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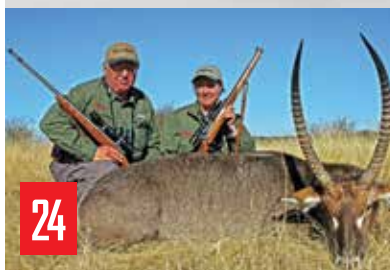
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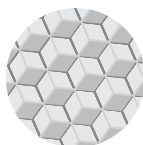
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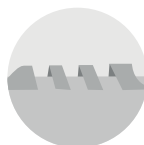
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NO BS

Referencing Tim Knapp's letter in the June 2021 issue on the magazine's use of "jumps" in the letters section. I do 100% appreciate your stories typically do not use this technique. However your excuse for using it in the letters section is pure "BS." Even if it is the last piece to be edited in. Making a single "story" segment takes, what, another 20 minutes or so? You could even take advantage of it to set a page or more dedicated to advertising at the end. A good place for readers to actually see who's paying the bills. As most all of us read the Letters section first.

BT Lewis

The magazine isn't laid out in linear fashion as you might expect. It's built in stages, starting with advertising. Late in the month-long, multi-stage and multiple-department process, the only remaining blank real estate are bits and drabs scattered throughout the magazine. We use this for Crossfire. Sure, we could rearrange everything but this would essentially start the layout process from scratch and just create problems somewhere else. The best compromise for us is to use the remaining white space for letters and then get the magazine out to subscribers. "Pure BS," really? You simply don't understand what you're talking about. —BW

I agree with your answer to the reader in the June 2021 issue about jumps. I have quit subscribing to another gun mag after voicing my complaint about spending time looking for the jump page to a story I started reading, then having to backtrack to the original story to read the next story. Their response to me was it was easier for

them to do it that way. I like reading each article without the jumps, but can put up with jumps in the Letters to the Editor section.

Dale Barry

GIVING IT UP

It was nice to see the FX Impact MKII Air rifle article in the May 2021 issue. In late January I decided to end my relationship with the powder-burning industry. I've had enough of watching prices rapidly climb to ridiculous levels and the crazy restrictions on how much you could buy. I shoot year round, typically one or two boxes per week at my local gun club here in Ohio. I decided to sell all my handgun primers, powder, bullets and dies along with all my reloading components and dies for centerfire rifle except for .223 components and dies.

I also sold five rifles I decided I'm no longer going to feed. I posted everything on a gun website on a Sunday afternoon at fair pre-craziness hoarder prices. It all sold in a little over an hour and my PayPal account had \$7,500 in it. \$5,700 went into two FX air rifles and a Feinwerkbau .177 cal. pistol. Then I bought a 4,500 psi compressor and a bunch of odds and ends to complement the changeover. I then bought 8,000 pellets for less than four boxes of .45 ACP at current gouging prices. Prices might come down on ammo but I'm pretty sure it won't be to pre-election/pandemic prices. I've moved on to a much more economical place.

Randy Scott

Randy, I'm not ready to make the same change but I am going to publish this as discussion fodder and food for thought. —BW



GUNS

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THE FINEST IN THE FIREARMS FIELD SINCE 1955

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PERFECT PACKIN' PISTOL PART 4 THE .45 AUTO RIM

The fourth cartridge in this series is from Smith & Wesson, chambered in a swing-out cylinder double-action revolver — the .45 Auto Rim. The United States Military had adopted the .45 ACP Government Model 1911 three years before WWI started and six years before we entered the conflict. Still we were not ready. Since there weren't enough 1911s to go around and they couldn't be produced fast enough, there had to be another solution. The ammunition, .45 ACP, used in the 1911 is rimless which means there's nothing to catch on the rear of the revolver cylinder for head spacing nor for the ejector star to engage for extracting should such ammunition be used in a revolver.

Joseph Wesson, president of S&W at the time, came up with the ingenious idea

allowing Smith & Wesson's N-Frame 2nd Model Hand Ejector chambered in .45 ACP to work successfully. His idea was the half-moon clip. This clip accepted three rounds and when placed in the cylinder provided proper head spacing as well as prevented the cartridge from moving forward in the cylinder. Placing two of these loaded clips in the S&W cylinder not only provided for the use of semi-automatic cartridges in revolvers but also resulted in very quick reloading if the clips were pre-loaded and also positive unloading. Thus the problem was solved and many soldiers of the American Expeditionary Force were armed not with Colt 1911s but with either a Colt 1917, which was a New Service chambered for the .45 ACP, or a Smith & Wesson 1917/2nd Model Hand Ejector.

A STAR IS BORN

After the war, as usually happens, these new Colt and Smith & Wesson sixguns became popular with civilians as well as law officers. Now it was time for someone else to come up with another good idea to allow cartridges — sans half-moon clip — to work in either model. This time it was a worker at Peters Ammunition, now part of Remington, who came up with a logical solution in the early 1920s. The simple answer was to put a rim on the rimless .45 ACP brass. The .45 Auto Rim was born.

Most revolver cartridges have a rim thickness of 0.060"-0.065" but the .45 Auto Rim required a rim of 0.090" to take up the head space provided by the half-moon clips. There is no doubt the .45 Auto Rim has a rim and it is quite an interesting-looking cartridge with its stubby length and thick rim. Smith & Wesson has always taken the .45 Auto Rim cartridge seriously, offering numerous models over the past 90-plus years. The 5½" 1917 Model was not only offered in military versions but commercial models as well, then after World War II it was upgraded to the 1950 Military and the 1950 Target and then the 1955 Target followed. In later years the 1955 Target became the Model 25-2 and has also been joined by the 625 series of stainless steel sixguns.

It appears there were no factory original 4" Smith & Wessons chambered in .45 ACP/.45 Auto Rim until well after World War II. The 1950 Target Model .45 is mostly found with the lightweight 6½" barrel, however the 4" version is reported as extremely rare. The lightweight-barreled 1950 Target became the Model 26 in 1957. I cannot find any documentation of an original 4" 1955 Target chambered in .45 Auto Rim, however there may be some S&W collector out there who has one. The heavy-barreled 1955 Target became the Model 25 in 1957. It is reported about 10 or 12 were made with 4" barrels and round butts for the CIA, however these have not been verified as factory original.

TAKE UP THE CHALLENGE

What the factory did not do, I decided to do. So, I had a 1955 Target Model .45 Auto Rim cut to 4" turning it into a very handy packin' sixgun. With the arrival of stainless steel models, we began to see some 4" .45 Auto Rim revolvers from Smith & Wesson.

A 4" stainless steel and blue S&W .45 AR sixguns (top and bottom) compared to the 5" heavy underlug barreled Model 625 (middle).



A speed loader with .45 Colt cartridges is fast, however a .45 Auto Rim sixgun with full moon clips is even faster.





STILL MAKING HISTORY.

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Introducing the 2021 Colt Anaconda.

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The Colt Anaconda, once again, makes history.

COLT.COM/ANACONDA



We mentioned the Model of 1988/Model of 1989 when we discussed the .45 Colt version. In 1994 Smith & Wesson produced the 4" Springfield Armory Bicentennial Edition which was produced by the Performance Center and offered by Lew Horton Distributors. This was basically a Model 629 .44

Magnum Mountain Gun chambered in .45 Auto Rim. In 1999 the Performance Center produced a 4" slab-sided barreled 625 for RSR Distributors. In 2005 the Model 625JM was produced as part of the Jerry Miculek Professional series with a 4" full underlug barrel and chambered in .45 Auto Rim. Of

course, for speed shooting Jerry uses full moon clips with .45 ACP ammunition.

A most interesting and practical packin' pistol was introduced in 2005 as the Thunder Ranch Special. This blued Model 22-4 has a 4" barrel with a pinned half-moon front sight reminiscent of the original found on the Model 1917. Instead of the round butt grip frame prevailing at the time, this one came with a true N-Frame square butt. This same basic sixgun with the 4" barrel was offered in the Classic Series in three versions, nickel-plated, blued and with a color case hardened frame.

LOAD AND HOLSTER

One of my favorite bullets for the .45 Auto Rim was designed by Ray Thompson in the early 1950s. At the time he actually designed four great bullets, namely #358156 for the .38/.357, #429215 and #429244 for the .44 Special and then later for the .44 Magnum, and the #452490 for the .45 Auto Rim. All of these are semi-wadcutter, gas-check designs and the latter was for his Smith & Wesson 1950 Target .45 Auto Rim. It weighs 254 grains in my alloy and also works well with the .45 Colt. In fact I use it for hunting loads in a .45 Colt Ruger Blackhawk. With this heavy bullet in the .45 Auto Rim 13.0 grains of #2400 gives me just under 1,000 fps. Again caution is necessary and these loads should be only used in modern .45 Auto Rim sixguns in excellent shape.

The .45 Auto rim is more efficient than the .45 Colt with most loads because of its reduced case capacity. The .45 Colt is, of course, the cartridge of choice when heavy duty loads are desired and the sixgun is strong enough to take advantage of the large case capacity while the .45 Auto Rim is better in standard-size cylinders.

An extra added bonus for the .45 Auto Rim is the fact it works quite well with the range of jacketed bullets designed for the .45 ACP. The lightweight 185-grain jacketed hollow points can easily be loaded to over 1,000 fps with 8.5 grains of Unique, resulting in an excellent choice for varmint shooting or small game hunting. With a 230-grain typical hardball bullet, 7.0 grains of Unique gives about 860 fps which is plenty powerful for most uses.

A second extra added bonus is the fact we can go right back to the beginning and use any of the revolvers chambered for the .45 Auto Rim with .45 ACP brass in half-moon or full-moon clips — that's versatility if I've ever seen it!



Both of these 4" .45 AR S&W sixguns have chambers cut so .45 ACP rounds can be used successfully without moon clips — however, unloading becomes a slow proposition!



Targets fired with John's custom 4" 1955 Target; Skeeter Skelton grips are by BearHug.



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(HAMMER) LESS IS MORE WHY CARRY THIS J-FRAME?

In the time of the smallest good 9mms and the best pocket-size .380s ever, the smallest-frame short barrel double-action revolver still thrives — Smith & Wesson's J-Frame. If you're considering one, you have three basic formats: the conventional spur-hammered Chief Special-series dating back to 1950, the shrouded hammer Bodyguard style introduced in 1955, and the "hammerless" Centennial, so named because it came out in S&W's hundredth year, 1952.

This latter revolver is a descendant of the top-break S&W New Departure Safety Hammerless of 1887 and discontinued in 1940. Gun lore has it the Safety

Hammerless was so named because it was meant to be "child resistant" with an extra-heavy double-action-only pull and a grip safety, the latter causing users to nickname it "the lemon squeezer." Col. Rex Applegate carried one for its small size and sleek, snag-free draw, but was disappointed when he pumped five of its stubby .38 S&W cartridges into an attacker who wasn't stopped. It was he who famously convinced S&W to manufacture it on the Chief's J-Frame in the more potent .38 Special cartridge. Like its predecessor, the Centennial was a lemon squeezer and "hammerless" only in that its hammer was inside, unseen and un-cockable.

TWICE REVIVED

The revived hammerless of 1952 was discontinued for lack of sales in 1974. J-Frame buyers found a grip safety on a revolver to be unnecessary or even stupid and wanted the single-action cocking capability of a Chief or a shrouded Bodyguard, the latter being almost as snag-free on the draw. The Bodyguard was seen as "the thinking man's Chief Special."

Four years before the discontinuance, Joni Mitchell sang "you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone," and it was true of the Centennial. It was during this period when shooters figured out a snub .38 was for emergencies, which meant double-action anyway. Savvy gun guys such as Wiley Clapp and the late Walt Rauch sang the praises of the Centennial and S&W



Three of a kind — the three types of short-barrel, short-frame revolvers: Chief Special (left), Bodyguard (top), Centennial (right).



With hand high on the backstrap, note the low bore axis of the Centennial. This is the .22 LR version, the Model 43C. Exposed-hammer Chief and shroud-hammer Bodyguard (below) don't allow the low bore axis hold of the Centennial.



listened. In 1990, what since 1957 had been the all-steel Model 40 and the Airweight Model 42 came back with new designations, and without the hated grip safety. It was so timely a reintroduction S&W execs back then told me it quickly became their best-selling J-Frame — of course it is with us today in many forms and chamberings.

GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS

As a kid, I thought the Centennial was stupid too ... but as a grownup and a serious shooter, I had to change my mind. It wasn't necessarily the hammerless profile might be ever so slightly faster out of pocket or ankle holster than a bobbed-hammer Chief or a Bodyguard. The single biggest advantage in shooting was less muzzle rise, model for model with the same ammo. The "high horn" of the backstrap allowed the firing hand to get higher on the gun, lowering the bore axis and reducing muzzle rise, thus improving recoil recovery for fast follow-up hits. Don't take my word for it — try it for yourself, as I did.

Another advantage comes from the direction of negligent discharge and civil liability protection. A cocked hammer creates a "hair trigger" effect that under stress can play into an unintentional shot. It also enables the false accusation an intentional, justified shot was an inexcusable accident! This is why so many



Solid-frame "Lemon-squeezers" — Early '50s Model 42 Airweight (top) and 21st Century 40-1 (bottom).

police departments made their service revolvers double-action-only.

Moreover, with a revolver thumb-cocked in anticipation of a critical shot, the situation can resolve itself without a shot being fired, leaving the user to lower the hammer on a live round with a shaky, over-adrenalized hand. This gets all the more scary if the shooter only has the exposed nub of a hammer found on the Bodyguard. The double-action-only design of the hammerless becomes a feature, not a bug.

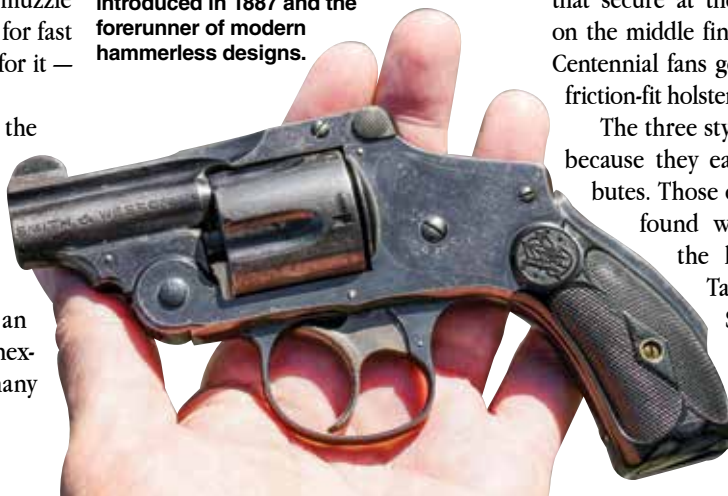
The S&W New Departure Safety Hammerless was introduced in 1887 and the forerunner of modern hammerless designs.

PRACTICE MAKES PERMANENT

The lack of single-action capability is dealt with simply by practicing double-action. Once you have it down, it's faster than thumb-cocking and you don't have to break your hold. More worrisome is without a hammer spur, you can't safely bring the hammer back to do a cylinder rotation check with a loaded specimen. We hammerless aficionados get past this by making sure our chambers are clean, our ejector rods are tight and our cartridges are free of high primers.

Thumb-break holsters are out, though; no hammer spur to hook on. Safety straps that secure at the trigger guard can snag on the middle finger, stalling the draw. We Centennial fans go mostly with pocket and friction-fit holsters.

The three styles are still in production because they each have their own attributes. Those of the Centennial are also found with the Ruger LCR and the hammerless revolvers of Taurus and Charter Arms. S&W's three incarnations show how many generations like its style. 🔫



DUKE'S YEARS AS A VARMINT SHOOTER REMINGTON TO ROCK CHUCKS, HE'S TRIED IT ALL

Readers of my work over the decades may be surprised to learn my primary rifle interest in the late 1970s to early 1980s was varmint rifles and many of my early articles concerned them. Prior to moving lock, stock and barrel to Montana in the mid-1970s I was mostly a handgun shooter. In southwestern West Virginia where I grew up, there simply was not much purpose for rifles. I did buy a Model 1903A3 Springfield with which I made my introduction to bullet casting for rifles. Before moving to Montana I doubt if I'd ever fired any rifle at a target more than 75 yards distant.

TARGET-RICH ENVIRONMENT

The area of Montana where I made my home had prairie dogs, "gophers" (actually ground squirrels), rock chucks and coyotes. In order to hit the ground running so as to become a rifleman, I bought a dedicated varmint rifle ahead of time. That's when

I learned buying anything with no experience in the subject was bound to be a mistake.

The rifle I bought was a Ruger No. 1 single shot with varmint-weight barrel chambered for .22-250. It wasn't too much of a mistake. The real problem was I put a 20X Lyman Super Targetspot scope on it. I discovered my error on my very first outing. Two local fellows invited me along to shoot "gophers" out to about 200 yards. I don't remember the makes of their rifles except they were bolt actions chambered for the .222 Remington. I do remember they had moderate power scopes. They would call out the location of a "gopher" such as, "Look just to the left of that boulder!" In the narrow field of view with the 20X scope I couldn't even find the boulder before one of them zapped the gopher. I didn't get off very many shots that day.

However, the experience launched me into varmint shooting. Quickly the Ruger

single-shot rifle and Lyman scope were traded and I purchased a Ruger Model 77 .22-250 bolt action. Its scope was a 6X Leupold. With this outfit I could at least hit a few gophers on my next outing. However, a little math showed I was burning about twice the powder my cohorts were using in their .222 Remingtons. So the Ruger was sold and replaced with a .222 Remington Model 700V (heavyweight barrel). For its scope I purchased one of the new Weaver T10s. Instead of using ordinary reloading dies and press, I switched over to Bonanza's competition dies and one of their nifty presses with its seating-die/shell holder alignment system.

Finally, with a bit of load development



Duke's varmint choices: (L-R) .222 Remington, .223 Remington and the .222 Remington Magnum.



Duke's sole varmint rifle today — his Remington Model 700 ADL .222 Remington Magnum — is used to stop coyotes from making a meal of their dogs or cats.



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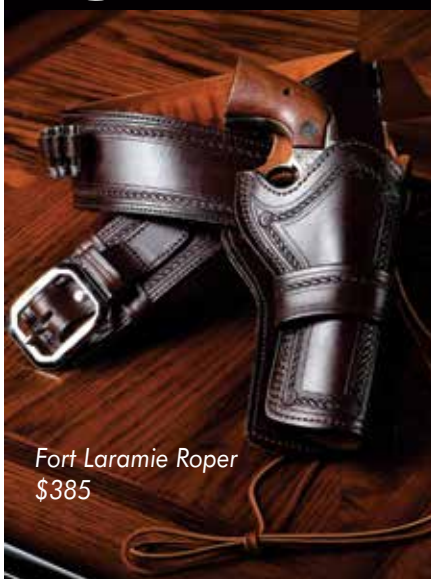
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About 15 years ago Duke was invited on a "ground squirrel safari" in Oregon. He attended with this Savage Model 11F .223 Remington and fired over 1,000 rounds in five days. Duke kept his .222 Remington Magnum M700 because it shoots groups such as this (below).



trying different powders and bullets, I hit upon a load combination that would consistently shoot 1" five-shot groups at 100 yards. Still I wasn't satisfied. Next I bought a slightly used Model 700V .222 Remington because it had a synthetic stock with an aluminum bedding block. Brother, was that thing accurate!

Sub-1" groups were common. For a time I turned into an accuracy nut. I wanted tighter groups and by selling off some "stuff" I bought a Remington 40X-BR .222 Remington and a case-neck-turning kit (brand unremembered). Atop the Remington I mounted a Lyman LWBR 20X scope. (LWBR stood for light weight bench rest.) Now I could shoot half-inch 100 yard groups and

sometimes quarter-inch groups. It was fun and educational but I was back to too much scope and a difficult rifle to pack about.

IT'S ONLY MONEY

Being unmarried in those days, when cash was available it went for more varmint rifles. Walkabout ones with standard-weight barrels became my fancy such as a Remington Model 700 .222 Remington Magnum. A Remington Model 600 6mm, a Ruger Model 77 .243 Winchester, a Ruger Model 77 .220 Swift and a pre-64 Winchester Model 70 .220 Swift were purchased. I even got a couple of .25-06s loading them with 75-grain bullets at very high velocities.

Then I burned out and my inborn interests in history returned. All those rifles were sold bar one — the standard-weight .222 Remington Magnum Model 700 ADL. I still have it.

About 15 years back I was invited on a ground squirrel shoot in Oregon. There wasn't enough brass for my .222 Mag so I bought a Savage Model 11F .223 Remington. I shot over 1,000 rounds through it in five days, then later gave it to a friend's son when he turned 13. My only varmint rifle now is my trusty .222 Remington Magnum. It serves for the occasional coyote trying for an easy meal with one of our pets. 🦊

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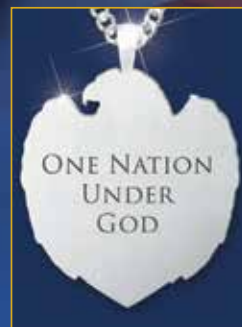
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HANDLOADING THE .45 ACP

PART 3: JACKETED BULLETS

In 1905 John Browning designed a semi-automatic pistol firing a new .45 cartridge the style of which we now label “rimless,” even though it does actually have a rim for the extractor. By 1911 the Browning design had become the 1911 Colt Government Model with one of the changes being a more user-friendly angle grip frame instead of the straight grip of the original. The cartridge would also be changed with the 200-grain bullet being replaced by a 230-grain round-nosed full metal jacket bullet at just over 800 fps. This cartridge soon became legendary for its stopping power and it’s a dead ringer in performance for the .45 Schofield cartridge the military had been using for over 30 years.

HARDBALL HISTORY

Now over 100 years later, not only is the 1911 Government Model still the semi-automatic by which all other pistols are judged, the original loading is still an excellent choice for everyday use — even though we have seen a long list of .45 ACP cartridges arrive with other bullets including flat-nosed and hollowpoint versions. I purchased my first 1911 Government Model in 1956 and

shot it exclusively with military surplus 230-grain Hardball ammunition. This original “Colt” was actually a Remington Rand-produced 1911 for use in WWII. When I moved my young family across the country in 1966, the 1911 loaded with Hardball was in its military holster under the front seat of our 1965 Ford Station Wagon. When I traveled back and forth to the University of Montana for three summers working on my Masters Degree, the same 1911 — again loaded with hardball — rode behind my back in my belt. During those summers when I needed a break from class during the week, I would drive up to Lolo Pass and shoot the 1911. It seemed to help lower my frustrations.

I load and shoot a large amount of cast bullets in my 1911s, however jacketed bullets are not ignored and are also used in large quantities. As outlined in the first installment of this series, all of my .45 ACP rounds — and I do mean *all* — no matter what bullets I am using, are loaded the same way. First all brass is sized using the Lee Undersized Carbide Sizing Die, then case mouths are expanded just enough to accept the bullet using the Lee Universal Expanding Die. After placing the proper



Springfield Armory Officers Model with a box of jacketed hollowpoints, aka “Flying ashtrays.”

powder charge and seating the bullet without crimping, I then turn to the Lee Factory Crimp Die. All of this ensures reloads will function in any 1911 I happen to use.

To duplicate the original Hardball load I have found a 230-grain FMJ bullet over 6.0 grains of Unique gives me 825 fps from a standard 5" barrel while 5.0 grains of Red Dot is about 25 fps faster. The latter load is especially accurate, giving groups just over 1" at 20 yards through a Springfield Armory TRP 1911. A slightly lighter load using the same 230-grain bullet is 5.0 grains of Bullseye for just over 800 fps with five shots in less than 1" through this same Springfield TRP. For a target load with this bullet, 3.5 grains of Bullseye is a very mild shooting 625 fps and an equally accurate load through



Unique continued to be a top choice powder for loading either jacketed or cast bullets in the .45 ACP.



Ruger SR 1911 Target Model (left) and Combat Commander thrive on a diet of jacketed bullets.

this Springfield. Switching to 5.0 grains of Alliant Sport Pistol powder gives me a very mild shooting load just over 750 fps which has proven to be exceptionally accurate in an Iver Johnson Long Slide 6" 1911.

JACKETS REQUIRED

There are many hollowpoint jacketed bullets available and I have found both the Hornady and Sierra 185-grain versions to be quite accurate. In fact, so accurate it is hard to find a load that is not exceptional. Using the Colt 1911 Government Rail Model Stainless Steel, the Hornady 185 JHP over 8.5 grains of True Blue results in 1,025 fps and five shots in $\frac{3}{4}$ " and 8.0 grains of CFE Pistol gives 980 fps and 1" accuracy, while the same load with the Sierra JHP is right at 1,000 fps and a group of $\frac{7}{8}$ " through the Colt 1911 Combat Elite.

As we saw in the installment covering cast bullets, one of my favorite bullets is the H&G #68 semi-wadcutter bullet, also duplicated by RCBS #45-201, and the Oregon Trail 45-200 SWC. A jacketed bullet for these is duplicated by a Hornady 200-grain jacketed semi-wadcutter. I load these with just a very slight protrusion of the bullet shoulder above the case mouth. Call it just over a hair's length or just so I



True Blue powder works well with both 230-grain and 185-grain .45 ACP jacketed bullets. John uses these four Alliant powders with jacketed bullets in .45 ACP (below).



can barely see it. This seems to work very well for me in all 1911 pistols. This Full Metal Jacketed bullet over 7.0 grains of CFE Pistol powder through the above-mentioned Colt Rail Model clocks out at 885 fps with a group under 1" while 8.0 grains of Powder Pistol is 90 fps faster and a group just over 1" for five shots. In addition to the typical 230-grain Hardball bullet Hornady also offers a 230-grain flat-nosed version which I have found to also be exceptionally accurate. With 7.0 grains of True Blue, the velocity through the Colt Rail Model is 845 fps with a 1" group while 7.0 grains of CFE Pistol powder results in a load which is 40 fps faster and just under one inch.

With a choice of so many excellent FMJ and JHP bullets what is the best choice for everyday carry, especially when traveling off the beaten path? My friend, custom gunsmith Gary Reeder, found himself in a situation where he had to put down a black bear which had been hit by a vehicle and, though incapacitated, was still very much alive. Gary found a hollowpoint would not get the job done, however a hardball bullet penetrated to the vitals. I prefer to stagger rounds in the .45 ACP magazine between FMJ and JHP loads so hopefully I am prepared for any situation.



With a few minor changes this well-used Model 25 was returned to service.

MODEL 25 WINCHESTER THE POOR MAN'S MODEL 12

Many readers are probably familiar with the Model 1912 Winchester (later changed simply to Model 12 or M12). When introduced, it was known as the "perfect repeater."

Manufactured from 1912 to 1963, a total of over 2 million were produced during its production run. The Model 12 saw action in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and was used by every branch of the service.

Model 12s were offered in 12-, 16-,

20- and 28-gauges with barrel lengths ranging from 25" to 32". Riot and Trench guns with shorter barrels were produced for police and military use. Many grades were offered as well as take-down versions.

PRICE PROBLEM

However, gun dealers complained about the high cost of the Model 12 and this brought about the lesser-known Winchester Model 25.

The Model 25 had a relatively short

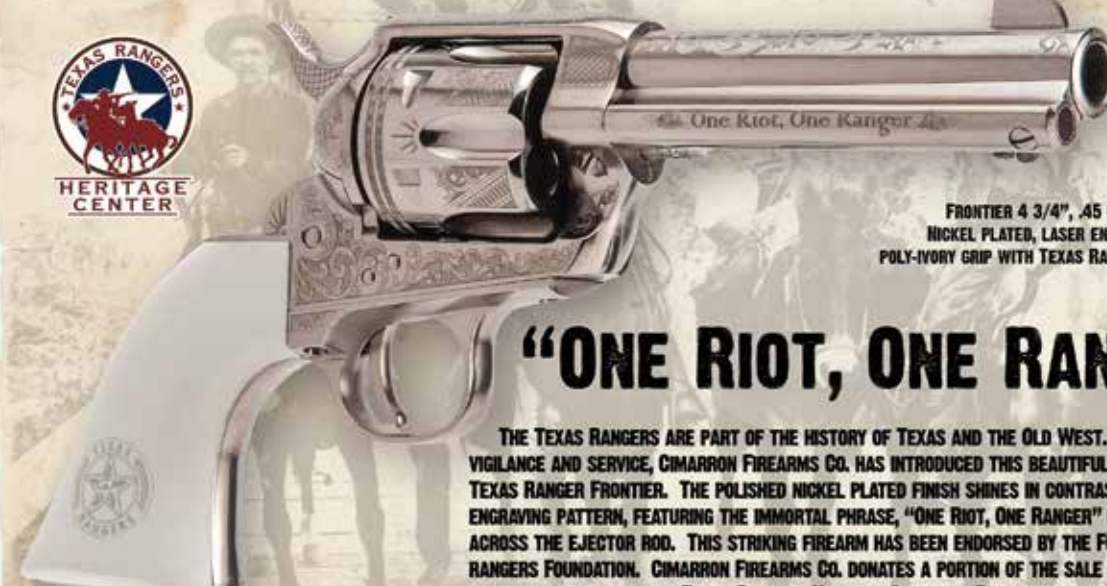
five-year production life with manufacturing beginning in 1949 and ending in 1954 with 87,937 produced.

Based on the Model 12 action, it was known as the "poor man's Model 12." The Model 25 was a no-frills model and offered only in 12 gauge. Standard barrel length was 28" although no take-down versions were made although a few riot guns with 20" barrels were produced. All Model 25s had solid frames, so no take-down models.

Unlike most modern shotguns with a magazine of four or five shells, the Model 12 and 25 have a capacity of six (6+1).

My son's fiancé was recently given a Model 25 by a relative. I'm not aware of

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GUNS Your next gun story begins here!

any records breaking down serial number by year, but with serial #10045 I think this was made in the first production year.

Flint brought it over for me to look at and said they had taken it to the range. He told me after firing the slide-action would not work without activating the action release, demonstrated the "problem" and handed it to me. I initially thought it was a well-worn Model 12, but looking it over I realized I held the rare (compared to the Model 12) Model 25.

I proceeded to work the action and dry fired the shotgun five times without touching the action release. I explained that like the Model 12 and Model 97 shotguns, the forend needs to be pushed forward and kept there while a shot is fired in order for the gun's action to unlock for the next shot.

Like the Model 97 and Model 12, the Model 25 can be "slam fired" while holding the trigger to the rear and working the action back and forth.

This shotgun was in good condition and lockup was solid, but the action was

quite stiff. I took a guess this was probably from years and years of no cleaning, with the interior gummed up with unburned powder, dirt and congealed lube.

Sometime along the line someone had shortened the barrel to 18¾" but had not replaced the bead sight. As with most factory shotguns, the length of pull (LOP) was too long for my son's fiancé. I've never understood why manufacturers make shotgun stock so long. While anyone can shoot a gun with a shorter stock, a long LOP makes good technique very difficult for anyone who does not have arms like an orangutan.

CUSTOM WORK

A decision was made to take the gun to Dave Fink of Fink's Custom Gunsmithing to shorten the stock, fit a recoil pad, install a bead front sight and perform any necessary cleaning and repair.

We've gone to Dave Fink for several projects and as usual, his work was exemplary. When the shotgun was returned we were more than pleased with the results.



When the barrel was shortened the front bead sight was not reinstalled. This was one thing needing to be addressed.

The bead sight was properly centered and the recoil pad to stock installation was seamless. The shortened stock fit Flint's fiancé perfectly. The action now feels slicker and is easier to manipulate. The absolute best thing was it brought a family heirloom out from the back of the safe and turned it into a shooter again.

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THE .308, THE ORIGINAL JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES

VERSATILITY TO THE MAX!

A reader asked — “Why have you never written about the .308 Winchester cartridge?” Well, why not now? Should be great fun!

The .308 Win. was released by Winchester as a commercial cartridge in 1952. Winchester chambered it initially in the bolt-action Model 70 rifle, and later in the Models 88 and 100 ... getting so sleepy ... ballistics almost equal to the .30-06 but in a shorter cartridge suited to semiautomatic and lever actions ... yawn ... and ... and ... short bolt actions ... ZZZZZZ.

MEDIOCRE NOT

The .308 Win. is not a very exciting cartridge. It isn't a super-high-velocity round. It isn't a big-bore bone crusher. There's nothing exotic about it. You could even call it boring. I have a shooting buddy who is an exceptional shot, a successful competitor and fine hunter. Old-school

cartridges like the .30-06 and .308 bore him to tears. His idea of a nice big game rifle is a .338-378 Weatherby. He once said he'd quit hunting before he would use a .308.

And yet year after year, decade after decade, the .308 is one of the most popular rifle cartridges as measured by ammunition and rifle sales. All the .308 has done for the past 70 years is whatever it was asked to do, efficiently, economically and capably. As with so many reliable items we tend to take it for granted.

I'm not into “favorite cartridges” much, but if I were the .308 wouldn't make my top-10 list — which was why I was startled when I did a mental inventory and realized I own more rifles chambered for .308 Win. than any other cartridge except .223 Rem. Why? Because the cartridge is so darn versatile.

I've used it in lightweight hunting



Dave doesn't see the forward-mounted “scout scope” a significant aiming advantage but he does like the easy access to the receiver for rapid loading.

rifles and heavy target rifles, shot it slow-fire at a thousand yards, rapid fire in practical rifle matches and at 4,000 rounds per minute from a helicopter door minigun. Maybe enthusiasts like my buddy find the .308 boring but the general shooting public does not.

I grew up on a Saskatchewan farm in the 1960s. Virtually all the men I knew hunted, whitetail deer mostly, occasionally moose and elk. About 1970 I asked a gun dealer I knew what was his best-selling cartridge. He said the .308 Win. by a wide margin. Lever actions were far more popular than bolt actions,

An early '70s era Browning BLR in .308, from the days when the BLR used a steel receiver. Scope is a 6X Redfield “Widefield” from the same era.

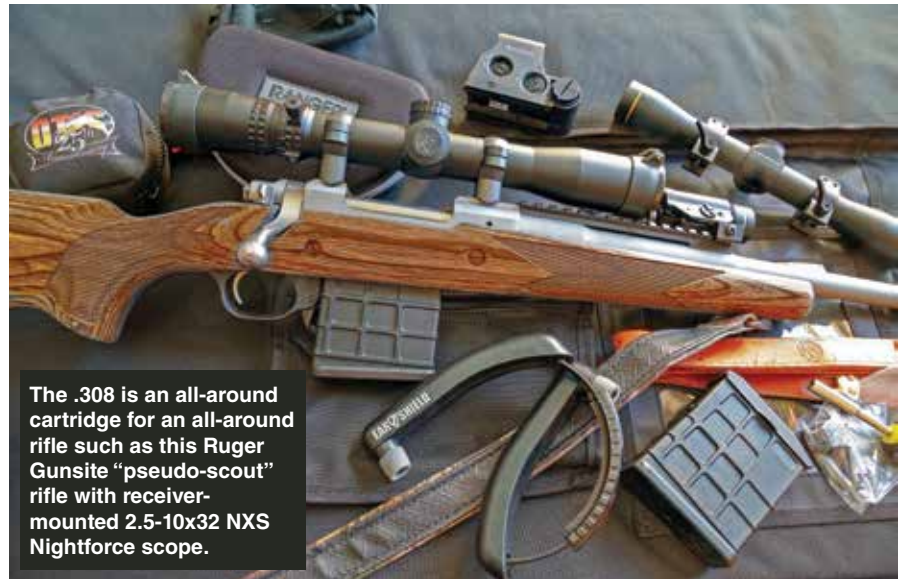


mainly Savage 99s and Winchester 88s, even the occasional Sako Finnwolf. When the Browning BLR appeared around 1970 it did quite well considering it was never a cheap rifle. I remember visiting an old subsistence farmer/trapper at his ancient, cluttered log cabin. Hanging on the wall was a like-new Browning BLR worth more than everything else in the room combined.

If you're looking for a lightweight, compact, fast-handling hunting rifle with plenty of power the .308 Win. is an excellent choice. For a while in the 1970s my deer rifle was a Remington 600 Mohawk .308. It was light, easy to carry, easy to maneuver in heavy cover. For my uses it had a couple of shortcomings. It was muzzle-light, with the balance point about $3\frac{1}{2}$ " ahead of the trigger. It was inherently very accurate; I could shoot it well from a rest, but not offhand or for running shots.

SAY WHAT?

The other fault was the muzzle blast



The .308 is an all-around cartridge for an all-around rifle such as this Ruger Gunsite "pseudo-scout" rifle with receiver-mounted 2.5-10x32 NXS Nightforce scope.

from the $18\frac{1}{2}$ " barrel. In those days I was too stupid to use ear protection while hunting, thinking (wrongly) an occasional shot without muffs wouldn't hurt my hearing. A 20" .30-30 or 22" .270 was bad enough, but the stubby little .308 was just too much.

Obviously neither of these issues is the cartridge's fault. Today there are many nicely balanced carbines from which to choose and modern hearing protection can and should be worn whenever one is shooting. I have several carbines including a Ruger 77 International I used in Africa.



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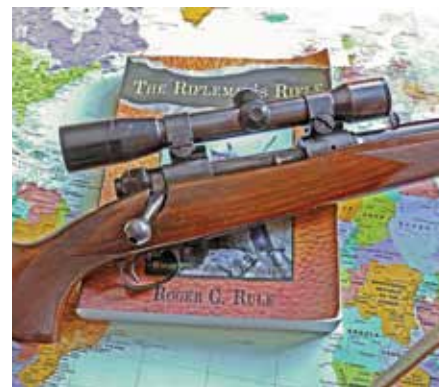
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Another venue where the .308 shines is the “scout rifle.” The term refers to an all-around rifle for big game hunting, pest control on farm or ranch and wilderness survival. Common features of current scout designs include: bolt action, detachable 5- or 10-shot magazine, compact overall length, barrel length of 18”–20”, adaptability to

receiver-mounted iron sights, or receiver or barrel mounted scopes.

The .308 excels as a cartridge for formal target shooting. I dislike the term “inherently accurate” as it seems rather vague and imprecise. The .308 has a huge accuracy advantage in having superb match ammunition widely available. Most big



Dave's oldest .308 rifle is this Winchester 70 Featherweight made in 1954 with a '60s era 4X Kahles scope.



This waterbuck fell to a Ruger 77 .300 Win. Mag but Dave feels his .308 Ruger International, held here by wife Simone, would have handled most of the plains game chores.

ammunition makers offer splendid .308 match loads. I remember a custom gun-maker saying every rifleman should have at least one accurate .308, just to be able to shoot Black Hills match loads that he considered the very best available.

Only the most meticulous handloaders can equal the accuracy of Black Hills match. Nonetheless the reloader will find the .308 a pleasant cartridge to reload. It isn't a bit fussy about powders, a nice feature when powders are in high demand and short supply.









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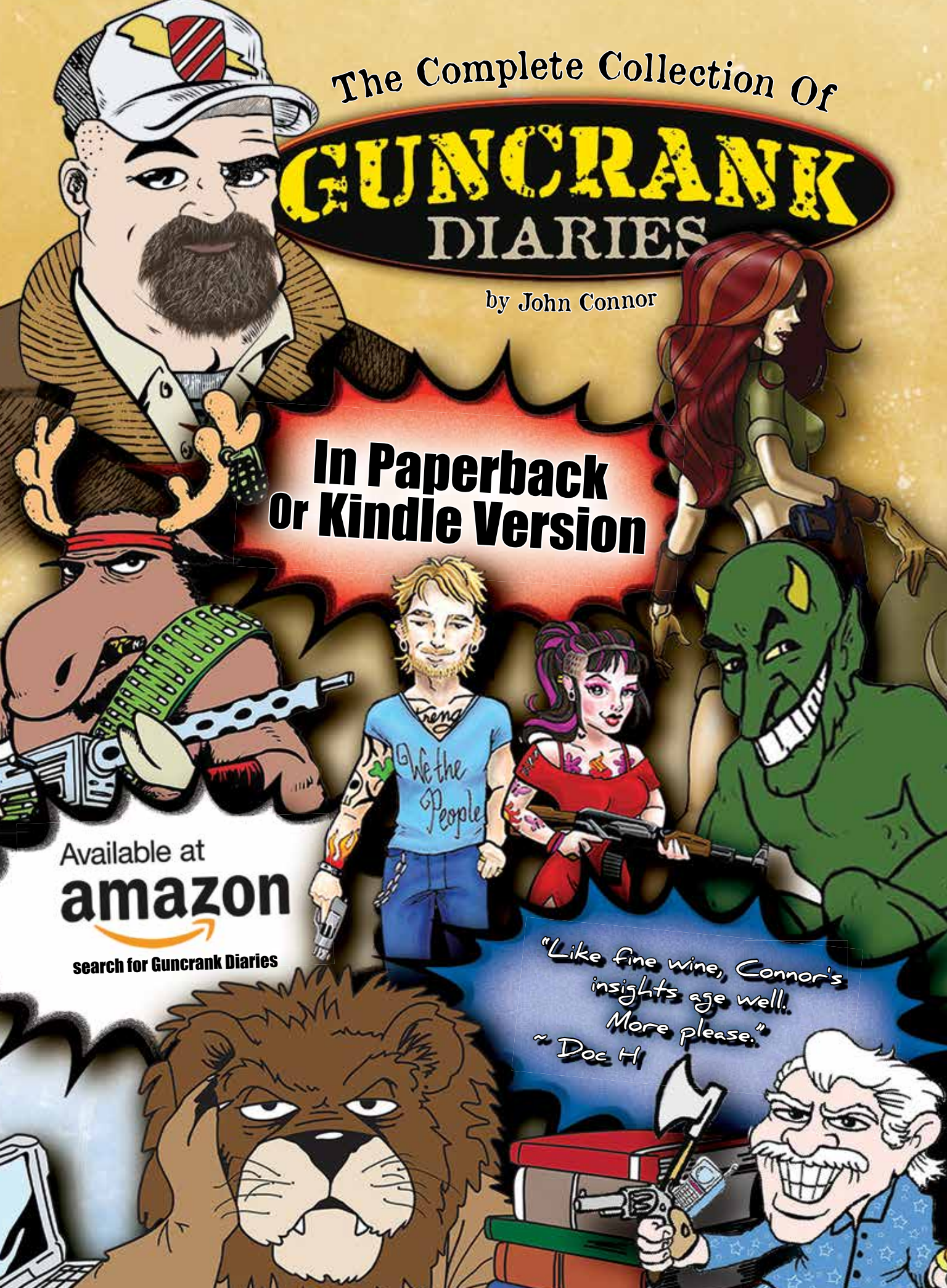
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*"Like fine wine, Connor's
insights age well.
More please."
~ Doc H*





Tom has several hand pumps but finds the Gamo model the most useful. It's well built and features a built-in manometer.

MUST-HAVE AIR ACCESSORIES

SHOOT BETTER, STRONGER, FASTER

One of my COVID projects was reorganizing the man cave. The process gave me a great opportunity to reminisce, tinker and appreciate the airgun gear I turn to most frequently. You know how it is — once in a while when you stop to ponder, you realize, “Hey, I use this thing all the time. It’s a great piece of gear!”

With this said, here are some of the most frequently used — and just plain valuable — airgun accessories in my world.

BENJAMIN CHARGING SYSTEM CYLINDER

Anyone have a shameful past involving pony kegs? Benjamin has a similar concept, although the consequences are fun and don’t involve bad behavior and hangovers.

The Benjamin “pony” cylinder is just 15” long but holds 90 cubic inches (14.72 cubic feet) of 4,500 psi compressed air. All of these translate to an overall weight of just about 5 lbs., so it’s backpack portable.

This mini cylinder will handle a good shooting session for rifle refills, however. An air-eating beast like an Airbow or Bulldog will get about eight fills, while a more choosy diner like the Marauder pistol or Challenger rifle will get about 30 fills.

Crosman.com

CROSMAN PELLGUN OIL

If you have CO₂ or pneumatic pump airguns, Crosman Pellgun Oil is a must-have accessory. Period, paragraph, end of story. The good news is a tube will cost you less than five bucks. The other good news is a tube will last you a long time. The best news is it’ll keep your airguns running at peak performance for years and years.

Proper usage couldn’t be easier. Just apply a drop to the tip of each CO₂ cylinder you’re about to load. As the gun’s internal stabber pierces the cylinder, right through your newly applied drop of oil, the lubricant and preservative will get blasted through the action with each subsequent shot. It’ll keep parts moving



A tube of Pellgun oil is the best couple of dollars you can spend if you shoot CO₂ handguns and rifles.

freely and apply preservative additives to keep the seals soft and leak-free.

Pellgun Oil is a petroleum product, so do not use it for high-pressure airguns, especially PCP models as petroleum lubes can combust under high pressure. There are silicone-based lubricants for safe application in high-pressure situations.

Crosman.com

SIG AIRGUN QUAD SHOOTING GALLERY

Voila! Instant range and bullet trap in one easy-to-transport package. This self-contained, all-metal target system is designed for lead shot and pellets. You get four knockdown mini-silhouette targets in the box. In the center is a SIG SAUER logo target serving as a reset for the system, so you can camp out in your shooting chair and skip getting up to reset your targets.

The box serves as a safe backstop and also catches all the stray BBs and pellets, so you won’t get in trouble with your significant other for leaving a mess.

SIGSAUER.com

HUNTERS SUPPLY LEAD PROJECTILE EXTRAVAGANZA

Here’s a little secret — the folks at Hunters Supply make a veritable plethora of airgun-specific projectiles. As you might have noticed, serious-caliber airguns from .25 on up to .50 are all the rage. This opens up a new world of pellet options. Actually, within this range think “slugs” rather than pellets, although you can get traditionally-shaped pellets in ginormous sizes too.

Wanna launch a .45 caliber, 520-grain hunk of lead downrange?

Hunters-Supply.com



The folks at Hunters Supply are certified airgun geeks. If you’ve got a rifle .25 caliber or above, check them out for a broad array of pellets and slugs.



Tom shoots the frangible Dust Devils at standard steel plates, in his garage. This FX Pocket Doppler Radar chronograph (below) isn’t much larger than a deck of cards.



GAMO HAND PUMP

I've got a few miscellaneous hand pumps floating around the man cave, but the one I reach for first is the Gamo model. If you're new to airgunning, be aware these are nothing like bicycle tire pumps. This one outputs 4,500 psi of compressed air to fill even the most air-hungry rifle, pistol or airbow.

The built-in manometer (air pressure gauge) is easy to read and precise for safe and accurate fills. The foot stabilizers are generous and fold up for easy storage. This is a solid piece of gear.

GamoUSA.com

DUST DEVIL BBS

We're blessed with an abundance of realistic and affordable BB pistol options great for training. With precisely matched dimensions and operation to centerfire equivalent pistols and revolvers, we can now train safely in the garage, basement, or if your neighbors don't mind, backyard.

You can shoot steel BBs through paper



This Benjamin "pony" cylinder is perfectly sized for a shooting outing while still being reasonably portable. A must-have for PCP shooters!



SIG's self-contained shooting gallery!

and into a trap or other safe backstop, but if you want to experience the feedback of shooting more reactive targets, check out frangible BBs.

As the name implies, the Dust Devil BBs shatter into ... dust when they strike a hard target like a steel plate. No ricochets mean

improved safety and less mess when you're finished. These are a little rougher on the surface than traditional BBs, so they may not feed quite as reliably in all actions. I'll take this tradeoff for an improved shooting experience.

AirVenturi.com

FX POCKET CHRONOGRAPH

This little device, not much larger than a deck of cards, is the cat's meow. It's a Doppler Radar chronograph powered by three AAA batteries. It's so small you can either set it on the bench or hang it below the muzzle. The device pairs with a companion smartphone app that captures the shot string data and does all the fancy math to output energy levels, standard deviations and all that.

This model is airgun specific and works up to about 1,200 fps or so. Word is the company is working on a centerfire-compatible version too. Stay tuned. 

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BATTLE-DAMAGED WEAPONS

GUNS THAT SPEAK

Will Dabbs, MD

The canteen likely does more to sustain a soldier's life in combat but a soldier's individual weapon is his most cherished possession. I have myself shared a sleeping bag with both an M16 rifle and an M9 handgun and found both to be proper company.

For most modern Americans, war is a distant abstract thing. The fact we can remain at war for decades without suffering as a population is one of the reasons it never seems to end. However, for the dedicated student of history, nothing brings the reality of war to life like battle-damaged firearms.

JAPANESE TYPE 99 PARATROOPER MACHINE GUN

On December 6, 1944, Japanese Airborne forces conducted their third and final parachute assault of the war on the Pacific island of Leyte. Some 409 Japanese paratroopers droned toward their drop zones in Ki-49 and Ki-57 transports before

jumping from 700 feet. One entire stick perished when their static line anchor failed.

On this certain captured airfield, a young Army Air Corps mechanic was roused by shouts about Japanese paratroopers. He grabbed his M1 rifle and left his tent just in time to see the billowing chutes of the enemy soldiers descending toward the runway. The young man picked a nearby paratrooper and took careful aim as he descended under canopy.

The American mechanic hit the Japanese soldier solidly. He said the enemy paratrooper was dead when he hit the ground. He landed, per the young American's description, "Like a sack of wet cement."

The firefight went on all night, and the attacking Japanese were killed to a man. The following day the Americans buried the Japanese dead in a communal pit, policed up the weapons, and burned off the ammunition. The young mechanic claimed the machine gun belonging to the man he had killed as a souvenir.





Will bought this Japanese Type 99 Paratrooper machine gun from the son of the man who killed its previous owner. The flapper muzzle cover broke off when its original owner was killed.

The soldier brought the gun home and registered it during the 1968 amnesty. I bought it from the man's son who had little interest in such stuff. The weapon's sole flaw is the flap cover to the muzzle is broken off where its original owner fell onto it during his ill-fated parachute drop.

SKS

This Chicom Type 56 SKS rifle was captured by a trooper named Mike from the 101st Airborne during Operation Apache Snow in Vietnam in 1969. The buttstock is cracked, the upper handguard is burned, and there is shrapnel damage to the magazine. Mike brought the beat-up rifle home as a memento of the most extraordinary period of his life.

After a rocky divorce, Mike sold the gun to a buddy in his National Guard unit. Their understanding was Mike could buy the gun back for the same price whenever he wanted it. Tragically, Mike developed cancer from Agent Orange exposure and died in 1991 at age 41. His friend knew I would give the weapon a loving home and graciously passed it to me.



This Japanese Type 99 Infantry rifle caught a pair of .30-caliber rounds, one of which undoubtedly blew the extractor off the bolt. Will found a replacement bolt online.

JAPANESE TYPE 99 INFANTRY RIFLE

This beat-up old gun was a serendipitous GunBroker.com find. The owner had no idea about the circumstances behind its sordid state. The original bolt was missing.

The gun is a fairly unremarkable Type 99 bolt-action Infantry rifle. However, there is a .30-caliber hole bored top-to-bottom between the stock and the receiver. The bullet tore through the gun and ruined the original bolt.

A second round creased the outside of the stock along a parallel trajectory, leaving a burned groove for its passage. I presume this means these two rounds were fired from an automatic weapon like an M1919 or a BAR. The specific circumstances behind the capture of this rifle were lost to history, but balance of probability was some poor unfortunate Japanese soldier died clutching it.

NO. 4 LEE ENFIELD

Small arms have all the sex appeal, but field artillery is the primary killer on the modern battlefield. The civilized mind

Moment of Clarity

*You've hunted here since you were a kid and your heart still races at the sight of game. Morning fog hangs over the scrub and the trees cast long shadows that muddle the shot. You dare not make a sound...then it all becomes **clear**...*

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cannot comprehend the scale of destruction wrought by a tooled up battery of howitzers. A WWII combat vet buddy described human entrails draped in trees following an Allied artillery strike on German troops in the open.

This battered No 4 Lee Enfield rifle was another GunBroker find. I honestly cannot clearly elucidate why I bought it. The stock is shattered and the entire barrel is bent at a crazy angle. Passing shrapnel gouged the barrel badly enough to expose the bore. The gent from whom I purchased this wreck had bought the rifle at a gun show and had no idea of the story behind it.



The stock of this German Spandau Gew 98 rifle was damaged near the comb. Some long-dead artisan very skillfully excised the broken bit and made a plug to repair it.

A DIFFERENT TIME

These days literally everything is disposable. I once bought a sports car boasting 72% of the thing was recyclable. There was a day not so long ago, however, when broken stuff was fixed rather than discarded. This axiom also applied to military weapons.

The German Gew 98 had some kind of damage to the top of the buttstock. The faulty bit was carefully excised and a replacement block installed in its stead. The subsequent repair was carefully sanded smooth and refinished before being returned to service.

The M1 Garand was a DCM rifle purchased from the government. The British SMLE was a gun show treasure. Both weapons had cracked upper handguards. At some point some armorer artisans carefully ripped slots crosswise to the grain and glued shims in place before sanding the repairs smooth.

Combat is man's most violent pastime. Chaos is its currency and wanton destruction the ultimate goal. In these battered old guns we get to glimpse genuine handheld history.

Thanks to WorldWarSupply.com for the support gear used in the photos. 

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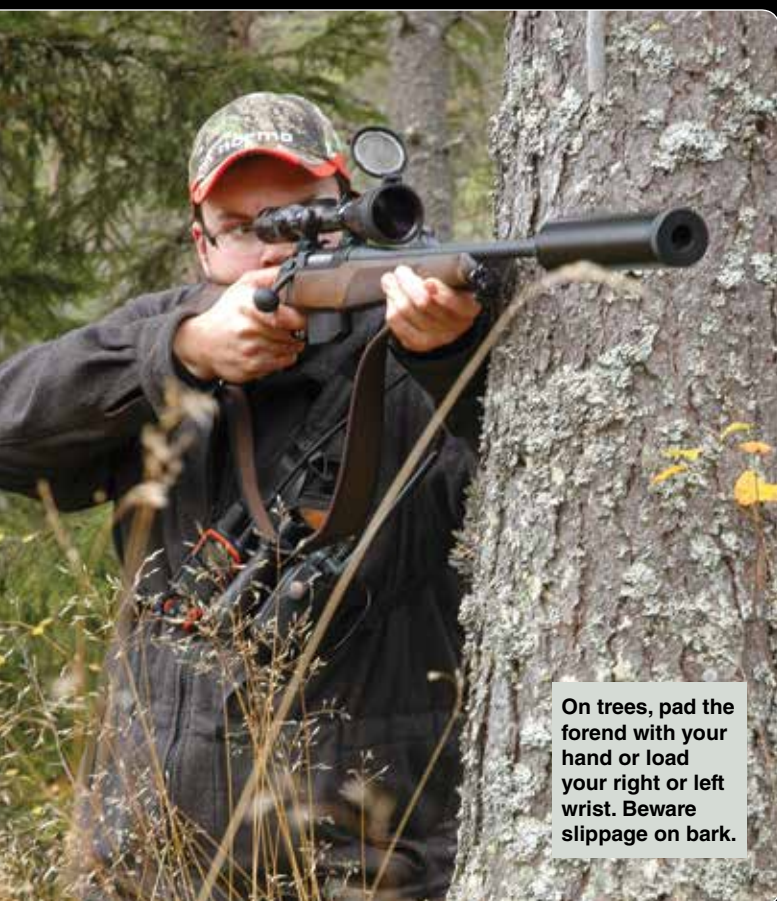
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SHOOTING RESTS

WHY SIT WHEN YOU CAN STAND?



On trees, pad the forend with your hand or load your right or left wrist. Beware slippage on bark.

WAYNE VAN ZWOLL

In pre-dawn fog and under snow-heavy conifers, I'd dogged the track to a thoroughfare muddied by prints. It led uphill, fraying through soggy thickets. Pockets of light ahead became an island of second-growth, freed of the forest's darkness and drip. I glassed it quickly from the gloom and spied a tan rump, then others. Sifting through the head-high tangle, the elk would soon vanish. Frantically I sought antlers.

There! I dashed ahead to catch a shot alley, braced my arm on a tree and fired. The herd crashed away, a current of ribs, rumps and strong black legs ripping through the slash in exploding snow. Then all was still.

Pegging the reticle to where the bull had stood, I saw a seedling quiver. Reflexive kick. A better result than from a tree-assisted shot years earlier. As the trigger yielded, so had bark under my hand. The Nosler had dived under the brisket.

HAVE A SEAT

Shooting standing, or offhand, is like walking backward. Given an alternative, why would you? Offhand targets have scuttled promising scores for me in competition. I'd cruise through prone, sitting and kneeling, then meet my Waterloo "awfulhand."

Addicted to prone, I go out of my way to use it afield. I've taken quite a few beasts despite delays slinging up and bellying down. Even a Cape buffalo. Last fall a mule deer close enough to

draw fire from most hunters trotted off as I scrambled to where I could sprawl. My .25-06 was nearly bench-steady when he paused at 300 steps. More recently, a whitetail that might have fallen to an offhand poke was doomed minutes later by my lizard-level shot through frosted grass.

Sitting and kneeling reduce ground contact and raise your center of gravity (CG). But in each you have a “tripod” base. Offhand, only your feet kiss Mother Earth, and CG tops belt level. If you’re built like me, you sway in the gentlest breeze. Without support, your arms flop on their hinges. Each heartbeat jerks the sight. Tiring muscles sag and twitch, the reticle ricocheting about your target like a fly on a barn window.

Practicing offhand in public draws ridicule. Practicing alone is no fun. So fine offhand shooting, once expected after puberty, has become rare. A rest can help.

“Wait,” you cry. “That’s cheating!” Not in the field. No sane hunter fires without support when support is at hand. Increasingly it is. Hunting in timber, we’ve long had trees to help. Now we tote sticks and tripods in open country, where natural rests are scarce. Low positions still make sense (think ground contact, elbow support, CG). But when you’ve no time to get low — or when brush or rock or the curve of a hill blocks the bullet’s path — you must stand or decline the shot.

THE RULE, NOT THE EXCEPTION

Always seek a rest. At a rifle range, I asked 40 hunters who’d just checked zeroes to fire offhand at a 6” target at 100 yards. Only five hit it. The 22-inch-square backer had just 30 holes. A single hunter asked if he could brace his rifle on a post.

A standing rest belongs on your home range. If you use shooting sticks or a tripod afield, practice with them. Time yourself setting up, aiming, firing, then cycling the action and getting back on target. On safari, hunters who’ve fumbled with sticks and tripods have lost some magnificent beasts.

My rifles wear only a Brownells Latigo sling. A great help prone, sitting and kneeling, a sling has little to offer when you’re upright, as your left elbow “floats” and won’t hold tension. I fire standing only at modest distances and take advantage of natural rests.

For an inexpensive standing rest mimicking what you might find in the woods, set a couple of 8-foot round cedar posts 6 feet apart. Wire another 8-footer between them 45” to 60” off the ground.



Lean into a standing rest (above) to “stick it” and offset recoil. Wayne grips its head; you can also hold the rifle. A folded tripod under this shooter’s arm (below) steadies his torso behind the tripod supporting his rifle. Smart!



In hunting garb, clutch the vertical post with your left hand and rest your rifle over it, index finger alongside or curled over the forend. Fire a group. Now hold the forend instead, bracing hand, then arm on the post. Next, let the post steady your right wrist. Now brace your right shoulder. Check targets; practice the most promising technique. A forward lean speeds recovery from recoil.

Ditto for the horizontal post. Grasp it, resting the rifle on your hand, index finger assisting. Next, hold the rifle. Keep your hand between forend and rest. Don’t let the barrel touch at all, padded or not.

GETTING SHIFTY

You may find point of impact has shifted since you zeroed sitting at a bench. This because forward support and pressure you apply to the rifle with cheek and shoulder all affect how the rifle moves as the bullet zips down the barrel. Those forces shift when you change positions. That’s why I confirm hunting-rifle zeroes from prone with a taut sling. Point of impact commonly falls to 7 o’clock. Zero checks offhand make sense too, especially with rifles most often shot offhand.

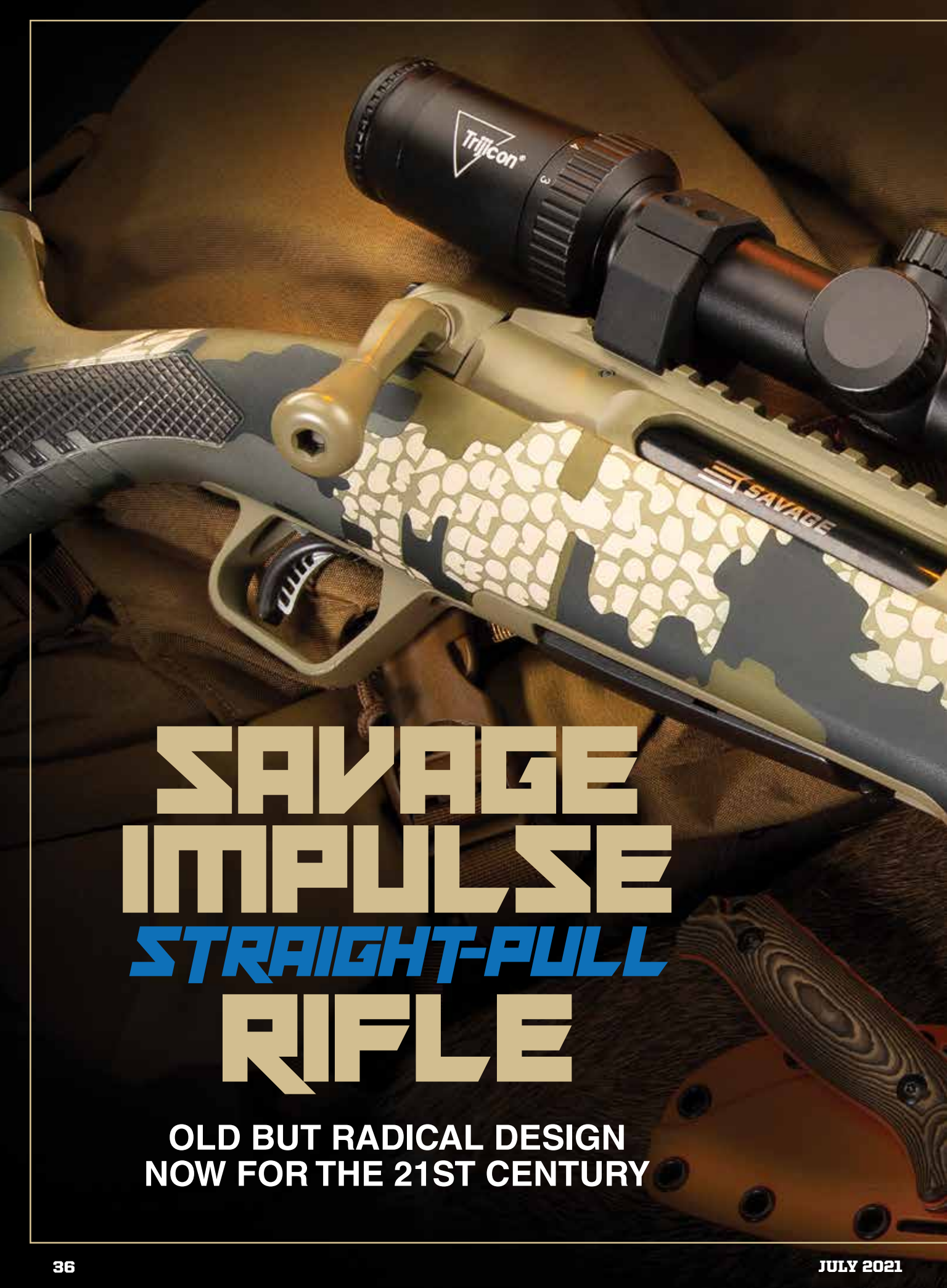
A standing rest is a blessing when you must fire hard-kicking rifles. Offhand, your body flexes to absorb recoil. On a seat, hunched over the comb, it’s an anchor that can neither bend nor slide. Cheek and clavicle take the hit. Flinching results.

ONE ANSWER

There’s a new standing rest at my house, well sorta. Impressed by the design of Royal Stukey’s shooting bench, I bought one. It has exceeded expectations. In truth it is the only portable bench I’ve used that doesn’t wobble. At all. Credit Stukey’s “floating nut plate” leg unions, the stout, precisely machined steel and laminates, the meticulous care in finish and assembly. Under bags or my Brownlee mechanical rest, it’s motionless as a millstone in mud. You can wring out a Benchrest rifle capable of shooting “into the ones” on this bench.

So I asked Royal if he’d considered making long legs for it. “No,” he said. Then: “Would they be useful?” A few weeks after I’d provided a length measure, he shipped a set of beefy, beautifully finished legs. They spun in as easily and locked as securely as the originals. Height is just right. This tall bench is solid as a granite outcrop. Stukey sells long legs, custom-made to measure, for all his benches in service.

“You know,” he smiled, “that was a good idea. I’ve seen you shoot offhand. You need all the help you can get.”

A close-up, high-angle photograph of a Savage Impulse Straight-Pull Rifle. The rifle is finished in a tan and grey camouflage pattern. It features a black Trijicon scope mounted on top. The word "SAVAGE" is visible on the side of the receiver. The rifle is resting on a brown, textured surface, possibly a bag or a piece of fabric. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the rifle and the background.

SAVAGE IMPULSE *STRAIGHT-PULL* RIFLE

OLD BUT RADICAL DESIGN
NOW FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

“Shoot again!” I bellowed, with no one nearby to zipper my mouth. Silence might have improved the outcome. His first shot had clearly missed. And the poor fellow was still closing the bolt on a second round when the elk left. “We’ll get him,” I cooed unconvincingly.

Firing fast without aim is pointless. So is firing too late. To seize every chance, you must use time efficiently, wasting neither thought nor movement.

While recoil wedges some delay between shots, a hunter should be able run their bolt action fast enough and smoothly enough to come out of recoil ready to fire again. Savage has just made it easier.

The new Impulse straight-pull rifle absolves you of rotating the bolt.

A quick back-and-forth flick of

your hand is enough to extract, eject, chamber another round and lock the bolt. Six ball bearings in the bolt head — “Hexlock” — are thrust outward by a spring-loaded rod to engage a recessed barrel extension as the bolt comes into battery. With the bolt handle fully forward, there’s no way they can retract, no way the bolt can budge. Once shoved to its forward position, the bolt can’t be pulled (or accidentally bumped) out of battery. Firing releases the mechanism for a fast reload. To unlock the bolt manually, you thumb a tab on the bolt’s tail. This tab, or button, is also a cocking indicator; it does not tell you whether or not the chamber is loaded.

HISTORY

The straight-pull idea dates at least as far back as the 1880s, in a series of rifles designed mainly by Ferdinand Ritter von Mannlicher, hired by Austria’s arms factory in 1877. Refinements brought about the twin-lug Model of 1895. Initially bored for the 8x50R cartridge, it served Austro-Hungarian forces in WW I. Two helical grooves in the bolt body rotated the locking surfaces with a straight tug on the bolt handle. Surface angles in the receiver were such the first 20mm of retraction moved the bolt head just 3mm, to add mechanical advantage for primary extraction.

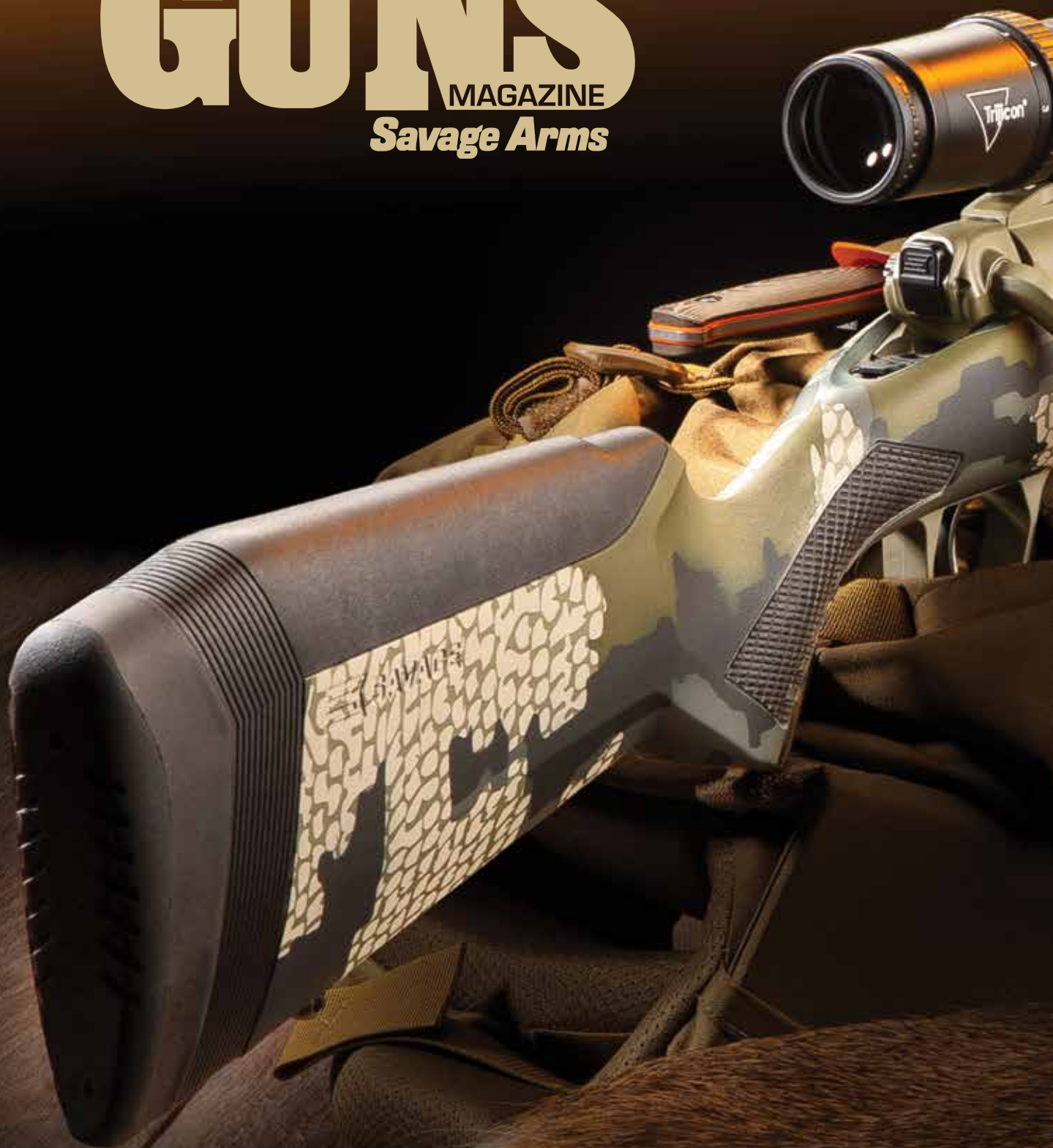
The Mannlicher of 1895 was clearly the template for Canada’s .303 straight-pull Ross rifles, 1903 to 1918. The first were failures, Mark IIs in 1905 and 1907 much improved — the latter to bottle the high pressures of the .280 Ross round. Canadian forces took the Model of 1910 to France in 1915 but found it unreliable. Dirt in bolt cuts and races seized actions; “war-time” tolerances in British .303 ammo caused cycling problems. Though a rare event, a Ross could be assembled in a way enabling it to fire without lock-up, sending the bolt into the shooter’s face.

Cartridges with higher pressures begged stronger, more dependable designs. They would come in sporting rifles to follow — without rotating bolt heads.



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The Savage Impulse brings the straight-pull rifle into the 21st century, offering accuracy and speed in a variety of hunter calibers.



GEAR LIST

AMMO:
Hornady Precision
Hunter 143-grain ELD-X

KNIFE:
Benchmade Saddle
Mountain Skinner

SCOPE:
Trijicon Huron
3-12 x 40

RINGS:
Seekins

BACKPACK:
Mystery Ranch
Pop-Up 38

SAVAGE IMPULSE *STRAIGHT-PULL* RIFLE



The American-made Savage Impulse straight-pull rifle offers the simplicity and accuracy of a bolt gun with speed of operation rivaling a semi-auto.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

The recessed bolt head of the new Savage has a bolt-face extractor, a slot for the mechanical ejector. The bolt release is in a familiar place on the receiver's left flank. To function, it must be moved forward, then depressed, an easy rocking motion with your thumb. Before reading the manual (c'mon, I've been pulling bolts since Sullivan hosted the Beatles), I almost ruptured my thumb pressing the release without a forward nudge.

Cleverly, engineers designed a removable bolt handle with your choice of five operating angles. The handle also functions on the left side of the bolt. To slip it off, remove the bolt and depress the button opposite the handle. Slide the cap off the keyed handle post. Change angles; replace the cap. To install the bolt on the left side, unscrew the post and swap it with the handle, then re-assemble. Of course, cases still tumble out the right-side port.

**“AT 400 YARDS
EITHER LOAD FROM
THIS RIFLE WOULD
MAKE A GRAPEFRUIT
QUAKE IN ITS
BOOTS, IF GRAPEFRUIT
HAD BOOTS.”**

You can remove the bolt head too. With the bolt out, uncock it by pressing the extraction plunger just forward of the bolt shroud and letting the bolt handle pivot forward. Depress the rear of the bolt head lock plunger behind the bolt head, rotate the head counter-clockwise and pull it off.

The bolt knob suits me, but Savage gave it threads (a half inch of 5/16-24 UNF). A quarter-inch hex wrench is all you need to switch it out.

Because the bolt locks directly to a barrel extension, the Impulse's receiver needs no bottle breech pressures — so it's of lightweight alloy. An integral Picatinny rail has 20 minutes of gain for long shooting. The receiver is held to Savage's AccuStock (with imbedded forend rail) by twin action screws, fore and aft of the magazine well. A hole behind the guard affords access to the AccuTrigger weight-of-pull screw. A tool is supplied for this adjustment.

The Impulse comes with snap-on combs and butt spacers so you can adapt the AccuFit butt-stock to your body and shooting style, and to the sightline.

Available in three configurations and a range of chamberings, the Impulse was predictably scarce when announced months ago. I was fortunate to get for range trials the version and chambering most appealing to me: an Impulse Big Game in .300 Winchester Magnum.



The quick release button (above) at the back of the bolt allows unloading without firing, but read the manual first to learn proper operation. Wayne didn't! Grip panels on the forend (below) of the adjustable AccuFit stock offers good control, while inside an aluminum Accustock rail system keeps things stable and accurate.





The Accufit stock system comes with a variety of cheek pieces for a true custom fit. The flush-fit detachable box magazine (below) holds four rounds in the Big Game version of the rifle. The Hog Hunter variant accepts 10-round AICS mags.



The multi-position ambidextrous bolt is the heart of the operation. Six ball bearings lock the bolt into the barrel extension to safely contain pressures.



BEAUTY IS A BEAST

This rifle is as eye-catching in hand as in photos, the Kuiu Verde 2.0 finish of its synthetic stock a pleasing complement to the Hazel Green Cerakoting on its receiver and 24" fluted, threaded carbon steel barrel. The barrel is *stiff*. Its heft contributes to the slightly nose-heavy balance I prefer and to the rifle's considerable weight: a couple of ounces shy of 9 lbs. The steel detachable box magazine, with forward latch, holds three rounds. As shipped, the trigger broke at 3¾ lbs. on my Timney scale.

On this .300 I cinched a Burris 4.5-14x scope in Burris rings that put the objective bell just off the barrel. Though the next-higher AccuFit comb might have supported my cheek better prone, the comb on the rifle as received felt ideal in other positions so I didn't switch it. Other than swab the bore (it appeared to have endured range trials elsewhere without cleaning), I did nothing to the rifle before bore-sighting.

At the range, the bolt scooped a cartridge from the magazine and the bolt handle snicked forward to lock. Behind the scope, I paused. After decades of turning solid lugs into machined cuts, why trust six loose ball bearings to bottle 60,000 psi and keep a non-rotating bolt from skating through my noggin?

With no good reason to either abort the

“‘PLEASE SEND PRICE,’ I WIRED THE PEOPLE WHO’D SHIPPED THE RIFLE. ‘SORRY, WE NEED THAT ONE BACK,’ CAME THE REPLY.”

project or continue, I compromised. Off the bench, I cocked my wrist to give the bolt a clear path into the hills behind and let fly. Okay — Roll your eyes.

NO FAIL

Rifle intact and case inspection done, I was soon perforating the middle of a 100-yard target. First groups, with 180-grain Hornady Interbond loads averaged 1.1". Great! But the winner of the day was Federal's 200-grain Terminal Ascent ammo. It kept sending bullets into 0.8". The difference is academic. At 400 yards either load from this rifle would make a grapefruit quake in its boots, if grapefruit had boots.

Feeding was without fault. There were no failures to extract or eject. Soon I was flicking the bolt as naturally as if it were the forend of a pump shotgun — instead of subconsciously nudging the knob up after each shot as was my tendency at first. The meaty barrel and well-proportioned stock, with generous cushioning from the butt-pad, held recoil to a level I've come to expect from .30-06 loads.

THE BIG QUESTION

Is a straight-pull rifle really *that* much faster than a turn-bolt? After all, a hunter can cycle either during recoil and recovery. You may well have fired quick follow-ups with traditional bolt-actions.

Having used a few other straight-pull rifles since Blaser introduced its Model 93 more than 25 years ago, I've found their main advantage lies more in the direction of hand motion than in a shorter stroke or faster cycling. Lifting a bolt handle to cock and extract, you rotate the rifle. It may not be noticeable unless you heave on a sticky case, but the twist is there. Straight-pull bolts in the Savage rifles move in the direction of recoil only.

Firing straight-pull rifles at moving targets and at game offhand, I'm on target faster because the sight stays nearer the



The medium contour, carbon steel fluted barrel is threaded for a muzzle device. Savage barrels are hand-straightened at the factory.

point of aim. Also, absent the need to start a camming action with the bolt, there's less tendency to drop the rifle below sightline for leverage. I've shot game offhand in thickets with straight-pull rifles, and prone across prairies. While I'm not peddling my Mausers and Springfields, a straight-pull action is faster.

Some shooters struggle with a straight-pull early on. The problem is habit. Lift a handle designed instead to be pulled, even for an instant, and you've bound the bolt, lost time and squandered your effort. Exiting an unfamiliar automobile, I often fumble for the door latch and may try to move it the wrong way. After 220,000 miles in my ancient Suzuki Sidekick, I could open its door in my sleep. Straight-pull rifles exact no more effort than turn-bolts — provided you break the turn-bolt habit.

PRICE PLEASE

My penchant for pretty walnut has, over time, dulled my appetite for synthetic-stocked rifles. But the arresting colors of

this Impulse, a slick, quick bolt, unique lock-up and outstanding accuracy with stiff hunting loads warranted an exception to my rule. "Please send price," I wired the people who'd shipped the rifle. "Sorry, we need that one back," came the reply. "We have too few to go around at the moment." Surely there are more available now.

Besides .300 Winchester, the Big Game version of the Impulse comes in .243 and 6.5 Creedmoor, .308, .30-06 and .300 WSM. The first four on the list have 22" barrels and four-shot magazines. They weigh a couple of ounces less than the magnums. At this time, all retail at \$1,447.

Savage also catalogs a Hog Hunter with the same action but with different stock and metal finishes. It comes in 6.5 Creedmoor, .308, .30-06 and .300 Winchester. Barrel lengths are 20", 18", 20" and 24" respectively. It's priced at \$1,377. So is the Impulse Predator, again with its own look, in .22-250, .243, 6.5 Creedmoor and .308. All Predators have 20" barrels and feed from a 10-shot AICS magazine.



SELF-DEFENSE FOR THE MOBILITY-

DAVID FREEMAN

I'm a serious gun toter who has in recent years become a mobility-impaired person. My aim here is to help others who are dealing with mobility and/or other health issues adapt as needed to defend themselves and their loved ones with a handgun.

THE ISSUES

I carry a handgun on my person everywhere it's allowed and for the most part, I avoid places where it's not allowed. Near the end of 2010, I took a hard fall in which both knees were damaged rather extensively. While seeking treatment for pain and mobility issues associated with the damage, the doctors discovered I had arthritis which was aggressively attacking the cartilage in my knees and shoulders. Following my doctor's orders, I began using a walker. As my knees continued to deteriorate and neuropathy raised its ugly head compliments of Agent Orange-related diabetes, I moved to an electric mobility cart and from there to a motorized wheelchair. My providers tell me surgery to replace my knees is not an option.

I continued to teach live classes for several years after losing the ability to walk or stand for more than a few brief seconds. In the classroom, I sat on a stool behind a lectern to keep the pressure off my knees, and at the gun range, I used the walker while conducting shooting proficiency tests. Now I'm in a wheelchair, I've continued to shoot often. Most commercial ranges in my area can accommodate my chair. Until about two years ago, I stood to shoot and sat down between shots. Now, I remain seated in my wheelchair shooting from a bench.

When I shoot outdoors on private land, I set up a table to serve as a shooting bench, but I also shoot away from the bench forcing myself to shoot unsupported while holding the gun in a modified weaver position. Shooting from a bench is different from being able to defend yourself from a wheelchair.

CHOOSING A PISTOL

I'm very fortunate I own a nice collection of guns, compliments of being in the business. I began carrying a .45 caliber 1911 Commander a few years ago. I supplemented the 1911



David adjusted the height of the arms on his electric wheelchair, so they don't interfere with his ability to draw from concealment.

STAY PRICKLY REGARDLESS OF YOUR PHYSICAL ABILITIES

CHALLENGED

with double-stack nines such as the SIG P229, S&W M&P and Springfield XD-M. More recently, I've found simple guns in 9mm more to my liking and three stand out: the Mossberg MC2c, the Taurus G3 and the CZ P07. These are all simple, narrow, double-stack 9mm guns carrying 15–17 rounds and are not significantly larger than a GLOCK 43, S&W Shield or Springfield XD-S. They are certainly not more difficult to carry or conceal. My favorite of these is the Mossberg. It has night sights, a great grip and nothing complicated. You just draw, line up the sights and pull the trigger.

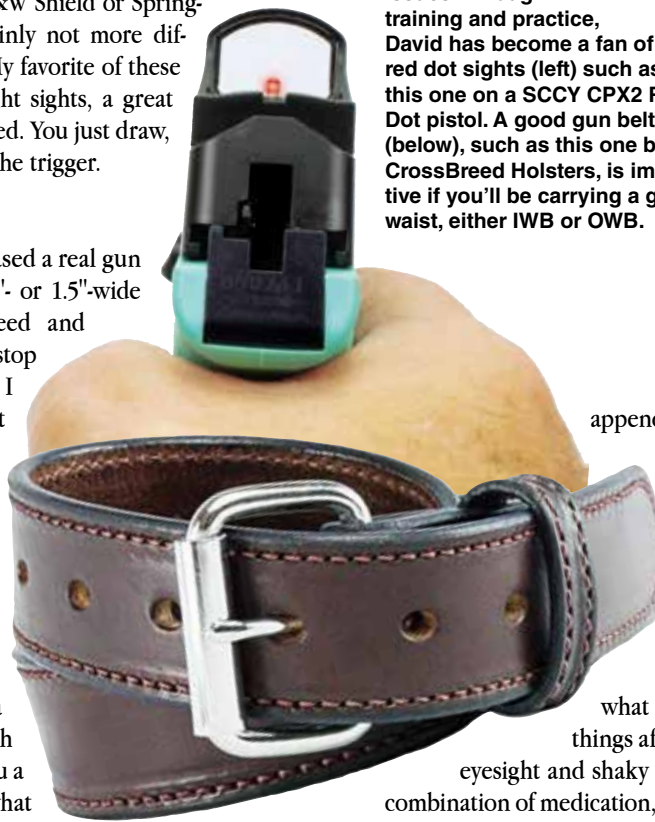
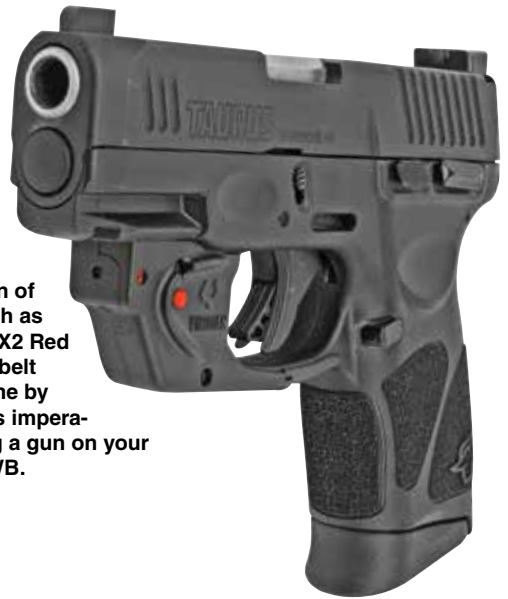
CARRY

If you have never purchased a real gun belt such as the thick 1.25"- or 1.5"-wide belts offered by CrossBreed and other leather companies, stop right now and order one. I can wait. I'm serious about this. Having a belt built for carrying a gun on your waist is foundational. If you'll promise me you've got the belt situation taken care of, we can move on to holsters. Dozens of companies make a holster to fit your gun. If you can wear a polo or Hawaiian shirt with the shirttail out, it'll save you a ton of aggravation about what holster to wear. Get a Bianchi Model 101, Foldaway Belt Slide Gun Holster. You can order one from Amazon and most likely have it in two or three days.

When my former boss Roy Huntington told me about this holster, I looked at it and thought, "Yea, right." But I trust Roy, so I got one and I've found it to be just the ticket. I put it on my belt when I get dressed and when I leave home, I slip my gun in the holster, clip a spare mag pouch on the opposite side and I'm ready to go. This holster will work with any of the 9mm double-stacks I mentioned above plus any of the popular single-stack pistols. It will work with most red dot or laser sights. It works with revolvers, too.

I wear my gun at the three o'clock position. To keep it a viable option, I lowered the righthand arm rest on my wheelchair so drawing from my holster is not restricted. The beauty of the belt slide foldaway holster is I can move it around for

This Viridian laser equipped Taurus G3c (right) is another one of David's favorite carry guns good for helping with eyesight issues. Through training and practice, David has become a fan of red dot sights (left) such as this one on a SCCY CPX2 Red Dot pistol. A good gun belt (below), such as this one by CrossBreed Holsters, is imperative if you'll be carrying a gun on your waist, either IWB or OWB.



appendix carry or cross-draw, or around behind my back and it still works. I do have some good IWB holsters and occasionally wear one to carry a heavier gun such as the Walther Q4 SF or SIG SAUER P226.

ON THE LINE

With the carry method settled, what about shooting? There are three things affecting my shooting these days: pain, eyesight and shaky hands. I manage the pain through a combination of medication, limiting my range time and shooting a lot of .22s. The eyesight issue required a visit to an optometrist with whom I was open about my need to focus on the front sight of a handgun at a particular distance. And although I didn't take a handgun to the appointment (which was in a very no-gun environment — a VA clinic), I was able to demonstrate the distance and the size of the object I need to focus upon. Fortunately, my eye doctor seemed to be well-versed in firearms and she even asked me how I compensated for being left-eye dominant even though I am right-handed. I showed her how I line up handgun sights and explained I shoot long guns from my left shoulder.

Also, related to eyesight, I'm warming up to the use of red dot and laser sights. When I was teaching live shooting classes, almost every laser sight I encountered was being used incorrectly and by someone who didn't know how to properly line up fixed sights. Painfully watching an elderly shooter turn on their laser, then watch it move around all over the target and never settle



Don't be afraid to seek help. David's range trips go so much better when he's accompanied by friends and family. He shoots often with his son Nathan and grandson Josh.

David's rescue dog Ginger is an ad-hoc watchdog, bloodhound, bomb-sniffing K9 and goes from sound asleep to full-on warning in 0.3 seconds. If you're mobility impaired, a companion such as this can help keep you safe.



When shooting from the bench (above), David often braces with his elbows to help stabilize his shots. David (below) realizes shooting unsupported, away from the bench is important to duplicate conditions he might encounter in a self-defense situation.



properly on the bullseye convinced me it was not the type of sight you wanted to depend upon for self-defense. But I've changed my mind, and it's all about training and practice. I have a couple of red dot sights and two guns with lasers mounted, and I'm able to shoot well with these guns using the optics installed. What's different? I know how to line up the existing sights and hold them steady. Having adjusted the red dots and lasers so they are superimposed over the front sight at ranges up to 15 yards makes using them easy.

Bracing myself with elbows on a table or leaning against a post or tree helps with the pain and the shakiness. But as discussed earlier, in a defensive situation I may not have anything to brace on so I sometimes practice as if I won't have it. This is where the fundamentals of proper grip, sight alignment, breathing, trigger pull and follow-through are so important. You've been taught these, right? If not, spend the money for instruction with a qualified handgun instructor.

TAKEAWAY

I hope sharing my experiences has helped any of you who are dealing with mobility or other aging issues. It's important to keep shooting as long as you can. Most of the men in my family have been active until their late 80s. This gives me 15 years or more to keep enjoying this wonderful sport and providing protection for my family and myself, but it won't happen if I don't invest the time and energy in staying current. I have an understanding with my wife and sons — they'll tell me when I'm no longer safe to carry a gun and I'll accept their verdict, knowing they are each able to assume the defender role if it becomes necessary.

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ROCK ISLAND ARMORY AL22 REVOLVERS

JOHN TAFFIN

I am not sure what passes for required reading in high schools these days, however in my time many of the classics were required reading. I well remember *Ivanhoe*, *Silas Marner* and definitely large doses of William Shakespeare. I also recall the latter had rare insight into the human character. One of his passages I have never forgotten has to do with the “Seven Stages of Man.” The bard notes we started out in this life helpless, then go through a period of growth followed by our declining years, and if we live long enough, we end up the same way we started — namely helpless and requiring constant care.

TIME CATCHES ALL

As I look back on my shooting life I find the same pattern. Until a few years ago it was my practice to shoot two or three times a week, sometimes all day. Then the “all day” sessions were cut to half days, and now it is usually three hours with a maximum of 300 rounds fired. I now shoot the “serious” stuff

The Rock Island Armory .22 LR was tested with a variety of ammunition as .22s have a well-deserved reputation for being picky about ammo.



once a week and the other morning is dedicated to nothing but .22 rifles and handguns and shooting with my two daughters. I am certainly not quite at the end of the trail yet and I hope I have several more years of shooting ahead of me. By confining much of my shooting to .22s and reasonable big-bores, I hope to pace myself. All this brings us to the subject at hand, a pair of new .22 sixguns from Rock Island Armory.

Rock Island Armory is the American face of Armscor which is based in the Philippines. Located in Pahrump, Nev., the official company name is Armscor Precision International/ Rock Island Armory. They are known for quality firearms at most reasonable prices as well as such innovations as the .22 TCM. Armscor is the number one manufacturer of 1911 semi-automatic pistols in the world and RIA has now brought out their first lineup of revolvers including those chambered in .22 Long Rifle and .22 Winchester



RIA is offering their new AL22 revolvers as a pair of double deuces; that is, both chambered in .22.

DOUBLE DEUCES FOR PLEASURABLE PRACTICE

Magnum Rimfire. When these were first announced I naturally thought they were being made in the Philippines but this is not the case. These .22 revolvers are marked with three companies, namely RIA for Rock Island Armory, APINTL for Armscor Precision International, and then the actual place of manufacture, which is the Czech Republic. The official model numbers are AL22 and AL22M.

TWO OF A KIND

These two revolvers are identical except for the chambering and caliber markings, “22 L.R.” and “22 WMR” on the left side of the barrel below the front sight. I found it interesting they use small letters for Long Rifle and capital letters for Winchester Magnum Rimfire. The only other difference is the cylinder capacity — nine rounds for the .22 LR and eight rounds

for the .22 WMR. Construction is all stainless steel resulting in a weight of just under 39 oz. for these K-Frame sized sixguns. The stainless steel matched with rubber grips equals a .22 suited for heavy outdoor use with no worry about the weather. At this stage of my life they certainly will handle much worse weather than I want to be out and about in.

The barrel is actually a two-piece affair consisting of a barrel proper and a shroud. The heavy underlug design encloses and protects the ejector rod. This is very well carried out and one has to look carefully, or read the manual, to discover this is the case. The stainless steel is nicely polished and it's obvious some good thought went into this model. Although the construction is all stainless steel, the fully adjustable rear sight and a front sight with a red insert are both black and easy to see.

The grips are black pebble-grained rubber with finger grooves

and provide a secure and comfortable feeling. Instead of having one screw all the way through, each panel has its own screw and is completely supported by the grip frame. This is also an excellent idea as I have seen more than one new revolver come through with the singular grip screw tightened to the point of cracking the grip panel.

These sixguns are traditional double-action, meaning they can be fired either by simply pulling the trigger or, if one wants a more precise shot, by cocking the hammer first. The single-action pull is smooth and measures 4 lbs. on my Brownells Trigger Gauge and the double-action pull likewise slick at 12½ lbs. When shooting double-action, care is needed to make sure the trigger resets by going all the way forward. Failure to do so will lock up the action.

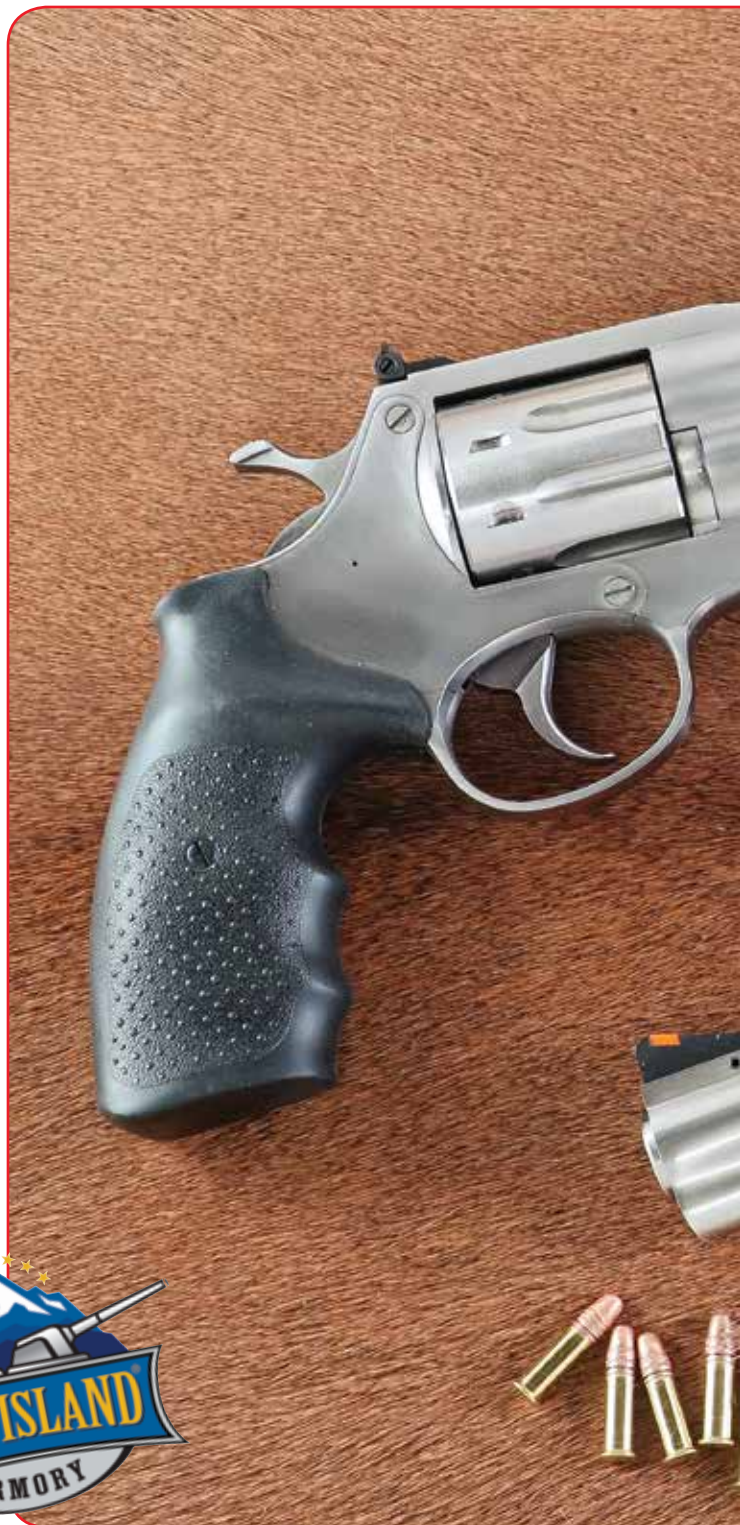
As mentioned above, these are K-Frame size and perfectly fit holsters I have on hand consisting of a home crafted thumb break design as well as a Safariland basket weave finished holster with a traditional safety strap. Either holster works well for secure carry in the field. The weight may be more than most would opt for in a concealed carry gun, however with the self-defense-specific .22 Magnum ammunition now available, the Magnum model results in an easy-to-use revolver with virtually no recoil. The .22 Long Rifle version, especially when loaded with such as the CCI Mini-Mag +V hollow points, is also a possibility for defensive use and once again with literally no recoil.

RANGE TIME

Test targets came with both the .22 LR and .22 WMR with targets labeled as being fired at 15 meters. Both groups measured 1½" for nine-shots and eight-shots respectively. I decided to fire my groups at the same distance, however I always give myself a Mulligan so my groups are actually for eight shots and seven shots respectively.

The .22 LR version was tested with 18 different factory loads. I have found over the decades .22s can be very picky about loads

The .22 Magnum version required "shooting in" but finally came around to acceptable accuracy of just over 1".



and I always like to have at least 12 different loads to try. The two most accurate loads, with both turning in 7/8" groups, were the Winchester bulk pack "525" hollowpoint at 1,083 fps and CCI's Green Tag clocking out at 943 fps. This CCI load required each cartridge to be pushed into the cylinder and I expected such tight fitting to result in accuracy and I was not disappointed.

All was well. And then I switched to the .22 Magnum sixgun. My first shots resulted in a 5" group, actually we could best call it a pattern. I always remember the 9-word speech Winston Churchill once gave in which he simply said: "Never give up, never give up, never give up." I especially try to apply this when testing firearms as sometimes they need to simply be "shot-in"



In addition to importing these .22 sixguns (above), Armscor also offers both .22 LR and .22 Magnum ammunition. The RIA .22 Magnum (top, left) has a cylinder capacity of eight rounds while the .22 LR version (bottom, left) has a cylinder capacity of nine rounds.

for lack of a better term and other times they may just prefer certain ammunition. I continued shooting this .22 Magnum with various kinds of ammunition and by the time I got to the 12th group it measured 2½". Not great but showing promise. The first shots were CCI Maxi-Mag and I was unable to ever get them to shoot very well. The last group put five rounds in just over 1" but the other three were nowhere close. CCI's Maxi-Mag +V HP clocking out at 1,556 fps did group at 1-7/8" while the CCI/Speer GDHP designed for self-defense gave a good accounting with a 1-3/8" group for seven shots at a muzzle velocity of 1,270 fps. Winchester's 28 JHP and Armscor's 40 JHP both shot well at 1½" with muzzle velocities of 1,645 fps and 1,278 fps respectively.

DETAILS

Rock Island Armory offers both of these .22 sixguns in blue or stainless finish and barrel lengths of 3", 4" and 6". They also have centerfire versions with the same specification in .357 Magnum, .38 Special and one chambering I have not seen offered as a new sixgun for decades, namely .32 S&W Long. This is a grand little cartridge for target shooting, small game and varmint control, as well as for teaching someone to shoot a sixgun which seems a little more powerful than a .22 yet without excess felt recoil.

MSRP: starting at \$599

Armscor.com

PALMA

Rifle Competition

**A BASIC GUIDE TO THE
SPORT AND EQUIPMENT**



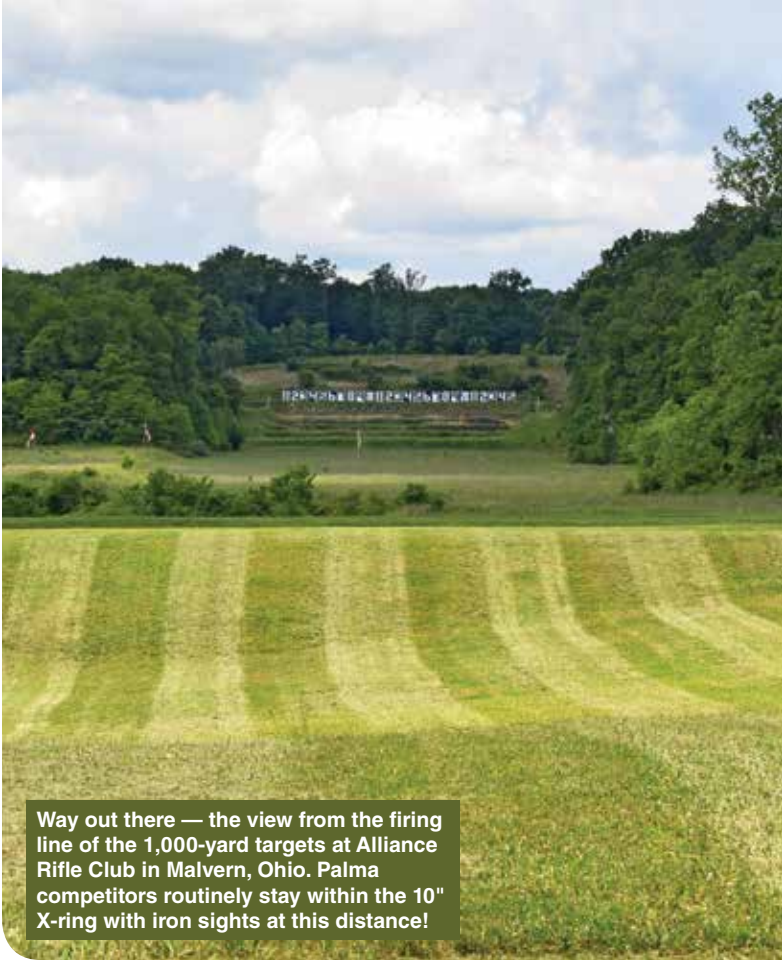
SERENA JUCHNOWSKI

The jaws immediately drop. “You shoot 1,000 yards? With iron sights?” It’s amazing how many people think it’s impossible. With the rise in popularity of “long range” shooting, classic disciplines like Palma have been forgotten. While competing with the AR-15 — originally with iron sights, then with a 4.5x optic — I attended 600-yard mid-range matches to better my prone skills. Farther down the firing line, on the 1,000-yard range, I would admire the beautiful stocks of incredibly long barreled bolt-rifles, wondering at the nearly clean scores fired by competitors.

I first heard of Palma from my junior coaches. They spoke of their student, Eric Eilberg, and of his travels with the Young Eagles Team. It seemed mystical. I never imagined being able to travel to shoot. I wasn’t involved in Olympic-sanctioned shooting sports. My discipline of choice, High Power, is relatively niche and not offered at high school or college levels but the first time I heard Palma, I wanted to be like Eric. I wanted



Serena works on her Palma shooting skills. Palma is a prone rifle competition using highly customized iron sights on .223 or .308 caliber rifles to hit targets at 1,000 yards. Photo: Max Crotser



Way out there — the view from the firing line of the 1,000-yard targets at Alliance Rifle Club in Malvern, Ohio. Palma competitors routinely stay within the 10" X-ring with iron sights at this distance!

to join the Young Eagles team, shoot as well as he and have the opportunity to experience new things.

BRIEF HISTORY

The first Palma Trophy match was held in 1876 in New York as part of the centennial celebration of U.S. independence. Five countries competed in the inaugural match — Australia, Canada, Ireland, Scotland and the United States. The U.S. claimed top honors. More countries have joined, competing in world shoots held every four years. The Palma Trophy Match course of fire is two sighting shots and 15 shots for record at 800, 900 and 1,000 yards on an NRA-LR target. The 44" aiming black holds the X, 10, 9 and 8 rings with a 20" diameter 10-ring and 10" X-ring.

There are two governing Palma rulebooks from the National Rifle Association (NRA) and International Confederation of Fullbore Rifle Associations (ICFRA). Both require metallic sights and allow .223 or .308 caliber rifles. ICFRA rules require a bullet weight no greater than 91 grains for .223 or 156 grains for .308. NRA has no bullet weight restrictions.

GETTING THERE

My training routine was firing over a hundred rounds a week in the summer, sometimes more and I began competing at Alliance Rifle Club in Malvern, Ohio. There I became friends with two incredible long-range shooters and coaches — Chuck and Kim Rowe. They impressed on me how important it is to have goals and warned me not to spread myself thin over different disciplines. Being the best at one thing takes dedication. When I began considering Long Range, Kim told me I wasn’t allowed until I earned my Distinguished Rifleman’s badge in Service Rifle. She may have been kidding, but I wasn’t about to find out.

“BY THE TIME I **FIRED 15 SHOTS** I WAS NEAR TEARS. EACH SHOT SENT THE RIFLE STOCK **SMASHING INTO MY COLLARBONE.**”

THE RIFLE

Four years passed before I began preparing myself for the next step in my shooting career. My dad encouraged me to take advantage of the opportunity while I had it, though I still was unsure of the future and apprehensive about spending money while in school.

You do not purchase a Palma rifle online or from a gun store. Palma rifles are custom-built, handed down, or purchased secondhand from a competitor. In my case, someone leaving long-range shooting wanted his equipment to go to someone young who could keep the sport alive. I purchased a Warner #2 rear sight, a Stallings Right Sight with an iris and an old McMillan black prone stock.

I had several pieces to the puzzle, but not all. Putting together a top-of-the-line rifle is expensive, especially for a freelance writer in college. I am incredibly grateful to Krieger Barrels, Kelbly's and Bullet Central whose sponsorships helped me fill in the blanks. In September of 2019, I earned my Distinguished badge in service rifle, the green light to start into something new.

Several people were consulted during the decision process as I considered a true Palma rifle or a generic long-range rifle. One person suspected I would be unable to handle the recoil of the .308. I ultimately decided to join the Young Eagles team and would need a .308. I also remembered “if Kim could shoot a .308, I could too.” I selected a 30" 1:13 twist Krieger Barrel with a medium Palma contour. Kelbly's chambered the barrel and installed one of their classic actions, the Big Bore Panda. Bullet Central donated a single-stage Bix'n Andy Remington 700 Benchrest Competition trigger.

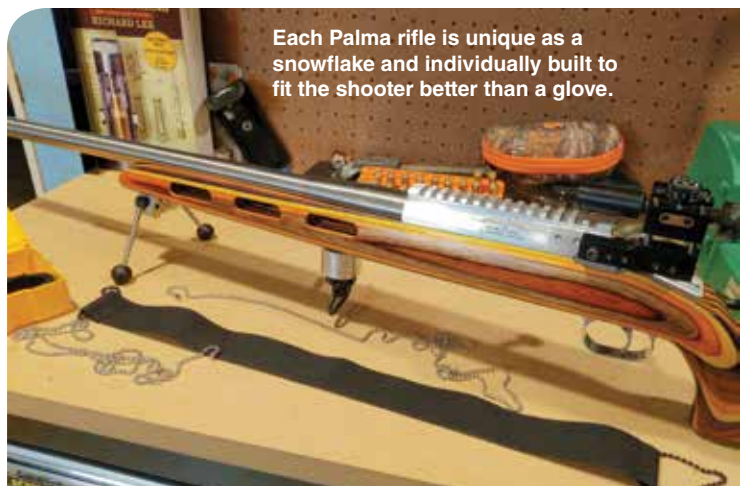
FIRST SHOTS

I did not want to jump right into a match. Eric helped me boresight the rifle, approximate eye relief and break in the

barrel. We used a Shotmarker electronic target at 600 yards. This allowed him to coach me from the firing line. I spent more time the first day working on position and adjustments than shooting. First and most important lesson of Palma: Make the gun fit you, do not fit yourself to the gun. This means if something is uncomfortable or doesn't seem right — do *not* keep shooting! Stop and fix it. Second lesson of Palma — this process never ends. Buttplate positions, aperture sizes — what is best will change by the day depending upon the range and light conditions.

ACCESSORIES

Small things make a difference. I borrowed handstops and slings from fellow shooters and am still determining what works best for me. Palma allows competitors to use a hook to secure the sling to their shooting coat. A separate coat allows you to keep your sling ready to go. A local leathersmith cut my coat's collar so it didn't ride against my neck when I lay down and added a buckle



Each Palma rifle is unique as a snowflake and individually built to fit the shooter better than a glove.



One of the biggest initial problems for Serena was realizing her stock “Goliath” didn't fit her. A new, shorter stock from her coach made an enormous difference in her performance. Photo: Eric Eilberg



Serena gets tips from coach Eric Eilberg. The most important part of learning any new discipline is to find a mentor who is already experienced and accomplished in the sport. Photo: Jedidiah Gaddie



Most Palma competitors load all their own ammunition for utmost accuracy. Serena uses an RCBS single-stage press and weighs every charge individually. Photo: Jedidiah Gaddie

to keep my shoulder pad from bunching. These seemingly minor changes help ensure you place the rifle in the same spot every time.

Your mat also makes a huge difference. I am a smaller-framed person. The thin, rollable mat I use for High Power began to bunch up underneath me as I fired, altering my position. I quickly learned a sturdier, thicker folding mat works much better. Currently, I use the Creedmoor quad fold shooting mat. It has a waterproof vinyl bottom, a double layer of foam for extra support under the elbows and doesn't move when I shoot! Even changing your mat makes a difference in position and the buttplate location — take nothing for granted.

SERENA AND GOLIATH

One size does not fit all. The Rows mentor me, adjust my position and give me tips. They are well-decorated shooters,

members of the U.S. National Rifle Team and Chuck is also a coach for the National F-Class team with Kim the team adjutant. They first noticed I needed a mirage band. My first few shots were level but began to scatter as the heat from the barrel distorted my sight picture. A mirage band, ceiling fan chain and cut off scope mount solved the issue. Even so, I consistently fired worse shots the more I took.

By the time I fired 15 shots I was near tears. Each shot sent the rifle stock smashing into my collarbone. Scared I could not handle the recoil, I should have listened to the advice I received but suffered through it. My enthusiasm waned, though I tried to hide it. With a 14" LOP stock it was nearly impossible for me to see through the sights. I also needed a rear sight extension, exacerbating the problem. I compensated by placing the buttstock far on my collarbone and letting it absorb the recoil.

Tired of bleeding through my shirt every match, Chuck convinced me to try one of his spare stocks, a petite Masterclass copy too small for him. It was much shorter and slighter — not only easier for me to grip but more comfortable. They were both bedded for Kelbly's big bore panda actions so the switch was easily made. He graciously traded stocks with me — the black synthetic stock Chuck named "Goliath" for the colorful laminate one which remains nameless.

Starting out, you cannot be afraid to change and try new things. Go to local matches. Talk to competitors. Before you buy all of your equipment, ask to borrow things to see what you like and need. Looks don't matter. It was hard for me to give up the black stock I had become attached to, but Chuck and Kim were right — I was miserable. Though I'm not at the top of the leaderboard, I've been able to improve and enjoy small successes, including joining the Young Eagles team.



DAVIDSON'S

SAM COLT LIMITED EDITION COMMEMORATIVE 1911

Art for Art's Sake

WILL DABBS, MD

What exactly transforms something otherwise mundane into an *objet d'art*? Leonardo DaVinci's Mona Lisa is actually painted on a wooden board, poplar to be precise. The components of the thing, a scrap of lumber and some antiquated pigments, are essentially worthless. However, as orchestrated by the hands of the master, the result is quite literally priceless. The last time the Mona Lisa was

insured it was for the modern equivalent of \$660 million.

Art is where you find it, and it can be found in some remarkable places. Label me a Philistine if you must, but I think Jackson

Pollock's work looks like a drop cloth. Yet, even something as utilitarian as a firearm can become art. In the Sam Colt Limited Edition Commemorative 1911 from Davidson's we find art of the ballistic sort.

The Davidson's Samuel Colt Limited Edition Commemorative 1911 is a thing of beauty. Functional, gorgeous, utilitarian and mean, this custom engraved handgun is an instant collector's piece.





The Colt 1911 pistol is as much an American icon as this M1928 Thompson submachine gun.



Colonel Sam Colt's serious visage graces the top of the slide.

ORIGINS

The gun is a Series 70 1911 Government Classic model from Colt. The slide, frame and minor bits are all finished in inimitable Colt high-polish blue. The color is like peering into the pupils of a pretty girl or studying the inky black space between the stars amidst a crisp night sky devoid of overcast. Stare too long and you start losing your free will. Upon this foundation the artisans at Baron Engraving worked their magic.

All the handy facets sport extensive and elaborate scroll and vine acid etching. There is also gold plating depicting Colonel Sam Colt himself as well as the distinctive "Onion Dome" of the original Colt factory. "God Created Man, Colonel Colt Made Them Equal" is splashed across the top of the slide.

The grips are cut from custom black pearlite. The gun comes with a spare set of double-diamond walnut grips as well should ostentation not be your bag. There is the expected standard 7-round box magazine. The gun features a 5" match grade barrel and standard fixed GI sights.

RUMINATIONS

A Belgian gunsmith named Mariette likely contrived the first pepperbox revolver in 1837, and Rollin White designed the bored-through cylinder 12 years later. However, it was Sam Colt who combined the two to change the world. His wheelgun designs remain viable defensive tools even this deep into the Information Age.

Colonel Sam claimed he took his inspiration from the capstan device on the brig Corvo that he crewed as a young man en route to Calcutta. He built a wooden model of what would become his revolver action before the ship returned to his home port. The company he founded brought the world the Civil War-era Navy wheelgun, the 1873 Peacemaker, the inimitable 1911 and the M16 rifle as well as many more. Given his outsized influence on the world of firearms his stern visage is entirely appropriate gracing the crest of this classic combat handgun.

Art is meant to be enjoyed. Sometimes it means we also use it for some higher purpose. Most typically we just gaze upon it lovingly. In the Samuel Colt Limited Edition 1911 from Colt, Baron Engraving and Davidson's, this is ballistic art of the practical sort. With an MSRP of \$2,199.99 it's even a little cheaper than I had expected.



DavidsonsInc.com

CHRISTENSEN ARMS RIDGELINE TITANIUM

WHEN A GUN SPEAKS, LISTEN UP!



MARK HANTEN

Few things stir my imagination and motivate me to adventure more than a fine hunting rifle. There is something about a well-crafted, purpose-built, precision hunting rifle that just makes me want to get outside and see the world. Christensen Arms' Ridgeline Titanium definitely conjures up this adventurous spirit and motivated me to go back to New Zealand to hunt tahr in the magnificent mountains on the south island. The plans were made, the trip was booked, then — COVID! Yup, yet another dream crushed by the pandemic! We need to talk about plan B.

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

I first saw a Christensen Arms Ridgeline at my local gun store. I was immediately impressed by the quality and precision imbued into this rifle's DNA. Guns like this aren't just a one-off — they're

a culmination of years of knowledge, experience, craftsmanship and artistry. This is exactly what it takes to place a seed in your subconscious when you throw it up to your shoulder for the first time, thinking of possible adventures.

This is a mountain rifle and my current hunting passion tends toward mountain hunting for animals living on the top of the world. So, when I threw up the Ridgeline to my shoulder — Presto, I'm at the top of the world pursuing some of the world's most elusive critters in some of the most beautiful and remote places on the planet. Yup, we're doing this! Then I learned the "Titanium" model had just been released with enhancements over the Ridgeline I was holding. When I finally got my hands on one, I was ready to book my hunt!

Okay, so what about this gun whisked me from the local gun store to the highest peaks? In my experience, quality has



**“GUNS LIKE THIS AREN’T JUST A
ONE-OFF — THEY’RE A CULMINATION
OF YEARS OF KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCE,
CRAFTSMANSHIP AND ARTISTRY.”**

Weighing in at a scant 5 lbs., 9 oz., sporting a 22" barrel and chambered in Hornady's 6.5 PRC, the Christensen Arms Ridgeline Titanium is a near-ideal mountain hunting rifle.

a distinct feel people instinctively understand. If you hand someone a plastic ballpoint pen and a Monte Blanc roller ball at the same time, they're going to see, feel and know the difference.

BUILDING BLOCKS

Materials are a good place to start when exploring the distinctions. The first thing jumping out on the Titanium is the weight and balance of the rifle. So sweet and so comfortable. At 5 lbs., 9 oz. with a 22" barrel, it hits the sweet spot for carryability.

Christensen Arms is one of the original carbon fiber barrel makers and they have it down to a science. Light weight, rigidity and heat dissipation are some of the benefits. The stock is made of carbon fiber as well, continuing the theme of lightweight durability. There is also the titanium receiver. Titanium is one

of the lightest and strongest metals, and its use for the receiver adds to the nimble feel and agility of this rifle.

Another factor on the continuum of quality is precision. The way things fit together matters, understanding the difference between tight and too tight, and knowing how to get there is what sets some companies apart. Christensen Arms started in the aerospace industry, literally building rocket and aircraft parts where exact tolerances are the expectation and anything less is unacceptable. Cycling the bolt on the Titanium gives you the feeling of confidence you get when precision is in your hands.

In my estimation, another gauge of quality is design. While some of this is purely aesthetic, much is predicated on effective use. Little things like the spiral fluted bolt reduces weight and the fluted bolt handle adds grip texture while adding a striking look. The stock is finished in a metallic gray with black webbing adding

texture as well as a distinctive subdued look for hunting situations. The contrast of the bead-blasted titanium receiver and the “aerograde carbon fiber wrapped barrel” is stunning, and both features reduce weight without sacrificing strength. Altogether, it’s a great-looking rifle and life is too short to hunt with an ugly gun.

ACCURACY FIRST

Christensen Arms has a “Sub-MOA Guarantee” and this rifle is within the

tolerance. I recorded $\frac{3}{4}$ ” groups with Hornady 143-grain ELDX loads and slightly over $\frac{1}{2}$ ” groups with the 147-grain ELDM.

Another factor I really like about the Titanium is it’s offered in the relatively new 6.5 PRC cartridge. For those who haven’t heard, the 6.5 PRC is the best cartridge ever made and can cleanly kill an elephant at 2,000 yards. Since you can’t see me, I hope you can sense the sarcasm in my words. I’m well aware of some of the claims made about several new wonder cartridges, but I

truly love how we live in a time where we can have these debates and discussions.

I am a fan of the 6.5 PRC but will admit to initially being a bit of a skeptic and late-adopter of the 6.5 bore — but now I’ve been shown the light. Clearly there have been many good 6.5s before the 6.5 Creedmoor and the 6.5 PRC but I think the 6.5 PRC is an ideal cartridge selection for a mountain rifle for pursuing medium-size game like most sheep and goats. As shortening your barrel will reduce velocity and downrange



The lightweight titanium receiver, carbon fiber-wrapped barrel and carbon fiber stock give the Ridgeline Titanium its nimble feel and agility.



To get the most out of the long-range capability of the 6.5 PRC a quality bipod is a must. This B&T Industries quick-detach Atlas V8 model is ideal for a light mountain rifle.



Mark added Caldwell's PIC Rail Adaptor Plate to the sling stud, giving the rifle a Picatinny rail mounting point for a bi-pod and a sling attachment.



Initial range work by Mark showed exceptional accuracy and mild recoil from the 6.5 PRC cartridge. He wasn't a fan of the muzzle brake.



Nope, not a tahr — Mark's Axis deer taken with the assistance of Maui Hunting Safari isn't a bad Plan B though!

“ALTOGETHER, IT'S A **GREAT-LOOKING** RIFLE AND LIFE IS TOO SHORT TO HUNT WITH AN **UGLY GUN.**”

energy, starting with more velocity allows you to shorten your barrel length to handy, light, mountain rifle-configurations while maintaining enough downrange energy to reach a little farther — and, sometimes in the mountains, you need it.

One thing I wasn't a fan of with the Titanium was the included 360-degree “Titanium Radial Brake.” I applaud them for including a muzzle brake as well as a thread protector, but it's not for me. My first couple trips to the range left me covered with dirt and dust from the blowback. Like all brakes, it increases the noise and blast to the shooter, which I can do without. I do appreciate the benefits of reduced recoil and will shoot some rifles with a brake but in this case I think it's unnecessary as another advantage of the

6.5 PRC cartridge is it's relatively mild recoil. Even with the diminutive configuration of a light mountain rifle, it's not going to create enough kick to inhibit accuracy and cause you concern.

I sometimes envy one of my hunting buddies' approach to hunting rifles — he has a 7mm blue/walnut Model 700 he's been using effectively for decades. He's confident with it and it has never let him down.

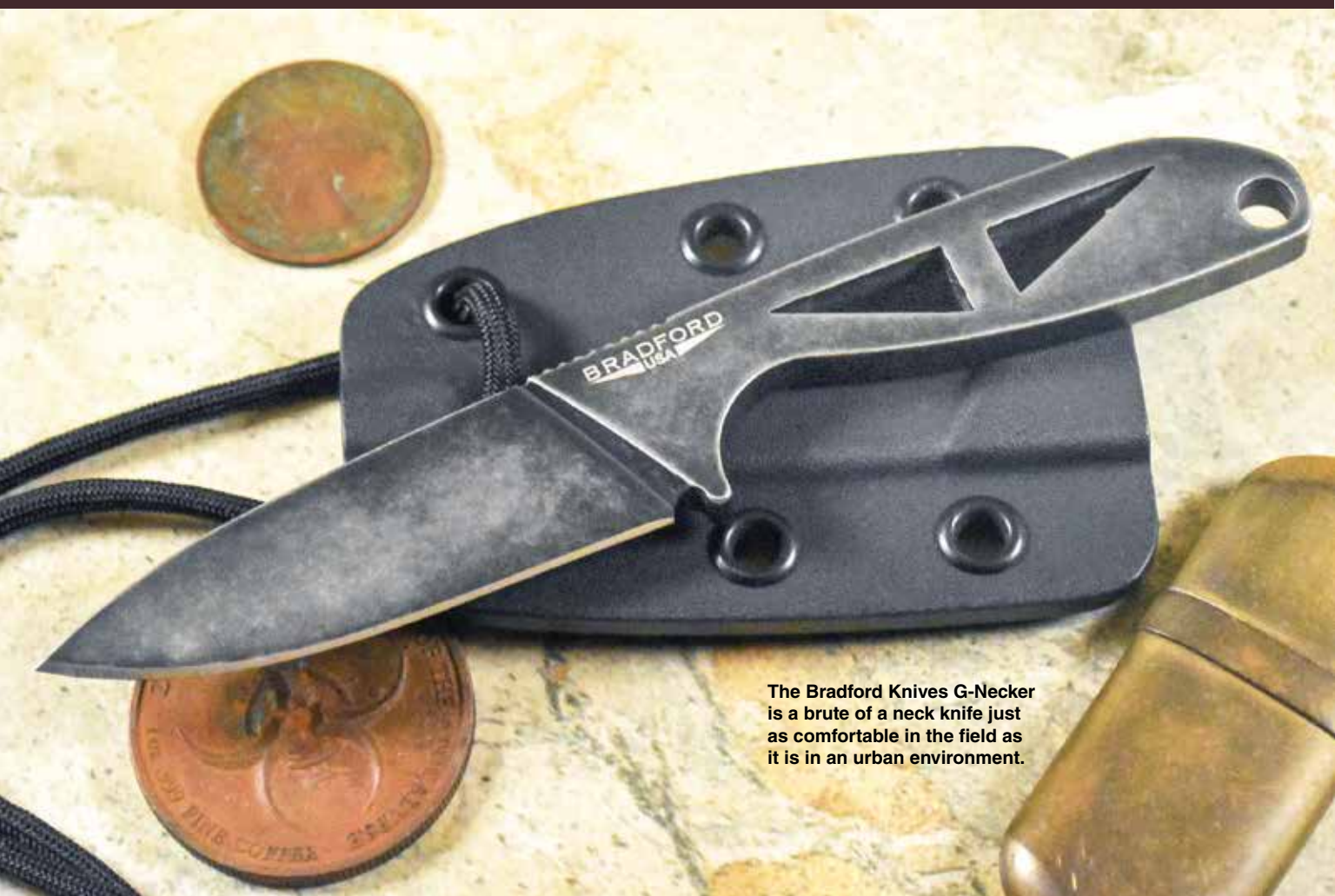
CHOICES, CHOICES

I, on the other hand, struggle with compromise when it comes with hunting rifles. I guess I'm a bit of a gun whisperer. They just speak to me, telling me what their mission is and prodding me to get out there and get it done. Judging from some

of my other hunting buddies, I'm not alone though. I challenge you to seek out one of these Christensen Arms Ridgeline Titanium rifles and throw it up to your shoulder. I'm pretty sure it'll have a message for you ...

Oh yeah, Plan B. Ultimately, Hawaii opened up for travel and after a couple COVID tests and lots of travel drama I was able to hunt with my trusted friends at Maui Hunting Safari. Axis deer are some of the toughest animals I've ever hunted and the Titanium in 6.5 PRC was an ideal selection. The 143-grain ELDX loads cleanly dispatched a nice buck and several does. The Christensen Arms Ridgeline Titanium spoke up, I listened and now we have fantastic meat for the foreseeable future. 🦌

ChristensenArms.com



The Bradford Knives G-Necker is a brute of a neck knife just as comfortable in the field as it is in an urban environment.

BRADFORD G-NECKER

BRUTE FORCE AND ALL MUSCLE!

Bradford Knives is not the biggest name in the cutlery world but those in the know will tell you they build some beastly knives. Their G-Necker is a prime example. While most neck knives are thin and lightweight for back-up duty, this brute of a necker eschews the norm and comes loaded for bear.

While most knives made to dangle around the neck typically have steel in the 0.10" to 0.12" range, Bradford's G-Necker

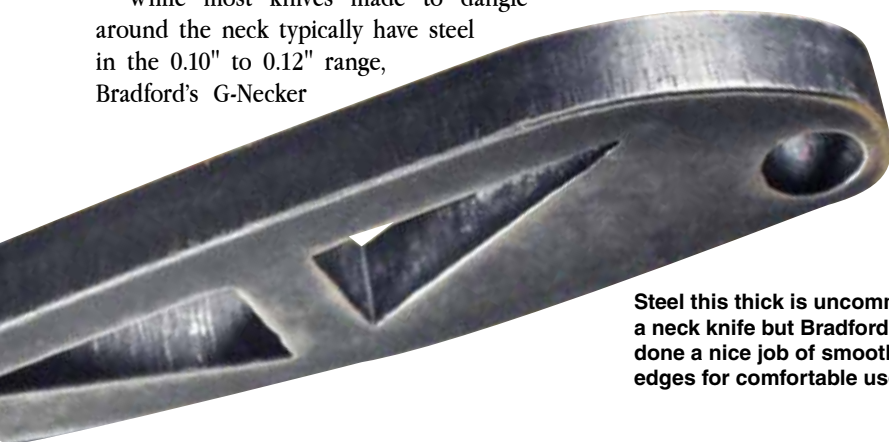
more than doubles the ante, showing up at the party with over twice the thickness.

The G-Necker is 6.125" overall and is made from one solid slab of 0.26" premium German Bohler-Uddenholm Elmax stainless steel, some of the best on the market and found not only in high-end tactical folders, but top bushcraft knives as well. The blade

is 2.874" of graceful, flat-ground Drop Point perfection capable of everything from combat to field dressing. The G-Necker's 3.25" handle is skeletonized to reduce weight and there's a handy lanyard hole at the base. A black Kydex pull-down sheath is included, replete with black paracord, ready to roll.

WHY YOU'LL LIKE IT

Despite its overbuilt construction the Bradford G-Necker weighs in at a very reasonable 2.68 oz. so it's not going to have you walking on the balls of your feet. This is a versatile neck knife, just as comfortable working in the field as it is serving protective duty in an urban environment. While it can be cord-wrapped for added cushion while in use, Bradford did an excellent job of contouring the handle edges to keep them from cutting into the flesh. In essence, it's built like a tank with Cadillac seats. Better yet, the G-Necker goes for a very affordable \$99 suggested retail.



Steel this thick is uncommon for a neck knife but Bradford has done a nice job of smoothing the edges for comfortable use.

BradfordKnives.com

MEOPTA MEOPRO OPTIKA LR RANGEFINDING BINOS

It's no secret I'm a big fan of Meopta optics. Made by one of Europe's largest and oldest high-end optic manufacturers headquartered in the Czech republic, Meopta has made a splash in the U.S. market by offering top-quality rifle scopes and optics at prices lower than comparable products.

My newest "toy" from Meopta is their new Optika LR rangefinding binos. Built around their excellent 10x42 chassis — of which I've been holding onto a loaner pair jealously for over a year — the new binos

add an integrated laser rangefinder to the mix. The "regular" pair were outstanding but I didn't hesitate to return my sample for this newest incarnation.

Coupling a laser with optics I find equal to many of the most expensive brands, the system is simple to operate and works without a hitch. The binos are claimed to reach out to 2,600 yards and while I haven't done any *real* long-range work yet, it's easy to range deer in the field down the road. I can also attest the tip of the church steeple out my back door is 323.5 yards away, even



though I'm weaving the beam through the branches of a large tree. Considering the degree of difficulty in getting such a measurement, Meopta might have a hard time getting this set of binos back!

MSRP: \$1,499.99

MeoptaSportoptics.com

BUTLER CREEK FEATHERLIGHT BINO CADDY

After reviewing the Meoptika Rangefinding binos, I realized it was finally time to get a *real* carrying system for my optics. While the Meopta binos comes with a very nice nylon carry case, I needed something to stand up to the real-world rigors of a hunting trip — scrambling over rocks, slithering under trees, jumping over creeks — but also protect the optic while keeping it instantly accessible. It's a tall order but I found the perfect solution in the Butler Creek Bino Caddy.



Well-built but not excessively bulky or heavy, the caddy keeps binos snugged up to your chest via heavy nylon straps connected to a foam-and-nylon back panel. There are a couple of small pockets for keeping your cleaning gear stowed but the best feature is the magnet top closure.

A pair of heavy duty magnets — complete with a "Do not use near pacemakers" warning — keep the clamshell top locked shut short of doing headstand-pushups. With the bino caddy, your optics are swaddled in a safety cocoon, out of the way from packs and guns in the middle of your chest, but remain instantly and easily slipped out to glass that trophy of a lifetime.

MSRP: \$74.95

ButlerCreek.com

XTI2 DXS OFFSET IRON SIGHTS

Dedicated secondary or backup sights on AR-platform carbines have been around 20 years or so, after soldiers in combat zones realized modern red dot optics and low-power scopes are robust, but can still fall victim to rocks, falls and gremlins. Somebody figured out by adding secondary sights, you can at least keep in the fight if the primary optic goes belly up. Later, gunners also realized any carbine with a low-power scope is great for engaging farther targets but when a "tango" pops up close enough you can smell the hummus on his breath, it's best to have something a little faster than a telescope to engage the bad guy.



The XTI2 from XS Sights solves both problems with a robust 45-degree offset set of "Ember Glow" photoluminescent sights for mounting on a carbine's Pic rail. These were originally designed for three-gun use but provide a very quick solution for backup even if you're using your gun for serious "social" purposes. Personally I prefer the 45-degree offset versions to the more-common flip-up sights that offer a plethora of ways to break or engage at the worse possible moment. Yeah, 45-degree sights could snag a sling or passing corner, but this concern aside, the XTI2 sights are more bombproof than the gun itself.

MSRP: \$180

XSSights.com

RECAPTURING RICHMOND

IT'S TIME TO MAKE A CHANGE

DAVE WORKMAN

It's payback time in the Old Dominion — if Virginia gun owners want to right the wrongs done last year by the new Democrat majority, they will turn out Nov. 2 in numbers not seen for many years during off-year elections.

Take this to the bank: The whole country will be watching.

HISTORY

In 2019, when only about 40% of the Commonwealth's registered voters turned out, gun owners were asleep at the wheel. Democrats, running to give anti-gun Democrat Gov. Ralph Northam a majority, took over for the first time in a generation and the result was a disaster for the Second Amendment.

This is not the time to be coy, nor is it the year to be playing third party protest politics. There is much more at stake than somebody "making a statement" for their personal high ground. Politics is a contact sport and if Virginia gun owners — more than 20,000 of whom descended on the Capitol in January 2020, only to be sneered at and ultimately ignored by the Democrat majority — want to reverse course and regain their firearms freedom by quashing Northam's agenda, you must vote *en masse* and be serious about it.

Gun owners around the country can help. Contribute to campaigns. Perhaps send a donation to the Virginia Citizens Defense League (vcdl.org) to support its efforts. The VCDL has a Political Action Committee (PAC) whose purpose is to help elect pro-rights candidates.

Gun owners in neighboring states can help with get-out-the-vote efforts, volunteer to spend a weekend helping a candidate's campaign by placing road or yard signs. Just make sure your efforts are squeaky clean legally and comply with Virginia election statutes.

MEET THE NEW BOSS ...

Northam is finished this year, being unable to run for a consecutive term so running to get back into the governor's office is another anti-gun Democrat, former Gov. Terry McAuliffe. He's also got competition from other Democrats. At this writing, the primary had not yet been held so whomever the GOP candidate is, Virginia gun owners should get behind that person.

Why is any of this important to gun owners in the other 49 states? Because taking back Virginia decisively will send a message to anti-gunners across the country — the Second Amendment community is ready and willing to fight. A sweep of Virginia's House of Delegates will be a shot across the bow for gun-hating liberals across the Potomac. It will encourage and perhaps even embolden conservative pro-gunners in other states to run for office and clean up their own legislatures in 2022, along with capturing Congress away from Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

Two things to remember:

- Your rights are at stake even if you don't live in Virginia, so get behind your brothers and sisters to help them win.
- Running your mouth on social media is not a substitute for voting if you're a Virginia resident. You *must* be registered to vote and you *must* submit a ballot. Do not allow anybody to discourage you by whining about your vote not counting.

Eighteen months ago, a lot of very alarmed Virginia gun owners had only themselves to blame for letting Northam's anti-gun compatriots gain full control, and they made the most of it. This is not the time for lethargy or apathy, and if Second Amendment Virginians have staying power, they're not going to allow it to happen again. This is the time for action and with just four months remaining until the November election, gun owners need to get busy.

Virginia's grassroots activists must get involved with their own delegate elections and the governor's race. If you don't know who is running in your district, find out. Attend candidates' forums. Challenge these people on their Second Amendment positions. Help them understand your concerns and do so in calm, measured language.

If you are going to contribute to a campaign, don't wait until the last minute. Make a donation now. Early money is the best money because it helps purchase advertising. It helps pay for printing signs and pamphlets. It pays for travel and campaign staff. It helps rent office space and pay telephone bills.

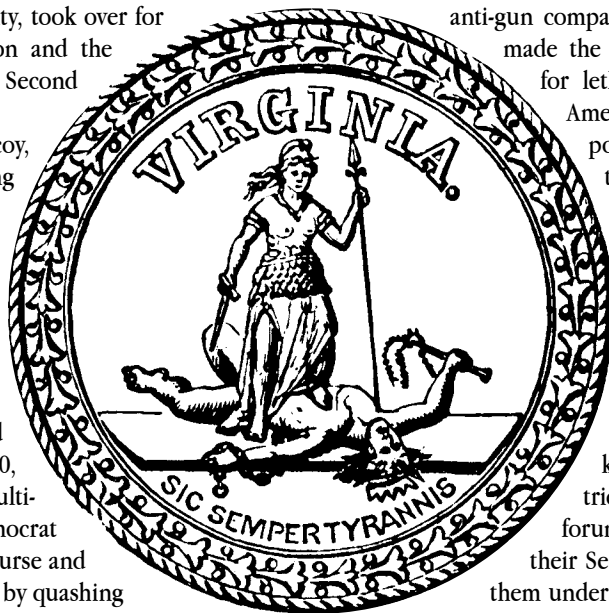
ELSEWHERE

Around the country let Virginia be a gauge and a testing ground to see what wins votes. The 2022 mid-term elections are 18 months away, and people are presently looking at potential candidates for legislative, congressional and senate positions. Running for office takes time and commitment, and lots of volunteer supporters.

Study what issues dominate the elections in Virginia — most likely the economy, COVID-19 and public safety — and use the knowledge to win in your state.

Get involved early, explain to the candidate why you're supporting his or her campaign and you are a gun owner who can get other gun owners to help and vote.

If you decide to be the candidate, remember the saga of



Colorado Congresswoman Lauren Boebert. I interviewed her twice some months ago and was impressed with what can best be defined as “spunk,” along with no small amount of perseverance. She beat the incumbent in the primary and fended off the challenger in November.

Boebert traveled up and down Western Colorado, talking to people in cities, towns and local communities. She demonstrated not only a willingness to run, but also a straight-from-the-heart desire to represent the values of her constituents because they’re her values as well.

Boebert’s story is tantamount to a female version of a Horatio Alger hero, someone who rises from very humble beginnings to achieve great things. Long story short, if Boebert could do it — and she did — so can you.

**“... BUT IF YOU THINK
IT’S IMPOSSIBLE
TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE,
REMEMBER — THIS IS
THE UNITED STATES,
THE LAND OF ENDLESS
POSSIBILITY.”**

Remember what your dad or grandpa used to say — If you want something done right, do it yourself. Only you can make the decision but running for office is something of a family affair. It is challenging, grueling and tiring but if you think it’s impossible to make a difference, remember — this is the United States, the land of endless possibility.

JOB ONE

The first task is to help your fellow gun owners win back Virginia. Afterward, join with other like-minded people to win back Congress in 2022. As the late Lee Iacocca famously said, “Lead, follow or get out of the way.”

Biden came into office six months ago promising to push an extremist anti-gun agenda and he’s got a friendly Congress to make it possible. Your activism supporting Virginia pro-gunners this year — and rights-friendly candidates next year — can make him regret it.

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FRED EICHLER SERIES LIGHT PREDATOR2L

ROCK RIVER ARMS

The *Fred Eichler Series Light Predator2L* from Rock River Arms features a carbon fiber handguard to reduce overall weight. The handguard also incorporates the unique coyote paw prints found on all Fred Eichler Series handguards. This accurate rifle incorporates a .223 Wylde Chamber for

both 5.56mm and .223 caliber ammo. The 16" lightweight fluted stainless-steel barrel offers accuracy at long ranges, has a 1:8" twist and has been cryogenically treated and bead blasted for a no glare finish. MSRP: Black \$1,945; Gunmetal Gray \$2,010. For more info: (309) 792-5780, RockRiverArms.com

CARBON STALKER

HOWA

The *Carbon Stalker* from Howa is offered in 6.5 Creemoor, 7.62x39mm, 223 REM and 350 Legend. A standard 22" Howa barrel is fitted into a Custom Carbon Fiber-wrapped stock bringing the weight to a lightweight 4 lbs., 10 oz. Features include an Accublock Lug Bed, a Limbsaver Buttpad, a 2-Stage Match Trigger, 3-Position Safety and sub-MOA assurance. MSRP: \$959. For more info: (800) 553-4229, howausa.com



BUTSKI LONG STROKER AND ORIGINAL CUTTER

HUNTER SPECIALTIES

The *Butski Long Stroker* and *Original Cutter* from Hunter Specialties are two calls you'll want to carry during turkey season. Both are designed by turkey hunting expert and champion caller Paul Butski. The Long Stroker is a long-boat, paddle-style box call producing excited yelping and cutting. Ideal for locating game, it makes more turkey vocals. Made of American walnut with a Purple Heart lid, this call has a compilation of high pitch rasp in every stroke. The Original Cutter, a 3-reed, stretched extra-tight call, will produce aggressive yelping and cutting. MSRP: Long Stroker \$49.99; Original Cutter \$9.99. For more info: (877) 269-8490, HunterSpec.com



HEX DRAGONFLY

HEX OPTICS

The *HEX Dragonfly* is a versatile reflex sight suited for use with pistols, rifles and shotguns. Manual brightness adjustment of the 3.5 MOA dot offers maximum control and the 16-hour auto-off feature prevents the battery from draining if accidentally left on. It is precision machined from 6061 T6 Hardcoat anodized aluminum and with a scratch-resistant, anti-glare glass lens. MSRP: \$249. For more info: (833) 886-9757, HexOptics.com



IMPULSE HUNTING PACK

**ALPS
OUTDOORZ**

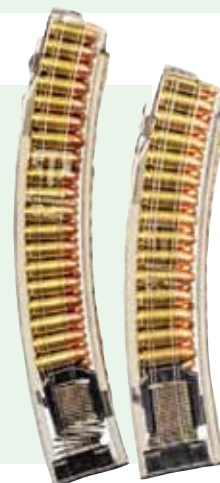
ALPS OutdoorZ introduces the new *Impulse Hunting Pack*. Developed for whitetail hunters who demand quiet and ease-of-access in an all-day pack, the Impulse comes wrapped in Deadquiet fleece to help deaden sound upon contact with brush or clothing. This makes it ideal for still hunting. The Impulse comes in Realtree EDGE camo and weighs 5 lbs., 4 oz. MSRP: \$149.99. For more info: (800) 344-2577, AlpsBrands.com



MAGAZINES FOR CZ SCORPION EVO

ETS GROUP

ETS Group announces the release of 30- and 40-round 9mm magazines for the *CZ Scorpion Evo*. The clear polymer mags are made from advanced polymers to provide impact resistance so they won't crack or break when dropped. With superior tolerances, the magazines won't become brittle over time, even when exposed to harsh environments, chemicals, extreme cold, or UV rays. The transparent bodies make it easy to identify round count and type. MSRP: \$21.99 (30-round); \$24.99 (40-round). For more info: (855) 887-5452, ETSGroup.us



For more New Products visit us
online at gunsmagazine.com

HANDALL BEAVERTAIL GRIP SLEEVE

HOGUE INC.

Hogue's *HandALL Beavertail Grip Sleeve* for the Taurus G2 series offers grip enhancement and precision fit for G2c, G3c and PT111 Millennium G2 models. Hogue's Beavertail grip sleeve design enhances the shooter's grip experience by significantly reducing perceived recoil of polymer pistols. Hogue's ultra-soft rubber provides added protection for the pulcrue of the hand while the finger grooves allow a consistent grasp and a secure hold. MSRP: \$12.95. For more info: (800) 438-4747, HogueInc.com



TOPS FILET TOPS KNIVES

TOPS Knives has released the *TOPS Filet*, their first filet knife. With an OAL of 11.5", its 154CM steel blade is 8" long, 0.09" thick with a tumble finish. The TOPS Filet will make it easy to slice fish. It would also be a great boning knife for meats. The handle is a combination of rubber and G10 that provides a secure grip that's important when dealing with slippery objects. It comes with an OD Green Kydex sheath. MSRP: \$215. For more info: (208) 542-0113, TOPSKnives.com



ELVIA EMERSON KNIVES INC.

Emerson Knives' *Elvia* can be used both as a utility tool and as a weapon. With an overall length of 7.2", it has a 2.7"-long, 0.125"-thick blade made of 154CM steel with a stonewashed finish and a hardness rating of 57-59RC. The knife has a conventional V-grind with a chisel edge, a G-10 handle and a Titanium lock. MSRP: \$264.95. For more info: (310) 539-5633, EmersonKnives.com



LIGHTWEIGHT TACTICAL DEFENSE (LTD) PISTOL LINE

LONE WOLF ARMS

Lone Wolf Arms introduces the *Lightweight Tactical Defense (LTD) Pistol Line*. Unlike many other GLOCK-pattern alternatives on the market, the LTD is not the result of geometry changes or polishing of new old-stock parts, but rather the culmination of decades of experience. Thanks to the Timberwolf Frame, the LTD offers a slimmer, more natural feel. They are also lighter. MSRP: \$699.95. For more info: (208) 448-0600, LoneWolfDist.com



RANGEFINDER HOLSTER

The *Rangefinder Holster* from Mystery Ranch allows one-handed operation to ensure easy measurement of range or distance. Constructed of 500D Cordura fabric and Poly spacer-mesh inner, the holster will fit rangefinders between 4" and 5" tall and 1.5" (deep) x 2.5" (wide). MSRP: \$25. For more info: (833) 548-1999, MysteryRanch.com



ROBUST BROWN FLUSH MOUNT MODEL

SKULL HOOKER

Skull Hooker offers the *Robust Brown Flush Mount Model* along with the original flush mount with a Graphite Black finish. The new model allows consumers to better match the European mount hardware to their displays and overall color scheme. The Flush Mount is constructed of high quality steel welded to support large and extra-large European-style skulls like bear, deer and antelope. MSRP: \$9.99. For more info: (877) 269-8490, SkullHooker.com



TACTICAL DELUXE GRIP PLUG

ERGO GRIPS

The *Tactical Deluxe Grip Plug* from Ergo Grips is designed to plug the cavity on the bottom of Tactical Deluxe Grips. Securely press into the bottom of any TDX grip to prevent debris from lodging in the cavity. It also functions as a shock-absorbing pad to protect the grip when setting the rifle down on hard surfaces. MSRP: \$5. For more info: (877) 281-3783, ErgoGrips.net

ALPHA SHOOTING REST

BIRCHWOOD CASEY

The *Alpha Shooting Rest* is one of five rests introduced by Birchwood Casey this year. The Alpha has a tubular steel frame with a non-slip rubber stock rest, adjustable leveling feet with bulls-eye bubble level and more. The rest accommodates popular AR pistols with barrels as short as 7.5" as well as full-sized rifles. The other new shooting rests are the Bravo, Echo, Foxtrot and Tango. Each is specifically designed for accuracy, comfort and ease of use. MSRP: Alpha \$229.99. For more info: (877) 269-8490, BirchwoodCasey.com



ROCK ISLAND ARMORY 20GA VR82 SHOTGUN PACKAGE

The VR82 is part of Rock Island Armory's VR series of tactical shotguns for home defense, hunting and the range. With a capacity of 5+1 and an OAL of 38", the VR82 in 20GA weighs 7.5 lbs. when empty, 8.5 lbs. when loaded. It has lightening cuts and an 18" contoured barrel for lightweight fast handling. Other features like ambi controls, flip-up sights, a barrel shroud, a forend and a BufferTHS buttstock are compatible with most aftermarket accessories. The VR82's upper, lower and forend made from 7075 T6 aluminum as well as

its AR-like styling contribute to durability and versatility in performance.

Streamlight's *PROTAC 1L-1AA* will brighten your path with 350 lumens of light when you need it. With a beam distance of 160 meters, the 4.25" everyday carry flashlight has an anodized aluminum housing with impact-resistant tempered glass lens. It runs on a CR123A lithium or AA alkaline/lithium battery. Run time on high is 1.30 hours, 14 hours on low.

The *Bona Fide* from CRKT is an 8.25" folding knife with a liner lock. Its 3.59" blade is made of D2 steel with a satin finish. The handle is aluminum making it lightweight and strong. The Bona Fide, from knife designer Ken Onion, suggests the shape of a traditional Hawaiian canoe and is a homage to Ken's roots.

The VR82 from Rock Island Armory, the flashlight from Streamlight and the knife from CRKT are prizes worth a click on the link or the cost of a stamp. Go now to GUNSMagazine.com/giveaways or to the post office. —Jazz Jimenez



VR82 SHOTGUN

MANUFACTURER: Rock Island Armory
(775) 537-1444, Armscor.com
CALIBER: 20GA, **CAPACITY:** 5+1
BARREL LENGTH: 18", **OAL:** 38"
WEIGHT: 7.5 lbs. (empty)
VALUE: \$729

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

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

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BONA FIDE

MANUFACTURER: CRKT
(800) 891-3100
CRKT.com
VALUE: \$99.99

PROTAC 1L-1AA

MANUFACTURER: Streamlight
(800) 523-7488
Streamlight.com
VALUE: \$45



RANGE RATS, SCAVENGERS & BRASS HOGS

THE INDIGENOUS WILDLIFE OF SHOOTING RANGES

OH, RATS?

Every range has them — Range Rats. They're not beady-eyed, long-tailed rodents, but die-hard shooters who frequent the range almost daily. They hate sitting around the house but love shooting. Usually retired, they have plenty of time on their hands.

Their cars are pre-packed with guns, ammo, targets and range essentials, allowing them to leave at a moment's notice. Sound familiar? They are salt-of-the-earth shooters and are known affectionately as Range Rats.

SCAVENGERS

Some Range Rats are also scavengers. Opportunists, they go on daily forays checking brass buckets and firing lines, scouring for their favorite morsels: range brass. Club members complain of shooters failing to police brass but the scrounger secretly loves them.

Scroungers think of brass as gold! And free gold is the best! After every empty is gathered, scroungers sneak back to their

vehicle, stashing their secret bounty. Only now will they shoot, if the urge strikes.

TRUE CONFESSIONS

I admit to being a scrounger. It's in my nature, I guess. I search the range for every last brass morsel I can find, keeping everything, whether I shoot those calibers or not. Believe me, someone will. And it's always nice to help out a fellow shooter, especially a beginning handloader.

I ecstatically recall finding rare-caliber rifle brass I do shoot, neatly returned in its factory box, waiting to be collected. For scroungers, this is the golden egg. It's what we live for. I know, we're sick! However, all this range brass can influence shooting habits, too. Let me explain.

FREE RANGE BRASS ...

Two of the most common calibers recovered (rescued?) are 9mm and 5.56/.223. Ejected and rejected, they litter



Those early handloads were accurate. Notice the red tape targets, a true Range Rat maneuver.

the earth. Finding these treats by the bucket load, I had to do something. Being mainly a revolver shooter, all this free 9mm brass got me thinking. I pull my 9mm semi-autos from the safe, becoming friends once again, all because of this free offering.

And 9mm reloads are efficient, using less lead and powder than my big bores. Plus, I have a few Ruger Blackhawk convertibles with 9mm cylinders, to keep my revolver skills in check.



Tank's 300 BLK rifles — (top) Ruger Ranch rifle and an H&R AAC 300 BLK Handi-Rifle.



The simple steps of converting 5.56/.223 brass to 300 BLK. Looks like fun, eh?

THE .300 BLK CONVERSION

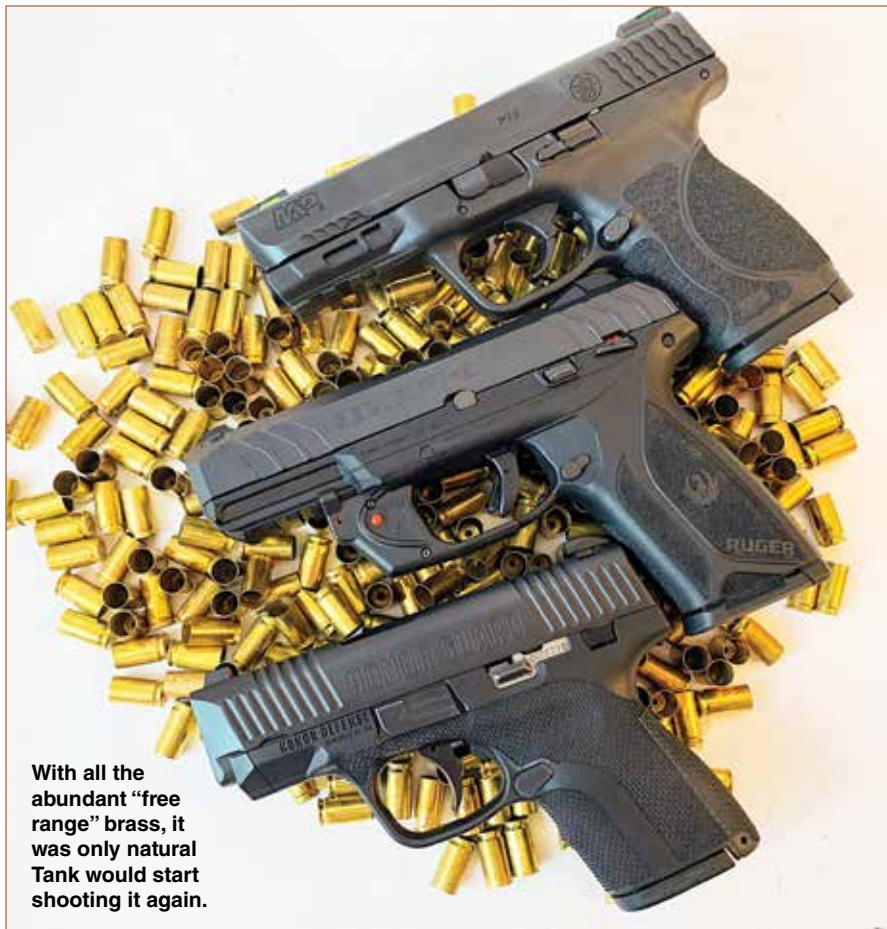
Having buckets of 5.56/.223 brass, with mountains of handloads, I'm pretty well set for life. However, 15 years ago I read about a cartridge called the .300 BLK. I learn 5.56/.223 brass can be converted to .300 BLK brass. Hmmm ...

Buying a small hobbyist chop-saw, dies and bullet molds, I start converting brass. Chopping the necks, I form it, trim it to length, neck chamfer and finally load .300 BLK cartridges.

Fueled by thriftiness and a fondness for tinkering, I find handloading enjoyable. Now, with all the "free" .300 BLK brass and handloads, all I needed was a rifle ...

DELIVERY SYSTEM?

Having a "few" AR-15 platforms, I could have built/ordered a .300 BLK upper. But I'd risk losing some of my hard-earned brass, plus I enjoy savoring each shot, confirming just how accurate my handloads are. I ended up getting an H&R AAC Hand-Rifle single-shot, break-action carbine. I have a



With all the abundant "free range" brass, it was only natural Tank would start shooting it again.

blast shooting it, my handloads being everything I could ask for, accuracy wise.

RUGER RANCH RIFLE

The H&R single-shot displayed the kind of accuracy achievable from the 300 BLK, but I wanted a repeater of some sort. The Ruger Ranch rifle fit the bill perfectly,

shooting a tad better than the H&R single shot.

Cast-bullet loads mainly consist of H110 powder with bullets weighing between 115-150 grains. All loads go under 2" at 100 yards, many much better, for perfect plinking, hunting and varmint rounds, especially with HP slugs. Jacketed bullets weighing 125-130 grains shoot within an inch, at 100 yards.

Cast bullets add versatility and are an economical way of shooting. The 300 BLK shoots best with bullets sized 0.310".

IN CLOSING ...

Being a Range Rat is beneficial, especially during ammo shortages caused by panics, pandemics and politicians. Remember the 6 P's — Proper Planning Prevents Piss Poor Performance. When this latest panic ends, take advantage. Learn to handload, stock up on powder and primers and hit the range.

And if you happen to see me, don't bother checking the brass buckets. They'll be empty — but I'm happy to share. Just ask, because that's what it's all about. 



A typical day's collection from the range cleaned, bagged and ready to load.

GUNS[®] MAGAZINE

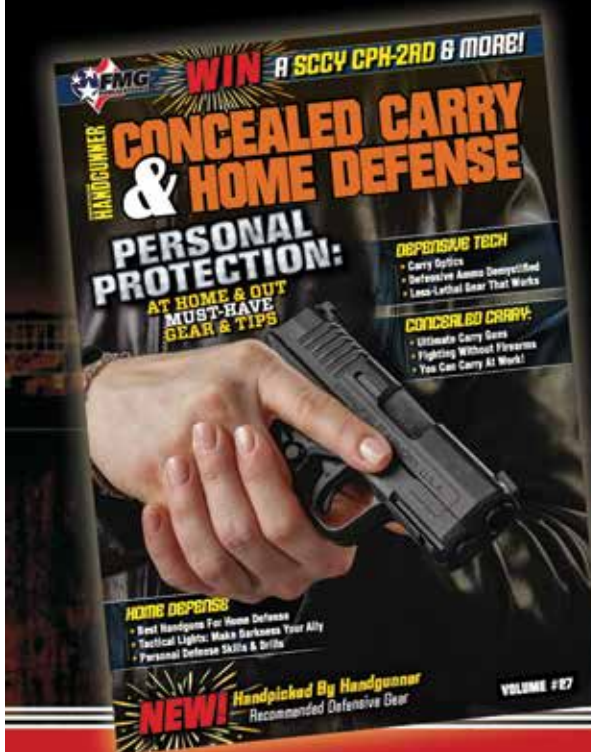
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obtained my .45 GLOCK 21 (a bit light for black bear, but offering plenty of rounds). We stood our ground, shouting, trying to simultaneously increase our bravado and scare the bear so lethal action on anyone's part would be unnecessary. He wasn't having any of it and defiantly stood still, gathering himself for the next move. The seconds turned to minutes and I could clearly count each heartbeat in my pounding ears, then — it happened . . .

Ken turned his head and quietly said, "It's just a stump."

Our assailant turned out to be a broken tree trunk. With corrugated black bark slicked by rain and dark skies, along with two splinters of wood perfectly simulating ears, the overall effect for inattentive hikers was that of a bear standing on its hind legs waiting to snack on a hapless passerby.

This was my first kill-or-be-killed moment facing the ever-dangerous tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) but I had prevailed. I'm just glad nobody else saw it.

SOLVING THE PROBLEM

After a dozen of such instances where imaginary bears have shredded my psyche and kicked my ego in the wedding tackle, I've discovered a great defensive technique which, in keeping with internet journalism standards, I'll name after myself.

First, after securing any firearm, stand at a 90-degree angle to the area where the imaginary bear stood. Place both feet about shoulder-width apart and slightly bend your knees to maintain a stable stance. Next, place your support-side elbow against your rib cage and extend your arm straight out, hand outstretched parallel to the ground. Keeping your fingers together and wrist rigidly locked, violently smack yourself right in the middle of the forehead with your palm and say "Snap out of it!"

The "Wheat Whack" works wonders, whether you are armed or not, and you'd be amazed at how it helps prevent future episodes of bear fright. It also works wonders regarding large spiders, stick-snakes in the tall grass or any other critter known to cause spontaneous incontinence.

We'll stop here because I need to go clean up the mess I made in the sink after changing the oil in my truck. But first, I'll need to check outside because my wife just walked into the office and whacked me right in the forehead.

Must be a bear in the marigold bed. 🐻



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THE BEAR WASN'T THERE ...

'ENOUGH GUN' SOMETIMES ISN'T ENOUGH

Bears are no laughing matter, especially whenever one is actively gnawing on your lower gible region. However, if you intend to pursue outdoor recreation or gainful outdoors employment in regions where *Ursus* conducts business — a large and growing percentage of our country — you have to acknowledge the fact you are sharing space with a mammal who scoffs at the idea of humans being at the top of the food chain. This is why “bear defense,” especially involving firearms, is such a staple topic of conversation among those who venture outdoors on a regular basis.

Let me admit upfront I've never really had a major “Hairly” with a bear. I've spent precious little time around grizzlies but have literally countless hours hiking, fishing, hunting and camping in areas where black bears hold court, but have yet to have a major adventure — defined as “requiring more than five quarts of blood.” However, I would/will suppose I might be the world's leading expert on “almost” bear encounters.

GO NORTH

In the agricultural Midwest, I grew up without giving a thought to large carnivores because they had been exterminated more than a century before my own first birthday. This innocent mindset changed about 30 years ago when I and several buddies planned a major two-week expedition into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area along on the Minnesota/Canada border. It was to be my first experience living cheek by jowl with bears for weeks on end and I was a bit overwrought at the prospect. Of course, being a late-20s male, I would have sooner admitted wearing panty hose to church than to claim a deep sense of foreboding regarding camping in Bear Country.

So, as we canoed deep into the wilderness, at one point 30 miles from the nearest habitation, I was a bit nonplussed at the prospect of something large and hairy visiting our campsite some night to investigate the fish smell permeating our gear — or perhaps to simply kill and eat me before I could exit my sleeping bag.

On this trip, a friend named Rob was a last-minute addition. He's a wonderful fellow

and a joy to be around, except for two things: for some reason, he felt compelled to graphically describe the condition of the pit toilet each morning over breakfast, and he had “night terrors.”

The first problem was rectified by my grabbing a canoe paddle and chasing Rob out of camp while attempting to neatly cleave his skull. However, the other difficulty proved challenging.

The next night I was lying awake in my small two-man tent, trying to silently calm my nerves — shot from a combination of physical exhaustion and worrying about the fact I was tens of miles from assistance of any kind if a bear, cougar or homicidal maniac decided to stop by for a visit. At this moment, Rob's brain decided to take his night terrors out for a spin.

I assure you there is absolutely nothing to get your adrenal glands pulsating wildly than to be lying in a tent in the middle of a black, silent wilderness and having one of your companions suddenly start screaming as if having a prostate exam conducted by Captain Hook.

To paraphrase an old dirty joke — when you have to use both hands to pull your undergarments out of your lower tract, it's a bad day. In this case, I eventually needed a logging chain and a come-along.

On this trip I was unarmed — but never again. Unfortunately, I discovered defense against imaginary bears proves tougher than the real thing.

GETTING HIGH

Years later, my friend Ken and I were undertaking our first major backpacking trip. The order of battle was to invade the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, hike a piece of the Appalachian Trail to Icewater Springs, then hit the Boulevard Trail to LeConte Lodge.

LeConte lodge is located smack in the middle of the National Park and the highest overnight accommodation in the eastern U.S. Once obtaining reservations — one year in advance — you can only access the cabin complex by hiking. The shortest route is several miles long with thousands of feet of elevation gain, while we chose a more gradual but much longer hike.

My concerns started as we obtained our required backcountry permit from the Park

Service. As it was September, the ranger warned us the resident bears were aggressively fattening up on berries in the high country and had already caused several hikers grief. Oh goody.

Our first stop was the Icewater Springs shelter. These shelters along the Appalachian Trail are rustic three-sided shacks with rows of wooden shelves for hikers to unroll their sleeping bags. When we arrived, several signs tacked to the shelter noted “Problem Bears” were active in the area and safety precautions should be taken.

That evening, lying on my shelf, I realized the shelter was nothing but a government-sponsored point-of-purchase candy rack for hungry bears.

“I'll take the marshmallow in the blue North Face sleeping bag, and you can have the crunchy-looking one in the green army-surplus sack,” I imagined the bears saying among themselves as we blithely slept. Fortunately, we weren't visited by bear — thousands of mice crawling, over, under and in everything as we tried to sleep — but no bears. Personally, I didn't mind the mice so much as the thought of the snakes they undoubtedly attracted. After a mostly sleepless but uneventful night, we hiked on to the lodge, spent a wonderful day and night then headed down the mountain the next morning on a different trail.

Above the clouds, things were gorgeous but as we went lower, the weather changed dramatically. What had started out as a clear morning turned into a steady hypothermia-producing rain. Fog swirled up the slope and through the tree tops like a bad horror movie as we slogged downward, dreaming of dry clothes and spiritous beverage waiting for us in Gatlinburg. We were mostly oblivious to everything, tuning out soggy socks and the water flowing down our necks as we switch-backed down the mountain. Then, it happened.

Suddenly, as we rounded a turn, both Ken and I saw it: Bear. A *big* bear reared up on both legs, just a few feet away on the downhill side of the trail. There, in the pouring rain and mist on the side of the mountain, I was afraid it might be time to write down my blood type for the responding medics.

Ken drew, if memory serves correctly, something revolver-ish in .44 Mag while I fumbled around a moment and finally

continued on page 73

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