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GUNS Magazine (ISSN 1044-6257) is published monthly by Publishers' Development Corporation, 13741 Danielson Street, Ste. A, Poway, California 92064. Periodicals Postage Paid at San Diego, CA and at additional mailing offices. SUBSCRIPTIONS: One year (12) issues \$24.95. Single monthly copies, \$5.95. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Eight weeks notice required on all changes. Send old address as well as new. SUBSCRIPTION PROBLEMS: For immediate action email subs@gunsmagazine.com, write Subscription Dept., 13741 Danielson Street, Ste. A, Poway, California 92064 or call (866) 820-4045. CONTRIBUTORS submitting manuscripts, photographs or drawings do so at their own risk. Material cannot be returned unless accompanied by sufficient postage. PAYMENT will be made at rates current at time of publication and will cover reproduction in any or all GUNS Magazine editions. ADVERTISING RATES furnished on request. Reproduction or use of any portion of this magazine in any manner, without written permission is prohibited. All rights reserved. Title to this publication passes to subscriber only on delivery to his/her address. The opinions and recommendations expressed by individual authors within this magazine are not necessarily those of Publishers' Development Corporation. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to GUNS Magazine®, ATTN: Circulation Dept., 13741 Danielson Street, Ste. A, Poway, California 92064. Copyright © 2020 by Publishers' Development Corporation.

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OCTOBER 2020

Vol. 66, Number 10, 790th Issue



COVER PHOTO BY
ROB JONES
THE IMAGESMITH, LLC

The gorgeous — and radical — Korth revolver is a work of martial art!

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RIGHTY TIGHTY?

On page 55 of the May issue ("Guns of the Wild Bunch"), is the picture of "Tex" backwards/reversed? Is "Tex" a left-handed or right-handed shooter? The picture portrays him as a "right handed" shooter. A good indication the picture may be backwards/reversed is the "badge" he wears — a badge and medals are usually worn on the left side.

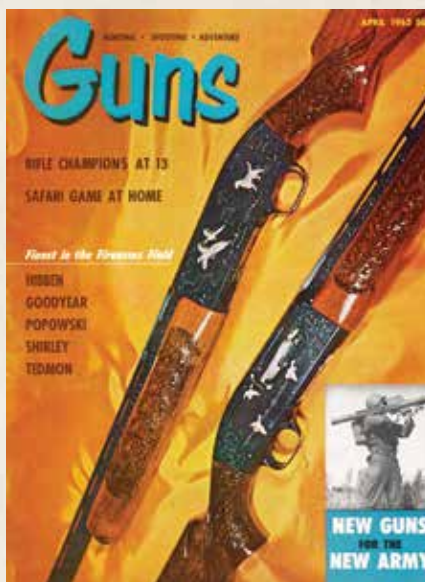
Stephen



Funny, I looked at the photo several times and something felt "funny" but I never caught it. You've got a sharp eye. We published the photo as received. After looking at the original (high resolution) file, I verified all the lettering on the badge and wagon read properly as the photo was printed. Apparently Tex prefers to wear his badge and medals on the right side! —BW

LONG AGO SHOTGUNS

I know this is a long shot but I have a friend whose father-in-law is the gentleman who owns the two matching and engraved Winchester Model 50s gracing your cover in April 1963. Now that his father-in-law has passed, he asked me to help figure out



the engraver of the two shotguns so he can determine what they are worth.

After all my research I am basically back at the starting blocks. Any help would be appreciated as the "On the Cover" comments on the inside don't say anything about who actually did the work.

Jeff McDonald

Interesting question and one I get on a regular basis. Fact is, there is no one alive who can tell us anything about those long-ago cover guns. Unfortunately, our predecessors didn't document those type of things — and I just realized we still don't! Good luck, one other thing you might try: Send me a good quality picture of the guns and maybe we can run something. You never know who might know something! —BW

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GUNS

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THE FINEST IN THE FIREARMS FIELD SINCE 1955

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REMEMBERING WALTER RODGERS

A CONTEMPORARY OF ELMER KEITH, HE DESERVES ANOTHER LOOK

I was still a junior in high school when *GUNS Magazine* first appeared in January 1955. The printed page had a major effect on me, especially some of the earlier writers such as Elmer Keith and Kent Bellah. Early 1959 was an especially influential time as I not only married in February but the April *GUNS* issue resulted in my first introduction to Walter Rodgers. I would guess most readers know who Elmer Keith was, however, I doubt if very many ever heard the name Walter Rodgers. His first article was entitled: "Take Your Time — Fast!"

REAL COWBOY

Walter Rodgers was a contemporary of Elmer Keith. Elmer was born in 1899 and Rodgers published a book in 1916 entitled *The Trail Drivers of Texas*, so from those two dates I am assuming Rodgers was older. He spent his life mostly packing a sixgun and living in the saddle,

working cattle, animal control and law enforcement in Texas and New Mexico. Along the way he learned much about gun handling, what worked and what didn't. When I first encountered him in print, I was already well on my way to knowing single-action sixguns and leverguns were my favorites. Rodgers didn't start me on the path but he certainly confirmed what I already knew.

I had chosen single-actions and leverguns for several reasons, not the least of which was what Rodgers called "Gun Feel." For my hand, as for thousands upon thousands of others, the best-feeling sixgun has always been a Single Action. The same feeling extends to rifles which are operated

with a lever and have a very flat profile. Rodgers wrote of Colt Single Actions and then Ruger Blackhawks. One of the things he wrote I really appreciated was: "Bless Bill Ruger for putting Magnums in real working sixguns." When it came to rifles he was particularly fond of the Winchester 1892 in .32-20, and the Model 1894 in .25-35 and .30-30. All real working guns.

LEARNING THE OLD WAY

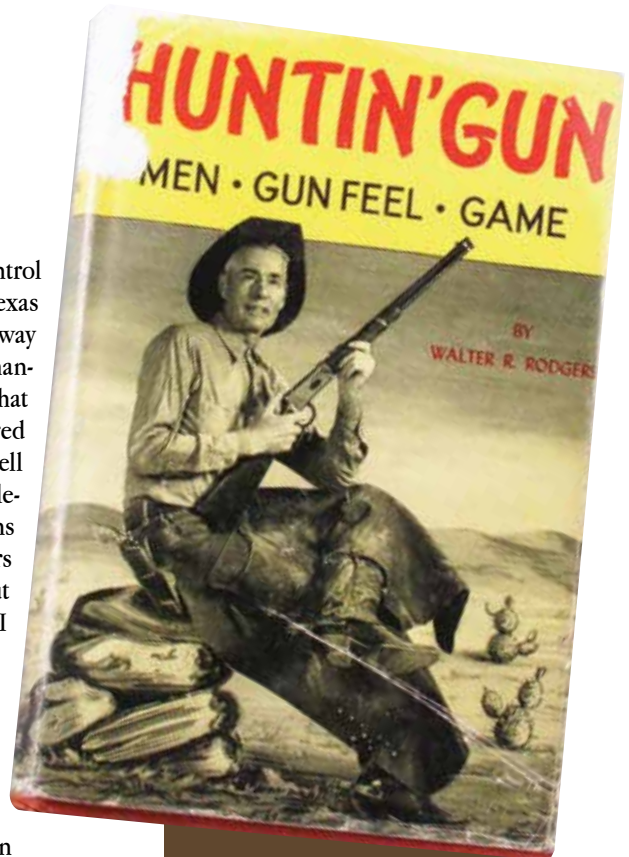
In 1959 Rodgers related: "Way back in the wild and rugged trans-Pecos province of Texas, known as the Big Bend country, in a very early part of this century, I was banging away at some tin cans back of my camp with an old Single Action Army Model Colt sixshooter. I had a cutaway holster strung on an old Ranger

Scout belt, and though I wasn't puncturing many cans, I was sure wearing the hide on my right thumb. I holstered the gun after each shot then went back frantically after it for the succeeding shot.

'Now yuh're dead,' said a drawling voice behind me right after I'd emptied my gun. I whirled in surprise, for I was so engrossed with my draw-and-shoot practice I hadn't heard the old Ranger walk up behind me. He grinned and shook a chiding finger at me. 'Never let a gun run dry,' he said. 'Reload after the third shot, and you'll not get caught with yore britches down.'

He flipped a fistful of .45 caliber cartridges from his own belt, and told me to reload. I did. 'Now,' he said, 'let's see you make that grab draw again.' Whirling towards my target (I was kinda proud of my gun speed by now) I made a fair draw and missed my target. 'The best of us miss now an' then,' he comforted me. 'Do it agin.' I holstered my gun, dove after it again, and fumbled my draw. The gun just wasn't in the right place.

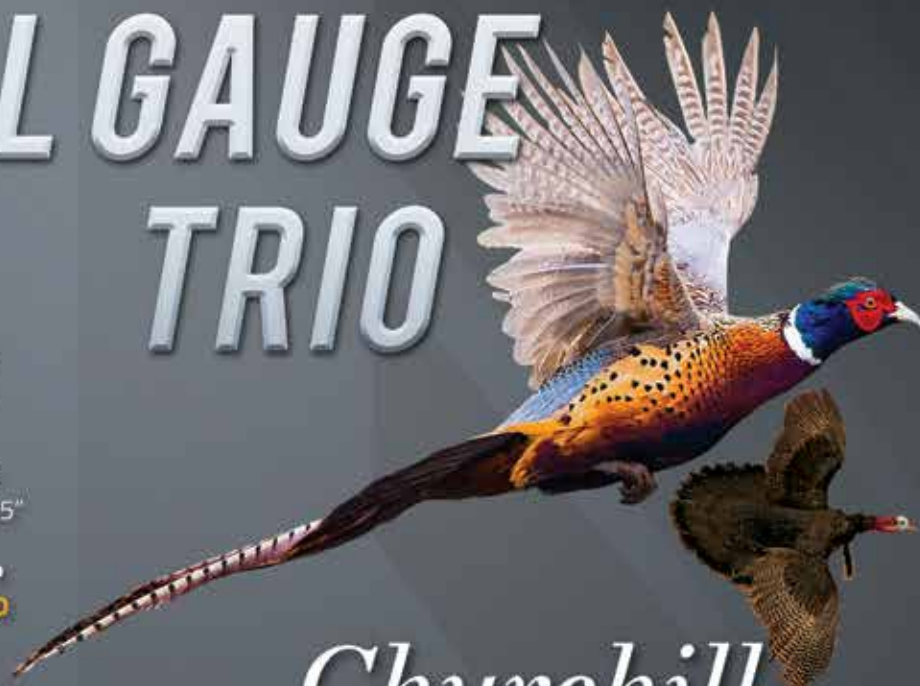
'I was looking for that,' the Ranger said seriously. 'Now, if'n it was possible



Rodgers' book *Huntin' Gun* can still be found at very reasonable prices.



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for a feller to die twicet, this would be yore second death in a gunfight. That grab draw just is no-wise dependable. Always remember, yore hand ain't got no eyes. Maybe bit'll find the gun, and maybe bit won't. Let yore fingers guide your hand to the gun, and don't get in such a bell-fire hurry.' That was in my first dependable, straight-from-the-horses mouth advice in gun-handling."

TIME PASSES

It was probably 40 years earlier when Rodgers learned this and it has now been over 60 years since he passed it on to me. Wearing the gun high on the belt and letting my fingers come up the holster to the sixgun is just the opposite of what was being taught at the time both by Hollywood and the sport of Fast Draw, neither of which were reality.

Rodgers not only inspired me as far as single-action sixguns and leverguns, he also made his own holsters and belts and this was a further inspiration to me as I started making my own shortly after reading his first article.

Rodgers' much-used Colt Single Action was a mite out of the ordinary. It was not a standard Colt Single Action Army but rather the Bisley Model introduced in the 1890s. The Bisley Model featured a wider target-style hammer and trigger as well as a larger grip more conducive to target shooting. Ruger brought out their version



John was originally inspired by Walter Rodgers' articles in the early issues of *GUNS* such as this one on converting the Ruger Single Six.

of the Bisley Model in the mid-1980s and since then many dedicated Sixgunners have fitted their standard Blackhawks with Bisley hammers. One way to do it is to make the modifications necessary to fit a Bisley hammer, however another way is to cut the hammer spur off of the Bisley hammer and weld it on to a standard Single Action hammer. What fascinated me about Rodgers' Single Action is the fact he went the opposite direction.

"The Bisley Colt had the original prong cut off, and the prong from an Army Model S.A. Colt welded on in its place. I made the grips from a section of old hickory taken

from an old wagon wheel long discarded at a homesteader's dugout in New Mexico. In repeat shots, it is much slower than the Army Model, but it can be used with amazing speed on the draw and first shot, and is very accurate," Rodgers wrote.

STORIES COME ALIVE

After first encountering Walter Rodgers in *GUNS Magazine* I discovered he had written for *American Rifleman* extensively in the 1940s and 1950s. I found this by "accident" when I cleaned out a widow lady's basement in the late 1960s. One of the things to be taken to the dump was about 35 years of *Rifleman* magazines accumulated by her husband. You can bet they did not go directly to the dump! I went through every one, clipping articles I wanted to save. I wound up with Elmer Keith's articles on sixguns as well as the writings of Walter Rodgers and several others, all of which may seem dated but are actually timeless.

I discovered many of Rodgers' works were put into book form and did a search, expecting to pay dearly if I found a copy. A search for Rodgers' book revealed an excellent copy can be had for under \$20 compared to hundreds for Elmer Keith. Apparently, he hasn't really been discovered yet. His book is titled *Huntin' Gun* and speaks of Men, Gun Feel and Game. Even if you're not an old dinosaur like me, I would be real surprised if you didn't enjoy reading the thoughts of Walter Rodgers.



Walter Rodgers' first article for the then-new *GUNS Magazine* in 1959 was "Take your time — fast!"



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BUILDING A BETTER AR MOUSETRAP

DOING DIY FOR THE RIGHT REASON!

The term “build” as applied to AR-type rifles is technically wrong. A more accurate term would be to “assemble.”

Besides having fun at a hobby, more often than not the reason many folks like to assemble a rifle/carbine is to save money. I'd like to have a dollar for every time I heard someone say something like, “My brother-in-law Bubba scrounged parts and built my rifle on his kitchen table. It's just as good as any of the big names.”

Chances are — No, it's not. And, if quality parts are used, it probably cost more than a completed rifle. Still, there is something gratifying about assembling a rifle when it's uniquely yours.

STARTING OUT

Some time back I decided to assemble an AR using nothing but quality parts. From another project I already had a CMMG mil-spec lower receiver and CMMG lower parts kit (also mil-spec) to serve as the base rifle.

Completing the lower receiver consisted of adding a BCMGUNFIGHTER Stock,

BCMGUNFIGHTER Mod 1 pistol grip and BCM QD Swivel Mount End Plate. Next up was to make a decision on the upper receiver. Caliber choices would be 5.56, 7.62x39 and .300 Blackout. Because of availability I opted on 5.56 in a Bravo Company KeyMod upper with a 14.5" barrel.

A Battle Comp 1.5 muzzle device is permanently pinned to the barrel to bring it up to the minimum 16" barrel requirement. Unlike some compensators, the Battle Comp won't render a shooter next to you “combat ineffective” due to the blast.

Sticking with Bravo Company the upper receiver was completed with a BCMGUNFIGHTER vertical grip, BCM bolt carrier group (MPI) and BCM GUNFIGHTER charging handle (medium latch).

Regardless of what type of handguard is used — rail, KeyMod or M-LOK — they need to be protected in the area where accessories are not attached. A BCM KeyMod Rail Panel Kit completed the upper receiver.

To make my rifle unique to me, all polymer parts were ordered in Wolf Gray instead of one of the more common colors.



BCMGUNFIGHTER Mod 1 pistol grip with a BCM QD Swivel Mount End Plate better positions a tactical sling.

The Battle Comp Compensator is permanently pinned to the 14.5" barrel. It is very effective.



OPTICS

I knew I would be using a red dot sight so I specified the standard front sight tower on the upper receiver. In an emergency, looking through the red dot at the front sight is like using a large ghost ring. It is surprising how much accuracy this setup can achieve. I did install a backup rear flip-up sight to co-witness

in the lower third of the red dot.

In the last few years red dot sights have become commonplace on almost all types of firearms. Some are excellent and some are more like toys for hobby guns and will not stand up to the abuse of a working gun. A red dot sight is not something you should save pennies on when it comes to saving your life and those of your loved ones.

A battle-proven company is Aimpoint and I use their red dot sights almost exclusively. The sight I chose for my rifle is the Aimpoint Patrol Rifle Optic (PRO). The

Denny Hansen

Through careful selection of parts, Denny's rifle is a one-of-a-kind quality, hard use firearm.



sight has 10 settings, four for use with night vision and six in daylight — one of which is extra bright.

The standard protocol for red dot sights is turn it on and leave it on and the battery life of Aimpoint sights far exceeds the competition. Left on a setting of seven, the PRO has a battery life of 30,000 hours, or over three years.

LIGHT IT UP

I think every defensive long gun should be equipped with a white light and my choice was a SureFire Compact Scout light. The light is a mere 4" long and only adds 4 oz. of weight but still produces 500 lumens of bright, white light.

Yes, there are less expensive lights available but SureFire remains the standard of the industry though some brands, like Streamlight for example, are excellent and have a proven track record. I will not, however, trust my life to a "buy one for \$19.95 and get another one free" light.

SLING IT

I subscribe to the "sling to a rifle is like a holster for a pistol" line of thought. The last item I added to my rifle was a Vickers Combat sling from Blue Force Gear. It is quickly fully adjustable and can go from holding the gun close for low profile applications to extended for shooting from the shoulder in less than a second.

With a little thought and careful selection of parts I can truthfully say my homemade assembly is as good as any of the top manufacturers', but is distinctively mine. 

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VETTING THE DEFENSIVE HANDGUN

DOES YOUR GUN DESERVE YOUR TRUST?

As the boredom of the COVID-19 shutdown started getting to me, I felt the urge to change carry guns if only as a change of pace. As my eyes roamed through the gun safe it occurred to me I hadn't written about vetting a carry or home defense firearm.

FORMAT

Most folks can get by with a bigger home defense gun than concealed carry gun. The first-time pistol-packer tends to err on the far ends of the bell curve: a gun too feeble for self-defense because, paranoid about it being spotted, they wanted something super-tiny. Alternately, they carry something almost "Dirty Harry"-size they soon find is too much, too soon, to comfortably conceal and carry.

The pistol I chose from the safe wasn't too big. It was a Smith & Wesson M&P Pro, with a 5" barrel and a capacity of 18 rounds of 9mm. It fit perfectly in a Summer Surprise inside-the-waistband holster, an homage to the late Bruce Nelson by the brilliant leathersmith Elmer McEvoy at Leather Arsenal in Idaho. With a forward "FBI tilt," it rides comfortably behind my hip at an angle keeping the long grip-frame from protruding rearward.

RELIABILITY

I knew this gun had a four-figure round count and was clean when it went into the safe, but I gave it a quick field-strip and re-lube anyway. I couldn't remember it ever malfunctioning on me before but I figured it needed at least a hundred rounds or so to verify. On a new gun, I'd have wanted a minimum 200 with 100 percent function. When I'm testing a carry gun, the actual carry is the last phase of the test. A defensive firearm, by definition, is a safety rescue tool — reliability is a non-negotiable baseline.

SHOOTABILITY

The gun's features taken in context with the shooter's attributes — size and strength, particularly in the hands, and also experience and habituation — combine in the very subjective element we call

"shootability." Hand fit is important, and this isn't just, "it feels good" but "can the user shoot it quickly and accurately?" A big element of this is trigger reach, measured from the web of the shooter's hand in line with the long bones of the forearm to the face of the trigger. I seem to shoot a little better when I can get the distal joint of my index finger centered on the trigger for more leverage, so the S&W M&P with its standard grip fits me perfectly in this regard. Another element is "pointing": when you bring it up on target, are the sights in line as opposed

to pointing up or down? This isn't just for point-shooters who fire from below line-of-sight because the shooter who uses aimed fire will be faster if the sights come to his or her eye already in line. The M&P fits me for both.

ACCURACY

You need accuracy — 4" groups at 25 yards are generally considered acceptable and I for one look for twice as tight. Accuracy isn't just grouping, though. It's also POA/POI: does your Point Of Impact coincide with your Point Of Aim? From a Caldwell Matrix rest at 25 yards I confirmed a 127-gr. +P+ hit a bit high and 147-gr. sub-sonic higher, while 124-gr. +P was a bit low but 115-gr. +P+ was spot-on for elevation and windage.



The M&P Pro earned a rare smile from Mas with 60 timed shots, five timed reloads, one-hand and two.



How does the gun shoot for you under time pressure? The S&W kept all 60 rounds in the "A-zone" in timed qualification.

Take the time to see where *your* gun hits with different defense loads. At 25 yards, this one was most centered with 115-gr. +P+.





Choosing a new gun for carry? A prudent shooter vets his choice before trusting it! This is Mas' "new" carry piece, a well-used full-size M&P Pro 9mm.

Shootability has to be determined on the range and if you're serious about it, you're judging both speed and accuracy to verifiable standards. This is why an electronic gunshot timer is so critical to personal skill development. Where do the standards come from? Google "practical pistol shooting drills" and you'll find an abundance of widely used tests to let you know where you stand and where the sidearm in question stands compared to others when in your hands.

With the M&P Pro, I started with Bianchi Plates — 8" steel disks at 11 yards with the 6-plate table run four times the way they do at GLOCK matches. I shoot a few GSSF matches a year and their on-line score sheets (www.gssfonline.com) give me a ready comparison for time. The S&W took 24 plates with 25 shots at about my average competition time.

On paper targets, a good test is Larry Vickers' 10/10/10 drill: 10 shots in 10 seconds from 10 yards on an NRA B8 bulls-eye. The M&P Pro kept them all in the black with a 99 out of 100 score, the lone 9-point hit being my fault, not the gun. I made it by less than half a second (9.54 to be exact) but I'll take the blame there too. Finally, I ran a 60-shot qualification course and the gun cleaned it. Not my tightest group over the course but not my worst either.

Altogether, this process allowed me to carry the pistol with confidence. If you haven't done something like this with your own carry or home defense handgun, I'd strongly suggest you do. Confidence feeds competence and competence feeds confidence, like yin and yang completing a circle — what you want the gun to deliver when you're running it.

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.257 Roberts	.270 Winchester	7mm RUM	.300 Weatherby	
.25-06 Remington	.270 WSM	.308 Winchester	.300 RUM	
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At left is Duke's M3 .45 "grease gun." At right is his friend's M3A1. It has one of the slowest SMG firing rates at only 400 to 450 rounds per minute

THE U.S. .45 SMG IN WWII ONE LAST HURRAH FOR BIG-BULLET SUBGUNS!

By the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the concept of military submachine guns was well established in Europe if not so much in America. The primary one available for the United States at the time was the Thompson .45 Auto SMG. During the interwar years the U.S. Navy had purchased about 500 of the Model 1921 and M-1928, with the U.S. Marines using them well in the several "Banana Wars" of Central America.

YOU'RE IN THE ARMY NOW

In 1939 the U.S. Army started purchasing "Tommy Guns" just as the Model 1928 evolved into Model 1928A1. These

versions could have vertical or horizontal fore grips. Their barrels had muzzle brakes and adjustable rear peep sights and could accept either stick magazines or drums of 50- or 100-round capacities.

Those early military Thompsons cost the U.S. Government over \$200 each — around \$4,000 in today's dollars! They were also time-consuming to manufacture. Savage, the sole maker in 1942, redesigned them. Drum magazines could no longer be used, fore grips were horizontal only, there was no muzzle brake and the rear peep sight became a mere bent piece of steel with a hole drilled into it. This new

version was named M1. By 1943 with a few more changes they became the M1A1. The government's price was reduced to about \$44 each. All the Thompson M1 and M1A1 guns had 10.5" barrels, wood buttstock and fore grips, and weighed about 10 to 11 lbs. unloaded depending on exact type. Their stick magazines came in 20- or 30-round types. The Model 1921 Tommy Guns had a 900 round-per-minute (RPM) cyclic rate but by the time of M1/M1A1, it was reduced to 700/750 RPMs.

Here is a tidbit I found intensely interesting in the book *Retributions* by British historian Max Hastings. For the September, 1944 U.S. assault on the island of Pelelieu he had official figures for the number of certain types of U.S. military ammunition consumed in the battle. For



The M50 .45 Reising Gun. It only saw action with the U.S. Marines early in WWII but was saddled with a small magazine and reputation for unreliability.



At the top is Duke's M1 Thompson .45 SMG, while below is a friend's Model 1928A1 .45 SMG.

.45 Auto it was 1.52 million! I would suppose most of it was fired from Thompson SMGs.

THE GREASE GUN ARRIVES

By 1943 the government wanted even cheaper, easier-to-manufacture and lighter SMGs. Therefore their designers borrowed on the German and British concept of all-metal manufacture and incorporated a wire butt stock. The end result looked amazingly like a mechanic's grease gun. Officially they were termed M3 but for 75 years mostly they have been called "grease guns." Barrel length was 8" and like the later Tommy Guns, their rear sights were merely perforated bent pieces of steel. Weight was about 8 lbs. Magazines for them were stick-type holding 30 rounds. Whereas Tommy Guns were select fire, "grease guns" were full auto only.

Not long after entering combat with American forces in June 1944, it was determined the M3 charging handle was fragile. It was a crank on the receiver's left side and was replaced with a simple hole in the bolt for the user's finger to retract it. This change became M3A1. Either M3 or M3A1, their cyclic rate of fire was only about 400/450 RPM.



Brass waterfall: Duke is clocking the rate of fire for his M1 .45 Tommy Gun.

RISING REISING

Worthy of mention in the realm of .45 Auto SMGs were the M50/M55 Reising Guns used by the Marines in early World War II. The M50 had wooden stocks while the M55 had a combination wood/folding wire butt stock because they were intended for ParaMarines. Their magazines were of 12- or 20-round capacity. Interestingly, where America's other SMGs fired from open bolts, Reising Guns fired from a closed bolt, which increased probability of hitting with

first shots. Combat Marines did not care for Reising Guns due to their unreliability, perhaps mostly caused by magazines.

GOIN' SHOPPING

In my quest to learn about the shooting aspects of World War II firearms, with one exception I have purchased representative samples of each basic type mentioned above. My Tommy Gun is the M1 version and my "grease gun" is the M3. The exception is Reising Gun but I have fired many rounds through a friend's Model 50. It only functioned well with one of the several magazines he had for it.

Conversely, my M1 Thompson has never had a failure to function with any ammo but the M3 has failed to work well with some cast bullet handloads. I've found both SMGs easy to hit targets with out to 50 yards as long as bursts are kept short.

Twice as many 9mm rounds can be carried for the same weight of .45 Autos. Therefore, 9mm SMGs eventually ruled in military forces. Conversion kits were even made so "grease guns" could fire 9mm. But, even with only limited use, .45 Auto SMGs have their place in American military history.

RED DOT 101

DIFFERENT LOOKS BUT ALWAYS TOP SPEED

There's no faster sight than a red dot. However, some look like receiver sights, others like scopes. What gives?

The term "red dot" itself is a logical moniker, given the first models, but almost generic — as "engine" covers a range of types: steam, petrol, jet and diesel, V-8, radial, lawnmower and Formula One. Meanwhile, red dots define prism and holographic sights along with open and closed (tube-type) reflex sights.

IN THE BEGINNING: PRISMS

The prism sight is the gray beard of the bunch — Zeiss had a prism sight in 1904. It's essentially a riflescope using an internal prism instead of a series of lenses to produce the sight picture. Perhaps the best-known modern prismatic sight is Trijicon's ACOG, or Advanced Combat Optical Gunsight.

The ACOG is tough as Caterpillar cleats but scales at 10 oz., as much as traditional fixed-power 4x scopes. Prism, or prismatic, sights are generally heavier than holographic and reflex sights. They're also battery-hungry and with few exceptions, they have fixed eye-relief (ER). In such respects they most resemble riflescopes with illuminated reticles.

Most modern prism sights feature glass-etched reticles. If you lose the battery power illuminating the dot, you can still see the reticle in daylight while electrical failure in holographic or reflex sights erases the reticle. Prism sights also offer magnification. Like riflescopes, many prism sights boast fast-focus eyepieces to sharpen the reticle.

Prism sights vary a great deal in features, bulk, weight and price. Trijicon's 1.5x, 4" TA44 scales a delightful 5.1 oz. but lists for over \$1,100. Primary Arms has a more affordable, 10-oz., 1x Cyclops ACSS which is ranging- and BDC-capable with a generous 3.7" of ER. The TMRP 5 from Burris weighs 19.1 oz. and has just 2.2" of ER but offers 5x magnification and a ballistic reticle in red, blue and green. Want lighter and simpler? Burris also sells a 3x RT-3 just 3.5" long weighing 8.8 oz.

HOLOGRAPHIC

The first holographic sight I used was from Bushnell, which pioneered this device commercially. It generates an image appearing not against the target, like an ordinary reticle or red dot, but out on the target. Early renditions had grainy reticles but they're better now and comprise a wide range of shapes and sizes. Holographic sights, like the 11.8-oz. Vortex Razor AMG UH-1 and EOTech's 9-oz. XPS2-2, weigh about the same as prism sights. There is one major, important distinction — holographic sights have unlimited ER.



Prism sight: Steiner's 332-series prism sights have 3x magnification and 3.15" of eye relief. Weight is around 16 oz.



Holographic: The EOTech is technically a holographic sight rather than a "red dot." It appears to project the reticle onto the target using lasers and glass.

My Browning .22 auto pistol wears a Bushnell Hologsight. It sits low, the sightline as snug as I get with irons and the "heads-up display" delivers a huge field with a circle-dot reticle.

Shooters with astigmatism, whose irregularly shaped cornea can't easily focus LED reflection on the cornea may find holographic sights easier to use than other prism and reflex sights. For easy hits near and far, Eotech's HWS reticle has a 68-MOA ring with a center dot. Their 3x HHS III ("holographic hybrid sight") has 20 brightness settings and weighs 25 oz. A 1x sibling is available with a 3x magnifier you can flip into service or out of the way.

REFLEX SIGHTS

Reflex sights, you could say, date to 1900, when Irish optics engineer Sir Howard Grubb patented a "Collimating-telescope Gun-sight" without "imperfections inherent in the old form of telescope-sights." His design used a reflecting surface to project an adjustable reticle into the shooter's vision. During WWI reflex sights enabled German Fokker pilots to aim their dual Spandau machine guns.

Sir Grubb's idea and Teutonic engineering took most of a century to refine. In 1975 Swedish inventor Gunnar Sandberg developed what he called a "single-point sight." You didn't look through this sight, rather you looked into the tube with one eye while your other registered a dot superimposed on the target.

Sandberg founded a company, Aimpoint, which went on to define this type of sight. You could see the illuminated dot from almost any place behind it. The front lens of an Aimpoint sight is compound glass that corrects for parallax. It brings the dot to your eye in a line parallel with the sight's optical axis so you hit where you see the dot even when your eye is off-axis. Like holographic sights, reflex sights have limitless ER, but they're not forgiving of astigmatism.

Now generations of Aimpoints later, these sights are smaller and lighter but sturdy enough for military use. Advanced circuitry has reduced power demand; batteries now last up to 50,000 hours at mid-range brightness settings! Positive windage and elevation clicks move impact 13mm at 100 meters. A 3.5-oz. Micro

S-1 was designed for mounting at mid-barrel on shotguns where its optical axis is snug to the rib. It has a 6-minute dot with 12 intensity settings. At least one in 10 glass-equipped moose rifles in Sweden wear an Aimpoint. I've used them on two moose, both in dark forest.

The first ghosted by at 70 yards, in very low light. I waited to shoot but followed the bull with the sight. He paused at 90 yards, just his shoulder visible in the gloom, where the Aimpoint's dot found it. My .30-06 bullet struck spot on. Years later another bull was milling, with two other moose, at thicket's edge. Brush stopped my approach at 80 steps. I saw only blinks of hair through a small alley and couldn't tell which beast was which. Then antler base and neck stalled in the opening. Again the Aimpoint's bright dot came instantly to bear. The moose fell to my Norma bullet from a double rifle in .375 Flanged.

Both the closed (tube) and open reflex sights function the same way. The reticle is a reflected LED image focused on the glass screen. The dot in a closed reflex sight is



Unlimited eye relief and countless mounting options make red dot sights a hot trend for pistol shooters, especially on defensive and competitive guns.



Even to its color, this lightweight C-More open reflex sight is a good match to this Volquartsen .22.

as bright a reticle as you'll get in any sight. A closed sight also protects the light path from weather and from obstruction. A leaf blown atop an open reflex sight kills the reticle, at least temporarily. The advantage of the open design is lightweight. Leupold's DeltaPoint Pro, with its 33mm lens, weighs 2 oz., as does Trijicon's RMR and Sightmark's Core Shot A-Spec. Bushnell's Advance Micro Reflex comes in at 2.2 oz., the Burris Fastfire at 1.5 oz. Triple the heft for a closed reflex sight. Holosun lists its \$227 HS503G at 4.9 oz. It and the 5-oz. Burris SpeedDot are lightweights for the closed type.

THE TAKEAWAY

Even more so than riflescopes, red dot sights of all flavors beg comparison in front of your eye. Big differences in weight, bulk, mounting height, eye relief, reticle options, battery life and price are hard to sift on a spec sheet. Neither "red" nor "dot" applies to all. You may prefer the eye-friendly green or a center circle. Regardless, when speed is of the essence, there is a "red dot" to fit your needs.





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LEVERGUN LOADS: .44 MAGNUM

MAKING 'NEAR PERFECT' INTO THE REAL THING

The first issue of *GUNS Magazine* arrived in January 1955 when I was a junior in high school. It was notable as the first magazine ever dedicated to articles on firearms, and it led the way as over the next few years three more purely gun magazines arrived. My first article was published in 1967 in the now long-gone magazine called *GUNsport*. Over the ensuing years I have read millions of words and also written several million words. And, after all this time, with everything I've read and everything I've written, there is one line that stands out and I consider the best words ever written — at least for those things I'm primarily interested in.

In 1966 my friend the late John Lachuk wrote: "If I had my druthers, I'd take this handy lever-gun and my 44 Maggie and head for the backcountry!" He was talking about the newly introduced Marlin 336T chambered in .44 Magnum. He went on to say: "One-caliber rifle-pistol duos are a Western tradition, handed down from the days when ammo counters were few and far between." Little did I know I would not only meet John in the future but we'd also become good friends.

LEVER FAN

I've been a fan of Marlin leverguns for over six decades; ever since I bought a pair

of Marlin shooters, a pair of original Model 1894s chambered in .38-40 and .25-20. In the foolish time of life known as teenage I let both guns slip through my hands. I would love to have them back now! In the 1960s, the Marlin 336, a long-time deer hunter's favorite offered in .30-30 and .35 Remington, was brought forth as the sixgunner's companion in .44 Magnum. I purchased the first one to hit town and it has now served me well for over 50 years. With its 20" barrel, full magazine tube and straight-gripped stock, it was the near-perfect woods carbine.

However, a real joy found in firearms is taking any one of many "near-perfect" sixguns or leverguns and making them even more near perfect!

To accomplish this with the 336 .44 Magnum, I sent it off to my now-late friend gunsmith Keith DeHart to have the barrel cut to 18-1/2" and the overly abundant forearm and butt stock, both made of too much quality walnut, slimmed down. The result is an even-easier and faster handling big bore carbine. Matched with my ever-present Bear Buster Ruger 4-5/8" .44 Flat-Top, it made the perfect sixgun/levergun combination for deep woods hunting.

Over the past 50+ years a lot of .44 long guns have come and gone, however this Marlin 336 remains a favorite. Groups



Quite a collection (above): John has been loading the .44 Magnum using #2400 for over 60 years. John uses a variety of jacketed bullets (below) in loads for the .44 Magnum levergun.



are for three shots at 50 yards with a 4X scope in place — Hornady 240 XTP over 24.5 grains of WW296 clocks out at 1,728 fps with a 5/8" group; Hornady 240 XTP, 22.0 grains of #2400, 1,696 fps and 1-1/4"; Hornady 265 XTP, 23.0 grains of WW296, 1,621 fps, 1-1/2"; Speer 240 JHP, 24.5 grains of WW296, 1,681 fps, 3/4"; and Speer 240-gr. JSP over 22.0 grains of #2400 yields 1,672 fps and a 7/8" group. All excellent hunting loads.

In 1969, the Marlin 1894 was resurrected and offered in .44 Magnum. This action, being shorter, is felt to be better suited to sixgun cartridges than the .30-30 length 336 action. However, I've never had any problems with the M336 action and .44 Magnum cartridges. Marlin also made a special run of Trapper-style 1894 carbines in .44 Magnum with a 16-1/2" barrel, full magazine tube holding seven or eight rounds, a recoil pad on its straight gripped stock, checkering on forearm and buttstock and excellent sights. Shooting these little carbines is a pleasant experience with all loads tested.

Felt recoil is certainly much less than one might expect; there were no problems encountered with recoil even when spending several hours at the shooting bench. Well, at least there weren't any in



John notes the levergun/sixgun combination still is exceptionally viable.

bygone days! However, these days I slip on a very thick rubber pad just because.

MORE RESULTS

The following groups are for three shots with the .44 Magnum Winchester Trapper at 50 yards using the factory iron sights: Hornady 240 JHP over 24.5 grains of WW296 gives 1,686 fps and a 1" group; Hornady 240 JHP, 22.0 grains #2400, 1,703 fps, 1"; Hornady 265 JFP, 23.0 grains WW296, 1,563 fps, 1"; Speer 240 JHP, 24.5 grains WW296, 1,723 fps, 1-3/8"; and Speer 240 JSP with 22.0 grains of #2400 results in a muzzle velocity of 1,711 fps and a 1-1/2" group. The Hornady 265 JFP was originally designed for the .444 Marlin however I find it is an excellent bullet for the .44 Magnum whether used in levergun or sixgun. At least in my hands, it's more accurate in the iron-sighted Winchester than the scope-sighted Marlin.

When I started loading for the .44 Magnum, carbide sizing dies had not yet arrived. Once they did I purchased both RCBS and Redding .44 Magnum Carbide reloading dies and have been using them



Two excellent powders for loading the .44 Magnum are #2400 and H110.

for at least 40+ years. They have served me well for both cast bullets and jacketed bullets. Any loads destined to be used in a lever gun should first have several dummies made up and checked for feeding through the action and chambering.

Most jacketed bullets will not be a problem unless they are long, heavyweight designs. An excellent choice I have found is the Hornady 265 FP which, although originally designed for the .444 Marlin,

works just fine in the .44 Magnum be it sixgun or levergun. In fact this bullet is so accurate it was my choice for long-range silhouetting back in the 1980s and '90s. It is also a bullet which, due to the placement of the crimping groove, works in every .44 Magnum levergun of my experience. This includes the Marlin 1894 and 336, Winchester 1894, Rossi and Browning Model 92s, and the Henry Big Boy.

POWDERING IT UP

It would be difficult to find a sixgun powder that does not work well in the .44 Magnum levergun. With jacketed bullets I mostly use Unique, Universal, #2400, #4227, H110 and WW296 with standard primers in the first three and Magnum primers thereafter. A heavy crimp is necessary not only for aiding in starting the burning process but also for keeping the cartridges from being pushed down into the case while riding in the magazine. The .44 Magnum levergun takes over where the .357 Magnum levergun leaves off, able to handle a few heavier chores.

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#NoBSBC

"I WANTED TO DO THIS VERY SAME THING FOREVER." MENTOR THEM WELL



The late Patrick F. McManus, who died in 2018 at age 84, wrote many great stories about hunting, fishing and outdoor living. A favorite from the '70s was called "A Yup of a Different Color." It recounts how then 14-year-old Pat persuaded two old hunters, Rancid Crabtree and Mr. Hooker, to take him deer hunting.

Driving into the mountains in Rancid's old truck, "*Rancid and Mr. Hooker told all the old stories again, starting each one off with 'I ever tell you the time ... ?' And we drank the scalding black coffee and ate the homemade doughnuts Gram had sent along, and the two men puffed their pipes and threw back their heads and roared with laughter at their own stories, and it was all a fine thing to be doing, going up into the dark, frozen mountains early in the morning with those two old hunters, and I knew I wanted to do this very same thing forever.*"

A FAVOR FOR DAD

The story reminds me of the old-timers (actually they were likely 40 or 50) who would sometimes let me tag along on deer hunts. My dad liked bird hunting but had little interest in deer hunting. Looking back I suspect the old hunters took me along as a favor to Dad. In any case I was grateful then and still am today. When I first read the story I was closer in age to the boy; rereading it today I realize I'm now one of the old hunters. I feel we who have enjoyed the shooting sports for so long have a duty to support future generations. I have huge respect for all those who volunteer their time to teach hunter and firearms safety courses. I'm also thinking of ways to support individual youngsters.

One way is to provide advice so they are properly equipped. This can be carried too far, of course. We tend to be equipment-happy about most sports — a little *make-do* spirit is to be encouraged. I remember my first hunting jacket was an old coat with a red lining, worn inside-out!

The idea is to make it a positive experience. It's hard to have a really good time if one's hands and feet are freezing. Safety courses teach the importance of ear and eye

Kaitlyn Hanson started hunting young, mentored by her dad, Dave's friend Al Hanson. She started out right with a youth/ladies model Weatherby Vanguard in .243 Win.



This Savage Lightweight Hunter rifle in .260 Rem. with a Burris scope is a great deer gun for new hunters. They'd also appreciate a loan of extra gear such as the Leica rangefinder, Jet Boil, Meopta binocular and Garmin GPS.



Dave realizes he should start giving away his overstock of knives to youngsters instead of leaving them for the executor of his estate to sell on the cheap!

protection. We can help ensure the youngsters have quality safety gear.

GUNS

Back in the '60s when I first hunted deer there weren't any "youth" rifles, at least none of which I was aware. Even rifles touted as lightweights such as the Winchester 70 Featherweight weren't very light. If a kid was especially lucky, he might get a Winchester or Marlin lever-action carbine.

Today's young shooters have a plethora of choices (and yes, I know what a plethora is). Most rifle makers have a compact youth model in their lineup.

For smaller-statured shooters even the compacts can be a bit long in length of pull. In my experience getting the LOP right is one of the most important components of stock fit. Don't overlook the option of an AR-style (modern sporting rifle) with collapsible stock. With these LOP can be set to

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Compact Ruger American rifles are perfect for young shooters. A rimfire .22 LR (left) is a great starter, or move up to a Ranch model .223 Rem with a 1:8 twist suitable for heavier bullets.

suit almost any size shooter. With the bolt concealed in the upper receiver housing there is no need to move the face from the stock to allow for bolt operation and a Picatinny rail on the receiver gives flexibility in mounting an optical sight.

**“EVERY HUNT
... HAPPENS IN
THREE STAGES:
THE ANTICIPATION,
THE DOING AND
THE REMEMBERING.”**

SELL IT CHEAP ...

If you're an old-timer like me you probably have shelves and drawers full of gear you seldom use anymore. I took an inventory of my gun and reloading rooms — and was frankly astonished! Daypacks, fanny packs, folding and fixed-blade knives, binoculars, hatchets, game saws, sharpening stones, spare shooting glasses, muffs and earplugs, cleaning gear ... I hang onto the stuff thinking one day I might need them, when the reality is one day my executor is either going to sell them cheap or throw them out. Better to give them to a youngster who will use and appreciate them. Remember along with a knife goes a lesson in sharpening and using it safely.

And at current rate of consumption I'd have to live to about 150 to use up all the .22 shells, not to mention all the reloading components. I can't quite bring myself to give away .22 shells yet but I sure am going to enjoy more plinking and training sessions with some worthy protégés.

THE GREATEST GIFT

The most important gift you can give is not things, but your time and your example. Let the youngsters learn every hunt, every competition, every day at the range, happens in three stages: the anticipation, the doing and the remembering. Encourage them while they are young, get in lots of the *doing*, for the day will come sooner than one ever imagines when the remembering is all you have left. But I'm not there yet. I still think it's all a fine thing to be doing and I want to do the very same thing forever. 🏹



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THE HEALTH EFFECTS OF CLOSING THE 'GUNSHOW LOOPHOLE'

GOOD AMERICANS MAKE A SIMPLE TRADE

As I sit typing these words, I am currently neck-deep in the COVID crisis. My day job involves wading about in a disease reliably killing about one in every 30 people who contract it and I am growing most weary of the thing. I sleep downstairs in the spare bedroom and have not been within six feet of my wife in 10 days. Such things will render a guy reliably grouchy.

My work makes me question my career choices. Perhaps in retrospect I should have become a plumber. The rest of the planet is just sick of being cooped up inside with nothing to do.

TRUE FRIENDS

It has been said most any able-bodied friend will help you move. A true friend, however, will help you move a body. This pal is the latter sort.

He's a local pastor, a former Law Enforcement Officer-turned-evangelist who speaks ballistic coefficients, grip contours

and magazine capacities as fluently as he does Jesus. We're kindred spirits, him and me. A staunch conservative who loves the Lord and has devoted his life to service, he's the nicest guy you'd ever want to meet.

I innocently admired his pocket knife one day in clinic and he would not leave without giving it to me. Why else would one carry a pocket knife if not to give it away to a friend, he explained. You built a mental image of this guy, yet?

NOT ALWAYS THE DEVIL'S WORKSHOP

My buddy's church building has been shuttered by the coronavirus. As the church is actually the people and not the facility, they are doing just fine but my friend has a bit more time on his hands than was previously the case. This spawned a most fascinating email.

It seemed he had a SIG P365XL hybrid he could live without and a whole pile of

lonely .45 ACP ammo needing a mission. He was between .45 ACP pistols at the moment. Could I help a brother out?

I have more than my share of guns but I had not yet availed myself of a P365. We devout gun nerds are not supposed to stoop to such, but I think this adorable little SIG carry gun is just cute as can be. Its sleek lines and Information Age ergonomics always struck a chord. This indeed seemed a splendid opportunity.

CORONAVIRUS AND THE BARTER ECONOMY

I scared up a low-mileage Springfield Armory 1911 Mil-Spec with a cool story. I had given this gun to my wife's grandfather, a decorated combat Infantryman during WWII, to host the special "sweetheart grip" he built and carried during the war. The resulting article was my personal all-time favorite from a decades-long career in gun writing (*American Handgunner*, "True

This tricked-out SIG P365XL "Frankengun" reliably lifted Will's spirits in the midst of the coronavirus crisis. This Springfield Armory 1911 Mil-Spec (inset) previously hosted a priceless WWII-era sweetheart grip Will's wife's grandfather carried while fighting in North Africa, Sicily and Italy.



Love, 'Total War.' Google is your buddy if you're interested.)

When the great man passed at age 96 the gun and grip came back to me. I moved the priceless grip to a 1944-vintage GI Remington Rand M1911A1. A top-tier 1911 once owned by a genuine war hero seemed a fitting swap. My buddy wholeheartedly agreed.

THE PRIZE

My new SIG is a "Frankengun" of sorts. The frame is taken from the standard P365. The elongated slide comes from a P365XL. It is such remarkable modularity reliably setting SIG handguns apart from their competition. They're like Garanimals for gun guys.

The frame is treated with some grippy stuff from Talon Grips and the gun comes with a 12-round magazine, three spare 10-rounders and a holster. As expected, it shoots like a dream and carries even better.

I found a spare 1911 magazine and a bushing wrench to toss in with the Mil-Spec. I had hoped my buddy would come out just a little bit ahead — after all, it was a really nice pocket knife.

RUMINATIONS

We made the trade in the parking lot of my buddy's church after a long day in clinic. I kept well clear. We've seen a lot of COVID-19 and I do not yet know how long I will go before contracting it. I didn't want my buddy getting more in the deal than he'd bargained for.

We enjoyed a delightful conversation, albeit at a bit of a distance, and we both got new toys. We pored over the guns and chattered like schoolgirls about it later in the evening via email. In a fairly stressful sea of gloom and darkness both of us had our spirits lifted.

Had the Leftists had their way and closed the "Gunshow Loophole" we would both be felons now. Instead, a dedicated man of God and his physician friend got a brief respite from the stresses of fighting a worldwide plague both spiritually and physically.

Honestly — Pelosi and Schumer can bite me. 

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NUMBER 4 LEE-ENFIELD RIFLE

THE LAST, BEST BOLT-ACTION BATTLE RIFLE

Frank Jardim

I've never regretted money spent on a military surplus gun. However, the 1945 Canadian No. 4 Mk 1 Lee-Enfield in this story was one of the best deals of my life when I bought it for \$125 in the late 1980s. It was made in June of 1945, probably less than two months before the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima to end both the war and the production contract it was made under.

It lay next to at least a dozen others across the gun show table and it was a tough choice. They were all pretty nice, with superb bores, very nice wood and just a little bluing wear on the edges. While not the most beautifully made military gun, it was without a doubt the best bolt-action battle rifle to see widespread use in World War II.

NUMBER ONE FOR THE BRITS

Over 3,000,000 were made. In the hands of British, Commonwealth and colonial soldiers, the No. 4 played a major role in defeating the Axis powers and remained their service rifle until fully replaced by the FAL in the 1960s. It continued to serve many second-rate nations well into the 1970s and insurrectionist guerrillas long afterward. In fact, in the 1980s, Soviet troops fighting in Afghanistan faced Mujahideen fighters armed with the No. 4 Lee-Enfield.

The crux of the No. 4 Lee-Enfield story is it was Great Britain's supremely practical evolution of the most promising of the world's first-generation, small-bore, smokeless powder, bolt-action repeating-rifles (their own Lee-Enfield) and the best battle rifle of World War I, the Short Magazine Lee-Enfield (SMLE) No. 1 Mk 3. From the start in 1888 with the Lee-Enfield, the American-designed, rear-locking-bolt,

turn-bolt action was the race car of the small arms world with its fast working speed and 8-shot, box-magazine. It was faster than front-lug bolt actions because it needed 30 percent less bolt rotation to open and close it, and less travel for loading and ejection. The speed of operation was further enhanced by placement of a turned-down bolt handle just behind the trigger (most bolt handles were straight and in front of the trigger) and the decision to have the bolt cock on the long, forward-chambering-stroke instead of the short, upward opening-stroke used in all other turn-bolt designs.

SMOKY IRONY

There's bit of irony in this story because the new Lee-Enfield .303 caliber cartridge was initially intended to be smokeless powder but the British couldn't get this piece of the system together in time so they had to start off with a black powder version, sort of like running your race-car on



low-octane regular gas. When finally adapted and fielded in the first of the improved, 10-shot, Lee-Enfield rifles in 1895, .303 British remained ballistically on par with the martial cartridges of other major powers throughout the bolt-action era. An increase in the Lee-Enfield's magazine capacity to 10 rounds, the adoption of stripper clip loading and the selection of a manageable 25.5" barrel perfected the basic design by 1906 and it made history in World War I. Under fire from fast shooting, 10-shot, S.M.L.E. (Short Magazine-Lee-Enfield) No. 1 Mk 3 rifles, the Germans sometimes thought the ferocious rain of lead was coming from machine guns.

As impressive as the SMLE No. 1 Mk 3 performed in World



The No. 4 Mk 1 Lee-Enfield rifle was the British empire's last bolt-action battle rifle and considered one of the best. A squad of Canada's 48th Highlanders in 1943 (opposite page) was armed with the No. 4 Mk 1, the most commonly issued British empire rifle in WWII. Also note the "Tommy-gun"!

War I, it had a few shortcomings. Its light barrel, forend stock-to-barrel fit and heavy muzzle-cap/bayonet-stud significantly diminished its long-range accuracy and it was expensive and complicated to make. After the armistice new rifles were considered, including semi-autos, but economy and the fundamental merit of the Lee-Enfield action trumped them. Improvements were made and by 1931, the first No. 4 rifles were on the trails. By 1939 the No. 4 Mk 1 was officially adopted. It was in full production in 1941 at the new Fazakerley and Maltby Royal Ordnance Factories and the Birmingham Small Arms (BSA Co.) factory.

ACROSS THE POND

Production wasn't just limited to England. In America, Savage Arms Company was awarded a contract for the rifle and built over a million at their Stevens Arms Company subsidiary in Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts from 1941 to 1944. These guns were sent to England and most were marked "U.S. Property" indicating they were Lend Lease equipment. In Canada, Small Arms Ltd., made over 905,000 rifles from 1941 to 1945 in their Long Branch, Ontario, factory. At peak production, they were making over 28,500 a month. These rifles went to war in the hands of Canadian soldiers and mine happens to be one of them.

THE BETTER MOUSETRAP

The No. 4's improvements included: a stiffer, heavier, barrel and redesigned handguard allowing it to free-float for most of its length; exposure of the last 2" of muzzle to which a new spike-style bayonet was directly attached; an increased sight radius and more effective aperture-type rear sight mounted on the rear of the receiver; plus an overall simplification of the manufacturing process to increase production efficiency and lower unit cost by reducing the number of machining operations and replacing some expensive forgings with stamped sheet metal parts.

The No. 4 Mk 1 was made only in America and Canada and featured an additional simplification omitting two parts and some machining operations that allowed the bolt to be removed from the receiver by aligning the bolt head perfectly with a gap in its guide slot along the side of the receiver. None of these changes made the rifle more graceful or better looking but they did improve function and most importantly, saved time and resources. Such thinking wins big wars.

BUY NOW!

You may be surprised to learn Hunter's Lodge (www.hunterslodge.com) still has World War II surplus Enfield No. 4



The rear bolt-locking lugs were not as strong or precise as front-mounted Mauser-style lugs but they were good enough.



The bolt handle on the No. 4 is located behind the trigger guard for fast operation.



A simplified sheet metal rear sight and square (instead of rounded) metal surfaces made the No. 4 easier to manufacture. Note the Long Branch markings on the side.

Mk 1 rifles for \$419. This amazes me since World War II ended 75 years ago and it's rare to see any military surplus guns of the era these days. Most of what pops up now is old inventory imported years ago, and such is likely the case with those at Hunter's Lodge. The law of supply and demand dictates the prices are a lot higher now than 25 years ago, but the lesson there is, "buy your military surplus when it's still surplus!"

After the last one is sold, a surplus \$120 gun becomes a \$420 collectible. A look at online auction site gunbroker.com showed a number of decent No. 4 Lee-Enfields from \$485 up. These guns aren't the screaming bargains they once were, but they are still affordable shootable, WWII collectibles.

The RUGER, a ROOKIE and REDEMPTION

WAYNE VAN ZWOLL

“It was 1,500 yards away. Getting closer was tough.”

Hans Taska would spend most of the next hour pushing through swamp-grass, wading a creek and pausing, hunched over, when his guide, Dave Sturm stopped. Hunting can be uncomfortable.

“We had the wind,” he told me, “but honestly, keeping track of that was new to me.”

THE ROOKIE

Indeed it was. Hans, 34, had taken his required Hunter Education exam remotely, on his smartphone the evening before. In the mountains of north-central Colorado, the option was his salvation.

Growing up near Gilbert, Arizona, near Phoenix, Hans was introduced to shooting “when I was five or six. Three generations of men in my family had hunted, and I perforated the occasional soup can. But it wasn’t a rigorous education.”

You might assume someone working for Sturm, Ruger would have all the skills under his belt.

High-country hunt tests new long-legged 6.5 PRC

LEARNING OCCURS

Chasing an engineering degree at the University of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff, Hans worked in the campus machine shop. There he met a fellow who had interned at Ruger’s Prescott operation. “He liked the job and the staff and was later hired. He encouraged me to apply there,” Hans said.

Taska joined Ruger as a manufacturing engineer eight years ago. No need to ask if he still enjoys it, I decided. A hint of interest from anyone is his cue to explain anything you might want to know about building a Security-9. This 9mm autoloader “is hammer-fired, with a glass-filled nylon grip frame, aluminum chassis and carbon steel barrel and slide. It has a 15-shot



Wayne carried this Long-Range hunter under a Leupold VX-3i 4.5-14x scope. It proved itself on elk.

magazine, drift-adjustable rear sight, fixed white-dot front..." Then Hans *really* gets deep in the manufacturing weeds.

THE STORY CONTINUES ...

"... Anyway," he continued with the hunting story a short time later, "It was exciting! Northern Arizona has high places, but that bull was living at about 9,000 feet, and after our sneak, I was gulping air." His chance came at about 120 yards. "It was an easy shot, kneeling, off sticks; but I didn't make the best hit." A refreshing admission, unforced. Spined, the elk collapsed. Finishers followed quickly. "A six-point was my dream! I'll have to find space on a wall!" His boyish enthusiasm defined the spirit of the evening in the converted ranch house.

Ginger's wizardry in camp's kitchen again awed the platoon crowding the table that evening. She served up mountains of meat loaf and mashed potatoes, with the perfunctory salad, then finished icing the fresh cinnamon rolls for breakfast. They cooled next to a platter smothered by a tall heap of home-made chocolate-chip cookies.

Our camp hosted hunters after deer, elk and pronghorns. Two bowhunters with coveted moose tags had killed fine bulls just before we arrived. "This is Moose Central for Colorado," said Dave, who manages 70,000 acres in the shadows of the Never Summer and Zirkel Ranges. Willow thickets choking the upper tributaries of the North Platte sprawled for miles across the flats adjoining our camp.

Ruger had worked with Spur Outfitters on past projects and had sent Dave a shipment of its new Hawkeye Long-Range Hunter rifles. Paul Pluff, public relations manager for Ruger, had invited Hans and fellow engineer Eric Perkins on the trip to give these shop-bound beavers and the new rifles precious field time. Paul snared a deer tag, Eric a pronghorn license.

REPLACEMENT

The Hawkeye has largely replaced the Model 77 as Ruger's flagship centerfire series but still features the most recent 77 action. Now only rimfire bolt rifles and those in .357 and .44 Magnum handgun chamberings answer to "77-Series."

I'm sweet on refinements distinguishing the Hawkeye from its predecessor, especially the lean, carnivorous profile of the checkered walnut on Standard and African rifles. The Compact, Varmint Target, Long-Range hunter and Predator versions feature laminated wood though stocks on both LR Target and the new Hunter are painted "speckled black/brown."

Notably, Hawkeyes boast a long, non-rotating Mauser extractor and fixed ejector along with a three-detent safety. Unlike the first Model 77s, feeding is truly controlled from follower to chamber. All Hawkeyes except the Long-Range duo feature internal staggered-stack magazines with hinged floorplates.

CARTRIDGE

The first Hawkeye Long-Range Hunter was bored only for the rimless 6.5 Precision Rifle Cartridge (Ruger has now added a 6.5 Creedmoor). Based on Hornady's .300 Ruger Compact Magnum and designed to hurl ballistically efficient bullets from short actions, it has the .532 head of common belted magnums. Its 30-degree shoulder is set farther back than the 35-degree slope of a WSM so the neck won't overrun the shanks of missiles with



One shot from 150 yards with a 143-gr. Hornady load from his LRH gave Paul this dandy mulie buck (above). Short 6.5 cartridges (below, L-R): 6.5x55 (circa 1894!), .260 Rem., 6.5 Creedmoor, 6.5PRC, 6.5/284, 6.5 Rem. Mag.





**“THERE!” PAUL AND I ALIGNED
OUR GLASS WITH DAVE’S, TOWARD
A WHITE SPECK IN THE BRIGHTENING
SAGE. “ANTLERS ARE HEAVY
ON TOP ... IT’S HIM!”**

Colorado's high benches hold pronghorns in the shadows of mountain ranges thick with deer and elk. The LRH laminate stock (below) comes with three half-inch spacers. Wayne uses two for a 13-3/4" pull.

Pinocchio noses when they're seated to clear short magazines. The 6.5 PRC beats the 6.5 Creedmoor off the blocks by about 250 fps. Hornady lists a 143-gr. ELD-X from the Creedmoor at 2,700 fps. The PRC kicks it out at 2,960. Distance narrows the gap a tad, as faster bullets endure more drag. But at 500 yards the 6.5 PRC is still clocking about 2,250 fps, a lead of 225 fps. You can match 6.5 performance with a 6.5/284, but you'll need a longer action.

THE FIELD

Dave arrived in camp with the rifles the evening before our hunt. Tearing fingernails opening cases, we got our first look at the Hawkeye Long-Range Hunter. It looked delightfully trim! Any "long-range" moniker puts me in mind of long, heavy barrels and bulbous stocks. The stainless, hammer-forged barrel was slender enough the muzzle was bumped up slightly in diameter to accommodate the 5/8-24 threading securing the radial-ported brake. Deaf enough already, I promptly took a wrench to the brake and replaced it with the supplied cap. Two front swivel studs handily accommodated both sling and bipod.

The stock was well suited to hunting. No needless bulk. Three spacers allowed length adjustment from 12-3/4" to 14-1/4". The Picatinny rail, secured to the receiver with four stout 8-40 screws, added 20 minutes of gain (up-slope to the rear) so long zeroes wouldn't tug scope adjustments to their extremes.

For my purposes, this rail was of no benefit — it forced a high line of sight, pulling my cheek off the stock. I needed a comb pad. Mercifully, the receiver was standard Ruger with scallops to accept Ruger rings. With the sun setting, I spun the ring screws loose enough to slide the Leupold VX-3i ahead so it wouldn't bang my noggin, then snugged it all and joined the others at the range.

RANGING IT

A queue behind the bench, and fading light sent me into the sage, prone. Soon bullets found the 100-yard target. I dialed to put them a couple of inches high, then shifted to 200-yard paper. As crickets and bats announced the night, my last three bullets landed just over center in a



Hans Taska works in Ruger's Prescott, AZ plant. He downed his first elk in Colorado with the LRH.

3" cluster at 200. Clearly Hornady's ELD-X liked the LR Hunter's 1-in-8 rifling. The trigger, a bit stiff, had modest but consistent take-up. Breaks were clean. The extractor and ejector functioned with smooth enthusiasm.

Ginger fed us steaks, baked her first batch of cinnamon rolls. Next morning we left at dawn.

SHOW TIME

The guns saw action all week. My chance came from prone, but quickly, at 220 yards. Joseph Von Benedikt downed another bull in a throaty scrimmage of elk, delivering his shot at 30 steps. Eric Perkins and Tom Beckstrand each killed their first pronghorn. Hans won the biggest smile contest.

The last morning, before sunlight had crested the Never Summer peaks, Paul, Dave and I had binos to brows scrutinizing a broad slab of east-facing sagebrush below a tuft of aspens clinging to rock.

"He was there," muttered Dave, eyes on a mid-elevation clump of bushes. He and Paul had climbed and crawled, then waited two hours within range of a fine mule deer. Their last-minute attempt to nudge it up for a shot failed. The deer spun as it rose and melted into seams in the slope.

What were the odds he'd be back?

REDEMPTION

"There!" Paul and I aligned our glass with Dave's, toward a white speck in the brightening sage. "Antlers are heavy on top ... it's him!" While we watched, the buck eased up-slope, from one brush patch to another, where he vanished. "Good grief!" Dave shook his head. "He's bedded already!"

Instead of climbing, Dave took advantage of the low sun behind us and thickets on the slope's hem to sneak in from the bottom. We followed. A stone's toss uphill, Paul set his tripod and eased to a sit. His Ruger was steady when the deer rose, 150 yards off. This time it had no time to turn. A solid "thwuck!" followed the flat crack of the 6.5 PRC.

"He wasn't quite up when you fired," Dave grinned as we admired the non-typical antlers.

Paul took a gulp of thin air and caressed the webbing atop the thick beams. "A new rifle shouldn't be left in the dust twice!"



The LRH was easy to carry in elk country at 8,500 feet — and quick to point! A brake is part of the LRH package (below). Wayne removed it and installed the cap because he said the gun already recoils gently.



The LRH comes with a 20-minute rail for long zeroes but might require a cheek pad.



The modern revolver has its origins with the legendary Samuel Colt. Colonel Sam was inspired by the capstan device on the brig *Corvo* he crewed as a young seafaring lad plying the waves in search of adventure. For nearly two centuries the wheelgun has ably occupied holsters around the world. Easy to use, accurate, and as reliable as the tides, the classic revolver has much to commend it even this deep into the Information Age.

The ultimate iteration of Sam Colt's timeless design is today's Korth NXR .44 Magnum. Birthed in Germany and offered on this side of the pond by the fine folks at Nighthawk Custom, the NXR .44 Magnum represents the absolute pinnacle of wheelgun evolution. With an execution most typically reserved for nuclear reactors or interplanetary spacecraft and a sticker price to match, the NXR .44 Magnum is the powerful rarefied handgun for the shooter of distinction. Potential applications for such a top-tier hand howitzer are thought-provoking indeed.

SERIOUSLY DANGEROUS GAME

Blake Hardwick made his money young and fast. He was the founder of PointlessGarbage.com, the most popular social media application on the planet. By his 30th birthday Blake had the trophy wife, a lifetime's worth of toys and more money than any mere mortal could spend. To assuage boredom Hardwick indulged his fetish for hunting dangerous game.

Blake had already bagged a record Kodiak brown bear in Alaska, a 1,200-lb. cape buffalo in South Africa and a Namibian

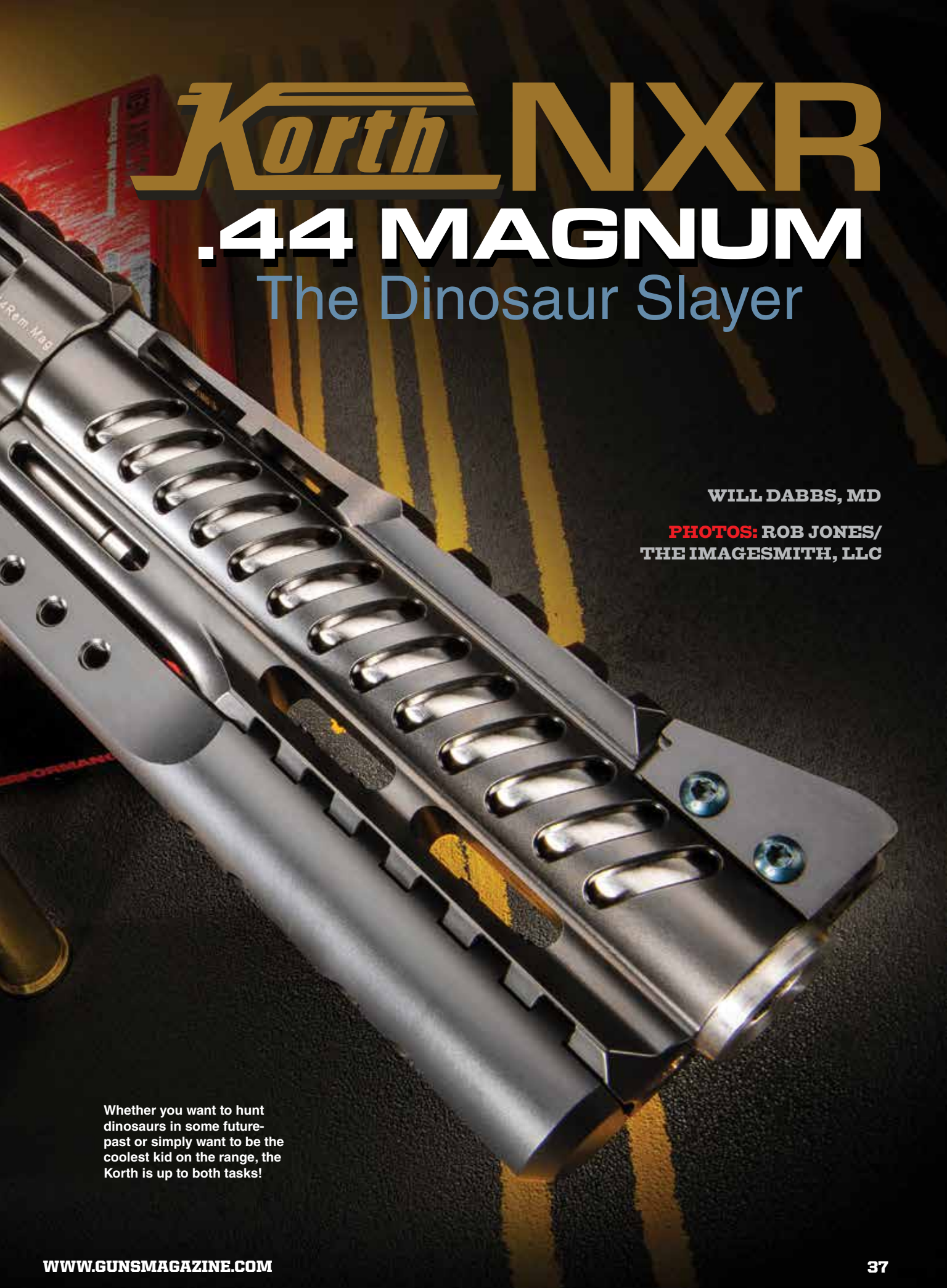
leopard at five meters with a 12 bore. This day, however, was something altogether different. This expedition had cost him a cool \$100 million.

This Montana day was Africa hot and suffocatingly humid. Blake had located a big male via drone before initiating his stalk. Pressing into a stand of heavy three-meter ferns he held his custom Korth NXR .44 Magnum revolver at the ready. He edged his hat clear of his eyes with his forearm and thumbed back the hammer. His finger loitered nervously alongside the trigger as if his life depended upon it — which it did.

Hardwick stood stock still. Amidst the pervasive buzz of mosquitoes the size of his thumb, he felt more than heard the deep rhythmic cadence of coarse breathing nearby. He crouched, oriented his massive revolver toward the sound and tried to penetrate the foliage with his eyes. The thick ferns parted slowly and he stroked the trigger as the world exploded.

This adult male *Deinonychus* was likely a solitary hunter, arguably the most adroit in history, and it had been stalking Hardwick just as he had returned the favor. As the sleek theropod charged through the underbrush behind its 16" skull bristling with razor-sharp teeth, Hardwick's Korth punched a heavy 300-gr. hollowpoint deep into its chest.

The terrifying creature fell heavily to the jungle floor, aerated blood spraying liberally through broad flaring nostrils. At 200 lbs. the adult *Deinonychus* was faster than a cheetah and uniformly lethal. The 5" articulated claw located on the second toe of each hind foot could disembowel man-sized prey with a



Korth NXR

.44 MAGNUM

The Dinosaur Slayer

WILL DABBS, MD

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Korth NXR

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.44 MAGNUM
IS COMPARABLE PARTS
OF COMBAT TOOL AND
OBJET D'ART.”



The Korth .44 Magnum
Revolver: Combining
art with firepower!

stroke. However, the same lightweight skeletal system making it so breathtakingly fast also left the animal surprisingly fragile. The single heavy expanding bullet pithed the creature's heart and it bled out in short order.

Hardwick checked his frantic breathing, holstered his extraordinary German revolver, and had the big raptor gutted in minutes. He secured a sling around the carcass and began retracing his steps. It was nearly a kilometer back to the Time Displacement Vehicle (TDV) and he was already imagining how the taxidermy mount of the *dromaeosaurid* would look crouching next to the sleek onyx desk in his office upon his return from the Cretaceous period.

Hardwick crested a rise and spotted the incongruous mechanical geometry of the TDV steaming in the distance. The inert weight of the creature left him uncharacteristically winded. However, something inexplicably made the man turn around. He had a strange ethereal sensation he was being watched. Were the temporal paleontologists completely certain this early into the time travel era the *Deinonychus* was not actually a pack hunter?

NOW BACK TO THE PRESENT

If you're rich enough it's at least hypothetically possible to buy your way into space. Money can land a spouse, an island, or an enviable position in modern politics. However, technology has not yet determined how to transcend time. If it could, however, and well-heeled folks of means could actually travel back to the Cretaceous to hunt dinosaurs with a handgun, the Korth NXR .44 Magnum would do the deed.

Certain names conjure a visceral image of quality and superlative workmanship. Though I've never had the pleasure myself, I'm told by those I trust Rolls Royce makes a fairly nice automobile. In the world of handguns, Korth-Waffen carries a comparably weighty gravitas.

Willi Korth birthed the first Korth guns in Lollar, Hesse, Germany, back in 1954. A former railway engineer, Herr Korth cut his teeth making inexpensive non-lethal defensive revolvers designed to fire tear gas cartridges. Since then Korth-Waffen has evolved into one of the most high-end arms manufacturers in the world.

UNBOXING AN HEIRLOOM

This rarefied firearm ships inside a padded cardboard box. I have purchased cheap mass-produced plastic pistols which arrived in polymer cases rugged enough to survive atmospheric reentry. However, those ubiquitous plastic cases now litter my attic unused. You don't buy a gun like this for the box it comes in.

There are rakish slots cut gill-like in the barrel sleeve allowing the natural stainless barrel to remain visible underneath. This produces a certain primal effect like you're hefting some miniature shark spitting bullets. The gun strongly resembles Rick Deckard's sidearm from *Blade Runner*.

The gun is heavy, almost massive, like you're paying for it by the ounce. The thick wooden grip folds into the human hand as though it were something organic. The mechanical interfaces are tough to capture in prose. You think you have experienced mechanical perfection elsewhere, then you grab this thing and realize you were mistaken.

Based in Arkansas, Nighthawk Custom was birthed in 2004 and has cemented its reputation for producing the world's most



The Korth has an unusual lever behind the hammer serving as the cylinder latch.



The cylinder offers plenty of room for fast loading and unloading. Press a button on the right side of the frame and the cylinder removes for cleaning.

refined 1911 pistols. Their slogan is “One Gun, One Gunsmith,” and their hand-fit weapons are indeed breathtaking to behold. I’ve had the pleasure of getting to know Mark Stone, the chief bottle washer at Nighthawk Custom, and he is a genuinely awesome guy. The holy melding of Nighthawk Custom and Korth-Waffen makes for a natural match.

THE DINOSAUR SLAYER

The Korth NXR .44 Magnum is comparable parts of combat tool and *objet d’art*. An integrated Picatinny rail up top accepts optics, while a similar bit on the bottom allows for customizable barrel weights. This particular copy sports a prodigious example. The hammer-forged precision barrel renders competition-grade accuracy, while the oversized Turkish walnut grips fit the human form like your threadbare Led Zeppelin T-shirt left over from college. You know, the one with the weird stains.

The rear sight is fully adjustable, while the front sight sports removable side panels. This arrangement offers a unique sight picture somewhat akin to an M1 Carbine with its amply fenced front sight. The cylinder release is a thumb lever located on the left aspect of the hammer. The swing-out cylinder offers plenty of clearance for fast reloads and the ejector sports enough travel to elevate empties generously. Open the action and press a discrete button on the right side of the frame and the cylinder drops free for cleaning.

The whole gun is finished in a rugged and attractive DLC finish. DLC stands for Diamond-Like Carbon coating, and it’s about as awesome as it sounds. Staring at the gun is like peering into the inky black space between the stars in a clear night sky. The gun features a 6” barrel and an all-in weight just north of 3 lbs. Rugged, accurate and unquestionably beautiful, the Korth-Waffen NXR .44 Magnum is a piece of handheld ballistic art.

TRIGGER TIME ON THE FINEST WHEELGUN ON THE PLANET

Hate me if you must, but I actually got paid to shoot this gorgeous beast. I maintain a beautiful Smith and Wesson Model 29 .44 Magnum in my personal stable. Though I am old, slow and ugly, I can drag the thing out and almost imagine myself as the *uber*-cool Dirty Harry Callahan cleaning up the mean streets of San Francisco. However, running full-power .44 Magnum rounds through the manly

Need room to mount optical sights for your next dinosaur hunt? The Korth offers acres of rail space for your accessories, plus more under the barrel.



The rear target-style sights are fully adjustable and machined into the frame.



One of the most noteworthy features (above), the Korth offers “rakish slots cut gill-like in the barrel sleeve allowing the natural stainless barrel to remain visible underneath.” The Jim Wilson-designed Turkish walnut grips (below) are huge but supremely comfortable, making the notorious .44 Mag recoil easier to handle.



Tyrannosaurus of the S&W wheelgun is not really much fun.

By contrast, the Korth NXR is a much more comfortable handheld howitzer. Pressure is force divided by area and the fat contoured grips on the NXR distribute the chaos markedly better than the thinner sorts on the Smith offering. The Korth trigger is as smooth as a politician's lies and as crisp as a fresh bag of Doritos.

The gun's impressive mass and perfect particulars make running it a treat. As expected, the holy melding of Korth-Waffen and Nighthawk Custom makes for a gun which is preternaturally accurate. Reloads are as fast and smooth as your dexterity will facilitate.

I ran several different loads through this magnificent machine. The heavy 240-gr. JHP rounds are buffalo stoppers, while the relatively lightweight Black Hills Honey-Badger solid copper anti-personnel rounds look like malevolent little flying power tools. If the heavy .44 Magnum horsepower pegs your fun meter unduly, then the NXR still runs soft-recoiling .44 Special rounds as well.

WHAT'S IT REALLY GOOD FOR?

Odds are you won't be stalking a big buck Deinonychus through the Montana jungles of the Cretaceous anytime soon. However, ours is the most refined consumer society in all of human history. Whether it is automobiles, wristwatches, firearms, or healthcare, if you possess the means, then the world is your oyster. I cannot personally afford such a luxury, but it doesn't mean I can't respect those who might.

The Korth-Waffen NXR .44 Magnum is the refined defensive and hunting handgun for the shooter of means. There are certainly better choices for concealed carry, and you might not want to drop your spanking new NXR pistol in the bottom of your tackle box before heading out to drown crickets. However, if you're partial to wheelguns this is quite literally the top of the heap.

Keep it in your bedside table, stow it gingerly in your glove box, strap it to your hip for your strolls out where the Wild Things Roam, bask in unfettered adulation on the range, or just sit around and drool on it. The Korth NXR .44 Magnum is a simply superlative piece of machinery. Pawing over this one was to taste the finer things. 

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PAYTON MILLER



Swapping out the original bolt and replacing it with the Kali Key BCG Bundle takes mere seconds. Manual labor is required to cycle (above). Operate the straight pull briskly (below) and don't ease it forward or you'll run afoul of the forward assist (if you're a righty).



California AR owners are all too familiar with the ever-shifting Byzantine requirements necessary to ensure “compliance” in this deepest of Deep Blue states.

CHESS GAME

Over the years, Golden State owners of Stoner's world-standard platform have had to become conversant with bullet buttons, fixed, low-capacity magazines, telescoping vs. fixed vs. thumbhole stocks and seemingly capricious state-enforced edicts against which no area of mechanical minutiae seems to be immune.

The end result has resulted in something of a continuing chess match between an unholy alliance of anti-gun bureaucrats and legislators versus a small but creative assortment of AR design talent.

Fortunately, like severing the Gordian Knot with a single slice, sometimes solutions to endless frustration can be breathtakingly simple — like the Kali Key.

THE SOLUTION

Their namesake product simply takes the AR-15 or AR-10 completely out of the dreaded “Assault Weapon” category by turning it into a manually operated repeater — specifically a straight-pull bolt action. Once converted, every onerous cosmetic sticking point will fade into irrelevance. The system is manually operated via a “bolt” which resembles an oversize charging handle operable from either side. The Kali Key can be used only in direct-gas impingement (DGI) guns — no piston ARs need apply.

The company claims the “lack of reciprocating mass” in the system results in tighter groups at 200 yards. Being married to the receiver sights of our FN M4 test platform, we shot it at 50 and 100 yards and found it very accurate using .223 Super Vel 62-gr. SCHP and HPR 60-gr. V-Max. An optical sight would, no doubt, have tightened things up a bit.

NO-CHASE SOLUTION

Converting an AR into a straight-pull bolt action is an obvious benefit to handloaders who don't want to chase ejected brass. Not to mention lessening the beating those 5.56/.223 cases may take. We found our Kali Key-equipped AR ejected brass positively, yet not energetically enough to require a hike to recover.



The entire assembly of Kali Key, BCG and gas diversion block slides into any standard AR without modification.

INSTALLATION

Installing the Kali Key is pretty simple, even for “non-AR” types. You can opt for the gas diversion block and mounting screws, plus ambidextrous manual bolt handle assembly. Or you can go with Kali Key’s pricier but stone-simple complete carrier group option (which we did). If you went for Option No. 1, just remove the original bolt carrier group and put the charging handle aside ‘cause you won’t be needing it.

Use an Allen wrench to remove the two screws attaching the carrier gas key. If they’re staked, alternate between the two with short turns until the gas key can be removed with the screws attached as a single unit. Then get rid of any carbon buildup and residue.

If you went for Option No. 2 like we did, things are even simpler. Just use the supplied screws and attach the supplied gas diversion block to the bolt carrier to a max torque of 48-50 inch pounds. The company recommends using Loctite Red 271 to “seal the deal.”

Granted, Option No. 2 is pricier, but it allows you to instantly revert to the semi-auto assembly within seconds — should you magically find yourself in less-restrictive environs. Essentially, the Kali Key’s Complete Bolt Carrier Group (BCG) allows you to turn your AR from Red State Gun to Blue State Gun or vice versa.

Sometimes glitches come from odd angles and in many cases they’re self-inflicted. Case in point: The rear sight on our FN M4 was all the way to the rear of our Picatinny rail. We kept wondering why our new “straight pull” unit had a tough time going into battery until we discovered it was banging the rear sight assembly just enough to hang things up. Once we moved the sight up one rail notch, all was reasonably smooth and beautiful.

One other caveat: If operating the bolt with your right hand you might find things a touch cramped dealing with the forward assist. You can take advantage of the Kali Key’s “ambi-ness” and run it with your left hand or simply reach over with your right. You’ll have to figure out whatever works best with your particular sighting configuration, be it iron or optical.

Keep the assembly well-lubed, particularly during the



Heart of the matter: The Kali Key (left) makes your AR rifle a bolt-action with fewer legal restrictions. Payton’s best iron-sight 100-yard group with the FN/Kali Key combo was with Super Vel 62-gr. S&W ammo.

break-in period. The company recommends a serious lubing every 500 rounds or so. On the bright side, 500 rounds goes a lot slower with a manual straight pull than it does with the original semiauto setup.

Legal compliance, of course, is at the heart of the Kali Key’s appeal. It’s a swift yet reversible solution to whatever legislative overreach exists. And, hopefully, whatever may come down the pike. But there are practical considerations in its favor as well.

Not all applications for which an AR is useful for require rapid fire. For varmints, paper targets or tin cans, deliberate precision shooting is still the coin of the realm. And, since many of today’s ARs can deliver the level of accuracy once considered to be the realm of traditional turnbolts, why not enjoy it? Despite the fact it’s now a self-loading world, for most purposes manually ejecting brass and chambering the next round isn’t such great a handicap. After all, bolt-action chassis guns have been “borrowing” AR design features for quite a spell now. Isn’t it only fair ARs borrow something back?

Price? Just the Kali Key setup costs \$97.95. The whole “BCG Bundle” we used runs \$182.95. Versions for .308 AR10 platforms run slightly more.

What Is 5R Rifling?

JOHN KRIEGER/KRIEGER BARRELS

5 R rifling has been around 40-plus years now but judging from the questions I've heard there seems to be little information on it. I am going to attempt to answer some of these questions. But first I would like to give you some history on the origin of the 5R rifling pattern.

IN THE BEGINNING

Back in the early 1970s I began competitive shooting in NRA matches. Through this I met Boots Obermeyer, a barrel maker in southern Wisconsin. Boots made barrels by the single-point cut-rifled method. Being a machinist myself, and fitting my own barrels, led to Boots and I having many interesting conversations — we talked about barrel making, chambering, tools, etc.

Around the mid-'70s Boots came out with the 5R rifling pattern. How this

came about was related to me directly by Boots and, to the best of my memory, is as follows.

THE STORY

A reporter from *Soldier of Fortune* magazine had acquired a quantity of Russian ammunition. It was believed at the time Russian ball-powder technology was way ahead of ours. This acquisition presented an excellent opportunity to find out if this was in fact true. The ammunition was sent to Aberdeen Proving Grounds for testing.

The Russian barrels intended for us with

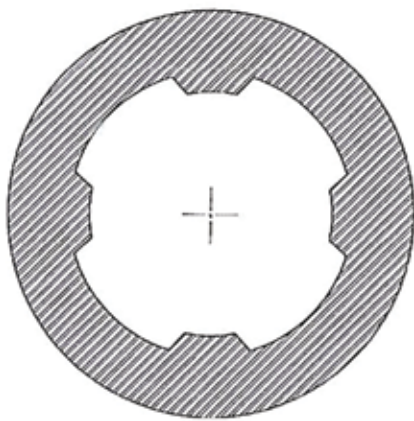
the ammunition had what might be called 4-R rifling. The barrels were hammer-forged and had a peculiar slope-sided rifling. The slope-sided rifling was to make the hammer forging process easier by not having to get the steel to flow into the sharp corners at the bottom of the groove. Boots was contacted to make test barrels as his single-point cut rifling lent itself to making odd things such as this rifling form. He also enjoyed doing projects like this and had done things before for Aberdeen.

To properly test ammunition requires test barrels which, as closely as possible,

SOME SAY IT'S BETTER, SOME SAY IT ISN'T

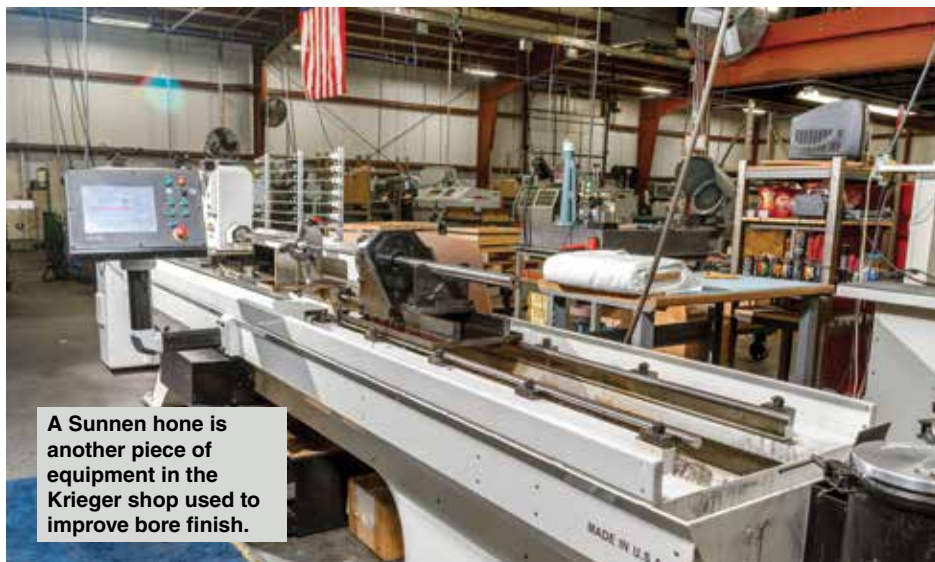


Part art, part science
— John Krieger barrels a rifle in his shop.



4 GROOVE

The 4-groove rifling profile: If you focus on the grooves, you'll see the sides are parallel, while if you focus on the lands, the sides appear angled.



A Sunnen hone is another piece of equipment in the Krieger shop used to improve bore finish.

represent the barrels of the rifles using the ammunition in the field. After Boots made the needed test barrels, the end result was not only were the Russians not ahead in their powder technology, they weren't even up to where we were at the time.

CURIOSITY SPARKS INVENTION

During this process, out of curiosity Boots made a barrel for himself in 5-groove rifling and was very impressed with its accuracy. It ultimately became his contribution to target shooting. For the record, Boots never claimed to have invented the 5R rifling pattern, only developing it for target shooting. The "R" refers to the Russian background.

I once came across an 1861 English patent for a rifling head showing a 5R pattern of rifling as an example.

DEFINITIONS

5R is a 5-groove rifling pattern with sloped or angled sides to the lands. All rifling has a certain amount of angle to the sides of the lands as a natural effect of the rifling process. The sides of the grooves are parallel, but the sides of the lands are not and the 5R carries this to an extreme.

So why should this be good? It is felt the 5R may seal off the bullet better. Also, the angle of the lands may be less stressful to the bullet jacket, so thin-jacketed match bullets would be less likely to come apart at the high spin rates longer bullets require. It is also felt to be easier to clean as there are no tight corners next to the lands to hold powder fouling.

The 5-groove type of rifling comes from the belief an odd number of grooves is also less stressful to the bullet because it doesn't have two lands directly across from one

another. The British have historically favored odd grooves for their rifles. Double rifles for example often have seven grooves with each barrel having a land at 6 o'clock. American manufacturers occasionally employ odd grooves as well. I have seen 5-groove barrels on some .22 rimfire rifles.

ANGLES

What is the proper angle on the side of the 5R lands? This is proprietary and it has evolved over the years.

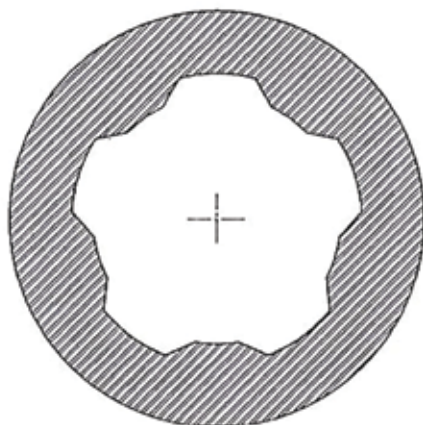
Some time ago Boots had a customer with a government contract for their rifles using the 5R barrels. Boots supplied the barrels for years. Then, the order was increased and being a one-man shop Boots couldn't meet the increase. He suggested they contact us at Krieger Barrels to handle the increased quantity.

We accepted the contract but I wanted to know what the 5R profile was so we would do it properly, the way Boots wanted it. I went down to Boots' shop so he could show me the proper angles and dimensions. Are the exact angles, etc. important? I don't know, but Boots thought they were and if it isn't his angles, then it's not really 5R!

RIFLING 101

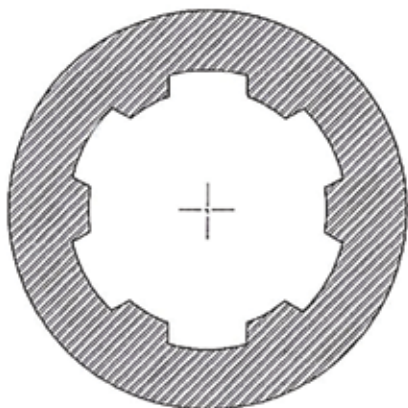
There are a number of different rifling forms, numbers of lands and grooves and combinations thereof brought out over the 500 or so years barrels have been rifled. There are even some early German barrels with straight grooves. Each one carried with it reasons why it was supposedly better.

Rifling is actually much shallower than it appears. For example, on a .30 caliber barrel the grooves are 0.308" or bullet diameter, 0.008" overall with 0.004" to each side. This is the height of



5R

The 5R profile: Using an odd number of grooves, plus highly angled land sides, is reputed to give better accuracy — at least some people believe.



6 GROOVE

Six-groove rifling again has groove sides parallel but the land sides are less angled than in 4-groove.

the lands and is only slightly taller than the thickness of a sheet of writing paper. One may wonder how much effect it could possibly have on the bullet but consider it takes a bullet at rest and in a millisecond or so winds it up to maybe 200,000 RPMs!

CHOOSING

As far as which type of rifling or number of lands and grooves shooting better than another, I know of only two instances where it was felt a certain number of lands was better than another. One was "leg matches" where shooters were required to shoot the military ammo issued at the match. It was felt by significant numbers the .30 173-gr. bullet shot better in a 4-groove barrel than in a 6-groove barrel. This was more subjective than scientific. In another instance, a more scientific test was performed with one specific bullet. I seem to recall it might have been the "famous" Herter wasp waist. It again was found to shoot slightly better in a 4-groove barrel than it did in a 6-groove barrel.

In both of the above two examples, the bullets seemed to favor the 4-groove barrel. Was it because the 4-groove barrel has more



A highly-modified — by Krieger — Pratt and Whitney 1/2 B-50 rifle is another special piece of proprietary equipment at the shop.

slope to the sides of the lands (see illustrations on p. 47) than the 6-groove barrel? If so, then maybe the 5R offers an advantage having more slope yet. I can see no disadvantage in 5R rifling compared to conventional rifling and it may actually help with some of the odd problems occasionally occurring.

ULTIMATELY ...

When I was shooting competitively, I shot both 4-groove and 5R barrels and never felt any advantage of one over the other. However, these matches from 300 to 1,000 yards were shot prone with a sling. The most accurate rifle on the line didn't always win the relay or the match. We didn't have VLD bullets then, with their high spin rates. The barrels all had their likes and dislikes, and none of them could make up for a poorly executed shot. They all went right where they were directed to go. 

John Krieger is the founder of Krieger Barrels Inc., makers of precision single-point cut-rifled barrels since 1982.

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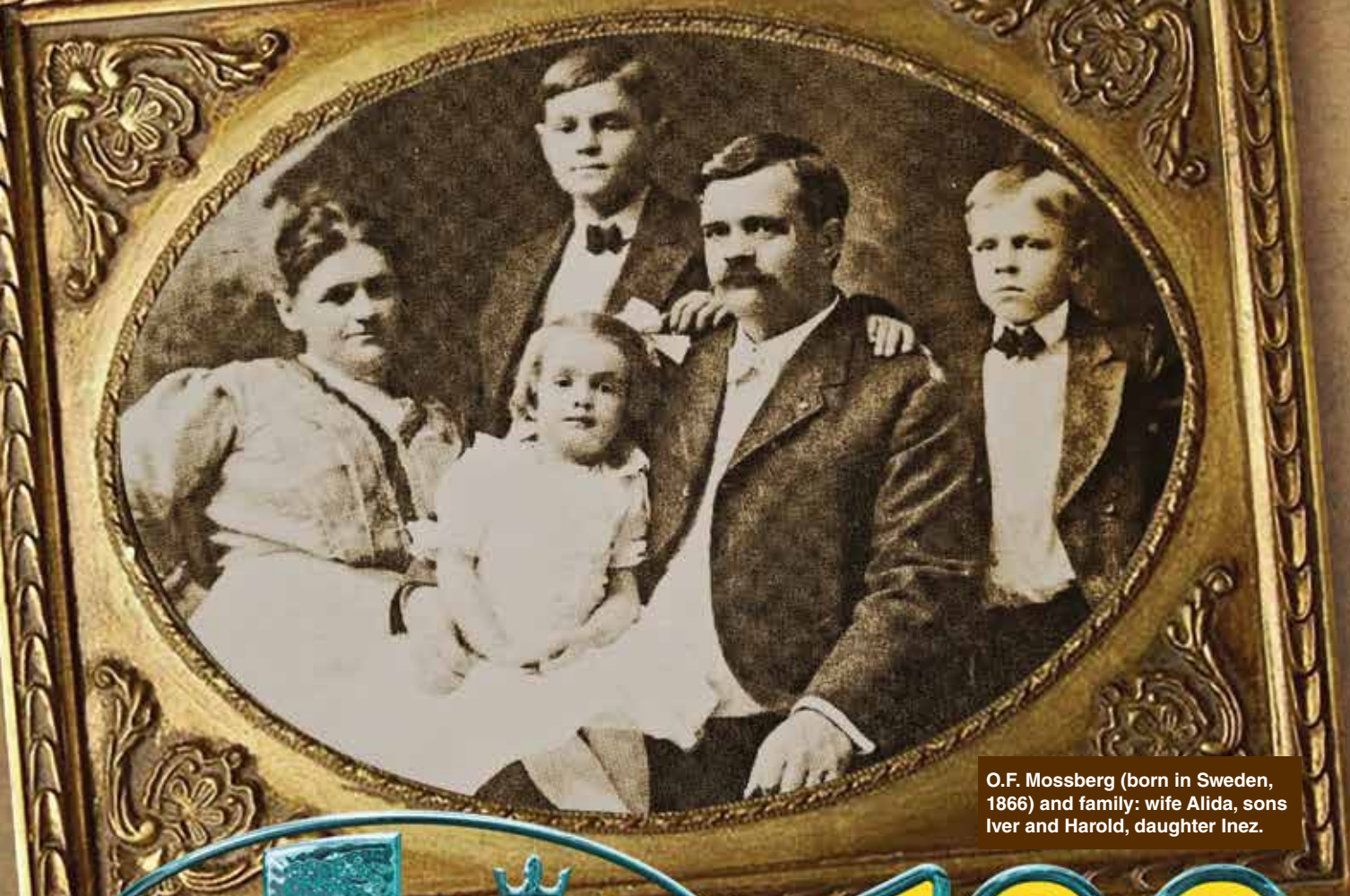
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O.F. Mossberg (born in Sweden, 1866) and family: wife Alida, sons Iver and Harold, daughter Inez.

MOSSBERG At 100



Solid lock-up of the Patriot's twin-lug bolt (above) contributes to the accuracy Wayne has found exceptional. The massive locking lug of the Model 500 bolt (left) engages a steel barrel extension in a forged alloy receiver.

A CENTURY OF GREAT GUNS

WAYNE VAN ZWOLL

In March, 1919, the nascent O.F. Mossberg and Sons Company was hanging on a thread. Harold Mossberg was the only employee in the rented loft on State Street in New Haven, Connecticut as his father Oscar and older brother Iver were still employed by the Marlin-Rockwell Co. The Mossbergs labored evenings and weekends tooling up to build the Brownie, a pistol yet to be patented. In July Oscar and Iver left M-R to join Harold full-time.

A year later, July 27, 1920, Oscar's patent application was approved. The Brownie, a four-barrel, hinged-breech .22 was already in production. It featured a 2-1/2" barrel with the trigger designed to swing forward out of the grip. The first Mossberg-branded firearm, it owed much to Oscar's pistol work for the Iver-Johnson Arms and Cycle Works in Fitchburg, Massachusetts.

OSCAR'S STORY

Born in 1866, patriarch Oscar Mossberg had emigrated from Sweden in 1886. First employed in a boiler factory, he started with Iver-Johnson and married Alida Peterson six years later. A patent awarded I-J in 1896 was credited in part to Mossberg and resulted in the "Hammer-the-Hammer" top-break revolver. Ad images showed a carpenter's hammer coming down on the revolver's hammer, proving the gun would not fire if dropped.

In 1900 Oscar left I-J to supervise shotgun production for C.S. Shattuck Arms Co., in Hatfield, Massachusetts but his heart was in gun design. Besides, Charles Shattuck was also a tobacco-grower and closed his factory during harvest to put his employees to work in the fields! Oscar left after two years.

Oscar next worked for the J. Stevens Arms & Tool Co. where he patented the Novelty, a four-barrel .22 with a rotating firing pin affixed to the hammer. A steel blade held in the frame was removed to extract cases. With tooling bought from Charles Shattuck, the Mossbergs began building Novelty pistols in a barn behind the family home in Chicopee Falls. In 1909, after 500 pistols, they sold manufacturing rights to Shattuck who produced them in .22 and .32 until 1915.

The same year, war in Europe shifted firearms priorities stateside. Oscar's sons were away at college when he took a job at Marlin-Rockwell, moving with Alida and daughter Inez to New Haven, Connecticut. One task: synchronize Colt's Browning-designed machine gun to fire between the blades



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SONS, INC.

This ad shows the streamlined bolt-action Mossberg offered, beginning in 1957, on its popular rimfire rifles.



Mossberg's first firearm — the four-shot Brownie pistol, introduced in 1920 at \$10.35, lasted until 1932.

of a biplane's spinning propeller. He worked with the brilliant Carl Swibelius, Marlin's chief designer from 1914 to 1926. After armistice, Marlin-Rockwell reorganized in 1919 and Oscar Mossberg, age 53, decided to form his own company.

THE BROWNIE

The Brownie pistol appeared on New York distributor J.L. Gale's letterhead at \$10.35. Soon the Mossberg loft on State Street was spewing Brownies 50 at a time. The business got more space and hired more help at 201 Greene Street. Before the Brownie was discontinued in 1932, it would sell 37,000 units.

The company's next firearm was a hammerless, slide-action .22 rifle designed by Arthur Savage and marketed as the Model 1903 Savage until dropped from the line in 1921. Oscar Mossberg was quick to buy it (allegedly for \$1) and produce it as Mossberg's Model K. By this time Savage's original box magazine had given way to a tube. Savage would revive the design in its Models 25 and 29 rifles.

Mossberg's first bolt-action .22 was the single-shot Model B sold as the Taylor Trapper's Special. F.C. Taylor Fur Co. of St. Louis had contracted the \$4.85 rifle. Built from 1928 to '32, the Model B preceded a single-shot lever-action .22 Oscar designed on the eve of the market crash. It had a Martini breech and listed for \$17.50. About 4,000 Model Bs were produced before vanishing in 1932 with the Model R tube-fed bolt-action and Model C single-shot, introduced in '30 and '31.

TOUGH TIMES

As the Depression raged in 1932, Mossberg produced its first shotgun, a .410 bolt-action single-shot. Improved .22 rifles, the Model 30 single-shot and box-fed Model 40, followed a year later, only to expire in '35. Priced in those hard days for as little as \$6, they wore Mossberg's own No. 3 receiver sight. It would sell many rifles!

By 1934 Mossberg had repeating bolt-action shotguns in .410 and 20 gauge. It overhauled its .22 rifle line in '35 and added telescopic sights. Harold designed the \$750 No. 6 scope and mount, and Mossberg made it inhouse rather than outsourcing. Between 1926 and WWII the firm would list over 30 models of rifle scopes. Spiegel and Montgomery Ward branded more than 87,000 of them.

Oscar Mossberg died in 1938. His sons added the round brick New Haven Gas House to expand the nearby Greene Street operation. Both plants ran at capacity until Mossberg moved to its North Haven, Connecticut facility in 1960.

YOU'RE IN THE ARMY NOW

During WWII Mossberg produced the Model 42MB box-fed .22 training rifle. The similar Model 44US was made for stateside use, staying in service for 40 years in ROTC and youth programs.

Iver O. Mossberg served as company president until his untimely death in 1945 at age 50. His son Alan was 12 then, but already active in the factory as Uncle Harold took the reins. It wasn't long thereafter I began ogling two-page catalog spreads of Mossberg .22 rifles — a treasure courtesy Carl Benson, chief Mossberg designer from the late '40s into the '70s.

Post-war products included the Model 151M autoloading .22 rifle and its M1 Carbine-like sibling, the Model 152 Carbine. A flock of .22 bolt-actions followed, plus 12- and 16-bore smooth-bores. Mossberg's first pump shotgun, the Model 200, had a one-piece stock with a nylon sleeve to run the action. It appeared

in 1955, in versions with screw-in choke tubes and adjustable C-Lect-Choke on a ported muzzle starting at \$46.95.

LATE '50S

In 1957 Mossberg ditched the Model 200 and replaced its 100-series rimfire rifles with the more streamlined 300 series. Models 342 and 352 bolt-action and autoloading rifles had distinctive stocks, their synthetic fore-piece hinged for support up front. The Model 35K auto's tube was housed in the butt-stock.

In '59 Mossberg fielded its only repeating lever-action .22, the Palomino. It sold for a pricey \$68.88 and lasted until 1971. The .22 Winchester Magnum Rimfire (WMR) also arrived early in 1959. Mossberg added its first WMR "Chuckster" rifles and the series would endure until 1985, when Mossberg discontinued all rimfires. Meanwhile, the 100 line of bolt-actions shotguns acceded to the Model 385 20-gauge and Model 395 12-gauge. The Model 500 pump would follow in 1961, on the eve of Mossberg's move to North Haven.

CHANGES AGAIN

Harold Mossberg died in 1964. Three years later the board elected 35-year-old Alan Mossberg as its president. This year marked Mossberg's entry into the bolt-action centerfire market. Its Model 800 had a six-lug bolt feeding .308 or .243 rounds (initially) from a staggered-stack box over a hinged floorplate. Priced from \$97.95, the M800 had an eight-year run. A long-action Model 810 gave way to the classier RM-7 with the M810's four-lug bolt head but a three-position wing safety, "rotary" (not spool) magazine and machine-checked walnut. Introduced at \$235, the RM-7 fell prey to late-'70s inflation, expiring in 1985.

Mossberg's commitment to a centerfire rifle coincided with Smith & Wesson's decision to drop its Howa-built bolt-action. The first Howa Mossbergs sold as four variations of the Model 1500, plus the deluxe Model 1700LS in nine chamberings, .223 to .300 Win. Mag. Mossberg discontinued these rifles in 1987.

MONKEY WARD LEVER

Mossberg's most unlikely rifle may have been its Model 472, a lever-action similar in form to Marlin's Model 336 but with a disconnecting trigger that traveled with the lever. It evolved at the urging of Montgomery Ward, a major purveyor of Mossberg firearms. Ward was first to introduce it as the Model 72 while Mossberg's Model 472 label came in 1974. Bored to .30-30 and .35 Remington, the M472 (rifle and carbine) was initially priced at \$112. In 1979, with cosmetic changes and a hammer-block safety it became the Model 479. After trotting out two racy .22 autos in 1972 and 1977 (the Model 432 and thumbhole-stocked Model 377 Plinkster), Mossberg soon weaned itself of rimfires.

THE 500 LEADS THE WAY

By 1985 it had dropped the M472 centerfire and hung its firearms fortunes on the Model 500 shotgun, announced in 1961. In 1970 the M500 got dual slide bars. A tang safety distinguished this shotgun from other repeaters and made it a hit with southpaws. Introduced in 12 gauge, the M500 came in five versions starting from \$74.95 to \$90.35.

The M500 story is long and still spinning out. It has become one of the best-selling shotguns ever with millions shipped! My

The Patriot push feeds smoothly from a polymer box. The "LBA" trigger pull: adjustable, crisp, consistent.



"Retrograde" walnut-stocked indulgence has a ghost ring sight and extended magazine.

TODAY

Economically priced Maverick pumps have joined Mossberg's line, with the Model 835 Ulti-Mag series for 3-1/2" shotshells. Gas-driven autoloading shotguns appear on Mossberg's current roster as the Model 930 and Model 940, the Model 935 Magnum for 3-1/2" fans. There is an SA series for small-gauge fans.

A century after the Brownie introduced shooters to O.F. Mossberg & Sons, the MC1sc again made Mossberg a pistol company in 2019. The striker-fired auto has a glass-reinforced polymer frame and a stainless 3.4" barrel.

Mossberg is also back in the .22 business with the Plinkster bolt-action and autoloading rifles, Blaze and AR-style Model 715 autos. The MMR is the company's nod to AR-15 demand, chambered in .224 Valkyrie and 5.56.

Their Model 464 lever-action in .30-30 has helped me take deer. Unlike the M472 mimicking the Marlin's 336 in profile, the M464 action has a Winchester Model 94 look. Choose a straight or pistol grip — or an AR-style stock and flash suppressor. This one would look odd in a scabbard at the hitchin' rack outside Kitty's saloon.

CENTERFIRE

Finally, there's nothing strange about Mossberg's Patriot bolt rifle. It has practical features and shows solid engineering with



Wayne's Mossberg Model 464 lever in .30-30 downed this South Dakota buck. Ejection is angled, for scope use.

variations filling seven catalog pages. Mine, with walnut stock and iron sights, is chambered in .375 Ruger. Despite the rifle's 6-1/2 lb. heft and the bump of buffalo-stopping loads, it's surprisingly comfortable to fire. My first range trial yielded a 0.7" group! I wish all my deer rifles shot this well, but then, this is a Mossberg — "More gun for the money."

www.mossberg.com

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.22 MAGNUM FOR SELF-DEFENSE

DAVID FREEMAN

I'm a rootin' tootin' .45 shootin' concealed carry practitioner and instructor — or, I was. For most of my years, I've been an adamant advocate of carrying enough gun. When people in my classes struggled with racking slides and begged me to tell them it was okay to carry a .380 instead of a 9mm, I wouldn't. Instead, I would work with them, showing them various tricks for racking the slide and remind them once it's loaded, you'll be okay.

My concealed carry instructor was a former marine who insisted if it doesn't start with a four it's not enough gun. I was one of those people who wore the T-shirt with, "Why a .45?" on the front and, "Because They Don't Make a .46," on the back.

TODAY

I owe a lot of people an apology. I'm thinking right now about a retired school teacher in her late 70s who bought a tip-up Taurus .25 from us when we were running a special on them. When I found out she wanted it for her daily carry gun, I tried explaining to her why it wasn't a good idea. She told me the gun

IF LIFE GIVES
YOU LEMONS —

BLAST
'EM!

would be fine if she was attacked because she would, "shoot 'em in the face."

I turned 72 on my last birthday. I'm not *really* old but some days I can't even open a package of saltines. I use an UpLula loader to fill my 9mm magazines. It's rare I carry one of my favorite .45 1911s anymore. I can still rack the slide on a P229, a



The Rock Island TM22 (above) or KelTec PMR30 (right) are two good options if you want to carry a .22 Magnum defensive pistol.



The capacity of these two firearms makes a compelling argument for their effectiveness as defensive handguns.

G3, an M&P or a Shield, but sometimes it's a Taurus 856 UL I stick in my pocket when we leave the house.

When I reviewed the Ruger Lite Rack LCP II .22 LR, I confess I began to think of it as a possible carry gun on some days. In my case it's arthritis accompanied by bursitis. Lots of us have such ailments but we don't want to give up carrying a gun — we'll just have to make adjustments!

I've written articles about shooting with hurting hands. But a .22? I don't think so, but the thought of carrying a .22 Magnum for defense is starting to sound like an option, especially if it has a large capacity magazine.

CHOICES

What kind of .22 Magnums have the capacity to make me feel comfortable? I've found two.

I came into our gun store one day and noticed my son, who was working behind the counter, wearing a KelTec PMR30 in his holster. Later when we were in the office counting up our meager sales for the day, I asked him about it. He said, "Dad, when you wear it all day you don't even notice this lightweight gun. And I figure, it's loud and has 31 rounds of magnum hollow points in it. No one is going to stick around and fight me in a gunfight when I'm shooting at him with the fire-breathing, loud gun that just keeps on shooting."

I've thought about his response often when I'm out shooting one of my .22 Magnums, including the PMR30. My son is a young man with none of the arthritis, bursitis and other painful diseases plaguing us old folks but he occasionally has a hitch in his gitalong from a football injury. Nobody likes to get shot and the psychological aspect of lots of bullets coming at you fast could stop aggressive behavior as fast as the damage those bullets are doing.

The PMR-30 is very light. Total weight unloaded is only 14 oz. and a loaded 30-round magazine doesn't add much weight. It's 7.9" long, 5.8" high and 1.3" wide with a 4.3" barrel. The grip is big because of the 30-round double-stack magazine and the mag release is at the base of the grip. There's an ambidextrous safety and a small slide lock on the left side. The book says the trigger pull is 5 lbs. but mine is closer to 3 lbs. with a short take-up and short reset.

The manual cautions the PMR-30 functions best with high power ammo, often with bullet weights of 40-gr. and up. They recommend CCI Maxi Mag 40 grain, Winchester Super-X 40 grain and Remington Premier Magnum 33 grain. I've shot it with all of those, and as long as the feed ramp is clean, it handles them fine. I've also used other types of ammo with good results. I would feel adequately armed with this gun loaded with 31 rounds of 40-gr. hollow points or even Hornady Critical Defense 45-gr. FTX cartridges. As far as holsters go, it fits into a 1911 holster pretty well.

So, the KelTec PMR30 is at the top of my list for guns I'd have with me if I absolutely couldn't operate a 9mm. KelTec started advertising this gun in 2010, but for the longest time they were very hard to get. We had them on allocation at our gun store and the first six we got in were absorbed by our employees.



David considers the Ruger Lite Rack LCP II .22 LR a last-resort pocket gun, but certainly better than nothing!

In order to get one from our wholesalers, we had to buy something else in the \$1,200–\$1,500 range. Eventually, my son and I each got one and they're among our treasured guns. I'm no longer an FFL so my finger isn't on the pulse, but I'm told they're much easier to get now. I see the MSRP is currently \$478.

PLAN B

The other gun I consider in my "adequately armed" rimfire category is one I reviewed in the December 2019 issue of *GUNS*, the Rock Island XTM .22 Magnum. This standard-sized 1911 carries 16 rounds of .22 Magnum ammo. I found it likes CCI's Maxi-Mag 40-gr. hollow points just fine. The XTM .22 Magnum weighs in at 2.5 lbs., fits in a standard 1911 holster and even shoots like a 1911 because it is. Since I'm a 1911 guy, this under-\$600 gun falls right in there as a low recoil, high volume ammo defensive handgun.

UPON FURTHER REVIEW ...

I revisited the gun my retired school teacher decided to use for personal defense. Those guns are pretty and fun to shoot, so back when they were available I got one for each of my daughters-in-law. I borrowed one while working on this article. The Taurus PT-25 holds 10 rounds of .25 ACP and has the advantage of not having to rack the slide. Load the magazine, then tip the barrel up to load one there and the gun is ready to go. It's small and easy to hide and at very close range would probably discourage an attacker, especially if you're cool enough under pressure to shoot them in the part of the face in front of the cerebral cortex.

In no way am I advising you to carry either of the subcalibers mentioned as a defensive handgun. However, if you decide on your own to carry one, shoot for the face, specifically right at the bridge of the nose. Penetration there will be your best option of stopping someone cold as the bullet enters the cerebral cortex, thus disrupting brain function necessary to sustain life.

Nothing in this article should be construed as this pistol instructor recommending you carry a rimfire handgun or even a .25 ACP for self-defense. I'm just giving you some things to think about if you start having physical issues as I'm doing myself. What's the old saying — "When life deals you a lemon, shoot it full of holes with a .22 Magnum!"





Lite Rack LCP II, or Mas likes to say, the "Elsie Pea Too Two-Two." If you can't operate the slide on this one, a semi-auto gun is probably out of the question

RUGER



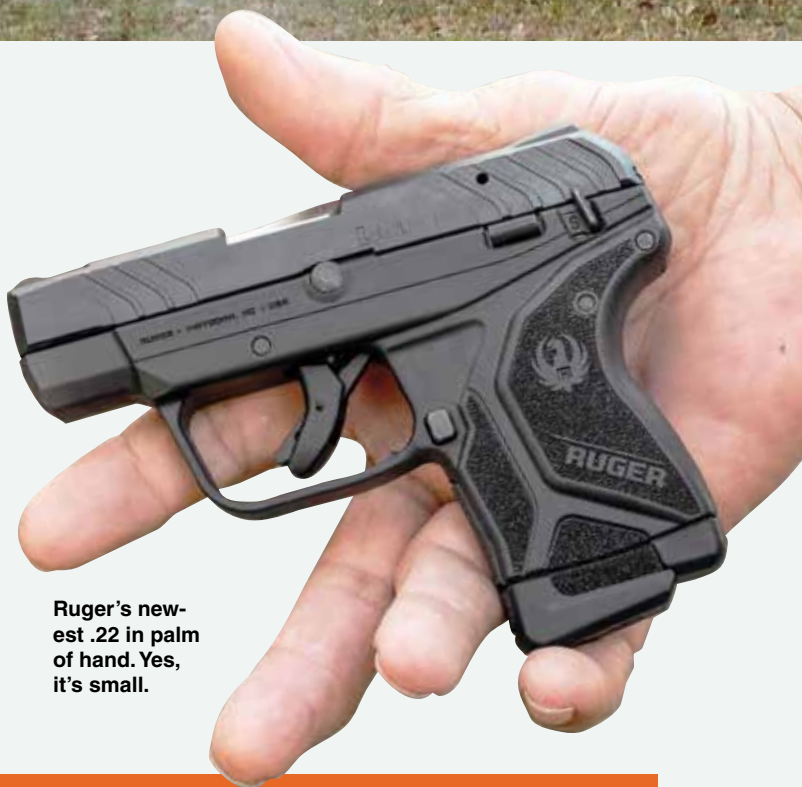
The best group at 25 yards was surprisingly good using CCI ammo. It was also the most reliable brand of ammunition.

In 2008, Ruger introduced their little LCP .380, which promptly became their biggest hit since their original .22 pistol of 1949. Jeff Quinn at his Gun Blast YouTube channel promptly nicknamed it Elsie Pea, which stuck. Since some consumers found its long, heavy double action pull objectionable, Ruger followed three years ago with the LCP II, same caliber and “footprint” but a single action design with a much easier trigger.

Brother Quinn dubbed this gun “Elsie Pea Too.” Now comes the third iteration, an LCP II in .22 Long Rifle. Stateside we pronounced the caliber “twenty-two,” but English speakers in other lands tend to say “two-two.” Therefore, it’s hard not to think of this latest model as “Elsie Pea Too Two-Two.”

FEATURES

The new pistol sports the same 2.79" barrel, 4" height, and 8/10" width as its .380 sibling but the magazine holds 10 rounds, the same capacity as the big Ruger sport pistol that put the company on the map so long ago. Unloaded weight is a



Ruger’s newest .22 in palm of hand. Yes, it’s small.

THE “ELSIE PEA TOO TWO-TWO”

ER LITE RACK LCP II

MASSAD
AYOUB

“DISCREET CONCEALABILITY AND COMFORT ARE, OF COURSE, WHAT THE LCP SERIES IS ALL ABOUT ANYWAY.”

feathery 11.2 oz. The polymer grip frame is textured for solid hold, a good thing since the grip is so tiny you can only get two fingers on it. It has a magazine disconnect safety and a right-hand sliding thumb safety which is reasonably ergonomic.

A key feature on this pistol is “Lite Rack” which simply means the slide is easy to retract to the rear. As a .22 with a locked breech doesn’t need much in the way of a recoil spring, it was almost effortless to cycle the slide with thumb and forefinger. This is a big selling point for people who have trouble manipulating auto pistol slides — anyone who can’t do it with the Lite Rack LCP II probably should look for something besides a semi-automatic pistol.

Before LCPs, the Ruger LCR had a .22 understudy. Below is the LCR .22 LR with its bigger-brother .38 Special version above.

TRIGGER

The trigger has a tab safety lever which didn’t get in the way, at least in our testing with everything from large hands to small. On the Lyman digital trigger pull gauge ran to 7.2 lbs. when checked near the trigger fulcrum as most folks would index. Beginning with the trigger at rest, there’s a long, light take-up before you meet “the wall” of firm resistance. From there, you feel a roll for about a fifth of an inch before the hammer falls. There was a scraping bit of creep in the trigger early on, but it seemed to smooth itself out after a hundred rounds or so.

ACCURACY

A 25-yard accuracy is not what this pistol was designed for but I tested it there anyway. I’m glad I did.

Using a two-hand hold on a Matrix rest atop a concrete bench, I shot the LCP II first with Federal’s aptly named Gold Medal lead round nose 40-gr. match-grade ammo. Unfortunately, it was designed for long barrel .22s, not pocket pistols, and didn’t earn a gold medal from the test gun: the five shots went into 7.10", though the best three were only 2.95" apart.

Next was Winchester’s Super-X plated round nose 40-gr. It promises 1300 FPS on the box, but let us not kid ourselves: that’s rifle velocity, and out of a very short barrel pistol like this one, won’t come close. The LCP .22 liked this better: 4.85" for all five shots, and 3.20" for the best three.

We found the sweet spot with CCI Mini-Mag copper plated round nose 40 gr. Somewhere angels must have been blowing trumpets, because this load drilled five shots into 1.85". The best three were in a flat-out amazing ½", two in a “double” so tight I had to look three times and check the exits in the cardboard target backing to find it.

BUT ...

Reliability has been a cornerstone of Ruger firearms since the company’s beginning but the gene may have skipped the LCP II .22. Feeding was fine, but misfires were rampant. With Federal Auto Match I literally couldn’t get through a magazine without catching a “click” when there should have been a “bang.” Winchester was almost as bad. CCI Mini-Mag again turned out to be the sweet spot: not a single malfunction



in the 200-plus rounds we tried. A Ruger exec I talked with blamed the ammo (particularly with super-cheap bulk pack .22), but also noted the LCP II seems to like CCI better than anything else.

SHOOTING ELSIE PEA TOO TWO-TWO

Our pistol came with a single magazine and I also ordered the bargain \$35 two-pack of extra mags. They lack the side button you generally find on .22 pistols to hold the follower down but it turns out you don't actually need the feature. The .22 Long Rifle rounds slid smoothly and easily into the magazines, all the way to the tenth. It also comes with a handy little loading tool.

The LCP II, like most of its type, tended to point low naturally and I found myself having to consciously cock the wrist upward a bit to get on target. The fixed sights were adequate and reasonably well registered for the CCI ammunition and recoil is all but non-existent. There's a little bit of muzzle flash from the short barrel but this just adds to the shooting fun.

SERIOUS BUSINESS

I don't see a .22 pistol as a defense gun, but some do and I was curious to see how it would perform on a 4- to 15-yard "backup" qualification course. The sun was almost below the horizon when I started and since the little pistol doesn't have night sights, I brought my SUV to the back of the range and did 36 of the 60 shots while lighting up the target with headlights.

I drew from one pocket and reloaded from another. With itty-bitty magazines and a short butt, reloading was not fast. The mag-release button is easy for a southpaw to reach and not hard for us righties but the ejecting magazine kept hanging up on the heel of the firing hand. Pulling it out with the support hand was more positive. The slide stop worked very well as a slide release lever, making for a faster reload than racking the slide.

Knowing there was a strong possibility of misfires with the Federal Auto Match ammo I used, I loaded full magazines despite the six-shot strings — as expected, I had two misfires. With the Lite Rack feature, it was easy to manipulate the slide, chamber another round and get my shots in within the time limit on each occasion. By the 10-yard line, though, I had switched to the Mini-Mag ammo and there were no further problems.

The qual target revealed a group 5-1/2" high, narrower for windage and well within the roughly 6x11" "down zero" zone of the IPSC silhouette for a score of 300/300. Not bad, especially under the circumstances.

CARRY ON

This pistol, like the .380 LCP II, comes with an inexpensive fabric pocket holster which tells me the gun is intended for carry. The owner's manual said not to carry it with a round in the chamber so I loaded it with the 10-round magazine only into "Condition Three." I tucked the pocket holster into the hidden



The Lite Rack LCP II (above) is virtually identical to the .380 LCP II except for the small left-side thumb safety.

pocket behind the breast pocket of a Woolrich vest one day, and an outdoorsman's shirt by the same maker the next. There was a little bit of sag, but with a notepad or iPhone in front of it, it never looked as if I was carrying a pistol. Discreet concealability and comfort are, of course, what the LCP series is all about anyway.

SUMMARY

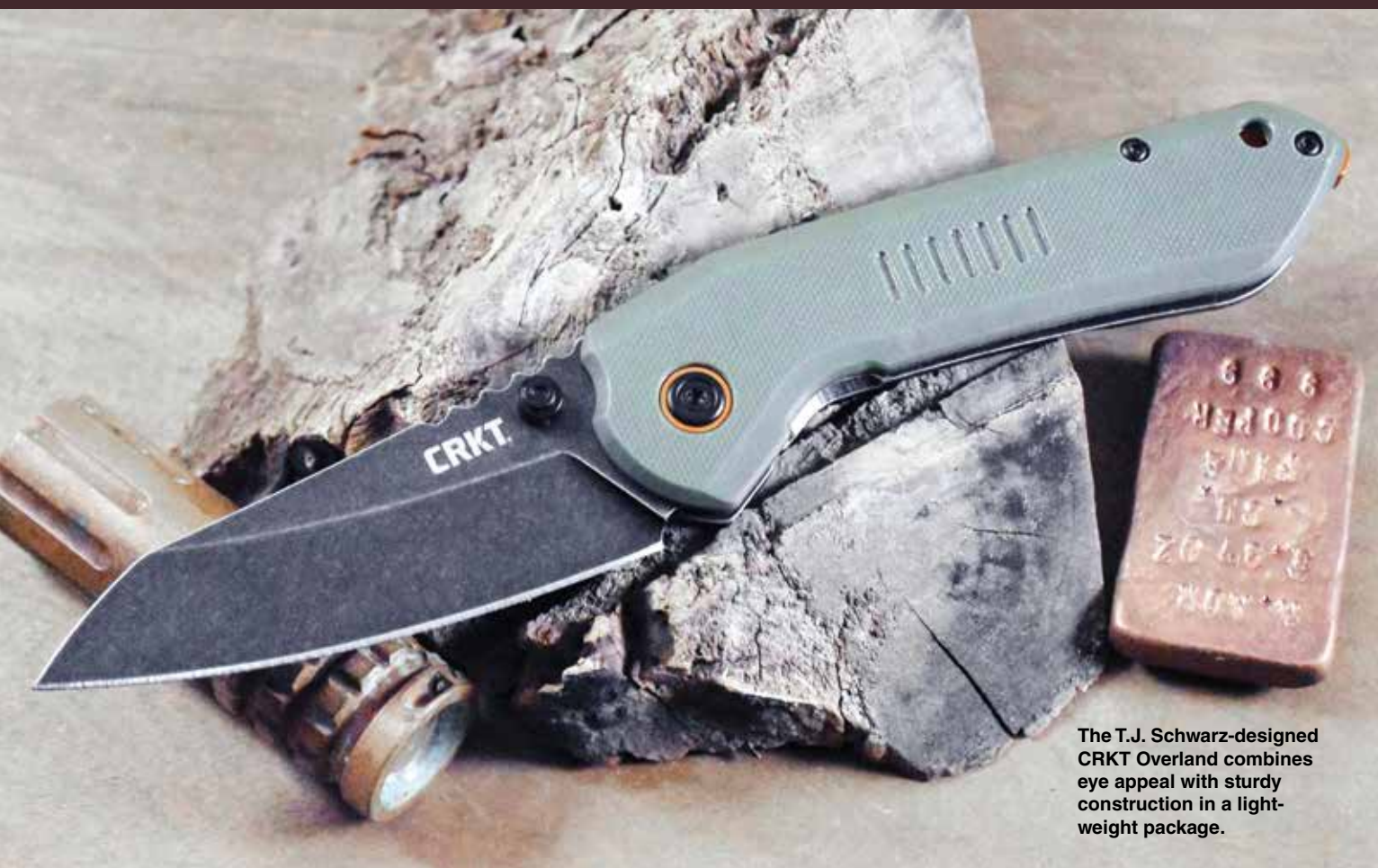
The gun's reliability was below Ruger par and its accuracy was mediocre with most ammo, but it worked fine and shot great with the CCI Mini-Mags. There is precedent — the Seecamp .32 auto was advertised initially for Winchester Silvertip .32 ACP only but didn't keep the gun from becoming a backordered "cult gun" for shooters needing maximum concealability. I think, however, the LCP II .22's greatest value is practice, as an understudy gun for those who carry the .380 LCP.

At \$350-ish retail and probably less at your dealer's, I found it to simply be fun, a reason enough to buy one.

Which I did.



www.ruger.com



The T.J. Schwarz-designed CRKT Overland combines eye appeal with sturdy construction in a light-weight package.

CRKT OVERLAND A MULTI-TASKER WITH STYLE

Columbia River Knife & Tool (CRKT) built their company on collaborations with custom knifemakers and Boise, Idaho's T.J. Schwarz is one of the latest. Unlike typical knifemakers, T.J. concentrates his time as a designer for manufactured knives and CRKT has climbed aboard the gravy train in a big way. The Overland model is the fifth feather in his cap for the company.

On the Overland's backside you'll find a frame-lock blade securing mechanism and tip-up pocket clip done up in the same Stonewash finish as the blade.

Schwarz likes classic design and the Overland has hints of Art Deco technostro complex styling in its overall vibe. It is 7-3/8" overall with a 3" blade, a medium-sized folder perfect for urban EDC carry or, as the name implies, out in the field tackling light to medium chores. The Overland's 8Cr13MoV stainless steel blade sports a modified Wharncliffe design with

a deep grind and there's jimping along the lower back spine for added purchase — all spiffed up in a Stonewashed finish. The handle, with its Olive Drab G10 front scale and spot-color orange anodized back spacer and pivot ring, is loaded with eye appeal. On the backside is a frame-lock mechanism for securing the blade and a tip-up pocket clip — both done up in the same Stonewash finish found on the blade. At only 3.6 oz. the Overland is light in the pocket.

WHY YOU'LL LIKE IT

Like most CRKT knives you get a lot of bang for your buck. At only \$69.99 suggested retail, there's a lot to like about the Overland. T.J. Schwarz's styling alone makes this folder stand out in the crowd and its sturdy frame-lock construction won't let you down. Wharncliffe designs are the workhorses of the blade stable and can perform a myriad of chores, including everything from wire stripping to meal prep. In a nutshell, the Overland will serve you well regardless of where you travel at a price you can afford.



www.crkt.com

WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM PANDEMIC PANIC?

ABOVE ALL ELSE, IT SCARED THE GUN CONTROL CROWD!

Want to frighten the gun prohibition lobby?

Declare a pandemic and watch legions of fence-sitting non-gun owners scramble to be first in line at the nearest gun store, then watch their facial expressions when they discover buying guns really isn't as easy or haphazard as they've been led to believe.

Disappointment and worry are great motivations to change one's philosophy, especially when it might involve personal preservation. Every new gun owner can translate to a new rights activist, which means one less gun-control extremist.

This past March, for example, *2A Defense* took a close-up look at the "gun rush" where an estimated 2.2 million firearms were purchased by panicked people evidently fearing a collapse of society as they knew it. Firearms retailers told us many — if not most — of their customers from the start of the COVID-19 outbreak in February through at least the first couple of weeks in April were first-time buyers.

According to some dealers, there were lots of people at gun store counters who had previously been gun control advocates. As liberals often do, they evidently believed all those restrictive gun laws they supported were meant for someone else. They were stunned when they learned they couldn't just hand a clerk cash or a credit card and take their new gun home.

They discovered background checks slowed down because the National Instant Check System (NICS) was overloaded. This happened because "non-essential" employees were furloughed, others got sick and more than 3 million background checks were initiated, a new record for the month of March.

These new gun owners also discovered waiting periods, and found out they couldn't just walk around with a loaded handgun unless they applied for, and received, a carry permit or license — plus, it took time to get one of those.

In short, lots of "fence sitters" or former gun control supporters learned they've

been deceived by the gun prohibition lobby and they didn't like it.

Jump ahead to right now. As this is written we're not sure how much the November election results will have changed the dynamic, but come January, many of these folks may be new allies in state level efforts to change, or perhaps even repeal some restrictive gun laws. This prospect has gun grabbers such as Everytown for Gun Safety, Moms Demand Action, Giffords, Brady and the Alliance for Gun Responsibility very concerned.

THE VIRGINIA LESSON

Earlier this year American gun owners got an ugly lesson in politics, courtesy Virginia Democrats and vehemently anti-gun Gov. Ralph Northam. When 22,000 angry and alarmed Virginians descended on the Capitol in Richmond, Democrats who had just won control of the General Assembly for the first time in two decades ignored them.

This rally, the gun owners had to acknowledge, happened because too many of them had been too lazy to vote in 2019 when only about 40 percent of Virginia's electorate bothered to vote. We've discussed this before and hopefully Virginians won't let it happen again. Those lawmakers will face Old Dominion voters in November 2021 and if the activism is still hot, a fair number of people will be looking for new jobs the following January.

Right now is the time to reach out to all these new gun owners. Invite them to join you at the range. If you're an instructor, offer them personal one-on-one safety training. Ask them to join your gun club and make them welcome.

THE NOVA SCOTIA LESSON

Has it really been six months since a Canadian police buff, apparently obsessed with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, killed 22 people in a rampage which isn't supposed to happen because of all the restrictive gun laws north of the border?

There is no Second Amendment in Canada. You won't find 175 million people

licensed to carry concealed handguns. Firearms ownership is much more strictly regulated up there — so much, some U.S. gun control advocates have occasionally used Canada's gun laws as the example they wish our country would follow.

The lesson from Canada, summed up by gun rights groups such as the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, is uncomfortably blunt: Gun control laws do not prevent determined people from committing violent crimes. Restrictive gun control measures make it impossible for honest citizens to defend themselves and their families from such predators.

Nobody wants to talk about this so you have to. Start planning for January legislative sessions in your state. Do some homework on the Portapique rampage and be prepared to confront and correct anti-gunners trying to exploit the tragedy to further a gun control agenda down here in the States.

THE PANDEMIC LESSON

Whatever else we learned, or at least reinforced, during the springtime Pandemic panic was the Second Amendment remains the fallback fail-safe, even among people who never before owned a gun — or even wanted to.

Somewhere buried deep in the American fabric is the understanding we're ultimately responsible for our own safety. When trouble appears on the horizon, regardless what people may have previously thought or felt, they reach for the one tool — the one piece of emergency survival equipment — which represents a fighting chance if all else fails.

We can build on this lesson. Grassroots rights activists have a rare opportunity to swell the ranks with people who have recently been "converted" and now understand how restrictive gun control laws prevent them and other honest citizens from exercising their rights.

Contact your local gun shop, ask who might be a new gun owner in need of safety instruction. Introduce yourself to some of these folks, and be subtle rather than overbearing. Find out about them; see what interests them. You might find several things in common beyond firearms.

Make new friends and remember, friends are far less likely to work against one another when they have common interests.

MEOPTA MEOPRO HD80 SPOTTING SCOPE



I've always wanted a "real" spotting scope but there is the tiny matter of disposable income. I've got some lunch money hidden in the mattress but spending the equivalent of a decent used car for a scope I won't use every day seems dumb. At least until I got turned on to the Meopta HD80!

This is a serious, top-of-the-line spotting scope without the "big name" price premium. Meopta is a respected European optics manufacturer quietly gaining a reputation among long-distance shooters for optics that punch far above their price class.

The HD80 has the typical spotting scope features such as 20x-80x zoom but the noteworthy feature is simply the optical quality. The 80mm Fluoride objective lens is impeccably sharp

even when dialed up and there are no annoying chromatic aberrations even at top power. You'd be hard-pressed to find a better cost/quality ratio in a spotting scope at any price! Street price: Around \$1,200

www.meoptasportoptics.com

PRIMARY ARMS GLX 2X PRISM SCOPE



I've never been a huge fan of low-power optics on ARs but this one might change my mind. The 2X power makes a nice compromise between a red dot and a "real" scope — you can quickly engage up-close targets but have a bit of magnification at longer distances. My inner jury is still out but I like the GLX more and more!



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This unit features the Primary Arms horseshoe-shaped ACSS reticle for quick indexing from 50 to 500 yards plus lead, is built like a tank and features 25mm objectives with HD glass. The glass and prisms definitely offer fantastic light transmission and clarity.

I definitely like the stout left-side operating knob. Having the operating controls on the left side makes it possible to change your reticle illumination without taking your operating hand off the controls of the gun for right-handed shooters. It's a small but pretty critical detail when you're talking optics for self-defense. MSRP: \$369

www.primaryarms.com

SOFHOLD GUN MAGNET



I always wanted a gun magnet to keep a “hideout” gun secured at my desk but most of them either didn't have enough power or I didn't trust their rubber coatings with the pristine finish of my blued guns. The problem is now finally solved with my new SofHold American Patriot Gun Magnets.

These are different than the others I've found — they're small and round (about the size of a drink coaster), covered in gun-friendly leather and are Oh My Gosh strong. In fact, if you buy more than one, don't accidentally get your fingers between a pair because it will hurt when they finally decide to mate.

The magnets mount to any surface where you can sink the three included screws and I'm actually stuck in the middle of a serious indecision while trying to figure out where, of all the sneaky locations I've dreamed up, to mount them. MSRP: \$39.99

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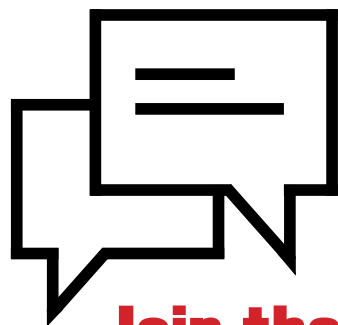
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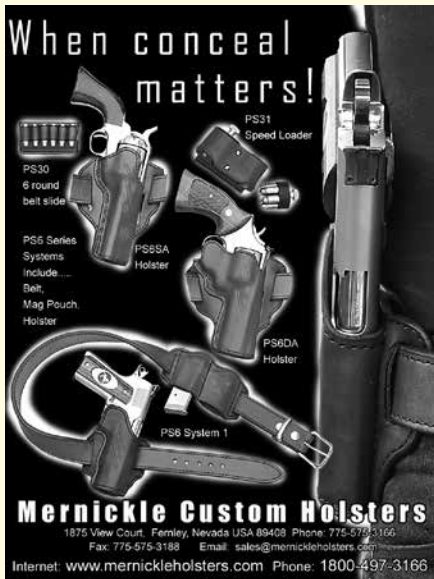
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Savage Arms has crafted a dedicated gobbler gun for taking Toms — the *Stevens 301 Turkey*. The single-shot, break-action shotgun in .410 has a 26" barrel that produces a tight pattern. A removable one-piece rail makes it easy to equip with an optic. For those who want a larger bore, the 301 also comes in 20 and 12 gauge. For more info: (800) 370-0708, www.savagearms.com



BULL-DOG SHOTGUN

AMERICAN TACTICAL

The *Bull-Dog Shotgun* is American Tactical's latest import from Turkey. Offering a contemporary look and modular design, it also brings function and reliability. The Bull-Dog is a semi-automatic 12-ga. shotgun with a 3" chamber and 18.5" barrel. The Picatinny rail system allows the shooter to use an extra magazine as a foregrip. With removable adjustable open sights and adjustable cheek rest, the Bull-Dog also features a patent-pending AR15-style charging handle and comes with a 5-round magazine with Picatinny cut-out. For more info: (800) 290-0065, www.americantactical.us



RRAGE AR 10.5" PISTOL (MODEL #DS2142)

ROCK RIVER ARMS

Rock River Arms expands its line of defensive semi-autos with the *RRAGE AR 10.5" Pistol (Model #DS2142)*. It is built on RRA's RRAGE upper and lower receiver and hand guard assemblies. Chambered in 5.56 NATO, the pistol features a 10.5" chrome moly barrel with a 1:9 twist rate and a low-profile gas block. SB Tactical's SBA3 stabilizing arm brace provides 5-position adjustability to fit any shooter. Weighing 5.7 lbs. with an OAL of 28.5", the RRAGE 10.5 pistol is for home defense, vehicle carry or recreational shooting. For more info: (309) 792-5780, www.rockriverarms.com

PERFORMANCE EYEWEAR

LEUPOLD & STEVENS

Leupold & Stevens has introduced *Performance Eyewear*, an eyewear line taking full advantage of Leupold's 113 years of optics manufacturing expertise.

Five styles were launched: the Becnara, Packout, Switchback, Tracer and the Katmai (in picture). The five styles are made from lightweight, ballistic-rated materials and come with scratch-resistant polarized lenses same as those used in Leupold's sporting optics. For more info: (503) 526-1400, www.leupold.com



S20

SAKO

Sako introduces the *S20* hybrid bolt-action rifle. The modular rifle can be configured with different rear stocks and forends depending on a user's preference. Both tactical-precision and ergonomic-hunting stocks are available. The multi-adjustable trigger (in single- and two-stage variants) will fit different hand sizes. An adjustable cheek piece and spacer help shooters find the best shooting position. For more info: (+358) 10 830 5200, www.sako.fi



CUSTOM ARMOR INSERTS

PREMIER BODY ARMOR

Custom Armor Inserts are a new solution for low-profile personal protection. Designed for use with Premier Body Armor's Tru-Spec Concealed Armor Shirt, the Level IIIA inserts are just 0.8 lbs. per panel, with the whole package weighing roughly 2 lbs. They provide protection without the bulk and weight of a vest or the need for specialized clothing. Designed and tested to NIJ Standard-0101.06, the panels are just 0.22" thick, but they will stop 9mm, .40, .45, and .44 magnum rounds. They are stab and slash resistant as well. For more info: (704) 214-9951, premierbodyarmor.com

FN 503

FN AMERICA LLC

Inspired by the FN 509 family, the 9mm striker-fired *FN 503* is built to conceal quickly and discreetly. It has a 3.1" barrel with a recessed target crown, enlarged controls, soft recoil and FN 509-style low-profile iron sights. The skateboard tape-style grip texture provides carry comfort and the metal trigger breaks crisply with a 5-lb. trigger pull. For more info: (703) 288-3500, www.fnamerica.com



XTI2 DXS EMBER STANDARD DOT OFFSET IRON SIGHTS

XS SIGHTS

XS Sights introduces the *XTI2 DXS Ember Standard Dot Offset Iron Sights* for AR-15 rifles. The second-generation, 45-degree XTI2 sights are a close-quarters, secondary sighting solution for rapid transition from a magnified primary optic. They eliminate the need to adjust magnification thus reducing target engagement time. The front sight is 0.140" wide and features an Orange Ember Glow Dot for increased visibility. For more info: (888) 744-4880, www.xssights.com



GUN TOOL AMP — AR15

REAL AVID

Real Avid's *Gun Tool AMP — AR15* is a compact kit loaded for, what else, an AR15. This multi-tool system will keep your AR15 up and running in the field or at the range. It cleans carbon from all critical surfaces to keep bolts cycling smoothly. Features include specialized carbon scrapers, a full array of common AR15 related bits and implements plus more. The Gun Tool AMP is also offered for pistols and 1911s. For more info: (800) 286-0567, www.realavid.com



AW2 36" RIFLE CASE

PLANO MOLDING

The *AW2 36" Rifle Case* from Plano Molding features Rustriector technology preventing rust and corrosion on your gear. The case is impenetrable from the outside, with dual-stage lockable latches and a Dri-Loc seal for a watertight, dust-proof shield. Inside the case, a pressure release valve equalizes pressure through temperature or altitude changes. The AW2 rifle case is airline approved and the right size to store and protect your favorite rifle. For more info: (800) 226-9868, www.planomolding.com



SSM-01 ACRO MOUNT FOR SIG 320

TANGODOWN INC.

TangoDown's *SSM-01 ACRO Mount for SIG 320* (DP Slide Cut Models) is easy to install and provides a secure platform for your Aimpoint ACRO. The SSM-01 is made from ordnance-grade steel with a rust-resistant black oxide finish. Mounting fasteners are supplied with pre-applied Vibra-Tite VC-3 thread locking compound. For more info: (909) 392-4757, www.tangodown.com



HK INCURSION OTF AUTOMATIC KNIFE

HOGUE KNIVES

The *HK Incursion OTF Automatic Knife* by Hogue Knives features a 0.125"-thick blade made of 154CM stainless steel in a bayonet profile. The 3.9" blade is stonewashed or finished with a black PVD coating and encased in a 6061-T6 anodized aluminum frame. A double-action, ambidextrous trigger deploys and retracts the blade with speed. The OTF in the knife's name stands for Out The Front. For more info: (800) 438-4747, www.hogueinc.com

MODEL 61122

BEAR & SON CUTLERY

Bear & Son's Bear Edge Knives expands their popular pocketknife line with the *Model 61122*. It's a 4-1/2" folder with a 440 stainless steel blade in satin-finish. One side of the 61122's handle is G10 while the other side is smooth, black-finished stainless steel. For more info: Phone: 256-435-2227, www.bearandsoncutlery.com



SUBMIT YOUR ENTRY ONLINE:

Franklin Armory BFSIII M4 GIVEAWAY

Franklin Armory specializes in manufacturing quality firearms for sporting, military and law enforcement applications. It is “adept at creating products for restrictive jurisdictions” and their firearms use 100 percent U.S.-made parts and materials. Franklin Armory is well known for its Binary Firing System, the Reformation (the firearm that’s neither a rifle nor a shotgun), the F17 series of rimfire rifles in 17 WSM and more. Another product comes to the forefront of the company’s roster of firearms in 2020 — the *BFSIII M4** — which also happens to be the gun being given away in this issue of *GUNS*. Chambered in 5.56 NATO, the complete rifle is of course made with Franklin Armory’s American-made, high-quality components. Equipped with the BFSIII Binary Trigger and other features, the rifle surprisingly comes at an entry level price. It sports a 16" LTW Contour barrel with a 1:7" twist, a 15" FST handguard/upper, an FAI-14 lower, an M4 stock, a low profile gas block, midlength gas system, A2 muzzle device and grip, a standard charging handle, salt bath nitride bolt carrier and optic ready sights.

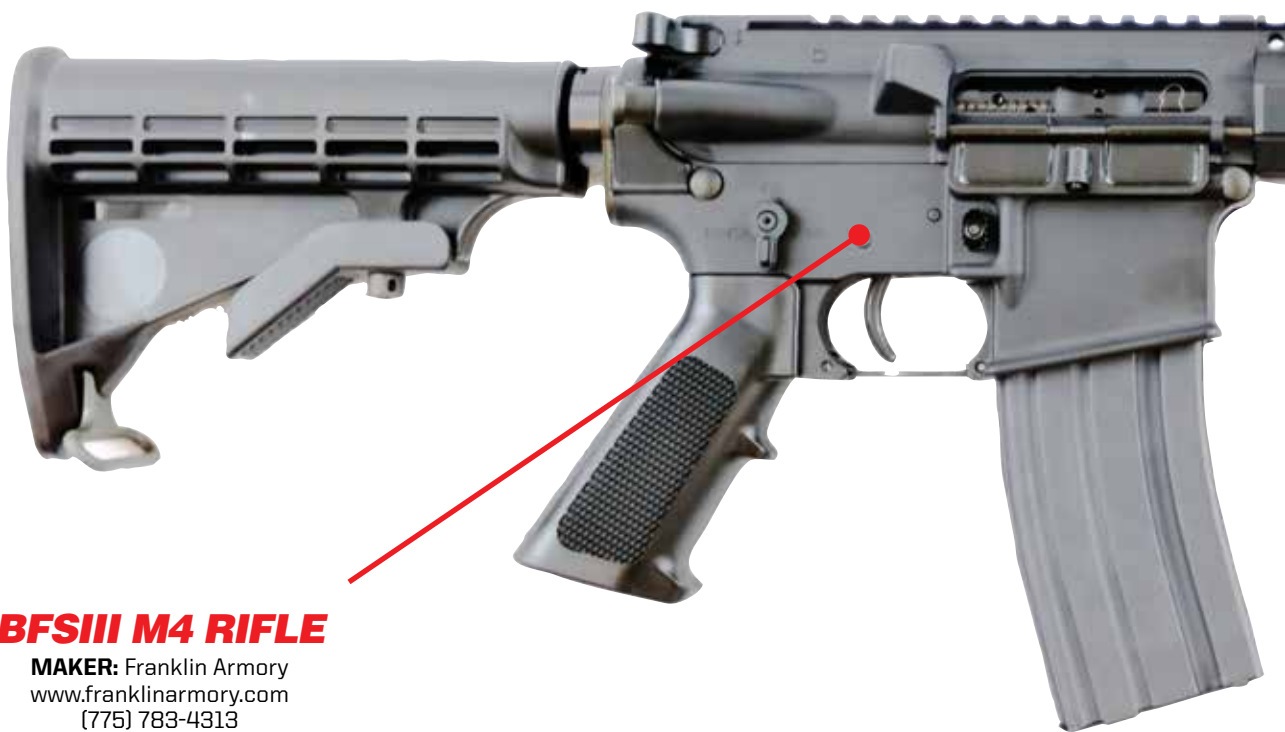
The 500-lumen *Streamlight ProTac 2L-X USB* is a tactical handheld flashlight. It’s available as a complete rechargeable

system with Streamlight’s SL-B26 USB battery with integrated micro USB port, or with two CR123A lithium batteries. This multi-fuel innovation ensures you’ll always have a light when you need it.

The name Manikomio refers to an insane asylum. It’s also the name of our next prize — the *MANIKOMIO Fixed Blade* from KRUDO Knives. With its all-black elements, the blade looks “insanely” sleek and stealthy. This double-edged knife with a 5" blade is made of 9Cr18MoV steel. It has bilateral serrations with a center groove and is ideal for camping, hunting and any other outdoor activity.

Don’t pass up the chance to win this simply amazing prize package. Go to www.gunsmagazine.com/giveaways or send a post card! —Jazz Jimenez

* The BFSIII is NOT for civilian sale in CA, DC, IA, NJ, NY, HI, DE, RI, FL, MD, CT or WA. In case a winner comes from any of these states, he/she will be given credit equivalent to the BFSIII’s value. The credit can then be used on the Franklin Armory website to buy a different gun legal in their home state.



BFSIII M4 RIFLE

MAKER: Franklin Armory
www.franklinarmory.com
(775) 783-4313

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OAL: 32", **BARREL LENGTH:** 16"
VALUE: \$1,069.99

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

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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.

A SINGLE-SEVEN SALUTE SPECIAL GUN TO HONOR JOHN TAFFIN

Admittedly, it was John Taffin (JT) who roped me into reading *American Handgunner* and *GUNS Magazine* so many years ago. I'll bet he lassoed you the same way, cinching you tightly into his world of articles and pictures featuring his sixguns, cast bullets and handloading. He understands people like you and me by having the same interests and obsessions as we do.

By bridging the gap of the past, JT keeps the words of Elmer, Skeeter and Bill Jordan alive, as well as a host of other industry giants. JT entertains while informing us by keeping the stories flowing.

THE SHOOTISTS

In 1985, John put into motion an idea he'd been gnawing on for years. What if he invited a handful of knowledgeable friends as consumed by sixguns, handloads, gun leather, and any other adornment, for a holiday of sorts? Of course, there'd be

shooting, but more importantly, there'd be fellowship, followed by the exchange of ideas, stories, hopes and dreams.

John had one dubious, yet brain-racking requirement. Attendees could only bring two handguns, semi-autos would

be allowed, only if chambered in .45 ACP, .38 Super, or 9mm. Talk about torturous! The two guns would have to be capable of handling any unknown task, hunt or situation. The event was a huge success and continues to this very day.

TODAY

What started as a few handpicked amigos has grown into a 100-plus



Sporting well-fitted stag stocks (above), The Shootists' Anniversary gun has its creed etched into the back of the grip-frame. The Shootists' 35th Anniversary gun (below) rightfully honors the founder of the organization, John Taffin. As you can see, Tank has been a Taffin fan for a long time.



like-minded, invitation-only members, displaying high character and fortitude. Today, The Shootists meet every year at the NRA Whittington Center in Raton, NM to continue the tradition JT started.

Besides exchanging gun-related ideas, The Shootists sponsor the Whittington Center Adventure Camp, giving teenagers who love the outdoors a chance to learn all shooting disciplines, archery, camping, cooking and survival skills. A winter gun raffle is also held, supporting St. Jude Children's Hospital.

A SPECIAL GUN

Since 1990, The Shootists have a commemorative gun made every five years. This year's gun was rightfully influenced by none other than John Taffin. Consisting of a stainless Ruger Bisley single-seven, chambered in .327 Federal Magnum, this hot-rodged, small-bore packs a lot of punch, yet is easy-shooting, recoil wise.

John's showing his wisdom here, as he's learned what decades of testing/shooting every big-bore boomer can do to your body. He shared this knowledge with us in these very pages. The pounding of thousands of rounds caused micro-fractures in his wrists, later developing into arthritis.

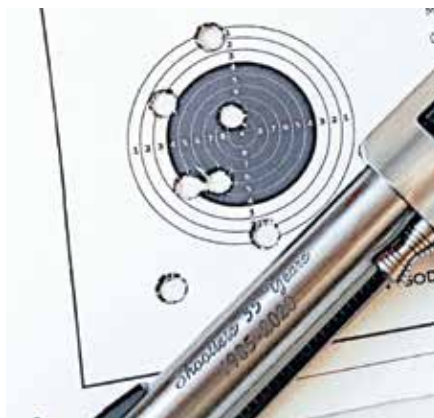
Barrel length is 4-5/8" and sports a Fermin Garza serrated-faced front sight. Handsome stag stocks add a rustic flair. "Shootists 35 Years 1985-2020" is etched on the barrel, as well as "Men Who Stand in the Gap" on the rear grip-frame. My favorite adornment is the silhouette of John, complete with Stetson, aiming his sixgun, etched into the top strap.

A beautifully machined Belt Mountain oversized #5 base-pin replaces the factory pin. Its multi-stepped, hourglass shape mimics Elmer's famous #5 sixgun base-pin and has the number 35 etched in the end of it. The stainless Bisley hammer and trigger are blue-blackened, the action/trigger tuned/timed, barrel crowned and cylinder gap tightened by Tyler Gun Works.

Bobby and his crew at Tyler really outdid themselves on this special project honoring JT on The Shootists' 35th Anniversary gun.

SHOOTIST SHUCK

The holster accompanying this gun was built by Doc Barranti, honoring JT. Called his Mountain Companion, it has JT's famous (iconic?) pose fittingly applied



Custom tuned and accurized by Tyler Gun Works from Friona, Texas, the Ruger Single-Seven is a shooter.



A front sight designed by Fermin Garza, as well as a Belt Mountain #5 base-pin by Kelye Schlepp makes the 35th Shootists' Anniversary gun well represented.



A Doc Barranti Mountain Companion shuck is shown, complete with Taffin's likeness, further honoring the founding Shootist.

to the holster. A minimalist design shuck, the Mountain Companion can be made for either strong, or weakside wearing. The simple hammer thong securely keeps your shooter in place.

THE JT SPECIAL

There's only a handful of men deserving of a gun made in their honor. Those who are worthy usually protest modestly. Thankfully, groups like The Shootists do it anyway — no matter how much the person doth protest!

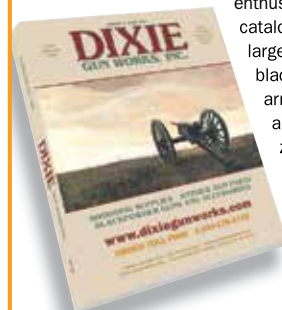
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as the hapless animal fell in a shower of feathers.

At this moment, I had become a full-blooded hunter and it was exhilarating.

I rushed into the fencerow under the wires to retrieve my trophy. With quivering hands, I found the bird sprawled on its back, looking disheveled as a tiny sprinkle of blood leaked from its beak. I saw bronze-orange feathers and instantly realized I had killed a robin.

THINGS CHANGE

The initial excitement of the kill suddenly gave way to a great sadness and guilt. Even at this tender age, I instinctively realized there was something fundamentally wrong

with shooting an animal simply for the enjoyment of killing. It was this moment I learned hunting without any purpose was a hollow victory, an attainment devoid of any satisfaction to a person of conscience.

At age 10 I had just realized I had primitive ethics — and suddenly they were troubled.

BACK HOME

I was roused back from the mists of time by water dousing my feet as the hose limply drooped in my hand. In the darkening yard, I scattered the birds, rolled up the hose, shut off the water and wistfully headed indoors.

Stopping at the back door to reflect in the twilight, it seems unsettling so many otherwise grown people haven't learned such a lesson.

IN OTHER NEWS:

I suppose you've noticed the world has gone crazy?

Among all the terrible news, this New World Order of global insanity has been a huge boon to the firearms industry. Some gun stores are reporting 10 times their normal sales volume and one major manufacturer just admitted to this corner some of their most popular guns are backordered until late spring of 2021!

This tidal wave of gun buying has had several effects. First, gun prices, even for clapped-out junkers, guns which have spent their entire lives under the seat of farm or ranch pickup trucks and appear to have been gnawed upon by wolverines, are sometimes going for twice the typical price. This makes your personal gun collection worth much more, if you are inclined to sell.

I wouldn't, but if you already have plenty of guns, right now is a great time to let a couple of your less-used firearms go at a premium.

Ammo supplies are tight but no major shortages have been seen. The same with other accessories as manufacturers have been working mandatory overtime to fill orders.

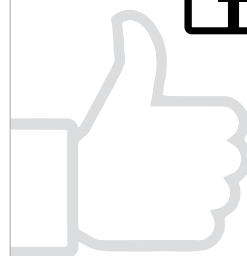
Another interesting effect is the fact you might see fewer new models being released. While this time of year is typically a lull for new firearms releases, with gun companies working at maximum capacity, there is no need to announce new guns to help bump sales.



Finally, it would appear the lessons of the "Obama bump" have been learned. Almost no one in the industry is buying additional equipment or hiring extra people because everyone knows this wave will eventually end at some point. An unfavorable presidential election could extend things, but right now the industry is primarily working with existing capacity. Hopefully, no bankruptcies this time around!

Your Momma

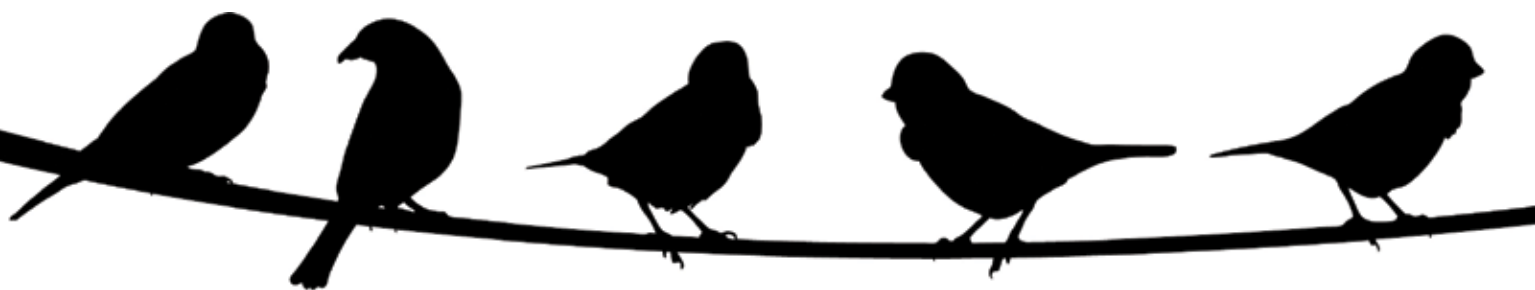
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THE ROBIN A HARD LESSON LEARNED

A few nights ago, I was in the backyard of our little estate on the prairie watering the plants, a favorite summer evening pastime. Standing barefoot in the pastel twilight with a garden hose is worth many hours of relaxation therapy and cheaper than a psychiatrist — or even bourbon. At least for this editor, time spent dousing the plants allows for forced quiet reflection in an otherwise hectic schedule.

While absently dampening our *Spirea* bushes, I was roused from my contemplation by watching a pair of robins petulantly digging for bugs just a few yards away in the freshly drenched mulch.

The birds were young and cheeky as they sauntered within feet of where I was standing. For several minutes I enjoyed the show. As they were close enough I could see the Robin's feathers puff whenever they spied a worm. The bird would pause, cock its head then dive into the mulch, thrashing about for a moment in a shower of hardwood chips then triumphantly surface with a slimy snack.

Enjoying the little show, I was suddenly reminded of an episode from several decades ago. It was otherwise forgotten but had played a tremendous part in the development of my personal shooting and

hunting ethic, in fact, my overall view of the outdoors. Like most important lessons, it was somewhat painful at the time.

FIRST GUN

For many years, I had begged my parents for a real gun, something to hunt elk and lion or at least the rabbits so abundant in my suburban backyard. The folks always made up some excuse or another but mostly, they didn't believe a 10-year-old boy was up to the task of cleaning a large-caliber double rifle.

Finally my dreams came true. Through the distasteful but highly effective technique of incessant whining, I was eventually given a BB gun previously owned by my uncle. A hefty solid-steel and walnut classic, the gun was an old Crossman model that required the barrel be pushed downward to cock the spring. This was an inherently bad idea but the gun had been designed before the words "product liability" had ever been coined. As it were, I was instantly in love with my new piece and rushed out to show the gang. This was a time when children carrying firearms and the term "gang" had entirely different meanings.

As bear and panthers were rare in my neighborhood, the only game available to the Great Hunter were local cottontail rabbits and the birds perching on the powerlines running behind our house. As the rabbits were so tame as to only

require a stout stick to dispatch, I felt them unsporting to pursue. Birds, however, were a different matter. Perched high above the ground, they presented a difficult target, flying instantly whenever a poorly aimed golden BB went whizzing past their ears.

They flew a lot — perhaps I was actually helping with their exercise program.

THE RULES

The birds and other living game, especially neighborhood friends, were officially proclaimed off-limits by my parents. The regulations specifically stated something to the effect, "I'll peel your hide if I catch you shooting anything!" Thus, hunting trips were carried out in secret.

For weeks I snuck out, stalking and firing upon various birds. I categorically stayed away from songbirds while hoping to bag a mourning dove, which I had read in *Sports Afield* were especially tasty. In retrospect, it was a perfect example of 10-year-old logic: believing a single dove breast could provide a hearty meal for four people.

One fateful day, I spied a fat bird upon the wire at twilight, silhouetted against the indigo sky. After a careful stalk using the privet hedge, I set up against an ornamental pear tree and fired. By some twist of fate — and exceptionally bad luck for Mr. Bird — BB and prey met. I heard a fat, wet *Thunk!*

continued on page 73





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