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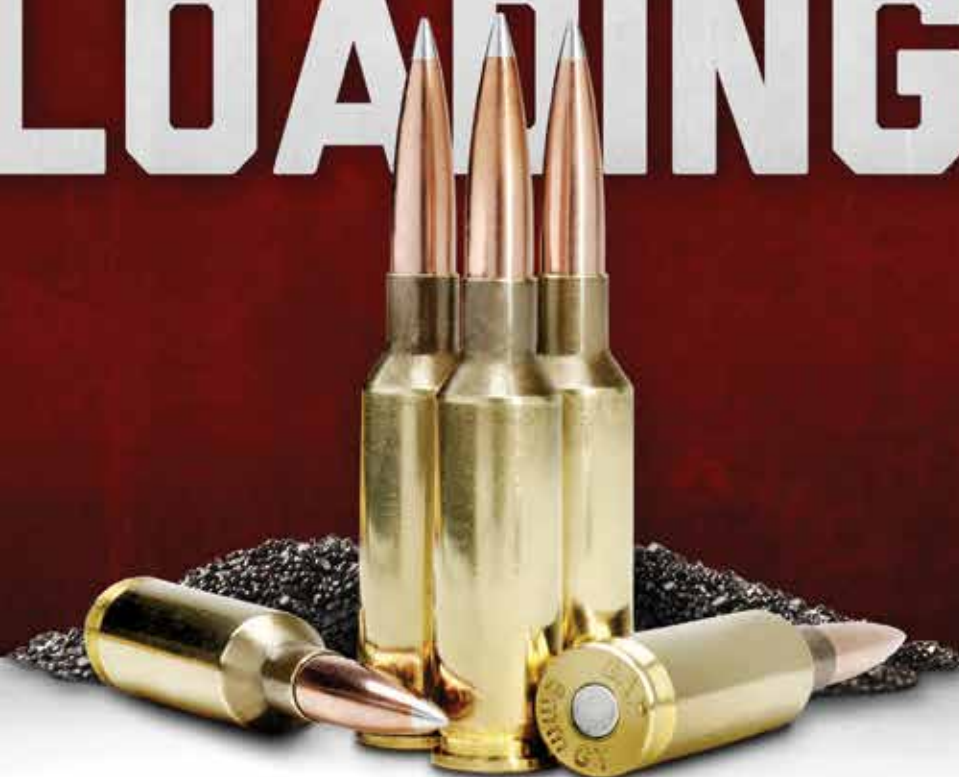
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A SHARP ONE

I look forward to every issue of *GUNS Magazine* and I especially enjoyed reading *Montana Musings* by Mike "Duke" Venturino in January about the Sharps rifles and in June about the "big fifties." This leads to my question.



I inherited a Sharps rifle when my brother passed away several years ago. He was a serious military and Civil War collector. In 2008, he had a replica rifle made by the Shiloh Rifle Company, which is described as an 1874 military rifle. It is in .50-70 Govt. caliber and has a military musket pattern with some "embellishments." Is this rifle an accurate replica of rifles actually used by the U.S. Army or any other military?

Steve Kepf

Original Sharps rifles in the military configuration were never adopted by the U.S. Army but were sold on the civilian market. I actually owned one in .50-70 in the 1990s. That Shiloh of yours is a beauty and I expect it being in .50-70 is very rare. In fact I've never seen one so chambered. Treasure it. —Mike Venturino

THE BEAVER RELIEVER

A friend recently asked me why I didn't write articles for a gun magazine. He said "you're witty, humorous, knowledgeable,

and you have the maturity of a 13 year old when it comes to all things related to guns!" Well, I just don't think I could get the job done any better than Dr. Dabbs! He does an outstanding job and I look forward to his articles each month! Dr. Dabbs' recent article on "blasting beavers" made me grin from ear to ear. As a land owner, I do not view these pests as cute cartoon characters. I also don't kill animals just for the sake of killing. However, I have zero tolerance for beavers, prairie dogs, pocket gophers and venomous snakes. My Remington 1100 has the final say in these matters.

Mark Germany



All the writers at GUNS and American Handgunner are fantastic but my favorite is Dr. Will Dabbs. He has a very entertaining way of expressing himself. I just read the article on Applied Pyromania in the June issue of GUNS and realized Dr. Dabbs is well experienced in high explosives. I was an EOD specialist in the late '60s and was stationed at Fort Lee, Va. before going to Range Control from Fort A.P. Hill on several

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GUNS

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THE FINEST IN THE FIREARMS FIELD SINCE 1955

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THE PERFECT PACKIN' PISTOL

PART V: THE .357 MAGNUM

Phil Sharpe is the main person responsible for the .357 Magnum. To come up with the .357 Magnum case, he simply lengthened the standard .38 Special from 1.155" to 1.290" to preclude the more powerful round from being dropped in a .38 Special revolver. Sharpe said — "The .357 Magnum cartridge was born in my mind several years ago. On a hunting trip with Col. D.B. Wesson, Vice-President of Smith & Wesson, a pair of heavy frame Outdoorsman Model revolvers were used with a large assortment of handloads developed and previously tested by myself. In the field they proved entirely practical, but Col. Wesson was not content to attempt the development of a Magnum .38 Special cartridge for ordinary revolvers, and set to work on a new gun."

The Smith & Wesson .357 cartridge is loaded by Winchester now at a working pressure of 35,000 to 38,000 pounds per

square inch, the greatest pressure of any handgun cartridge and approximately twice as heavy as any other revolver cartridge. For more than a year before the release of this gun, Col. Wesson manufactured a few pilot models, building and rebuilding each one, redesigning this and that until he found a suitable combination. I am not connected with any arms or ammunition maker and desire this fact [to be] clearly understood. I did not design the gun or the cartridge, however a number of my ideas were incorporated in the design of this gun, tested through an understanding of handloading problems, and a number of weak points in ordinary revolvers were quickly corrected."

WORLD RECORD

The .357 Magnum Smith & Wesson was proclaimed as "The World's Most Powerful Revolver" and it certainly was for

several reasons. First, and foremost, the extreme muzzle velocity was well over 1,500 fps from one of the 8-3/4" Registered Magnums. Combined with the flat-nosed Keith- or Sharpe-type bullet, maximum shocking power was achieved.

Many of the FBI agents began carrying 3-1/2" or 4" .357 Magnums including Jelly Bryce who switched from his .44 Special. Lt. Col. Patton was stationed in Hawaii and purchased a companion sixgun to his beloved .45 Colt, a 3-1/2" .357 Magnum. Soon to be Colonel, Charles Askins went with the .357 Magnum. He selected the 4" length, had it fully engraved and carried it in a Berns-Martin holster.

It is fashionable these days not only for the .44 Magnum, but also such cartridges as the .454 Casull, .480 Ruger, .475 and .500 Linebaughs, to give the .357 Magnum short shrift. However, it is still the same excellent cartridge and sixgun combination it was back in 1935 when the first Magnums arrived. Those early .357 Magnums were simply works of sixgun art, so much so they may very well be the finest revolvers to ever come from the Smith & Wesson factory. From 1935 to 1939 approximately 5,200 "Registered Magnums" with the registration number on the yoke cut were manufactured; the cylinder must be opened to access the number. Barrel lengths in order of preference were 6-1/2", 5", 6", 8-3/4", 3-1/2" and 4".

In 1939 Smith & Wesson dropped the registration procedure and barrel lengths were standardized at 3-1/2", 5", 6", 6-1/2", and 8-3/8", not necessarily in order of preference. These sixguns are known simply as .357 Magnums as the Smith & Wesson numbering system did not arrive until 1957. All of these guns had a beautiful high bright blue finish, nickel was an extra option, with a fine line checkering on the barrel rib, top strap, and rear sight assembly. Both the backstrap and front strap were serrated and the .357 Magnum was the first Smith & Wesson to be fitted with Magna stocks that filled in on both sides of the grip frame to the top of the backstrap. When all Smith & Wessons received model numbers in 1957, the .357 Magnum became the Model 27.



John's choice of three Smith & Wesson Perfect Packin' Pistols are (top to bottom) the Model 27, Model 19 and Model 28.



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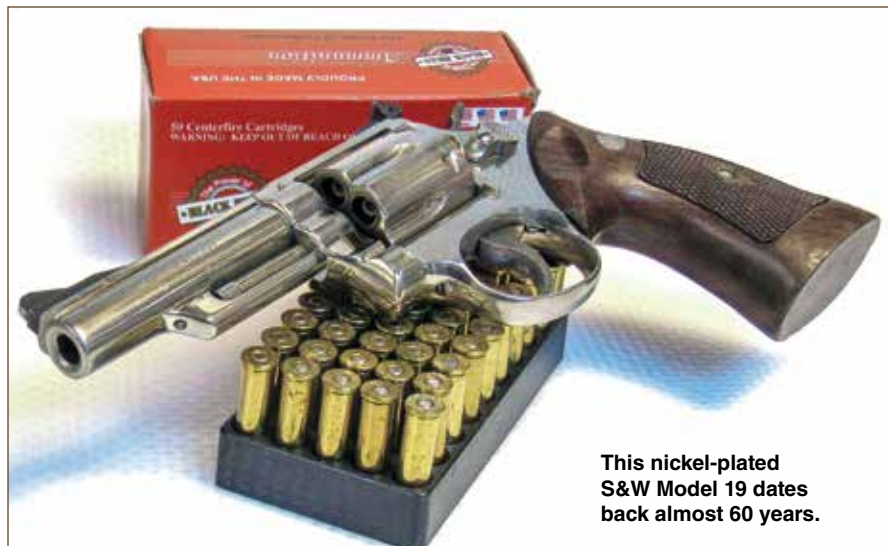
NO FRILLS

In 1954 Smith & Wesson began offering a less-finished .357 Magnum specifically for the patrol officer — the Highway Patrolman. This was a basic no-frills .357. No high polish here as the finish was a matte blue and also gone was the fine checkering on the top strap. Barrel length was 4" and 6" and Magna stocks were standard. LEOs were not the only ones to go for this less fancy .357 Magnum as it became a favorite with outdoorsmen.

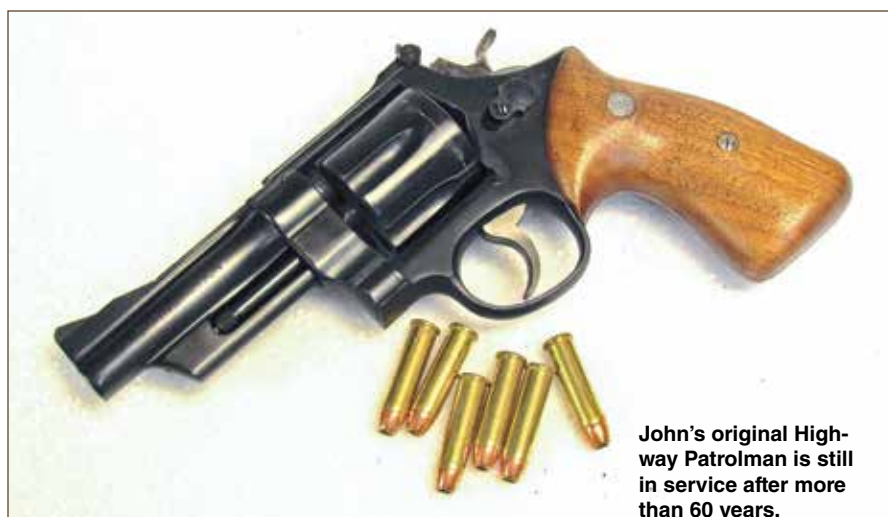
The first new Smith & Wesson I ever purchased was a 4" Highway Patrolman (later the Model 28) in late 1956/early 1957. At the time .357 Magnum brass was almost impossible to find, jacketed bullets even more so, so most of my loading of the .357 Magnum was accomplished with cast bullets in .38 Special cases. The passing of more than a half a century has not changed it all that much and thousands of .38s are shot through my .357 Magnums. If I have a favorite .357 load for the Magnums it is the Lyman/Thompson #358156 gas checked cast bullet loaded over 14.0 grains of #2400. With several pre-model-number .357 Magnums, the average across-the-board group accuracy for five shots at 20 yards is 1.1". The old guns still shoot!

A NEW GUN DESIGN

Bill Jordan, Marine combat veteran and Border Patrol Chief Inspector when he retired in 1965, was directly responsible for the .357 Combat Magnum. In 1986 Bill spoke of how the Combat Magnum came about. "In 1950, Smith & Wesson introduced the Model 15, a 4"-barreled version of the K-Frame Masterpiece series. This gun was acclaimed by law-enforcement officers, and it was undoubtedly the best thing going for the group up until its unveiling. The only thing wrong with it was it was a bit too light, especially the



This nickel-plated S&W Model 19 dates back almost 60 years.



John's original Highway Patrolman is still in service after more than 60 years.

barrel for defense use, and it was chambered for the .38 Special cartridge. They called the new gun the Combat Masterpiece. Following the Masterpiece debut, I had given a lot of thought to advantages that would result from chambering the Combat version for the .357 Magnum cartridge."

Bill Jordan stated the gun should be built on a K-Frame, have a heavy 4" barrel

with an extractor shroud similar to those used on the larger-frame .357 Magnum, target grips, target sights and the .357 Magnum caliber.

On November 15, 1955, the first production medium-frame Magnum was completed; it was named the Combat Magnum. Bill called it "the answer to a peace officer's dream." In the late 1950s I purchased my first Combat Magnum — which I still have. The original Combat Magnum had a 4" barrel, Bright Blue or nickel finish, checkered walnut target stocks, adjustable sights, standard trigger and hammer. In 1957 the Combat Magnum became the Model 19 and 1968 the first stainless steel version of the Combat Magnum, the Model 66. A piece of exceptional good news is the Combat Magnum has been revived and is back in production. Whether one chooses the .357 Magnum/Model 27, the Highway Patrolman/Model 28, or the Combat Magnum/Model 19/Model 66, any one of them will serve as a Perfect Packin' Pistol.



The guns that started it all: a pair of early 4" S&W Registered Magnums.

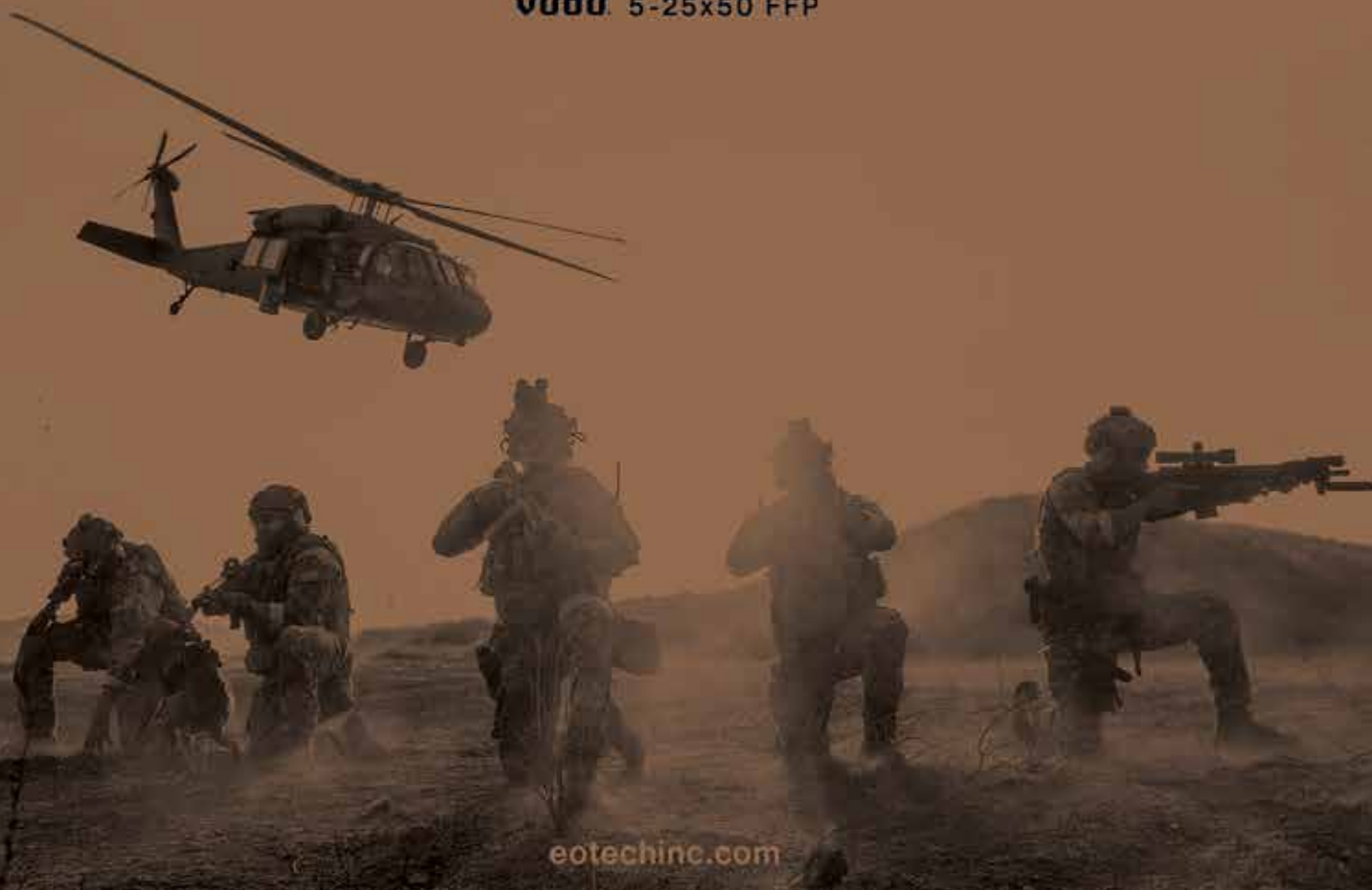


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UNDERSTUDY GUNS

IF THERE WAS EVER A TIME FOR .22s ...

“Understudy gun” was a term first heard in these pages and is now more relevant than ever.

Way back in the day, my predecessor in this column, Jan Stevenson, was I believe the first to use the term “understudy gun” to describe a .22 caliber version of a larger caliber handgun. He cited the Colt Trooper .22 he used to practice for centerfire revolver shooting, Colt’s .22/45 conversion unit for their big autos and Smith & Wesson’s little .22 Kit Gun as an understudy for what was then the most popular concealed carry gun in the country, the J-Frame .38 Special snubby.

Writing this now, in the midst of the worst “ammo drought” of my long lifetime, I appreciate Jan’s concept more than ever. In the last ammo drought circa 2013 I saw 500-round bricks of .22 ammo selling for a hundred bucks. I’m seeing this some places now. What I didn’t see then, and seeing now, is 9mm practice hardball tagged at a thousand dollars for a thousand rounds — and people desperate enough to buy it at this price.

Yes, .22 ammo costs more these days than it used to from most sellers, but it’s still cheaper than the 9mm and .45. I am blowing the cobwebs off my .22 conversion units and spending more time with understudy guns.

ONE EXAMPLE

I’ve been enjoying my GLOCK 44, a 10-shot .22 LR in the same format as the 9mm G19, .357 SIG G32 and .40 S&W G23. It’s much lighter, of course, and has almost no recoil but otherwise it’s a pretty good facsimile. Mine hasn’t been modified in any way, including the sights, so for a comparison test I pulled a stock G19, original right down to the white “ball in basket” plastic sights except for a Striker Control Device from Tau Development Group (taudevgroup.myshopify.com). The SCD replaces a GLOCK’s backplate

and prevents the trigger from being pulled while the thumb is applying pressure to it, a safety net if you have to hurriedly holster.

I wanted the sights to be the same, since most of my other GLOCKS have aftermarket sights. Both pistols have stock 5.5-lb. trigger pulls. Each, along with their magazines, fit perfectly in the holster, mag pouches and belt from Precision Holsters.

I took them to the range with a box each of Aguila .22 Long Rifle Super Extra 40-grain and Atlanta Arms and Ammo 9mm 115-grain FMJ Match. The course of fire was NRA Police Service Pistol, which you can complete with a 50-round box and have two cartridges left over. The B27 target in competition scoring mode gives a value of 10 points per shot. It starts at 3 yards with 6 shots dominant-hand-only in eight seconds, followed by reload and six 2-handed from 7 yards in 20 seconds. This is repeated at 15 yards, followed by six each kneeling, standing “weak side,” and standing “strong side” in 90 seconds total. All times start with hand clear of holstered weapon and include reloading time.

I shot the .22 first, keeping them all in the tie-breaking center 10-X ring until I got to the 15-yard line, where I got some 10s and a 9. At 25 yards I started drifting north-by-northwest as



The .22 conversion units: Advantage Arms on a GLOCK 17, left, and SIG’s own on a P226.

HOME ON THE RANGE

A composite image featuring a man in sunglasses looking through a rifle scope, a mounted deer head, a person in a field, and boxes of Berger Ammunition.

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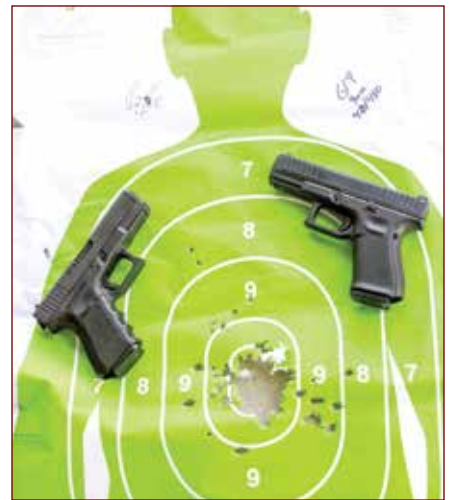
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G44 .22 (left) and G19 9mm (right) — both scored 470 out of 480 on the NRA Police Service Pistol Course on a B27 target in competition scoring mode.

far as the 8-ring and ended up with a 470 out of 480 possible. For about the first three magazines after shooting the .22, the 9mm felt like a .45. At the 25-yard line with the left hand stage, I pulled all six south-by-southeast but the takeaway is this — I shot the same 470 out of 480 with the 9mm as with the .22, learned similar lessons, and did it cheaper with the rimfire.

THE UNDERSTUDY

What the .22 lacks, of course, is recoil, and it can spoil us and let us get sloppy as to hold and grasp. In GLOCK matches on the same field of fire as the larger caliber service pistols — two shots on each paper target. The only difference is to compensate for the .22's feeble power level, a hit on a steel target scores the same as knocking it over. I looked at the scoresheets from a couple of these matches and didn't see much difference between the G44 in Rimfire and the G17 and G19 pistols in the Master Stock division. With at least 81 shots fired (you get pickup shots if you miss the steel), Brad Balsky scored 31.55 seconds time with the .22 and 35.73 with the 9mm; Tony Boone shot 43.93 seconds with the .11 and 44.72 with the 9mm; and Gorka Ibanez with 42.50 in .22 was actually faster in Master Stock with the 9mm at 39.14 seconds.

For trigger time, the .22 shines at draw-to-the-shot practice, where recoil doesn't much affect things. And, for breaking in those millions of new gun owners we've been embracing since 2020, the light recoil and mild report of the .22 make an obviously good choice as a "starter gun."

PrecisionHolsters.com

An advertisement for FMG Publications. It features several magazine covers: "GUNS SURPLUS", "OLD WEST", "CONCEALED CARRY & HOME DEFENSE", and "DIY GUNS". The FMG Publications logo is prominently displayed in the center. Text at the bottom reads: "Get our latest SPECIAL EDITIONS for \$12.95 each! Order online today! www.fmgpubs.com Toll Free: 1-888-732-2299 or by mail, P.O. Box 502610, San Diego, CA 92150-2610".



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MARLIN 1895 .45-70 LEVER-ACTION

STILL VIABLE FOR DEFENSE OR HUNTING

The Springfield Trapdoor Cartridge Rifle and Carbine was produced for the military in 1873. It came chambered in an equally new, powerful cartridge.

Commonly called .45-70 Government or simply .45-70, the actual nomenclature for the cartridge was .45-70-405. In order, the numbers stand for the caliber, how many grains of black powder is used and the weight of the bullet measured in grains.

By the time of the Spanish-American war in 1898 the Army had adopted the bolt-action Krag Jorgensen .30-40 caliber rifle but not in great numbers. Many soldiers went into action with the Springfield Trapdoor .45-70s against their enemies who were armed with faster-firing Mauser bolt-action rifles — sometimes with dire results. The Springfield was completely phased-out following the end of the Spanish-American war.

Although the United States won the war, one wonders if the war could have been brought to an earlier conclusion if American soldiers had been armed with rifles with a greater rate of fire.

Such a rifle could have been something like the lever-action Marlin Model 1895.

Mostly thought of now as a hunting cartridge, the .45-70 is capable of taking down any big game in North America. However, in a rifle like the Marlin it is equally effective for self-defense, especially with modern ammunition such as Hornady's 325-grain FTX bullet.

SPECS

The Model 1895 has an 18.95" barrel with a length of pull (LOP) of 13.4" and weight is 7.5 lbs. It has a folding, adjustable semi-Buckhorn rear sight and hooded ramp



The Marlin stock has a pistol grip with a curved lever to match the contour of the grip.

front sight with a brass bead. The receiver is drilled and tapped for a scope base.

The stock has a pistol grip with a curved lever to match the contour of the grip. Both the stock and forend has checkering for a sure grip and are made of American Black Walnut with a rubber recoil pad. Finish is blue and capacity is four plus one.

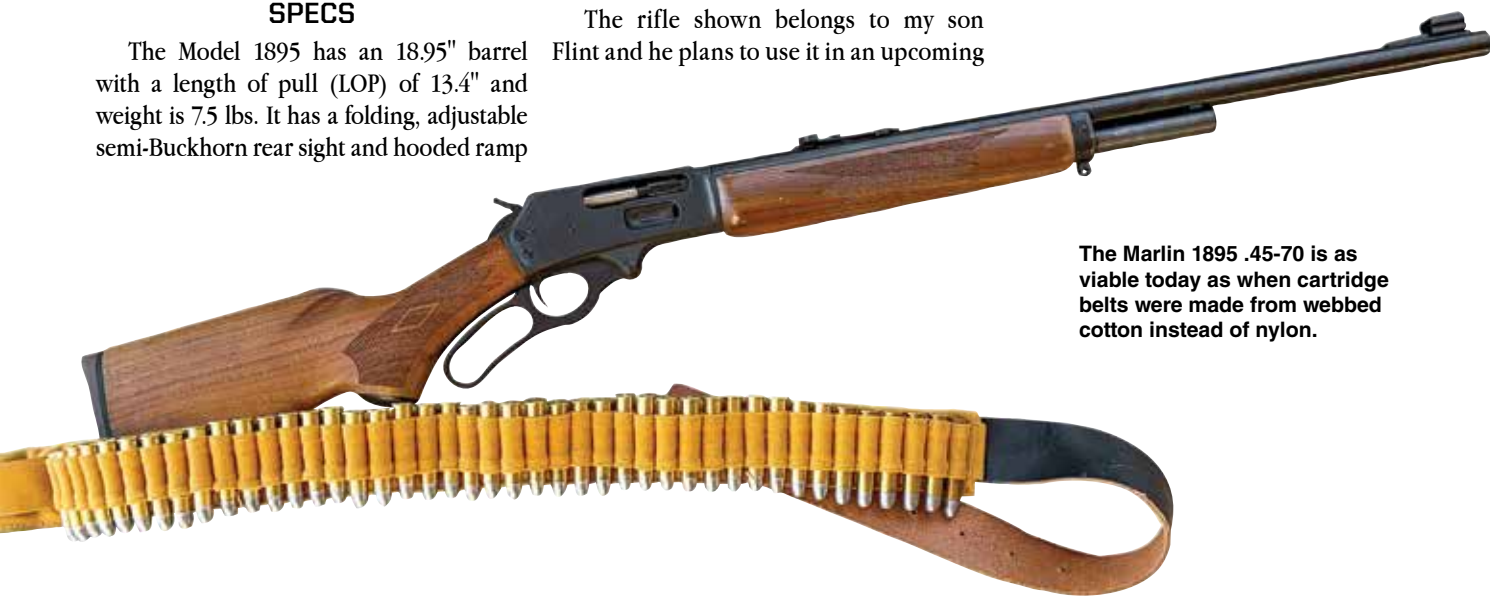
MODS

The rifle shown belongs to my son Flint and he plans to use it in an upcoming

bison depredation hunt, and possibly for a bear hunt. But first he felt it needed a few modifications to meet his needs.

First, the factory LOP is a bit too long to fit him well, especially with heavy clothing. And, while he can hit with the semi-Buckhorn sight, he wanted sights that were easier to pick up.

I cut down the stock to achieve a 12.5" and reprofiled the existing recoil pad.



The Marlin 1895 .45-70 is as viable today as when cartridge belts were made from webbed cotton instead of nylon.

THE ADVANTAGE OF METAL FOR THE PRICE OF POLYMER: MEET THE STK100 – THE STRIKER-FIRED PISTOL BUILT TO TURN HEADS



Well, looky here. A striker-fired pistol with enough weight to reduce felt recoil yet comfortable enough to carry all day. The 9MM STK100 also has 17-round capacity and features an optic-ready slide. Not to mention a textured grip that's angled more like a 1911 for greater control and accuracy. Put one in your hand and see for yourself.

\\ ARMSCOR.COM/STK100



The choice for sights was a no-brainer — I went with a Skinner Express rear sight. The sight comes with a 0.096" aperture insert that can be removed to achieve a 0.200" ghost ring (other aperture sizes are available from Skinner Sights).

I chose a Skinner fiber-optic front sight. The fiber optic tube measures 0.78" and transmits a lot of light to the eye.

Since the semi-Buckhorn rear sight was now superfluous, it was removed. A word

of caution here: If you perform a similar modification and remove the Buckhorn rear, place a business card under the sight elevator to avoid scratching the barrel.

Of course this left an unsightly empty dovetail on the top of the barrel with sharp edges to possibly abrade either clothing or flesh. Additionally, the edges of the dovetail could become damaged and require a gunsmith to repair in the event the original sight was ever replaced.

Therefore, I used Skinner Dovetail Sight blank to fill in the void. The blank is oversized and requires filing down to fit in the Marlin's dovetail. This is a slow process of filing and checking the fit. It is easy to remove too much steel, but impossible to replace. Once the blank will barely begin to insert, it can be tapped the rest of the way into place with a non-marring mallet.

I applied blue Loctite on the screws securing the sights as well as the dovetail blank.

The stock front sight is a hooded ramp with a brass bead.



A folding, adjustable semi-Buckhorn rear sight is standard. Denny replaced it with a Skinner Sights aperture sight and used a Skinner blank to fill the empty dovetail.

SUMMARY

Whether you use the Marlin 1895 as it comes out of the box or choose to add some changes to suit your personal preferences, the rifle is reliable, accurate and powerful.

As much as I hate to say it — with Modern Sporting Rifles under attack from the left — lever-action rifles may become as relevant as they were a century ago. To tell the truth, they are as viable as they ever were.

Street Price: Starting around \$750

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HANDLOADING THE .45 ACP

PART 4: THE COMMANDER

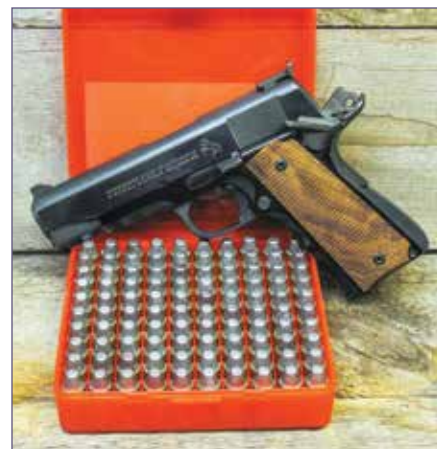
The U.S. Military used the 1911 through two world wars and then in 1947 the Army began looking at the possibility of adopting a smaller, lighter .45 ACP pistol. Colt engineers came up with an alloy-framed .45 weighing one-third less than the 1911 and having a barrel length of 4-1/4" compared to the original 5" length of the 1911. The Army never did adopt such a pistol, however, in late 1949 Colt began offering a commercial version of what is now known as the Commander. With its lighter weight, the Commander is much easier to carry all day — 26 oz. as compared to the all-steel 1911 at 39 oz. — and makes a major fatigue difference as the day wears on. However, the trade-off is its greater felt recoil so in 1970 an all-steel version was offered as the Combat Commander.

WHAT IT IS

We have confusion these days about just what is a Commander. Originally,

"Commander" referred to the original alloy-frame 1911 while the all-steel version was the Combat Commander. Now we often hear Commander to refer to the all-steel version while the alloy-frame model is known as the Lightweight Commander. Herein I will use the original terms, meaning when I say "Commander" I am talking about the alloy-framed version and the steel model will be called the Combat Commander.

The question was earlier raised as to whether the Commander would stand up to a lot of firing of standard loads. Col. Jeff Cooper wrote he did see aluminum shavings, in fact he says a "good deal" of them, while shooting a Commander. Fifty years ago Skeeter Skelton did torture testing of both the Colt Gold Cup and the Commander trying to see if the alloy frame is good only for a relatively small amount of shooting. To answer this question



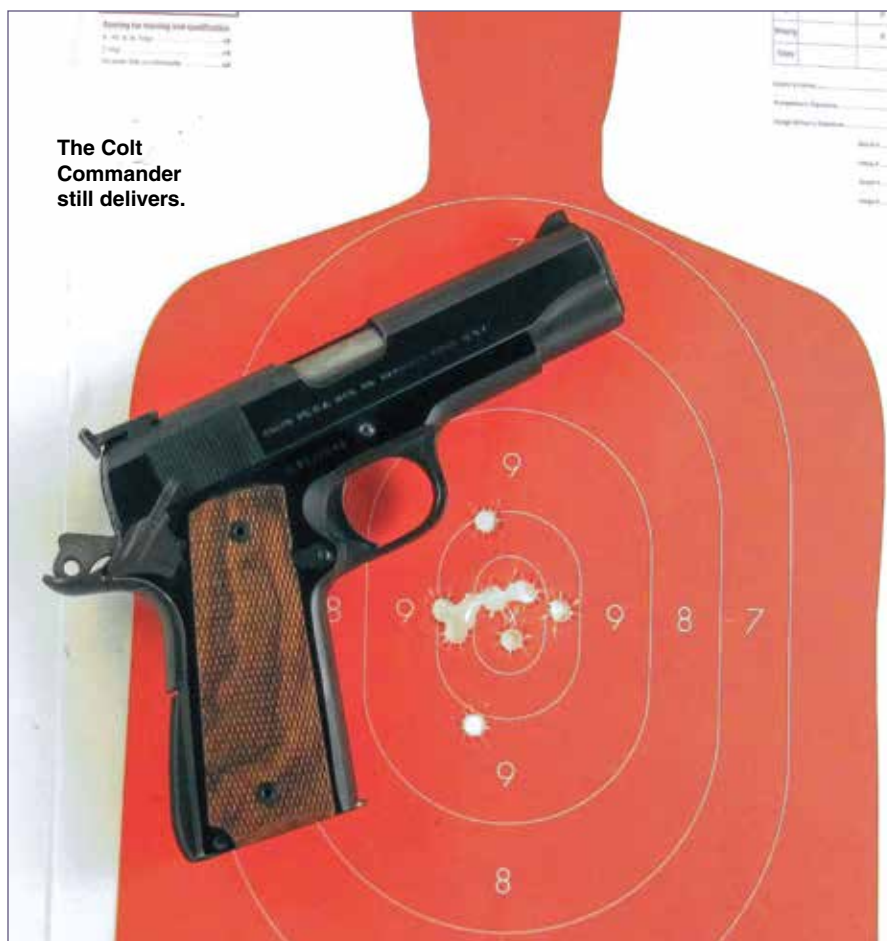
The original Colt Commander featured a lightweight alloy frame, the original "Carry much, shoot little" pistol.

5,500 rounds of Super Vel .45s were shot through his Commander and at the end of the testing he found the plunger tube had loosened. The ejector, though still functioning, had broken and needed to be replaced, and there was a 1/8" to 3/16" vertical crack in the frame in front of the slide stop pin. None of these prevented the Commander from functioning and in all probability the alloy used today for Commander frames is a lot stronger.

VERSIONS

In 2011 Sturm, Ruger joined the ranks of the 1911 manufacturers with their SR 1911. Ruger did just about everything right and shooters began waiting to see what would come next. Two years later the Ruger SR1911 Commander arrived. Although listed as a Commander, it is a Combat Commander. Once Ruger had both the 1911 and the Commander carried-out in stainless steel, the next step was an alloy-framed Commander. This cut 7 oz. off the weight of the stainless steel Commander. This may not sound like much but comparing them side-by-side, it feels like a significant amount and definitely does so when either one is carrying all day. The lightweight Ruger Commander has a polished titanium feed ramp; this cuts down on wear as cartridges enter the chamber. I mentioned the Ruger Commander specifically as it has proven to be an excellent performer.

In addition to the two versions of the Commander from Ruger I also have extensive experience with two other Custom Combat Commanders, one being from Jimmy Clark and the other the Wilson



The Colt Commander still delivers.



John's herd of Commanders (from top left clockwise): the Ruger Commander, Ruger Combat Commander, Clark Custom Commander and the Wilson Professional.

Professional, as well as my original Commander going back more than 50 years. When the passage of the Gun Control Act of 1968 was announced we had no idea just what it would do. So, many of us went out and purchased whatever we could before it went into effect. I went to the closest gun store and found three Commanders chambered in .38 Super, 9mm and .45 ACP and bought all three. I had better sights installed on the .45 Commander and it has now been in service for over half a century with no problems whatsoever.

RELOADING

In reloading for the Commander, it is not necessary to cut back on loads normally used for the 1911. However, although I find the Combat Commander just about as easy to shoot as the 1911, I cut back on the load when shooting a large quantity of ammunition through the Commander as the recoil gets to me very quickly. My most-used loads with the Colt Commander are both assembled with cast bullets. The Lyman #452460 hollow-point version weighs out at 190 grains and loaded over 5.0 grains of W231 clocks out at 780 fps while grouping five shots in just over 1" at 20 yards. Using the 219-grain Lyman #452424 over the same charge increases the muzzle velocity to 825 fps while grouping in 1-1/2". This semi-wad-cutter bullet has a large flat nose that increases shocking power. I am surprised at the fact it feeds flawlessly in this Colt

Commander, which will not work with 185-grain jacketed hollow points.

Switching to the Ruger Commander and using the same charge of 5.0 grains of W231 with three different cast bullets also works out exceptionally well. The Lyman #452424 clocks out at 837 fps while grouping in 1-1/8"; Lyman #452460 HP, 791 fps, 1-1/4"; and the RCBS #45-225 RN groups into 1-1/2" while clocking out at 807 fps. All of these loads are not that far removed from factory hardball.

My more powerful loads are saved for the Combat Commander pistols. Ruger's version with the Hornady 185 JHP over 7.0 grains of Unique registers 938 fps on the LabRadar and puts five shots in just over 1" while the same powder charge with the 190-grain Lyman #452460 HP puts five-shots in 1-1/2" with a muzzle velocity of 1,034 fps. This Ruger also shoots exceptionally well with the easy-shooting load of #452460 with 5.0 grains of W231 for 746 fps and a 1" group. A potent load for the Wilson Professional has proven to be the Hornady 185 JHP over 7.0 grains of Unique for just over 900 fps. With 230-grain FMJ bullets over 5.0 grains of Bullseye or 6.0 grains of Unique, the Wilson Professional clocks out at 755-765 fps while grouping into just over 1". This is slightly less than factory hardball however I have no doubt it would get the job done.

I have no doubt today's Commanders will handle any reasonable 1911 loads, however life is more pleasant if loads are tailored specifically for the gun and shooter.

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S&W HAND EJECTOR 2ND MODEL .455 NO LOVE EQUALS A BIG BARGAIN

Smith & Wesson's N-Frame double-action revolvers are some of the most respected handguns ever made. This is especially true for the exquisite pre-World War II ones. Almost all fans of S&W pre-war N-Frames dream of someday owning a "triplelock" .44 Special. Only about 15,000 of those were sold between 1908 and 1915. Later S&W offered Hand Ejector (HE) 2nd, 3rd and 4th Models of the N-Frame. All are greatly desired as .44

Specials. Some were also made as .38-40, .44-40 and .45 Colt but are so rare I've never actually seen one.

However, there's one S&W Hand Ejector version made in both 1st and 2nd Models that gets little love. Those are the .455s, as in the British .455 Webley. The only reasons I can think of for their lack of popularity is the cartridge itself. For example, a good friend told me at a recent Montana gun show a fellow offered him a fine condition S&W

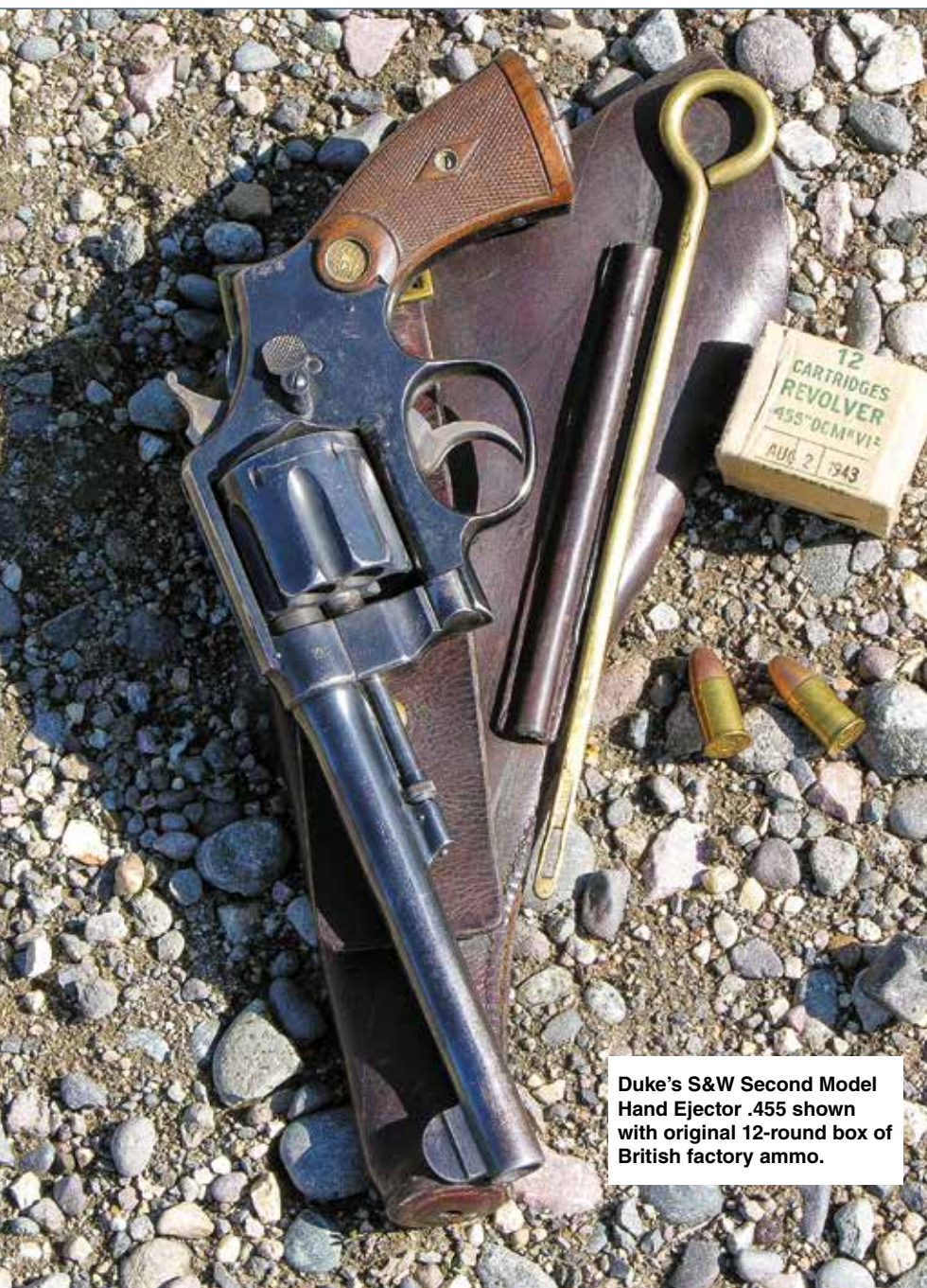
HE 2nd Model at a very attractive price but he turned it down because it was a .455. I would have nabbed it faster than a New Yorker heading to Florida! I already load for .455 Webley and although it's sort of a silly cartridge by modern standards, it is capable of fine shooting.

STIFF UPPER LIP

In the 1890s the British developed their .455 as a round for their top break Webley revolvers and as the handguns progressed from Mark I to Mark VI, so did the cartridge evolve from black powder and lead bullets to smokeless powder and jacketed bullets. My reason for calling the round silly is the Brits loaded it with 265-grain bullets at about 650 fps. By modern standards it's a pee-dunkler. I read one instance of a World War II American Marine who was surprised by a Japanese officer wielding a British Webley .455 (likely captured during the massive British surrenders at Hong Kong and Singapore). The Marine only had time to duck his face before the enemy fired and the .455 FMJ hit his helmet making only a slight groove. It was the last shot the Japanese officer ever fired.

My 1977 introduction (sort-of) to the S&W Hand Ejector .455 was with a friend's. It was an HE 2nd Model converted to fire .45 Colts, which is a fairly simple operation for an experienced gunsmith. My friend and I shot hundreds of my .45 Colt handloads through it. We both remember it as being easy to hit.

Fast forward about 35 years and I was working hard on my book *Shooting World War II Small Arms* (available on Amazon). For the project I needed an original .455. It wasn't too hard to find on GunBroker.com. It's from the HE 2nd Model production and to my joy it factory-lettered as shipped to the Canadian Government in 1916. These S&W .455s are all of a type: 6½" barrels, fixed sights, blue finish, checkered walnut grips and lanyard ring in the butt. It should be mentioned the first 5,000 S&W .455s were HE 1st Models (triplelocks). The British complained they were too closely made for trench mud, so the extra lock was eliminated — which S&W was going to do anyway, along with the shroud beneath the barrel meant for protecting the cylinder's ejector rod. This latter feature returned with the HE 3rd Model. The Brits bought another 69,000 S&W .455s HE 2nd Models, which means more were made than all the .44 Special HE 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Models lumped together.



Duke's S&W Second Model Hand Ejector .455 shown with original 12-round box of British factory ammo.



LOAD AND HOLSTER

Handloading the .455 Webley is simple nowadays. New brass is offered by Buffalo Arms Company and any .45 Colt bullet works well. I got my best results from Hornady 255-grain 0.454" swaged lead bullets. RCBS used to make a special order mold for the conical 265-grain bullet but it's now discontinued. However MP Molds still offers this bullet. For a brief period Hornady offered

The .455 Webley loads (left to right): Fiocchi 262-grain lead bullet, Hornady with 265-grain lead bullet, Hornady 255-grain .45 "Cowboy" bullet with Duke's handload, and RCBS #455-265 RN cast bullet (now discontinued) alongside Duke's handload.

some .455 factory loads with 255-grain lead-alloy bullets. Fiocchi .455 factory loads with 262-grain lead roundnose bullets are being imported from Italy. From my big S&W they chronographed 660 fps. A charge of 3.5 grains of Bullseye with the Hornady 255-grain bullets almost duplicates it perfectly.

The S&W .455s served Britain and their commonwealth allies in two world wars and so make fine handguns for historical minded shooters.

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MEOPTA OPTICS

GLASS FROM THE OTHER EUROPE

Like Swiss watches and Italian sports cars, Teutonic optics have a hallowed history. Hensoldt and Zeiss, then Leica in Wetzlar — and Schmidt & Bender in Biebertal — have made Germany a celebrated hub for makers of optical instruments. Add Austria, given Swarovski's Absam home in the Tyrolean Alps.

You could say high-end Japanese and Philippine manufacturers match the quality of rifle scopes and binoculars from the Old Country. The science, processes and materials yielding superior optics are shared worldwide. European makers buy glass from Japan.

Europe's top optics names come by their celebrity honestly, but not all glass worth knowing is well known. I'd visited Europe several times before finding a factory in the Czech Republic big enough to dwarf a Walmart distribution hub, one that has spent more than \$10 million on lens-coating machines, employs 2,500 people

and has built scopes since the depths of the Depression — Meopta.

CHECKING IN

Prerov is an industrial city, founded in the 18th century and now part of the Czech Republic. Of its 45,000 residents, 2,500 work at Meopta whose factory commands an expansive campus on Prerov's hem.

Despite a growing product line for hunters, only a quarter of Meopta's business has to do with sporting optics. Binoculars generate less than 20 percent of this revenue while over half comes from sales of rifle scopes. Military contracts make up just under 10 percent of total sales — though I can't say if the prisms for Abrams tanks and windshields for Boeing and Northrup-Grumman aircraft are so listed, or ranked as "industrial" products, which comprise half of Meopta's output.

Founded by a Dr. Mazurek, the company manufactured optics under a Communist

regime from 1933 to 1990. It became Meopta in 1946. According to Surujh Roopnarine, who hosted me at the factory, "until about 1970 it made a range of optical and mechanical items, including the only cinema projector in Europe. During the '70s and '80s it focused on military glass, binoculars to periscopes." In 1991 Meopta was bought by an American, Paul Rausnitz. His family still owns it. A U.S. branch appeared in 2004.

Surujh is also American. A native New Yorker, he met his Czech wife when she visited there to train in Meopta's U.S. office. They moved to Prerov, he as one of two Meopta sales executives. English is not widely spoken in the C.R., and as Czech was not offered in my high school, Surujh proved useful. He was also articulate and most gracious.

After an hour's walk on ancient stone paths through Prerov's "old town" along the Beca River, I got a few details on Meopta sales stateside. Not all carry the company's name. "We've made components for other European manufacturers," Surujh assured me, "and Cabela's sold our binoculars under its own label." While Meopta exports to 55 countries, Germany and the U.S. are its top customers, accounting for 20 and 23 percent of product shipped. The Czech Republic, with relatively few hunters, is a distant third.

Meopta values the traditional and serves the European market with big scopes excelling for wild boar hunting at night. My old Meopta Artemis, one of three fixed-power scopes then cataloged, has a steel tube. Still, the company keeps an eye on shifting trends. Alloy now accounts for well over 80 percent of metal in the firm's optics. "All reticles, first-plane and second, are etched," Surujh said as he led me through stadium-size buildings. "The lens is coated with chromium oxide, then photosensitized. UV light beamed through the template exposes all but the reticle. When the chromium oxide is washed off, just the reticle remains."

The section for lens production, coating and fitting is enormous. "It employs 900 people," Surujh said. "There are 40 coating machines, including eight Syrus units that cost 1.2 million Euros apiece! Our Meo-Bright lenses get 13 coatings. We apply up to 100 on others, some aspherical." Heat-sensitive fluorite glass doesn't like coatings



Meopta's factory in the Czech Republic employs 2,500 workers, yet it's owned by an American family.

at 300 degrees C, “so for it we dial temperatures back to 80 C.”

About 500 employees staff the mechanical division, which includes anodizing. “Some companies farm that operation out,” explained Surujh. “Almost all the work on Meopta products happens right here.” Meopta doesn’t make plastic or rubber parts. It outsources only “universal” hardware: small screws, pins and washers.

Some Meopta products for the U.S. are shipped as components, a common ploy to avoid onerous tariffs on finished goods. Parts are assembled in Meopta USA facilities on Long Island.

Optically, the binoculars, rifle scopes and spotting scopes from this Czech maker seem to me the equal of German and Austrian products in the same or higher price strata. By other measures too, Meopta delivers fine value. My MeoPro 3-9x40 has a lightweight, 1" alloy tube, sharp quarter-minute clicks, plenty of ring space and a rear-plane reticle. It was modestly priced. “Czech wages trail those in Austria and Germany,” Surujh said. “We’re catching up but still enjoy a 20% savings in labor costs.”

LINEUP

Meopta’s rifle-scope stable has grown considerably over the last decade. The MeoPro on my .25-06 is no longer listed but the Optika5 series with five-times magnification ranges (2-10x, 3-15x and 4-20x) has upstaged its parent line. The Optika5’s still have 1" tubes while other Meopta scopes — MeoPro Optika6, MeoStar R1 and MeoStar R2 in ascending order of price — feature 30mm tubes.

MeoStar 1, with four-times magnification, offers illuminated reticles. Meopta’s top-end MeoStar R2 has six-times magnification in four versions. The rear-plane reticle (K-Dot2 illuminated or German #4) appears one size across the power range. Field of view at 1x: a huge 113 feet at 100 yards! Eight brightness settings adjust for any light condition while MeoDrop hydrophobic lens coating sheds water.

One of the best new products from this Czech firm is the MeoSight III, a 1½-oz. open red dot sight useful for hunting handguns and slug-slinging shotguns as well as for rifles. It’s parallax free, with your choice of 3- or 5-minute dot, automatic or manual brightness control.

Meopta’s binoculars come not only in



Lens production at Meopta is automated (above). Forty coating machines include eight Syrus machines at \$1.2M each! This modestly priced Meopta 3-9x MeoPro (below, left) on Wayne’s .25-06 helped him kill his best whitetail buck. The new MeoPro Optika LR 10x42 HD laser-ranging binocular (below, right) is lightweight, compact, easy to use and gives instant range reads.



Nothing replaces the human eye during inspections and collimation. Many fixtures are built in-house.

common 8x42 and 10x42 configurations, but in 7x42 and nimble 8x32 versions. The 12x50 and 15x56 let you see far comfortably when you must keep eyes to the glass for long periods. In blind tests Meopta’s MeoStar spotting scopes I’ve used would be impossible to distinguish from the industry’s most expensive models.

Europe’s top optics names have come by their celebrity honestly, but not all glass

worth knowing is well known. I’d visited Europe often before finding in the Czech Republic a factory to dwarf a Walmart distribution hub, that’s spent more than \$10 million on lens-coating machines, employs 2,500 people and has built scopes since the depths of the Depression.

Meopta is one of a few brands proving you needn’t always pay the most to get the best.



CZ 457 RIMFIRE RIFLE SERIES

IMPROVING ON GOOD

Firearms made in the Czech Republic enjoy a reputation for excellent design and high quality construction. The history of the famous manufacturers Brno and CZ (Česká Zbrojovka, which translates as “Czech Armory”) is rather convoluted, as is the history of the nation itself, affected by wars both hot and cold. From the late 1940s to the early 1990s importation of firearms with rifled barrels from Soviet bloc nations to the U.S. was difficult, if it could be done at all. For decades, CZ rifles were tremendously popular around the world but virtually unavailable in the U.S.

As the Soviet empire collapsed and nations regained their independence, trade in sporting arms resumed. The big change came when CZ-USA, headquartered in Kansas City, was established in 1998 and began aggressively promoting and marketing CZ firearms.

CZ-USA is run by some very smart people. My impression is many of them are American firearms enthusiasts — or at least they listen to firearms enthusiasts. At any rate, new versions were introduced with features popular with American shooters without changing the basic design, high quality of materials and workmanship.

BACKSTORY

All this rather superficial history is intended to provide background for the recently introduced 457 rimfire series. CZ rimfires have a long and storied history, dating to the Brno Model 1 introduced in 1945, followed by the models 2 through 5. Though seldom seen in the U.S. due to trade sanctions, these Brno .22s were very popular

worldwide. They still sell quickly on used gun racks in Australia and New Zealand, even after three generations of steady use.

The Brno Model 2 (1954) was also known as the ZKM 452. When importation of Czech-made firearms resumed the 452 was the basis for the rimfire rifle, first offered on the American market in 1995. After CZ-USA assumed distribution many model variations were introduced, including the very popular American Classic. New cartridges such as .17 HMR and .17 Mach 2 were added. The model 453 was virtually identical to the 452 but with a better trigger including a single-set trigger variation.

Barrels of the 452/453 rifles were threaded (or pinned) to fit the receiver. The model 455 (2010) used two large setscrews in the receiver to retain the barrel, making barrel changes by the shooter fast and simple. The setscrews are coned to fit matching recesses in the barrel so when the screws are torqued to factory specifications barrel fit is tight and consistent.

From the Model 1 of 1945 to the 455 of 2010 the rifles earned high praise for workmanship, materials, accuracy, reliability and durability. They also came in for a few criticisms. One was the high bolt lift, irrelevant when iron sights were the norm but leaving little hand clearance when a scope is fitted. Triggers were generally good but even in its best iterations the 452 triggers didn't quite measure up to the best target models — Anschütz, for example. And yes, that is a very high bar. The most common complaint among American shooters was the manual safety. The CZ safety was pushed forward for



With its short bolt lift for scope clearance, forward-to-fire safety and one of the best adjustable triggers to ever grace a rimfire rifle, the 457 has earned the approval of devoted CZ fans.

safe, backward to fire — the opposite of most popular models sold in America.

A NEW BEGINNING

CZ introduced the model 457 in 2019 to address these and other issues. The action was made an inch shorter and slab-sided to improve appearance, the manual safety was redesigned to operate in the back-for-safe/forward-to-fire sequence so familiar to American shooters. The bolt lift was altered from 90 to 60 degrees, leaving plenty of hand clearance while a newly designed — and absolutely superb — adjustable trigger became standard. CZ has an excellent online video showing how to safely adjust the trigger for weight of pull, take up and over-travel. The 457 retains the excellent polymer magazines and the interchangeable barrel system of the 455 series.

The Synthetic shown here is one of the lowest-priced versions, well-suited to hard use. Barrel and action have a hard, smooth, corrosion-resistant nitride finish. With its synthetic stock the rifle is virtually impervious to even the worst weather conditions. The receiver is drilled and tapped for scope bases including a Picatinny-style rail available from CZ. It also has the 11mm integral grooves commonly found on rimfire rifles. I used the grooves and Tasco rings to attach a Redfield



The CZ 457 is the current model of the highly regarded line of CZ bolt-action rimfire rifles. The Synthetic version is both relatively inexpensive but tough.



The CZ 457 features a short-lift bolt leaving plenty of clearance between hand and scope, a more intuitive safety and a superb, fully adjustable trigger design.



Five- and 10-shot magazines are offered for the 457 rifle. The design has a spacer to accommodate longer magazines when the 457 rifle is fitted with a .17 HMR or .22 Magnum barrel.



When the 457 is cocked, a red cocking indicator extends from the rear of the bolt housing. The bolt remains unlocked so the chamber can be loaded or unloaded with the safety engaged.

rimfire scope I had on hand.

Five-shot, 50-yard groups were consistently in the range of .5-.7" using several brands of high-speed hollow point .22LR cartridges. Since the rifle is intended for small game hunting and pest control, I didn't see any point in shooting match ammunition. Other 457 versions are made for competitive shooting and have minimum-dimension chambers to enhance accuracy.

The CZ 457 is a terrific rifle and the Synthetic version an amazing bargain. Its most impressive feature is the outstanding adjustable trigger. It's hard to believe a trigger of this quality can be found on a hard-use, utility rifle with a suggested retail price of \$475. Kudos to CZ for improving on a legend.

THE PYROMANIAC'S CHILD

THE CHIP DOESN'T FALL FAR FROM
THE TREE — OR LAUNCH PAD



I keep a little bit of this stuff (above) mixed up and handy just for emergencies. Potassium nitrate (below) is the oxidizer. You can get this in small quantities from a pharmacy. A proper bucket like this is available online.



Roughly one in five Americans suffers from some sort of mental illness. The severity of these maladies can range from inconsequential to catastrophic with everything in between. However — in moderation — some of these unfortunate syndromes can actually be a good thing.

As an example, full-bore Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is utterly debilitating. Folks with severe OCD are so consumed by their involuntary routines they are unable to engage in normal life as we might define it. A bad case of OCD can render you nigh impossible to be around. Just a smattering, however, makes you a good doctor.

The capacity to fixate on details amidst a chaotic situation is critical to certain professions. The key is to strike the sacred balance between effective physician and intolerable human being. As my wife can attest, in my case the results are lamentably mixed.

The same can be said, surprisingly enough, of pyromania. Pyromania is classified as an

Impulse Control Disorder. Truly serious sufferers most usually end up in prison. Those of us with just a sprinkling of the malady typically gravitate toward gun writing.

AN EXPLOSIVE COMBINATION

First, the obligatory disclaimer. Proceed at your own risk. Testosterone is the most potent poison known to man and nobody forces us to do stupid stuff like this. I'm not recommending anybody go out and try what follows for themselves. Keep in mind I'm a professional gun writer. People expect such idiocy from folks like me. The following tale is presented for entertainment purposes only.

An engineering degree combined with enough time in uniform playing with the real deal to gain a certain modicum of comfort around ordnance laid my foundation. Home-schooling my kids well away from civilization accelerated the unfortunate natural urges. I could wield such stuff as thermite, binary explosives and improvised thermobaric charges conjured from coffee creamer and decry it chemistry or physics class. One of the more reliable crowd pleasers was homemade solid rocket fuel. It's a wonder my kids turned out normal.

It's not like the recipe is some kind of secret. You can find anything on the Internet. The easiest homemade solid rocket fuel uses potassium nitrate as an oxidizer, sulfur as a catalyst, and powdered sugar for fuel. I sourced everything locally. It is simply breathtaking how much energy is bound up inside sugar. Make some of this stuff and you'll never look at a Snickers bar the same again.

We experimented with dozens of different designs. Interestingly, a solid rocket motor doesn't burn from the bottom up. Solid rocket fuel burns from the middle out. Whether it is a bottle rocket or the Solid Rocket Boosters on the space shuttle, they all work the same way. There is a hole bored through the center of the propellant grain (the technical term for the rocket motor) such that the fuel ignites along its entire length. The top is sealed and the bottom ends in a nozzle to constructively



Put a dab in a Kleenex and touch it off on the back porch after dark and the flash is visible from space.



Behold, DIY rocket fuel. From right to left is powdered sugar, atomized sulfur, potassium nitrate and the finished product.

vent the chaos. The result is unfiltered awesome.

Experimentation is half the fun. We made one- and two-stage rockets with payloads and without. We are blessed to live on a remote rural farm so we could test our creations off the back porch. I used a length of steel rod shoved into the ground as a launch pad. Some of these rockets were a bit on the large side.

GROUND ZERO

It was a breezy Spring day in Mississippi and the fall leaves formed a crunchy blanket atop everything. We had been shooting rockets for a while and were down to the day's last war shot. Without my realizing it, the vigor of the previous effort had softened the base of the launch rod. When we lit our last missile the rod failed, fell over, and loosed the thing parallel to the ground and into the woods.

Alas, our farm is an otherwise uninhabited space so all involved simply thought it comical as our hefty rocket careened off into the wilderness. We gathered up our gear and headed inside. Before my wife retired she



Solid fuel rockets both large and small operate on similar principles, though it must be noted NASA hasn't set any Mississippi forests on fire recently. Photo: Unsplash

thought she heard something crackling.

By the time we got to the point of conflagration the fire was already maybe 30 meters across. My family and I took up shovels and buckets and began beating back the flames like people possessed. Two hours later roughly four acres of our farm had been incinerated. We were all of us baked, utterly

exhausted and reeking of smoke. My wife and kids were inexplicably short with me. As we finally made our way back home for food, water and showers, one son was overheard muttering to the other, "I'm leaving this crazy place forever, and I'm never coming back. Are you with me?" Such is the sordid lot of the pyromaniac's child.



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RUGER OLD MODEL SINGLE-SIX CONVERTIBLE

THE OLDIE IS STILL A GOODIE

Payton Miller

Bill Ruger's Standard Model pistol (1949) and the Single-Six revolver (1953) pretty much set the rimfire handgun market on its ear. It's been conjectured Ruger's little single-action was an artful attempt to take advantage of the enormous exposure sixguns were getting via television and movie westerns of the 1950s as he'd noticed a "single-action gap" in the market. At the time Colt was still being several years away from getting back into the SA sixgun business.

By 1969, both the Standard and Single-Six were still priced well below the comparable competition. The Standard Model, at \$41.50 was well under the \$71.50 sticker on the Colt Huntsman. The Single-Six Convertible (the interchangeable .22 Magnum cylinder came along in 1962) was \$69.50, still under the \$82.50 sticker on Colt's two-cylinder Frontier Scout rimfire.

Of course, none of this late '60s MSRP argle-bargle mattered much to me at the time. As of 1966, my Dad had gotten me a — barely — used first-year Single-Six Convertible for the sum of 40 bucks. He'd seen an ad in the local newspaper, driven down to the address listed and done the deal for my birthday. The seller had given him a handwritten bill of sale I kept for years. Then, they shook hands and that was that. No DROSS fee, no Private Party Transfer, no FOID card, no nothing.

The extra cylinder, source of the "Convertible" name, came in a little red felt bag with a gold drawstring. Changing cylinders took me — mechanically challenged as I was — under 10 seconds but I must confess the .22 Long Rifle unit got little use back in those days.

MAGNUM MANIA

The first chunk of disposable income I laid hands on went straight to a 50-round box of Winchester Super-X .22 Magnum HPs. The price was a hair under 5 bucks. My father — your basic



As issued in 1962: walnut grips with post-Alexander Sturm eagle medallion, frame/barrel assembly with coil mainspring and contoured loading gate (this replaced the original flat gate), .22 WMR cylinder and base pin, ejector rod, spring and housing.

Depression/WWII guy — was aghast at my profligacy but I didn't care. As far as I was concerned, the healthy magnum-ized boom instead of the considerably less-dramatic snap of a Long Rifle was well worth the expense.

Mine was a 6.5" barrel as opposed to the 4.75", 5.5" and 9.5" models. I thought it was a pretty graceful barrel length — long enough for a good sight radius yet not as unwieldy as the Bun-tylinesque 9.5". In those heady, pre-personal chronograph days, ad literature for the then-standard 40-grain .22 Magnum breathlessly proclaimed a 1,500 fps velocity from a 6.5" handgun barrel; 2,000 fps from a rifle.

At the time I didn't care. I was enjoying the heck out of shooting beer cans, small game, varmints, dirt clods and paper targets with it. And, truth be told, I was pretty enamored of the



The author's 1962 Convertible (top) features a 6.5" barrel. Another barrel option was 5.5" as shown by this late-1950s Single-Six (bottom).



gun in magnum guise and remained so for many years. But recently I broke it out to see exactly what kind of velocities I was getting from current .22 Magnum and .22 Long Rifle loads. The results were enlightening.

.22 Magnum: CCI 40-grain MaxiMag HP — 1,379 fps; Hornady 30-grain V-Max — 1,727 fps; Hornady 45-grain FTX — 1,326 fps; Winchester Supreme 34-grain JHP — 1,700 fps.

.22 Long Rifle: Winchester 40-grain Wildcat — 1,018 fps; Winchester 36-grain HP — 1,138 fps; CCI 32-grain Stinger HP — 1,253 fps; Aguila 30-grain Super Maximum — 1,365 fps

By this, it seems there isn't a whole lot of handgun velocity difference between heavy bullet .22 Magnum loads and .22 Long Rifle light-bullet, hyper-velocity loads like the Stinger and Aguila Super Max. In terms of more important things like 25-yard accuracy and shooting to my fixed sights, the best magnums were the Hornady 45-grain and CCI 40-grain. But as far as the Long Rifle selection, the slowpoke 40-grain Winchester Wildcat stuff took top honors, even if it did shade a bit to the right.

OLD-SCHOOL, OLD MODEL

The Single-Six Convertible (0629) can still be had with fixed sights in 5.5" but if I had to do it over again I'd probably opt for adjustables, which came in 1964 with the premiere of the Super Single-Six Convertible. There are just too darn many point-of-impact variations in the vast array of .22 rimfires (magnum or not) to stay with fixed ones. Plus, the higher-profile adjustable sights are easier for old eyes to pick up. But I'd still want a blued gun.

And I'd always be missing the tactile, old-school pleasure of setting the hammer at half cock to spin the cylinder. This, of



Best 25-yard .22 Mag results came with Hornady's 45-grain FTX while the tightest .22 LR cluster came with the Winchester 40-grain .22 Wildcat. The old Ruger seemed to prefer the heavyweights!

course, went bye-bye with the introduction of the New Model Single-Six in 1973. Even after all these years, to me there's just something unholy about being able to freewheel the cylinder by merely flipping open the loading gate on a transfer-bar gun.

The superior trigger of the Old Model Single-Six is one of the reasons they're still highly sought-after. Mine breaks at 2.5 lbs. and all broken-icicle/glass rod clichés are applicable here — although follow-through on the shot assumes greater importance with the lengthy single-action hammer-fall.

But no, you shouldn't load the Old Models all the way around. Just leave the hammer down on an empty chamber like the old timers did, at least when they weren't expecting trouble.

But seriously, what if five's all you got?

We're talking about a sporting single-action rimfire. You're not gonna reprise High Noon with it, and if you find yourself trying, you've made a serious error somewhere along the line. Just remember the old Colt Peacemaker mantra: Load one, skip one, load one.

For sheer sentimental reasons — not to mention the fact I'm now frugal and mature enough to appreciate the .22 Long Rifle option — this would be the last handgun I'd ever part with. I won a bet with it in my late 20s when my vision was 20/15. At 100 yards I hit two ground squirrels on a hillside with three shots from prone and won 20 bucks.

But even back then I was smart enough to quit immediately and hang onto the money. Just like I'm going to hang onto that Ruger.

.375 JDJ

The Original Hand Cannon

JEFF “TANK” HOOVER

Thanks to stalwarts JD Jones of SSK Industries and Larry Kelly of Mag-na-port International, the 1970s were the heyday for handgun hunters, the decade being filled with design and innovation.

Kelly came up with the idea of porting barrels using Electrical Discharge Machining (EDM) to reduce recoil, muzzle blast and barrel flip while Jones brought us custom-quality barrels chambered in both standard and wildcat cartridges for Thompson/Center (TC) Contender single-shot frames. Later, they both designed cool, limited run, one-of-a-kind handguns for handgun hunters.

One of the most popular calibers Jones designed is his .375 JDJ cartridge. Made for the TC Contender single-shot handgun/carbine, this powerful cartridge is simply the .444 Marlin case necked-down to accept 0.375" bullets. This is done by running fresh .444 Marlin brass through your .375 JDJ sizing die. With Starline Brass making .444 Marlin brass now, we are in great shape!

Both JD and Larry proved the .375 JDJ's mettle by taking elephant, Cape buffalo, lion, bears and other large, dangerous game, most with a single well-placed shot. It was — and still is — considered the “original” hand cannon for good reason. It's no wonder they're best buddies. Ken Kelly said, “more like brothers, talking every morning on the phone for an hour or more.”

BALLISTICALLY SPEAKING ...

Bullets from 220–235 grains can be driven to 2,200 fps. These slugs are ideal for deer-sized game and are easier on the wrist while shooting. Mid-weight bullets in the 270-grain class can easily reach 2,000 fps and are a good all-around weight for practically anything. Lastly, are the 300-grain heavyweights driven to 1,900 FPS? These slugs are capable of taking any game on earth — and have. In my 20" TC Carbine, a bona-fide crusher, velocities reach over 200 FPS more from the longer barrel.

Sadly, both the Hornady round-nosed bullets have been discontinued as well as the mighty fine 220-grain Interlock bullet. I stocked up on those bullets before they were discontinued. I'm

A close-up of Tank's TC .375 JDJ handgun on the bench. Those are 270-grain MP Molds HPGC slugs loaded over Hodgdon H-322.



Here's the fixins' for .375 JDJ handload happiness — (left to right) 444 brass parent cartridge; 220-grain Hornady bullet, MP Molds 270-grain HPGC slug, RCBS 270-grain FNGC slug, Speer 235-grain bullet and 300-grain RN Hornady bullet.



Here's Tank's TC G2 Contender carbine, above his original TC Contender hand cannon. Those guns have a reputation for accuracy — and prove it with typical 100-yard targets.

stingy shooting them and plan on saving them for nostalgic hunts in the future. However, there are several other worthy bullets made today to fill the niche of those older slugs.

CAST BULLETS ... AGAIN

You know me — I cannot write about a cartridge without mentioning a load, or two, involving the use of cast bullets. And, with some Hornady bullets being discontinued, it only makes sense to shoot a lot of cast bullets. There's a lesson there somewhere, eh?

I have two favorites for the .375 JDJ. The first is the RCBS 250 FNGC, or flat-nosed gas-check design. Cast from wheel-weights it drops from the mold at 270 grains. Loaded over a stiff charge of Hodgdon H322, velocities over 2,000 FPS are easily obtained.

The MP Molds 270-grain HPGC (hollow-point gas-check) gets the same loads of H322 for the same velocity. As with most Thompson Center barrel/Contender combos, accuracy is as good as you can hold. We're talking 1–1.5" at 100 yards! No wonder people love TC single-shots!

TANK'S RIGS

My own .375 JDJ rigs are nothing short of spectacular, in a TC-factory sort of way. The hand-cannon consists of an original TC Contender frame with a factory .375 JDJ barrel. I added a Pachmayr forearm and grip with sling swivels. This addition is nice for absorbing felt recoil. I sure wish Pachmayr would bring them back as they are discontinued.



Double trouble! — Larry with a couple of nice Cape buffalo he took with the .375 JDJ.

Scope-wise, I have a Bushnell Elite 3200 2-6X scope just like Larry used. I recently had Ken Kelly, Larry's son, port it for me on my last trip to Mag-na-port. Shooting it for years in original factory form, I finally decided the reduction in recoil with "original" Mag-na-port porting just makes it right.

My carbine has the G2 Contender frame with the 20" Carbine barrel attached to it. I have a Bushnell Banner 3-9X scope mounted on it. It is short, quick pointing and a joy to carry, as a carbine should be.

FOR NOSTALGIA'S SAKE

Pulling these guns from my safe, I'm quickly reminded just how well TC guns shoot! Hardcore TC fans already know this — I just wish they'd make a resurgence in the manufacturing world. Still, it's fun to shoot what our heroes did before us. If only we all could hunt the world over like Larry Kelly and JD Jones did ...

KAHR ARMS TOMMY

HISTORY OF THE BEST-KNOWN U.S. SUBMACHINE GUN

MIKE “DUKE” VENTURINO
PHOTOS: YVONNE VENTURINO

The Thompson submachine gun — better known as the Tommy Gun — has a long, mythical history in both popular culture and reality. Starting in 1962 gun-guys my age watched Sgt. Saunders pack his Tommy Gun all over France every week on the *Combat* TV series. More recently the movie *The Highwaymen* shows Kevin Costner as Texas Ranger Frank Hamer buying Thompsons over the counter at a Texas gun store when preparing to hunt down bandits Bonnie and Clyde.

In actual fact .45 Auto Thompson Submachine Guns saw relatively little action

prior to World War II and big city gangsters (mostly in the Chicago area) saddled Tommy Guns with a negative reputation in the 1920s. Their crimes, such as the murder of seven individuals on Valentine's Day 1929, were over-publicized by newspapers and cinema newsreels. When Great Britain declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939 their army was woefully short of weaponry. Regardless some British officers resisted buying Thompson submachine guns from the United States terming them “gangster guns.”

Consider this: The first 15,000 Thompson submachine guns were Model

1921s manufactured to beautiful quality standards in the Colt factory. A few thousand of them were still in inventory in 1939. Here's another fact: General John T. Thompson, after whom the submachine gun was named, had almost nothing to do with its design and manufacture!

It was his idea hand-held machine guns would make ideal “trench brooms.” To this end he raised financing and founded the Auto-Ordnance Corporation, hiring engineers and draftsmen to design prototypes and having them made in Cleveland, Ohio. Until the early 1940s — after General Thompson ceased his connection with Auto-Ordnance — did the company actually have a factory. Ironically General Thompson and his descendants realized little financial benefits from the weapon named after him.

A great disappointment to General Thompson was during his lifetime, the U.S. Army showed scant interest in his brainstorm, a hand-held machinegun with a 10.5" barrel capable of both semi-auto and full-auto function. Other calibers were experimented with but the .45 Auto was its primary caliber. Various ordnance boards tested Tommy Guns, found them reliable but claimed shotguns would be

A The rainbow trajectory of the .45 ACP round required a complex and fragile Lyman sight for long shots, though most users relied on the “Spray and Pray” method for closer targets. **B** The reciprocating bolt handle on the top of the receiver — grooved to allow sighting — can be disconcerting to shooters. Military models M1 and M1A1 moved the handle to the side.



GUN

more appropriate for trench warfare.

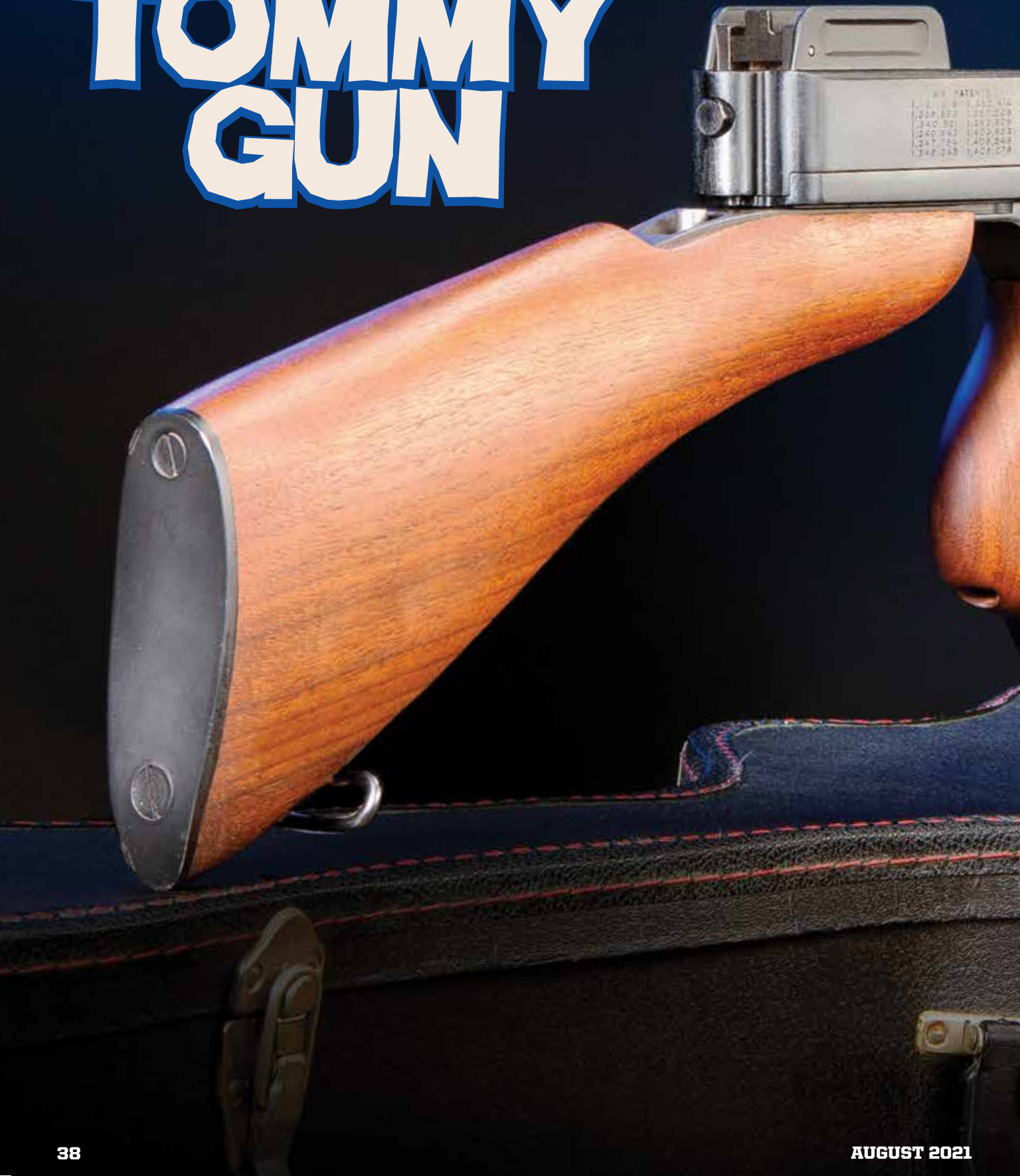
According to the book *American Thunder II* by Frank Iannamico, in 1931 the U.S. Army Infantry Board said the Tommy Gun “has no place as a standard article of the Infantry.” They did allow the weapon might be usable for riot control and guard duty. It wasn’t until 1939 when the U.S. Army decided to buy 951 Model 1928 Thompson submachine guns for issue to armored vehicles.

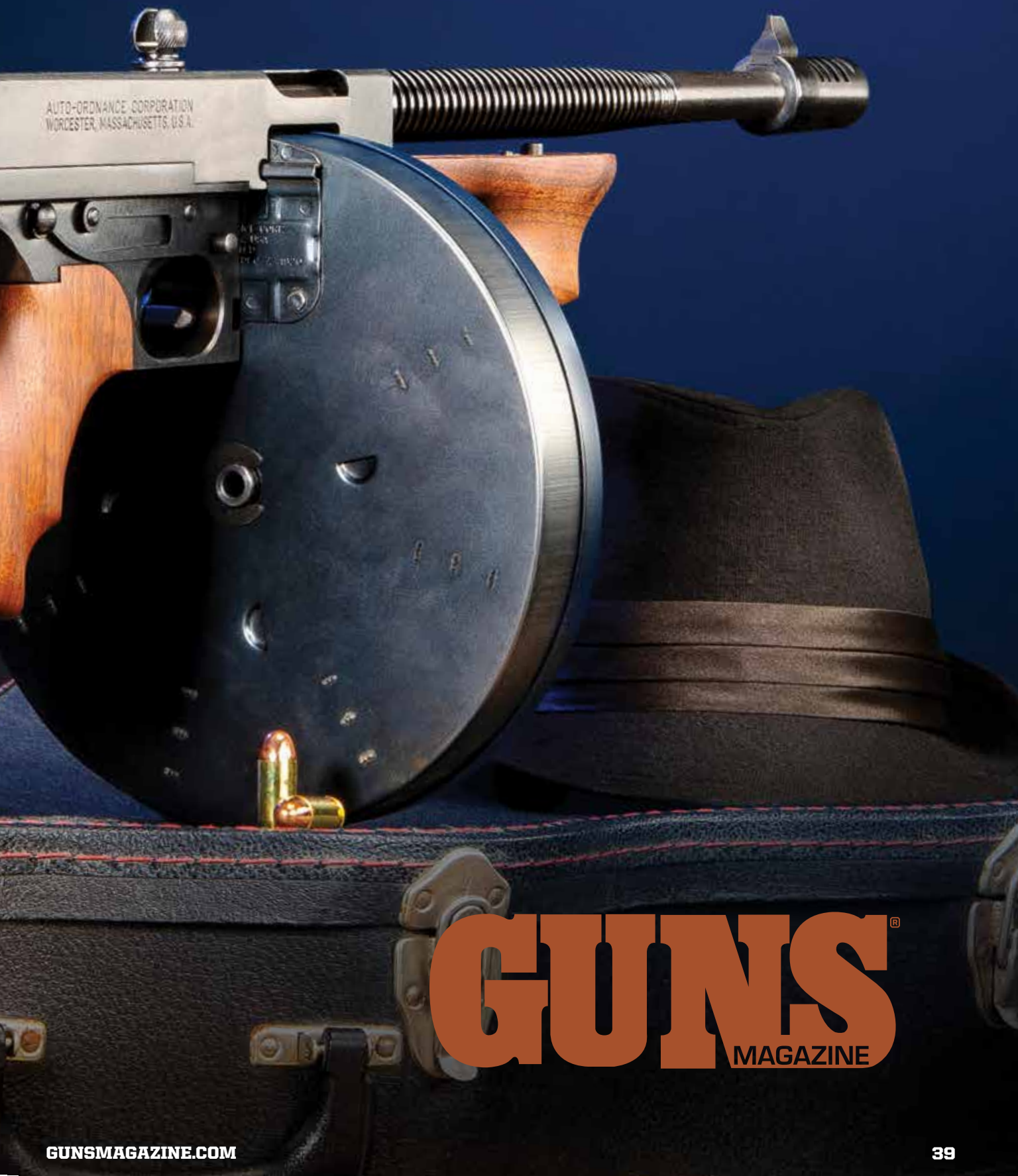
The U.S. Marine Corps — as always willing to be out of step with the U.S. Army — welcomed Tommy Guns and requested 50- and 100-round drum magazines. They began with the Model 1921, but changes were requested by the Navy and Marines and some Model 1921s were converted. The Model 1921’s rate of fire of 800/900 rounds per minute was slowed to about 700 RPM and a Cutts Compensator was attached at the muzzle to hold down muzzle



**K&H
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TOMMY GUN





GUNS[®]

MAGAZINE



climb. These were over-stamped "Model 1928." According to Iannamico's book, in the '20s and '30s Marines used these Thompsons in the Banana Wars of Central America and also in China.

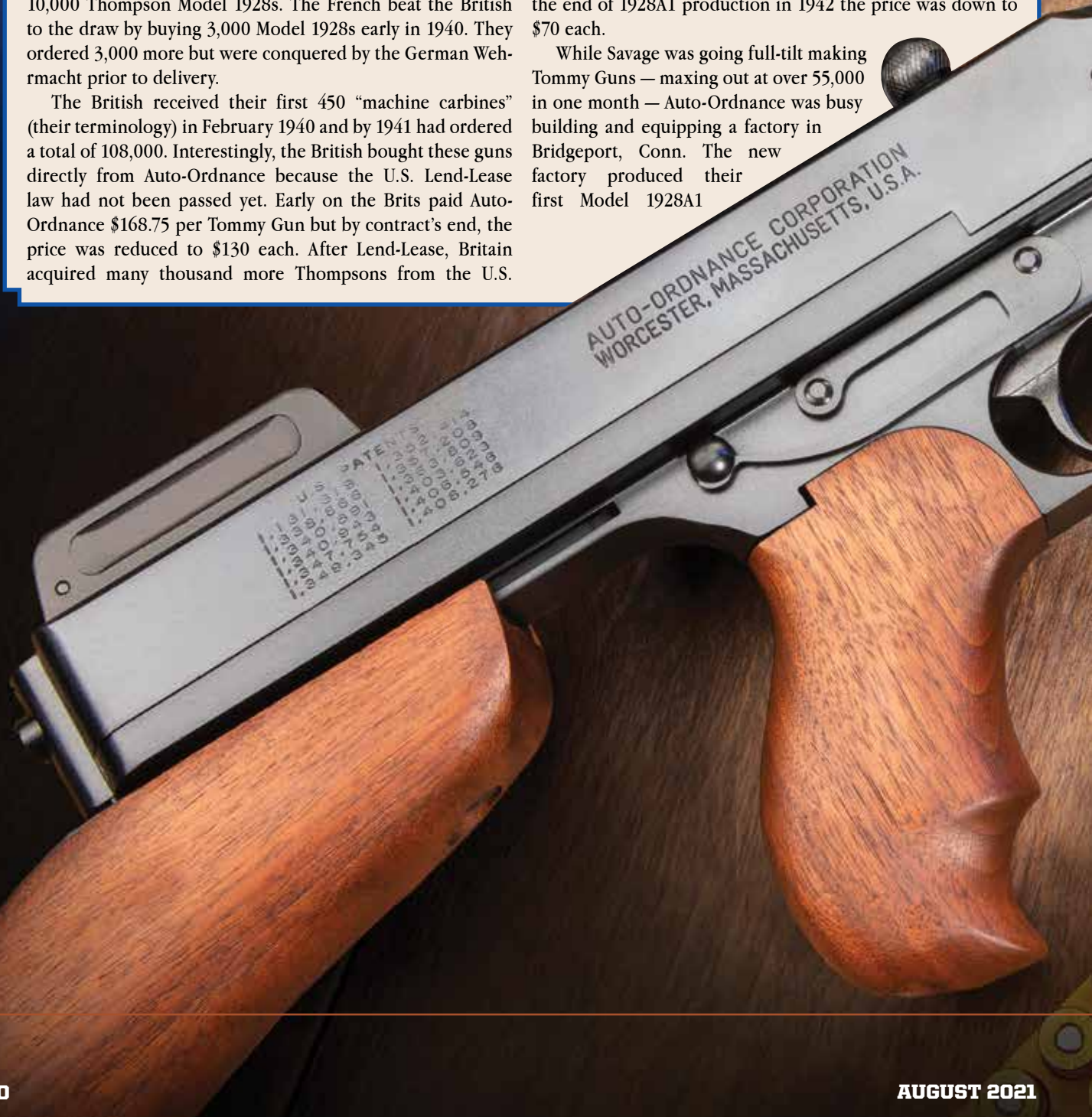
In the late 1930s an astute businessman named Russell Maquire obtained controlling interest in the Auto-Ordnance Corporation. What he got were patents, spare parts and a small quantity of the first 15,000 Colt-made Thompsons. However, Maquire predicted a new war would break out in Europe and prepared for it. Colt rejected his requests for more Tommy Gun manufacture so Maquire convinced Savage Arms Corporation of Utica, N.Y., to accept a contract for 10,000 Thompson Model 1928s. The French beat the British to the draw by buying 3,000 Model 1928s early in 1940. They ordered 3,000 more but were conquered by the German Wehrmacht prior to delivery.

The British received their first 450 "machine carbines" (their terminology) in February 1940 and by 1941 had ordered a total of 108,000. Interestingly, the British bought these guns directly from Auto-Ordnance because the U.S. Lend-Lease law had not been passed yet. Early on the Brits paid Auto-Ordnance \$168.75 per Tommy Gun but by contract's end, the price was reduced to \$130 each. After Lend-Lease, Britain acquired many thousand more Thompsons from the U.S.

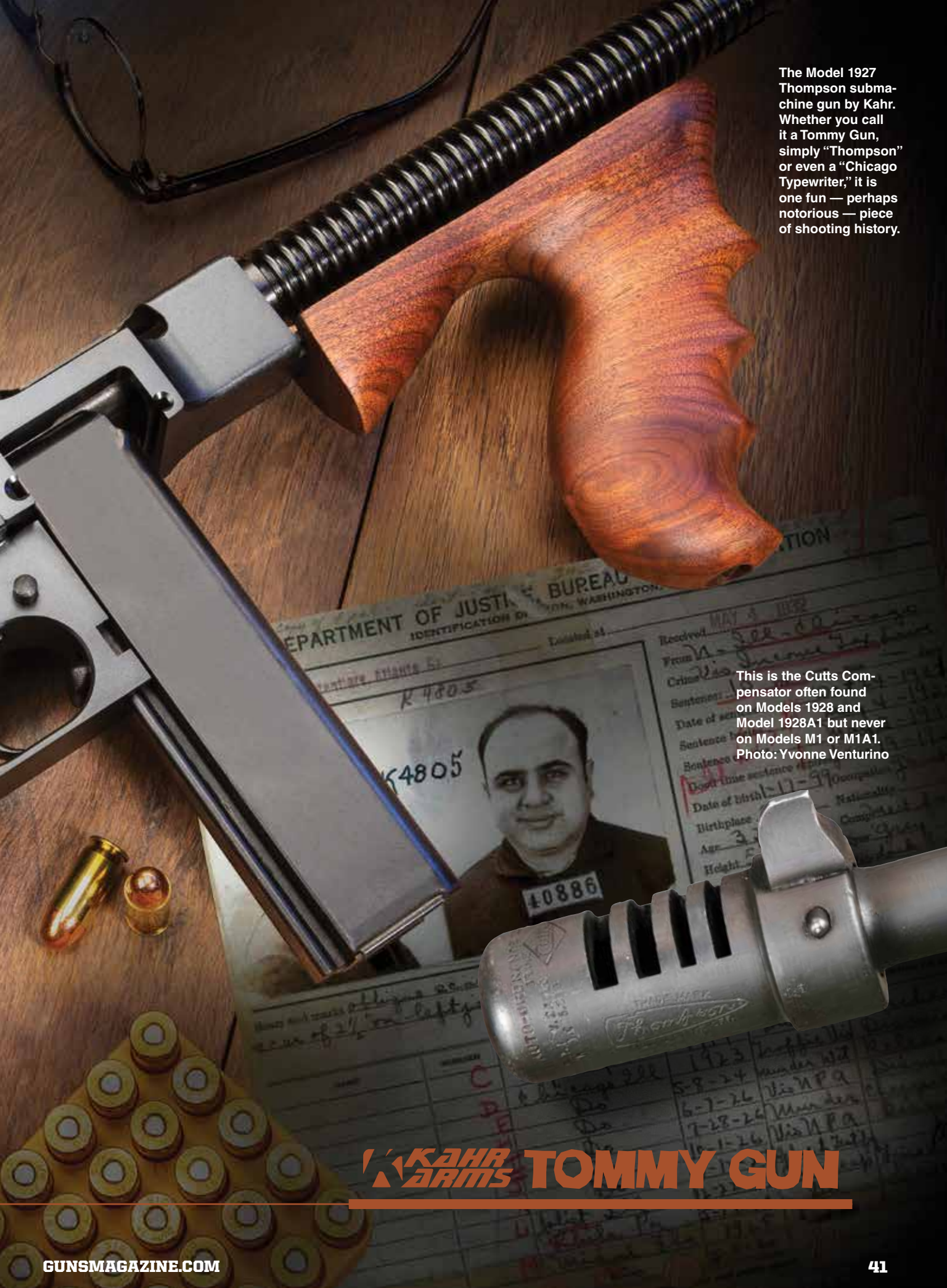
Government and used them in all theaters of the war by their own Canadian, New Zealand, Indian and Australian troops.

When Savage took over production of Tommy Guns, the Model 1928 had 1" finned barrels with a Cutts Compensator. The finning gave more barrel area to dispense heat quickly. Sight for rear was an intricate Lyman model adjustable for windage and elevation while the front sight was a simple blade. Walnut buttstocks were capped in steel; the fore-grips were also wood. For the U.S. military, the front handguard was horizontal but for foreign sales it was usually vertical. As the Model 1928 evolved into Model 1928A1 many changes were phased in. The rear sight became an L-shaped piece of steel still made by Lyman; the barrel became smooth but the Cutts Compensator was retained. This model also retained the ability to use both drum and stick magazines. Cost to the U.S. Government for the first Model 1928A1 was \$202.50. By the end of 1928A1 production in 1942 the price was down to \$70 each.

While Savage was going full-tilt making Tommy Guns — maxing out at over 55,000 in one month — Auto-Ordnance was busy building and equipping a factory in Bridgeport, Conn. The new factory produced their first Model 1928A1



The Model 1927 Thompson submachine gun by Kahr. Whether you call it a Tommy Gun, simply "Thompson" or even a "Chicago Typewriter," it is one fun — perhaps notorious — piece of shooting history.



This is the Cutts Compensator often found on Models 1928 and Model 1928A1 but never on Models M1 or M1A1. Photo: Yvonne Venturino

Kahr Arms **TOMMY GUN**

in August, 1941 and their last in October, 1942. In between, about 142,000 Tommy Guns passed through their doors. Counting both Models 1928 and 1928A1 Savage made over 552,000, therefore by fall of 1942 about 663,000 had been made.

In 1941 Savage engineers gave the U.S. Government some ideas on how to make Thompson Submachine Guns more quickly and less expensively. The changes were accepted by the government and resulted in a significantly altered Tommy Gun. Its bolt cocking handle was moved from the receiver's top to its right side and the Cutts Compensators were eliminated. Machining to allow 50- and 100-round drum usage was dropped and the intricately machined bolt was simplified. Cost to the government was reduced to \$43.

Later in 1942 a few more changes caused the model to become the M1A1. The firing pins were machined integral with bolts, protective ears were added alongside the bent piece of steel serving as rear sight and a reinforcing crossbolt at the stocks wrist. Sources vary but in total from Model 1921 to M1A1 about 1.5 million Tommy Guns were made.

Despite the thought and efforts going into remodeling the Tommy Gun, their time was limited. The government had moved on to adopting M3 "grease-guns" so the last Tommy Gun was delivered in February 1944. Regardless, many thousands were still in service during the Korean War and photos taken in Vietnam in the 1960s often show Thompsons of several versions being used by both sides.



KAHR TOMMY GUN 1927A-1

RETRO-RESPLENDENT "GAT"

ROY HUNTINGTON

What weighs 12.5 lbs., is more than a yard long, tends toward obstinacy when carried, is hard to shoot accurately and pokes and prods when you manipulate it? Why, a Thompson, of course. And, in spite of this running series of inconvenient traits most of we "gun-people" love them and generally want one — badly.

"Hey, want a Tommy Gun?"

"Who me? Oh, no thanks ..." has never been heard by a human being — ever.

As Duke reminds us in his feature, many of us watched "Sgt. Saunders" fling his Thompson around like it was made of plastic in the iconic 1960s TV series "Combat." I've handled real ones and it almost takes two hands to "fling them around" like he did. I

wonder if his was, indeed, a prop gun most of the time? Gads, that'd dim the bright light of heroism somewhat. Nonetheless, the images of flying .45 ACP brass and "mowed-down" Nazis remains as firmly implanted in my 66-year old brain today as it was when it was initially seared into my then 10-year old brain. Gosh.

So, like most Boomer Boys, this genetically tattooed image finally came to life when I was a cop in the middle 1970s. Our small agency had not one, not two, but three genuine WWII era full-auto Thompsons — and a BAR — and a belt of

Pineapple grenades too. Ha! I was able to shoot the Tommy Guns, depleting cases of WWII military ball ammo — "Shoot up that old ammo, kid," said my grizzled WWII vet sergeant. Instead of getting it out of my system, all this simply made things worse. Or better?

DECADES PASS

The modern Auto-Ordnance company struggled to stay afloat over the years and once purchased by Kahr, was able to gain momentum and traction with an influx of funding, engineering skill and solid

A This serial number with AO prefix means the Thompson was made by Auto-Ordnance. Photo: Yvonne Venturino **B** This tiny "s" on an M1 Thompson denotes it was made by Savage Arms during WWII. **C** Note the Thompson "bullet" trademark and the Lyman on the base of this M1's rear sight.





Two basic Thompson Submachine Guns. Top is an M1 made in 1942 by Savage Arms. Bottom is Model 1928A1 made by Auto-Ordnance also in 1942. Both have 30-round stick magazines. Photo: Yvonne Venturino

marketing. What they found was a ready market for “civilianized” Tommy Guns of all sorts, albeit with some concessions for the all-seeing BATF’s rules. Compromises like 18” barrels and re-designed innards to make conversion to full-auto essentially impossible allowed this iconic beacon of unfulfilled wishes to be owned by we mere mortals.

Over the years Auto-Ordnance has offered some eye-catching variants, like a “solid” gold model, commemorative models and the latest — the T1B-14. Having a 14.5” barrel, extending to 16.5” with the genuine Cutts Compensator installed, keeps the package slightly shorter overall yet pleases the BATF at the same time. Since the original Thompson had a 10.5” barrel, the pesky longer barrel has always miffed us, detracting from the hearty look of the original and making the heft feel just not quite “right.” Surprisingly, the slightly shorter barrel does actually feel better, so thank you Kahr — we’re getting closer.

If you want your very own, there are many models to choose from, running the gamut from, say, \$1,300 or so for an aluminum-framed 9mm version, to upwards of \$3,400 if you need your very own gold one. They also have genuine 10.5”-barreled models but those are classified as “Short Barreled Rifles” (SBRs) and need special transfer protocol. Think around the \$2,000 to \$2,500 mark to get one similar to our test gun.

What can we say about operation and shooting? First off, let’s get this out in the open right now. This magical 12.5-lb. beast is not practical today in any way you could possibly imagine. But we all know it’s not about this, don’t we? We’ve covered 9mm Gatling guns, full-auto BB pistols and .600 Nitro Express double rifles, so don’t dare point your finger and act like we’ve lost our minds. We haven’t, and neither have you if you see the delight in all this. Yes, we’re able to hit the 50-yard torso gong with it. Yes, it shoots America’s favorite

.45 ACP cartridge. Yes, we want to wear a Fedora when we hold it. And yes, we tend to keep it leaning against our desk as we work and stare at it now and again.

But the real reason to own one? Take it to the range, tote your genuine violin case to the bench. Causally flip the latches open, lifting the lid with a flourish — but don’t be too obvious about it. Then, nonchalantly look around with a thoughtful look, as if you’re thinking, “Oh, did I leave something in the truck?” What you’ll see will be stares of interest, desire and envy all around you. Usually either a kid — or an adult who hasn’t lost his youthful enthusiasm — will make a beeline over, stop, point and say, “Mister, is that a Tommy Gun?”

“Indeed it is,” you’ll say. “Want to shoot it?”

“Boy, would I ever!”
Get it now?



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WINCHESTER

MODEL 42

A PETITE AND PERFECT .410 PUMP GUN

PAYTON MILLER

I've always felt starting a novice shot-gunner with a .410 borders on child abuse. A .410 should properly be viewed as the reward for finally having learned a thing or two about wingshooting over the course of many seasons.

Getting hooked on a .410 is something that generally happens once you're fairly well along in years, at least in my case. I'd been a "12 or 20 guy" all my life but once I began to show symptoms of Acute .410 Infatuation, concerned friends attempted an intervention, advising me to go to a 28 instead. "It's a real gun," they told me. "Anyway, what do you want with a bore-size measured in caliber instead of gauge?"

My smart-ass answer was something along these lines: "If you're gonna be a smallbore showoff, why not go all the way?" The upshot was for years I used a .410 Browning BPS. It was a wonderful gun, based on the bottom-ejecting Ithaca M37 pattern, which made it kind of a pain in the butt to single load at skeet but it shot wonderfully. It was a great little dove gun, not so great on tougher, wild-flushing California Valley quail, but still a peach.

THE HOLY GRAIL OF .410S

Having been hanging out at my local skeet field, I often got to shoot with a tight-knit group of very



A vintage Winchester ad touts the Model 42 as a "beginner's gun." Actually, a gas-operated 20-gauge may do a better job of building confidence.

serious retired Japanese guys who used Winchester 42s exclusively, as well as the short-lived Browning/Miroku reissues from the early '90s now costing darn near as much as an original.

I became horrendously envious of those wand-like, properly scaled M42s that were easily a pound lighter than my BPS. To be honest, up until then most other .410s I'd seen at the club had been outrageously pricey O/Us — either dedicated .410 imports or less exorbitant Browning Citori 12-gauges with Briley tubes.

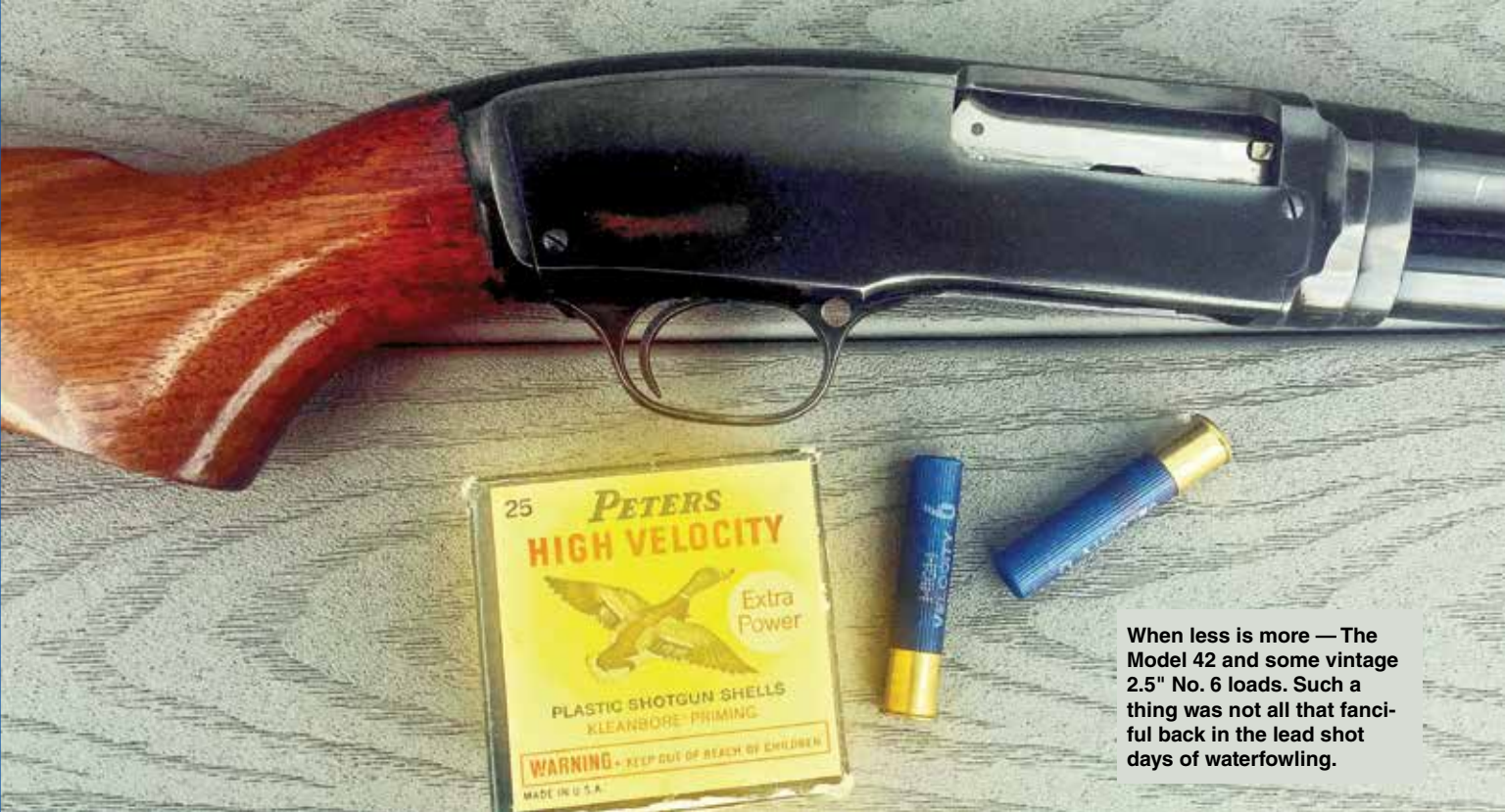
My "stopgap" solution for a seriously scaled-down .410 was a nice old Stevens Model 940D single-shot. As much fun as I had with it, I realized if I wanted to shoot doubles with something truly small-framed yet capable of repeat shots, I was going to have to get serious about finding a Model 42.

AT LAST

After searching for years for a Model 42 I could afford, I managed to luck into a better specimen than I deserved for a few bucks less than the price of a new Benelli M2 Field auto-loader. With a serial number indicating a 1955 date of manufacture, mine — a 26" barreled Standard Grade with a Modified choke — was a product of the home stretch of the model's 30-year production run (1933–1963). Other grades included Deluxe, Skeet, Pigeon and Trap. I've handled a Deluxe, which was a vent-ribbed



A 1949 vintage 28" ribbed-barrel Model 12 (top) over our 1955 vintage 26" Model 42 plainly illustrates the size difference between "medium-frame classic" and "small-frame classic offspring."



When less is more — The Model 42 and some vintage 2.5" No. 6 loads. Such a thing was not all that fanciful back in the lead shot days of waterfowling.

thing of walnut and steel beauty but I handed it back quickly, not wanting to spoil myself for my Standard Grade.

Besides its first-glance resemblance to Winchester's equally classic Model 61 pump-action .22, part of my M42's charm is its fixed choke. Although I'd only used the full choke tube on my Browning BPS, I've noticed darn little practical difference between M and F when you're dealing with 2.5" .410 target loads. We're talking half an ounce of No. 8 or 9 shot and the longest poke you're going to be presented with at skeet yardages is 21 yards maximum anyway.

I really enjoyed being able to dump a full box of Winchester AAs into my pants pocket and barely notice they were there! No fancy shell vest required, but you may want to think about hanging on to those empty hulls! The .410 may classify as a smallbore but there's nothing small about the per-box price tag.

It took a while to settle in with my Model 42, but given the parameters of skeet — or a dove opener when the birds aren't too spooky — if I'm swinging and pointing the gun like I should, the .410 isn't all that much of a handicap.

The problem with any ultralight .410 lies in simply not "over-muscling" it, swing-wise. This isn't to say you're going to over-lead things. You're more likely to compensate for the light weight



Difference: A standard 2.5" .410 target load (center) holds a half-ounce of shot while a 3" field load (right) contains an 11/16-oz. payload. Even an Extra Lite Winchester AA 12-gauge load (left) holds a full ounce.



Good genes: The Model 12's distinctive magazine locking pin and plug stop are also hallmarks of the petite Model 42.

by consciously slowing things down to the point where you'll commit the usual stop-and-go swing that results in shooting behind the bird. Guys using Briley .410 tubes in a full-size O/U are less likely to fall prey to this. There is a definite learning curve but it's more than compensated for by the joys of a smoking stuff with a little bitty gun.

And, on those inevitable occasions when I hit a slump, I pick up a 20 or 12 for a couple of sessions until my confidence comes back. If Winchester — or Browning — ever sees fit to reintroduce this little gem in any grade, I'll be first in line for it. But for now, this one will do nicely.

The Singular **FITZ SPECIALS**

Sixgun for the connoisseur gunfighter

JOHN TAFFIN

I have often said the best part of my job of being a gun writer for nearly 55 years is not all the guns I get to test but the many interesting people I meet. Growing up I read of legends I did not realize, couldn't even imagine, I would someday know. Five of these men were colonels — Rex Applegate, Charles Askins, Jeff Cooper, Bill Jordan and Walter Walsh. However, the beginning of my knowledge of these men goes back to the early 1950s when I was still a very young teenager:

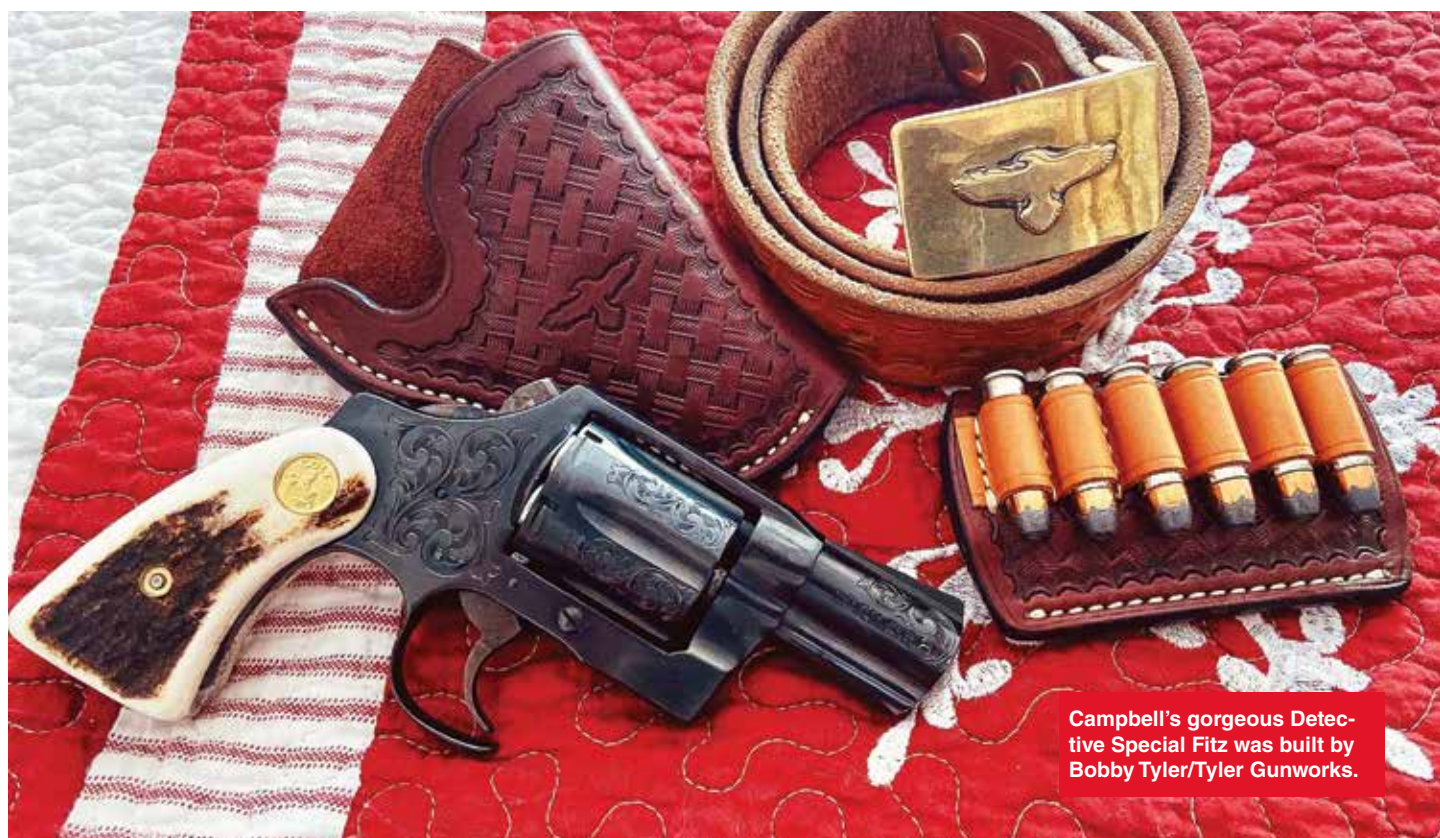
"Speed guns are best made up with revolvers as the basic arm. My partner, George Parker, one time made up one of the most poisonous speed guns I have ever seen. He was a Border Patrolman at the time and wanted something that would be handy in the car and for undercoat carry when he was working in civilian clothes. He took the Colt New Service .45 and chopped the barrel off to 2", then he rounded off the stock and shortened it somewhat. After this he dehorned the hammer leaving only enough on the hammer to give the needed weight to the firing pin. He cut out the front of the

trigger guard so it would not impede a quick draw, and attached a ramp type front sight. The gun was chambered for the old .45 Colt cartridge not the .45 ACP and so had lots of stopping power despite the short barrel length. This weapon was remarkably fast out of a holster and was sufficiently shortened so it could be carried in a coat pocket or front trousers pocket with comfort. There was nothing on it anywhere that would catch in the clothing.

"Parker had gotten the idea for this gun from Henry FitzGerald, Grand Old Man of the Colt Co., who always had a matched pair in his pants somewhere. After I tried the Parker belly gun I made a somewhat similar shooting iron for myself."

— Col. Charles Askins, *The Pistol Shooters Book*, 1953

These words had a lasting impression on me as I read them when I was 14 years old. All kinds of images sprang up in my mind and notice Col. Askins talks of what we now call high visibility sights being used before World War II. This was also my first introduction to the special sixguns of John Henry FitzGerald, also known as "Fitz."



Campbell's gorgeous Detective Special Fitz was built by Bobby Tyler/Tyler Gunworks.



John's .44 Special Fitz New Service compared size-wise to a Colt Detective Special — nearly the same size but with more power and speed-enhancing features.

MR. COLT

John Henry FitzGerald was “Mr. Colt” between the two World Wars, traveling to all the large pistol matches, shooting and fixing Colts and being a genuinely good ambassador for the company. Fitz was considered a firearms expert and spent much time lecturing and instructing both target and defensive shooting.

Before Clint Smith; before Mas Ayoob; before Jeff Cooper; even before Col. Applegate there was FitzGerald teaching principles and practices of quick shooting with a revolver. Not only was he a top shooter, he was also the designer of the Fitz Special. The Fitz Special started nearly 40 years before being discovered by Askins and Parker as Fitz started experimenting with the then-new Colt New Service.

“Perhaps some would like to ask why I cut up a good revolver and here is the answer,” he said. “The trigger guard is cut away to allow more finger room and for use when gloves are worn ... The hammer spur is cut away to allow drawing from the pocket or from under the coat without catching or snagging in the cloth and eliminates the use of thumb over hammer when drawing ... The butt is rounded to allow the revolver to easily slide into firing position in the hand ... The top of the cut-away hammer may be lightly checked to assist in cocking for a



Ken's Fitz doesn't “need” all the engraving, but life is too short to shoot a plain gun ...

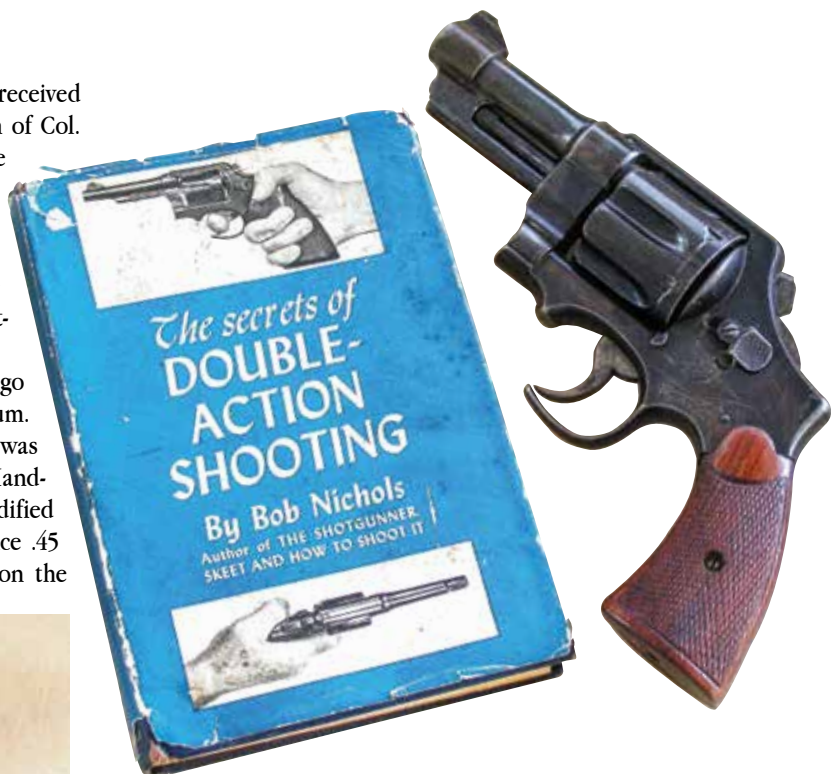
long-range shot.” It was common knowledge among his contemporaries Fitz always carried a pair of .45 Colt Fitz Specials in his two front pants pockets. He definitely knew how to use them.

SPECIAL TOUR

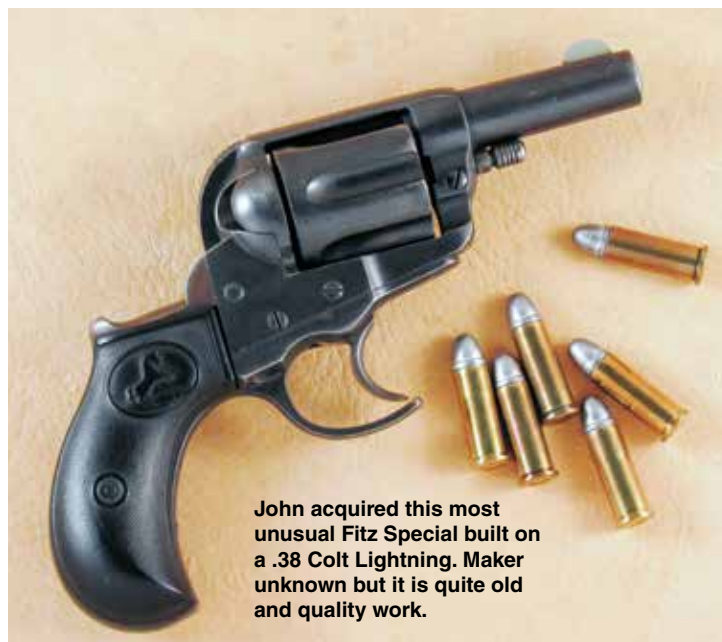
I had often read about and seen pictures of the Colt Fitz Specials but had never seen one, let alone handled one, but now I

was about to. It was a rare privilege accorded me as I received a personally guided tour through the private museum of Col. Rex Applegate. Actually, three of us being hosted by the Colonel as I had traveled to the Oregon Coast with fellow writer Pat Cascio and we had stopped on the way to pick up another comrade, Chuck Karwan. All of us were personally acquainted with Col. Applegate and I had presented him with the coveted bronze as Outstanding American Handgunner in 1996.

The Colonel's favorite possession as far as firearms go was found immediately inside the door of the museum. Actually it was one of two first items, as this sixgun was resting upon the base of the Outstanding American Handgunner Awards Foundation bronze. The highly modified revolver had started life as a standard Colt New Service .45 Colt probably with the same 5-1/2" barrel as found on the



Master of the Double Action, Bob Nichols, chose a Smith & Wesson Triple-Lock as the basis for his Fitz Special.



John acquired this most unusual Fitz Special built on a .38 Colt Lightning. Maker unknown but it is quite old and quality work.

well-known Colt revolvers of World War I, the Model 1917 .45 ACP. Then again, considering Col. Applegate's many contacts, this revolver could be one of the very few specially manufactured as it now appeared. On the side plate were the words "TO REX FROM FITZ."

TODAY

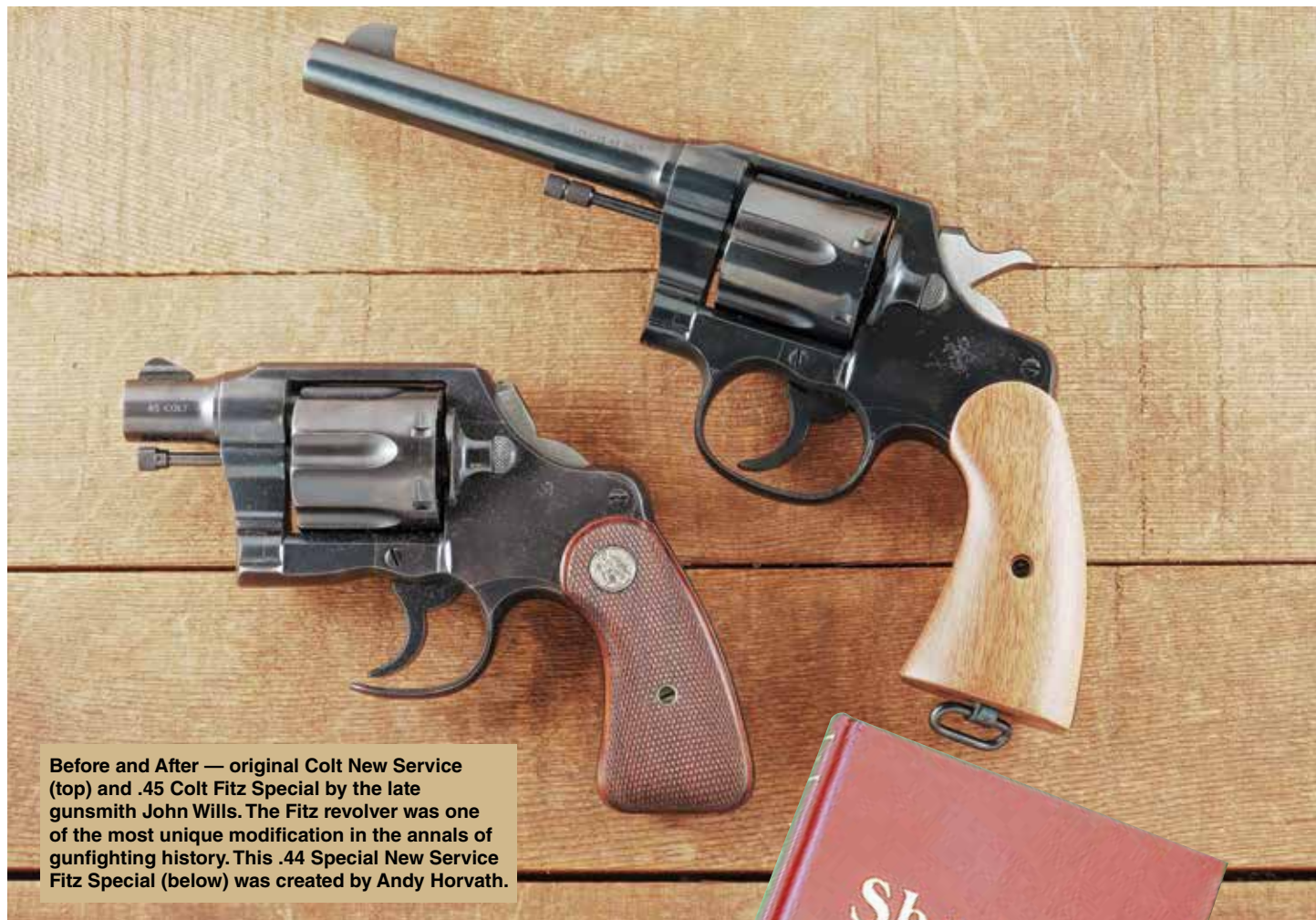
I have recently found I'm not the only one who appreciates Fitz Specials. I have made the acquaintance of retired sheriff Ken Campbell, the CEO of Gunsite Academy and he shared two of his Fitz specials with me as well as these words: "I have an infatuation with the Fitz revolvers and the history around them. Those that blather on and on about being unsafe because of the cut trigger guard need to read history and understand the time they were made, what men wore, etc. The real gunfighters of the time had Fitz-made revolvers."

Campbell shared with me his engraved Colt Detective Special Fitz by Bobby Tyler. Tyler has built up several Fitz Specials, especially on the Colt Detective Special. My friend Jim Wilson, also a retired sheriff has one as well as friend and fellow Shootist Mark Hargrove, now chairman of the Shootists.

Several years ago I purchased a most interesting little sixgun. It was interesting for several reasons not the least of which it's a .38 Colt Lightning that actually works but also for the fact it seems to be a very old and high quality Fitz Special. Just this week my friend Milt Morrison/QPR shared two Colt New Service Fitz Specials with me that belong to two of his customers who happen to be brothers. I found out they were commissioned by the brothers' father, one in .44 Special and the other .45 Colt, and made up more than 20 years ago by a gunsmith in Anchorage, Alaska, the late John Wills. His work was absolutely of the highest quality and if any reader knows anything about this newly discovered gunsmith, I would certainly like to hear from you.



John's Fitz shoots like a dream and is easy to handle when using Speer 200-grain Gold Dot HP .44 Specials at just under 750 fps in the 2" barrel.



Before and After — original Colt New Service (top) and .45 Colt Fitz Special by the late gunsmith John Wills. The Fitz revolver was one of the most unique modification in the annals of gunfighting history. This .44 Special New Service Fitz Special (below) was created by Andy Horvath.

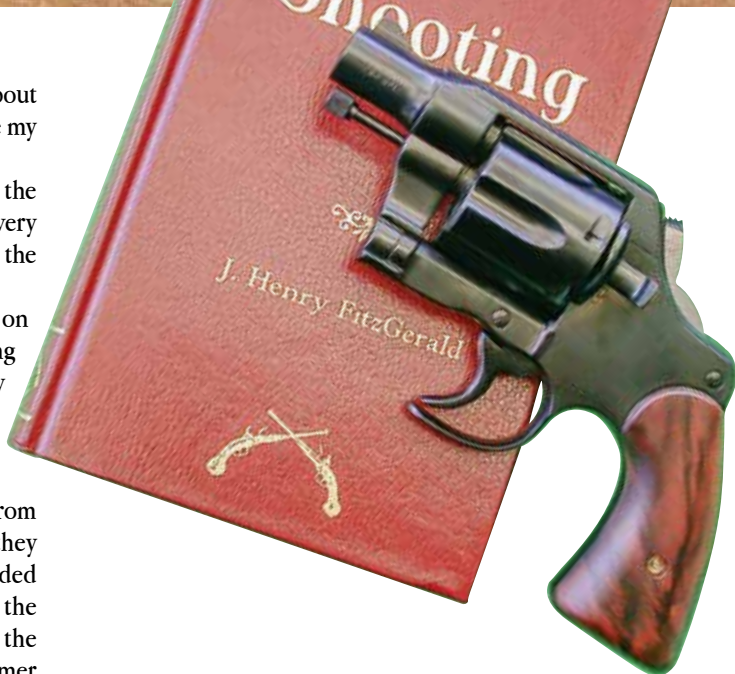
MY OWN

Col. Askins' words stayed filed back in my mind for about four decades until I finally decided it was time for me to have my own Fitz Special.

A late-model New Service chambered in .44 Special was the starting point. Although it had some problems, it came at a very good price. I sent it off to one of the premier gunsmiths in the country, Andy Horvath.

Horvath said of this New Service: "It's got a few miles on it and somebody got a little carried away with the buffing wheel. I bushed the cylinder to get out most of the endplay and installed a ball lock on the crane to help with the lock-up. Instead of cutting the old barrel, I just made a new one using up a piece of Douglas barrel blank too short for anything else. The sideplate screws are made from a Ruger base pin, as the old screws were polished until they were ugly. The grip frame has been shortened and rounded and fitted with fancy walnut grip panels, and the top of the hammer serrated for shooting single-action by starting the hammer back with the trigger and then grabbing the hammer with your thumb."

Andy polished and re-blued the little .44 Special with the result being I now have what has to be one of the finest Fitz Specials in existence built by one of the finest gunsmiths ever. It shoots like the proverbial dream and is very easy to handle using Speer's 200-grain Gold Dot HP .44 Specials. These clock out at just under 750 fps in the 2" Fitz Special, while my most-used everyday working load — the 250-grain Keith bullet over



7.5 grains of Unique — registers 830 fps, or just about the perfect equivalent of Fitz' .45 Colt loads.

With all the choices we have for defensive handguns today, some might feel this was a waste of time, money, effort and a good sixgun. Going back in history to commemorate a special sixgun and special sixgunner is never a waste. For those who understand, no explanation is necessary; for those who don't, none is possible.



HERITAGE FIREARMS BARKEEP

COMPACT BARGAIN, RECREATIONAL HISTORY

WILL DABBS, MD

The Heritage Firearms Barkeep is a rimfire rendition of the classic short-barreled Colt Sheriff's Model Peacemaker. The Barkeep comes standard with a 2" barrel and a steel .22 LR cylinder. However, a drop-in .22 Win Mag sort offers a little extra punch for a paltry \$30. This adorable little period recreational hogleg is the perfect low cost way to kill a lazy Saturday afternoon plinking at the range.



The Heritage Firearms Barkeep occupies an interesting niche. You can drop a fortune accumulating a proper working gun collection these days. However, the Barkeep represents a rare holy melding by being both cost-effective and cool. Featuring a concealable stubby barrel along with a few nods to modern manufacturing techniques and safety, the Barkeep hearkens back to an earlier, more rugged time.

THE GORY DEMISE OF CHARLIE STORMS

In 1882 Luke Short was a Faro dealer in the Oriental Saloon in Tombstone, Arizona Territories. At 32 years of age, Short was a seasoned gunman. On February 26th he was dealing cards to a local ne'er-do-well named Charlie Storms.

Storms was in his 60s and was likewise an experienced shootist. This fateful day Storms had been up all night playing cards, swigging cheap whiskey and quarreling. Storms wouldn't live to regret his fulminant temper.

Storms ultimately accused Short of cheating and was asked to leave. Soon thereafter Storms returned in a drunken rage. He grabbed the Faro dealer Short by the ear and drew his Colt Peacemaker, a shortened Sheriff's Model in .45 Colt. However, Luke Short was faster.

Short shoved his own Colt revolver into Storms' chest, cycled the hammer and fired. He plugged the homicidal drunkard a second time as he fell backward to the floor. The range was so close it set Storms' shirt on fire.

Storms fired twice as he fell, but his shots went wide. The misguided malcontent was dead where he fell. Meanwhile, a local sawbones doctor named George Goodfellow sat across the room nursing his own drink. When he subsequently examined Charlie Storms' cooling corpse he made a most remarkable discovery.

On the fateful morning, Storms had placed a folded silk handkerchief in his breast pocket. Short's heavy lead bullet had centerpunched this dainty accoutrement and pushed deeply enough to flatten against his spinal column. Though the wound was inevitably fatal, Goodfellow was surprised to

The Heritage Firearms Barkeep hearkens back to an earlier, more raucous time when stubby 2" 1873 revolver variants were popular among card sharks and similar ne'er-do-wells.

find it relatively bloodless. Upon further investigation he discovered the silk handkerchief had encapsulated the bullet into the wound but had not torn.

Goodfellow, a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and the country's foremost expert on gunshot wounds at the time, was intrigued. In 1887 he penned "The Impenetrability of Silk to Bullets" for the *Southern California Practitioner*, a prominent medical journal of the day. After a great deal of trial and error, this observation ultimately led to the soft body armor worn by law enforcement personnel around the world today. This remarkable odyssey began when Charlie Storms tried and failed to murder a card dealer in the Oriental Saloon with his cut-down Colt Sheriff's Model.

THE GUN

The Colt 1873 Peacemaker was as iconic a firearm as has ever been produced. Colonel Sam Colt was equal parts mechanical visionary and master marketer. Starting with his sundry cap-and-ball wheelguns that armed troops on both sides during the American Civil War, Colonel Colt eventually developed his design into the cartridge-firing 1873 Peacemaker.

The original Peacemaker was most commonly chambered in .45 Colt and featured the graceful and inexplicably comfortable curving grip typical of all period Colt revolvers. I don't know what sort of secret sauce they drip over those things at the Colt factory to make the arching grip fit my grubby mitts so well, but it is indeed uncanny. The right-sided loading gate and barrel-mounted ejector provided a rate of fire and reliability to cement the gun as the apex predator of its day.

Vintage 1873 Peacemakers were offered with 4.75", 5.5" and 7.5" barrel lengths. Charlie Storms' gun, however, was an unusual variant. These stubby little custom wheelguns were typically known informally as the Sheriff's Model, the Banker's Special, or the Shopkeeper. Heritage Firearms calls their particular example the Barkeep.

PERTINENT PARTICULARS

The 2" barrel on the Barkeep is too short to accommodate a conventional ejector rod. As a result, the gun comes with a neat separate ejection tool. This contrivance is little more than a short length of steel rod mounted into a wooden handle. To clear the chamber you place the gun on half-cock and push the empties out from the front with the tool as the chambers pass the open loading gate. Pressing a retention button allows you to remove the cylinder pin from the front and easily drop the cylinder for cleaning or replacement.

The front sight is the same classic generous blade characteristic of all vintage Colt revolvers. The rear sight is a simple groove cut into the top strap. While nothing about this system is even remotely adjustable, my gun shot precisely to point of aim out of the box at reasonable handgun distances.

The big spur hammer looks like it would catch on absolutely everything, but it doesn't. Thumbing the hammer back is a simple and intuitive process which takes literally no conscious thought. There are several different grip and finish options at various price points. However, none of them are expensive. The gun we tested here has an MSRP of only \$189.

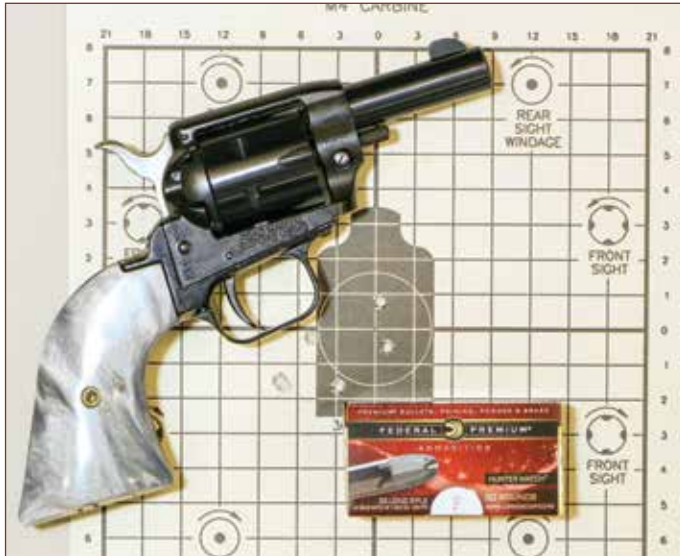
The cylinder is steel, while the frame on my copy appears



Fun guns — (top to bottom) the Ruger Wrangler, a vintage Colt Frontier Scout and the Heritage Firearms Barkeep. All three fire .22 LR ammunition and despite disparate barrel lengths they all shoot about the same.



A modern version of a classic gambler's pistol, the Barkeep's low price and inexpensive rimfire chambering make it affordable — and fun — on the range!



At 10 meters off of a simple rest, the Heritage Firearms Barkeep shoots plenty straight.



To remove empty cases, just set the hammer to half cock, open the loading gate and poke them out from the front with the included tool. If you lose it, a length of coat hanger wire also works fine! Disassembly of the Heritage Firearms Barkeep (below) is a snap without tools.



to be some sort of alloy covered in a black oxide finish. The high points do lose their finish fairly quickly, but it gives a gun like this character. Given its rimfire chambering, this pistol should outlive your grandchildren. There are, however, a couple of places where the Barkeep diverges from its Old West forebears.

THE MODERN SCOURGE

There were apparently not nearly so many trial attorneys in 1882 as is the case today, so Colonel Sam's design has been upgraded to meet modern safety standards. The gun fires via a transfer bar system rather than a straight firing pin in the hammer like the originals. Additionally, there is a warning engraved on the gun discouraging carry of the pistol with a live round underneath the hammer.

The most prominent departure from the original is a manual safety device built into the left aspect of the frame. This lever is fairly discreet. Pivot it up and the gun is safe, rotate it down and the action is hot. Such an appendage will undoubtedly offend the purist, but it doesn't get in the way and works just as intended.

TRIGGER TIME

The timeless architecture of Sam Colt's design makes the Heritage Firearms Barkeep run fast and well. The rimfire chambering is essentially recoilless, while this also makes the gun cheap to feed. On the range the Barkeep is a surprisingly straight shooter.

I really like these tidy little rimfire wheelguns, so I shot this pistol alongside a Ruger Wrangler and Colt Frontier Scout out of my collection. Despite the stubby barrel, the Barkeep grouped comparably well from a simple rest. The ejection tool is indeed something extra with which to keep track, but it's another reason God made pockets. Should you ever lose it, a short length of coat hanger is comparably effective.

Though I've not myself ever tried crack cocaine, I suspect the effect is somehow viscerally similar to shooting a rimfire sixgun. So long as you have an ample supply of bullets, it is awfully difficult to show any substantive restraint. Bring along half a dozen empty aluminum beverage cans and you will shoot until you lose the light.

So, what's the Barkeep actually useful for? Don't know, don't care. There are lots better defensive handgun choices, though the Barkeep stoked with high performance .22 Win Mag rounds would be undeniably formidable. The primary mission of the new Barkeep is simply pure unfiltered recreation. If your shooting range is being overrun with empty beverage cans, the Barkeep will help restore the balance of power.

RUMINATIONS

The Barkeep is an Information Age rimfire rendition of the original Colt 1873 Peacemaker Sheriff's Model. Designed for easy concealment and fast action, those same timeless attributes translate into a great recreational plinking gun today. If you're small-statured or recoil-averse, such a tidy heater would also still make decent company in a hard spot. Compact, accurate, reliable, cool and safe, the Barkeep is the cost effective recreational belly gun.



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APX BERETTA CARRY

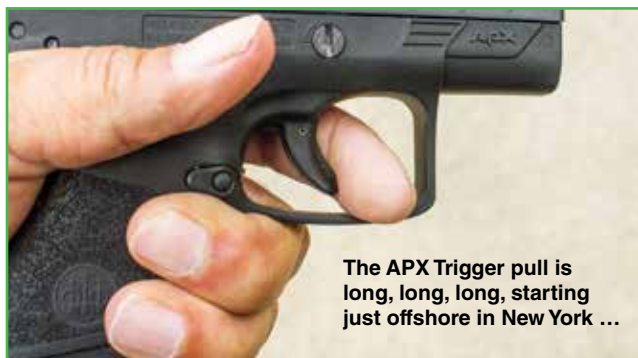
MASSAD AYOOB

Beretta came relatively late to the polymer striker-fired “service pistol” market, but their Apex in this format has drawn raves from most reviewers. Beretta included a chopped and channeled version — still with a double-stack magazine — they call the APX Compact. But the concealed carry/off duty gun market has an insatiable desire for smaller, slimmer 9mm pistols, and to satisfy this large niche now comes the Beretta APX Carry. It uses what might be called a “semi-single stack” magazine, à la GLOCK’s recently introduced G48 and G43X.

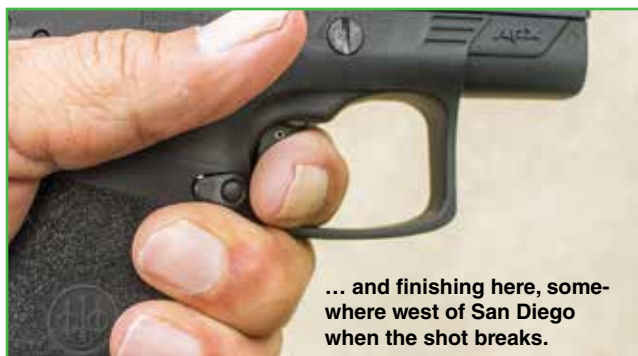
The slide is pure APX in appearance with its distinctive wide-apart grasping ridges running the entire slide length except for flat spots by the ejection port, but the rest of the pistol harkens to an earlier Beretta pocket 9mm, the Nano of 2011.

I asked Erik Stern, Beretta Product Manager for Tactical Products and Pro Shop, about how much of this pistol’s design DNA came from the Nano series, and how much from the service-size APX.

Stern says, “The APX Carry replaces the Nano. The Nano has been around since 2011 and was good in its time, but the APX is better, primarily with ergonomic issues. We changed the shape to bring the hand up significantly in the back of the grip. You have more purchase with the hand on the frame. Feedback on regular APX has been wonderful. The APX Compact was a little chunky; we wanted the APX Carry to be pocket size. We learned a lot with the APX.”



The APX Trigger pull is long, long, long, starting just offshore in New York ...



... and finishing here, somewhere west of San Diego when the shot breaks.

SLIMMED-DOWN SPICY ITALIAN

INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

This little pistol comes out of the box weighing just under 20 oz. and includes a nice little nylon carry case for the pistol; an eight-round extended mag; a six-round magazine with a pinky rest and a flush floorplate for the latter to give a third configuration option.

Stern was right about the “ergos.” The old Nano pointed low in my hand, something of a deal-breaker for me but the APX Carry pointed where I wanted it — if I closed my eyes and brought it up to the target, it was spot-on when I opened my eyelids. Trigger reach was perfect for my average-sized adult male hand, too. The sights were decent: big and blocky with a single non-illuminated white dot up front.

The front and back of the grip-frame are aggressively stippled and the gun never moved in our hands when we shot it. Recoil wasn’t bothersome for anyone who shot it, including female instructors. All testers of both genders preferred the long magazine for shooting because it gave a firm purchase for all the fingers. The flanged mag came halfway down my pinky finger — not comfortable at all. The flush-bottom magazine conceals the best, at the price of two less rounds on board, and tucking the pinky tightly under the butt still affords a solid firing grasp. Only one tester felt the aggressive checkering was uncomfortable in firing.

A huge tactical advantage of the APX Carry, which I’m surprised Beretta doesn’t advertise, is the recoil spring guide design allows the gun to fire at press-contact — it won’t go out of battery and become unshootable if you have to put it directly against an assailant’s body to fire, sometimes necessary when you’re in a belly-to-belly struggle with a criminal trying to murder you.

TRIGGER PULL

The most polarizing thing about the APX Carry among shooters will be, I guarantee, the trigger.

A Lyman digital trigger gauge showed the average pull weight to be 7.19 lbs. But the story of the Carry’s trigger goes far beyond its weight — the pull is *LO-O-ONG* and as with the Nano preceding it, there’s a reason.

Erik Stern told me, “This pistol is absolutely drop-safe. It has a passive firing block, trigger safety that interacts with chassis and frame like the APX. This is a non-pre-cocked striker, double-action style. You have a long, deliberate pull. That’s a lot more forgiving in pocket, off-body, or non-traditional carry.”

MAGAZINES: APX VIS-À-VIS NANO

Some reviews have stated APX magazines are interchangeable



Not bad — Mas shot these 9 rounds (above), from extended mag, 7 yards, Isosceles stance. The APX Carry is definitely “shootable.” The Beretta APX Carry (left) — Italian heritage made in Gallatin, TN.



Design and muzzle configuration give standoff capability so contact-distance shooting is possible — a big tactical plus in Mas’ opinion.

with earlier Nano mags. *Alert!* — this turns out to be not entirely true.

Erik Stern explains, “We have changed the body, springs and followers. However, Nano

magazines could be used in APX carry at the range but shouldn’t be for defense use. Like anything else, if you expect it to perform at its best, you should use correct OEM mags.” However, an APX Carry magazine is apparently an upgrade when used in a Nano. How would a Nano owner who bought an APX Carry keep from mixing up the magazines? Erik told us, “The floorplate on the Nano is a flat piece, non-textured on extension and flat bottom, and also longer on the six-round baseplate at the rear. The Nano has a laser weld seam on the back; the APX magazine does not.”

ACCURACY

On the 25-yard line, America’s most ubiquitous 9mm practice load, the 115-grain FMJ Winchester White Box, grouped 5-3/4” for all five shots, with three of them in the 10 ring including a tie-breaker center X, with one clipping the nine-ring and another out in the seven zone. Those three “10s” were in a more pleasing 2-7/8” group. Score was 45 out of 50 possible points, or a respectable 90%.

On the other end of the power scale in the Winchester 9mm line is my general carry favorite, the Ranger-T 127 grain +P+. Recoil was snappier, of course, but this turned out to be the ammo the baby Beretta liked most. The whole five-shot group measured only 2-1/4” with the best three in 1-5/16”. The whole group was slightly right of center, or the target score would have been a perfect

“possible”; as it was, the tally was three-10s including an X, and two nines. This came out to 48 out of 50, or 96%. All things considered, damn good for a pocket pistol.

But how did it do from the easier seven-yard line? I inserted the eight-round mag after chambering a ninth round and fired the APX Carry from a solid Isosceles standing position. On one of the same B8 targets,

I was rewarded with all nine inside the 10 ring and eight of those in the tie-breaking center X ring, a 100% score. The nine-shot cluster measured an inch and thirteen-sixteenths, and seven of those were in a sub-inch one-hole group. I couldn’t ask for more than this, and I’m sure the one bullet hole that escaped the X ring was my fault, not the Beretta’s.

CONCLUSIONS

At \$460 MSRP, the APX Carry is designed to compete with concealment pistols such as the super-popular S&W M&P Shield. I was happy with its accuracy, feel, ease of carry and overall “shootability.” A few testers experienced a bit of a finger pinch at the toe of the trigger; this seems dependent on finger shape, and if it’s a problem you’ll pick up on in the gun shop before you put your money down.

The only real complaints we had were about the length of the trigger pull, all from testers who spend most of their time shooting GLOCKS and other pistols they’ve become accustomed to firing with a short stroke on the trigger. As Erik Stern said, the APX Carry was expressly designed to have a trigger that felt like a double-action pocket revolver. If you are accustomed to the latter — or to a Kahr or other double-action auto pistol — and looking to switch to a flat auto with nine rounds instead of five or six, you and the APX Carry will very likely experience “love at first shot.” If you aren’t, your trigger finger will want a definite re-acclimation period to bond with this very useful little self-defense pistol.

BerettaUSA.com

The **HEX** Dragonfly

**SPRINGFIELD ARMORY LINGERIE
CAN'T BE FAR BEHIND?**



The new Springfield Armory Dragonfly red dot sight, shown here atop their superlative XD-M Elite OSP pistol, is as precise as Jane Austen's prose and as rugged as John Rambo's jockstrap.

A**B**

WILL DABBS, MD

Springfield Armory has been churning out butt-kicking guns since 1974. Their catalog launched with such staples as the M1A and 1911 and has steadily evolved ever since. Modern offerings include the expansive line of XD-series pistols, the Saint and M1A families of black rifles, and the superlative Hellcat high-capacity micro-compact concealed carry gun. In 2020 they even launched their own line of bolt-action precision rifles. I've rolled in the dirt with scads of Springfield Armory weapons and have yet to have a stoppage, at all, not once, ever.

Now Springfield Armory is taking the dive into electro-optics. Their new HEX Wasp and Dragonfly red dot sights include state-of-the-art features, a pleasant price point and bar-setting warranty. The addition of the Wasp or Dragonfly to a modern tactical firearm reliably makes a good gun great. If this keeps up we'll someday be driving Springfield Armory cars and wearing their logo on our underpants.

IRON SIGHTS ARE OVERRATED

Any minute now legions of retired Marines will show up on my front doorstep bearing torches and pitchforks. Fortunately for me, military service is pretty tough on the knees, so

A The HEX Dragonfly perfectly complements your favorite modern combat handgun with a small, robust, lightweight and capable package. **B** The Dragonfly's ruggedized glass is scratch- and glare-resistant.

outrunning a bunch of agitated Marine retirees shouldn't be any terrific chore. However, I would indeed allege most iron sights are contrived more for the firing range than the battlefield.

We Americans have made some simply superlative military gun sights. The sights on the M1 Garand, late-war M1 Carbines, and ultimately, M14 rifles are about as good as they get and as rugged as Margaret Thatcher's backbone. They are perfect for killing a lazy day on the range. However, when somebody is shooting back I just don't see my taking the time to fart with stuff like that.

Think back to the last time you nearly stepped on a poisonous snake. Such things happen in the Deep South fairly frequently. A Left-wing counterpart might be if Starbucks runs out of coffee stirrers or somebody inadvertently utilizes something other than your preferred pronouns. Under such unexpectedly terrifying circumstances, a few predictable physiological changes occur very rapidly.

In medical parlance we call this a beta response. Catecholamines like epinephrine and norepinephrine engage their respective G protein-coupled receptors to energize the Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS). As near as I could tell, the SNS has no practical physiological purpose other than to torment first-year medical students. Just kidding, God designed the SNS to keep you alive if ever you might be chased by a bear.

The pedestrian term is the fight-or-flight response. This near-instantaneous reaction dilates your pupils, increases your heart rate, boosts your blood pressure, mobilizes energy stores and diverts blood from non-essential organs to your skeletal muscles. The same thing happened to me the first time I met my wife back in 1982.

Under these circumstances your body is optimized to move quickly, not solve detailed technical puzzles. On the range you might indeed be fiddling with your sights. In a full-bore gunfight, however you'll likely be more concerned with maintaining control of your bowels. It's all pretty natural.

Up until the turn of the latest century, mechanical gun sights just weren't much use in a close range firefight. Repetitive training creates muscle memory so the gun points where you want it without a great deal of conscious thought. Nowadays,

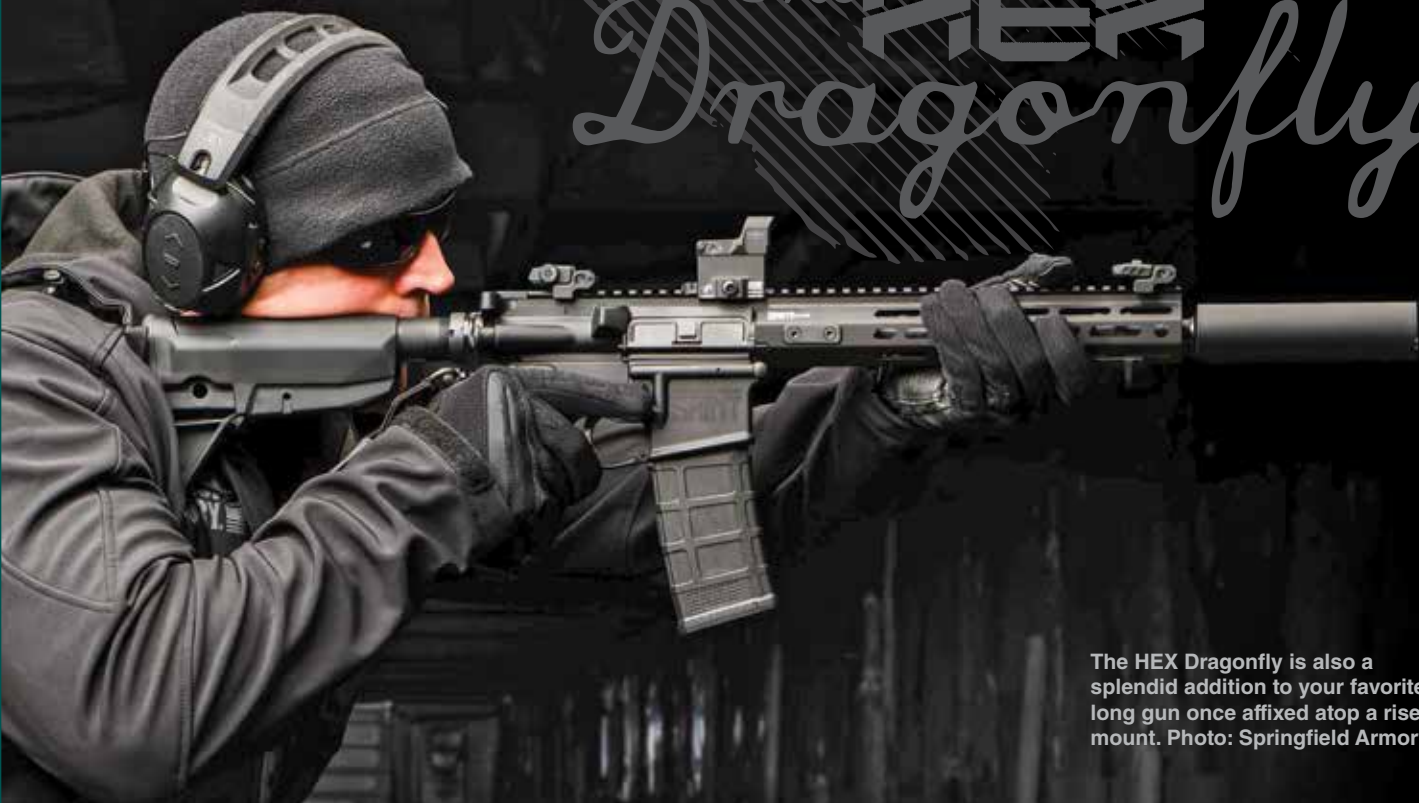


“... ELECTRONIC RED DOT SIGHTS FINALLY OFFER A **HANDS-FREE** SUBCONSCIOUS **SIGHTING SOLUTION** THAT WORKS EVEN WHEN YOU THINK YOU MIGHT BE **ABOUT TO MEET JESUS** FACE-TO-FACE.”

At 12 meters off of a simple rest
this Dragonfly-equipped XD-M
Elite OSP shoots plenty straight.
Those five-shot single jagged
holes are about as good as it gets.



The HEX Dragonfly



The HEX Dragonfly is also a splendid addition to your favorite long gun once affixed atop a riser mount. Photo: Springfield Armory

however, electronic red dot sights finally offer a hands-free subconscious sighting solution that works even when you think you might be about to meet Jesus face-to-face.

THE HEX DRAGONFLY

The new HEX Dragonfly from Springfield Armory is a state of the art electro-optical red dot sight sufficiently small and lightweight to ride atop your typical combat pistol. The Dragonfly is a drop-in fit on their XD-M pistols with the OSP slide cut. The Dragonfly is also a fine choice for your favorite black rifle or tactical shotgun in conjunction with a riser mount.

The Dragonfly housing is 6061 T6 hardcoat anodized aluminum. The sight is roughly 1" square, just shy of 2" long and weighs a paltry 1.2 oz. The dot is 3.5 MOA and features 1 MOA windage and elevation adjustments using nothing fancier than a cartridge rim. The Dragonfly is parallax-free and sports 1X magnification for optimized situational awareness.

The single CR2032 battery can be found at your local Walmart and will power the sight for up to 100,000 hours on modest power settings, about three years. There are eight manual brightness settings and the sight takes a nap if left unmolested for 16 hours. There is but a single external switch.

IPX7 waterproofing means you can submerge the Dragonfly up to one meter underwater for half an hour with no ill effects. If your daily life involves such stuff then you are way cooler than I am. Scratch-resistant, anti-glare glass keeps things crisp and clear. With an MSRP of \$249 the Dragonfly is also markedly cheaper than comparable big name sights while remaining just as capable.

The Dragonfly's little brother is the HEX Wasp. This sight packs the same features into a smaller package to ride comfortably atop micro carry pistols like the Hellcat. The Wasp has an MSRP of \$299. Both sights enjoy a simply superb lifetime warranty.



The Dragonfly has but one external control — hit this button and the sight pops to life.

RUMINATIONS

Running a red dot for the first time, particularly on a pistol, does offer a learning curve. You'll hunt for the dot the first couple dozen times you present the gun. However, with a little practice the red dot pops right up into your field of view every time you draw the weapon. This is why we train.

Once you have taken its measure, the Dragonfly follows your gaze without conscious thought. You run the gun with both eyes open so you can best keep track of your surroundings. The end result is fast, intuitive and seamless — something you really can use when the world's going sideways and the angels are tapping you impatiently on the shoulder. You'll never go back to your old iron sights again.



Springfield-Armory.com



PRO-TECH MALIBU BLUE A SLICK AND EFFICIENT CLEAN MACHINE

When states across the country relaxed automatic-knife laws a few years back manufacturers jumped on the bandwagon, but such knives were old hat to Pro-Tech Knives. Owner Dave Wattenberg and company had been

offering autos for over 20 years. So what does he do to broaden his customer base? Offer manual openers, of course! The latest is the Malibu Blue, an elegant flipper opening tactical with lines as clean as the ocean surf.

Pure as the driven snow, Pro-Tech Knives' Malibu Blue (above) is the perfect blend of clean design and unadulterated mechanical efficiency (below left). Everything you need to open the Malibu Blue blade in the blink of an eye and send it back to its frame is all right here.

right amount of curves to fit the hand like a glove with no overkill. For transport there's a tip-up pocket clip for easy carry.

WHY YOU'LL LIKE IT

There will always be a need for black tactical knives by serious users who prefer stealth in their knife, but if you like a little glam without being gaudy, the Pro-Tech Malibu Blue is your knife. Wattenberg knows slick actions and the speed of the Malibu Blue's flipper rivals those of his spring-fed variety. Last but not least, everything about this knife is infused with quality, from its premium steel and simplified mechanics to the overall design that smacks of uncluttered effectiveness.

MSRP: \$270

ProtechKnives.com

The 7.50" overall Malibu Blue keeps things sanitary and efficient by dumping the ubiquitous thumb stud on the blade and replacing it with a lightning-fast flipper opener. Once the blade is ready to slip back into its frame, a simple button release unlocks its charms. The Malibu Blue's 3.25" Reverse Tanto blade, neat and stylish in its own right, uses upscale CPM 20CV stainless steel to take care of business with hygienic efficiency.

The folder's vibrant 4.5" blue anodized handle touts just the



WARTHOG CLASSIC II KNIFE SHARPENER

The Warthog knife sharpener might look like a Rube Goldberg machine or an 18th century torture device but trust me, it will shock you with effectiveness!

When I got the press release regarding this contraption, I responded with, "This thing looks complicated, does it work and is it simple enough for a gun writer to operate?" The company responded claiming it does indeed work as promised and was so simple even I, a practicing journalist, could use it effectively. I'm not from Missouri, but I said, "Show Me!"

Coming out of the package the sharpener

looks complicated and un-intuitive, but after breaking down and reading the instructions, I realized you simply stick your knife in the slot and start drawing it across the automated diamond rods. At this point levers start levering, rods start sliding and your knife gets sharp — really sharp.

I've always been honing-impaired and after owning many different brands of knife sharpeners, I always end up with knives slightly duller than a baseball bat. I've finally found one that works, even for editors!

MSRP: \$99.99

WarthogUSA.com



XS SIGHTS REMINGTON 870 MAG EXTENSION KIT

I've often said I'm one of the last extant gun writers who still loves the pump shotgun for defensive use. As a retired cop of a certain age, I can field-strip and reassemble the popular street sweeper blindfolded under remembered threat of "pushing on the earth."



If you have a standard 870 you wish to make tacti-cool, you'll definitely want to add a magazine extension tube. However, there is one problem: little dimples — officially known as "detents" — inside the magazine tube. There are several field-expedient methods of removal but none inspire confidence. Now, with the XS Sights 870 mag kit, you not only get a top-quality magazine extension and spring, but you get a swage tool that easily removes the detents with no danger of gun damage if used as directed.

The mag extension is hard-coat 6061 aluminum and comes with a Wolff extended spring. The tube fits most mag clamps and, as a nice touch, offers wrench flats on the end for final snug-down. Push your mag tube pimples down using the included swage tool, install the kit and you're ready to join at least one old-school editor in repelling boarders!

MSRP: Around \$80

XSSights.com

FEDERAL PERSONAL DEFENSE .22 LR

For our Quartermaster section, I always use the product at hand before passing judgement. However, I'm going to talk about something I've not been able to fully test because I'm told the authorities frown on magazine editors shooting evildoers at random, even if they fully deserve it.

Federal's new Punch Personal Defense Ammo for .22 LR is unique. Dispensing with

meeting the standard FBI ammunition tests — which no .22 LR (to date) would meet — Federal decided to focus purely on penetration. This makes sense as a .22 is woefully underpowered as a fight-stopper but it can be rapidly fatal if employed accurately to critical organs.

In this regard, the flat-nosed

29-grain non-expanding bullet is claimed to have nearly 14" of penetration in 10% ballistic gel while speeding along at 1,070 fps from a 2" revolver. This certainly seems like it would get a bad guy's attention if judiciously applied. I'm highly hesitant to recommend a .22 LR when your life is on the line, but as they say, "Some gun is better than no gun." The Punch .22 LR might do better than just "some."

MSRP: \$9.99 per 50

FederalPremium.com



2022 CAMPAIGNS START NOW

IT'S TIME TO RECRUIT GOOD CANDIDATES

Democrats have been scrambling to push through as much of their agenda as possible over the past few months and here's why: They expect to lose Capitol Hill in 2022 and they must get finished with as much as possible this year because in January, the campaign season starts.

Nobody is going to want to ruffle feathers in an election year. Democrats tried in 1994 with the Clinton Crime Bill which included the 10-year ban on so-called "assault weapons." They passed the bill in September. Two months later the November election turned into a political bloodbath. Congress changed hands for the first time in years and stayed through the remainder of Bill Clinton's presidency.

It pains people in the gun rights community to pick on a single political party, but Democrats under Nancy Pelosi, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Chuck Schumer have made themselves the target. They stopped being the "Party of Gun Control" a couple of years ago to become the "Party of Gun Prohibition."

Who is vulnerable? All of them, theoretically; those from deep blue states will likely escape next year's purge, those in swing states won't but it's up to you to make that happen.

Target for replacement:

- Any candidate who talks about "common sense gun reform."

- Candidates who use the term "gun violence." There's no such thing as "gun violence." There's just violence. Someone murdered with a knife, club or brick is just as dead as someone who is murdered with a firearm. Never let a politician get away with this lie.

- Anybody identified as a "gun safety candidate" by some local or national gun control organization.

These people are in the pockets of wealthy gun prohibition lobbying groups and will do as told.

- Incumbents who voted for the "Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2021" (H.R. 8) or the "Enhanced Background Checks Act of 2021" (H.R. 1446); eight House Republicans voted for H.R. 8 and two of them also voted for the other measure.

While it may become a painful exercise, start reading your local newspaper and watch for political columns to start name-dropping as the campaign season opens. Write down those names. Find out about them. Be clever, not combative. Let them talk while you just listen. There will be plenty of time later to either help get someone elected or derail their campaign.

Remember what happened in 1994, the first mid-term

election under Bill Clinton — it was a disaster for Democrats largely because they voted for the Brady Law in 1993 and the Clinton Crime bill in September 1994, apparently expecting the voters to forget. Instead, passing those two measures brought gun owners out of the proverbial woodwork. Because House Democrats rammed through the two background check measures back in March, they're scrambling to pass as much of their agenda as possible because they fear a repeat of November 1994 in 2022. They won't admit it publicly, of course.

Start working on this right now! Next year at this time will be too late because the primaries will have already happened and you might be stuck with candidates you don't like. Find someone you do like and get them on the November 2022 ballot. Groom them. Educate them.

Many people want to roll back anti-gun laws and restore what existed before the current administration took office. That will only happen by voting out of office the people who created the current mess. Impatience is the enemy of success, and "perfect" always becomes the enemy of "good."

A candidate may not agree with you all the time, but if he/she concurs 80% of the time, helping put this person in office is far preferable to having someone in office who disagrees with you 100% of the time. Educate such people rather than declare them as "traitors" or "Fudds."

FOLLOW-UP

Back in March, this column referred to a list of businesses posted by the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms (CCRKBA) designed to help readers fight back against anti-gun social bigotry.

Reader Tim Cole inquired in the May issue about pro-gun businesses. No such list exists, for very good reason. Smart business people are interested only in making a profit and serving all customers, rather than using their establishments to make a social statement.

We're happy to report one business on the original CCRKBA list was removed after chatting with a vice president of the company. Auto Zone was somehow labeled anti-gun more than a decade ago and ended up on the list, prompting a personal call from a company vice president. According to this official, there is no policy regarding guns "to my knowledge," and he ought to know. He's an attorney.

But the episode offers an opportunity to cool a few jets here and there. If a business is not posted with one of those "Firearms Not Permitted" or "No Guns Allowed" signs,



don't be the "Second Amendment justice warrior" who marches in to interrogate a manager or owner about their store/company policy. It's unnecessary, and can backfire monumentally. Most likely, they don't have a policy, so don't give them an excuse to create one you may not like.

Syndicated radio host Mark Walters at Armed American Radio notes his advertisers are all pro-Second Amendment. The business roster includes My Pillow, Defender Coffee, Leadslinger Whiskey, GunBroker.com, CrossBreed Holsters, X Insurance, and of course North American Arms and Kahr Arms.

Likewise, support the people who advertise on Tom Gresham's *Gun Talk* program, along with the companies that advertise in *GUNS* and *American Handgunner* such as Harbor Freight.

People who go looking for confrontations do so to get attention and sometimes they get more than they bargained for by being embarrassed. People who do this forget they become poster children for all gun owners. This correspondent has been armed in restaurants, department stores, malls, hardware stores, supermarkets and other places. We make strides by not being confrontational or offensive.

SUPPORT YOUR GUN RIGHTS GROUPS

Whether you are a member of a local gun club or national organization, support them with donations.

Now is the time to be contributing because early money is the best money in political campaigns and efforts to fight back against gun grabbers continue 24/7. The other side never lets up and never slows down. Gun owners need to be equally energetic and aggressive.

Pick your favorite group and send them \$20 a month, which is less than one might spend on a box of ammunition. Forego a cup of designer coffee and set the money aside for your contribution. You may not think a double sawbuck will make much difference but if 10,000 people just like you do the same thing, it stacks up to a lot of money.

Seeds grow into plants and come late summer, they provide crops. Politics is much the same. If you nurture something, it will grow and bear fruit.

The other side has taken the high ground. It's time to start the process of taking it back.

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REMINGTON 870 +2 MAGAZINE TUBE EXTENSION KIT

XS SIGHTS

The *Remington 870 +2 Magazine Tube Extension Kit* from XS Sights increases the capacity of standard Remington 870 shotguns by two shotshells and allows the mounting of additional tactical upgrades. The magazine tube extension kit includes a factory detent removal tool, a 45" Wolff 12-gauge extended spring and the +2 extension tube. MSRP: \$80. For more info: (888) 744-4880, XSSights.com



ACRIUS OVER UNDER SERIES

LEGACY SPORTS/POINTER SHOTGUNS

Legacy Sports and Pointer Shotguns introduce the *ACRIUS* Shotguns. The *ACRIUS Over-Under Series* is affordable, reliable and a natural upgrade for an experienced hunter or for a youngster's first shotgun. Features include a walnut stock, five chokes, extractors, raised vent ribs, crisp mechanical triggers, chrome lined barrels, barrel selector and shot-after-shot consistency. MSRP: \$589. For more info: (800) 534-229, LegacySports.com/brands/Pointer/

TRIJICON TENMILE 4.5-30X56

TRIJICON



The *Trijicon Tenmile 4.5-30x56* gives tactical shooters the tools necessary to acquire, identify and engage targets. It features a user-selectable red or green illuminated, first focal plane reticle available in MOA or MRAD configuration, extra-low dispersion glass and fully multi-coated broadband anti-reflective lenses. Crisp windage and elevation adjusters offer ultra-precise tracking with Return to Zero elevation control. MSRP: \$2,675. For more info: Trijicon.com

DRURY OUTDOOR TURKEY MOUTH CALLS

HUNTERS SPECIALTIES

Hunters Specialties announces a series of turkey mouth calls designed by 6-time world champion turkey caller, Mark Drury. The *Drury Outdoor Turkey Mouth Calls* include the Tongue Cutter, Tongue Cutter Plus, Tongue Inverter and Ghost Tongue Mouth Call. All have aluminum frames and three reeds of 0.003" latex. Mark tightened up the reed spacing and used a flat tongue instead of a pointed one to get more performance out of the mouth calls. For more info: (877) 269-8490, HSStrut.com



AUTO PRESIDIO II

BENCHMADE

The *Auto Presidio II* from Benchmade fuses muted colors with the functionality of the Auto AXIS mechanism. The mechanism allows the knife's blade to get moving with a simple pull on the Axis bar. The 3.72" blade in Tactical Gray Cerakote is made of CPM-M4 steel. There's burnt bronze anodization on the T6 aluminum handles. The subtle colors also make this model a viable option for duty use instead of the standard all-black-everything tactical look. This model is available only with the serrated blade. MSRP: \$300. For more info: (833) 557-2526, Benchmade.com



X-TRM RAZOR DIGITAL

WALKER'S

Walker's introduces the *X-TRM Razor Digital* with Bluetooth Earmuffs that provides hearing protection. Improved from the original Razor earmuffs, the X-TRM Razor Digital features comfort GEL ear pads and a cool mesh headband. The X-TRM Razor Digital with Bluetooth has an NRR rating of 23 and produces clear digital sound. MSRP: \$149.99. For more info: WalkersGameEar.com



360° ARG PISTOL GRIP

MID-EVIL INDUSTRIES

Mid-Evil Industries introduces the *360° ARG Pistol Grip*, an innovative rifle grip for AR-style mounts and precision chassis that accept AR-style grips. It allows shooters to adjust their pistol grip into various positions with a simple locking handle. The 360° ARG will mount on any AR15 and AR10 lower receiver replacing the standard pistol grip. It fits standard mil-spec AR-style grip mounts, even non-AR15 weapon platforms, using AR-style mounts with no modifications required. MSRP: \$119.95. For more info: (844) 556-4747, Mid-Evil.com



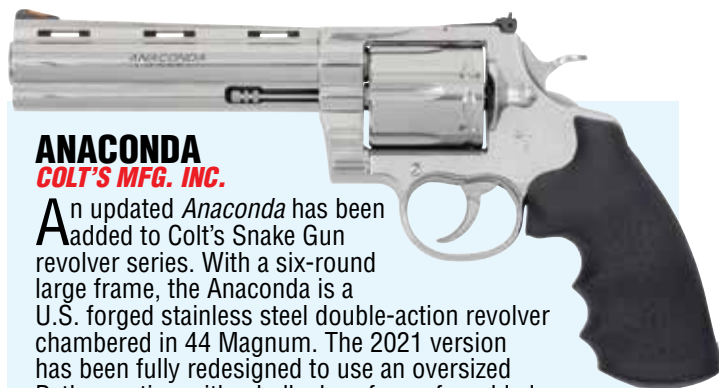
For more New Products visit us
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PLR RIFLESCOPE SERIES

SIGHTRON INC.

SIGHTRON launched its *Precision Long-Range (PLR) Rifle Scope Series*, taking long-range competition and target shooting into the future. Models include the 8-32x56, 6-24x50, 10-50x60 and 6-24x50 FFP (first image focal plane). The SIII PLR Rifle Scope Series features 30mm tubes, a new internal zero-stop mechanism and illuminated reticle options. MSRP: Starting at \$1,149.99. For more info: (919) 562-3000, Sightron.com



ANACONDA

COLT'S MFG. INC.

An updated *Anaconda* has been added to Colt's Snake Gun revolver series. With a six-round large frame, the *Anaconda* is a U.S. forged stainless steel double-action revolver chambered in 44 Magnum. The 2021 version has been fully redesigned to use an oversized Python action with a bulked-up frame for added strength. Recoil-absorbing Hogue overmolded grips are interchangeable with all Colt Python grips. The full-lug, ventilated rib barrel is offered in 6" and 8" lengths. MSRP: \$1,499. For more info: (800) 962-2658, Colt.com



MPL1

AXEON OPTICS

Axon Optics has launched the *MPL1* pistol light with ergonomic rear switches featuring three light modes. Lightweight and compact, the MPL1 delivers 300 lumens of light ideal for self-defense handguns. Designed to maximize threat identification, the Axon MPL1 is a powerful flashlight for mounting on a handgun with an accessory rail. MSRP: \$44.99. For more info: (479) 646-4210, AxonOptics.com

HTF CONCEALED STORAGE/CARRY GARMENT BAG

SKINNER SIGHTS

Skinner Sights' *HTF Concealed Storage/Carry Garment Bag* is designed to hold two handguns, eight handgun magazines, a long gun up to 40" in length, three rifle mags, a tactical flashlight, a knife and other miscellaneous items. This handy bag can be hung in a closet with your clothing for a hidden-in-plain-sight concept yet ready to grab and run if needed. MSRP: \$249. For more info: (406) 745-4570, SkinnerSights.com



BULLETS FOR THE 405 WINCHESTER

NORTHERN PRECISION

Northern Precision now offers *Bullets for the 405 Winchester*. They come in a variety of standard and custom weights. These start at 225 grains and include a 265-grain and the 300-grain. Custom weights can also be made. Bullets are made in lead tip, round nose. A spitzer will soon be offered. There are also bonded core bullets for hunting and non-bonded for sight-ins. MSRP: From \$25 for a box of 50 non-bonded; \$35 for a box of 25 bonded. For more info: (315) 955-8679, NPCustomBullets.com



A08 SERIES

BEAR & SON CUTLERY

Bear & Son Cutlery's *A08 Series* features automatic opening lockbacks that fit the budget and lifestyle of the American work force. Knives in the series have 440 stainless steel blades that swiftly open with the push of a recessed button. The EDM Precision locking mechanism ensures safe and reliable operation of the knives. Handle materials are Rosewood, Genuine India Stag Bone or Black G10. The A08 knives also come with a pocket clip and lanyard hole. MSRP: \$158.75 to \$174.99. For more info: (256) 435-2227, BearAndSonCutlery.com



ARKANSAS TRI-HONE SHARPENING SYSTEM

GATCO SHARPENERS

The *Arkansas Tri-Hone Sharpening System* from GATCO features a coarse silicon carbide stone, a 100% natural Arkansas medium stone and a 100% natural Arkansas fine stone. Weighing 2 lbs., 1 oz., the 3-stone sharpening system mounts on a natural wood triangle for an elevated work surface, making it easy to sharpen outdoor knives, kitchenware and other straight-edge knives/tools. MSRP: \$46.25. For more info: (256) 435-2227, BearAndSonCutlery.com/product/GATCO-10003/



IWI GALIL ACE GEN-II PACKAGE

The *Galil ACE GEN-II* in 7.62x39 caliber takes center stage as the main prize in this month's giveaway. One of the newest products from IWI (Israel Weapon Industries), it's a continuation of the fan-favorite Galil ACE, created using feedback from real customers using the gun in the field. Modeled after the legendary AK-47 and Valmet RK 62, the Galil family never stops improving. The new Galil ACE GEN-II is 7 lbs. 5 oz., with a shorter safety profile and throw, Free Float MLOK rail forearm, 30-round capacity, and an updated trigger profile. The GEN-II has a barrel length of 8.3" and an overall length of 27-5/8" with the brace collapsed.

Streamlight's *PROTAC HLX USB Flashlight* brightens your way with 1,000 lumens of light on high mode. With a beam distance of 330 meters, the 5.43" flashlight is multi-fuel: It uses a rechargeable Li-Ion USB battery pack or two CR123A lithium batteries. Run time on high is 1.50 hours, 23 hours on low.

The *COMPACT* is a powerful PepperBall launcher you can carry in your pocket. Preloaded and ready to shoot with a launch distance of up to 30 feet, the COMPACT fires a projectile with a pepper irritant. The pepper ball bursts to release a pepper cloud upon impact to incapacitate a threat.

Owning IWI's Galil ACE GEN-II, Streamlight's PROTAC HLX USB Flashlight and PepperBall's COMPACT launcher will improve your self-defense situation. And they can be yours if you enter the giveaway. Join online at GUNSMagazine.com/giveaways or mail a postcard. —Jazz Jimenez



GALIL ACE GEN-II

MANUFACTURER: IWI

(717) 695-2081

IWI.US

CALIBER: 7.62x39, **CAPACITY:** 30

BARREL LENGTH: 8.3", **OAL:** 27-5/8"

WEIGHT: 7 lbs. 5 oz.

VALUE: \$1,849

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

ENTER to WIN!

If you are unable to enter online, mail a postcard with your name and address (no envelopes please). Entries must be received by August 31, 2021. Limit one entry per household.

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Streamlight.com
VALUE: \$85



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CAST LEAD KILLS

If you're squeamish, or prone to vasovagal syncope — grab the smelling salts. I'm about to reveal something few, if anyone, knows. Tucked deep within the bowels of my iPhone, inside the Photos App, is a file. A secret file, taking years to accumulate.

While gruesome to some, for a cast bullet junkie, they're evidence. Evidence caused by cast bullets. The close-up pictures of damaged hearts, lungs, vessels, shattered bones and blood trails tell the tale. The file is fittingly called, "Cast Bullet Carnage."

PROPERTIES

Cast lead projectiles are as old as firearms themselves. A heavy metal, symbol Pb, atomic number 82 on the elements table, lead possesses perfect characteristics for projectiles. Dense, its melting point (621.5 degrees F) makes it ideal for casting bullets into any shape, with molds of our choosing.

Being soft, alloying it with tin or antimony, sometimes both, hardens it. Adding trace

amounts of arsenic allows heat-treating, providing a wider range of hardness levels for our tasks. Lead is indeed versatile!

SHAPE MATTERS

The round ball (RB) was the first and most common cast projectile. Used with black powder, a cloth patch prevented leading when fired in muzzleloaders and black powder pistols. Its blunt shape is hard-hitting. Being pure lead, it flattens somewhat on impact, creating large wounds.

Later, cylindrical-shaped bullets were designed, flattening trajectories and deepening penetration. These projectiles were paper-patched and loaded into cartridges. As time progressed, hollow-point bullets and those with large nose-flats were determined to cause maximum tissue damage.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

I've heard some question the effectiveness of cast bullets. I've never witnessed this phenomenon during dozens of kills.



With its low melting point, lead is perfect for casting. In this case it's a Lee .501 440-grain gas-check radiused flat-nose Tank used on his Russian sow. An evolution of lead projectiles (below, left to right) — patched RB, paper-patched projectile, flat-nosed bullet, hollow-point bullet, gas-check bullet. All bullets are powder coated.



Those complaining almost always miss the vitals, so why blame the bullet? Every critter struck with a cast projectile, in the vitals, be it handgun, rifle, or muzzleloader, travels little — if at all — in my experience.

Where the animal is struck is more important than what struck it. Sure, I use jacketed bullets, too, and love them. But I enjoy using bullets I cast and loaded myself for the independence and self-sufficiency they provide. More importantly, satisfaction is tenfold when successfully taking game with such loads.

RUSSIAN CONCLUSION

Recently, I was hunting Russian Boar. It was cold, windy, with 6" of fresh snow. I spent half the day overlooking a steep ridge, waiting (shivering) in ambush. It felt like the Bavarian Alps. Instead, I was at a ranch in Pa. specializing in pig hunts.

This late winter hunt was a convenient means of testing a cool lever gun in a wicked caliber, while having a chance to procure some tasty pork. Did I mention I had a ball doing it?

THE SHOT

Suddenly, two Russian sows appear 80 yards below. While aiming, a gust of wind



Marlin 1895 .45-70 is as viable today as when cartridge belts were made from webbed cotton instead of nylon.



Here's Tank and the Russian porker. Tank's in the rear, if you're confused.

dislodged a tree limb, nearly hitting said porkers, spooking them. The Big Horn Armory lever gun, chambered in 500 S&W Magnum and sporting a Trijicon RM 06 red dot sight swings past the nose of the larger porker while I press the trigger. Said

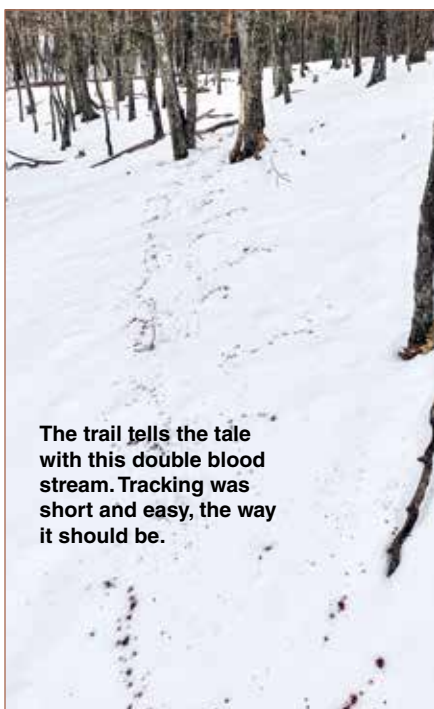
porker is perforated, leaking from both shoulders. Running a short distance, she falls. A heavy, dual blood trail, speckled with lung bits leads to a short recovery.

After skinning, examination reveals pulped lungs on the entry side, with a 3" hole on the exit side lung. The cast bullet is from a Lee mold dropping 440-grain flat-nosed gas-checked slugs. They are powder coated, loaded over 37 grains of H110 powder, stuffed in Starline brass and sparked with a Winchester LR primer. Performance is perfect. Who says cast doesn't kill?

A DEEPER EXPLANATION

Cast bullet handloads are comparable to archers using handmade long bows with wood-shaft arrows. Sure, modern tackle is faster and more sophisticated but taking game with tools you've made makes the hunt more special.

It brings back the days of our self-reliant forefathers casting RBs to feed and protect their families. So keep your powder dry and your lead hot, pilgrim! Above all else, have fun doing it! Now if you'll excuse me, I need to check my spicy pork links grilling outside. The dogs are drooling, and I'm not far behind!



The trail tells the tale with this double blood stream. Tracking was short and easy, the way it should be.



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occasions to do exactly what Dr. Dabbs explained in his article — take out beaver dams. To my knowledge we did not have any casualties as Dr. Dabbs did, but we blew a lot of dams to stop the flooding of many ranges and range roads. We had to use a bit more than two minutes of time fuse on big blows in Vietnam because some had several tons in one blow.

David Bigger

GREEN GUNK

Sending letters to editors, writing product/service reviews and the like is not typically in my bailiwick. Additionally, while I see humor in a variety of things, I rarely laugh out loud. However, Mr. Wheat's *Insider* in the June 2021 issue of *GUNS* produced an exception. I'm still giggling. All members of the gun guy-collective should lay out for all to see. And although I don't know what avocado toast is, it sounds pretty good.

Neil Stevens



Thanks! avocado toast is basically toast with smushed-up avocado goo smeared on it. I made the reference because my Millennial kids all love it. It's not bad if you like guacamole, just don't let it cause you to hang out in trendy (i.e. overpriced) coffee shops! —BW

GO WEST, YOUNG MAS

Maybe Mas will recall this? Doubt it, since this was at the Second Chance pin shoot in 1988. At the time I was using a then new video cam that recorded to VHS tapes, so the quality is poor. A couple of the guys who attended the shoot were also pilots and as they flew over they tossed Cherry Bombs from the low flying craft as they circled. Of course these came nowhere close to the

ground before exploding but they got the attention of the shooters, including Mas. We all thought this was great fun.

Mick Slater



Hey, I remember that! Thanks for the blast from the past. —Mas

THE NRA DEBACLE

I just finished listening to you and Jim Shepherd's podcast #76 ("Wayne LaPierre Must Go!") and I've got one main question: What can/should a long-term NRA member do to help create a cleanup of the executive suite at NRA, up to and including the ouster and defunding of Wayne LaPierre?

Clifton Ivy

As usual, your latest podcast was excellent but there was a glaring omission: What can or should NRA members do? I am not familiar enough with the NRA bylaws to know if there is some action members could take to oust the board and the executive suite. If there is something members can do, other than setting up lawn chairs and coolers to watch the coming train wreck, you and FMG publications have the means to reach, inform and inspire many NRA members and supporters. Both the country and the NRA have been focused on external enemies for years. It looks like both are on the verge of being destroyed from the inside.

Joe Filice

Just wanted to say thanks for a painful but realistic take on the current situation at the NRA as discussed in episode #76. I agree with you change is needed but how do we members apply the pressure needed to get leadership change at the NRA? I've been a life member for years but never had reason to reach out to anyone in a position of authority at the headquarters. Thanks again for what had to be a pretty joyless

experience recording the episode. The truth hurts sometimes, but it's still the truth and needs to be told.

Greg Reeves

If every NRA member would return the NRA donation requests forms without any money and write across the form "No money until Wayne LaPierre and crew are gone!" — this would immensely speed up the clean-out of the bad blood ruining the NRA. From a long standing but currently disgusted NRA member.

Allan Jenne

We got lots of letters on this podcast episode and so far 100% of them have been in support (a rarity). In my opinion, first and foremost we need rank-and-file NRA Members to demand action. We've all been hesitant to raise hell because of the good work the NRA does but it's time for torches and pitchforks. Otherwise, we should all just be quiet and let Wayne (and friends) continue doing what Wayne does. In a worse-case scenario, the lifeblood of the NRA is money so the day LaPierre and Co. have to buy suits off the rack and fly coach on a commercial airline, I believe the group will go off in search of greener pastures. One suggestion: Remain a basic member so the NRA doesn't lose electoral power, but don't give the organization another dime until reforms are made. —BW

STILL NO CONNOR

Thank you for finally publishing *Gun-crank Diaries*, a wonderful anthology of Connor's work and includes stories prior to my subscription. As a longtime subscriber to both *GUNS* and *American Handgunner*, Connor's articles were always the first ones I read, not to disparage your other brilliant writers. I am sure I represent all of Connor's fans who would like to email him but do not want to invade his privacy by sending something to his old AOL email address. Could you please publish a current email address for those of us who want to let him know how much we miss reading his stories and want to wish him well? While you are at it, you might as well include how we could contact the rest of your contributors who don't mind getting feedback.

Mark Holmes

We maintain regular contact with John and he knows folks want — demand — him to start writing again. For purely selfish



was a young lady we have been introducing to various handguns to see what she handled best. She took to No. 3 like a duck to water — I may have lost my gun. I took your advice for off-handing with a slight modification: “Release that fair maiden, Snively Whiplash, or prepare to meet your maker!”

Jerry Mandel

business reasons, I'd love him to write some new stuff but the chances of it happening are between slim and none. In terms of addresses, the editors act as gatekeepers for the writers. Some of them enjoy direct contact with readers, while others would like to maintain a bit of privacy. Feel free to send us correspondence and we'll forward to the writers. —BW

BUFFETT-BELLY BLUES

I am 22 years old and have been concealed carrying since I was 19. I have recently started listening to your podcast. I always hear you guys talking about different things and ways to EDC (every day carry). I heard you say you carry a man purse, AKA a Fanny pack. I would like to suggest you look into a holster/utility belt type thing called a “Belly Band.” You can find them on Amazon. They can hold full-size to sub compact guns, along with an extra mag, wallet, keys, small flash light or whatever else you can fit, they are surprisingly comfortable and I recommend you give one a shot! Keep up the awesome show!

Dustin Recker

I've used a belly band in the past, and I didn't find it comfortable. I will agree it's great for deep cover and keeping things secure but it comes down to body type. I'm guessing you haven't spent as much time in the buffet line as I have! —BW

TALE OF THE SCALE

I read “Handloading the .45 ACP Part II” and I think John Taffin has a typo regarding his Lyman #452424 mold. I checked out a bullet cast from my Lyman #452424 and it weighs 260 grains not close to 217 grains as mentioned. In the meantime keep up the near perfect excellent work.

Carl Thomas Zmuda

Thanks for writing and is always a pleasure to hear from readers who will read carefully! The mold I have is a very early one and combined with typesetting metal, it comes out lighter. —JT

AWN CARE

Would you please tell Mr. Van Zwoll (“SWAT Leather, You Varmint,” *GUNS* December 2020) he is the first gun writer who has used a word my phone can't define. What is a grass awn?

Alex A.



Alex, I'll take botanical trivia for \$400! A grass awn in the spiky, bristly part at the top of a grass seed husk. The tall things sticking off a wheat seed head? Awns. —BW

CIMARRON S&W NO. 3 AMERICAN

Regarding the *GUNS* cover story June 2021 — Took it out today. First off, let me say this is a well-made, tightly-fitted, good looking revolver. A delight in the hand. The 8" was out of stock so I bought the 5". Three of us took turns on paper targets to get a feel for the sights. Results were less than spectacular but we did determine it shot a bit high. Switching to tin cans is where the fun came in. None of us could miss with a minimum of five hits before the can was too far away to see clearly. One of the shooters



Well heck, thanks for your awfully kind email. I was actually just shooting mine yesterday. I find it great fun to clank an 80-yard steel torso here with it. Once you get yours, try off-handing it with one hand. It just sort of hangs there. Mutter “Unband her you ruffian” just before you press the trigger too. It helps. —Roy Huntington

YOU'D NEVER GUESS

I enjoy *GUNS Magazine* and the podcasts, well done. Who plays the music for the podcast? Great drum beat, give them credit please?

Ron Jones

Ron, you're the only person who has asked: The composer is — Brent T. Wheat. I put the piece together on my laptop while on a flight home from San Diego two years ago. I was just messing around to kill time and ended up liking it. I chose it for the podcast because the metallic “clunk” on the drum track sounds to me like bullets hitting steel plates. Even a blind pig finds an acorn once in a while! —BW

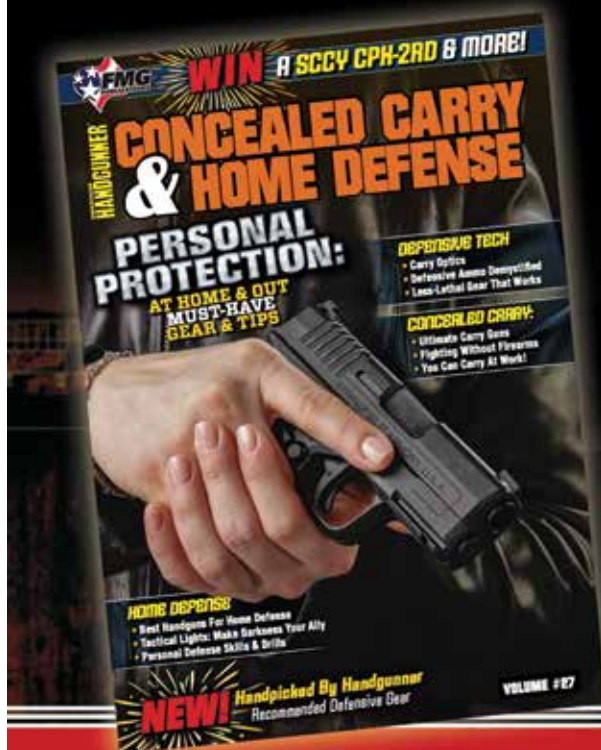
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will attest, .223 brass hits skin and can actually stick, causing significant 2nd- and 3rd-degree burns in the process.

The AR-platform carbines are notorious in this regard. The guns tend to fire a considerable number of rounds in each session and rapidly heat up. They also eject brass quite vigorously, something launching it into low earth orbit. If you are training as part of a group, it's very common for the white-hot casings to be flying over, under, around — and unfortunately — onto your body.

Of the countless episodes in my own training book, I'll share a prototypical and highly memorable incident at a carbine

somehow found its way past my beltline and finally ventured into the unexplored regions of my trousers like a small, cuprous Vasco de Gama.

I knew from experience I had to keep the malevolent brass moving lest I suffer serious damage but also had to maintain safe muzzle discipline. This series of actions proved far more difficult than the old trick of rubbing your belly and patting your head at the same time.

As the casing was sauntering around above the waist, I tried a few enthusiastic shoulder snaps like those often used by Otis Redding's backup singers. When the brass reached the small of my lower back I executed several hip rolls, the likes of which would have caused any mother or religious

"IF SHE ONLY KNEW THE TRUTH — IT WAS MERELY MY WORLD-FAMOUS RENDITION OF THE HOT BRASS BOOGIE."

training class with the late Pat Rogers. Pat's classes were known for high round-counts and we spent the week shooting and loading as fast as our chapped little fingers could fly.

At the time I was on a SWAT Team so I was wearing all the requisite "cool-guy" gear — fatigues, body armor/load-bearing vest, gun belt and thigh holster, knee and elbow pads, sunglasses, radio gear with headset and a nice, salty-looking "boonie" hat. Of course, I had a camo bandana around my neck because, well, it looked neat and I knew the critical ABCs: "Always Be Cool."

LET'S DANCE

During a rapid-fire relay in which we had all emptied multiple magazines, one adventurous shell casing decided it was time to make a long-awaited inner-space exploration. Time went into slow motion as somehow, violating both the laws of physics and haberdashery, the round got under my bandana, then shirt, and began a long, slow southward journey.

First it rolled around my back, visiting various landmarks along the way like a tourist checking out Disney World. Bored with this hirsute region, the casing then

official to recoil in horror. When the brass finally ventured south of the Mason-Dixon line, I began a series of violent and suggestive hip thrusts which would get you arrested in most rural areas, especially if performed near large farm animals

The brass was finally starting to cool a bit and slide down a pants leg, so I kept said leg quivering at approximately 750 cycles per minute. A fellow shooter, having missed my previous gymnastics while focusing on his own target, saw the moves and grew concerned our catered noon meal had reached critical mass and was poised for immediate launch. "Did you have the roast beef or chicken salad for lunch?" he shouted.

With the firing string finally over, I began maniacally removing my excessive gear and clothes in an effort to locate the casing. Simultaneously, a passing motorist called 911 to report there was a pudgy, camouflaged male stripper on the shooting range who apparently had accidentally released a live weasel inside his G-string. She demanded the police come and arrest the man for felonious dancing.

If she only knew the truth — it was merely my world-famous rendition of the Hot Brass Boogie.

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IT'S THE HOT BRASS BOOGIE! DANCING LESSONS ON THE FIRING LINE

Aside from being a magazine editor, you might be surprised to learn I am a world-class dancer, as verified by several national shooting organizations. Let me explain.

A MUSICAL BACKGROUND

For starters, I have often heard the term “beefy” intended mostly as a compliment in regards to my appearance though I am still moderately nimble and healthy in spite of being one large pizza away from shopping at the Big and Tall store. My outdoor and recreational pursuits no longer involve hiking dozens of miles and I view jogging as a sin worse than sobriety, but I can still work 14-hour days doing construction or clearing brush. Of course, I now have to recuperate for six weeks after such an outing, but at least I’m still capable.

I’ll share another personal trait relevant to today’s message — I’m blessed with rhythm. I’ve been a drummer in various forms since I started banging on pots and pans at age four and over the years I’ve performed in front of thousands and thousands of people, several of them actually sober. In one highly memorable incident at a large outlaw biker rally, my drummer was entirely surrounded by topless women, one or two of which even possessed the usual number of teeth.

Adding love of music with a strong internal metronome, I logically enjoy cutting a rug. Thus, we have our backstory — a lumpy late-middle-age guy who writes about guns for a living and loves to dance, and even has a bit of talent for it, despite not owning a stereotypical dancer’s body.

My love of “the boogie” frequently collides with my vocation. For instance, two or three decades ago at the Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trades (SHOT) Show in Las Vegas, a major beer manufacturer sponsored the annual media party. These were wild affairs, attended by hundreds of journos and hangers-on who drank

thousands of gallons of free beer. After dinner, awards and a short presentation, the evening was turned over to music and more beer.

On this night, a hot cover band took the stage but the large dance floor remained empty. I was enjoying the music and significant portions of the host’s products while chatting with various friends in the firearms industry. Toward the end of the evening, the band was begging someone, anyone to come out and dance but to no avail. After more pleading by the band and more sampling of the sponsor’s wares, the dangerous little voice inside my head spoke up and said, “Let’s show these deadbeats a thing or two!”

With a resounding war-whoop I started calling people out, pointing, waving my

an impression on the attendees, the fact I’m still employed full-time in the shooting industry is a testament to the fragility of the human memory.

BORN TO BOOGIE

I shared this interlude as public testimony I can, and will, dance. My moves might be unorthodox but they keep time with the music and I pursue them with great vigor. Of course, like most guys, I hesitate to publicly engage in this pastime until I’ve had a wee bit O’ liquid motivation to grease the skids. Then — watch out!

However, there is one other circumstance where I can be persuaded to trip the light fantastic at the drop of a hat. Actually, it would take far longer to doff a chapeau than to witness a marvelous demonstration of my foxtrot skills during what most would consider a crisis situation. I’m referring to the moment when hot empty shell casings somehow find their way inside your clothing.

For the uninitiated, this predicament occurs when you stand on the firing line blazing away at targets with several of your stalwarts. At some point, a hot shell casing fresh out of the gun goes playfully down your shirt or, heaven forbid, down a gap in the waistline of your pants.

Having a piece of hot metal roaming between your clothing and skin is a highly memorable experience and invokes a considerable range of response in the victim. Some folks scream vile epitaphs and dangerously wave their gun all over the range, while others simply endeavor to keep the offending casing constantly in motion while finishing the drill. This is my chosen technique as a practicing suave-master.

CHOOSE YOUR HEAT

Hot brass comes in many flavors. The .22 LR casings are only warmish, while 9mm and .45 ACP tend toward hot and can leave a mark if held stationary against the skin for several seconds. However, the temperature of rifle brass generally starts at “Aaarrrrgggg!” and ends somewhere above the melting point of a diamond — the .223 is the absolute tops in this regard. As any regular carbine shooter



arms, wildly gesticulating, gyrating like a dervish with fleas and generally acting like I’d lost what little mind I did possess, all while leading a growing samba line from the seating area to the dance floor.

Once there, according to bystanders with a clearer recollection of the event, I gave a floor show to shame any budding Baryshnikov. I whirled, I twirled, I rolled on the floor, body parts flying in several different directions simultaneously — but always in time with the music. It made such

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