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2021

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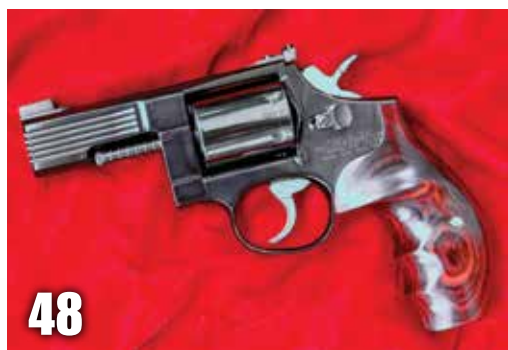
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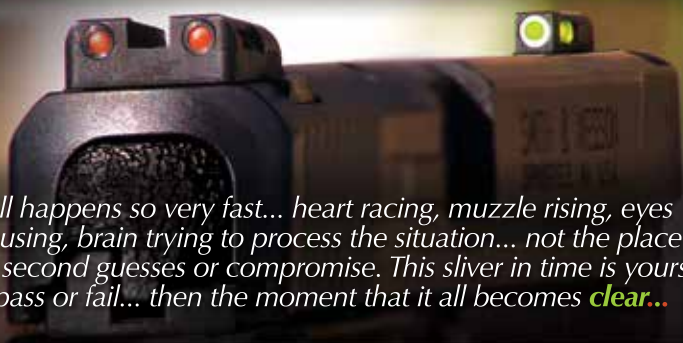


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KEEP 'EM COMING!

Despite being months removed from when SHOT Show would have occurred, new product announcements just keep on coming! From exciting new handguns to innovative new gear and accessories, we cover it all as we learn about them. Read our first looks of everything new at americanhandgunner.com and gunsmagazine.com.



EXCUSES, ALIBIS & GENERAL EPHUS

You read him. You know him. You love him. The best of John Connor's columns from the pages of *American Handgunner* over the years, *Guncrank Diaries: The Collected Works*

is full of excuses, alibis, pithy observations and general ephus. Order your copy at americanhandgunner.com/guncrankdiaries.

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If you've ever been interested in long-range shooting, wanted to restock your rifle or buggered up your handgun while attempting to change sights, listen and learn from recent episodes of the *GUNS Magazine* Podcast! Listen to new episodes every Friday on your favorite streaming service or online at gunsmagazine.com/podcast.

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ONE IF BY LAND

I don't want to put Mr. Korwin into the same league as Paul Revere ... uh, yeah; I do! Mr. Korwin called an alarm about HR5717. Please do everything within your means to bring this to the attention of the loyalists (those who favored candidates who would destroy our constitution and republic). I doubt they truly want to disarm themselves. The problem with ignorance is those who are ignorant do not know it. Mr. Korwin's articles should enlighten them. Please get them into the hands of those who are ambivalent or indifferent to our cause to the best of your ability.

Craig Hines



Indignant Vultures

In *Guncrank Diaries* (Nov/Dec 2020) Dr. Dabbs painted a detailed picture of his up close and personal knowledge of grasshoppers. I was rolling around laughing as it made me think of a very similar experience which, unfortunately, I can't blame on youthful exuberance as I was old enough to know better. Somewhere between Miami and the middle of

nowhere in the Everglades, speed limit signs are mere suggestions, assuming you could read between the bullet holes. Early one morning, I was returning to Miami at an unsafe speed on my Kawasaki 1100 when I saw a turkey vulture enjoying his putrefying breakfast not too far ahead on the side of the road. I started grabbing brakes just as he started flapping wings. A few seconds later, he was

airborne, and I was a bit below the speed limit. He (or she) hit me in the center of the chest and went spiraling off into the air. I had a death grip on the bars and the seat squeezed tightly between my butt cheeks. Somehow, I stayed upright with only some smelly feathers remaining stuck under my helmet. The turkey vulture had stabilized in the air and flew indignantly away. I can assure you, neither of us

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will forget the experience.

As in your case, it could have been worse. Thanks for bringing the memory back. I still have the bike.

Ken Bedat

Guardian Seamstress

The article, "Beretta Tear-Away Clothing" (Mar/Apr 2021) brought back a memory of my wife's alteration of my uniform shirts.

Over the years I carried a variety of backup small semi-autos inside my waistband, cross-draw position, with my shirt tucked in over it. One day, as I was getting the holster positioned, and the shirt smoothed over it, my wife observed, "If you ever need that gun in a hurry you're either going to tear a button off your shirt, or risk flipping the gun out when you jerk the shirttail out of your pants." When I came to bed later that night she said, "Try the shirt hanging on the back of the dresser chair in the morning," rolled over and went back to sleep.

In the morning I found she had removed the lower middle button from a uniform shirt, put Velcro in its place and sewed the button to the outside, so the shirt looked normal. It worked great; all my shirts were so altered.

I've had the same awesome wife for 52 years. I'm long retired, but she's still looking out for me.

William L. Kotila

Gun Confiscation?

Regarding Alan B's letter about police, *Speak Out* (Mar/Apr 2021) he wondered how current LEOs would react to gun confiscation orders. After 39 years as a police officer, on four different departments, Alan echoes my fears. Among other duties, I was a firearms instructor. My observations during my last decade as a LEO were not heartening. Many recruits were not "gun people." They saw the carrying and qualification of a gun as work, not pleasurable, and therefore expressed no interest in it. Some even saw it as a necessary evil to be an officer. These recruits were more interested in "social services" style of policing, not really caring about chasing down criminals. Many of those officers from a decade ago are now in management positions. I believe there is a high probability some of these officers would have no problems instituting and even encouraging gun confiscation programs.

Mike D.
Phoenix, AZ

How quickly we forget ... Thousands of guns actually were confiscated by law enforcement officers from citizens via door-to-door searches during the hurricane Katrina disaster. Sadly, there

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will always be some who will follow unconstitutional and illegal orders. Thankfully, we're seeing lots of law enforcement leaders across the country standing up against unconstitutional gun control policies. There's a lot to be said for the Sheriff's model where leaders are elected and report directly to citizens! —Tom

Nice Guns!

I do very much enjoy your magazine, reading it monthly since 1983. But I do have a small concern: the market is being flooded with so many 9mm handguns — what I call plastic guns. Why doesn't your magazine do more product evaluations on "real" wheelguns like the trusted .45 to the massive .480 and the (one shot will do) .50? I would like to see more wheelgun and less 9mm! I know, those 9mm ads pay the light bill, but enough is enough. Equal time for other, more powerful handguns.

Cindy

Appendix Carry

I do enjoy your magazine but notice little attention is given to appendix carry. It does require more care but is more accessible in a car or at a desk, and the draw seems faster. I did a training class with Mike Seeklander before adopting it. It's worth a discussion.

Brett Barnett

We've got an upcoming story along the lines of "The Great Appendix Carry Experiment." Taking one for the team, it looks like I'll be the guinea pig. I've tried it on and off and absolutely agree security and concealment are better and the draw is noticeably faster. However, I still struggle with the gun jamming into either my gut or my leg, especially when sitting. Maybe I just have a little too much excess, ummm, "muscle" around the waist to make it work. We'll be reporting on the results in an upcoming issue. —Tom

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GEAR TO WET YOUR WHISTLE

I don't know how ground conditions are where you live, but around here buying a box of ammo these days requires three lawyers, a letter of credit and a seven-year indentured servitude guarantee. As for guns, the shelves of my local gun store resemble a socially distanced Joe Biden campaign rally. There's just not much to buy, even if you can afford it.

Being an eternal optimist, I've figured out it's a pretty good time to shop for accessories, making your shooting life a bit easier. Not counting reloading supplies and gear, most other items, at least so far, appear to be in reasonable supply. Allow me to share a couple things that wet my whistle.

LEUPOLD DELTAPOINT MICRO

How on earth do you find the dot in the tiny lens? You don't.

That's okay because the DeltaPoint Micro isn't supposed to work like a standard red-dot sight. With most traditional red dots, you're expected to raise the pistol to a firing position, find the dot in the window and shoot. The standard sights in the pistol, if even visible at all, aren't really part of the equation.

The DeltaPoint Micro operates more like a ghost ring system. Think of the optic itself as the rear ghost ring pairing with the standard front sight post. As the user, you don't do anything unusual or train any differently. Raise the pistol, look for the front sight, and you'll see it through the "ghost ring." The difference is there will now be a dot superimposed on your target as well as the front sight itself.

I might describe this as a "partial" form of the occluded shooting concept. If you have a red dot sight with the front lens cover on, and shoot with both eyes open, your brain will still superimpose the dot on target even though your "shooting" eye can't see through the glass. In this case, the heavy "ghost ring" combined with the standard (much thicker) post front sight seemingly gets in the way of the red dot view, but with both eyes open, you see the dot on target just fine.

There's a second big benefit to this

configuration. Whether the red dot is on or not, you have a perfectly good ghost ring sighting system ready to go. If the standard front sight is Tritium-equipped, all the better — you've got a night-compatible ghost ring system as a backup.

The batteries in the DeltaPoint Micro run for about 3.5 years on power setting four, so if you want absolute assurance of continuous operation, just change out the battery every year and you're good to go. The system uses a motion-activated approach to maintain an "always on" dot while preserving battery life.

Speaking of batteries, the CR1632 lives in the flying saucer hanging off the back of the slide. Moving the compartment to a non-traditional location offers a couple of benefits. It allows the optic body itself to remain small and unobtrusive, maintaining compatibility with most holsters and aiding easy concealment. It also allows you to change batteries without impacting the sight's zero.

The DeltaPoint Micro is currently available for non-MOS GLOCKS and S&W M&P pistols, so I mounted the DeltaPoint Micro on a GLOCK 43X for testing. Proportionally, it's a great pairing, and I found existing holsters like the Blackhawk Stache compatible with the setup. Installation was simple. Just remove the existing rear sight



You can order the Steady Rest in clear aluminum or a powder-coated black finish. Other colors are available on a custom basis.

The rest fits perfectly in a .50 caliber ammo can.

RANSOM STEADY REST

I've been looking for the perfect pistol rest since Jimmy Carter grew peanuts in the White House Rose Garden. I've tried bunches of them: plastic adjustable ones, those tripod setups for rifle foreends and everything in between. Most configurations have yielded so-so results, even when weighed down with 25-lb. bags of lead shot. I carry those in my little red shooting wagon for just this purpose. As a side note, lugging a



Because the optic's window is so small, it serves double duty as a standard ghost ring paired with the existing front sight.

and replace with a dovetail adapter. The optic's baseplate screws into the adapter. Just visually center and use the windage and elevation adjustments to complete the zeroing process.

As for handling, as long as I forgot I was working with a red dot sight, it was a seamless transition. Just look for the front sight and the ghost ring effect was intuitive — with the bonus addition of a red dot on target superimposed over the front sight post itself. I practically found the ghost ring setup to be applicable at shorter distances while the red dot gave me better precision at longer ranges, say 15 yards and out, with improved speed over an irons-only configuration.

All in all, it's a nifty setup. The ghost ring approach makes moot the standard red dot objection of, "what happens when the dot doesn't work?"

For more info: Leupold.com



Using this dovetail adapter, the DeltaPoint Micro replaces the standard rear sight.



The unique design places the battery behind the slide so the optic itself remains small and easy to conceal.

couple bags of lead shot gets tough on the back and sandbags insist on leaking all over the place.

I thought about acquiring a classic Ransom Master Series Rest. Those are the mechanical devices we all know and love, built for mechanical accuracy testing. Bolt your handgun into place using custom grip inserts and allow the machine to do its work managing recoil and returning the handgun to its precise starting orientation. A great solution, but I wanted something a bit more flexible, usable for not only dedicated bench accuracy testing, but sight and optics zeroing, long-range plinking and the like.

Enter the Ransom International Multi-Caliber Steady Rest.

This self-contained unit, made entirely of aircraft aluminum, has solid rubber feet, so it doesn't move on the bench. It's so stable it doesn't require supplemental weight like those bags of lead shot. Hallelujah!

A rectangular padded base provides a resting spot for the butt of the handgun. The butt pad mounts to the aluminum base via screws, so it's easy to replace should yours get torn up over time. If you wanted to make your own custom-

height version, it would be an easy DIY project.

An adjustable "tower" up front gives a "V" notch for the muzzle or dust cover of your handgun. The company offers a leather "sock" that slips over the notch, so you've got a nice padded surface to protect your gun and soften some of the recoil bounce. The leather pad provides the right balance of "squish" and stability for consistently aimed shots.

Range report? I love this rest. With others I've tried, getting an absolutely precise sight alignment shot to shot is near impossible. This one makes duplication of exact sight alignment easy. During my first trial, I obtained sub-1" 5-shot groups from 25 yards using a new Walther PDP pistol.

You can order the Steady Rest in

Note the leather "sock" providing cushion for the gun and a bit of recoil absorption. The "V" notch is height adjustable.

The butt rest pad is easily replaceable and a thicker version is available from Ransom.

Clear (bare, polished aluminum) or with a black powder-coated finish. The unit is designed to fit into a .50 caliber ammo can for safe and easy transport. It also includes a threaded hole in the base for attachment to a tripod.



For more info: RansomRest.com

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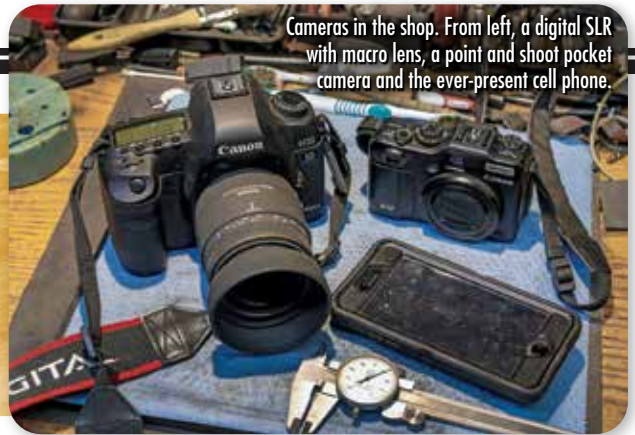
Not every tool in the shop cuts, drills, or grinds. One tool I use every day is my camera. I use three different cameras in three different ways; each is important to my shop.



Pistols ready for shipping to a plating service — photographed as an inventory record.

PARTS CATALOG

My most often used camera is in my phone. I use the phone camera as a notebook or a scratch pad. When I'm working on an unfamiliar gun, I use it to record the location of parts during disassembly or the sequence they should go back in. It's fast and small. The image quality is good enough for printing if I have to.



Cameras in the shop. From left, a digital SLR with macro lens, a point and shoot pocket camera and the ever-present cell phone.

It also has a good macro lens feature. I frequently use the phone camera to record machine set-ups. There's nothing like working out a one-off set up for the Bridgeport mill and forgetting how you did it for later use.

The phone cam is also handy for online social media posting, as some platforms allow you to post right from the phone quickly and easily. Last but not least, I use the phone camera for quick shots to send to clients in the case there is a question about a pistol feature or part.

DOCUMENTATION & ONLINE PUBLISHING

The second camera I use is a small digital pocket camera — mine is a Canon G12 model I've had for 10 years. It takes better quality photos for saving on my computer, publishing in this column, or posting to internet forums. I also record all the parts going out to plating in the event of a misplaced part. The camera is small and light and has adjustable features like ISO sensitivity and shutter speed, which are not found on my phone. It has a sharper zoom lens with a macro feature. The images must be downloaded to my computer so I can email them or get good quality prints. Many full build projects get documented along the way with photos, at the end of the build we provide a thumb drive of photos to the client.



A finished custom 1911 photographed with oak leaves and acorns found in the backyard. The brown leaves compliment the burl grips by Crystal Glaspie and handmade holster by Jason Ingle.

GLAMOR SHOTS

The last camera is a professional grade digital SLR. I use this for pistol "glamor shots." These studio shots are used for promotion, publication and display. I actually shoot them in my basement — no need for a studio. The camera I use is a Canon EOS 5D, which is really a little overkill. I use dedicated "macro" lenses that provide very sharp images and allow me to get close-up detail shots. A tripod is a must. I use constant lights instead of flashes, this makes it a little easier, and less expensive. Sometimes I shoot outside on the patio, but harsh sunlight makes lots of shadows that hide detail.

For full blown custom pistols, the glamor shots are planned very early in the build process. Many times, a client will provide details of their personality and life that I often use to select props for the photo shoots. I actually enjoy this part. I find it challenging yet relaxing.

For instance, the "Decade Project" of 1911s (March/April 2021) features a gun built to mimic a '20s gangster pistol. For the background I found an old felt hat, some old coins and dollar bills. A friend brought over his 1927 Thompson machine gun. I printed a few old wanted posters from the internet.

Another photo shoot was much simpler, but as effective. One client wanted a chocolate-colored set of burl grips for his Colt Commander with a matching holster and burl looking highlights. My grip maker Crystal Glaspie of "A Woman's Touch" made perfect grips, Jason Ingle crafted a great holster matching the shades of the grips and adding tanned African bullfrog as an accent to the woods burl. For the photos, I used a simple background of brown oak leaves from my backyard. Simple photos really, but the planning and matching colors made it work.

I find lots of cool props at yard sales, flea markets and sometimes orchestrate the photo shoot around the props. Good photos really attract a lot of attention.



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THE TIME FOR RELOADING IS... NOW

I'm not certain what the definition is of the "Perfect Storm" but we're clearly experiencing some atmospheric disturbance. Have you walked through a gun store lately? If so, you'll probably find most of the ammo shelves empty. Why? Perhaps it's a combination of things beginning with the COVID pandemic followed by civil unrest, rioting,

burning down businesses, or financial instability. The tumultuous activity encouraged 7 million first-time gun buyers to purchase ammo to feed their newly purchased handguns. Then political chaos struck the heart of America like we've never seen before, and our Constitutional Second



Amendment is being scrutinized by politicians. It's no wonder honest, hard-working, law-abiding citizens are concerned. Gun sales have spiked and ammo is flying off the shelves.

TAKE CONTROL

If the lack of factory ammo hasn't got you to at least consider reloading, nothing probably will. Yes, reloading components — especially primers, are almost as scarce as ammo. Certain powders are difficult to obtain, along with many types of bullets. Components have seen price increases like everything else. But if you look hard enough and shop around, you may be able to scrounge up enough to get you through until we see brighter days ahead.

Gun writers are not immune from the current ammo shortage. Thankfully, I have enough reloading components stashed away to get through this storm. This isn't the first ammo shortage we've experienced, nor will it be the last. Having a hard time finding ammo? Don't have enough rounds to shoot to your heart's content? Even with the arduous task of procuring components, you may still want to consider rolling your own.

Reloading is a great hobby that gives you flexibility. Handloaders can experiment with different loads finding

the right combination that performs superbly in their particular firearm. Load up rounds specifically for hunting or change recipes to punch paper or steel while practicing. It also offers a potential cost benefit. There is a start-up cost for equipment and components. With this year's ammo shortages and dramatic increase in prices, the cost recovery period for equipment has shortened significantly.

Under normal circumstances, one could assume the cost of reloaded ammo was approximately half of the cost of new with similar components. Savvy consumers could even reduce component costs and increase the benefit ratio. Obviously, the rising costs of components currently enter this equation.

A recent conversation with my good friend and Redding Reloading guru, Robin Sharpless, confirmed more shooters are getting in to reloading now and reloading die sales have increased substantially. You probably won't see any new products offered from Redding this year — they can't keep up with current demand. So regardless of component shortages, those who haven't reloaded in the past are certainly entertaining the investment today.

REDDING SOLUTIONS

Redding products are American made, and the company is still located in the same area where the company began in a chicken coop with one product — a powder scale. As a way of celebrating and showing customer appreciation, Redding will freeze their 2020 pricing throughout 2021. This gesture is most welcome and definitely a departure from increasing price points we are experiencing in so much of the shooting sector.

Handloading for pistol ammo, I like their T-7 turret system. Place all four dies into the turret and when you finish one stage, simply turn the turret and go to the next. Redding's four-die set for pistols is an absolute must for me. I much prefer seating the bullet in one stage and crimping in another.

Their micrometer seating dies are also beneficial in more ways than one. Loading single-shot pistol rounds like 6.5 Creedmoor or .308 Winchester, their competition shell holders are extremely helpful when bumping the shoulder of the cases correctly.

If you're getting started, purchase at least one reloading manual from Hornady, Nosler, Sierra, Speer, or other well-respected sources. There is a wealth of beneficial information in these manuals, helping you to get on the right track safely.

Be very cautious about using loads from any other source not affiliated with industry standards.

Granted, component costs are increasing as well as items becoming more difficult to find, but reloading still represents a logical economic decision. I would bet the farm this is not the last ammo shortage we will experience!



For more info: Redding-Reloading.com

Redding's T-7 turret system allows you to insert multiple dies in the press. When one stage is complete, turn the press and go to the next stage.





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TRIGGER EPIPHANIES



I learned that a smooth trigger pull is key to accurate shots.
Photo: Anthony Wilder

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

The obvious — rifles are longer and larger, so I'm used to having more support points. Being able to balance against my body and use the support of a sling makes a huge difference. I couldn't understand why a process coming so naturally to me with a rifle seemed somewhat out of reach with a pistol. I thought I was doing everything the same way — but my targets revealed differently.

I also didn't realize how much sight picture, sight alignment and focus have to do with manipulating the trigger. With a rifle, I use cheek weld to establish proper sight picture and sight alignment first, before even touching the trigger. With handguns, there is no cheek weld.

WHAT TO DO?

It is a natural reaction to want to clench your hand, moving all of your fingers rather than just one. I do tend to move more than just my index finger when I begin to manipulate the trigger.

My mentor George Harris defines the goal simply, "being able to move the trigger and fire the gun without changing the muzzle's stability or position in relation to the target." I will plead guilty to wanting to make the gun go off rather than letting it fire.

When I think too much about something, it tends to go worse than if I didn't think at all. I always pay attention to firearm safety; I just may not expend as much energy remembering what I learned rather than just doing it. I need to think about the trigger in a different way, as the

gas pedal of the gun. It is not about pulling the trigger slowly, it is about pulling the trigger smoothly. *The speed truly does not matter as long as the muzzle doesn't move.* I also needed to more carefully watch and critique the movement of the front sights to evaluate my trigger press.

WALL DRILL

Sounds simple enough, but how do I test it? With the instability of a pistol, how do I know if my sights moved because of trigger pull or something else? The answer: the Wall Drill.

First, visually and physically verify your handgun is unloaded and there is no ammo in the area. Choose a blank wall with nothing to aim at and after assuming your traditional shooting grip and stance, press the muzzle of the pistol against the wall until it just barely makes contact. Then break contact while keeping the muzzle as close as possible to the wall without touching it. Using a blank wall allows you to focus only on the front sight, as there is nothing for you to look at forward of the sights. Ensure sights are properly aligned and then press the trigger. Watch what your front sight does in relation to the rear sight — it mimics what the muzzle does in relation to the target.

LESSONS

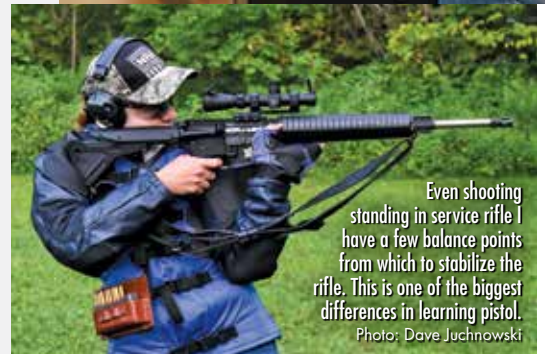
I admit this was strange at first. I soon discovered I didn't know whether to keep both eyes open or one closed. I know you're supposed to keep both

I don't even think about it anymore. When I began shooting service rifle, I remember agonizing over the trigger pull, learning how to work the sear during a rapid fire and feeling the reset of the trigger. You become spoiled, one with the gun, as cliché as that sounds, and muscle memory takes over.

You should be surprised when the gun goes off. When the target lines up with your sights and you pull the trigger without even thinking about it — that's when you know the process is automatic. It doesn't happen every time, but there's definitely a point when you reach such an extreme level of comfort things just feel "right."

Things still don't feel "right" with a pistol. I'm not uncomfortable or scared, but something still seems off. I know I'm a bit jumpy on the trigger and the shots don't always land where I want them to.

The Wall Drill is an excellent training drill to see what happens to your front sights when you pull the trigger. Photo: Anthony Wilder



Even shooting standing in service rifle I have a few balance points from which to stabilize the rifle. This is one of the biggest differences in learning pistol.
Photo: Dave Juchnowski

eyes open, but I am still struggling to do so. I also noticed I was having trouble keeping equal spacing on each side of the front sight between the notches. It was impossible to ignore the small quivers going through my arms. My rifle sights seem to sit on the target when I get comfortable, even during offhand. With a pistol I can feel my muscles contracting, which also distracts my focus from the front sight.

This will be an ongoing process. I understand now what I need to do and how much of an effect trigger pull has on sight alignment and shot placement, but it will still take time to enact. Now if I can just get my arms to stop moving.





PDP

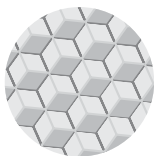
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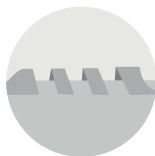
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CAN YOU REALLY ACCESS YOUR GUN WEAK HANDED?

New duty gear may make some things easier, but some things harder.

One of our *Handgunner* readers from the law enforcement sector, Jerry Boyd, writes: "With officers now wearing external vest carriers (often bulging with equipment items) and wearing Level II or Level III holsters it's nearly impossible for an officer whose gun hand is incapacitated to draw his/her handgun with the opposite hand. Reaching across the bulky external vest carrier and getting a proper grip on the handgun while defeating holster safety devices is impossible. With unloaded weapons, I have had dozens of officers attempt such a draw. Only one, a very thin, lanky officer with unusually long arms, was able to get the gun out of the holster and even he had to set the gun down to re-grip it so he could shoot. In this case, it took the officer over 12 seconds to extract the gun.

"In my last four years as an LEO, I wore such a vest and used a Level III holster. There's no way I could have drawn with my off hand. My solution was to carry a backup handgun in one of the center pouches of my external vest carrier, where I could easily access it with either hand. This issue is one I am positive most officers never think of and yet if the SHTF they will wish they had. I thought of it as soon as external vests and retention holsters came on the market — because early in my career I sustained an on-duty gunshot wound to my arm."

Retired lawman Jerry Boyd is a voice of experience on the matter. His writings have appeared in *Handgunner's* sister publication for law enforcement, *American COP*. And as he has noted, having been wounded in the arm, he has credibility on the topic.



External equipment vests reduce back pain and make gear accessible, but make weak-hand draw from strong-side holster more difficult.

NOT JUST ABOUT EXTERNAL VESTS

Everything has pros and cons, and uniform police gear is no exception. The reason the external vest for routine uniform patrol is currently trending is it keeps radio, spare pistol mags, perhaps expandable baton and handcuffs and TASER and pepper spray and even an AR15 magazine readily accessible at the front of the torso, taking the weight off the hips. The constant wear of a 15- to 20-lb. duty belt instead of a vest that distributes the weight across the upper body is one reason why lower back issues have historically been an occupational hazard of uniformed police work. But all of these, plus included body armor, significantly increases torso girth.

I've been teaching weak hand draw from strong side holsters since first becoming a police firearms instructor in 1972. There are some individuals who simply can't accomplish it. The more stuff that's between the reaching hand and the gun, the less range of movement there is to make the draw. Snatch-resistant security holsters make it harder for the bad guy to draw the good guy's gun, but also harder for the good guy to get it out of the holster and on target.

It ain't just the external vest. A concealed ballistic vest creates the same effect. So does obesity. Make all the doughnut jokes you want, but constantly sitting behind the wheel of a patrol car with your 8-to-10-hour shift punctuated by sudden bursts of extreme physical exertion is not the best route to physical fitness.

Today's police departments emphasize fitness, but that has its own impact. The larger your biceps, shoulders and pecs become, the more range of movement you lose in terms of upper limbs reaching across the torso. Those of us who resemble the "before" picture instead of the "after" image in the Charles Atlas bodybuilding ads enviously use the term "musclebound."

And all of those elements are true of off-duty cops, plainclothes officers and ordinary armed citizens. So, what to do?



This city cop designed his own vest holster for his backup slimline GLOCK. It's reasonably accessible to the non-dominant hand, too.



Left hand draws GLOCK 26 9mm BUG from right-handed Alessi ankle holster.



S&W 340 M&P .357 with LaserGrip at left and Kahr PM9 9mm at right are popular choices.

A backup gun the support hand can reach is the logical answer.

RESPECTFULLY SUGGESTED

A Backup Gun (BUG) accessible to the non-dominant hand is the logical "fix" for this potentially deadly problem. The external vest? You can rig it with a pouch to hold a compact BUG set up primarily for the non-dominant hand but still accessible to the dominant hand. An ankle holster set up for strong-hand draw (butt to the rear on the leg opposite primary hand) is still readily accessible to the support hand, preceded by a quick lift of the pants cuff. If the external vest has taken enough gear off your belt to clear a path for your non-dominant hand to reach a side pocket, that location will do nicely for a pocket holster.

Thanks to Jerry Boyd, who is fighting for the good guys even after his retirement from law enforcement, for bringing forth this discussion.





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FRONTIER FIREPOWER

Firepower of Old West revolvers is one of the most misrepresented historical aspects of that era. No doubt most of the nonsense comes from Hollywood or, to a lesser degree, western novels. Bad guys get thrown about when struck by good guys' revolver bullets. Even horses take dramatic spills.

Truth is, it just wasn't so — at least not with holster size



revolvers. In the beginning of the revolver era, sixguns were huge. The fabled 1847 Walker Colt at 4½ lbs. weighed about as much as the famous American M1 .30 Carbine. It was never meant for belt carry by troops — horses bore the weight in saddle holsters. However, Walkers with their .44 pure lead 148-grain balls over 60 grains of black powder did approach the power of a modern .357 Magnum.

THE "BELT PISTOL" ERA

By 1850 Colt finally brought out a revolver actually called a "belt pistol" meaning it was supposed to be worn on one's person. Today, that one is known as the Model 1851 or the Navy Colt. Its caliber was called .36 but ball size was 0.375" because back then a weapon's caliber was rated by the barrel's bore, not its groove diameter. A 0.375" round ball weighs about 80 grains and a 25-grain blackpowder charge from a '51 Navy or its successor, the Model 1861 could push it to about 900 to 1,000 fps. Black powder quality varied immensely in those days. That's about equal to one of today's .380 autos. Jesse James took

a body hit from a .36 caliber revolver fighting as a guerilla in the Civil War and carried the ball until his death in 1882.

Even the hidebound U.S. Army thought .36 revolvers were a bit weak and therefore decided to switch to .44s when Colt managed to make one light enough for belt carry. That was the Model 1860, which was rivaled by Remington's Model 1858 in popularity during Civil War combat. Their 148-grain 0.457" round balls might hit 800 fps, which would give them just a mite more striking power than one of today's 148-grain .38 Special wadcutter target loads.

Duke shooting a Colt Model 1861 .36 cap and ball. A mere 25-grain powder charge made that much smoke.



CARTRIDGE POWER

The above cap and ball revolvers reigned supreme among fighting men in the Old West until the advent of metallic cartridge revolvers circa 1870. Did the new self-contained cartridges dramatically increase revolver firepower? They did in regard to speedy reloading, but not so much in terms of knockdown power.

Take, for instance, the .36 caliber Colts. Many of those were "converted" to fire .38 Colt rimfire and centerfire cartridges. In the 1990s I had one of Colt's 2nd Generation Model 1861s converted to duplicate the very valuable originals. With a 130-grain heel-type bullet over 18 grains of black powder, it would barely break 700 fps. When the "long" .38 Colt version came along with a 145-grain bullet, it did break 700 fps by just a bit. When I fired those loads into a fence post on my property, the bullets' bases were sticking out.

Handgun power did begin to progress. S&W developed .44 American and .44 Russian in 1871 and 1872, respec-

tively. Colt's .44 Colt also came in 1871. These rounds collectively carried bullets from about 210 to 255 grains, but none of them exceeded 750 fps from the 7½" to 8" barrels of their various sixguns. In other words, they about equaled the hitting power of a modern .44 Special round with the traditional loading of a 246-grain round nose bullet at about 750 fps.

Many six-gunny folks today think Colt and the U.S. Government finally got on the ball in 1873 with the new Colt "Strap Pistol" (topstrap) and .45 Colt cartridge. It's often touted about its load was 40 grains of black powder and 255-grain bullets. No. Not really. In January 1874 the .45 Colt was loaded by Frankford Arsenal with 250-grain bullets and 30 grains of powder. This load hit about 775 fps from the SAA's 7½" barrel. By 1875, the U.S. Army also accepted S&W's Model #3 Schofield .45 revolver. Its shorter cartridge



Duke has handloaded black powder cartridges for these reproductions.

only carried 28 grains of black powder with 230-grain bullets for 725 fps.

Finally, in 1878, Colt adapted their big single action to .44 WCF (.44-40) and got real power from a sixgun. The rounds did carry 40-grain powder charges with 200-grain bullets and velocity from 7½" barrels most certainly broke 900 fps.

Think about this: At the famous fight at the OK Corral most everyone had either a .45 Colt, .44-40 or perhaps even an S&W .44 Russian revolver. Not one combatant was put out of action with a single hit, except from Doc Holliday's shotgun.





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HOW TO MAKE SURE A PISTOL 'FITS' YOU

When a novice asks for advice on purchasing a first handgun, a popular suggestion is to try various handguns and find one that “feels right.” The problem is a novice doesn’t know how a handgun should feel and is probably looking for a bit more help.

The human hand is a marvelous device and highly adaptable, and an experienced shooter can do a creditable job with most any size handgun, from a tiny Browning .25 ACP to a huge Desert Eagle .50. For the new shooter, it’s helpful to choose a gun making the process easier. Think medium. Medium size, medium weight, medium recoil.

PUT YOUR FINGERS TO WORK

The grip frame should be long enough to accommodate all three of the fingers holding the gun. I don’t like having the pinkie finger dangling below the grip. If the grip is just a bit short for your hand and the gun otherwise suits you, a solution may be a thick base pad on the magazine, or even a spur extension.

CIRCUMFERENCE

Grip circumference may be the single most important factor. To see how well a pistol fits your hand, try this: Pick up the pistol with the non-shooting hand and seat it in the shooting hand, the grip tang pressed firmly against the web of the hand, the barrel about aligned with the forearm. Now check the position of the bottom three fingers. What works for me (right hander) is if *the tip of the middle finger extends at least 1/4, but no more than 1/2, of the width of the left grip panel.*

Some high-cap designs with thicker grip panels are borderline too big even for my somewhat larger than average hands. An innovation of which I highly approve is to eliminate grip panels entirely, as with GLOCK pistols and current designs from S&W, Springfield Armory, SIG, CZ, Walther and others. If you have average or smaller hands, one of these may let you have the advantages of a double stack magazine in a pistol, you can grip securely. If these are still too large, many of these makers offer single-stack magazine versions with a slimmer grip.

TRIGGER REACH

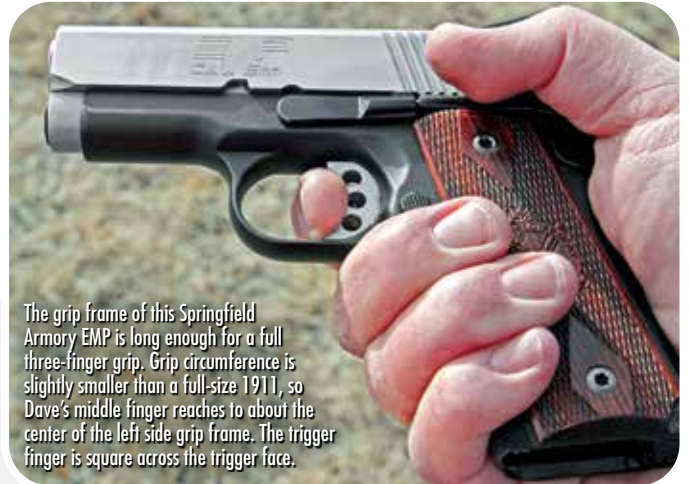
You should be able to place the trigger finger squarely across the face of the trigger so it can be pressed straight back without imparting any sideways pressure. If the grip circumference works for you, most likely you can adjust trigger finger position a bit to make it work. If not, you may need to fit a replacement trigger (easy with 1911-style pistols, impossible with many other models) or try a different pistol.



Dave's trigger finger placement on a full-size 1911 like this Nighthawk Falcon.



This CZ-99 9mm with 15-shot magazine and thick wooden grips is too large for Dave's wife, Simone. Her fingers barely reach the left side of the grip and her trigger finger barely reaches the trigger.



The grip frame of this Springfield Armory EMP is long enough for a full three-finger grip. Grip circumference is slightly smaller than a full-size 1911, so Dave's middle finger reaches to about the center of the left side grip frame. The trigger finger is square across the trigger face.

Trigger reach varies with which part of the trigger finger engages it. Personally, I like to center the pad of the finger across the face of the trigger. Some prefer the finger extending a bit farther, even as far as the first joint past the fingertip. *Go with what works for you as long as you're pressing the trigger straight back with no sideways pressure.*

GRIP ANGLE

Some shooters prefer the “1911” grip angle with the wrist in a fairly neutral, centered position. Others insist it is more consistent to have the wrist canted fully forward with a more slanted grip, such as the GLOCK or Ruger .22 pistol. I think either works. I shoot 1911s more than anything else, but I also shoot slant-grip designs such as my Colt Woodsman or GLOCK pistols, just not quite as quickly. As a general rule, I think it best to select a style and stay with it.

BALANCE

Balance can be a bit tricky as a loaded high-capacity magazine changes weight distribution — and it changes as the magazine empties. I like the pistol to balance slightly toward the muzzle. I don’t care for muzzle-light pistols — or rifles, for that matter. I think most novices won’t notice balance until they have acquired some shooting experience and skill. Sometimes accessories, like Tungsten rods, are available to let the shooter alter balance.

Start with getting all three-bottom fingers on the grip, extending far enough around the grip frame to give a solid hold. Get this right and you’ll have a good start on becoming a competent handgunner.



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CCW BREAKAWAYS A POTENT PAIR OF PANTS

Ever heard of a monkey trap? Its effectiveness owes its success to the power of sheer desperation.

Take a large gourd, cut a hole in it barely large enough for an empty monkey hand, and insert something yummy and desirable. The monkey reaches in, grabs the treat, but can't withdraw its hand while clutching the prize. The device works because the monkey is desperate for the free goodie and isn't willing to let it go in order to become unstuck. So, monkey sits there, hand in gourd, looking sheepishly ridiculous.

If you pocket carry, you may have experienced the concealed carry version of a monkey trap. Some pants pockets, while large enough for the hand or gun alone, are a tad too tight to allow extrication of a hand clutching a gun. That's why I always check the draw process on new pants — I don't want to be the monkey in the event of a violent encounter.

ANTI-MONKEY PANTS

The folks at CCW Breakaways understand the importance of a fast and unhindered draw from the pocket. Accordingly, they've designed concealed carry pants not only facilitating safe carry of a handgun in the front pocket but also a fast and snag-free draw.

The basic ideas behind the CCW Breakaway pants are the configurable front pockets and "fake" pocket openings. With normal pants, the top of the pocket is defined by the top of the pants. The pocket opening, regardless of shape and size, is what you get. Want more room to

pull stuff out? Make a larger opening.

The CCW Breakaway pockets are attached at the top to the beltline of the pants with two snaps per pocket. So, if you withdraw your hand vigorously from a pocket, the snaps pop open and the pocket opening doubles or triples in size. This is the anti-monkey trap feature. Unlike the hapless monkey, you can take a full firing grip on your handgun while it's in the pocket, and draw it out with no hindrance by the limitations of your pants pocket opening.

The company makes a variety of styles including pleated khakis, denim jeans, cargo pants and even shorts.

POCKET POWER

The pants are engineered with not only draw function, but concealment in mind. Each interior front pocket (no righty-lefty bias here) has internal Velcro attachment areas and straps allowing you to define the shape and depth of the pocket. The lateral strap also allows you to shift the position of the gun side to side. Depending on the size and shape of your handgun, you can arrange the pocket to place your firearm lower down the leg, more towards the center, or however you most like it positioned. There are pouches for optional thin plastic shields which break up any remaining outline of your handgun managing to get past the layers of heavy internal pocket fabric. Optional SkinTight holsters provide extra trigger protection if you like.

There's another functional benefit to these potent pants. The design allows you to "prepare" to draw with no visible commitment on your part. Ease your hand into your gun pocket, get a grip and you're ready to go. No one will be the wiser. If you don't have to use your gun, great! No harm, no foul.

When the pocket "breaks away" one can easily pull a handgun out of their front pants pocket! No monkey trap here.



The khakis use a traditional slit vertical pocket and can accommodate larger handguns. The denim pocket still opens to double its size. Note the SkinTight pocket holster (right) and Anti-Print Shield (left).



LEARNINGS

As a guy, I'm incapable of reading instructions, but once I finally did, I was better off for it. The instructional videos on the company's website will show you the tips and tricks for ideal usage, pocket configuration and gun placement. Don't be like me — watch them first! Also, do pay attention to the "true-to-size" warnings on the website. Don't order the same size you always get. Break out the measuring tape and measure a pair of your existing pants.

You may be surprised at the difference between the vanity labels and actual size.

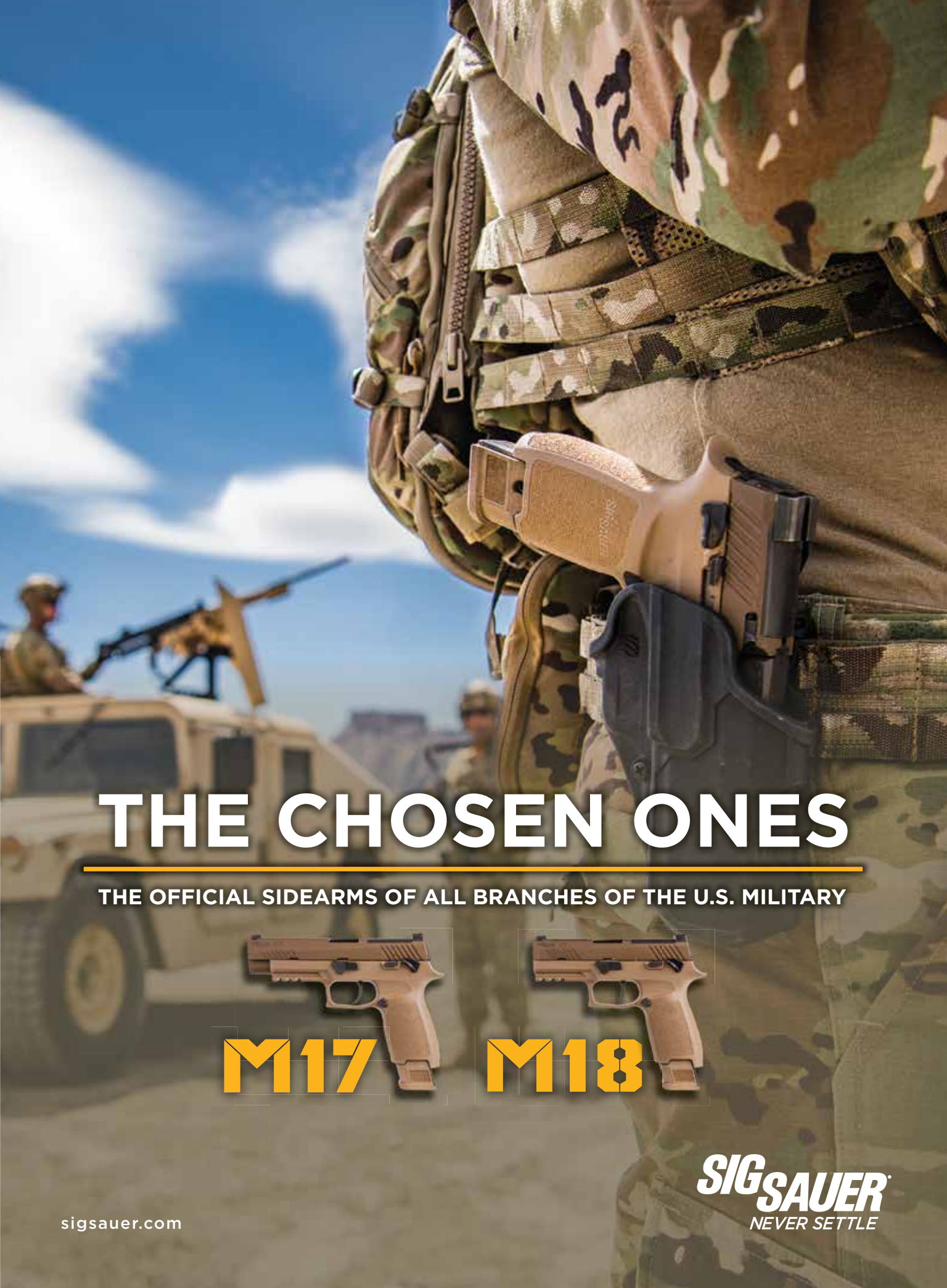
Oh, and a bonus tip. Consider optimizing the opposing pocket for everyday gear. There's a lot to be said for having an ultra-deep pocket for money clips and cell phones. Give it a try!

As for gun variety, be aware every person is different. For example, the larger your pants waist size, the larger gun you can conceal. That's not a statement of the obvious, it's more a reflection

of the width from fly to side seam, which defines the grip size one can hide. I had success with everything up to the mid-size auto pistol universe. As for more compact pistols, concealing models like the Springfield Armory XD-S, S&W Shield and GLOCK 43X was effortless. My favorite for these Power Pants? My vintage Walther PPK/S.



For more info: CCWBreakaways.com



THE CHOSEN ONES

THE OFFICIAL SIDEARMS OF ALL BRANCHES OF THE U.S. MILITARY



M17



M18

THE PYROMANIAC'S CURSE

I have thus far inadvertently instigated three proper forest fires. This is indeed not the sort of thing about which one should boast. However, they all ultimately ended well.

I was stationed on a sprawling Oklahoma military base home to the Field Artillery. Everything from small arms to sky-splitting Multiple Launch Rocket Systems tore the ranges asunder night and day. However, the firing of personally owned automatic weapons on the post ranges was strictly verboten. For a young buck with a pair of transferable machineguns, what was a brother to do?

My sweet bride's solution was the birthday gift of a year's membership to a nearby civilian range. So long as I was safe, they didn't care if I ran my machineguns or not.

Some shooting buddies from college came up from Dallas for the weekend. We had planned this outing for months and had stockpiled a prodigious quantity of ammunition in support. We also brought along half-a-dozen milk jugs filled with water to serve as crude reactive targets.

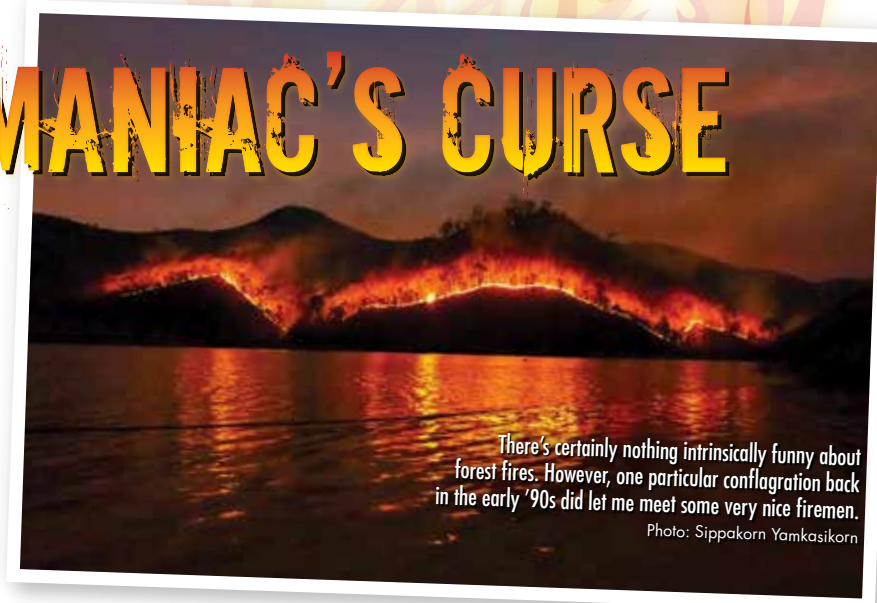
Tactical Riverdance

I planned to kick off the day's festivities with a GI-issue M158 Star Cluster rocket. How I came by the thing doesn't matter. Suffice to say, the statute of limitations has long since expired.

Star Clusters are as cool as Steve McQueen's sunglasses. This tidy little folding-fin rocket comes packed within an aluminum tube. To fire the thing, you remove the cap from the top and slip it onto the bottom. You then hold the unit facing upward in the left hand and strike the base vigorously with your right.



This MAC10 sub-machinegun set me back \$650 back in 1987. M158 Star Clusters sell for about \$75 online these days. I once inadvertently incinerated a modest fraction of Oklahoma with such a trinket.



There's certainly nothing intrinsically funny about forest fires. However, one particular conflagration back in the early '90s did let me meet some very nice firemen.

Photo: Sippakorn Yamkasikorn

A firing pin inside the cap detonates the solid propellant.

The Star Cluster rocket rises about 250 feet before expelling five bright illuminant assemblies. Total burn time is six to 10 seconds.

The little rocket roared to life and burst at the prescribed height with prodigious vigor. As we had a robust headwind, the rocket then drifted over our heads and fell back behind us. We all had a chuckle and took up our favorite stutter guns to get the party started in earnest. At that point, I hazarded a glance over my shoulder and noticed the tiniest wisp of smoke.

Deleterious curiosity not being confined solely to the feline, we young men climbed out of the depressed range space to investigate. The burgeoning grass fire was by then perhaps 15 feet across. We commenced to stamping about like a Riverdance troupe on crack.

For the briefest moment, the battle teetered. We retrieved our milk jug targets and began emptying them along the expanding perimeter of the blaze. We had maybe half of the conflagration controlled when there arose a mighty wind. That's when things got real.

Vermin Exodus

The grass thereabouts was perhaps waist deep and speckled throughout with isolated cedar trees, several of them a couple dozen feet high. When the hot Oklahoma wind added its mischief to the mix the blaze blossomed like Trump's temper. When overcome, the

trees exploded like bombs.

It is simply breathtaking to appreciate how many small creatures call your basic patch of Oklahoma grassland home. A modest dirt road bisected this enormous prairie, but the fire cleared this impediment with ease. I got to this failed firebreak just in time to see a veritable horde of rats, mice and similar displaced vermin running for their lives.

One rangy rat of simply epic proportions stopped in the road not 10 meters from where I stood. For a pregnant moment we just stared at each other. His beady little eyes said flatly, "I really, really hate you, man," before he scampered off.

At that point we had a decision to make. We could load up our vehicles and make haste, all the while fabricating some plausible cover story to use when the next day it was determined we had incinerated the preponderance of the American Midwest. We opted instead to do the right thing and fetch the Fire Brigade.

While awaiting the professionals, I waded into the conflagrating grass and single-handedly rescued the range facility's port-a-john from a certain fiery doom. I would be reticent to use the appellation hero myself in describing my actions that fateful day. However, I would not much object should others choose to do so.

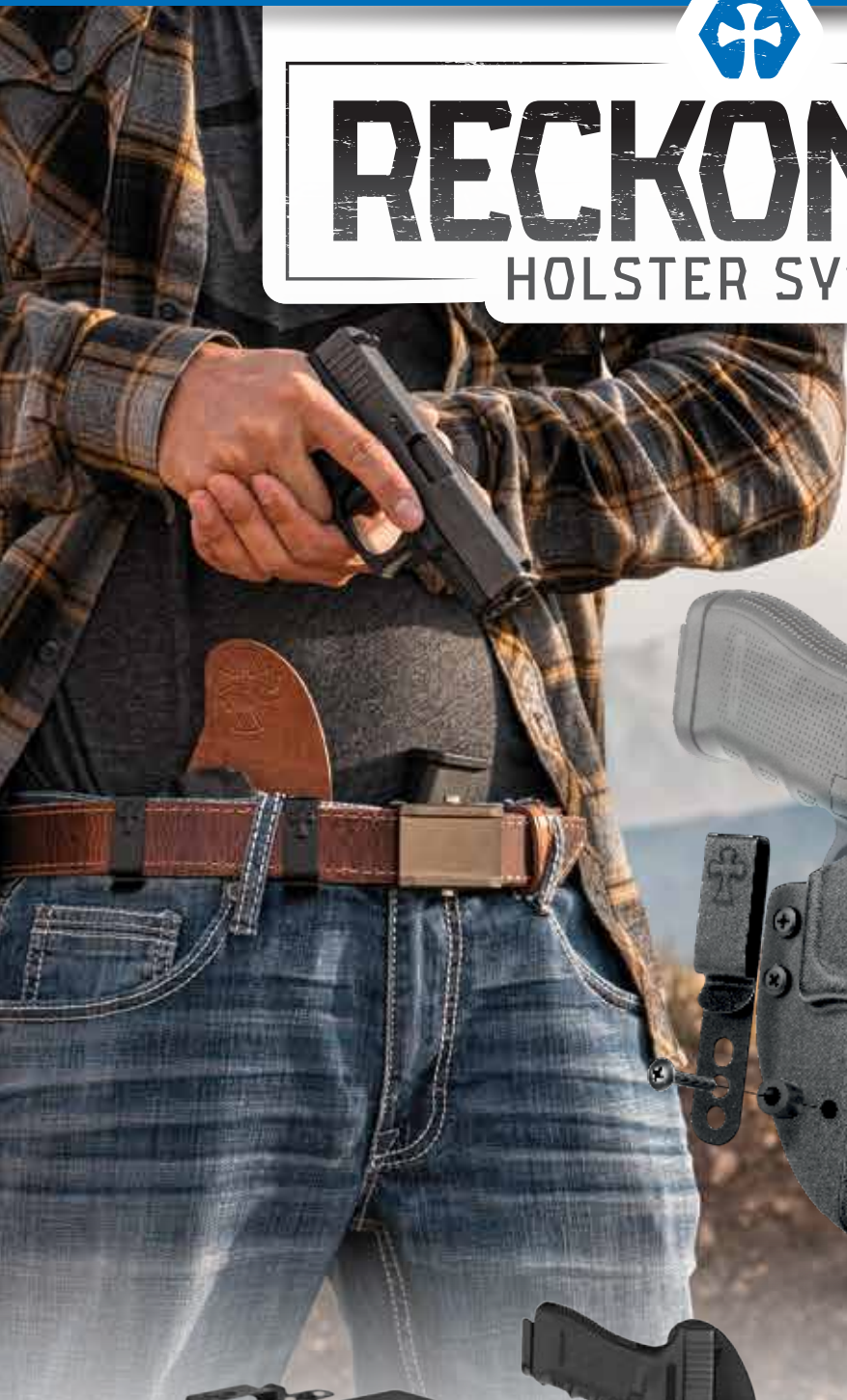
The pumper truck made short work of the carnage. I ultimately incinerated maybe four acres. Nothing of substance was destroyed, though I did struggle to explain the liberated GI-issue rocket flare to the firemen. They sighed, and I didn't go to jail. A grand time was had by all ... except for the rat. His day kind of sucked.





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A FRACTION OF A SECOND



Dummy red/blue/toy weapons are a great way to teach new shooters about safety, or to confirm someone has the proper habits developed. Never assume someone "knows."

"Protect your eyes and ears," was the range command. After working some dry drills with their pistols, the students were told to holster, then make sure they had eye and ear protection on. For some reason the student at the end of the line got a little behind and was about to pull the muffs down over his ears while still holding his 1911. The instructor standing next to him — with good reason — prevented this mistake. Afterward, we often laugh about these "slip-ups." It's a way of dealing with the close calls. *A fraction of a second is all it takes to make a mistake carrying tragic consequences.*

Around firearms — regardless of the application — the number-one priority is always safety. Firearms are dangerous, but no more so than a roaring chainsaw. Like with any tool, consistently applying the necessary safety rules greatly reduces the chances of mishaps. But it only takes a little distraction to introduce danger.



A great way to learn safety and manipulations is to use dummy ammo.

THINKING IS DOING

The best way to be safe is to think safely; 95% of safety is mental. Proper actions require correct

thoughts. You learn the safety rules, then religiously apply them without exception.

How you think about these rules is important. You only use positive statements. "Keep your finger off the trigger," as opposed to, "Don't put your finger on the trigger." I can't remember the parts of the brain involved in self-talk, but they don't recognize the difference between positive and negative quantifiers. When you say, "Don't put your finger on the trigger," what comes out, which guides action, is "... put your finger on the trigger." When you do get it wrong, and we all do, acknowledge it and correct as necessary, but don't mentally dwell on the mistake. You'll only be programming the wrong action. Instead of thinking about what not to do, focus on the correct actions.

When a firearm is in your hand, the only thing you should think about is handling the weapon safely. You can't afford to be distracted, even for a fraction of a second. Should something else need attention, secure the gun first. The majority of safety infractions occur when someone needs to perform a task involving the hands, as mentioned above.

Getting into a hurry, rushing and trying to impress your shootin' buddies is a sure way to get into trouble with firearms. Slowing down is going to be your biggest aid when it comes to safety. There's conscious thought prior to any physical action. You think about what you need to do, how to perform the action safely, and then finally act. Eventually, with proper repetition — slow, correct practice — a majority of these actions begin to operate at a subconscious level.

Even though you're fighting for your life, you still have to think about safety. Keep the muzzle pointing in a safe direction and finger off the trigger until the sights are on target.



THE OTHER GUY

It's also mandatory to watch everyone around you. When you're doing everything correctly, muzzle is pointing in a safe direction

with safety devices engaged and your finger clear of the trigger and trigger guard, the person standing to the right decides to move left — their path taking them directly in front of your muzzle. You immediately lower your pistol even more, slightly twisting your upper body to avoid covering them with your muzzle because of their actions.

When anyone else is handling a firearm, I operate under the assumption nobody knows what they're doing until proven otherwise. You'd be surprised how many gun owners don't even know the four basic safety rules. Verify, then trust. Beginner students work with a blue/red gun first until they

display safe handling skills. Never leave a weapon where someone unauthorized has access to the gun.

Lots of guys think it's high comedy to hand a beginner a live, loaded weapon and then watch their struggle. That's never funny, and extremely dangerous. I go to "high alert" whenever someone says, "Here's what I carry," and then proceeds to reach for a weapon. While telling them to hold up for a sec' I'm moving, either distancing or getting closer where I can control the direction they point the weapon. Even under supervised conditions, like participating in a defensive training class, you have to be watchful of others.

All these same principles apply when using a firearm for defense. Even though you're in a fight, you still have to be thinking about safety. You have to keep the finger clear of the trigger and guard. Avoid sweeping anyone with the muzzle. If forced to fire, you've got to obtain a clear angle so any errant rounds end up in a safe location. Safety mistakes in a fight are deadly.

Finally, as a responsible gun owner, remember others who are less experienced are always watching you as an example. Using firearms is a serious subject, regardless of the application but particularly for defensive use. Therefore, it should be approached accordingly.





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THE .357 SIG: 9MM ON WARP DRIVE

I'm a fan of the .357 SIG. It's a confidence building cartridge that can do phenomenal things down range. It was developed to mimic the ballistics of a .357 Magnum in a magazine-fed handgun with the same length action as a 9mm. However, reloading the .357 SIG isn't for the novice.

When I first saw the .357 SIG, I thought feeding a 9mm-sized nose into a 10mm hole made it infinitely more reliable, which it did. Quite a few Law Enforcement agencies adopted the .357 SIG with great success. In the 120- to 135-grain loadings, it really does perform like the .357 magnum.

THE RIGHT SPECS

I carried it off duty and used the caliber when we had budget cuts. My duty gun was a GLOCK 22 and when our range budget was severely reduced, I wasn't getting enough rounds for proper training. I figured it was cheaper to buy 9mm sized bullets than 10mm ones, so I got a Lone Wolf .357 SIG conversion barrel and went to work. My goal wasn't performance. It was cheap practice.

The .357 SIG has been the subject of some controversy. It's a semi-auto handgun cartridge with a shoulder, but it headspaces on the case mouth. Correctly shouldered cartridges will always chamber correctly if sized correctly, regardless of where the case mouth lies.

The latter part of the case has the same diameter as the 10mm and .40 S&W family. I experimented with sizing .40 S&W cases to .357 SIG and found .357 SIG cases are 0.860" and converted .40 S&W cases are about 0.846". It can be done, but this practice should be filed away with reusing primers when civilization falls, and cases are unavailable. My Speer manual says don't do it. I don't and you shouldn't either.

Some manufacturers used a 9mm bullet for .357 SIG loadings. They shot well until they were tested through barriers like tempered glass, where jacket/core separation distinguishes which manufacturers did their homework. Hornady and SIG SAUER definitely did. Other companies, not so much.

Starting out, I made some rookie reloading mistakes. I

went out and ordered some 124-grain RN plated bullets and tried to load them. No matter what I did, I couldn't keep it under the 1.140" maximum overall length. In this bullet weight, the best bet is a TC-style bullet with a generous meplat. Most RN plated or jacketed bullets around this weight won't work as the nose sticks out too much.

I worked up two LSWC loads suitable for practice.

The lighter was for punching paper; the heavier TC one was for steel and bowling pins. I also played around with a JHP, just to see what it could do. The Hornady 124-grain XTP can be pushed to velocities around 1,600 fps, but everything I shot was moderate. The wider meplat and reduced taper keeps the OAL within the range of the cartridge's specs.

AA#9 is one of the easiest powders to work with in this caliber, besides Shooters World Ultimate Pistol (DO 36). AA#9 usually will require loads nearly filling the case and works well for higher velocity loads. If you're working up a load, try magnum primers around the 12.5- to 13-grain mark.



The case on the left is a .40 S&W sized to .357 SIG. On the right is standard .357 SIG brass. Theoretically, the resized .40 S&W case should work, but .357 SIG headspaces on the case mouth. Reliable manuals tell us not to use resized .40 S&W cases, so Lindsey doesn't.

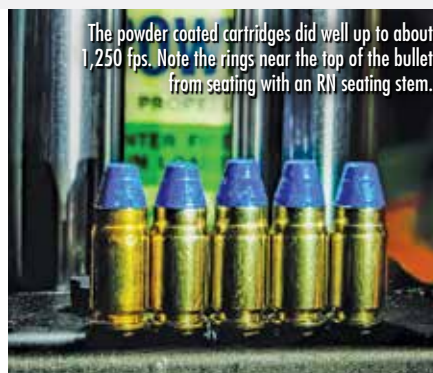


The Lone Wolf GLOCK 22 Conversion Barrel converts a .40 S&W GLOCK 22 to .357 SIG. The more recent trend is for users to convert 40 to 9mm, using the LWD-229TH. This barrel has consistently given superior accuracy.

HIGH-VELOCITY, BUT SLOW?

For practice, I settled on a load with Ultimate Pistol. Ultimate Pistol is easy to distinguish — it looks like miniature flattened spheres. It's so versatile it can be used for calibers ranging from .380 to .45 LC. Ultimate Pistol gets cartridges to Major Pistol velocities, without dangerously high pressures and yields low flash. It meters beautifully in my Frankford Arsenal Intellidropper.

While there is little load data for lead bullets and Ultimate Pistol, you'll find this powder is a workhorse for .357 SIG



The powder coated cartridges did well up to about 1,250 fps. Note the rings near the top of the bullet from seating with an RN seating stem.

loads using lead bullets.

I went to 6.6 grains of Ultimate Pistol on the 120-grain bullets. After a few rounds, it was keyholing. Since I had worked up to this load without it

keyholing before, I figured the problem wasn't lack of obturation. I confirmed there was leading at about 1,150 fps. I switched to powder coated bullets, and the leading didn't occur until about 1,250 fps. I backed down to 6.5 grains of Ultimate Pistol, which ran well and left only a moderate amount of carbon. At 25 yards, groups stayed under 2.25".

I enjoyed playing around with the .357 SIG, but eventually I did the obvious. I switched to 9mm for duty, and made 9mm practice rounds, using cheap, readily available components. However, I still keep my .357 SIG barrel around, just in case I need to send a 9mm bullet into warp drive.



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ROCK ISLAND'S



Call it 3" at 15 yards for a full load of 11 rounds. Roy feels it could do better with some time — and practice — as the BBR was plenty accurate.

BBR 3.10

ROY HUNTINGTON



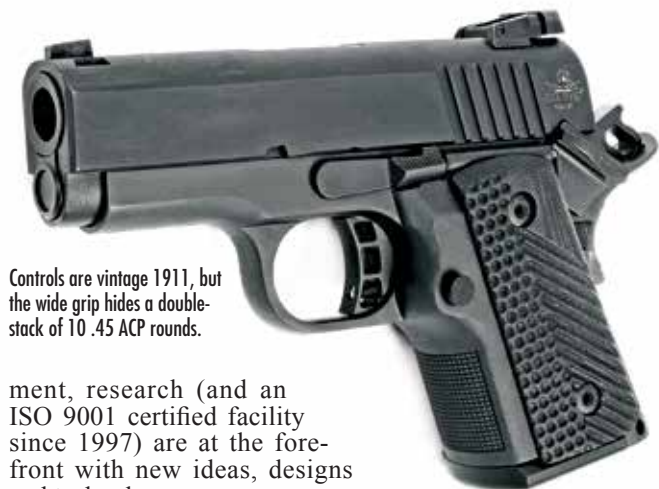
A firing grip means the little finger sort of curls under the base plate. The BBR is a two-hander for sure!

Armcor, the parent company of Rock Island Armory, manufactures more 1911s than any other company in the world. Since the 1980s, 1911s arriving from Armscor have dominated the affordable 1911 market here in the states (and the world). Over the past 20 years or so, they've also made serious in-roads in every other category of 1911 style and design there is. In short, they're not only the backbone of the 1911 marketplace, but through diligence in product improve-

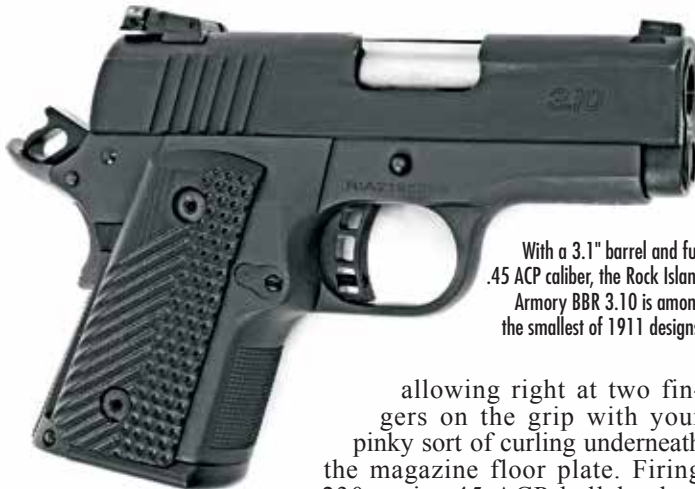


Interestingly, 11 .45 rounds take up the entire slide length of the BBR. A veritable "lead storm" if launched all together!

COMPACT, DEPENDABLE AND POWERFUL .45 ACP



Controls are vintage 1911, but the wide grip hides a double-stack of 10 .45 ACP rounds.



With a 3.1" barrel and full .45 ACP caliber, the Rock Island Armory BBR 3.10 is among the smallest of 1911 designs.

ment, research (and an ISO 9001 certified facility since 1997) are at the forefront with new ideas, designs and technology.

The fact they've remained loyal to their commitment to keep price-points affordable has helped to make Armscor USA (the ammo brand) and Rock Island Armory (the gun-side of the house in the U.S.) favorites of American shooters of all sorts. I've known Martin Tuason, the president of Armscor, for years now. His passion for the industry — and for the U.S. — is obvious and contagious. Trust me when I say he's not one to rest on any laurels and is at the very point of the spear, driving the company to keep raising the bar. Since his grandfather acquired a modest firm in the Philippines around 1940, the Tuason family has focused on the international market, growing to meet the challenges — while never losing track of the fact their employees — and customers — are family to them.

So, the reasons for their successes are obvious if you simply look at what drives them and what they hold important. I tell this bit of historical tale to offer you some insight for the next time you handle a Rock Island Armory in a store. Think beyond a

price point, to the roots, commitment and drive of the people behind it, all of which brings us smartly to the Rock Island Armory BBR 3.10 in .45 ACP. It's distinctive — even intimidating — and brings this family history of innovation and engineering into today's world. It's also a handful — and you can trust me on this!

But Why?

I asked myself this very question when I first saw the BBR. If you're not too new to shooting, you might remember the Para Ordnance Wart Hog line of 1911s. There was one model mirroring the BBR closely — although the BBR is not a copy. The Wart Hog also cost \$1,000 in 2004 dollars, while the BBR's MSRP is \$699, offering the same 10-round magazine and 3.1" barrel. The BBR is also ported, with a fully adjustable rear sight, among other upgrades. It's a good idea, taken to the next level.

Part of the "Baby Rock" series from Rock Island, this one is a far cry from the .380 "mini" 1911 introduced previously. At about 33 oz. with an empty magazine, the BBR's all-steel construction (frame and slide) help to balance light weight with the heft needed to help control the beast. And yes ... it's a beast, not for the faint of heart or a novice to handgunning. This is not the first gun you should buy to carry and shoot if you're new to things.

The front strap is about 1.8" long,

allowing right at two fingers on the grip with your pinky sort of curling underneath the magazine floor plate. Firing a 230-grain .45 ACP ball load or a higher performance defensive load tends to cause the little BBR to rock and do the jig in your hand, all the while trying to escape. A "firm firing grip" is an understatement and needs to be hardened to, and you can take this advice to the bank.

At about 5.5" tall and 6.3" overall, the BBR is tidy, but when you grab it in-hand, you'll find the grip — 1.48" wide — a bit of a challenge. Not quite a Desert Eagle challenge, but nonetheless a significant bit of real estate to cover. I have what I'd call medium-sized hands and while at first, I hesitated, thinking I'd not be able to manage a good grip, I was actually wrong. One adapts in such situations and combined with the off-side hand to help things along, I soon found myself enjoying shooting this fire-breathing dragon.

But still, why on earth do we need the BBR? It's easy actually — it's one of the smallest, lightest, highest capacity 1911-style autos in .45 ACP you can find anywhere. If you trust your life to this fat cartridge, the BBR brings 11 rounds of .45 caliber thump literally into the palm of your hand. Learn to control things and it can easily be a good friend to you when times get rough.

Details, Sir

If you go down a list of custom touches found on most high-end 1911s, you'll find them residing here too. The compact G10 aggressive textured grips lead the way toward control, and an abbreviated beavertail grip safety with a modest bump on it helps to activate things when needed. The rear sight is adjustable and compact, the front sight is a bold blade and the thumb safety, magazine release and slide lock are where they belong. Checkering on the

Simple but effective ports help counteract the sprightly muzzle flip.

A couple of full-sized 5" .22 TCMs from Rock Island show off the tiny BBR's footprint — yet it holds 10+1 .45 ACP rounds.



front strap and on the hammer spring housing is aggressive enough to hold onto but won't tear skin.

The design is bushing-less, simplifying things and making the short design possible, while the aluminum trigger is adjustable for over-travel using the built-in screw. The finish is a business-like Parkerizing on the steel bits, and I'm guessing anodizing on any aluminum bits. There's a modest amount of "melting" going on to take the edges off, literally, and I like the fact the cocking serrations are only on the rear of the slide. I've found forward serrations (to enable easier press-checking) usually just grind-up a good leather holster. I don't miss them at all.

The recoil spring is captured on a guide rod, and the ported barrel lines up neatly with ports in the slide. More about all that later.

Rock Island says the trigger pull should be "five to seven lbs." and mine tested right at 5 lbs., 10 oz. and was actually quite good. I'd not want one much lighter than this on a recoil-hungry thumper like the BBR. Mine came with one maga-

zine, although more are available from Rock Island.

Steeling My Nerves

I've fired lightweight .44 Magnums, .500 and .460 Magnums and even .475 Linebaughs in lightweight revolvers so I was ready for a fire-breathing monster here. Alas ... I was disappointed. I think the ports help, no doubt, but also contribute to the fire-breathing and loud part of the equation. I found if you simply hold onto the BBR as if your life depended upon it — which it might — it's quite controllable. Having said this, I also wouldn't hand this to a new shooter and, with a charming smile, say, "Oh, you'll enjoy shooting this one!"

They won't.

If this was a 9mm things might be different. But then it wouldn't be a .45, would it? I think if you're experienced, not necessarily recoil sensitive and simply keep your head on straight and don't out-

think yourself, you'll do fine. I put about 150 rounds through this test gun in one sitting and it would have been easy to shoot more. I also honestly expected it to act-up, at least at first, but it ran absolutely 100% with the Armscor 230 ball I used. I did clean and lube it well prior to shooting it and a bit of maintenance like this pays dividends just about always. A good stiff wrist helps too.

More out of curiosity than anything, I shot it at 25 yards, but honestly feel 15 makes more sense. I likely wouldn't try for groups with my 2.5" .45 ACP 1917 revolver at 25, and this is essentially that. The target shows 11 into 3" shots at 15 yards and I wasn't trying too hard. I'm betting things could tighten up if I took my time. A good 25-yard center torso hit would be a piece of cake, though.

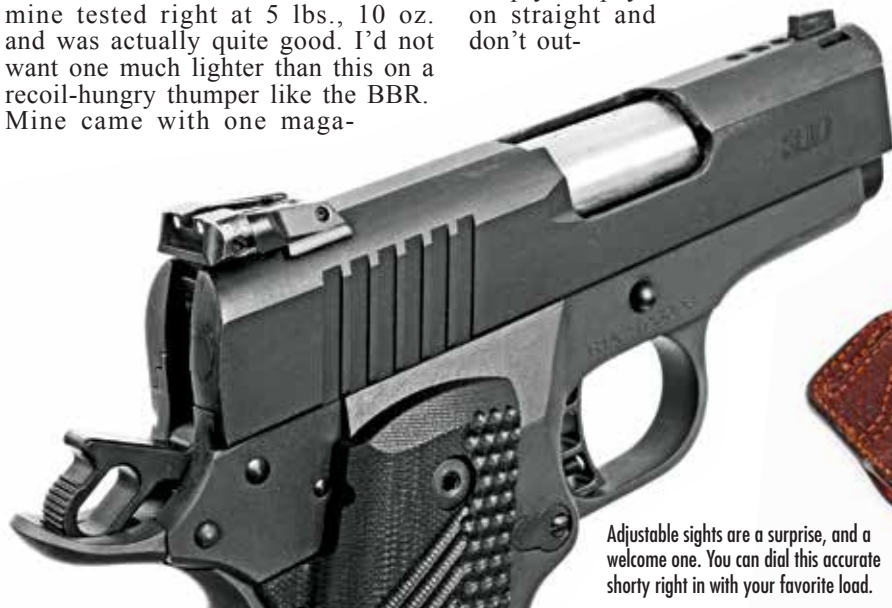
Interestingly enough, the actual rifled portion of the barrel on the BBR is about 2.2" so I vote on giving it at least a chance. Although, because I have little control over good judgment at times, I fired a magazine at my 80-yard torso gong and scored 7 out of 11 hits. The BBR shoots — but it does take some experience to manage things.

Chronographing the ball ammo from the BBR and a 5" 1911 showed the ball ammo only lost about 25 fps in the short gun, which is what I expected. However, higher performance lightweight bullet ammo tends to lose 100+ fps, which also doesn't surprise. You should do some experimenting to make your own carry ammo decision.

Now What?

All in all, it goes thump, you notice it, then you get used to it — and you start to enjoy it. If you think you need a pocketful of .45 ACP for a close-in encounter, you'd be genuinely hard-pressed to find anything better than the BBR. You really could sort of throw out a wall of 230-grain bullets in about the time it takes to think of it. That's bound to get something's attention? 

For more info: Armscor.com, Ph: (775) 537-1444, support@armscor.com



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Roy found holsters fitting an Officer's ACP-sized gun to work fine. This old Yaqui Slide was particularly handy.

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HOT KNIVES & TOOLS



The knife universe is so diverse today you can pick from a plethora of options to tailor to your needs for the day at hand. Have a low stress day working around the house or office and just need a little something light to unbox packages and such? There's a knife for that. Going to be around crowds where you feel more comfortable with a tactical EDC at your side? Got you covered. Or does business require you travel in uncharted waters where you might be exposed to the seedy side of life? There are knives for those circumstances, too. Oh, and we've also included some hot ones for hunters and survivalists in the great outdoors, too. Check 'em out!



1 | PRO-TECH MALIBU BLUE

For over two decades Pro-Tech Knives has been known for their automatic, spring-loaded openers, but recently they have been offering de-programmed manual models — the latest being their Malibu series of flipper operators. The 7.50" overall Pro-Tech Malibu Blue is as clean in design as it is to operate. Its 3.25" CPM 20CV stainless steel stonewash finished Reverse Tanto blade rolls out like butter on glass via an easy-to-access flipper

mechanism atop the rear handle spine. Deploying the blade is as simple using the plunge lock located within easy thumb distance on the Malibu Blue's attractive 4.5" anodized handle. Out back is a tip-up pocket clip for easy carry. MSRP for this spic-n-span EDC is \$270. ProTechKnives.com

2 | BÖKER KNIVES RANGEBUSTER

Böker Knives' Rangebuster is a thoroughly modernized version of the old traditional Sodbuster farmers' knife. Böker has given the pattern a whole new life by adding a 3.03" drop point style blade of top shelf N690 high-end stainless steel, yet retained the classic pocketknife feel with a nail nick for opening. The Rangebuster's 3.75" handle has the original's strong brass "birdseye" pivot, but the profile has a more stylish grip and a lockback mechanism is added for greater safety during blade lock-up. The frame eschews liners for stiff, durable Micarta slabs that lighten the knife's weight to a welcome 1.52 oz. Green or maroon handle options are available for the Böker Knives Rangebuster at a suggested retail of \$229. BokerUSA.com

3 | BRADFORD KNIVES G-NECKER

Bradford Knives' G-Necker breaks the mold of common neck knife *zeitgeist*. While "neckers" are often thought of as bantams of the fixed-blade breed, the G-Necker is crafted of 0.26" top shelf Bohler-Uddenholm Elmax stainless steel — twice as thick as the norm for such knives. At 6.125" overall and sporting a 2.874" flat ground drop point blade, this is not an overly large knife, but its hefty steel expands its ability to perform field and tactical tasks outside the typical neck knife bubble. The G-Necker's handle has been skeletonized to reduce its weight to a very manageable 2.69 oz. Bradford provides a black Kydex pull-down sheath with a necklace of black paracord. MSRP for the Bradford G-Necker, shown here in Blackwash version, is an affordable \$99. BradfordKnives.com

4 | A.G. RUSSELL LIGHT'N BUG

The A.G. Russell Light'n Bug is a feathery ounce of pure pleasure. This little dandy falls into the "dress tactical" category meant for carrying around the office or with your Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes. The 5.75" (overall) Light'n Bug keeps its weight in check with a 3.40" handle of Carbon Fiber scales over attractive blade anodized Titanium liners with





a liner-lock mechanism to keep the extended blade in check. The Light'n Bug's 2.50" spear point blade is black-coated 8Cr13MoV stainless steel and the whole 1.0-oz. package is accented with a gold anodized thumb stud and Torx screws. A blue anodized Titanium pocket clip completes the Light'n Bug. MSRP is \$75. AGRussell.com

5 | CRKT SEPTIMO MULTI-TOOL

Need a multi-tool, but not a big one? Columbia River Knife & Tool answers the call with their new Septimo Multi-Tool. A scant 4.84" closed, the Septimo houses a 2.86" Tanto-style blade for general purpose cutting and at its base is a deep Veff serration for ripping through paracord and webbing. The blade rolls out and stays put up via a liner-lock mechanism, and at the opposite end you'll find an adjustable wrench for tackling nuts and bolts. In addition, there's a Phillips and flat head screwdriver, bottle opener and glass breaker. Better yet, there's a pocket clip on the back of the Septimo Multi-Tool for at-the-ready pocket or belt carry. All of this in a handsome black oxide finish for an MSRP of \$59.99. CRKT.com

6 | SOG KNIVES SOG-TAC CA CRIMSON AUTO

Stuck in L.A. with the automatic blues again? SOG Knives can cure your ills with their SOG-TAC CA Crimson Auto. Legal in California, where auto blades over 2" are banned, the SOG-Tac Mini has a 1.90" AUS-8 stainless steel Trailing Point blade, black coated for reduced reflectivity. The 3.75" handle is anodized aluminum colorized in a handsome crimson. There's an easy-to-locate push-button blade release on the upper front handle and SOG has thoughtfully added a slide safety to keep the blade from accidentally opening during carry. On the back is a handy tip-up pocket clip. Lightweight at a paltry 2.5 oz., the SOG-TAC CA Crimson Auto has a suggested retail of \$129.95. SOGKnives.com

7 | WHITE RIVER KNIFE & TOOL EXODUS SERIES

Just when you thought there was nothing new under the sun in outdoor knives, White River Knife & Tool has shed new light on the genre. Originally produced for Exodus Knife & Tool, the White River gang liked their

designs so much they decided to offer the Exodus series themselves. The Exodus 3 and 4 models are surprisingly slim. The 3 model checks in at 7.2" overall, the larger 4 at 8.5". These are full-tang designs with blades of premium CPM S35VN stainless steel; the Exodus 3 is 3.15" in length and its big brother's 3.88". Their green Linen Micarta handles offer a subtle flare at the ends with a nice palm swell across the mid-section. Black Kydex sheaths are included with the Exodus 3 and 4, and their MSRPs are \$155 and \$190, respectively. WhiteRiverKnives.com

8 | TOPS KNIVES UNZIPPER

At first glance you might think TOPS Knives may have mistakenly sharpened the back side of the blade on their Unzipper model. Have no fear, this is a Pikal "bird's beak" style fixed-blade designed specifically for close quarters combat. TOPS' rendition of the fighter is 7.75" overall, 4.25" of the total in a wicked 1095 carbon steel blade with a black traction coating. The Unzipper's handle has a deep choil offering a bounty of finger protection and ribbed black G10 scales make for an excellent grip. The Unzipper tips the scales at 3.8 oz. and a black Kydex belt sheath is included. Suggested retail for this wicked bit of business is \$145. TOPSKnives.com

9 | GERBER GEAR EXO-MOD SAW

Gerber Gear's Ex-Mod line of skeletonized knives and tools is their latest in contemporary outdoor offerings. The 7.55" Exo-Mod Saw struck our fancy as small, compact hunting and camp saws aren't as common as other gear in the outdoors scene. Light in weight, the 2.6-oz. Exo-Mod Saw has a 4.4" cutting blade of voracious crosscut teeth sharp enough to make a Piranha blush. A blade stop at the end helps keep the blade focused on the job at hand and the Exo-Mod



Saw's 4.6" handle has rubberized inserts to take the sting out of extended use. A black molded sheath is perfectly suited for belt or pack carry and black-wash/black handle (shown here) or satin finish/bright orange versions are available. MSRP is \$33. GerberGear.com

10 | SPYDERCO PACIFIC SALT 2 GREEN

Serrations abound on the Spyderco Pacific Salt 2 Green's 3.75" satin finished Spear Point blade — the better to cut tough synthetic materials like rope and webbing. Ideally suited for outdoor types like boaters and rock climbers, the Pacific Salt 2 Green's blade is made of LC200N stainless steel with high Nitrogen content making it totally corrosion proof against the nasty effects of salt water or sweat. It simply will not rust. The 5.0" handle, made of tough, time proven FRN synthetic, is taken from Spyderco's ever popular Endura model. For toting the Pacific Salt 2 Green serves up a user-friendly pocket clip that can be positioned for left- or right-hand grip and tip-up or tip-down carry. MSRP is \$180. SpyderCo.com





PEDIGREED DEFENSIVE

WALTHER'S NEW PDP FLAGSHIP PISTOL



TOM MCHALE • PHOTOS: ROB JONES/THE IMAGESMITH, LLC

Fritz would be proud. I'm pretty sure Carl would also approve, but I think Fritz might be the one with a soft spot for the new Walther PDP pistols.

Those of us who care about such obscure things like founders of modern gun companies likely have the name Carl Walther burned into our collection of neurons dedicated to firearm trivia. Interestingly, it was Fritz Walther, Carl's eldest son, who moved the company to expand from their efforts crafting hunting and target rifles to handguns. I suspect Carl didn't resist Fritz's desires, as he was mar-

ried to one Minna Georgine Pickert. She had handguns in her blood as her father, Christian Friedrich Pickert, worked with a nearby revolver manufacturer, Arminius Waffenwerk. It's never a bad idea to tip your hat to the father-in-law by expressing a sincere interest in his work.

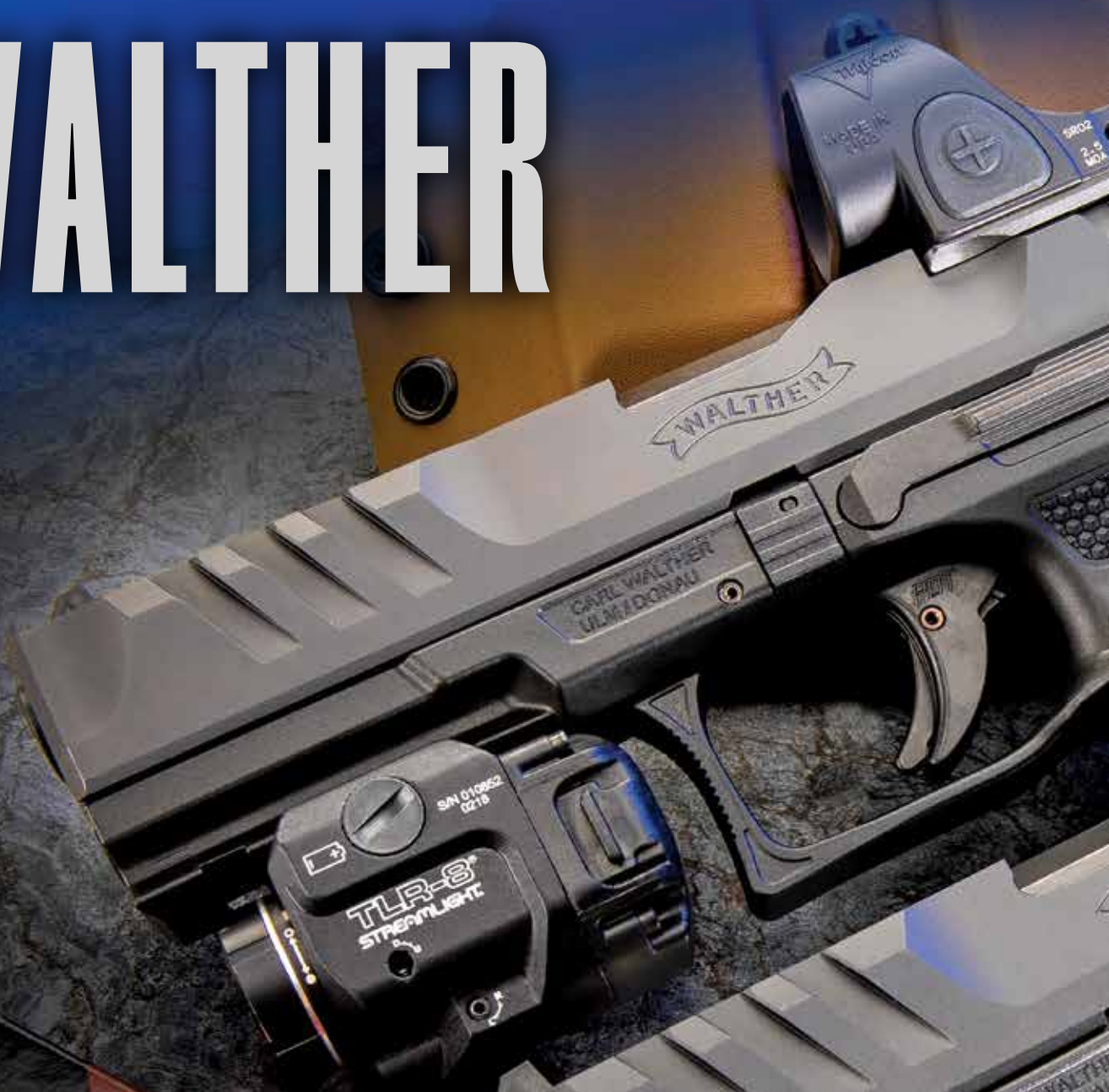
Anyway, under Fritz's prompting, Carl expanded the company's efforts into pistols in 1908 with models 1 through 5 and 7 through 9. Most were .25 ACP and .32 ACP pistols. Their efforts stamped a permanent entry



PRECISION

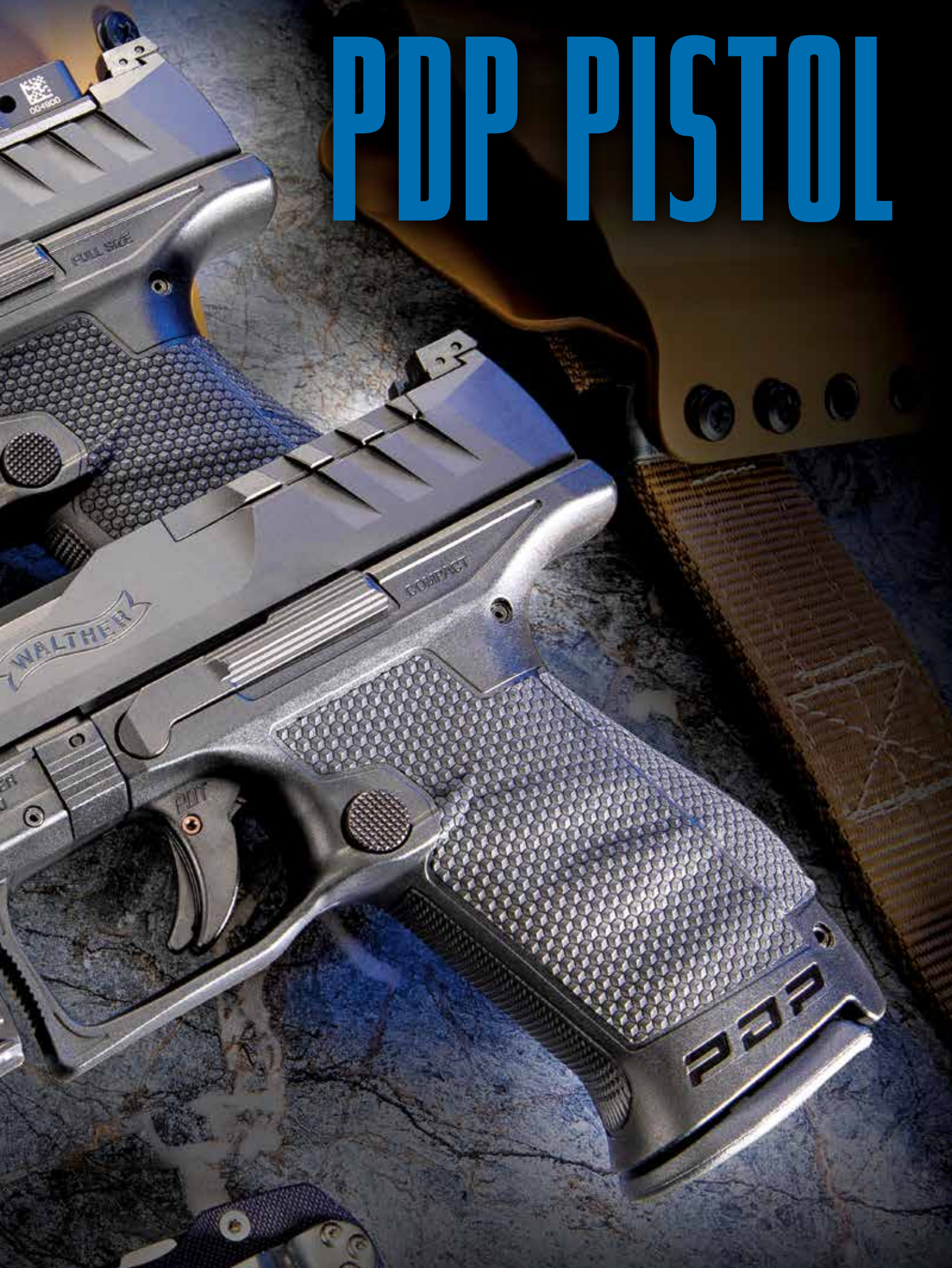


WALTHER



AMERICAN
HANDGUNNER

PDP PISTOL



WALTHER PDP PISTOL



in the history books in 1929 and 1931 with introductions of the Walther PP and PPK. These wonderfully elegant pistols are among my all-time favorites, prompting a compulsion to break out my tuxedo every time I pull one from the safe.

Things have changed over the years, and while you can still order new models of the PPK and PPK/S, those icons are no longer carrying the flag as the company's de facto duty and personal defense pistols. Those duties have now been passed to a brand-new flagship model, the PDP.

All New, All Walther

The new Walther frontman pays homage to the PPQ and Q4/Q5 series pistols but brings new features and

fired pistol with the expected polymer frame and steel parts up top. If you see one lingering at the cheese buffet across the room, you'll recognize it as a Walther based on its iconic PPQ-style appearance and attention to ergonomics.

Available initially in two 9mm versions, the full-size model sports a 4.5" barrel and packs 18 rounds in its steel magazines. The compact model contains a 4.0" barrel and shorter grip frame accommodating a 15-round magazine. With either packaging, you'll get two magazines in the box.

Form & Function

Geometry was never my strong suit, but as I recall, mathematicians refer to six-sided shapes as hexagons. The PDP's side panels and rear grip surface

design elements to take the line forward another decade or so.

are covered with legions of them, creating a grip pattern Walther calls Performance Duty Texture. It's wonderfully effective and sticks in the hand without skateboard tape-style abrasion and abuse. The front strap is molded with a more traditional checkering pattern. Under the octagon fields, the terrain rises and falls on the grip sides to create subtle finger "grooves." To be clear, the front strap is straight — no grooves — it's just the grip sides having the ever-so-subtle waves. It's as comfortable as sheepskin-lined moccasins and stable in hand. You'll get three total grip backstrap panels to adjust grip circumference and trigger reach and all have a nice palm swell shape on the backstrap. Bottom line: This pistol fits the hand like a fine rabbit fur-lined driving glove. All this leads to grip angle and pointing characteristics reminiscent of a 1911.

The cocking serrations are defined by deep, squared-off cuts located front and back. Walther calls it SuperTerrain Serrations. I call it effective.

Rounding out the frame feature set, you'll find a four-slot rail on the full-size model and a three-slot version on the compact. A steel pin drilled through the base of the grip offers a lanyard attachment point.

Triggernometry

The stock trigger in the PDP is ... wonderful. You'd think with today's computer-guided design and manufacturing techniques it would be possible to develop a quality trigger not adding undue cost to a pistol. Walther figured this out. You'll experience about 3/8" of take-up ending with a barely detectable "click" sensation. If you like to stage the trigger, you might appreciate this attribute. From this point on, you'll get about 1/8" of constant pressure followed by a really nice break at about 5 lbs. No grit or drag, just a smooth press sensation. I really like it.





The reset is tactile and audible, so it's hard to miss. I also detected a good bit of forward pressure on the trigger carrying your finger past the reset point whether you intend to or not. I found I liked this feature as it's nearly impossible to short stroke this trigger when shooting fast.

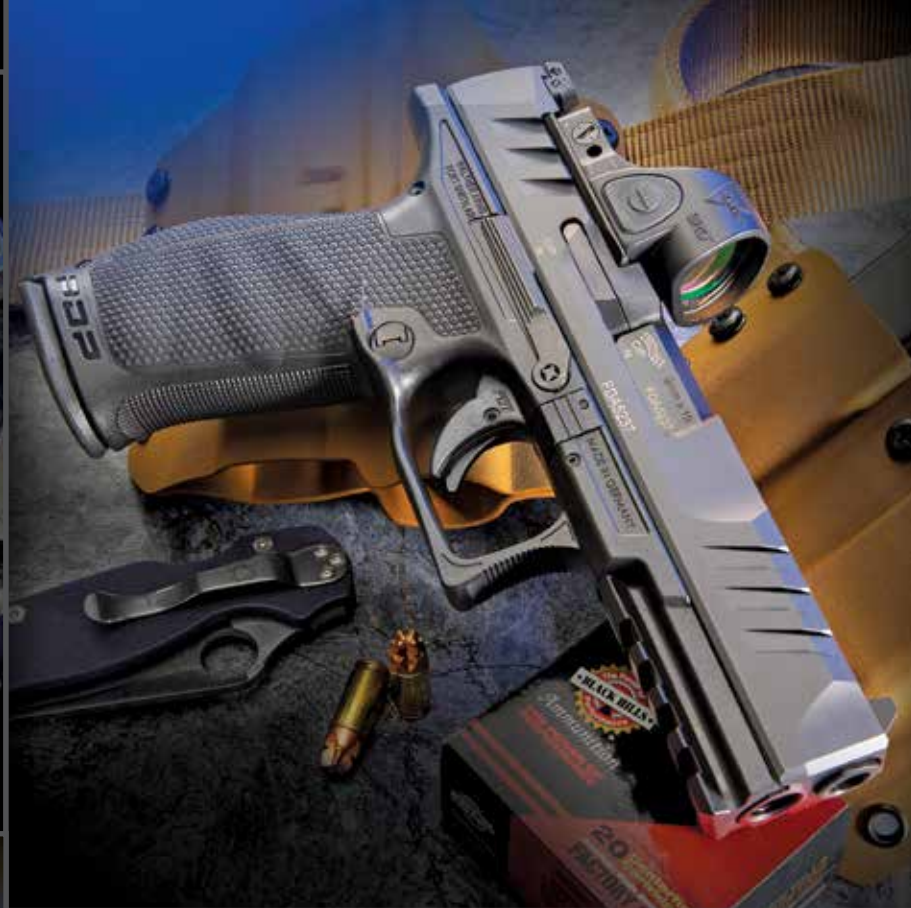
To Rack, Or Not To Rack?

Due to the nature of my job, shooting different pistols on any given day, I've drifted into a training habit of only using slide lock levers for administrative tasks. I never use them to release the slide when shooting. Instead, I've

developed a habit of a quick "rack" to release the slide. I do this because pistol manufacturers install slide lock/release levers in different locations determined via a function of Jupiter's current position in relation to the third Taco Bell to the west of Possum Kingdom, South Carolina. Sometimes the slide lock is closer to the trigger area while on other guns it's much farther back near the rear of the slide. When shooting different pistols, it's hard to develop any consistent muscle memory for using this lever as a release. By all means, if you use the same or similar pistols all the time, feel free to get in the habit of using that

lever — it's faster. The "rack" technique is just universal — it will work on any gun with no fumbling to find the lever.

The Walther PDP takes an interesting approach to lever location. Rather than deciding where to put it, the engineers placed it, well, everywhere. The slide lock lever on the PDP is extra-long. It measures a solid 1¾" from pivot point to end. Not only is the lever easy to reach without alteration of your firing grip, but the length also provides extra leverage, kind of like Archimedes' famous earth-moving lever and fulcrum. You will have no



problem whatsoever using the slide lock lever to chamber a new round. Even if you're a lefty, the chore is easy as a lever of equal length is located on the right side of the slide.

Let There Be Sights

The PDP uses standard GLOCK-compatible sights. While it might sound strange for a company to choose a sight architecture from a competitor, it's a customer-centric move. Because there are so many GLOCKS on the market after decades of sales there

are dozens of aftermarket GLOCK compatible sights you can choose from. You'll have no problem finding aftermarket sights.

The included factory sights are standard three-dot variety — with a bonus. The front sight is a post mounting through the slide with a screw accessible from inside — standard GLOCK style. The rear sight is reminiscent of a Novak LMA. It's adjustable not just for elevation, but windage too. You'll find two small screws on the right-hand side of the outer sight body that maneuver an inner mechanism containing the squared-out notch. This approach negates any point of aim adjustment disadvantage of the fixed front sight post.

XS tall sights

I fully intended to test a Walther PDP with optic sights, so it seemed appropriate to install a set of tall back up iron sights on this model. I chose the XS Minimalists. As the name implies, the sights are a little simpler and therefore less expensive than the standard XS sights having pricey tritium lamps in both front- and rear-sight bodies.

The XS Minimalist sights have a standard front sight but the tritium insert is surrounded by a bright orange

photoluminescent ring. The rear sight is plain — all blacked out with horizontal separations to help minimize glare. It has a standard square notch in the back with slightly rounded corners in the bottom of the square. That's to help guide your eye higher to the top of the front side so you can more easily align it with the tops of the rear sight to get your elevation dialed in.

The XS tall Minimalist sights measure just about 3/8" from the top of the frame and co-witness perfectly with a red dot optic in the lower segment of the glass.

Trijicon SRO Red Dot Sight

The Walther PDP is optics ready out of the box and the company will give you a free optic mounting plate of your choice to fit your preferred model of red-dot optic. I chose the standard Trijicon plate as I felt the Trijicon SRO would pair wonderfully with the full-size PDP.

This SRO features a 2.5 MOA red dot in a package that runs for up to three years, so for me, it's perfect for defensive use at home and for concealed carry. To be ultra-conservative, I'd change the CR2032 battery every New Year's day through the top-loading compartment. No need to recheck the zero. If you prefer, you can get the SRO with a 1.0 or 5.0 MOA dot size.

Our Special Projects Editor Roy jokingly refers to handgun red dots as "TVs on top of the pistol." In this

WALTHER PDP PISTOL

case, the SRO is the 80" wide-screen version you see when walking into Costco. The SRO features a large round housing that translates to a large diameter glass viewing window. The now-tiresome complaint of "I can't find the dot!" has been banished from all possible relevance with this optic. You cannot miss the dot in this wide-screen TV setup. While I describe the SRO as offering a large viewing area, I should be careful to note it's not so expansive as to prevent concealed carry. Mounted on the PDP compact model, the setup works just fine with normal carry methods.

Ammo Games

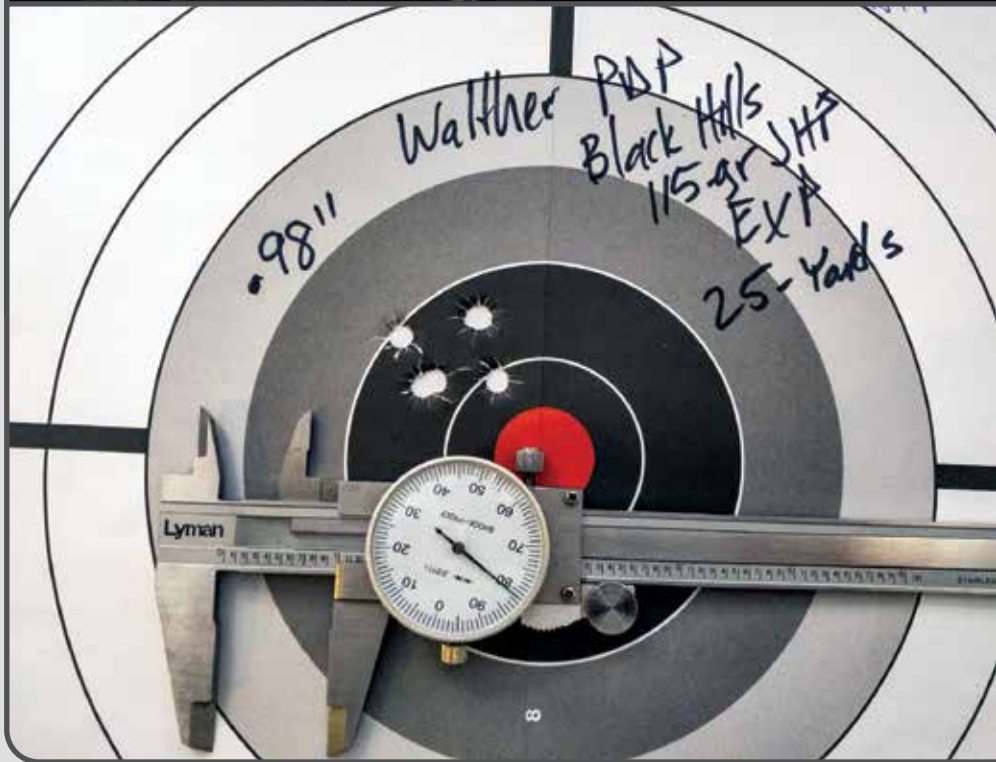
Even during these desperate times of ammo drought and despair, I managed to scrounge up enough of three different loads to do proper testing with the Walther PDP.

Black Hills HoneyBadger is quickly becoming one of my favorite defensive loads. The solid-copper bullet resembles a drill bit more than a hollow point, and as the shape hints, it's not designed to expand. Barriers or no barriers, it will perform the penetration task demanded. From the full-size Walther PDP, I measured average velocity of the light-for-caliber 100-grain projectile using a Competition Electronics Pro Chrono DLX optical chronograph 15 feet from the muzzle. The average velocity of a shot string worked out to 1,287.3 fps. For accuracy testing, I used a Ransom Multi-Caliber Steady Rest set up 25 yards from the target and fired multiple five-shot groups. The HoneyBadger load grouped into an average 1.79".

I also dove into a supply of Norma MHP (monolithic hollow point) 108-grain ammo. In previous reviews, I've found this defensive load to show exceptional accuracy. For defensive use, it's designed to expand massively when used for home defense and concealed carry applications. Using the same Pro Chrono setup, I measured average velocity of a shot string at 1,220.7 fps. From 25 yards, I fired multiple five-shot groups and observed an average group size of just 1.41". Nice.

Last up was a more traditional load from Black Hills — their 115-grain JHP EXP offering with its traditional hollow-point design. The finicky nature of Black Hills' production showed with this offering. Average velocity clocked in at 1,206.7 fps. Accuracy was impressive with an average group size of just 1.27". Even more impressive was the five-shot group of the day at just 0.98".

This PDP will shoot. It's been a while since I've tested a production pistol with this kind of repeatable accuracy. Com-



bined with a red dot, it's easy to put shots on target with satisfying precision.

Closing Arguments

When Carl Walther began his apprenticeship at a small Zella-Mehlis, Germany shop back in 1886, I doubt he foresaw the worldwide success and reach of today's companies, but given his focus on precision target arms, I

suspect he'd be proud of the latest company offering.

I found the PDP to be an impressive pistol all around. Easy to handle, firm in the hand and stunningly accurate for a mass production handgun. With an MSRP of \$649, you're getting a heck of a pistol for the money. 

For more info: WaltherArms.com

Los Angeles County Sheriff "Emeritus"
Eugene W. Biscailuz not only created
the California Highway Patrol, he
owned this revolver.



TALL, BUT TRUE, TALES

FASCINATING GUNS YOU NEVER SAW

GARY PAUL JOHNSTON

No, while all these guns tell a story, none are in my collection. Sigh ... But I do know the stories of all but one, and strangely I did own it at one time.

A Tom Mix Find

Back in about 1955, the ad in the *L.A. Times* described a Colt revolver for sale for \$350, so the current owner called, got the address in Hollywood and hurried over only to find an old movie studio. The Colt was a .44-40 S&W with a 4¾" barrel, SN 765XX, made in 1882. It had the remains of a cheap stove chrome finish through which engraving could be seen.

It sported a pair of original Colt mother-of-pearl grips, the right one having a carved longhorn steer's head with 24kt gold horns and ruby eyes. Both escutcheons having the Rampant Colt facing forward indicated the grips

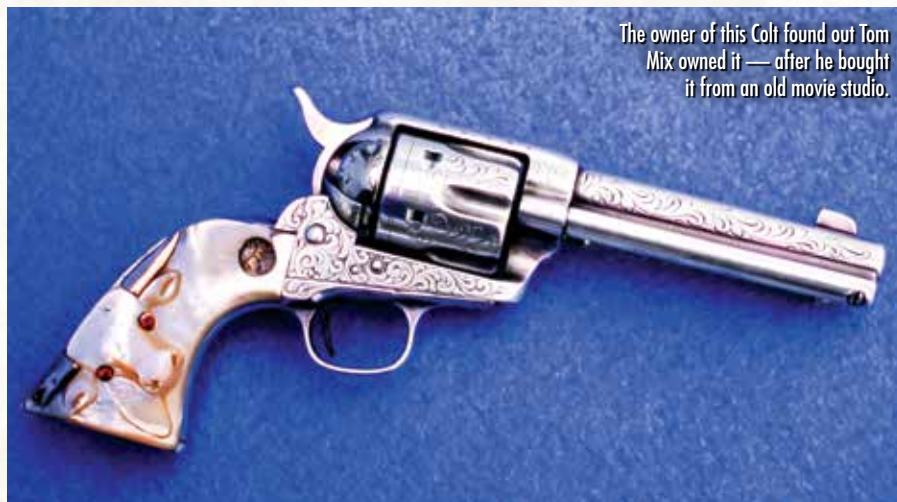
were made in 1913 or later. The owner decided to call the movie company back to inquire about any known history of the gun. He was told all they knew was it had been owned by Tom Mix.

A Colt letter described the gun as seen, being factory engraved with no grips indicated. The owner decided to have the chrome electrically removed and found the engraving showed use, but was beautiful, and it was agreed, due to its era, the original finish was probably silver, so he had a light silver finish applied. If only it could talk!

Real Fitz Specials

Born in Manchester, NH around 1870, John Henry Fitzgerald became interested in firearms at an early age — especially Colt revolvers, which he became adept at working on. By the mid-1920s "Fitz" was customizing Colt New Service and other Colt DA

The owner of this Colt found out Tom
Mix owned it — after he bought
it from an old movie studio.





What collector wouldn't drool over the opportunity to buy a Lawman's 1891 Colt SAA complete with his original Deputy Sheriff's badge?

revolvers by shortening the barrel to 2", bobbing the hammer spur, doing a smooth DA trigger job and removing the forward portion of the trigger guard. The result was called a "Fitz Special" and was done to make it easier to conceal the gun and access it more quickly.

The New Service gun shown was made in 1940 and bears SN 3494XX and Colt records report it was shipped as a "Fitz" Special to a dealer in Texas for a company in Prescott, AZ. Years later, it popped up in the estate of a police lieutenant in Oregon. With no Colt records kept of "Fitz" Special revolvers, it estimated only about 100 were made.

Biscailuz's Revolver

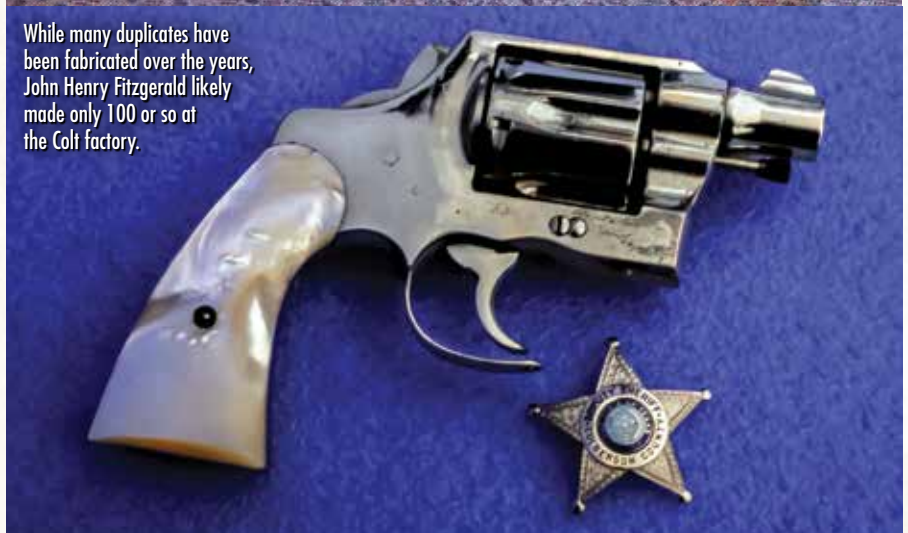
Here's an exceptional S&W originally owned by Los Angeles County Sheriff "Emeritus" Eugene W. Biscailuz (1883-1969). With the accomplishments of Sheriff Biscailuz far too numerous to cover here, his law enforcement career spanned from 1907 to 1958, during which time he created the California Highway Patrol. He also liked fine guns and carried this one, a S&W .44 Hand Ejector, popularly known as the "Triple Lock." Arguably one of the finest revolvers ever made, the "Triple Lock" had a third lock to hold the front of the cylinder firmly in place. It was only produced from 1908 to 1915 with a total production of 15,376. With the SN of this one being 81XX it was likely made about 1911.

The Priest's Gun

A Catholic Priest showed up at the indoor range and asked if he could shoot. He was given a stall where he produced a single action New Model Number 3 S&W revolver and a nearly full box of .44 Russian ammunition.



This S&W New Model Number 3 ended up with a priest after a confession. Confession to what, we might wonder?



While many duplicates have been fabricated over the years, John Henry Fitzgerald likely made only 100 or so at the Colt factory.

As several shooters gathered around, the priest reloaded and fired another six shots at the target. All 12 shots hit the target, producing a group of about 6". "Not bad," said one of the onlookers who was a Los Angeles County Deputy Sheriff. "Thanks," said the priest, "but it's a little big for me; I think I need something smaller."

The deputy produced an S&W six-shot .38 Special revolver with a 2" barrel, unloaded it and handed it to the

priest. "Probably something like this," he said. "Yes," replied the priest, "this is just what I've been looking for!" The deputy told the priest he had another one at home that was identical and he'd trade it to the priest for the old S&W.

Being curious, the deputy asked the priest where he got the old revolver and the priest told him after receiving a confession the gun was surrendered to him. When the deputy asked what the man confessed, the priest said he



D.W. King's custom work arguably led to the development of the classic Colt Python.

couldn't divulge the details.

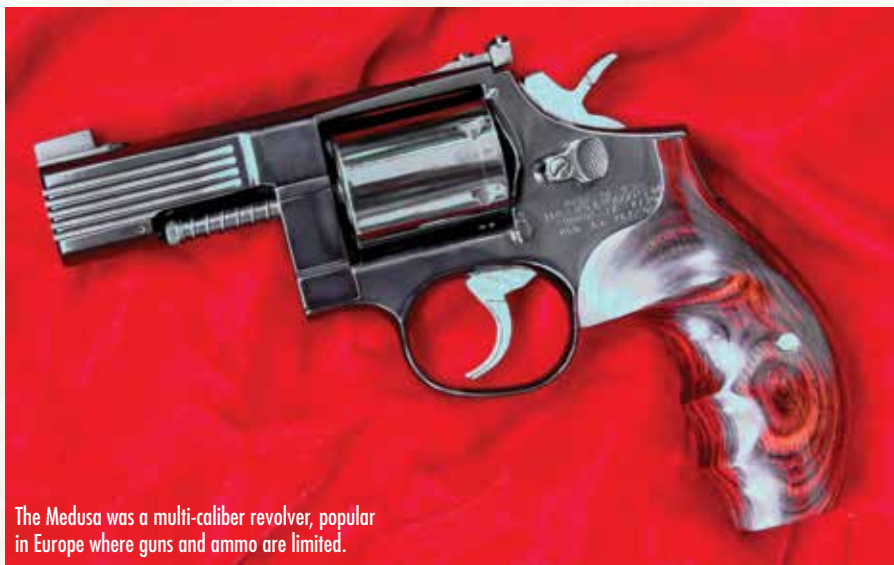
It was last fired in good hands.

The Multi-Caliber Medusa

When I got married, I had the first Phillips & Rogers multi-caliber revolver. Made on an S&W K-Frame, the gun had a unique cylinder, the chambers of which would accept and fire everything in the 9mm/.38 family, except for the 9mm Makarov. I found 17 different rounds I fired in it. Years later a friend of mine took over the design, improved it and called it the "Medusa." It was a huge hit

in Europe where handguns are limited, as is ammunition.

Around 1998 Colt got wind of the design and contracted the company to incorporate it into a brand new .357 Magnum revolver called the Colt Magnum Carry. The new gun was introduced at the 1999 SHOT Show and was called the "Survivor," but another company had a rifle by this name and threatened to sue, so the following day the "Survivor" was not present. However, another Magnum Carry called the Colt "MC" made an appearance.



The Medusa was a multi-caliber revolver, popular in Europe where guns and ammo are limited.

Some 25 Magnum Carry's were shipped to the Medusa's company in Texas. However, there was a huge upheaval at Colt where several new guns were cancelled, including the Magnum Carry and its sibling, the Multi-Caliber. Only a handful of Colt Magnum Carry revolvers were sold and the number of Colt Multi-Caliber revolvers is unknown.

King's Python Origins

Born in Colorado in the latter part of the 19th Century, D.W. King moved to San Francisco where he began a fruitful career designing and making sights for rifles. Soon King's business turned to customizing Colt and S&W revolvers with better sights, superb lock work and ventilated barrel ribs that added weight, looked great and provided an elevated plane on which to mount King's sights, the most elaborate of which had a tiny mirror to shed light on the red front sight.

King converted Colts and S&Ws and bought new guns from both companies to convert for his customers. King's complete package was called the "Super Target." Following D.W. King's death in the mid-1940s his business was "acquired" by former employees who formed the Micro Sight Company using many of King's ideas.

With the war over, Colt and S&W also began incorporating some of King's features with Colt bringing out a mass production version of the "Super Target" in 1955 called the "Python." This King Colt "Super Target" is built on a Colt Official Police model made in 1937, the SN 6105XX. Unusual is it's been engraved and has ivory grips.

The CIA Deer Gun

I encountered the CIA Deer Gun shown in the mid 1970s and the owner (long deceased) had limited information, except to say only 10 remained of the thousand produced for clandestine use during the Vietnam War.

From a request by the CIA, the Deer Gun was designed and manufactured by the American Machine & Foundry (AMF) — the same company that makes bowling equipment and Harley-Davidson motorcycles. Spawned by the Liberator Pistol of World War II, the Deer Gun reportedly took its name from a top-secret OSS element called the Deer Team active in Indo China near the end of that war.

Made of die cast aluminum, the single-shot Deer Gun had a steel barrel with a smooth bore. The barrel was unscrewed to load one of the three rounds of 9mm ammunition furnished in the white Styrofoam flotation box. The box also contained a wooden rod to extract fired cases, and a cartoon instruction-sheet on how to operate the



Like the WWII-era Liberator Pistol, the CIA's Deer Gun was intended to provide a cheap single-shot solution, allowing capture of enemy guns through up close and personal surprise and force.

weapon to kill communist forces and then take their weapon.

Due to tactical changes in the Vietnam War or politics, or both, the Deer Gun project was cancelled with only a few Deer Guns reported as having been tested in the field, and the rest being destroyed. One Deer Gun was recently reported as having brought \$27,500 at auction. Whether it was the one seen here is unknown, but consider the irony a cheap, throwaway gun that originally cost the government less than \$4 would bring a price 6,875 times that much 50 years later.

Colt Pistol For Sale

The newspaper ad read, "Old Colt Pistol For Sale." It was right after the Korean War and the pistol was pricey, but the collector beat it right over to the address where he met an elderly gentleman who led him to an old dental cabinet in the garage. He opened a drawer and pulled out a very dirty Colt Single Action Army revolver and handed it to our collector. He said it belonged to his great such-and-such who had been a lawman in Arizona many years before and he wouldn't take less than \$75 for it.

The collector later said he reached in his pocket so fast he thought his hand was going to go right through it. He could see it was nickel plated, but he rubbed the dirty grips and began walking before the seller could change his mind. It was then he realized the grip was one piece of ivory. The seller yelled to him asking, "Don't you want his badge that goes with it?" The collector was so excited he didn't ask the original owner's name or where he had been a deputy sheriff.

The Colt is a .45 and was made in 1891 with SN 1374XX. It letters to a 7½" Colt SAA with grips and finish not listed. The original owner could have returned it to Colt to have the barrel replaced with a shorter one. It's got lots of personality, been in and out of a holster a thousand times and is still in great running condition.



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You need to ask yourself if you're awesome enough to rock such a rarefied carry piece as the Hellcat RDP. For those that make the cut, the new Hellcat's threaded barrel accepts this stubby Gemtech Lunar sound suppressor.

WILL DABBS, MD

THE BLOCKBUSTER SEQUEL

THE SPRINGFIELD HELLCAT RAPID DEFENSE PACKAGE



The Hellcat RDP compensator is milled out of 8082 aluminum and puts a little of that muzzle chaos to work mitigating recoil and muzzle flip.

In September 2019, Springfield Armory raised the bar for micro compact carry pistols with the Hellcat. Stuffing an industry-leading 13+1 rounds of 9mm Parabellum into a package most typically reserved for .380ACP mouse guns, the Hellcat brought responsible armed Americans unprecedented, concealed carry capabilities. Just when you thought it was safe, however, the Springfield Armory skunkworks has now bumped the standard up yet higher.

The basic chassis is classic Hellcat. This palm-sized pocket rocket lacks any protruding ditzels, fits my hand like a tailored suit, and is as reliable as Daniel

Defoe's death and taxes. The gun comes with two magazines, one packing 11 rounds and the other 13. With this as a foundation, the good folks at Springfield Armory just took everything to the next level.

Movies And Math

I do so love a good action movie. I'm the geeky guy clutching the plastic light saber who's spazzing out during the opening scrawl of the latest *Star Wars* installment. Perhaps you've seen me in your local theater. I'm personally responsible for a not insignificant percentage of Hollywood's annual box office take. If ever I get abducted by aliens, George Lucas could starve.

There is a reliable formula Hollywood screenwriters use to keep dweebs like me coming back for more. If the first movie is impressive, the sequel must be all the more so. The problem is once you get through several iterations, it gets tougher and tougher to attain the same level of cinematic awesome-

ness. The end result has a geriatric John Rambo hobbling out of his memory care facility on a quad cane to battle al Qaeda Nazis on Uranus. In mathematical terms, the upper limit to the function seems to be, well, ill defined. The same phenomenon is at work in this new Springfield Armory handgun.

I was an early adopter of the Hellcat and have proudly packed mine for more than a year now. Now in one fell swoop this new RDP version leaves me in the dust. With radical new features and value-added capabilities, the new Hellcat RDP is like the action movie sequel. Everything just got a little bit more awesome.

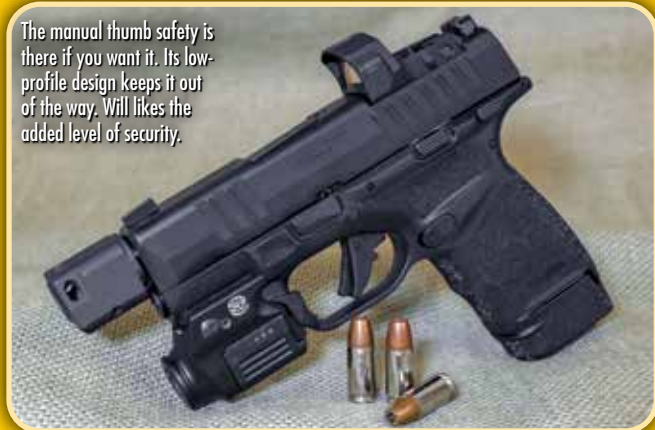
Less Chaos, More Safety

The Hellcat Rapid Defense Package enhancements fall into three broad categories. The most obvious is the niftiest little compensator. The new RDP Hellcat comes with its extended barrel threaded 1/2x28. The tiny thumb-sized compensator is machined from 8082 aluminum and indexes automatically without shims.

Look, Ma, no switches! The HEX Wasp micro compact red dot sight is always on and automatically adjusts for ambient lighting conditions.



The manual thumb safety is there if you want it. Its low-profile design keeps it out of the way. Will like the added level of security.



With 13+1 onboard, manual safety, and HEX Wasp micro red dot sight, the Hellcat RDP packs service pistol capabilities into a package you can hide comfortably underneath shorts and a T-shirt. The SureFire XSC weaponlight is custom designed for the Hellcat.



This compensator redirects some of the chaos to help counteract muzzle flip and perceived recoil. The device latches rigidly in place and takes up very little space. It should also not interfere with most existing holster solutions.

The new Hellcat RDP is also available with an optional bilateral thumb safety. Manual external safeties are a sore subject among certain professional gunmen, some of whom object on basic principle. I respectfully disagree. I feel the addition of a manual safety on a combat pistol is 100% ballistic sweetness.

I am personally acquainted with four different sordid circumstances wherein law enforcement officers experienced negligent discharges involving pistols that lacked manual safeties. Each case was an undeniable training failure, but that doesn't change the fact during these four episodes three officers got shot. In the case of this thumb safety, use it if you want or ignore it if you don't. I don't see a downside.

The Hellcat RDP still retains the standard bevy of automatic safety mechanisms. An internal drop safety keeps the gun inert despite rough handling. The blade safety keeps the pistol hibernating until your finger is on the trigger. Despite all this mechan-

ical security, the Hellcat RDP is still instantly responsive when you need it.

Wasp Vision

Springfield Armory has offered their Hellcat as an OSP (Optical Sight Pistol) for some time now. In this configuration, the rear slide deck is cut to accept a micro red dot sight. However, this design also retains the superb Hellcat luminous sights.

The Tactical Rack U-Notch tritium-powered sighting system on the Hellcat is, in my opinion, the finest in the industry. This design looks like a grinning glow-in-the-dark cyclops and is both fast and intuitive. The RDP allows you to retain the use of your iron sights co-witnessed through the new Hex Wasp micro red dot optical sight.

The Hex Wasp is Springfield Armory's first foray into electro-optical sights and is purpose-designed for this micro compact application. There are no external switches. The sight is always on and includes an auto-dimming feature that *automatically adjusts the brightness of the dot for ambient conditions*. The rugged lightweight housing is cut from 6061 T6

hardcoat anodized aluminum and features easy-to-grip serrations on the front, rear and sides. The glass lens is scratch-resistant and treated to minimize glare. They also offer a slightly larger version suitable for full-sized handguns and rifle applications called the Dragonfly.

The dot is 3.5 MOA, and the unit runs more than 65,000 hours on a CR2032 battery you can buy at Walgreens. Under real-world conditions, you can expect two years between battery changes. Refresh the battery every other birthday and you're good. The Wasp is IPX7 waterproof. This means it can be submerged to one meter for up to half an hour. If your life involves putting your carry gun through stuff like this, then your problems are worse than mine. The architecture of the Wasp mimics that of the Shield RMsC, so it mounts without an adapter.

The unit weighs a mere 0.7 oz. and will still fit in most standard Hellcat holsters. Windage and elevation adjustments are accomplished via a small included hex wrench, though mine

The Hellcat RDP upgrades typically do not interfere with your existing holster solution. My trusty Galco rig fits me like my favorite pair of broken-in boxers.



Right: At 12 meters the Hellcat RDP groups monotonously inside of a juice can lid. This is perfect performance for a concealed carry gun.





The new Hellcat RDP is still a basic Hellcat underneath. Upgrades include the HEX Wasp red dot, the manual safety and a muzzle-mounted compensator.

was zeroed perfectly from the factory. All up the Hellcat RDP synergistically becomes more than the sum of its parts.

How Does She Run?

The Hellcat RDP carries just like my unadorned Hellcat. I use the same holster and the same manual of arms. I like the manual safety. I work among kids, so I prefer additional safety over tactical prickliness. Thumbing the safety clear on the draw is an intuitive exercise, and there's no law saying you have to use it just because it is there.

If you've never run a red dot-equipped handgun before, there is a learning curve. The first few presentations, you will find yourself hunting the dot. However, like any shooting discipline, your hands and eyes get the memo after a while. With a little practice, the red dot jumps into your field of view of its own initiative.

I shot the new RDP alongside my unadorned Hellcat, and the compensator makes a difference. The Hellcat never was unpleasant, but recoil is nonetheless brisk. It's still vigorous, but muzzle

flip and mechanical recoil reduction are better on the new gun. The end result is handy, cool and fast. I could easily keep my rounds in a juice can lid at 12 meters.

At the end of the day, I dragged out my checkbook. I couldn't resist the siren's song of enhanced control and the capacity to mount a sound suppressor on my micro carry gun. Anybody want to buy a well-maintained first-generation Hellcat? I'll let it go cheap.



For more info: Springfield-Armory.com



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SHORT & SWEET



Ruger's 5151 New Vaquero packs a .45 Colt punch into a compact, well thought out package. The custom leather is from Doc Barranti.



RUGER'S 5151 BIRDSHEAD VAQUERO

JEREMY D. CLOUGH

It wouldn't be fair to say Ruger was built on the single action, but it wouldn't be entirely inaccurate either. William B. Ruger formed a partnership with Alexander Sturm, an artist and a bit of a polymath who had been an OSS officer and married Teddy Roosevelt's granddaughter. He provided the funding to support Ruger's ingenuity.



The 5151 is a pretty, compact, solid feeling sixgun that slips easily into the hand, points well and cocks easily.

Together, Sturm and Ruger introduced the stunningly successful and aptly named Standard .22 pistol in 1949. Combining elements of the Luger, Nambu and other pistols, it has since evolved into the current Mk IV and remains the standard for general use .22 LR pistols. The Standard was quickly followed by a trio of single action revolvers: the .22 caliber Single Six (1953), the Blackhawk .357

Magnum (1955) and the Super Blackhawk .44 Magnum (1959). All of these were well received by a market acculturated by Western movies and fast draw, but largely deprived of new production sixguns due to Colt's suspending SAA production after WWII.

When Bigger Is Better

The Ruger revolvers were more than just copies of the SAA. They were re-engineered with things like coil springs that made them more reliable, and they



Jeremy's favorite load for the 5151 is Double-Tap's 250-grain semi-jacketed hollow point, advertised to do 950 fps. Relatively soft shooting, it looks the business because it is the business.

were stronger than the guns upon which they were patterned. Later versions also incorporated a transfer bar internal safety making them safe to carry with a full cylinder. They also had adjustable sights, which greatly improved practical accuracy, but barred them from use in the fledging sport of Cowboy Action Shooting, which allowed only traditional-style fixed sight pistols.

Until late 1992, that is, when Ruger first displayed the fixed-sight Vaquero. Brought from idea to production in a speedy four months, the "Vaq" retained the advances of the Super Blackhawk while eliminating its Dragoon-style square back triggerguard and adjustable rear sight, resulting in a gun suitable for the SASS.

Chambered initially in .45 Colt blued guns had their receivers finished in a mottled pattern that mimicked color case hardening. Instead of the usual brushed finish, stainless Vaqueros received a polished finish reminiscent of nickel. While the actual polishing process was proprietary when the Vaq was introduced, the appearance of the finish suggests a tumbling process.

With a larger frame and cylinder than the SAA, the original Vaquero was far stronger than its inspiration. The strength, though, carries a weight penalty, which also affects the gun's balance. Ever responsive to customer

feedback, that led to the introduction of the trimmer, lighter New Vaquero. In addition to a longer frame window, the cylinder of the early .45 Colt Vaq is visibly larger (about 0.090" longer and 0.050" wider) and has thicker cylinder walls, weighing some 1½ oz. more than the cylinder of the New Vaquero in the same caliber.

The .45 Colt is really two cartridges: the earlier, blackpowder-spec load and the hotter +P rounds that crowd .44 Magnum territory. Those like me who carry a .45 Colt for bear defense appre-

ciate the early Vaq's ability to safely shoot +P loads that shove 335-grain solids out at a thumping 1,100 fps. The New Vaquero, however, is not intended for this kind of use and should not be fired with the heavy +P loads you often see marketed as "Ruger Only" or such. Stick with standard pressure in the new model.

The 5151 Saddles Up

Into the smaller, livelier world of the New Vaquero comes the 5151, a stainless birdshead-style New



Grip frame of the original Vaquero (left) shown with a smaller birdshead grip on the 5151 New Vaquero (right).



The 5151 comes with a hammer reminiscent of the Super Blackhawk hammer. Lower than the traditional Longhorn found on the Blackhawk (and usually Vaqueros), the lower, wide spur cocks easily.

Vaquero available exclusively from Talo. Featuring a 3¾" barrel, rounded grip and slightly lower hammer, the 5151 in .45 Colt creates a nice, compact package that tips the scales at 37 oz. For comparison, a Super Blackhawk .44 Magnum with a 4½" barrel weighs half a pound more. Sights are, of course, the traditional groove-and-blade arrangement.

Neither birdshead grips nor short barrels are anything new on single actions. The mechanical problem with the latter is a short barrel leaves little room for an ejector rod, since the travel of the ejector rod is limited by barrel length at the front and the cylinder base pin on the rear. On a short gun, the operating tab on the ejector rod hits the end of the cylinder base pin before the rod can stick far enough through the chamber to do much good.

A single action is nobody's idea of a speedloading gun — there's a reason people carried two — but still, reloading the gun is even more difficult when it requires separate tools. Ruger addresses this custom, one best honored in the breach, by including a muzzle-length ejector rod housing on the 5151 and shortening the head of the base pin to make room on the back end. It makes a big difference: The tiny button lets the ejector rod stick some 0.543" out of the cylinder, enough to push empty cases some 0.714" out. No doubt, that's short — the ejector rod of a 4½" .44 Special Blackhawk I had on hand protruded over 0.950" — but it was adequate for my use. The two Bowen custom Rugers I measured (a 4" lightweight Vaquero and a 4½" Super Blackhawk with the massive Keith #5 base pin) both have less protrusion, and I have quite a few rounds through them without extraction problems.

Grip panels

are a bolt-on wood laminate with an attractive mix of darker and lighter grey-brown layers. Unlike palmswell grips, the panels are narrow in the middle, giving the middle finger of the shooting hand extra purchase on the gun. Conceptually it's similar to the divot Bob Lum used to leave on knife handles, and it works equally well. The front of the cylinder has a heavy bevel reminiscent of the blackpowder bevel, which is a nice aesthetic touch and aids in holstering. Although hard to photograph, the bore was impressively bright.

Installing a lower hammer, such as one from a Bisley, is an old-school trick to make a single action faster to cock, a trick well known enough to have appeared on Elmer Keith's iconic #5 revolver. While shooting a sixgun two-handed, cowboy action style, can benefit from the taller hammer, one-handed work will make you appreciate the lower spur — and lots of us aren't willing to bet you'll have both hands free when you need a gun. The 5151 doesn't have the super low Bisley hammer, but it also doesn't have the tall "longhorn" hammer of the Vaquero and Blackhawk. Instead, the hammer more closely resembles the lower profile of the Super Blackhawk, which is between the two, with a wide, serrated thumb pad that's easy to hit. The trigger broke at an average of 4.5 lbs. as measured on a Lyman digital scale from Brownells.

The end result is a pretty, compact, solid feeling sixgun that slips easily into the hand, points well and doesn't require undue effort to cock. Complaints? Although the mounting screw was tight, there's a bit of play where the front end of the ejector housing mounts to the barrel. The action was a little sticky when the gun first arrived, but this went away immediately during the first range session. Sometimes you do just have to shoot the gun.

Making Smoke

I fired some 200 rounds through the 5151, including 255-grain semi-wadcutters and 250-grain semi-jacketed hollowpoints from DoubleTap ammunition, as well as handloads of mixed bullet type, provenance and quality. As expected, there were zero malfunctions, and recoil was surprisingly mild. The semi-wadcutters recoiled noticeably more than the hollow point rounds, but neither was unpleasant. The birdshead grip is significantly smaller than the traditional sixgun handle, but I had no trouble hanging on to it. Recoil seemed to



Mike "Doc" Barranti created this beautiful Brill style holster for the New Vaquero along with a six-round cartridge slide for spare ammo. He included the Gunsite Raven at Jeremy's request.

drive the gun directly back into the palm instead of flipping the muzzle up, but that's only based on the way it felt to me; your mileage may vary. I was able to shoot groups in the 3½" range at 25 yards, but most of this is probably limited by the bright stainless sights. With darker sights, which are easier to align, the gun is capable of tighter groups.

Gunleather

A good gun needs good leather, and a sixgun in particular needs something with a bit of Western flair. As has become my wont, I reached out to Mike "Doc" Barranti of Barranti Leather. Those of you who listen to the podcast will know he got the nickname "Doc" from our own Tank Hoover; in any event, you should know Doc has been making holsters for around 35 years and he is very, very good at it. He made one of his Ranger holsters for the 5151, along with a matching cartridge slide to hold six spare rounds. Both are made of black leather and stamped in the basket-weave pattern used on the Brill holster, after which the Ranger is patterned. Doc also stamped the cuff of the holster with the Gunsite Raven at my request. Unlike

The tiny button end on the cylinder base pin gives the shortened ejector rod more travel — just enough to push cases out.



the movie-inspired Buscadero gunbelts, the Ranger holds the sixgun up high and tight, where it can be concealed, which is appropriate for a chopped-and-channeled hogleg like the 5151. Together, they make a very classy combination, and one I like enough to keep.

Unfortunately, I'm one of those people who can't leave a sixgun well

enough alone, so I've already talked to Hamilton Bowen about sending this 5151 up to Tennessee for a little extra attention. I'll keep you posted.



For more info: DoubletapAmmo.com, Brownells.com, BarrantiLeather.com, Ruger.com

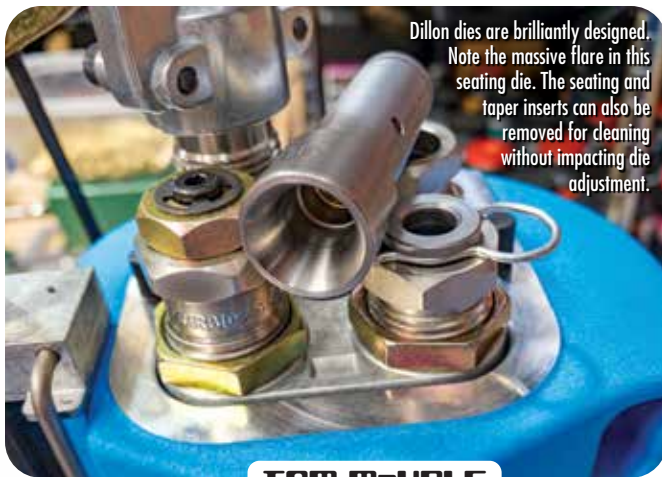
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Dillon dies are brilliantly designed. Note the massive flare in this seating die. The seating and taper inserts can also be removed for cleaning without impacting die adjustment.



All four stations in action, so each handle pull completes a cartridge.

TOM McHALE

RELOADING

DILLON'S 550C

BLUES

PRECISION LOADING MACHINE



The 550C complete with optional gear including trays, low powder sensor, strong mount, roller handle and tool caddy.



Most design features take a belt & suspenders approach, like this fail-safe rod ensuring the powder bar closes fully when the handle rises to the upper position.

We've had plenty of surprises over the past year, although I'm still waiting for those scary flying monkeys from *Wizard of Oz* to make a dramatic entrance. With guns and ammo flying off the shelves thanks to pandemics, riots and business as usual from those common sense-sucking leeches of society (politicians), it's a good time to think about reloading. While it's always a stellar idea to start with a simple single-stage reloading press, there comes a point where volume matters, and that's where the joy of progressive reloading begins.

I've been reloading for a couple of decades now. Heck, I love it so much I even wrote a book — *The Practical Guide to Reloading Ammunition*. Yes, I'm a reloading geek at heart. Over the years, I've been through most all the brand colors of reloading gear. Red, green, more red, yellow, black, mauve and a delightful shade of fuchsia. But for whatever reason, I've never spent quality time with ... blue.

If you're up to speed on reloading gear, you might recognize "blue" as the flagship color of Dillon Precision. Sure, I've used components of theirs over the years — the Super Swage 600 is a lifesaver for dealing with military crimped brass like 5.56 and 7.62. But what I haven't yet done is take the plunge into "blue" reloading presses. They've always had the reputation of high-end gear with prices to match, so I decided to see for myself how the value

scales tip. Will the age-old apothem, "Buy once, cry once" hold true?

Progressive: The 550C

Confessions first. I freely admit I'm an auto-indexing snob. When I ventured into "blue" progressive reloading, I was hell-bent on trying out an auto-indexing model. For those new to reloading, this means a pull of the handle automatically advances the shell plate and cases to the next stations. In my mind, and you know what they say about assumptions, a progressive press one has to manually advance couldn't be much faster than frozen *I Can't Believe It's Not Butter* oozing uphill.

As proof I'm not as stubborn as I look, I allowed Mark at Dillon to talk me into a trial of the 550C model. It's a progressive press with four die stations, automatic priming and powder dispensation. But you have to manually advance the shell plate after each yank on the handle. Hold this thought for a hot second. To explain how this worked out, we need to take a step back and review the operation of the 550C.

As for caliber choice, I figured I'd give the blue machine a real test using a finicky handgun caliber — .357 SIG. It's a bottleneck case, so sizing can be an adventure. It also takes small pistol primers, so there's no room for imprecision in the priming system. And the limited case neck length demands absolute precision and consistency for firmly seated and safe, cartridges. If this blue machine was going to succeed or fail, a



Note the manual advancement levers and caliber-specific pins holding the cases precisely in the right position.

The unit shown below has the optional empty case bin. The completed cartridge bin comes standard.



The all-metal bullet tray option is worth the cost. It holds hundreds of projectiles in close proximity to where you'll need them. It makes a dramatic efficiency difference.

caliber like .357 SIG would be sure to expose its strengths and weaknesses.

Workflow Efficiency

In this setup you'll notice I've got the bullet tray mounted on the left, brass and completed cartridge trays on the right, and the roller handle installed. These all contribute to zen-like production.

Step one involves inserting an empty case with your right hand. An adjustable spring guide eases it into place in the shell plate. Concurrently, the left hand places a bullet from the optional tray into the freshly sized, belled and powder-charged case. Your right hand is now available to pull the handle. The roller add-on prevents friction on the hand and makes the pull easier.

Step two is easy. Since your left hand is sitting right near the shell plate's advancement levers, flick it forward with your thumb. You can adjust tension of the movement, so it pops into the next position effortlessly. Detent features ensure the shell plate locks into the right position, regardless of "thumb flick" inconsistencies.

Step three? Repeat. That's it.

Manual indexing didn't slow me down one iota. In fact, it made things easier. If ever there's a glitch (rare) or a need to double-check a cartridge, I could stop and inspect, or even move the shell plate back a step if necessary. That's not always easy on an auto indexing press — with some models it's an exercise in frustration and reverse engineering as you embark on a crusade of unplanned disassembly.

I should note a difference in approach to the shell plate. Other progressive presses use springs to hold cases in place in the plate. When a case advances to the next station, a cutout in the plate secures most of the case while the spring holds in the case in the cutout. Dillon uses removable pins. The benefit is *the case can't move — at all — with that rigid pin holding it in place*. There is literally no wiggle room. I believe this is one of the reasons the press runs so smoothly overall. Cases at each sta-



tion are perfectly and rigidly aligned with their respective dies.

Priming Precision

The first thing I look at in a progressive press is the priming system design. It's almost always the weak point in the system because those little buggers are tiny and finicky. Oh, and they can explode if not treated with care. Whether belt fed, tube fed, or delivered by tiny storks, the priming design and precision of parts construction has to be nothing short of perfect else you're headed for a life of reloading frustration. I can't tell you how many times a press with less than absolute perfect priming plunger alignment has fouled me up. If some primer insertions feel rough or heavy, you're dealing with something ever-so-slightly out of spec. I experienced precisely zero of this with the 550C. Every single primer has seated with identical smoothness and pressure.

The 550C uses a tube feed system. After righting with a primer tray, use the included pickup tubes to restock the reservoir with another hundred and you're off and running. The pickup tube "nozzles" are perfectly sized, requiring almost no pressure to lift a primer into the tube. Ahh, the joy of well-thought-out details ...

Once you start operation, you'll see spent primers falling down a chute with a trap door. As you lower the shell plate, the trap door opens, dropping the spent primer into a metal trash bin. Concurrent with this operation, a sliding bar moves a primer cup back to the tube feed where a fresh primer drops into place. As you move the handle forward, the shell plate lowers over the primer cup. A gentle push forward on the handle seats the primer effortlessly. The

550C comes with an electronic alarm, letting you know when you only have a handful of new primers left in the tube.

Powder

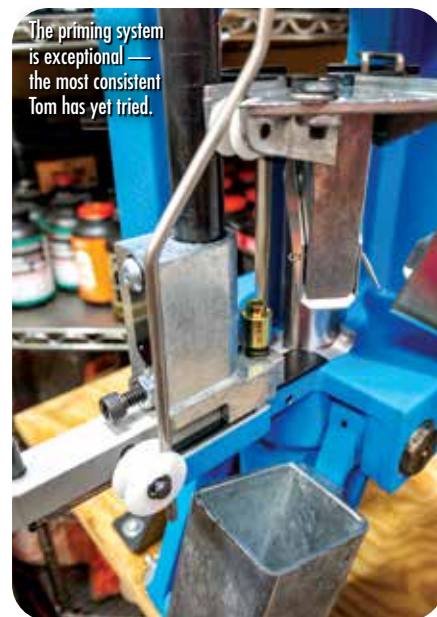
Station two uses a case mouth bellings insert that comes as part of the caliber conversion kit. When the case is raised to the dispenser, the insert bells the case mouth. It's adjustable so you can flare as much or as little as you like.

The powder system is designed with a belt and suspenders approach. As you pull the handle, raising the shell plate to the dies, you also drop the powder into the case. On the handle upstroke, a combination of springs and a pull-down rod move the charge bar back under the powder reservoir and give it a shake to fill the adjustable powder bar cavity.

Over dozens and dozens of spot checks using a digital scale, I found the metering to be spot on consistent, drop after drop, thanks to the redundancy in the dispensing mechanism.

Seating And Crimping

The final two operations of bullet seating and crimping each have their own station on the 550C. That's my



The priming system is exceptional — the most consistent Tom has yet tried.

A caliber conversion kit includes a shell plate, pins to hold cases in place at each station, and a powder funnel insert for case belling.



preference anyway, so I was happy. While the Dillon 550C takes any standard dies, I chose to pair this setup with Dillon's pistol dies to check out the full "blue" experience.

Blue Dies Matter

Don't share this with the engineers at Dillon, but ... I tested the .357 SIG dies without case lube. They are carbide (unusual in itself for .357 SIG dies), so in theory, they should work without any lube. However, the .357 SIG is a bottleneck cartridge, so one would think case lube is a must unless you enjoy extracting stuck cases

sizing die, the interiors are extravagantly flared. I don't mean a little; I mean more like a giant funnel. A case at the seating and crimping stations can be out of alignment by a good quarter inch or so and still be guided into place. It's a lot of extra machining, which leads to the higher price, but it's a valuable feature.

Second, the die inserts like the seating plug are removable with the die still mounted in the press. A large locking spring secures the insert so it can be removed through the bottom of the die body for cleaning without impacting die adjustment. Why doesn't

from your expensive resizing dies.

The resizing process worked without hiccup on bare, dry brass, so, curiosity satisfied, I reverted to spraying my pile of ready cases with a quick blast of Hornady One Shot. This smoothed out the operation considerably thanks to reduced friction.

There are two other standout features of the Dillon dies.

First, except for the

everyone do this? The feature likely adds cost but is brilliant.

The Net-Net

When you buy a Dillon press, you'll find a plethora of optional gear available. Bite the bullet and spend the money. You'll be glad you did. Each add-on component makes the process faster, easier and more glitch-proof.

Reloading blues aren't soulful or sad. Rather, the 550C presents an uplifting tune. There's lots of good gear on the market, but you do get what you pay for. The difference between this blue 550C and other presses is it's not a tool or loader. It's a precision machine. Every detail has been thought out and constructed not just for speed, but reloading precision and process reliability. It just works. All the time. It's well worth the \$529.99 for the base model with a one-caliber conversion kit.

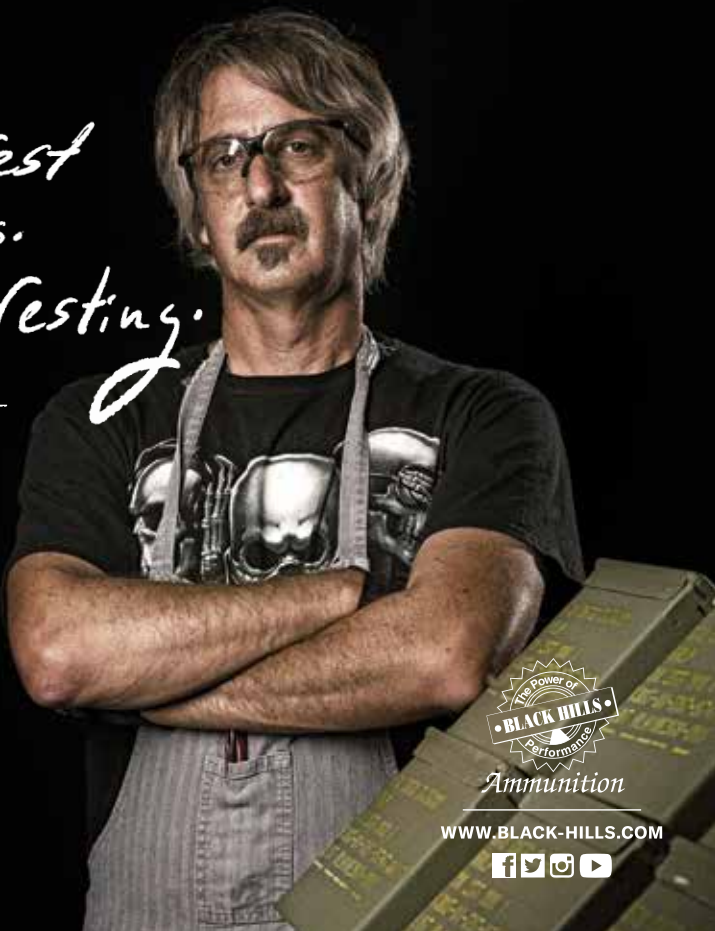
With every other press I've tried over the past couple of decades, I learn the nuances and inherent "finicky" attributes and develop ways to work around them. With the 550C, I'm still looking for those "finicky" attributes. In the meantime, I'll just continue to churn out precision ammo. 

For more info: DillonPrecision.com.

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Alan Korwin

SANCTUARY FROM THE FORCES OF DARKNESS

Is there such a thing? Literally — forces of darkness — seeking to subvert human freedom and reduce humanity to iron-curtain rule? Are elite people active among us, like outrageous tyrants of the past whose names you know, names I won't mention? People whose goal is to disarm you, render you helpless, then exercise absolute control over you?

That's a pretty grim picture and hard to imagine. You're reluctant to accept such a thing could exist here. I know I am. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce us under absolute despotism, it's increasingly difficult to ignore the signs.

It is becoming so difficult to ignore, an increasing number of states, counties, cities and towns are considering, introducing or enacting Sanctuary Policies. *A Sanctuary Policy is local legislation that legally places specific areas of jurisdiction (legal control) solely into local hands.* Done properly, such a policy prevents federal meddling where it's none of their business, based on clear precedent and rules of federalism.

Federalism is the principle that we Americans have two governments operating for us at the same time: one national, also called federal, and 50 states, with separate distinct powers. The powers delegated are subject to consent of the people governed.

Checks & Balances

One of our Founding Fathers' many brilliant and unique concepts was to have these separate forces at play to balance each other out, apply brakes as needed, and the really clever part — *delegate only certain power to each, and withhold certain powers from each.* It's confusingly called federalism. Under federalism, for example, police power lies exclusively with the states. Regulating weights and measures is to federal

authorities alone. As examples of limits, states cannot control immigration, and the feds are banned, as you know, from infringing on rights to keep and bear arms. We've drifted from the plan.

Sanctuary Principle

Under Sanctuary, gun rights you have now set a baseline. Proposed reductions are null and void. What the new Sanctuary bills are saying, in simple terms, is that any reduction of rights people currently enjoy in Sanctuary Zones respecting arms, ammo, accessories, possession, sales, transfers or anything else arms-related is infringement, and infringement is banned. Proposed reductions are null and void. Rights you have now set a baseline. Repealing any existing infringements would be appropriate.

Anyone who infringes on your right to keep and bear arms commits a misdemeanor or felony — depending on the place, the nature of the offense, and frankly, how ticked off the sponsoring legislators are at people proposing or attempting these civil-rights denials. They don't take lightly to abridging civil rights, which is what infringement is. No one should, whether it's "We don't serve your kind," "No coloreds at this water fountain," or "Carry is prohibited here even with your earned and paid for government permission slip." Denial of rights under color of law, or by conspiring with others, is illegal and punishment attaches (18USC§241).

Left-leaning activists like Antifa, Black Lives Matter and anti-border groups have been demanding "sanctuary" too — but for illegal immigrants. These things aren't subject to sanctuary, however, *because immigration and border controls are exclusively delegated to the federal government*, and serve a legal, rational purpose.

Shared Responsibility

Mustering the militia in times of crisis on the other hand is a shared federal and state responsibility. Personal security and self-defense are state and individual responsibilities beyond the

reach of national authorities. And dealing with arms in public hands is actually prohibited to the federal government by the guarantees of the Second Amendment. So, under the conditions of the Constitution's Supremacy Clause, Article VI, making demands or basically anything about the right of the people to keep and bear arms isn't in pursuance of the Constitution. Infringement is banned. The 10th Amendment emphasizes, undelegated powers are reserved to the states, or to the people. Sanctuary should not need declaring.

But localities, anticipating infringement by feds who've promised it, are preemptively enacting Sanctuary Policies. My favorite part, the part some say is the glaring flaw in an otherwise inspired Constitution, is adding punishment for violators. It is blatantly illegal to deny the civil rights of gun owners. That's already law. Now states are putting local teeth in these laws.

The feds will question this brazen (you might say proper) challenge to usurpation of citizens' rights. Federal authorities have grown a bit uppity in their demands for power. Relinquish control, even if it's undelegated? Nah. Shut up and go stand over there. Well, Oklahoma, Montana, Arizona, Missouri and others are going full-state Sanctuary, along with Illinois' and Virginia's counties and more.

Where does your county, city or state stand? Good Sanctuary Policy reestablishes who's boss, without needing to use the muzzle end of your arms. Sounds like



Alan Korwin's website *GunLaws.com* features his 15 years of work as *The Uninvited Ombudsman* writing *Page Nine*, the 14 books he's written, 30 years as the publisher at *Bloomfield Press*, and more common sense like you just read. For more info: *GunLaws.com*, *PageNine.org*

STILL STOKIN' HOT

Caswell Provoke



Voxnaes Bona Fide



Carson M16



Rogers CEO



PAT COVERT

PHOTOS: ROB JONES / THE IMAGESMITH, LLC

COLUMBIA RIVER KNIFE & TOOL CONTINUES TO FAN THE FLAMES

Columbia River Knife & Tool recently celebrated 25 years as one of the hottest cutlery companies on the planet and brought with it a major change. Founder Rod Bremer announced his plans to retire from the President's role of CRKT (as it's commonly known) and he didn't have to look far for his replacement. Mark Schreiber, his son-in-law, had been a longtime employee of the company and was deemed the perfect fit to replace Bremer. We were chompin' at the bit to find out more about Mark and get his thoughts on taking over the reins.

We started by asking Mark to give us a little career background and inquired as to how he came to join the company. "Prior to joining CRKT, I lived in the world of software and IT. I graduated college with a Computer Science degree," Mark tells *Handgunner*. "I was working at a company that developed software for online banking, leading teams that implemented the online banking websites for some of the largest financial institutions in the U.S. and abroad. My introduction to CRKT and the world of knives started much earlier when I married my wife, Thea, Rod's

oldest daughter in the summer of 1994 — just a few months after Rod founded CRKT. I got a front-row seat to see Rod build CRKT from the ground up with incredible grit and determination."

While not a huge knife enthusiast initially, Schreiber found himself drawn into the world of sharp steel. "Rod would always show me the latest knives they were working on and share stories of his travels across the country and the world to meet designers, customers, attend trade shows, and visit factories," Mark informs us. Then a chance fishing trip sealed the deal. "We went up to Alaska to fish for halibut and salmon. It was an absolute blast. Knifemaker and designer Russ Kommer was living up there at the time and took us everywhere, giving us the full Alaska experience. Knifemakers Brian Tighe and Greg Lightfoot went halibut fishing with us, and I just remember the passion that everyone had for their craft, the respect they had for each other, and the camaraderie between them and Rod. They each had their own unique style and background, yet all came together over the common bond of knifemaking. It was amazing to see that.

AMERICANHANDGUNNER.COM • JULY/AUGUST 2021

“I was fascinated by it all and expressed to Rod that if there was ever an opportunity where it would make sense for me to join the family business, we should talk. That opportunity came in 2010 and, after several months of discussion to make sure the decision was right for our family and CRKT, I made the leap and joined CRKT in November 2010 as the IT Manager.”

Joining CRKT set the ball rolling for things to come. “I spent my first year at the company as the IT Manager learning our systems and processes, developing new reporting to help us make better decisions, and integrating systems to improve efficiency,” Mark notes. “I then spent a year as our VP of Operations where I was responsible for planning, organizing, and directing the distribution operations of the company. I then spent two years in the role of Executive Vice President, where I worked with the company’s management team to implement the CRKT’s strategic plan and execute programs that led to further growth of the company. I was promoted to President in 2019 and at the same time Rod moved into an advisory role. It was important for us to have a smooth transition, so over the next few years Rod and I worked closely together as I took on more of the day-to-day responsibilities as Rod stepped back.”

We asked Mark what he thinks has been the key for CRKT’s success over the years. “It all starts with our incredible team and the grit and passion they bring each day,” Schreiber states. “We’re a family business, have been that way from the start, and we’ve managed to keep that family feel even as we’ve grown.”

Talent A’Plenty

CRKT was also one of the first cutlery manufacturers to embrace collaborations with custom knifemakers — a widespread practice today. “Another huge part of our success is the custom knifemakers and designers that we have been fortunate to collaborate with,” says Mark. “CRKT simply would not be what it is today without them. That, combined with our willingness to take risks on unique designs and mechanisms along with our constant quest to push the envelope, has brought fresh designs and mechanisms to our customers.

“Our early collaborations with Ed Halligan on the K.I.S.S. and Kit Carson on the M16 models launched CRKT on the trajectory we are on today. We’re incredibly proud of the fact that, while we may not have been the very first company to collaborate with custom knifemakers and designers, we did it on a greater scale than was seen before and created a model that has been emulated by many other knife companies. We

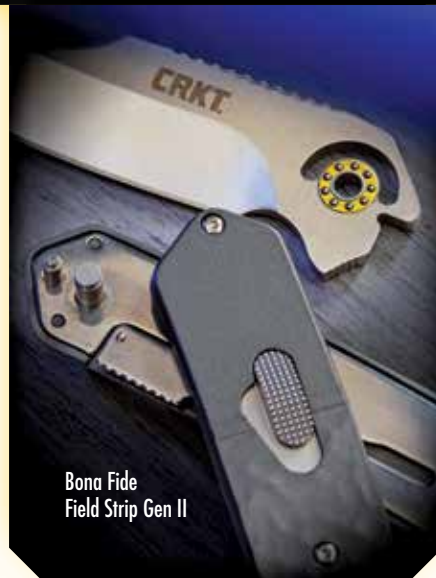


Ikoma Seismic

truly believe that our extensive collaborations with custom knifemakers and designers is what sets CRKT apart from every other knife company.”

How popular is the Kit Carson M16? There are 34 different models in the current CRKT line. Halligan’s K.I.S.S. is still very much alive in both plain edge and serrated tanto versions. These are pictured here as well as much more recent designs such as Joe Caswell’s intriguing Provoke folding Karambit, Flavio Ikoma’s hi-tech Seismic missile, Jesper Voxnaes’ handsome runt Pilar, and Richard Rogers’ super slim CEO. Also included is the new for 2021 Jesper Voxnaes Bona Fide model featuring knifemaker/designer Ken Onion’s Field Strip Gen II technology for easy take down, cleaning and reassembly.

So where does Columbia River Knife & Tool go from here? Mark gives us a glimpse. “Working closely with our designers and our amazing leadership team, you’ll continue to see CRKT push the envelope and introduce new game-changing innovations and designs. Form will always meet function at CRKT, as evidenced by the new technologies and products we’re offering in 2021 — and we’re very excited about the future.



Bona Fide
Field Strip Gen II

In a nutshell, I’d say we see plenty of opportunities to grow and expand in the coming years by driving innovation and intelligent product design. As for specific products beyond 2021, well we can’t let that cat out of the bag just yet but suffice to say it’ll be worth staying tuned.”



For more info: CRKT.com

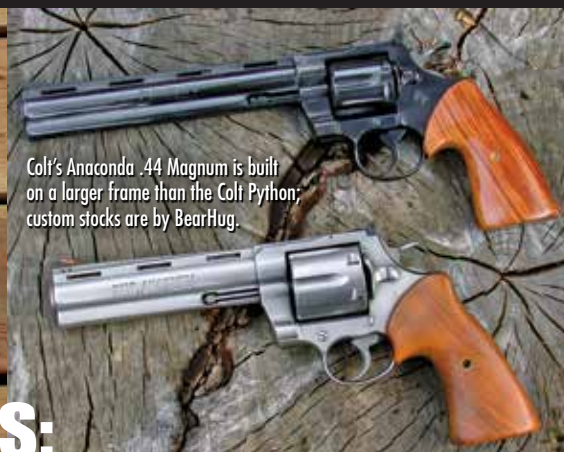


Halligan K.I.S.S.

Voxnaes Pilar



Ruger's stainless steel .44 Magnum double action sixguns: 7 1/2" Redhawk, 5" Redhawk, 9 1/2" Super Redhawk. Custom stocks are by BearHug.



Colt's Anaconda .44 Magnum is built on a larger frame than the Colt Python; custom stocks are by BearHug.

PLAYIN' FAVORITES: 44 MAGNUMS DOUBLE ACTION SIXGUNS

The 1950s were a great time for sixgunners. During those few short years, Colt resurrected the Single Action Army and introduced the .357 Magnum and the .357 Python. Ruger gave us the .22 Single-Six, the .357 Magnum Blackhawk, the .44 Magnum Blackhawk and the .44 Magnum Super Blackhawk. S&W outdid both companies with the arrival of the 1950 Target and Military Models in .44 Special and .45ACP, the .357 Magnum Highway Patrolman, the .357 Combat Magnum, the 1955 Target in .45ACP and Elmer Keith's long-awaited .44 Magnum.

I am going to take advantage of my advancing years looking at my favorite sixguns. Choosing favorites is not always easy. Sometimes I can pick one favorite; other times it will be several. With this in mind, we herein look at *Taffin's Top .44 Magnum DA sixguns*.

A GOOD SMACK IN THE HAND

Over the past half-century plus I've fired virtually every revolver ever offered. I survived most of them with no problem (at least at the time), however, the testing of the relatively lightweight Bisley Model gripped .475 and .500 Linebaugh Maximums required the expending of so much strength and concentration *I would shoot in the morning and lie down and rest in the afternoon*. They literally made me physically ill. As bad as the



6 1/2" Nickel Model 29

6" Model 629 stainless steel

Classic Model 629

6" Performance Center Model 629

Custom stocks are by BluMagnum and Hogue.



The 4" S&W Model 29 all steel .44 Magnum compared to the lightweight 329PD.



John unleashing the beast with a Super Redhawk.

recoil of those sixguns were, I was somewhat prepared as I had fired so many thousands of rounds through other heavy recoiling sixguns. However, nothing ever caught my attention as quickly and as thoroughly as the shooting of that first .44 Magnum.

It was in late 1956 and I thought I was at the height of my invincible period of life. I was a seasoned sixgunner, or so I thought. Several of us teenagers who always shot together had gone to Shell's Gun & Archery Farm for a pleasant time shooting. That was about to change! Shell had one of the first S&W .44 Magnums and rented it at the cost of six rounds for half a buck.

It was, in fact, as Major Hatcher of the NRA had proclaimed, like getting hit in the palm of the hand with a baseball bat. I was determined to eventually conquer the .44 Magnum if it didn't put me down in the process. It was a long learning curve, but I finally made it. Over the years I've shot just about every .44 Magnum, be it DA or SA, single-shot, semi-automatic, bolt action, or lever gun ever chambered in the .44 Magnum. Let's look at the double actions.

ORIGIN STORY

Elmer Keith had pressed for a “.44 Special Magnum” in his writings for nearly 30 years. In 1954 he met with S&W and Remington trying to convince them to bring out a new sixgun and load. S&W specially heat treated the cylinders of their Model 1950 Target .44 Special and re-chambered them to fit the new .44 Magnum Remington developed. It was soon obvious the relatively light weight of the 1950 Target needed to be increased because of the recoil of the new round with its 240-grain bullet at nearly 1,500 fps. The length of the cylinder was

increased to completely fill out the frame window, and the tapered barrel was given a new and heavier bull profile, the same basic barrel as used on their Model 1955 Target .45 ACP.

That first S&W which eventually became the Model 29 was known simply as the “.44 Magnum” in those pre-numbered model days. To my eyes, it’s simply the most beautiful DA revolver ever produced. First came the 6½” version, and then the 4” and 8¾” barrel lengths were added. In 1958 H.H. Harris of Chicago ordered 500 .44 Magnums with a 5” barrel.

Elmer Keith thought he had received the first .44

Magnum out of the factory, however records show he actually got the third example. By the time Keith received his .44 Magnum he was now living in town and wanted something to conceal easily under a coat, so he had The Gun Reblue Co. cut a 6½” .44 Magnum back to a 4½”, engrave it, and stock it with ivory. This beautiful sixgun as well as several other .44 Magnums are on display in the Elmer Keith Museum within the Boise Idaho Cabela’s store.

TAMING THE BEAST

In the early 1960s I purchased both a 6½” and 4” Model 29. I was reloading at the time but was not smart enough to handload. By this, I mean reloaders just keep loading the same load over and over while handloaders experiment. All of my early loads were Elmer’s standard of 22 grains of #2400 under his #429421 hard cast bullet. *It would take a long time for me to realize it was a lot more fun to shoot lighter loads.* I eventually came up with a load of 10 grains of Unique using the same bullet that gave me 1,100 to 1,200 fps depending upon barrel length, and this is basically the standard load I now use in all of my early S&W .44 Magnums.

VARIANTS

Over the years S&W added several variants on the Model 29 such as the stainless-steel Model 629, the heavy underlugged Classics, and the very lightweight Model 329PD. The latter makes a great packin’ pistol, however I use .44 Magnum loads in it very sparingly, preferring to use it as a .44 Special. In the late 1980s S&W, after receiving numerous complaints over the years about the Model 29 cylinder unlocking and rotating backwards when fired, I

instituted the Endurance Package that solved this problem. Over the years I’ve fired dozens of S&W pre-Endurance Package .44 Magnums, however the only two that exhibited this problem was one of their 10½” Silhouette Models and a 6” Model 629. The Model 29 was dropped in the 1990s, however, for the 50th Anniversary celebration a special version was brought back and still remains cataloged.

Dirty Demand

In the late 1970s to early 1980s it was virtually impossible to find an S&W .44 Magnum for sale. This was thanks to Dirty Harry Callahan of the San Francisco Police Department — a mythical movie character. His “Make my day” resonated with moviegoers, who soon wanted a .44 Magnum just like Dirty Harry’s, regardless of whether they could handle it. S&W worked 24 hours a day producing .44 Magnums but couldn’t keep up and prices soon doubled on the secondary market. Someone had to relieve the

pressure and that someone, actually two someones, were Dan Wesson and Ruger.

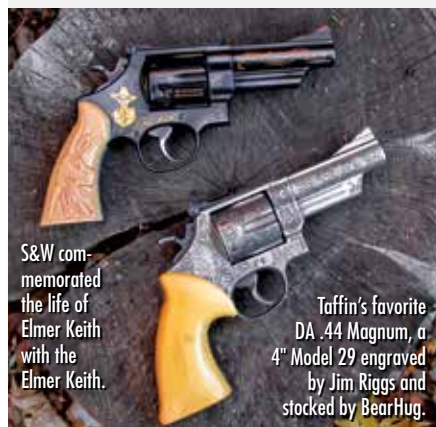
Dan Wesson

By this time Dan Wesson was firmly established, especially among long-range silhouetters with their heavy barreled .357 Magnum. I talked with their engineer, Paul Brothers, at an NRA Show at the time and he shared his plans for bringing forth a .44 Magnum. When they did, it was a dandy! It was built much heavier and sturdier than the original S&W, so much so the 8” heavy barreled version was over the 4-lb. weight limit required by the rules of long-range silhouette shooters and a few ounces had to be shaved. They were also able to come up with a 10” version with a standard

S&W offered the original .44 Magnum in barrel lengths of 4”, 5” (rare), 6½” and 8”. Custom stocks are by BluMagnum and Roy Fishpaw.



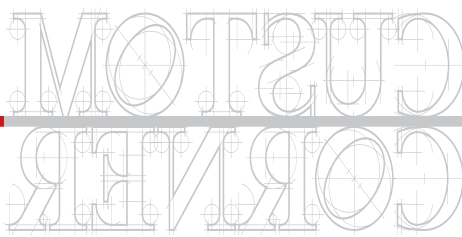
Comparing stainless steel Ruger .44 Magnums: Super Redhawk, Super Blackhawk and Redhawk. Custom stocks are by Blue Magnum and Bear Hug.



S&W commemorated the life of Elmer Keith with the Elmer Keith.

Taffin's favorite DA .44 Magnum, a 4” Model 29 engraved by Jim Riggs and stocked by Bear Hug.

CUSTOM CORNER



Custom Corner features paid listings by the identified pistolsmiths. Many are members of the American Pistolsmiths Guild and the American Handgunner Club 100. Advertising information is available from: **AMERICAN HANDGUNNER**, Adv. Dept., 13741 Danielson St. Ste. A, Poway, CA 92064; delano.amaguin@fmghq.com; (888) 732-6461.



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barrel and still come in under the weight limit. As expected from Dan Wesson, both of these guns are superbly accurate.

Ruger

Ruger also took advantage of being able to design the gun around the cartridge with the heavy-duty Ruger Redhawk. First offered in stainless steel, this sixgun is virtually indestructible. Ruger also offered a second DA .44 Magnum in the 1990s by combining the Ruger Redhawk with the GP-100, resulting in the Super Redhawk. If anything, this version is even stronger than the original Redhawk. My original 7½" Redhawk now wears a scope, however I had another one cut back to 4" and the grip frame slightly round butted to come up with a packin' pistol suitable for constant outdoor use. Recently Ruger began offering the Redhawk with a factory 4" barrel and finger-grooved, cushioned rubber grips which go a long way to making shooting of even 300-grain bullet loads manageable.

Taurus

Taurus' original entry into the .44 Magnum market is one of most accurate .44 Magnum double action sixguns I've ever encountered. With a scope in place and proper loads, 100-yard groups less than 1½" were easily attained. Taurus now offers the much heavier Raging Bull in both blue and stainless steel .44 Magnum. The weight combined with the cushioned rubber grips makes this a very comfortable shooting .44 Magnum. If this one had been around in 1956, I would never have been intimidated by the .44 Magnum.

Colt

It took Colt 35 years to offer a .44 Magnum, however, when they did it was a dandy. Looking like a combination of the Python and King Cobra, the Anaconda was the first big bore DA Colt had offered in 50 years. Some early Anacondas had bad barrels and would not shoot very well, however the problem was soon straightened out and mine is a superb shooter. Unfortunately, the Anaconda is no more; those who have them must keep them, as I've rarely ever seen one for sale at the local gun shows.

If I had to pick just one DA .44 Magnum, it would be one of the original 4" Model 29s, preferably the 29-2 Diamond Dot had engraved for my birthday 25 years ago. As mentioned above, if real heavy-duty use was contemplated it would be replaced by the 4" Ruger Redhawk. The .44 Magnum was the first of what would become a long line of very powerful big bore cartridges. As far as I am concerned, the .44 Magnum is still *King of the Sixguns*.



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SCAN TO ENTER



The *Taurus G3 T.O.R.O.* is our premier prize in this issue's gun giveaway. Given the growing penchant for shooters to include micro red dots on their semi-autos for personal defense, recreational shooting or competition, Taurus brings the G3 series pistols into the optic arena for 2021 with the full-size G3 T.O.R.O. (Taurus Optic Ready Option). The slide for guns in this series features a factory optic cut so users can add their choice of micro red dot without custom gunsmith work or "downtime" on their handgun. The T.O.R.O. system accommodates a broad range of optics, thanks to an interchangeable plate-mount. The G3 sports a polymer-frame profile in a full-frame configuration with generous stippling on the grip for control and retention. An ergonomic palm swell and side-frame memory pads give quick, positive hand positioning. The frame has a Picatinny rail, a manual safety and slide release lever. The G3's 6-lb. trigger is designed with a smooth take-up and a crisp, clean break. The G3 also includes a serrated steel rear sight along with a white dot steel front sight.

With the G3's optic cut, you can easily attach the *Bushnell RXS-250 Reflex Sight*, another prize in this giveaway. The point-source LED on the RXS-250 creates a 4-MOA dot beam. The true-tone, multi-coated optics has 50,000 hours of battery life. No need to remove the unit from the firearm to replace the battery — just open the top-loading door. Ten brightness settings give daylight viewing and night-time visibility along with night vision compatibility. Includes a Weaver-style mount, Bushnell multi and basic tools, Spudz cleaning cloth and battery.

This giveaway also comes with a hundred rounds of *9mm Ammo 115-Gr FMJ* from Magtech. Magtech FMJ ammunition delivers reliable, accurate performance on the range. Full Metal Jacket projectiles are the ideal choice for training, target shooting and general range use. Magtech ammo is available in a wide variety of calibers and bullet weights along with supersonic and subsonic options.

CRKT's *Lanny* is an everyday carry knife that takes a classic slip-joint style and adds an assisted opening innovation for fast opening speeds. Its 3.18" blade is made of 8Cr13MoV high carbon stainless steel with a satin finish; the handle is 6061 aluminum. Strong and lightweight, the Lanny has an OAL of 7.44" and weighs 4.10 oz.

We're sure you're as excited to win the Taurus G3 pistol with Bushnell optic sight, the Magtech ammo and the CRKT knife as much as we are to give them away. So don't wait, enter now! Go to AmericanHandgunner.com/giveaways or send a post card! —Jazz Jimenez

TAURUS G3

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(800) 327-3776, TAURUSUSA.COM
CALIBER: 9MM, CAPACITY: 17
OAL: 7.28", BARREL LENGTH: 4"
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MAGTECHAMMUNITION.COM
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LANNY

MANUFACTURER: CRKT
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TOTAL VALUE: \$788.75

GERBER FASTBALL SERENA JUCHNOWSKI

I'm turning into my father. Not literally, but I've fallen into the habit of opening and closing the Gerber Fastball purely for entertainment. I've always been somewhat wary of flipper opening knives, but I'm comfortable with this one. I've actually



come to prefer the one-handed opening as it comes in handy for daily knife tasks. The Fastball has a three-position pocket clip that can be moved for ambidextrous carry, a 3" S30V Wharncliffe blade, and weighs a mere 2.7 oz. It clips easily and securely onto my jeans pocket and I nearly forget it's there. I was honestly impressed with this American-made knife and how swiftly and easily it deploys. It fits naturally in my hand with a small indent below the blade serving as an intuitive grip point with protection from the blade. *GerberGear.com*

TOM MCHALE

1791 ULTRA CUSTOM HOLSTER

My wife's passion is tinkering with experimental recipes in the kitchen. Mine is tinkering with shooting stuff in my man cave. Amazingly, these worlds collided when I used our new *sous vide* cooker (it makes amazing steaks, by the way) to prepare a poached holster.

The new 1791 Ultra Custom IWB and OWB holsters are leather, inside and out, but sandwiched between is some magic material that softens to a moldable consistency when heated. After submerging and "cooking" the holster in a Ziploc bag (to keep it dry) at 160 degrees for about five minutes, you can mold it into near any shape you like.

The company offers a variety of sizes so just order something close to your gun and you can hand fit the rest. If you mess up or want to change guns later, just repeat the process. No harm, no foul. *1791GunLeather.com*



TOM MCHALE

BLACKHAWK STACHE IWB HOLSTER

The new Stache holster from Blackhawk is designed to be insanely configurable. It's an injection-molded IWB design with adjustable friction retention features. The body cut is low, allowing for pistol optics without having to break out the Dremel tool. It's also ambidextrous, as all mounting hardware can easily flip to the opposite side. Those are the basics.

Where the Stache gets its panache is with the modularity features. If you want to use it on the hip or in more of an appendix position, you'll appreciate the removable "claw" feature. This extension applies pressure to the inside of the belt, thereby pushing the grip in towards the body for improved concealment. The Stache comes with multiple claw sizes for more or



less "push" as you prefer.

There's also an optional magazine carrier attachable via flexible wing in the Premium configuration of the Stache. That's all

adjustable for cant angle too, so you can create your ideal fit. *Blackhawk.com*

TOM MCHALE

TRIJICON DI NIGHT SIGHTS



The new DI Night Sights from Trijicon combine the best of daylight and nighttime sighting solutions. Fiber optic tubes provide "can't miss it" aim points in normal lighting conditions, but don't shine in low light and darkness. The DI sights place a Tritium vial behind the fiber tube, so it glows in the dark too. That Tritium lamp is shielded by a sapphire jewel for safety and clarity.

The rear sight offers a "U" notch cut into a serrated face to reduce glare. The "U" provides super-fast alignment with the front sight. It's also flanked by two smaller tritium vials.

You can also swap out not only the color of the fiber optic tube with green, yellow, orange and red, but you can change the color of the retaining ring too. Yes, the days of setting fire to tiny strips of fiber tubing are gone! Unscrew the cap and drop a new one into place. That cap provides an extra bit of diameter to the front sight dot too.

Compatible with a growing list of GLOCK, SIG, S&W and Springfield Armory Pistols. *Trijicon.com*



LETHAL FORCE AGAINST A MOB

SITUATION: Pushed to the wall by an overwhelming force of angry protesters, under attack with rocks and blunt instruments, the peace officers open fire.

LESSON: Within their range, according to law, blunt force weapons including clubs and thrown objects can constitute deadly force. Any member of a mob may share its culpability.

It's a chilly March day with snow on the ground and still falling in an American city policed by a force of some 2,000 sworn, armed personnel. Protests have been rife, all the more so after an armed citizen attempting to disperse a rowdy group of vandals has shot and killed an 11-year-old boy. The small contingent of uniformed men at a street intersection has been urged not to start any shooting, because they've been informed many of the protesters are carrying concealed weapons and are fully prepared to use them.

Hatred has focused on the uniformed law enforcement personnel. The protests were born in long-standing discontent that has boiled over. On one side is the growing throng of protesters and on the other, society's designated "Forces of Order."

The former virulently hate the latter.

These protests have been born in what the participants see as systemic discrimination against them, and unfair treatment of them and their kind. As they look at the uniforms arrayed against them, the protesters see the very embodiment of the oppression they perceive and abhor. They hate and fear them the way the Jews of Warsaw hated and feared the Nazis.

Those protesters have grown increasingly angry. They shout epithets at the uniformed people assigned to be there, comparing them to a certain kind of lower life form normally raised as food. Some members of the crowd are agitating more vehemently than others, especially one tall, burly black man.

One particularly aggressive member of the mob loudly challenges the authority figures to shoot him. Some of those in the crowd are visibly armed with heavy sticks. Others see the hated uniforms as targets for thrown missiles. Soon they are hurling snowballs, then rocks. People in the crowd are screaming, "Kill them!"

It has begun with a few of the locals verbally and crudely harassing a single one of the "uniforms." Responding to his call for backup, eight brothers in the same uniforms have arrived to back him up. All are white males. Meanwhile, the crowd has grown exponentially. It is escalating further.

Emboldened, one member of the crowd approaches and swings a heavy stick at one of the peace officers. It impacts with a loud thwack and, struck in the head, the peace officer falls. He regains his feet, gun in hand.

A single gunshot rings out.

Some people hear a man shout, "Fire!"

Several of the men in uniform do just that.

The series of gunshots doesn't last long. When it is over, 11 members of the crowd have been struck by bullets. One is mortally wounded: Patrick Carr will die two weeks later. Four more are dead or rapidly dying on the snowy street. They include Samuel Gray and James Caldwell, and the youngest to die, Samuel Maverick, 17.

Among them too is the tall black man who was a leader of the crowd. Some witnesses will say he was the first to fall.

His name is Crispus Attucks.

Perspective

The above incident took place at the intersection of Devonshire and State Street in Boston, Mass., on the fifth of March 1770. It became known as the Boston Massacre, and it so aroused the ire of the American colonists it became the most strongly smoldering tinder in what would half a decade later become the roaring bonfire of the American Revolution.

Leading up to the incident, the Colonies in general and Boston in particular were politically polarized. On one side were the Tories, the Royalists who swore by King George. On the other side stood the Whig party, characterized by their opposition to Britain's policies in dealing with the American colonies. Allied and mixed in with the Whigs were the Sons of Liberty, also known as the Patriots, many of whom would later be among the Founding Fathers of the United States.

AYOOB FILES

Hostilities had been strong. Those uniformed peacekeepers were British soldiers, part of a large contingent led by General Thomas Gage and tasked with keeping a lid on things in Boston, a city considered to be a hotbed of potential revolution. When the colonists called the British soldiers “lobsters” and “lobsterbacks,” they weren’t just talking about the distinctive red coats of their uniforms. The lobster was seen as low on the evolutionary scale — a bottom feeder, a cockroach of the sea — and shouting that epithet against them was the equivalent of calling one of today’s police officers “pig.”

Eleven days prior to the Boston Massacre, a civilian customs service man opened fire on a crowd that was throwing rocks through the windows of a Loyalist-owned shop, one striking the owner’s wife. The shot killed an 11-year-old boy named Christopher Seider. Two thousand Colonials angrily attended the child’s funeral, and the anger was still fresh among the crowd on the night the British troops opened fire at the intersection of Devonshire and State.

The Boston Massacre, as it quickly became known, inflamed passions throughout the colonies. Perhaps in

hopes of tamping down unrest, the soldiers who fired were charged with murder, as was their commanding officer Captain Thomas Preston.

Adams For The Defense

To the surprise of many in Boston, John Adams was chosen to lead the defense team. Already a noted lawyer, having entered Harvard at age 16 and admitted to the bar eight years later, his sympathies lay strongly with the colonists rather than the Crown. Those who knew Adams said he was concerned defending the unpopular soldiers would hamper or kill his career.

Adams said, “If these poor fools should be prosecuted for any of their illegal conduct, they must be punished. If the soldiers (acted) in self-defense ... they must be tried, and if the truth was respected and the law prevailed must be acquitted.”

The Trials

The senior British officer present, Captain Thomas Preston, was the first to go to trial. After three hours of jury deliberation, he was found not guilty.

Many colonists were upset by that, but there were explanations. Legal observers of the day felt the prosecutors did a sloppy job, while John Adams managed the defense magnificently. Preston himself would later

write to General Gage, “The Counsel for the Crown or rather the town were but poor and managed poorly ... my Counsel on the contrary were men of parts, and exerted themselves with great spirit and cleverness.” (1) Testimony differed whether Preston shouted “Fire.” Some witnesses failed to identify Preston correctly. Reasonable doubt had been established.

Many observers then and historians now felt Adams packed the jury. The panel included multiple friends of the captain, one of whom had been known to say prior to trial Preston was “as innocent as a child unborn,” and if he happened to be on the jury, he would never convict him.

When Adams defended the remaining soldiers in the next trial, he would have a steeper hill to climb. Preston, armed only with a saber, had obviously not fired a shot. The dead became so by gunfire, and it was the soldiers who ultimately pulled the triggers.

In their book *John Adams Under Fire*, Dan Abrams and David Fisher would write of the Preston verdict, “John Adams won his case, but doing so made his defense of the eight soldiers that much more difficult. The jury determined that Captain Preston had not given the order to fire: Therefore, the soldiers must have done it by themselves, without orders. They

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were responsible, and it put their lives in far greater jeopardy. The penalty upon conviction was death on the gallows. Making the situation even more precarious, the blood lust in the town had not been satisfied. Blood answers blood, but Preston, the lead officer, walked away. The soldiers were different. The people knew soldiers from the streets; if they didn't know these particular men, they knew others just like them. They'd had their encounters, and there'd been far more bruises than friendships. Men were slain for demanding their God-given rights. Would no one pay for that?" (2)

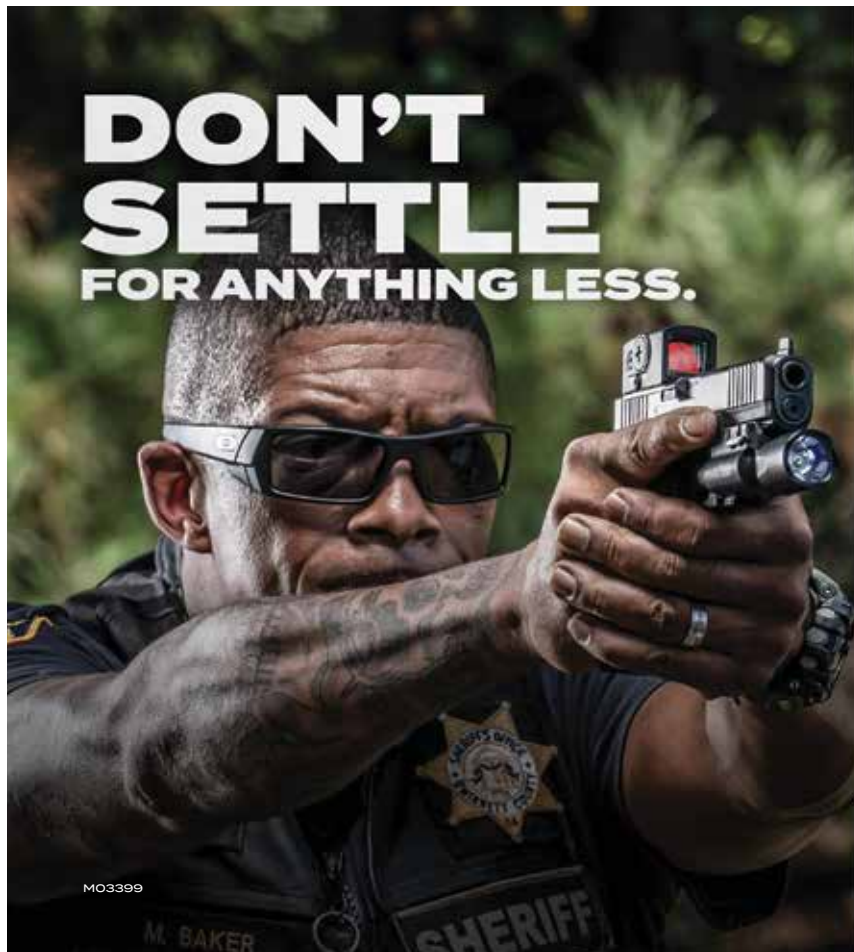
Adams famously said in the trial of the eight remaining soldiers, "Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence." He added, "It is more important that innocence be protected than it is that guilt be punished, for guilt and crimes are so frequent in this world that they cannot all be punished. But if innocence itself is brought to the bar and condemned, perhaps to die, then the citizen will say, 'whether I do good or whether I do evil is immaterial, for innocence itself is no protection,' and if such an idea as that were to take hold in the mind of the citizen that would be the end of security whatsoever." (3)

Adams' trial strategy was to establish straight up self-defense. In a final argument replete with references to case law and legal scholarship he exhorted the jury, "In the case here, we will take (Private) Montgomery, if you please, when he was attacked by the stout man with the stick, who aimed it at his head, with a number of people round him, crying out, 'Kill them! Kill them!' had he not a right to kill the man? If all the party were guilty of the assault made by the stout man, and all of them had discovered malice in their hearts, had not Montgomery a right, according to Lord Chief Justice Holt, to put it out of their power to wreak their malice upon him? I will not at present, look for any more authorities in the point of self-defense; you will be able to judge from these, how far the law goes, in justifying or excusing any person in defense of himself, or taking away the life of another who threatens him, in life or limb; the next point is this: That in case of an unlawful assembly, all and every one of the assembly is guilty of all and every unlawful act, committed by any one of that assembly, in prosecution of the unlawful design they set out upon."

While many saw Crispus Attucks as victim and martyr, Adams painted him as an instigator who not only earned the massive 770-grain .69 caliber Brown Bess musket ball that exploded his liver

but triggered the entire tragedy. Witnesses described Attucks as being armed, not just with a stick, but with a bludgeon resembling a piece of cordwood. In her book *The Boston Massacre: A Family History*, professor of history Serena Zabin summed up the thrust of John Adams' theory of the defense: "Here, then, was the storyline for the four judges and jury to hold on to as they sorted through contradictory and confusing evidence. Adams offered his listeners — and the future readers of the trial transcripts — a convenient shorthand for understanding a complicated event. An unruly crowd, separate from both the town and the soldiers it was taunting, drove soldiers to think that they needed to defend themselves from Boston's inhabitants." (4)

The trial of Captain Preston lasted five days; that of his subordinates went seven, the court keeping hours of 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. In the end, Corporal William Wemms and Privates John Carroll, James Hartigan, William McCauley, William Warren and Hugh White (the initial focus of the mob's anger) were found not guilty. Privates Matthew Kilroy and Hugh Montgomery were found guilty of manslaughter. Though they could have been hung, their sentences were commuted to being branded on the thumb with a small capital "M" to mark them permanently as having been convicted of manslaughter.



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They served no additional incarceration beyond the months spent in jail awaiting trial. It is generally believed by legal analysts they were the only two shooters convicted because the jury determined they were the only two who fired with intent to kill.

Analysis And Lessons

If reading the above gave you a sense of *déjà vu*, you are not alone. Today we see outrage and riots when, for example, a Kenosha policeman shoots a supposedly unarmed man who turns out to be armed with a knife, combative, and in physical contact with the officer who fired. We see a nation divided in politics: Think today's Left and Right, particularly at the far ends of each. This same division is found in the media. Compare today's CNN versus Fox to 1770 Boston: The colonies were inflamed by Paul Revere's widespread condemnatory pamphlet *A Short Narrative of the Horrid Massacre in Boston*, which was only partially balanced by a Loyalist pamphlet sympathetic to the soldiers titled *A Fair Account of the Late Unhappy Disturbance at Boston*. If past is indeed prologue, let's look at some lessons.

Lesson: Standing up for unpopular defendants is not necessarily a career-killer. Though some saw John Adams as a turncoat licking King George's boots, he remained a solid figure in the Patriot movement. He was one of the Founding Fathers as things went on, and of course, became the second President of the United States.

Lesson: Jury selection is critical. Many legal scholars believe a packed jury was the reason for the verdicts, and had the jury box been filled with Sons of Liberty instead, several British soldiers would have hung from Boston gallows. Certainly, friends of defendants shouldn't have been allowed on the jury. (When the Revolution broke out, several of those Loyalist jurors fled to England and remained there.) However, the composition of the jury was not the only reason most of the defendants got off completely, and two received only a "slap on the wrist" brand on the hand.

Lesson: Disparity of force is for real. Though the term "disparity of force" does not appear to have been used in these trials, it is a long-standing but little-understood legal principle which remains in effect today. It means if an unarmed attacker is so likely to cause death or great bodily harm if his attack continues, such power to harm is the equivalent of a lethal weapon and warrants the defender's recourse to deadly force. There can be many elements of disparity of force, but the one clearly in play here was the overwhelming force of numbers presented by a mob that far outnumbered the British soldiers. The use of blunt force weapons

(clubs, thrown objects) by the crowd was also in play. We cannot avoid the comparison to situations today where frozen bottles of water are thrown, flag-staffs and hard, heavy placard poles are wielded, and illegally powerful lasers which can cause permanent blindness are aimed at LE officers' eyes. It is obvious the jurors agreed with John Adams' argument the soldiers were in deadly danger and were justified when they opened fire.

Lesson: "I only followed orders" was no excuse then or now. Witnesses differed whether Preston ordered his men to fire. Preston himself denied it, but prior to the trials the enlisted men sent a note to the judge claiming they fired under orders and would have been executed had they disregarded those orders. Adams, wisely, did not lean on this argument when he defended the soldiers. It should be noted the gunfire did not occur in a single thunderous volley. Eyewitnesses described the sequence of shots as separate; one, Thomas Wilkinson, testified the shots came "with the regularity of a clock striking." (5)

Lesson: We need to fully understand the legal principle that each member of a mob shares responsibility for the danger they create, and the defensive force that comes back on them. That principle was in play in the Boston Massacre trials, but cannot be applied in some of today's situations, described by a police supervisor who writes under the pseudonym of "Spencer Blue" as homicidal aggressors being sharks swimming in the protective sea of peaceful protesters. Violent actors in the midst of peaceful people do not necessarily call for unleashing deadly force on the entire crowd.

Santayana warned us those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. If the Boston Massacre planted the seed for the American Revolution that left 25,000 dead, the comparison to events of today is ominous, indeed. While the uniforms and weapons change over time, patterns of human violence historically repeat themselves. As we see the antagonistic violence sometimes demonstrated today by both far Left and far Right, it appears almost as if some radical fringe groups are hoping to ignite a Kent State or Boston Massacre theater of martyrdom for their respective causes.

Footnotes: (1): Abrams, Dan and Fisher, David. John Adams Under Fire. Hanover Square Press, 2020, p. 114. (2): Ibid., Abrams, p. 116. (3): <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/05-03-02-0001-0004-0016> (4): Zabin, Serena. The Boston Massacre: A Family History. Houghton Mifflin, 2020, p. 217. (5) Ibid., Zabin, p. 155.

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Leupold & Stevens, Inc. launches the *DeltaPoint Micro*, a fully enclosed, low-profile red dot sight.

Designed for concealed carry and personal defense firearms, it's compact and easy to conceal.

The DP-Micro mounts directly to the rear sight dovetail and sits at the same height as factory iron sights. It aligns with the front sight for rapid target acquisition and accuracy. Lightweight and rugged, the DeltaPoint Micro is 2.25" long, 1.25" high and weighs 1.1 oz. Initially offered for S&W M&P line and non-MOS GLOCK models. MSRP: \$399.99. For more info: (503) 526-1400, Leupold.com

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Versacarry

The *Comfort Flex IWB* is made with a forward cant for easy draw. It is held in place by a

strong belt clip for stability and fit while remaining easy to get on or off. Part of Versacarry's Comfort Flex holster line, the IWB holster is ultra-slim and lightweight for a comfortable carry. It is made from Versacarry's signature water buffalo leather that surrounds a polymer insert making it strong and resistant to collapsing upon pistol draw. Optics compatible, it will fit most pistols with Reflex sights. MSRP is \$44.99. For more info: (979) 778-2000, Versacarry.com



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ALTOR Corp.



ALTOR Corp. has developed a custom *Holster for the ALTOR Pistol*. Made of genuine leather, the holster has

loops for six spare cartridges. Custom accessories for the pistol are also available: interchangeable barrels in .380, 9mm and a 9mm threaded barrel (1/2 x 28); Cerakote-coated polymer frames; and a dual-use elastic bandolier that can either attach two spare cartridges or a small flashlight to the frame. MSRP: \$54. For more info: (602) 441-4077, ALTORCorp.com

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Taurus is offering the *Raging Hunter* in .460 S&W. This expands the Raging Hunter lineup that already includes popular hunting handgun calibers like the .454 Casull, .44 Magnum and .357

Magnum/.38 Special +P. The series features sleeved barrels, a gas-expansion chamber, a safety transfer bar, a Picatinny rail along the barrel shroud, a fixed front sight and a fully adjustable rear sight. The Raging Hunter comes with an ergonomic finger-groove grip with cushioned inserts, an alloy steel or stainless frame and a stainless barrel. MSRP: \$968.18 Black; \$983.33 Two Tone. For more info: (309) 944-5341, TaurusUSA.com





PRO-LOCK HOLSTER N8 Tactical

N8 Tactical introduces the *N8 Tactical Pro-Lock*, the company's first OWB holster. It has a durable, firearm-specific polycarbonate pocket offering a very good fit. A leather backer composed of two layers of cowhide offers comfort as well as security. The leather surface prevents scratches on your firearm while providing a clean and smooth surface to draw from. Pancake belt loops accept up to 1¾" belts and have soft rounded edges for added comfort. MSRP: \$49.95. For more info: (888) 732-5011, N8Tactical.com



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Falco Holsters



The *A903 L Holster* is available for a wide variety of pistols and revolvers. It is open bottom and will fit guns with red dot/suppressor sights, lights or lasers. The A903 is made of Italian leather and Kydex and is available in right- or left-handed versions. It can be attached to belts with a sturdy clip. It has a customizable cant, a sweat guard and a holster claw. MSRP: \$69.95. For more info: FalcoHolsters.com

SUBSONIC 9MM LUGER

Barnaul Ammunition

Barnaul Ammunition now offers the *Subsonic 9mm Luger* for use with suppressors or for shooters competing in Minor Power Factor divisions. The new ammo is like the company's original Silver Sport line ammo developed for IPSC competition but with a difference. Encased in zinc-coated steel, it incorporates a slightly heavier 151-grain FMJ bullet instead of the original 148-grain projectile. With an average muzzle velocity of 850 fps, the Barnaul 9mm Subsonic delivers a power factor of 128.35 from a 4.7" barrel. MSRP: \$22.99 per box of 50. For more info: (877) 425-4867, BarnaulAmmo.com



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The Duty-Role 9mm *DR920* from Shadow Systems is a working gun for law enforcement, military or anyone who prefers a larger frame and full-length top end. It has a match-grade barrel that's conventionally rifled, spiral-fluted and comes threaded or unthreaded. Shadow Systems' optic cut allows for most brands of red-dot optic to be mounted to the slide. MSRP: From \$799.99. For more info: (469) 458-6808, ShadowSystemsCorp.com

groove, the rim is then trimmed to correct SAAMI spec size, then final case sizing and inspection is done. Then the primer, powder and bullet are loaded in separate steps (possibly in another factory) and you get your box of .380 — or any other caliber.

Step 7: This is the same line-up of .380 components. Note how the case walls are worked thinner, the case head begins to take shape, the primer pocket is formed, the primer hole is drilled and you eventually arrive at a complete — and to spec — .380 case ready to be loaded.

Step 8: Here's how the process looks for a bullet. The drawn copper jacket is mated to a formed lead core, but there are many steps to get here.

Step 9: Some "body" has to do it! Some companies make sure each loading station is manned by a tech (this is at Black Hills). But most bigger companies have the machines on auto-pilot punching out loaded rounds on their own, pounding away while a tech checks things out now and again to make sure things are proceeding correctly.

Step 10: What all the hoopla is about — a loaded cartridge. The next time you burn up 500 rounds of .22 in an afternoon, take a moment to thank all those people who were involved so you could have a bit of fun.

So, What Now?

I recently had a reader ask me if I knew where he could "... get some .223 ammo." I asked him if he just needed a box or two to load up his protection rifle and he said, "Oh, no, I have that cov-



ered. I have about 35,000 rounds, but wanted to buy some more."

And therein lies the issue. So just stop for a bit, if you would? I know it seems almost painful to actually not go shooting for a few months — but you'll survive. Honestly, you will. And the majority of your defensive shooting skills won't disappear either. Do some dry-firing, get an electronic gadget if you want to play at practice, buy an airsoft gun or even an expensive air rifle to play with — but give it a rest for a while. Then the makers can get caught up.

And no, there's no great conspiracy. If there was, I'd have to be a part of it since I'd know about it, and I'd stomp my feet and I'd cry foul and let the entire world know. There just isn't. We're just buying it all.

In the meantime, I think I need to go buy 5,000 rolls of toilet paper for no particular reason. I mean, well, you know ... you never know do you?



BIG SIGHTS!

I can't see my sights well any longer. I've tried about everything when it comes to irons, but I don't really want a red dot on my EDC gun. What to do? Then Bill Meares called me and sent this test gun. It's another reason my forehead is flat these days — I keep slapping it saying, "Why didn't I think of that!" In a nutshell, Bill designed a series of "biggie-sized" front and rear sights for a handgun and his initial run fits GLOCKS. The idea is a really, really big front and rear sight is easier to see. Duh — it is, and he's right. The red "test" gun has four rears and four fronts very cleverly designed so you can rotate the plate to bring up any of the sizes, front and rear. A dealer would have this test gun on-hand (dealers, are you listening?). You just dial in the rear and front combo you like best, then you buy those sights from the dealer and install them on your gun. No fuss, and no muss. It works like gang-busters and you honestly can't imagine the difference until you see it for yourself.

Suddenly, my 66-year old eyes can see the sights well enough to get to work fast and surely. I want them to fit other guns now and Bill says if it goes well, he'll definitely be doing more models later. Check out the sight picture through the "Big Sights" and a common sight picture in the pics. Get it now?

For more info: BigSightSystems.com, Ph: (833) 900-5326, info@bigsightsystems.com



RONIN LEATHER HOLSTERS

I stumbled onto a gold mine and his name is David Galloway. A veteran, his holster shop is what we all want to find. David does first-class work, but it's affordable and turn-around is fast. His designs are all well-grounded in the real world and encompass just about any need anyone could possibly have when it comes to CCW holsters and accessories like mag carriers, belts and such. The SW Special shown here, which he made for my Hellcat, retails for \$75! And there's no waiting 12 weeks. I can find no fault at any level with David's workmanship, business model and commitment to quality. David's a custom maker who's not a prima-donna.

We've communicated quite a bit now and I remain impressed by his enthusiasm and drive. As he says on his website: "I will never send out a holster I would not use myself — or give to a loved one." You've got to see his "Tanker" rig too. At only \$95, once the word gets out he's going to own that market! Tell him *Handgunner* sent you.

For more info: RoninLeatherHolstersLLC.com, Ph: (360) 870-9904, dave@roninleatherholstersllc.com



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AMMO MAKING MANIA



IT'S MORE COMPLICATED THAN YOU THINK

I know ... I know ... I'm tired of it too. But I know how to make ammo magically re-appear back on the shelves. No, really, I do. Just stop buying it and hoarding it. Let the makers get caught up and you guessed it — your local gun store would have ammo on their shelves again. “How’s that again,” you say?

But first a few things you might not really know about making ammo. It’s not quite as simple as you may think. If you reload, and especially if you cast your own bullets, you have a better handle on understanding how things work. But even then, you’re starting out with completed components. The bullets are likely already made, cases are ready, primers pre-made, powder off the shelf, your press is over-the-counter, powder measure and all the tools and bits. All ready to go. All you’re really doing is putting it all together, like building a model when you were a kid. Some assembly required.

But what if you had to buy the raw materials and craft your own brass cases? What if you had to scrounge up copper sheeting then create a machine to stamp out the plugs of copper (or brass) so your huge machine could pound out cases or jackets in steps? What about primers? The raw goods to make the go-juice for them, dies, machines to build them, smart people who know how to do it, etc. are all part of the

deal. And somebody has to mine the lead, copper and other ores. In between looking at lead and copper ore, then looking at a completed bullet in your hand are many almost magical steps. No small amount of time, labor, smarts, energy, money and experience are devoted to almost miraculously create a bullet or loaded cartridge.

Oh, it also takes people willing to be trained, then just as willing to show up and work three shifts in a dirty, greasy, loud factory, sometimes actually risking death or serious injury — just so we can go plinking with our .22.

You put your key in your car and know if you turn it the car will start. But you also likely can’t actually explain how it occurs, right? Ditto for the box of ammo you’re complaining you don’t have enough of right now. You want it — likely even have some — but it’s easy to overlook how it came to be.

The Steps

Let’s meander on an extremely abbreviated trip down the manufacturing line of a typical ammo plant. Scale it up or scale it down, the basic steps are always there.

Step 1: It pretty much all starts here with raw materials. Ammo makers source lead (often as wire on rolls for cores), sheet copper and/or brass and other metals to make cases, primer cups, bullet cores, jackets and whatever else is needed. I’d count powder as a sort of “raw goods” too.

Step 2: For cases, sheet brass get stamped into “cups” like this. A huge machine does it using dies. This is sort of step one in



creating a case or a copper jacket.

Step 3: Here’s a typical machine in the process of stamping out cartridge cases from this original “cup.” One machine does one cartridge case design. If you want to change it to another, everything shuts down while engineers and skilled tradespeople re-tool the machine with new dies and tune it up. Keep in mind bright, agile and knowledgeable people are needed to assure these machines do what they’re supposed to be doing.

Step 4: After a few stampings, the original cups begin to look like cases. Keep in mind this takes many steps, and involves many machines and very high precision. Rims and extractor grooves are actually cut with a lathe-like machine! Note the actual human hands in the photo too. There’s no mystical chanting involved, just hard work by real people.

Step 5: I lined these up when I was touring the SIG ammo factory. From left to right, things start with a cup (already drawn to size a bit here), then to the final case, which is then loaded elsewhere in the factory.

Step 6: Believe it or not, this is what it takes to make a .380 case. The cup on the left, is followed by the first drawing, another to thin and stretch it, then another, continuing the process. This is followed by a trim to length and a stamping to form a raw rim. Note how in the next step, the rim is turned to size, followed by a lathe-cut extractor

Continued on page 80





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