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2021

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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER



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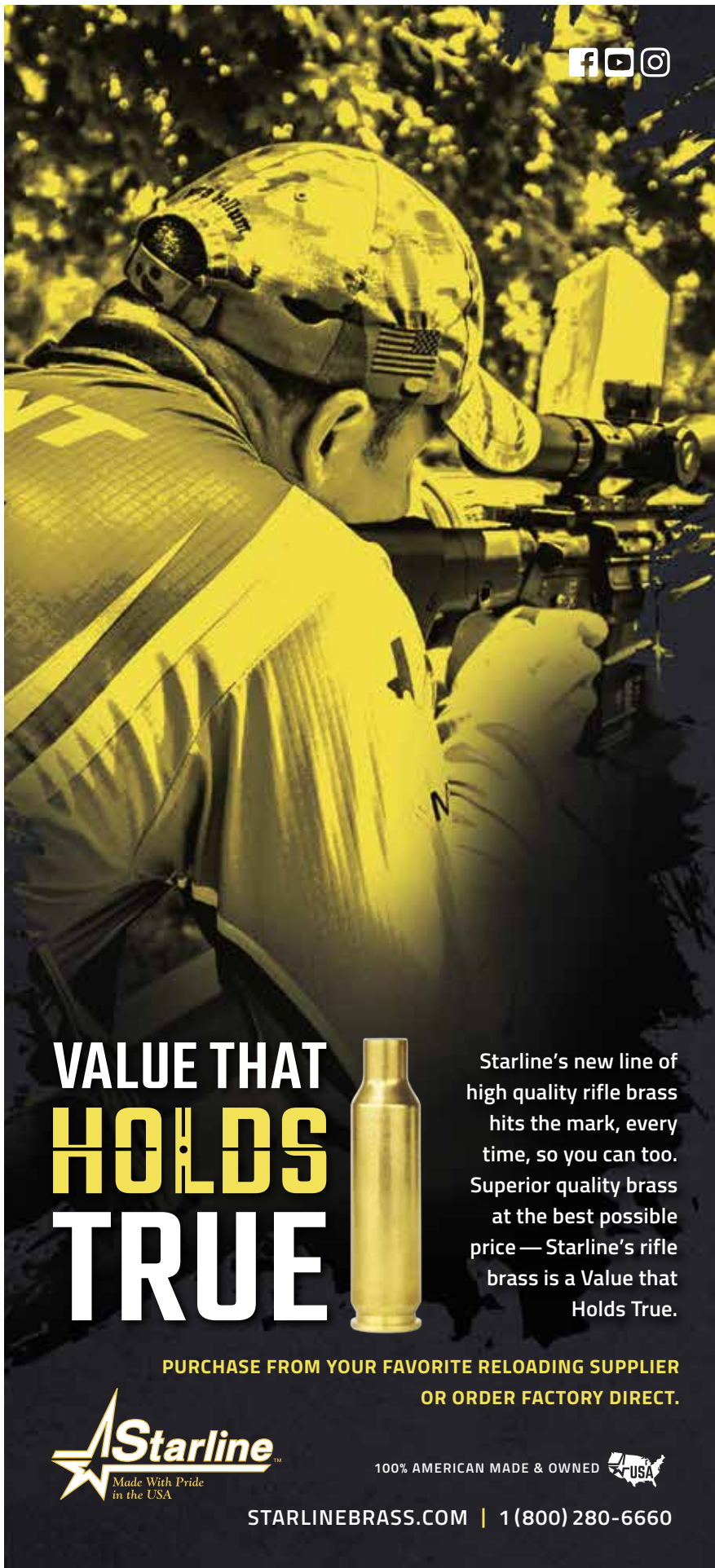
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GUN CRANKS

Was just doing my weekly GunBroker listings while listening to videos on YouTube. I can't stand firearms YouTube stuff, most of it just &^%\$%s me off. The frustration level while listening has to be a contributing factor to early demise. I am running out of car, truck and fighter jet interview videos to run in the background and remembered to give yours a try. That's some good &^%\$! I loved the episode on old cop stories. The whole thing reminds me of Wednesday nights when my buddies and I order in pizza and have a boy's night with a cigar here and there.

Thanks for the entertainment. I've got a few months' worth of GunBroker time covered with your *Gun Cranks* shows now!

Jeff
Rangemaster Gunworks



Secret Squirrel Browning

In 1964-65 I was in the 5th Special Forces Group, Vietnam, stationed at its headquarters in Nha Trang. We were allowed to carry personal side arms. I purchased a Browning 9mm Parabellum pistol with "U.S. ARMY" or "U.S. MILITARY" (I forget which) markings.

My understanding of the history of these pistols is they were issued to

Special Forces to evaluate as a possible replacement for the .45. I brought it home with me in 1965, and years later sold it to a gun shop.

Can you please confirm or refute my assertion? Everyone I have talked to since that time has told me there never was a military issued Browning 9mm pistol.

Mike King

Well Mike, a group of our esteemed writers has been debating this point via email. The consensus is the U.S. Military never "marked" Brownings for "official" use. However, several friends and family anecdotes surfaced about possible trades with Aussie soldiers who did use them and "ghost" use by various MACV/SOG teams, but markings would have been unlikely. Jeremy



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Clough did find some evidence BHPs were tested at Eglin, but in the '70s — well after your stated time frame.

So, we can't confirm nor deny. Not because we're secret squirrels, but rather there's no clear evidence either way. What say you out there? Anyone have any first-hand information on the topic? —TM

Stimulus Master

Yesterday I took part of my stimulus check and bought myself a brand new Kimber Micro 9 and a set of Hogue grips. I hope the Biden crew appreciates my support of both local business and American manufacturing. I know I do.

Keep up the good work.

Nate Snell

Problems, Problems

I'm starting to have *problems* ... excuse me, *issues* with the way writers change words nowadays. They don't say "get a good grip on the gun," they say "When you *purchase* the handgun tightly." I had to look it up and found an old meaning of *purchase* was "acquire." I'm still gonna *grip*. Anyway, when I got the July/August 2021 *problem* ... excuse me, *issue* of *American Hand-*

gunner I wanted to *tell* ... excuse me, *share* with you my thoughts on the BBR 3.10. I also found the *butt* ... excuse me, *buttocks* of the gun is quite short and was wondering why they didn't offer a *clip* ... excuse me, *magazine* with a spur for the *baby* ... excuse me, *infant* finger. Also, the gas port behind the front sight can *ruin* ... excuse me, *cause physical destruction* of your night vision. I gotta go lay down. Now my *brain* ... excuse me, my *frontal lobe* hurts.

Tom

Fine Gun 'Riters

Just a quick note to let you know how much I appreciate the variety found in your mag and the assortment of writers you have on staff. Ayooob is always a great read and Dr. Dabbs is clearly carving out his own niche in the gun world. Then you have John Taffin, a great big Idaho cowboy who goes back to the days of Elmer Keith, another Idaho boy. So keep it varied and stay classic.

S. Findley

Lexington & Concord

Lately I've noted *pistoleros* warning us to practice with revolvers because our semi-automatics may soon be

banned. That being said, be not deceived. If we let the government take our semi-autos, they'll soon want the revolvers as well. "Safe countries" like England have not only outlawed public ownership of firearms, they now prohibit the carry of pocketknives. This I know because mine and my wife's were confiscated by a London bobby. The ruling class loves a disarmed populace.

The time has come when we must deny the politicians and their minions any of our firearms, regardless of threatened penalties. Preparing for confiscation will only encourage it. If our Minutemen had not barred the way to the armories at Lexington and Concord, we today would not only have to surrender our firearms but our pocketknives as well.

Paul N.

From the People's
Republic of California

Across the Pond

Well, here I am stuck with COVID restrictions in my apartment in Stockholm, believe it or not. I'm fondling my 4¾" Colt SAA and a holster by Karla van Horne. Now is the time to thank *American Handgunner* and especially Roy Huntington for more than



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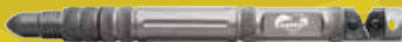
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SPEAK OUT

four decades of inspiration that made me buy amazing handguns and leather. During the early 1980s I drooled over the picture of Richard Heine's first prize pistol to Mike Plaxco. I ordered an almost similar one — and in those days I could order from Sweden. That pistol was further enhanced during my six years of government work (I'm a retired Swedish infantry officer) in the U.S. While stationed in your fantastic country, I customized and engraved my other handguns as well, bought a box full of holsters and belts from Mr. Lou Alessi and hunted bison with a revolver, a five shot Ruger Bisley in .45 Colt, aka Nimrod, from Hamilton Bowen. That fine gentleman also customized the Model 25 Heritage, Model 29 and Colt SAA in the pictures. Glory Days, indeed.

I am also, of course, a student of the practical handgun. I think I know my way around the 1911 and the never-ending parade of polymer pistols. But I just can't figure out how the old timers managed to reload their SAAs. All I know is the load one, skip one, load four regime, but that doesn't tell you squat about reloading during a lull in the fighting. What is the best loading procedure after three or four rounds? How do you coordinate your hands and fingers? Are there military instructions still around? Maybe the CAS-folks have put forward new and more efficient ways?

I am kindly asking Mr. John Taffin or Mike Venturino to share some light on this topic — hopefully in an article. I realize, however, the topic is not on the mind of the majority of readers. But who knows? If not, let me just thank you again for the excellent magazine and the inspiration! I also thoroughly enjoyed Roy's writings in the holster columns way back.

Sverker Ulving
Stockholm, Sweden

I was thrilled to hear from a fellow Handgunner in Sweden. We'll most certainly pass on your comments to Roy Huntington as well. And I think you've just suggested a fine idea for an upcoming article! Thanks, and best wishes from this side of the pond! —TM

Did You Notice?

I wanted to thank you for changing your format on your articles. I am referring to finishing each article with continuous pages. I have been one of your readers for over 20 years. I purchased my first *American Handgunner* at Half Priced Books and I was hooked. You put out a great



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SPEAK OUT

magazine. *Ayoob Files* is what got me hooked initially and *GunCrank Diaries* didn't hurt either.

John Good

Reading the July/August issue, I started to sense something was different. Then I realized I wasn't having to hunt through the magazine for the rest of the article. It was right there on the next page. What an interesting idea. I have complained about this ridiculous notion it's better to break up an article into pieces and scatter it about in a magazine for years. This format is better than sliced bread, buttered popcorn and chocolate ice cream. So much better, I fear someone will decide to improve on it to make themselves relevant. Don't let them. Thanks for using common sense in this new layout of your magazine.

Larry Stegall

National Treasure?

Will Dabbs is a national treasure.

Gerald Kuntze

We agree. I hope Nicolas Cage doesn't find and steal him. — TM

Free Gun Complaints ...

I am a dinosaur. I have a flip phone I carry for emergencies. I couldn't even tell you the number to it. Your latest contest requires scanning one of those psychedelic postage stamp looking things or get a "post card" and mail it in. I am effectively excluded if I don't want to %&\$# my money away on a "Smart Phone" and don't know where to get one of those "post cards." I haven't seen post cards since the photographic ones at the seashore in England.

You need to come up with a more merciful way for us older individuals to enter. Some way to cut out the address label, place a stamp on it, and mail it in or actually use my computer?

Martyn Hawkins

Any 3x5 (or any other size) index card will do just fine! Jazz says you can also cut out a cereal box. — TM

Hoarding

Just read your piece on the ammo shortage. Right! Stop buying. We're not at war. The time to panic buy is when there's no panic and the ammo is cheap. And the piece on the Dillon 550. Great! Have one I bought in a divorce sale 30 years ago for \$150!

I think I may have replaced a spring

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once, and the primer system once. Both free from Dillon. I loaded all my practice ammo for the 300 WSM on it for the Africa trip in 2010. Another ammo shortage year.

Al Vail

In the Gut

Appendix Carry. Some love it. Some hate it. Some have a flat belly. A lot of us do not. Appendix carry for me would point the muzzle at me! I carry IWB strong side. Yep, under the seatbelt. But I carry ankle as a backup. Remove the seatbelt at the first indication of trouble so any assailant cannot use it to pin me in the car. But get away ASAP. Even if you drag a "peaceful protestor" with you.

C. Douthitt

Connor MIA?

I was wondering if you would be able to tell me what happened to John Connor? He was/is my favorite 'gun-riter (just finished the *Guncrank Diaries* compilation book and will no doubt re-read it many more times). Maybe I missed hearing what happened because the last entry in the book was January/February 2018 and that's when I began my 18-month hospitalization, culminating in a double lung transplant. During that period, I did read my collection of *American Handgunner* magazines over and over. Thanks to all you 'gunriter guys for keeping me sane.

I realize it's probably none of my business if Connor wants it kept private.

Name Withheld By Request

We still get a lot of letters on this topic. Our Mr. Connor has officially retired as of a couple of years ago. Too many dents and dings we suppose, so it's time for a well-earned rest! Hammock? Beach? Shooting range? We're not sure where he is, but I'm betting on a range somewhere ... —TM

Oops

I enjoy *American Handgunner* very much and find it to be a great source of information. As I was reading the article "Tall, But True Tales" I found an error of fact on page 50. Mr. Johnston states the "CIA Deer Gun was made by AMF — the same company that makes bowling balls and Harley-Davidson motorcycles."

As a gun guy and Harley-Davidson guy, I would like to share some knowledge. While it is true AMF did for a time (1969 to 1981) own and operate Harley Davidson, in February 1981, Willie G. Davidson and some other executives of Harley Davidson, purchased Harley Davidson away from

AMF. The AMF years were not the greatest years for HD, but those years did keep the Harley Davidson company running and Harley Davidson is to the motorcycle industry what Colt and Smith and Wesson are to the handgun industry.

Kindest regards,
D. Bowie

We did receive a couple of letters on this topic, so thanks for setting us straight! —TM

Gun Cranks vs. NRA

The latest *Gun Cranks* show, concerning how to fix the NRA, has had an effect on how I think regarding the National Rifle Association. I've long resisted joining, because I couldn't stand the thought of my hard-earned money going to support LaPierre. What you all said about maintaining a membership, and no more than that monetarily, rang true. I'll be joining this afternoon.

Mike Bell

Hellcat for Sale

Please tell Dr. Dabbs, heck yes, I will buy your Hellcat! Any chance to own a gun that was owned by America's greatest gun writer is a chance I'll take. Besides, he makes his own movie guns and costumes, pretty cool.

Vinnie G.

In *Handgunner* (July/August 2021), Will Dabbs wrote, "Anybody want to buy a well-maintained first-generation Hellcat? I'll let it go cheap."

I'll purchase it and will pay extra for Dr. Dabbs' signature too. I want it not as a shooter but as a souvenir from Dr. Dabbs.

He's my idol ... smiles.

Peter Bertini

Okay now, if you guys swell up Dabbs' head, he's going to become insufferable like a Hollywood actor! He's already starting to say things like, "Have your people call my people and we'll do lunch" — TM

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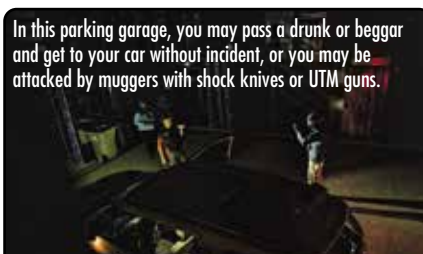


VANTAGEPOINT

TOM MCHALE



In this coffee shop you might witness a disgruntled employee squabble or need to react to an armed attack.



In this parking garage, you may pass a drunk or beggar and get to your car without incident, or you may be attacked by muggers with shock knives or UTM guns.



Angela from event host H&K commits to explosive action in hopes of turning the tables on an attacker.

DANGER! SCENARIOS!

Over the past three days I've been shot, stabbed, beaten, wrestled, molested by drunks, thugs and muggers, stabbed some more and killed about a dozen times. Ahhh ... it's been a truly glorious few days.

On the plus side, I did manage to ward off a few dozen seriously violent bad guys using escalating combinations of voice commands, lights and UTM sim firearms. Creative problem solving was the name of the game. One determined student pummeled his attacker with an outdoor trash can when his gun went out of action.

After perforating role-playing thugs with hundreds of "bullets," something occurred to me. I used precisely one traditional range skill.

Thanks to the professionalism of the self-defense trainers at W.O.F.T. Self Defense outside of Orlando, Fla., I'm still alive and well, albeit with welts, bruises and various aches and pains. Sometimes that's the price of valuable life lessons and I was more than happy to pay it.

Over the past decade or so, I've been to a couple of dozen firearms and defensive shooting courses. *I can say without reservation I learned more practical self-defense skills over the past three days than all the others combined.*

Did all those others teach me how to shoot? Absolutely. However, I've not yet seen anyone doing deep and immersive training with real defensive scenarios most likely to be encountered in everyday life. How many shooting schools have you sitting in a coffee shop, minding your own business, when two of six role-playing instructors break out into a full-on domestic fight? Maybe a weapon comes into play. Maybe it doesn't. Or the "drunk" appearing to be sick next to your car suddenly pops up with a knife or gun? Ever thought about what you might do?

Learnings

The make-believe notion of being the cowboy in a white hat, casually standing back and shooting to save the day, was

quickly destroyed. If only criminals would cooperate and accept the easy fate.

Situational awareness, or paying attention, is great. I'm all for a switched-on lifestyle. But if you think you're so good at master-level awareness, you'll be able to spot and solve any problem with a gun, you're deluding yourself. We each face dozens of moments every single day when other people, or objects and structures capable of hiding an attacker, are close enough to allow one to be in our face long before we can react and bring a gun into the fight. Other defensive tools, both physical and mental, are a must.

A light is a powerful tool, and I need a simpler one. We ran dozens of scenarios in a dark parking garage ranging from a drunk harassing us to a planned two- or three-on-one mugging. Whether there was criminal intent, the light was a useful tool to help separate the annoying from the truly dangerous. When things got ugly, the light was a valuable tool not only to identify targets, but to distract, buy precious fractions of seconds, and sometimes escape. My current model has different intensities and modes. Forget that. I want one power level — high — and one button.

Leaving doesn't feel very macho, but is often the right solution. Remember, as much as you may want to see yourself as society's designated protector, you have a bigger obligation to come home to your family. That's hard to do if you're dead or spending the next few decades in jail as a result of getting mixed up in someone else's altercation. Think long and hard before getting involved. The real story is far too often different from what first appearances indicate.

Explosive and committed action is a powerful strategy. By acting with vigor, you have a 0.25 to 0.50-second action/reaction advantage over your adversary. This can save your life.

Don't settle for grabbing the "little gun" and stuffing it in a pocket before you run to Walmart or out to grab some milk. Those are likely your most sta-

tistically dangerous errands. If you're going to carry, do it right.

That Range Skill?

Oh, and the one range skill I did use throughout the force-on-force shooting incidents? Malfunction clearing. While UTM-equipped firearms are more likely to jam, most malfunctions were a result of close quarters combat. Shooting while yanking your gun back to a retention position because Joe McThuggNoggins is lunging for it tends to cause a misfeed. Pulling the trigger with your muzzle jammed into an attacker pounding you into the pavement is another winning cause of a stuck gun. The list goes on — with a common denominator. Fighting with a gun at contact distance doesn't allow for a proper Weaver or Isosceles stance and grip, and the risk of jams sky-rockets, so be darn sure you learn how to instinctively clear your gun.

I've always figured malfunctions were unlikely in a self-defense encounter because quality modern ammo and guns almost always go bang. But the best gear may not work right in the middle of a close-quarters fight. At one point I ended up pistol whipping an instructor (wearing protective gear) in the head with a jammed pistol. Clearing a malfunction would have been a great option, but my support hand was holding his knife at bay. Yet another scenario I didn't fully appreciate until it happened to me.

If you carry a gun for self-defense, by all means, learn how to shoot. "Range" skills will help when you're shooting at high speed from awkward positions, even if you're not planted in your official gunfighter stance at standoff distance. But be sure to consider some real scenario training to learn tools and strategies for problem solving, with or without that gun. The past three days changed my life, and it was only a taste of what I still need to learn.



For more info: WOFT.com

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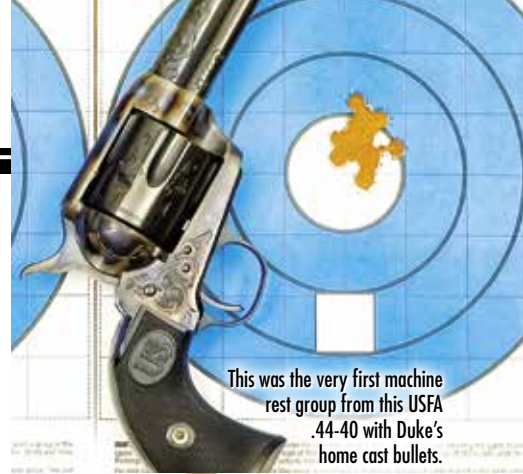


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CONSIDER CASTING

The purpose of guns and cartridges is to direct a bullet into a target. In other words, without bullets, guns are useless. Shooters in this COVID-19 era of almost non-existent components are learning this the hard way. Since 1966, I've never been without bullets for my handguns and plan to never be without them. In just the first three months of 2021, I've cast over 3,000 handgun bullets for various writing projects in calibers .32, .38/357, .38-40, .41 Long Colt, .44 Special, .44-40 and .45 Colt. I enjoyed every minute of it.

Back when I became a .38 Special reloader, in my locale there were no handgun bullets to buy. None! Nada! Some older gents in the local gun club told me if I was going to shoot, I would have to cast. One guy sold me a cast iron lead pot for use on gas stoves for \$10, and another for \$7.50 sold me a Lyman single-cavity bullet mold with handles. I've owned literally hundreds of handgun bullet molds since, but don't want any more single-cavity molds for handgun bullets. I may enjoy my casting sessions, but there's a limit to my patience.



This was the very first machine rest group from this USFA .44-40 with Duke's home cast bullets.



Duke discovered MP Molds when their innovative sliding base plugs for hollow-base (and hollow-point) bullets allowed use in multiple cavity molds.

UNIVERSE OF CASTING

In terms of cast bullets for repeating handguns (excluding single shot pistols) we have a bewildering array of designs to choose from. They include shapes of full wadcutter (WC), semi-wadcutter (SWC), roundnose (RN), roundnose/flatpoint (RN/FP), hollowpoint (HP), hollowbase HB, plain base and gas-checked base.

So, what's best? That's an impossible question, but any of them is better than no bullets. Personally speaking, on my reloading bench I have dies for .32 Auto, 7.65 French Long, 8mm Nambu, 9mm Parabellum, .38 Super, .40 S&W and .45 Auto. Also on my loading bench are dies for 16 revolver cartridges. They range from .32-20 to .455 Webley. Some of those cartridges are loaded rarely, such as 8mm Japanese Nambu and .41 Magnum, but I still acquired molds for them. The flip side is I load .38-40 and .44-40 by the hundreds and thousands.

A FOR EFFORT?

The only handgun caliber with which I consider myself a failure with cast bullet shooting is 9mm Parabellum. My cast bullet luck with my current five World War II 9mm pistols and two submachine guns has ranged from barely okay to downright dismal. Groups are large, bullets sometimes tumble in flight and barrel leading is bad. Some manufacturers such as GLOCK recommend not shooting lead alloy bullets in their barrels. Fine. Drop in, aftermarket barrels are offered for lead bullet shooting in GLOCKS. If I had a GLOCK, I'd buy one of those barrels. Get this: The same poorly performing 9mm cast bullets when fired in my single Colt .38 Super of 1990s vintage shoot nicely. Go figure.



The most accurate shooting Duke ever experienced with cast bullets in semi-autos came with this Kimber Pro Compact .40 S&W.

SUCCESSES

The best cast bullet accuracy I've ever gotten with semi-autos was with a Kimber Pro Compact 1911 .40 S&W. From machine rest using cast SWCs and RN/FPs it usually shot ragged clusters at 25 yards. *I always use a hard alloy for semi-auto pistol bullets.* They get slammed about a bunch going from magazine to chamber. Revolvers are a cinch. *I always use a softer alloy for revolvers.* Used to be .45 Colt gave me fits until I discovered Colt SAAs

have 0.451"-barrel groove diameters but 0.456" chamber mouths. Load 0.454" bullets of soft 1:20 tin to lead alloy and .45 Colt SAAs become tack drivers. For cast bullet revolver loads over 1,250 fps I often use a gas check design.

A softer bullet often will compensate for mismatched revolver barrel/cylinder dimensions. I've come to favor the RN/FP design of bullet for most of those revolver cartridges. Used to be I'd avoid HP or HB cast bullet designs because they were only available in single cavity molds. Now I've discovered MP Molds where one can obtain multiple cavity

HP and HB molds. I've used their four-cavity convertible .32-20 mold for both HPs and FPs and their two cavity .41 Long Colt mold for HBs.

If this column inspires you to run out and get a casting setup, save your gasoline. Along with everything else involved in reloading, casting stuff is in short supply. Hopefully by the time you read this the ammo, component and reloading equipment drought will be over. Just beware! It could happen again!



For more info: MP-Molds.com



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The completed Colt Officer's project with bushing-less Caspian slide, sights and custom grip safety finished in matte black IonBond.



BUILDING A COLT OFFICERS MODEL

Once in a while it's good to try new things, a challenge. I usually try to work on something new with my son Nick, who was recently selected as an American Pistolsmith Guild "Apprentice," a new program for young Smiths who are working toward full membership.

For a change, I decided to build a Colt Officer's Model. Most 'smiths will roll their eyes at the mention of a compact in the 1911 platform. The short recoil system can be difficult when it comes to function. The plan was to convert the Colt to a bushing-less barrel set up and add a magwell. The frame was steel, which would allow for a welded magwell.

COMPONENTS

First, I sourced a new slide from Caspian Arms. The slide was cut with a smaller 0.699" diameter barrel opening to mate with the Colt barrel — eliminating the need for a bushing.

The frame was checkered at 30 lines per inch. This would be matching a Wilson Combat checkered mainspring housing. For the magwell, my friend Pete Single had some rough blanks he had sent me to "play" with last year. To install the magwell, I first had to remove 0.300" from the bottom of the frame using a mill. The back web of the frame had to remain since it holds the sear spring in place.

Nick and I worked together to weld (the process is actually

silver brazing) the magwell blank to the frame. The frame must be heated to red while the magwell is held in place with clamps. Silver wire is drawn into the hot seam parts. Once cooled, it is a solid joint. This was the easy part. Now the blank must be sculpted into a comfortable shape, which also allows for fast magazine changes. Translation: Lots of hand filing and sanding. Once the shape was finished, a new mainspring housing pinhole was mapped out and bored on the mill.

Nick worked on the top end, cutting dovetails for a Novak Megadot front

sight in orange and Heinie Ledge rear sight. We added a flat top and serrations to give a nice visual sight plane. The internals were all replaced with bar stock parts from Extreme Engineering. A small ergonomic thumb safety and slide stop from Harrison Design plus a Derr Precision "bobbed" grip safety finished off this compact 45. The recoil system was made with EGW parts. During testing, I had to tune the recoil spring to ensure proper function. The black IonBond finish and VZ carbon fiber grips kept things stealthy for conceal carry.

HAND TOOLS

Most of my time at the bench is spent doing hand work using files, stones and sandpaper. It's not glamorous but critical for a good job. Good tools make it easier, and I'm always on the lookout for better products. For stones I have used Boride Engineering on my bench for years. They offer a new "Pro Pistolsmithing" kit with almost 20 stones in a variety of shapes and coarseness for shaping and smoothing. They offer other kits as well as specialty abrasives.

Speaking of abrasives, I was watching my teenage daughter do her nails one day. She was using a sanding board with a flexible foam core.



A variety of sanding sticks and stones used to smooth metal prior to finish application. Many can be found at hobby tools or arts and crafts supplies.



Steel magwell blank after being silver brazed in place.



Milling a new hole through the magwell. This needs to be exact to allow for a retaining pin that holds the mainspring housing in place.

I looked on the internet and found a hobby pack with color-coded grits. The small size (popsicle stick) and flexibility really work well when smoothing small radii and tight corners. A very easy, inexpensive tool.

For large flats like a 1911 slide I used to wrap a sanding sheet around a flat steel block using fingers to hold the paper in position. A new sanding block from Harrison design has a clamp to secure a strip of paper and finger grooves to make holding less fatiguing. John designed it to take 2" strips of paper that can be bought in rolls. It has a rubber pad for under the paper to help smooth out wavy surfaces.

As I mentioned, the American Pis-

tolsmith Guild has announced a new class of membership for "Apprentice Members." This is for the young 'smith either working with a Guild member, a manufacturer, or a student at a recognized gunsmith school. Apprentice members get insight and guidance from senior members. They also get guidance while working on their handcrafted pistols, which will be submitted to the Guild as part of their full membership application.



For more info: WilsonCombat.com, VZGrips.com, AmericanPistolsmith.com, BorideAbrasives.com, CaspianArms.com, HarrisonCustom.com



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SHELVES BARE?

YOU STILL HAVE OPTIONS

I saw a recent post from someone saying their supplier didn't have any powder suitable for handgun reloading. There were plenty of "agreeing" emojis. I dropped a ROFL.

This cannot be a concise compendium, but I'll try, because the list of crossover powders wouldn't fit in this magazine. I'll discuss a few you might find if you went into your local store.

WINCHESTER POWDERS

If we ever go to zombie apocalypse, the powder that will most ensure your survival for multiple guns and situations is WST. It's great for 12-gauge and will cover your pistol needs. The Winchester load data only lists three calibers, but I've worked up loads for every handgun cartridge I shoot. I have the same respect for WST as I do Unique, which has completely different qualities, but the same characteristics. WST can be metered through anything, just like Unique. My favorite load with WST uses a Lee 120-grain TC bullet, powder coated a royal blue.

HODGDON POWDERS

Longshot Powder is a shotgun powder for heavier and magnum loads. As a pistol powder, it will run your favorite projectiles at higher velocities and lower pressures. If you see it on the shelf, buy it. It does have a steep spike in pressures, over a narrow band and doesn't allow much latitude. I'd pick WST over Clays for handgun, but many handloaders use Clays daily as their go to.

Hi-Skor 700X is an extruded flake powder well known for its advantage

in light target loads with moderate pressures. Metallic cartridge loaders know it because it's the hardest pistol powder to meter. It gets caught in metering equipment and always gets stuck in my powder trickler. It's hard to handle, and hard to load. I don't use it in my progressive presses.

However, it burns cleanly, produces accurate loads and delivers lots of rounds per pound. Hint: Tap the powder measure a couple of times after each drop. My favorite 700X recipe uses a Lyman 358665 158-grain LSWC for a .38. It's a bit narrow banded in smaller calibers, but for reloading 9mm, .38, .40, and .45, it's a winner.

CLEAN SHOT

Clean Shot actually says "Pistol/Shot Shell" on the container. It's appropriately named, and it works well from .25 Auto up to .45 LC. What I like best is one can load everyday practice and high velocity loads without dangerous overpressure. My favorite is using Clean Shot for .25 Auto, with 55-grain lead bullets, but I also load a lot of 9mm cast (Lee 356-120-TC).

VIHTAVUORI POWDERS

One supply house in the Midwest was out of everything except N320, N330 and N340. In the comments, someone had asked if they were going to get any pistol powder anytime soon. I chuckled to myself. Not only did they have some powder, they had *the* powder: N320. They also had her two older sisters in stock. These three powders can load my entire inventory of handguns. If I had a .500 S&W Magnum, I'd add N105.

N320 is a fast-burning powder near the rate of Red Dot or W231. It has

Hodgdon Longshot is primarily a shotgun powder doubling as a handgun powder. It's easy to load, meters well and mid loads are moderate in pressure.



Lindsey loaded some Sierra 125 Powerjacket bullets into 9mm to test the consistency and flow of various powders. The Longshot loading got it up to defensive pistol velocities with only moderate pressures.

an extruded tubular grain texture. The formula includes a de-coppering agent and graphite, which improves its ability to flow. It's better trickled than dispensed from a rotary powder measure. I use a Frankford Arsenal Intellidropper for great results.

It's just so wide banded it's perfect for cowboy loads all day and hostile territory recipes too. With N320, I can load light cartridges that will cycle the gun reliably and have great accuracy, but it can still produce magnum loads.

My favorite N320 load uses Berry's 100-grain RN bullets in my Bersa Firestorm 380. There aren't a lot of shotgun loads out for this powder yet, but Vihtavuori has some listed using 1¼ to 1½ oz. lead loads using N320.

ALLIANT POWDERS

Alliant describes Unique as the world's most versatile reloading powder, and fact checkers know this is true. My friends use it for .45, but I like it in .32 Auto, using a 60-grain Corbin swaged bullet. This is one of those powders all reloaders should have. Old timer reloaders will say, "Unique burns dirty" but consider this: There is a new, cleaner formulation and efficient loads burn cleaner.

Off the top of my head, I can think of a dozen more potential powders that could be listed. I have no idea when the shelves will be full of reloading products again. For those who are just getting into the reloading game, welcome. You should know there are a lot more options available to you, if you do some extra research.



For more info: Hodgdon.com, Vihtavuori.com, AlliantPowder.com, ShootersWorldPowder.com

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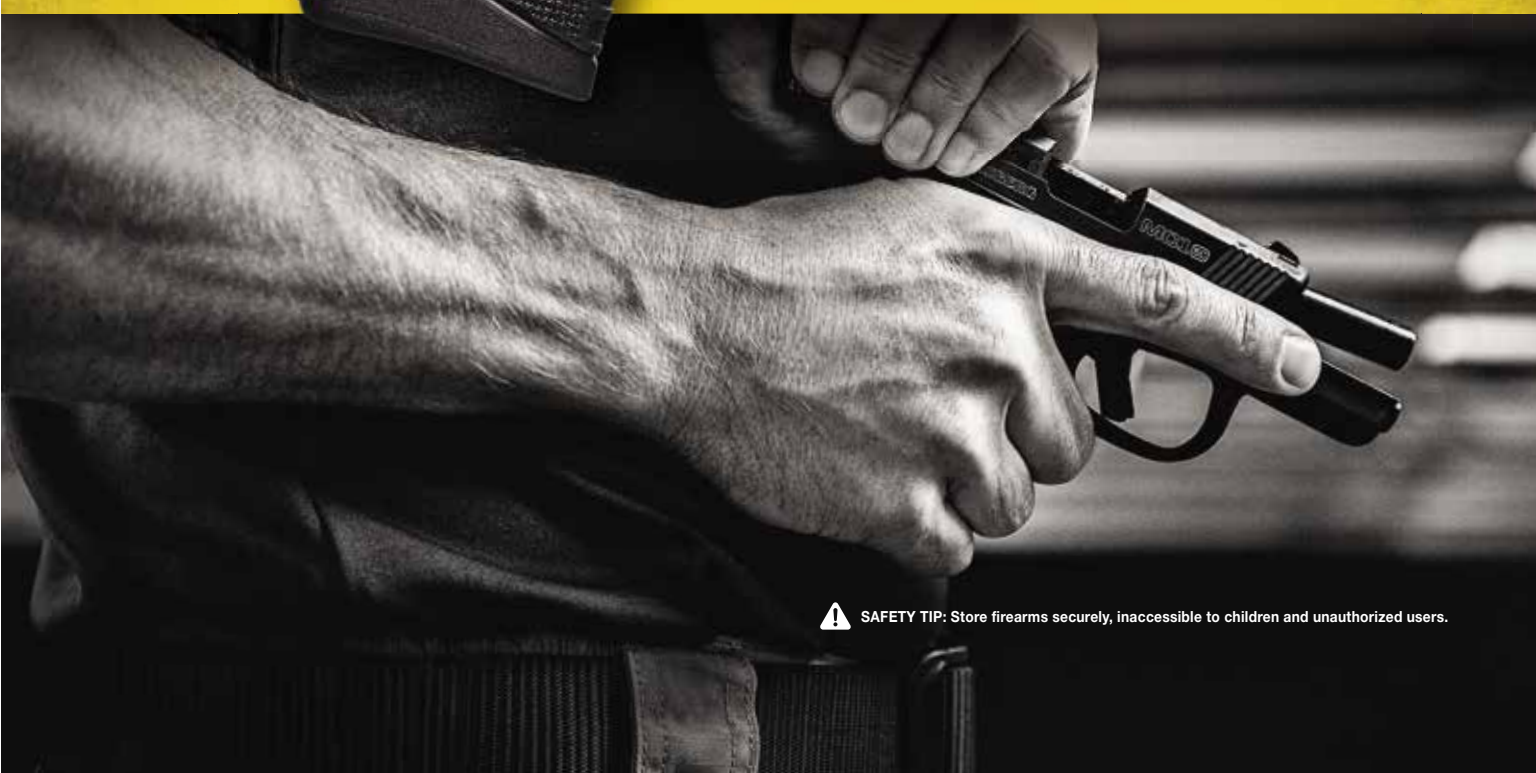


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THE GREAT APPENDIX CARRY EXPERIMENT

Before we get into the trials and results of my appendix carry experiment, let's get the controversial discussion out of the way. It's complex and could fill an antique called a "phone book" but you'll get the idea.

Appendix carry offers a speedy draw. Concealment is great if one has any chest at all, as the cover garment drapes over your gun. It also packs your pistol in a very protected area, not sticking out your side. Retention rocks. The muzzle points at important stuff like, well, you know, and other important stuff like your femoral artery. Where it points doesn't matter because your handgun is protected in a holster. But you have to draw and replace your gun pointing in scary directions! But training overcomes, and you can stick your belly out when performing administrative functions so the muzzle points at the ground forward of your feet.

That should about sum things up. Those aren't all my opinions, just the conventional wisdom of pros and cons. To check out this appendix carry thing all the cool kids use, I invested a month, forcing myself to carry a GLOCK 43X with a Leupold DeltaPoint Micro right smack in my gut. Rather than repeat hearsay, I wanted to develop my own first-hand opinion on whether it works for me.

GEAR CONSIDERATIONS

Successful appendix carry requires the right holster. A traditional IWB model will be less than ideal as it's designed for strong side, not frontal carry. On the side, bending forward when moving or sitting isn't a consideration as the muzzle area slides along your hip. When positioned up front, the muzzle in a lower-ride holster has nowhere to go but right into your leg. So, the holster must support the gun fairly high relative to the belt clip point.

You'll also want a more vertical cant angle. You might have some success canting the grip slightly towards your strong side, so experiment with that.

Last, many effective appendix holsters use a wing or claw that sticks a "bar" off toward the strong side. The



The concealment claw extends out and applies pressure to the belt, pushing the grip toward the body.



The Blackhawk Stache is a great holster for appendix or standard IWB carry. This is the basic version without an optional mag carrier attached on the right side.

purpose of this is for the "bar" to press against the inside of your belt and force the handgun's grip toward the body. This aids concealment.

For this experiment, I chose the new Blackhawk Stache holster. It's ideal for appendix carry but makes a swell standard IWB holster too. It's ambidextrous by flipping the sturdy mount clip and you can tweak cant angle easily. There's a detachable concealment claw with multiple "bars" to adjust the amount of "grip tucking" pressure. The claw mount screws double as retention adjustments. You can add an optional mag carrier extension if you like and that works fine for appendix carry as you can separate mag and gun on either side of your centerline.

RESULTS & LEARNINGS

I need to lose weight. Geometry is geometry after all. My excess "muscle" over the beltline tends to push the grip forward instead of allowing the whole handgun rig to ride in the theoretically flat area of my midsection. Adding a closed-foam "wedge" on the lower inside of the holster helped immensely.

Do experiment with side-to-side positioning. Counterintuitively, the more I moved toward the center, the better the system worked for me. I was less keen

on using the mag carrier extension, but that's likely a weight-related issue too.

With strong side carry, I tend to tighten the belt a good bit. With appendix carry, allowing a touch of slack worked better for me. This allowed the belt and holster to ride up when I sat down. Huge comfort difference!

I learned to live under pressure. The muzzle protrudes below the belt. Your leg is always there. Those two objects will touch, especially when sitting. The right holster, placement, and adjustments converted the "pressure" level from jabbing me painfully to perfectly tolerable. Your mileage may vary, but I suspect most people will feel a bit of muzzle area

pressure on the upper leg. The more fit you are, the less you'll feel.

Bottom line? It was okay for me. I found the right balance of placement and mount making this method work without undue pressure against my gut and leg, but until I shed a few pounds of "muscle" from my waistline, it likely won't be my primary carry method. I have to confess I still have some reservations about the muzzle "pointing at important things" issue, so for the time being, I'm enjoying that Stache holster in the 3:30 position on my waist.



For more info: Blackhawk.com

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HUNGER, SLEEP DEPRIVATION AND ONE SERIOUSLY STIFF LIZARD



There's nothing like military service to put your problems in perspective. Hunger, exhaustion and sleep deprivation will reliably strip away the veneer of civility.

I had not slept in three days. In the modern age, the U.S. Army can't legally hit you. However, they do liberally employ hunger and sleep deprivation as stress enhancers. Anybody can seem cool when they are well-rested and freshly scrubbed. Go a few days without food and sleep, however, and the true you invariably bubbles forth.

It has been my experience filthy humans in a filthy environment ultimately reach a sort of dirt stasis. You get so dirty that old dirt has to fall off to make room for new dirt. Under those circumstances things that might precipitate the screaming haddabs back in the World seem strangely not so onerous.

We finally called an admin halt and sat down in a clearing to savor an MRE. I've eaten some vile stuff in sundry government-sponsored survival schools. MREs, by contrast, are typically fairly palatable. The modern versions even include a flameless heater. Ours is the first military in history to avail its soldiers of a hot meal anywhere in the world under any circumstances. That may seem a small thing. It isn't.

We circled in groups of about a dozen, stripped out of our killer gear and proceeded to barter MRE components. A fellow soldier with whom I was only remotely acquainted walked up and asked to join us. I scooted over to make space in the circle.

Jurassic Spasms

Before he sat down, the young man began to behave strangely. What started as a modest twitch soon evolved into gyrations most vigorous. He then shook his right arm a couple of times and a huge dead lizard shot out of his shirt sleeve to land amidst the dinner of the guy sitting beside me.

At least 15" long from snout to tail,

this was a freaking epic reptile. The beast's death rictus left it resembling a giant brown scaly banana. The demised creature not surprisingly put quite the damper on my neighbor's repast. The offended party leapt backward as though electrocuted, vigorously energized over the fact a stranger had unceremoniously deposited a big dead lizard into his Chili Mac.

Before formal pugilism could ensue, the interloper from whose uniform blouse the deceased creature had emerged began screaming and running about in circles. The young man was shedding his clothes with mad abandon. Several of us leapt up and subdued the maniac before things got truly out of hand.



Lizards are great, but I'd sooner not have them running amok in my clothes.
Image: John Hanusek

"LIFE CAN BE HARD THESE DAYS. PANDEMICS, A MORTGAGE, DRACONIAN WRITING DEADLINES AND ENDLESS CHAOS AT THE MEDICAL CLINIC WHERE I TOIL SUFFICE TO KEEP MY WORLD PERPETUALLY AGITATED."

When the kid regained his wits, he explained himself. Some 18 hours prior, his patrol leader had called a brief halt to get his bearings. Thoroughly exhausted, this dude had plopped down at the base of a tree to lean his heavy rucksack against the

trunk. He then dipped his head forward, seeking a brief respite.

The patrol leader motioned for everybody to move out moments later. As the young man pulled himself to his feet, he felt what he thought to be a modest branch fall down the neck of his uniform shirt. There was no time to tend to the offending stick as they were moving fast and hard, so he just squeezed and wiggled as best he could to get the stob out from underneath the shoulder straps of his LBE (Load Bearing Equipment). Once the thing was comfortably oriented in the void in his shirt, he had promptly forgotten it was there.

After dropping his gear, he recalled the offending item as he made his way over to eat with us. The first he knew he had been carrying the cold corpse of a foot-long dead lizard around in his armpit was when the thing slid out of his shirt sleeve and landed in my buddy's dinner. Apparently, the beast's unsettling quietus was the result of his efforts to work it into a comfortable spot. It took half an hour for the guy to quit shivering.

Ruminations

Life can be hard these days. Pandemics, a mortgage, draconian writing deadlines and endless chaos at the medical clinic where I toil suffice to keep my world perpetually agitated. However, my time in uniform gave me a baseline against which to compare the travails of the day.

Oftentimes things may indeed seem bad back here in the World. However, nowadays I get to sleep at home, my food doesn't come out of a plastic bag and my job description no longer entails people trying to kill me when I'm at work. I also never, ever get so dirty I might not notice an enormous dead reptile stuck inside my clothes. Life's not so bad after all.



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STUDENT HANDGUNNER

SERENA JUCHNOWSKI Photos: Max Crotser

RECOIL RHYTHM

Bang. By the time the rifle recoils and settles back down on the target, I've already taken up the first stage. I smoothly pull through the second ... bang. A magazine change and eight shots later I've finished the rapid-fire sitting string, taking my head off the rifle to watch the targets disappear into the pits a few seconds later.

The Comparison

A rapid-fire string isn't a competition to see who fires the fastest. It's an exercise in timing and trigger control. These skills translate well from rifle to pistol, though muscle memory is different. Familiarity with your trigger is key. The gun going off should surprise you and you shouldn't anticipate the shot, but you need to have an idea of the trigger weight for the best performance.

My service rifle trigger is a 4.5-lb. two stage. When I fire a shot, I take up the first stage and when on target pull through the second. While the gun is recoiling, I let the trigger out until I feel it reset and by the time the sights are back on target, I'm ready for the next. Working the sear is economy of motion. In other words, eliminating pulling through the first stage each shot saves time, which allows you to shoot faster. Whether you're shooting a rifle or pistol, a single stage or two-stage trigger, there will always be a reset point. *Dry-fire is a great way to learn where this point is and how to feel it.*

The Goal

The goal is still the same, to manipulate the trigger and fire the gun without changing the muzzle's stability or position in relation to the target. Shooting swiftly is only important if you're making accurate shots. I still remember a lesson imparted upon me early on by my head rifle coach. "I can teach a monkey to sit there and pull the trigger," he said. "We're here to place good shots on target." Shooting quickly and not hitting anything is a reckless waste of ammunition.

How Fast?

My pistol mentor George Harris puts it simply: "You can shoot only as

fast as you can hit." Speed increases by shooting with economy of motion, which can be achieved through the reset drill. When you fire a shot with a handgun, the muzzle lifts off the target. As the muzzle is lifting off the target, you should release the trigger forward to the point of reset. You should reach the point of reset at approximately the same time the muzzle reaches its peak height. Once the muzzle begins coming down, apply pressure to the trigger, increasing as the muzzle gets closer to the center of the target. You only release the shot when the muzzle is pointing at the target. Ideally, the shot will break within a millisecond or two of the muzzle returning to the original location.

Let Recoil Happen

This sequence is a rhythm and relies on recoil to set the tempo. The moment you begin overly forcing the gun or trying to stop recoil, you disrupt the rhythm. Economy of motion comes from finding the reset point of the trigger, not by forcing the gun to its original location faster.

I learned from service rifle your body ends up doing much of the work for you. It understands the weight of the trigger and your mind wants to center the shot, so you won't shoot at the top of the arc (above the target). No thought

goes into when to break the shot. You'll have a momentary pause while following through and allowing the gun's muzzle to lift off the target and settle back to its original location.

Know Your Firearm

This relaxation does not come right away when you have bad habits or are unfamiliar with your trigger. Dry-firing and practicing the reset drill can amend this. Many shooters will pull the trigger and keep their finger and trigger locked to the rear until the gun settles on target. When the gun settles, they let the trigger move forward and reset. This adds time to each shot, prevents development of a rhythm and increases the amount of time your muscles are strained.

You must know how far the muzzle comes up and how your trigger feels. Dry-firing can help you gain an initial feel for your trigger, but live-fire with the reset drill teaches you how to recover from the recoil between shots.

This is one of the most easily transferrable skills from rifle to pistol shooting. No matter what firearm you are using, knowing how much force you need to apply to the trigger and how far the gun will recoil above the target is critical to finding your reset point and executing a smooth trigger pull.



Letting recoil happen and learning its rhythm doesn't mean relaxing a firm and proper grip.



Serena working on the reset drill with a Kimber Micro .380.



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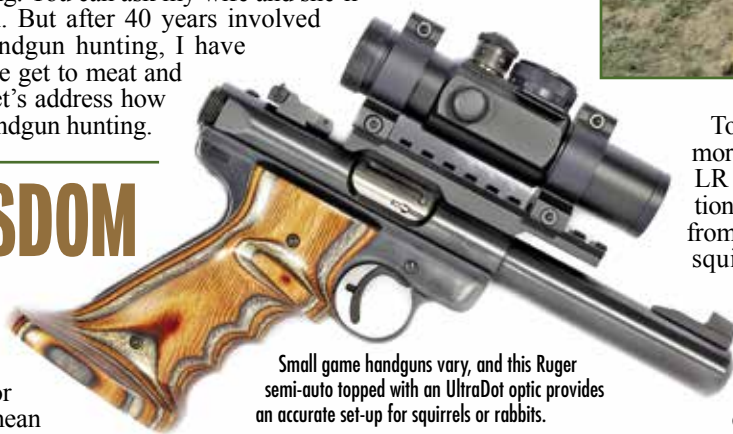
STARTING SMALL

During and immediately after deer season, I noticed a considerable amount of traffic on social media platforms regarding handgun hunting. Surprisingly, there were quite a number of handgunners pursuing whitetail with their favorite handgun. Many posted hero shots of their success with a broad array of handguns. Lots of questions — and even more answers — popped up from individuals looking to get their feet wet with handgun hunting, hoping to fill their freezer with venison. Some answers contained solid information, others not so much.

I'm not an expert on anything. You can ask my wife and she'll testify to this fact, under oath. But after 40 years involved with some mighty serious handgun hunting, I have learned a few things. Before we get to meat and potatoes of starting off right, let's address how *not* to begin your journey in handgun hunting.

CALIBER WISDOM

Just because you've seen one on social media or held a conversation in the local bar involving a big bore handgun like the .454 Casull or .500 S&W Magnum doesn't mean you need to start with one. Over the years, I've witnessed a lot of individuals purchase a big bore revolver, those generating teeth-shattering recoil, just because a buddy has one. For an inexperienced shooter, this is not a good way to start your handgun hunting career. Don't misinterpret, there is nothing wrong with big bore handguns, if you can handle the recoil. It's just not a good place to start.



Small game handguns vary, and this Ruger semi-auto topped with an UltraDot optic provides an accurate set-up for squirrels or rabbits.

Whether novice or highly experienced shooter, a good .22 LR pistol is a great way to learn the fundamentals and keep in tune. It's also much less expensive than practicing with centerfire ammunition. For me, I can't think of a better way to get started in handgun hunting than pursuing small game like rabbits or squirrels.

VARMINT TIME?

Another great way to spend quality time behind the trigger is varmint shooting. This may entail groundhogs, prairie dogs, or other vermin. I've spent a lot of time shooting prairie dogs in target-rich environments and this offers valuable trigger time — plus you will learn a lot about wind and bullet trajectory. You'll also be doing the rancher a favor by helping eliminate critters destroying his property.

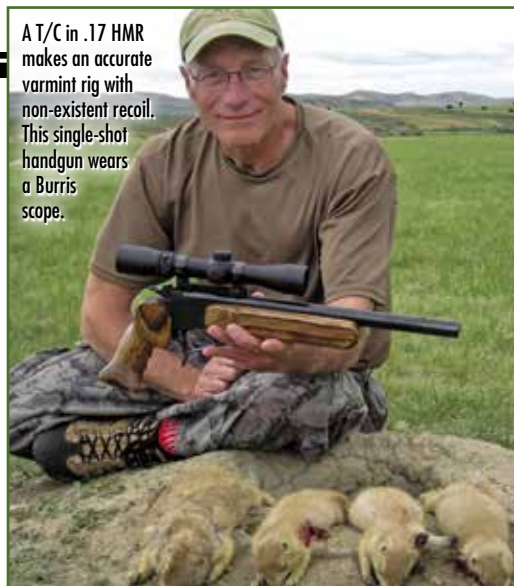
Some of my favorite handguns for varmints include .17 HMR and .223. Neither of these produces a lot of recoil so you can shoot for extended periods without fatigue. A good quality scope is necessary, as prairie dogs do not offer much room for error. By shooting small targets from various ranges with light-recoiling handguns, you will gain confi-

dence in your ability while honing your shooting skills. This is a big step toward tipping the odds in your favor when big game seasons roll around.

Whether you hunt small game or live near heavily populated prairie dog towns, either prospect is a great way to improve your shooting ability. These opportunities don't cost a lot of money compared to a guided big game hunt. You may be finding a place close to home that will provide a quality outdoor experience without costly tags or license fees. Neither requires expensive handguns and gear.

Even if you're an experienced handgun hunter with years of success under your belt, small game hunting or varmint shooting can better prepare you for the upcoming big game hunting seasons. I enjoy most of my squirrel hunting during the off-season when most all big game seasons are closed —

A T/C in .17 HMR makes an accurate varmint rig with non-existent recoil. This single-shot handgun wears a Burris scope.



To this day, I enjoy an early morning squirrel hunt with a .22 LR handgun of some description. You find yourself shooting from all sorts of positions when squirrels are in the top of the tree or feeding on the ground. Some shots have to be taken off-hand, while others can involve a rest of some kind. It can be very challenging and even humbling at times. After all, a squirrel's head presents a very small target so precise shooting is essential.

Handguns for small game do not have to be expensive. Whether you prefer single shots like T/C's, semi-autos, or revolvers, they all have a place if they're accurate. At my advanced age, optics is necessary for proper shot placement. Younger eyes may not need them.



This T/C in .223 with Hornady ammo is deadly on varmints. The T/C is topped with a Bushnell 2-6x scope.

same as varmint shooting in the summer months. These opportunities are much more productive, keeping me tuned-up for hunting season, than going to the range and punching paper.

If you want to hunt deer or any other big game with a handgun, there's no better way to start preparing than hunting small game or varmints.





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RECOIL SCIENCE

Recoil and muzzle blast are the two biggest hurdles to overcome in learning to shoot well. If guns didn't recoil and make loud noise, learning would be so much easier. But until we can go to our local gun store and purchase a phased plasma rifle, recoil and blast are realities we need to manage.

RECOIL PHYSICS

Recoil moves the barrel away from the point of aim. Since we mostly shoot the gun vertically with the grip below the gun, the muzzle moves up as the gun is fired. Movement begins as the bullet starts to move — the muzzle is rising as the bullet is traveling down the barrel. With handguns of light to moderate recoil, muzzle rise while the bullet is in the bore is negligible.

With powerful cartridges, it's significant. Revolvers like the Ruger Super Blackhawk .44 Magnum have tall front sights. When the sights are aligned on target, the muzzle is actually pointing below the target. The muzzle rises as the bullet travels down the bore, and if you've sighted it in properly, the bullet hits where it's supposed to.

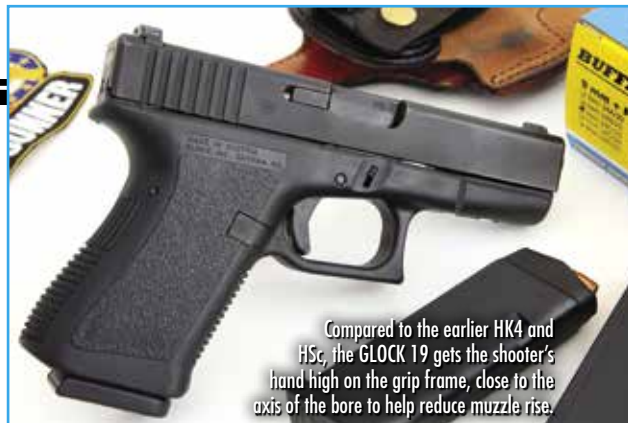
Recoil also has a torque effect,

rotating the gun in the direction opposite the rifling twist. Generally, the effect is mild enough we are hardly aware, but you can feel it when shooting a big bore with a lighter grip.

Recoil is why instructors stress the importance of a consistent grip, both in terms of hand position on the gun and how firmly it is gripped. Consistency is less critical with light-recoiling guns, which is why most people shoot their best with heavy target .22 pistols. At the other end of the scale, guns with heavy recoil such as .44 Magnums, .454 Casull and .500 S&W are as sensitive

to grip pressure as a fine violin.

Recoil velocity and recoil energy can be calculated, based on bullet weight, muzzle velocity, powder charge weight and gun weight. Comparison charts provide useful information but don't tell the whole story. Recoil is also affected by the size, shape, materials and location of the grip, and by devices such as muzzle brakes and suppressors.



Compared to the earlier HK4 and HSc, the GLOCK 19 gets the shooter's hand high on the grip frame, close to the axis of the bore to help reduce muzzle rise.



The Ruger New Model Super Blackhawk .44 Magnum (top) has a higher front sight and ramp, compensating for muzzle rise compared to the original three-screw Ruger Single Six .22LR/.22 Magnum (bottom).

SHOOTER IMPACT

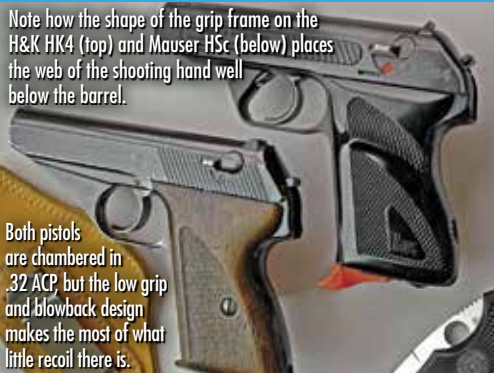
How recoil is perceived varies with individuals. Hand and arm strength are factors, although I believe muscle tone, overall fitness level, and shooting technique are more important. I've seen junior shooters, well short of their full growth and strength, handle centerfires in competition with complete control and aplomb.

Many new shooters (and some not so new) are, perhaps subconsciously, afraid of recoil and muzzle blast. Such apprehension is perfectly understandable. I feel the key to overcoming such fears is to never let the gun hurt you. Always use effective ear protection, and if necessary, wear both soft foam earplugs and high-quality earmuffs. It's amazing how effective ear protection is in improving shooting skill.

Know your recoil tolerance. Military and police organizations have determined from considerable experience average adults can manage recoil of around 4.5 to 5.5 ft-lbs. This is about the level of full power .38 Spl. and

Note how the shape of the grip frame on the H&K HK4 (top) and Mauser HSc (below) places the web of the shooting hand well below the barrel.

Both pistols are chambered in .32 ACP, but the low grip and blowback design makes the most of what little recoil there is.



9mm Luger loads in handguns weighing around 2 lbs. loaded.

Recoil tolerance is a factor of how many rounds fired in a shooting session. The load I fired most in my stock .45s was a 200-grain lead bullet at 925 fps, with recoil energy of 5.5 to 5.8 ft-lbs. depending on gun weight. I can fire this load indefinitely without recoil fatigue.

Once recoil goes over 6 ft-lbs. I have to keep round count down a bit to avoid the risk of developing a flinch. With heavy .45 ACP

or .357 Mag. loads, I take a break every hundred rounds or so, and fire no more than 200 to 300 a day. I used to shoot metallic silhouette with heavy .44 Mag. loads. I could manage 40 rounds no problem, but if we had to shoot two 40-round sessions back-to-back my trigger control would deteriorate around the 70-shot mark. With heavy recoil like my .454 Casull, 10 shots a session is enough.

Protect your hearing against muzzle blast. Learn your recoil tolerance level both in terms of recoil and in the number of shots you can fire in a session without recoil fatigue. Never let the gun hurt you, and you'll shoot with confidence and enjoyment to develop the consistency to become a really good shot.



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Revolvers are back, especially for self-defense. Well-established companies are producing a wider variety of wheel guns than ever. And we have the re-introduction of the Colt Snake revolvers with several new entries to the market. Caliber? Take your pick from the tried and true: .38 spl., .357, the .44s and of course .45 ACP. And we have “new” revolver calibers like the 9mm and .380 ACP. A good revolver loaded with modern defensive ammo is ideal for defensive use. But, like any firearm, there are a few modifications to make them “more better.”

Most people never consider modifying their revolver. “It’s easy,” they say. “Just point and shoot.” Revolvers are “easy” to shoot. However, compared to a semi-auto, they require more training and practice to shoot accurately and manipulate efficiently. For life-and-death situations, simple tools work well, providing you can use them competently. Any modifications to the revolver that make things easier are worth considering.

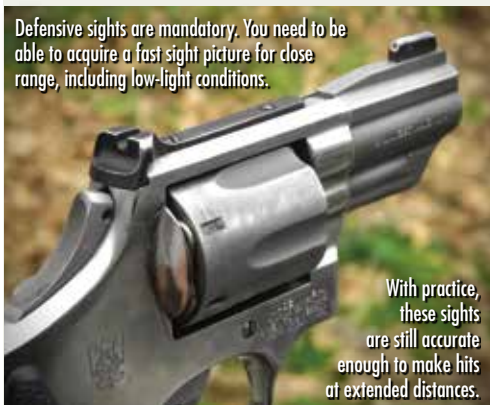
STOCKS

One of the easiest modifications to a revolver is changing out the stocks. Wheel gun stocks come in all flavors. Options include wood, bone/horn, hard synthetics like G10 and soft rubber — in all shapes and sizes. “Fitting” the pistol to your hand improves accuracy and control. Stocks can also factor into concealability.

SIGHTS

For defensive use, good sights are mandatory. “Target” sights are not for close-range, low-light fast shooting. Defensive sights are quick to acquire under all conditions, yet still accurate enough for the distances and size of targets involved. A lot of today’s revolvers come with sights fitting these requirements, or are set up so they’re easily

Defensive sights are mandatory. You need to be able to acquire a fast sight picture for close range, including low-light conditions.



With practice, these sights are still accurate enough to make hits at extended distances.

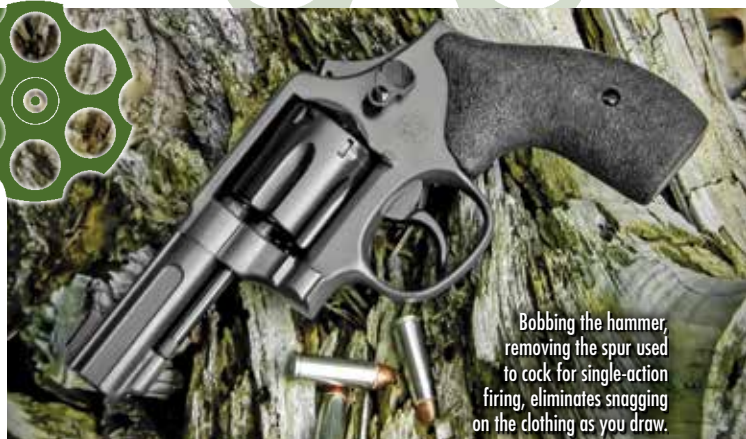
exchanged. Older model revolvers may require the services of a gunsmith.

ACTION!

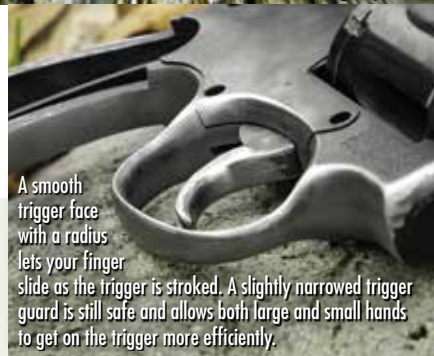
Tuning the revolver’s action is highly recommended. It’s not uncommon for a revolver’s double action trigger (stroking the trigger cocks and releases the hammer to fire) to be north of 10 or 11 lbs. I’ve had some max out my 12-lb. electronic gauge.

“I’ll cock the hammer so the trigger is really light,” you’re thinking. Nope! *All defensive shooting is double-action;* single action firing is only for target shooting. The single action is too light for defensive use. Under stress it’s very easy to negligently fire a round. De-cocking is a very fine motor skill. This isn’t done under stress as the muscles start burning excess adrenaline and you’re shaking like it’s 20 below zero. A revolver “defensive” trigger (again not a “target”) with a crisp, clean break makes a revolver easy to shoot accurately.

Since you’re shooting double action, you don’t need a hammer spur for cocking. They snag up on your clothing as you draw from concealment. “Bobbing” the hammer cures this. While you’re at it, the exposed face of the trigger could use a little lovin’ too. As you stroke the trigger, the finger shifts position during the trigger’s arc. A smooth-faced trigger (no serrations) with a nice radius works best.



Bobbing the hammer, removing the spur used to cock for single-action firing, eliminates snagging on the clothing as you draw.



A smooth trigger face with a radius lets your finger slide as the trigger is stroked. A slightly narrowed trigger guard is still safe and allows both large and small hands to get on the trigger more efficiently.

FRAME

Although you don’t see it very often, in “olden” days it was common to slightly narrow the trigger guard. Nothing like the “Fitz Special,” which has the front of the guard completely removed. Trimming the sides of the guard slightly and contouring this into the frame allows the finger to flow smoothly onto the trigger when it’s time to fire. This helps with both large and small hands. I also like a little radius on the entire frame, including the front of the cylinder. This makes it feel better in the hand, and easier to holster.

In the right hands, revolvers are very accurate, even short-barreled “snubbies.” They’re ideal for close quarter situations, where most attacks occur. There’s no slide to get pushed out of battery. They come in a variety of sizes and calibers and are easy to “fit” to your hand. With defensive sights, modern ammunition and a few modifications (always consult an expert gunsmith before deciding on specific modifications) they’re close to perfect for self-defense.

Just don’t forget to learn the proper manual of arms, and then add plenty of practice.



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WHAT COPS CARRIED WHEN HANDGUNNER BEGAN

1976

"WE'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY"



LAPD issue in 1976 was S&W M/15 .38 with 158-grain round nose lead.

When *Handgunner* began in 1976, the service revolver was still king. Only one major civilian law enforcement entity adopted pistols as standard issue for all armed personnel: the Illinois State Police, in 1967, who chose the 9mm S&W Model 39.

Security holsters as we know them today were in their infancy. The most successful at the time was Bianchi's B27, an updated version of the old break-front Berns-Martin. A few agencies still issued flap holsters: Houston PD and the state troopers of Illinois and Iowa, both of the latter placing them cross-draw. All eventually updated to more modern holsters, some sooner than later. Scabbards with simple retaining straps and thumb-breaks were still in wide use.

THE SERVICE REVOLVER, THEN

S&W had been the dominant brand among police for the previous quarter century or so, but the Colt was still seen in many duty holsters. The Colorado State Patrol issued the deluxe Colt Python .357 Magnum as standard, the Colt Trooper .357 was the most commonly issued gun for Florida state troopers, and a great many street cops still wore the fixed-sight Official Police .38 Special discontinued in 1969.

The brightest new star on the service revolver horizon was the 1970 Ruger Security-Six. The guns were solid and price and time were right. S&W was owned by Bangor Punta, and it was not the best period for quality

control. The Security-Six vaulted into second place in police popularity.

S&W remained the most widely issued with their K-Frame .38 Specials the most popular duty guns nationwide. NYPD mandated fixed-sight guns, and the Smith Model 10 was the dominant choice. Adjustable sight Model 15 Combat Masterpieces were standard issue in the Los Angeles area, both for LAPD and the LA County Sheriffs, and that state's Highway Patrol took a similar route.

S&W's big advance, quickly picked up by Ruger, was the stainless-steel revolver. In .38s, the fixed-sight Model 64 and the adjustable sight Model 67 made enormous sense due to their corrosion resistance. However, the gun to have was the Model 66 .357 Magnum.

DUTY AMMO, THEN

The theoretically ideal stainless Combat Magnum was problematic: stainless heats up faster than chrome-moly ordnance steel, and heated steel expands. Liability concerns led police who used .357s to train with full power, super-hot Magnums and early 66s locked up. By the time engineering changes cured the problem, it was the '80s; Dick Baker at S&W had led the team that designed the larger, heavier duty L-Frame, and in '85 Ruger followed suit with their brawny GP100.

The .357 Magnum round was on the rise. Fears of over-penetration that limited its police popularity were alleviated with the controversy-fraught acceptance

of hollow point bullets, pioneered by Lee Jurras' Super Vel and quickly copied by the big ammo makers. The bullets expanded and stayed in the body of the offender where they caused devastating damage. Many gunfights with the super-hot 125-grain .357 at 1,450 fps led Kentucky State Police troopers to dub it "the magic bullet," and it quickly developed a reputation as a "manstopper." Anyone who calls that an apocryphal story hasn't talked to KSP troopers or Indianapolis PD cops who used it.

Meanwhile, hollow points brought the .38 Special up off its knees, particularly the 158-grain all-lead semi-wadcutter HP. Pioneered by Winchester and quickly followed by Federal and Remington, it was popularized as the "FBI Load" when the Bureau adopted it, and as the "Chicago Load" or the "Metro-Dade" or "St. Louis" load.

Autoloader reliability was an issue, and Remington took a leap forward with a line of JHPs whose ogive fed even in guns designed for ball ammo. While no big departments other than Illinois would be issued autos until the '80s, some smaller agencies had them before '76. The 115-grain 9mm and 185-grain .45 Remington JHPs

expanded some, if not dynamically, and they fed. Texas Rangers had always had a soft spot for the 1911 in .45 and to some degree the .38 Super. LAPD's pioneering SWAT team standardized on the 1911 .45 from its inception in the late '60s (and through today). The most popular "hi-cap 9mm" was S&W's Model 59, which also had a troubled history at the time; later generations would solve its reliability issues.

Training is an issue unto itself. It has since improved exponentially. No one then foresaw police duty pistols fitted with flashlights and carry optics, let alone "plastic pistols from foreign lands." What a long, strange trip it's been.



Seen here with fixed-sight Model 13, the recently introduced 125-grain .357 SJHP was hard to control but a dynamic fight-stopper.



In '76, the FBI load had "taken the .38 up off its knees."



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Hogue finger groove grips of exotic woods for S&W sixguns.



Altamont grips for Ruger single actions include walnut, rosewood, synthetic woods and antique ivory.

CUSTOM GRIPS: TALENT & CRAFTSMANSHIP

As shooters, we're fortunate to be living in a time when the most talented gunsmiths, grip makers and leather workers are plying their trades.

Anyone who has read my writings over the past many decades knows how I'm close to being obsessed with equipping my sixguns with custom stocks. The time has come to add some other names to this exclusive list.

Deer Hollow Enterprises

The Colt Python arrived in 1955 with hand filling grips, fully checkered. Around 1960, someone at Colt decided to "improve" the Python. The grips were changed, so the top part of the grip was now thinner and unchecked — no improvement at all! Now thanks to Olof at Deer Hollow, the original fully shaped and fully checkered grips are back. Once again the magnificent original feel is available.

In the 1920s the 2" Police Positive .38 Special was created with fully checkered grips added to the slightly

rounded grip frame. This checkering helps keep the little .38 from twisting in the hand. Later versions of both the Detective Special and alloy framed Cobra had a shorter, squared off butt frame. Olof is now offering the original fully checkered grip to fit the shorter grip frame and will soon have the original style. Also beautifully crafted, Olof offers Colt repro-grips for the 1903, 1908 and Diamondback as well as grips for such World War II pistols as the Nambu and Radom.

TK Grips & Hobbies

My good friend Tony Kojis has been making single action grips for nearly 60 years — over 2,000 sets. The first pair of grips he made for me more than 50 years ago was a one-piece Pau Ferro exotic wood for a Colt SAA .44 Special. These grips are still in use on the special .44 Special and still look as good as they did more than half a century ago.

Tony was an Industrial Arts Teacher and later a real estate broker, with grip making a part-time endeavor. Now he's retired and is doing grips full time. He totally understands "grip feel" and in my case now makes the grips slightly thicker and molded to accommodate my hands, which have become more

and more tender feeling. He also knows the meaning of perfection when it comes to fitting wood and steel together. His Single Action Grips are fitted to Colt, Colt replicas and Ruger grip frames, which must be supplied for a perfect fit. Prices start at \$175 and are dependent upon the wood being used. Elk staghorn is available and, hopefully, ivory will be made legal again.

Tony has come up with a Grip Kit for those who would like to see if they have the creative and productive patience to fashion their own grips. The kit consists of beautifully figured walnut grip blanks along with escutcheons, screws and instructions allowing you to create your own grips.

Altamont

This 40-year-old company offers walnut, rosewood and synthetic grips. They were the first to offer G10 grips. At one time Ruger offered beautiful, real wood, aftermarket grips with the black eagle medallions, and these were made by Altamont.

Altamont uses high-speed CNC machinery to produce their grips, so each pair is exactly the same as the machines can make them. One of the problems grip makers face is changing frame (especially single-action) tolerances. Ruger's latest single action, the Wrangler .22, has a grip frame just slightly longer than their regular lineup. The current Flat-Top/New Vaquero



Exquisitely fully checkered Deer Hollow walnut grips as found on the original Python and Cobra.

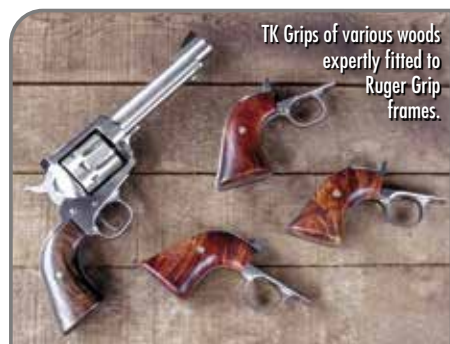
grips will fit the Wrangler however the grip frame protrudes below the grip. Altamont produces Wrangler grips in both wood and synthetics that actually fit. They also offer an attractive aged ivory synthetic grip.

Altamont is one of the few companies actually offering grips made for the Colt New Service that hasn't been produced for over 80 years. Altamont's New Service grips fit my 100-year-old .45 Colt New Service, as if they were handmade. I can say the same thing about their Roper-style grips, which have been installed on a 70-year-old .45 S&W Model 1950 Target. Both fit perfectly and really dress up these old sixguns. I was also surprised at how relatively inexpensive these are, as well as their entire line-up of grips.

Hogue

This is another old-line company started by Guy Hogue 50 years ago. I almost feel I grew up with Hogue Grips as I have been using them for over 40 years. Way back when Ruger and S&W decided to start producing semi-automatic pistols, I found Hogue was the place to go to find custom grips for them. This is now a second-generation company and Guy's sons, Aaron and Patrick, have greatly expanded the company and its products to include such things as knives and overmolded rubber rifle stocks.

As time has passed my hands have become more tender and they are certainly not anywhere near as strong as they used to be, and finger groove grips really help. Hogue offers finger groove grips of rubber, really nice exotic woods and synthetic materials. The rubber finger groove grips are really a lifesaver for me when shooting heavier loads. They provide security and the rubber helps cushion felt recoil. My latest acquisition, the new Colt Python Stainless Steel .357 Magnum has now been fitted with Hogue rubber finger groove grips. These not only add to the weather beating quality of the stainless-steel finish, they make .357 Magnum



TK Grips of various woods expertly fitted to Ruger Grip frames.

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Most of the ivory gripped single actions over the past 40+ years pictured in John's articles were made of pre-ban ivory by TK Grips.



VZ G10 grips designed for 1911 frames include:

Double Diamond
Blue Black with
the Colt logo on a
stainless-steel Colt
Government Model

Hydra Burl
Predator Green
full-sized 1911
grips pictured on a
Ruger Commander

loads much more comfortable to shoot. Hogue's grips fit very securely to double action revolvers by slipping on the grip frame and then fastened to a provided stirrup on the bottom of the grip frame.

VZ Grips

VZ grips are produced by John Van-Syck. They are completely American made of all-American materials. VZ offers grips made of G10, Micarta and stabilized wood. G10 is a high-pressure thermoset plastic laminate with multiple layers of woven fiberglass mesh cloth impregnated with an epoxy resin binder. Some may think this material is a brand-new discovery, however in 1956 I "bull-nosed" the hood of my 1949 Ford Club Coupe using the same mate-

rial. The binding together of the fiberglass mesh with the epoxy resin results in a very strong, virtually unbreakable grip for sixgun or semi-automatic. Grips made of Micarta are also a laminate using linen, burlap, or canvas. I believe linen Micarta was originally used in the electric industry and has been available in both ivory and black Micarta. Stabilized wood is strengthened by being injected with epoxies.

VZ offers grips made of G10 for 1911s, both standard and compact models, the new Colt Cobra, the Ruger SP 101, S&W J-, K-, L- and N-Frames as well as what they call "Round-2-Square" design to convert round-butt S&W revolvers to square butt. Since the G10 grips are a laminate, recipes can

create different colors.

All of these sample grips have exceptionally aggressive texturing. There is no way a 1911 can twist in the hand with the pattern found on these grips, and the smallish J-Frame factory grips are replaced by a wraparound design that almost becomes part of the hand. All of these grips are exceptionally secure for shooting but also aid gun retention. And they're plenty eye pleasing!

Good craftsmanship never dies. If you look, you can find beautiful, and functional, grips for your favorite shooter.



For more info: DeerHollowOnline.com, TonyKojis@gmail.com, AltamontCo.com, HogueInc.com, VZGrips.com.



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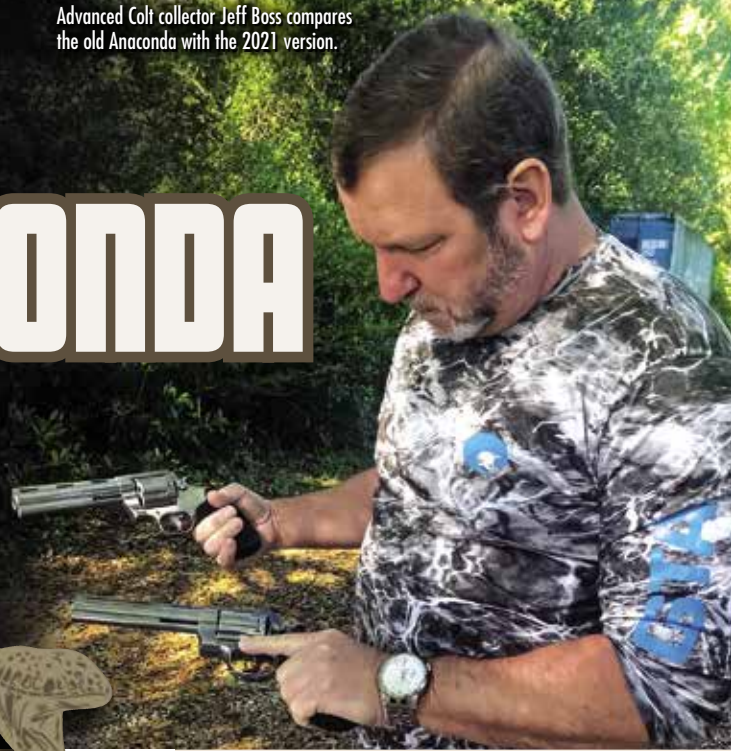


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THE RETURN OF THE COLT ANACONDA 44 MAGNUM

Advanced Colt collector Jeff Boss compares the old Anaconda with the 2021 version.



Federal Champion
240-grain .44
Magnum hollow
points, 25 yards,
new Colt Anaconda.



Manufactured from approximately 1990 to 2003, the massive Colt Anaconda came late to the DA .44 Magnum revolver market, and at a time when Colt was phasing out of that type of handgun, thus it never gained great popularity. However, those who did own them generally loved them, and it became a case of "you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone." When Colt returned to the DA wheel-gun market recently, with updated Cobra and then Python models, the Anaconda seemed

AN OLD SNAKE HAS SOME NEW TRICKS

MASSAD AYOUB

Cylinder ratchet is asymmetrical on the new Anaconda (left) and symmetrical on the original (right).





The earlier Anaconda's front sight was secured with two pins; the new one is much more easily changed out.



Original (bottom) and new (top). Note the different frame pins and logo stamp.

a natural follow-up. Here we test a 6" barrel sample designed to compete with S&W's Model 629 and Ruger's Redhawk and Super Redhawk.

Made entirely of stainless steel, this .44 Mag. tips the scales at 53 oz. unloaded and is spec'd for 59 oz. with the optional 8" barrel. Like the Python before it, the Anacondas have a full-length barrel underlug bringing the weight, and point of balance, forward toward the muzzle making it feel even heavier when extended to arm's length. It's roughly three-quarters of a pound heavier than the standard S&W 629. A Redhawk is a quarter pound lighter than the Anaconda with the same barrel length, and the Super Redhawk will exactly equal the 6" Anaconda's weight if the Ruger has a 7½" barrel. The Anaconda's finish was nicely polished: not quite comparable to the Royal Blue of a 1955 Python, but really, what is anymore?

Action

I tried a couple of old Anacondas from the Jeff Boss collection and found they each had a very slight cylinder wobble. Not the new incarnation. With the trigger back and the hammer down, its second cylinder hand locks the chamber in line with the barrel absolutely motionless. It was this signature Colt feature that always helped give the Python and the old Officer's Model target revolvers their reputation for unsurpassed accuracy, and it's good to see it in this newest Colt revolver.

The updated lockwork also gives this gun a very sweet double action trigger pull, as good or better than its current competition out of the box. Only the most experienced trigger finger will feel any "stack," or increase in resistance in the double action stroke, and then only in the slowest of slow fire. As soon as the shooting got a little bit faster, it felt to the several of us who handled it that the pull seemed perfectly even. Several auto pistol shooters could not detect any stacking at all. My only Ruger and Smith .44 Mags that were better were custom guns: a 29 built by Russ Jefferson, a

629 tuned by the late great Andy Cannon, and a Super Redhawk with action by Ron Power. The custom work would have brought those guns up to at least the same price as the 2021 Anaconda.

On a Lyman digital scale from Brownells, pull weight averaged 10 lbs., 1.4 oz. single action averaged 6.55 lbs. As I've found with the 2021 Python, SA pull on Colt's current model, big six-guns tend to be heavier than we were accustomed to with 20th Century Colts. However, the pull did give a clean break, and as we'll shortly see, the heavy single action pull did not seem to impair the gun's accuracy.

Handling

As noted, the DA pull was very sweet, and the SA pull crisp, if a bit heavy, and as also noted earlier, it felt distinctly muzzle heavy.

The adjustable rear sight differs from those of yesteryears: Read the owner's manual on that! The red ramp front sight is interchangeable with a 0.50" Allen wrench, and the owner's manual says, "Optional sights (sic) configurations are available in either a Tritium sight, brass bead configuration, or a fiber optic." Medium thread locker is suggested when changing the front sight.

The test gun came out of the box

with the rear sight far to the left of center. Did they have to adjust it that far to get it to hit? Nope. A test shot aimed at high chest from 25 yards put the bullet well left into the silhouette's shoulder area. The idiosyncratic rear sight has a "windage lock" that needs to be loosened with an Allen wrench to adjust the rear sight blade laterally. After some experimentation, we got it dialed in, but the adjustment felt mushy.

Previous Anacondas came with Colt-logoed and medallioned Pachmayr grips, which nicely cushioned the web of the hand. The 2021 version comes with Hogue's, which felt great but left a bare steel backstrap; thus, the grip cushioned the proximal joints of both thumb and trigger finger, but not the web of the hand that generally takes the brunt of the recoil.

HKS Size 29 speedloaders worked fine with the Anaconda. We experienced no sticking of spent casings in the chambers, even with our hottest loads. With the muzzle turned up, more spent casings than not fell without touching the latter, all the rest cleared with alacrity. A good thing. Unloading, one live cartridge would sometimes hang up on the left side of the grip, but there were



With elbows and wrists bent from a bench rest, here is the height of recoil with full power .44 Magnum loads.



From top: The early Anaconda had no provision for an optical sight; later production models were tapped for same; and so is the new Anaconda at bottom.



The new Anaconda (below) is distinguished in part by longer bolt cuts on the cylinder, a slightly different pin and logo placement, and different grips.

no issues or glitches in rapid ejection of spent brass. All primer indents were centered and deep. The cylinder latch did require a stronger rearward pull than Colts of the past which generally offered an effortless release.

Accuracy

Handheld from a Matrix rest on a concrete bench at 25 yards, we tested light, heavy and traditional loadings for this versatile chambering. For a hunting

load the choice was Winchester Supreme 250-grain JHP, churning 1,250 feet per second velocity and 867 foot-pounds of energy. This hardest-kicking load of the test put five rounds in 1.30" measured center to center, the best three in 0.70". (I measure to the nearest 0.05".)

For a traditional .44 Mag. loading I selected the economical Federal Champion 240-grain SJHP, rated for 1,230 fps and 807 fpe. Recoil was surprisingly manageable thanks to the Anaconda's heft. Group measurements were 1.45" for all five, with four in 1.25" and the best three in 0.70" — again.

The .44 Special has always been a favored practice load in a .44 Mag, and certainly adequate for self-defense with faster recoil recovery. PMC's .44 Special JHP weighs 180 grains and runs at a nominal 980 fps, duplicating many proven .45 ACP defense loads. The Anaconda had a 1.10" group going with the PMC, but I unknowingly honked a shot that stretched the five-shot measurement to 3.55". This is why I always measure also for best three. Decades have taught me this factors out enough unnoticed human error by an experienced shooter to make "best three" from the bench closely comparable to "all five" from a machine rest. The machine rest is cool — I

have two — but they are tedious for the tester to set up, and impossible for most readers to duplicate without significant expense and effort. The best three .44 Specials went into 0.85". By the way, it's a cliché to say, "That .44 stuff kicked like a .22," but in the weighty Anaconda, this was true of the .44 Special load.

Reliability And Durability

We had zero malfunctions of any kind with the test Anaconda. In the midst of the worst ammo drought of my long lifetime, we didn't have enough .44 Mag for our usual "buckets o' bullets" testing, but fortunately, Colt did. Justin Baldini at Colt's told *American Handgunner*, "We've shot 14,000 rounds of .44 Magnum on one single gun. We don't estimate a lifespan but after 14,000 rounds the frame was still well within spec, so it's more than that. We also put a gun on a machine which performed 70,000 trigger pulls, with no issues there either."

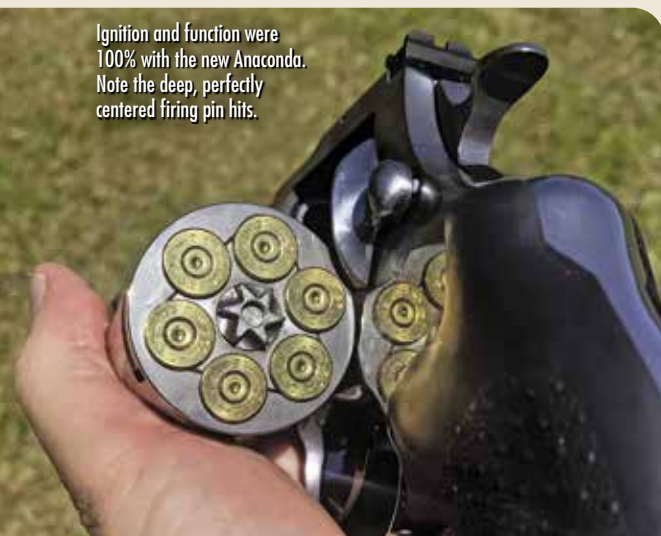
Value

Value is always subjective. At \$1,499 MSRP, the Colt Anaconda is plus/minus half again the price of its Ruger and S&W counterparts. What you're getting for the added money is a very slick double action, a very nice finish, and of course "the pony on the pistol." For perspective, older Anacondas are starting in the low two thousands on GunBroker and going well into the \$3,000-plus range. Gun dealer and Colt collector Jeff Boss, who graciously provided the older specimens for *Handgunner*, said he liked the action of the new one better than any of his several old ones. And of the seasoned shooters who tried the test sample, several are waiting in line to buy one.

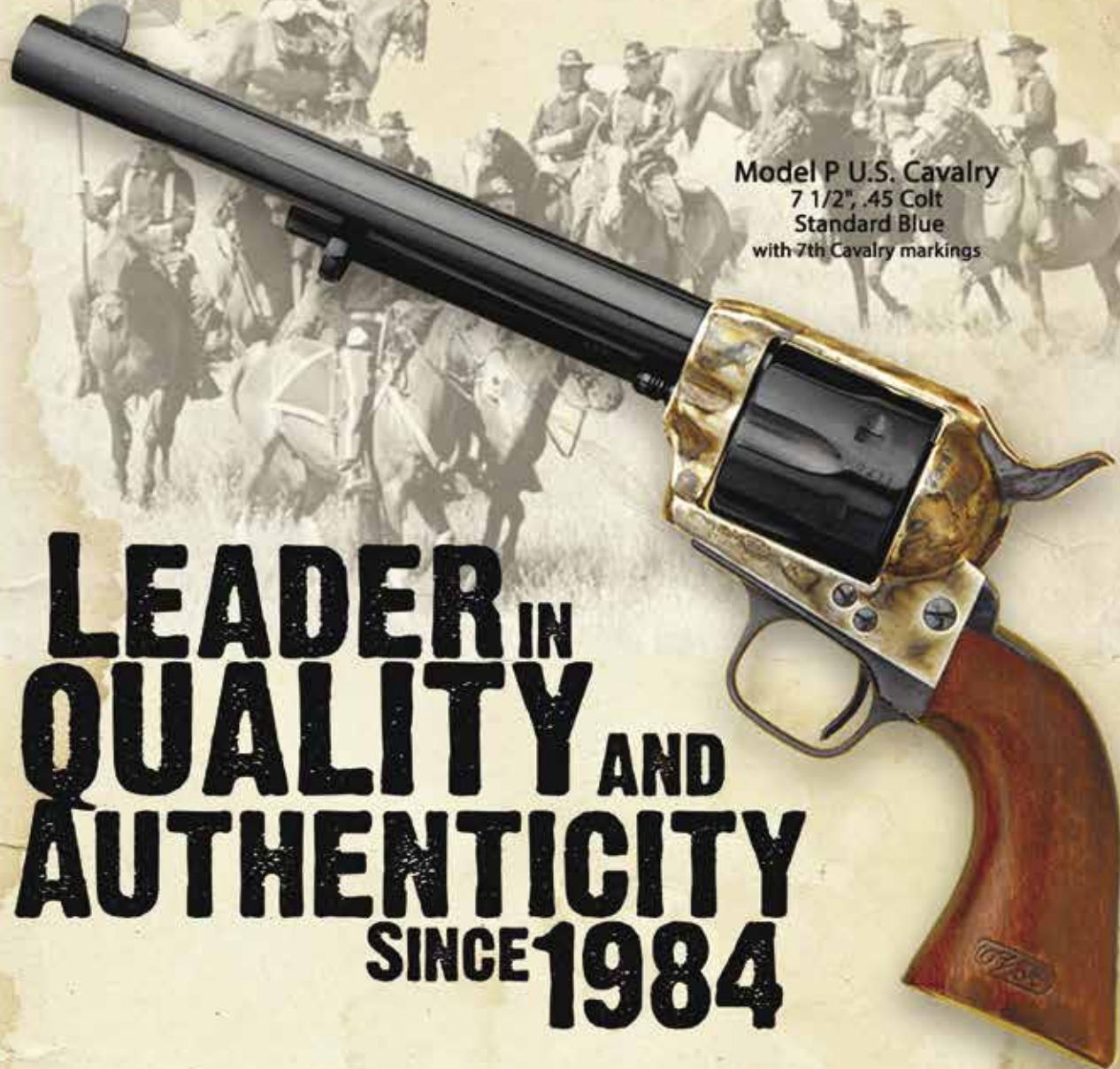


For more info: Colt.com

Ignition and function were 100% with the new Anaconda. Note the deep, perfectly centered firing pin hits.



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A .22 LR OPTICS READY TACK DRIVER!

The TaurusTX 22 Competition is a full-sized rimfire with a 5.25" barrel and 8.15" overall length.



The open top slide design allows the fixed optics approach and center placement.



TOM MCHALE

TAURUSTX 22 COMPETITION

The thing about pistol red dot sights is it doesn't matter where you put them on the gun. Whether on the back of the slide, or more forward like some type of Scout rifle handgun mutant, they just work. With optical sighting, there's no such thing as sight radius or eye relief. The TaurusTX 22 Competition pistol takes full advantage of this footprint flexibility.

On the two sample models sitting on my desk, the Leupold and

Holosun sight bodies are mounted just about smack in the middle of the pistols' 8"-plus overall length. The optic lens itself is nearly 5" forward of the rear of the slide. Part of the design choice is made permissible by the blow-back action of the .22 LR chambering. With a fixed barrel, there's no reason one can't mount the optic platform right on top of the barrel itself, and Taurus did exactly that. The result is a rigid composition of barrel and sighting system bound together. Everything else, like the slide and operating controls, move about at will, but the two pieces

that determine where the bullet lands are locked in place. This turns out to be most significant.

Twenty-two Scoop

The pair of "Taurii" on my desk are some of the most interesting rimfire pistols I've had in my hot little hands in quite some time. An extension of the more traditional TX 22 rimfire handgun, the Competition model adds size, extras and a new slide and frame interface.

The slide is an open top design, reminiscent of the Taurus and Beretta 92 series. The open top of the slide forward of the optics mount allows full rearward travel of the slide during recoil, so the optic doesn't move — at all. With no "lockup" to repeat shot to shot, accuracy should be enhanced.

The TX 22 sports a polymer frame with an aluminum slide. You'll get three 16-round magazines or if you live in a Republik, you can order a 10-round version. The magazines are polymer, but they still drop freely with a press of the left-side release button. That's reversible if you prefer it on the other side.

You'll also note safety levers on each side of the frame — a necessity, since the TX 22 Competition is a single-action pistol.

The only other visible controls are a slide lock lever on the left side and a recessed takedown release. This mechanism is flush with the frame just above where you'll place your trigger finger. Rounding out frame features, you'll get a two-slot Picatinny rail up front for lights, lasers, or if you're feeling really

Under the lens of the Holosun you can see the sight mount adapter that works with the optics platform. Also note the generous flats on the muzzle thread protector.





With SilencerCo Sparrow suppressor attached, this Winchester Super Suppressed 45-grain ammo printed 0.90" groups at 25 yards.

spunky, a pistol bayonet.

The sights are three dot variety with twist. I'll assume the rear sight design is also a nod to the competition mission of this pistol. While the front is fixed through the side à la GLOCK, the rear is adjustable for both windage and elevation. Inside the rear sight outer body is a floating section housing the actual rear notch. Two independent screws on the right side allow separate adjustment of windage and elevation so you can match point of impact to point of aim for your chosen load. This is particularly handy for .22 LR pistols given the variety of bullet weights, jacket material and velocities.

The trigger face is wide with a rounded contour, somewhat reminiscent of a DA revolver. There is about 3/8" of light pressure take-up followed by a smooth break at 4.75 lbs. I did notice the take-up stage smoothed out with use.

Optics Ready

As a competition-ready pistol, the TX 22 is optics ready. There's the aforementioned generous mounting platform with a small recessed cutout on the front end. This is where one of two included mounting plates drop into place to provide the mounting interface for optics.

Those adapter plates are reversible. So, by flipping each upside down, you'll get a total of four unique optic compatible platforms. Out of the box you can mount the following: Trijicon RMR, C-More STS, Vortex Venom, Docter Noblex, Burris FastFire, Sightmark Mini, Holosun HS507C and Leupold Delta-Point Pro. Of course, you can also use any other make that shares a mounting footprint with any of the above.

Suppressor Ready

Is there anything more fun than a suppressed .22 LR pistol? Before you ponder this question, the answer is ... no. Rimfire handguns with a silencer are an absolute hoot. I'd almost bet a hot pastrami sandwich, with melted Baby Swiss even, they have negative recoil and actually remove ambient sound from the immediate area. They're that gentle



Tom tested the TX 22 with a variety of .22 ammo including match, suppressor optimized and CCI Mini-Mags. The Ransom Multi-Caliber rest (for 25-yard accuracy testing) didn't disappoint.

to shoot and quiet. And during normal times, ammo is plentiful and cheap.

The TX 22 comes complete with a 1/2x24 threaded barrel. No adapters required as with other suppressed plinkers. Just unscrew the thread protector with exposed flats and pop on your favorite can. I've got a SilencerCo Sparrow handy for just such occasions and it worked like a charm on this Taurus.

Paired with most any .22 LR ammo, you'll get subsonic velocities out of the 5.25" barrel, so you'll hear no supersonic crack of the projectile, just a gentle "pffhht" sound. It might make you just a bit giddy.

I fired five types of ammo through the TX 22 and used a Competition Electronics Pro Chrono DLX about 10 feet downrange to record average actual velocities: CCI Mini Mag HV .22 LR 40-grain (1,026.3 fps), Winchester Super Suppressed .22 LR 45-grain (946.3), Norma Match-22 .22 LR 40-grain (823.7), SK Pistol Match .22 LR 40-grain (817.7) and Lapua Pistol King .22 LR 40-grain (869.7). Around these parts, the speed of sound is about 1,133 fps, so everything I shot was comfortably in the ultra-quiet zone.

I'll be buying one, or maybe both of these pistols if they let me and you can rest assured a suppressor will reside on it — always.

Teeny, Tiny Groups

Heading out with a shiny new pistol only to find it prints so-so

groups at 25 yards can put a damper on the "new toy" enthusiasm. Fortunately, I had no such cloudy day with the TaurusTX 22. I had a joyous day full of proud smiles.

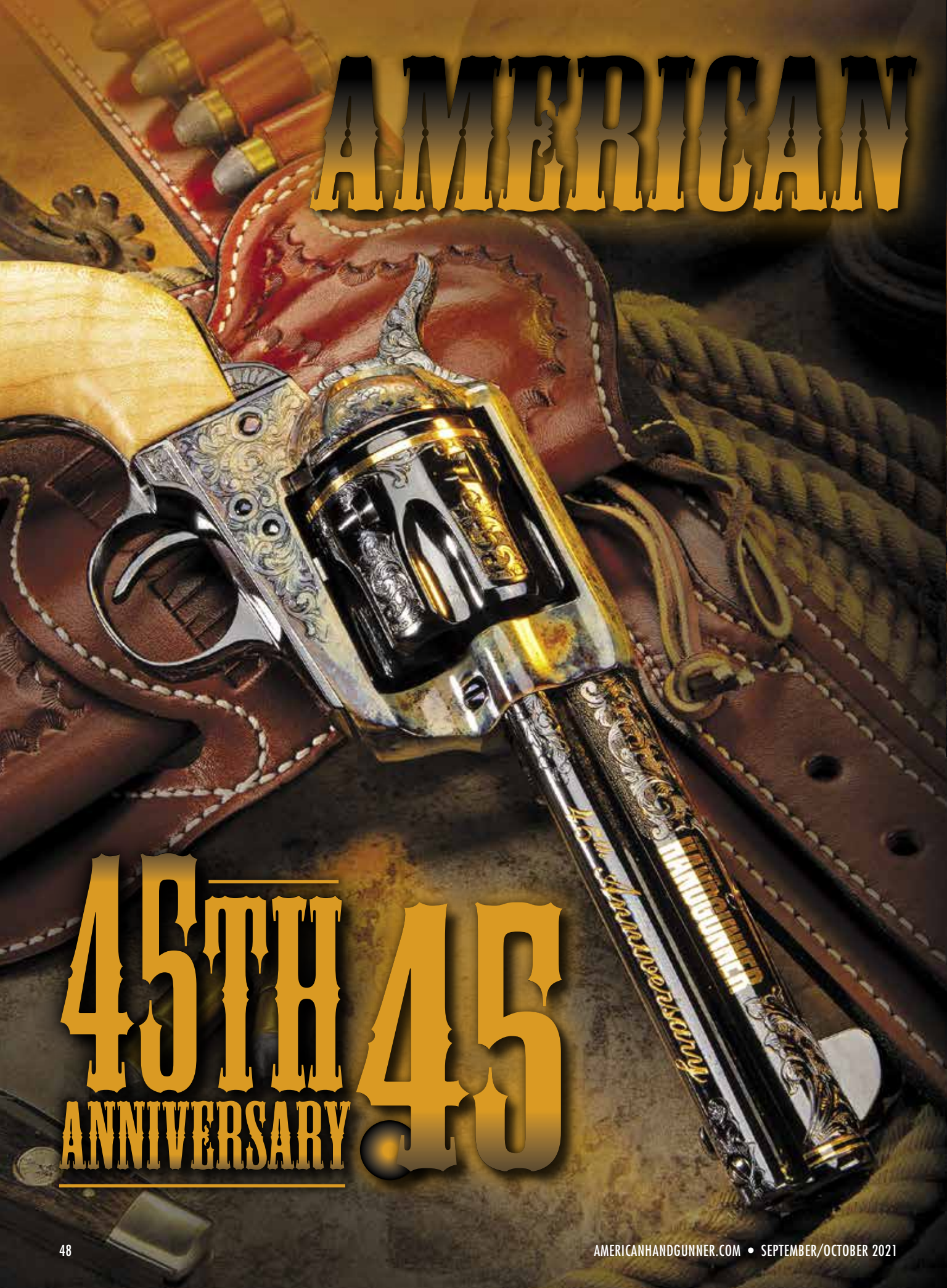
Setting up at 25 yards using the world's spiffiest pistol rest (the Ransom Rest Multi Caliber), I decided to do accuracy testing with the TX 22 outfitted with the Holosun HS507C red dot optic. I just love the circle with interior dot reticle. Anyway, using the same ammo from velocity testing, I was most pleasantly surprised at the accuracy performance from this nifty little pistol. Measuring five-shot groups, I observed the following: CCI Mini Mag HV .22 LR 40-grain (1.17"), Winchester Super Suppressed .22 LR 45-grain (0.90"), Norma Match-22 .22 LR 40-grain (1.29"), SK Pistol Match .22 LR 40-grain (1.40") and Lapua Pistol King .22 LR 40-grain (0.97"). Wow! Consider me impressed! This rimfire pistol will shoot.

Closing Arguments

This is a great little pistol and I have to say it surprised me. A lot of polymer guns come through here, but it's a rare specimen capable of shooting 1" groups from 25 yards with regularity. MSRP is listed at \$484.85.



For more info: TaurusUSA.com



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HANDGUNNER



JOHN TAFFIN • PHOTOS: ROB JONES/THE IMAGESMITH, LLC

It was a Tuesday night in December 1954. I specifically remember the day as every Tuesday I took the bus to town to pay my paper bill. My paper route had 100 customers, and on Friday night I collected \$0.45 from each. The following Tuesday the *Beacon Journal* got \$30, and I had \$15 for myself. This particular night I spent a dollar of that \$15. It cost me \$0.50 to ride the bus both ways, and it was my habit as I walked back to the bus stop to check the newsstand.

There on the magazine rack at the newsstand was the January 1955 issue of a new magazine called *GUNS*. I could hardly get the second \$0.50 out of my pocket fast enough. Finally, a magazine totally devoted to firearms.

Fast-forward 21 years. I was still reading *GUNS* every month. The magazine had a tremendous impact on my life (and still does), but now the second

wave appeared. Forty-five years ago, *American Handgunner's* first issue was published. You might say I grew up with *GUNS* and matured with *American Handgunner*. Being as I am now in the early years of my ninth decade, it could be said I really matured!

Every issue I learn something from our highly qualified staff of writers. It's not unusual for an issue to cover such diverse ends of the spectrum as black powder sixguns and semi-automatic 9mm pistols. I've read almost 300 issues of *American Handgunner* and learned something from each one.

Forty-five years is a very significant run, especially in this day and age. So how does one celebrate such a milestone? His Editorship, Tom McHale, made a magnificent decision. The best way to celebrate anything is to mark the



occasion with a special gift. It didn't take long for Tom to decide that something should be a .45, so we began discussing just what would be appropriate. It didn't take us any time at all to agree on a .45 Single Action chambered in a truly American cartridge, the .45 Colt.

The decision was made to go with Cimarron Firearms with one of their Frontier Models, and as I told his Editorship I would place a barrel length of 4¾" at the top of the list. We also decided to cook up something a little special for this Cimarron. First, the good folks at

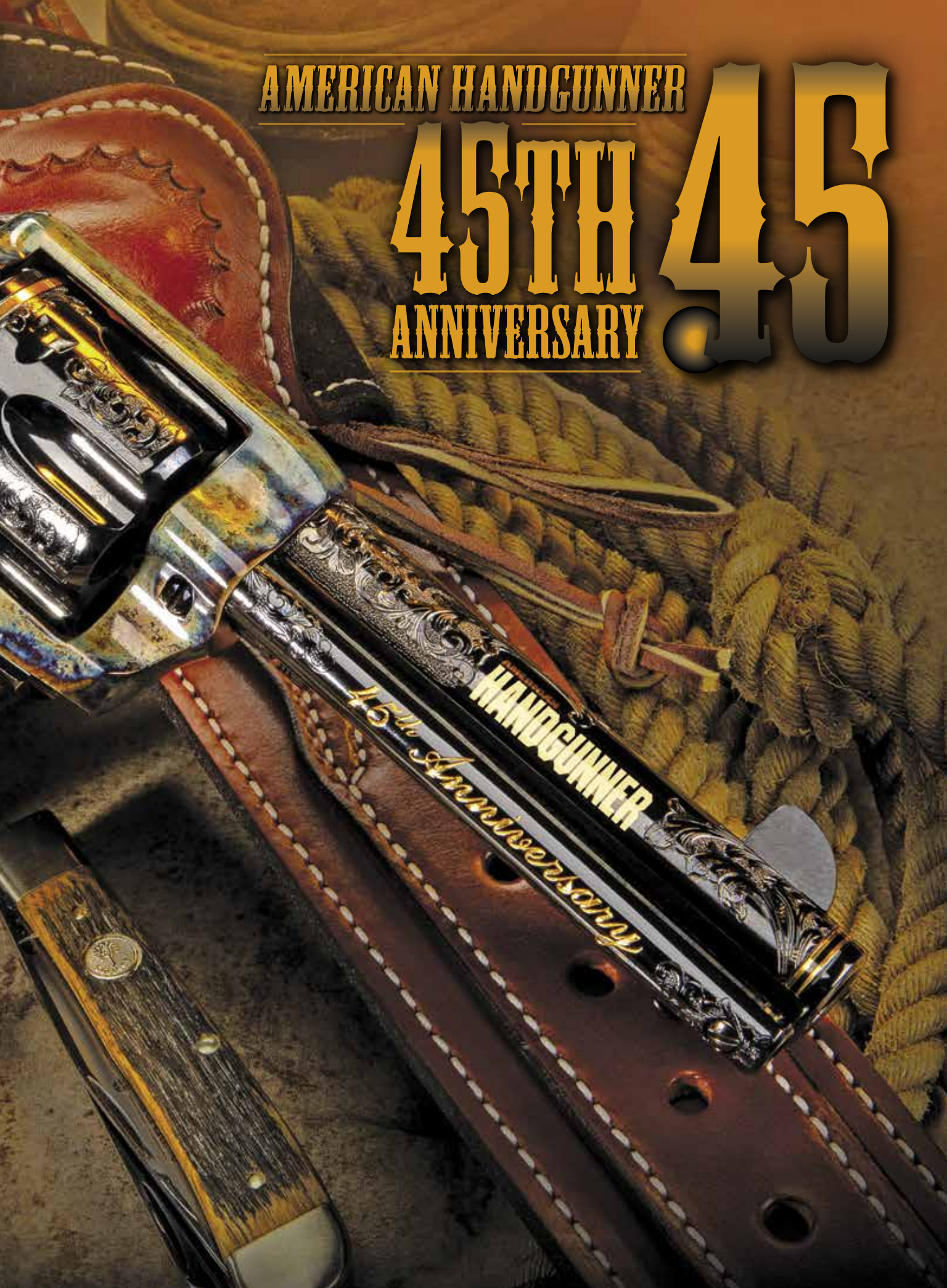


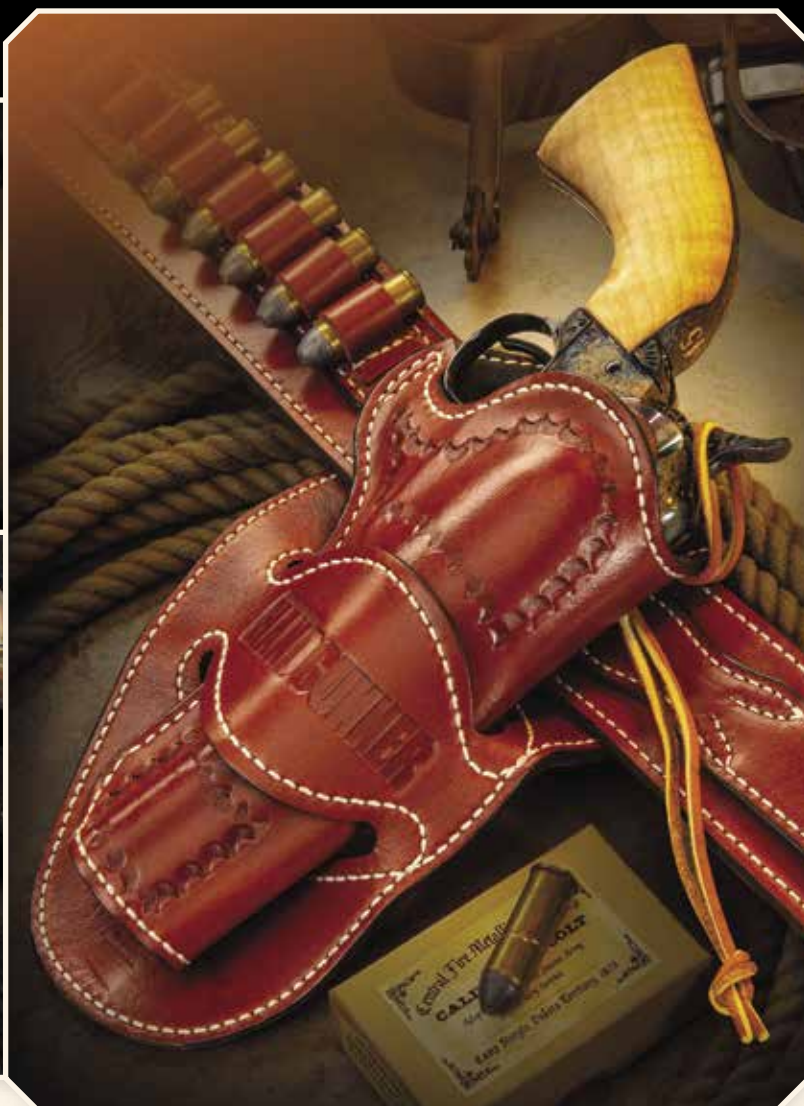
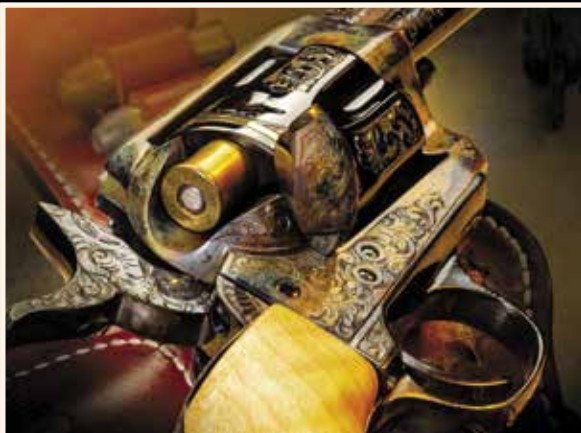
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45





Cimarron sent the .45 for me to look over and to shoot. Then came the most significant step. Once I finished my part, I would then send it to the masters at Baron Engraving to appropriately commemorate and celebrate such an anniversary. So, first let's take a look at this very special to be .45 sixgun.

Cimarron Transformation

When one has been a gun writer as long as I have, coming up on 55 years, you learn some things. One thing I have learned is there is a vast difference when it comes to working with various firearms companies. Some are easy to work with, some difficult, some almost impossible. Cimarron Firearms is at the top of the list. Mike Harvey of Cimarron Firearms and I go back together a long way — almost 40 years. Mike was working in a bank when he started the long road to coming up with truly authentic replicas by purchasing a small importer of replica guns known as Allen Firearms. He changed the name to Cimarron and moved his headquarters to Fredericksburg, Texas, where I first made contact with him. I was the first writer to have the privilege of

spotlighting Cimarron Firearms (CFA) more than 35 years ago. Over the years Mike has worked diligently to have Italian replicas constantly updated and improved as to fit and finish and quality of steel. Today's replica single actions are well made and very good-looking; let's say very authentic looking sixguns.

Those of us who have a little, or a lot, of gray in our beard remember well the poor quality of both Spaghetti Westerns and Italian replica sixguns of 50 years ago. Clint Eastwood went from the TV screen to Italian Westerns, which improved immensely as Eastwood took over the production. Improvements in the Spaghetti Westerns continued until they reached the apex with one of my favorite movies, *The Outlaw Josie Wales*. That took care of the movies.

For me, even more important was also seeing replica firearms begin taking a giant leap forward in both quality and authenticity. It didn't take place overnight and much, probably most, of the credit goes to Mike Harvey. The replica industry started first with percussion sixgun copies, my first was an 1858 Remington, and then cartridge firing duplicates. These early copies were

lacking in authenticity and they were easy to spot in the Spaghetti Westerns as many of the Colt Single Action copies had something never offered by Colt, namely brass grip frames. The bluing was also substandard, and the case coloring followed the same pattern. Mike Harvey worked exceptionally hard to convince the Italians to turn out quality firearms. He has definitely succeeded, as over the years the bluing, case coloring, quality of steel, the fitting and the dimensions have all improved to the point at first glance it is difficult to tell Cimarron Firearms offerings from the originals. We now have quality replicas of almost every Colt, S&W and Remington single-action sixgun, both percussion and cartridge firing, as well as exceptionally well-made Winchester-style leverguns. And this brings us to the .45 at hand.

Cimarron Frontier .45

I must say when I picked up the Cimarron Frontier .45 from my FFL holder, Buckhorn Gun, I was most favorably impressed. The case-hardened frame exhibits extremely attractive blues and grays, and the hammer

is also case colored instead of having bare steel sides. The hammer is flush with the top of the frame and not sticking up or below. The bluing is deep and metal-to-metal finish is as it should be with no sharp edges. The leading edge of the cylinder has the black powder camphor between the flutes. The one-piece walnut stocks are also well fitted to the grip frame and do not have the reddish look of so many grips found on replicas in the past.

This is a traditionally styled single-action, which means there is no transfer bar. Safe carry requires the hammer to rest on an empty chamber. It does have the Swiss-safe type safety consisting of a cylinder base pin with two notches on the front. For normal use it is placed in the rearward notch while engaging the front notch allows the base pin to protrude far enough through the back of the frame to prevent the hammer from going forward enough for the firing pin to hit the primer of a cartridge. The action is quite smooth, and the cylinder locks up tight with no end shake or side-to-side movement. There is no over-travel on the hammer and the hammer and trigger come together just as the hammer stops its rearward movement. The barrel to cylinder gap is barely perceptible. The sights are easy to see as they are not of the pinched variety but rather a square notch rear sight matched up with a non-tapered front sight.

Range Results

Now it was time to shoot. As I write this, it's January, so instead of my sturdy shooting bench, solid pistol rest, and good lighting, it was necessary to go to the indoor range that has none of these shooting aids. This makes the results even more exceptional. With Black Hills 250-grain .45 Colt FP and their 230-grain .45 Schofield load as well as the CCI Speer 230-grain Trailblazer, groups at 20 yards all measured right at 1". For my eyes it shoots right on for windage and low for elevation, which means the front sight can be filed to accommodate a chosen load. The good news is it is a shooter. This is no surprise as I've yet to have a Cimarron sixgun which wasn't.

Once my part of this project was accomplished, the .45 was shipped to David Miles of Baron Engraving to be properly embellished. The color case hardening was left as is while the frame screws were fire blued and the barrel, ejector rod housing, trigger guard, back-strap and cylinder were all treated to scroll engraving with gold bands on the cylinder and "American Handgunner"



Heidi hard at work on the Cimarron Frontier .45.



This cylinder is in the process of being transformed to ... stunning.

A BARON ENGRAVING MASTERPIECE

TOM MCHALE

Heidi Roos sits at her workbench awaiting the next project. One might think the Senior Engraver, with 18 years of experience (11 of those with Baron Engraving), would open the next project box to find a complete firearm, ready for the *pas de deux* of art and engineering. No, it's not to be. Instead, Heidi opens a box to find a pile of parts that will eventually comprise a Cimarron Frontier .45 Colt single-action revolver.

To complete the engraving process, it's a necessity for an in-house gunsmith at Baron to break each firearm into its individual components, so each can be designed, handled and engraved separately. No small part of the skill of quality engraving is developing the ability to envision the final product and how the planned design will flow from part to part, completing a cohesive work of art on the re-assembled firearm.

While every project is different, it's not unusual for Heidi to spend a week or more on just one gun, and it's also common to invest a day or more pondering the final design before putting pencil to paper for the rough design. That'll change throughout the process as the gun speaks to the engraver during the work. Drawing on inspiration from previous masters like Lewis Daniel Nimschke, who worked the second half of the 19th century, she'll lean on her preference for the classic American Scroll design, made popular on these shores through a simplification of Victorian, almost Edwardian, techniques.

Knowing this handgun will be color case hardened, Heidi considers application of extra deep and bright cuts, so the design will clearly show through the darker and colorful finish. Gold plating will also look beautiful on this one, so she'll hand cut those areas for later plating with 24-karat gold.

While every project is a challenge to ensure a design is comprehensive and coordinated across the collection of parts, a single-action revolver like this one requires even more three-dimensional vision and attention to detail. Lots of round, cylindrical and partially spherical areas are tricky to navigate with the graver tool. Then there's the barrel. When in the vise, she can only see one side, but the overall pattern has to match perfectly on each side of the relatively narrow tube. A .45 Colt may look large at the fiery end, but there's not much workspace on the exterior of the barrel.

This special .45 features a personal touch like no other. At Baron, only one engraver touches any given firearm. As writers and painters are recognizable by their individual style, Heidi can spot engravers by their scroll work. This one is uniquely hers. If you've got a sharp eye, you'll find "H. Roos" on this revolver, but we're not telling where it is. It's part of the mystique.

For more info: Cimarron-Firearms.com, BaronEngraving.com, TK Grips (208-484-5325), DeSantisHolster.com

engraved on the barrel all resulting in a most attractive, one-of-a-kind .45 Single Action. To top off the project, my grip maker of over 50 years Tony Kojis of TK Grips crafted a beautifully fitted and finished set of curly maple grips for this one-of-a-kind sixgun. Tony specializes in single-action grips and he is a master craftsman.

This special sixgun will go to one fortunate reader as the 45th anniversary issue giveaway gun, so be sure to enter. That person will face a big decision: "Do I shoot it or keep it as is?" My vote is predictable. Sixguns are made to be shot, and as beautiful as it is, it should be used and passed down generation to generation, say every 45 years?



In 1926 the M1911 got a slight upgrade into the definitive M1911A1. This is the weapon of American troops during WWII.



The pretty lady is Will's wife's grandmother. This rig kept her Infantryman grandfather company from North Africa through Sicily until the end of the war in Northern Italy.

FANTASTIC VOYAGE

THE METEORIC TRAJECTORY OF AMERICA'S BULLET



The M1911A1 was the most powerful combat handgun of the Second World War. This rugged military weapon could be found anywhere American troops served.

WILL DABBS, MD

A friend was manning the .50 atop a gun truck in Afghanistan when his convoy was ambushed by Taliban insurgents. Heavy automatic weapons fire from multiple crew-served weapons raked their vehicles. The ear-shattering crump of RPGs split the morning. One moment they were rumbling peacefully down this remote dirt track and the next the whole world came crashing down on top of them.

The bad guys were rapidly gaining fire superiority. Cutting through the adrenaline of the moment, my buddy began to feel serious fear.

Unbeknownst to my pal, while he had been throwing .50-caliber rounds as fast as he could feed his *Ma Deuce* his convoy commander had been working

the radio. Amidst the deafening roar of outgoing fire and the terrifying rattle of the opposite sort there arose a fresh, new, unfamiliar racket. Two AH64D Apache gunships roared over the convoy close enough to touch, their 30mm Hughes M230 chain guns stammering out a steady stream of high-explosive heart-break. Then 2.75" Hydra 70 rockets rocked the sky. The synergistic combination broke the back of the ambush while transforming the Taliban terrorists into so much dog food.

Despite the heavy incoming fire, my buddy stood up in his gun mount, raised both hands aloft toward the fire-spitting gunships and screamed, "Merica!" at the top of his lungs. Nobody else on the planet does that but us.

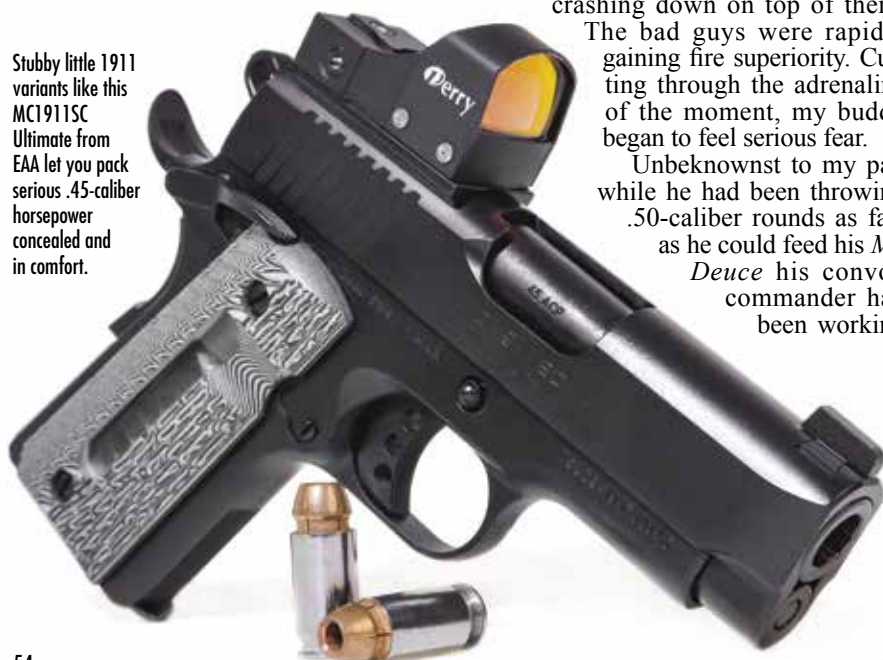
French grunts with Brigade La Fayette don't jump up in the middle of a firefight and shout, "France!" The same can be said of Britain, Poland, Latvia, Montenegro and Uzbekistan. We Americans are just a little bit different.

We are bigger, louder, stronger, richer and more obnoxious than any other nation on planet earth. Along the way we gifted humanity with microchips, telephones, light bulbs, GPS, nuclear weapons, Donald Trump, the Kardashians and Silly Putty. *We honestly just don't do anything halfway.*

Origin Story

In the 1870s the U.S. Military was spread thin trying to patrol the American

Stubby little 1911 variants like this MC1911SC Ultimate from EAA let you pack serious .45-caliber horsepower concealed and in comfort.





Bookends — The Colt Peacemaker (right) kicked off this party back in 1873 while the HK USP .45 keeps things hopping today.

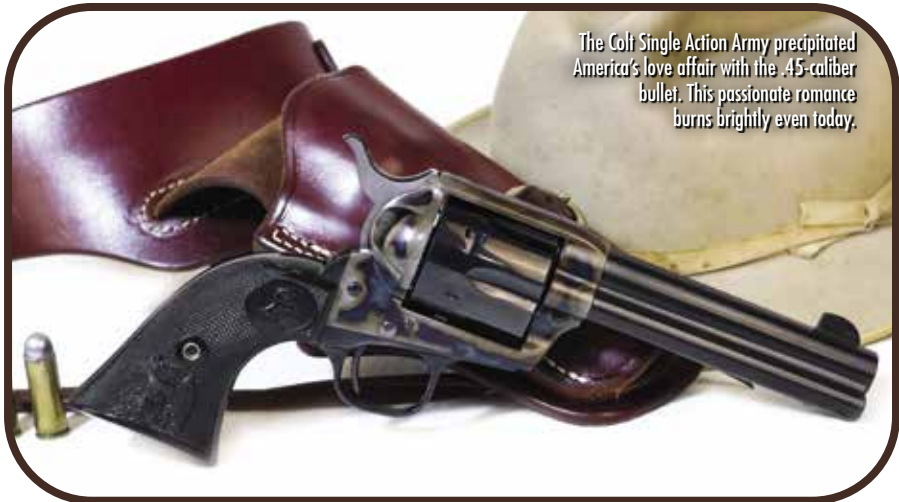
West. In the immediate aftermath of the American Civil War, it was time to standardize a new handgun and cartridge with which to equip the Federal Army. Troops prior to this time were armed primarily with an amalgam of disparate cap-and-ball wheelguns left over from the recent hemoclysm.

The end result was a joint effort between Colt's Patent Firearms Manufacturing Company and Union Metallic Cartridge. They called the gun the New Army Metallic Cartridge Revolving Pistol, or more simply the Colt Single Action Army. UMC developed the .45 Long Colt round it fired. We know it as the Peacemaker.

Forty-five. Close your eyes and swish the word around in your mouth like some properly aged port. You have just now tasted the intoxicating ballistic awesomeness intrinsic to the mystical term. Nearly but not quite half an inch, the .45 strikes that perfect symbiotic balance between recoil, portability and downrange thump.

The Peacemaker is as iconic a firearm as ever there was. Despite its smooth unadorned mechanical grip and leviathan manual spur hammer, the Colt 1873 Peacemaker runs like a lawyer after cash. After a lifetime of squeezing triggers for fun and money, I can honestly say nothing fits me quite so well as that 147-year-old classic hogleg.

In 1892 in a fit of insensate foolishness, Uncle Sam binned his .45-caliber cartridges for the .38 Long Colt. We



The Colt Single Action Army precipitated America's love affair with the .45-caliber bullet. This passionate romance burns brightly even today.

rocked along in this sordid state until the turn of the century and our horrid little war in the Philippines. There the new .38-caliber round was found to be sadly lacking.

Our opponents in the Moro Rebellion were Muslim fanatics known to tie wet thongs around their testicles before going into battle. As the leather dried, it contracted. The pain ultimately became so extreme death didn't seem such a wretched alternative. No wonder those little .38 slugs didn't quite cut it.

The Archetypal Forty-Five

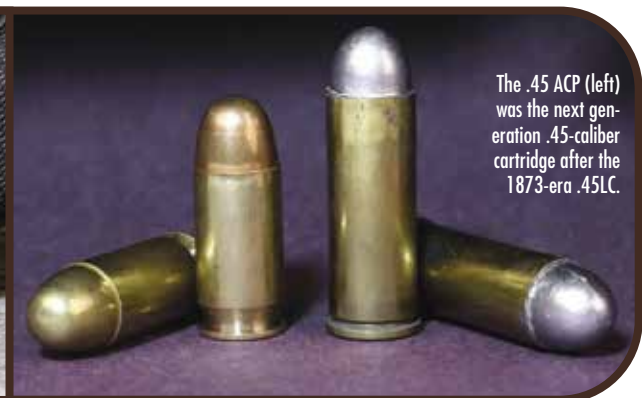
The solution was John Moses Browning's inimitable .45 ACP round. At the time Europe was fielding combat

handguns like the P08 Parabellum Luger that pushed a 9mm jacketed projectile. Old John Moses took that 115-grain German bullet and simply doubled it. The resulting 230-grain monster has set the bar for military handgun stopping power for a century.

As a nation, I never felt like we did quite right by John Browning. The great man held 128 patents when he keeled over of heart failure at the FN plant in Liege, Belgium, in 1926. He designed every rifle caliber automatic weapon used by American forces in WWII. Seems to me if we could get Lincoln to scootch over just a little bit closer to Teddy Roosevelt, we could yet squeeze Browning's legendarily stern visage



When John Moses Browning set out to design a new combat pistol cartridge, he took the European standard 9mm Parabellum (right) and just doubled it. The resulting massive .45 ACP is a proven stopper.



The .45 ACP (left) was the next generation .45-caliber cartridge after the 1873-era .45LC.



The Browning-designed M1911 pistol ably carried American Doughboys through World War I. It also became a favorite of Depression-era gangsters.

alongside all the others on Mt. Rushmore.

Browning's .45 ACP and the legendary M1911 pistol that fired it set an international standard for effectiveness in military handguns that has yet to be bettered. The M1911 saw fairly extensive service with U.S. troops deployed to Europe during World War I. In 1926 the design was tweaked slightly to make the M1911A1.

In the 1930s the M1911 was a popular gangster weapon. John Dillinger was a fan. Baby Face Nelson used a

Lebman full auto conversion to murder a Federal Agent and severely wound two others during the gun battle outside the Little Bohemia Lodge in 1934. With war clouds looming, American industry tooled up to produce M1911A1 pistols and the chunky .45 ACP rounds they fired en masse.

During the course of WWII four different companies produced some 1.9 million M1911A1 pistols. Singer made around 500 as well, but that was a drop in the ocean. Uncle Sam ceased produc-

tion at the end of the war and satisfied himself by rebuilding these old guns for decades. The pistol I was issued when first I donned the uniform was an old WWII-era clunker M1911A1 that rattled like Bernie Sanders' skull.

The M1911 still enjoys a following that is both vigorous and fanatical. The Delta operators of my era carried high-capacity, custom-built M1911 race guns. Certain high-speed military and Law Enforcement tactical units still use upgraded versions even today.

The M1911 has also been a popular fixture in movies. The number of films in which the M1911 has starred defies ready categorization. From Ben Affleck's *The Accountant* to Arnold Schwarzenegger's *Terminator*, the 1911 shows up any time movie makers want their characters to be unambiguously awesome. The AMT Hardballer Longslide used by the Terminator was an integral part of the machine's inimitably menacing persona.

Today's State of the Art

Modern high-tech expanding bullets have pushed the soft-shooting 9mm back to the forefront among military, law enforcement, and civilian shooters. However, I have seen a lot of people



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shot. Those struck by .45-caliber rounds invariably seemed less happy than their 9mm counterparts.

Today all the major handgun manufacturers produce .45-caliber versions of their products. The GLOCK 21 packs 13+1 on board, while the Springfield Armory XD-M .45 does the same. HK's USP in .45 ACP carries 12+1. All of these modern polymer pistols are as reliable as tax increases and government overreach.

Modern .45 ACP polymer handguns are most all amenable to sound suppressors. The large exit pupil on a .45-caliber can make it a bit tough to quiet down, but squirting a little ablative material like wire pulling gel down the gullet helps a lot. Modern defensive loads for the .45ACP incorporate the same high-tech stuff that makes the 9mm so effective, only more of it.

One of the modern options for the .45-caliber handgun that would have been unimaginable a generation ago is the capacity to build a functional pistol at home with simple tools. The 1911 kits from 1911Builders.com offer anything you might find in a high-end custom 1911, all in a package you can legally craft in your basement. Their precision rail cutter uses a little elbow grease and a manual shuttle in a jig to

cut the frame rails and barrel seat while guiding the drilling of the requisite holes to finish out an 80% frame. If you really want to be fancy Defense Distributed will sell you a Ghost Gunner hobby-sized CNC mill that interfaces with your laptop, is about the size of a fish tank and produces factory results.

Ruminations

From 1873 to the present America's torrid love affair with the .45-caliber

bullet has been like one protracted ballistic honeymoon. Countless millions of rugged Americans have fallen under its spell. I am myself one of them. Recoil is vigorous without being painful and the downrange effects are time-proven in the real world. Another century down the road when phased plasma rifles are all the rage there will no doubt yet remain a rabid following for the timeless .45. I hate that I'll miss it.



The AMT Hardballer Longslide .45ACP was the Terminator's sidearm in the 1984 sci-fi classic of the same name.

Five Stars?
Those are fighting words.

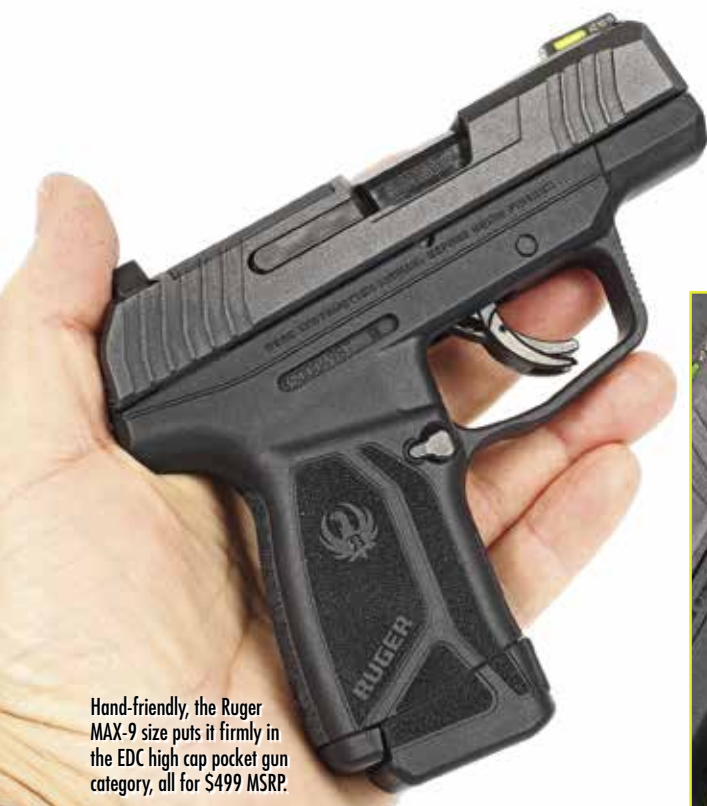
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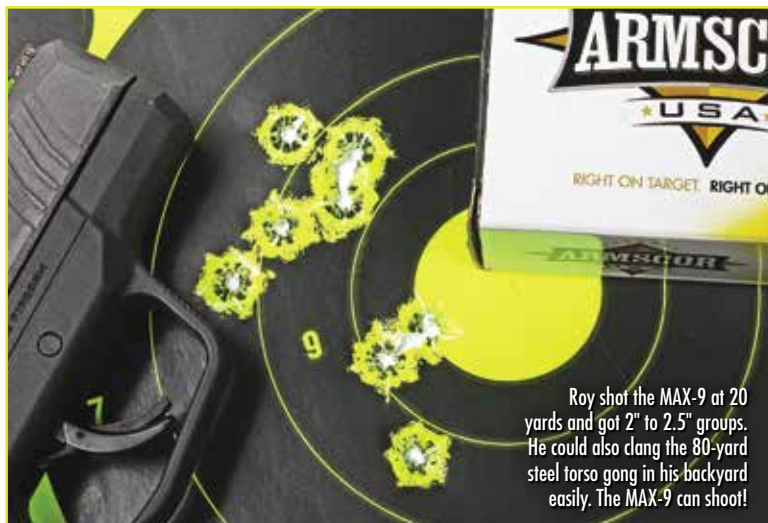
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Hand-friendly, the Ruger MAX-9 size puts it firmly in the EDC high cap pocket gun category, all for \$499 MSRP.



Roy shot the MAX-9 at 20 yards and got 2" to 2.5" groups. He could also clang the 80-yard steel torso gong in his backyard easily. The MAX-9 can shoot!

THE MAX-9

ROY HUNTINGTON

As two to three generations have grown up with little or no experience with revolvers, it seems they drift away from wheel guns toward what they're more comfortable with — semiautos. I'm seeing a real shift from small-frame revolvers like S&W J-Frames, Colts or Rugers to small or even "Micro" 9mm autos as pocket or daily carry guns. While some of us might call it heresy to ignore the reliable old revolvers, I have only to look at my own daily carry gear to see, um ... small 9mm autos.

Frankly, I like to think if you don't take best advantage of new technology — especially when it comes to safety equipment — you're a blithering idiot. Would you wear a kapok life jacket today? Drive your car on the freeway without wearing your seatbelt? Okay,

maybe you would; I take that all back. But let's just say there might be smarter things to do when your life is at stake.

Focus On Function

Ruger introduced the LC9 series a few years ago as their submission for the EDC compact 9mm. In typical Ruger fashion, they showed their heritage by designing a ruggedly simple package, affordably priced and instantly appealing to we "everyman" shooters. Ruger's legacy of solid "tractor-like" guns filling the hunting, sporting and defensive needs of tens of millions of shooters stayed the course with the LC9.

Yet, almost overnight, the 8-round smallish 9mm became "retro" as 10- to 13-round guns were introduced. Abruptly, the same size begged a magazine capacity of at least 10 rounds, or you couldn't compete in the market. As it's done many times in the past though, Ruger took its time before leaping, and when it did, with the

MAX-9, they nailed it. Value, function, form, ergonomics, reliability — the lot — are all checked off.

The MAX-9 has a 10- or 12-round magazine capacity in 9mm, and while at first it looks as if they took an LC9 slide and stuck it onto a higher cap frame, that's not quite the case. Ruger fiddled with the design and parts of the upper until there are essentially no parts fitting both the LC9 and the MAX-9. Like any new generation of firearm from Ruger, the MAX-9 tends to hint at history, but showcases new engineering.

Mechanics

I'd call my hands medium-sized, yet unlike many "higher-cap" grip frames, the MAX-9 fits me just fine. There's no stretch to reach the trigger and my fingers close around the grip fully. My wife, Suzi, has long, slender fingers, and she pronounced it comfy too. A bit of Ruger magic, I assume. The grip texture is a molded-in rough surface, a

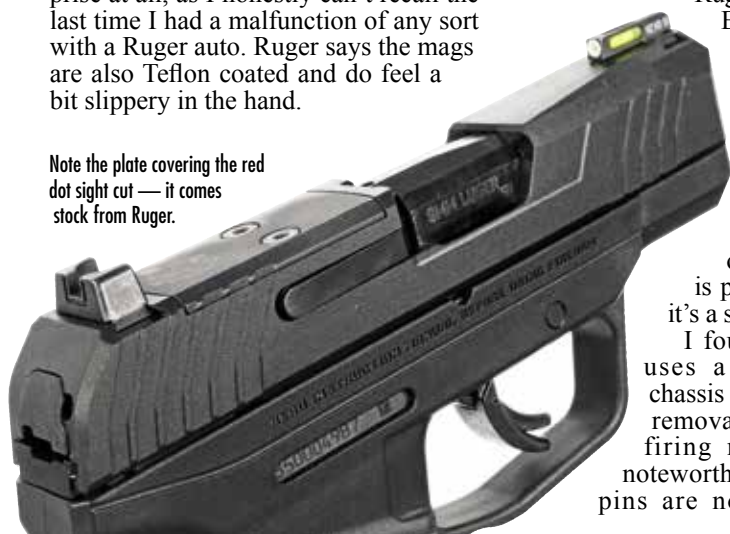
bit like skateboard tape, just aggressive enough to hold, but not so gritty as to be irritating in use.

A classic recoil-operated, striker-fired design, the MAX-9 comes with no big surprises. At about 5.95" long and 4.69" or 4.95" tall — depending upon the mag used — the gun still sits nicely in your hand due to the high beavertail in the grip frame. There are no removable grips, but there are very subtle thumb-swells built into each side near the top. While you can't actually rest your thumb on them, I found they do serve to sort of index your hold nicely. Something I particularly like is the fact the rear of the trigger guard is formed "up" offering a bit more room for your fingers to grip. It's a small touch but makes a big difference.

Models are available with or without a thumb safety and sights are a nice bold fiber optic front with a tritium circle and a wide cut-out rear. Interestingly, the sight cuts fit stock S&W auto sizes, so there are plentiful sight options out there. There's no mag-safety, so it can be fired sans-mag (and you're reminded of that with a line of text on the slide). The mag release can be swapped out to either side by the user, which is pretty much *de rigueur* today and also very handy. The left side shows the safety (at the rear), slide lock and then take-down pin window moving toward the muzzle. While take-down does need a pin or punch, it's very easy to manage and you don't need to pull the trigger to accomplish it. No oopsies.

The trigger is the typical "flipper" type and, unlike many, is smooth and wide. My test gun showed an average of about 5 lbs., 6 oz. over 10 tries. The pull itself is longish, but smooth and without much of the "sponginess" you often feel with a polymer gun. The single-feed double-stack magazines are well made, easy to load, and I had zero issues with reliability with the MAX-9 over about 300 rounds fired. Not a surprise at all, as I honestly can't recall the last time I had a malfunction of any sort with a Ruger auto. Ruger says the mags are also Teflon coated and do feel a bit slippery in the hand.

Note the plate covering the red dot sight cut — it comes stock from Ruger.



Bottom: You get 12+1 from the "extended" mag and 10 in the standard one. The gun comes with both in free America.

Back to front: Safety lever on this model, slide release and take-down port. The mag release can be swapped to be ambi and the trigger is wide and smooth.

The slide is good-old carbon steel, with some sort of black-oxide coating, and the frame is glass-filled nylon. I also think the heavy bevel treatment on the slide makes perfect sense, making holstering or pocket carry easier. There's an external extractor evident, along with a tiny window in the top of the chamber area to peer into for a glint of a chambered case.

Operation

Being striker-fired, the MAX-9 uses the rotary design previously used by Ruger in other designs. Basically, the trigger is pulled, then the sear is cammed while a plunger is moved, allowing the striker to slam forward firing the gun. The gun can't go off unless the trigger is pulled to the rear, so it's a solid, safe design.

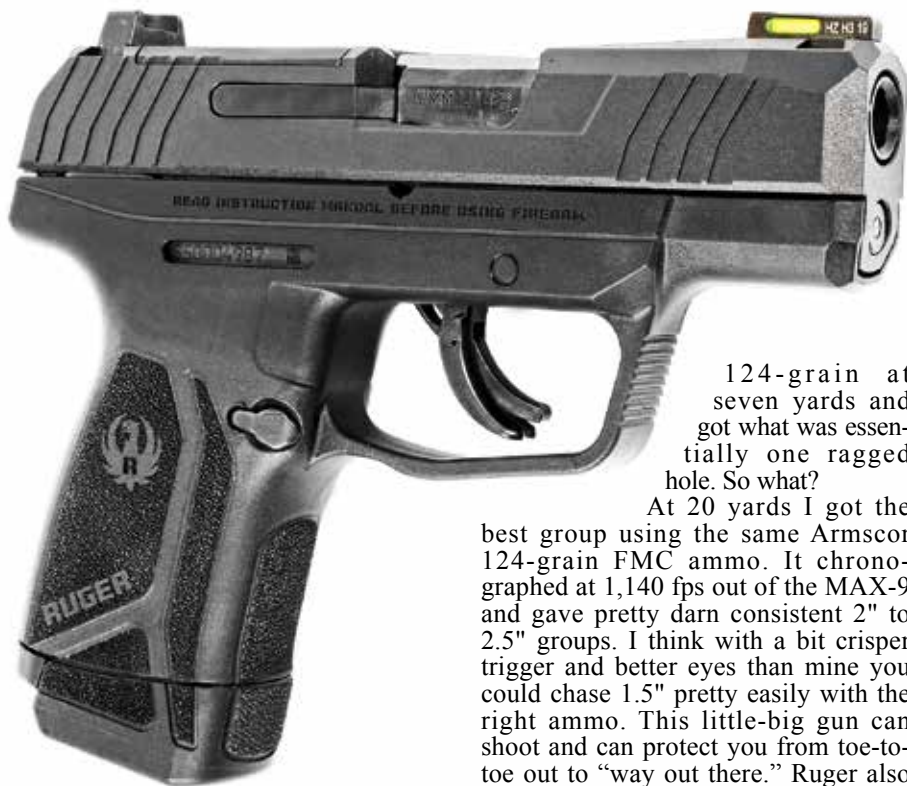
I found the fact Ruger uses a sort of built-in chassis — aluminum, non-removable — to hold the firing mechanism to be noteworthy. This way cross-pins are not relying on the

"plastic" frame to keep the bits in-line and running smoothly. It's simple and elegant and highly functional. I think this will also contribute to a more reliable, consistent trigger pull as time and wear build up. I'd honestly believe you could take a MAX-9 and 10,000 rounds of ammo and have no problems shooting it all. If you could find the ammo, that is.

Shooting

Again, Ruger has addressed the elephant in the room by making the MAX-9 optic-ready. It's the JPoint screw pattern, so compact red dot sights that will fit are plentiful. I didn't take the time to mount an RDS, as I'm sure there would have been no surprises there. Between us, I don't use them on compact, EDC guns but certainly can see the advantages for some shooters, especially those who have real trouble seeing irons. Ruger makes it easy to try both ways if you like, without muss or fuss.

At first blush, accuracy with the MAX-9 seemed excellent, so I pushed shooting out to 20 yards. I really don't know the value of "accuracy" testing a handgun like this at seven yards, which so many seem to be doing these days. Is it because they can't shoot? Virtually any gun can hit the center of a target at this range, so what are we proving? For grins, I shot the MAX-9 with some Armscor 124-grain 9mm and some SIG



Ruger's MAX-9 sports a HiViz front sight, bold rear, flipper trigger and 12+1 rounds of 9mm fight.

124-grain at seven yards and got what was essentially one ragged hole. So what?

At 20 yards I got the best group using the same Armscor 124-grain FMC ammo. It chrono-graphed at 1,140 fps out of the MAX-9 and gave pretty darn consistent 2" to 2.5" groups. I think with a bit crisper trigger and better eyes than mine you could chase 1.5" pretty easily with the right ammo. This little-big gun can shoot and can protect you from toe-to-toe out to "way out there." Ruger also warns while the MAX-9 is safe with +P loads, using them will cause undue

wear so recommends not doing it. It's in your hands, it seems.

I think many shooters fear these little guns recoil too snappily to shoot well, but that's simply not the case. Shoot them as you would any other gun, concentrating on proper trigger press and a very, very firm grip and they not only will perform, but excel. The platform is there, you just need to get up to speed with it.

Should You?

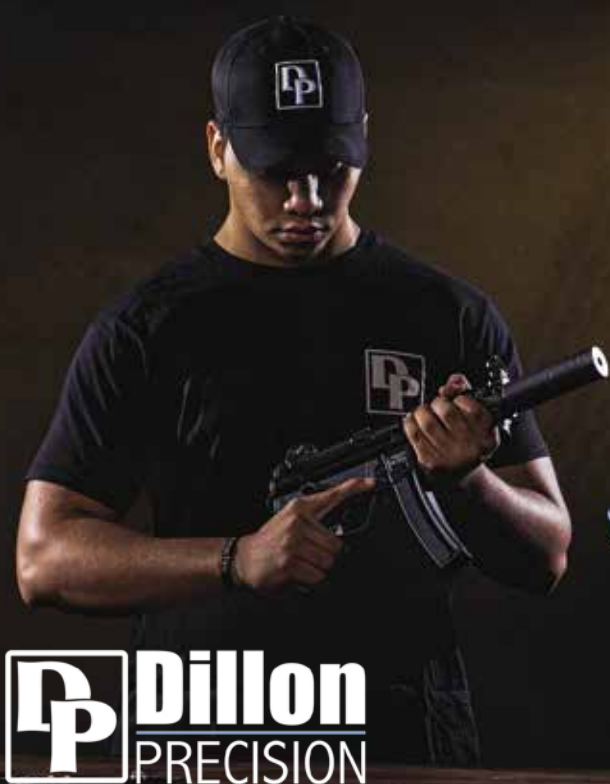
If you haven't explored this whole tiny-terror 9mm side of things, you really should. At only about 18 oz., the MAX-9 weighs about 6 oz. less than a Walther PPKS, and, oddly enough, one ounce *less* than an S&W Model 36 J-Frame — but holds more than twice as much ammo.

Ruger is commended for this blend of smooth ergonomics, friendly pocket or IWB, purse or backpack carry and extreme shootability. All this comes in a package costing \$499, making it one of the most affordable higher-cap small 9mm autos out there.

Nicely done, Ruger.



For more info: Ruger.com; Armscor.com



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The alloy framed Walther P38 P1 version shown here was adopted by the West German Bundeswehr and other countries and is more affordable than collectible wartime pistols.



JEREMY D. CLOUGH

WALTHER P38

THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PISTOL YOU DON'T THINK ABOUT

The Walther P38 wasn't the first 9mm: The honor goes to the P08 Luger which, like later German service pistols, mostly came to the U.S. in the rucksacks of returning GIs. Though its sleek lines still beguile, the Luger is a mechanical dead end while the P38 has shaped the modern service pistol.

Nor was it the first double action: The PP or the obscure .32 caliber Little Tom usually get credit for that. Walther's pistols, though, starting with the blowback PP in 1929 and quickly followed by the smaller PPK, were the first commercially successful ones, and the P38 adopted by the Germans in 1938 was the first 9mm military handgun to combine DA/SA with a locked breech.

Action!

More complex yet regarded as safer than the American M1911 whose single action trigger has always bedeviled the fool and incautious alike, the P38 was

a far cry from the ridiculously hard to make toggle-action Luger. Among other things, it incorporated inexpensive stampings — groundbreaking technology pivotal to later guns like the HK G3/MP5 family.

Instead of the mechanism having to stay cocked to be ready to fire, as with single action or striker-fired guns, the hammer of the P38 stayed in the forward position until the trigger was pulled, which both cocked and then released the hammer, which was cocked by the cycling of the slide for subsequent shots. Hence the DA/SA name; double action first shot, single action thereafter.



The P38 (left) wasn't the first 9mm; that was the P08 Luger (top). While the toggle-locked Luger is a mechanical dead end, the features of the P38 shaped service pistol design worldwide.

Applying the safety automatically dropped the hammer, returning the gun to DA mode.

2 Steps Forward, 1 Back

The heel magazine release securing the P38's single-column, 8-round magazine was a step backwards from the pushbutton of the PP/PPK family, as was a safety change where the hammer falls onto a locked firing pin instead of the safety cross shaft on the PP family.

The P38 (right) wasn't the first DA auto, nor were its predecessors the PP and PPK (below).



The PP family was, though, the first successful one, and the P38 was the first locked breech 9mm service pistol to use the DA/SA system.

Unfortunately, the square early firing pins were fragile, and one breaking when the hammer fell on a loaded chamber would be spectacularly dangerous, as the gun would likely dump its entire mag. Breaking one on an empty WWII-era gun is safer, but as I learned the hard way, expensive. The later round pins are stronger.

Like the PPK, P38 grips are wrap-around plastic ranging in color from brown and green to black, and at times made of sheet metal due to the exigencies of war. We were, after all, bombing the foolishness out of any German manufacturing facility we could fly over at the time. With memories of trench warfare still fresh, the grips were grooved horizontally so they would readily shed mud, a calculus omitting how much slicker that makes the grip. Later ones are checkered.

The loaded chamber indicator of the pocket pistols was retained, as was the clever plunger-retained extractor debuted on the Walther Model 8.

Silencer Ready

Instead of the customary Browning-style tilting barrel, the P38 barrel slides forward and aft in recoil, with a locking block beneath the barrel that rotates up into locking notches on either side of the slide. Unique, and, like the DA system, one of a precious few handgun features not invented by John Browning.

Both the PPK (left) and P38 (right) used a decocking safety, but while the PPK drops the hammer onto a steel shaft, the P38 hammer falls directly on the back of the locked firing pin.



Mostly important for suppressed guns, this eliminates the cantilever effect where the added leverage of a suppressor's weight keeps the rear of a tilting barrel locked up into place and unable to cycle.

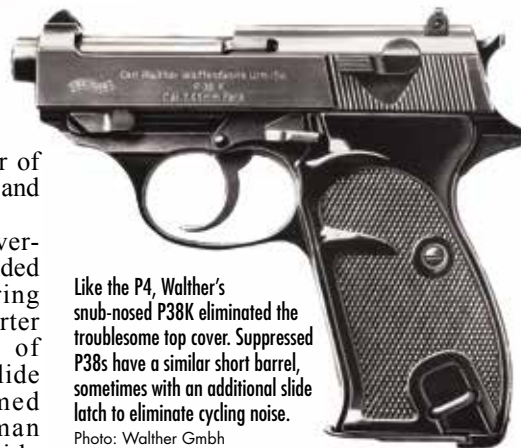
Walther produced suppressed versions of the P38s, some with an added latch to keep the slide shut during firing, as well as the slightly shorter P4 and snubnosed P38K (both of which omitted the problematic slide top cover), and the alloy-framed P1 adopted by the West German Bundeswehr and the closed-slide P5 and P5 Compact. Given the Germans' well-founded fascination with subcaliber conversions, the P38 was made in .30 Luger and .22 LR, with conversions in .22 LR and 4mm. The 4mm was available until recently from Lothar Walther, the still active barrel-maker founded by Carl Walther's son.

Inspirations

Walther wasn't the only one riffing on their proven design. British stalwart Webley & Scott promptly made a DA 9mm in 1952, as did S&W, whose Model 39 appeared in 1954, followed by the hi-cap 59 that later morphed into the hugely successful 5906. A rare military version of the 39, the Navy's Mk 22 Mod 0 "Hush Puppy," was equipped with a suppressor very similar to Walther's, further revealing the



Barrel locking block on the P38 (left-to-right), Beretta 951 and Beretta 92. The inspiration is unquestionable; it appears on very few other handguns, as most auto pistols use some variant of the Browning tilting barrel.



Like the P4, Walther's snub-nosed P38K eliminated the troublesome top cover. Suppressed P38s have a similar short barrel, sometimes with an additional slide latch to eliminate cycling noise.

Photo: Walther GmbH

gun's inspiration.

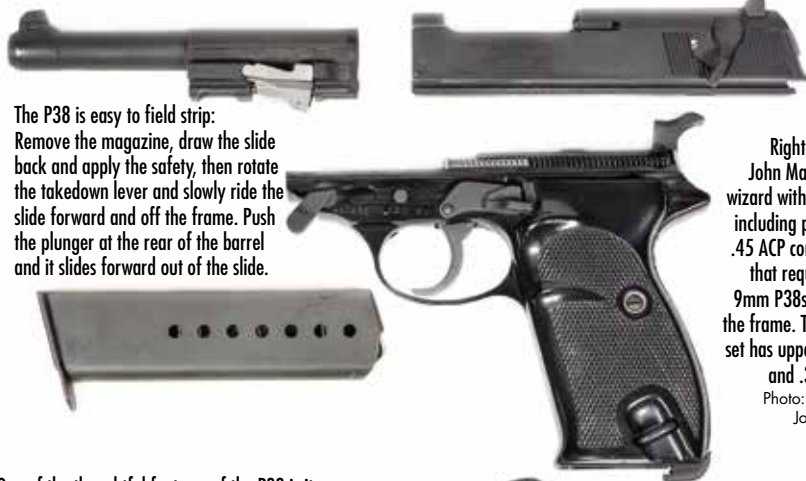
Nor was that the end of the P38's influence: The Army's General Officer Pistol program supplied distinctive sidearms to flag officers as a sign of rank. Originally using Colt pocket pistols in .32 or .380, the supply was depleted by 1972. Two of the four proposed replacements were the P38 and M39, already in use by Air Force Officers. A third contestant was a 9mm Colt Commander. While the test was won by the M15 arsenal-shortened M1911 .45 — the only one that wasn't a 9mm — the pistols under consideration make it clear what was on the military horizon.

Beretta Derivations

Beretta's first riposte to the P38 was in 1951 with the M51, also known as



While the Beretta 92 has mechanical differences, it's a lot like a P38 with a Browning Hi-Power magazine.

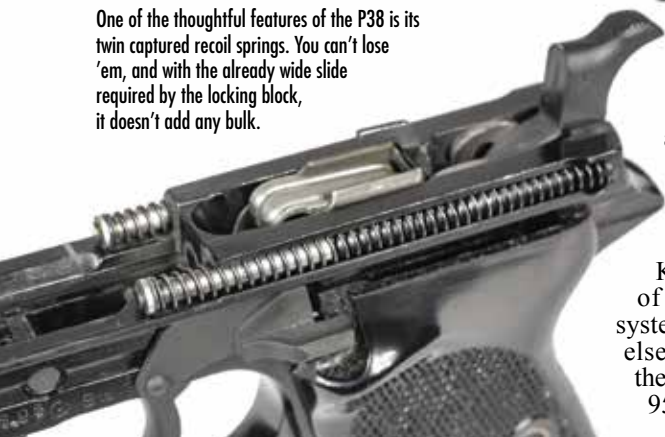


The P38 is easy to field strip: Remove the magazine, draw the slide back and apply the safety, then rotate the takedown lever and slowly ride the slide forward and off the frame. Push the plunger at the rear of the barrel and it slides forward out of the slide.

Right: The late John Martz was a wizard with the P38, including producing .45 ACP conversions that required two 9mm P38s to make the frame. This cased set has uppers in .45 and .38 Super.
Photo: Courtesy John Martz



One of the thoughtful features of the P38 is its twin captured recoil springs. You can't lose 'em, and with the already wide slide required by the locking block, it doesn't add any bulk.



the 951 and produced elsewhere as the Helwan Brigadier. It included the P38's wrap-around grooved grips (as did the roller-locked CZ52) and locking block. Other than in Beretta and its Taurus copies, the *über* rare Korth semi-auto and a couple of stray Llamas, this locking system appears virtually nowhere else, leaving no question where the idea came from. Visually, the 951 combines the Beretta 1934

and sleeker, Mossad-famous Model 70, including their single action triggers, scooped-out slides and the low grip-mounted magazine release of the 70. Not an unattractive pistol, the 951 is primarily interesting as a transitional piece between the P38 and its most triumphant progeny, the 92.

Adopted by the U.S. Army in 1985 as the M9, the 92 arrived in 1976, replete with a P38 locking block and DA/SA trigger mated with the high-capacity magazine first seen on the Browning Hi-Power P35. One could be forgiven for saying the 92 is a P38 with

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Beretta's 951 (top) is a transitional model that uses the P38 locking block later found on the 92 but with the single action trigger and styling of the 1934 and 70 series (bottom) blowback pistols. The Helwan Brigadier is a copy of the 951.



a P35 magazine. The inspiration is clear, and while it won't latch, a 92 mag manually held in a Hi-Power magwell will feed.

P38 Legacy

While the peerless John Martz produced stunning custom P38s, including cut-down "Baby" versions and .45 ACP and .38 Super versions painstakingly created from two pistols each, P38's true legacy is the service pistols inspired by its combination of DA/SA trigger and 9mm chambering. This pairing set the standard for the 92 as

well as other police and military pistols including SIG, HK, Ruger and the other Wondernines that ruled the roost through the '80s and '90s.

Not to mention the caliber, arguments continue, as they have for the century-plus since Thompson and LaGarde first tested the 9mm versus .45. The 9mm is currently the chambering for military, police and increasingly, concealed carry. The Luger started it, but let's not forget when the Luger was under consideration by the



Probably the most questionable design feature of the P38 (along with ejecting to the left), the sheet metal slide cover provides easy access for service and holds the rear sight in place. Unfortunately, they can also slip the surly bonds of earth during recoil.

Army, Ordnance insisted it be in .45 ACP. It's the P38 and its progeny that popularized 9mm in the U.S.

With over a million produced during WWII, not counting pre- or post-war guns, there are plenty around, including the reasonably priced alloy framed P1 versions. A vast library of books covers the P38, from the two-volume *Walther: A German Success Story* to Maj. George Nonte's fascinating little manual that includes helpful field expedients such as how to urinate through the action ("vigorously") to rinse debris from it, an indignity the old warhorse doesn't deserve.



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12 ROUNDS OF MICRO POCKET POWER

TOM MCHALE

GX4 TAURUS

The Taurus GX4 packs 11 rounds into its two included flat-base magazines. Add one in the chamber for two sixguns of carry capacity.

There's a new pocket pistol in town and, hold on to your shorts, it's ... affordable! We get lots of letters asking why we don't cover more guns mere mortals can afford, so here you go. The new Taurus GX4 micro 9mm pistol offers big performance with a modest price tag.

GX4 Tour

The GX4 is a subcompact, micro really, 9mm pistol. It's sized like many .380 ACPs but offers plenty of 9mm get up and go. In its 6.05 x 4.4 x 1.08" wide package you'll get a magazine full of 11 rounds. Add one in the chamber and you're looking at two sixguns in your pocket. All of that houses a 3.06" barrel.

As a polymer pistol with steel slide, it's light to carry at just 18.5 oz. unloaded. When you field strip the GX4 you'll notice a hidden benefit on the inside. The chassis on this pistol is a full-length stainless-steel framework that prevents flex under fire and provides structural integrity for the polymer grip. By full length, I don't mean the chassis extends to the muzzle; it doesn't. But the chassis and rail segments are continuous from the front of the trigger guard to the rear of the frame.

The GX4 ships with two 11-round magazines. They're steel bodied, helping them drop freely on magazine release activation. There are rear witness holes for rounds 4 through 11, so you can easily see your load status. You'll also note the bottom of the magazines have

The sights are GLOCK-cut compatible, so there's a universe of possibilities. However, Tom liked the factory sights just fine.

The stippling pattern is shallow, so it feels more like sandpaper or skateboard tape. It is effective under fire.



Left: Takedown is easy but does require a flathead screwdriver, case rim, or other instrument. Note the rotating pin just above the trigger guard.



Note the flat and wide trigger and safety leaf.

a scallop cutout in case you need to rip out a magazine in the event of a serious jam. While the magazines in the box are flat-based, you can order an option 11-rounder with a pinky extension and an extended 13-rounder. Ten-round configurations are available for those living under the iron-fisted rule of Republikks.

Presumably to save frame real estate on this micro pistol, there's no takedown lever visible. On the right side, you will see a flathead screw slot on a pin about the diameter of a pea. Rotate that 1/4 turn and you can press the trigger while easing the slide off the muzzle end. Yes, you do have to press the trigger to field strip the GX4. Personally, I think this is an overblown issue as there are a dozen other situations where you need to verify loaded status and muzzle direction before doing something or other.

Handling

The GX4 has what I would describe as moderate texturing around the grip area. Technically, it presents a random stippling pattern on all four sides of the grip. However, the stippling depth is relatively shallow, so it's more reminiscent of a finer sandpaper type surface, not tall spikes, ridges, or other random shapes. There are two small stippled areas on the frame above the trigger guard. These are nifty places to rest your right- or left-hand trigger finger when not shooting.

One can't defy physics, so you'll find the GX4, like any gun of the size and weight, is a bit jumpy when using full pressure self-defense ammo. With my large (not extra-large) hands, I can get part of my pinky on the grip. However, I found it more comfortable to shoot with two fingers on the grip and my pinky curled underneath. That worked out just fine, and I didn't have any problem controlling the gun, especially when making good use of my support hand.

The trigger is pretty good out of



Black Hills' HoneyBadger ammo produced this 0.98" group.

Federal Syntech Defense is a fragmenting lead-core, synthetic jacket load with a deep penetrating base. It shot into 1.08" from 15 yards.

the box. There's a very short and relatively smooth take up stage of maybe 1/8" followed by constant pressure to a break. Using a trigger scale, I measured the break at 6.25 lbs. It's a tad heavier than I would like in a perfect world, but as a pocket-friendly pistol I can't really complain about a little extra safety margin in this department. I did not have any trouble managing the trigger on the range — it didn't affect my ability to shoot accurately.

If you like to shoot the reset, you'll be able to do this with the Taurus GX4. I wouldn't describe the reset as audibly or tactilely obnoxious, but you can feel it and to a lesser degree hear it. The trigger shoe itself is flat and wide, as is the safety leaf in its center. You will note vertical serrations in the leaf itself.

The pistol as a whole is designed to be carry friendly. The grip is well rounded and there are no sharp corners to be found. The frame dust cover is beveled and the slide up top is subtly beveled in the opposite direction. Even the muzzle area, frame and slide, are beveled from the front end to ease reholstering. The whole rig will just melt into an IWB holster.

Sights

There's a new term making its way through the industry — "standard industry cut." As there's a good chance you don't yet know what that means

— I didn't — it's a standard term for "GLOCK compatible" dovetail sight cuts.

That's a smart move on the part of the Taurus. There are so many aftermarket sights on the market right now to fit GLOCK pistols you will have a plethora of choice should you want to upgrade the factory sights. Don't get me wrong, the sights that come on the GX4 are just fine. There is a standard white dot up front. It mounts through the slide with a small screw like a GLOCK. The rear sight is blacked out with horizontal separations to reduce glare and features a square notch. There is no pressing need to upgrade the sights on this gun unless you want something more colorful like a fiber-optic or night compatible like a Tritium filled version.

Does it Shoot?

I tested the Taurus GX4 with three types of 9mm ammunition. Given the subcompact form factor of this pistol, two-finger grip and short sight radius, I elected to shoot the "formal" stuff from 15 yards. Seemed appropriate. I also set up a Competition Electronics ProChrono DLX 15 feet downrange to check velocities while I was at it. If you don't yet have a chrony, do check this one out. It's an outstanding piece of gear. The Bluetooth connection to a phone app makes range use easy — no pencils and paper — everything is recorded and calculated seven ways



Inside is a stainless-steel chassis to prevent flex and increase durability.

0.82" five-shot group from 15 yards.

Black Hills HoneyBadger is designed to be an "always works" offering, as the design doesn't rely on expansion at all. The solid copper projectile will always penetrate and deliver its fight-stopping performance through a unique "drill bit-like" design. Light for caliber, the 100-grain gnashing badgers left the GX4 at 1,175.7 fps and printed a 0.98" group.

Range tests: Check. This subcompact shoots just fine, thank you very much.

Closing Arguments

The Taurus GX4 is one handy little pistol. I always try to look for the unique attributes defining the value of a new gun. In my view, this one boils down to 12 rounds of pocket-sized power. Yes, it'll make a stellar pocket pistol given its size and shape. The inclusion of standard (GLOCK-compatible) sights is a huge plus in my book. Hat's off to Taurus for making a customer-centric decision benefitting the consumer. I wish more manufacturers would standardize on sight compatibility. With an MSRP of just \$392.42 it will be hard to go wrong with this one.



For more info: TaurusUSA.com, FederalPremium.com, Black-Hills.com, CompetitionElectronics.com

from Sunday on your smartphone.

Federal Syntech Defense borrows technology from the colorful Syntech practice, training and match lines with its lead projectiles coated with polymer material. These blue rounds are pure hollowpoints designed to break into four pieces when impacting organic targets. Three petals branch off into 6" deep tracks while the base core will penetrate a total of 12 to 18". I've tested these 138-grain rounds in gelatin, and they do exactly that. Over the chrony, the Syntech Defense loads averaged 1,017.3 fps. From 15 yards, a five-shot group mea-

sured a peachy 1.08". That'll do!

Federal Punch is a more affordable premium self-defense round built as a traditional jacketed hollowpoint. Without the engineering needed to optimize over the FBI test protocol which is less relevant to home and defense situations (shooting through wood, steel and auto glass for example), Federal has produced an HST-like round more affordable for us mere mortals. Don't get me wrong, Punch will penetrate all those test protocol objects, it's just not optimized for the weird situations. This load clocked in at 1,065.7 fps and produced a stellar

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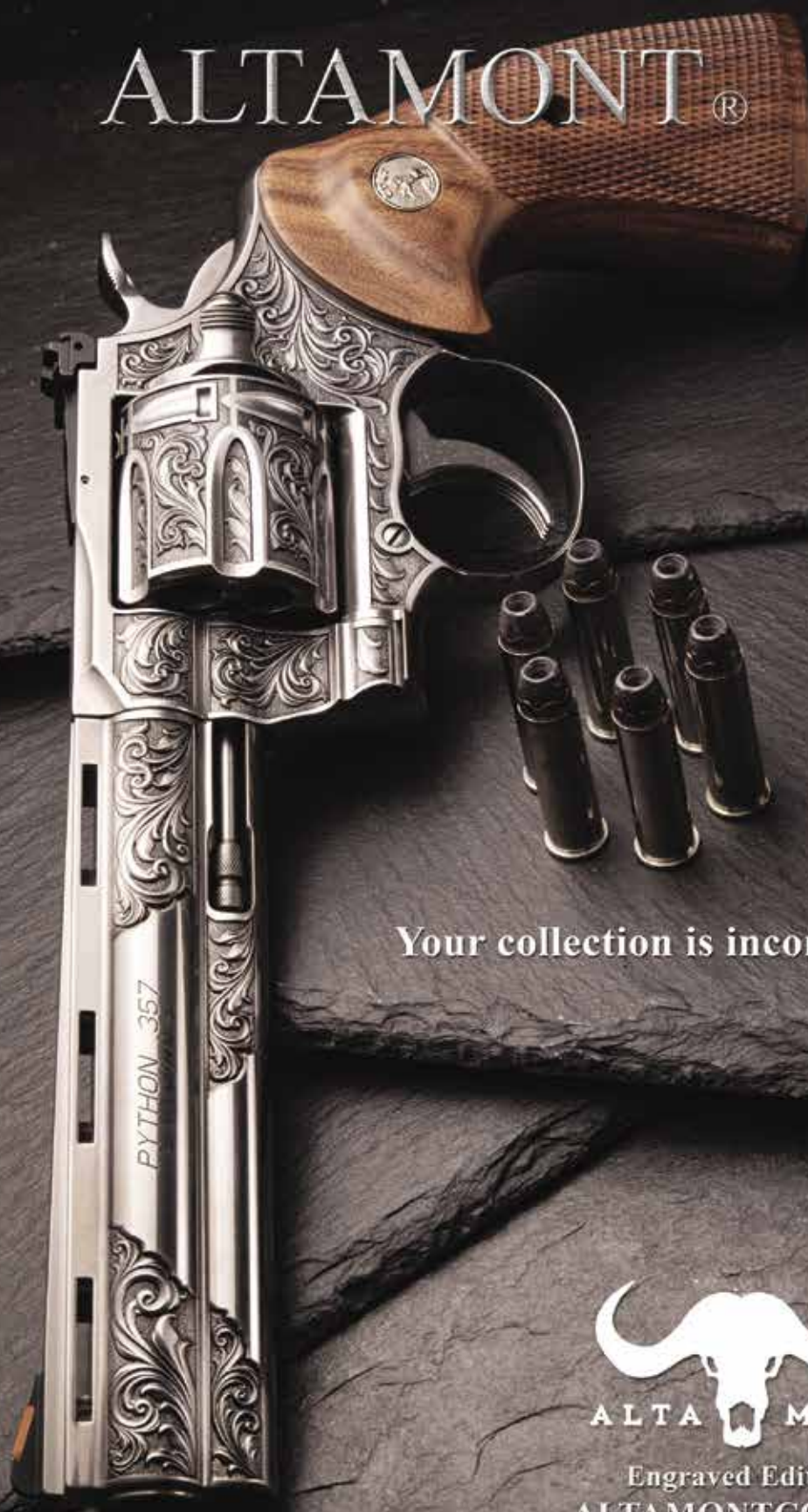
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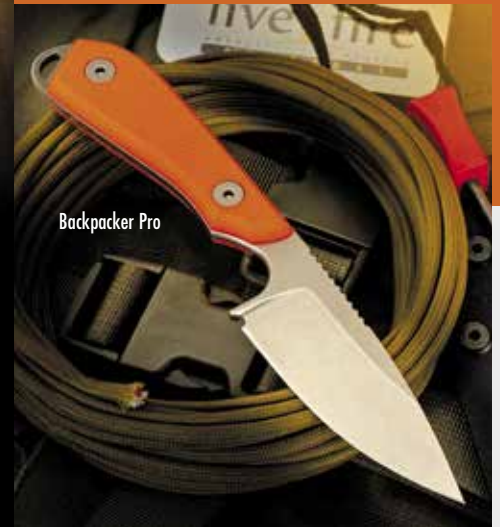
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WHITE RIVER KNIVES IS A FAMILY ON A MISSION

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PAT COVERT

PHOTOS: ROB JONES/
THE IMAGESMITH, LLC



Backpacker Pro

The Cammenga family of Fremont, Mich., is far from the first family business to pursue manufacturing knives, but they're certainly one of the most devoted. "Beginning in the early '90s our family manufactured the U.S. military lensatic compass which was also used by hunters, anglers and other outdoor enthusiasts," President and

founder John Cammenga Sr. tells *Handgunner*. "We sold the business in 2005 and I planned to retire, travel with my wife Susan and go fishing. However, we soon realized we needed to go back to work as we missed the challenges and rewards of operating a small business."

"In late 2010, an opportunity arose to purchase knife-making equipment from a local bank. I immediately asked my sons if they wanted to form a new family business," John recalls. So in 2011 White River Knife and Tool opened for business. From the start, we committed to make all White River Knives in the U.S. with sourced materials made in our own country.

Family First

"It soon became clear we wouldn't be where we are today without the dedication and skills of our sons," John relates. "So we recently made them co-owners of the business — announced here publicly for the first time. Still being a small company, we all wear many hats. I may have the title of President, but I spend most of my time in the shop. Susan is our Secretary and Treasurer but splits her time between the office and the shop. John Jr. is our General Manager but spends most of his time designing our knives and sheaths, programming CNC grinders and in project management. Matt is our VP of

Sales but spends most of his time writing code and setting up CNC machines, making sheath fixtures and is our IT guy."

I'm often reminded of something my father told me years ago: 'If you are too big for the little jobs, then you are too little for the big jobs.' We try to live by that every day at our shop and it's resulted in a dedicated team and great working atmosphere."

Outdoors & More

White River Knives is known for making some mighty fine fixed-blade knives for hunters, fishermen, campers and survivalists. "We named our company after the White River in Michigan's Manistee National Forest, which runs through our personal property. Our bear logo is inspired by a pet bear that lived for many happy years on our property in a massive bear cage with a one-acre play area, says John. "We are best known for our outdoor knives. That said, through many collaborations and OEM work we have manufactured a wide variety of knives including tactical/fighting, first responder, throwing, chef knives and more. We also make folding blades for other brands."

Our Model 1 knife is our most popular and is offered in a variety of handle options. It features a high finger choil and the handle is contoured to fit a wide



Firecraft FC 3.5 Pro

variety of hand sizes,” notes the senior Cammenga. “The M1 Backpacker features a mil-spec 550 paracord wrapped handle. The M1-PRO features a textured G10 handle, and the M1-Caper has a thicker and fully contoured handle. A close rival to the top spot is our Firecraft Series FC-3.5-PRO designed by outdoorsman Jason Tietz. It is lightweight and suitable for bushcrafting tasks, field dressing, skinning, food prep and more. Other top models include our Knucklehead and traditional fillet knives, designed by John Cammenga Jr.” Recently White River was contracted by Exodus Knife & Tool to produce two of their innovative bushcraft-oriented fixed-blades, and the Cammengas liked their designs so much they offered to sell two of the knives in their line to help increase exposure and sales. These appear in the White River catalog as the Exodus 3 and 4.

Corporate Values

Having tested many of their fixed-blades over the years, I can attest they cut like a house on fire — much due to the fact they use top-shelf steel heat-treated to perfection. “Most White River blades are made with premium steels produced in the U.S., such as CPM-S35VN, CPM-3V

or CPM-S90V,” John relates. “These are all proprietary knife steels made by Crucible Industries, LLC based in Solvay, N.Y. Our most popular handle options are phenolic laminates, such as Micarta. A common trait of White River knives is user comfort, even with extended use. We try to eliminate ‘hot spots’ and give the user maximum control.”

“In 2021 we plan to introduce a folding knife, a chef set and a line of first responder tools designed by Kurt Delia

of Delia Tactical. We are also increasing capacity for our own knives and our OEM partnerships.” Switching career gears is risky any way you slice it, but White River Knives has not only weathered any storms it may have encountered along the way — it has thrived. This is a story of the American dream come true and how one family is living it and enjoying it at its finest.



For more info: WhiteRiverKnives.com



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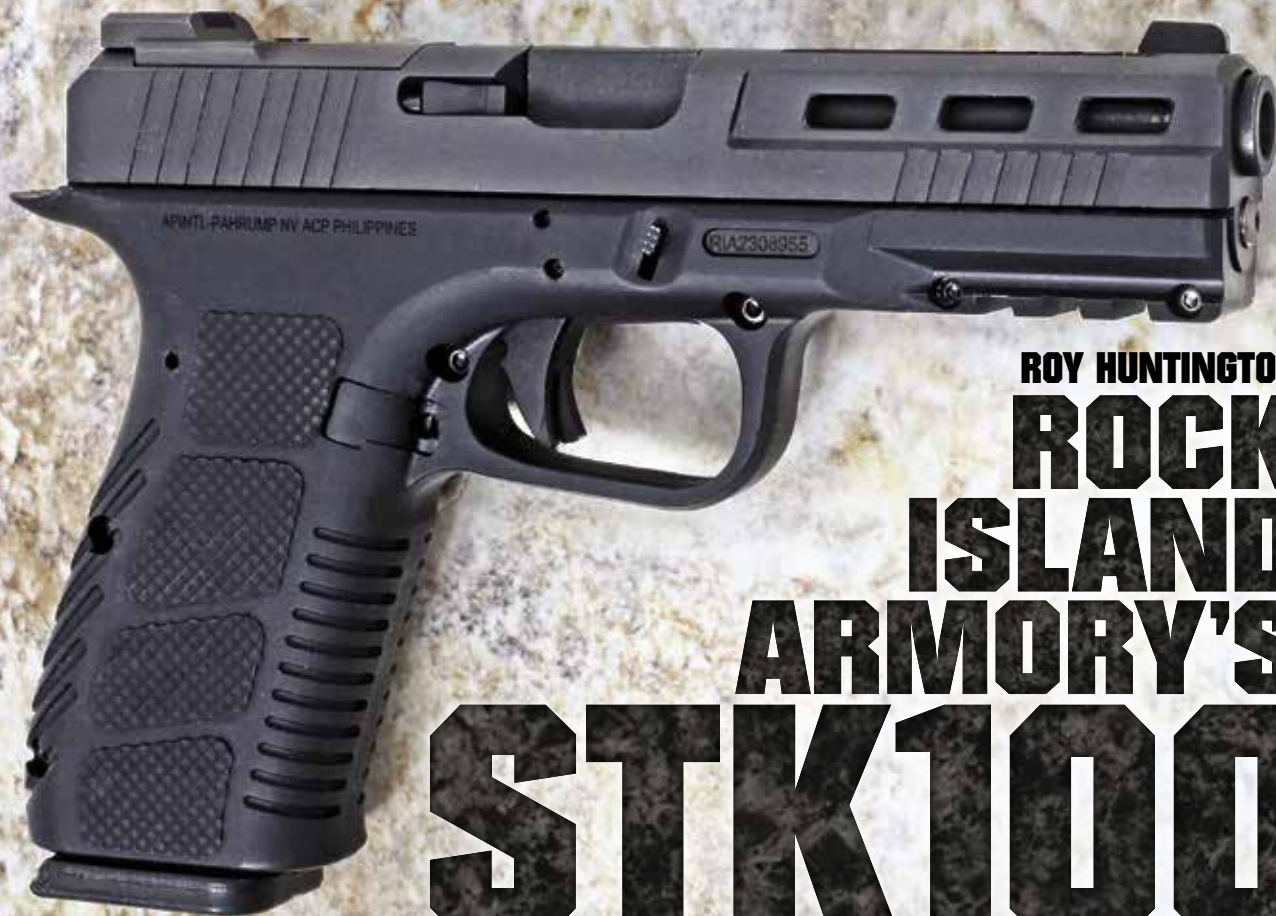


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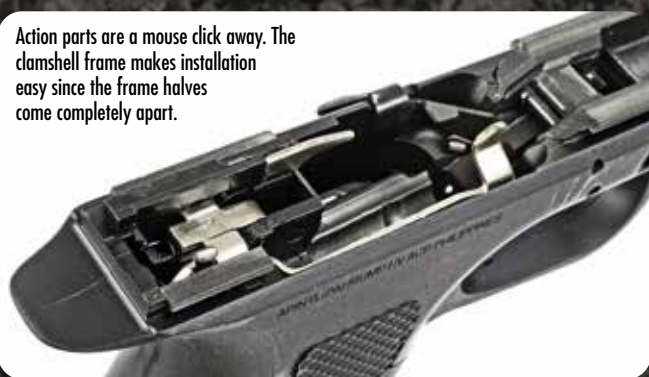
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9MM DEFENSE – RE-ENGINEERED!

Action parts are a mouse click away. The clamshell frame makes installation easy since the frame halves come completely apart.



Replacement or custom sights are available from a wide range of after-market shops. The slide comes pre-cut and fitted for a red dot sight.



That's 1.5" at 20 yards from a rest using Armcor 124-grain ball ammo. Roy found the STK100 to be reliable and very accurate.

I was chatting with Martin Tuason, Armscor/Rock Island's president on the phone about their new STK100. It was obvious he was enthusiastic about the new gun.

"I wanted Armscor to get into the striker-fired market, but not with a plastic gun. That's been done. Dustin Jones, our CFO, knows the market and did the research. He came back encouraging us to take the leap. We put our heads together and decided, let's do it."

Martin went on, "And, since we're famous for working with metal it was only natural we decided to do what we do best. We're the number one producer of metal 1911s in the world so we know how to do it!"



The Rock Island STK100 may look like it has a polymer frame, but it doesn't. Rock Island felt aluminum yielded a better result and Roy thinks they're right.



If you look carefully you'll notice the grip angle isn't the classic "Polymer Pistol" one. The STK100 matches the classic feel of the 1911, improving pointability significantly.

So they did.

As I talked with Martin I was holding their brand new STK100 in my hand. I had shot it some to get familiar with it before calling him, and it had run just fine. I'd call it "fun to shoot" even. Think "modern defensive pistol" like we've grown familiar with — but with some key differences.

The STK100 is 17+1, 28 oz. and about 7.9" overall. Call it a full-sized holster pistol if you would. The slide is carbon steel (Parkerized), having easily replaceable sights. The slide is also supplied fully machined with a red dot sight cut-out. To me, one of the most powerful features is the all-aluminum frame with machined-in integral grips. There's also a high-cut beavertail allowing a very high, secure grip. I have medium-sized hands and can reach the trigger comfortably in spite of the double stack magazine girth. It's obvious some thought went into the grip assembly.

But praise be, at his insistence, Martin's team changed the grip angle to match that of a classic 1911. When you pick up the STK100 and point it you notice the difference immediately. There's no "point, then adjust a tad" going on. You bring it up and it locks right in — presto. If you don't think this matters lay gun "B" on the gun store counter, and place the STK100 next to it and pick them up one after the other. I promise you'll grin and say, "Oh, I get it now."

Details

Armscor is truly a family-owned business and the people who run it are gun-people. They shoot, talk guns and are working constantly with their customers, military and police to keep honing products and creating new ones.

The STK100 comes from a police gun concept in the Philippines where the company originated. Martin wanted something that'd run 20,000 rounds and

The STK100 design borrows features from another famous model — but with some significant changes like the aluminum clamshell frame!



be able to withstand the rigors of hard use in the field. He felt the aluminum frame made good sense as part of that idea.

The result is a unique two-part "clamshell" frame. If you look at the photos, you can see small screw holes along the frame's perimeter. Lurking just inside the holes are Allen-headed stainless steel screws. This combination of aluminum and assembly engineering allows a few interesting things to occur.

To get to the action bits it's easy to simply take the gun apart. Now you can see and handle everything inside clearly. Also, this assembly method allows much easier machining of the frame as both "sides" can be done next to each other with no need to dig deep into a blind hole, for instance. Deburring, drilling, etc. can go smoothly — and faster. This keeps costs down too, allowing a lower MSRP.

I think the most important thing about the aluminum frame is the fact it adds rigidity and repeatability. Cross pins, screws and assemblies inside tend to ride smoothly. The relationship of parts like sears and action bits remain fixed to one another. No (or extremely little) frame flex means a more reliable trigger pull and long-term predictable dependability.

A Base Gun?

Custom parts from the likes of Lone Wolff Distributors, ZEV, Technologies, APEX Tactical and others fit.

As Martin said, "Why re-invent the entire wheel when it's only a few important segments that could stand to be upgraded, like the metal frame, for instance?"

There's a world of after-market parts available for popular guns like the Ruger 10/22, AR-style rifles, GLOCKS, etc. and Armscor is riding the wave with the STK100. Sights, triggers, barrels, magazines, etc. are all potential drop-in accessories already on the market ready to go into an STK100. And, at about \$595 at full

MSRP, it's a good way to get into the "custom gun" fun trend building your own idea of what a "perfect" defensible pistol would be to meet your needs.

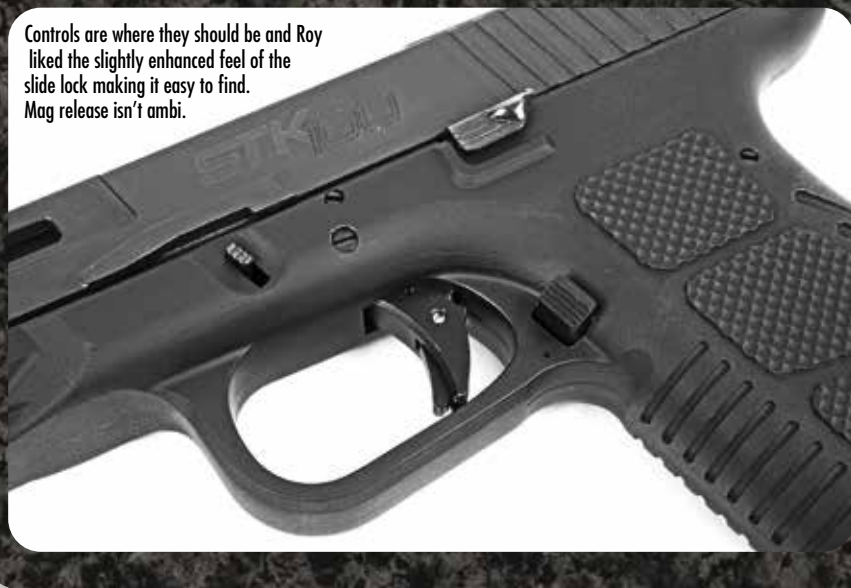
Handling

The grip angle makes such a difference as to be immediately noticeable. General gun-handling seems a bit smoother for me, and bringing the gun up to shoot feels as if the sights settle right where they belong. I found it to be fast, secure and certain when pointing.

The grip texture machined into the STK100's frame surface is contoured the way it is for a reason. The front strap horizontal cuts help to keep the grip from moving vertically when firing. The rear angled cuts help to keep the back-strap from rolling up and right under recoil (if you're a right-hander). The side checkering gives your palm and fingertips purchase to hold their places properly. Combined they act as a sort of triple threat to the gun moving under recoil.

Shooting was, in short, a delight. I'm no newcomer to all this and I've literally shot hundreds of this style of handgun over the years. From the earliest "high cap" autos in the middle 1980s as a cop, to today's most cutting edge designs, I've got tens of thousands of rounds through them. With that much exposure you can't but help develop a sort of automatic response when handling them. "Oh, this feels like I thought

Controls are where they should be and Roy liked the slightly enhanced feel of the slide lock making it easy to find. Mag release isn't ambi.



it would," you seem to say to yourself. It's easy to become complacent unless you're surprised suddenly.

Which I was.

The STK100 isn't another clone of a clone — but pushes the envelope out even further.

On Target

Trigger pull averaged about 4 lbs., 6 oz. and reset was secure and audible.

I liked that. It also smoothed out as I shot the gun. But I'll be honest and say I'd look forward to a crisp APEX style trigger some day as they tend to spoil you terribly. The STK100's aluminum frame would also mean the aftermarket trigger would remain sound as time passes with no surprises.

The sights were fine, with a white dot front and, combined with the comfortable grip angle and ergonomics,

showed me this gun can shoot. The STK100 gave me dependable 5-shot groups in the 1.5" to 1.75" range at 20 yards using Armscor 124-grain FMJ ammo. That's a stock \$600 gun, stock trigger, stock barrel, stock sights, etc. I can only wonder what we could accomplish with a custom barrel, trigger and sights.

I've got just short of 500 stashed rounds through it. I cleaned and lubed it when I got it and it's run just fine since. It's a very early pre-production gun and to be frank, they often suffer from glitches. But this one runs great, which bodes well for production models. Since they have it sorted out this early, the rest will be easy.

In short, this gun is not only fun to shoot, but it's manufactured by "gun people" — and they nailed it. Martin, the ever-present, ever-vigilant company president said to "Look for new models as time passes." It'll be interesting to see what they come up with.

And remember — dogs can't eat an STK100. Just sayin'.



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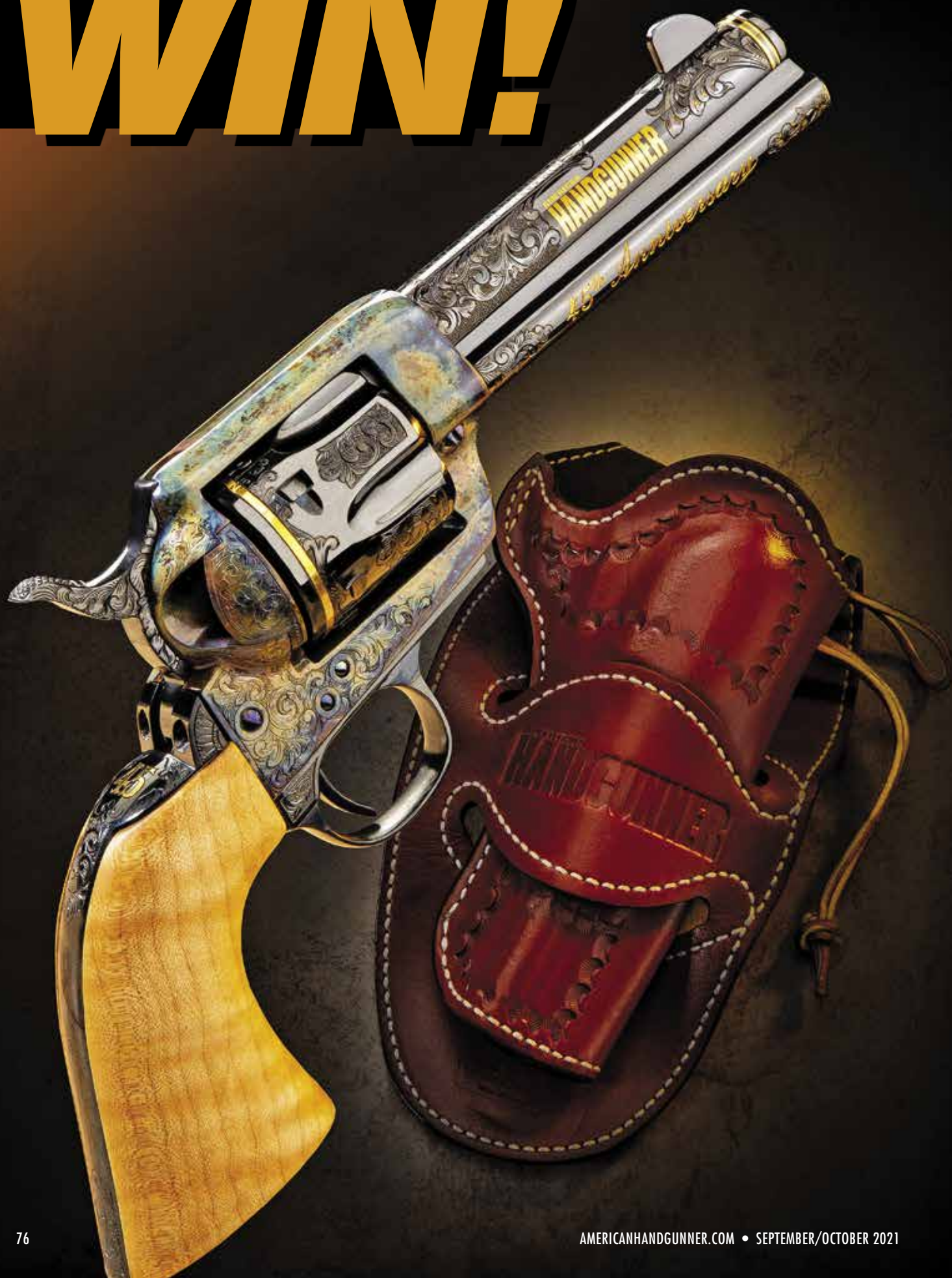
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It is only fitting for *American Handgunner* to celebrate its 45th year by giving away a .45 — the *Frontier Model .45 LC* — the very same gun on the cover of this magazine!

It's no ordinary wheel gun! Cimarron Firearms first sent it to no less than gun 'riter par excellence John Taffin so he could shoot and write about it. As John relates, he picked up the gun from his FFL dealer and was immediately impressed. "The case-hardened frame exhibits extremely attractive blues and grays, and the hammer is also case colored instead of having bare steel sides." When John used the gun at an indoor range, he said the results were exceptional even without shooting aids. It's a shooter and John says, "This is no surprise as I've yet to have a Cimarron sixgun which wasn't."

After testing, the gun made another stop, this time to Baron Engraving, where it was transformed to a stunning piece of art. "The color case hardening was left as is while the frame screws were fire blued and the barrel, ejector rod housing, trigger guard, backstrap and cylinder were all treated to scroll engraving with gold bands on the cylinder and 'American Handgunner' engraved on the barrel all resulting in a most attractive, one-of-a-kind .45 Single Action . . . then TK Grips crafted a beautifully fitted and finished set of curly maple grips for this one-of-a-kind sixgun."

Carry your special sixgun in a special holster — the *Desperado* from DeSantis Gunhide. It's an authentic 1800s Mexican loop holster made of premium saddle leather with full suede lining and decorative border stamping. The "American Handgunner" logo is stamped on the holster just as it is on the *Frontier Model .45*.

The Cimarron Frontier Model .45 LC and DeSantis' *Desperado* Holster have both been transformed to celebrate our magazine's 45th anniversary. Join our giveaway for a chance to win these stunning prizes! Visit AmericanHandgunner.com/giveaways or send a (post) card! —Jazz Jimenez

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We've been told it's difficult to find postcards nowadays so here's a tip: Follow the lead of resourceful entrants who used index cards, back of greeting cards and even cereal boxes.



ENTER ONLINE!

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ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY SEPTEMBER 30, 2021 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. Winners must respond within 30 days of receiving notification or an alternate winner will be selected. 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 *Handgun 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. **UNABLE TO ENTER ONLINE?** Mail a postcard with your name and address (no envelopes please) to *American Handgunner Magazine*, GOM September/October 2021, P.O. Box 501377, San Diego, CA, 92150-1377.

SCAN TO ENTER



EDITOR PICKS

GUNNYSACK



SERENA JUCHNOWSKI

GERBER CENTER-DRIVE PLUS

All stacked neatly in a row before me. An assortment

of 12 flathead and Phillips bits, not counting the two in use. The center-axis driver is what initially attracted me to the Gerber multi-tool, weary of searching for the family screwdriver set. Great for small projects, quick and on-the-go fixes, this tool has already proven its worth in small car repairs, like pulling fuses in a failed attempt to fix my haunted radio. Though a bit on the heavy side at 9.5 oz., this tool is well-built and sturdy — nothing on it requires babying. Besides the 3.2" center-axis driver that aligns like a real screwdriver, the rigid set of needle-nose pliers with rotatable carbide wire cutters and strippers impressed me. An assortment of 14 tools does not overwhelm, and each has a locking mechanism for both safety and efficient use. *GerberGear.com*



TOM McHALE

STREAMLIGHT WEDGE EDC LIGHT

Who says a flashlight needs to be round? While the classic cylindrical shape was mandated for decades by battery design, the new crop of reliable rechargeable lights can use batteries produced in nearly any form factor.

Imagine a .22LR pistol magazine, although longer and narrower. Remember how that "flat" shape fits neatly in the pocket without adding undue bulk? That's the Wedge. At 5.46" long, just under an inch wide, and 5/8" thick, the Wedge slides into the pocket just as easily. An integral belt clip provides extra security and additional stowage options.

A USB-C port is exposed on the back end and when charged, the Wedge delivers a constant 300 lumens of broad pattern light. Push forward on the intuitive rotating thumb switch for a burst of up to 35 seconds of 1,000 lumens. Time in THRO mode is limited to prevent overheating.

The Wedge — a useful and eminently portable EDC and general-purpose light. *Streamlight.com*



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TOM McHALE

BENCHMADE 945 MINI OSBORNE

A quality pocketknife will spoil you rotten. I've had dozens of lesser knives over the years, and they've earned their rightful place — sitting in a drawer. It's the good ones that move to the daily carry routine.

Twenty years ago, Warren Osborne drew up his namesake iconic knife design. While variations have come and gone, knife aficionados have been wanting a mini version for years. It's here.

The Mini Osborne features a 2.92" blade and 3.84" closed length. Portable enough you'll always have it handy for daily chores, the 6.76" open length enables a full-hand grip if needed.

You can get the Mini Osborne in black, or, my favorite, satin CPM-S30V reverse tanto blade with a green anodized aluminum handle. It's a manual opener easily operated with one hand. The Mini Osborne uses the Axis lock system so no need to ever get a finger in front of the blade — sliding buttons on each side of the handle accomplish the unlock function. *Benchmade.com*

SERENA JUCHNOWSKI

MTM CASE- GARD AMMO POUCH



"Stay ..." I caution the rounds of .22 LR I had delicately placed on the bench beside me. At least one never listens, falling to the ground and ruining the standing position I worked so hard to build. Other times, I'm just heading outside to fire a few quick rounds and fumbling with a box of ammunition. It's a problem you never remember until you've got your hands full and nowhere in reach to store your next shots. I have used MTM Case-Gard ammunition boxes for years but was delighted with their simple ammo pouch. Easily cleanable and lightweight, it secures to a belt or pocket with a heavy duty clip. Designed to hold 100 rounds of .22 LR, it is also suitable for smaller quantities of larger rounds and spent casings. I really like it for backyard plinking and shooting from the standing position, keeping rounds easily accessible. *MTMCase-Gard.com*

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TOM McHALE

FEDERAL PUNCH .22 LR AMMO

In a perfect world, everyone might use .300 Win Mag for self-defense applications. In reality, caliber choice is often determined by physical limitations and one's ability to control the handgun properly. For those situations where .22 is the right defensive choice, Federal offers the new Punch ammo.

Designed to perform from small, short-barreled handguns, Punch features a 29-grain nickel-plated lead-core projectile. Its round-nose, flat-point design doesn't expand. Instead, it's intended to deliver maximum energy and penetration, even from tiny handguns. From a 2" barrel it's rated to crank out 1,070 fps and 1,650 from a 24" rifle. The nickel-plated case also aids reliable function in a variety of guns.

I fired it into Clear Ballistics gel blocks from an S&W M&P22 Compact (3¾" barrel) and it penetrated an average of 15". *FederalPremium.com*



TOM McHALE

RMJ WEEZERKER WILDERNESS AX

Inspired by RMJ's Beserker large ax, the Weezerker is compact enough to hang on the belt with included low-ride straps. Its slightly curved handle, with spiffy G10 grips, balances beautifully in the hand for vigorous, bordering on extreme, chopping. The well-rounded and razor-sharp 5" blade makes easy work of, well just about anything around the home, farm, or camp. Even the beard (inside curve) is sharpened for more cutting options. Think chores requiring a "pulling through" motion.

Without the scabbard, the 12.5"-long ax weighs 1 lb., 11 oz., so it's light enough to handle safely but heavy enough to provide excellent chopping momentum. The head is just over 5.5" long at its maximum and backed with a 0.270" thick small flat for light hammering chores. Given the wicked blade and curved handle, do be careful when reversing the Weezerker to pound stuff. *RMJTactical.com*



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ARMED SELF-DEFENSE IN AMERICA, THE YEAR AMERICAN HANDGUNNER WAS BORN

SITUATION: A 45th anniversary demands something special.

LESSON: The core dynamics of armed self-defense don't change much ... but the techniques and the hardware — and the laws governing the wherewithal — do.

For 30-some years this section of the magazine has been devoted to studying actual gunfights, with commentary from the participants. For *American Handgunner*, the special occasion seemed to warrant macrocosm instead of microcosm: an overview of where armed citizens and cops stood in 1976, when the late editor Jerry Rakusan came up with the idea of a magazine devoted to handguns and their legitimate uses. We'll touch on some high-profile shootings along the way.

Sniper

A decade earlier in Austin, a crazed ex-Marine murdered his wife and mother, then brought a wheelbarrow full of guns and ammunition to the top of the Texas Tower and opened fire. Eighteen people died and 31 were wounded. Police buckshot and .38 Special proved impotent against him from the ground below, but rifle fire from armed citizens forced the gunman to keep his head down. This ended the slaughter until private citizen Allen Crum led police to the top of the tower from the inside. Crum fired the first shot of the rooftop encounter in which APD officers Houston McCoy and Ray Martinez finally shot the mad sniper to death with a Winchester 12-gauge pump and a department issue S&W .38/44 Heavy Duty.

In 1976 history repeated itself when another whack job did something similar, pouring rifle fire into the streets below from a high balcony of a 26-story Holiday Inn in Wichita, Kansas. Swiftly employing the strategy that had stopped the slaughter in Austin, police raced up the inside of the structure to engage the suspect. Wichita hero cop Mike Hill charged the sniper's balcony perch, pumping buckshot into the sniper through a glass door, neutralizing him before his death toll could approach that of the Texas Tower incident.

Deadly when unopposed, the cowardly murderer had no stomach for fighting armed men. He dropped his weapon and squealed he wanted to give up. Quick police response had limited the butcher's bill to three dead and six wounded. The killing spree had lasted only 11 minutes. Hill would say later, "We didn't have SWAT. The responding people took care of it." Hill and his brother officers had learned, benevolently, from recent history.

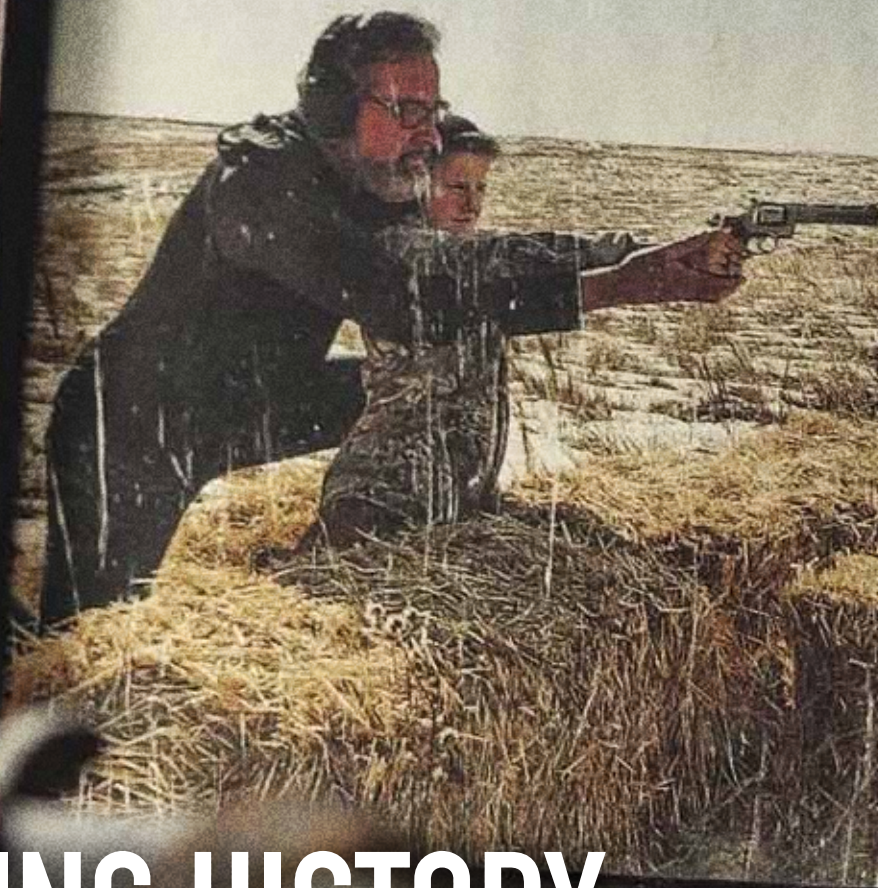
Serial Killer

The "Son of Sam" killing spree began in mid-1976 and ended 12 months later. The sick stalker left a trail of dead and crippled victims, usually couples he had ambushed as they sat in automobiles. The crime lab determined the bullets had come from a Charter Arms Bulldog .44 Special revolver, and the media at first dubbed him "the .44 Caliber Killer." If you had registered a Charter Bulldog .44 in the NYC area, you could expect a visit from the police, and anti-gunners of the period danced in the blood because they hadn't yet discovered "assault rifles" and were then focused on banning the concealable handguns they called "Saturday Night Specials." When the killer at last faced cops with guns pointed at him, he surrendered meekly. Those of us who lived in right-to-carry jurisdictions wondered how much sooner the horror might have ended if any of his victims had been armed and able to shoot back.

Private Citizen Carry In 1976

The majority of states that did have concealed carry were "may issue," that is, it was left to the discretion of the issuing authority whether to grant the permit. In many jurisdictions "may issue" became a code term for "We'll give you the permit if you're white, male, rich and politically connected." Relatively few states were "shall issue," meaning authorities were required by law to issue to any requesting adult with clean criminal record or show good cause why not.

Continued on page 84



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AYOOB FILES

Continued from page 82

One such shall issue environment was New Hampshire, whose state motto was and is "Live Free or Die." *In 2021, may issue is the exception rather than the rule*, with 39 states having written shall issue into their laws.

In 1976 there was but one state, Vermont, allowing concealed carry of a loaded handgun by a law-abiding citizen without a permit. Perhaps not coincidentally, Vermont has always had one of the lowest violent crime states per capita. Today, there are a dozen states following the Vermont Model of so-called Constitutional Carry for all law-abiding citizens, including visitors, and three more that allow permitless carry by their own state's residents.

In 1976 there were seven states where there was no provision for an ordinary law-abiding citizen to carry a loaded, concealed handgun in public: Texas, Louisiana, Ohio, Kansas, Wisconsin, Oklahoma and Illinois. Today, every state has some provision for a carry permit in their statutes. Those seven came on line one by one, all in shall issue mode, in 1995, 1996, 2004, 2007, 2011, 2012 and 2013 respectively.

In 1976, only two states, Indiana and Michigan, recognized carry permits issued in other states. Today, some states have "limited reciprocity" meaning they recognize only permits from states that recognize theirs, and many others have "total reciprocity" recognizing permits from all other states. Indeed, only a few states still recognize no other permits and don't issue non-resident permits: New York, New Jersey, Washington state and Maryland.

Of course, there were outspoken and well-funded forces opposing armed self-defense and even ownership of handguns in 1976. Handgun Control, Inc. had been founded two years prior, and would eventually morph into the Brady Organization of today. Opposing them were the NRA, the Second Amendment Foundation founded two years before by Alan Gottlieb, and SAF's sister group, the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, founded in 1971.

1976 was the year in which the gun owners' civil rights groups joined hands to successfully defeat a referendum that would have banned civilian possession of handguns in the state of Massachusetts.

Armed Citizen Training

In 1976, Col. Jeff Cooper and his wonderful wife Janelle opened Gun-

site in Paulden, Ariz. Shortly thereafter his contemporary, world combat pistol champion Ray Chapman, opened the Chapman Academy of Practical Shooting in Columbia, Mo. *It was a watershed for armed American citizens.*

Prior to that time, the only formalized pistol training available to private citizens was from the NRA, and that was primarily safety and marksmanship. Its zenith was the pistol school offered once a year at the NRA-sponsored National Pistol Championships at Camp Perry, Ohio, which limited its curriculum to bullseye match shooting.

Cooper opened the door to true defensive deadly weapons training for private citizens that had not existed since the *sailles des armes*, the dueling schools for rich young gentlemen in the Deep South in the antebellum years. In '76, the FBI was still teaching hip-shooting at seven yards. Cooper's breakthrough would quickly advance police training nationwide.

Cooper and his associates had a banner year in '76. It was also the year he and Chapman hosted the Columbia Conference at Chapman Academy in Columbia, Mo., where IPSC was formed. The International Practical Shooting Confederation spread the sport of simulated defensive shooting worldwide and sparked numerous practical

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shooting sports, including IDPA (“the concealed carry sport”), Steel Challenge and Three-Gun competition. The governing body of IPSC in this country is USPSA, the United States Practical Shooting Association. All contributed to better skills and shooting techniques for The Good Guys and Gals.

The ‘Good Guys’ Armory

A gun dealer in 1976 would tell you for the most part, armed citizens who carried concealed pretty much followed the plainclothes police model of the time. The “snub-nose .38 Special” was the most commonly carried gun when out and about. There are few official resources, but those that exist support the point.

In 1976 there were seven states where there was no provision for an ordinary law-abiding citizen to carry a loaded, concealed handgun in public.

It was about then New Hampshire gun owners rose up against a couple of newspapers in their state, furious *those papers were getting lists of concealed carry permits from the chiefs of police who issued them and publishing them with names and addresses.* One city asked for a particular gun to be listed by serial number on the permit, though the carrier was not limited to that one firearm. The gun owners prevailed, and a law was passed to make the information “need to know only,” but the artifacts of the articles exist. The paper in question listed most often the S&W .38, and second most often the Colt .38. In New York City, which did limit the concealed carrier to one gun by serial number (two, if they were lucky), the snub .38 was again the most common choice.

Those who wanted a small auto tended toward the Walther .380. The 1968 Gun Control Act had limited imports, and (anti-gun politicians having different standards back then) you could import a higher capacity gun easier than a lower capacity one, so the German Walther PPK/s (with the short PPK barrel/slide but the larger PP grip frame and magazine) was destined to become a “best-seller” in its class. Yes, the James Bond movies did have something to do with that.

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Jeff Cooper did much to popularize the 1911 .45 auto among serious concealed carriers. In 1976, if you were serious about a .45 auto, you wanted the Colt. It was not the company's finest hour for quality control: many of *American Handgunner's* readers considered a new Colt .45 auto in 1976 to be raw material for custom gunsmiths, and one of my colleagues described them as "an assortment of 1911 parts, thoughtfully assembled before you bought them." Today's Colt 1911s are much, much better.

In home defense handguns, the revolver was still the most popular. The most common were the 4" barrel service six-guns in .38 Special and .357 Magnum. One of the most popular gunwriters of the time, Jack O'Connor, was a rifleman first, a shot-gunner second, and a handgunner a distant third. In one of his gun books of the period, he actually subcontracted the handgun section to Jeff Cooper. O'Connor wrote the handgun he personally kept for home defense was a 6" barrel S&W K-38 target revolver. His *bête noir* in gunwriting, Elmer Keith, preferred a 4" barrel S&W .44 Magnum, just as he preferred large-bore rifles over O'Connor's signature .270 Winchester. More of the general public went O'Connor's way than Keith's, and a lot of military vets went with the gun Uncle Sam had trained them on, what was then known generically as the ".45 automatic."

The Police Side

In 1976, 207 American police officers died in the line of duty. Eight of those were stabbed to death, something to remember the next time we hear the phrase, "he only had a knife." More than that were killed by intentional vehicular assault, something to keep in mind the next time we see a headline that says, "Unarmed motorist shot by police."

New York City recorded 1,622 murders in 1976, down by 23 from the 1975 tally. Almost half of the victims had criminal records. Layoffs and attrition had brought police manpower down from 27,262 in 1974 to 22,304 in 1976, serving a population of approximately 8 million people.

The NYPD instituted SOP 9 in 1970 when the legendary Lt. Frank McGee took over the department's Firearms Training Unit and turned it into the Firearms and Tactics Unit. Standard Operating Procedure number 9 encompassed the intensive debriefing of every member of the service who fired a shot anywhere but on the range and included round count, distance, shooting stance and whether the officer took cover or used his sights.

The SOP 9 stats for 1976 showed 11 officers shot and wounded and one officer killed. That was down from a

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peak of 50 cops wounded and seven officers slain in 1973. Forty-seven NYPD officers were wounded and a dozen killed in 1971.

On the other side of the ledger, cops shot and wounded 79 criminal suspects, and killed another 25 in 1976. This was also down from a prior high year, 1971, in which NYPD officers had shot and wounded 221 perpetrators and killed another 93. 1976 showed 379 officer-involved shooting incidents, compared to 810 in 1971 and 994 in 1972. In the field in 1976 the officers had fired 994 shots, less than half of the 2,113 discharged in 1971 and 2,510 in 1972. The year 2021, thankfully, finds all these numbers much lower.

Police Foundation, March 1995: “The FBI first began collecting data on felonious killings of police officers in 1945. The information was first reported, starting in 1961, in the annual UCR publication *Crime in the United States*. In 1972 the UCR developed a separate publication, *Law Enforcement Officers Killed*, which focused on officers killed in the line of duty. Indeed, it was in the early 1970s that general compliance by law enforcement agencies with the voluntary reporting system was achieved. The amount of and quality of data regarding these incidents have improved progressively since that time and are considered the most reli-

“Unfortunately, then — and to this day — there is no complete national database of all police gunfights, nor, for that matter, all self-defense shootings involving armed citizens.”

The SOP 9 stats were (and still are) extremely valuable, because it is rare to find any other law enforcement agency tracking those numbers so meticulously. The UCR, Uniform Crime Reports, have not been turned in by every single law enforcement entity.

The following is from *Death on Patrol: Felonious Homicides of American Police Officers, A Report to the National Institute of Justice from the Police Foundation* written by Lorie Fridell of FSU and Antony Pate of

able of all data collected in the UCR.”

Unfortunately, then — and to this day — there is no complete national database of all police gunfights, nor, for that matter, all self-defense shootings involving armed citizens.

Disarms And Retention

Jodi M. Brown and Patrick A. Langan, Ph.D. later wrote in *Policing and Homicide, 1976-98: Justifiable Homicide by Police, Police Officers Murdered by Felons* that in 1976 14%

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of slain officers were killed with their own weapons, a trend that peaked in 1986 at 23%.

The year 1976 was the dawn of a police training movement which would go far toward changing that. It was during that year when true "handgun retention" training was crystallized. The Kansas City, Mo. area experienced a spate of disarming of police with tragic results and Jim Lindell, lead defensive tactics instructor for the KC Regional Police Academy, was tasked with developing a program that would defeat disarming attempts whether from hand or holster. The Lindell Method, also known as the Kansas City system, taught cops techniques based primarily on leverage to defeat grabs to the drawn or holstered gun.

Today, 45 years later, it has been estimated Lindell's pioneering training has likely saved as many cops from death as the soft body armor created by armed citizen and Second Amendment advocate Richard Davis in 1972. For perspective, the Kevlar Survivor's Club at this writing now lists over 3,100 "saves" thanks to Davis' invention. Many of those vests stopped bullets from snatched police weapons.

Today, a much smaller percentage of slain officers die in front of their own guns. Another reason for this is the virtually universal adoption of uniform security holsters. John Bianchi and his lead designer Richard Nichols pioneered that in 1976, and waiting in the wings was Bill Rogers, whose snatch-resistant designs produced by Safariland are now virtually standard in American law enforcement. Over the years, *American Handgunner* has paid homage to all of these life savers.

Looking Back

In the almost half-century since *American Handgunner* was founded, we've seen a lot of changes. The confluence of disasters in 2020 saw a huge influx of newly armed American citizens. Far more people are able to protect themselves and their families than in 1976. Our guns, holsters, ammunition and available training in shooting and tactics have advanced exponentially.

I'm grateful to have been a part of *American Handgunner* since its first issue, and proud of the influence the magazine has had. Next issue, this corner of the magazine will return to its original format of gunfight (and aftermath) analysis. This time around, thank you, our readers, for being instrumental in *American Handgunner's* success in the fight to protect gun owners' civil rights, including the right to protect oneself and the other innocent people we are responsible for, from criminal, homicidal evil.





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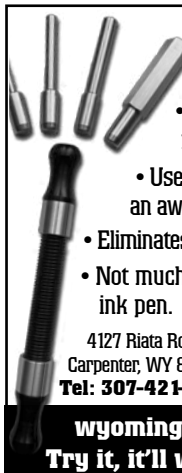
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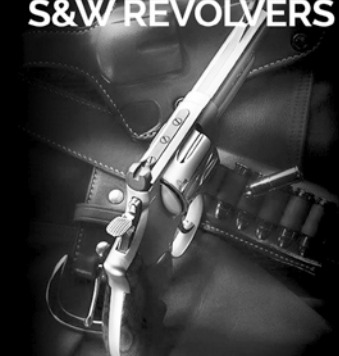
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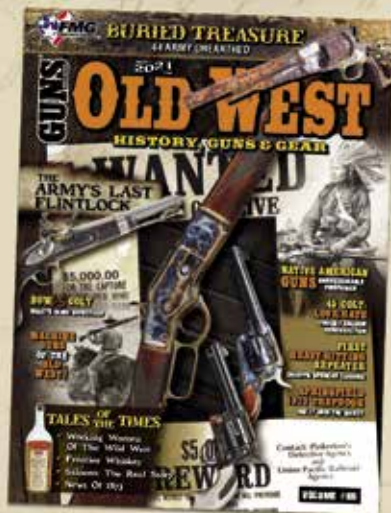
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IT'S NOT ABOUT THE BACKGROUND CHECK. IT'S ABOUT PROFILING

Prelude

Before we get to the meat of this, we have to look at the elephant in the room — the beast everyone is ignoring. Under these new federal laws (HR8 free-transfers banned, HR127 total ban with psych test and fee, HR1446 10-day delay minimum), and all the others the Biden clique is introducing (63 federal gun laws pending!), they exclude themselves. It's right there in plain English in the beginning. The laws do not apply to federal agents, law enforcement officers, or security guards — basically, any "officials." New laws only apply to you peons, Joe Q. Public, the deplorables.

This is the very definition of tyranny: Gun laws for thee but not for me. Mass media and even our own gun-rights groups have overlooked and ignored it, because it is so standard. Of course, it doesn't apply to them. Why would they need to be checked out before they can have guns? Cops, FBI, CIA, DHS, ICE, narcs, they're all honest and clean, passed scrutiny to be on the team. Trust us! Hmmm.

The Excuse Doesn't Work

The crime-fighting excuse Biden's team offers doesn't even make sense. The people behind this push for new, more controlling gun-possession bills — popularized as enhanced background-check bills — have not thought this through. We all want to end crime, stop killers and reduce the use of firearms in acts of violence. Will these bills do it? Not even in dreams.

Countless armed villains (however you define this) are already out there, committing armed crimes (supposedly) inspiring the proposals. If you think back, the "enhanced background check" was originally the rallying cry to stop psychotic children from mass murdering their classmates. That argument has left the building.

The Democrats' new bill, HR1446 doesn't affect children — they can't buy guns at retail anyway — it leaves them alone, just as it leaves armed criminals armed. Villains can't have anything to do with guns right now under all the strict laws in place, but they're armed, anyway. This new check can only theoretically stop new criminals from getting

Continued on next page 92

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GUN RIGHTS

Continued from page 90

their first gun, if they try to do this at retail, assuming they're bad enough to already be on the prohibited list.

One recent murderous psychotic did just that — cleared the check, got his first gun, and went on a killing spree. The check was meaningless. Checks do nothing whatsoever about all the armed misfits in society creating the havoc you see on the nightly news. How many newbies do you suppose are looking for a career in crime and need to buy their first gun in a shop? However, the bill will turn you into a felon if you give a gun to a friend, with or without payment. Freedom extinguished. Giving a gun to anyone for a crime has always been and remains criminal.

What's the price tag on this national plan? Reporters, typically fixated on cost, are mum, like their government handlers. Proposals include tracking every single piece of hardware, its current owner and its current location in your home (you read that right, in HR127). This is going to stop criminals, how, exactly? The bill lacks a crime-fighting component. It places heavy burdens on you as a member of

the public. It doesn't affect criminals who are already totally banned.

Is It Just a Smokescreen?

Mandatory psychological evaluation of you and everyone around you (you read that right again) is the big ticket, with a more sinister effect (if not pre-planned goal). Just look at communist China to see how this works.

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In that brutal dictatorship, where gun possession means the state can execute you on the spot, your social status and literal ability to work or go shopping depends on your psych score. The communists compile this

from ubiquitous cameras recording the population, your work record, your use of the web, everything they can put into the mix. With a low score, forget about good housing and any kind of economic advancement. Government here wants databases of everyone. Guns are just the startup excuse. It's collecting everyone's psych profile — and even suggesting it, that matters.

Mr. Biden doesn't appear to be the architect of these plans — anything this clever and complex is cooked up by teams of savvy activists. Their names are known, but they operate in darkness. He likely couldn't tell you what's in the bill — heck, journalists don't know. Half the gun-rights community hasn't seen how sinister this is. They're worked up about an \$800 yearly fee the Attorney General collects in the red-herring bill from one weird Congresswoman with no co-sponsors. Meh.

It's collecting the psych profiles — even the suggestion of it, with guns as grounds — that matters.



Award-winning author Alan Korwin has written 14 books, 10 of them on gun law, and has advocated for gun rights for nearly three decades. See his work or reach him at GunLaws.com.

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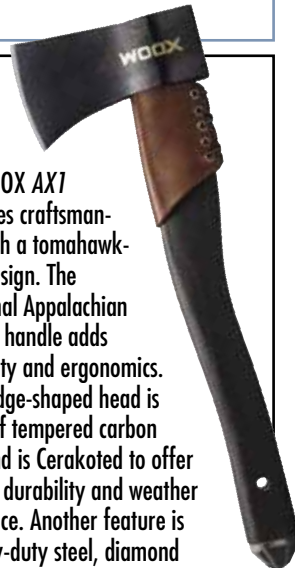


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bottom of the magazine, like a 1903 Colt auto. The grips are some sort of hard plastic but nicely made, and details like the slide serrations, sight-track on the slide top and nicely curved grip frame all serve to give it big-gun looks and feel. I'm reminded of the old Austin Seven auto; a perfect "full-

sized" car — only very tiny.

The sights are particularly smartly designed and give it a "real" sight picture, unlike the grooves or non-existent sights on many pocket guns. The DA trigger pull is another surprise and is longish but smooth. Single action is another delightful revelation, delivering

a light and predictable let-off. Accuracy is, not surprisingly — very good. An excellent trigger, good sights, clean, sharp rifling and good .22 ammo mean this gun shoots 2" groups quite handily at 15 yards. And yes, my 80-yard torso gong sometimes rewards me with an unobtrusive "tink" if I take my time single action. How fun is that?

Prices on a TP-70 seem to be in the \$500 to \$800 range. If you go shopping, I'd hold out for the original maker, Norarmco, as their quality really is better. As an aside, Iver Johnson made the TP22 which is "sorta" like this but clunkier and cheaply made, although they run fine. The Walther TPH .22 also mirrors the Bud in build quality and some features (I've owned them too), but just doesn't have the same charm as the little Bud does, at least to me.

Still, all are good excuses to go shopping, if you ask me. Not everything needs to be biggie-sized,  you know.



The DA/SA trigger pull is very smooth and the gun seems to like standard velocity ammo the best.

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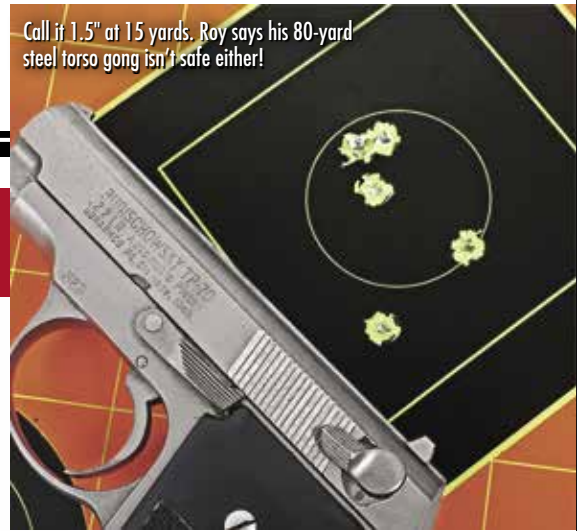


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Altamont Company	69	Dillon Precision Products	60	NIGHT FISION	85	Ten-Ring Precision	89
AmeriGlo	99	European American Armory Corp.	2	North American Arms	78	TOPS KNIVES	93
Armed Citizens Leg. Def. Net. Inc.	12	Fiocchi Ammunition	37	O.F. Mossberg & Sons	23	Trijicon	35
Armscor/Rock Island Armory	81	Galloway Precision	80	Powder River Precision Inc.	89	Turnbull Restoration Co. Inc.	79
Bear & Son Cutlery	10	GlockStore	61	Real Avid	17	Tussey Custom	89
Beltman Inc.	85	GripSwell	10	Ruger	11	Versacarry	97
Benelli USA	27	Heckler & Koch	75	SAR USA	29	Volkman Precision	89
Black Hills Ammunition	57	HiViz Shooting Systems	88	SCCY Industries LLC	7	VZ Grips	14
Burger Knives	90	Holosun	96	Sentry Products Group	71	W.C. Wolff Company	86
Bushnell	21	HSS Corp.	89	Simply Rugged Holsters	15	Walker's	8
Cimarron Firearms Co.	45	Indo-US Mim Tech Ltd.	84	Spartan Blades USA	88	Wilson Combat	68
Colt	83	IronMind Enterprises Inc.	85	Springfield Armory	100	World War Supply	91
Competition Electronics Inc.	92	Les Baer Custom	33	Standard Manufacturing Co. LLC	39	Wyoming Sight Drifter LLC	89
CrossBreed Holsters	41	Littleton Coin Co. Inc.	19	Starline Brass Inc.	6	XS Sights	87
Cylinder & Slide	39	Lyman Products Corp.	15	Streamlight	9	Zero Carry	86
CZ-USA	25	Mag-na-port	14	TAC SHIELD	87		



Call it 1.5" at 15 yards. Roy says his 80-yard steel torso gong isn't safe either!



This Bud's For You...



The TP-70 is tiny but fools the eye into thinking it's a big gun. Roy's has the original box and paperwork.

Budischowsky TP-70 .22 LR

I was poking around in the safe the other day and this appealing but still serious TP-70 begged to see the light so I thought I'd share it with you. This charming tyke has caused me no end of enjoyment for close to 45 years. I originally bought it in the later 1970s as a back-up gun for duty carry. It's in .22 LR — this had also been made in .25 ACP — and fits the bill perfectly as a sort of minime to a full-sized holster gun. I think that's what made them so popular when they were first introduced. The

"Buds" as they were fondly called, had all the features and benefits of something like a bigger S&W auto of the time, but were shrunk for shirt pocket convenience. Think of it as a blend of a tiny Colt pocket .25 auto and the DA workings of a Walther, give or take a bit.

Edgar Budischowsky, a Czech-born firearm designer, became modestly famous for a couple of high quality designs, none of which really caught on in the U.S. However, in 1973, an American company called Norarmco (Norton Armament Corp.) of Mt. Clemens, Mich. manufactured Edgar's little TP-70 (originally made in Europe) and sold them through 1977. Norarmco called it the Budischowsky TP-70 and made it of cast and machined stainless steel parts. Overall quality was quite good and both the .22 LR and .25 ACP versions sold decently if not in huge numbers. In 1977 Norton must have changed

hands or re-organized and quality suffered as I saw many references to soft slides and issues with reliability with their guns. The guns made in Michigan were of good quality, but guns made in Florida and Utah later were not up to par. I'm not sure how many were made by each company but from what I could glean, about 5,000 total were made. The serial number on mine is in the 300s and is marked as a Norarmco gun, made in Michigan. Quality seems very good and the gun runs fine. There are, however, sometimes issues with the .22 versions needing extractor work and hammer spring upgrades when they start to misfire or fail to extract. Good luck finding any parts though.

Some Thoughts

At about 12 oz., 3.5" tall, 4.65" overall, 2.6" barrel (1.5" of that is rifled barrel) and a 6-shot magazine, the Bud is pocket-friendly and very definitely fun to shoot. Amazingly, it is a DA/SA design, complete with a slide-mounted safety doing double-duty as a hammer drop. The slide release functions like a real one and take down is with a classic rotating lever on the starboard side. There's a recoil spring guide rod and the mag catch is at the

The TP-70 is a tiny bit smaller than a Keltec P-32. Note the take-down lever.



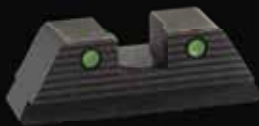
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