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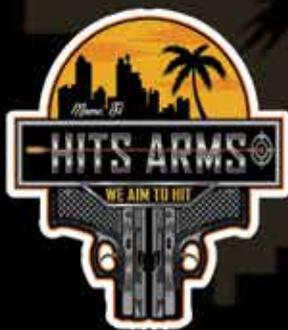
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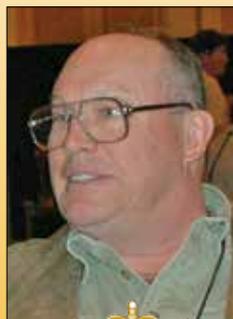
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## SPECIAL DELIVERY FROM GERMANY

I support your assessment fully ("The French Do Something Right," Sept/Oct 22) and want to mention I own one 7.65mm Manurhin PP from 1970. My father gave me this pistol when I successfully passed the Bavarian hunter's examination at the age of 16, and I honor the reliable PP even today. Since I own two original Manurhin (Mulhouse/FRA) instruction manuals from the '50s, published in German, I feel free to provide a set of copies for you ...  
Gerhard Bahr, Colonel (GEF), ret.

*And this, ladies and gentlemen, is what brings us together. What a wonderful surprise receiving this note from Col. Bahr along with a copy (in German, English and Spanish) of an original manual. I do so love this job as one of the best parts is connecting with readers of similar interest and passion. While thousands of miles may separate us at times, we're bound by shared appreciation, sometimes sprinkled with a bit of nostalgia. —TM*



## Revolver Suppressors?

The Sept/Oct issue of *Handgunner* has an advertisement from Heritage Manufacturing. The ad suggests their new tactical cowboy revolver can be fitted with compensators or suppressors. Most knowledgeable people know this cannot be done. I would suggest one of your writers doing an

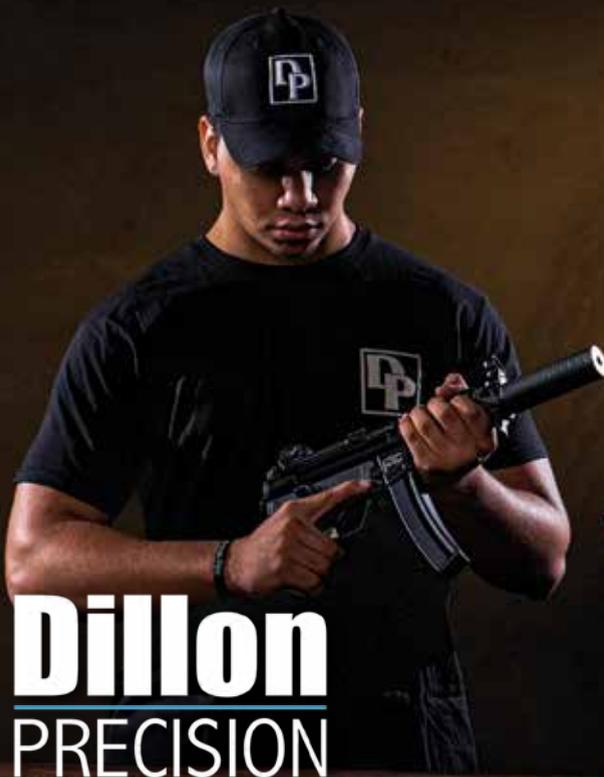
article on the subject. This has long been a pet peeve of mine. I see on TV shows the bad guys often with a silencer attached to it.

Paul Noble

*You can attach a suppressor to a revolver — there's technically nothing preventing that action. The "gotcha," if*

*you want to call it that, is it won't be as quiet because of the high-pressure gas escaping from the cylinder gap. So, it works at reducing noise, but theoretically, it wouldn't be as quiet as a semi-automatic pistol (with no cylinder gap) of the same caliber.*

*The Russian Nagant revolver had an "interesting" solution for this challenge.*



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The combination of a moving cylinder front to back, extended brass cases and an inset bullet caused the extended case mouth to enter the forcing cone prior to the shot, thereby "eliminating" the cylinder gap. It was a weird revolver with an awful trigger, but on the other hand, worked better with a suppressor. —TM

## Appendix Carry

I read about the foam insert you use for IWB appendix carry. What I didn't see either in the article or on the video where you spoke about it is, who makes it and sells it? How is it affixed to the holster? Point up or down? Is Velcro supplied with the insert or not? Where exactly do you fit the foam insert? To the wing of the holster or the main body? In short, could you answer these questions for us slow to understand older farts? I mean this kinda stuff wasn't around when I was in uniform ('70s through mid '90s) so HALP, please.

Mike

Mike — I figure a picture is worth a thousand words of explaining all this bio-physics, so here's a photo of my setup. For this teardrop shape, I have the fat end down, and the whole mess backing the body of the holster where the slide resides. LAS Concealment ([LASConcealment.com](http://LASConcealment.com)) sells them for about 15 bucks, or you can shape your own from most any closed-cell foam. —TM



## .30 Super Carry

It seems the Super Carry is a solution for which there is no problem. It is also a caliber for which guns will be more expensive, ammunition outlets will be fewer and ammunition itself will remain pricey. If I were to guess, this caliber will join Club Boutique — where the .41 Magnum, .40 S&W, 10 mm, .357 SIG, .50 AE and their brethren hang out. Club Boutique has many members — including many post-Civil War handgun calibers and technologies, which have not stood the test of time. BTW Club Boutique gets a lot of visitors who like something different or who see beyond just mere market popularity.

One of the great things about handgunning is its willingness to experiment



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Kevin Michalowski's 3 Favorite Things (USCCA Expo 2018)

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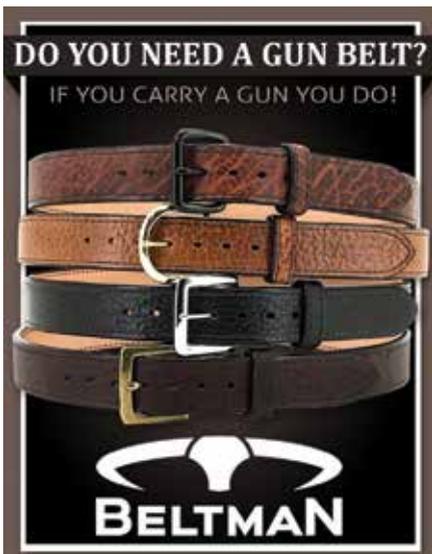
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## SPEAK OUT

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Bruce Woods

### Survival Options

In reference to "One and Done" in the Sept./Oct. issue, musing over survival firearms is always interesting. Seems like everyone leaves out a few possible selections when it comes to calibers. Since you are not going to run down to the nearest store in such times, one should have the loads they need already stored.

Why not a .22 TCM? It is reloadable and can be used in rifle and handgun for a combo if desired. Same can be said for the .32 H&R Magnum for revolver fans.

For those who want something really loud, there is the .327 Federal.

And for rifle only, there is the .25-20 and the .32-20 that can be really versatile with handloading for strong actions.

The redeeming qualities of these are they take up little more space than rimfires and can be loaded to fit many situations with jacketed and lead projectiles.

As for .22 LR and .22 WMR, sure, they are good. Even more so with the larger capacity models of late. However, when the supply runs dry and variety is lacking, they can easily be approximated with small centerfire choices.

Just a thought.

Carl Hand

### Gun Cranks TV

Just finished watching the *Gun Cranks* on lever guns. You guys are spot on again. They are perfect for hunting in the woods, simpler and less prone to problems. I wanted a 444 Marlin for a lot of years and finally got one. Jerry Schriver was the inspiration. Great gun. I have them in .22, .22 Mag, .357 Mag, .44 Mag, .30-30 and, of course, .444 Marlin. Awesome guns!

Keep the Gun Cranks going.

Bob

To see current and past episodes of the *Gun Cranks*, visit [YouTube.com/GunCranks](http://YouTube.com/GunCranks). —TM

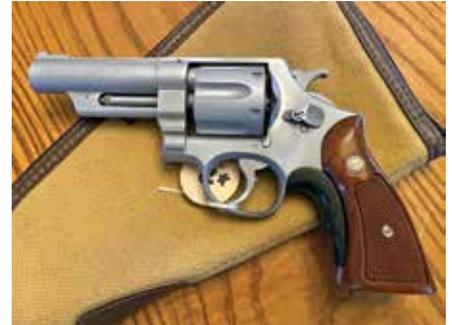
### What's This S&W?

I have a dilemma! I have a Model 1917 S&W revolver I am tasked with identifying and selling as an estate piece. The bottom of the grip says 1917, but it has a Model 1955 bull

barrel. The finish was redone in (maybe) hard chrome. It's a great-looking gun, but I am not sure exactly what it is.

I have been in contact with S&W, but first, they said, based on the serial number, it was a 1917. Then, after sending pics, they said it was a 1955 as that is stamped on the barrel.

Mike



Mike, your base gun 1917 is a low serial number from the first year of production in 1917. I note whoever did the conversion also removed the lanyard loop from the bottom of the grip. The barrel is from a 1955 Target Model S&W (.45 ACP). This sort of barrel change was a moderately common modification in the '60s and '70s. It appears whoever did the work did a good job. The finish is most definitely hard chrome, also popular in the same time frame.

Unfortunately, there is no collector value to a gun modified like this. A nice, original 1917 may go as high as \$1,800 or more if it's minty. "Shooter" grade guns seem to be selling in the \$800 range now.

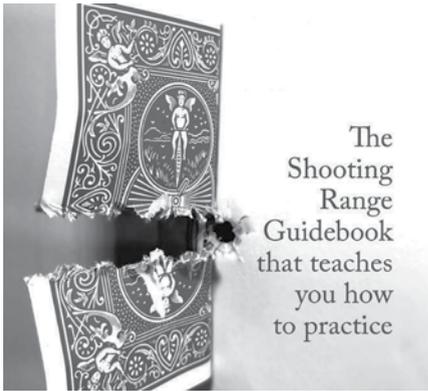
If the gun functions correctly and is in good mechanical condition, the value is as a "shooter" to someone looking for a nice, heavier barreled .45 ACP revolver.

We think the best avenue for this would be listing it online on [gunbroker.com](http://gunbroker.com) or a similar online auction-style sales site. The key is to find two people who both want a "shooter" like this, and hopefully, they'll bid it up! I do think it's a handsomely done bit of work, though! I hope this helps. —RH

### Truth?

With all the folks attuned to conspiracy theories, it is remarkable few have so far recognized Joe Biden for who he truly is — an agent of the firearms industry. Like Barack Obama before him, Joe Biden was certainly secretly funded by large cash contributions from major gun and ammunition manufacturers who recognized these politicians would single-handedly sell more guns and ammo than all the best ad campaigns. By threatening to outlaw guns, they

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created an unmatched “get guns while you still can” panic and then added campaigns to hamstring law enforcement and encourage lawlessness — a triple whammy that could hardly be matched for boosting gun sales, short of the outbreak of a zombie apocalypse.

On an unrelated matter, is Will Dabbs aware of COVID-Z? The symptoms include a staggering gait and an insatiable hunger for human brains ...

Jeff Sourbeer

*In these troubling times, it's important to maintain a sense of humor, isn't it? Thanks for the note, Jeff. —TM*

## Sight Distance?

Most of the time I read a review, it seems 25 yards is the standard. When I read about the distance for defensive shootings, it's about 7 yards. Then I see the articles for laser sights and other kinds of sights. Do they really make a difference over iron sights if most shootings are 7 yards? Keep up the good work.

Bob Watson

*Thanks Bob, I think there may be a couple of questions here. We normally test guns at 25 yards to help discern the mechanical “ideal” accuracy of a handgun, so we all know what it “can” do. As for self-defense scenarios, you're correct. Statistically, most are at short ranges, but no one is assured of that. Consider the Texas West Freeway church incident (about 25 yards) and the recent Indiana mall shooting (40–43 yards). As for lasers and optics, I believe the benefits of those aren't as much for distance shooting as easier, more rapid, accurate sighting in different conditions. Lasers are great in dark conditions, while optics help many shooters with less than perfect eyesight. —TM*

## Pinkies & Dumb Things

I also read Ms. Juchnowski's article when it came out about the pinkie and its influence on accuracy. After reading Mr. Stuart's experiences, I felt I should now write. When I was in SWAT training, my instructor told us the pinkie finger on the grip has the single biggest impact on shooting accurately. It seems the sympathetic movement caused by the little finger, when squeezing, pressing, pulling (or whatever terminology you want to use) the trigger does more to pull your shots offline than almost anything else you do. I am hard to convince, so when I next went to the range to shoot, I pointed my pinkies forward as he demonstrated. I'll be danged if my

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## SPEAK OUT

shots didn't hit dead center (no pun intended). Now I realize, not everybody will have the same results, but my results were good enough that I tell people, if they're pulling their shots down and to their shooting hand side, to give that a try until they can get a handle on moving just their trigger finger when they shoot.

I also agree in this day and time, people take themselves entirely too seriously. I've done some pretty stupid things too, Tom. We could possibly compare notes as to who is the most fortunate to have made it to their current age. As always, though, this is the first-class magazine for people wanting to learn about handguns! Keep up the great work. And you should still try to get Connor and Clint Smith to return to the masthead. They and Mas are still my favorites.

William Carmickle

### New Grips, Old Vaquero

EddieKay from N.J. — avid reader of *American Handgunner*. I just purchased Ruger Magna-Tusk Aged Stag Grips for my Old Vaquero 4" from Arizona Custom Grips — azcustom-grips@gmail.com. My 'smith will fit them on in a couple weeks



### Cultist!

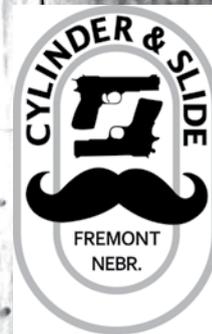
I really enjoy reading the articles of gun magazine writers that write about guns I have. I learn more about my guns than gun companies publish or that I could ever even guess at. When I discover an article about a firearm I own, I keep the article and co-locate the article with the firearm.

In your Sept./Oct. 2022 issue, I read articles about three guns I own. I even found out my Beretta Model 70 is a cult classic. Whether that is good or bad depends upon which cult, I suppose. Three cheers for the best issue ever of *American Handgunner*!

W.A. Rogers

### Mexican Loop Holster

Mike Venturino, I have enjoyed your articles for years. In the Mexican Loop article (Sept./Oct. 22) you mentioned a Mexican Loop holster



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with a FOK stamp on it. FOK was a hardware warehouse located in South St. Paul, MN. They inventoried everything from meat hanging tracks, household goods, pocket knives, etc. for sale in hardware stores around the Midwest. Your holster probably came from that company. I believe the FOK warehouse was closed in the 1960s. The company may have been merged with the Ace Hardware company, but I am not sure.

Keep up the good work and have some fun today.

Chan Zuber

### Revolver Requests

It would be nice to have an article on the Anderson-Wheeler rebirth of the old Webley revolver in .357 Mag.

An article on the Janz German revolver would also be interesting. For example, how does it compare with the corresponding model of the Korth revolvers?

Dick Hamly

### Ed Brown

First, I want you to know that *American Handgunner* is my favorite magazine. I have been a reader for

years. Great editors and photographers. And you tell it like it is.

I want to share an experience I recently had with a well-known and respected supplier of firearms and related equipment. I placed an order with Ed Brown Products for a few 1911 parts. They confirmed the order and sent the shipping information to me within a couple of hours. The shipper then sent the tracking number and expected delivery date. Later that day, I wondered about my order and checked my emails. FedEx said it had been delivered at 3:38 p.m. that day to my front porch. I had been working outside all day and had not seen a FedEx truck come to my home. I live in a rural area and there is no way I could have missed it. Before getting bent out of shape I checked nearby homes to make sure it wasn't delivered there by mistake. No luck.

As I was preparing to send FedEx an email, I noticed an email from Ed Brown Products. They were confirming the delivery and if I was happy with my purchase. I quickly sent them an email explaining my shipment was not delivered and that I had looked for it nearby. I then sent FedEx an email to start the process of them investigating where my package was left. Before I fin-

ished that email, I received another from Ed Brown. They apologized and graciously told me they would replace my missing order and ship it to me free. I received it on Monday morning through Priority Mail. That was fast!

Ed Brown Products did not have to do this as it was not their fault. But they stepped up and showed they are a class act. Not every company would have done this. I would highly recommend Ed Brown Products to everyone. Their products are excellent, and their service is excellent. They have a customer for life. Still haven't heard from FedEx.

Thank you, Ed Brown Products.

Roy Patterson

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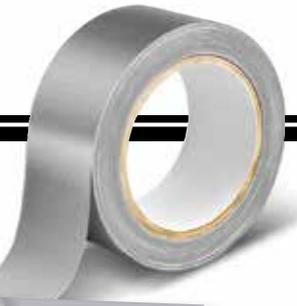


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## RELOADING SCIENCE:

# DON'T CRIMP MY STYLE

**C**rimping is a bit like duct tape, a hammer or maybe a cold beer. Liberal use of any of these is assumed capable of fixing most problems. And you know what they say about “assuming...”

The assumptive definition of “crimping” is that it locks the bullet in place, keeping it right where it should be until it’s shoved out the fiery end by the contained conflagration. Once again, you know what they say about “assuming....”

Let’s take a closer look at what crimping is and, more importantly, what it isn’t.

### Why Crimp?

Before diving in, let’s discuss the “why” behind the crimping thing. It’s really, really important for bullets to remain in their original and specified position in the cartridge case.

If a bullet gets pushed into the cartridge case, even a little, firing

pressure can reach unsafe levels. Remember, every load recipe is carefully designed to fall within safe pressure limitations based on a calculated volume determined by the case’s interior and the base of a bullet seated to its proper depth. When a bullet is set back into the case, there is less available volume for the same amount of powder burn. All else the same, less volume translates to higher-than-planned pressure — kind of like putting a small nozzle on a hose or tightening your belt three extra notches.

Conversely, sometimes a bullet moves the other way. If a cartridge is too long because the bullet is sticking too far out the front end of the case, it may not fit in the magazine or chamber properly. Sometimes the projectile will get stuck in the rifling on chambering, causing the cartridge to come apart. Bullets in revolver cylinders may jam the cylinder’s ability to rotate freely.

Bullets in cartridges waiting to be fired (in a revolver cylinder or semi-auto magazine) are subject to all sorts of g-forces forward and back like recoil, slides slamming into cartridge bases and all that, so it’s essential to ensure bullets are firmly locked into place in the cartridge case.

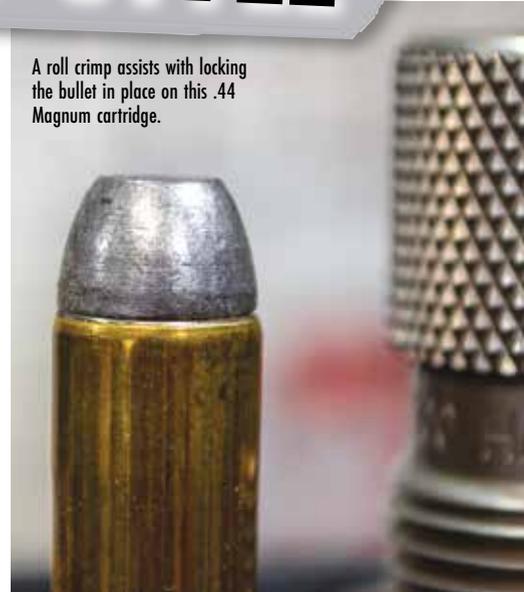
### Is Crimping The Answer?

Yes. And no. It depends on the nature of the cartridge, and even then, I might describe crimping more like using suspenders with a belt.

What “primarily” holds a bullet in place is case-neck tension. Think of the friction between the bearing surface of the bullet and the inside of the cartridge case. If there’s a tight fit between bullet and case, friction will do a marvelous job of ensuring the bullet stays put.

This sounds too simple, so you know there are

A roll crimp assists with locking the bullet in place on this .44 Magnum cartridge.



exceptions, right? To explain those, we need to examine two styles of crimping: roll and taper.

### Roll Crimping

Since many (most?) revolver cases headspace (fancy word for indexing their position in the chamber relative to the breech and firing pin) using the case rim, it doesn’t really matter what’s going on with the leading edges of the case mouth — there’s no need for a ledge on the case mouth as there is with rimless straight-wall cartridges, as we’ll see in a minute.

A roll crimp technique for such cartridges uses a crimping die to press the case mouth edges into the bullet’s body. Many lead bullets have a crimping groove for just this purpose. On jacketed revolver bullets, you might see a cannelure groove. That ridged pattern circling the bullet offers space for the case rim to be “pressed” or “rolled” into the bullet’s jacket.

The net result of this technique is an extra layer of security. Case-neck tension does much of the job of holding the bullet in its proper place. The roll crimp helps lock the bullet to the edges of the case mouth, further



Driving the dowel into this slightly undersized hole will create plenty of “case neck tension.”



You can “taper crimp” this with a vise until the cows come home, but the dowel won’t ever be locked in place.

preventing movement forward or backward during recoil.

### Taper Crimping

Many straight wall cartridges like 9mm, .40 S&W and .45 ACP headspace on their case mouth ledges. If you look into the chamber, you'll see an interior shelf to trap the leading edge of the cartridge case. This sets the proper position of the entire cartridge relative to the chamber and firing pin. If you roll crimp a cartridge like this, there's no ledge on the case mouth to reach a hard stop on the chamber shelf.

Taper-crimping dies simply press the case walls back into a cylindrical shape, leaving the case mouth ledge intact. When seating a bullet, it's necessary to flare the case mouth a bit, so the taper crimp step just restores the proper diameter of the case mouth.

Don't rely on taper crimping to lock the bullet in place!

Let's illustrate this point with a

woodworking analogy. Imagine you're seating 1/4" wooden pegs in a board. If you drill a 3/8" hole, the peg will be loose. You can stick that board in a vise all day long, pressing in from the sides to "taper crimp" it, and you'll never achieve a tight fit. However, if you drill a 3/16" hole and use some force to insert the 1/4" peg, it'll be plenty snug.

The same concept applies to brass and bullets. Simply shoving the sides of the case into the bullet will never produce a tight and proper fit. In fact, too much taper crimp is a bad thing. Take care not to overexpand the case mouth, so seating the bullet develops case-neck tension.

The bottom line is this: Crimping isn't duct tape. It's not designed to fix a problem that shouldn't exist in the first place. Focus on doing the preceding steps properly and use the crimping step as designed, whether taper or roll.



Cartridges like this 9mm and .45 use a taper crimp. The "shelf" of the cartridge case mouth needs to remain in place for headspacing.



Note the bullet's crimping groove. It's designed for an aggressive roll crimp.



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## I'M ADDICTED TO JIGS



The DMI 1911 fixture plate cutting a precise 31.5-degree feed ramp in the mill with a 0.50" ball mill cutter.

Jigs are my life. Like many gunsmiths, jigs are a must-have, particularly for repetitive work. They save time and build consistency. Not every process has a jig, but many do.

I use as many jigs or fixtures as possible; in business, "time is money," so using a jig to set up a milling or a hand process saves time. There are jigs for small things like sight cutting and large-scale jigs for checkering. As you can imagine, the costs can also run from small to large. Some jigs I make; others are available from manufacturers. Let's talk about both.

Ned Christiansen's dovetail sight holding jig makes it simple to clamp small sights for either hand or machine work.



## EVERYDAY JIGS

One small jig or fixture I use is very simple; it's a sight-holding jig. Sights are tough to clamp properly and this jig makes it simple. Master gunsmith, tool-and-die maker Ned Christiansen offered a two-jig set a few years ago. The set has four dovetails in the most popular sizes. One jig for front sights, the other for rear sights. It's actually quite simple, but makes working on sights so much easier. Slip in the sight, tighten the set screw and mill or file as needed. It makes installing a gold bead simple.

Another jig I use is Harrison Designs' grip safety jig. The jig slips into the 1911 trigger bow slot in the frame and allows me to

blend the safety to the frame in either the engaged position or the relaxed position. I blend all my grip safeties using this jig. It's a huge time saver.

Some fixtures have multiple uses; the DMI 1911 fixture plate looks like a large protractor. It allows the smith to secure a 1911 frame indexing on the slide stop pin hole for several cuts. The 1911 blueprints show all the hole locations and measurements based off the STP hole. The protractor grid allows for cutting perfect 31.5-degree feed ramps. It is also used for cutting frames. The frame can be removed and replaced on the plate without zero loss.

The Power Custom sear jig by Ron Power has about 20 different adapters for honing the sear and hammers on many makes and models. Buy one base unit; then adapters are available individually. The unit is well-made and heavy, which makes it stable while working on the bench or table.

## DIY JIGS

In some cases, I have to make my own jig. For a one-off project, I recently had to make a fixture to hold a 1911 hammer flat for milling. This was to recreate a John Giles-style hammer for one of his guns that was missing the original. The shape of a 1911 hammer makes it challenging to hold. My jig is a flat aluminum plate with a drilled and tapped hole and a stud that goes through the strut pin hole to prevent the hammer from moving while milling. I might never use the jig again, but I had to have it for this job.



A small jig designed to hold a 1911 hammer securely for precise milling.



The new Krebs jig by EGW (Evolution Gun Works) to cut standard 1911 frame tangs for a beavertail grip safety on a milling machine.

## FOR PROS AND AMATEURS

One great jig/fixture I used when I started was a "Krebs'" 1911 beavertail fitting jig by Marc Krebs. This jig allows me to cut the standard GI grip safety tangs on the 1911 for installation of a "beavertail grip safety." Level the jig in your mill vise, then install your frame using a provided gage pin through the jig and thumb safety pin hole in the frame. A milling 3/8th cutter removes small amounts from the frame until the new grip safety will fit. This is done by rotating the frame on the axis of the provided gage pin. Material can be removed in large rough cuts and then in smaller increments until the desired fit is achieved. The tang radius can be as small as 0.220". This is a valuable jig for either the occasional user or the professional. George Smith at EGW has started production of the jig with a few improvements like a frame spacer and a 0.250" radius gage, which is used as a reference point to make quicker work until the final dimension cuts are made. The jig's finish is hard anodized. Set up is fast, and the cutting is even faster. With practice, it takes about 20 minutes start to stop.



For more info: [EGWGuns.com](http://EGWGuns.com), [PowerCustom.com](http://PowerCustom.com), [HarrisonCustom.com](http://HarrisonCustom.com), [MichiGuns.com](http://MichiGuns.com), [DOTYMI.com](http://DOTYMI.com)



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## THE .30 SUPER CARRY BACKSTORY

There is much hoopla in the firearms press about the new .30 Super Carry and the handguns being built for it. I don't own one of the pistols, have never seen one of the cartridges and doubt I ever will shoot a .30 Super Carry. This isn't being ugly; it's just the *Way of the Dinosaur*. (That's me.)

### THE PEDERSEN DEVICE

But I can give you some interesting backstory. Let's return to 1917/1918. The U.S. Army was embroiled in World War I's trench warfare. Invading German trenches with five-round capacity Model 1903 Springfield rifles battle-zeroed for 547 yards and fighting at off-the-muzzle ranges just wasn't an optimal situation. Especially considering the Germans had thousands of their 8"-barreled P08 "Artillery" 9mm Lugers with 32-round drum magazines with which to shoot back. Of course, the reverse was true when German Sturm Truppen landed in Doughboy trenches.

Therefore, a solution to the U.S. Army's dilemma was envisioned in 1917 by noted arms designer J.D. Pedersen. On his own, he developed a device that could be fitted to M1903 .30-06 Springfield rifles converting them from bolt

This is an original box of the U.S. .30 Auto Pistol Model of 1918 ammunition. The cartridge at the left is a round from the box. At right is a round of French 7.65mm Long.



action, five-round shooters to semi-auto, 40-round shooters. U.S. Army officials were wild about the idea.

However, the Pedersen Device necessitated a new cartridge. Mr. Pedersen had developed it too. It used a rimless case, 0.78" long with a 0.308", 80-grain bullet giving nominal velocity from an M1903's 24" barrel of 1,300 fps. The U.S. government christened it with the lengthy name of U.S. .30 Auto Pistol Model of 1918. (The words "Auto Pistol" were used to fool German spies.)

The Pedersen Device fed those rounds from an awkward-looking magazine angled from the top right of special Mark I M1903s and ejected fired cartridges through a port on the action's left side.

Pedersen Devices and its ".30 Auto Pistol" ammunition made it to France but hostilities ended before them seeing action.



At right is a French Model 1935A. At left is a U.S. Model 1911.

### THE FRENCH GO .30

Now we're into the mid-1930s. A French engineer named Charles Petter, working for *Societe Alsacienne de Constructions Mechaniques* (SACM), designed a new pistol for the French Army. Although it vaguely resembled the American U.S. Model 1911, it was petite in comparison. Barrel length was 4.30" with a weight of only 26 oz. Chambering was for a likewise petite cartridge called 7.65mm Longue (Long). Have you figured out where I'm heading here? That's right, the "new" French cartridge had a rimless case of 0.78" length, with an 85-grain bullet at a nominal velocity of about 1,100 fps. Evidently, the French had obtained some of the U.S. .30 Auto Pistol Model of 1918 ammunition and liked it, except they increased the bullet diameter to 0.310/0.311".

France's new military pistol was designated Model 1935A. It is a delight to handle with a slightly curved grip frame that fits hands better than most straight grips. Also, its checkered black plastic grips are

comfortable. Safety is a hammer block type. Flip it up and solid steel blocks the hammer from hitting its firing pin. A magazine disconnect doesn't allow the pistol to fire if its magazine is absent. Sights are simple: a small blade front dovetailed to the slide and notched rear machined integral with the slide. What ruins its aesthetics is a baked-on, black paint finish.

Are you wondering why I'm so familiar with the French Model 1935A? The story is too long to detail here, but I got my first while in my teens and sold it long ago. I bought another in 2010. I managed to purchase some original French ammo with the newest one. In sealed boxes and looking pristine, not one round of it would fire. My shooting has been chiefly with cast bullets from Lyman mold #313249, sized

to 0.313" and weighing 81 grains. Brass is brand-new from Starline. In fact, I use properly adjusted .32 Auto reloading dies. My velocities are running around 1,100 fps, depending on the exact handload.

### WHAT COMES AROUND, GOES AROUND

So how does this connect to the new .30 Super Carry? Well, the new case is rimless, 0.827" long and loaded with 100- to 115-grain, 0.313" jacketed bullets. The velocity quotes I see mention 1,250 fps but with stupendous pressures of 45,000 psi. By comparison, the maximum 9mm Luger pressures are 35,000 psi. Is the .30 Super Carry just a copy of the old U.S. .30 Auto Pistol Model 1918 round but made a mite longer for safety's sake? Supposedly not. Regardless, there is definitely a backstory worth considering.



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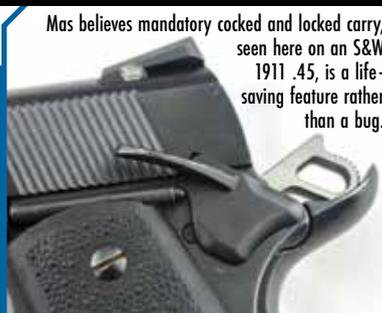
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HEIGHT

## WEAPON RETENTION

# IS A LIFE-AND-DEATH CONCERN



Mas believes mandatory cocked and locked carry, seen here on an S&W 1911 .45, is a life-saving feature rather than a bug.



**W**e must remember every suspect we close with has access to a pistol — ours.

On December 30, 2021, Sergeant Marlene Rittmanic of the Bradley, Illinois Police Department was shot and killed as she begged for her life, and her partner, Officer Tyler Bailey, was shot and wounded. The weapon was Sergeant Rittmanic's duty pistol, snatched away from her by the murder suspect.

This sort of tragic outcome happens less often than it once did. Thirty years ago, one large East Coast police department's union determined every officer killed in the line of duty in the agency's long history had been slain with a snatched service revolver. On the opposite coast, a large sheriff's department reported roughly half of the murdered deputies in their recent history had been shot with snatched weapons. Nationwide, the commonly quoted figure was approximately 20% of police murdered on duty were slain when the killer gained control of the officer's weapon.

## THEN AND NOW

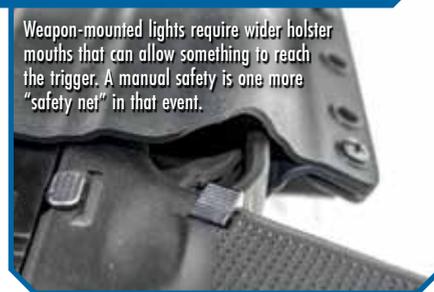
**T**he number of officers killed with their weapons is lower now and is attributable to multiple factors. One is the prevalence of improved security holsters typified by the Safariland series designed by Bill Rogers. Another is the wide adoption of gun-retention techniques pioneered by Jim Lindell in the 1970s at the Kansas City (MO) Regional Police Academy and the National Law Enforcement Training Center. Each of these factors has probably saved as many police lives as the adoption of lightweight daily-wear body armor invented by Richard Davis in the early 1970s.

Another consideration is most uniformed police personnel today carry a TASER in addition to their pistol. The TASER's similarity to a duty pistol (in shape) and use has been criticized due to a relatively few high-profile shooting cases in which cops accidentally shot people when they thought they were triggering their electronic control device. However, people overlook one advantage of the TASER being shaped and "fired" like a pistol: Handgun-retention techniques also work well for defense against TASER disarms.

Another new trend we must consider is the near-universal adoption of weapon-mounted lights (WML) on uniform-duty pistols. To allow the light's passage, the holster's mouth has to be made wider than in the past. This can create a gap sufficient for something narrow — like the spidery-thin finger of a psychotic child or an anorexic female junkie — to enter the holster, press the trigger and fire the gun while it's still locked in its holster by the security device.

What could prevent that? It may be time to re-examine another "hardware solution" from the past, the on-safe duty pistol.

Weapon-mounted lights require wider holster mouths that can allow something to reach the trigger. A manual safety is one more "safety net" in that event.



## THE THUMB SAFETY

**I**n 1977, a decade after Illinois State Police became the first large domestic L.E. agency to adopt an autoloader, ISP permitted me to research the results. I identified 13 troopers who were alive because they had the S&W Model 39 9mm. Only four were "firepower saves" when they would probably have been killed had they had the old six-shooter; the rest were all disarming incidents. Two or three involved the trooper punching the mag release as he felt the gun leaving his hand, activating the magazine disconnect safety. All the rest were saved because the gun was on-safe, and the

would-be cop-killer couldn't figure out how to activate the pistol. We have seen this many times with other agencies and on-safe duty pistols.

The value of the manual safety seemed to disappear from institutional memory, replaced by the mantra of the KISS ("Keep It Simple, Stupid") principle. Today, those who realize violence isn't always straightforward and cops aren't stupid still have the thumb safety option available. Our most popular striker-fired duty pistol, the GLOCK, can be retrofitted with the thumb safety designed by now-retired Syracuse cop Joe Cominoli and available through Tarnhelm

Supply. Our other two most popular striker duty guns, the S&W M&P and the SIG P320, can be ordered from their factories with very ergonomic ambidextrous thumb safeties. In my opinion, on-safe carry is a feature, not a bug, on the currently resurgent 1911 duty pistol. This feature solves the "spider fingers in the security holster" problem and provides another safety net for an officer involved in a life-or-death struggle over their service pistol.

This column is respectfully dedicated to the memory of Sgt. Marlene Rittmanic, Bradley (IL) PD.



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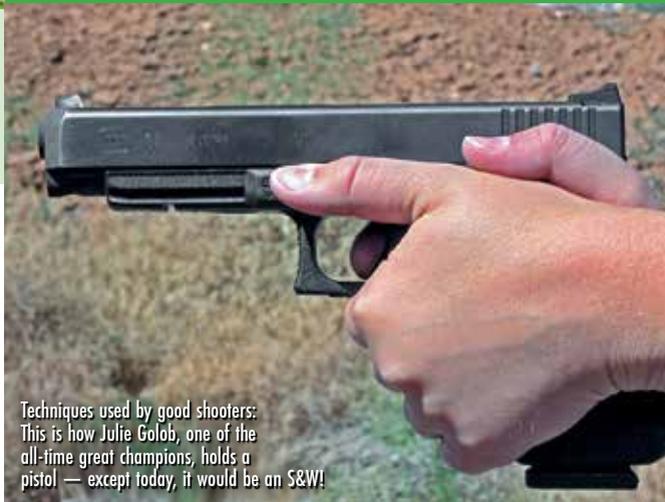
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A major benefit of competition is learning safety and gun handling skills from an experienced shooter. Steve Welsh has introduced dozens of shooters to the sport for no reward except the satisfaction of supporting his club.

# TOP 10 REASONS COMPETITION MAKES YOU BETTER

It seems only a small percentage of handgun owners shoot in organized competition. At various times I've competed in bullseye, metallic silhouette, speed shooting and practical pistol — and I've found several benefits.



Techniques used by good shooters: This is how Julie Golob, one of the all-time great champions, holds a pistol — except today, it would be an S&W!

## 1 MEETING PEOPLE WHO SHARE YOUR INTERESTS

A shooter I once met emigrated from an Asian country and joined all sorts of social and sporting associations to meet people. He said most groups had people whom he knew didn't like him or, conversely, were out to prove their tolerance by collecting him as their "Asian" friend. He disliked both types equally. He said shooters were the only group genuinely indifferent to race, gender, religion or other differences. "All they care about is whether you handle firearms safely and follow the rules. Do those things, and you are one of them."

## 2 OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN FROM GOOD SHOOTERS

Just being a competitor is no guarantee of skill, but odds are there will be a few capable shooters from whom to learn.

## 3 OPPORTUNITY TO SEE (AND MAYBE EVEN TO TRY) A WIDE RANGE OF FIREARMS AND GEAR

Etiquette tip: Don't ask to handle or shoot someone else's firearm. Wait until they offer, which they will after getting to know and trust you.

## 4 CUTTING RELOADING COSTS

Every competitor I've known has been a reloader. We used to cut costs by getting together for bulk

orders of components, buying 100,000 primers and 64 lbs. of powder, for example. When shooting 10, 20 or 30,000 rounds annually, even a small saving per round adds up.

## 5 OPPORTUNITY TO MEASURE YOUR ABILITY

It can work both ways. I've known people with "big frog/small pond" exaggerated ideas of their shooting skill who were shocked to find they really weren't very good. I've known others who weren't aware they were pretty darn good and had the potential to reach very high levels.

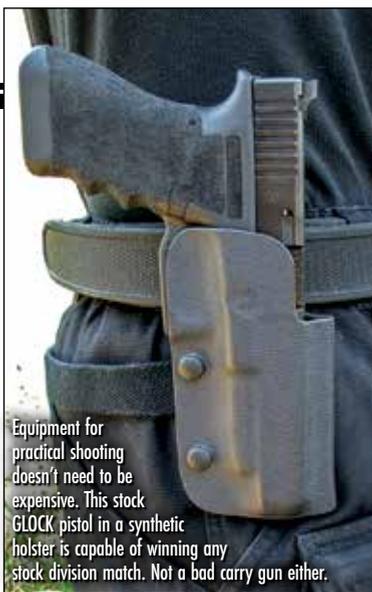
## 6 BUILD SAFETY HABITS

Competition has safety rules and procedures that become part of your routine. For example, in practical shooting competition, when a stage is completed, before holstering and leaving the line, both competitor and range officer check the firearm to be certain it is unloaded. Two sets of eyes are better than one. On an African hunt, I'd check the chamber on returning to the vehicle, then ask another person to double check it was clear before sliding the rifle back in the scabbard. The

professional hunter mentioned he'd never seen this done before but liked the process very much.

## 7 OPPORTUNITY TO SHOOT UNDER PRESSURE

Comedian Jerry Seinfeld had a funny routine about surveys showing what people feared most was speaking in public. The second greatest fear was death. I suppose if people were told they had to either speak in public or die, most would choose to speak. There's no doubt, though, performing with others watching can be stressful. Learning to shoot even while under stress is a worthwhile lesson.



Equipment for practical shooting doesn't need to be expensive. This stock GLOCK pistol in a synthetic holster is capable of winning any stock division match. Not a bad carry gun either.

## 9 ENHANCES CONFIDENCE

A police officer friend who was a Master-class shooter told me of an encounter with a shotgun-armed suspect. When he saw the sights aligned rock-solid on target, the certainty he could make the shot if necessary gave him a flood of relief. The incident ended with the suspect in custody, no shots fired and no one injured. Contrary to what you might hear in the news, this is the outcome police officers want.

## 10 COMPETITION CAN BE FUN

Actually, I don't like using the word *fun* as it makes it all seem rather trivial. It can be rewarding. Some people just aren't made for spectator sports. I'd a million times rather be the worst player on the field than the best fan sitting in the bleachers. And best of all, maybe sometimes you win. A character in the movie *The Reivers* had a line I've always remembered. "And so I had my moment of glory — that brief, fleeting glory which of itself cannot last — but while it does, is the best game of all." 



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## BLACKPOINT TACTICAL

### AROUND THE BELT



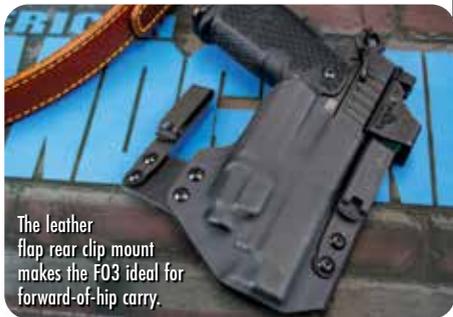
Each of these is designed for a different placement around the clock.

**M**y regular concealed carry holster requirements aren't too picky. Considering the pistol I'm carrying these days for some ongoing editorial work; a holster needs to securely support a full-size Staccato P model double-stack 9mm pistol geared up with an also-not-micro Holosun HE508 red dot sight. And there's the Streamlight TLR 7A weapon-mounted light on the front rail. And it needs to do this while guaranteeing complete invisibility while wearing shorts and a regular T-shirt. Oh, one more thing. The humidity here is analogous to a high school football team's communal shower, so it needs to function (meaning not rot or get sticky on the draw) while soaking wet. And bonus points for stowing an extra 17-round magazine, also successfully concealed.

Piece of cake, right?

My search quickly led me to BlackPoint Tactical. The Alpharetta company prides itself on making holsters for less common handguns with various accessory options, including red dot sights and weapon-mounted lights.

As it turns out, the company had three distinct offerings for different belt placements.



The leather flap rear clip mount makes the F03 ideal for forward-of-hip carry.



The DualPoint is the appendix carry model. Yes, you can easily conceal even a large pistol like this Staccato P 2011.

### TRADITIONAL IWB: MINI WING

**T**he Mini Wing is an IWB holster optimized for the 4:30 position (if you're a right-hander). Small leather wings mount to the front and back base of the Kydex two-piece shell. The leather wings each offer two grommeted holes for clip attachment. Combined with three vertical holes on each low-profile spring metal clip, you can easily adjust ride height and cant angle.

The Kydex shell is molded carefully to the specific pistol, offering snap-into-place retention. One pleasant surprise: The light mold is also shaped precisely to (in this case) the Streamlight TLR 7A, so it also locked into place.

### FRONT OF HIPBONE: F03

**T**here's a lot to be said for front of hipbone carry. Offering similar benefits to behind the hip, this position gives you leverage to protect against gun grabs, keeps the muzzle pointed in a less "interesting" direction compared to appendix carry, yet still facilitates a fast and cover garment snag-free draw.

The two clips are spaced almost as far apart as on the Mini Wing model, but the front is anchored to the Kydex body while the rear clip attaches via a floating leather flap. This draws the grip toward the body and allows the holster to move, aiding comfort as you change positions. As the position requires, gun orientation is vertical and that works just fine.

### APPENDIX: DUALPOINT

**T**he DualPoint is designed for carry in the one o'clock area (assuming right-hand configuration). Shown here is the split spring-steel clip option, which adds a bit of flexibility for belt mounting, but you can order it with a mono clip if you prefer. A "rear" side-mounted metal strut loop pushes against the back of your belt, encouraging the grip to stay close to your body for better concealment. Optionally, add a "plus pouch" for an extra magazine.

I have to say the large Staccato P with optic, light and a 17-round spare magazine disappeared with this rig under a regular T-shirt. As I have a couple of extra pounds around the waist, I added a foam backing for comfort.

You'll note that with virtually all holster choices, you have a range of options for customization, including accessory type, belt-clip options, OWB loops, red dot sight cut, threaded barrel covered or pass through and tall sights.

Oh, one more thing, and a practice I wish all holster makers would follow. BlackPoint prints the holster identification on the back of each model. For example, the Mini Wing has BlackPoint, 4.45 Staccato, RMR, TLR-7, MW (for Mini Wing), LM (for light-mounted) and RH. If you're collecting the proverbial box-o-holsters, you'll appreciate this detail.



For more info: [BlackPointTactical.com](http://BlackPointTactical.com)



The Mini Wing is the more traditional IWB option designed for carry in the four to five o'clock position.

Lots of clip and mount holes allow height and cant customization.



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## A/B TESTING:

### A SMART APPROACH TO BETTER SHOOTING

I'd first heard the term "A/B testing" among friends familiar with websites, SEO and other such alchemy. "You have two versions of a website, ad or whatever. You show some people banner A, and some of the people banner B, and you see which one gets more engagement."

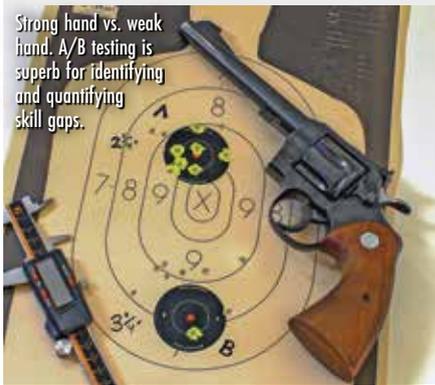
Most might recall this is simply new-speak for a scientific experiment using a control group and another group receiving a different intervention. A few years back, I started to think about how seldom I used it in everyday life — like at the range.

Ever ponder questions like this? How should I be standing? Does this gun shoot better than that one? Where should I put my trigger finger?

Good news: We can put on our proverbial white coats and become scientists in the laboratory of life. It's as simple as putting out two targets, doing one thing to the first and then another thing to the second.

Too vague? Let me give you a few ideas. If you're diagnosing the mechanics of your shooting technique, as I did a few months back, load one magazine and run the gun with the pad of your finger resting on the trigger. Then, switch out your target. Put a fresh one up and shoot off a magazine with the same cadence, but now by pulling the trigger with the crease of your finger. If one method is A, the other is B. After a few repetitions, see if there's a clear winner.

Strong hand vs. weak hand. A/B testing is superb for identifying and quantifying skill gaps.



Above: A/B testing might be life-saving when applied to a CCW choice. Left: Any hardware changes, like cool new grips, should be rigorously tested and validated to assess whether the modification was wise.

## ELIMINATING VARIABLES

The best part of A/B testing is it discourages the well-intentioned but decidedly unhelpful ways we try to improve. I remember having a discouraging range session, then coming home and stewing on all the things I might have been doing wrong. The next time out, I'd arrive at the range determined to grip the gun differently, stand differently and press the trigger differently, all while feeding the gun a different brand of ammo. If making one conscious change in the name of shooting better is good, then making nine changes must be great, right? Well, no.

The issue is in making a drastic overhaul to their normal shooting habits, many people abandon some aspect of technique or equipment that was a non-issue in their quest to improve. In other cases, there may be undue importance placed on minor things.

It's critical to establish your personal "baseline." In other words, let's say last time you ran a GLOCK 19 with 115-grain Blazer Brass ammo, shot from an isosceles stance with both eyes open and a thumbs-forward grip on the gun. Take an inventory, regardless of if you were happy or dissatisfied with how you shot! Write everything down if you need to.

Next time out, shoot as per your usual on one target. Then, *change one aspect* of what you suspect might be a problem. If you're diagnosing stance, make sure you run the same gun with the same ammo the same way. If you're seeing which gun works best for you, default to your normal shooting stance, grip, and hold ammo constant across the different platforms. If a Beretta 92 is your "A" and a SIG P226 is your "B," ensure all other lurking variables are kept in check.

## "DATA" IS THE PLURAL OF "ANECDOTE"

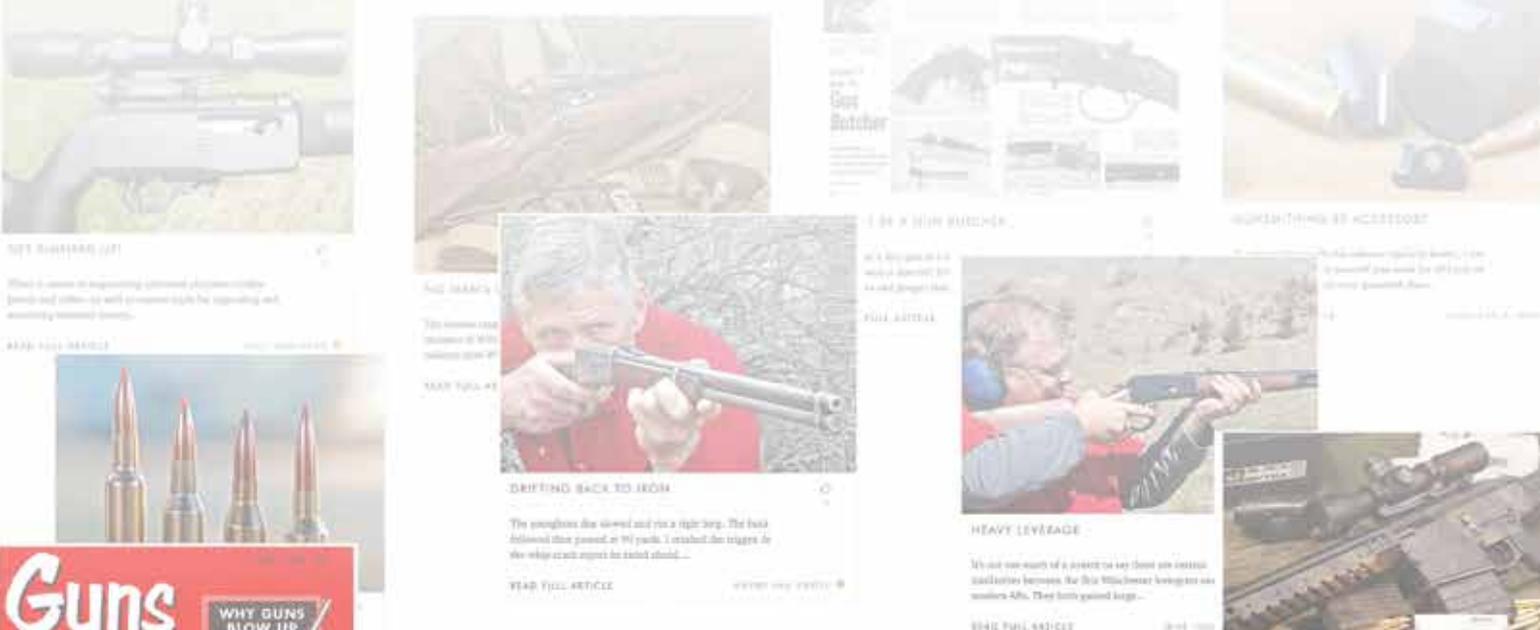
Saving targets for later analysis is a great way to take your A/B testing to the next level, but remember to add context. To wit: Write down how you produced an on-paper group — it's often as important as the group itself.

It's also important to remember with A/B testing a single pair of targets doesn't tell the whole story. Specifically, if you're testing two loads or two guns in a head-to-head battle, you want to ensure your result isn't a fluke. I've had some loads that initially clustered in a mediocre pattern cut a single hole a group later. The initial distribution was my fault for not following through the shot — the gun and the load were, in fact, faultless! As scientists say, valid findings should be repeatable.

## GOOD? NOW GET CRACKING!

One of the most thrilling moments of evolution as a shooter is realizing good results come not from learning about what works but from discovering what works for you through practice. Keep in mind just about every question you have can be transformed into a testable hypothesis. With the neighborhood range or shooting hole as your laboratory of choice, you'd be hard-pressed to find a more fun way to bring science into daily life.





Can women outshoot men? We checked in 2003 the answer was yes. And it's still true today. There's a fun look back at E. D. Coats' five-page article in the July 1993 issue of GUNS.

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## WHO NEEDS A HASHMARK—AND WHY?

Compensating reticles on scopes are nothing new. It's not uncommon to find optics companies referring to them in a variety of ways. For example, Leupold offers their Boone & Crockett reticle, Burris goes by Ballistic-Plex and Crimson Trace has the Custom BDC Pro, while others define their system in different terms. However you slice it, hashmarks provide hunters with a means of holdover for shooting at extended range.

If your hunting conditions do not allow for extended-range shooting, you probably don't need any holdover reticle system. If I'm hunting in the woods with a .44 Magnum revolver and my farthest possible shot is inside a football field, I really don't need holdover reticles. However, there are a lot of possibilities in the hunting world where extended shots with both revolvers and single-shot handguns are aided by hashmarks.

For example, varmint hunters, who often encounter long-range shooting opportunities, will welcome hashmarks for



Burris offers two long eye-relief handgun scopes shown here. Mounted on the Freedom Arms .357 Magnum is their 2-7x Ballistic Plex model. The other scope is their 3-12x Ballistic Plex with adjustable parallax on the objective end.

precise shot placement. For you antelope hunters enjoying the wide-open spaces of the west and often find yourself shooting beyond 100 yards, the holdover reticle system may very well help fill the freezer and punch your tag.

Unfortunately, there are not a lot of options available in long eye-relief handgun scopes. Granted, many who hunt with single-shot handguns chambered in bottleneck cartridges often mount a rifle scope simply because these optics provide a wide variety of features compared to handgun scopes. Some hunters like to dial for distance. This is an option, but like everything else in life, it may not work well in all situations. I have witnessed hunters spend excessive time looking at their drop charts and then fooling around with the turrets in order to get everything just right. In the meantime, the game disappears along with their shooting opportunity.

## BURRIS

Burris offers two handgun scopes with their Ballistic-Plex reticle. Their 2-7x and 3-12x handgun scopes feature three hashmarks below the center crosshair. This reticle works well when you spend quality time at the range determining the point of impact for

each hashmark. When I'm hunting with a revolver, I normally sight in at 50 yards, and I will see where the point of impact is at subsequent 50-yard intervals. For single-shots, whether it's on a varmint gun such as .223 or a deer hunting candidate like 6.5 Creedmoor, I usually sight-in at 100 yards and work my way out to the longest distance I anticipate a shooting opportunity.

This fact-finding mission takes dedicated time on the range. I shoot the same load I'll be hunting with, so there is no variance or change of impact. Once you see where the bullet impacts with each hashmark using 50-yard increments, you can easily transfer this data to the field. So, when a groundhog pops up at 300 yards, you know exactly which hashmark to use without a lot of guesswork.

## CRIMSON TRACE

Another company providing a long eye-relief handgun scope is Crimson Trace. Currently, I'm working with their Brushline Pro 2.5-8x BDC pistol scope. Crimson Trace calls this reticle system the CT Custom BDC Pro. The reticle features four diamonds. At first I wasn't too sure about the diamond-shaped symbols as hashmarks. Now that I've had time to get familiar with this reticle, it makes life easy. I simply use the top or bottom portion of the diamond as two different aiming points. In essence, you have a total of eight different points in addition to the top of the post on the bottom crosshair. I don't put the target in the center of the diamond.

Crimson Trace provides handgun hunters with their long eye-relief Brushline Pro 2.5-8x BDC pistol scope. Another great addition to handgun hunting optics.



Compared to a duplex reticle, these compensating reticle systems offer an advantage to handgun hunters who are shooting at extended ranges. I cannot overstate the importance of appropriate range time to determine exactly your point of impact at various distances with your scope's reticle graduations.

At a recent Handgun Hunters Competition in Newcastle, Wyo., my wife and I both shot the rimfire event with a Burris 2-7x handgun scope. Challenging targets varied widely, out to 150 yards. With the Ballistic-Plex reticle, we knew where to hold from

25 yards out to 150 yards, thanks to range time calibrating those marks. Even though most of my squirrel hunting revolves around 25-yard shots, I wouldn't hesitate to shoot a tree rat from 50 yards or beyond simply because the holdover reticle provides a means of a well-placed shot. The same Burris optic was fitted on my Freedom Arms .357 Mag. for the Revolver Optics event, where steel targets were placed out to 200 yards.

Thanks to Burris and Crimson Trace for their offerings of holdover reticles. They work!



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Universal fit blocks do not allow the lip of the powder measure to seal against the case mouth. Lindsey uses a 9mm block from Durling Wood Works.



## LOADING .380: FINICKY BUT WORTH IT

If you had asked me 10 years ago if the .380 was a suitable cartridge for personal defense, I might have replied, "Marginal, at best." But I have to admit the .380 just gets better and better.

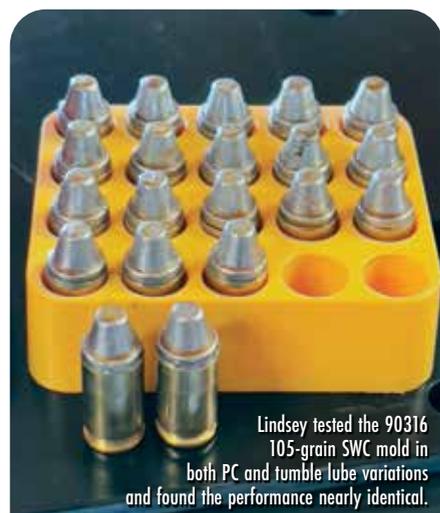
To be a great caliber, there has to be a source of reliable practice rounds. However, there is little load data out there and factory rounds are expensive. As a result, I've been reloading .380 for decades. It's not a cartridge for beginners, but the rewards are astronomical.

### Bearing Surface

Case mouth thickness varies greatly among brass brands and the .380 has only a short area to grab a bullet and optimize neck tension.

Solution: Use a bullet with a longer cylinder bearing surface. The best .380 bullets I've found have a "more tangent" ogive and a longer

The Lee 365-95-1R turned out to be the best bullet for the .380 when sized properly.



Lindsey tested the 90316 105-grain SWC mold in both PC and tumble lube variations and found the performance nearly identical.

cylinder. If you want a good mental picture, consider Everglades Ammo .380 Auto 100-grain plated bullets.

For lead, I use Lee molds TL-356-95-RF, 90316 and 365-95-1R.

The TL-356-95-RF will give you light, accurate loads and moderate slide velocities from the .380's blow-back operation.

The 90316 mold is no longer in production, replaced by the 358-105-SWC. This mold was designed for light .38 Special loads and generally drops at 0.358". I size them to 0.356".

The 365-95-1R was designed for Makarovs. It has a long cylinder surface and short nose. Bullets need to be forced into a 0.356" sizing die. This turned out to be the most accurate and reliable of all my .380 loads.

Because the 365-95-1R is "fat" to its ogive, it occasionally wants to stick in the seating die. Like all .380 loads, your crimp should just be enough to close the rim and no more. There are

taper crimp dies available, but none come with a caution against over crimping, which they should. The difference between the case diameter and the crimp is measured in thousandths, not hundredths.

Slug your barrels. Some guns, like the Beretta 1934, run 0.357" bullets better. Mine like 0.356", but it is normal to run 0.001" over the groove diameter.

### Single Stage!

The loading block is your friend. The .380 is not the best choice for a progressive loader because it requires a little more "feel" when neck expanding and seating.

I use a Hornady Lock-n-Load Powder Measure for production reloading. Your most important tool is a loading block. A "universal" block won't cut it because the tall sides won't allow the lips of a powder measure to seal on the case mouth. One of the best products out there

is a Durling Wood Works loading block for 9mm.

## Make Weight

The .380 functions best with bullets ranging from 80 to 110 grains at moderate velocities. Longer bullets may engage the rifling beyond the chamber; others drag their noses in the magazine. Light bullets often don't offer enough bearing surface for proper neck tension.

Roughly half of all .380s are straight blowback operation that can get battered with the use of hot loads and heavier bullets.

My pick for powders is RamShot True Blue, a relatively dense ball powder that meters well. True Blue is slower burning than many would use in a .380, but it fills the cases and gets the velocities with a slightly slower spike in pressure. HP38 is a bit quicker and it is what I grab for small case volume loads.

## Results

With the 365-95-1R sized to 0.356", I loaded 3.4 grains of RamShot True Blue at an OAL of 0.944". It had a shockingly low standard deviation, running 698-700 fps. Even in my NAA Guardian's 2.5" barrel, it shot little groups, fed and functioned without problems. This is a good training load.

With the 90316 105-grain SWC mold, I ran 2.3 grains of HP38 with an OAL of 0.950". Most reloaders know HP38 has a "sweet spot" where it burns with almost no residue and shoots small groups. Performance drops off quickly as it approaches 2.7 grains, so see what works in your .380.

Loading the TL-356-95-RF, I ran PC bullets with 3.4 grains of RamShot True Blue at 3.4 grains and OAL of 0.939". The velocity was slightly lower than the 365-95-1R and felt recoil was a little softer.

Unique works well in the .380, as long as the loads are measured by weight, not volume. Volume measures don't do well with Unique loading less than 4 grains. For the 90316 mold, 2.9 grains of Unique puts it right in the middle of the scale.

The .380 is more fun to shoot than most of my other guns. The newer defensive loads make it a viable option for your dinner jacket carry. Sort your brass and load your practice rounds carefully. 

For more info: [DurlingWoodWorks.com](http://DurlingWoodWorks.com),  
[EvergladesAmmo.com](http://EvergladesAmmo.com)



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Jungle operations are filthy and unforgiving. In this case, just getting there was half the fun.  
Image: Military.gov

# PERSPECTIVE

**N**owadays, Army helicopters can pull any mission at midnight that they might at noon. Night vision sensors displace the darkness so beautifully that aircrews can fly nap of the earth, conduct sling-load operations and fire weapons accurately in total darkness. However, it was a rough road getting there.

Night vision goggles back in the day suffered from poor resolution and a limited field of view. You compensated for this by moving your head constantly. Many's the morning I hit the rack after a long night flying NVGs feeling like someone beat me on the neck with a crowbar.

## A Dark & Stormy Night

A friend was on an operational night insertion into Central America back at a time when we weren't technically doing operational night insertions into Central America. His men wore sterile uniforms and planned to leave no footprint. This was a covert recce, pure and simple. His guys were loaded for bear, but the plan was to return to base, having expended nary a round.

The mission brief had them physically touching down at the LZ (Landing Zone). The pilots of the UH-1H helicopter would be flying under night vision goggles. While this is commonplace today, at the time, it was fairly radical.

The infil was uneventful, and the aircraft came to a stationary hover at the LZ. My buddy, as the team leader, was on comms with the pilots. They had briefed that the aircraft would actually land. The pilots explained the terrain was too uneven to touch down safely. The pilots stated they were at a sub-3' hover. These guys needed to get out.

A bit of a row ensued. Eventually, the pilots told my buddy to either get out or stay, but they were

heading back to base. This was a live operation, and the Bad Guys were both prickly and mean. Every second they sat there at a hover increased their chances of mischief. In frustration, my buddy told me he gave the two pilots the finger, something lyrically ineffective in the dark, and directed his men to debus. My friend's team dutifully leapt clear of the aircraft and fell 3' to the top of a triple canopy jungle.

It was just a mistake. Using their crude NVGs, the pilots had somehow mistaken the jungle canopy for the ground. My pal's team banged around through the treetops before ending up unceremoniously on the jungle floor far below.

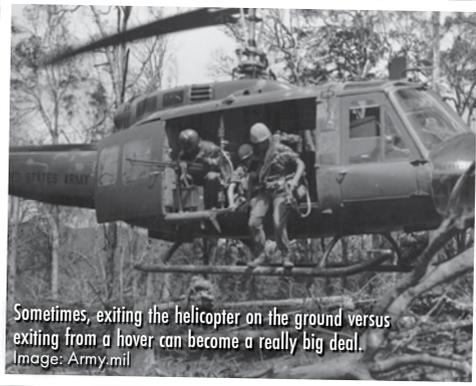
## Aftermath

Everybody on the team was hurt. The M60 gunner, however, was hurt bad. My buddy told me they located him by his groans in the darkness.

This turn of events obviously canceled the mission. Nobody was in any shape to move tactically. In desperation, my buddy fired up his red lens flashlight. The sight that greeted him made his blood run cold.

The M60 GPMG (General Purpose Machine Gun) was referred to by one and all as the Pig. The big gun weighed 23 lbs. empty and would reliably bring the pain. It was generally wielded by the biggest, meanest guy in the unit.

This big, mean guy was additionally burdened by a generous load of ammunition in his rucksack along with all the requisite kit to keep a small special operations unit running in the field for a week. Most of that mass was located on the guy's back. When he felt what he thought to have been the ground give way underneath him, he dutifully prepared for a proper parachute landing



Sometimes, exiting the helicopter on the ground versus exiting from a hover can become a really big deal.  
Image: Army.mil

fall — feet and knees together, knees slightly bent and head tucked forward. He was in that configuration when he subsequently impacted the ground below.

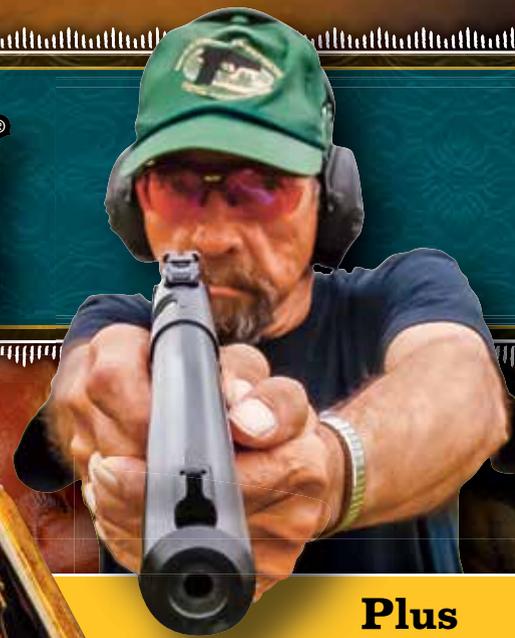
Everything in the universe is physics. When my buddy reached his hapless machine gunner, he found him mashed up into a ball that seemed most unnatural. In the dim light of the red lens torch, my friend could see the distal end of the man's femur tenting the back of his right shoulder. The man had hit the ground so hard he had sheared his thigh bone and subsequently impaled himself with it.

The medic did not want to try to unravel the poor guy in the dark in the jungle, so they just bound him all together with rappel ropes and called for an immediate medevac. A different aircraft successfully got them out of the jungle and the man miraculously survived. Once they got back to base, there was the issue of the mouthy helicopter pilots who had precipitated all of this in the first place.

My buddy told me he immediately went hunting for these two pilots with murderous intent. The command team wisely removed the two aviators to a different facility for their own protection. In retrospect, that  was clearly for the best.

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## THREAT RESPONSE FUNDAMENTAL NUMBER 2:

# COMMUNICATION

**T**he fundamentals of the threat response are Move, Communicate, Use Cover, Shoot — as necessary — and Think. Moving is the first response to danger. Communication is number two on the list for numerous reasons, which often surprises people. And, like all other skills, communication must be practiced in advance, probably more than your shooting skills.

### Vital, But Not Natural

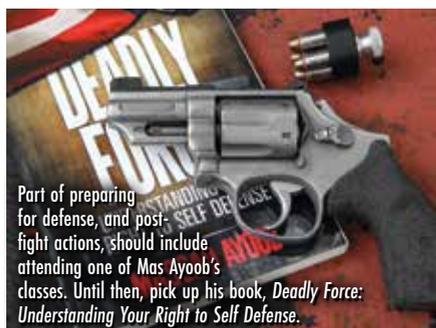
Solving a dangerous problem — unless you're completely alone — requires communication with others. Think car wreck, natural disaster and violent attack. You communicate with family or friends, coordinating actions with your team, whether armed or unarmed. "Go out that exit, now!"

It's also beneficial to involve bystanders. "You, call 911 now!" In most situations, you should be issuing verbal commands to the threat(s). "Stop! Leave my house!" At some point, you'll be conversing with law enforcement and lawyers.

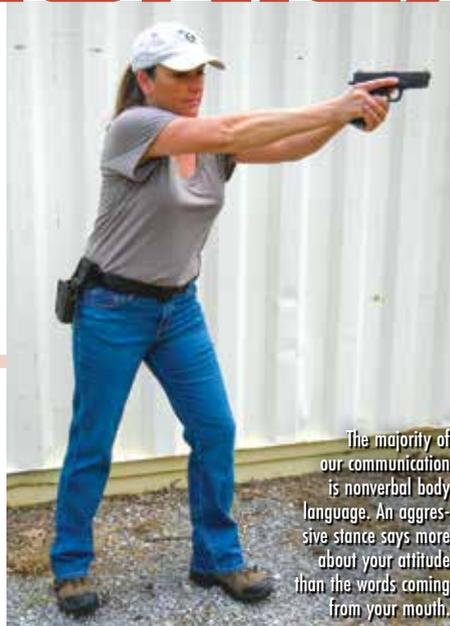
Communication involves exchanging information. I talk to my dog. I communicate with my wife, Gretchen. Communication consumes a lot of our brain's "random access memory," making it difficult during high-stress situations. It's not "natural." Success requires practicing in advance. Use your "outside" voice; everyone experiences auditory exclusion during stress.

### Threat Management

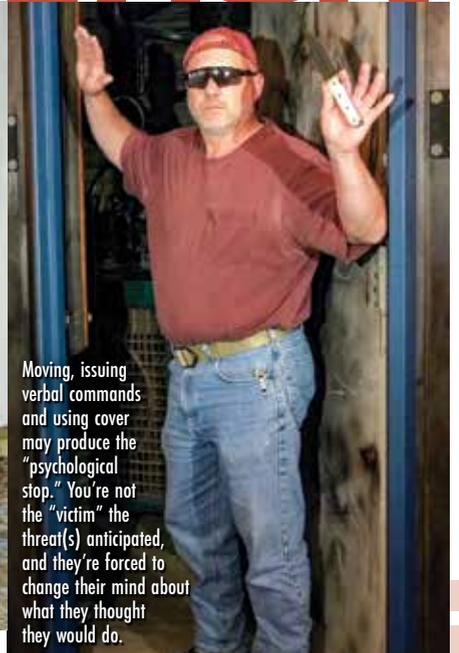
For coordinating actions with team members, I use "I.C.E." — I inform my partner of what I need to do. "Moving right!" My partner confirms, "Move right!" Avoid using "no" and "go." They sound too much alike, plus those words don't confirm you understood what your partner said. After receiving confirmation, we're on the same page. I have permission to execute that action.



Part of preparing for defense, and post-fight actions, should include attending one of Mas Ayoob's classes. Until then, pick up his book, *Deadly Force: Understanding Your Right to Self Defense*.



The majority of our communication is nonverbal body language. An aggressive stance says more about your attitude than the words coming from your mouth.



Moving, issuing verbal commands and using cover may produce the "psychological stop." You're not the "victim" the threat(s) anticipated, and they're forced to change their mind about what they thought they would do.

Communicating with the threat(s) is about issuing verbal commands. You're telling them what to do. Be guarded against engaging in a conversation. It's just a ploy the threat uses to get you into a more vulnerable position. Keep the commands short, simple and precise. "Stop!" If time permits, follow up with additional instructions. "Leave now!"

Over 90% of our communication is nonverbal body language. Your physical actions, stance and movement must be "aggressive" enough to match the verbal commands. While issuing commands, you're creating distance, moving to cover or an exit.

The sooner you begin issuing commands, the better. It may produce a "psychological stop." You're not the victim they anticipated. Over two million times a year, the presence of a firearm and verbal commands solve the problem without any shots fired. Plus, drawing attention to the threat establishes who they are and proves you're doing everything possible to avoid conflict. If the threat doesn't comply, it's time to ramp up your response.

When do you draw the pistol? This question can't be answered until that exact point in time. There are too many variables to factor in advance. Waiting until you're 100% sure the pistol is needed will be too late, plus your commands carry a lot more weight when the pistol is in hand. The low-ready position, with arms, hands and weapon extended and muzzle low, is ideal for this. Safety Rule II is still in effect: Never point the muzzle at anything you're unwilling or

not ready to shoot. Regardless of what you do or when, at some point, you'll have to explain the "why" behind your actions.

### Post-Encounter

At some point, you're communicating with responding law enforcement and eventually lawyers and such. Although the physical confrontation is done, this part of the confrontation is equally important. The best way to get a handle on these skills, and others, is to attend a class with Mas Ayoob. He's the leading authority in the nation on the legal aspects of using lethal force.

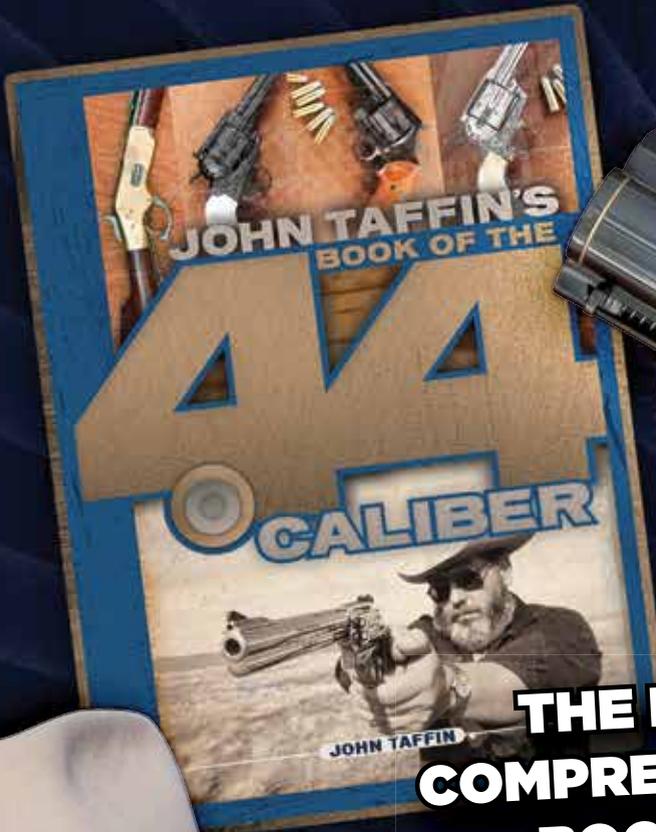
Communication is a mandatory part of practice, like the rest of your defensive skills. Every time you rehearse drawing the pistol, you should be moving and issuing verbal commands to the threat. Some type of reactive target is good for this. Your subsequent actions, especially shooting, are based on how the threat reacts to the verbal commands. Once the threat is down or gone, you're communicating with partners. "Threat down!" followed by additional information such as, "Moving right to the exit."

There are exceptions to everything mentioned here. The exact details of the situation will dictate your response. The more prepared your defensive skills are, including communication, the better prepared you'll be to deal with danger and just plain ol' everyday life.





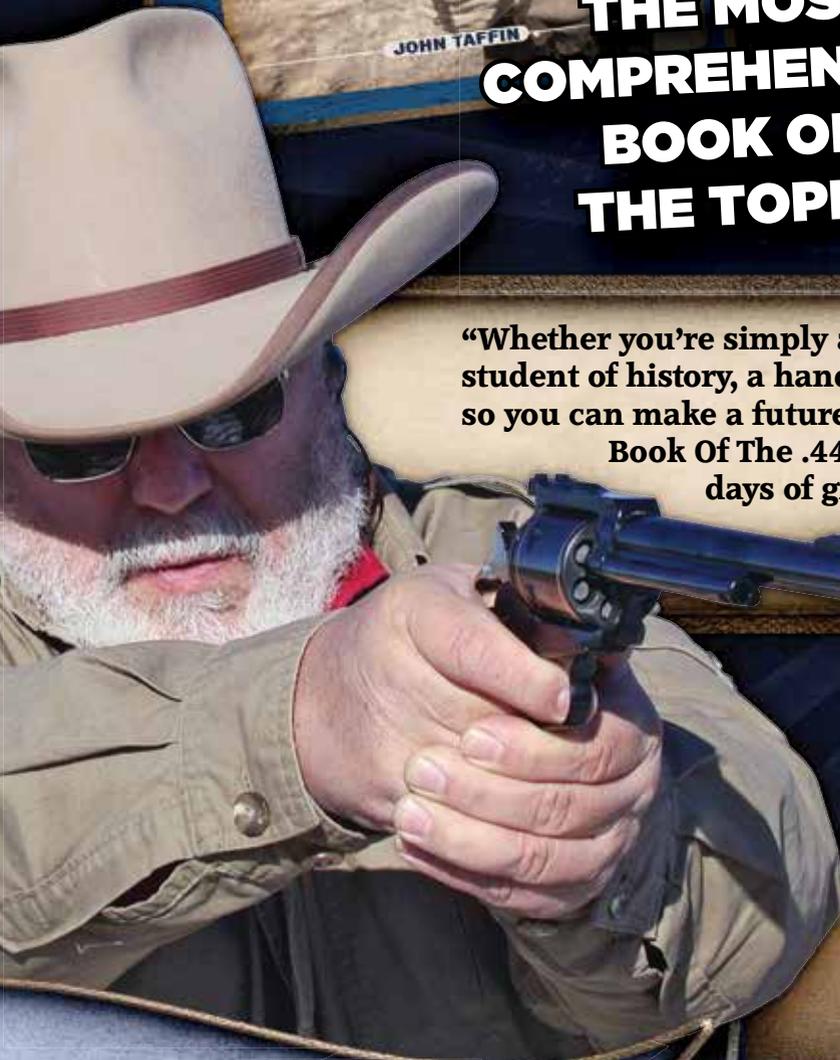
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# PACKING HEAT LIKE

WHEN WEIGHT, SIZE AND PRACTICALITY ARE IRRELEVANT

James Cameron's *The Terminator* is one of Will's favorite movies. Perhaps because the Terminator wields AR-180s one-handed?



WILL DABBS, MD

# THE TERMINATOR

Imagine you were invited to participate in a groundbreaking clinical trial. This isn't testing out some radical new hair growth formula or Viagra knockoff. This is something important. Some hypothetical DARPA scientist is offering to turn you into the Terminator.

Yeah, THE Terminator. This guy will take your brain and transfer it into a Cyberdyne Systems Model 101 from the esteemed 1984 James Cameron movie. You'd weigh 600 lbs., and draw power from twin redundant miniaturized nuclear reactors. You'd be human flesh grown around a hyperalloy combat chassis. You'd be bulletproof, fast and immensely strong. Your sex life would undoubtedly take a hit, but you'd look like Arnold Schwarzenegger circa 1984. Would you do it? Think it over. I'll wait.

Heck, yeah, you'd do it. We all would. It would be worth whatever pain, social stigma or operative risk just to stroll around your local Walmart looking terrifying. Just imagine how it might transform your typical workday. How awesome

would it be to lean forward, my red mechanical eyes glowing behind a pair of killer shades, and say to the little old lady in the exam room, "Tell me about your hemorrhoids," in Arnold's unique Austrian patois?

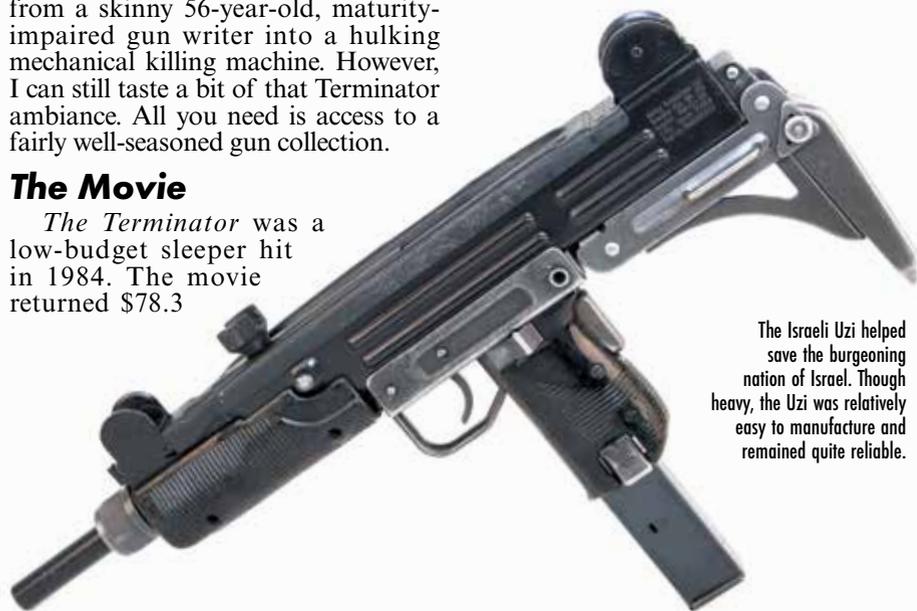
Sadly, technology has not yet advanced far enough to transform me from a skinny 56-year-old, maturity-impaired gun writer into a hulking mechanical killing machine. However, I can still taste a bit of that Terminator ambiance. All you need is access to a fairly well-seasoned gun collection.

## The Movie

*The Terminator* was a low-budget sleeper hit in 1984. The movie returned \$78.3

million off of a \$6.4 million budget. It also launched the careers of several well-known cinema personalities.

James Cameron wrote and directed it before going on to such epics as *Titanic*, *True Lies* and *Avatar*. Michael Biehn subsequently starred in *Aliens*, *The Abyss*, *Tombstone*,



The Israeli Uzi helped save the burgeoning nation of Israel. Though heavy, the Uzi was relatively easy to manufacture and remained quite reliable.

The fire selector on the Uzi is a left-sided thumb switch.



The ArmaLite AR-180 was simpler to produce than the AR-15 and incrementally more reliable. It orbited around a pressed steel receiver that could be produced economically by semi-skilled workers.



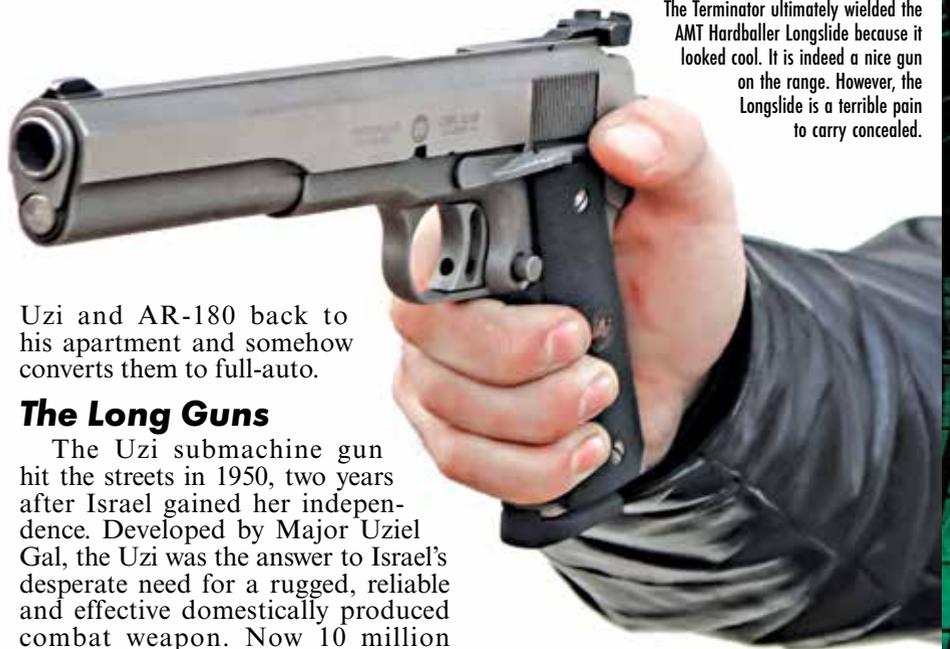
*The Rock* and *Navy SEALs*. Arnold Schwarzenegger eventually became, well, Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Cameron's original vision for the narrative differed substantially from what we saw on the big screen. Biehn was originally cast as the Terminator, while Schwarzenegger was supposed to be the soldier from the future sent back to stop him. Per the original vision, the killing machine was an infiltrator designed to blend in. While patterning the Terminators off of hulking Austrian bodybuilders might not have made the most tactical sense, it certainly produced a superlative action movie.

### Terminator's Weapons

Only flesh will pass through the time displacement equipment, so you come through time naked and bereft of weapons. As the Terminator is encased in flesh, he gets to pass. For those of you who haven't committed the dialogue to memory, as have I, here's a rundown of the guns in the film ...

The Terminator makes a beeline for a California gun shop, shoots the proprietor and leaves with an Uzi submachine gun, a Franchi SPAS-12 shotgun, an ArmaLite AR-180 rifle and an AMT Longslide .45. Per the backstory, the Terminator takes the



The Terminator ultimately wielded the AMT Hardballer Longslide because it looked cool. It is indeed a nice gun on the range. However, the Longslide is a terrible pain to carry concealed.

Uzi and AR-180 back to his apartment and somehow converts them to full-auto.

### The Long Guns

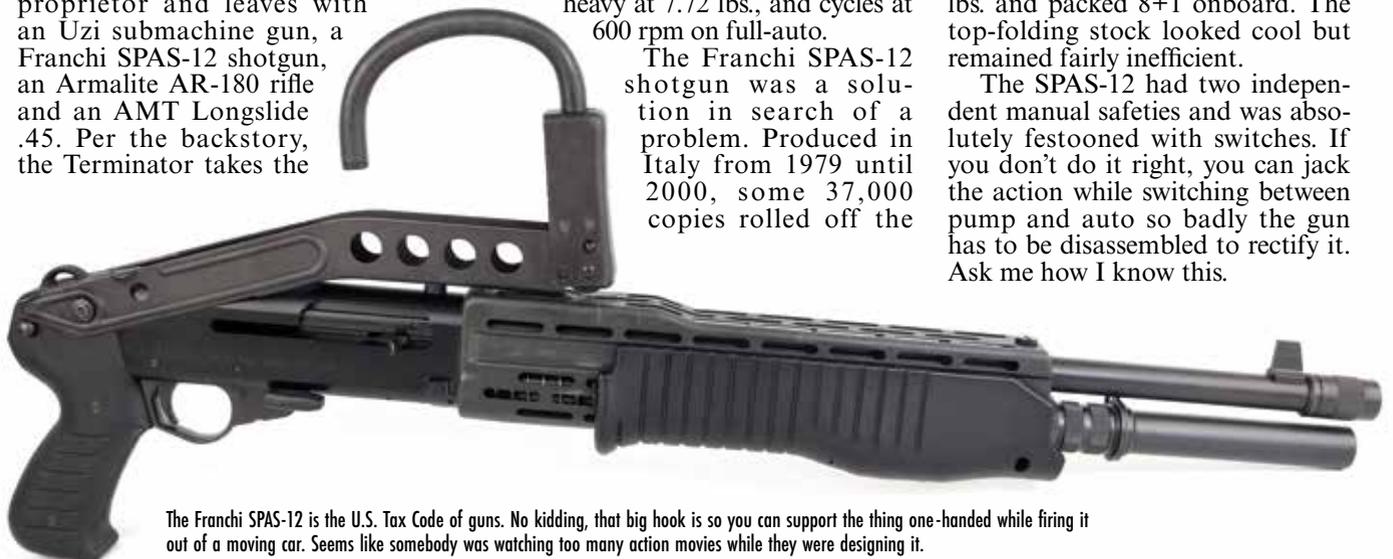
The Uzi submachine gun hit the streets in 1950, two years after Israel gained her independence. Developed by Major Uziel Gal, the Uzi was the answer to Israel's desperate need for a rugged, reliable and effective domestically produced combat weapon. Now 10 million copies later, the Uzi is the most-produced SMG in human history.

The GI Uzi fires from the open bolt and feeds from either 25- or 32-round magazines. The gun can be had with either a folding steel stock or the detachable wooden sort. The Uzi is heavy at 7.72 lbs., and cycles at 600 rpm on full-auto.

The Franchi SPAS-12 shotgun was a solution in search of a problem. Produced in Italy from 1979 until 2000, some 37,000 copies rolled off the

lines. The SPAS-12 was as alluring as Raquel Welch circa 1962 and as complicated as the manual for your new microwave. Capable of being run in either pump or auto, the SPAS-12 weighed just shy of 10 lbs. and packed 8+1 onboard. The top-folding stock looked cool but remained fairly inefficient.

The SPAS-12 had two independent manual safeties and was absolutely festooned with switches. If you don't do it right, you can jack the action while switching between pump and auto so badly the gun has to be disassembled to rectify it. Ask me how I know this.



The Franchi SPAS-12 is the U.S. Tax Code of guns. No kidding, that big hook is so you can support the thing one-handed while firing it out of a moving car. Seems like somebody was watching too many action movies while they were designing it.



The AMT Hardballer Longslide was a staple in 1980s-era gun magazines. It runs just like any other 1911 pistol, only longer.

The SPAS-12 sold for around \$1,500 new even back in the '80s. The gun takes an engineering degree to run well but is, in competent hands, effective enough. However, there are a lot of more conventional autoloading shotguns that will do the same thing for a fraction of the cost. Should you find yourself with a SPAS-12, check the polymer recoil buffer before you shoot it. They get friable and fall apart when they get old.

The ArmaLite AR-180 was Gene Stoner's next-generation replacement for the AR-15. Designed in 1963 and released for service in 1969, AR-180 receivers were pressed out of sheet steel and could be produced more easily and cheaply than the aluminum AR-15 sort. The biggest difference between the two guns was the operating system.

The direct gas impingement system of the AR-15 consisted of little more than a length of hydraulic tubing. That of the AR-180 incorporates a short-stroke gas piston action that runs cleaner than the simpler, lighter AR-15. This same basic mechanism has been copied in the FN SCAR-16, the HK G-36 and the SIG M-5 Spear.

### Terminator's Pistol

The Terminator's handgun of choice was the AMT Hardballer Longslide .45. This ballin' hogleg was a regular staple in the *Shotgun News* magazines of my youth. I seem to recall they retailed for maybe \$325 apiece back in the 1980s. These stainless-steel guns

came as a standard Government model, a stubby concealed carry version called the Skipper and then the distinctive Hardballer Longslide.

The Terminator's Longslide included a radical new laser sight that required 10,000 volts for activation and 1,000 volts for reliable operation. The power pack rode inside Arnold's field jacket, while the wiring for the activation switch snaked through his field jacket for surreptitious operation by his weak hand. While lasers are ubiquitous findings on our modern tactical firearms, such stuff was radical indeed back then.

The controls on the Longslide were oversized, effective and left-side-only. The gun fed from standard seven-round magazines. The Longslide ran just like any other M1911 pistol, only longer.

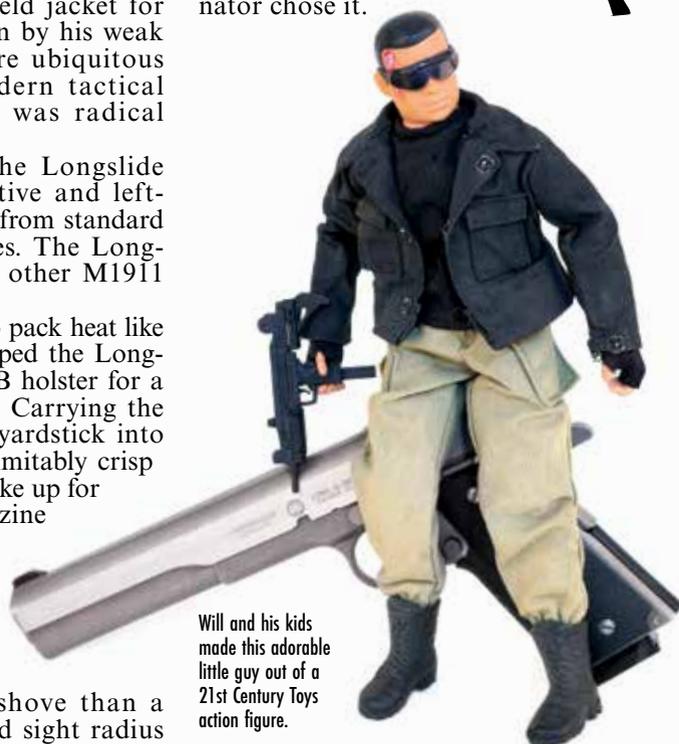
As I really wanted to pack heat like the Terminator, I dropped the Longslide into a proper IWB holster for a long day in the clinic. Carrying the gun is like shoving a yardstick into your pants, but the inimitably crisp M1911 trigger helps make up for it on the range. Magazine changes set the standard for everything else. My Longslide has been uniformly reliable with everything I've fed it.

Recoil is more a shove than a snap, and the extended sight radius



The Terminator typically wields his Uzi submachine gun one-handed. Not recommended for those of us made from 100% flesh.

enhances control and accuracy. The gun's weight and its elongated snout help keep recoil and muzzle flip in check. After a little trigger time, I can see why the Terminator chose it.



Will and his kids made this adorable little guy out of a 21st Century Toys action figure.

The Complete Collection Of

# GUNCRANK DIARIES

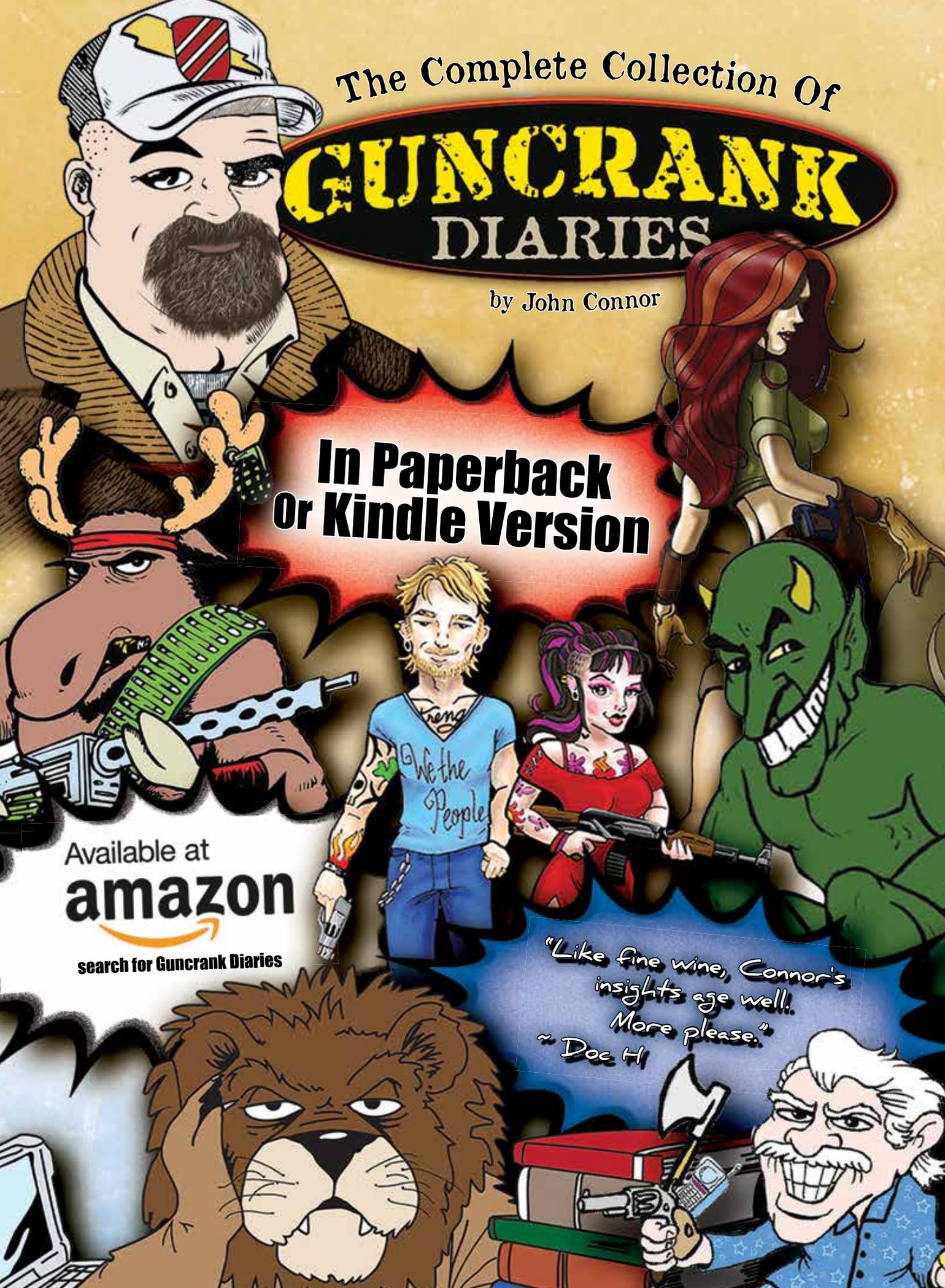
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# SPRINGFIELD ARMORY



# PRODIGY OSP 1911



**SUPERLATIVE WORKMANSHIP, INSANE CAPACITY,**

**GENETIC HYBRIDIZATION AND WARPING SPACETIME**

**WILL DABBS, MD**

PHOTOS: ROB JONES/THE IMAGESMITH, LLC

**T**he Springfield Armory Prodigy OSP (Optical Sight Pistol) is arguably the most capable 9mm 1911 in the world. The Prodigy OSP sports a top-tier feature set and a magazine capacity of which old John Moses Browning might only have dreamt. With its inimitable 1911 single-action trigger and a whopping 27 rounds on tap, the Prodigy brings

capabilities to the combat handgun most typically reserved for pistol-caliber submachine guns.

I've never met a combat veteran who said he wished he had less ammo when he was neck-deep in the suck. Additionally, the fastest magazine change is clearly the one you don't have to make. With a capacity this bounteous, you just don't have to

swap out mags terribly often. The Prodigy OSP is a delightfully fresh take on a classic combat pistol.

### **Hybridization**

I have a friend with a fascinating problem. He likes dogs, as do I, and maintains a female pit bull and a male chihuahua as part of his family stable. Concerned he might end up with more

50  
CENTERFIRE PISTOL CARTRIDGE  
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SPRINGFIELD ARMORY

**PRODIGY  
OSP 1911**



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FULL FEED



AMERICAN  
**HANDGUNNER**



canines than he had inclination for, he consulted a buddy purportedly knowledgeable on such things to ensure there wouldn't be any unwanted amorous complications. The friend assured him the disparity in geometry should serve as effective birth control.

Now 12 puppies later, my buddy discovered to his dismay, that love always finds a way. The resulting bizarre little creatures look like a hyena had a baby with a rat. These tiny mutant dogs seemed like something spawned in some diabolical Nazi research facility. This was a really big pit bull and a really small chihuahua. How does that even work?

The subsequent offspring obviously represented a mystical combination of these two very different animals. Scientists who intentionally do this in a lab call it Somatic Cell Fusion — the act of combining tissues from disparate creatures into a new hybridized result. How could that ever go wrong?

Personally, I'm against this. While the art's practitioners extol the virtues of Somatic Cell Fusion in the

ongoing fight against disease, I am simply concerned some yahoo is going to retire to his laboratory and conjure up a *skunkopotamus*. I've seen those movies. Scientists are always doing stuff like that.

Believe it or not, genetic hybridization applies to our discussion today. By taking certain traits from John Moses Browning's 111-year-old combat pistol and fusing them with an Information Age polymer fire control system, the mad scientists at Springfield Armory have created the most extraordinary, hybridized end result. Unlike the liger, tigon, wholphin, zebroid, grolar bear, beefalo or the aforementioned horrifying pithuahua or chipit (all real creatures ... no kidding, Google it), the Springfield Armory Prodigy OSP is actually epically cool.

### Technical Details

The Prodigy is one exceptionally manly pistol. The slide and frame are cut from big chunks of forged steel. At just over 2 lbs. empty, this gun has some serious heft. The frame is

so thick the slide stop is inset into the meat of the thing. The extended thumb safety is replicated on both sides of the gun.

The dust cover is railed for accessories, while the fat contour heavy barrel seems absolutely massive. It comes in either 4.25"- or 5"-barreled versions. Think of them as awesome and extra-awesome.

The expected grip safety sports the obligatory memory bump for instant thought-free operation. An extended beavertail helps protect your sensitive squishy bits from hammer bite. The hammer is both skeletonized and ample.

The Prodigy OSP comes from the factory with a serrated Tactical Rack rear sight. The generous steel blade front sight includes a replaceable fiber optic light tube. For those who actually deign to read the manual, and both of you know who you are, you will find the instructions for replacing the light tube should it ever succumb to rough handling. However, none of that matters in this case. My Prodigy

# SPRINGFIELD ARMORY PRODIGY DSP 1911



came equipped with a superlative HEX Dragonfly electronic red dot sight.

The HEX Dragonfly is Springfield Armory's flagship full-sized pistol optic. The smaller version used on micro compact guns like the Hellcat is the Wasp. The Dragonfly, like everything on the Prodigy, is built like a main battle tank.

A left-sided pushbutton activates the sight. Change the battery every other birthday, and you'll be fine. Dot adjustments require a small screwdriver and are stupid-proof. As the red dot co-witnesses with the iron sights, just point the gun in a safe direction and adjust the fall of the dot until it overlays your irons. An armored hood makes the sight tougher than you are.

The slide sports aggressive cocking grooves both front and rear. The full-length, two-piece guide rod and bushingless barrel interface make this 1911 the most accurate Browning design mankind can craft. Every single thing about this gun looks and feels perfect. The real magic, however, lives in the grip.

## Steel Meets Polymer

Unlike John Browning's classic, the grip of the Prodigy is a separate polymer component that fastens rigidly into the frame from the bottom.

This assembly houses the magazine, incorporates the fire controls and includes the trigger guard. The traditional flat mainspring housing is beautifully checkered. The texturing of the grip feels like mid-grit sandpaper. Wrapping my paws around this rig locks the gun in place like it was bolted there.

The trigger is extended, skeletonized, adjustable for overtravel and beautiful. There is a scant, grit-free take-up followed by a delightfully crisp break. Springfield Armory has been building 1911 triggers since the 1970s. They've gotten good at it.

The magazine release is slightly extended for easy purchase. The end result is readily accessible yet discreet. Magazines shoot out of the butt like Aunt Gertrude's award-winning boiled okra.

The overall personality of the grip is that of a serious polymer combat pistol. The volume fills the hand without being disproportionate. People are bigger now than was the case back in 1911 when John Browning created his masterpiece. Back then, troops complained the trigger reach was excessive. This resulted in the shorter trigger and scalloped frame of the 1911A1 in 1924.



# PRODIGY OSP 1911 SPRINGFIELD ARMORY



Nowadays, our hands are larger than those of our forebears. I have big simian mitts and the Prodigy fits me perfectly. My bride is a petite rascal and she found the gun to be comfortable as well. There is a modest undercut to help lower the bore axis and enhance control. The polymer frame pitches the center of gravity forward to help minimize muzzle flip. The overall effect is pure unfiltered awesome.

## Magnificent Magazines

The original .45 ACP 1911 packed seven rounds in the magazine. Subsequent single-stack 9mm Parabellum versions typically carried nine. So how did the gun-bodging savants at Springfield Armory get three times as much ammo into a handgun of such modest dimensions? My best guess would be they bent spacetime.

Here's spacetime in a single paragraph: An Einstein-Rosen Bridge is a connection between hypothetical disparate areas of space. It can be modeled as a vacuum solution to the Einstein field equations. These numerical models can be considered an intrinsic part of the maximally extended version of the Schwarzschild metric. This mathematical construct describes an eternal black hole bereft of both charge and rotation. In this case, spacetime should not have any "edges" as we might imagine them. Per this model, it should be possible for a particle to continue its path arbitrarily far into either its future or past, describing any possible trajectory. In spacetime, this might be visualized as a geodesic.

All that sounds tedious and arcane because it is indeed undeniably tedious and arcane. Such brain-

bending stuff might make for a fun hobby, but you wouldn't want to live there. In the case of the Prodigy, the Springfield Armory engineers just seemed to somehow cram insane amounts of ammo into an otherwise pretty normal pistol. I can only presume they somehow warped spacetime to get there.

There are three magazine options available for the Springfield Armory Prodigy. The flush-mounted sorts pack 17 rounds. Slightly extended base pad assembly that interfaces seamlessly with the grip and carry 20 rounds. The mac daddy extended mags include the same oversized base plate and indeed hold 26 rounds. Each of these magazines is built like a dump truck and remains surprisingly easy to load.

The baseplates include scalloped areas in the extremely unlikely event they ever get sticky. Stiffening ridges pressed into the bodies make them all but indestructible. The mags are finished out in some kind of dull gray. Were I to hazard a guess regarding the finish, I would suppose perhaps hand-rubbed testosterone.

## Trigger Time

So how does she run? It's actually tough to capture in print without retreating to hackneyed terms like epic, awesome and ballin'. I'm told juvenile turkeys will sometimes stare into the sky during their first vigorous rain shower long enough to actually drown. While I'm not technically a turkey, I could stay on the range shooting this gun until I starved to death.

The 9mm is the most popular centerfire cartridge on the planet. It hits hard yet offers modest recoil. However, in tiny little mouse guns, the 9mm can still be a handful. By contrast, I have shot 9mm carbines that seemed to produce more felt recoil than this pistol.

Each round cycles like a sewing machine on quaaludes. The effect is more of a shove than a snap. This is one delightful 1911 platform. The

Prodigy grouped like a dream. Break-in took about 50 rounds.

The controls are perfect and the experience sublime. Rapid magazine changes will remind you of how John Browning earned his place atop history's esteemed pantheon of weapon designers. I'd say something nicer about this gun were I a bit more creative, but this is honestly the best I can do.

### **What Can You Do With It?**

That's a good question. The Prodigy OSP would be mighty fine company tucked into a nightstand, riding in a glove box, perched on your hip while out in the wilderness or on the competition field. Additionally, I recently read something about Active SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence). As part of this program, in 1974, the Aricebo message was transmitted toward globular star cluster M13, some 25,000 light years away. Scientists hoped to make contact with a friendly interstellar civilization and, in so doing, facilitate the greatest discovery in all of human history. Seriously! What were they thinking?

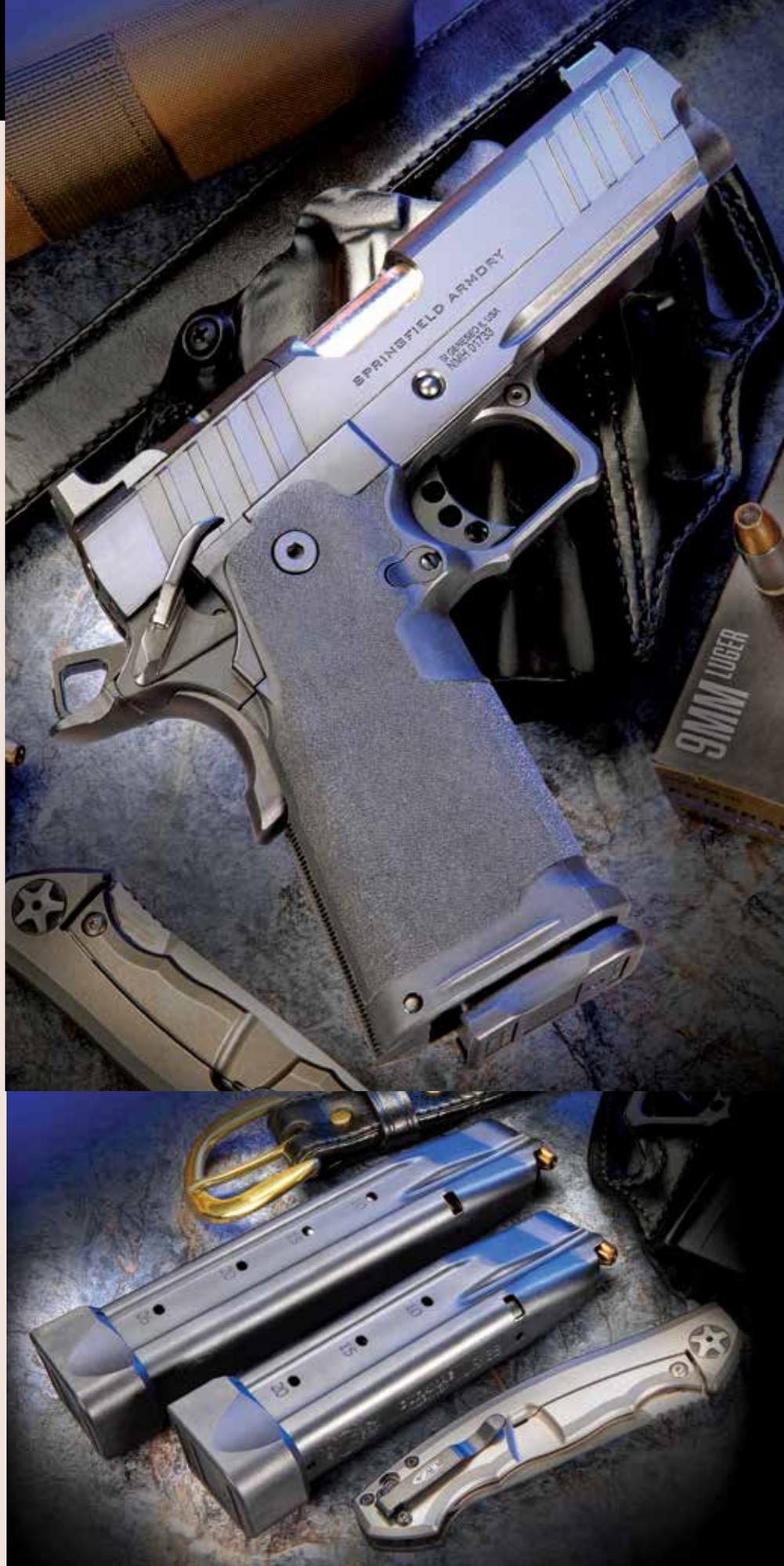
Have those guys never actually seen a science fiction movie? I doubt advanced extraterrestrial intelligence would be any friendlier than we are, and we really suck at being friendly. Second only to our scientists churning out hordes of genetically engineered duck monkeys, reaching out to unknown alien civilizations seems like a really bad idea to me. However, if ever I did have to face down hordes of hungry alien invaders for real, I'd want the Springfield Armory Prodigy OSP 1911 9mm by my side.

As awesome as the Prodigy undeniably is, you need to get into one with your eyes open. This is not a diminutive concealed carry gun. This is a service or competition pistol. Packing this handgun would get old underneath shorts and a T-shirt. However, I can think of nothing better to have strapped to my thigh when the aliens show up peckish after their long trip.

### **Denouement**

I'm saving up for a cool machine gun at present and I really didn't need to buy another pistol right now. However, after my play date with the Springfield Armory Prodigy, I dutifully retrieved my checkbook. This gun was just too cool to send home. A guy  could go broke doing this job.

For more info: [Springfield-Armory.com](http://Springfield-Armory.com)



# SWITZERLAND'S



The pistol could be carried "cocked and locked," and the safety thumbed off by the shooting hand. Flipping the safety back on all but requires use of the off-hand. The safety didn't block the firing pin, so the pistol could discharge if dropped on a hard surface.

# P49 PISTOL

## SURPLUS MASTERPIECE ... THAT OUTSHOOTS 9MM CARBINES



Frank's son seizes the opportunity to sport some Cold War Swiss Army camouflage.

### FRANK JARDIM

**D**espite my cynicism, I am genuinely delighted when a gun I'm testing performs up to the manufacturer's claims. As a historian, I'm even more delighted when legendary arms live up to the hyperbole built around them. The P49 (Pistole 49), Switzerland's standard issue military sidearm from 1949 to 1975, is one of those vintage guns with a reputation that seems too good to be true. I've always wanted to test one, but their rarity and high price tag were obvious obstacles.

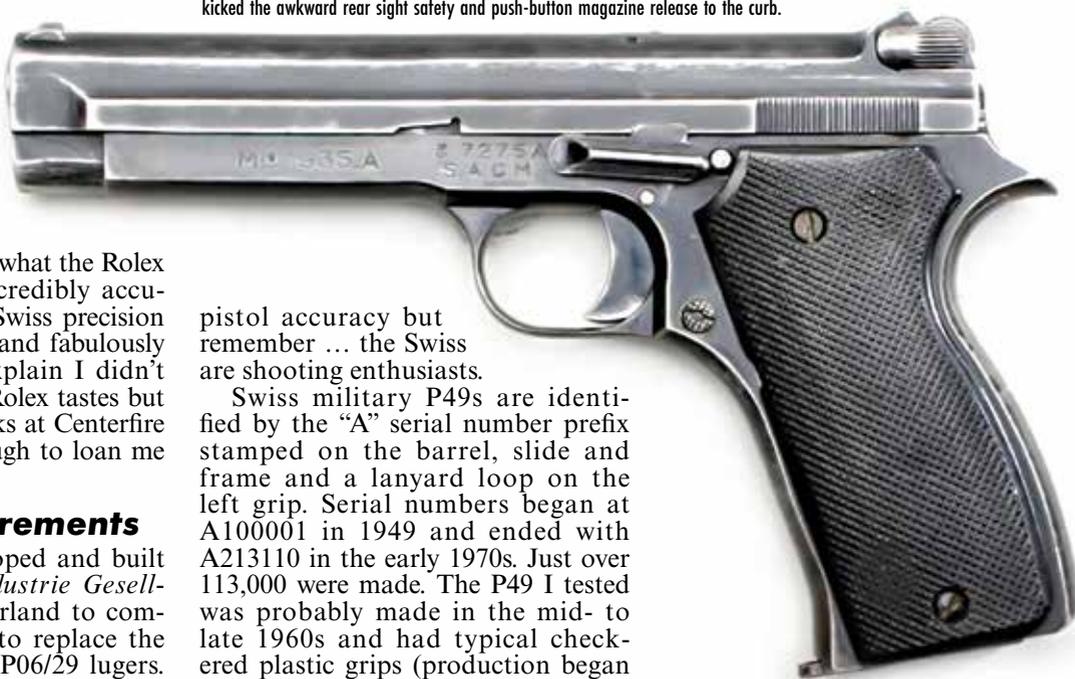
Finally, my gun collecting dai-monion led me to an online reconnaissance of Centerfire Systems and discovery of several excellent condition P49 pistols. They cost a mere \$2,999 each. While the price tag probably represents several mortgage payments



Fewer parts mean less tolerance stacking. Like the Browning Hi-Power, the Model 1935 A and the P49 used a slide without a bushing.

Both front and rear sights were drift adjustable for windage. The Swiss military crest is just in front of the rear sight. The P49 and Model 1935-A used a spring-loaded extractor more durable than the 1911 type.

For comparison, this is the French Model 1935-A the SIG drew heavily from. SIG kept a lot but kicked the awkward rear sight safety and push-button magazine release to the curb.



for many of us, most of us are not advanced collectors of Cold War military handguns. "Are those people mentally ill?" you ask. Not especially.

They know the P49 is to military autoloaders what the Rolex is to wristwatches: incredibly accurate, made with great Swiss precision from quality materials and fabulously expensive. I should explain I didn't buy this pistol. I have Rolex tastes but Timex pockets. The folks at Centerfire Systems were nice enough to loan me a P49 for this story.

### Precision Requirements

The P49 was developed and built by *Schweizerische Industrie Gesellschaft* (SIG) in Switzerland to compete for the contract to replace the Swiss military's aging P06/29 lugers. Take note that in SIG's commercial designation, the P49 was the P210-2, and they ultimately sold variations of the P210 to discriminating civilian shooters, West German Border Police and the Armed Services of Denmark. These were all fine guns, but my focus was the Swiss military P49, whose specifications required every pistol to fire groups under 5 cm at 50 meters using match-grade ammo. That's more than target

pistol accuracy but remember ... the Swiss are shooting enthusiasts.

Swiss military P49s are identified by the "A" serial number prefix stamped on the barrel, slide and frame and a lanyard loop on the left grip. Serial numbers began at A100001 in 1949 and ended with A213110 in the early 1970s. Just over 113,000 were made. The P49 I tested was probably made in the mid- to late 1960s and had typical checkered plastic grips (production began with grooved wooden panels) and improvements to the safety and slide release contact surfaces to make them easier for the thumb to get purchase.

The test pistol was also marked with a "P" on the side of the trigger guard, indicating it had legally passed from military to civilian ownership. Scotch-taped under the grip panel, I found the name and address of what I presume was its last civilian owner. The gun shows wear to the finish on

Both the Model 1935-A and the P49 had a modular hammer assembly. This made for easy cleaning.

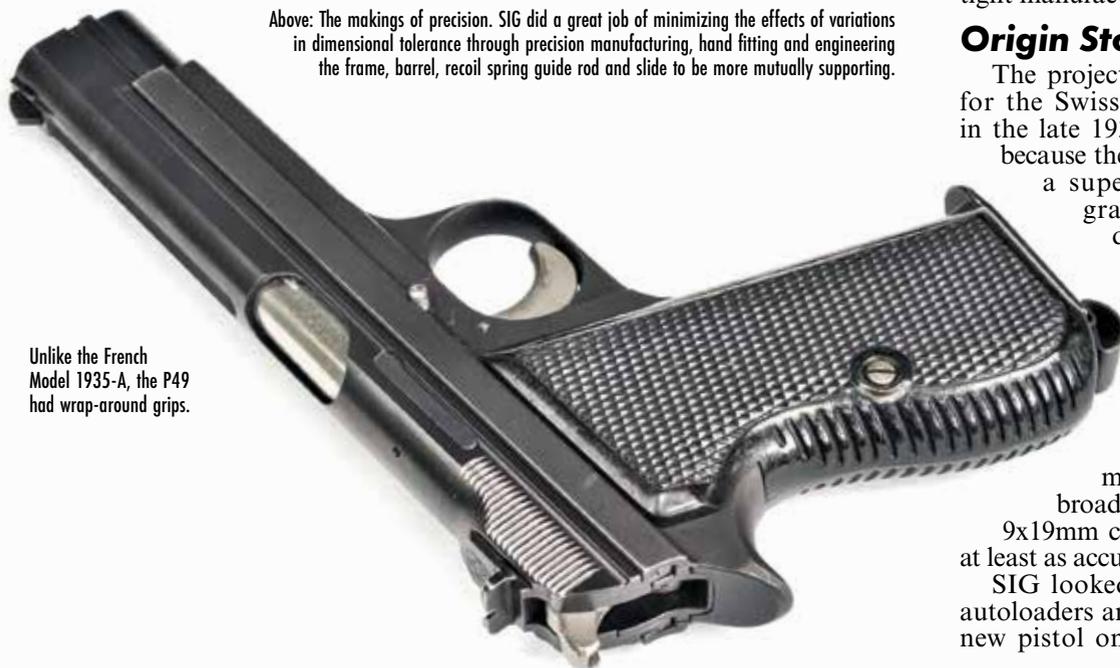




The P49 is very easy to field strip. Its modular hammer assembly was more practical to clean in the field. Note the full-length slide rails.



Above: The makings of precision. SIG did a great job of minimizing the effects of variations in dimensional tolerance through precision manufacturing, hand fitting and engineering the frame, barrel, recoil spring guide rod and slide to be more mutually supporting.



Unlike the French Model 1935-A, the P49 had wrap-around grips.

the edges and high spots, but no signs of abuse, and appeared to have an excellent barrel. Frankly, it was in magnificent condition for a 50+-year-old surplus military pistol. The Swiss take care of their guns.

### Shooting A Classic

To test the P49, I set a 6" black bullseye on a 2' square piece of white poster board at 50 yards. I shot the pistol with a two-hand hold from the bench over a solid rest, specifically "The Rock" rest made by Caldwell Shooting Supplies I customarily use for test-firing rifles. I had no 124-grain 9x19mm Swiss military match ammo, but I did have a box of Winchester's "White Box" with the typical 115-grain FMJ ball bullet and a box of USA READY sporting a flat-nosed 115-grain FMJ bullet, which sort of looks like it should be a 124-grain bullet.

I tested the White Box first with unspectacular results. The average spread for a five-shot group was 7". Unimpressed, I switched to the flat-nosed Winchester USA READY. My groups shrank immediately and dramatically. My average five-shot group was now 2.27". This translates to 5.77 cm. It's not quite the 5 cm specification the gun needed to leave the factory over half a century ago, but it isn't new, I didn't have Swiss ammo, a machine rest or the highest degree of target shooting skill!

The P49 obviously delivers in the accuracy department. If it isn't the most accurate 9mm military service automatic anymore, it can't be very far removed from that honor. Hmmm ... How did they do that without sacrificing reliability? The answer is, at great expense, via good design and tight manufacturing tolerances.

### Origin Story

The project to find a replacement for the Swiss P06/29 Luger started in the late 1930s. It was a tall order because the Swiss-made Luger was a superbly accurate, target-grade gun, thanks to its design, grip ergonomics, quality manufacture and bottleneck 7.62x21mm (.30 Luger) caliber. What they weren't was particularly powerful or reliable in dirty field conditions. The Swiss military wanted a more broadly reliable and powerful 9x19mm caliber sidearm that was at least as accurate.

SIG looked at the latest military autoloaders and decided to base their new pistol on the French military's

7.65x20mm caliber Model 1935-A pistol. They obtained the necessary licenses to utilize its specific patents, which is why the Swiss P49 bears a close external resemblance to the French gun. The Swiss kept its grip angle, Browning style, locked breech, short-recoil, tilting-barrel operating system, its front and rear anchored full-length recoil spring guide-rod, bushing-less barrel, unique modular hammer mechanism and pivoting trigger. The changes SIG engineered resulted in the most expensive, most accurate and, many argue, the best, standard military sidearm ever made. This process took about 10 years, so the Swiss military clearly wasn't in a rush. In fact, they weren't even SIG's first customer for the new gun.

### Design Tweaks

To increase accuracy, SIG tightened up the relationship between the barrel and recoil spring by eliminating the pair of 1911-inspired rotating barrel links on the bottom lug of the Model 1935-A barrel and substituted an angled slot integral to the lug. The somewhat "V" shaped slot unlocked the barrel from the slide by camming the barrel from the horizontal pin of the slide stop under recoil. By eliminating two parts from the mechanism, tolerance stacking was reduced, and the slot's broader width also held the barrel in more rigid horizontal alignment throughout the recoil cycle.

The most important SIG design changes to enhance accuracy was employing full-length guide rails on the frame and slide. By doubling the length of the rails for full-length contact between slide and frame, SIG reduced the amount of possible deflection between those parts at their extreme ends making for more consistent lock up. SIG hand-fitted the P49 slides and frames together, and the slide, frame and barrel are identically serial numbered.

While mechanical accuracy is a function of engineering and precision manufacturing, practical accuracy is tied to the human condition. Grips, sights, balance and trigger contribute to making the P49 a great shooter. Unlike later SIG service pistols, the P49 slide isn't towering clumsily over your shooting hand. Its slim snout and comparatively sharp grip angle (about three degrees more than a 1911, but 12 degrees less than a P08 Luger) make the P49 feel more like a target pistol.

It has an excellent two-stage trigger pinned into the frame at the top that pivots smoothly with almost no lateral wiggle. None of your trigger-pull effort is diverted or wasted, and it seems less sensitive to finger position. The first



The full-length recoil spring guide-rod and the camming slot in the barrel lug are anchored together within the frame using the pin of the slide stop, installed here for illustration purposes. The barrel, slide, guide rod and frame are all tied together rather rigidly.

The P49, and the rest of the SIG P210 family, had the lines of a fine target pistol.

stage take-up is of no consequence, and after stopping against the second stage, it breaks crisply at around 5 lbs. After putting 50 rounds through the P49 from the bench at 50-yard targets, it was apparent this pistol was as (or more) accurate than some popular 9mm car-

bines I've tested. Guns like this make a guy wish he'd made smarter financial decisions along the road of life. Cryptocurrency seemed like such a smart bet ...



For more info: [CenterfireSystems.com](http://CenterfireSystems.com)



Shot at 50 yards from the bench, this 2.44" group was the first one Frank shot with the Winchester USA READY ammunition. And it wasn't even his best group!

# THE NEW COLT'S CLASSIC

## JOHN TAFFIN

**W**e were on one of our rare vacations, albeit a working one, traveling down to the Freedom Arms factory. My wife and I had spent the night in Jackson, Wyo., before going through Yellowstone Park and then up through Montana to visit fast-draw expert Bob Munden and his lovely bride, Becky. Standing in line for breakfast, my wife suggested, "Why don't you go over to the gun store and look around while I keep our place? I'll get the table and know what you will order anyway."

Across the street, to the Bitter Root Trading Company I went to spend my waiting time looking through the racks of old Winchesters, Marlines and Sharps rifles and carbines. Then over to the pistol case to look at the Colt Single Action Armys and Bisleys. When I got to the end of the showcase, a sixgun on the bottom shelf caught my eye. It also caught my checkbook. When I returned to my wife at the breakfast table, I had a small package under my arm. It contained a beautiful 7½" Colt New Frontier .44 Special.

### A New Frontier

It was the beginning of a new era — a breath of fresh air. We had a new president. A young president to replace the grandfatherly Ike. Little did we realize what lay ahead in the 1960s. To honor the new president and new optimism, one firearms company decided to bring out a new sixgun. In late 1961 (only two were made in this year), Colt brought forth the New Frontier in honor of John F. Kennedy's New Frontier. Within two years, rifle shots would ring out in Dallas, Camelot would be gone and the specially engraved New Frontier would never be presented.

Our country's innocence was gone, never to return, but the Colt New Frontier would remain in production



Can you say Perfection Plus? 2nd Generation New Frontier 4¾" .45 Colt with factory ivory stocks.

The standard barrel lengths of the Colt SAA were carried over to the New Frontier, 4¾", 5½" and 7½".



# FRONTIER

## SINGLE ACTION

for the next 20+ years. As did Ruger seven years earlier, Colt flat-topped the frame of an existing model, added an adjustable rear sight mated with a radically sloping ramp-style front sight and brought forth one of the most beautiful sixguns ever. Just as with the Colt Single Action Army that gave birth to the New Frontier, the new sixgun carried a deep blue finish on its barrel, cylinder and grip frame topped off with beautifully mottled colors on its case-hardened main frame.

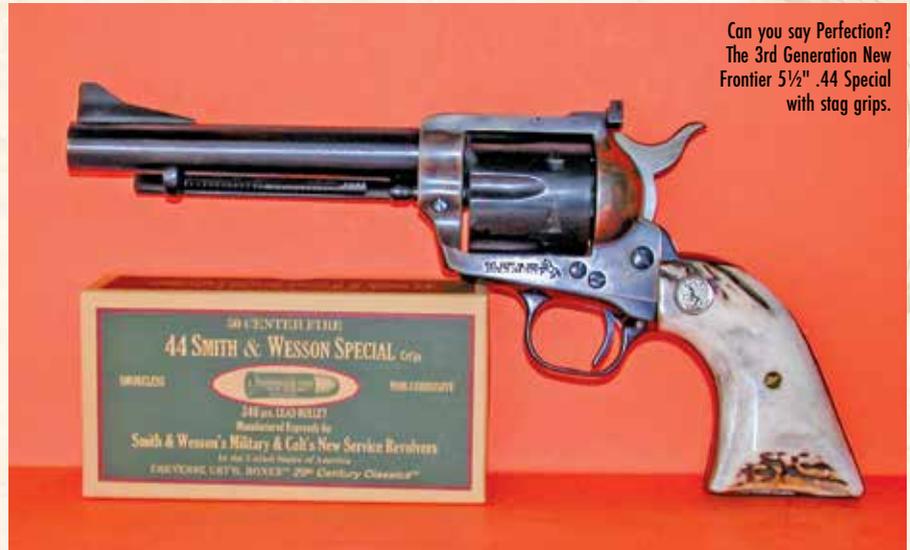
In the production of the 1st Generation Colt Single Action Army sixguns from 1873 to 1941, a few target models, both Single Action Army and Bisley, were produced consisting of a slightly flat-topped frame, a windage adjustable rear sight by drifting and locking in place and a front sight that could be adjusted up and down.

During the 1920s, Elmer Keith tried to interest Colt in modernizing the Colt by flat-topping the frame and adding fully adjustable sights. He even offered the loan of his custom sixguns, including his famous #5SA, but Colt would not listen. Had they been open-minded, Ruger may never have materialized.

Keith's #5SA was built in the mid-1920s. It was a 5½" Single Action chambered in the cartridge of time, at least for reloaders, the .44 Special. The grip was created by mating a Bisley backstrap with a Single Action trigger guard, and its influence today can be seen in the Freedom Arms and Ruger Bisley revolvers. The frame was flat-topped and carried a fully adjustable rear sight mated with a post front sight with a bead. The gun magazine of the day, *The American Rifleman*, carried Keith's article on the #5SA entitled "The Last Word." The #5SA was definitely the last word in single actions in the 1920s.

### Premium Pricing

In 1962, a Colt Single Action Army cost, gulp, \$125. The New Frontier was even higher at an



Can you say Perfection?  
The 3rd Generation New  
Frontier 5½" .44 Special  
with stag grips.



It really doesn't get  
much better than this!  
The 7½" 2nd Generation  
Colt New Frontiers in .44  
Special and .45 Colt.

unreachable \$140. This was at the same time .357 and .44 Magnum Ruger Blackhawks were going for less than \$100, and the superbly crafted and blued Super Blackhawk in .44 Magnum was selling for \$116. Our local store had a New Frontier .44

Special I drooled over quite often, but with college tuition, three hungry kids and a wife who stayed home with them, there was no way. Had I been able to look into the future, I would somehow have borrowed the money and bought the Colt. Today it



Excellent examples of hunting sixguns, Colt 2nd and 3rd Generation 7½" New Frontiers chambered in .44 Special.



Two beautiful examples of near-perfect Pistol Packing' Perfection — 2nd Generation Colt New Frontiers. Both are 4¾" .45 Colts. Leather is El Paso Saddlery's Austin.



Heartstopper #1: 2nd Generation 4¾" Colt New Frontier .45 fitted with stag grips.

would be worth no less than 10 times the original price. I keep reminding myself: Always remember, Colt Single Actions do not go down in value!

### Production History

The Colt New Frontier began with serial number 3000NF, which stayed in the Colt plant. The last of the 2nd Generation New Frontiers was in the 72XXNF serial number range, giving us slightly over 4,000 New Frontiers from 1961 to 1974. Four calibers were made in this first run of Colt Flat-Top Target sixguns. These were in chamberings of .45 Colt, .38 Special, .357 Magnum and .44 Special. According to Colt expert Don Wilkerson, the .38 Special is the rarest, followed by the .44 Special. Less than 100 .45 New Frontier Buntlines were also produced.

In 1978, The New Frontier went back into production with the 3rd Generation Colt Single Action Army. Serial numbers began at 01001NF, using five digits instead of four. In the last, and according to Colt, final run of New Frontiers, calibers were .45 Colt, .357 Magnum, .44 Special and .44-40. All the 2nd Generation New Frontiers were standardized with a finish of bright blue except for the case-hardened frame. The 3rd Generation New Frontiers can be found in full blue and nickel finishes, including nickel-plated Buntline New Frontiers in .45 Colt, .44 Special and .44-40. The .44-40 was available in the short barrel length of 4¾", but I do not believe any .44 Specials were offered in this length.

### New Frontier Facelift

Take a very close look at any 3rd Generation New Frontier before buying. Some of the later ones were hastily thrown together and will require some expert gunsmithing to bring them up to standard. My "Breakfast Special," the New Frontier .44 Special purchased before bacon, toast and hash-browns in Jackson, was dropped off at Munden Enterprises before ever being fired. Bob Munden performed his action magic, replacing springs and smoothing the action, then it was off to his grip maker, Mike Wallace. I asked to be surprised with the choice of wood, and I certainly was — breathtakingly so. When the .44 Special arrived back here in Idaho, it wore heartstopping one-piece grips of burl maple that fit my hand perfectly. Wallace joins the select group of Charles Able, Tedd Adamovich, Larry Caudill, Roy Fishpaw, Bob Leskovec

and Paul Pesinger as men who understand what single-action grip-making is all about.

### **Flexible Sighting**

The Colt New Frontiers maintain the beautiful looks, feel and balance of the Colt Single Action Army with the added advantage of adjustable sights. It is a rare fixed-sighted sixgun that shoots to point of aim, and when it does, it is normally for only one load. The New Frontier's sights allow any reasonable load to be dialed in.

Until the advent of the Colt Anaconda in both .44 Magnum and .45 Colt, the New Frontier remained the finest hunting sixgun ever offered by Hartford. Especially in the 7½" barrel length and in calibers .44 Special and .45 Colt, the New Frontier will get the job done up close on deer and black bear-sized game. They are not Magnums, but the .45 Colt will easily handle loads using 260-grain Keith-style bullets at 1,000 to 1,150 fps., while the .44 Special uses the same style bullets of 250 grains of 1,200 to 1,250 fps.

### **Perfect Packin' Frontiers**

The short-barreled New Frontiers in both .44 and .45 caliber make excellent Perfect Packin' Pistols that are easy to carry and relatively light-weight compared to .454 Casulls and Ruger .44 Magnums. With heavy .44 Special and .45 Colt loads, one can handle anything up close except the big bears. I can only think of two improvements to the New Frontier.

First, as with almost all sixguns, they cry for custom grips. The only other change I would make is the use of a flat black post front sight instead of the glare-gathering sloping ramp front sight. Colt has provided a high front sight that goes well with one of my favorite sixgun shooting pastimes, namely long-range shooting at small rocks on yonder hill. The secret to this style of long-range shooting is not holding over as one does with a scope-sighted rifle or pistol, but simply holding up enough front sight with the intended target perched on top. Of course, this is only for shooting at inanimate objects, not for hunting.

New Frontiers are gone forever. Also gone is the .44 Special in the Single Action. Don't count either out. The Single Action is a survivor, and let's hope the New Frontiers return; if not from Colt, then from USFA. For now, New Frontiers seem to be readily available at gun shows, and the really good news is they are not regarded as highly by collectors as the Single Action Army. Hence, prices are usually quite a bit lower.



Heartstopper #2: 2nd Generation 4¾" Colt New Frontier .45 fitted with ivory stocks.



The 3rd Generation Packin' Pistols New Frontier style, 5½" versions in .45 Colt and .44 Special.

The "Breakfast Special" .44 Special New Frontier tuned by Bob Munden and stocked by Mike Wallace.



# OUR PICKS FOR YOUR FAVORITE SHOOTER

# HANDGUNNER'S GIFT GUIDE

TOM MCHALE



EYEPAL PEEP SIGHTING SYSTEM



REAL AMERICAN TOMAHAWKS

STREAMLIGHT WEDGE FLASHLIGHT



**B**efore we get into this, let's clear up one thing. It's perfectly fine to buy these gifts for yourself. Hey, you deserve it! And we're sure your friends and family will appreciate how you spared them the trouble of shopping on your behalf.

So, never fear. These holiday gift ideas are *Handgunner* staff favorites — time-tested and proven values. Enjoy!

## REAL AMERICAN TOMAHAWKS

Chop, build, improvise, break, escape, cut, trim, defend, improvise, throw. The list of things you can do with a proper tomahawk is near endless. Founded and run by "a group of incredibly skilled outdoorsmen capable of surviving for years with nothing more than their Tomahawk and a blade of grass," the company takes inspiration from its flagship product from Peter Lagana, a descendant of an Iroquois brave.

With a head drop-forged from 1060 carbon steel and choice of Dupont Nylon 66 textured or Tennessee flamed and lacquered wood for the handle, it's a tool that'll last through tough use. I know this from experience. After many "aggressive" throws, they're still intact. You can even choose one in olive drab green for that authentic 1968 look.

Two bits on the American Tomahawk website stand out: Not made in China and Makes owner cooler than their friends. The former rings true

as these fine tools are crafted in Chattanooga, Tenn., and we can certainly agree with the latter. [AmericanTomahawk.com](http://AmericanTomahawk.com)

## BLUE FORCE GEAR DOUBLE PISTOL BELT POUCH

The Pistol Belt Pouch from Blue Force Gear, available in single and double configurations, brings flexibility to a new level.

The pouches are soft, made from a material Blue Force called ULTRA-comp. Think elastic, but orders of magnitude tougher. The inherent flex in the material allows one-size-fits-everything use for single- or double-stack magazines or anything else. The key is there is no "memory effect," so you can carry something thin one day and thick the next without loss of tension. I like the Double Pistol Pouch model not just for carrying two magazines, but because it offers the flexibility to carry other items like a flashlight, multi-tool or even car keys.



**HOGUE  
HANDALL  
BEAVERTAIL  
GRIP SLEEVE**



**CAT TOURNIQUET**

The other benefit of the design is comfort. The hook-and-loop belt loops allow attachment to belts up to 2" wide and the soft contour helps the pouch mold around the body. You'll also appreciate the lack of hard edges and corners. [BlueForceGear.com](http://BlueForceGear.com)

## STREAMLIGHT POCKET MATE USB

As the saying goes, "Two is one, and one is none." And if one of the two is a mighty mouse, all the better.

The Streamlight Pocket Mate is a tiny, and I do mean tiny, keychain light with a big attitude. Its single-activation button — handy for a thumb — turns on the low-power mode, beaming out 45 lumens of light. That's plenty to make your way from the car to the house or find lost keys or a light switch. Another press amps the output up to a whopping 325 lumens, turning the Pocket Mate into a viable alternate defensive tool.

The light weighs next to nothing (0.5 oz.) and features a mini-USB charging port. A charge will get you an hour at low power or 20 minutes on high. A spring-loaded hook allows easy keychain attachment and a subtle clip lets you go hands-free. [Streamlight.com](http://Streamlight.com)

## CAT TOURNIQUET

Before rolling your eyes at the "tactical tourniquet" craze, consider this: a hospital worker acquaintance of mine applied seven of them in just one week. That's because tourniquets aren't just for the rare gunshot wound — they can save lives from many types of severe extremity bleeds. While you may not encounter a gunshot wound in your lifetime, the odds are pretty high you'll be a first responder to some accident sooner or later.

The CAT Tourniquet is simple to use with basic training. The hook-and-loop adjustment design makes it easy to apply to your own arm or leg in a pinch. Once "rough-sized" with the Velcro, crank down the windlass and lock it in place. There's even a tab on which to write the time of application.

I keep them in my shooting bag and car because you never know. You just might save a life. Get your favorite shooter a few for car, home and range bag. [CombatTourniquet.com](http://CombatTourniquet.com)

## EYEPAL PEEP SIGHTING SYSTEM

I'm blind. Well, not entirely, but things have been getting fuzzier ever since 12:01 a.m. on the day of my 40th birthday. Important things, like front sights

## STREAMLIGHT POCKET MATE USB



and targets. The human eye is designed to focus on one distance at a time, but youthful eyeballs can compensate and switch back and forth better.

If you want to see your rear sight, front sight and target clearly, check out a time-tested solution — a small aperture. The EyePal is a vinyl-like "sticker" but without gooey stuff. It adheres to your shooting glasses and presents a tiny hole through which you view sights and targets. Optical magic brings your sights and target into much sharper focus. It's similar to a small aperture on a camera — the in-focus depth of field is much longer.

Versions are available for rifle and pistol sighting, and take it from me, these are indispensable for precision shooting over iron sights. I use them for all accuracy testing. [EyePalUSA.com](http://EyePalUSA.com)

## RCBS UNIVERSAL HAND PRIMING TOOL

Here's the reloading tool I use more than any other — the RCBS Universal Hand Priming Tool. If you use a single-stage reloading press, handling the priming operation separately can save lots of time and aggravation. Even if you use a progressive, offloading primer seating often makes sense, especially with finicky presses or calibers.

With this tool, say goodbye to caliber-specific adapters forever. Insert a cartridge case between the spring-loaded clamps, and it's automatically centered and ready to go. The heavy-duty grips won't give you blisters after a few hundred cases and will last a lifetime. The primer reservoir doubles as a "flip tray" to properly orient a box of primers in seconds. And the tray is segregated from the primer insertion punch to protect against mass detonation. A brilliant and "must-have" tool! [RCBS.com](http://RCBS.com)

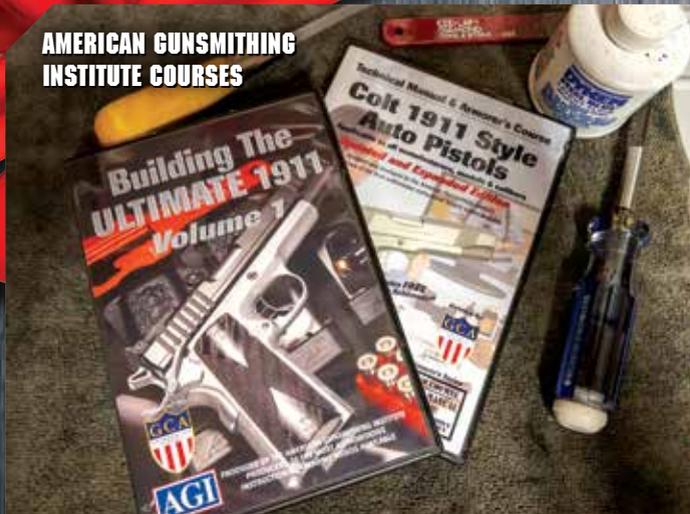


**SOFHOLD AMERICAN  
PATRIOT GUN MAGNET**

## AMERICAN GUNSMITHING INSTITUTE COURSES

If your special someone likes to tinker, spare them those embarrassing trips to the gunsmith to "fix" the home repair or customization job. Enter American Gunsmithing Institute.

**AMERICAN GUNSMITHING  
INSTITUTE COURSES**



Offering three-plus-boatloads of DVD courses (more than I can easily count), the company has packaged knowledge on everything from armorer programs to trigger jobs and everything in between.

I've had a hankering to customize my own basic 1911 pistol, so I'm starting with "Colt 1911-Style Auto Pistols Technical Manual and Armorer's Course." This 2½-hour program illustrates the basics of mechanical operation and debugging. Real guns with visibility cutouts are used to show how parts work together. With that foundation, I'm next diving into "Building the Ultimate 1911, Volume 1." No need to wish me luck; the programs inspire me with plenty of confidence. The vast catalog will undoubtedly have something for your special giftee. [AmericanGunsmith.com](http://AmericanGunsmith.com)

**STREAMLIGHT WEDGE FLASHLIGHT**

This gift recommendation has passed the ultimate utility test. In a drawer of "EDC stuff" packed with various flashlights, I pick this one up to tote around in my support-side pocket every single time I leave the house, day or night. Why?

The flat profile seamlessly slips into a front pocket, while the built-in clip holds it in an easy-to-access position and consistent orientation. It's rechargeable via a standard USB-C cord.

The big value in this one is its novel activation mechanism. Simply press your thumb forward to rotate the on/off switch. Push harder, and the unit bursts 1,000 lumens instead of the standard 300. No modes or complicated series of button taps are required. It just works, so it's an outstanding option for defensive use. You will get a solid three hours of use before a recharge is needed. [Streamlight.com](http://Streamlight.com)



**HOLOSUN HES08T-RD X2**

**SOFHOLD AMERICAN  
PATRIOT GUN MAGNET**

Do you do anything unusual like sit at a desk, drive a car or sleep in a bed? If so, check out this magnetic holster from Softhold. It's a magnetic disk slightly larger than

**BLUE FORCE  
GEAR DOUBLE  
PISTOL BELT  
POUCH**



**RCBS UNIVERSAL  
HAND PRIMING  
TOOL**

a silver dollar and covered in leather. Mount this to a surface of your choice — under a desk, nightstand or car dashboard — and it will hold your handgun in place. No matter how much hoplophobes fret about undetectable "plastic guns," the barrel and slide are always made of steel, so this approach works.

The embedded magnetic disk packs 50 lbs. of pulling force, so unless you carry a Hakim battle rifle, it should secure any pistol you can shoot. Be aware this is not a safety device — if young ones or guests are in the area, secure your gun under lock and key. [Softhold.com](http://Softhold.com)

**HOGUE HANDALL BEAVERTAIL GRIP SLEEVE**

Hogue grip sleeves are nothing new. I added one to a GLOCK 32 well over a decade ago, and it did a yeoman's job of taming the sharper recoil of that hot little bottleneck .357 SIG round. Back then, grip sleeves were ... sleeves.

The newer HandAll models are still slip-on accessories but perform more like permanent grip modifications — a good thing. The sleeve is sturdier and, as the name implies, extends all the way up to cover most of the beavertail. I appreciate the finger grooves up front. The result is a sure grip surface that also changes the whole profile by adding "meat." For slim single stacks and compact pistols, you'll get more usable surface area.

Do follow the instructions precisely, even the odd suggestions. These grips are tight and somewhat difficult to install. This is a good thing as they won't move or rotate like earlier models — at all. [HogueInc.com](http://HogueInc.com)

**HOLOSUN HES08T-RD X2**

Holosun has come on strong in the durable handgun red dot category with models ready and well-suited for hard use, in part thanks to titanium bodies surrounding the more delicate electronic parts.

One of the standout features of this optic is the "target" reticle — a 32 MOA circle surrounding a 2 MOA center red dot. It's an addictive sight picture once you try it. You can also run with just the outer circle or center dot only. You have to see to appreciate — this is the unit currently on my everyday carry gun.

The side-mounted battery tray means no change of zero when swapping the battery every 50,000 hours. Its Shake Awake technology ensures the dot is on and ready to go when the gun is moving. Last but certainly not least is the solar panel mini-farm on the top. If you manage to run a battery dry, the unit still runs on solar power. [Holosun.com](http://Holosun.com)



# GUNS

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# DUKE'S BLUNDER



These are two other .38 Colts. At the top is the 2nd Generation Colt Model 1861 .36 caliber Duke had converted to fire metallic cartridges just as the originals were done in the 1870s. At bottom is the .38 Colt Model 1877DA.

MIKE "DUKE" VENTURINO  
PHOTOS: YVONNE VENTURINO

## RARE FIND .38 COLT SAA OR FRANKEN-GUN?

If you've read my articles much, you must be aware of my quests in which I develop a desire for certain firearms and strive to fulfill it. For example, once, I desired a sample of all S&W Model 20-somethings — including the identical ones with names before the U.S. government decreed S&W had to use model numbers on their handguns. Since only 1,200 S&W fixed-sight Model 21 .44 Specials were made before discontinuance in 1966, that collection was a tough one.

Also, I admit to having an impetuous nature. Yvonne says I'm inclined to jump before looking or, in my case, buy before knowing. Usually, I luck out — such as with the 1913 vintage Colt SAA .44-40 with a 7½" barrel — which I bought after seeing a single photo of it. It was a superb find!

### Many To Choose ...

Not all of my quests have resulted in such sterling results. The .38 Colt SAA central to this article is an



While Duke must use the hollowbase bullet (second from left) in his traditional .38 Colt revolvers with their 0.375"-barrel groove diameters, he can load all the other solid rounds for use in his Frankenstein .38 Colt. From left: Lyman #358156HP, Rapine 357-145HB, Lyman #358477, RCBS .38-158CM and Lyman #358430.

example. First, let me give a bit of history. Between 1873 and 1941, Colt SAAs were chambered for no less than 36 different cartridges. Some of these were so similar as to be identical for practical purposes.

For instance, there were SAA calibers stamped “.38 S&W Special” and others marked “Colt .38 Special.” The only real difference was the Colt ones had a definite step in chambers where the 1.16" long cartridge case mouth seated. The S&W ones had more of a taper there. As for the ammunition, the rounds headstamped S&W had 0.357", 158-grain roundnose bullets and those headstamped Colt had flat-nose bullets of the same weight and diameter. Otherwise, both versions of “.38 Special” SAAs could fire either cartridge. This isn't too big a factor because before 1941, only 89 of the “Colt Specials” and a mere 27 of the “S&W Specials” were made. This information is taken from the book *The 36 Calibers of the Colt Single Action Army* by David M. Brown.

### More .38 Colt

However, there was another .38 Colt cartridge in this confusion. It began in the 1870s with the cartridge used in Colt's conversions of .36 percussion revolvers to fire metallic cartridges. It was also one of the introductory rounds in Colt's Model 1877DA, aka Lightnings. At that time, .38 Colt cartridge cases were about 0.75" long and loaded heel-type 130-grain, 0.375" bullets over black powder. Colt began offering .38 Colt SAA revolvers circa 1886. The U.S. Army even adopted swing cylinder double-action Colt .38s starting in 1892. All these early Colt revolvers had barrel groove diameters nominally 0.375" to accommodate heel-type bullets. The U.S. Army was upset with .38 Colt stopping power and eventually returned to .45s. However, when I fired a black powder powered, 145-grain, .38 Colt into my baffie box, it surprised me by penetrating into the fifth board.

As time passed, ammunition factories realized heel-type bullets were ridiculous. Therefore, they remodeled .38 Colt factory loads to have 1.03" cases with full diameter 150-grain bullets fitting inside cartridge cases. This necessitated the reduction of .38 Colt bullets to 0.357" diameter but with deep hollow bases so that when fired, bullets' “skirts” would expand to grip barrel rifling. This sounds weird today, but it worked well.

Also, it must be noted the barrels in SAA .38 Colts from 1886 to 1914 had 0.375" barrel groove diameters



Colt never stamped their .38 Colts as “short” or “long.” All were simply .38s.



The two types of early .38 Colt cartridges. Left is a .38 Colt (short) with heel type bullet and right is a .38 Colt (long) with hollowbase bullet.

and chambers bored straight through. Only 1,641 SAA .38 Colt permutations were made in that period. Officially the first .38 Colts became the .38 Short Colt, and the longer ones became .38 Long Colt. However, the Colt factory never stamped anything but “.38 Colt” on their revolvers until the later advent of .38 Specials.

### Confused Yet?

Here is more confusion. In 1922 Colt decided to reintroduce .38 Colt to their catalogs. Note that carefully.

The guns were stamped .38 Colt, the same as those made between 1886 and 1914 — no “Special” in the name. However, Colt dispensed with the large 0.375"-barrel groove diameter and went to 0.354" barrel groove diameter, which were their standard for .38/.357. Colt stuck with that 0.354"-barrel groove diameters on their .38s/.357s until revolver manufacture ceased. I have never been able to determine with certainty if the post-1922 SAAs had bored through chambers or if they were



Most of Duke's .38 Colt handloading is done with these two cast bullets. Left to right: Winchester factory load, 145-grain hollowbase cast bullet from now discontinued Rapine Bullet Mould Company and loaded round, 145-grain cast bullet from RCBS mold #.38-140CM and loaded round.

Duke's blunder was buying this expensive .38 Colt SAA and then finding out it was a Frankenstein.



cut with a “neck or edge” for the 1.03” .38 Long Colt case. Brown’s book says Colt made 1,365 of that second run of .38 Colts.

### Back To The Quest

If you have managed to understand all of this so far, visualize me virtually wandering into the .38 Colt maze on internet buying sites and factor in my impetuous nature. What I wanted was one of the 1886–1914 .38 Colts. Why would I want to deal with that oversize barrel problem? Because I wanted the education on handloading for obsolete Colt cartridges.

Then, in mid-summer 2020, I spotted a very fine-looking SAA with its 5½” barrel clearly stamped .38 Colt. Brothers and sisters, did I

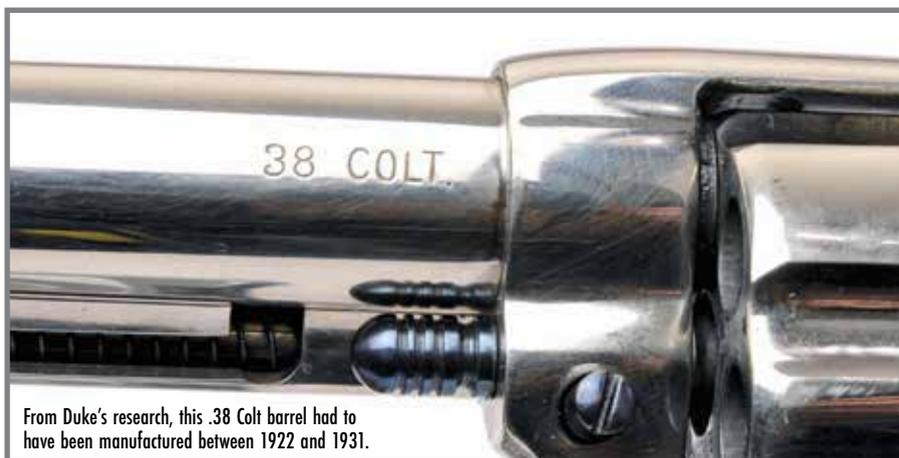
jump without thinking, just as Yvonne says I do? By its serial number, the Colt dated to 1899, so it had to have had the large-diameter bore, right? Its nickel plating’s condition was too fine for 121 years old, so I figured it had been restored along the way and obviously, the job had been done professionally. The grips were some sort of silly-looking synthetic material with a big star in the middle of each panel. No sweat there; I’ve discarded lots of grips over the past 50 years.

When the .38 Colt arrived, I was more than pleased upon unpacking it. The nickel finish was unmarred in any way. When the grips were removed, I found stamped there

“9-8-5 N” on the left side of the trigger guard. To me, it was a code of whoever restored this revolver with “N” standing for nickeled. My pleasure was short-lived. A 0.357/0.358” bullet will drop right through a 0.375” bore. One did not slide through this Colt’s bore. Slugging it resulted in a 0.354” piece of lead, so obviously, this Colt’s barrel was post-1922. I sent for a factory letter before even shooting it.

### Things Get Interesting

Initial shooting is when more evidence of my blunder appeared. After the first shot of .38 Long Colt factory ammo, the cylinder would not rotate. I had to dismount it, which revealed the firing pin hole in the frame had been wallowed out to the point primers extruded into it. That’s not good at all. When I looked into chambers, they were “necked,” but a glance showed they were much too long for the 1.03” .38 Long Colt’s case. In fact, they would even accept .357 Magnum cases. Then I spotted a number on the cylinder. Most SAA cylinders have at least part of their



From Duke’s research, this .38 Colt barrel had to have been manufactured between 1922 and 1931.

Although Duke's Frankenstein Colt SAA .38 wasn't the collector's item he had hoped for, it turned out to be a finely accurate shooter.



This mystery stamp on Duke's .38 Colt trigger guard most likely was put there by its restorer. Duke thinks the N stands for nickel-finish.



Duke fired a .38 (Long) Colt handload with black powder into this baffle box with 1" pine boards and was surprised when it lodged into the fifth board.



frame's serial number. This one's didn't match the frame and it had an M-prefix. So, I checked my Colt SAA .357 Magnum's cylinder, which was made in 1969. It also has an M.

Needless to say, I was upset, for this revolver was sold with a "no return" policy and cost thousands — not hundreds. It needed salvation, so it was quickly packaged up and sent to my friend Bill Fuchs dba as Spring Creek Armory in Ten Sleep, Wyo. The firing pin hole was wallowed out, but it had also been shoddily converted from a rimfire firing pin hole. That was the bad news, but the good news was Bill could weld it so the Colt was functional again. I also told him to fit it with some nice one-piece style grips while it was there.

### Franken-Colt

Then the Colt letter arrived and it certainly did not improve my mood. This Colt shipped from the factory in 1899 as a .38 WCF (.38-40) with a 7½" barrel. So, it started as a centerfire, was converted to a rimfire and then reconverted to a centerfire. And along the way, someone had fitted it with a .38 Colt barrel and Colt .357 Magnum cylinder and then had been renovated by someone else. My impetuous nature had netted me a Frankenstein Colt! Albeit a very handsome one.

When it returned from Spring Creek Armory, it sported a beautiful set of rosewood grips. Furthermore, it functions perfectly and shoots both accurately and to its sights. It eased the pain somewhat. I'll never get back from it the bucks that went into it, but it's a very eye-catching Colt six-shooter. And at least it's easy to handload for. For my other .38 Colts, I load hollowbase bullets because of their 0.375"-barrel groove diameters. Those loads will

work just fine in this revolver. And, seeing as how it will accept any .38 Special bullets for which I have a plentitude of molds, reloading for it will be a cinch. So, this Frankenstein Colt will stay with me.

Someday if anyone asks what I'm shooting, I'll tell them to look right there on the barrel; it's a .38 Colt!



This photo shows the evolution of .38s. From left: the .38 Short Colt, .38 Long Colt, .38 Special and .357 Magnum.

# FINCH KNIVES ADDS JUICE TO CLASSIC FOLDER PATTERNS

Reciprocity

# REINVENTING TRADITION

PAT COVERT

PHOTOS: ROB JONES/THE IMAGESMITH, LLC

Finch Knives escutcheon

Chernobyl Ant

VooDoo

The old saying “There’s nothing new under the sun” suggests everything we call the latest and greatest is derivative of a forebearer in new trappings. Finch Knife Company takes no exception to this thought — rather, they have embraced it by taking classic folding-knife patterns and modernizing them to the hilt. The brainchild of Spencer Marquardt and Steve Laughlin, the company is located in Stilwell, Kansas — about as far from

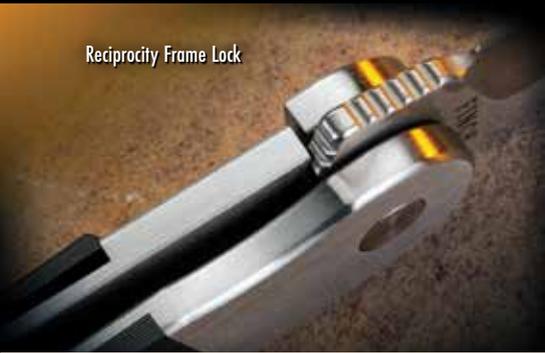
the high-tech hotbeds of America — this budding company has set the pocketknife world on fire. On Finch’s invigorated patterns, you’ll find modern features such as flipper opening mechanisms, liner and frame locks and blades that roll out on bearings smooth as butter on glass.

## Red Hot Sodbuster

The Chernobyl Ant is Finch’s tribute to one of the oldest working knives in the pocketknife stable —

the Sodbuster. At 7” overall with a 4” handle, this folder is a good size for an EDC that won’t make you miss your tactical carry. The Ant’s 3” blade is a deep-bellied drop point of Swedish-made 14C28N stainless steel manufactured by Sandvik, one of Europe’s premier steel makers. Rather than using nail nicks in the blade for opening, Finch puts flippers on all their knives — a modern touch popular on many tacticals. The flick of a Finch flipper reveals a key reason

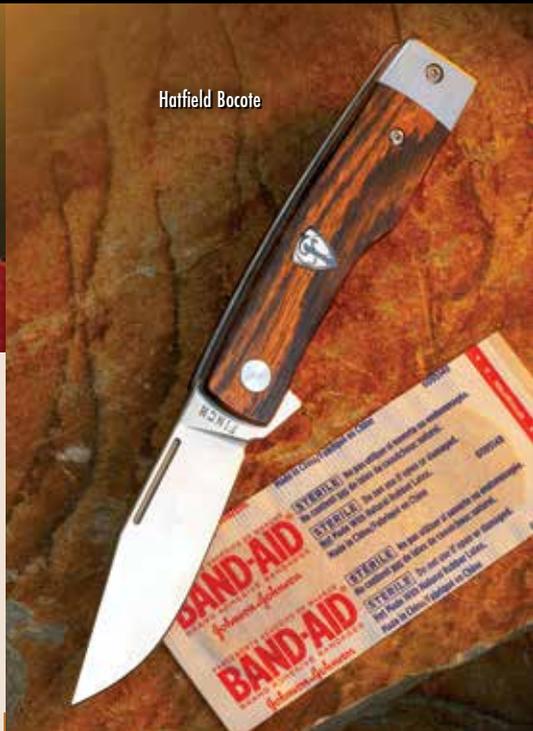
Reciprocity Frame Lock



Chernobyl Ant Pocket Clip



Hatfield Bocote



for the company's popularity — their actions are mind-bogglingly slick and smooth. A stainless-steel liner lock secures the blade and thumbs out of the way for deployment.

The Ant's handle is a comfortable "just right" 4" in length. Finch typically offers three options for handle scales. Our version is traditional red jugged bone, nicely done in a tight pattern. A Finch Knives trademark escutcheon tops the front scale. For carry, there's another modern touch in the form of a tip-up pocket clip, removable if you want to carry it loose on the pocket — old style.

### Gunner's Delight

The Gunstock pattern is a favorite of old firearms enthusiasts and Finch has taken this revered design and upped its caliber with modern features. Dubbed the Hatfield, the profile has the familiar rifle stock profile as the original pattern from decades ago, but with the super cool elements Finch loves to exploit. At 3.5" closed, the Hatfield is very pocket-able, but there's a pocket clip out back should you choose to keep it at the ready. Our model is showing Bocote Wood scales, an homage to rifle stocks of old, but in true Finch fashion, there are more modern options.

The ever-present Finch flipper is there to roll out the Hatfield's 2.75" 154CM stainless steel clip-point blade. A classic long-pull nail nick has been added should you prefer to access the blade forerunner style. Two other features — a bird's-eye pivot and a stainless bolster at the base — hearken back to yesteryear as well. For serious firearm aficionados, the Hatfield is sure to be a hit around the range or gun shop. Just be sure it doesn't end up in another pocket than your own.

### The Modern Hunter

The Finch Model 1934 is an updated send-up of the legendary Folding Hunter pattern. Like the Chernobyl Ant, this model has a 4" handle and 3" blade. Finch chose 154CM stainless for the cutting chores, a steel found on upscale tactical knives over the years and still favored by many knifemakers and manufacturers

today. The Model 1934's blade — which rolls out via the company's slick flipper — is a deep Clip Point style that serves well for utility and protection. Blade lock-up and deployment are handled by a beefy frame lock on the backside of the handle.

The Model 1934 featured here has stainless steel bolsters and dark tan jugged bone scales. A stainless tip-up pocket clip is located on the backside of the handle, removable for loose pocket carry. As usual, Finch offers scale options for their upscale mud bug. If you like your pocketknife to go the extra mile farther than the standard fare, the Model 1934's added half-inch offers you more chore options with only a smidgeon of extra weight.

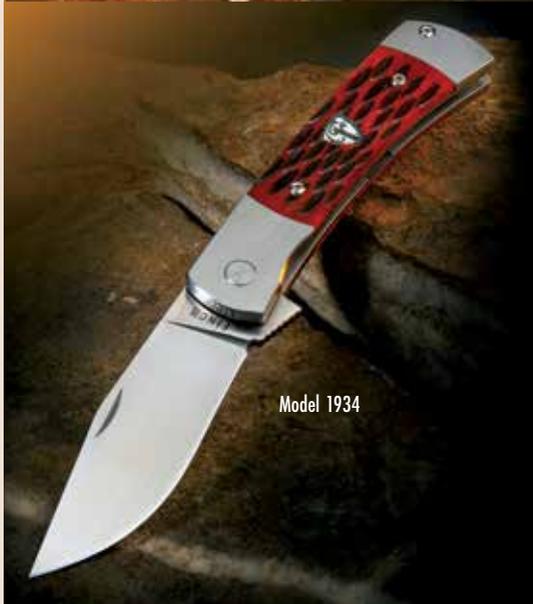
### Pint-Sized Powerhouse

The Lucky 13, also referred to as the VooDoo — is one of the company's early releases and remains a popular choice for Finch fans. At 3.5" closed, this knife is sized more like a gent's folder, but don't tell the VooDoo's beefy 2.4" hard-working Wharncliffe blade that. Here again, Finch chose 154CM stainless steel to do the slicing and dicing and once again, a flipper offers opening in a snap. That said, the blade has an old-timer nail nick as a deployment option.

Shown here is the VooDoo decked out in smooth white bone scales accompanied by stainless steel bolsters. Out back is a rock-solid frame lock with a stainless pocket clip for high pocket carry. Pint-size powerhouses like the VooDoo are often called "runts" in the tactical folder world, and this Finch offering can bestow unto you the same hard-nosed utility in spades.

### Returning The Favor

The Reciprocity is the most modern looking in the Finch aviary, resembling the early tactical folders of the 1990s when the genre was getting its sea legs. This is one of the company's larger 4" offerings. The Wharncliffe was rediscovered back then as a very capable blade for both hard use or combat and still finds its way on many tactical knives today. The Reciprocity's version is 3" of 154CM stainless steel with a flipper or long-pull nail nick option. The blade



Model 1934

rolls out slick 'n smooth and locks up vault solid thanks to its sturdy frame lock on the backside of the frame.

The Reciprocity exhibits further resemblance to those early neo-modern tacticals through the use of carbon fiber scales and a beefy top bolster for added strength, and — of course — there's a pocket clip for quick access. There's nostalgia to be had in the Reciprocity — with all the goodies of modern tactical fare.

It's hard to find a new niche in today's crowded folder market, but Finch Knives has done just that — not only making throwback knives fun and interesting again, but doing them with quality and hardworking attributes.



For more info: [FinchKnives.com](http://FinchKnives.com)



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## SCAN TO ENTER



**A**merican Handgunner is starting the new year with a bang! with a Shadow Systems MR920 FOUNDATION SERIES pistol as the top prize of the Jan/Feb giveaway package. The series was developed out of conversations between old-school gun guys — the type who aren't fussy about aesthetics and want only the essential features.

The compact 9mm includes an optimized wraparound texture for supreme control during rapid fire, three interchangeable backstraps to customize the angle of the bore for a tailored natural point of aim, a deep cut above the trigger guard for greater control and a gently extended and upswept beavertail. The MR920 is equipped with a multi-footprint optic cut and steel sights on the slide. The match grade, smooth-finish nitrided barrel is rated for +P ammo and is conventionally rifled. Internals include a carbon steel guide rod and a drop-safe, polymer trigger with a 4.5–5.0-lb. trigger pull and a crisp, tactile reset.

Kershaw's karambit blade has a tactical edge. The *OUTLIER* is quick and secure with everything you want in a karambit. It has a steel backspacer with jimping to fit a variety of grips, with or without the ring. A reverse grip is easily achieved with this knife. The 8Cr13MoV blade is not only tactical, but utilitarian as well. You can use it for cutting boxes or rope. For quick access, the flipper or thumb stud can be used with Kershaw's assisted opening mechanism. Both the blade and steel ring has a BlackWash finish.

Streamlight's *PROTAC 2L-X* produces 500 lumens of light at a beam distance of 165 meters. This multi-fuel tactical flashlight uses an SL-B26 battery pack with a Li-Ion USB rechargeable battery or two CR123A lithium batteries. At 5.14" long and weighing 3.9 to 4.4 oz., this handheld light will run 3.25 hours on high and 30 hours on low.

Win the Shadow Systems' MR920, Kershaw's *Outlier* and Streamlight's *PROTAC 2L-X* when you join *American Handgunner's* first giveaway of 2023. Go to [AmericanHandgunner.com/giveaways](http://AmericanHandgunner.com/giveaways) or mail a postcard. —Jazz Jimenez

### MR920

MANUFACTURER: SHADOW SYSTEMS

SHADOWSYSTEMSCORP.COM, (469) 458-6808

CALIBER: 9MM, CAPACITY: 15, BARREL LENGTH: 4", WEIGHT: 22.4 OZ.

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### OUTLIER

MANUFACTURER: KERSHAW KNIVES; KERSHAW.KAIUUSA.COM, (800) 325-2891

VALUE: \$71.99

### PROTAC 2L-X

MANUFACTURER: STREAMLIGHT; STREAMLIGHT.COM, (800) 523-7488

VALUE: \$159.99

## TOTAL VALUE: \$1,030.98



Except for the stag stocks, the bottom Bisley Model .357 is stock. The top gun has been fitted with a 10½" barrel and a Super Blackhawk brass grip frame, while the .357 Vaquero has been fitted with an adjustable front sight, custom hammer and stocks by Larry Caudill.

## BUILDING A BETTER BLACKHAWK: .357 MAGNUM

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**B**ill Ruger introduced his semi-automatic .22 pistol in 1949 and followed up with his .22 Single-Six in 1953. Two years later, in 1955, Ruger thoroughly modernized the centerfire single-action sixgun with the first Blackhawk. To arrive at the Blackhawk, Ruger increased the size of his Single-Six to duplicate the Colt Single Action Army, added a massive top-strap that enclosed a fully adjustable rear sight matched up with a ramp front sight and chambered it in the most powerful cartridge of the time, the .357 Magnum. To all this was added a virtually indestructible action.

When the existence of the .44 Magnum cartridge became known, three of the .357 Magnum Blackhawks

in barrel lengths of 4¾", 5½" and 7½" were converted to the new .44.

Elmer Keith told Ruger the frame was too small to handle the .44 Magnum. However, he would like to have the shorter barrel for use as a .44 Special. Ruger agreed to give it to him, but it got packed up with the other two to be shipped back to the factory. Ruger heeded Keith's advice and proceeded to do more proof testing. Elmer proved to be right as one of the guns blew. The frame and cylinder size of the .357 Magnum was increased to better handle the .44 Magnum, and in 1956, Ruger's .44 Magnum Blackhawk arrived.

### .357 Dreams

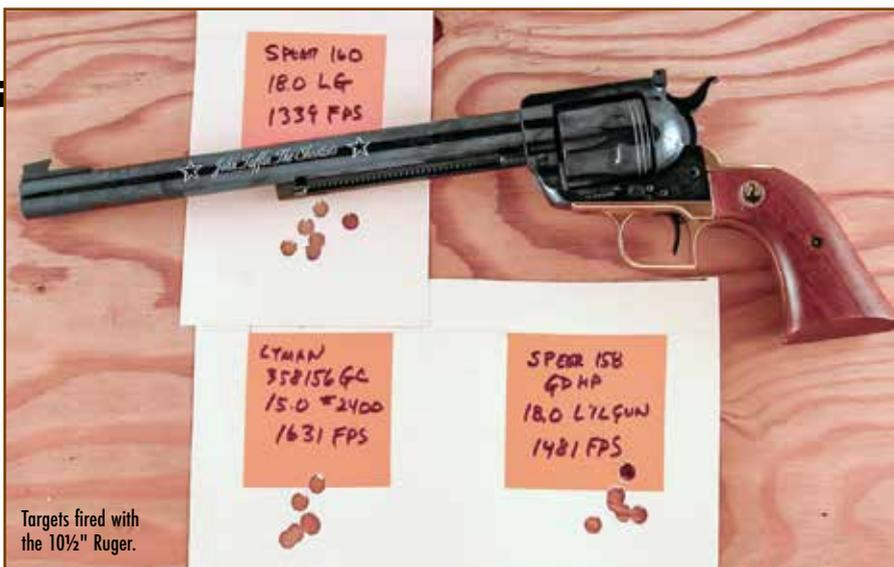
Being a teenager at the time, I was mostly oblivious to all of this except for the original .357 Blackhawk. I was a junior in high school when I opened up the latest issue of *Outdoor Life*, and there was a full-sized picture of the new .357 Ruger Blackhawk. That picture was pinned above my bed and was the last thing I saw every night and the first thing I saw every morning. Someday, I would have one of these. In 1957 or early 1958, I acquired my first Ruger .357 Magnum Blackhawk.

### Custom Thoughts

Then as now, the .357 Blackhawk is two sixguns depending upon one's perspective. First, a Blackhawk, or any other Ruger for that matter, can be purchased and used for a lifetime just as it comes from the box. For more dedicated sixgunners, the Blackhawk is an excellent solid sixgun that can be improved to a *Better Blackhawk* to meet the wishes and desires of the original owner. I've used them extensively both ways.

My first .357 Blackhawk, now lovingly known as the Flat-Top Blackhawk, was in the original barrel length of 4¾". Ruger soon followed with a 6½" version and then very rarely in the late 1950s with a 10" .357 Blackhawk.

Ruger soon followed with a 6½" version and later with a rare 10". Anyone who was a follower of the Colt Single Action noticed quickly something was amiss. Why the 6½" barrel length? Yes, this was a standard length of the Smith & Wesson .357 Magnum; however, speaking subjectively, it never appealed to me on the Blackhawk. The standard Colt SAA lengths were 4¾", 5½" and 7½". Now I can forgive Ruger for



the 1/8" discrepancy in the shorter barrel, but why did he ignore the 5½" and 7½" and compromise with 6½"?

When it comes to building a *Better Blackhawk*, I normally start with the original Three-Screw .357s, which were produced from 1955 to 1972. After that, the New Model .357 Blackhawk arrived and these have .44 Magnum-sized frames and cylinders, so I am partial to the smaller-sized originals.

### Barrel Length Solutions

I am exceptionally fond of the original length of the .357 Blackhawk. The only change I have made on mine in nearly 60 years is to replace the sloping front sight with a flat black post, which is much easier for me to see. But I had to do something about that 6½" barrel length model. Two paths were chosen. One

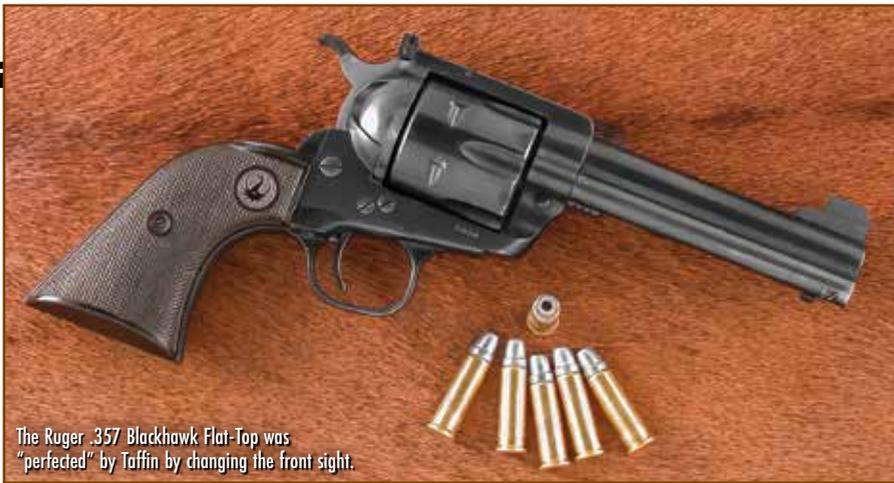
was an easy conversion of simply cutting the barrel back 1" and remounting the front sight to come up with the Colt Artillery length barrel of 5½". As I've grown older, I've come to appreciate this length as only slightly more difficult to pack than the shorter barrel and only slightly less easy to shoot than the 7½" version.

I remember while still in my formative sixgunning years reading of Skeeter Skelton solving the "missing" 7½" model by cutting back an original 10" barreled .357 Blackhawk. At the time, we did not know how rare the 10" .357 Blackhawk was. To do such a thing today would certainly not be acceptable.

The alternative is to fit a new barrel; fortunately, it is relatively easy to find the right conversion barrel. During the heyday of long-range silhouetting,



These three Ruger .357 Blackhawks were fitted with heavy bull barrels from the .357 Maximum Ruger in lengths of 10½", 8¾" and 7½".



The Ruger .357 Blackhawk Flat-Top was "perfected" by Taffin by changing the front sight.



Ruger offered the Ruger .357 Maximum Blackhawk with a 10½" barrel. Many of these Maximums have been converted to larger calibers requiring a new barrel, which gives us a source for takeoff barrels.

I found four such barrels for use in building a *Better Blackhawk*. One was left at the original length and sent off to Gary Reeder attached to a .357 Blackhawk. Gary re-blued this Blackhawk as only he can while at the same time embellishing it with gold trim. I fitted it with a brass Ruger Super Blackhawk grip frame, and it is an exceptionally good shooting sixgun and companion to my original 10" .357 Blackhawk.

About five years ago, the Ruger Collectors Association had a special run of 50 10" .357 Blackhawks made up for members using the 50th Anniversary .357 New Model frame, which is the same size as the original. I was fortunate to come up with one of these. So, I now have three of these long-barreled Blackhawks for shooting pleasure. They are exceptionally accurate with all loads; however, I prefer 180- to 200-grain bullets, especially the latter. I bought an NEI four-cavity gas-checked #358.200 bullet mold from

a reader, and these Blackhawks and that bullet are a marriage made in sixgunn' heaven.

### More Better Blackhawks

The 10½" conversion took up one of the four barrels, leaving three. Starting with two .357 Blackhawks, one Old Model and one 50th Anniversary New Model, I turned everything over to my gunsmith Tom Cripe at Buckhorn Gun to be made into two *Better Blackhawks*. One would fill in the 7½" blank while the New Model would be used for something completely different.

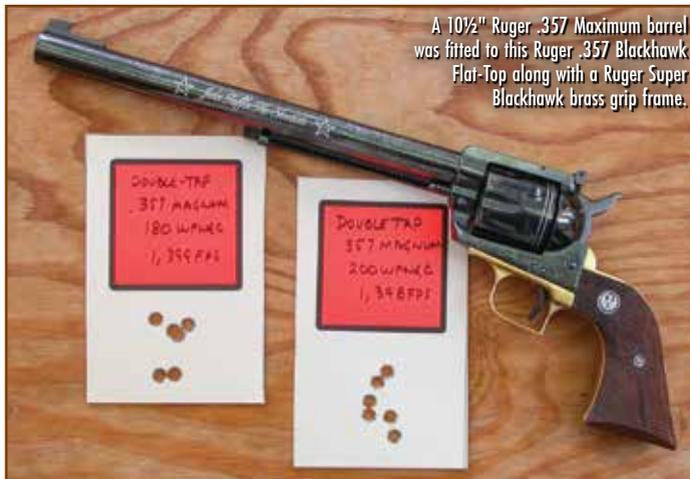
When the original S&W .357 Magnum arrived in 1935, the first barrel length offered was 8¾". This was a compromise between portability and being able to squeeze everything possible out of the new cartridge. If my duplication loads are any indication, those first loads exceeded 1,500 fps with a 158-grain bullet. The bullets proved to be too soft and leading soon appeared. The answer came with Ray Thompson's gas-checked .357 Magnum bullet, the Lyman #358156GC.

Elmer Keith received one of the original long-barreled .357 Magnum Smiths, complained the barrel was too

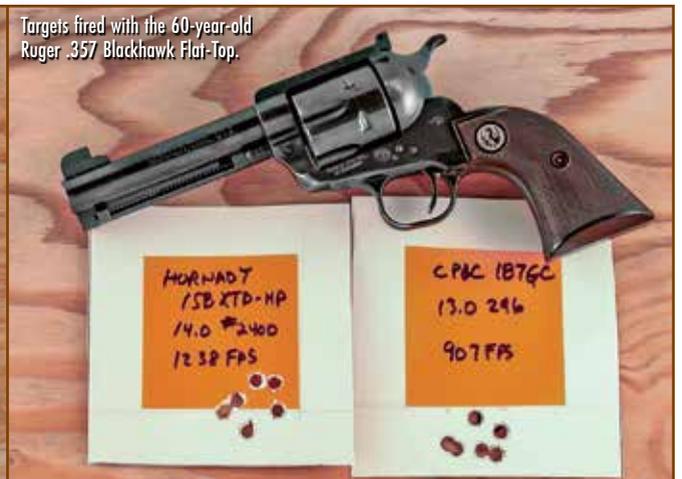
long for both packing and shooting and sent his back to the factory to be re-barreled to 6½". Meanwhile, it was soon discovered this longer barrel resulted in too much distance between the front and rear sights to allow it to be used in bullseye competition. I can't believe anybody would actually have shot one of these in formal target competition. Nevertheless, that was the reason advanced, and the barrel length was cut back to 8¾". Since I had plenty of barrel length to work with, I decided to go with the original length of 8¾".

To finish these two projects, I had Tom polish off the warning label and re-blue the barrels before final fitting. The Maximum barrels use the longer ejector rod housings; however, I decided to stick with the standard-length housings which came on the .357 Blackhawks. This meant the original screw in the side of the barrel had to be plugged. The Maximum barrels are the heavy bull-barrel type, so they give these medium-frame .357 Magnums a distinctly muzzle-heavy feel.

Three of those barrels have now been put to project use, leaving one more in my parts box where it awaits a future project.

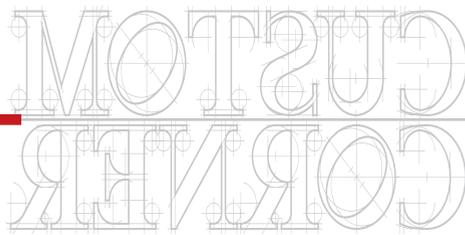


A 10½" Ruger .357 Maximum barrel was fitted to this Ruger .357 Blackhawk Flat-Top along with a Ruger Super Blackhawk brass grip frame.



Targets fired with the 60-year-old Ruger .357 Blackhawk Flat-Top.

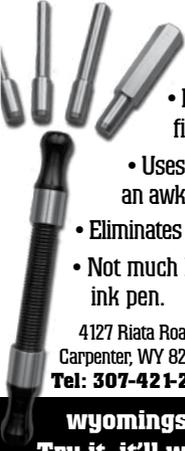
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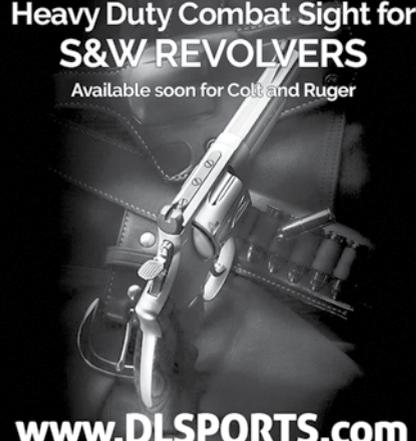
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Publication Title: **AMERICAN HANDGUNNER** Issue Date: **SEPTEMBER 2002**

1. Issue Frequency: **Quarterly** 2. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: **SEPTEMBER 2002**

3. Annual Subscription Price: **\$19.75**

4. Office of Publication: **225 W Valley Parkway, Suite 100 Escondido, CA 92025**

5. Owner: **Delano Amaguin, 225 W Valley Parkway, Suite 100 Escondido, CA 92025**

6. Publication of Statement of Ownership: **Required - Yes**

7. Publication of Statement of Circulation: **Required - Yes**

8. Publication of Financial Statements: **Not Required - No**

9. Publication of Audited Financial Statements: **Not Required - No**

10. Publication of Audited Circulation Data: **Not Required - No**

11. Publication of Audited Circulation Data: **Not Required - No**

12. Publication of Audited Circulation Data: **Not Required - No**

13. Publication of Audited Circulation Data: **Not Required - No**

14. Publication of Audited Circulation Data: **Not Required - No**

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## FURTIVE MOVEMENT SHOOTING: THE RICHARD PALMER CASE

**SITUATION:** The suspect is reaching for what looks like a gun in their pocket. It looks like “shoot now or die.”

**LESSON:** The rule is, “You don’t have to be right, but you do have to be reasonable.” You can be cleared four times over in a shooting and still be criminally charged. If you’re a cop criminally charged, we hope you belong to a union or fraternal organization.

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A furtive movement shooting occurs when someone appears to be going for a gun, gets shot for it and turns out not to be armed. Sometimes the movement is a deliberate faking of the menacing gesture — to intimidate a victim or to achieve “suicide by cop” — and sometimes, it is unintentional.

For peace officers and armed citizens alike, the green light to use deadly force normally turns on only in a situation of immediate, otherwise unavoidable danger of death or great bodily harm to oneself or some other innocent party. For that situation to exist, three criteria must be simultaneously present. They are most commonly known as ability, opportunity and jeopardy.

The ability factor, sometimes called means, translates as “power to kill or cripple.” The opponent must be reasonably perceived to be either armed with a deadly weapon such as a gun, knife or club or have such a great unarmed advantage over you as to constitute disparity of force. This might take the form of greater size and strength, force of numbers or known or obviously recognizable skill in unarmed combat. The opportunity factor means they are close enough to employ that power to kill or maim quickly. Finally, the jeopardy factor is the element of manifest intent: The opponent must manifest, by words or actions, what would be reasonably interpreted as intent to kill or cause great bodily harm.

The furtive movement goes to the ability element. It gives the defender reason to believe the opponent is armed with a deadly weapon. It must happen in such a way the reasonable person would construe it as going for a weapon and nothing else within what the courts call the totality of the circumstances. The opponent must still be close enough to harm you with the weapon you reasonably believe they are armed with and must still be manifesting an intent to hurt or slay.

For perspective, why is the charge “Armed Robbery” when the perpetrator robs a bank with a note that says, “I have a gun, give me all the money” or simply has a hand in a pocket making a “finger gun,” but turns out to have no actual weapon? It is because his actions have given the victim reason to fear being unlawfully shot. The same furtive movement principle is in play if the intended victim draws a gun and shoots the suspect making said movement.

Please bear all of this in mind as we look at the *United States v. Richard Palmer* case.

### The Stage Is Set

Deputy Richard Palmer had served with distinction as a uniformed law enforcement officer for more than 20 years, most of it with the Lake County Sheriff’s Department headquartered in Tavares, Fla. The agency comprises more than 500 sworn deputies and some 260 non-sworn personnel. On the night of October 11, 2016, Palmer was on routine patrol when he received a call of a disturbance at a known drug house in a rural part of the town of Paisley. As he headed to the address, he remembered a brother officer who had been murdered near there not long before.

*Continued on next page*

## AYOOB FILES

Approaching the narrow road which led to the house, Palmer saw a Mercury sedan with a lone female at the wheel approaching from that direction. She blew through the stop sign and came to a halt directly in front of his marked unit. His first thought was that she was fleeing the scene; he obviously needed to talk to her. Palmer already had his windows down so he could hear any danger signals as he approached, and he saw her window was down, too. As she gestured apologetically, he gestured back for her to pull over and told her so loudly.

Instead, she accelerated away from him.

Palmer spun the steering wheel and followed, carefully avoiding two bicyclists, the only other people in sight. The woman drove less than a hundred yards and then suddenly cut left, across the lawn of a house, and came to a stop in the yard. Palmer followed, throwing the patrol unit into park and making sure it was angled to the left to put the engine block between her and him.

He saw the driver's door pop open. Alarm bells went off in his

head. When a driver does that, it's telling the officer behind them there's something in their car they don't want the cop to see. It is also, Palmer knew, one of the most common patterns of ambush murder during traffic stops.

There had been no time to radio in. Palmer quickly opened the door of his unit, stepping to the left for an angle to better see the driver. What he saw chilled him: She appeared to be putting a black semiautomatic pistol into the front pocket of her hoodie with her left hand.

She approached him rapidly, her hands now visible. Palmer's department-issue GLOCK 22 was out and in hand, muzzle down, as he yelled at her repeatedly to stop. But she kept coming.

### The Unforgiving Moment

The hands are where he can see them ... and then suddenly they drop, the left hand appearing to be going for the hoodie pocket. Palmer raises the GLOCK, leveling on her chest, and fires. The woman jerks and then falls heavily to her right. The hands are visible again and empty. Palmer ceases fire.

He moves forward. GLOCK still pointed at her, the deputy tries to remove the gun from the hoodie pocket.

He finds only an iPhone. He tosses it to the side. It is at that moment he realizes she is unarmed.

### Immediate Aftermath

The woman, whom we will refer to here as only RP — yes, she had the same initials as the deputy who shot her — survived. The bullet struck her right hip from about 20', dropping her instantly. She would complain of permanent pain thereafter.

The dashboard camera had been set slightly to the right of center in the patrol car, several feet from where Deputy Palmer was standing when he fired the shot in question. Its time counter showed less than one minute from when she accelerated away from the patrol car at the intersection to when she was shot.

In the silent video, RP gets out of the car. She has an apologetic smile as she walks toward the patrol car and her hands are chest high. Suddenly, both hands dip down toward her waist. The hands rise again, and an instant later, she is seen to collapse down to her right from the gunshot. Palmer is seen approaching from the left, GLOCK still covering her, and immediately going to her left hoodie pocket. He is seen to withdraw the smartphone and toss it

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aside. He then holsters, attempts to handcuff her and finds it is causing her too much pain. He abandons the handcuffing and radios for paramedics and backup.

### **Investigative Aftermath**

It was clearly a furtive movement shooting. We've all heard the term "justifiable shooting." It means the shooter did the right thing by pulling the trigger. As the late Judge Roy Bean might have said, "That person needed to be shot." Less widely known is the concept of the "excusable shooting." That conclusion says, "With 20/20 hindsight and unlimited time, we now know that the person in question didn't need to be shot. However, the circumstances were such that any reasonable person might have done the same as the shooter, and therefore, the shooter should be held harmless (i.e., not be convicted of, or punished for, the shooting)." This incident fits the latter profile.

The Lake County Sheriff's Office concluded so. Rick Palmer was restored to duty and was later promoted to a supervisory position.

FDLE, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, also investigated the shooting. That agency has

a reputation for not covering for bad cops. They found no wrongdoing on Palmer's part.

The State's Attorney's Office reviewed the shooting and found no problem with it.

**“The hands are where he can see them ... and then suddenly they drop, the left hand appearing to be going for the hoodie pocket. Palmer raises the GLOCK, leveling on her chest, and fires.”**

Indeed, a Grand Jury assessed the matter and returned No True Bill, which in essence is a finding that no crime has been committed.

However, much later, the incident came to the attention of an attorney in the United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. He thought otherwise. In September 2019, Palmer was indicted on Federal

charges of violating RP's civil rights and lying to investigators.

### **Trial**

The trial was held in Federal Court in Tampa from the end of March through early April 2022. The competent Alan Diamond and Kepler Funk were co-counsel for the defense. Palmer had hired them out of his own pocket. Never thinking anything like this would happen to him, Palmer had never joined the Fraternal Order of Police. The prosecution's theory was Palmer had become angry with RP for not pulling over and shot her for that reason.

Sheriff Payton Grinnell was called to the stand. On direct, he answered yes to the prosecutor's questions that department regulations called for the officer to radio in the stop and turn on emergency lights that would activate sound recording on the dashcam, which Palmer had not done. However, on cross-examination, the sheriff explained the regulations in that regard were guidelines, not laws.

RP herself was not called by the prosecution to testify. Only the prosecution can say why. Had she taken the witness stand, she might have had to admit to the alcohol

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and narcotics in her bloodstream that night and that she'd had many arrests often involving methamphetamine and had done jail time. It would probably also have come out she had previously testified she had pulled into a stranger's yard because she knew she was driving someone else's car without their permission and without a driver's license. She somehow believed the car wouldn't be towed if it was on private property. This would have killed the Government's insinuation she didn't know she was being stopped by the police. Because Palmer didn't know her background at the time of the stop, it could not be introduced by his defense attorneys.

The defense's case was brief. As an expert witness for the defense and having intensively debriefed Palmer, it was easy for me to counter the prosecution's assertions.

## Why is the charge 'Armed Robbery' when the perpetrator robs a bank with a note that says, 'I have a gun, give me all the money' or simply has a hand in a pocket making a 'finger gun,' but turns out to have no actual weapon?

Why didn't Palmer turn on the emergency lights or siren? Their purpose is to notify the target driver and others on the road a stop is taking place. The video showed clearly the two bicyclists saw Palmer and stayed out of his way and that RP could clearly see the marked car, the uniformed officer, and hear and see his directions to her. In the few short seconds of the interaction, he simply hadn't had time to hit the now unnecessary toggle switch. The Government alleged he didn't know the dashcam was running. In fact, Palmer had watched its installation and knew it was indeed operative. Why didn't he radio in? He didn't have time. He hadn't been able to read the license plate, and the "chase" covered less than a hundred yards.

Part of the prosecution's case theory was Palmer violated procedure by doing a routine traffic stop instead of proceeding to a more serious call for police service. I explained the woman blowing through the stop sign was the least of it: She appeared to be coming from the scene of the serious call, could be expected to provide critical information on what was happening there and might even be the perpetrator. Thus, stopping her was logical and a part of responding to the more urgent call.

The core question was, how could the shooting have happened?

Despite access to top experts at the FBI and DEA academies and more, the Government hadn't figured it out. RP's sudden turn into the yard had given Palmer no time to radio for backup. Her emergence from the vehicle, appearing to put a pistol-like object in her pocket and her rapidly approaching him in defiance of his orders to stop all warranted taking her at gunpoint. Her hands coming down to where she had appeared to have stowed a gun triggered the shooting.

### Timing

The Government's video of the shooting, complete with a time counter, showed from the moment her hands started going down, they had reached the area of the hoodie pocket in 0.33 of one second. The movement caused Palmer to raise his gun, indexing on her chest. In an

extended isosceles stance, his hands and pistol now blocked his view of her hands, which remained down for another 0.475 of a second. It took another 0.315 seconds for the rising hands to reach chest level — Palmer told me he never did see the hands come back up. By then, the 180-grain Gold Dot .40 bullet was on its way. She reacted to the bullet wound only a fifth of a second after the hands reached chest level. Overall, only 1.32 seconds had elapsed from the downward movement of her hands that triggered Palmer's decision to fire to when she crumpled from the bullet strike.

Once it appeared she was going for the gun, even if he had seen the rising hands, it would have been an unanticipated stimulus to stop a trigger pull already under way. While reaction to anticipated stimulus averages about a quarter-second, the cognitive response required for a reaction to unanticipated response averages over a second for most people and will rarely happen quicker than seven-tenths of a second at best.

Why not wait to see the gun? Because if you wait that long you'll see what comes out of it. I testified once the hand was on the perceived gun, a person in RP's position could have drawn and shot the deputy in less than a second.

The prosecution harped on the

hip shot, implying it was intentionally fired to torture and punish and emphasizing police are taught to shoot center mass. I was able to testify the officer had told me (and the initial investigators) he was trying to put the shot center chest. However, I explained right-handed shooters such as Palmer tend to shoot low left (and southpaws, low right) due to “milking” the gun under pressure, which I demonstrated to the jury with Mr. Diamond. In a previous questioning, Palmer had been discussing this when he blurted he didn’t want to kill her; the Government seemed to interpret that as an admission to having shot her to torture her. Their theory did not explain why a rogue cop who wanted to torture someone with a bullet wound would leave her alive to testify against him.

I took the witness stand at about 10:30 a.m. and was done with cross-examination at about 2:30 p.m. Cross is easy when the truth is on your side, and you can explain it. On my departure, I learned the testimony I had expected from the defendant and department use of force instructor Richard Rippy had not taken place. Diamond and Funk felt it looked like we had covered the waterfront, and the jury had “gotten it.” In a “strike, while the iron is hot” decision, the defense closed after I left the stand.

To make a long story short, Kepler Funk delivered a brilliant closing argument in which he pointed out something I had established in my testimony: In the years since the shooting, the Government had had millions of times longer to second guess Rick Palmer than Palmer had when he reasonably believed he was about to be shot to death in the dark.

The jury acquitted him on all charges.

Months later, a Google search showed nothing whatsoever about his acquittal but still showed his 2019 indictment.

Palmer was welcomed back at the Sheriff’s Department with open arms and given a much-appreciated appointment to Marine Patrol, where he is now working.

## Lessons

Action-reaction paradigms must be taken into account when analyzing cases of this type. They were, insofar as the Sheriff’s Office, FDLE and the State’s Attorney’s Office ... but apparently not by the U.S. Department of Justice.

The guiding light for police use of force is the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1989 decision in *Graham v. Connor*.



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It focuses on the standard of objective reasonableness. The Court said, “The ‘reasonableness’ of a particular use of force must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight.”

**The prosecution harped on the hip shot, implying it was intentionally fired to torture and punish and emphasizing that police are taught to shoot center mass.**

The opinion also stated, “The calculus of reasonableness must embody allowance for the fact that police officers are often forced to make split-second judgments — in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving — about the amount of force that is necessary for a particular situation.” Diamond and Kepler were able to get a jury instruction outlining this principle.

It is essential to have post-accusation support. Legal cases cost big money. I’ve always urged police officers to join their union or fraternal organization: It is the one entity that will likely pay for your legal defense if criminally charged.

As much as the department might want to stand behind you, they’re not allowed to pay legal fees for people accused of crimes. Organizations like Armed Citizens Legal Defense Network (ArmedCitizensNetwork.org) serve a similar purpose for private citizens. (Disclosure: I’m on ACLDN’s advisory board.) Rick Palmer paid about \$100,000 out of his own pocket and Diamond and company gave him a hell of a deal at that.

Be sure your instructors will speak for you. Cop or armed citizen, a jury told you did what you were trained to do (and what you were trained was, in fact, the right thing to do) can be enormously helpful. Retired deputy Richard Rippy stood ready to do so. In this case, Rippy had briefed me on the training, and I was able to get it in. Some instructors fail to do so, particularly in high-profile or politically motivated cases.

I would like to publicly recognize Alan Diamond and Kepler Funk for a great job of lawyering and Richard Rippy and Sheriff Grinnell for being stand-up, honest lawmen. I would also like to applaud the trial judge, James D. Whittemore, who did a very fair and impartial job in what turned out to be his final case before retirement from a most distinguished career. Finally, a hearty thanks to Rick Palmer’s family — including one son in the same department — who stood by him all the way through the unnecessary nightmare it took more than half a decade to end.





# NEW PRODUCTS



## SFT9

Wilson Combat

Wilson Combat's SFT9 double-stack 9mm handgun offers a unique blend of classic double-stack design mixed with

modern reliability enhancements that improve handling and shooting performance for shooters of all skill levels. Features include a Commander-length slide, 4¼" match-grade bushing-style barrel, Wilson Combat TRAK grip texture on the front and the rear of the grip frame, stainless steel slide with corrosion-resistant black DLC and 15-round capacity. MSRP: \$3,095. For more info: (800) 955-4856, [WilsonCombat.com](http://WilsonCombat.com)

## MIRAGE 2.0

Wildgame Innovations

The *Mirage 2.0* 30-megapixel camera delivers 16:9 stills and 15-second 720p HD video clips. The half-second trigger speed, combined with 42 nearly invisible infrared LEDs and a long 90' illumination/detection range guarantees a camera that is both discreet and can get the shot in any setting. Built-in automatic exposure control ensures top-quality image captures in all lighting conditions. Powered by eight AA batteries or a 12-volt DC power source (not included). Time, date and moon phase stamps will help put you on the ground when the big one shows up. MSRP: \$89.99. For more info: (877) 269-8490, [WildgameInnovations.com](http://WildgameInnovations.com)



## GX4XL

Taurus

The 9mm Luger GX4XL from Taurus features a 1" longer T.O.R.O. slide than the GX4 — increasing muzzle velocity and sight radius and making it easier to maintain accuracy. The DLC-coated 3.7" barrel ensures reduced friction. The GX4XL boasts a flat face target trigger, gas nitride coated slide, two backstrap options and more. OAL is 6.43" and 10-, 11- and 13-round magazines are available. MSRP: Starting at \$429. For more info: (800) 327-3776, [TaurusUSA.com](http://TaurusUSA.com)



## FOUNDATION SERIES

Shadow Systems

FOUNDATION SERIES pistols by Shadow Systems are available in three models: MR920, XR920 and DR920. Three interchangeable backstraps enable the user to change the angle of the bore for a natural point of aim. The multi-footprint optic cut allows for mounting an optic from most brands. Steel sights on the slide with a plain black serrated rear and white dot front which afford a lower 1/3 cowlitness with most optics. The pistols ship with two Magpul magazines. MSRP: Starting at \$679. For more info: (469) 458-6808, [ShadowSystemsCorp.com](http://ShadowSystemsCorp.com)

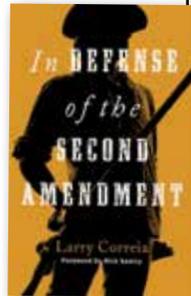


## IN DEFENSE OF THE SECOND AMENDMENT

Regnery Publishing

Written by fire-arms instructor Larry Correia, *In Defense of the Second Amendment* contains important information for someone

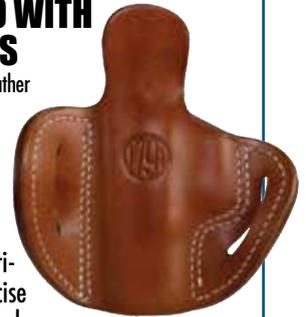
who owns a gun, is thinking about owning a gun or who cares about the preservation of our constitutional rights. Correia's practical experience comes from having owned a high-end gun store (catering largely to law enforcement) and being a competitive shooter and self-defense trainer. MSRP: \$29.99. For more info: [LaurenSnyder@Regnery.com](mailto:LaurenSnyder@Regnery.com), [Regnery.com](http://Regnery.com)



## HOLSTERS FOR RUGER MAX-9 WITH OPTICS

1791 Gunleather Holsters

With a commitment to help Americans exercise their Second Amendment rights, 1791 Gunleather offers *Holsters for Ruger MAX-9 with optics*. The Optic Ready Belt Holster 2.1 is an open top multi-fit belt holster with an optic cut. Other holsters for the Ruger MAX-9 are the Optic Ready Paddle Holster 2.1, Ultra Custom Belt Holster 2.1, Fair Chase Deer Hide and more. MSRP: \$59.99 to \$64.99 for the Optic Ready Belt Holster 2.1. For more info: (800) 407-1791, [1791Gunleather.com](http://1791Gunleather.com)



## HK P30/P2000 CUSTOMIZATIONS

Langdon Tactical Technology

Langdon Tactical Technology (LTT) has partnered with Heckler & Koch (HK) to offer *customizations to HK's P30 and P2000* series of pistols. With over 200 options to choose from, the LTT P30 lineup includes the P30, P30L and P30SK all in DA/SA and LEM options, along with the California-compliant P2000 model in DA/SA. LTT will also be offering custom work on existing P30s and P2000s, including Low RDO solution, night sights and LTT trigger job with multiple options for pull weight. MSRP: \$165-\$205. For more info: (571) 385-2979, [LangdonTactical.com](http://LangdonTactical.com)





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MSRP is subject to change without notice. FMG Publications presents the MSRP in good faith and is believed to be correct at the time of printing.



**TC9 SERIES**  
Taylor's & Company

Taylor's & Co. TC9 Series of 9mm pistols includes four reproduction models of the 1873 Cattleman revolver. The TC9 utilizes a side-loading gate and an ejector rod. The revolver clone has a steel frame with a rear frame notch and fixed front blade sight. The 9mm 1873 Cattleman revolver is offered in a black-checkered grip and case-hardened frame (pictured) and a checkered larger-size walnut grip with blued steel finish. Available in 4.74" and 5.5" barrel lengths. MSRP: \$546.39 for black-grip models; \$588.14 for walnut-grip models. For more info: (540) 722-2017, [TaylorsFirearms.com](http://TaylorsFirearms.com)

**COMBAT SPECIAL  
THEME 1911  
.45 PISTOL**  
D&L Sports Inc.



Two-tone custom 1911 pistols became popular in the 1970s and 1980s. Often carried by Col. Jeff Cooper, they are typically referred to as "Combat Special" models. The *Combat Special Theme 1911 .45 Pistol* is now offered by D&L Sports. MSRP: Prices vary with custom features. For more info: (928) 636-1726, [DLSports.com](http://DLSports.com)

**WX OMEGA**  
WileyX



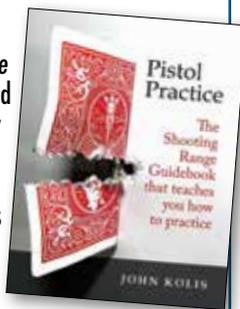
WileyX's *WX OMEGA* ends the search for a solid pair of perfect-fitting sunglasses. The WX Omega is one of the bolder frames in the Active Lifestyle Series — it's lightweight with a high-wrap that blocks out any peripheral light. The lenses meet ANSI Z87.1 safety standards for optical clarity and high-mass/high-velocity impact, guaranteeing maximum protection and precision vision in any outdoor adventure. MSRP: Starting at \$100. For more info: (800) 776-7842, [WileyX.com](http://WileyX.com)

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DELUXE IWB  
HOLSTER**  
Versacarry



The *Obsidian Deluxe IWB Holster* is an optics-compatible, custom-molded polymer holster. It has an adjustable cant and adjustable retention for confident draws. For all-day comfort when carrying, the holster features a raised protective backing and adjustable grip concealment. It has an open bottom to accommodate firearms with threaded barrels. The *Obsidian Deluxe* is available for a wide range of firearms including the GLOCK 19/43, H&K VP9SK, Ruger Max 9, S&W M&P Shield and more. MSRP: \$39.99. For more info: (979) 778-2000, [Versacarry.com](http://Versacarry.com)

**PISTOL PRACTICE**  
John Kolis



*Pistol Practice* is written and published by NRA- and USCCA-certified firearms instructor John Kolis. It offers a framework for novices to attain competence and experienced shooters to improve skills. The spiral-bound guidebook contains 20 chapters of exercises and challenges, with targets and score sheets to track progress. Kolis's goal in writing the book is to make range time "safe, fun and productive." MSRP: \$29.99. For more info: [John@PistolPractice.com](mailto:John@PistolPractice.com), [PistolPractice.com](http://PistolPractice.com)

**PDP 5.1" THREADED  
BARREL 9MM KIT**  
Walther Arms

Walther Arms' *PDP 5.1" Threaded Barrel 9mm Kit* has polygonal rifling for improved performance. The kit includes the barrel with 1/2x28 TPI threads, spring and thread protector. It works with the PDP 4.5" model but will not fit the steel frame PPQ. The PDP 5.1" Threaded Barrel 9mm Kit is offered in the North American market only. MSRP: \$249. For more info: (479) 242-8500 ext. 507, [WaltherArms.com](http://WaltherArms.com)



**HAMMER TARGET**  
Hammer Targets, LLC



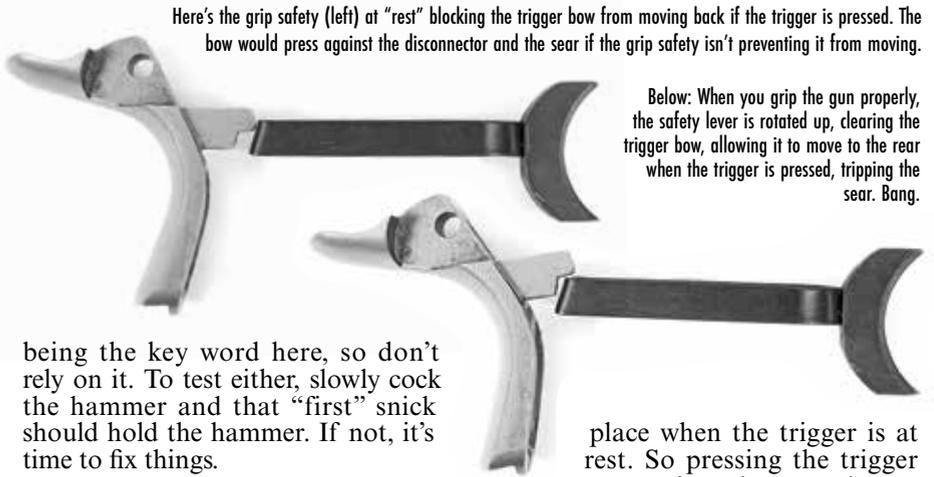
The *Hammer Target* is the world's first steel target with a built-in slide hammer. Constructed with 3/8" AR500 steel, the target can be used for training with all handgun and rifle calibers. The *Hammer Target* is modular, highly portable and constructed with a reactive steel gong that drives fragmentation straight down. MSRP: \$299. For more info: (208) 296-9449, [HammerTargets.com](http://HammerTargets.com)

the trigger (not enough to trip the sear). Now move the slide about 1/4" or a bit more to the rear and you'll feel the trigger suddenly sort of relax and move back, but the hammer doesn't fall. Thank you, disconnecter. Now continue moving the slide back a bit while you hold the trigger back, then let the slide come back forward to lock. Now, release the trigger. Hear that click? The disconnecter is doing its magic and the gun can fire. If it didn't go like this, the gun isn't safe. Get it?

**STEP 4: HALF-COCK NOTCH**

Original-design guns have the classic Colt "captive" half-cock notch. It's meant to catch the hammer if it slips from your thumb and generally won't allow a trigger pull to fire the gun from half-cock. It's not a safe carry method though, as a dropped gun can break the half-cock notch and allow the gun to fire.

Some designs have a "Series 80" notch, which is engaged when the hammer is cocked only a short distance. If you pull the trigger at that notch, the hammer fall isn't brisk enough to fire the gun. Probably



Here's the grip safety (left) at "rest" blocking the trigger bow from moving back if the trigger is pressed. The bow would press against the disconnecter and the sear if the grip safety isn't preventing it from moving.

Below: When you grip the gun properly, the safety lever is rotated up, clearing the trigger bow, allowing it to move to the rear when the trigger is pressed, tripping the sear. Bang.

being the key word here, so don't rely on it. To test either, slowly cock the hammer and that "first" snick should hold the hammer. If not, it's time to fix things.

**STEP 5: FIRING PIN SAFETY**

If you have a Series-80 style 1911 or one with a firing pin safety, it's easy to check. It's a simple mechanism. Arrange things so you can press the trigger while holding the hammer back. Now (with your third hand?) use a punch to press the firing pin forward. It should move freely. Release the trigger and try again and it should hit a block. There's a lever and plunger system pulling the plunger from inside the slide, allowing the firing pin to move or to lock it in

place when the trigger is at rest. So pressing the trigger moves the plunger down, allowing the pin to move forward at the hammer strike.

So there you go, five simple steps to safety with your 1911. Please, remember to keep your wits about you as you do this and the muzzle pointed in a safe direction at all times. Questions? Drop a note to [editor@americanhandgunner.com](mailto:editor@americanhandgunner.com) and Tom will get it to me. If you'd like to hear about other things like this, let us know what you want demystified. Stay safe, and take a new shooter shooting! 

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# GUN RIGHTS

Alan Korwin



## WHEN IT'S TOO GOOD, THAT'S BAD

### NYSRPA V. BRUEN ENCOURAGES GOVERNMENT LAWLESSNESS

By now, you've heard of the *Bruen* case at the Supreme Court. It overturned NY State's 100-year-old Sullivan law — which effectively banned legal carry in public — with obviously little effect on rampant violence. Widely heralded as a spectacular win for the pro-rights gun community, like everything, there are other sides. Anti-gun-rights people along with agenda-driven constitution-less politicians don't think it's a win. They believe this case is awful and it's generating unintended consequences. Anti-rights bigots have been pushed over the edge, kicked in the face and have abandoned principles and constraints our Constitution is designed to provide.

#### State v. Federal

Similarities to the recent abortion decision are startling. *Dobbs v. Jackson* did not “overturn” *Roe v. Wade*. It corrected the error in *Roe*, returning power to states where it belongs, because there is no legit federal authority on the matter. Feds had usurped power they did not have. Conversely, *Bruen* clarifies power over arms is not in states' hands — they must abide by the Constitution.

Now the worst anti-gun-rights states have their backs up. In both cases (guns and abortion), there's a push to amend the Constitution (unlikely), calls for civil disobedience (happening) and plans to subvert what SCOTUS has determined (by governors). In editorials and actions, opposition to the rule of law is vigorous and dangerous. That is the real takeaway from these new seminal cases.

#### Rights Restoration

*Bruen* is so good for our side it is hard to fathom. The ancient Sullivan law, that arbitrary grant of power over freedom to officials, is kaput. It will ripple massively through the states — goodbye unreason-

able permit denials. Arbitrary “proper cause” clauses for denying peoples' right to arms, which had morphed into near-total bans, are over — theoretically. It resembles *Heller* (2008), which stated unambiguously the U.S. right to arms, nearly two-and-a-half centuries strong, belongs to individual citizens. That's essential truth, willfully obscured by power brokers holding mass-media levers. Leftist and communist assaults calling 2A a “collective right” — meaning no individuals had it — got demolished.

Followed shortly by *McDonald* (2010), your rights exist outside your home, not just within your four walls, another shibboleth promoted by anti-Americans to limit or eliminate this precious right, ceding more power to government. Many illogically feel safer when the government is powerful and feel threatened when you are. This is the opposite of how our Founders established the freest nation on Earth.

Now comes *Bruen*, accurately declaring concocted schemes to restrict your right to arms cannot stand. Antis are rendered powerless and rightly so — if law matters.

And there's the rub. Those defeated in their totalitarian efforts to wrench power from us — that's you folks who like this magazine and everything it stands for — are left naked and defeated. If it were you, you'd fight back. They are.

#### Fighting Back

In the coming months and years, we can expect actions like we're seeing in New York State. Unelected Kathy Hochul became the anti-gun-rights governor. She is driving a 10-part set of rules, with legislative backing, to neuter the SCOTUS decision. Before you can go armed from your home, you'll need to satisfy this woman and her abusive demands — like show us your online search passwords to qualify. It's precisely what SCOTUS ruled cannot be done — bureaucratic judgments. Will online Trump enthusiasts qualify? Imagine

needing your governor's permission, in writing, plus tests with miles of red tape to get a book.

Hochul's 10-bill package outlaws what they're calling loopholes — a euphemism for freedoms they dislike — requiring non-existent micro-stamping on new sidearms, banning normal-capacity magazines, expanding who can declare you guilty of red-flag infractions, mandating social-media reporting on “hate speech,” license requirements for people under 21 buying semi-auto rifles and bans on defensive body armor. Let me ask, how much of this will stop mass murderers?

This is bad for the country, very bad. Recognition and restoration of repressed rights should not lead to civil manipulation from establishment operators. It should be grounds for removal from office. Propagandized New Yorkers may lack the *cojones* to do that — they're convinced guns are evil, and government must save them.

Falsely calling crime this new thing “gun violence,” Hochul signed legislation to “immediately strengthen” the state's gun laws. They already have America's strongest draconian repressive gun laws but leave them unenforced, allowing lethal perpetrators out on the street.

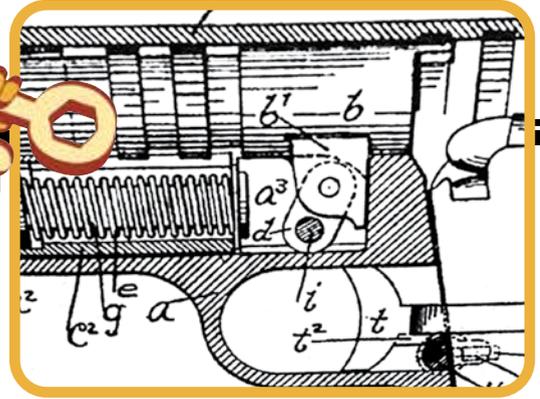
New York's case to deny rights is so weak the three dissenting justices resort to hyperbole and scare tactics rather than reasoned legal argument. Read the dissent; it's revealing and embarrassing. Compiled statistics on how many people are murderers do not make a case against fundamental rights. But it's all they have. Gun control is not crime control. Anti-gunners  don't know this.

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



ROY HUNTINGTON

# THE INSIDER



# 5-POINT 1911 SAFETY CHECK

## IS YOUR GUN SAFE?

If I had to wager, I'd wager at least 10% of the 1911s I've worked on over the decades have had safety issues. Some were even new guns. If I just think about well-used 1911s, I'm betting the percentage is more like 15% or even 20% — especially gun show “parts” gun amateurs often assemble. Not long ago a friend brought me a foreign 1911 (an Argentinian “Sistema” Colt clone) saying it needed some work. No fooling.

The hammer followed when the slide was released on an empty chamber. The grip safety didn't function correctly and if you engaged the thumb safety, pressed the trigger gently, then took the safety off, the hammer would fall. It got me to thinking going over this very simple 5-step safety check might be something we should chat about.

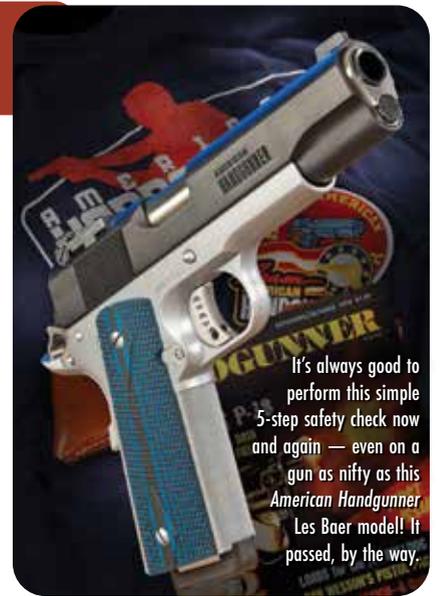
*Before you do this, clear the gun please. Please?*

### STEP 1: THUMB SAFETY

Cock the hammer and engage the thumb safety. Now pull the trigger with more force than you would use to fire the gun, but don't be the Incredible Hulk either — just firmly. Now take the safety off. Did the hammer fall? If so, check the “bad” box. Now, hold the (unloaded!) gun up next to your ear. I like to use electronic hearing muffs for this since they give you bionic hearing. Now slowly try to cock the still-cocked hammer back and listen carefully. Do you hear a click? That's the sear re-engaging in the hammer notch. It means when you pressed the trigger with the safety on, the sear moved a bit because the cam in the thumb safety meant to block the sear is worn or mis-fitted. That's, as we say in the machine shop, “Dangerly!” Get the gun looked at.

### STEP 2: GRIP SAFETY

The grip safety blocks the trigger from moving to the rear, pushing against the sear (with some help from the disconnecter). Hold the gun so the grip safety is “on” (not depressed). Cock the hammer,



It's always good to perform this simple 5-step safety check now and again — even on a gun as nifty as this American Handgunner Les Baer model! It passed, by the way.

thumb safety off and press the trigger. Did the hammer fall? Now (like the thumb safety check), gently try to cock the hammer while you listen. Did you hear any clicks of the sear re-engaging? If not, all is good. If so, it's fix-it time.

Now, get a firm firing grip, thumb safety off and cock the hammer. Pull the trigger and run the slide, keeping your finger on the trigger. Now release your palm from the grip safety but *keep the trigger pressed*. You with me? Now, release the trigger. Did the grip safety snap back out where it normally rests? If so, all is good. If not, you know the drill.

### STEP 3: DISCONNECTOR

The disconnecter keeps the gun from going full-auto. It sort of kicks the sear back into engagement even if the trigger is held back. Cock the hammer and put gentle pressure on

Step 4 verifies the half-cock notch. Here it is on a classic Colt-style 1911 design.



Note how the hammer notch “captures” the sear. The disconnecter is poking up about where it would be.

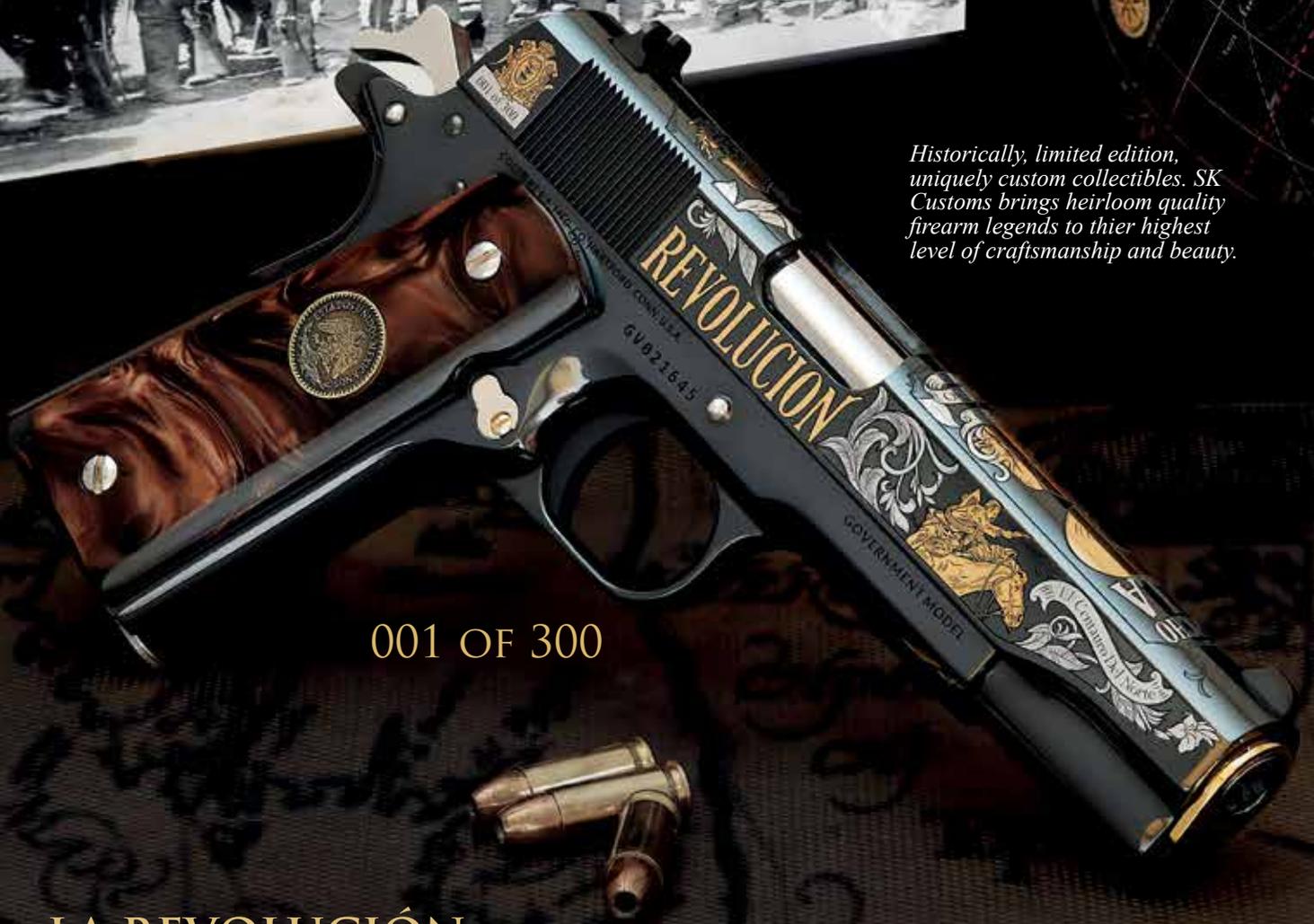


The thumb safety locks the sear from moving by using a camming surface on the safety

They can get worn or are simply butchered during a “fitting” job (on the left).

This one is fit correctly, but each gun is different and needs a deft touch to get it right.

*Continued on page 80*



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