giveaway: the *BT Fighter*. CRKT describes this folding knife with a button lock as “a machinist’s masterpiece.” It comes from the shop of Brian Tighe and features a layered, sculpted handle made of glass-reinforced nylon and a grooved backspacer for an enhanced grip. The BT Fighter’s stainless steel drop point blade is 3.640" long with a stonewash finish. OAL is 8.875"; closed length is 5.146". It’s nearly undetectable so you can carry it every day.

Take a chance to win this SCCY CPX-2 RD package. Enter the giveaway by going to www.gunsmagazine.com/giveaways. You have the option to mail a postcard too. Here’s hoping you win!
—Jazz Jimenez



BT FIGHTER

MAKER: CRKT
(800) 891-3100
www.crkt.com
VALUE: \$79.99

COMFORT FLEX DELUXE HOLSTER

MAKER: Versacarry
(979) 778-2000
www.versacarry.com
VALUE: \$44.99

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.

ENTER TO WIN!



If you are unable to enter online, mail a postcard with your name and address (no envelopes please). Entries must be received before May 31, 2020. Limit one entry per household.

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**TOTAL
VALUE:
\$463.98**



CPX-2 RED DOT

MAKER: SCCY Industries LLC
(386) 322-6336

CALIBER: 9mm Luger, **CAPACITY:** 10+1

BARREL LENGTH: 3.1", **OAL:** 5.7"

WEIGHT: 17 oz. (unloaded)

www.sccy.com

VALUE: \$339

DIY SKINNER SCOUT SYSTEM BUDGET BUILD, SMOKIN' ACCURACY!

Never being "by the book," for 27 years I considered departmental regulations as guidelines for cops lacking problem-solving skills, discretion or the ability to think on their own. I never blatantly broke the "regs" but I may have bent a few. In this latest rifle build, I guess it was time to break a few more!

SCOUT RIFLE

Jeff Cooper was an innovator with many great ideas. His emphasis on training, mindset, large-bore handguns, and the scout rifle system are legendary. It's Cooper's Scout Rifle we'll be discussing as I show you an easy, cost-effective way of building your own.

Scout Rifles are typically bolt-action carbines, chambered in .308 Winchester, are less than 40" in overall length and 3 kilograms in weight. They sport both iron and optical sights, capable of hitting a man-sized target out to 450 meters.

They utilize forward-mounted scopes for faster reloading of the rifle and providing wider field of view on targets. The rifles also employ a basic sling for carrying and shooting.

SKINNER SIGHTS SCOUT

Andy Larsson of Skinner Sight is always thinking of new ways to help us shooters. Besides "peep sights," Skinner Sight offers ingenious scope bases with integral "Peep" sights. This double-duty system is handy, should your scope fail, or conditions

make "peeps" more advantageous such as stalking in densely covered woods or hunting in the rain.

This year, Andy released a Scout Rifle scope-rail for the popular, insanely accurate Ruger American. Already having an American in .308 Winchester — and loving the Scout Rifle concept — requesting a rail from Andy was a no-brainer for a DIY kind of build.

SCOUT RAIL SPECS

This Piccatiny style rail provides a factory "peep" rear sight as well as an AR15 type front sight. Since the Ruger American is sans iron sights, this rail system provides the dual sight system component of Cooper's Scout Rifle. Utilizing the pre-drilled holes on the action of the American, two additional holes must be drilled and tapped on the barrel for added stability.

Having a trip planned to visit Ken Kelly of Mag-na-port I brought the rifle along, hoping Ken would drill/tap the new holes and chop the 22" barrel to 18". Ken did me one better, threading/crowning the barrel so I can add one of his muzzle-brakes or a suppressor at a later date.

NOT A FAN

As much as I love Cooper's Scout Rifle concept, I never warmed to the forward mounted scope. I understand the concept, it just never felt natural. I deviate, using a conventionally mounted scope.

Skinner Sight recently dipped their toe into the optics world, offering an affordable

The 18" barrel makes the Ruger American a handy-dandy carbine following in the Cooper Scout tradition ... well almost.



Profile shot showing how the Skinner Sight Scout Rail adds iron sights to your Ruger American.

Targets tell the tale. Tank was extremely pleased with the total performance of the Ruger American, Skinner Sights Scout rail and scope, and ammunition performance.



scope for people like you and me. It's a 1-6x24 variable, with 30mm tube. It retails for \$289 and is the brightest scope in this price range I've seen. It has a ranging reticle with illuminated red dot for low light conditions, too! Perfect for a hunter!

I've always liked the lines a straight-tube scope provides, keeping weight and bulkiness down. Should you prefer a forward

mounted scope, Skinner Sights Scout Rail base allows it. A used \$5 gun-show leather sling completes my rifle.

SHOOTING THE SCOUT

I originally had this rifle set up for a long-range shooter. It was capable of 3/4" groups for 5-shots at 100 yards with Black Hills 168-gr. ELD-M ammo. Shooting the rifle with this ammo produced three 3-shot groups at 100 yards averaging 0.6". Yeah, I was surprised too! Did cutting the barrel down to 18" stiffen it, making it more accurate? Maybe I'm just shooting better? Nah! Ken's crown job probably helped more than anything.

Practice and utility loads consisting of RCBS 150-gr. FNGC (flat-nose gas check) cast bullets loaded over 22 grains of 2,400, sparked with a WLRP go just over 2,000 fps, with almost the same accuracy. Three 3-shot groups at 100 yards averaged 0.9". To say I was pleased would be an

understatement! I shoot coffee cans of these cheap/fun loads. Its low recoil makes it a great starter load for youngsters as well.

This \$300 rifle is a shooter, especially when the Skinner Sights Scout rail/ Skinner Scope combination is added. It adds versatility with its double-duty sight system without making it clunky. The chopped-down 18" barrel makes the rifle *wieldier*, whether hunting from a tree-stand, woods walking, or simply taking it in and out of the truck.

Many see beauty in finely figured walnut and blued steel. A true rifleman sees beauty in performance, versatility and a compact package, much like this DIY pseudo scout rifle. I like it, I like it a lot ... and that's really all that matters, right?



Black Hills EDL-M 168-gr. load shot extremely well, as did Tank's home-concocted cast handloads featuring Powder Coated slugs, 2400 powder and Winchester LRP.

www.skimmersights.com

GUNS[®] MAGAZINE

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pistol of “reputable” manufacture, I take the opposite tack and suggest you go ahead and buy something, anything, and *then* start scrimping to upgrade. In the meantime, you won’t find yourself dying in the street wondering if the custom .45 you still can’t afford would have saved your life.

If you have only pocket change to spend, reliability or lack thereof will be the critical factor. Cheap or used guns are notorious for having intermittent bouts of firearms constipation so it’s vital to put the gun through its paces, prior to purchase if you can. If not, make sure you understand all its little shooting quirks by spending ample range time before carrying.

The key to reliability is making sure the weapon is scrupulously clean and properly lubricated. On my backup .22, I found a little dirt, too much oil or lack of same would cause a misfeed every second or third shot. If cleaned and properly lubed, I could trust it (just barely) to work if needed.

Here’s the good news: There are more and better “price point” guns on the market than ever before! As CNC technology is cheaper than ever, the manufacturing tolerances in even inexpensive guns are better than some of the bigger names of 20 years ago. Therefore, before buying a used gun of dubious parentage, I’d suggest picking up one of the new lower-cost 9mm pistols offered by various manufacturers. My current budget recommendation is the Taurus G3, around \$250 “on the street.” I’ll wager it’ll perform on par with a “name-your-favorite-\$500-pistol,” provided you regularly perform basic maintenance — defined as “don’t let 3 lbs. of lint accumulate inside the dust cover.”

To summarize and hopefully prevent one or two breathless letters to the editor, I’m not suggesting a used, pawn shop, no-name .25 caliber pistol made from the finest cast zinc, balsa wood and yak spit in Upper Filthistan is ideal for a self-defense weapon. However, if the choice comes down to such a “distinctive example of firearms technology” or a big rock, I’d say go ahead and buy the gun.

Besides, it’s nearly impossible to put a Picatinny rail and flashlight on a chunk of sandstone.

I know — I tried.



NEWS AND NOTES



We’ve just come back from the annual Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trades (SHOT) Show in Las Vegas. Many considered this year’s show as a critical barometer to the health of the firearms industry but I’m happy to report nearly everyone left “Lost Wages” upbeat, even if they lost at the craps table. In fact, more than one person, when quizzed about the effects of the upcoming presidential election, responded by saying, “We’ll deal with it when it happens. Right now, we’re too busy selling guns!”

Such things make my little heart pitter-patter with joy!

Also noteworthy was the explosion in new products, both accessories and guns themselves. There were clues to this general upward trajectory as our email overflowed with press releases more than usual in the run-up to the show. A few items of note:

SIG SAUER is expanding into the hunting market with their CROSS bolt-action rifle, a hybrid hunting/target rifle aimed at folks who will use the rifle both for paper-punching and elk-pestering. Meanwhile the re-issued Colt Python is getting rave reviews and has inspired a whole new class of “Fanboy,” which I completely understand. Check out our website for a *GUNS* Exclusive — gorgeous pictures of the first engraved Python, from Tyler Gun Works!

A collaborative effort of Traditions Firearms, Federal ammo and Hodgdon powder is bringing factory cartridges into the muzzleloader world, promising simplicity and consistency along with ease of loading and unloading. Also, the Mossberg MC2c is a great “blue collar” striker-fired 9mm which will give a similar plastic German gun a run for its money.

Our friends over at Springfield had a busy week, introducing their new XD-M

Elite series, .308 SAINT Pistol and the Ronin 1911 9mm and .45 ACP following on the heels of their hot Hellcat micro-compact. We didn’t personally handle the Ronin but many friends and acquaintances did and say the piece, with an MSRP of \$849, might be one of the best values in the 1911 space.

Speaking of handguns, every tactical pistol at the show featured — either as standard equipment or an available option — a red-dot sight. No surprises here but the widespread availability of the optics makes it clear they are *the* hot new trend for pistols. Holster and accessory makers are likewise taking heed. While our aging eyes agree red dots make hits easier, we’re still not convinced they are faster than our express-sight-equipped pistols. Call me a crusty curmudgeon, but don’t call me late for dinner!

Finally, in a low-key but important product launch, Trijicon introduced its “Ventus” range-finding wind meter, a true leap into the next generation of environmental measurement devices for long-distance shooters. Not only does the handheld optic measure non-reflective targets out to 5,000 yards, it measures wind (both horizontally and vertically) in several locations out to 500 yards using Doppler Lidar (look it up). We played with a prototype late last year and it promises to truly be the next big evolution for shooters. When we asked Trijicon reps if the military is interested, we only got an inscrutable smile in return.

The only downside — (as with a very expensive restaurant) if you have to ask the cost, it might be out of your price range! However, technology constantly gets cheaper and smaller over time so in 10 years we’ll all have something similar in our range bags, along with a small radar chronograph the size of a cigarette box!

CHEAP PISTOLS

A GUN – ANY GUN – IS BETTER THAN A BIG ROCK!

Gun writers collectively tend to forget something — we all *want* to carry a \$5,000 custom defensive pistol but sometimes a large soft drink at the local Dairy Fairy is far beyond our personal net worth at the moment.

I've been fortunate to climb to the top of the smoldering slag heap of national gun scribes but I try to always remember my rather humble beginnings as a rookie cop, with a wife, babies and creditors who unreasonably expected on-time payment. Back then, working for local government pay rates, my gun collection was pitiful, usually bordering on non-existent.

THE TRUTH

As someone with a bit of experience in real-world gun play, I'm a firm believer in the idea you should buy the best equipment

you can afford when it comes to self-defense. However, let's be honest: If the choice literally comes down to buying little Timmy's insulin versus purchasing a firearm, most of us will legitimately choose — reluctantly — to pay the bills rather than buy a hunk of metal you hope you'll never use.

I think of such tough decisions whenever I hearken back to my first days as a freshly minted, wet-behind-the-ears baby cop. In those days, with a newborn and a massive debt-to-income ratio, the only backup gun I could afford was a classic “man-stopper,” the Jennings J-22 .22 LR semi-auto!

I'm sure a few readers spewed cheese puffs all over the magazine upon reading the previous sentence. After all, what self-respecting human, let alone a *gun guy*, would carry this little semi-auto in such a deadly serious role?

Based upon my non-existent bank balance at the time, such a person would have been me.

BIGGER AND BETTER

It was three years before I could justify spending some of our growing but still meager financial resources on a “real” gun. However, during this period I resigned myself to the idea of at least *having* a back-up weapon if things got really ugly, unlike many of my cohorts (this was long before most cops were issued back-up/off-duty guns). My gun selection didn't inspire a lot of confidence but it was comforting just the same.

While we agree quality is important in a self-defense firearm, what if the best gun you can afford wouldn't even rate as a doorstop at NRA Headquarters? If you find yourself in such a position, as I have, here are a few thoughts.

First, just buy the gun. While some experts, usually gun writers, suggest you save your pennies and buy a “real”

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