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56



67



52

FEATURES

50 BEER BUDGET 1911s

Lotsa' fun for around \$500! Pat Cascio

52 POINT OF AIM VS. POINT OF IMPACT

What you see ain't necessarily what you get. Mike "Duke" Venturino

55 CLOSE LOOK: AMMO **WEB BLAST!**

Zombie blasters and hot-hitters! John Connor

56 GOLDBLOCKS REVOLVER

Ruger's SP-101 .22 is "just right." Dave Anderson

58 CHAMBERS CUSTOM

This "righty-lefty" mirror image 1911 duo challenges the eye. Roy Huntington

67 ALMOSTS: THE NORTON TP-70

Tiny and elegant, a true "mini" auto in .25 ACP and .22 LR. J.B. Wood

68 PERFECTION PERSONIFIED

Chris Reeve: lifetime knives. Pat Covert

71 WIN A STUNNING TUSSEY CUSTOM 1911

All proceeds support InterFACE doctors helping kids! Roy Huntington

72 CLOSE LOOK: HANDLOADING

Gear and goodies you gotta' get! John Connor

74 CAVEAT EMPTOR

An engraver's notes. Brian Powley

COVER STORY

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Handgun options for beauty and performance. Dr. George Dvorchak

DIDN'T KNOW A DAMN THING UNTIL...

A novice goes to Gunsite. Mark Hampton

DEPARTMENTS

- 26 THE SIXGUNNER** John Taffin
Ruger Bearcat .327 Federal upgrade!
- 30 THE AYOOB FILES** Massad Ayoob
A cop-killer and his demise.
- 36 BETTER SHOOTING** Dave Anderson
HK P7 mini-upgrade.
- 90 GUN RIGHTS** Alan Korwin
We dare you!
- 110 GUNNYSACK** Roy Huntington
AR MagVault, Maxpedition, Crimson Trace and Kimber 1911.22 Kit.



50

COLUMNS

- 8 SPEAK OUT**
- 20 REALITY CHECK** CLINT SMITH
- 24 COP TALK** MASSAD AYOOB
- 32 CARRY OPTIONS** SAMMY REESE
- 34 SHOOTING IRON** MIKE "DUKE" VENTURINO
- 38 TAFFIN TESTS** JOHN TAFFIN
- 40 HANDLOADING** JOHN TAFFIN
- 42 PISTOLSMITHING** ALEX HAMILTON
- 44 GUNCRANK DIARIES** JOHN CONNOR
- 46 WINNING EDGE** DAVE ANDERSON
- 48 HANDGUN HUNTING** J.D. JONES
- 122 THE INSIDER** ROY HUNTINGTON



72



71



20



38

RESOURCES

- 104 CUSTOM CORNER**
- 114 SPOTLIGHT** STEVE EVAIT
- 118 AD INDEX**
- 119 CLASSIFIEDS**

HANDGUN OF THE MONTH

WIN

76

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COLT STREET

I enjoyed reading about the “gun streets” of Bel Air, Md. (Jan/Feb 2012, *Speak Out*). I used to visit my son in Canal Winchester, Ohio and remember street names like Browning, Colt, Rifle, Shotgun and, of course, Winchester. No surprise, the entire neighborhood felt like an oasis in the middle of nowhere, and made me feel good all over. I kinda’ get those same feelings when I read your great magazine!

Mel Mandelkorn
Sarasota, Fla.

Thumb Boo-Boo

Mike “Duke” Venturino’s recent feature on the tiny Browning 1911 .22 (“A Baby 1911,” Jan/Feb 2012), caused some reader concern because a young shooter, Morgan, was shown holding the gun with her left thumb behind the slide, in danger of being cut by the slide cycling. Duke had this to say:

“Guys, Morgan isn’t just another pretty face posing with a gun. She’s

Montana ranch raised; so, during hunting season she will be up before daylight, saddling her horse with her mother and brother, riding high into the mountains hunting elk. It will often be below zero, and likewise time and again she will bring home meat. In September of 2011, she and her mother were flown into a drop camp in Alaska for a moose hunt. There were no big, strong, tough guys to take care of them — and they

didn’t need any. Unfortunately, they didn’t get a shot at a legal-size moose. If she gets a boo-boo on her thumb from a pistol’s slide, she’ll be able to handle it. She’ll also learn not to do it the way most of us did — by experience!” Duke

Assault Rifle Nonsense

As a hunter and CCW holder, I’ve read every gun magazine and I see a lot



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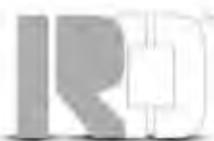
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SPEAK OUT

of articles written about assault rifles, assault clips, assault gear and such. My question is how do we change this? A rifle is a rifle; a handgun is a handgun; and what is so assaulting unless it's turned on someone? Then they're assaulted. You can dress up a Ruger 10/22 to make it look evil, but it's still just a .22, with nothing assaulting about it. So, how do we shooters and hunters change this picture to the public? The media is tearing our sport to pieces everyday by abusing the term "assault" rifle. Some yahoo shoots at the White House, and the first thing they say is it appears it's an assault rifle (then show a picture of a shotgun!). Give me a clue how to help change this perception.

D. Williams Aiken SC
 Via e-mail

While my knee-jerk reaction is to not worry about a name, I understand your concerns. The NSSF (National Shooting Sports Foundation) has lead the way to calling AR-15-type rifles "Modern Sporting Rifles" instead of assault rifles. Indeed, after WWII and Korea there were thousands of M1 Garands converted into some very beautiful hunting rifles — perhaps the first of the Modern Sporting Rifle generation? We here at FMG have also coined the term "Modern Defensive Rifle" to cover the entire gamut of semi-auto rifles that might be used for self-defense (by police or the public), and can also be used for targets, plinking, hunting or simply just to own for the sake of owning or collecting. To hear a homeowner used his "defensive rifle" to defend his family during a riot, or a cop relied on his issue defensive rifle to defend herself against a car full of criminals, is hard to argue against, and does seem to paint a subtly different picture of the situation and the gun used. I say, let's out smart 'em! RH

Digital Delights

I've been reading *American Handgunner* for what seems like forever. Every time it arrives, I grab it out of the mailbox and digest it in a couple days. Then I read it again and again, until the next issue arrives. My wife and I are relocating back to the mountains after 20 years in Florida, and with the house packed up and nothing to do, I logged onto your website to do a change of address. While I was online I checked out the digital extras. Holy mackerel, say it isn't so! Have I have been missing out on a whole ton of info and cool stuff? I normally dislike the computer since my eyes get fatigued, but gads man, I absolutely loved Duke's Colt Single Action

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SPEAK OUT

series, and just can't get enough. All the contributors are top notch; keep up the good work! I only hope these old eyes can hold up to my enthusiasm.

Steve Mikula
NRA Pistol Instructor

Rotten Service

A reader sent me the following, saying he wrote it after visiting a gun store recently. He was appalled at the lack of service, and was made to feel unwelcome. I'm running it since not only have we all experienced this sort of thing in gun stores at times (makes me crazy!), but with many dealers reading Handgunner, I felt it might be a good reminder to them to take a hard look at their own customer service. Oh, he also said the storeowner never bothered to apologize or even acknowledge receipt of the letter. RH

"I stopped in your shop about 10 days ago, and asked to look at your Curio & Relic guns. I really enjoyed looking at many of the interesting long guns in your shop, and the great posters and flags. While I'll admit to window shopping (and not buying anything) that day, I would have seriously considered buying if I had felt at all welcome in your shop. While you showed me guns, you never said 'hello' to me, or my wife, or my 10-year-old son. Even my son noticed you never bothered to say hi.

Also, I never once saw you look me in the face. It's pretty standard when you greet someone in your store — someone who might spend several hundred dollars — to look at them in the face and welcome them. Your hat covered your eyes the entire time we were there. You spent all of your time talking to your friends. If you had said, 'Hello, how can I help you today? What are you interested in?' I very well could have spent up to \$300 or more on a gun. Maybe the next time a friendly stranger pops in, you'll at least say hello."

Name withheld by request
Via e-mail

Writing To Servicemen

There have been a slew of you (including some teachers) asking lately how to write to servicemen and women. So, I went to the source and checked with our own John Connor to see what he recommends. RH

"It's easy, and I know they always appreciate a letter. Have readers go to www.anysoldier.com (also www.any-marine.com, www.anysailor.com, www.any-airman.com, www.anycoastguard.com — you get the picture). What you get is names,



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SPEAK OUT

bios, info on who they are, where they're from, what their needs are, etc., and you get the info to send mail directly to them. It's a great program. I try to pick a different 'contact' from a different service about once a month. I can't send much, but you'd be amazed what a great thing a can of Pringle's potato chips, a couple shrink-wrapped sticks of jerky, some magazines, etc. can be. It's primarily about sending stuff; small gifts and such, always with notes, but letters alone are great morale boosters.

Tip for the teacher: One of the most popular things to send is — used but good condition kids' toys! Like, surplus 'beanie babies' and stuff. The Marines seem to particularly like them to hand out to Afghan tykes in the villages. There are lots of females deployed forward too, and they routinely run out of such mundane things as hair bands (only send black or brown) and deodorant. A very commonly listed request from the females: "leave-in hair conditioner," especially since water to thoroughly rinse hair can be scarce.

Letters are just fine, but even something like recent copies of daily newspapers, which would otherwise be thrown out, are a big hit. Sorry to go on in detail, but ... They are all my comrades — and my kids. You might also give the teacher this link for more info/suggestions: <http://www.gunsmagazine.com/a-card-a-can-a-plan/>

Okay, I'll stop now. Connor"

Sexy Knife

In your article on the Les Baer premium 1911s ("Brand Franchise," Nov/Dec 2011) there is a picture of the pistols that includes a very artistically made knife. Who made the knife and does he produce them for sale? They're all good — but that was an excellent issue.

Bob
Via e-mail

Thanks for your kind words, Bob. That knife is a limited edition by William Henry Studio, known for their stunning quality and amazing designs, fit and finish. Prices range from in the several hundred dollars for a basic knife to many thousands!!! for a fancy one. I thought the one Rick Thronburg from William Henry supplied fit perfectly. Check out what they do at: www.williamhenrystudio.com

Oopsie

I go through every issue of *American Handgunner* from cover to cover. Fine job, by the way. But when I got to the *Insider* column (Nov/Dec, 2011) and



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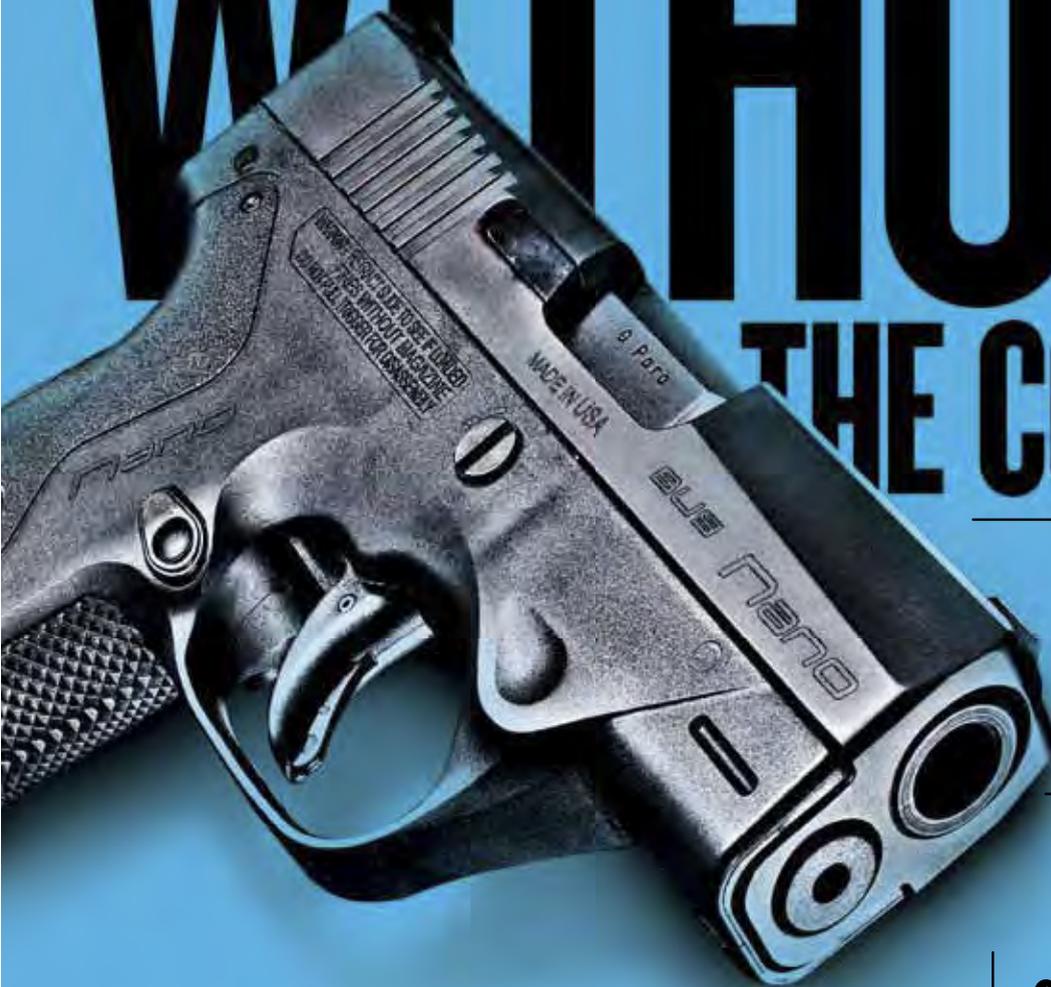
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SPEAK OUT

read about Ruger winning both Handgun and Rifle of the Year, it said “see the review (of the LC9) in this issue.” Huh? Did I miss that review? I scanned the table of contents, no LC9 review. I counted the page numbers to make sure my postman hadn’t ripped out any pages. I spent nearly as long looking for that review in that issue as I spend reading it in depth — still no LC9 review.

Now I know you’ve got a lot on your plate as editor, and Duke is out on his property trying to adjust the non-adjustable sights on some military piece. Mr. Taffin is busy reading J.B. Wood’s newest book on revolvers.

J.D. is probably in his casting room. Mas is most likely in court giving expert witness testimony. Connor is ... well, doing something. Sammy’s busy working leather conditioner into a new holster. Alex is backed up with orders. Dave is re-calibrating his chronograph (again), and you’re probably at Brandon’s Gunshop trying to get control of your checkbook-gone-wild. So, I can see how that gaffe might have gotten past you. But have mercy, Sensei Roy! I’m confused enough as it is, being on the far side of middle age, and seeing me flipping frantically through the pages of the magazine causes my wife no small amount of consternation.

Could you please direct me to that review of the LC9, as I’m considering getting one for myself by first giving it

to my wife, who will very sweetly say, “No, Dear, just go ahead and keep it for yourself.”

JB Lawrence
Fort Myers, Fla.

Uh ... er ... um ... I was only at Brandon's for a short time. And heck, I can't even pronounce Gozmatx', much less know one when I saw one, but damn if he didn't have one. All the finish was worn off and it didn't have any sights or grips or hammer or anything either. He said I got a good deal on it too. I dunno ... does anyone have any 11.97 Rimless, heeled-bulleted, outside lubed Gozmatx' ammo? He said I needed the stuff made in Bosnia in stripper clips, not the Russian stuff from before the big revolution there. Brandon said he was out of it



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temporarily, but I could get it most anywhere. My excitement over that find may have contributed to my moment of indiscretion about that LC9 article. Let's just say, if you happen to look in the previous issue (Sept/Oct 2011) you'll find that article on page 70. Oops. RH

Gun-Buying Frenzy

Roy Huntington's column (*Insider*, "Acquisitional Deficiency," Jan/Feb 2012) really hit close to home! Without entirely understanding how or why, I seem to have ended up with a large variety of .32 ACP service pistols — a Colt 1903, a Spanish/French "Ruby", a Beholla, Walther Modell 4 and PP, a Yugo M70 and finally a semi-auto Skorpion. Luckily .32 ACP ammo can be had cheaply. I also wound up with three revolvers in .38 S&W — a Webley, a Royal Hong Kong Police Colt and a S&W Victory Model. Thank goodness Prvi Partizan produces modestly priced .38 S&W! Finally, I seem to have no less than four Nagant revolvers, two Russian and two Polish. Ammo is available, but not cheap! I'm still not sure how I, a collector of military pistols in 7.62/7.63mm and 9mm, ended up with all these oddities, but I enjoy them all. I never did get a French pistol in 7.65mm Longue, and am glad of that! But you never know, do you? Keep up the good work!

Ed Rudnicki
Dingmans Ferry, Pa.

Gun Free?

I write concerning the article by Alan Korwin (*Gun Rights*, "Are Gun-Free Zones ... Gun Free?" Nov/Dec 2011). Do we really need this kind of ranting in *American Handgunner*? Korwin insults and demeans politicians, leftist politicians, right-wing politicians, liberals, "government" bureaucrats, newspapers, educators, federal agents, anti-rights bigots, and "Slick Willie Clinton." That's an impressive list, for a piece that's not a full page in total content. He refers to anti-gun people, as a class, as "anti-rights bigots," fools, irrational, idiots, dimwits, ignorant, fawning and ignorant urchins, morons and "beyond stupid." Makes me wonder whom he approves of. He goes on to make assertions contrary to the current state of constitutional law, and to the value of domestic law. Does he, or anyone, believe individuals, whether pro- or anti-gun, will be impressed or persuaded by shrill attacks and name calling?

Yes, I know about freedom of speech, but I question whether a magazine I admire and enjoy reading need provide a forum for such screeds. I've also been a subscriber of sufficient years I know your dictum that, if dissatisfied with an article, just turn the page. Good advice. But I'm not dissatisfied, I'm embarrassed to read such writing in a maga-

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SPEAK OUT

zine I like and recommend.

Korwin will no doubt cast me among the beyond stupid anti-rights bigots he writes of, but I've been an NRA Benefactor Life Member for more than 40 years; I'm a former NRA-certified police firearms instructor, a retired Marine, and a former team shooter. I own, shoot and carry guns. There are better and more effective ways to state pro-gun positions than Korwin's *ad hominem* attacks. I've Googled his background and he seems capable of better. *American Handgunner* certainly is capable of better.

G. Solis
Via e-mail

Gary, I hate to dilute the content and meaning of any of my writers. I could have edited out the, shall we say "strongly worded" portions of Alan's column, but at many levels he's right — they are morons, albeit, at rare times, well-meaning ones. We're always happy to announce the fact there's an elephant in the room when others choose to ignore it and get trampled. I asked Alan to comment. RH

"A thoughtful letter, thanks. Yes, I did enjoy lambasting imbeciles who use their "official" positions to perpetrate dangerous and reckless make-believe gun-free zones on the public. I hope your aversion to my playful use of colorful language didn't distract you from the core message — hanging a no guns sign is negligent; hoping it will protect you is absurd; and the people who do or support such things are hoplophobes needing treatment, or anti-rights bigots (strong words but true) who deserve punishment. Alan Korwin"

And ...

Great article by Alan Korwin telling it like it is (*Gun Rights*, Nov/Dec 2011). When the Fort Hood incident was reported, there were pictures in the newspaper of our brave solders, dressed in their camouflage — because we are at war with terrorista — unarmed and hiding behind walls when this human debris, Nidal Malik Hasan, started shooting. The disgust and anger is still with me. Alan hit it perfect when he called our politicians idiots; that was generous compared to what I think of them.

This other set of human debris — politicians — making a army base a gun-free zone is beyond any hint of common sense or good judgment. Our brave and dedicated solders are trained in the use of weapons. Walking around the base unarmed just invites terrorists like Hasan to attack unarmed solders. Would he have attacked had he known all the sol-

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ders were armed with M4 carbines? At least they should be carrying M-9s, and not only on base, but off base too. Hey, stupid, idiot politicians — we're at war!

C. J. LaPorte
Denham Springs, La.

Big Bore Blasting

I simply can't tell you how pleased I am to always see your coverage of revolvers, especially the classic big bores of all kinds. When I hear that bump in the night, I find myself reaching for a 4" Model 29 loaded with that new Buffalo Bore full wadcutter in .44 Special you featured not long ago. Call me old fashioned, but that heavy N-frame just delivers confidence in spades.

I live in the country with my family, and once, when my boys were small, they were playing on our property when a pit-bull-mix stormed over our fence and cornered them, growling. I luckily happened to see it happen as I stood at the kitchen window. I grabbed that Model 29 (loaded with CCI Blazer .44 Special HP at the time), ran out and shot that dog immediately. At the shot, he turned toward me, took a halting step or two, then dropped as I was about to shoot again. The kids were safe and I was shaken. But acting fast and decisively, and having that Model 29 at-hand, I'm sure saved my kids. The cops came, nobody claimed the dog (there was no collar) and since rural cops understand such things, that was that. I learned there's no time to get into a gun safe at a time like that, so think about how you store your go-to gun.

Gabe Franken
Via e-mail

Deployed Joplinite

As I sit here deployed on the tip of the spear for the Asian Pacific region, I occasionally get a little down time, and when I do, I usually pick up the most recent edition of *American Handgunner* magazine. It's been my little slice of home. In my spare time back in the states, I'm an avid shooter, dedicating many hours to my hobby. In a recent edition (Nov/Dec 2011) I spotted your *Insider* column ("Acquisitional Deficiency") and thought "hell that sounds like me." I began reading your article and a certain name jumped out at me, Brandon's Gunshop. I bring this up because I'm a Joplin native. I grew up there, went to college there, and I served three years on the Redings Mill Fire Department. My dad served 21 years on the Joplin Police Department, so naturally I was brought up around guns, and Brandon's, in turn, was my favorite store. When my dad thought I was of responsible age, my first rifle was acquired from Brandon's, a Polish T-44. During my college years at MSSU, I would make my way down to the gunshop about once a

Continued on page 107

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Clicks And BOOMS

I'm intrigued with the general aspect of safe gun handling; and since I do it every day, it's important to me. What I call the "click and boom" versions of gun handling are of particular interest to me.

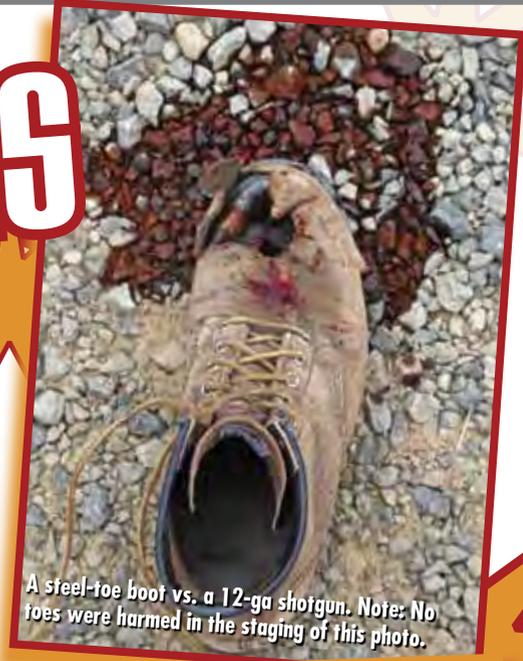
There are two things in life very loud in the overall audio spectrum — a gun that goes click when it's supposed to go boom, and a gun that goes boom when it's supposed to go click.

Heidi and I were teaching an Urban Rifle class some time ago and had a student who was overweight. He said he couldn't go prone or kneel because his "knee was bad." Yeah, his knee was bad because of the buncha' pounds "we" were overweight.

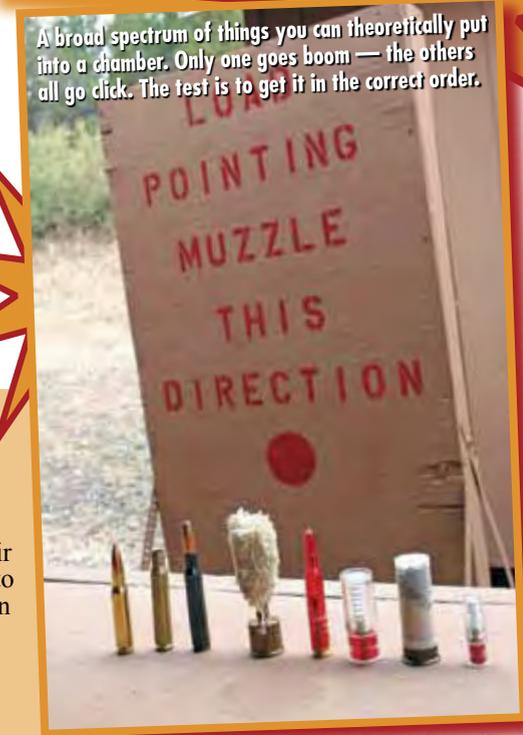
Heidi and I do this drill where students do a back-and-forth sort of movement to make or break contact. We've done it safely in our teaching environment, without incident, for 28 years. For a day and a half, Heidi has repeatedly told this guy to get his stinking finger off the trigger while he is not on the target. I think that's a basic rule? You guessed it, while moving forward, out of breath, overweight and damn finger on the trigger, he takes the safety off — and his sights are not on a target — and torches one into the ground.

By the grace of a higher being, no one is forward, and it's basically a "wet spot in our shorts" drill. Heidi went forward and reprimanded him firmly; and he had it coming. So a suggestion for the go to school, shoot in a match, 3-gun wanna' be cool tactical operators and such folks — lose some weight. And keep your finger off the trigger until the sights are on the target.

And before everyone launches on the editor, eat what you want and be what you want, but try to be what you *are*, not what you *imagine* you are. My Mom had a saying as we grew up: "Act your age." Solid advice from an 84-year-old sage.



A steel-toe boot vs. a 12-ga shotgun. Note: No toes were harmed in the staging of this photo.



A broad spectrum of things you can theoretically put into a chamber. Only one goes boom — the others all go click. The test is to get it in the correct order.

Snappy-Cappy

At a recent rifle school we had a father and son show up. Nice folks, shooting hunting-type rifles, and apparently well disciplined to their world, sort of. At the first day's end, the students move their rifles to a safe area so they can clean. Shortly, the boy asks, "Can I put my snap cap in my .270 bolt action to let the striker down?"

I say "Yeah, but why don't you just check the chamber, check the mag well, check the chamber, check the mag well again, point it in a safe direction, safety off, and gently close the bolt on the empty chamber while your finger is on the trigger; then the pressure is off the striker."

"Cool, you can do that?" says he.

"Yes, and then you are not messing around with stuff in the chamber, which is a very bad idea," I remind him, rather pointedly.

He does his Winchester .270 empty chamber check thing. He and Dad leave and go to the fiddle table near the classroom. After a bit I drive by and the Dad comes forward, long in the face. He says, "I had a fubar. I put my snap cap that wasn't [he mixed the snap with live rounds in his pocket] in my rifle, pointed it at the bullet trap and pressed the trigger." Thereby getting a resounding BOOM with his .30-06 into my \$400 550 armor plate. The projectile struck at the very edge of the plate, zapped the edge, and the secondary frag sprayed the building behind the trap.

At this point there is not actually much for me to say. I leaned forward, looked around him at the younger guy and said, "That's why I don't use snap caps."

Really?

In retrospect, in my golden years, all the people who blow off safety rules and on occasion their own fingers and toes, well, they sort of offend me. If you read what I wrote, there are two versions of the finger-trigger thing, and they need to be done correctly, at the right time and place, and they all need to have a muzzle in a safe direction. Imagine that.



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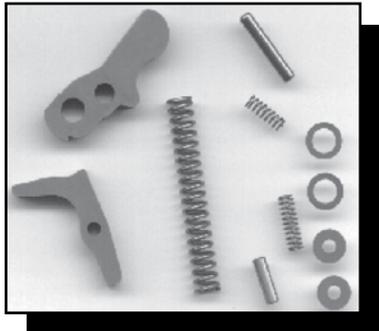
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Allowing officers to choose guns they like, has led to marked improvements in hit rates in on-duty shootings.



UPD allows a broad range of duty and off-duty handgun choices.

OFFICER CHOICE

While some agencies take a “one size fits all” approach when it comes to issue handguns, others have found it better to give some latitude. One such is the Unified Police Department of Greater Salt Lake, Utah. James M. Winder is CEO of the UPD, and also Sheriff of Salt Lake County; both entities are served by the same firearms training center.

Nicholas Roberts is Rangemaster of UPD. UPD came into being Jan. 1, 2010 and encompasses the unincorporated county and four contract cities. UPD and SLCSO protect a population of 1.1 million. Some 450 sworn UPD officers serve full-time, augmented by a reserve corps of 30 armed personnel. On the sheriff’s side of the house, there are 125 protective service officers, and among 600 corrections officers, roughly 180 are armed.



CHOICES

“We allow six brands of service pistols,” says Rangemaster Roberts. “Beretta, SIG, Smith & Wesson, Springfield XD or XDM, Glock and the Colt 1911 Series 80. Approved calibers are 9mm, .40 S&W, .357 SIG and .45 ACP. Our standard issue service pistol is the Smith & Wesson Military & Police, and the officer can request it in any of those four calibers, with or without the optional manual safety.”

UPD no longer allows revolvers for primary duty carry, but recently re-authorized them for off-duty and backup use. Roberts notes once they were allowed to carry the handy J-frame again, more officers have made the choice to carry a backup gun. Many of the UPD officers choose to carry their old service pistols, with Third Generation S&W 6906 and 4006 still seen frequently in duty holsters.

Roberts explains this policy in four starkly simple words: “No gun is perfect.” Fifty percent of the armed personnel carry their own personally

bought weapons, and department policy is all sworn personnel must have badge, ID and firearm readily accessible at all times.

Whatever the caliber, the officer must carry department issue ammunition. Federal Tactical is what UPD adopted for .40 S&W (180 grains), .45 ACP (230 grains in +P) and 9mm (135 grains in +P). Roberts reports all have worked well in the department’s actual officer-involved shootings. For .357 SIG the duty round is the 125-grain Speer Gold Dot, and for the backup .38 Specials it’s Speer’s 135-grain Short Barrel Gold Dot. Neither has up till now been used by the department in a gunfight.

In 1995, patrol rifles replaced shotguns, all Colt AR-15s, and individual officers can purchase their own approved Colt .223 rifles if they desire. Issue load for the patrol rifle is Federal Tactical 55-grain bonded. The 55-grain bonded Federal Tactical has also shown excellent penetration through windshield glass, with no marked deviation of trajectory and has been an exemplary fight stopper.

ULTIMATE GOAL

Nick Roberts tells me the 9mm is chosen by the troops more than any other. “A number of our officers have found they can hit center faster, with more bullets, with the 9mm,” says Roberts. “We’ve also had a number of the older officers go to the 9mm after issues such as arthritis made it more comfortable for them, and easier for them to run with speed and accuracy.” The .40 caliber is second most popular, followed by the .357 and finally, the .45. Smith & Wesson is the most widely chosen brand, with Glock in a strong second place. SIG, Beretta and the Springfield XD Series follow in that order, with the recently approved Colt 1911 only now beginning to develop a following at UPD.

The department knows bullet placement is the most important aspect of stopping an assailant. Each officer trains four times a year, once in the FATS machine to combine judgment with defensive marksmanship, and the rest live-fire on the range. The department emphasizes use of sights whenever possible. Annual training includes “stress shoots,” obstacle courses combined with shooting, and wounded officer response techniques. Ammunition budget is in the area of \$170,000 per year.

Hand-to-gun fit is a critical part of finding the gun that works best for the individual officer. The interchangeable backstraps and forgiving trigger reach of the M&P were among the reasons it was adopted, and every recruit gets to try it in every possible grip configuration. They are also introduced to the other optional makes and models. Exemplars of each are kept at the range for that purpose, and to be brought to the scene of an officer-involved shooting to replace whatever gun the officer was using, which has to be taken as evidence.

A very high level of competence demonstrated where it counts has been the result. The department’s records indicate a very high hit ratio in the field: 72 percent at this writing. I want to congratulate Sheriff Winder, Rangemaster Roberts and firearms instructors Dave Kilgrow and Randy Lish on police firearms policy geared to individual excellence in the name of public safety.



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Ruger's Single-Action Bearcat A .327 FEDERAL UP-GRADE!

Colt had pronounced the single action dead in 1940. Enter Bill Ruger. His desire was to produce a single action which anyone could afford to own and shoot, while still maintaining the look and feel of the original. The result was the .22 Single-Six. Ruger wisely maintained the original grip frame of the Colt Single Action, downsized the mainframe to reduce weight when using the little rimfire cartridge, and he totally improved the standard single action by replacing flat springs with virtually unbreakable coil springs. That was 1953, and the Single-Six has been an excellent seller ever since. It was my first handgun after I graduated high school in 1956.

A few lightweight Single-Sixes with alloy cylinders and frames had been offered, however now Ruger decided to come forth with a true pocket pistol. In the 1840s, both Colt and Remington had offered .31 percussion pistols, such as the Wells Fargo, Baby Dragoon and the New Model Police. These

were all very easy to conceal pocket pistols. Today we have a large proliferation of pocket pistols, however this was certainly not the case in 1958, and especially not in .22 caliber. Once again Ruger sensed the market and brought forth his little Bearcat revolver.

The original Bearcat had a non-fluted 6-shot cylinder with a role engraving of both a bear and a mountain lion, a black anodized aluminum mainframe with integral grip frame, and an alloy trigger guard anodized to appear to be brass. The first serial numbers were from 1-999 and then a letter prefix was added such as A001-A999, B001-B999, and so on for 25 letters of the alphabet excluding the "O" which could be mistaken for a zero.

By 1960 the "alphabet" Bearcats gave way to a normal numbering system and a prefix number was added in 1969. The original Bearcats weighed just over 16 ounces and were discontinued in 1970, to be replaced one year later by the steel-frame Super Bearcat. Today's Bearcat is all stainless steel with a transfer bar safety, while still maintaining the half cock position for loading and unloading.

Left: (L-R) The .22 LR is the original chambering for Ruger's Bearcat, next is the .32 H&R magnum. Harton's custom model is chambered for the .327 Federal, and it works great, offering amazing power in a tiny gun.



A REAL SIXGUN

There are some sixgunners who can shoot everything equally well (and some equally bad!), however I'm not one of them. The easiest sixgun for me to shoot is an adjustable-sighted 7½" single action, such as the Colt New Frontier or original Ruger Flat-Top Blackhawk. The most difficult sixgun, single action or double action, for me, is the little Ruger Bearcat. Everything about it is small and lightweight, with a very tiny grip frame. However, I keep reminding myself this is not a target pistol but a pocket pistol or kit gun, which easily stows in a backpack or tackle box. When the

going is rough and every ounce counts, a Bearcat and a box of .22 ammunition is definitely priceless.

I ignored the Bearcat when it first appeared, and in fact did not buy one

until my son's 10th birthday. He saved up half the money and I paid the other half and he was on his way to becoming a single-action sixgunner. He told me in recent years how envious all his friends were of him as he had a *real* pistol, while they all had cap pistols.

"I remember how excited I was, nearly trembling, when we went to the gun shop run by the short man with black horn-rimmed glasses and a noticeable limp to pick out my first handgun," he told me. "I was 10 years old, and as I invested my life savings, which was equally matched by you, probably pulled from the

Continued on page 100

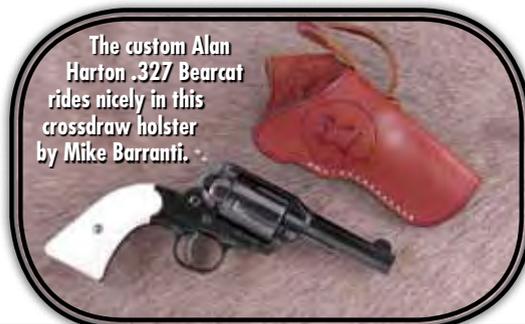
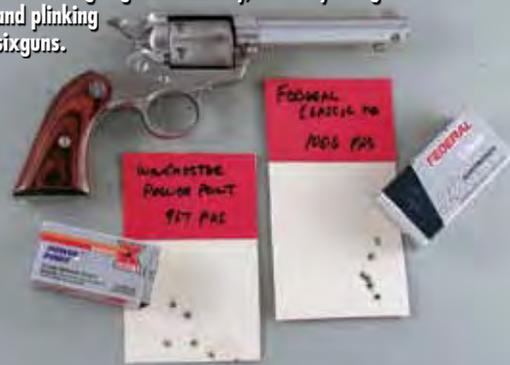


The Harton .327 Federal and original .22 Bearcat cylinders compared.



Ruger factory Bearcats compared to the custom .327 Federal Magnum Bearcat by Single Action Service (R).

A current production stainless steel Bearcat may not quite deliver target-grade accuracy, but they are great trail and plinking sixguns.



The custom Alan Harton .327 Bearcat rides nicely in this crossdraw holster by Mike Barranti.



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The new Ultra+ CDP II™ (left) with full-length grip and Ultra CDP II™ with short grip are chambered in .45 ACP. Both have 3-inch barrels that make them easy to conceal.



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CHAIN OF DEATHS: UNRAVELING THE MYSTERY OF A COP-KILLER AND HIS DEMISE

SITUATION: As skilled with a rifle as he is ruthless, a bad man kills unarmed victims and five police officers ... until he meets a good man as capable with a gun as he.

LESSON: Never underestimate your opponent; realize there's a time to besiege and wait, and a time to approach and search ... and utilize modern communications to contain deadly threats and to complete important investigations.

When a training assignment recently brought me to the Unified Police Department of Salt Lake County firearms training center, I had the pleasure of meeting Officer Randy Lish. He and I corresponded before, sharing an interest in law enforcement gunfights of the past, and the lessons from them that can be applied to modern police work and self-defense. It was from Randy I learned the story shared with you below, a case rich with survival lessons that might have been lost to history without Lish's untiring investigation and research.

The Killings Begin

An hour after midnight on Sept. 21, 1913, the murders began outside the McKensie boarding house in a neighborhood known as Slap Gap in Bingham, Utah.

Rafael Lopez also went by the nicknames Red and Ralph, the latter an Anglicized version of his given name. Short but strongly built, and in his late 20s, the handsome young Mexican fancied himself a ladies' man, and already had a history of violently assaulting other men in arguments over women. Such a discussion with his friend Juan Valdez quickly turned acrimonious, and Lopez drew a revolver and shot Valdez dead in the street. Their mutual friend Thomas Castillo witnessed the murder, and when he upbraided Lopez for shooting an unarmed man, Lopez pistol-whipped him to the ground, and then ran into the boarding house to gather his things and escape.

By the time Deputy Sheriff Julius Sorensen reached the scene, Lopez had already gathered his clothing and a rifle and fled on foot into the snow of an unseasonably cold night. Taking Castillo into protective custody, Sorensen gathered other lawmen to search for the killer. The deputy apparently thought it would be a simple arrest following a spontaneous homicide in a violent mining town. He did not realize that the dominoes were already falling in what would be a most tragic chapter in the history of Utah law enforcement.

Officers Down

Four lawmen on horseback followed the killer's trail to a ranch near Lark, Utah. Sorensen and Deputy Otto Witbeck circled out to scout for the wanted man, while Bingham Police Chief John Grant and Salt Lake County Deputy Nephi Jensen rode toward the ranch house to inquire if the owners had seen the fugitive.

But Rafael Lopez was waiting for them.

He had taken an ambush position in a ditch near the ranch house, and from a distance later determined by the *Salt Lake Tribune* to be 118 yards, opened fire on them with a Model 1895 Winchester lever action. His braced rifle afforded him deadly accuracy. A .30-06 bullet struck the chief in the left side, driving through both lungs and exiting the right side of his torso with enough force to leave some of his insides hanging from the exit wound. Chief Grant toppled from the saddle, killed almost instantly. *Continued on page 78*

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CCW Breakaways

For the last 12 or so years, I've had a J-Frame or similar-sized pistol riding in my pocket holster. Please, no hate mail about only having a small revolver and a few speed strips. It's better than a pocketknife, challenge coin and some pocket lint, and was a good backup gun on duty. My struggle as a fan of pocket carry is due to the inconsis-

tency in how pants are made. I've gone back to the store to buy the same brand and style of my favorite jeans, only to find the pocket dimensions changed. Trying to get my gun out turns me into a monkey with his hand caught in the jar holding the peanut. All the monkey has to do is let go and he's free, but in my case I can't let go — if I don't get the gun out, I'm in deep trouble.



CCW Breakaways' own "in-use" pics show it best. That's a full-sized Glock there and it not only hides it, it's comfortable and lightning fast.

NEW THINKING

Jay French, founder of CCW Breakaways, has been trying for 30 years to find the best way to carry a concealed handgun. For him, the mode of carry must be concealable, comfortable and fast into action. To meet this triad of requirements, he designed what he terms as "pants with a Holster-pocket." The Holster-pocket is fully adjustable and reinforced in order to hold the largest of pistols. Body type varies, so, because of that, the ability to be concealed yet still remain comfortable will determine how big a gun you carry. The ultimate goal was to have users view the Holster-pocket as a gun accessory, not a garment. This I had to see.

The process for designing CCW Breakaways was much more than finding a pant style and sewing in a Holster-pocket. Jay is a devout practitioner of personal defense; he spends many hours a week in the dojo, practicing real world self-defense. He also dedicates a lot of time to self-defense oriented shooting. The twist is Jay always trains while wearing his CCW Breakaway pants or shorts — and soon to be released jeans. He's extra hard on the gear and himself when training. If he's not successful, he simply continues on and trains harder. If the CCW Breakaways fail, it's back to the drawing board to find for a solution.

The finished product I received was flawless. I immediately knew Jay made sure nothing but the best had the CCW Breakaways name on it. But I must confess, at first I thought Jay was playing a joke on me. I couldn't find the breakaway part at the top of the pocket. I could feel and see the Holster-pocket, but the top of the pocket was so well designed and integrated, it took a second look to figure them out. And you don't have to choose which pocket comes with the fully adjustable system; both front pockets do.

When I modeled the shorts for my wife her comment was something similar to: "Who are you and what have you done with my husband?" When she saw the confused look on my face she casually responded, "Sorry babe, I'm just not used to you looking that stylish!" Ouch! Okay, so I'm not at the tip of the spear when it comes to the latest fashion trends. Jay accomplished looking good and being well armed, at the same time. In my case, I'll probably stand out if my buddies see me, but for you fellas in tune with the latest trends, don't worry, you'll be stylin'.

This inside-out view shows the adjustable pocket the gun rides in. You can tailor it to fit your gun and, to a certain degree, your body style.



Simple

Once you have the Holster-pocket adjusted for the gun you carry, you are ready to roll. A second pocket holster isn't needed. The design provides protection to the pistol or revolver like it's actually in a holster. But don't go throwing keys and junk in the pocket along with your gun, and if you don't get that one, give me a call and I'll "splain it" to you.

The ability to have your hand on your gun, ready to go in a second, yet not look like it is, is the beauty of the Holster-pocket carry. The draw from the CCW Breakaways is very gross-motor. Grab your gun in the firing grip and the fist-making motion combined with outward pressure on the pocket pops the quick-release snaps at the top of the pocket, freeing the gun for the rest of your draw-to-shoot or guard sequence. I performed many practice draws from as many awkward positions I could come up with, and I always managed to get the gun out.

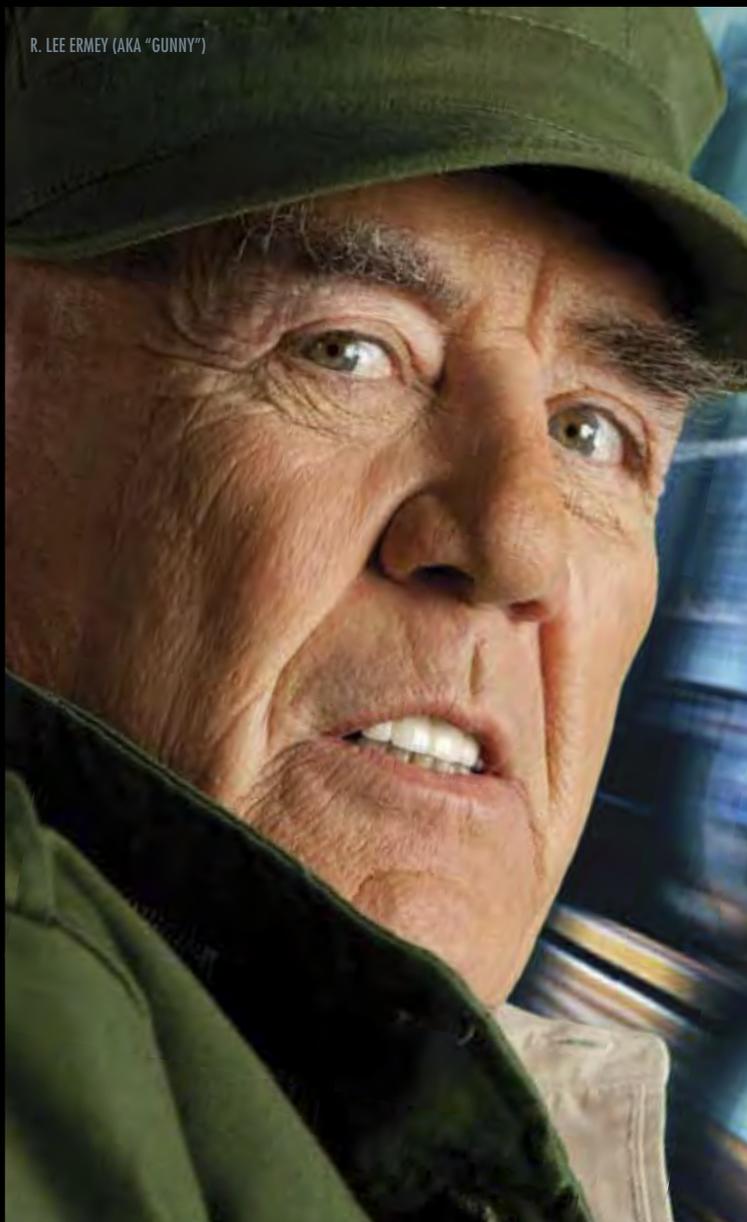
I was skeptical at first, but I'm now sold on the concept. It also doesn't hurt that my wife thinks I look good. She's never said any of my other holsters make me look fashionable. Go figure.



For info: www.americanhandgunner.com/ccw-breakaways



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Photos: Yvonne Venturino

SLUGGING IT OUT

Recently a reader sent his Editorship, Roy, a request for a specific column about how one goes about "slugging" barrels. Since I've been doing that for decades, I got elected to detail the process. First, a word about why anyone would want to "slug" a barrel. The sole reason is to determine its size, or more precisely, its interior diameter. Why? So the proper size bullets can be sent through it. With most American made handguns of modern manufacture, slugging a barrel is likely not necessary. Tolerances today are that good. With handguns of yesteryear, or modern ones of foreign make, it's possible their barrels can measure all over the map.

Also, there's this to consider. If you are going to only handload factory jacketed bullets in your handguns, or fire only factory loads, I say don't bother. You will be restricted by the diameters available anyway. However, if you're going to cast your own bullets or fire commercially cast bullets, then it pays to know what diameter you need.



After starting the ball in the muzzle with a non-metallic hammer, tap the pure lead round ball flush with the handgun's muzzle. There will be some flash around the muzzle as is shown here.



Duke's USFA .45 single action's barrel measures right at .451" in its grooves.



Tap the lead slug through the barrel, taking care it lands somewhere soft. You don't want to damage your slug.

Get The Lead Out

First off you'll need pure lead "slugs." For that purpose I bought a wide variety of pure lead round balls for muzzleloaders as sold by Hornady and Speer. For the slugging process I pick one much larger in diameter than the barrel to be checked. For instance, if it will be a .357 Magnum then I use a .375" pure lead round ball. If it's a .45 caliber then I use a .490" one.

Next you need a non-metallic hammer, like a leather or wooden mallet or a weighted rubber hammer. Don't use a metal hammer of any sort to pound a slug into a barrel! Trust me, you'll mess up the crown. Also you'll need a short piece of hardwood dowel a bit longer than the handgun's barrel.

Lay the pure lead round ball atop the barrel's muzzle. It doesn't hurt to put a squirt of oil on it. Then pound it in flush with the muzzle using your non-metallic hammer. See why now? By hammering in a much larger size ball, there will be a lead flange around the muzzle. That's okay, just toss it aside. Now the slug in the bore will have parallel sides easily measured. Using the piece of hardwood dowel, tap the slug all the way through the barrel. Here's a tip learned from hard experience. If the barrel is permanently mounted, as with a revolver, place its butt on something soft so you don't chip the grips. Of course if the barrel is easily dismantled, like a 1911, take it out of the handgun for slugging.

POTENTIAL GLITCHES

With many older guns it may just fall through once started. Don't worry, that's a sign of a tapered bore. With some other guns you may notice the slug slides through very smoothly. That's a sign of fine manufacturing quality. With some guns you may notice tight and loose spots. Again that's not a great cause for worry. It's a sign of modern manufacturing quality, which often does not equal bygone years. Here's another tip. Be prepared to catch the slug as it exits the barrel. There's no sense in going to this trouble and then have the soft lead slug deformed by hitting a hard floor.

Now, all one need do is measure the slug with a set of calipers or a micrometer. Is it really that simple? Yes, it is if the gun in question has an even number of grooves. You just measure the opposing ones and that's your barrel's groove diameter. Conversely, that's not possible with barrels having an odd number of grooves. For instance all Smith & Wesson revolvers have 5-groove barrels. What to do then? Well that requires a bit extra and we'll detail that in the next issue.

I like to give an example of what is detailed so my USFA "Custer Battlefield" single-action .45 was slugged as Yvonne photographed the process. I was sure it would measure .451" and sure enough, that was precisely what happened. That's all there is to it. I could have slugged a half-dozen barrels in the time it took me to write this description, so don't be afraid to give it a try.



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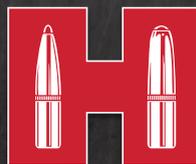
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Pictured above:
9MM 135 gr. FlexLock™

This HK P7 is an excellent example of a "used but not abused" police trade-in.

HK P7 MINI-UPGRADE

The HK "squeeze cocker" pistol was introduced in the mid-1970s and discontinued some 30 years later.

Thirty years would seem to be sufficient time to decide if I wanted one, but I never quite made it. About the time I'd decide to buy one there would be a price increase, or I'd find some other item I just had to have. Time just gets away from us. Of course, once a gun is discontinued everyone wants one. The HK was never a cheap gun; currently some of the more unusual variations, such as high-caps and .40 S&W models, are trading (or at least being offered) at rather shocking prices.

Fortunately a supply of "police trade-ins" shows up every now and then. Few

US police agencies adopted the squeeze cocker. I believe those once issued to New Jersey State Police were eventually sold as surplus. More recently some German police trade-ins have been imported and offered for sale. I've seen them priced at around \$700; if that seems like a lot for a used pistol, remember it's about half of the last retail price on new examples.

The pistol shown here is a P7. It has a heel clip magazine release latch, which was replaced by an ambidextrous lever release on the P7M8. The M8 version also had a synthetic heat shield. The design uses powder gases to keep the slide closed until pressure

has dropped to a safe level. As a result it tends to get hot from extended firing, and frankly the firing doesn't have to be terribly extended — even three or four magazines fired quickly can get the pistol so hot it is hard to handle.

I suppose it's a bit late now to talk of the design's virtues, but they are real and worthwhile. They are famous for excellent accuracy due to the fixed barrel, a quality single-action trigger-break, mild recoil, excellent reliability and outstanding workmanship and materials. Features any handgun would be proud to possess.



Here's the same HK P7 after Robar applied its superior NP3+ finish. Looks better than new, and it's rust-resistant and easier to clean. Ostrich-skin shoulder holster made by Haugen Handgun Leather — a classy rig for a classic pistol.



This HK P7 was a police trade-in. Though not a lot were issued to police departments they do show up now and then. Robar NP3+ finish is attractive, rust-resistant, extremely durable and makes cleaning much easier and faster. Holster/magazine carrier by Haugen Handgun Leather.

SINGLE MOD

I wouldn't modify a new in box or rare variation model, but this used, sound P7 is a fine choice as a shooter. Actually, there isn't much to modify. The trigger is very good, sights are adequate and it functions perfectly. The one modification added is a NP3+ finish from Robar.

NP3+ is a truly amazing finish. It's attractive, rust-resistant, very tough and durable. It has the added advantage of natural lubricity; in technical terms it's slicker than oil on plate glass. On some guns (revolvers especially in my experience) the slickness of NP3+ improves operation and trigger pull.

On the P7 the advantages I was after were rust-resistance and ease of cleaning. The gas operation of the design can result in a buildup of powder fouling. It can get so baked-on the fouling has to be scraped off; NP3+ is so slick, fouling doesn't stick. The P7 is a very easy pistol to fieldstrip — it can literally be done in a few seconds — then a quick wipe down with a soft cloth with a bit of powder solvent on it, is all it takes to make the pistol look new.

NP3+ is not an inexpensive finish but it is absolutely

worth it. I remember when we had to make a decision on a new roof for the barn. The estimate for steel was quite a bit more than asphalt shingles, but we were glad to pay the extra price. Instead of having to do it again in 20 or 25 years, we're done with it. By the time the steel needs replacing the next generation can worry about it.

The outstanding Robar workmanship enhances the fine HK workmanship. The P7 is a compact, reliable, durable pistol and now it's rust-resistant and easy to clean as well. Looks good, too.

Haugen Holders

Jerry Evans at Haugen Handgun Leather made a couple of classy rigs for the P7; an ostrich-skin shoulder holster with double magazine carrier, and a sharkskin belt scabbard with single magazine pouch. Don't let the stunning, museum quality beauty fool you; these are also comfortable, practical holsters.

There's never been a wider choice of quality new handguns than there are today. There have also been a lot of good ones discontinued over the years. Maybe there's a model you liked but (like me!) missed out on the first time around. Sometimes, if you keep your eyes open, you get a second chance.



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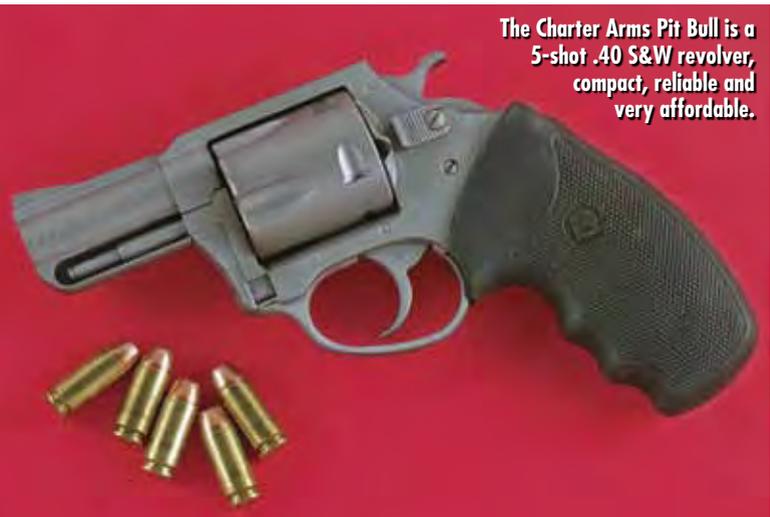


CHARTER'S NEW .40 S&W REVOLVER!

It's been my experience dedicated sixgunners, especially those with more than a little gray in their beard, have several attributes in common. Of course, one is the fact we all appreciate fine handguns, with fine being defined as any sixgun or semi-auto which functions 100 percent reliably, always goes bang when the trigger is pulled, and shoots to point of aim. Fit and finish are definitely important, but can be overshadowed by function. Old sixgunners are also enthralled by fighter planes of World War II, classic cars of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, and dogs of virtually every description. When it comes to the latter, I've had everything from litter runts, to mutts of unknown heritage, and even purebreds. No matter what their ancestry, all dogs often put humans to disgrace when it comes to loyalty and unconditional love.

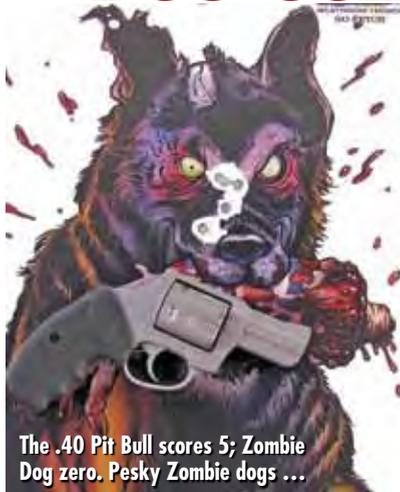
Like every boy growing up I had many dogs, and as I married and the kids came along, we made sure they also experienced the love of dogs. There is something inbred in dogs of every type which especially makes them protective of young kids and women.

I always wanted to have a pair of large purebred dogs and this goal was achieved in 1995 with Red and Wolf. We got them as 6-week-old Malamute puppies and they grew to be huge, lovable and gentle dogs — except when they were in their protective mode. The grandkids could do anything to those dogs, and my youngest granddaughter was especially attracted to them, with one usually being found on each side of her.

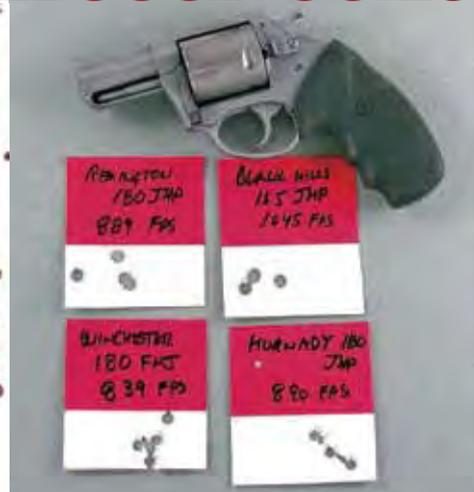


The Charter Arms Pit Bull is a 5-shot .40 S&W revolver, compact, reliable and very affordable.

DOG-GONE GOOD GUNS



The .40 Pit Bull scores 5; Zombie Dog zero. Pesky Zombie dogs ...



Targets fired at 7 yards with the .40 Pit Bull revealed good accuracy for self-defense.

OTHER "DOGS"

Several other "dogs" have also been very important to our family for more than 40 years. Back in the mid-1960s, Charter Arms did something very radical; they intro-

duced a 5-shot blued double-action revolver, aptly named Bulldog. Although it was not much larger than a Colt Detective Special, it was chambered in .44 Special. I had to have one simply because of the chambering, however it soon became a very important member of our family. In those days, we did a lot a camping and the .44 Bulldog went

everywhere with since I could fit it into a pocket or in the top of my boot.

When the kids were in high school, we rented a motor home and traveled into a "Gun Free Zone," however the .44 was stashed within easy reach in the motor home. Three times in my life the fact I had a gun defused a possibly dangerous situation, and two of those times were with my family, and it was the .44 Bulldog which protected us.

When Diamond Dot began fly fishing it was only natural for her to stash the .44 Bulldog in her vest. There was only one problem; she had a propensity for being dunked in every

Continued on page 98

The .40 Pit Bull (R) is virtually identical, other than chambering and ejection system, to the .44 Special Pug and Bulldog.



The springs which hold the rimless cartridges in the .40 Pit Bull cylinder are barely discernible.



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LOADING THE .38 SUPER

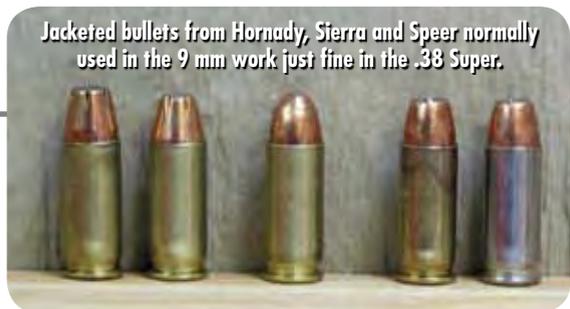
My experience with the .38 Super goes back more than 40 years. When the '68 Gun Control Act was announced we really did not know what effect it would have on firearms production, so one of the handguns I bought to get in under the wire was a .38 Super Colt Commander. It turned out to be a disappointment. It simply would not shoot accurately. It's not that either the cartridge or the Colt were at fault, it was simply the way it was chambered. Most semi-auto cartridges are referred to as rimless. Of course, they do have a rim, however it's the same diameter as the body of the cartridge. Semi-autos headspace differently as seen by the rimless .45 ACP, which headspaces on the mouth of the cartridge.

The .38 Super is neither rimless nor rimmed but actually somewhere in between; call them semi-rimmed. The rim of the .38 Super is .022" larger in diameter than the body of the case, resulting in only .011" of rim on each side for headspacing. Quite often this would not be enough, and often the blow of the firing pin would move the case forward far enough to cause misfires. That was the problem with my old Commander.

I finally sent it off to Bill Wilson, who installed a new barrel, cut for headspacing on the mouth of the case and the problem was solved. Groups shrunk from 12" at 25 yards to 2", without even searching for the best load. If you have an older .38 Super with accuracy problems this could be the solution.



Cast bullets normally used in the .357 Magnum can also be used in the .38 Super; they should be sized to .356".



Jacketed bullets from Hornady, Sierra and Speer normally used in the 9 mm work just fine in the .38 Super.

Versatile

Reloaders have a wide range of bullets to select from. Any jacketed bullets normally used in the 9mm will also work fine in the .38 Super, as both take bullets of .355" diameter. I routinely use jacketed bullets from Hornady, Sierra and Speer when loading for the .38 Super.

As far as I know, no factory loaded .38 Super has ever been offered with cast bullets, however there is absolutely no reason why they can't be used successfully. I've had very good luck with Oregon Trail's Laser Cast 9mm bullets, as well as their 158-grain SWC .38 bullet. One of my

most accurate reloads is the Lyman/Thompson gas-checked bullet over 5.7 grains of Unique for 1,150 fps and groups under 1". The RCBS plain-based bullet is not far behind, clocking out at 1,120 over 5.0 grains of Unique and groups just over 1" too.

Reloading the Super is pretty straightforward, with one problem to be aware of. My loads are normally assembled on the RCBS Pro 2000 Progressive press using my RCBS dies dating

back to the early 1970s. These are steel dies requiring lubing of cases before sizing, however I have recently added a Lee carbide sizer. I long ago learned to check before I load up a big batch of the ammunition to make sure it will fit the chambers, and in the case of semi-autos, make sure it will feed. Using the carbide sizer and cast bullets at .356" diameter worked fine. However, when trying to use the same sizer and .355" jacketed bullets there's not enough neck tension between the case and the bullet, resulting in bullets being pushed into the cartridge case as it chambered. There is no problem with the use of the same-jacketed bullets when using the standard steel-sizing die.



Targets shot with the Colt Series '80 .38 Super shows the Super can deliver!

Photo grips by www.handmadegrips.com

STILL SUPER

Interestingly, the same three powders, Unique, Universal and Power Pistol I normally employ for standard loads in the .44 Special are the same three most often picked for reloading the .38 Super. The most accurate loads I have found with cast bullets use Unique and Universal, while Power Pistol has given me the best results with jacketed bullets.

Before the arrival of so many high-cap semi-autos, the .38 Super stood head and shoulders above all others with

its 10-round capacity and powerful factory loading. In fact, the .38 Super in a Government Model is the equivalent of a short-barreled .357 Magnum, like the 3½" Model 27, with the added advantage of 10 rounds compared to six rounds, and a fast reload.

Jeff Cooper started me on the trail of the .38 Super when he mentioned in one of his early books in the late 1950s the fact the .38 Super was an excellent Trail Gun, capable of taking anything easily up through coyote size. I can't disagree with him, and the use of hard cast SWC bullets adds to its versatility.



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1911



Taming Triggers



The size difference between a giant single-action hammer, a medium 1911 hammer and the tiny S&W .22-caliber Ladysmith hammer. Each has its idiosyncrasies — which is a big word for a pistolsmith!



Questions about triggers and sights dominate the majority of discussions in all gun shops. I have written about sights and the thousands of combinations available in the past, so it is time for a refresher on triggers.

Triggers on the little pistols, such as the Walther PPK and others around that size and smaller, like the little .25-caliber pocket pistols, have very heavy pulls. There's not much even the best pistolsmiths can do to lighten the trigger on these. Before you buy one you need get permission to dry fire the pistol to see if you can manage the trigger. If your hands are small, or your lady friend has a hard time with the double-action pull, you are going to be better off putting the pistol back on the shelf and looking at something a little larger.

One good way to tell if the tiny pistol is for you is to dry fire and notice how far you are off the center of the target after the trigger is pulled. If you are off more than just a couple of inches you need to think twice before purchasing.

The reason the triggers on the small pistols must be

so heavy is due to the tight geometry. The hammers are small, and the distance between the pivot point and the firing pin strike point is short, so an extra strong spring must be installed to drive the small hammer into the firing pin with enough force to crush the primer. Installing lighter springs is not an option in most cases, as misfires will result.

The Classics

Trigger jobs on semi-autos like the 1911 are easier to lighten, but can be problematic on Colt and Para USA pistols with a Series 80-style firing pin block. One of the greatest little inventions for doing trigger jobs on the .45 is a little 25-power microscope made by Edmund Optic, sold by Brownells. It allows you to see the all-important contact surface between the hammer and sear.

Contact between the hammer hooks and sear must be perfectly parallel if you are to achieve the proverbial "glass cracking" trigger pull. A positive or negative rake on the sear, in relation to the hammer hooks, will make the trigger pull very hard or introduce dreaded creep.

Trigger pulls on single-action revolvers are fairly easy to do. The big, heavy hammer does not need much speed to crush the bee-jabbers out of the strongest primer. The trigger pull can be lightened a bit by installing one of WC Wolff's reduced-power hammer springs. This is an excellent remedy, but does not replace a *professional* action job by an experienced revolversmith. A professional can also add an over-travel stop, and remove that grinding creep we all hate so much.

Some pistolsmiths like to lighten the single action by grinding the mainspring down to pencil thin. This works well if done conservatively, yet if overdone, the action will feel wonderfully light, but lock-time becomes as slow as molasses in the winter, consequently accuracy suffers drastically. If a sixgun action feels really light and you can actually see the hammer fall as if it's in slow motion, you need to replace the hammer spring.

The Edmund Optic 25X microscope makes the all-important sear/hammer connection in a 1911 crystal clear.



TRIGGER-STOPPING

One addition I would do to any trigger, no matter what category firearm, is to add an overtravel stop. The overtravel stop could be in the form of a screw in the trigger, a spot welded on the rear of the trigger or a welded internal stop. I usually try to weld the stop inside the action so it cannot be seen from the outside, and is adjusted by filing — so it will not change. No matter how it's installed, it stops most trigger rearward travel after the sear disconnects from the hammer. This is just one way to keep the firearm from moving while the bullet is still in the barrel.

If you do not understand the mechanics and geometry of your firearm and believe you can do your own trigger and action job — be very careful. You are treading in an area that could cost someone his or her life if done incorrectly. Best to get a pro to do it.



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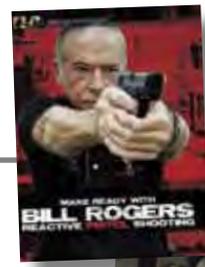
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I've never met Clint Smith in person. I've read a lot of his writing, but never shaken his hand. That said, I've spent several hours of informative, personal 1-on-1 time with him, reaping the benefits of his knowledge on subjects from defensive use of the revolver to fighting from and around a vehicle. We haven't had dialogues — it's been Clint talkin' and me listening — but that's okay, because I can listen to myself anytime! It's my dime, so I want to listen to *him!*

I'm not a gunsmith. Hey, I'm not even a decent gun *mechanic!* But you name the gun, and I can get a master gunsmith to patiently guide me through the process of stripping it right down to the frame, answering all my questions about how the plunger prods this pin and what the heck this widget whacks.

Paul Howe is an ex-cop and 20-year Army veteran, with ten of those years in Special Operations as a tactical team leader and senior instructor. I like his training style and content, but it's tough to get down to Nacogdoches, Texas for a session at his Combat Shooting and Tactics (CSAT) facility. No worries though, I've got the best of his expertise captured on some little round discs, and more available online. And I know he'll pardon me if I also spend time with Bill Rogers, the master of reactive pistol shooting, and the hard-core training team of Chris Costa and Travis Haley, a pair of real high-speed low-drag guys, if you'll forgive the term.

Veni, Vidi, Video-Vici!

Time away from work and the price of travel — not to mention course fees and ammo costs — may prohibit you from attendance at a premier training establishment, but video's the next best thing to being there. Too, you're not restricted by the tempo of a large group, and you can replay the material any time you like. So, shooters, who's got what?

Go to www.americanhandgunner.com/store, click on the DVDs, and check out Clint and Heidi's latest offerings on home defense, the urban rifle and a whole lot more. *Defend Yourself With The Gun At Hand* is classic Clint stuff to use what you already have effectively rather than trying to buy your way into effectiveness. And *Concealed Carry For Ladies* gives you the best of this husband/wife team on distaff defense. Both are 2-disc sets priced at \$49.95 and \$29.95 respectively. Their style? They're teaching *friends*, and that includes us.

AGI, the *American Gunsmithing Institute*, is best known for their long, thorough courses for working gunsmiths, but you really need to scan their *Armorer's Series* videos, because they're made for us non-gunsmith types. Most of the courses run 90 minutes to 2 hours and cost \$39.95. They cover history and background as well as function, and provide complete disassembly and reassembly instructions. Video really beats books when you can actually see the moving interaction of parts, like the lockwork of a S&W revolver, and just how much pressure a master 'smith applies to a given maneuver.

It could be well worth the cost of picking up an old Makarov and buying the video just for the value of all you'll learn — and the confidence gained — in the process of strippin' it down to the last pin and putting it back together!

BLOODLESS BATTLES & BLOODY DRILLS

Most trainers push their students to achieve their best. In *The Art of the Dynamic Handgun* from *Magpul Dynamics*, Travis Haley and Chris Costa push 'em to their failure points — repeatedly — and then show them how to adapt and overcome, against all odds. Watching them train, I'm reminded of the old saying about the Roman Legion: "Their drills are bloodless battles and their battles are bloody drills."

The Magpul mantra is "reality, consistency and efficiency," and the emphasis is on deliberate, drilled movements reduced to "running on autopilot" while responding to the sudden intrusion of Murphy's Law instantly and

decisively. The 4-disc, 7-hour set covers basics to way beyond, and it's well worth the \$49.95 price.

Panteao Productions has put together a unique training outfit. They have recruited a big and growing array of well-known shooters and trainers like Lewis Awerbuck, Jessie Harrison, Mark Redl, Massad Ayoob and Paul Howe, and professionally recorded them at their best.

Anybody can buy the videodisc sets online at \$49.99 each — with discounts for multiple purchases — but I think the best deals are Panteao's monthly and yearly memberships. As a subscriber you can stream any and

all of their videos online, 24/7/365, as often as you like. That means you'll also have unlimited access to all new productions as they're finished, plus streaming short "Pro Tips" from all the experts. If you've gotta have discs in your mitts, you can then select your favorites and buy 'em at a discount. What a deal, huh?

Get a Blade-Tech training barrel, or some inert rounds. Seize the remote control. Warm up your thumbs, and *fall in for training!* Connor OUT

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SPRINGFIELD ARMORY'S XDM 5.25 COMPETITION .45



This version of the Springfield Armory XDM pistol has a 5.25" barrel with slide of corresponding length. It has several competition inspired features (such as excellent sights) and would also be a good choice for home defense or as a duty sidearm.

The XD pistols from Springfield Armory have proven to be high quality, reliable, shootable and durable contenders in the very competitive polymer-frame autopistol market. Latest variation is the Competition Series with 5¼" barrel in 9mm, .40 S&W or .45 ACP. As the name suggests this version has several features making it suitable for popular action and speed shooting sports. I hope the name won't cause non-competitors to overlook it.

Long ago a full-house competition pistol came with features such as optical sight, multi-chamber compensator, very light trigger pull, and weight often well over 3 pounds. Fine for its intended purpose, but not a pistol one would be likely to choose for home defense, much less concealed carry. All ancient history, ever since the development of divisions for production handguns and those with limited modifications. Production division has become especially popular. Not only is a production class handgun far less costly than a full-house unlimited gun, it's more versatile. This Springfield Competition model would also do quite nicely as a duty handgun, or on a nightstand for home defense.



One of the best adjustable rear sights I've encountered on any handgun.



A front sight with fiber-optic insert is mounted in a dovetail cut in the slide.

SIGHTS AND TRIGGERS

The rear sight of this XDM is one of the nicest I've seen (even including custom pistols costing several times as much). Adjustments are precise, accurate, and repeatable. I've seen adjustables mounted so high, and with edges so sharp, they look as though they could be used to field dress a deer. Not so with the Springfield. The sight body is fitted low, and strongly mounted in a cut in the slide. It looks like part of the gun, not some added-on afterthought. The corners of the sight blade are rounded too, so as not to catch.

The front sight is a post with a fiber-optic insert, a style increasingly popular with match shooters. The fiber optic seems well protected against accidental blows. The sight is mounted in a dovetail cut so shooters preferring different sight styles can easily add their favorite.

The trigger is typical of this style of pistol. It's about as different from the short, crisp pull of a single-action auto-

pistol as one could imagine. Yet the fact is, people shoot these long, relatively heavy triggers very well. In fact I shoot them fairly well myself, even though I believe a quality 1911-style trigger pull has few equals, and no superiors.

Trigger pull on this XDM measured 6¼ pounds, with 1/2" of movement from "at rest" to sear release. There's about 1/8" or so of take-up, then the pull builds smoothly and consistently until the shot breaks. Forward movement to reset is about 1/4". For competition I'd want some work done to make it a bit lighter; for general use, including personal defense, it's adequate out of the box.

The "5.25" in the name refers to the barrel length, with corresponding slide length. A lightening cut results in slide weight the same as a standard length XDM. Keeping the slide light helps it cycle more quickly, function better with moderate to light loads, and makes the pistol lighter and quicker to handle. The benefit of the longer slide/barrel, of course, is primarily the longer sight radius.

BEST YET?

The barrel is stamped "Match" and it certainly does shoot. Groups averaged in the 2" range with several brands of ammunition and bullet weights (5 shots, 25 yards, handheld from a rest). Barrel twist is 1:16" with conventional rifling, six lands and grooves, so it can use lead bullets. In fact some of the best groups I got were with lead 200-gr. SWCs.

Other features are as on all XDMs, with positive firing pin lock, trigger

safety device, grip safety, ambidextrous magazine release, frame accessory rail, and interchangeable backstraps for different hand sizes. Magazine capacity in .45 ACP is 13 cartridges.

I fired about 350 rounds through the test pistol with no malfunctions. This is the fourth XD-XDM pistol I've had a chance to shoot. Counting a couple I purchased, I likely have around 4,000 rounds through them and cannot recall a single malfunction.

Competitive shooters like the smaller calibers (9mm and .40 S&W) for reduced recoil, faster recovery, and

increased magazine capacity. I have a notion the .45 ACP version will be very popular with shooters who are interested primarily in personal defense and occasionally in competition.

The XDM has been a huge success; from my perspective the 5.25 model is the best yet. Currently it comes with three magazines, a synthetic holster and magazine carrier, two extra back-strap inserts and lock, all packed in a really good carrying case. Springfield Armory doesn't show an MSRP but I see it advertised at around \$700 to \$725 on various sites.





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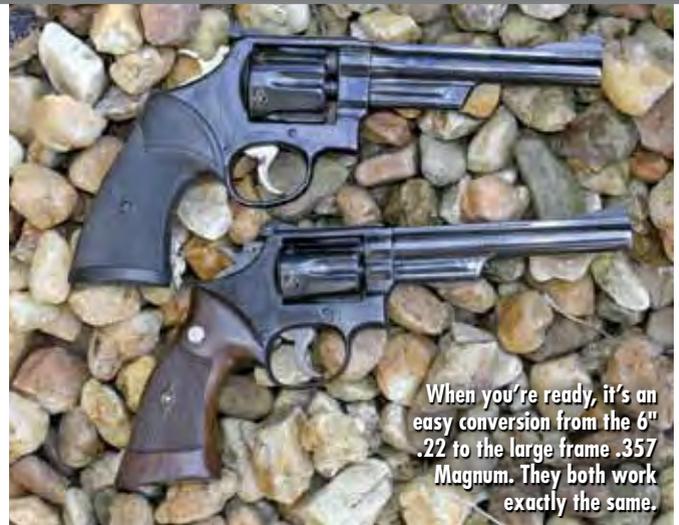
By the time you read this half the country will be gripped by cold temperatures and covered with snow. Maybe it's time to start thinking about getting into handgunning or steering that teenager toward an enjoyable lifelong interest. Make no mistake it can turn out fine or badly.

My feeling is to start out with a good double-action .22 revolver. I prefer a 6"-barreled S&W, as they have adjustable sight models with an easy to use sight radius, good balance and normally have at least an acceptable trigger pull. The beginner should not have a really good trigger, but one that is acceptable and safe. I exclude the single actions as they are time consuming and boring to load for beginners, and auto pistols aren't as safe in the hands of a beginner. They also encourage simply blasting, not learning.

Next comes familiarizing with the functions of loading, sight picture and dry firing to become acquainted with sight picture, trigger squeeze and the sight wobble when the inevitable "trigger jerk" occurs.

The first real shots should be with ear and eye protection and large targets almost impossible to miss at short range. Standard velocity ammunition is generally more accurate than high velocity and lower in cost. Quit while it's still fun too, when you see them tire or lose interest.

Shooting from a bench and using sandbags for a rest is a good way to begin learning the fundamentals using small bull's-eye targets at short range. Getting consistent groups should be the goal. Concentrate on that trigger pull — the most important facet of accurate shooting. Adjust the sights until the bullets are hitting where they are supposed to, and then try some short-range shots at tin cans or other fun targets like charcoal briquettes, but without using the rest. Now repeat it about 10,000 times using paper targets to tell you what you are really doing, and fun targets to keep the fun in it.



When you're ready, it's an easy conversion from the 6" .22 to the large frame .357 Magnum. They both work exactly the same.

Fast And Fancy

Ten thousand sounds like a lot, doesn't it? It really isn't. Many years ago, after reading *Fast and Fancy Revolver Shooting* by Ed McGivern, I bought a S&W .22 4" Combat Masterpiece and put 30,000 rounds through it, shooting fast double action on moving and stationary targets — all in about three months.

No, I never got anywhere near as good as Ed, but could hit a thrown tin can consistently four times and often five before it hit the ground. I never did get those elusive six hits before it hit the ground though. Empty shotgun shells became pretty easy targets and a properly thrown coin simply disappeared when hit. In less than six months the Combat was about done for. I never learned to shoot an autoloader as accurately and fast on thrown targets.

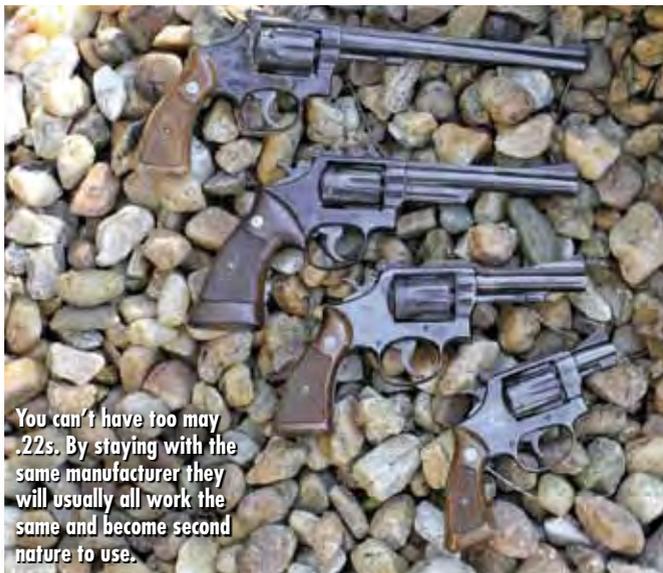
I found .38 Special wadcutters fired in a 6" S&W Highway Patrolman were just as accurate on thrown targets, visually more satisfying, but a bit slower between shots. My best ever was when I jumped a flock of Mallards off a farm pond at about 10 yards and got four out of six with the .38s. I still have that Highway Patrolman and it has been rebuilt at least three times, and the barrel set back as the forcing cone was badly worn. Stepping up in caliber in a similar gun is an easy step.

MOVING UP

Graduating from targets to cottontails, jacks, squirrels or the like is well within the capabilities of a .22, and a great way to learn to hunt. After the .22, a .38 or .357 revolver is probably the most effective way to continue. A single action should be considered, and good quality .38 wadcutter ammo can still be purchased economically. The difference in shooting .38 Special and .357 Magnum ammunition is major. Muzzleblast in a .357 is far worse than its recoil. I'll never forget my first shot in a short-barreled Ruger with full-power loads — and no ear protection. If shooting .38s in a .357, be sure to clean the chamber frequently, as a build up of deposits will occur at the end of the .38 case, hindering chambering in longer .357 cases.



For more info: www.americanhandgunner.com/smith-wesson



You can't have too many .22s. By staying with the same manufacturer they will usually all work the same and become second nature to use.

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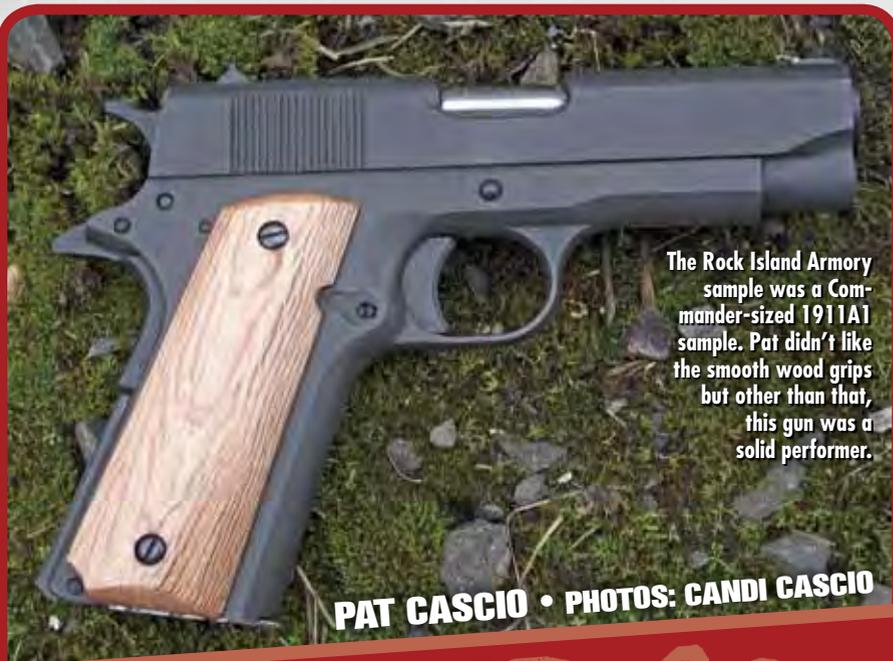
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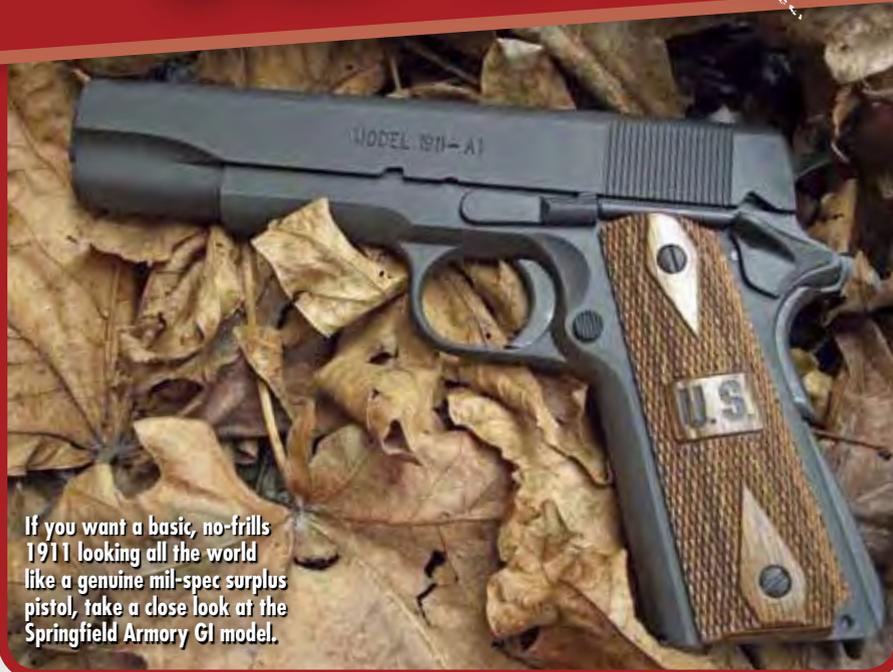
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The Rock Island Armory sample was a Commander-sized 1911A1 sample. Pat didn't like the smooth wood grips but other than that, this gun was a solid performer.

PAT CASCIO • PHOTOS: CANDI CASCIO

BEER BUDGET 1911S



If you want a basic, no-frills 1911 looking all the world like a genuine mil-spec surplus pistol, take a close look at the Springfield Armory GI model.

Readers Steven Dimino asked we take a look at some of the lower-priced 1911s out there. Easier said than done! We put this together at the end of the giant gun buying frenzy not long ago, so it was like asking for blood out of that proverbial turnip from some of the makers. We did the best we could, but if we de-included your favorite, we'll try again later now that the pipeline is filling up nicely.

I really appreciate highly customized 1911s just like anyone else does; however, like most folks I'm on a budget, and more often than not, my budget is a beer budget — not a champagne one. I like to get more for my money when I'm out gun shopping, as do most folks. Honestly, though, I was really impressed with all these "economy" 1911s we tested. All were plenty accurate, with most groups in the 4" range at 25 yards. Best of all, are the prices.

Most of the guns sell for around \$525 in my neck of the woods, with the exception of the Rock Island Armory that goes for slightly under \$400. I'd take any one of them, tuck it in a holster and carry it for self-defense, without ever looking back. Here's what we learned.

Springfield Armory GI

The GI model comes in a nice plastic carrying case with a mag pouch, holster and cleaning rod. The parkerized finish was evenly applied to the frame and slide and looked darn good. I particularly liked the hard wood grips with "U.S." engraved on each grip — they looked very military if you ask me. Trigger pull was right at 5.5 pounds.

I really liked the looks of the GI; it reminded me of my days in the US Army. The one thing I didn't care for, but comes with the design of the gun, were the very smallish front and rear sights. Again, this gun is made up to

look like the original 1911A1, so I knew beforehand the sights would be smallish. For my aged eyes, shooting this gun was a real chore but it wasn't the gun, it was my eyes.

I fired a variety of 230-grain .45 ACP ammo in the GI, from Black Hills and Winchester, and even the JHP fodder functioned perfectly. The one minor glitch came with the first two mags of ammo: the empty brass was coming down on top of my head. But for some reason after the first two mags, the brass ejected cleanly off to my right. It ran just fine the entire test and felt like a "real" gun!

Auto-Ordnance

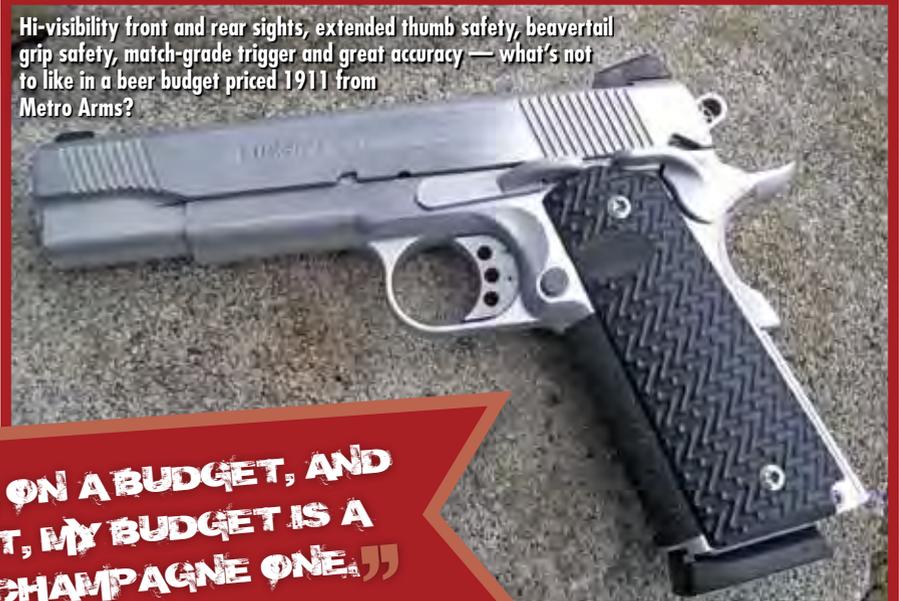
I received two almost identical 1911s from AO. One was their standard parkerized 1911A1 with brown plastic grips, and the second basically the same gun, with the exception the slide was marked "100th Anniversary" in recognition of 2011 being the 100th year of the 1911.

As with mil-spec 1911s, both samples had those smallish sights that took all the concentration and focus I could muster to see them. Both samples also had the standard short trigger and small thumb safety. I can live with both though, not a problem.

I did like that both AO samples had throated barrels, and both fed 230-grain JHP and FMJ ammo straight out of the



The Auto-Ordnance basic 1911 comes with brown plastic grips, parkerized finish and a throated barrel. It looks good on top of the BLACKHAWK! tactical thigh holster — they were made for each other.



Hi-visibility front and rear sights, extended thumb safety, beavertail grip safety, match-grade trigger and great accuracy — what's not to like in a beer budget priced 1911 from Metro Arms?

“ LIKE MOST FOLKS I'M ON A BUDGET, AND MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, MY BUDGET IS A BEER BUDGET - NOT A CHAMPAGNE ONE. ”

box. The slides of both AO samples had 1911A1 and "U.S. Army" stamped on the slides. The grip safety, as on all mil-spec 1911s, is the long type and curved slightly downward. If you're going to shoot a lot during one session, be prepared for some soreness in the web of your hand. Hey, it's part of the gun of the original design, eh?

Rock Island Armory

I was only able to lay claim to a Commander-sized 1911 for this article. This gun is made in the Philippines (as are many 1911s marked with other makers names), and overall quality seemed just fine. Again, we have a basic, no-frills 1911A1 pistol with a 4.25" barrel instead of the full-length 5" barrel found on the other Gov't-

Continued on page 88



The Para GI Expert came equipped with black poly grips but Pat put a pair of his Code Zero 1911 grips he designed on the gun.

Big-bore revolvers have tall front sights for a reason. Left to right: Colt New Frontier .45 Colt, Smith & Wesson Hand Ejector, 2nd Model .44 Special, and Smith & Wesson Hand Ejector, 2nd Model .455 Webley.



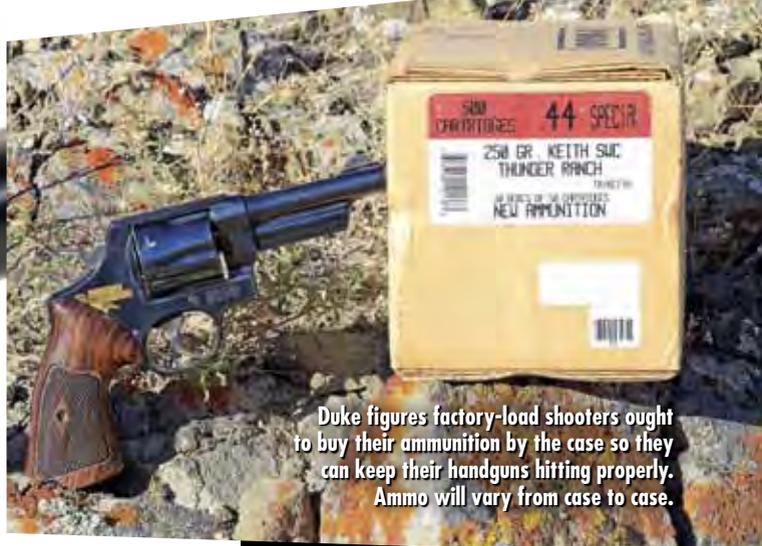
Point Of Aim vs. Point Of Impact

Mike "Duke" Venturino • Photos: Yvonne Venturino



Shooting handguns from a machine rest is a fine way to test their precision, but it is not a viable way to sight them in because their recoil dynamics are altered when mounted.

Tall front sights on a Colt New Frontier .45 Colt (left) and Smith & Wesson Hand Ejector, 2nd Model .44 Special (right). They're like that for a reason.



Duke figures factory-load shooters ought to buy their ammunition by the case so they can keep their handguns hitting properly. Ammo will vary from case to case.

Hitting a target with a handgun bullet not only requires a bit of hand-eye coordination and small motor skills in your fingers and hands; but also requires understanding point of aim (POA) in regards to point of impact (POI). Handguns cannot — and do not — place all bullets where aimed.

If you don't believe that last statement have someone aim straight away with a big bore revolver, such as an old S&W N-frame or Colt New Frontier. Then stand a dozen feet to the side and look carefully. Its muzzle will be pointed slightly downwards. That's due to a simple law of physics saying that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.

For handgunners, that means as soon as the bullet begins moving down the barrel, recoil begins pushing the barrel upward. With cartridges such as .45 Colt, .44 Special, etc., with heavy, slow moving bullets, the revolver's muzzle actually has to be pointed noticeably down so the bullet exits when recoil brings it up to level. The gun manufacturers calculate that factor into the heights of their front sights. Back in the day when there wasn't much choice in factory load bullet weights, this was simple. They simply regulated a .45 Colt revolver for 250-grain bullets, a .44 Special for 246-grain bullets, a .38 Special for 158-grain bullets and so forth. That's the reason why front sights

are so tall on older revolvers, especially those for big calibers.

Big Changes

Now get this. In modern times the ammo companies have wanted to speed up older cartridge ballistics but needed to stay within SAAMI specs. That required a lighter bullet, as in 225-grain ones for .45 Colt and 200 grains for the .44 Special. Now those older revolvers have low point of impacts in relation to their point of aims. Somebody out there is saying, "Huh?" You bet: lighter bullets = less recoil = less muzzle flip = lower POI. The most severe case of this I've experienced has been with .38 Special revolvers. In that caliber you can buy (or in the past have been able to buy) factory loads with bullets as light as 95 grains and as heavy as 200 grains. I've actually fired loads with bullets varying that much from my old 5" K-frame Military & Police revolver. The POIs of those bullets varied by about a foot at 25 yards.

To help illustrate this article I fired
Continued on page 92



Here's a .45 ACP 230-grain FMJ military load, 225-grain cast roundnose (Lyman #452374), 225-grain custom cast roundnose and 230-grain FMJ Speer bullet and their loaded rounds. Although these .45 ACP loads would have bullets weighing within 5 grains of one another Duke doubts if they would all have the same point of impact in relation to point of aim. Back in the era when factory loads usually came with only one bullet weight, the handgun manufacturers built the height of their front sights to match those weights. For a .38 Special that would have been 158 grains, for .44 Special 246 grains and for .45 Colt 250 grains.



Back in the era when factory loads usually came with only one bullet weight, the handgun manufacturers built the height of their front sights to match those weights. For a .38 Special that would have been 158 grains, for .44 Special 246 grains and for .45 Colt 250 grains.



Duke fired his old S&W Military & Police .38 Special with 95-grain Winchester Silvertips and 158-grain lead CCI Trailblazer ammunition just to show how far apart the bullets would group on target — 5.5"!



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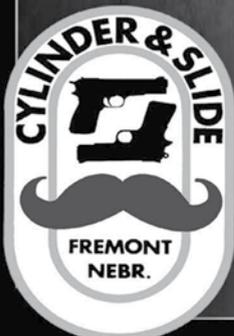
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AMMO

A CLOSE LOOK AT



6

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AMMO: THE HANDGUNNER'S SOUL FOOD

Your roscoe of choice or simply the “weapon at hand” may be an Ortgies 7.65, a veteran Smith & Wesson Model 10, a Kimber Super Carry or a refurb’ed Gen-1 Glock 17. As long as that shooter is sound, most handguns can be adapted to a wide range of purposes. Whether your training is military, law enforcement, sporting competition, self-defense or just down-home basics, the fundamentals of grip, sighting and trigger control are the same, and if your head’s screwed on straight, you and that gun can be effective on tin cans, targets or terrorists. But then there’s *the ammo factor*.

Weather and thick clothing are serious considerations in choosing personal defense ammo. Penetration and ricochet characteristics figure heavily in defense of your home. Magazine capacity and caliber should be taken into account when assessing terminal bullet performance too. Practice and training ammo can be matched as closely as possible to your primary ammunition for consistency in recoil effect and point-of-aim/point-of-impact.

There are a host of considerations, but happily for us, there’s an even greater host of *choices!* You and your may be omnivores or picky eaters, but just have a taste of offerings — there’s some soul food here for you both!

1 So who’s the gunwriter who first warned you of the coming Zombie Apocalypse? Huh? You may have scoffed, but Hornady listened! Their new Zombie-Max Certified Zombie Ammo comes in 9mm, .40 S&W and .45 ACP plus rifle calibers. It’s clean burning, low-flash premium performance ammo you can count on when the undead come shuffling and moaning through your splintered doors and shattered windows ...

2 For all you folks packin’ sweet little .22 WMR poppers like the North American Arms “Black Widow,” go check out the new Gold Dot high-velocity, jacketed hollowpoint load from Speer. Optimized for 2” barrels, it delivers deep penetration with controlled expansion and high weight retention — a ton of power in a tiny package!

3 You’ve seen Hallmark’s all-occasion greeting cards, right? Well, CorBon has your all-occasion handgun ammo. At left, deep-penetrating solid DPX rounds with hollowpoints you could sip brandy out of; at center, smooth-feeding fast-expanding Pow’R Ball is digestible in virtually any pistol, and at right, that’s their Glaser low-penetration, low-ricochet, almost explosive, frangible ammo.

4 Wilson Combat says quality with great authority, and their .40 S&W ammo is a fine example. Loaded with a 140-grain Barnes TAC-XP slug smokin’ out of a 5” barrel at 1,200 fps, it’s controllable, superbly accurate and delivers havoc on-target.

5 Stan Chen made his bones building some of the finest custom pistols around, and now he’s putting his penchant for precision into Stan



5



7



3



1

Chen Customs ASYM ammunition. I haven’t had the opportunity to shoot any yet, but some picky-particular folks like Jason Burton of Heirloom Precision, and our own Publishing Potentate Roy-Boy rave about it. Huh. Maybe, umm ... we should try it?

6 From .25 ACP to .500 Smith & Wesson, MagSafe’s Defender, SWAT and MAX loads give you three choices of performance characteristics, and one guarantee: outrageous effectiveness. Shown here, MagSafe’s 210-grain .500 S&W Defender round packs 25 pieces of plated #2 shot into a 2,150 fps power-punch!

7 Black Hills red boxes signify all-new factory ammo, while the blue boxes contain highest-quality remanufactured rounds. I think I’ve shot enough of both in .45 ACP, .223 and .308 to wallpaper a red room and a blue one, and I can tell you what they share: Never a misfire, never a squib, not even a “Crazy Charlie” flyer — never! That’s no surprise, because since Black Hills began on Jeff and Kristi Hoffman’s kitchen table, to the tons of ammo produced today, not a single round leaves the factory without a human eyeball having squinted at it. That’s Black Hills quality!



For more info: www.americanhandgunner.com/product-index and click on the company name. Go to www.americanhandgunner.com and click on the Web Blast link to see more great ammo by more great makers!



2

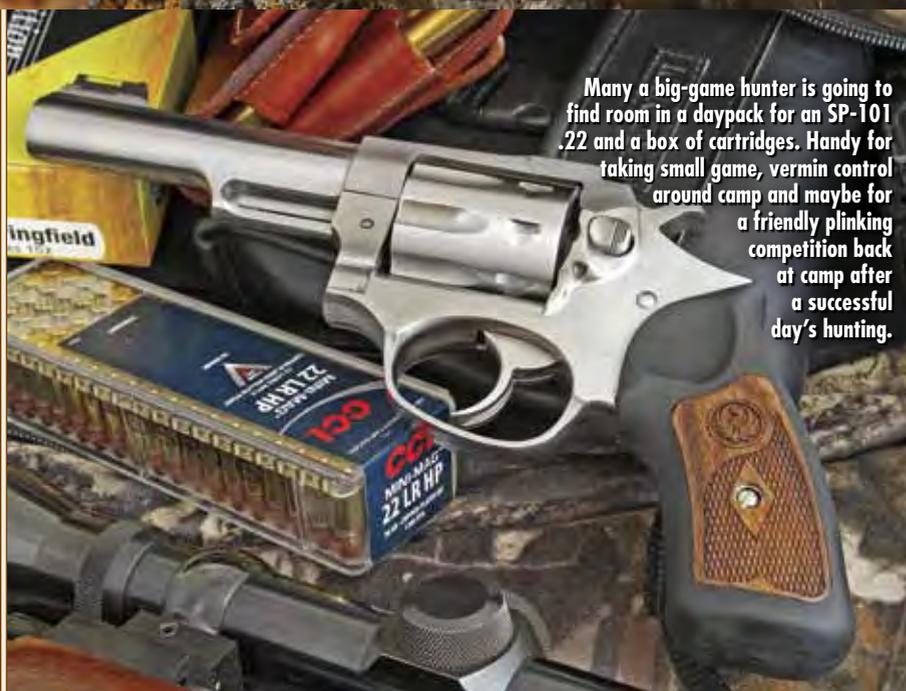
RUGER'S SP-101 .22

DAVE ANDERSON

The Ruger SP-101 .22 is a medium-weight, double-action .22 revolver. Quality of workmanship and materials is excellent, and it's tough, durable and reliable — excellent for new shooters, plinking, informal target shooting, small-game hunting or storing in a survival pack.



IT'S JUST RIGHT GOLDILOCKS REVOLVER



Many a big-game hunter is going to find room in a daypack for an SP-101 .22 and a box of cartridges. Handy for taking small game, vermin control around camp and maybe for a friendly plinking competition back at camp after a successful day's hunting.

For informal target shooting, plinking with friends, or introducing new handgunners to the shooting basics, I love my S&W K-22 and Colt Officer's Target Model .22 revolvers. Their excellent accuracy, steadying weight and outstanding trigger pulls make them joys to shoot.

The same 38- to 39-ounce weight, which makes them hold so nicely, becomes a disadvantage for carrying. On hunting trips, outdoor photography excursions, while hiking, fishing, or most any outdoor activity, I generally have an S&W Kit Gun in .22 or .22 Magnum stuffed in a daypack somewhere. With their light weight — about 24 ounces — they're easy to carry, though a little hard to hold steadily.

This arrangement suits me just fine. But many otherwise fine people don't see a benefit in owning lots of guns. For some it makes more sense to own



A typical 5-shot group from a rest at 25 yards, this one measures a whisker over 2", fired with W-W high-speed hollowpoints.

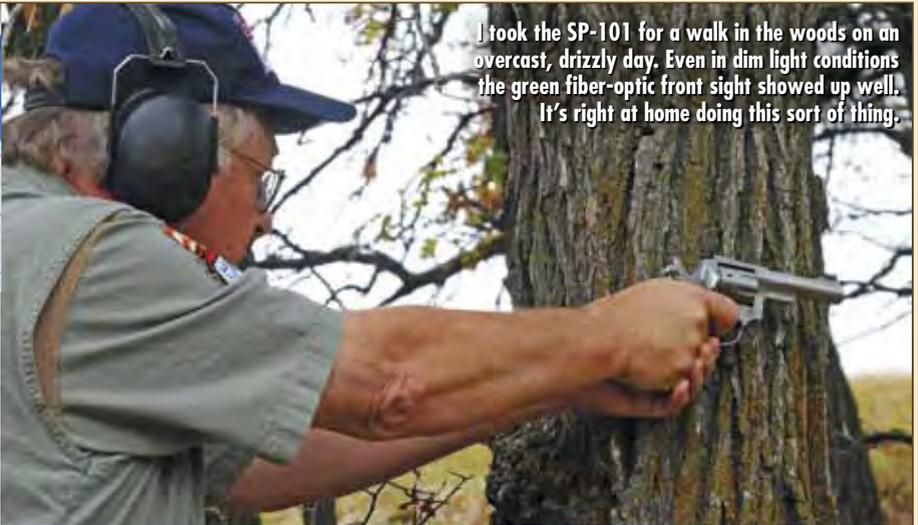
one revolver to handle both situations; big enough for ease of handling and shooting, compact and lightweight enough for ease of carry.

There haven't been a lot of revolvers in the middle ground. The fine S&W Combat Masterpiece .22 has a handy 4" barrel, but weighs only a couple of ounces less than the K-22. One double-action revolver, which fits this slot neatly, is the Colt Diamondback. Long since out of production, the Diamondback is currently much in demand with collectors. Even "shooter condition" examples are hard to find at a reasonable price.

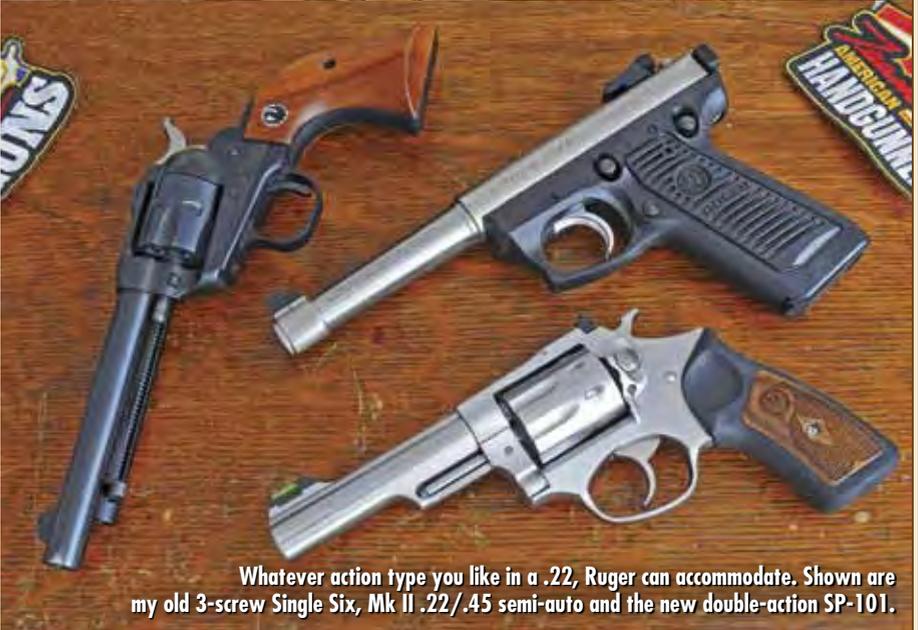
The Right Gun

Now there's another entry in the not-too-big, not-too-small category, and it's a gem. The Ruger SP-101 is "just right," and unlike the Diamondback, is available new at reasonable cost. In size and weight it's very similar to the Diamondback, with both around 31 ounces, with similar barrel lengths, overall lengths and heights.

Why did Ruger make the barrel 4.2" instead of 4"? I'm guessing in order to make importation and sale legal in Canada, where handguns with barrel lengths under 105mm (4.14") are prohibited. The barrel length is an advantage for Americans traveling between the Lower 48 and Alaska. They can obtain permits to transport non-prohibited firearms while traveling across Canada. "Prohibited" handguns would have to be shipped ahead via a carrier such as FedEx or UPS.



I took the SP-101 for a walk in the woods on an overcast, drizzly day. Even in dim light conditions the green fiber-optic front sight showed up well. It's right at home doing this sort of thing.

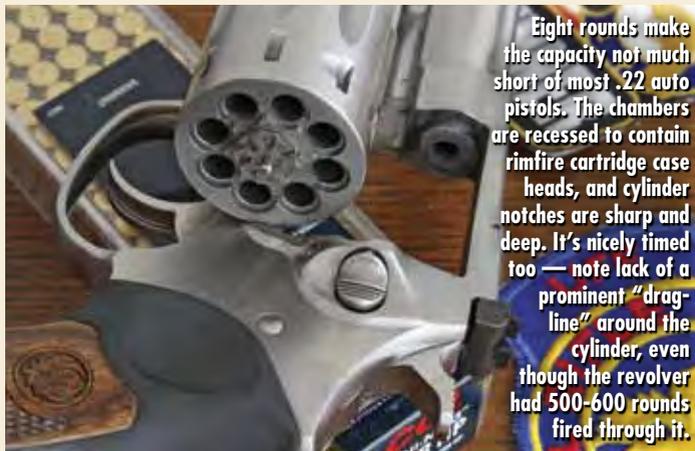


Whatever action type you like in a .22, Ruger can accommodate. Shown are my old 3-screw Single Six, Mk II .22/.45 semi-auto and the new double-action SP-101.

Incidentally, before scoffing too much at silly Canadian gun laws, it should be noted many of the sillier regulations (e.g. barrel length, magazine capacity restrictions) were copied word for word from legislation originally drafted in California. The slightly longer barrel may be contingency planning in case some states should impose barrel length restrictions in the future.

Constructed of stainless steel, and with Ruger's virtually indestructible lockwork, the SP-101 is the epitome of a hard-working, all-around revolver. It's tough, reliable, weather-resistant, strong and durable. Remember, the same frame size handles full-power .357 Magnum loads. It would take an enormous amount of shooting to wear

Continued on page 90



Eight rounds make the capacity not much short of most .22 auto pistols. The chambers are recessed to contain rimfire cartridge case heads, and cylinder notches are sharp and deep. It's nicely timed too — note lack of a prominent "drag-line" around the cylinder, even though the revolver had 500-600 rounds fired through it.



Ruger chambered the SP-101 in .22 before, but earlier versions had 6-round capacity and a fixed rear sight. The current 8-shot version has an excellent adjustable rear sight, a feature much appreciated on a .22, which may be used to hit tiny targets.

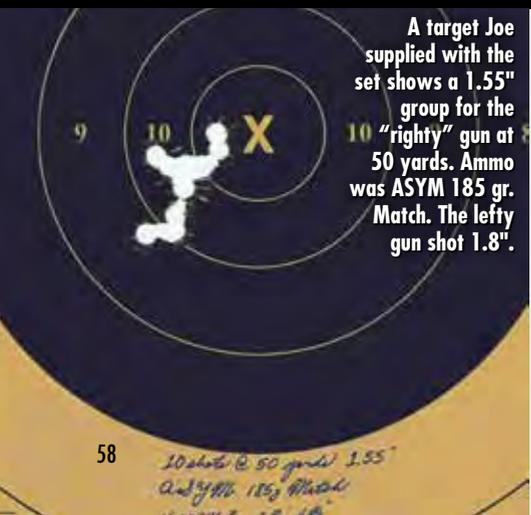
CHAMBERS CUSTOM

ROY HUNTINGTON
PHOTOS: CHUCK PITTMAN



RELIABILITY,
ACCURACY AND
AESTHETICS ...
TIMES TWO

MIRROR IMAGE DUO



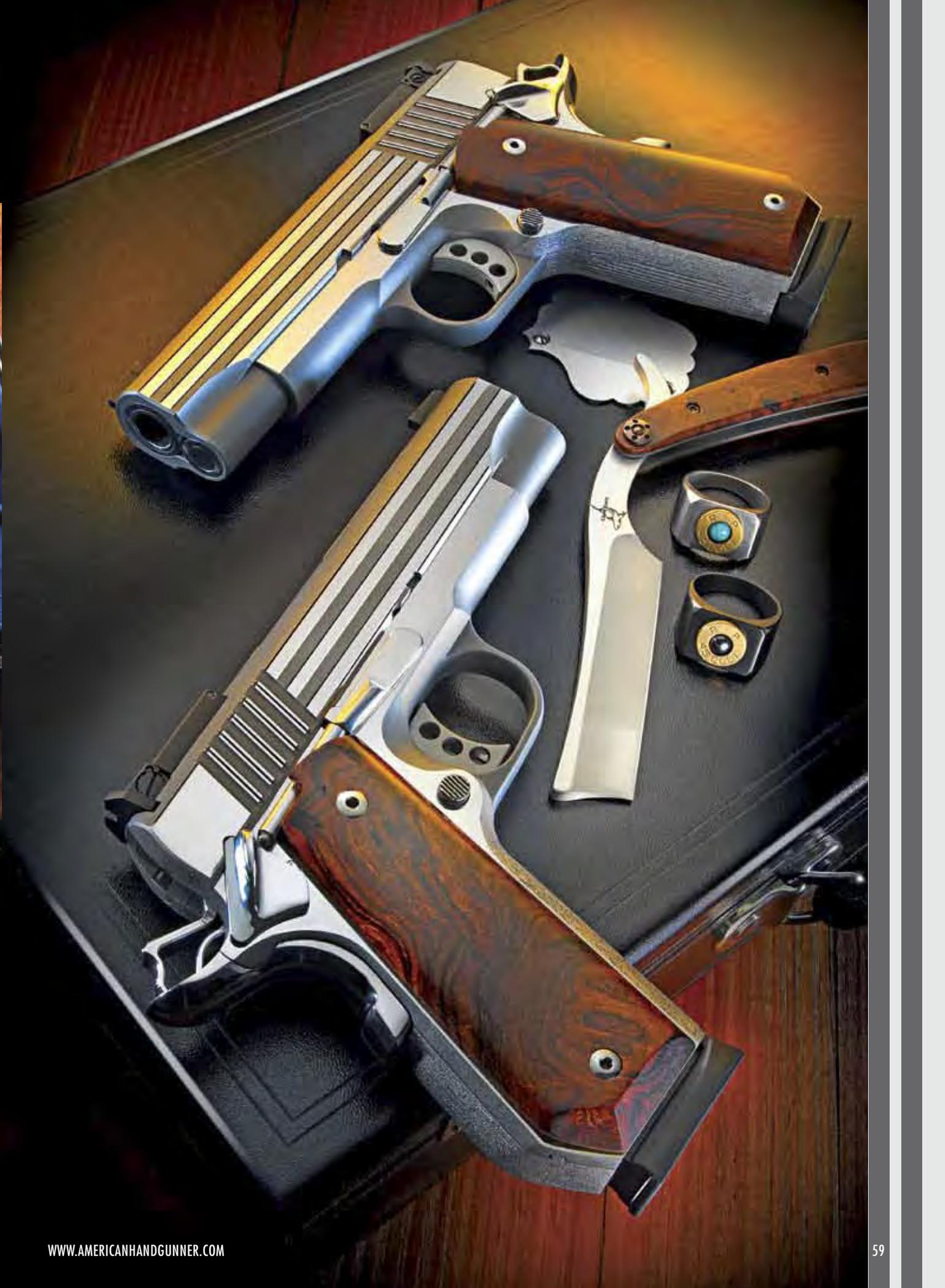
A target Joe supplied with the set shows a 1.55" group for the "righty" gun at 50 yards. Ammo was ASYM 185 gr. Match. The lefty gun shot 1.8".

I've known Bob Marvel for some years now, and consider him a friend. But what does that have to do with Joe Chambers, who built this stunner of a set? Bob is, without a doubt, one of the top, rare handful of true master custom pistolsmiths in the business — period. Suffice to say I respect his work and his opinions. A few short years ago at the Shooting and Hunting Outdoor Trade Show, he came to our FMG booth with a young man in tow.

"Roy," he said, "I'd like to introduce you to Joe Chambers, a young

man who is working with me, learning how to build guns." Before me stood a young man, intense and interested, acutely aware he had an opportunity presented to him when Bob offered to mentor him, and another now as he was being introduced to industry insiders at the SHOT Show. "Joe has a gun he'd like to show to you," continued Bob.

Out came the case and into my hands went a pistol that, frankly, surprised me. Some (most?) of the "This is a sample of my work" guns I see





from new pistolsmiths are good examples of *potential* — but rarely something I could feature in *Handgunner* in good faith. We keep the bar high here, and with today's readers (and customers) expecting virtually flawless performance and workmanship, if we don't deliver the goods, I hear about it — a lot.

But Joe's gun was different. Solid, perfectly executed, crisp lines, flats that were flat, unique design touches and checkering that didn't have to hide from the most discriminating customer. Frankly, I was amazed. But having said that, and knowing Bob, I wasn't surprised. Bob would not have wasted my time with anything other than the best.

"Joe," I said. "Get your shop going, build some guns, flesh out your experience in business a bit, build a good website and then call me. I'd be happy to chat with you about being in *Handgunner* one day." Bob grinned, Joe grinned and even I grinned as we shook hands on it. And sure enough, as time passed, Joe parted ways with Bob, started his own shop, built guns, built his business and reputation and we met a few more times.

One of those times he told me he had a hankering to build a "lefty" 1911. I said, "If you build a two-gun set, a right and left, that'd be very interesting, something definitely different



“BUILDING THE LEFTY MEANT EVERYTHING HAD TO BE CAREFULLY EVALUATED FOR CAUSE AND EFFECT, BUT FROM AN OPPOSITE POINT OF VIEW.”

for our pages. If you do it, we'll need to talk some more.”

I could see Joe was thinking hard as we parted company.

The Set

Then at SHOT last year, Joe said he'd assembled the bits, talked Gary Smith at Caspian out of their very last left-handed slide, and otherwise said he was about ready to try it. About that time, old friend and world-class knifemaker Greg Lightfoot showed up in the booth. I introduced them and

then it hit me. “I'll make you a deal Joe,” I said. “Build that two-gun set, and get Greg here to make a knife or something to go with it. Then, if it all comes out like I think it will, I'll feature it in *Handgunner*. That work for you guys?” It worked.

Someone once told me, “It's a feather in anyone's hat to be featured in *American Handgunner*.” We're flattered here to know that's how people think about it. I also know my job isn't to hand out feathers to just anyone, especially when it comes to custom

guns. The work has to be above standard — well above standard as a matter of fact. It's not that we're snooty, it's because *you're* demanding. If I let crooked checkering, or tilted sights, or tool marks or shoddy fits in, I'll never hear the end of it. So actually, my job is easy. Either it's the best possible — or it doesn't go in.

Some months later Joe called and said, “They're done. I'm going to send them.” The set was stunning, and Greg's razor (what a great touch!) was stunning and the case was stunning

CHAMBERS CUSTOM MIRROR IMAGE DUO





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and they shot like hell's-a-fire to boot. I phoned Joe: "Be prepared to get a feather, Joe."

Joe

"To me, building custom 1911s is all about passion," Joe told me. "Ever since shooting a 1911 for the first time, when I was 11 years old on my uncle Bob's farm in Arkansas, the pistol has fascinated me. I was fortunate to build a friendship with, and be mentored by a true master craftsman, Bob Marvel. It's a passion I take very seriously, and one I strive to continually improve at every opportunity. Each project is treated as a unique experience, and a little piece of me goes into each pistol created. And that passion is, to me, what makes building them so satisfying."

In the past several years, I've seen several of Joe's pistols, and they have all exhibited the kind of exemplary workmanship and attention to detail only some in the business attain — or even attempt to reach. Many simply arrive at "adequate" and then get comfortable and trundle along, building adequate guns the rest of their careers. Sort of like someone saying they have 20 years of experience in a craft, but in actuality, they have one year of experience, repeated 20 times. To grow, improve, hone your craft, accept criticism, respond to it and keep raising that quality bar is what makes the difference between the mundane — and the marvelous.

Joe's consistent quality and attention to detail opened the door to membership in the American Pistol Smiths Guild in 2010, where experienced members vet an applicant's work. If it doesn't



CHAMBERS CUSTOM SET:

- CASPIAN SLIDES FIT TO CASPIAN FRAMES WITH MATCH TOLERANCES
- K&T NM BARRELS FIT WITH CHAMBERS TAPERED SLEEVE CONE FOR A TOLERANCE AT THE MUZZLE OF LESS THAN .0005" BETWEEN THE SLIDE AND BARREL
- BARREL HOOD TO BREECH FACE GAP LESS THAN .001"
- BARREL CHAMBERS CUT TO .905"
- KFS LPA COMBAT EAR REAR SIGHT, MODIFIED FOR CLEANER INSTALLATION
- CHAMBERS CUSTOM FRONT SIGHT
- VARIOUS CASPIAN PARTS, FITTED AND MODIFIED
- MCP DISCONNECTOR CUT IN SLIDES
- CHAMBERS CUSTOM RECOIL PLUGS
- STI GUIDE RODS
- WOLFE 22LB RECOIL SPRINGS
- EGW EJECTOR (RIGHTY), EGW/C&P CUSTOM MADE EJECTOR (LEFTY)
- C&S ULTRA-LITE HAMMER, SEAR AND DISCONNECTOR (RIGHTY), C&S HAMMER AND DISCONNECTOR (LEFTY)
- PM MACHINE SEAR (LEFTY)
- S&A GRIP SAFETIES BLENDED AND FIT
- BROWN BOBTAIL MAINSPRING HOUSINGS
- GREIDER TRIGGERS
- TRIGGER PULLS AT 3LB 4OZ, WITH SHORT ROLL AND MINIMUM OVER-TRAVEL
- WICKED GRIPS OF IRONWOOD
- POLISHED AND BLASTED STAINLESS STEEL FINISH.
- AZTEC PATTERN CUT TOP OF SLIDES, STIPPLED FRONT OF FRAMES, MAINSPRING HOUSINGS, SLIDE REARS, EJECTORS AND EXTRACTORS
- CUSTOM COCKING SERRATIONS
- CHAMBERS CUSTOM PISTOLS "PINSTRIPER" PATTERN ON SIDES OF SLIDE
- SLIDE, FRAME AND MAG WELL EDGES HAND BEVELED

pass, you don't get in. Which to me means if you're dealing with a member of an organization like that, you at least have the confidence your chosen pistolsmith for your pet project has been peer-reviewed. Peace of mind?

Custom gunsmith Ted Yost, of Heirloom Precision, recently brought up a good point, though, about custom pistolsmiths. He told me that simply because someone builds a custom 1911 or two doesn't make them a successful pistolsmith. They need to show they can do it consistently, or as he says it, "Get guns out the door, and keep that level of quality."

Guns built by Joe have been used to win 49 class championships at the *NRA Camp Perry National Championships*, as well as many regional, state and local matches. He has already built guns for collectors, people who use them for self-defense, action shooting competitors and even soldiers all over the world. Joe gets guns out the door, and has proven his workmanship in a wide range of shooting categories and disciplines.

Continued on page 84

THE TITANIUM TACTICAL POCKET PISTOL... DoubleTap™

The world's smallest & lightest .45 ACP concealed carry pistol on the market today.



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Actual
Size



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- ⊙ Thumb-latch auto-ejects spent rounds
- ⊙ 5 Patents pending including double-action trigger system



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AUTO EJECTS ROUNDS



PATENT PENDING DOUBLE
ACTION TRIGGER SYSTEM



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HAMMERLESS,
NO-SNAG DESIGN

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THE NORTON

ALMOSTS:



Elegant and tiny, the TP-70 traced its heritage to a German design and was like a miniature S&W Model 39 of the same time period.

J.B. WOOD

This neat little pistol was designed in the late 1960s by Edgar Budischowsky and was first made in small quantity by Korriphila Präzisionsmechanik, GmbH, in Ulm, Germany. It was offered in .22 LR and .25 Auto versions, and was called the TP-70. The “TP” part was “Taschen Pistole” — Pocket Pistol, and 1970 was the year of introduction.

Alas, by then, its small size made it un-importable into the US because of the infamous 1968 gun law. In 1973, a US firm, Norton Armament of Mt. Clemens, Michigan, began production in America. A year or so later, the tooling was sold to “Americarms” of Miami, Florida. It has been said the stainless-steel machine work was not up to the original German standards, causing problems.

In some cases, that may be true. However, the three I have fired (one

in .22 LR, two in .25 Auto) all worked perfectly, and the .25 version I won is nicely machined. The TP-70 was like a miniature of the S&W Model 39, with many of the same features. It had an external hammer, and selective SA/DA trigger. The slide-mounted manual safety locks the firing pin and drops



The 12 Ga. shotgun shell give you perspective and shows why the TP-70 was a favorite pocket pistol and back-up gun for a short time.

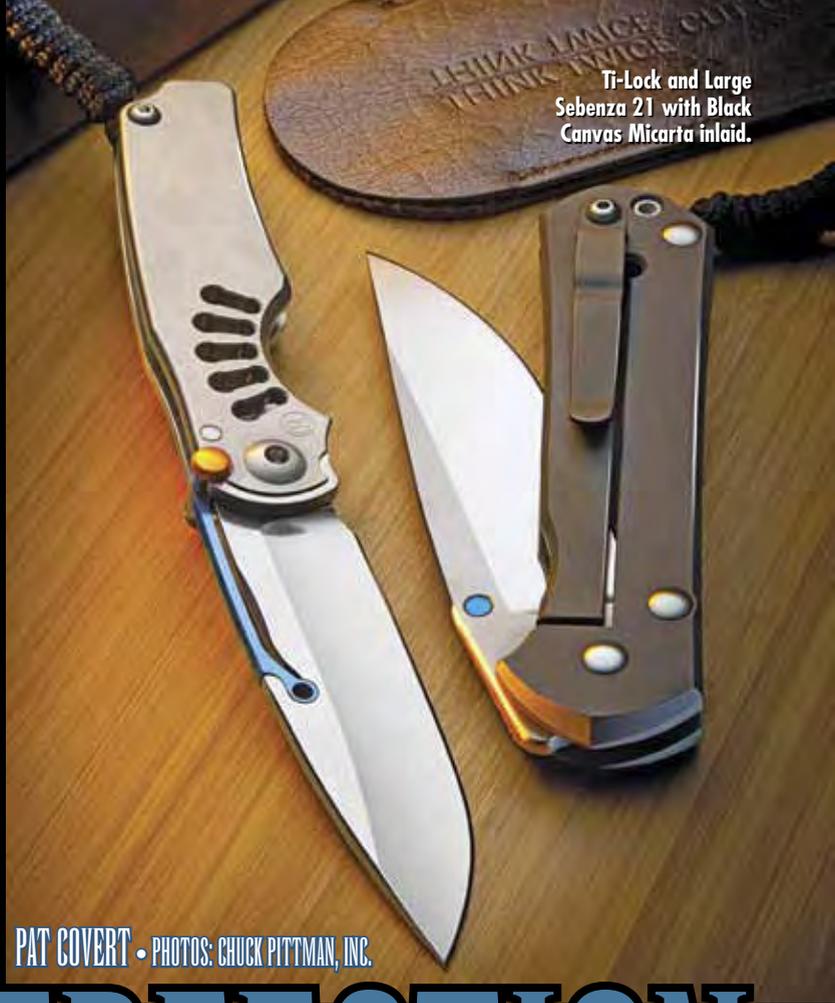
the hammer. An external manual latch holds the slide open after the last shot. On the right side of the frame, a single lever offers quick and easy takedown. Internally, it has one of those damnable magazine-disconnect safety systems. Take out the magazine, and it can't be fired. However, as with many of these systems, if your finger is rested on the trigger as the magazine is removed, it will. I'm not sure whether the following is true of all TP-70 pistols, but mine has a non-inertia full-reach firing pin. Thus, when carrying with a round in the chamber, it's very important the manual safety should be used.

As for the reason the pistol was made in such small quantity, perhaps the price was a little too high for the time. Or, it may be the US company was under-financed. Whatever the cause of its demise, it's still a neat little pistol and you can still find them on the collector's market.





Pacific



Ti-Lock and Large Sebenza 21 with Black Canvas Micarta inlaid.

PAT COVERT • PHOTOS: CHUCK PITTMAN, INC.



Mnandi folder with Bloodwood inlaid and Nyala fixed-blade.

PERFECTION PERSONIFIED!

We all have our own definition of the word “perfection” and Chris Reeve’s is just higher than most of us can imagine. Chris Reeve Knives of Boise, Idaho has been the recipient of the Blade Manufacturers Quality Award — the highest kudos you can get in the cutlery industry — 10 times. That’s a feat difficult for any competitor to top. He accomplishes this by paying attention to the tiniest details in the manufacturing process and using

state-of-the-art equipment that can hold the tightest of tolerances.

Born in South Africa, Reeve’s first interest in knives came in 1975 when he was a second year tool and die maker apprentice. He was scheduled to go into military service on the Mozambique border, a particularly arduous environment. According to Chris, “I needed a knife to take with me but could not afford a good one, so I decided to make my own. It was an interesting thing to do and I started reading about knife-making. But I had other things on my mind. I went motorcycle racing until

1981. After this I was at a loose end the weekends and turned back to knives. It was then I started to work on the hollow handle concept I had come up with for a survival knife, machined from one solid piece of steel I did in 1978, but had not had the chance to do anything about it. I went full-time on those in 1983 and they continued until 2010. Those have now been and gone.”

Moving from motorcycle racing to knifemaking would turn out to be a stroke of fortune on Chris’ part. He is one of those rare people who set out to be the absolute best he can be, and though these hyper-driven types don’t always achieve their loftiest goals, they often hit pay dirt somewhere along the line. “When I set out to make knives I wanted to be the best — take the company to the top. I wanted to be world champion on my motorcycle. I did not achieve that, but we gave our utmost to get the other. You have to set expectations high for your employees and not accept anything else but.”

Knowing he had a much better chance of selling knives in the US, the knifemaker packed up his family and crossed the big pond. “We moved

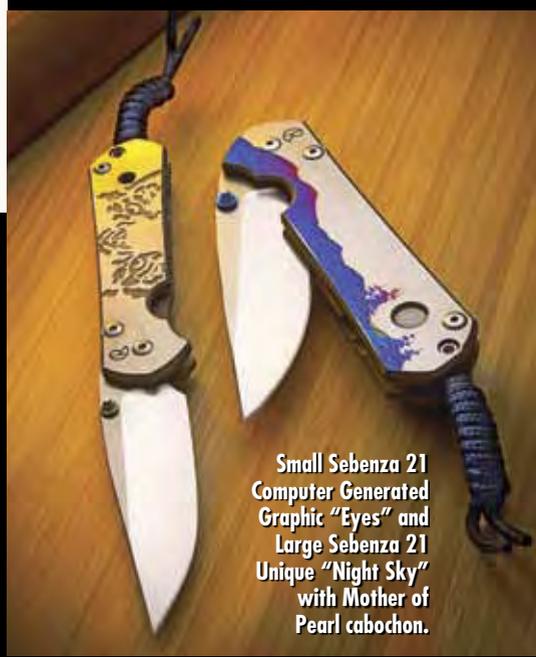
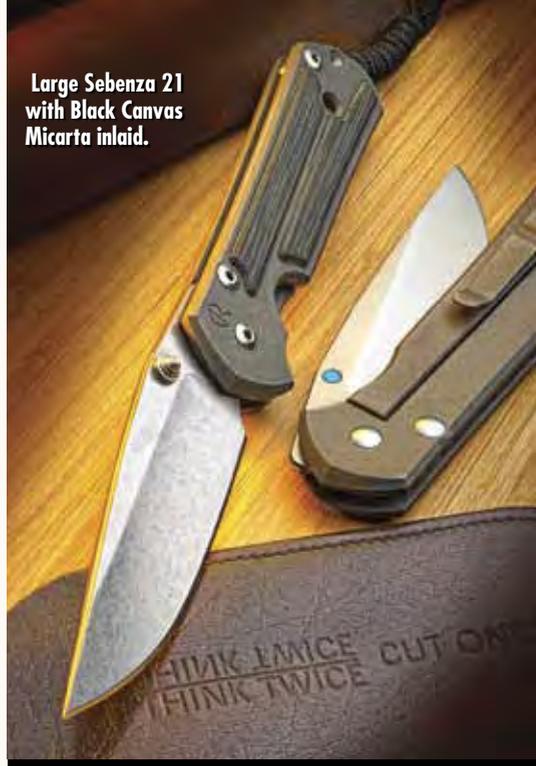
to Boise, Idaho in 1989, March 7th,” explained Chris. “I have always been a manufacturer and used whatever technology was available to me. The 1-piece knives were always made on CNC machines and then hand ground. I had help in my shop and never hid the fact. Our shop has always been open to my customers and fellow competitors. It never did affect the way I did business. The only trouble was when there was the silly nonsense in the [Custom] Knifemaker’s Guild about handmade or not and that caused me to withdraw from the organization as a company.” Shortly after his move to Boise Reeve took the leap from being a custom knifemaker to a manufacturer, and never looked back.

Striking Gold

Reeve would move from making straight knives to folders, which are much more difficult to make but were much more popular among knife users at the time. “We relied heavily on the 1-piece knives in the 80s and 90s and I also did some one-off stuff, custom items I made entirely myself. I designed

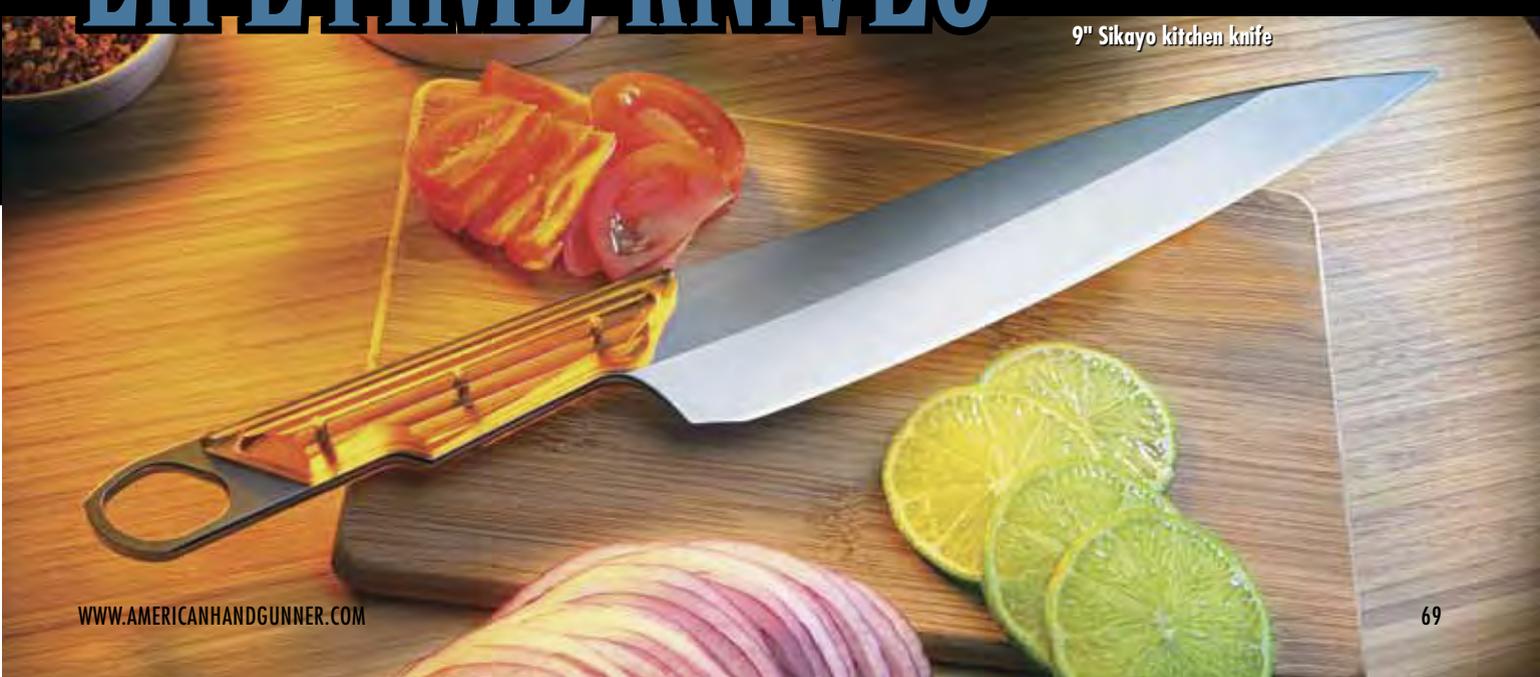
Continued on page 94

Large Sebenza 21 with Black Canvas Micarta inlaid.



Small Sebenza 21 Computer Generated Graphic “Eyes” and Large Sebenza 21 Unique “Night Sky” with Mother of Pearl cabochon.

9” Sikayo kitchen knife



CHRIS REEVE: LIFETIME KNIVES

WIN THIS STUNNING TUSSEY CUSTOM CARRY COMP

1911 .45 ACP

AND HELP INTERFACE DOCTORS HELP CHILDREN!

InterFACE is an international volunteer surgical team providing reconstructive surgery for children with congenital and acquired deformities. Their team, people I know personally, consist of plastic surgeons, anesthesiologists, nurses, speech therapists, dentists, psychologists as well as other dedicated volunteers. This group of professionals travels to various sites in Latin America to provide these services for free — to children who would otherwise have to live their lives with severe deformities.

Since 1975, this all-volunteer group have taken their “operating room in trunks” to sites yearly, to perform follow-up treatment — and see the final results of the miracles they so often perform. My wife, Suzi, has gone with them and seen the results of their efforts personally. She came back greatly touched by what the doctors and nurses do for the children. What they do is, literally, life-changing for these kids and their families.

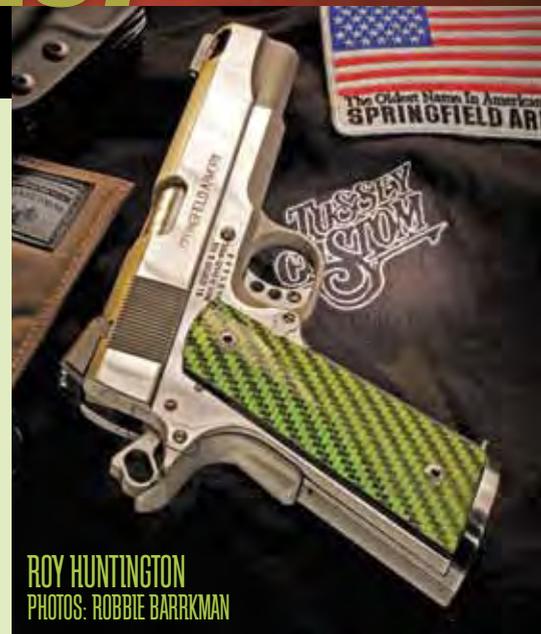
InterFACE recently lost one of their key sponsors, and their program is in danger of being cut drastically. We offered to donate magazine space to a raffle of a custom 1911 to help out, and renowned custom pistolsmith Terry

Tussey of Tussey Custom quickly jumped on board, volunteering to build a gun. Springfield Armory graciously supplied a stainless steel 1911, several makers supplied parts, and Terry supplied many parts from his own inventory. The result? This stunner of a custom 1911 from Terry’s own skilled hands.

All proceeds of this amazing raffle opportunity will go to *directly* support the doctors and nurses who travel on their *own* time to perform the healing surgery on these children. Tickets will only be sold for a limited time (through March 30, 2012) so act quickly to benefit this great cause — and for the opportunity to win this stunning 1911!

You can enter by going to www.interfacekids.org/raffle. They’ll accept PayPal, and most charge cards. You may also send a check, and make sure to include a phone number and e-mail address if you have one. Make the check out to InterFACE, and send it to: InterFACE, 4619 Blue Spruce Rd., Bismarck, ND 58503. If you have questions, Dr. Davis Bronson can help you at (417) 540-1768 or at his e-mail at davisbronson48@yahoo.com.

The winner will have to comply with all legal requirements for firearm own-



ROY HUNTINGTON
PHOTOS: ROBBIE BARRKMAN

ership in their state, and will need to supply an authorized FFL from a dealer willing to accept the gun from Tussey Custom. The winner is responsible for all transfer fees at the receiving dealer. The winner will be contacted by InterFACE within 5 days after the drawing on April 16, 2012.

Help these doctors help these kids — and just maybe win a great pistol at the same time. Let’s give these doctors a helping hand!



Check out the InterFACE homepage to learn more about this great group of doctors and nurses at: www.interfacekids.org and then go to www.interfacekids.org/raffle to sign up — help out!

AMONG THE CUSTOM
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- Ramped, throated and polished breech face
- Caspian extractor and ejector
- Ed Brown hammer
- Carry bevel performed
- Stealth comp (an S800 option!)
- Checker front strap
- Undercut trigger guard
- Brushed finish with aluminum oxide on radius
- Carbon Creations grips
- And much more!

HANDLOADING

A CLOSE LOOK AT



JOHN CONNOR

1

GOT EMPTIES? FILL 'EM UP! GEAR & GOODIES FOR HANDLOADERS

So, now that you're really skilled at turning loaded cartridges into smokin' empty hulls, what are you gonna do with those buckets of brass? Why not fill 'em up, top 'em off, and get two or 10 or a dozen more trips to the range out of 'em?

I've done some reloading myself, but I bow to the experience of my pal MacKenzie, who churns out mounds of munitions — 1,000 rounds per week or more. When asked the top three tips he'd give to gunners thinking about handloading, he said: "First, read *The ABC's of Reloading* by Rodney James or *Modern Reloading* by Richard Lee, to learn the process. Second, go to www.brownells.com or www.midwayusa.com

and create an account. Even when the manufacturer's stock bins are bare, they usually has it in stock at bargain prices with fast delivery. Third, buy a bullet puller, because *you're gonna screw something up!*"

I'll second that! Now here are some goodies for you!



3

6

5

4

1 If you're starting from scratch, don't waste time and money buying individual components for your first setup. By the time you read this, Lee Precision's new, expanded Classic Turret Press Kit will be available, designed to take you from start up to 200 rounds per hour with economy and confidence. And if you're short of room, check out Lee's space saving, 3-legged Reloading Stand too!

2 The Lock-N-Load AP by Hornady is a professional-grade, auto-indexing 5-station progressive press capable of bangin' out 500 rounds per hour! Features include their no-adjustment Universal Case Retainer Spring which allows you to easily remove and reinsert cases of any size at any point in the process, and a powder dispenser that

won't allow you to dump gunpowder if you sorta' forget to insert a cartridge!

3 Pick out a set of reloading dies for your chosen caliber, and make sure they include a carbide sizing die, which will eliminate the whole case-lubing headache and double cleaning your empty brass. Several makers offer high quality dies, like this set for .454 Casull, made by RCBS.

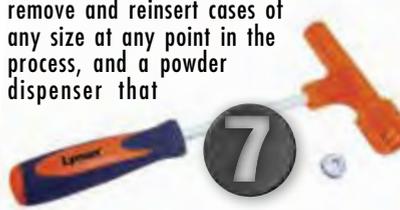
4 You can seat new primers using your press, but many savvy reloaders prefer the sure feel afforded by a hand-primer, to assure you of perfect seating. Lee Precision's AutoPrime has been the "Gold Standard" for many years, and their new ErgoPrime shown here, promises an even more certain feel. It comes with visible primer trays and no-tools-needed changing of shell holders.

5 Save yourself hours of hand cleaning dirty brass with a Berry's 400 Tumbler. Smoothly, quietly and efficiently, the vibrating action cleans and polishes your grungiest empties

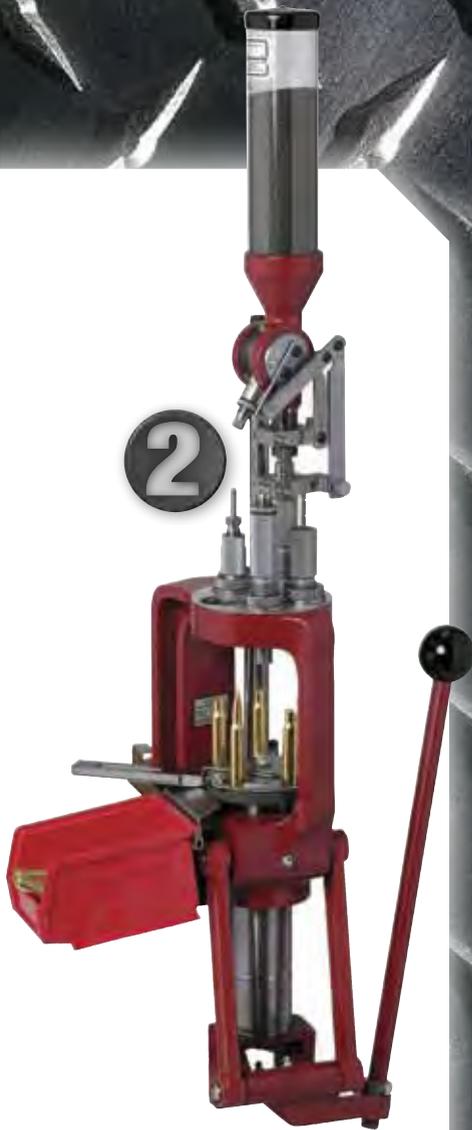
to a slick sheen, using crushed walnut shell or corncob tumbling media. The 4-quart bowl will accommodate 1,000 9mm or 600 .45 ACP hulls, and many reloaders rate it higher than others at twice the price.

6 Both handloading novices and veteran cartridge-crunchers will appreciate the iSD Electronic Powder Dispenser by SmartReloader USA. Both a precision scale — accurate to .1 grain — and dispenser, it's invaluable for cautiously working up custom loads, and its on-board chip will remember up to 50 of your favorites!

7 Put a Lyman Magnum Inertia Bullet Puller on your must-have list because — here's a shocker — everybody makes mistakes! You just loaded a hundred rounds with the right amount of the wrong powder or vice versa? This handy tool will safely pull the slugs and separate your components with a couple of sharp taps on the workbench — and it won't laugh at you, or rat you out to your shooting buddies!



7



2



8

8 Every handloading workbench needs a good reference guide, and there are great ones out there by Speer, Sierra Bullets, Lyman and others. Shown here is the second edition of *Modern Reloading*, very well written and organized by Richard Lee. As one of my buddies says, "The only thing it hasn't got is a crock-pot recipe!" 

For info: www.americanhandgunner.com/product-index and click on the company name.

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CAVEAT EMPTOR

An Engraver's Notes



Bold, consistent scrolls, excellent shading and a flow to the work obvious to the eye means this is high-quality engraving. Trust your instincts, you'll know what looks good — and what doesn't.



Danger Will Robinson! Erratic control of the tool, out-of-round scrolls, inconsistent background shading (among other problems) means this is amateurish work at best! Stay away!

BRIAN POWLEY

Now, more than ever, we are being treated to an ever-increasing supply of engraved guns at the local gun shows. The art of engraving is in a new renaissance period. There are dozens of new engraving artists on the scene, and some are quite good. To the new and untrained, the wow factor is in high gear. All that “eye candy” is an incredible stimulant to our visual senses, and almost everyone wants to own a one-of-a-kind firearm. Engraving creates that, and it makes owning a particular gun a personal, individual and unique experience.

On modern firearms an engraved gun doesn't necessarily make it a prize worth paying for. How so? There are many reasons, but I'll just take on three for now. If the engraving is poorly completed, it can actually *harm* the value of a good quality firearm. Look at the two examples in the pictures. I engraved both in order to illustrate my point.

At first glance, photo number one might look all right, but artistically, it shows scrolls in a haphazard fashion. They are just all over the place with no sense of flow or meaning. Notice how some scrolls are out-of-round and there's not much in the way of detail. The widths of the engraved lines are inconsistent. Some are thick and some are thin. This is lack of control the engraver has over his chisel. Look at the background treatment. The coloration is inconsistent, incomplete and looks mottled. It's an apparent attempt

to decorate with something looking like foliage. On a fairly modern firearm, this could depict the work of an amateur engraver. If this work were done recently on a Winchester Model 12, the value of the gun would surely be diminished.

Now take a look at photo two. Notice how the scrolls are round and flow in a purposeful direction. The details of the leaves and tendrils make it look somewhat lifelike. The background color is very consistent and creates a remarkable contrast making the engraving literally jump out at you. Scrollwork really is just a stylized version of a living plant, and the artwork accentuates the natural lines of the gun.

Themes

Pay attention to what's engraved on the gun. Cape buffalo and elephants on a Winchester Model 94 just don't seem to fit. I would expect bison, white-tailed deer and mulies. Rabbits and prairie dogs on a .375 H&H Magnum rifle don't really work either. The engraving may be well done, but it's akin to a mismatched wardrobe.

Once upon a time, a young, enthusiastic engraver showed me his work and was anxious for my comments. Engraved on his lever-action .22 was a beautiful white-tailed, 10-point buck running away from but looking back at an African lion in pursuit of his dinner. The quality of his work was good, but the accuracy of the details in this game scene was just wrong. A deer looking backwards while

running away from a predator doesn't happen. An African lion chasing a white-tail? That probably doesn't happen, either. And all of these well-executed cuts were done on a gun that would never be used on either animal.

Good Value?

Engraving is decoration, period. Depending on who engraved it or what it's on, it may *reduce* the value of it. I think a beautifully engraved Taurus 709 would be something to behold, but I also know that it is what it is: A personal defensive firearm priced new between \$400 and \$500 — engraved or not.

The value of an original first generation Colt 1873, a pre-64 Winchester Model 94 or a “new-in-the box” Colt 1911 National Match can be ruined by an amateur engraver. Likewise those same guns, in the hands of a master engraver, can be transformed into works of art worth thousands of dollars.

In the words of a good friend, “I don't have to know *how* to make an apple pie to tell if I'm eating a good one.” This analogy works in the engraving world also. If it looks good to you, and doesn't overtly violate any of these ideas we've talked about, it might be a good thing. There are plenty of Internet sites to drool over and get educated, *before* you spend more than something is worth — or just maybe, get the deal of a lifetime.



For more info: www.americanhandgunner.com/powley-engraving



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READER SURVEY QUESTIONS:

1. Is your primary interest in handguns for: A) Self-Defense B) Target shooting/plinking C) Collecting D) Competition E) Several categories
2. If you could only buy one handgun in 2012, would it be: A) Centerfire semi-auto B) Centerfire revolver C) Rimfire semi-auto D) Rimfire revolver E) Single shot, any caliber
3. If you were to carry a small revolver for self-defense, would you: A) Carry it in a pocket holster B) In a pocket with no holster C) Ankle holster D) Belt or shoulder holster E) Pack or bag carry
4. If you carry a handgun for self-defense do you: A) Carry it constantly B) Carry it sometimes C) Depends on the weather and clothing I wear D) Only in my auto E) I don't usually carry, but should

Limit 1 entry per household. This contest is open to individuals who are residents of the United States and its territories only. Agents and employees of Publishers Development Corporation and their families are excluded from entering. Contest void where prohibited or restricted by law. Winners must meet all local laws and regulations. Taxes and compliance with firearms regulations will be the responsibility of the winners. Winners will be notified by CERTIFIED MAIL on official letterhead. ATTENTION DEPLOYED MILITARY: USE STATESIDE ADDRESS! No purchase necessary to enter. Giveaway guns and accessories may have minor handling marks or evidence of being test-fired.

HOM MARCH/APRIL 2012

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CIRCLE ANSWERS TO READER SURVEY:
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 Question #3: (A) (B) (C) (D) (E) Question #4: (A) (B) (C) (D) (E)

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BONUS



1



2



3



4



1 Size does not matter when it comes to the Rapid Reticle SOP-Compact Reflex Red Dot Sight. This small package optic offers a 5 MOA pulse LED red dot and is versatile as it is powerful. It can be applied to any type of firearm including handguns, shotguns, rifles and even archery applications. With more than 20 different mounts available, the SOP-Compact can be depended on in many situations. Even battery changes are easy with the flip-top cover eliminating the need to dismount the unit for battery replacement. Whether tandem or the primary optic on a handgun, the SOP-Compact is easy to use, durable, and made to last. **2** The Impact-45 Rolling Steel Target is a fun, dynamic, reactive steel target available for center-fire handguns. Their patent pending Rolling Steel Target design actually uses the bullet energy from successful shots to roll the target downrange. The innovative 3-fin target heads ensure it can be shot from any angle safely. Impact Rolling Steel Targets allow you to spend more time shooting and less time setting (and resetting) targets. Safe for 9mm to .44 Magnum calibers! Gift certificate good for \$59.95. **3** The M1911 Pistol Armorer's Course will give you a detailed understanding of the model 1911 pistol. The course covers design, model variations, disassembly, assembly, lubrication, parts fitting, trigger pull adjustments, maintenance and troubleshooting. After-market parts and modifications are reviewed. Dean Caputo, a law enforcement officer and factory armorer/instructor for the 1911 platform, will teach you how to keep your 1911 running properly, and how to do limited custom work on your pistol. **4** The GWH #7 holster is a rock solid inside the waistband holster with a very minimum bulk, designed to wear just behind the point of the hip. This is a Burns Custom Pistol and Lou Alessi design. Subtle design changes and long experience with an inside the waistband holster has made the GWH an incredibly comfortable and secure holster, extremely fast on presentation. The open top allows the fastest wrist-locked draw. Weapon retention is achieved by hand molding and boning for an exact fit, plus the friction of being IWB. The reinforced top band keeps the holster open to allow 1-handed holstering. A matching IWB #4 Mag Pouch is included.



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AYOOB FILES

Continued from page 30

Lopez' next shot followed quickly, striking Jensen at the top rear of the pelvis. The bullet shattered the spine and severed the spinal cord before it exited his abdomen. Paralyzed, he too fell to the ground, quickly hemorrhaging to death.

Hearing the shots, Witbeck and Sorensen turned their horses and galloped to the scene. They had no sooner found their downed brother officers than they, too, came under the murderous gunfire of Lopez. Witbeck collapsed to the ground, shot through the right chest. Sorensen drew his revolver and returned fire, and Lopez turned and ran.

Only at this time was the mine finally evacuated, and toxic fumes pumped in, with the hope of 'smoking out' the killer.

Deputy Sorensen desperately tried to aid his wounded partner, but to no avail. In an hour, Witbeck was dead and Sorensen rode for help.

The Next Ambush

More Utah lawmen flooded in to assist in what would become the most massive manhunt in the state's history. When they caught sight of Lopez, he drove them to cover with rifle fire, but they had learned to keep their distance and thus prevent the loss of any more of their number. When cornered, Lopez would take the high ground, pinning the police down with near misses and taunting them at the top of his lungs until darkness fell. By morning, he would be gone, and the posse would again take to the trail, repeating the cycle. Lopez seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of .30-06 ammunition.

The fugitive's trail led back to Bingham, where his bloody footprints were seen going into the Minnie Mine, where Lopez once worked. The place was a labyrinth with countless exit tunnels, and the mine's owners refused to shut it down to allow a search. The frustrated policemen had to thread their way among working miners as they looked for a man many of those workers considered a friend.

It turned out that Lopez' ammo supply was not so inexhaustible as it seemed. He had gone on the run with the Model '95 and seven 20-round

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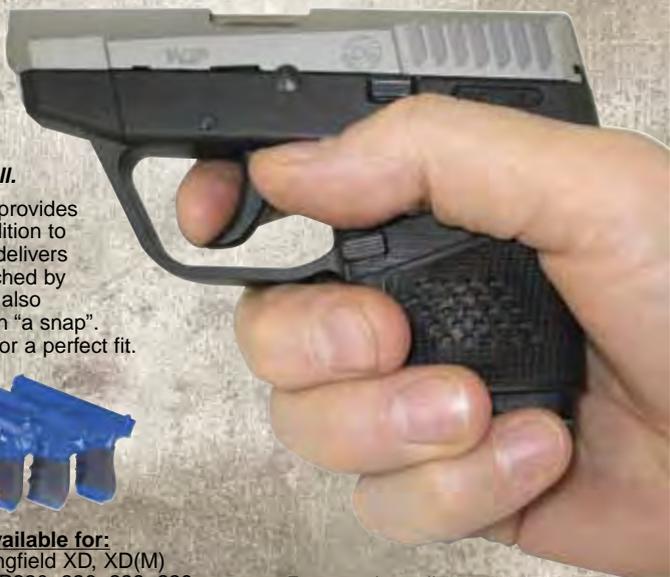


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boxes of .30-06 cartridges. Lopez, police later learned, was down to seven of his 140 rounds when he showed up at the home of his friend Mike Stefano. Stefano would later claim that Lopez intimidated him into providing another Winchester lever gun, a Model 1894 and all the ammunition Stefano had for it — some 42 .30-30 cartridges.

This was the weapon Lopez had in the mine when he spotted two more of the now 150 police officers that were searching for him. From the concealment of a pitch-black tunnel, he ambushed them.

Deputy J. Douglas Hulsey was hit in the back, through the right shoulder blade, with the bullet exiting his chest, and another .30-30 slug smashed into his heel. Lopez' third bullet struck Deputy Thomas Manderich, also in the upper right back, ripping through the top of his heart. Both men fell, dying.

Only at this time was the mine finally evacuated, and toxic fumes pumped in, with the hope of "smoking out" the killer. The ploy failed. A massive contingent of police then searched the mine after the fumes cleared, tunnel by rabbit warren tunnel. The search of the mine continued for week after fruitless week, and was at last abandoned. The Winchester '94 was finally found at a railroad trestle not

far from an exit hole from the Minnie Mine. The killer was gone.

Six men were dead, five of them police. Of the latter, one was actually an armed citizen who had volunteered for the posse, but because he had died trying to protect the public, he would forever after be remembered as a police officer killed in the line of duty. The cost of the largest manhunt in Utah history was some \$29,000, a fortune in the year 1913. In a time when there was little or nothing in the way of benefits for families of cops slain in the line of duty, several widows and orphans were left destitute. And the killer had escaped, leaving the murders listed as an unresolved "cold case" until Randy Lish put it together 89 years later, in the 21st century.

Lopez Escalates

Some of the downtrodden Mexican miners saw Lopez as a rebellious hero, and were happy he got away. One writer even postulated Lopez had settled somewhere else, to create a law-abiding new identity and live happily ever after.

Nothing, it turned out, could have been farther from the truth.

Instead, Lopez had headed south, toward the Mexican border. Apparently, he attracted criminal followers until he led a ragtag gang of some 20 bandits. He acquired a taste for blood, and his

single worst atrocity came in 1914.

Lopez and his gang of bandits robbed a train along the border, cold-bloodedly executing 19 of 20 unarmed American passengers. This brought him solidly into the sights of the Texas Rangers who, for years, found him as elusive as their Utah counterparts had.

That state of affairs changed precipitously in the year 1921. A new captain took over Company C of the Texas Rangers, headquartered in Del Rio. Reviewing the caseload he inherited, he was struck by the particularly vicious depredations of the bandito known as Rafael Lopez. The captain may have been aware the man was wanted for murder in Utah, but his primary focus was on the horrendous mass slaughter of the 19 American train passengers. By now, it was estimated Lopez was responsible for the murders of at least 30 innocent victims.

The Ranger captain had long since earned a reputation for implacable fury directed against such monsters, and now Lopez was in his crosshairs. He decided he wanted to catch Rafael Lopez more than he yet wanted to bring any criminal to justice. The Ranger captain's name was Frank Hamer.

The Man For The Job

Today, we remember Frank Hamer primarily as the man who led the

A LOT OF
PEOPLE ARE
CONVINCED
CONVENTIONAL
RODS ARE THE
WAY TO GO.



6-officer, 3-agency task force that killed Bonnie (Parker) and Clyde (Barrow) in Bienville Parish, La. in 1934. In 1921, however, he was already a hero in Texas. He was well on his way down a path of some 50 or more gunfights, of which he was destined to leave just as many criminals dead. Hamer was such a good shot he put on shooting exhibitions, with stunts like shooting small targets out of the air with his favorite rifle, the Remington Model 8 semi-auto chambered for the .25 Remington cartridge.

In this, he had something in common with the mass murderer he sought. Unknown to the Utah cops who would soon die by his hand, Lopez was said to be so good with a rifle that he, too, performed exhibition shooting, and he demonstrated preternatural skill in firing his preferred lever-action Winchester from the hip. Lopez reportedly worked for a time with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.

A master rifleman and experienced murderer was now on a collision course with a master rifleman and experienced gunfighter. The subtle distinction would determine the outcome.

The End Of The Trail

In October of 1921, an informant approached Hamer and told him the bandit leader hired him to guide the

gang on a secret route, but he was willing to betray Lopez for the \$3,000 reward the railroad put on the bandit leader's head. The scene, they determined, would be a ditch where the Rangers could ambush the Lopez gang as the riders passed in the open.

Gun people remember Hamer for his famous courage and his uncanny shooting skill, but police detectives remember him for his masterful investigative work and natural ability to manipulate informers and "read people." Hamer suspected Lopez had spies on the law and order side, and it occurred to him the informant might really be leading him and his Rangers into a trap crafted by Lopez.

So, on the evening in question, Hamer and his Rangers hid their horses out of sight, and arrayed themselves on a low ridge above the ditch where he told the informant they'd be waiting in ambush. Sure enough, as twilight fell, the Texans spotted a group of some 20-armed men stealthily approaching the ditch on foot from behind. Hamer recognized the informant among them, about three men away from the obvious leader, who was holding a ready Winchester and wearing the bandanna on his head and overalls, which had long been Lopez' trademark clothing.

Hamer stood up from cover with

his favorite rifle, the Remington Model 8 semi-auto, and shouted in Spanish, "Halt! We're officers of the law!"

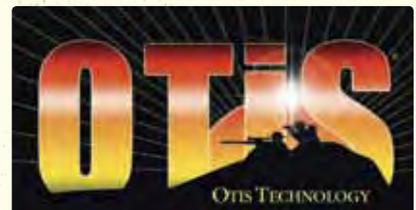
The leader whirled and fired. Frank Hamer felt something burn his cheek but ignored it; with his front sight settled on the other man's chest, he instantly pressed the trigger of the Remington. The sheet of flame at the muzzle lasted only a moment in the gathering dusk, and Hamer could see his antagonist collapse to the ground. He swung his rifle toward the double-crossing informant, in time to see the man spinning and falling from other Rangers' bullets. Hamer swept his muzzle toward the next armed target and joined what was now a raging, full-blown firefight.

When it was over, the Rangers reloaded and cautiously approached the corpse-strewn ditch, which Lopez intended to be their mass grave. The exact body count is unclear. Novelist and Western historian Gene Shelton, in "Manhunter: The Life and Times of Frank Hamer," wrote that "The battle was over in minutes, its end coming with a final pistol shot as a Ranger dispatched a wounded bandit. Frank strode to the irrigation ditch and the riddled bodies. Not a man had escaped." However, in the authoritative biography "I'm Frank Hamer" by John Holmes Jenkins and H. Gordon Frost, the account reads,

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"The Rangers returned the fire, and some 30 minutes later 11 of the bandits were dead, and the rest had run away."

By all accounts, the first to fall was identified as Rafael "Red" Lopez. A single .25 Remington bullet from the rifle of Captain Frank Hamer took him down. It struck the center of the killer's overalls at over 2,000 fps, drilled through a pocket watch in his bib pocket, and shredded Lopez's heart, killing him outright. The double-dealing informant was also among the dead, hit at least three times.

According to surviving reports, none of the Rangers were killed or wounded, save for the minor graze wound on Frank Hamer's cheek. Hamer gave the dead man's bloody, bullet-pierced watch to his brother Harrison Hamer, a US Customs officer. For many years the grisly trophy hung at a Customs house in Laredo, a mute warning to any who came across the Border with criminal intent.

Communications were limited in those days, and law enforcement was very provincial. While the Texas lawmen may have known their slain quarry was wanted for murder in Utah, it is unlikely they knew the man Hamer slain was a cop-killer five times over. Utah authorities were never informed of the death of Lopez, and the reward they had offered for him went uncollected. Into the 21st century, Utah officials listed it as an open case.

Then came Randy Lish, who joined the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office when he retired to Utah after a distinguished career with the San Diego, Calif. Sheriff's Department. An accomplished historian in this area, and a career cop with a deep respect for his profession's martyred dead; he opened an investigation on his own time and dime with his sheriff's permission, and at last made the connection. He traveled to Texas to interview Hamer's son, Frank Hamer, Jr., then 86, and confirmed the legendary Ranger brought justice to the cop-killer. The long-cold case was closed at last.

Lessons

Rafael Lopez progressed from murderer to serial killer to mass murderer. It seems only fitting he should have been the first to die in what can fairly be described as a "mass justifiable homicide."

A review of Lopez's history showed he found it easy to murder unarmed men, or unwary cops whose backs were turned to him. The one time he took return fire — from Deputy Sorensen, armed only with a handgun 118 yards away, while Lopez had a rifle and was well ensconced behind cover — Lopez broke and fled. Exhibition-class shooter against exhibition-class shooter, he got off the first shot at Frank Hamer, but failed to make it count. Could that have been because he was, for the first time,



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in a gunfight with a deadly opponent instead of murdering a helpless victim? By contrast, Hamer — famed already for his cold courage under fire at the time of the incident — center-punched Lopez despite having literally been shot in the face.

Hamer's people skills and investigative experience tipped him to the deception of Lopez's double agent, saving him and his Ranger Company from being the next mass-murder victims. Taking a superior position with cover and surprise, coupled with the legendary marksmanship skill that was the Texas Rangers' stock in trade, helped Hamer seal the outcome.

**It seems only fitting
he should have been
the first to die in
what can fairly be
described as a 'mass
justifiable homicide.'**

What are the lessons from the chain of events, which took five police officer's lives in Utah? I'll turn that over to Randy Lish, who probably has studied it more deeply than anyone else now alive.

"They underestimated their opponent. There is no reason to believe they knew how good a shot he was," Randy explains. He adds, "The racial prejudice rifle at the time may have been a factor too, noting when you see another person as lower than yourself, you underestimate his abilities. In this case, it had lethal consequences. There were those in Bingham who knew Lopez was probably the deadliest rifle shot in the town, and he had once before shot an unarmed man. An investigation before setting out to arrest him would have determined that, and almost certainly led to a more cautious approach by the police.

"After the initial shooting, I would have made sure I had several good people with me. Today, we would not have treated it like an old-fashioned raccoon hunt. I would have tried to find the best civilian or law enforcement sharpshooters in the valley. Today, we would have tried to pin him down. We would have sent men in the dark slowly moving toward where he was. The posse dropped its guard when night fell, and he escaped every time. This tragic incident teaches us underestimating the suspect can be a fatal mistake," Lish concludes.

We wish to thank Officer Randy Lish, without whom this article would not have been possible.



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CHAMBERS

Continued from page 65

One reason shooters like Joe's guns is the fact they're accurate. Chambers Custom 1911 style pistols in .45 ACP shoot 10-shot groups at 50 yards between 1.1" and 1.5" — with the average being about 1.35". The guns built in 9mm and .38 Super average just under 1" for 10 shots at 50 yards. Remember, that's at 50 yards, not 25.

But there are more reasons.

Triad Of Thoughts

"First and foremost to me in importance is reliability," explained Joe. "If the gun doesn't function it's not useful. All the guns built here at CCP are tested with at least 300 rounds of different types of ammo, including hollow points, wad cutters and ball. The duty or carry guns are tested with as much as 500 rounds. It's not uncommon to get e-mails or phone calls from people telling me they have tens of thousands of rounds through the gun with zero malfunctions.

"Secondly, but certainly not far behind, is accuracy. If the gun isn't accurate it isn't interesting to me. Having been taught to build bullseye guns from the beginning, it wasn't hard to cross those same techniques of accuracy and reliability right over to carry and duty guns," said Joe. "Contrary to popular belief, an accurate gun can be absolutely reliable and vice-versa. I can guarantee the accuracy I advertise is real, and you can duplicate those groups in the real world, time after time."

"The final important thing to me is the aesthetics of the gun," he continued. "It has to feel right in the hand. There can be no sharp edges, or pinch spots. The lines have to run straight and smooth. The buffing has to be clear, the blasting crisp, and the trigger job has to be perfect. When I finish a gun, the response I'm looking for when the person opens the box is — wow!

"Regardless of whether it's a 'duty' gun, competition gun or going to a collector, it has to have those three things — or it doesn't leave here," Joe said seriously.

Fruition

Joe started this project working on how to fit a right-handed slide to a left-handed frame, but it was a massive job. Then, in 2010 at Camp Perry, he mentioned the project to Gary from Caspian and got Gary's classic grin. It seems Gary had found the one remaining lefty-slide, a Commander-length one, and Joe snatched it right up.

Caspian also set aside any remaining parts they had for a lefty, but Joe still found many parts were missing. That

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left him with a number of parts needing to be fabricated, or retrofitted in order to make the lefty work.

A couple of hurdles having to be crossed were the firing pin plate, ejector, grip safety and the frame. Joe said, "The firing pin plate would be easy — I just had to make one." He was able to modify a grip safety to work and clear the thumb safety on the inside. The ejector was a different story. After contacting George Smith at Evolution Gun Works, George sold Joe a couple of blanks with the pins on the bottom so they could be machined to fit the lefty. That worked out just fine.

The frame had to have the rails welded-up because it was what is called a "production fit" and needed to be "match fit" for what Joe needed. It was taken out to Young's Welding, in Nebraska, and Joe's bud Jaren took care of the welding so it could be re-machined at Joe's shop.

One other major issue was with the A1 cut on the lefty frame. As it came to Joe, it was oblong, uneven and needed careful re-shaping. After laying it out with circle gauges and scribes, Joe ground and shaped it by hand until it matched the right-handed frame's A1 cuts. "Just that took me about six hours," said Joe.

Joe decided to build the lefty first and get it running, before he did any cosmetic work. On a windy day in the spring of 2011 when his dad was visiting they took it out to test it for the first time. "I like to keep some cool stuff around for when my dad comes, and this was a real treat," Joe told me on the phone. "That gun ran flawlessly. Later I tested it for groups, and considering what was being worked with in regards to the slide, frame and some of the small parts, I was happy with how it shot. Not many people out there are building Commander-length guns that shoot sub-2" at 50 yards for ten shots, and no one has done a lefty to my knowledge. I was real proud, as you might expect!"

The "right" gun could now be built knowing all Joe needed to do would be to match up the parts, which would turn out to be no small feat. "Dozens and dozens of hours would go into this process," explained Joe. For instance, the magazines are matched to each gun. Think about it — the mag release and slide stop is on the "other" side for the lefty!

There's More

Ed Strange of Wicked Grips agreed to make the grips for the set. Ed does fabulous work and his exhibition ironwood he used for this amazing set keeps up with the quality of Joe's work in every way.

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work with leather and French inlating is without peer. Kade is considered to be one of the finest in the business for case restoration and construction and you can see why. Joe said, "This case is a Moroccan Borchardt style, reminiscent of the cases guns came in at the turn of the 20th century. To me it's the kind of case that bespeaks quality and elegance without being gaudy. We picked the chrome hardware and blue interior to set off the guns, razor and rings and compliment them instead of over powering them."

Greg Lightfoot's razor seems a perfect fit too. While a custom knife would have worked, the razor adds a surprise when the case is opened. Greg told me he's been making custom razors lately, and there's a huge collector's market for them. When I hooked he and Joe up, I said, "Well then, a razor it is!"

The razor is 19C27 stainless with an ironwood handle and titanium liners like the custom Lightfoot folders Greg's shop too. Made of 304 stainless, he uses real brass cartridge cases and replaces the primer with a precious stone. Greg calls them "Extreme Jewelry" for the man or woman who might already think they have everything. They don't.

Shooting?

You bet. "Joe," I said on the phone. "I just got the guns back from Chuck Pittman. Am I allowed to shoot them?"

"What? You haven't shot 'em yet?" laughed Joe. "Of course I want you to shoot them. And if you keep a good grip on the lefty, shoot 'em both at the same time. It's a real blast!" he said, laughing even louder. "Keep in mind with the twist of the rifling being the same for the lefty gun as the right, the lefty tends to want to torque left and up. That's okay for a gun ejecting to the right like a normal 1911, but the lefty tends to chase the brass with the open ejection port, and if you don't keep a firm hold, it can actually catch the empty as it flies out!"

I admit to no small amount of trepidation as I loaded and shot the two guns. I kept thinking about scratches, or fumbling something and dropping it, or any one of a hundred things that might go wrong while they were in my possession. But I managed fine, and the guns ran just like Joe said they would — 100 percent. Accuracy for me at a lasered 35 yards (it was windy so I kept it closer than Joe's recommended 50 ...), hovered around that magic 1" mark using AYSM match 230 gr. ammo. I honestly only fired about 50 rounds total. I didn't feel I needed to prove anything with these guns. They are, essentially, art that shoots, and a few rounds showed me they did — indeed.

I need to explain something here about groups like that. If you have a "normal" auto of any sort, a combination of a bad or average trigger, fit of

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the parts and inherent accuracy of the design in question will often preclude you from doing much better than 2.5" or more at 25 yards. As a matter of fact, with most autos, a 2.5" group offers bragging rights. Careful sighting and an even more careful trigger press can deliver that kind of performance from many factory guns.

But when you put those same skills to work with a masterfully crafted auto — like a highly tuned 1911 built by someone who understands accuracy — shooters are often amazed at the groups that appear almost magically downrange. If you've never had the pleasure of experiencing a "perfect" trigger and an auto that runs like the proverbial Swiss watch — treat yourself. It's not magic, not gun-writer myth (at least not here) and not even surprising to someone who has had the opportunity to shoot fine guns like these. Good guns, good ammo and an even decent shooter can, indeed, almost seem like it is something magic. But it's not, it's simply quality in action.

Joes guns were quality in action, at every level.

A Total Effort

Joe said he's got a bit over 250 hours in the guns for this project. He called it a "challenging" project, and the fact it took him far outside his comfort zone made it even more appealing to him. "Building the lefty meant everything had to be carefully evaluated for cause and effect, but from an opposite point of view," said Joe. "When you throw in the fact I was working with the *only* slide of this configuration known to exist, let's just say the pressure was on at times."

In case you're wondering, Caspian does not have any lefty slides left — this was the last of the last. Joe did say he recently found a lefty Government-length slide with a Gold Cup style rib on it, in stainless. He didn't say, but I'll bet it's a Randall, since I remember them from the late 1970s, and having that rib on them. There might be some parts headed his way from Caspian, but Joe warned me it would be the last they have. "Once I get it all in one place, you never can tell what might happen with it!" laughed Joe.

I'll bet I know, Joe. And by the way, I hope you use that feather wisely — we were proud to hand it out. Oh, and Joe hasn't decided on a value for this remarkable set yet. You'll have to wrangle it with him if you'd like to own it. If only, eh? 

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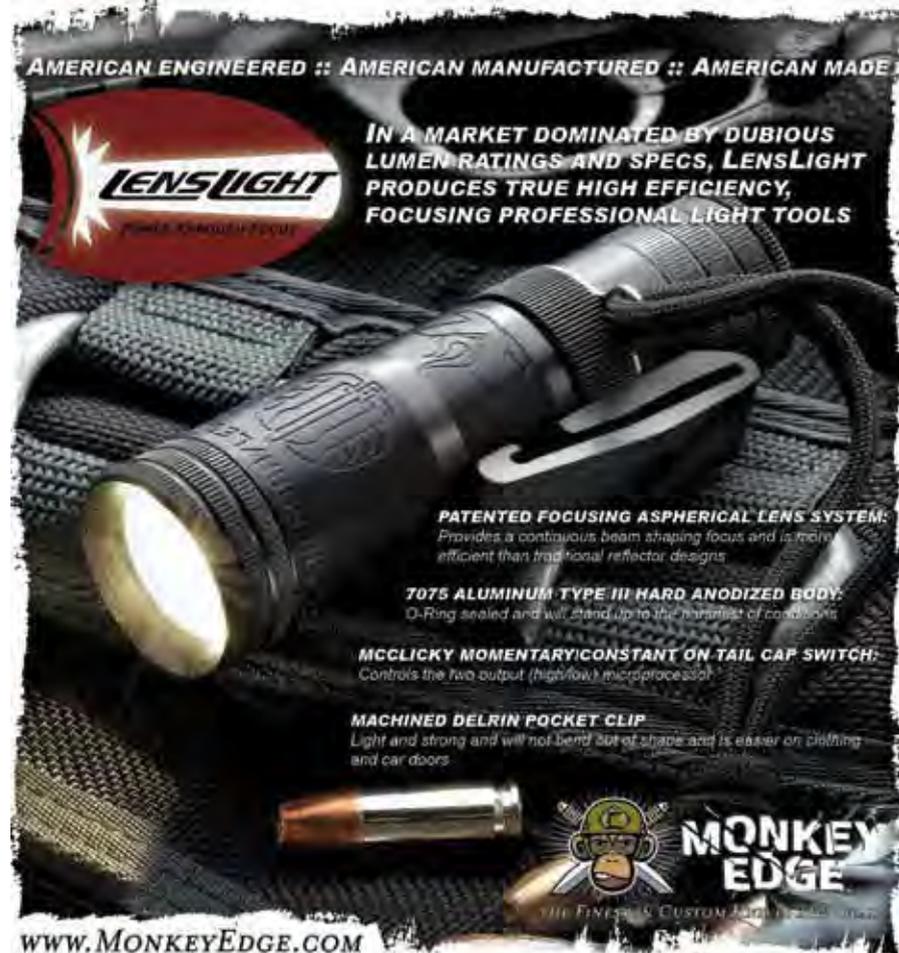
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BEER BUDGET

Continued from page 51

sized 1911s tested. Personally, I like the Commander-sized 1911 as it offers a better balance in my hand than the full-sized guns.

The RIA 1911A1 had an evenly applied parkerized finish and good fit. Again, those dreaded small front and rear sights adorned the slide. Nice wood grips were on the frame, and this was my one major complaint: they were smooth instead of checkered. I found the grips extremely slick-feeling in my hand. Were this my gun, I would immediately replace the grips with some type of textured ones for a more secure hold.

You don't have to spend a thousand dollars or more to get a very functional 1911, if that's all you're looking for.

The gun was tight and I expected some malfunctions because of it, but that didn't happen. I fired a godly amount of Black Hills and Winchester 230-grain FMJ and JHP through the gun, without a hiccup.

Metro Arms

The Metro Arms American Classic II is another full-sized 1911A1 made in the Philippines. My sample was made in stainless steel, and it had all the bells and whistles you'd want, including a lowered and flared ejection port, hi-visibility front and rear sights, extended thumb safety, long trigger and beavertail grip safety.

The frame on the Metro Arms was obviously cast, as there were a lot of casting marks they didn't polish out of an otherwise outstanding 1911. Trigger pull was right at 4 pounds, as well as being crisp and smooth. Actually, the trigger was better than those seen on much higher priced 1911s. The one thing I didn't like on the Metro Arms were the wood grips. I eventually bought this gun, and the first thing I did was remove the grips and throw 'em in the trash, replacing them with the Mil-Tac "Code Zero" 1911 grips of my own design.

I put a lot of trigger time on the Metro Arms. The gun simply amazed me, never missed a beat and was just as accurate as any number of my higher-end 1911s. Some groups were down there at 2" at 25 yards. This gun never gave a hint of any problems; it just shot all the world like a custom 1911 would. I even fired

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The #101 Bachman Slide for the 1911, shown with the MP 213 single magazine pouch. Both pieces are illustrated with border tooling.



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some Buffalo Bore +P 230-grain JHP ammo through this gun, without any problems at all. A full-length guide rod is standard on this gun. I can take 'em or leave 'em these days, as they just complicate takedown and cleaning.

Para USA

The GI Expert is sort of a cross between a basic no-frills 1911A1, and a gun in transition to being a little something "more." We have a basic 5" Gov't style frame and slide to start with. Then Para added 3-dot sights, which I sincerely appreciate. The grip safety is of the old Colt-style used on their old Commander sized guns. It has a small upswept tang, and it tends to bite after a lot of shooting. Still, I preferred this to the older Gov't-style long tangs. The thumb safety snicked on and off with authority, and the entire gun was nicely fitted.

The GI Expert comes with a pair of black plastic grips. I didn't like 'em, and replaced 'em with a pair of my Code Zero grips for a better purchase. I also applied some skateboard tape to the frontstrap of the grip, which is a pretty common practice I do to a lot of 1911s that feel a bit slick in my hand — a poor man's checkering and something to keep in mind. The GI Expert has the Para Kote black finish on the frame and slide, and it's tough stuff to be sure.

Interestingly, I had a few instances where the slide would lock open during shooting with rounds still in the mag. This was caused by 230-grain. FMJ ammo. The bullets were just *barely* kissing the inside of the slide stop, causing it to lock open prematurely. This can actually be a common problem with 1911s so keep your eye open for it. A few minutes with a file solves the problem.

Some Final Thoughts

What really amazed me was all of the samples fed and functioned with jacketed hollow point ammo, right out of the box. There's often some small break-in period for any new auto, like the Springfield Armory tossing brass on top of my head, clearing up after two mags. So don't panic until you have about 200 rounds or so through any new auto.

While this wasn't a comprehensive test of affordable 1911s out there today, I think we learned you don't have to spend a thousand dollars or more to get a very functional 1911, if that's all you're looking for. And any of these would be just fine as a base gun for a custom model, or to add a few custom touches to. Shop around, and you'll find something to suit your needs — at a beer budget price, too!



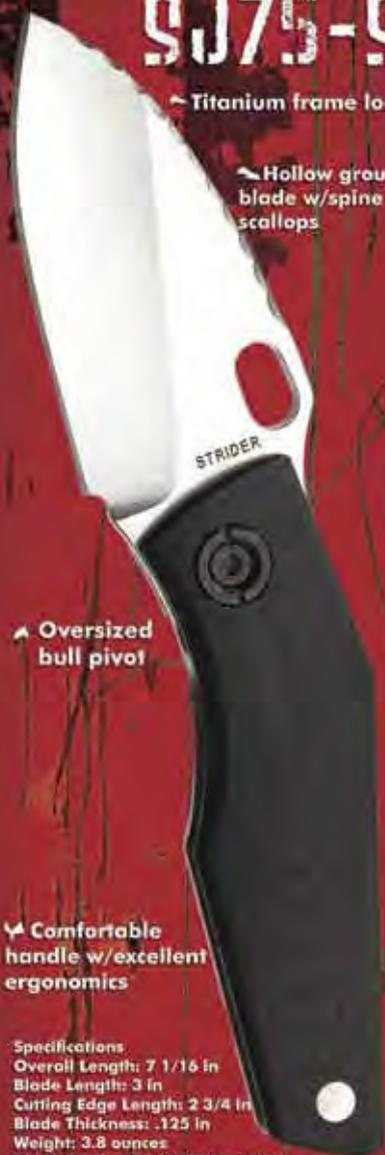
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WHAT TACTICS CAN PROTECT OUR RIGHTS? I DARE YOU...

We know some of you don't care about gun rights. You just want range time or some hot new gun in order to smell burning powder and bust a few caps — nothing wrong with that. If there weren't love for the sport, it would have died.

On the other hand, we know lots of you are scared witless that big government and anti-rights bigots will destroy our precious right to arms, and leave you defenseless. No amount of cold-dead-finger posturing seems capable of stopping that — and getting yourself dead may not be the best approach, you think? So, what can you do?

I hear it all the time: "What can I do to help save our rights? I'm just one person." First of all, everyone is just one person, so you inherently have the identical power to act that everyone else does. If you've done nothing to increase your power, then sure, you're a low-power lackey. Fortunately, it's not a terminal condition, and *you're* the one who can fix it. And it's easy.

Go to dinner. I said it was easy, right? Here's the catch — invite a handful of good friends or shooting buddies along. Pick a place that's quiet, like the side room of a joint, so you can have a long talk. You may have to look around to find a good spot, and make sure they'll do separate checks. Man, that's hard, going around to local haunts and checking them out, even if you beer up along the way, hey? Are you man enough (or woman enough) to try this? Pick a date and let everyone know.

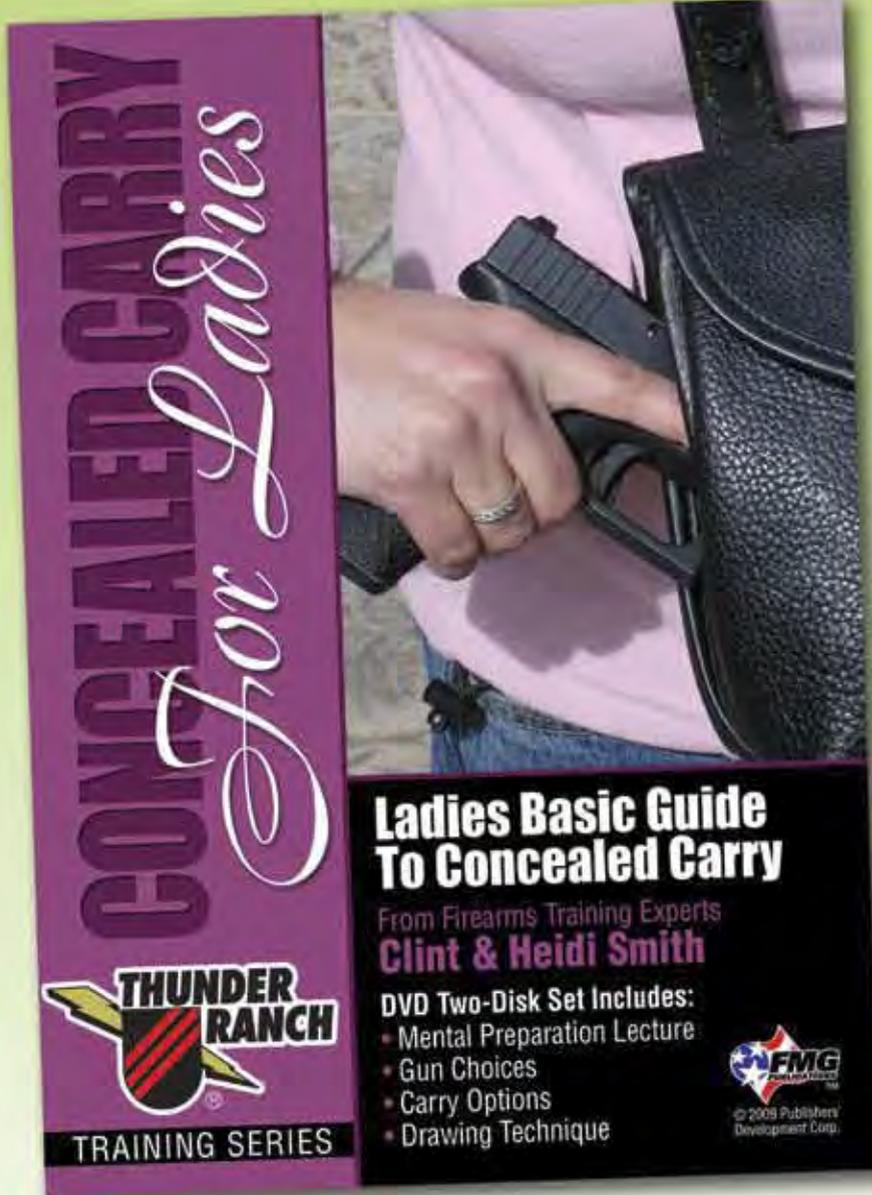
After everyone arrives and mingles, tap a glass to make the universal call-to-order sound, welcome your friends, thank them for coming and spend the entire evening talking about one single subject: "What can we do to help preserve our rights?" Don't get side tracked, stay on point, and be bossy if you need to. This gives you real *power* — power in numbers, leadership and the constitutional power of the right to assemble, which can move mountains. The group *will* come up with ideas that make everyone nod in agreement — that's what you're looking for.

Then Do It

As a group, decide to *do* whatever it is you come up with. You'll feel the power, it's exhilarating and like politicians, you'll hunger for more. Ask everyone to come back next month, bring friends, and do it again. Put e-mails on a list so you can easily organize. Now you're a community organizer, and you *know* where that can get you. Do you have the guts to

Continued on page 102

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POA VS. POI

Continued from page 53

two handguns with two different bullet weights each. One was a S&W Hand Ejector, 2nd Model .44 Special with 250-grain Black Hills ammo and 200-grain Winchester Silvertip factory loads. The other was a S&W Military & Police .38 Special with the aforementioned 95-grain Silvertip load by Winchester and a cowboy action load by CCI with 158-grain lead bullet. Both loads in each revolver were fired at the same point of aim at 20 yards. Coincidentally, in each case, the light load impacted 5½" lower than the heavy load.

Here's another factor — velocity. All other factors equal, if you speed up a bullet it will have a lower POI than a slower one of equal weight. That's because it's in the barrel for a shorter period of time, hence less muzzle flip. No wonder in our modern era with our abundance of factory loads, adjustable handgun sights have become so common.

Is it starting to seem like a miracle anyone's handguns are ever sighted-in? For instance, at times I've shown photos of groups fired with my own handguns and they aren't centered in the bull's-eye. Readers have commented on that.

Extenuating Factors

One is the Ransom Pistol Machine Rest I often use when testing a considerable number of rounds for accuracy. That apparatus minimizes human error, especially shooter fatigue. It also changes the dynamics of a handgun's recoil because the rest is solidly anchored to something. Mine is bolted to the top of a beam that is integral with the construction of my shooting house. Heavy bullets still have a higher POI than lighter ones, but the POA is all out of kilter compared to when the same handgun is hand-held. For me the Ransom Rest causes the POI to be lower and to the right from when I fire the same handgun and load in my own two hands.

I sight my handguns in from a standing, two-handed position. And I certainly don't do any sight movement after just one shot. My zeroing of a handgun's sights is performed by judging from an at least a 5-shot group. To do this you must be confident of your shooting ability. Let me say up front I'm not one of the world's best handgun shooters. What I have at least learned to do in 45 years of handguning is know when I pulled a shot. For my purposes, when zeroing the gun, that errant shot is ignored and the sights adjusted by the group's center.

Again, ammunition factors must be considered. You must sight in a handgun with the exact load with which

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it will be used. Of course, re-sighting an adjustable sighted handgun is a simple matter. All that's required is a proper fitting screwdriver. Re-zeroing a fixed sight handgun is a much different matter and can be a major pain in the butt. I've discussed mechanical details of sighting in fixed sight handguns in past *Shooting Iron* columns so we won't get into it here.

Ammo

Be sure of this too: All ammunition is not created equal. Let's say you sighted in your .45 ACP pistol with handloads carrying 230-grain FMJ bullets. Then in a desire to economize, you decide to substitute lead alloy, 225-grain roundnose bullets. Don't count on both bullet types giving the same POI with the same POA. They may, but they may not. A change in POA could be caused by the fact lead alloy bullets give less resistance in a barrel than jacketed ones. Not only will that result in a velocity difference, but also in a difference in the pistol's recoil dynamics.

Here's another example. Just because you sighted in your .45 Colt revolver with X-company's 250-grain bullet doesn't mean it will also be zeroed with company Y's version of that load. Chrono-graphing such loads has sometimes shown me as much as 150 fps difference between brands of .45 Colt with 250/255 gr. bullets. There's no way loads varying that much can give the same POI with the same POA. If you rely on factory ammo, my advice is to buy it by the case and then verify your POI again when buying the next case.

And finally, what is a good POA? Anyone who started their handgun-shooting career in bull's-eye-type competition was taught the 6 o'clock hold. That is, put the bull's-eye atop the front sight, but have the sights adjusted so the POI is centered. That's all well and good on a level range with targets of a known size. Out in the real world when shooting at angles, at targets of various sizes, and in competitions where speed is a factor, I prefer to have my POI be the same as POA.

I can live with POI a little bit higher than POA as long as I know it, but I don't want it off laterally, and I never want it to be lower, because then the target is obscured. When I feel a handgun is zeroed, my next step is to shoot it at some of my 6" round steel targets from about 50 to 60 feet. If I can hit them reliably I'm satisfied.

All of this may sound intricate, but it's actually not. You can get several handguns perfectly zeroed in an afternoon's shooting, and it will be fun to boot. Sort of an: "Oh darn, I have to sight in another handgun today. Gosh, how awful to have to do that!"
Yeah, right. 

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PERFECTION

Continued from page 69

the Integral Lock Sebenza in 1987 but didn't have the opportunity to put it into production until 1990." Chris informs. Indeed, the Sebenza (the Zulu word for "to work") was innovative, and Reeve's integral frame lock was, and still is, one of the strongest locking mechanisms around. Users and collectors have held the Sebenza in high regard, and it is still the company's most popular model.

Reeve's popular seller (or should I say legend) saw several modifications over the years and on its 21st birthday in 2008 a newer, improved version was released dubbed the Sebenza 21. This is a good-sized folder, 8.3" in overall length with a 3.625" S30V stainless steel drop-point blade. A smaller version is also available checking in at 6.87" and a 2.9" blade, and both are fitted with a sturdy Titanium pocket clip, backside.

All Sebenzas sport thick Titanium handles and the blades have a tumbled "stonewashed" finish with dual, ambidextrous thumb studs. All the while the Sebenza was progressing, Reeve was coming up with ways to dress up the handles. While the basic knife is pure workhorse, the Titanium frames can be dressed up in milled and fly-cut patterns, a rainbow of brilliant anodized colors, and inlays of exotic woods and carbon fiber. Collectors flock to these like moth to flame.

Breaking The Mold

While the Sebenza has been nothing but a hit, Reeve is no one hit wonder. Other folder designs have been added in recent years, showing other sides of Chris' expertise in design and function. The Mnandi (Zulu for "very nice") is a sleek gentleman's folder using the same Integral Lock mechanism found on the Sebenza. A variety of exotic wood handle inlays are offered, including African Blackwood, Ebony, Bloodwood and Bocote. The Mnandi's blade is a sleek 2.75" drop point using nail nicks for opening. Overall length is 6.3" and when not engaged, the folder slips onto the pocket via a sleek machined Titanium pocket clip.

While most associate Reeve with his folders, he is every bit into fixed-blades as well. The Pacific is a serious piece of tactical steel designed in collaboration with Bill Harsey, a seasoned knifemaker with close ties to the military. The Pacific is a generous 11.5" in overall length and sports a wicked, deep-ground 6" clip-point blade of GPM S35VN steel treated to a non-reflective charcoal gray KG Gun-Kote finish. The handle has ample grip, with a deep index finger groove and guard

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designed-in for finger protection, all topped off with scales of sandblasted black canvas Micarta. The knife comes with an ACU Combat Master, Molle, adjustable SpecOps brand sheath, with a black leather scabbard as optional.

I had help in my shop and never hid the fact. Our shop has always been open to my customers and fellow competitors.

For outdoor buffs, Reeve offers up the 8.5" Nyala, a distinctly styled drop-point hunter with flair to spare. The knife's 3.5" CPM S35VN blade (with a tumbled satin finish) has a deep-bellied grind perfect for skinning, but will be equally enthusiastic performing light to medium field chores around the camp. Most striking about the Nyala are the linear grooves in the handle adding loads of style and enhancing the knife's grip. The Nyala comes with a nicely done leather sheath Reeve outsourced, by Gfeller Casemakers. If you want to stand out in the wild or the camp, this is your knife!

Kitchen Too

Reeve has even taken on the kitchen cutlery world with a duo of Japanese inspired chef's knives, dubbed the Sikayo line. These are based on sushi knife patterns but have a modern twist. Available in two lengths (11.5" with a 6.5" blade and 14" with a 9" blade), the Sikayos are state of the art, using Reeve's favorite CPM S35VN steel and handles of durable, non-absorbent Ultem 1000 synthetic. The broad blades, with gently curved edges, are designed for pure slicing or "rocking," and with such state-of-the-art materials you can rest assured these would be passed down for generations.

As you can see, there's a load of diversity in Chris Reeve Knives line, so much so we couldn't cover them all. Reeves folders start at \$350 for the small Sebenza, and go up from there. The Pacific is very reasonably priced at \$325, as are his kitchen knives, which are priced at hair over \$200 for the smaller Sikayo. When you buy a Chris Reeve knife there's one thing, which you can be sure of — it's going to last a lifetime or more. This perfectionist wouldn't have it any other way!



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GOLDILOCKS

Continued from page 57

out even the .357 Magnum versions; in .22 caliber, its service life should outlast several human life spans.

I mentioned Alaska earlier. I suspect Ruger will sell a bunch of these fine .22s there. Stored in a survival pack along with a few boxes of ammunition, the SP-101 will likely be carried in a lot of bush planes, snowmobiles and ATVs.

The 8-round cylinder capacity is surely nice for range shooting and plinking too. Your buddy with a semi-auto .22 can reload faster if he has extra loaded magazines, but sooner or later he has to stop and reload the magazines. That's when you catch up and pass him.

Testing Fun

After unpacking the SP-101 I used a BoreSnake to clean the barrel and chambers. I ran around 100 rounds of Federal and W-W standard-velocity match loads and another 500 rounds of high-speed hollowpoints, W-W and CCI Mini-Mags. Not a great amount, but it was done with no further cleaning other than wiping down the exterior before taking some photos. Despite the lack of cleaning, the revolver functioned perfectly throughout, with easy extraction of fired cases.

Sights on the SP-101 .22 are very good. The rear sight is click adjustable for elevation and windage, and the adjustments work as advertised. The front sight is a slightly-ramped serrated post with a green fiber-optic insert. It is mounted in a dovetail, cut into a sight base on the barrel rib. Incidentally, the barrel, ejector rod housing, serrated rib and sight base are all machined from one piece of steel.

For range shooting I like a plain black post, but for field use the fiber optic is very practical. I tried some plinking in the woods on a rainy over-cast day and found the green dot easy to pick up, even against dimly lit targets.

Accuracy proved adequate, if not outstanding. Standard-velocity W-W match .22s were just so-so, with groups of around 2½" to as large as 3". Best accuracy came with high-speed hollowpoints from CCI and W-W, consistently averaging 2" groups; nice to see, as this is the type of ammunition I'd want for small-game/vermin shooting. All groups were hand-held from a rest, five shots at 25 yards.

What To Change

There are a couple of things I'd change. The single-action trigger break is clean and crisp enough, but heavy at 5 pounds, 10 ounces. Likewise, double-action pull is smooth and consistent, but heavy at over 12 pounds. I realize in a hunting/survival situation most shooters

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will use single action, but I suspect many owners of centerfire SP-101s will want a .22 as a trainer so they can practice D/A shooting at less expense.

Rimfire cartridges require a good smack for consistent ignition, so you don't want to strive for too light a pull. Still, I'd want some trigger work done. Ruger lockwork is relatively simple and straightforward, so if gunsmith work is necessary it shouldn't be expensive. A simple and inexpensive spring change may well be enough. Both Wolff and Wilson Combat make spring kits for the SP-101, available at very reasonable cost.

The rear sight adjustment screws aren't marked for direction. You'll have to read the instruction manual, or at least remember: turning the screws clockwise adjusts the sights left and down. The windage screw slot requires a small screwdriver, a size maybe not found in every home tools drawer.

Grips on the SP-101 are functional and attractive, and I like the checkered wooden inserts. The diamond pattern around the grip screws is a nice touch, reminiscent of the S&W grips used up until the late 1960s, and I'm not sure if this is an homage, a dig, or just a coincidence.

My hands aren't overly large, but I found these grips a bit on the small side, with not quite enough space for the little finger. They're a nice size for concealed carry, and I could shoot reasonably well with them. Since I'd most likely carry it in a packsack or in a flap holster I'll probably order a set of custom grips in a bit larger size.

I may not have conveyed what a nice revolver this is. The SP-101 .22 is a handsome, well made, quality handgun with excellent fit and finish. All letter and number markings are neatly and evenly stamped on the gun. Admittedly, this does nothing for the revolver's shooting ability, but it is an indication of quality of workmanship, and enhances appearance and pride of ownership.

Several of the revolvers I regularly use are Colts and S&Ws from the early postwar era, into the 1960s, made at a time when a lot of hand tuning and polishing was standard production practice. This fine Ruger .22 doesn't look at all out of place on the rack next to these old classics. It's a revolver I plan to buy and I expect to use it a lot.

It's also an outstanding choice as a training pistol for new shooters, as an understudy for a centerfire model, as a sidearm for hunters, fishers, campers and hikers. A lot of adventurous types who travel through (or fly over) wild country are going to store one with their survival gear. When it's needed, whether next year or 40 years from now, it will be there — and it will still work.

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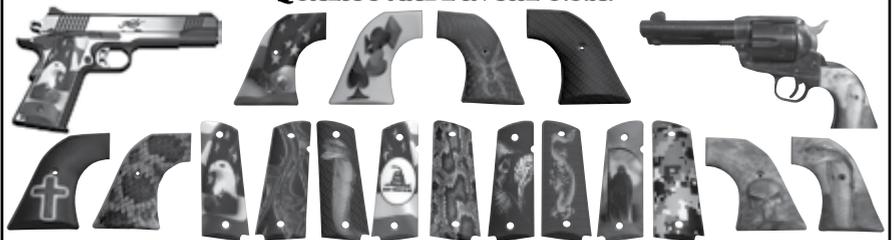
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TAFFIN TESTS

Continued from page 38

stream she fished. One day this happened, and not only the .44 Bulldog went under the water, but she was carrying a role of Tums in the same pocket. B+W+T = OBM (Bulldog + Water + Tums = One Big Mess). After we got the .44 cleaned up and cleaned out it, was time to replace it with our second .44 Bulldog, this one in stainless steel. She could dunk it to her hearts content as it was impervious to such action.

House Gun

When Charter Arms downsized their original .44 Bulldog to the shorter-barreled Pug — a stainless steel version with an enclosed ejector rod — I acquired a test gun and subsequently purchased it. They are both on-duty as this is written, however not in the conventional sense. I often hear the term house gun and I assume this means a gun kept in the house for protection.

Now, unless one lives in a compact studio apartment what are the chances a gun will be in reach when needed? I have a very large house. Over the years, we have added a 16x32' family/trophy room, a 16x25' office, and a 12x16' sewing room, in addition to the three bedrooms, two baths, and a double garage (converted into a loading room) we already had. Now just where would be the convenient place to have just one house gun? How would I know where I would be when trouble started?

No matter where I am in the house, if I am not wearing a gun at the time there is always a gun within easy reach. The two rooms where any of us are the most vulnerable are the bedroom and bathroom. Beside my bed there is a Remington 12 gauge, a .45 with a flashlight/laser attached rests in the headboard on my side, while a .357 Magnum is also within reach as well as a .38 on Diamond Dot's side. The bathrooms, however, are Charter Arms .44 Special Bulldog territory. The medicine chest in the main bathroom has a stainless steel Pug while a .44 Bulldog, also stainless steel, is in the drawer in the bathroom off my loading room. Both being stainless steel there's no worry about moisture. Both are loaded with CCI Blazer 200-grain .44 Special JHP loads, and even if I am dripping wet from the shower I won't be caught unawares.

The New Design

I believe it was at Shot Show 2009 Charter Arms "introduced" the latest versions of their Pit Bull to be offered in .45 ACP, 9mm and .40 S&W. These are all rimless semi-auto cartridges and normally require moon clips when used in double-action revolvers. Sometimes they

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will work without the clips, however depending on the type of crimp used on factory ammunition, combined with the particular revolver chamber, they may move forward in the chamber when the hammer hits the primer resulting in poor ignition or even a misfire.

Even if fired successfully, there is the problem of ejection since there is no rim for the star extractor to contact and empties must be punched out one at a time with a pencil or some similar object. Moon clips are quite handy, and can be carried loaded in the pocket for a reload, however then there is the operation needed to remove the empty cases from the moon clips.

Charter Arms has solved all these problems with a rimless cartridge extractor assembly. Each chamber has a spring located in the extractor. Cartridges are easily snapped in, however fired cases will not simply fall out of the chambers even if the gun is held with the cylinder open and the barrel pointed to the heavens. However, a sharp authoritative tap on the extractor easily releases all cartridges. As so often happens with new projects, it takes a while for them to actually become reality. The first example of the new Pit Bull is chambered in .40 S&W and it works perfectly.

Affordable Defense

The new design is essentially a standard Charter small revolver, with the added feature of the innovative extraction design for rimless rounds. So if you can run a revolver, you can run the new Charter just fine.

Six different types of factory .40 S&W ammunition were tried, with no malfunctions whatsoever. This is not a target revolver by any means, sights are a traditional, non-adjustable hog-wallow rear mated up with a ramp front, and groups were fired at a "self-defense" distance of 7 yards. At that distance groups were way above adequate, with the average being just barely over 1" for four shots. Velocities in such a short barrel are also quite impressive, with the lighter weight 155- and 165-grain jacketed hollowpoints averaging right at 1,050 fps, while the 180s from four different manufacturers were right in the 850-900 fps velocity neighborhood. Felt recoil from such a light-weight 20-ounce revolver is quite sharp since the .40 is a snappy round, making the rubber grips much appreciated.

Charter Arms puts a price tag on this 5-shot, 416 matte stainless steel, 2.3"-barreled revolver at a most reasonable \$342. It will soon be followed by versions in .45 ACP and 9mm. We'll be testing them as they are introduced.



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SIXGUNNER

Continued from page 26

black leather wallet chained to your belt, to meet the price tag of the Ruger Bearcat, I was in awe of my new purchase. Imagine how I felt when the gun shop owner leaned over, and with a wink, dropped a 50-count box of .22 shells in my hand and lifted a finger to his lips in a gesture that I knew meant I wasn't to tell anyone of his generosity.

"Later, when you made the belt and holster, I voted myself the coolest kid in the world. And why wouldn't I be? I had a dad who could shoot better than anyone I knew, let me carry my sidearm like a real cowboy, molded his own bullets, and reloaded his own ammo. My gun was real, the bullets real, and the holster was real leather stitched by hand. Having my name carved in my belt truly completed the ensemble." Nothing like priceless family memories!

High Shooting

That original Bearcat shot about 3" high for me, and one old "A" version I now have does the same thing. However some previous owner had filed down the sight somewhat. A later steel-framed Bearcat we have also shoots high for me, although not quite so much. A friend recently purchased one of the current stainless steel Bearcats for his wife and when shooting this I find it shoots low, so a little work with a file would bring it right to point a aim for me.

It's a fascinating little pocket pistol and I've always been curious as to why Ruger did not add adjustable sights when it went to the Super version, as they had with their Super Single-Six. There are several custom sixgunsmiths who do offer adjustable sighted conversions on the Bearcat.

There's also a long list of custom sixgunsmiths who do all sorts of caliber conversions on the full-size Ruger Blackhawks, with everything from .256 Winchester and .32-20, all the way up to the .500 Linebaugh. I also have a Single-Six which John Gallagher has converted to a 5-shot .41 Special, which makes an excellent little big-bore pistol. But what can be done with the Bearcat? Is it actually possible to convert this little .22 to larger calibers? Enter Alan Harton of Single Action Service.

Customized

Alan recently sent me a totally custom Bearcat, which is about the neatest little single-action pocket pistol I have ever seen. A few decades ago Harrington & Richardson introduced the .32 Magnum in their line of double

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action revolvers, and this same cartridge was picked up by both Ruger and Smith & Wesson for their sixguns. The .32 Magnum is a great little cartridge that does not quite replace the old .32-20. What H&R did not do, Federal has now accomplished by extending the length of the .32 Magnum to give us the .327 Federal Magnum, which definitely challenges the old .32-20. It is, in fact, basically a straight cartridge case replacement for the bottlenecked .32-20.

Would you believe Alan Harton has come up with a 5-shot Bearcat chambered in .327 Federal Magnum? And would you also believe the American Eagle 100-gr. .327 Federal Magnum hollowpoints clock out at over 1,400 fps from this short-barreled little pistol? That is a lot of power in such a small package. It's also quite a handful, and the 85-gr. Hornadys at 1,235 fps are much more pleasant to shoot.

The original Bearcat is too small to handle the .327, and also six holes would remove too much metal. So Alan enlarges the cylinder frame window to accept a longer and thicker custom cylinder. This allows a 5-shot cylinder which provides extra wall thickness. And the cylinder, which is 4140 steel, also has to be longer to accept the extra length of the .327 Federal Magnum.

A new barrel was fabricated from a Douglas .32 blank, which is free-bored, or Taylor Throated if you prefer, to allow the bullet to totally enter the barrel before encountering the rifling. Alan also milled the top of the main-frame flat and removed the ejector housing boss altogether, welding up the frame where it had been. Of course the firing pin had to be changed from rim-fire to centerfire.

The base pin is made extra long, with a knurled head for easy removal since it's used to punch out the empties. The hammer spur has been reshaped to a Bisley-style configuration and the gun finished in a beautifully dark bright blue, topped off with exquisite ivory grips. It's almost, but only almost, too pretty to shoot.

A Shooter

But shoot it does! My four .327 Federal Magnum loads, two factory and two handloads averaged 3/4" for four shots at 7 yards. This is basically a pocket pistol, however Alan also sent a crossdraw holster, made by our mutual friend, Mike Barranti. Whether carried in Barranti's excellent leather or in a pocket, or even in a daypack or backpack, no matter how one is traveling, this .327 Bearcat is a powerful little piece of insurance to have along.



For more info: www.americanhandgunner.com/sturm-ruger-co; Alan Harton, Single Action Service, (713) 772-8314.

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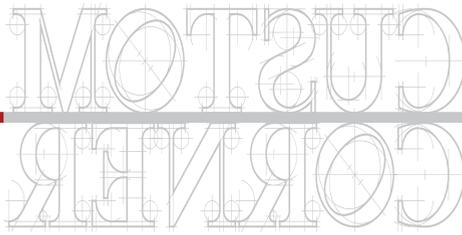
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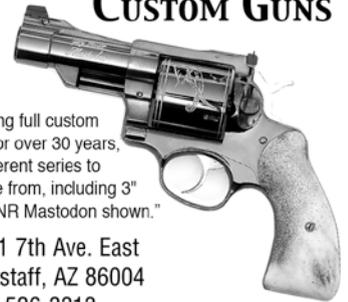
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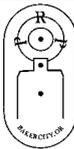
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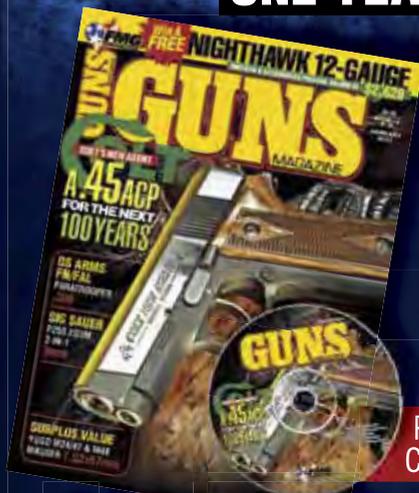
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SPEAK OUT

Continued from page 19

week. I made my first firearm purchase from Brandon's, an 870 tactical. My wife also bought her first gun there as well, a used H&K USP .40. It was nice to pick up a nationally distributed firearm publication — not to mention my favorite one! — read a little bit about home. Now I can tell everyone down at the shop "that's my hometown gunshop." Keep up the great work, and next time you are in Brandon's, tell him Klink says hi.

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Guncrank Thanks

I've always enjoyed your magazine. It's just great, with great articles and writers. But John Conner has written the best article I've seen in a while (*Guncrank*, Nov/Dec 2011). I agree 100 percent with what he says. I, too, am very thankful to be alive and living here in America. Thank you, John! And thank you, staff and writers for such a great magazine!

Richard Ross
Via e-mail

Roy, thank you for your small research project you did on behalf of my question regarding ballistics of a .45 ACP fired from a 1911-type semi-auto versus a revolver. That kind of personal attention is something one remembers.

I just finished reading the *Guncrank Diaries* (Nov/Dec 2011), by John Connor. I must admit his column is one of the first I head for in each issue. Is there a biography available on John? Such a book would certainly be a fantastic read. Having no great adventures in my own life — I spent almost 5 years on a Naval base, but never went to sea on a Navy ship — I enjoy reading adventures of those who actually had them. From the things in his column, it seems John would be at the top of any life experience and adventure list!

Art Schubert
Reno, Nev.

Art, against my better judgment, I asked Connor how he wanted me to answer this. RH

"Be careful what you wish for, Art — ya might get it, good an' hard! I'm working on a little one, 'The Tao of Connor,' fulla gems, gravel and road-kibble, and a behemoth collection of Guncrank and Odd Angry Shot (from

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— Roy Huntington, Editor

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AMERICAN HANDGUNNER

GUNS) columns, including all the good stuff that cruel editors like His Immenseness Roy-Boy and Jeff John cut out of 'em to comply with their silly word-count restrictions. I'm thinkin' we might call that one 'Prop-Wash' or 'Shrap & Frags.' That said, now the editors might arrange for me to have 'a tragic accident' — but only if they can find me! Kwaheri! Connor Out"

And ...

I've been reading *American Handgunner* for years now, and I always enjoy the magazine. I like to think of shooting and handling handguns as my "hobby of choice." *Handgunner* seems extraordinarily tailored to my interests each month, and a recent issue (Nov/Dec, 2011) was the stuff of classics and legends. I refer specifically to John Connor's article (*Guncrank*: "On Bein' Thankful"). Suffice to say I've had chapters in my life that parallel others who have had "a look around the curtain" and I know, as well, the value of a woman who will shed tears over the diminished health of her mate, and the extreme joy and appreciation of life one enjoys as a winner of the "Life Lottery."

Further, I appreciate the "Grunt's Gift Guide 2011," also by Connor. When I was in Vietnam, we thought it was great to get a "CARE Package" from home. Cartons of chocolates and other goodies went over really well with one's hootch mates. While I'm patting your authors on the back, let me include "Origins of the S&W Centennial Revolver" by Michael Janich. The design of that holster bears consideration for modern day carry guns.

In sum, this issue was even better than usual, and that is really an accomplishment worthy of your efforts. Congratulations on editorial excellence. Now, as a recording artist once said to the acts to follow as she walked off the stage — "Go ahead, Top That!"

Hal Hansen
Via e-mail

Ha! That's a challenge we take up each

issue, Hal ... trying to top it again ... and again! But your kind words are the grist that keeps us going. No matter how many times we get an issue out the door, no matter how many times I grind my way through an column, or badger Connor to get his stuff to me on time, or laugh at Duke and a hat — or a hundred (thousand?) other things — it's the fact guys like you actually like what we do that honestly makes it worthwhile. And you take the time to tell us. No fooling. RH

New York Reload

I've heard of Kansas City Spin, Road Agent's Spin, Border Toss and others, but the New York Reload has me stumped. Mas Ayoob used it in his column (*Cop Talk*, Nov/Dec 2011) and I'm dying to know what the heck it is. Maybe just two or three rounds? I'm stumped!!

Jim Carter
Via e-mail

And here I thought all Handgunner readers were genuine gun guys and knew all this sort of thing! Just kidding, Jim. A New York Reload is simply going for another gun, already loaded. Many cops, especially in the early days, in New York carried a duty sixgun and a small-frame revolver as a back up. Not having speed loaders in the early days, they simply dropped the issue gun if it went empty and drew the "reload" to get back into the fight. So,



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Built by GunVault, the same company who builds those very cool biometric gun lock boxes, the AR MagVault is bright orange so you can't mistake it's there, is well-made, and at only about \$24.95 it's also easy on the wallet. It's made from glass-reinforced nylon so is well into the "virtually indestructible" category. Also if you're a cop, it's a great way to secure your rifle in the trunk if you're stowing it non-operationally or if you keep it at home, not in a locked case or safe — and ditto for homeowners. If you're uneasy leaving a rifle "out" for defense or some level of security, the AR MagVault is fairly easy to remove. If you kept a loaded mag nearby, you can get things up and running



pretty fast, but I'd say practice regularly and you'll have to figure out where to keep your key handy.

On the range, you could use the MagVault to secure and make-safe your AR on the line, and that blaze orange color shows everyone your rifle is unloaded, open and safe from prying fingers. I can easily see this as an issue item for police departments, and for that price, well within reach of anyone who owns an AR-type rifle. Nicely done, if you ask me. *For more info: www.americanhandgunner.com/gunvault*

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Now I’m not sure the mainstream “Sam and Suzi Home-maker” crowd notice, but we gun people might, and just maybe some bad guys will too. Then again, why’s that so bad? If I’m a cop and I think you’re a cop, then I know if something comes up, I’ll probably have cover at-hand. If you’re a bad guy and you notice I possibly might be a cop — with a gun — then you might just behave. But still, some people wanted something a bit more “invisible” — if you get my drift.

Two of Tim’s most popular packs, the Fatboy (shown) and Jumbo Versipack now come in, shall we say, discrete colors. Looking more like something you’d buy over the counter in a trendy mall store, the new colors offer a lower-key look,



Photo: Courtesy Ralph Mroz

passing more as a book or goodie bag rather than a “Hey, I’ve got my roscoe stashed in here!” bag. Maxpedition did away with all the MOLLE loops and Velcro patches, but kept all the other cool features. They also did a great job with colors such as royal blue, dark blue, red, maroon, yellow, orange, green (not OD but good ol’ plain green) and — don’t hate me, I’m just the messenger — pink. Hey, some people like it. I use their gear almost daily, just so you know. *For more info:* www.americanhandgunner.com/maxpedition

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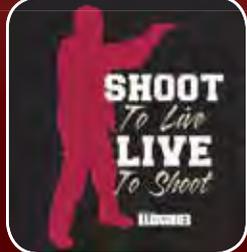

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WOODEN LASERS?

Okay, not really wooden lasers, but certainly “real” wood Lasergrips from Crimson Trace. Normally we’re familiar with Crimson Trace’s Lasergrips living in neatly molded plastic of some kind, but their new Master Series is actually made of exotic laminates and stabilized wood.

The Master Series is available in Rosewood and G10 and will fit full-sized 1911s (Government and Commander), compact models and, for the first time ever, the Bobtail models. The Master Series is precision machined, and the test sample fit our Officer’s ACP-sized gun perfectly. The photo shows a set of wood grips (from Wicked Grips) for comparison. You can see the Crimson Trace grips do reflect a real wood look — because they are! The stabilization process hardens the wood, making it perfect for machining for a seamless fit, offering great wear resistance, and I’d think it would be pretty much impervious to water or most gun cleaning solvents.

The “guts” of the laser system remain classic Crimson Trace, and the over-molded activation button assures normal activation just like their other Lasergrip systems. We’ve long been proponents of laser aiming systems on defensive handguns, especially backup guns. The new Master Series simply makes the concept more attractive — perfect for a custom gun or simply if you want to be nice to yourself! *For more info:* www.americanhandgunner.com/crimson-trace

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I know you may not believe me, but *Handgunner* readers own a lot of 1911 pistols. Yeah, I know, hard to believe, but it's still the truth. We all care for 'em, shoot 'em, buy more of 'em, and just plain love them dearly. But what most of us don't love so much is the cost of ammo these days. Which brings us neatly around to the Kimber Rimfire Target Conversion Kit. The kit has all the goodies you need to turn your favorite 1911 into a cheap-shooting .22 LR or .17 Mach2

blaster, depending on the kit you buy. Our test sample had adjustable sights, and slipped right onto about a half-dozen good quality 1911s I had on hand. Kimber says it will work on 4" or 5" guns, but will *not* work on the Taurus PT 1911, may not work on the Para GI Expert and is not for Kimber Ultra Models.

Having said that, I ran shooting tests using a genuine Colt Series 80 (works on Series 70 models too) and it ran fine. When chambering a round, let the slide *snap* forward so it chambers correctly. Also, you will need to use good quality, high-speed .22 LR ammo, such as CCI Mini-Mags or something alike. If you just *have* to use standard-velocity loads, you need to install a lighter hammer spring or the slide can't reliably cock the base gun's hammer. Don't put the .22 magazine into a standard 1911 when the .45 slide assembly is installed, as it might damage the magazine. Also, the slide won't stay back after the last round with the .22 kit on.

Accuracy was good, hovering around 2.5" or a bit more depending on the load. Plenty good for informal targetting, plinking, teaching someone new to the 1911 platform or even small-game hunting. It's great fun to shoot your favorite 1911 like this, and just might encourage you to get more trigger time practicing that all-important "press"! Around \$333 at full retail. For more info: www.americanhandgunner.com/kimber



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21st century styling and legendary Wilson Combat reliability combine to create the smallest, lightest Wilson Combat pistol: the Ultralight Carry Sentinel. The ULC Sentinel performs as good as it looks and is optimized for high-performance 9mm loads. When ultimate concealment is needed in an easy-to-shoot package, the Ultralight Carry Sentinel will be a perfect choice. *For more info: (870) 545-3635 or www.americanhandgunner.com/wilson-combat*

EPIC ACTION VIDEO CAM Stealth Cam

Stealth Cam expands its line of wearable adventure cameras with their new EPIC 1080. Can record in stunning 1920x1080 high-def, and captures all the action of the hunt with sharp, high resolution video and crisp, clear audio. Weighting only 2.5 ounces and measuring under 3", now you can broadcast you EPIC adventures for your friends and family! Operates on just three AAA batteries, the EPIC 1080 has an MSRP of \$199.99.

For more info: (877) 269-8490 or www.americanhandgunner.com/stealth-cam



RAD GUNWORKS

Caron Forensics

Caron Forensics is introducing their new RAD GunWorks, a wall-mounted weapons cleaning and maintenance workstation. This heavy-duty, multi-purpose cabinet features a lockable, double door design. Once unlocked, doors open to 12" D x 36" H x 49" W of space to organize and securely store your tools, chemicals and cleaning supplies. An oak bench folds out of the cabinet, giving you a workspace at waist level to clean and maintain your weapons, with all your tools within hands reach. The space saving design allows you to fold and lock the workbench, then shut and lock the doors. *For more info: (800) 648-3042 or www.americanhandgunner.com/caron-forensics*



DEFENSIVE TACTICS SERIES OPSGEAR

This series of DVDs are based on the best practices from military special ops, competitive martial arts and street fighting. Presented by OPSGEAR, the series simplifies self-defense in a way that has not been available in the past. All ages, sizes, both male and female will benefit from this easy to apply life saving system. *For more info: (801) 936-2322 or www.americanhandgunner.com/opsgear*



THE GUIDES CHOICE

Diamond D Custom Leather

The Guides Choice is simple, comfortable, versatile and easy to adjust. It features maximum handgun accessibility, while not interfering with clothing or gear. With over 15,000 sold, the Guides Choice Leather Chest Holster is the most popular chest holster that Diamond D Custom Leather offers. Handmade in Alaska, the Guides Choice is made to last! *For more info: (907) 631-4212 or www.americanhandgunner.com/diamond-d*



SUB-SAHARAN Grayman Knives

The Sub-Saharan incorporates all the toughness and functionality you'd expect from a Grayman knife, as well as some distinctive new design features. A full thickness curve on the top of the blade allows for "choking up," multiple grips options, and facilitates batoning. The sharpened top edge allows for back slicing; sweeping grind lines end in a sharp piercing point. The comfortable new handle design is green textured G10 with a lanyard hole. *For more info: info@graymanknives.com or www.americanhandgunner.com/grayman-knives*





FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SEEING YOUR PRODUCT FEATURED IN SPOTLIGHT CONTACT, STEVE EVATT (800) 533-7988.



CENTERFIRE AND SHOTSHELL EARPLUGS Just Plugs

Just Plugs, LLC, manufacturers of Seriously Awesome Hearing Protection, introduce their line specifically for the shooting and hunting industry with Centerfire and Shotshell shaped earplugs. The lightweight, reusable and highly visible protectors have all earned a noise reduction rating of 30 decibels, according to the American National Standards Institute, making them as functional as they are fun! Just Plugs are easy to use, and can be rolled down to fit into anyone's ears. They also have other earplug shapes, like the Spark Plug and Beer Bottle designs. *For more info: (888) 577-5847 or www.americanhandgunner.com/just-plugs*

GET-BACK MINI GPS

Brunton Outdoor Group

The new Brunton Get-Back Mini GPS quickly shows the way back to your starting point by the shortest, most direct route. The Get-Back points directly back to any of three points, adjusting direction as you move, showing the route by arrow and the distance in feet or kilometers. *For more info: (307) 856-6559 or www.americanhandgunner.com/brunton*



THE HENCHMAN Blackwood Custom Knives

The Henchman "flipper" folder is based on Blackwood's very successful Henchman fixed blade. Neil has created a sleek knife that is easy to conceal with a very ergonomic grip and good hand retention. The flipper design eliminates the need for thumb studs creating an overall look that is just as sleek as the fixed blade version. *For more info: nblackwood4@gmail.com or www.americanhandgunner.com/blackwood-custom*

SCOUT SCOPE RAIL

XS Sight Systems



The Ruger Gunsite Scout Rifle was named the Shooting Industry 2011 Academy of Excellence Rifle of the Year, and right on the heels of that honor, XS Sight Systems was ready to go with a full-length scope rail with aperture sight to compliment the Scout. It features drop-on installation and expands versatility allowing red dots, scout scopes and traditional optics. *For more info: (817) 536-0136 or www.americanhandgunner.com/xs-sight-systems*



CENTERFIRE LASER SERIES LaserMax

LaserMax introduces the CenterFire Laser Series designed specifically for the Ruger LCP and LC9. The CenterFire is easily installed by mounting it to the frame without changing out parts or altering the exterior of the gun. The CenterFire laser is specifically designed for guns without a Picatinny or Weaver rail. *For more info: (585) 272-5420 or www.americanhandgunner.com/lasermax*

ROSSI RANCH HAND HOLSTER

Hunter Company

Hunter Company's new holster for the Rossi Ranch Hand and similar Mare's leg pistols, is constructed of top grain leather and features directional snaps to hold the gun securely with a leg tie down. The Ranch Hand fits on a belt up to 2" in width. *For more info: (800) 676-4868 or www.americanhandgunner.com/hunter-company*

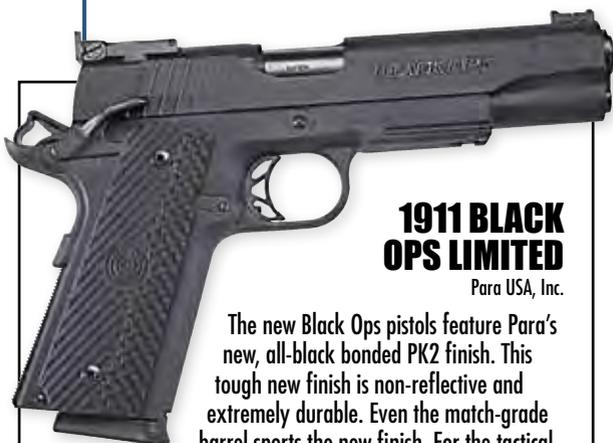


BOMBER AND GROWLER LOAD-OUT DUFFELS Maxpedition

Maxpedition



Discreet duffel-style bags with cylindrical profiles designed for concealing larger- and longer-than-expected objects. The exterior design creates an optical illusion as to the interior layout, which contains a spacious 2-way gusset allowing for creative organization of spaces. The Bomber Load-Out Duffel is 11x21", and the Growler Load-Out Duffel is 11x21". *For more info: (877) 629-5556 or www.americanhandgunner.com/maxpedition*



1911 BLACK OPS LIMITED

Para USA, Inc.

The new Black Ops pistols feature Para's new, all-black bonded PK2 finish. This tough new finish is non-reflective and extremely durable. Even the match-grade barrel sports the new finish. For the tactical operator, these pistols are built on new frames with integral light rails. In addition to providing the flexibility of adding a variety of lights, lasers and light-laser combinations, the new Black Ops pistols also feature the ultimate in gripping control. No expense has been spared to give them the best control possible with .45 ACP pistols under all conditions. *For more info: (704) 930-7600 or www.americanhandgunner.com/para-usa*

KENDA LENSEIGNE SIGNATURE SERIES

Bianchi Cowboy

Safariland's Bianchi Cowboy division has introduced the Kenda Lenseigne Signature Series, a line of mounted shooting rigs designed by world record holder, Kenda Lenseigne. The collection includes four performance-based rigs in a variety of distinctive materials and finishes including embossed snake print and real cow hair.

For more info: (800) 347-1200 or www.americanhandgunner.com/bianchi-cowboy



SABERTOOTH KNIFE

Spivey Knives

The Sabertooth is perfectly suited for hunters, campers, backpackers, fossil-digging archeologists and military. Overall length is 12¾", and the blade is 7½". This classic double row of biangular teeth on a sloping spine is the most effective saw on a knife ever designed. In tests, the saw cut through a 1¾" iron pipe and showed no damage to the teeth, so cutting through bone or wood will be an easy task. Made with steel used for tank armor, you can be sure the Sabertooth is tough. *For more info: (405) 371-9304 or www.americanhandgunner.com/sabertooth-knife*



UV CURED GRIPS

GunGrips.net

GunGrips.net has the perfect addition to their color powder coat images introduced two years ago. They have added an Ultra Violet cured image system that enables them to reproduce most any full color, high-resolution image on the grips, virtually the same as the original. The red "Punisher" shown on AlumGrips true oval is one example of the process. There will be a limited number of these available at the AlumGrips booth at the 2012 SHOT Show. *For more info: sales@gungrrips.net or www.americanhandgunner.com/gun-grips*



EZ-OFF BASEPLATES

Dawson Precision

The newest addition to the Dawson Precision line of aftermarket parts for Glocks is the EZ-Off series of baseplates. Available in four heights and colors, Dawson EZ-Off Baseplates are designed specifically for competition, law enforcement and military use. These baseplates are CNC machined from billet aluminum and are uniquely designed to ease the installation and removal of the baseplate to the Glock mag body. *For more info: (254) 793-0150 or www.americanhandgunner.com/dawsonprecision*



CATTLEMAN HOLSTER

Simply Rugged Holsters

Simply Rugged Holster's new Cattleman Holster is a traditional holster with fully functional design features. The Cattleman offers maximum coverage for your gun along with tightly molded superior retention. Available in strong side, or cross draw versions, and can be either tooled or plain. Perfect for autos or revolvers, the Cattleman can be ordered with or without a hammer strap. *For more info: (928) 227-0432 or www.americanhandgunner.com/simply-rugged-holsters*



WOMEN SHOOTING ACCESSORIES

Packing In Pink

Packing In Pink Offers a wide range of shooting apparel and accessories. The products are designed by and for women — and only women. Safety is always priority number one, but unlike other manufacturers, sex appeal and comfort are a very close second. Because of their devotion to women, PIP will make a donation to breast cancer research with every purchase. These slimmer fitting earmuffs are comfortable and lightweight; with an adjustable, lightly padded headband and foam padded ear cushions that mold around your eye wear for unobstructed protection. *For more info: sales@packinginpink.com or www.americanhandgunner.com/packing-in-pink*



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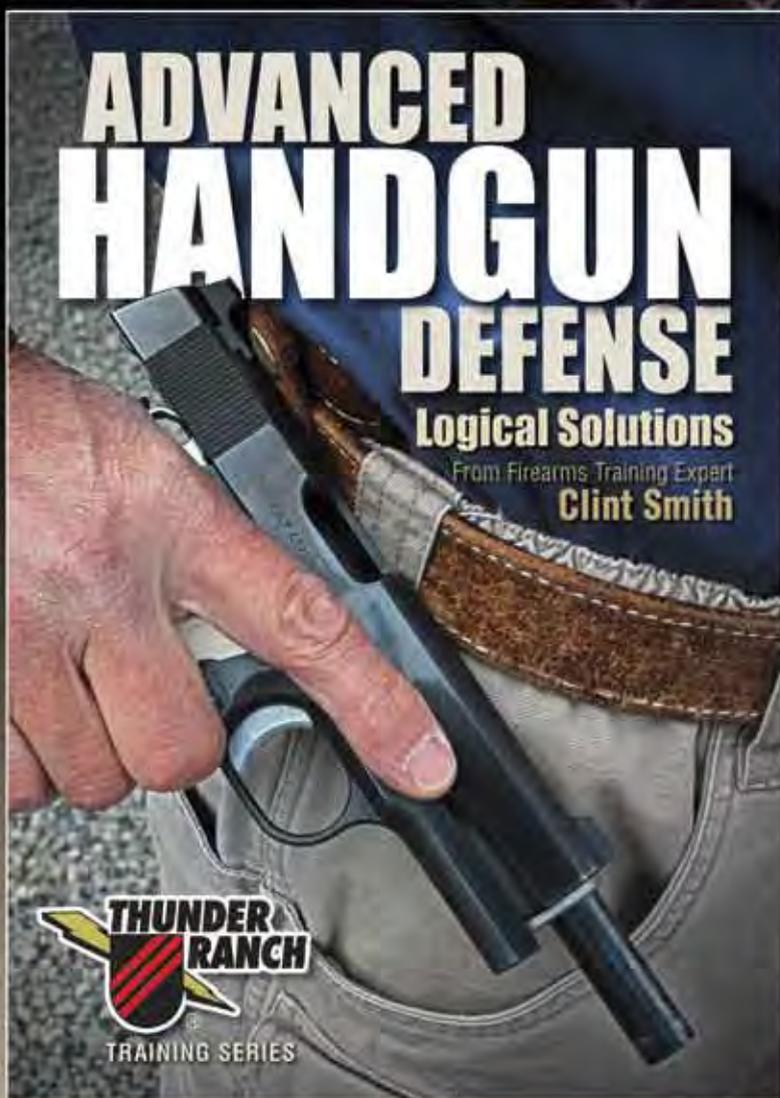
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Al Mar Knives	73	Condor Outdoor Products	47	GOTE Gear	102	Meprolight Ltd.	49	SOG Specialty Knives/Tools	83
Aluma Grips	82	Crawford Knives LLC	100	GrandMasters/P.Custom	22, 23	Monkey Edge	85, 87, 89, 93	Spartan Blades USA	95
American Handgunner Sub.	70	Crimson Trace Corporation	16	Grassburr Leatherworks Inc.	92	MTM Case-Gard	45	Sportsman's Team Challenge	19
Amer. Handgunner T-Shirts	111	CrossBreed Holsters LLC	37	Grayman Knives	94	N82 Tactical	95	Springfield Armory	9, 123
American Tactical Imports	45	Cylinder & Slide Inc.	54	GSI International Inc.	113	Nighthawk Custom	11	SSK Industries	100
ArmaLite Inc.	39	CZ-USA	107	Gungrips.net	109	Nitesiters	100	Stan Chen Customs	14
Armscor Precision Inc.	105	D & L Sports Inc.	104	GUNS Magazine Sub.	106	Ogre Manufacturing LLC	100	Starline Brass	106
Arntzen Corporation	102	Darrel Ralph Designs	108	Heizer Firearms	66	Old West Reproductions	88	STI International Inc.	2
Arredondo Accessories	102	DeSantis Holster	94	Hinterland Outfitters	86	Otis Technology	80, 81	Sturm Ruger & Co. Inc.	25
Bar-Sto Precision Machine	100	Diamond D Custom Leather	84	Hogue Inc.	37	Pact Inc.	8	Ten Ring Precision	104, 105
Belt Mountain Enterprises	102	Dillon Precision Products	89	Hornady Manufacturing Co.	35	Para-Cord	105	Thunder Ranch Training	91, 117
Benchmade Knife Company	17	DonSon Products Inc.	101	IronMind Enterprises Inc.	99	Pearce Grip Inc.	86	TOPS KNIVES	98
Beretta	15	DoubleStar Corp.	82	Iver Johnson Arms, Inc.	85	Powder River Precision Inc.	105	Trausch Grips	96
Berry's Mfg. Inc.	87	Double Tap Ammunition	10	Kahr Arms	79	Pro Ears	90	Tuff Products Brand LLC	97
Black Hills Ammunition	103	El Paso Saddlery Co.	101	Kimber Mfg.	13, 19, 27, 124	PrOlix	17	Tuff-Writer Inc.	14
Blade-Tech Industries	28, 29	Elite Survival Systems	92	Lambert Knives	88	Puma Knife Company USA	107	Tussey Custom	104
Boker USA Inc.	86	European American Armory Corporation	21	LaserMax	103	Purdy Gear	82	U.S. Coins	12
Brian Tighe	101	FenixLight Limited	99	Lee Precision Inc.	110	Rick Hinderer Knives	83	USA Shooting Team	75
Brownells Inc.	92	Fiocchi of America	66	Les Baer Custom Inc.	43	Rim Rock Bullets Inc.	89	Viridian Green Laser Sights	18
Caron Forensics	12	Fletcher Custom Pistols LLC	104	Lightfoot Knives	84	Rio Grande Custom Grips	97	W.C. Wolff Company	96
Caspian Arms Ltd.	84	FMK Firearms	93	LockSAF	98	Rohrbaugh Firearms	78	Wilson Combat	47, 73
Chambers Custom Pistols	104	Frontier Gunleather	98	Lyman Products Corp.	79	S.W.A.T.	118	Wilson Tactical	10
Chip McCormick Custom	31	G96 Products Company	85	Mag-na-port Intl. Inc.	17	Sand Burr Gun Ranch	104	XS Sight Systems	78
Colt's Manufacturing Co.	3	Galco Gunleather	6	Majestic Arms Ltd.	83	SIG SAUER	41	Zerust	102
CRKT	18, 37	Gary Reeder Custom	104	Marvel Precision LLC	78	Simply Rugged Holsters	99		
Competition Electronics	112			Maxpedition Hard-Use Gear	7	Singletery Customs	104		

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Democrats owning firearms (from poll).

55%

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\$305,000

Median value of homes owned by Occupy protestors arrested in NY.

\$185,400

Median value of homes in US.

4,500

Troop deaths in Iraq.

1,700

Troop deaths in Afghanistan.

OVER \$1 TRILLION

Combined war costs since 9/11/2001.

32%

War vets feeling neither war was worth the sacrifices.

1.9 MILLION

Number of known species of all kinds on Earth.

98%

Chance of "positive" eating experience with Prime beef.

29%

Chance of "positive" eating experience with Choice beef.

flash. Hmm ... maybe velocity isn't that important after all? Before you get hysterical, think this over some more and hang-loose until we run that stopping power article soon.

Unless you're approaching rifle velocities, why beat yourself and your handguns up worrying about a gain of 100 or even 300 fps or so? A 950

fps bullet of adequate design will stop someone virtually as well as the same bullet at 1,250 fps, and sometimes better — so it's time to stop worrying. If you're hunting, velocity and bullet construction *can* be very important, but not as much as you might think. We'll talk about that another time. A bunch of stuff to think about, I'd say?

CEINER ARRESTED

Jonathan Arthur Ceiner, Inc. is known for making .22 conversion units, however the company's lack of customer service has always generated complaints among our readers. Well, it seems your complaints were well-founded, as the owner, Mr. Ceiner, was recently arrested by officers of the Brevard County Sheriff's Office and charged with "...schemes to defraud less than \$20,000, which is a third degree felony." There you go.



ASYM Ammo

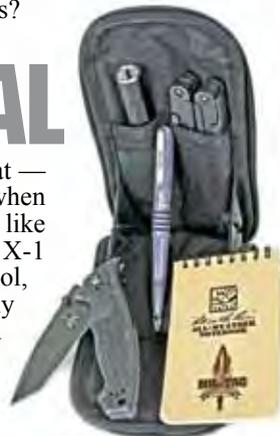
Pistolsmith Stan Chen, of Stan Chen Customs, is now crafting some of the absolute finest limited edition ammo around. It's consistent, accurate and virtually hand-made. My favorite load, the .45 ACP SDX, has a 185-gr. Barnes solid copper HP. I just walked in from chrographing some from a 5" Les Baer 1911: 998 fps, 994 fps, 1,001 fps, 998 fps and 995 fps. That consistency bodes well for accuracy, quality and reliability. More and more custom pistolsmiths are using ASYM ammo as their benchmark for accuracy testing. We can see why. www.americanhandgunner.com/chen-customs



In the "shamless endorsement of staffer's kids" department, we have 1-year-old Caden, and he's already a veteran at checkin' out *Handgunner*. Even though Caden ain't exactly old enough to talk yet, his expression pretty much says it all, when he was told how much that Les Baer cover gun cost. "Slivitz-blub-blithesska ... burp!" is the best we can figure what he said. Might translate to, "Geez ... that'd buy a lot of animal crackers, Mom!" You listenin' Les?

URBAN SURVIVAL

MIL-TAC's "Urban Survival Pack" (basic) is just that — about everything you'd need in one handy spot when the tornado hits. It's filled with MIL-TAC goodies like the MTF-2 folding knife, TDP-1 Defense Pen, Inova X-1 LED light, all-weather notebook and an SOG Multi-Tool, neatly held in MIL-TAC's Utility Pack. Priced separately it all adds up to over \$400, but as a kit, it's about \$270, a screamin' deal. One-stop shopping, as it were, and all top quality products! www.americanhandgunner.com/mil-tac





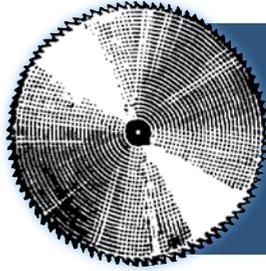
Art Gecko

Okay, I had to show this. Dear lady-friend and national treasure when it comes to leather working, Karla Van Horn, sent me this photo of a stunner-of-a-rig she made for a customer. This is all handwork, from the beginning to the end, and even under a magnifying glass, it's virtually perfect. What really got me was when she said, "Notice the gecko I worked into the pattern at the customer's request? Well, what else could I call this pattern from now on but *Art Gecko*?" I fell outta' my chair. *Feast your eyes at: www.americanhandgunner.com/purdy-gear-2*



Classic Editions

We're building up our library of scanned PDF files of early *Handgunner* and *GUNS* magazines. If you go to the links listed here, you can choose from many of the earliest issues and have a blast checking out the foamy hats and "gun nut" stories. Hey, we used to not mind being called gun nuts. Heck, I still don't mind! www.gunsmagazine.com/classic-guns-magazine-editions/; www.americanhandgunner.com/classic-handgunner-editions



Tool Usage Explained ...

TABLE SAW: A large stationary power tool, commonly used to launch wood projectiles for testing wall integrity. Can also be used to cut any length of lumber into pieces too short for the job intended.

THE INSIDER

PISTOL CLASSES

Jim Garthwaite, talented 1911 and Hi-Power pistolsmith and American Pistolsmiths Guild member, recently told me he's been offering classes on building custom 1911s and Hi-Powers. I haven't attended any of the classes, but I do know Jim, and he's a first-rate craftsman and a solid fellow, so I have no doubt they would be excellent classes. *For more info: www.garthwaite.com/services/classes.php*

TUFF PRODUCTS

QuickStar loaders are one of those "Why didn't I think of this?" things. Natt Stevens, guru at Tuff Products, said it's not only an easy way to carry five extra rounds (the "safe" load for a classic single action) of your .38 or .44/.45 ammo, but it's a nifty way to load safely and securely too. We tried 'em, and they work! www.americanhandgunner.com/tuff-products



LASERMAX & RUGER

Rugers new LC9 (*the Shooting Industry Academy of Excellence Handgun of the Year Award winner*) is now available factory-equipped with a LaserMax Centerfire Laser. The .380 LCP is also available with the laser option, so it gives someone a .380 or 9mm choice in a small, defensive pistol equipped with the LaserMax system and its ambiswitch. www.americanhandgunner.com/sturm-ruger-co

NSSF Traditional Ammo Fight

The National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) the trade association for the firearms, ammunition, hunting and shooting sports industry, is encouraging all hunters, shooters and gun owners to contact their United States Senators and Representatives for important legislation. You need to urge them to become original co-sponsors of the Hunting, Fishing and Recreational Shooting Sports Protection Act; legislation clarifying Congress has *not* given the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) authority to regulate ammunition and its components under the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). Currently, anti-hunting groups are trying to force the EPA to ban all traditional ammunition (lead based) under TSCA. The legislation would also prevent the EPA from banning traditional fishing tackle (can you say lead weights?). The NSSF contends state fish and game departments should have authority in the matter. We agree. There is no scientific evidence traditional ammunition has any adverse impact on wildlife, and a 2008 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed consuming game harvested with traditional ammo does not pose a human health risk. Let's stop this silliness before it gets out of hand. *Go here for more info on how you can help: <http://nssf.it/HR1558>*





HOW FAST IS FAST?

OVERTHINKING VELOCITY

One of the more common letters I get here are readers worrying if their self-defense load is adequate. Regardless of the caliber, they still worry. They often say, "The forums are full of a mixed bag of opinions, but I hesitate to trust comments from anyone who is unwilling to even sign their name. I know who you guys are, know the articles are vetted, and trust you — can you help me out?" One thing they usually bring up first, is the *velocity* of their chosen load.

While forums and websites can offer solid info, you're smart to balance it with other resources. Your personal experience, books, articles, a trusted friend's opinions, etc. all serve to find a common denominator. Once the chaff floats away, what remains is probably pretty good to rely on. Right off the top — and we'll prove this in a future issue with a new, groundbreaking stopping power article — *any* handgun caliber (from 9mm/.38 Special on up), loaded with reliable, modern defensive ammunition, will do the job to protect you. And amazingly enough, in our study we learned virtually *any* caliber, from 9mm to .44 Mag, takes from one to two shots to stop a bad guy. The final numbers showed around 55 percent are stopped within one to two shots — regardless of caliber! There truly are no magic bullets or calibers, and shot placement and penetration are paramount.

But still, many of you are caught up in the velocity issue. "Yeah, but isn't 1,257 fps better than 1,245 fps? It is, isn't it? Isn't it?" And then you



Load (.357 Mag.)	2.25" Bbl.	3" Bbl.	4" Bbl.	6.5" Bbl.	18.5" Rifle
Am. Eagle 158 JSP	1,099	1,187	1,169	1,187	1,709
Rem. 158 SJHP	1,108	1,186	1,263	1,274	1,770
Extreme Shock 160	944	973	1,049	1,083	1,303
Buff. Bore 140 Barnes	1,366	1,474	1,498	1,496	1,957
Double Tap 110 Barnes	1,289	1,413	1,447	1,419	2,080
Federal 148 WC (.38 Sp.)	645	648	696	648	789

invest hard-earned dollars chasing that velocity nirvana, which is, I might add, *mostly a complete waste of your time*. Huh? Did he just say that?

I've been doing some work with Ruger's new M77 .357 Magnum bolt action rifle. A very cool, short, light rifle, just made for kids and recoil-sensitive shooters. So, I had a fairly good selection of .357 Mag loads on-hand. I thought, hey, let's shoot them in a wide range of barrel lengths and see just what velocity changes might occur. And then, let's ask if any of it really matters in the real world? Check out the chart, and we'll chat about it a bit.

Let's think about that stopping power/velocity question I hear so often. Our bullet weights ranged from 110 grains to 160 grains, and velocities of the .357s ranged from a low of 944 fps (Extreme Shock 160 gr.) in the 2.25" Performance Center .357 J-frame, to a high of 1,496 fps (Buffalo Bore 140-gr. Barnes) in the 6.5" Highway Patrolman. I tossed in the rifle velocities just for fun so you could see what happens when you bring a rifle to a handgun fight, even when using some pistol calibers. The Ruger gave 1,957 with that same Buffalo Bore load, and 2,080 with DoubleTap's 110 Barnes. Once you reach near 2,000 fps, serious things begin to happen, and then velocity tends to work well — but not so much before then.

But what did we learn? As far as handgun loads go, I learned you *don't*

want to shoot heavy .357 loads in J-frame guns, especially in lightweight models. Muzzleblast is shocking (I can't imagine firing one without hearing protection, like at night in your bedroom ...) and the palm-slapping recoil borders on uncontrollable. Just don't do it. But look at those velocities — *any of the loads tested*, from the low of 944 to the high of 1,496 would be very capable self-defense loads. And, if it were me, I'd lean toward the moderate ones, with heavier bullets, so they aren't so much of a handful. Check out how the velocity of some loads increased with barrel length, and not so much for others. The more consistent loads often offer good performance in shorter barrels since the powders seem to burn well in shorter barrels. The penalty in recoil, muzzleblast, controllability and cost when you move from 950 fps to 1,450 fps is extreme, while the stopping power increase is hard to measure in the real world. Read that sentence again. Stopped is *stopped*, regardless of the velocity.

I threw in the 148-gr. .38 Special wadcutter just for fun. Note from 2.25" to 6.5" you don't gain a thing. As a matter of fact, other than the slight increase in the 4" gun (normal velocity variances) it was very consistent. That's why that load if so accurate, and burns cleanly in short-barreled guns. Gel testing I've done shows 148-gr. lead wadcutter often penetrate 14" or more, and offer mild recoil and no muzzle

Continued on page 120

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