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# 2023

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# MARCH/APRIL



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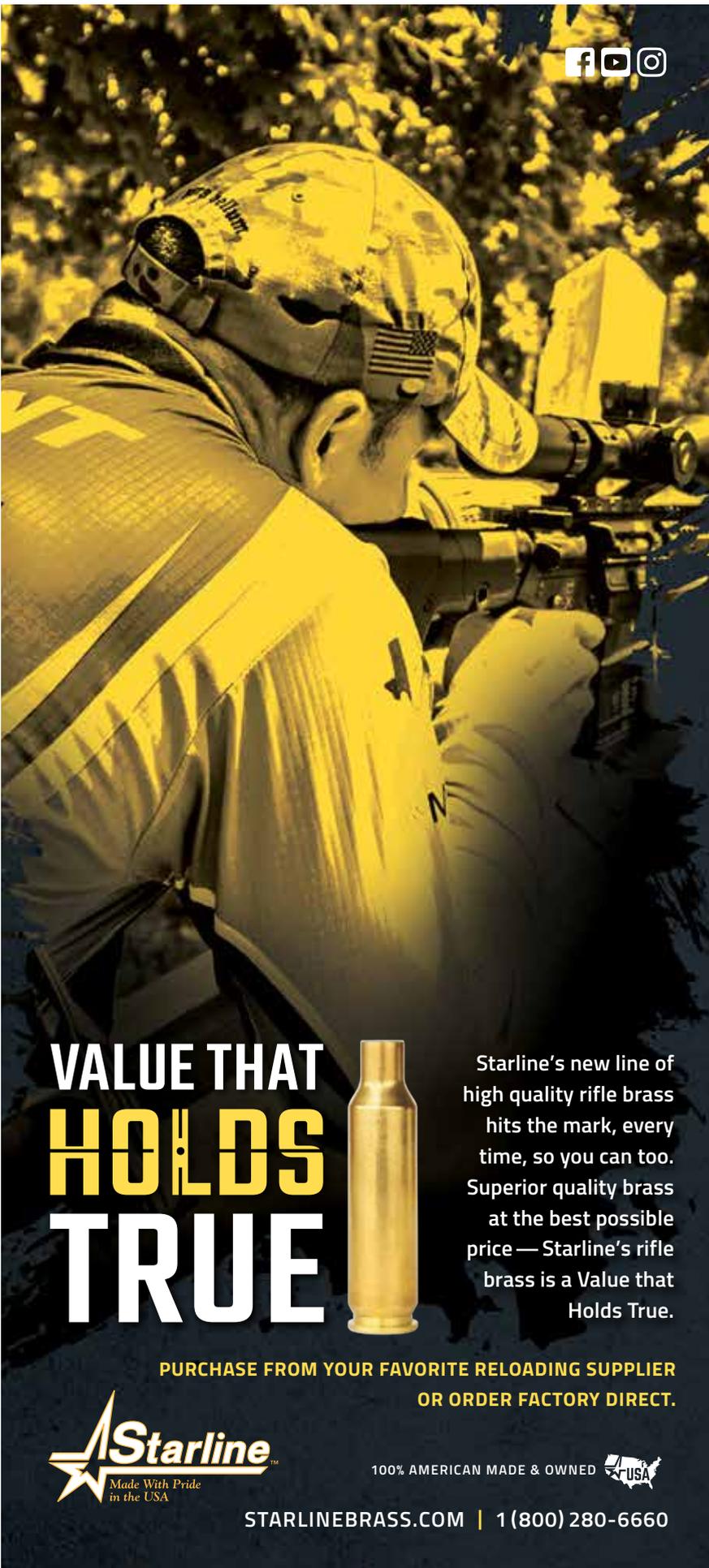


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## SCAM ALERT

There are websites that are scams. I found out the hard way. I ordered some primers from FederalPrimerShop.com, and they only accepted Zelle or Venmo as payment. When I did not get a confirmation for my order, I emailed them and got no reply. I was suspicious, so I did a web search. There were many sites saying they were a scam. I tried to get my money back but to no avail. I have notified the police, and they are investigating the site, which is now shut down. Please inform all of your readers not to purchase anything from a website that does not accept credit cards or PayPal because it is a scam.

Jim H.



## .22s For Self-Defense?

In reference to Dave Anderson's well-written article "Just Say No to Rimfire Defense" (Nov/Dec 2022), I would agree with most every aspect except the "never do it" tone of the article. I have been an instructor for more than 40 years, teaching firearms in the Corps, in Law Enforcement, and to civilians.

I normally recommend against a .22 caliber as a personal defense firearm; however, never say never.

I was asked by one of my fellow officers, basically, a non-shooter, to teach a CCW class for his elderly aunt, a physically challenged sweetheart who couldn't pull the trigger on DA revolvers nor work the slide on most

semi-autos due to her disabilities. She found the triggers on most guns difficult to manage. We looked at the ease of the tip-up barrels on some of the semi-autos to load the first round, but the mags on those guns were too hard to load. Her weakened grip strength made recoil a concern as well. Determined to continue to live alone in spite



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of her fears due to the growing crime rates, she kept an open mind.

Then, I remembered my Ruger MK II .22. On the range, after the initial introduction to the Ruger, she began to settle in and enjoy shooting the Ruger and actually tightened up her groups nicely. Her nephew took her to the local gun shop, and she bought her own Ruger .22 pistol and membership for their range. She was soon able to put 10 of 10 into the 10 ring at 15 yards consistently. For her, the .22 made a perfect home defense gun, and when she had to go out at night, personal protection.

Jim Shank

### Beretta 950

I know this is a bit late (March/April issue), but I believe the good doctor Will Dabbs may have missed the point with this superb little firearm. I am 82 years young and just a bit recoil-sensitive, so taking this piece to the range is like a soothing ointment for my aged joints, LOL. Last time at the range, I had a crowd around me in no time flat and may have actually encouraged some folks to seek one out. The workmanship is wonderful, everything works smoothly and who doesn't love a tip-up barrel? Mine has no love messages, but it does have a real Italian magazine, and that is pretty romantic. Mine also seems to shoot a bit left but so what?

Anyway, I still love his write-up, and that pushed me to seek one out and I have no regrets. Keep up the good work and cover these out-of-the-mainstream guns.

Paul de Florio

### French Walther

I enjoyed the article on the Manurhin Walther PP in the Sept/Oct *Handgunner* issue. About 20 years ago, I was lucky enough to get my hands on two of them. One 7.65mm and the other .22LR. Both were made in France. They weigh the same, and the recoil feels the same. Perhaps the .22LR was used as a training aid?

No box came with the 7.65mm. The box for the .22LR is the same as you showed in the article. However, the owner's manual, while printed in France, is in German.

David Gorman

### More Walther History ...

I was really interested in Roy's piece on the little Walther pistols. I think that I have the answer to the history of the UK Ministry of Defence contract.

I know from firsthand experience these guns were procured to be issued as personal protection weapons to members of Ulster Defence Regiment, a part of the British Army, at the height of the



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# SPEAK OUT

IRA terrorism campaign in Northern Ireland in the 1970s and '80s.

Ian McCollum has an informative video about this subject here:

<https://www.forgottenweapons.com/?s=Walther+L66A1+>

With kind regards,  
Cleland Rogers

The British MOD ordered 3,000 Walther PPs in .22LR for issue to elements of the Royal Ulster Constabulary during the "Troubles" in Northern Ireland. These were subsequently replaced with other pistols and sold on the surplus market, of which yours is an example. I am also a big fan of the PP and consider it to be the most beautiful of all automatic pistols. I'm also a big fan of *American Handgunner* and have subscribed for many years. Keep up the excellent work.

Best regards,  
Nick Ripollone

## Provenance

In the recent online article by Jeremy Clough about the Seecamp Compact 1911, there was a photo of an early See-

camp LWS-25 pocket pistol. The caption referenced an FBI provenance for this gun. What does this mean or refer to? I looked up various dictionary explanations for the word "provenance" but with no success in explaining the caption. I would appreciate a better understanding of this remark since I am a proud owner of an LWS-25.

Tom S.

*"Provenance" in our world refers to the provable history of a gun. Think of a gun at auction that can be traced by evidence to being used by Billy the Kid. Its "provenance" will make it a treasured collector's item. In the case of the Seecamp LWS-25, there was some evidence this gun was used by an FBI agent in the past, which adds a bit of interest to this specific pistol. —TM*

## Cats Are Loyal Too

I came to the U.S. when I was 17 and got my citizenship after a long wait. I treasure that moment. I was raised high in the Andes of Peru on Saturday matinees with Roy, Gene, Hopalong and Lash Larue. I guess I would qualify as a gun guy: I have followed Skeeter Skelton, John Taffin, Sheriff Jim Wilson and Bill Jordan, among others, avidly. According to Mr. Taffin's account, I have sev-

eral (never too many) favorite "packing" handguns, both revolvers and automatics.

My question is this: There are often dog stories in the "gun" magazines. But is there some unwritten rule about gun guys not liking cats? I'm a cat person myself. In our hometown, 12,500 feet above sea level, I had a cat that disappeared the day I left to come to college here in the States. Nine months later, on summer vacation from college, Montezuma came back just two days after I arrived. Ditto the next summer. Cats can be loyal too.

Keep up the great work and articles.

Ian Ouei

*Wow — 12,500 feet above sea level? You must have the lung capacity of Aquaman! Remind me never to run a 5K against you. As your story indicates, sometimes I think domestic pets have bigger brains than we give them credit for. —TM*

## Details Matter

Bernie Sanders was on *Meet the Press* on October 16. He stated, "... too many people have fought and died to defend American democracy." People fought and died to defend the Constitution.

Korwin once called Biden to the floor for stating that it was his responsibility



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QUOTES

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to protect the American people. It's his responsibility to protect the Constitution, Korwin said.

Craig Hines

## Dangers Of Gun Lubes

I just read your Lube War article with a chuckle. A couple of years ago, I took my cousin's son to the range one afternoon, along with a good quality AR and a .22-LR bolt conversion and magazines kit. It ran fine at first but then started malfunctioning. It clearly needed some lube, so I reached into my range bag for the tiny bottle of Militec (yes, really) that had always resided there. Well, it was nowhere to be found, but I did have some greasy suntan lotion. It did the trick but required reapplication every few magazines. At the end of the fun, I walked to my truck and laughingly realized that hiding under the hood was an engine holding five quarts of lube.

H.A. Young

*Don't forget to reapply after swimming!* —TM

I just read your "1, 2, 3, 4, I Declare a Lube War" column in *Handgunner* Nov/Dec 2022.

Overall, the premise seems correct, but the butter spread definitely doesn't qualify. As in so many "butter-type" products, it contains salt! My choice would be unsalted butter! I suppose a case can be made for water (universal solvent), stabilizers and preservatives, but the salt will kill you and your gun.

No personal dog in this fight (I don't have hypertension).

Ken Millard

*Ken brings up an excellent point here. One of the hidden dangers of using I Can't Believe It's Not Butter, in addition to possibly wrecking your firearm, is the silent killer — hypertension. Be careful out there, folks!* —TM

## Colt Frontier Scout

I am writing you in the hope that you have information on who might work on an old Colt Frontier Scout. From the serial number, it was made in 1959 (the year I was born!), which makes it kind of special to me. That and the fact I inherited it from my brother-in-law just makes it doubly special. Now it's in what might be euphemistically called "well-used" condition.

In a last act of desperation (no offense intended), I'm writing to you in hopes that you can put me in touch with

at least one, if not more, gunsmiths who would at least be willing to take a look at this poor thing.

If it matters, this is in .22LR, and to my knowledge never had a .22 Magnum cylinder.

I've been reading and subscribing to *AH* since the mid-'80s and think if anyone can help, it's the staff at *AH*.

Thanks in advance and keep up the magnificent work.

Best regards,  
Rich

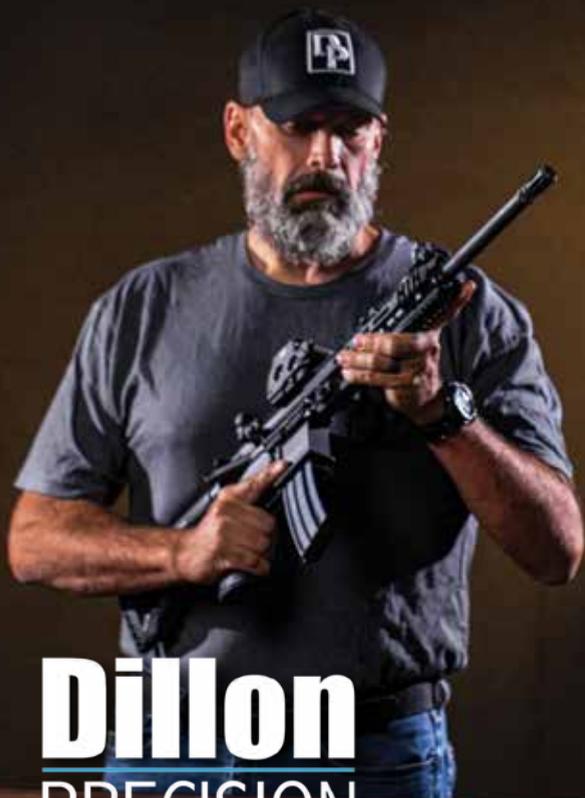
*Any takers?* —TM

## Walther PP

I enjoyed your article about the .22 LR Walther PP and share your fondness for the PPs.

I also have them in all three calibers. Like yours, mine are all steel versions. I handload the .32 with 00 buck, which I find just as accurate up to 15 yards as factory loads (and almost as cheap as .22 ammo). I cast the 00 buck from WW alloy in a gang mold and size in a .311 Lee push-through die with Lee Liquid AloX. They feed and function just as reliably as factory ammo through my PP.

However, like yours, my .22 PP sees a lot more use — with no need to



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## SPEAK OUT

spend all that time picking up tiny and expensive .32 brass.

Another "Little Big Gun" that gets even more use as a tractor gun here on my place is an S&W 2214. With its aluminum frame and 3" barrel, it's about 4 oz. lighter than the PP and fits in a pocket even better — especially with that half-inch *thin* slide. While not nearly as sleek and beautiful as the PP, it is just as accurate, if not more so, likely due to a better SA trigger pull. Plus, both front and rear steel sights are drift adjustable! I find mine to be even more reliable than the PP and with a wider spectrum of ammo types.

I also have the 4" 4422, which is equally accurate and reliable, but sees far less use due to its size.

If you've ever written about these super EDC "Little Big Guns," I don't recall it. They seem to be even more scarce than the PPs around here (NC). I've bought the only ones I've ever seen for sale and am still looking for a stainless 2213.

How 'bout an article on these splendid little pistols when you get a chance!

Best regards,  
Dennis Pearson

## More Heroes

A while back, I wrote to you stating how I wished to see more stories about exciting individuals in our nation's history and the arms they used. That's why I was so excited to see John Taffin's story "Forget Hollywood" in the Nov/Dec issue. Let's make these types of stories regular! I would love to see more stories like this about our military and law enforcement heroes and the tools they utilized in their duties in upcoming articles.

Derek Shattuck

## Count Chocula

Please let Dr. Dabbs know that a potentially "healthier" alternative to his "Count Chocula" addiction might be Magic Spoon (cocoa flavor) cereal. It has lots of protein, low carbs and low calories. Though, it is crazy expensive.

We need to keep Dr. Dabbs around for as long as possible so he can continue his excellent work for *American Handgunner*.

Regards,  
Henry R. Rudzinski Jr.

## Slide Pull Weight

The firearms industry and the magazine industry always mention trigger pull weight, but never Slide Pull Weight. I know it would be a valuable number to print for women and us older people.

Seems like a simple slide clamp and a good fish scale that holds "max weight pulled" would be a good addition to any semi-auto handgun review.

Hope you start including this information.

Chris Cipriani

*Hmmm. You've got me inspired by this question. I agree, it's a relevant factoid to know about a pistol. I'll do some tinkering to see if there's a meaningful way to do it. —TM*

## Spiderman Secrets

I'm having trouble finding a piece of gear lauded by Dr. Dabbs in the Nov/Dec issue (p. 34). I've been able to find the basic belly band holster shown in the pictures, but I can't find the accompanying Spiderman jammies that are the essence of the ensemble. I'm sure the Spidey jammies are essential to the proper fit of the belly band, just as I'm sure they strike fear into the malevolent hearts of any potential attackers. And also, probably into the hearts of the good doctor's patients.

Please, please, tell us where we can get the Spidey jammies! (I really should have expected no less of a helicopter driver ...)

Crime-fightingly yours,  
Mike Barrett

*Alright, Dabbs, fork over the supplier of the superhero jammies! —TM*

## More Primers

If you shoot 9mm or .308, you can find ammo, but not so with .30-06, 7 mm Rem mag., .38 Spl. or .357 Magnum. I think the ammo manufacturers are probably doing what they can. But the truth is there's not much on the shelves. It may be time to slow ammo production and get reloading supplies to the million reloaders out there. Primers, bullets, brass, powder, shot, etc.

Who does not want primers? Chicago street gangs, Mexican drug cartels, Ukraine and the IRS. If you have a better idea, I'd like to hear it

Frank G.

## Gangster Guns

As a victim of acute nostalgia for the 1920s and 30s, I would like to suggest a topic.

Guns of the Gangsters. In addition to the guns used on both sides of the law, this could include short biographies of some of the criminals and their pursuers (i.e. Melvin Purvis, Frank Hamer, Sam Crowley, Charlie Floyd, Wilbur Underhill, etc.), the cars they used (John Dillinger had a thing for Hudson Terraplanes, Clyde Barrow for V-8 Fords, and bootleggers liked the Studebaker Big

Six), and analysis of some of the more noted gun battles (Little Bohemia lodge, and the Barker hideout in Florida).

Michael Johnson

Well, this sure sounds like a fun topic idea. We'll be sure to cover it in either Handgunner or our Surplus Military & Classic Firearms special edition. —TM

### Pencils and Lead ...

In the November/December issue, Lindsay Bertomen's article "Bullet Bumping" crossed my eye, particularly the third section on testing lead hardness with different pencils. I'd love to see that technique explained a little more fully, either with a follow-up article or maybe a YouTube video.

A long-time reader of Handgunner, sometimes over-the-counter, but mostly by subscription. Have a great time with Guncranks episodes!

J. Shepherd

### Bad Retailers!

After listening to one of the episodes of the GUNS Magazine Podcast about how many retailers have pulled the magazines off the shelves, I was going to write to my local chain bookstore and thank them for not doing the same.

I usually visit this establishment frequently, probably two to three times a week on average, so I knew they hadn't removed any of the great variety of gun magazines that they usually stock. So, on a random Tuesday, I headed to the bookstore, grabbed a latte, and went to grab a couple of gun magazines. Except they weren't there.

After some searching, I found them languishing behind an abandoned checkout counter, like some other magazines used to be back in the day, only they didn't have protective covers over them to shield them from young prying eyes. I did grab a couple to peruse while I was there, but it made me feel like a second-class citizen — like I should be ashamed of what I was looking at. I guess that's their goal, isn't it? I obviously never wrote the letter, and I haven't been back since.

Rich

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The 9mm Civil Defense round (left) weighs just 50 grains but moves along at 2,063 fps compared to a 230-grain .45ACP, which flies at a leisurely 850 or so.



A shipment of Liberty Civil Defense "light and fast" ammo got Tom thinking about the whole speed versus heft thing.

# FIZZICS 'R US

I'm not a physicist, but I did read *Astrophysics for People in a Hurry* by Neil deGrasse Tyson. He attempts to explain such things as how, at the moment before the Big Bang, all of the matter and energy in the known universe was contained in a space a trillionth the size of the period that ends this sentence. Now that I think about it, trying to wrap my head around stuff like that is likely why I'm not a physicist. I can't even comprehend a miniature Reese's Peanut Butter Cup being packed into a wrapper that small, much less the sum total of all stuff that ever existed anywhere in the cosmos.

While the deGrasse Tysons and Hawkings of the world can ponder the great expanse in their studies, we mere mortals can make more practical use of the physical sciences for our shooting activities.

## Smokin' Fast

The folks at Liberty Ammunition recently sent me some Civil Defense ammo. As a quick refresher, the ballistic theory behind this particular ammo style is "light and fast."

The 9mm uses a 50-grain projectile, so you'd expect it to carry more velocity than the more traditional projectiles weighing over twice as much. Fired from a 9mm 1911, I measured this one at 2,063 fps — significantly faster than Maverick's F/A-18 Hornet (1,745 fps).

The .357 SIG version also uses a 50-grain projectile, and given the larger case size, you'd expect it to make the 9mm look slow. It does. I clocked this one from a SIG P320 at 2,404 fps.

I also tried some of the "heavy" stuff. The 10mm offering uses a really chunky projectile, weighing in at a whopping 60 grains. From a Springfield 1911, it measured 2,377 fps.



Let's stop and think about that for a hot second. We're talking low-end rifle speeds. Or if you're a *Top Gun* fanatic, over Mach 2. If I hadn't just read an astrophysics for dummies book, I might have asked a stupid question like, "Are there two sonic booms when you shoot it?"

## Light, Fast, Heavy, Slow?

All of this got me thinking about the never-ending debate of which is better — heavy and slow bullets like a .45, or something lighter but much faster, like maybe a Civil Defense round. Yeah, we all know a stray .45 ACP round destroyed the city of Dresden in WWII, but that's just one anecdote — we need more information to settle the debate.

## No Favors

Pondering this and how many .45 bullets can be squished into the size of a period, it occurred to me that we don't help ourselves with how we rate ammunition.

The traditional standard is "energy," meaning kinetic energy. Lots of 9mm rounds have "energy" of 340 or so to 400 foot-pounds for the hot loads. A traditional 230-grain .45 ACP moving at 850

fps generates 369 ft-lbs. You get the idea. But what does that tell us? I put forth ... not the whole picture.

## Energy Vs. Momentum

Let's make an oversimplified and likely defective analogy. All you physicists out there, no need to send the correction emails; we're just dealing in gross illustrations.

One might think of kinetic energy as destructive power, like an electric drill. It's moving fast and will wreak havoc on drywall, a 2x4 or a bowl of Jello. But on its own, it will not knock down said objects or fling them into oblivion like movie characters hit by handgun rounds. Except maybe the Jello.

For momentum, I'd use a rough description of "the ability to move an object." If you roll a golf ball at a bowling pin, the effect will be far less drastic than hurling a 16-pounder at the same velocity because the momentum is dramatically different.

## Energy

If you look at the math behind kinetic energy, measured in ft-lbs., it emphasizes velocity. You calculate it

What kind of momentum would you endure if a buddy dropped a clump of bananas on your foot? You might be surprised.

## Which has more momentum?

as one-half times mass times velocity squared. This is precisely why a 9mm easily matches the “energy” of a .45 ACP bullet twice as heavy. It also explains why a .223 Remington cartridge, with its puny little 55-grain bullet, generates almost three times as much energy (1,100 ft.-lbs.) as a 9mm or .45 ACP.

### Momentum

On the other hand, momentum weighs mass and velocity equally — the equation is — mass times velocity. The weight of the bullet counts a lot more in the numerical result.

For example, a 9mm 124-grain bullet moving at 1,150 fps has about the same energy as a .45 ACP traveling 850 fps (364.2 vs. 369 ft.-lbs.), but the .45 has roughly a third more momentum (27.93 vs. 20.37 lb.-ft/sec). There — a victory for the big and slow ballistics crowd!

But ... momentum doesn't tell the whole picture either. The momentum of a 115-grain 6.8 SPC round traveling at 2,675 fps (43.95 lb.-ft/sec) is



Remington 6.8 SPC  
115-grain

almost exactly the same as nine bananas dropped from six feet (44.21 lb.-ft/sec). I'll elect to stand in front of the bananas, given the choice.

### The Answer?

I suppose we could launch an extensive campaign to encourage ammo manufacturers to print both measurements on the box. That might prevent confusing implications resulting from

our traditional ammo power measurement. As we all know, a pro bowler wings a 16-lb. ball at almost 18 miles per hour. That generates approximately the same kinetic energy as a .380 ACP, and a single .380 ain't knockin' down all 10 pins. If it were clear the bowling ball delivered 422.4 lb.-feet /sec of momentum, compared to just 12.21 for the .380, things would make a lot more sense. 

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## WHAT A DIFFERENCE A STANCE MAKES

**S**hooting stance is a topic I try not to get too dogmatic about. There is plenty of time to settle in a solid stance in formal bullseye shooting. In a defensive, hunting or competitive practical shooting scenario, you need to be versatile enough to go with what works.

This isn't to suggest stance is not important — a stable shooting position makes fast and accurate shooting easier. For the novice shooter, the time and effort spent developing a strong and stable stance will significantly enhance the learning process. It will make you a better shooter in less time.

Before starting to change things, you should be aware of what you are already doing. Maybe your shooting stance is already working for you, and any change would make things worse. I'm always leery of instructors who start offering advice and making changes to your shooting techniques before even observing you shoot. Make changes a little at a time, testing constantly. I remember legendary golf pro Harvey Penick writing, "If I suggest an aspirin, it doesn't mean take the whole bottle."

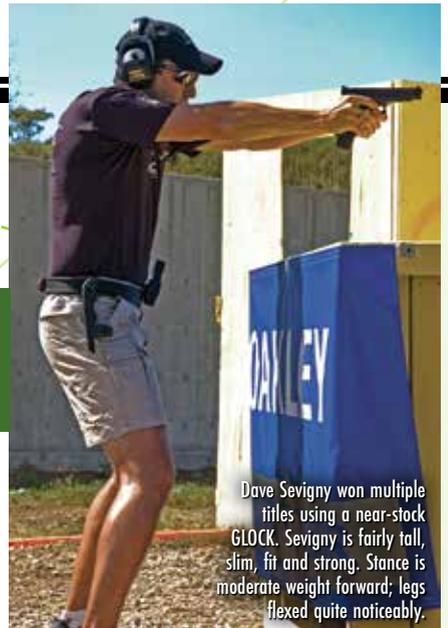
## HOW THE PROS DO IT



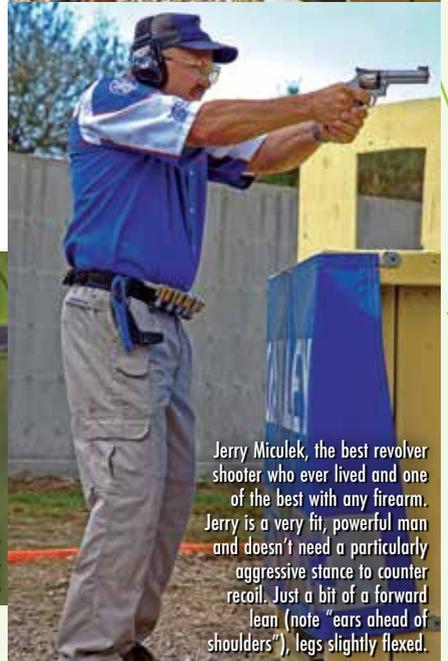
Vintage photo of Jesse Harrison, one of the all-time greats over a long shooting career. This was in 2008 when she was shooting a GLOCK. Currently, she shoots for Taurus. Very fit and strong for her size, she uses a forward-leaning aggressive stance.

I've included some vintage photos of shooters who were not only champions but were competitive for a long time. The feet are about shoulder width apart, maybe a bit more, legs slightly flexed. The stance is balanced, alert and stable yet mobile to

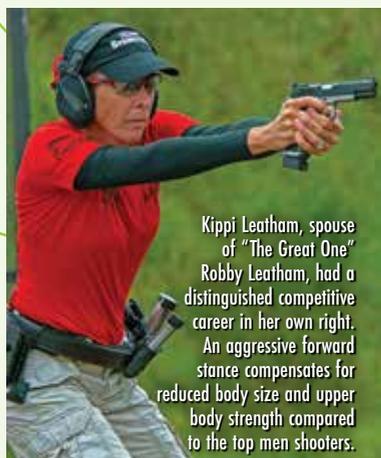
move instantly as needed. The stance is strong but not rigid — "springy" rather than locked, with body weight forward rather than back on the heels. My friend J. Michael Plaxco used the phrase progressively aggressive: "shoulders ahead of hips, ears ahead of shoulders."



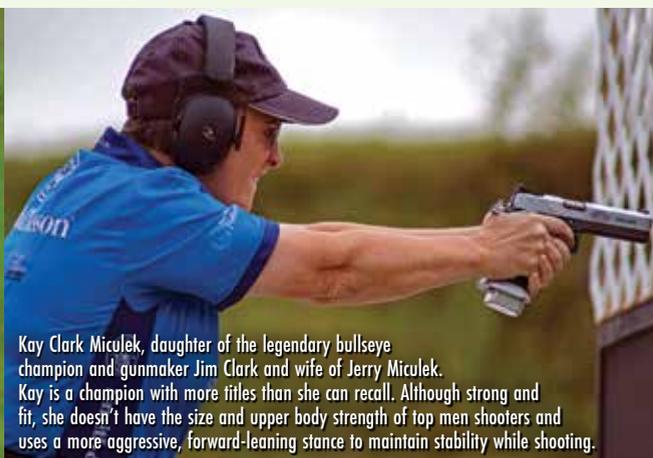
Dave Sevigny won multiple titles using a near-stock GLOCK. Sevigny is fairly tall, slim, fit and strong. Stance is moderate weight forward; legs flexed quite noticeably.



Jerry Miculek, the best revolver shooter who ever lived and one of the best with any firearm. Jerry is a very fit, powerful man and doesn't need a particularly aggressive stance to counter recoil. Just a bit of a forward lean (note "ears ahead of shoulders"), legs slightly flexed.



Kippi Leatham, spouse of "The Great One" Robby Leatham, had a distinguished competitive career in her own right. An aggressive forward stance compensates for reduced body size and upper body strength compared to the top men shooters.

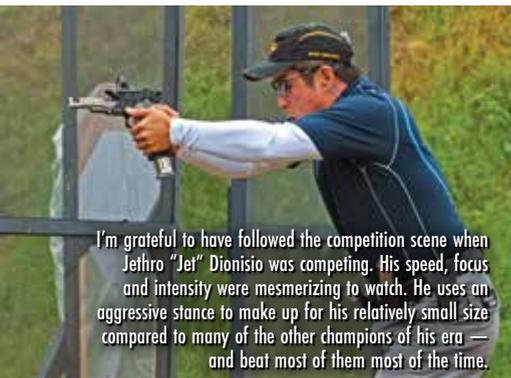


Kay Clark Miculek, daughter of the legendary bullseye champion and gunmaker Jim Clark and wife of Jerry Miculek. Kay is a champion with more titles than she can recall. Although strong and fit, she doesn't have the size and upper body strength of top men shooters and uses a more aggressive, forward-leaning stance to maintain stability while shooting.

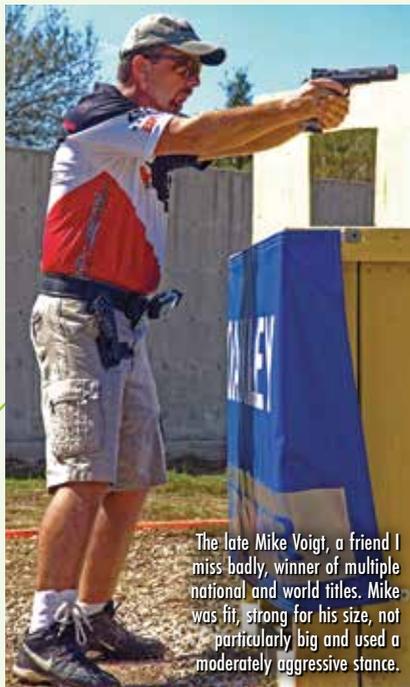
Test your stance by firing several shots rather than one or two. Set up a target you can easily hit, even if only three yards away. Fire at least six shots as fast as you can and repeat several times.

Novice shooters are often pushed back on their heels by the cumulative recoil. Try adjusting weight distribution forward a bit, make the stance a bit more aggressive and continue shooting strings until you can shoot any number of shots and remain stable.

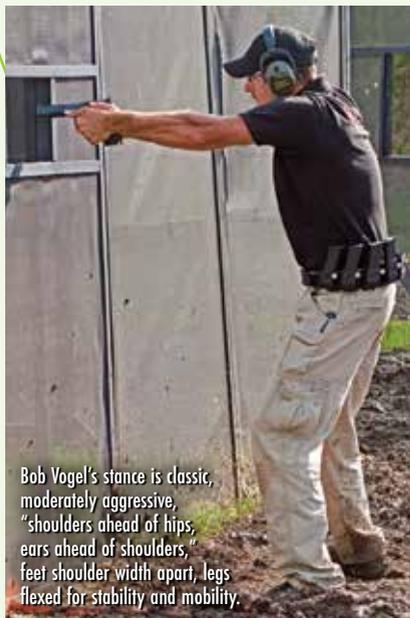
Upper body, arm, wrist and hand strength help. Remember, the hold must be firm but not locked, or speed will suffer. Arms and hands manage muzzle jump to return the sights on



I'm grateful to have followed the competition scene when Jethro "Jet" Dionisio was competing. His speed, focus and intensity were mesmerizing to watch. He uses an aggressive stance to make up for his relatively small size compared to many of the other champions of his era — and beat most of them most of the time.



The late Mike Voigt, a friend I miss badly, winner of multiple national and world titles. Mike was fit, strong for his size, not particularly big and used a moderately aggressive stance.



Bob Vogel's stance is classic, moderately aggressive, "shoulders ahead of hips, ears ahead of shoulders, feet shoulder width apart, legs flexed for stability and mobility.

target after each shot; body mass and body position maintain stability during recoil. At major matches, I've often seen women shooters weighing maybe 125 lbs. shooting faster and with better recoil control than men with  much greater strength.



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

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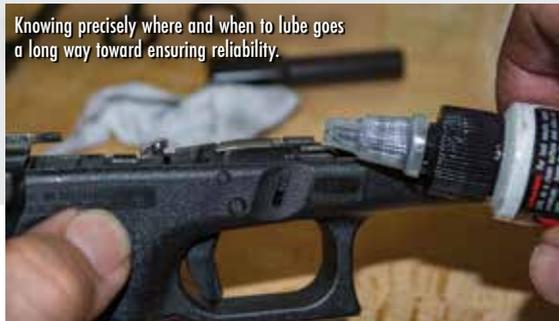
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## INSTRUCTOR VIEWPOINT:

# MAKING GEAR WORK OVER THE LONG HAUL

**O**ver the years of training police and civilians, I've learned a few things about gear that works over the long haul. Let's explore some common elements and a few things you can do to ensure your gear doesn't let you down.

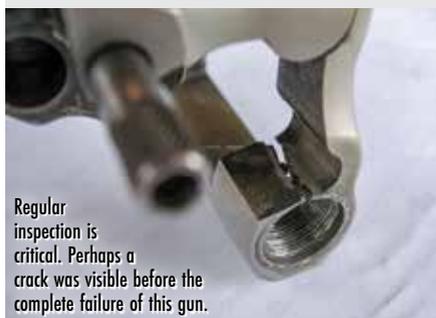
Knowing precisely where and when to lube goes a long way toward ensuring reliability.



## SERVICE REPUTATION

**W**ith so many new companies coming and going, stay with those who have proven they are a consistent quality company that will back up their product.

I remember qualifying an officer on his off-duty S&W J-Frame. Halfway through, the officer raised his hand and said, "Something is wrong. The front sight is gone." I walked over, ensured his revolver was clear and safe and asked to see it. Sure enough, the barrel was rotated around, and the frame was cracked. Thinking a good company will not have problems with a product produced every day is as bad as believing the world is a safe place. Knowing S&W backs their products, we called our representative and had a return label that day. I am not saying to ignore "new" gun manufacturers; just understand they may be here today but gone tomorrow.



Regular inspection is critical. Perhaps a crack was visible before the complete failure of this gun.



Don't just maintain parts like magazines and springs; recognize they may need to be replaced from time to time.

## YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR

**T**he old saying "you get what you pay for" rings true. However, you do not have to buy a \$5,000 gun to get quality. On the contrary, I have seen those guns fail on day one of a class, and the \$500-\$600 guns run all week with no issues. So, how do you know what to buy? Do your research on quality companies, go to a range or gun shop that will allow you to touch and handle the guns you are interested in, then rent and shoot all the ones you "like" to see what best fits you and your mission.

I do not list any brands here for the same reason that I do not say my Chevy truck is better than your Ford or Dodge. A brand is specific to each person and their intended use.

## MAINTENANCE AND ROTATION

**K**nowing how to clean, inspect, and lube your gun is key to its functional longevity. The same holds for gear. Cleaning and inspecting your holsters, magazines, and illumination tools will keep the screws from falling out, the leather from cracking and failing to hold shape, and flashlights with corroded or dead batteries.

One of the most common gear issues we see on the range is screws falling out of Kydex holsters. No thread locker was applied after proper tension was set. Repeated presentations and reholstering will loosen the screws and the user will have poor retention. In the worst case, the holster will rotate on the hip, and the gun will fall out. Small details like this are commonly overlooked.

Contrary to what some may think, leather wears out and does not hold its shape after years of use. There is a time to retire that favorite old holster and buy a new one. Buying used gear may seem like a great deal, but you might buy twice and spend more money after receiving someone else's worn-out or broken gear! If you buy used, inspect and touch it before buying.

Magazines are another area new shooters think are everlasting. We need to consider magazines like tires on our vehicles — they have a limited life. The more we drive, the faster tires wear out, just as magazines wear faster the more you use them. Always buy quality magazines! I would suggest magazines from the same manufacturer as your weapon.

Remember, do your research on what fits your mission! Seeing what your local, state or federal law enforcement officers carry may help you decide. Most

of the time, those guns have been thoroughly tested and have worked "over the long haul." Budget for quality holsters, magazine carriers and cleaning kits for your weapons. Learn where and how to apply lubricant. If you look, the gun will tell you where it needs lube! Lastly, understand that all weapons, gear and ammo can and will fail at some point. Magazines, heavy wear parts and gear have a limited life!

Regular inspection is the most important way to ensure your gear works long-term.



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## REFLEX -OR- TUBE?

**T**he old adage, you can't hit what you can't see, is true. I guess a follow-up could be, the better you can see, the better you can hit. Often, I see handgun hunters who have acquired a new handgun asking others what optic would be best. While some prefer to hunt with irons, many seek some optic enhancement. There are many factors to consider before rushing out and purchasing an optic.

What gun and caliber are you shooting? At what distance do you anticipate shooting? What's the longest possible shot? Are you hunting prairie dogs or big game such as wild boar, black bear, or whitetail deer? These and other factors weigh in on the final decision.

Scopes are an option, especially if you're shooting prairie dogs at 200–300 yards. Some handgun hunters prefer scopes regardless of distance or game. However, many revolver and semi-auto shooters are leaning toward red dot sights. Most red dot sights for handguns do not offer any magnification but still provide desirable results for hunting purposes. This is especially true when shots are 100 yards or less. A lot of game is taken inside the confines of a football field.

Red dot sights come in basically two forms — reflex and tube type. I'm not advocating one is better than the other for hunting and every individual may have his personal preference. Reflex sights are smaller and take up less room on the gun than tube versions. Over the years, I've shot several brands of reflex sights, and today there are many options from various manufacturers.



Available in either black matte or satin silver finish — a welcome optic to the handgun hunting community.



This Ultradot rides on top of a customized Ruger Super Redhawk. The optic holds up well under the recoil of the .44 Magnum.

## REFLEX OPTIONS

**F**or example, the Leupold DeltaPoint Pro rides on top of my GLOCK 40 MOS. It's a perfect fit for this 10mm Auto. The 2.5 MOA dot is also welcome. Burris makes several versions of their FastFire. The company's FastFire 3 comes with a 3 or 8 MOA dot. Ultradot offers their reflex sight in the form of the L/T, with a 4 MOA dot. Trijicon is another premium option. The Trijicon RMR series is well-known in the hunting fraternity. Their RMR Type 2 LED model comes in 3.25 and 6.5 MOA. Trijicon provides many options in the RMR line-up. The SRO is another top-shelf reflex optic available in 1, 2.5, or 5 MOA. These are just a few examples of the many quality reflex sights on the market today.

Choosing the MOA size dot will vary among shooters. Competition shooters, who are racing the clock shooting at rather large steel targets, may prefer larger MOA dots. The larger dot allows the shooter to find the dot quicker and engage targets faster. These large MOA dots work well at close range.

On the other hand, hunters will probably benefit from something in the 2 to 4 MOA dot size. The smaller dot tends to be more precise if shots are extended. Keep in mind a 2 MOA dot will cover 2" at 100 yards. I like the 2 MOA dot and can live with a tad larger.



Leupold's DeltaPoint Pro fitted on a Kimber 10mm Auto.

## TUBES

**T**ube-type red dot sights are another excellent option for hunters. For years I've been shooting Ultradots in several models they provide. I like their Matchdot II, which features four dot sizes: 2, 4, 6 and 8 MOA. Turn the dial and choose whatever you deem appropriate for the occasion. This model also comes with two different reticle patterns. You can accommodate most lighting conditions with 11 settings to adjust dot brightness.

I'm excited about their new Gen 2 30mm tube sight. This new version will offer a larger field of view with more light-gathering capability. It's just a wee bit over 5" long and weighs less than 5 oz. I'm pleased to see this optic with a 2 MOA dot, as I've found it ideal in most of

my hunting pursuits. It's available in either matte black or satin silver. An extension tube, polarizing filter, mounting rings and hex wrench are included in the box. The new Gen 2 also features 11 settings for adjusting dot intensity. This will be a most welcome revolver optic to the handgun hunting community.

I have plans for the new Gen 2 Ultradot. It will be fitted on a .460 S&W Mag. The combination will be ideal for big-game applications, and I have complete confidence the optic will hold up to copious amounts of recoil. After shooting Ultradots for many years, I know what to expect — an optic that will withstand brutal recoil.

Whether you prefer reflex or tube-style optics, there are many possibilities today. I lean toward tubes such as the Ultradot. A quality optic will enhance shot placement — and that, my friends, is essential.



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RXC-200  
15MM LENS  
HEIGHT

RXU-200  
11MM LENS  
HEIGHT

## HOW WAS YOUR DAY?



Golden retrievers make the finest pets. Will's was a rescue named Samantha.



Emergency rooms are the repositories of humankind's greatest drama. When you work in a place like this, it can be tough not to take it home.



I don't recall ever doing a full 12 hours in the urban ER, where I learned my craft without at least one gunshot wound. The record was seven. People are mean to each other. There's no place short of a battlefield where this timeless axiom is made more patently manifest.

We were some of those homeschool freaks. My wife and three kids did school from the living room every day. Where a typical student/teacher ratio in a regular school might be two to 20 or 25, in ours, it was two to three. All three turned out great, and my wife emerged with her sanity intact. However, this meant that when I came home at weird hours from the hospital, sometimes it was to find quite a lot of activity.

### Bringing Horrible Home

I had worked all night and wrapped up right after dawn. This particular stint had been extra horrible. I pulled into the driveway grimy, tired and foul. I slipped into the laundry room from the garage and was greeted by Samantha, our golden retriever.

Samantha was a rescue and a mighty fine hound. She was a doormat of a dog who didn't have a violent or vicious bone in her body. She was forever eager to please and interminably patient with the kids. When they wanted to roll around on the floor with her or tug her ears, she just went with it. For that stage in our lives, she was the perfect dog.

I don't myself care for cats. I don't want bad things to happen to cats; I just don't have any great affection for them. I view cats like lizards or birds. They'll stick around if there's something in it for them, but I never got the vibe that a cat really loved me.

By contrast, I have had dogs that would give their dying breath for me. Dogs are limitlessly loyal and protective. Dogs love you when you're tired, grouchy, or smell bad. Dogs love unconditionally. *People could learn a lot from their dogs.*

This particular morning Samantha was in the laundry room because she had been distracting during school. I found myself similarly exiled from time to time. As a result, however, she was really glad to see me. On this day, I kind of needed that.

I scratched behind her ears and rubbed her neck. She responded by wagging her tail until it looked like it might break off. On the other side of the door, I could hear laughter and happiness coming from my family. The kids were doing school, and that was serious. However, there was pure, unfiltered love there. It was my favorite place in the world.

### Dog Sense

Before I opened the door, I noticed Samantha behaving strangely. She seemed fixated on my sneakers, licking and smelling all over them. She was always an affectionate animal, but this was something else. Her interest in my footwear seemed unnatural. That's when I noticed it.

My sneakers were soaked in human blood. We typically wear little disposable foot coverings, but the ER this evening had been extra special bad, and there hadn't been time. I removed my shoes, rinsed them in the sink, and put them out in the garage to keep them away from the dog. I similarly attended to my socks before depos-

iting them in the laundry. I then pushed my way through the door and into that other world.

### How Was Your Night?

My sweet precious wife looked up and asked innocently, "How was your night?" How do you answer that? Do you respond with, "Well, I just had to put my sneakers in the garage because they were soaked in human blood, and I couldn't get the dog to leave them alone. How was yours?"

No, you don't say that. You just smile like a monkey with a fresh grapefruit and say, "Fine, thanks. Tell me about yours."

My wife didn't sign up for that. It's not fair to bring that kind of execrable baggage home and befoul such a precious innocent place with it. However, that baggage sometimes needs to go someplace.

When there is a school shooting or something similar, once the smoke clears, there are counselors who descend on the place to try to make folks whole. In certain professions, however, that's not really practical. If you live in a haunted house long enough, that haunted house eventually starts to feel like home.

Try not to judge soldiers, cops, physicians, nurses and ER staff if their behavior seems a bit outside accepted norms. Sometimes dark humor or quirky mannerisms are just part of the job. And when they say their day was fine, try not to pry. Please just be patient and do your best to make them feel normal. 

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# THE MASADA & MASADA SLIM

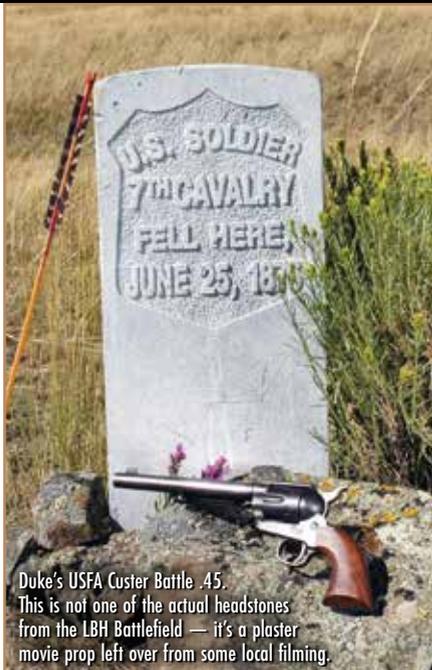


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The MASADA takes user preferences to a new level. Each feature was carefully selected based on input from the military, law enforcement, and gun enthusiasts alike. The MASADA was engineered to endure all elements while maintaining IWI's legendary attention to detail and reliability. The Masada Slim is the continuation of the Masada line of pistols. Developed with a thin profile and compact design, it allows for ease of concealed carry while providing substantial magazine capacity.

**IWI.US**



Duke's USFA Custer Battle .45. This is not one of the actual headstones from the LBH Battlefield — it's a plaster movie prop left over from some local filming.



Duke's path to the USFA. From left: 1984 Colt with misnamed black powder frame, USFA Custer Battlefield .45 and the two mid-1970s vintage Peacemaker Centennials.

## A MILESTONE SINGLE ACTION

**M**ostly, I don't get sentimentally involved with my firearms. When I sell or trade one, it goes with no, or at the most, minor regrets.

There is one handgun in my racks, however, that gives me a warm fuzzy feeling every time it's in my hands. It was made by the now-defunct United States Firearms Company (USFA) and labeled as their Custer Battlefield .45 single action. I first discovered this special run of revolvers at USFA's booth at the 2004 SHOT Show in Las Vegas.

It stunned me, not because it was a thing of beauty. It was just a brown finished (antiqued) .45 with plain walnut, one-piece grips. What stopped me in my tracks was that it was a nigh-on perfect reproduction of the very first 7½" barreled Colt Single Action Army .45 I had ever seen.

That USFA revolver on display took me back to August 1968 when I entered the National Park Service museum at the then-named Custer Battlefield in southeast Montana. It's since been renamed Little Bighorn Battlefield. There in a display case was a worn Colt single action .45 with a 7½" barrel, patina finish and walnut grips. It was representative of the nearly 700 or so revolvers that were carried onto the battlefields that June day of 1876. From that first moment, I wanted one like it.



## ROAD TRIP

**T**hat August, my summer job ended, leaving a break before college began. Many readers know the said battle happened when 12 companies of the U.S. 7th Cavalry rode into the Little Bighorn Valley, where five companies were killed to a man, and the other seven were severely handled by Sioux and Cheyenne warriors. I am not alone in my fascination with that fracas; people still

come from all over the world to visit the battle site.

Anyway, on a whim, I said to a friend, "Let's go to Montana so I can see the Custer Battlefield." Take note we were in West Virginia, and neither of us had been farther west than the Ohio River. Even though he had little idea where Montana or the Custer Battlefield was, my friend said, "Sure." We loaded up my sister's VW "Bug" with camping gear, and after a rather erratic 2,000 miles, we arrived. That trip was a milestone. From the first day in Montana, I knew I would spend my life in this state.

## THE REAL DEAL COLT

**A**fterward, finding myself a suitable 7th Cavalry type .45 Colt took a while — a long while. In 1984, Colt again offered the misnamed black powder frame as was typical for their SAAs from 1873 to the mid-1890s. I ordered one, had it fitted with one-piece walnut grips, and carried it on the 1985 battlefield re-ride. That was a horseback trip retracing the 7th Cavalry's path from the morning of June 25 to where the battle happened that afternoon. Still, something was missing about that Colt. Eventually, I gave it to a friend.

In the mid-1970s, Colt made 2,002 Peacemaker Centennial .45s, almost identical to the ones issued to the 7th Cavalry in the summer of 1874. Sadly, Colt had stamped those two words on the PC's left sides. By the year 2000, I had rounded up two of those fine revolvers. I considered my 1968 craving

satisfied, happily blazing away with my pair of .45s in cowboy action shoots and here on my range.

Then came SHOT Show 2004, and I was standing there near stupefied, looking at USFA's display Custer Battlefield .45 single action. That revolver was precisely what I had wanted for so many years. As matters turned out, Doug Donnelly, founder of USFA, had visited the Little Bighorn Battlefield himself and was also smitten with the .45 still on display in their museum. To honor the LBH Battlefield, he decided to offer the special version. In placing my order

with Mr. Donnelly, he asked what serial number I wanted, as he was allowing buyers to choose. I said, "I suppose 1876 is taken?" As a matter of fact, it was not. Mine wears it now.

USFA no longer exists as a manufacturer and having traveled nearly around the world, I'm no longer the inexperienced 19-year-old that drove so far to see the LBH Battlefield. Hundreds of handguns have passed through my hands, but there is only one that takes my mind back to a memorable trip that changed my life. And yes, I shoot it whenever I can make time!





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## THREAT RESPONSE FUNDAMENTAL NUMBER 3:

# COVER

**M**ove, Communicate, Use Cover, Shoot — if necessary — and Think. These are the fundamentals of responding to a threat. Moving is number one for many reasons. Among them is it forces the threat to react to your actions. Communication — issuing verbal commands and coordinating with your team — is number two on the list. The third fundamental is taking advantage of the safety created by cover.

Cover protects against the threat and their weapons. Concealment hides you from view and doesn't offer any physical protection, but if they can't see you, it greatly reduces the chances of an attack. If the threat uses "arm-strong" weapons — their fists, a knife, or baseball bat — large objects like a table or car, an obstacle preventing them from getting close enough to use their weapon creates cover. Protection against bullets requires something that stops, redirects or impedes incoming fire and is relative to the type of rounds fired at you.

A round of 7.62x39 ball ammo from an AK47 will punch through a lot more material than a round of 5.56 from an AR15. Some rounds are specifically designed for their penetration properties. Two or three shots from an "anemic" 9mm will punch a hole through a standard concrete block. Most objects around us offer a certain degree of protection but should not be considered "bulletproof."

The first rule for using cover is to create distance between you and the object providing protection. When rounds impact hard cover, they skip like a stone across water, usually at a 12- to 15-degree angle or fragment. This impact also rips off secondary debris from the object itself. All



Instinctually, we want to hug cover. This puts us directly in the path of any bullets or fragments ricocheting. Impacts will also rip material off that hard surface. This target was 18" from a concrete block. Holes in the circle are from .45 ACP. The squares are from 5.56, and all the other holes are from an AK firing 7.62x39 ball ammo.

of this can injure and kill. Instinctually, we want to hug up close to our protection, putting our bodies directly in the path of these fast-flying fragments. Creating distance, a minimum of six to eight feet, dramatically reduces your chances of absorbing any of this debris.

Distance from cover opens up your field of view. On the interstate, if you're too close to the semi-truck in front of you, all you can see is the truck. Now, create space and back off from the truck. Now, you see what's going on in the lanes beside the truck. Distance also puts more space between you and whatever danger is on the other side of the cover. You can be 50 feet from an object, and as long as you can position it between you and danger, it will provide protection.

Some situations don't allow you to create this distance. When the threat is elevated on higher ground, you must get closer to cover for protection. If there are multiple threats, they may try to work around both sides of your cover. You have to visualize the geometry; these angles determine where you need to be positioned. Seeing the angles is especially important if there are multiple threats.

It's always best to remain standing for mobility. Fights are dynamic and fluid. The



Vehicles constructed with lightweight materials, especially today's autos, should be considered concealment instead of cover.

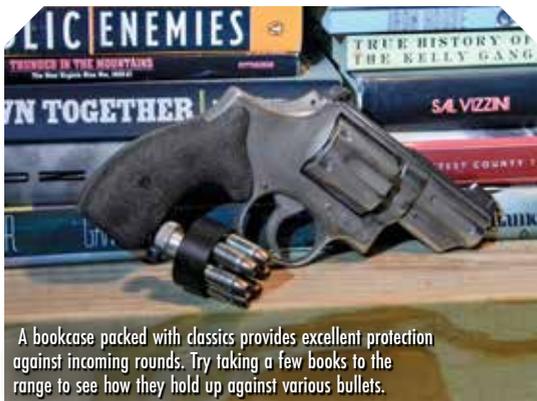


Create distance between you and the object providing protection. This reduces the chances of avoiding all the debris created when bullets hit that hard surface.

threat is trying to flank around your cover; you're moving to keep that protection between you and them. Whenever possible, work around the sides of cover, concentrating on exposing the least amount of your body. You need to see all of the threat to properly identify and, if necessary, place accurate hits in the different zones of their body. At the first opportunity, you're looking for better cover with more protection or that's located in a safer location.

The majority of violent confrontations occur in low-light environments. After receiving training, your practice should include working cover with hand-held and weapon-mounted lights. As usual, most of your practice should be with dummy weapons used the corners of walls or various pieces of furniture as your cover. Use all the same techniques at the range and confirm your accuracy.

Danger! You're moving to cover while issuing verbal commands for the threat to stop. You're not the victim they anticipated, so they leave to find an easier target. Your tactics paid off, and shooting wasn't necessary to stop the threat. But the next time could be different. When we meet again, we'll discuss shooting fundamental number four.



A bookcase packed with classics provides excellent protection against incoming rounds. Try taking a few books to the range to see how they hold up against various bullets.



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## THE “HAND ON GUN” READY POSITION

You don't necessarily have to draw to be in a ready position. Police work being a dangerous profession, cops often have to draw their guns proactively. Some “police reform” advocates are demanding cops write a report every time their pistol clears the holster.

The NC *Charlotte Observer* reported in 2020, “Charlotte Mecklenburg Police will start tracking every time an officer draws a weapon and points it at someone. The additional reporting is enabled by a new sensor — sometimes called a holster monitor — which automatically turns on an officer's

body-worn camera when a firearm is removed from its holster.... CMPD Chief Johnny Jennings said all officers have now been outfitted with the new ‘signal sidearm’ sensor. Officers will also be required to report why they drew the weapon and what they did with the weapon after it was drawn — including whether it was pointed at anyone, he said.”

That is over the top. Here are some thoughts on reducing the number of draws and avoiding the onerous process.



Take a timer to the range and see for yourself, says Mas.

## DRAWN GUN DISADVANTAGES

First, recognize there are many times when a two-hand hold of a drawn duty pistol gets in the way of other things an endangered cop, or, for that matter, an armed citizen, might need to be doing with their hands.

You may have to be manipulating a communications device or illumination device. In the dark, on unfamiliar floors or broken or slippery ground, there is always the possibility of a fall: The result can be a handgun knocked out of battery, its muzzle plugged with snow or mud,

or a lost gun. If a situation goes rapidly to “hands-on-suspect,” getting the gun put away quickly becomes an issue. If jumped in the dark, that drawn gun may be the target of a snatch attempt.

## “HAND ON GUN” TECHNIQUE

As a young patrolman in the '70s, I got into the habit of mostly keeping my hand on a holstered weapon with the retaining device released. Jim Lindell taught me handgun retention in Kansas City and I knew “hand on holstered weapon” was the single strongest position for the “Good Guy” when a struggle began.

If you let go of the pistol, today's uniform duty holsters, such as the Bill Rogers-designed Safariland, will activate the retaining device as soon as your hand leaves the holster. If ready to draw, your thumb will have already deactivated the release mechanism. You only have to worry about the effect on speed and accuracy if you need to shoot.

## SPEED AND ACCURACY

How much speed are you losing with the “hand on a holstered gun” instead of already drawn?

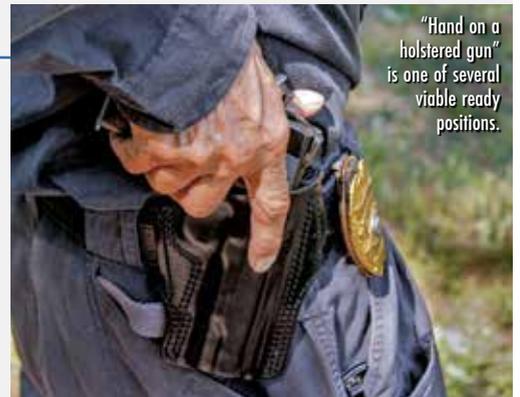
I took a timer to the range with my S&W 1911 .45. Starting cocked and locked at low ready from 10 feet, my time to react and fire averaged 0.64 seconds with all center hits. Starting with the hand on the holstered pistol, the average time was 0.916 seconds to react, draw and fire from a two-handed stance. Going for speed, I dropped a few points: 84% hit value as opposed to the 100% from low ready. The time difference had been only a little more than a quarter of a second — 0.276 seconds.

I went to the range with three good friends and repeated the test using Springfield Armory Hellcat Pro striker-fired guns with iron sights from an open-top Kydex. Smarter than me, they went for accuracy instead of speed,

and all got 100% hit value from both low ready and starting with “hand on a holstered weapon.” IDPA Five-Gun Master John Strayer averaged 0.686 seconds from low ready and 1.068 seconds from hand on a holstered gun, an average difference of 0.382 of one second. Retired state investigator Allen Davis averaged 0.564 from low ready and 1.024 from hand on a holstered gun, a difference of 0.46 of one second. The average overall was 0.67 from low ready and 1.178 from hand on a holstered gun — a difference of 0.508 of a second.

If you have an immediate identified threat, you want the gun up and out to start, but for less critical situations, a quarter to a half a second isn't much of a price to pay for the advantages of “hand on the holstered pistol.”

And in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, you



“Hand on a holstered gun” is one of several viable ready positions.



Allen Davis comes from low ready with a Hellcat Pro 9mm. He was only about half a second slower, starting with his hand on the holstered gun.

won't have to write a report, which the cop-haters will use to say you're gun-happy. Slowing down for the “speed's fine, accuracy's final” advice that has stood the test of time from Wyatt Earp to Bill Jordan doesn't cost you that much.

Try it yourself: What works for you is what's important. Keep your mind open and your hand full. Having a hand on a holstered gun is the optimum “ready” for some situations.



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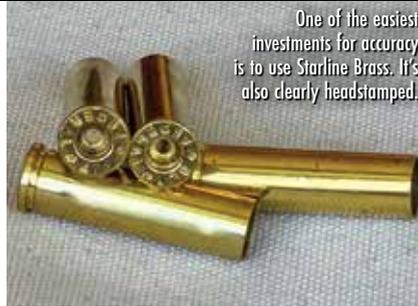
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## MY EDC: .327 FEDERAL MAGNUM



One of the easiest investments for accuracy is to use Starline Brass. It's also clearly headstamped.



Lindsey's #1 choice for reloading the .327 Magnum is Lyman's "Orange Box" 3-Die Carbide set.

I am starting my campaign to make the .327 Federal Magnum the most popular revolver cartridge ever. The arguments for it are easy. It's an effective defensive caliber, one of the easiest calibers to reload, and it has more versatility than any other revolver cartridge. If I bring a revolver to a gunfight, this is the caliber.

The .327 Magnum is a rimmed, straight-walled cartridge based on the .32 Magnum. It's also .312 caliber but with a 1/8" longer case. The brass uses better metallurgy and has more reinforcement at the web, being designed for pressures up to 45,000 psi.

I have found the best weight range for this caliber is 75-125 grains because they are the easiest to reload. There are 60-75 grain bullets, mostly designed for the .32 Auto. They may work all right in the .32 Long, but they need some tweaking to load in .327.

Many loads I used here kept the standard deviation in single digits. I cannot do that with a .357 magnum. There is something about the .327 that is inherently consistent. For example, the Lee TL-314-90-SWC load, using 4.7 grains of HP 38, didn't deviate more than 25 fps. This is quite a feat since powder dispensing can vary a tenth of a grain.

## USE LYMAN

Lyman "Orange Box" die sets use an M-type expander, which gives two advantages to the .327 reloader. First, the die is an open

body, which allows the case mouth to open, and it doesn't get resized again in the downstroke. Second, the Lyman die uses a unique taper, gentler on cases, allowing more reloads and less trimming. For the .327 Magnum, I would pick Lyman every time.

Crimping is critical on the .327. Check your crimp by loading a dummy bullet, then pulling it. Inspect for changes in diameter or deep ring marks. Either one means your crimp is too tight. The caliper is your friend.

## THE RIGHT COMPONENTS

If you're reloading .327 Magnum for plinking, it's all right to pick up range brass. With my practice loads listed here, you might get as many as eight reloads without trimming, but I would begin gauging the brass length after five. However, for ideal accuracy and consistency, I have the secret sauce: Starline Brass.

There is another reason to use Starline Brass. It carries a "327 Federal" headstamp. Since it is hard to distinguish three of the sister calibers, .32 Magnum, .32 Long, and .327 Magnum, having a clear headstamp prevents "kabooms."

For all of my .327 loads, I use Winchester Small Pistol Primers. The burning chamber of the .327 is limited, so the controversy of, "Should I use magnum primers?" is of lesser importance. This is not one size fits all, but a small pistol primer is a safe bet for .327.

Because of the smaller burning chamber, my powder selection priorities are precision metering first and clean burning second. Ramshot True Blue, HP 38, and Accurate #5 are top of my list. With True Blue, I get great velocity, low recoil, low muzzle flash and a clean burn. With Accurate #5, I get consistency and precision metering. You already know HP 38 gave me a low SD.

## JACKETED AND LEAD

Standard .327 jacketed bullets run .312". I loaded some Hornady 100-grain, .312" XTP bullets, and my LCRx spat them out almost in the same place on the target. Using 7.4 grains of True Blue, they ran just shy of 1,190 fps. When I fired them at bare ballistic gelatin, they generally exceeded 19" of penetration. This is a moderately hot load and it screams out of my 1.87" LCRx barrel.

Cartridge OAL is critical for this load; I used 1.49". I experimented with loads between 7.0 and 7.4 grains. The 7.4-grain load seemed to work the best, but be aware it is loud!

I also tried 78-grain Rim Rock Bullets, which are sized .313". These bullets are always first quality, and I pushed them consistently to 1,300 fps, which they handle well. Let's see, 8.5 grains of Accurate #5 will get you there, but, like all load recommendations, begin at least 10% lower and work your way up. The OAL for this load is 1.462". You'll feel this load in hand, unlike other softer recoiling loads.

I fired bullets made with a Lee Precision TL-314-SWC mold designed for Lee's Tumble Lube. I used my Lyman 4500 to lube and size them to .314". Note 4.5 grains of HP 38 drives this bullet to 1,050 fps using an OAL of 1.46".

My range buddies believe I'm obsessed with the .327. I am. It can do amazing things, demonstrate outstanding accuracy in a snubnose, and is excellent for defense.



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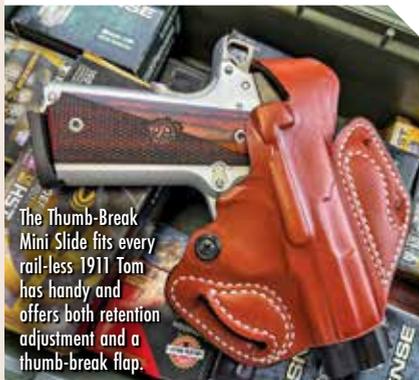
Winter is here, so for me, it's outside-the-waistband (OWB) carry season — at least some of the time. While I generally make more use of Kydex for IWB carry here in the humidity capital of the world (leather can get sticky on the draw when moist, and yes, I hate that word), the cooler months offer an opportunity to easily conceal a full-size pistol with classic OWB leather.

Three of my favorite carry pistols are the Staccato C2, Springfield Armory SA-35 Hi-Power and Springfield Armory 4" EMP Ronin 1911. All have some weight, and none are what one would describe as a micro-compact, so they're great candidates for evaluating some sturdy leather gear. I decided to try three different OWB leather options from DeSantis Gunhide.

## VARIABLE GRD

The GRD is a bit of a hybrid, although your handgun will enjoy the (nearly) full benefit of a shaped leather interior.

The belt loops are made from polymer (available for 1.5" and 1.75" belts), which attach to the leather body with screws. Extra holes allow you to adjust the ride height by about 3/4". As the extra holes are only on the leading side, this also tweaks the cant angle.



The Thumb-Break Mini Slide fits every rail-less 1911 Tom has handy and offers both retention adjustment and a thumb-break flap.



The Speed Scabbard is a minimalist design and remains thin and comfortable without the reinforced mouth. It does a marvelous job of supporting this Staccato C2 with an optic.

Two neat things about this model. It's a fit leather holster, but it includes a set of polymer or Kydex "jaws" inside, which lock onto the trigger guard, aiding retention. When you holster, you'll hear and feel a solid "click," letting you know everything is right. It's also completely and properly ambidextrous — just mount the belt clips on the other side. Everything, down to the reinforced mouth for one-handed reholstering, is identical on either side.

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I'm using this one with the SA-35 Hi-Power, but it's available for various 1911-type and polymer service pistols.

## SPEED SCABBARD

DeSantis markets this one to "meet the needs of plainclothes professionals preferring a holster without a thumb break while still providing firearm retention." I disagree ... sort of. Yes, it will meet those needs, but it's also an excellent option for general concealed carry use.

Admittedly a personal preference issue, I generally prefer a "no thumb snap" fit too, and the high ride of this model makes it very easy to conceal even a larger gun like the Staccato C2 with a mounted optic with ease. The precisely boned leather provides a tight fit with natural friction retention. Some models also have a retention screw. The Staccato model does not, nor is it needed. There's also some variance between models for different gun fits. All have 1 3/4" belt loop cuts, but some models have a third slot for cant angle adjustment or cross-draw use.

## THUMB-BREAK MINI SLIDE

For the Springfield Armory EMP 4" Ronin 9mm 1911, I elected to go with the Thumb-Break Mini Slide. Yeah, I know, I just stated I "generally" prefer holsters without a thumb break. In my case, the "generally" leaves me wiggle room



That section molded below the slide contains the GRD (Gunhide Retaining Device). Think polymer "tongs" to grab the front of the trigger guard.

for those times when I'm puttering around outdoors doing projects, riding my mountain bike, or any other activity likely to involve lots of moving around and bumping into things. In those cases, that thumb-break system provides peace of mind that your gun won't run away from home.

As the name implies, this one is an open-bottom design, so the muzzle length doesn't matter. As I'm using the 1911 fit, it works

fine, not just with my 9mm EMP but equally well with a 10mm Springfield Armory 1911 Ronin and a .45 ACP Springfield Armory TRP 1911. With all three models, the snap cover is cut generously enough that I don't have to resort to leather stretching contortions to fasten the snap-equipped flap between the cocked hammer and frame. So, yes, for pistols designed to be carried cocked and locked, the snap design also provides a bit of extra insurance preventing an unplanned hammer fall.

This all-leather model is equipped with two 1 3/4" belt loop slots, placed to provide a moderately aggressive forward cant angle. A retention screw allows you to adjust the primary retention resistance supplementing the security provided by the thumb break. You can order it  in black or tan leather.

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

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## Let's Talk About SIGHTS

Sight issues are probably number two in my shop after function problems. It's frustrating not to hit where you are aiming.

Let's focus on iron sights, no pun intended. This category includes night sights, fiber optics, gold beads, etc.

The most common issue is adjustment. On the pistol production line, the sights are typically set in the middle of the dovetail slot or staked/pinned into the barrel or slide. If a shooter finds himself shooting off-center, he will elect to move his rear sight. This is typically where the trouble starts. Most factory-installed sights are set in the rear dovetail with a hydraulic press, frequently making moving the sight with hand tools almost impossible.

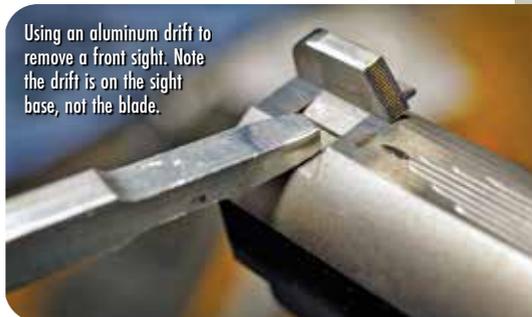
## SIGHT MOVEMENT TIPS

I've found the key to moving sights is not the tool but holding the slide. The slide or frame must be held securely in a vise. I use a large Wilton bench vise with 5" aluminum jaws. I never hold a slide or frame in the jaws without padding. The padding can be hard rubber or leather to prevent scratches or metal transfer from the vise. I also avoid over-tightening the vise. Too tight, and I could crush a frame or slide. I want the jaws just tight enough that energy from my drift punch is transferred to the sight, not to the vise.

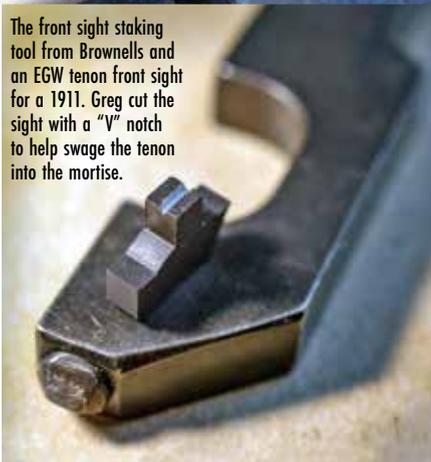
You may think, "Why not mention a sight pusher at this point?" I work on so many different pistol models a pusher would be impractical. I prefer a drift and hammer. The key to using a drift is it's made of softer material (like brass or aluminum) than the sight. It must also be the correct size. You can buy drift punches from Brownells. I make my own from round stock of both brass and aluminum. I make the drift to contact the strongest part of the sight — usually the base, not the blade! Hitting the blade can easily damage it or even snap it off.

After loosening a set screw or removing an elevation screw, the drift punch should move the sight with easy blows from the hammer on the punch. If it's too hard to move, hit a little harder. Some sights might have been set using adhesive like Loctite. They should be heated with a hair dryer to soften the glue.

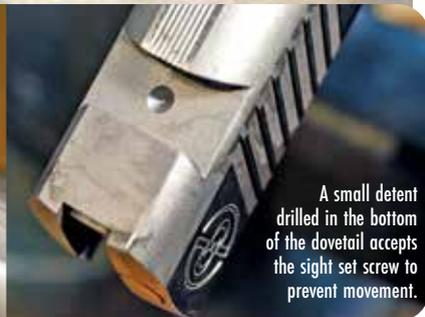
Using an aluminum drift to remove a front sight. Note the drift is on the sight base, not the blade.



The front sight staking tool from Brownells and an EGW tenon front sight for a 1911. Greg cut the sight with a "V" notch to help swage the tenon into the mortise.



A small detent drilled in the bottom of the dovetail accepts the sight set screw to prevent movement.



## INSTALLATION SECRETS

Once the sight is zeroed or replaced, I want to ensure it does not move under use. Most rear sights have a set screw. I like to drill a small detent on the slide for this screw to "nest" in to prevent movement.

There are three main types of front sights: dovetailed with a pin, dovetailed with no pin and staked. For dovetailed and pinned front sights, the pin must be removed beforehand so the sight can be moved. This pin is usually a 1/16" roll pin; it can be pushed out with a "roll pin punch." Now it can be removed and changed for a new type. Check with your supplier for a suitable replacement.

Staked front sights are not designed to move but are known to fall off on occasion. This is usually due to poor installation. I have a few tricks that make staked front sights stay in place.

First, I ensure the sight fits snugly in the slide mortise — the square pocket milled in the slide. The sight has a stud on the bottom; this is the tenon. The tenon should fit in the mortise with taps from a non-marring hammer. If it won't fit, file a small amount off the tenon and try again. Once it slips in, remove the sight. Staking requires a special tool like the ones sold by Brownells. Before staking, I make a "V" notch in the bottom of the tenon with a file. This "V" allows the tool to nest and not slip. It also makes swaging the steel tenon easier.

For added security, I will add a small amount of JB Weld to the mortise. The adhesive will fill any voids in the fit and add security to the staked sight. Hammer strikes to the staking tool spreads the tenon. These are not heavy blows that could snap the sight. The "V" notch gives the process a good head start. After spreading the tenon, I clean up the excess JB Weld with a cotton swab and solvent. After a drying period, sand the excess tenon flush with the slide.

For more info: [Brownells.com](http://Brownells.com), [WiltonTools.com](http://WiltonTools.com), [JBWeld.com](http://JBWeld.com)

# GUNS

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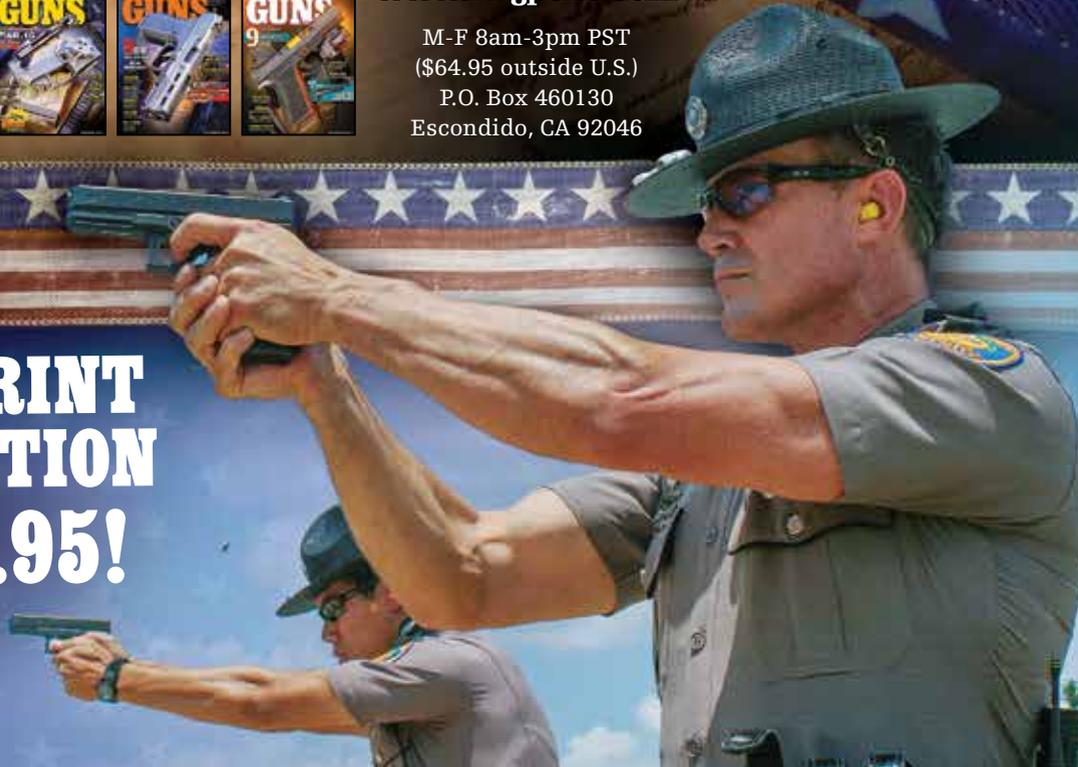
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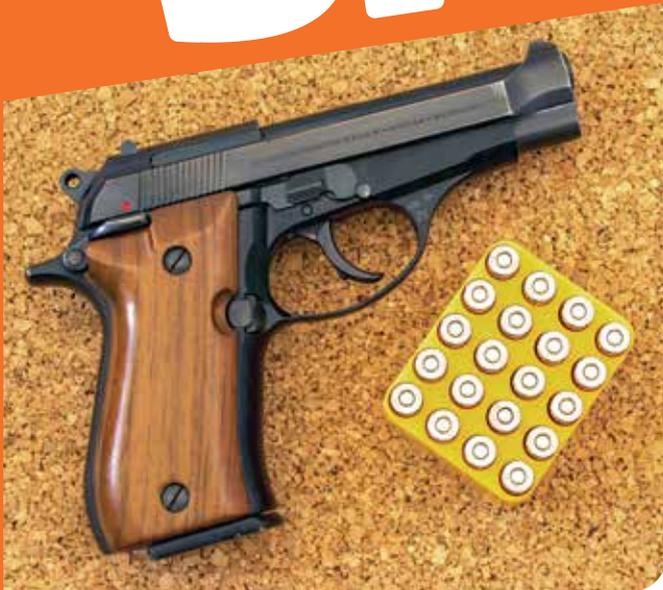
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# PARTING SHOTS



Above: Small, "cute" guns like this Beretta 84 can be hard to shoot!

**WHEN IT'S TIME TO SAY GOODBYE**



A nice old Colt, but a modern shooter may prefer to have the funds.



Two Ubertis (essentially), but to Clayton, only one is a keeper. He vastly prefers one caliber over the other!

**W**e all remember our first date, our first car, and our first job. Like many of life's milestones, we also tend to attach a huge degree of sentimental importance to our first gun. I'm no different: I remember the first time I went shooting with my father, both of us new to a stainless Smith and Wesson N-Frame .357. Because of that day (and that gun), I became a true-blue fan of the shooting sports. But what was the second or third gun I bought for myself? My fifth? I couldn't rightly tell you.

If you're like me, you may have accumulated a decent enough collection of guns before you realize — aw, hell — you don't love all of them equally. Not every ugly duckling in your collection will turn out to be a swan. If you're on the fence about keeping or selling a gun or two, I'm hoping to give you a well-intentioned

shove into “sell” territory. What follows are a few easy criteria I use to decide what gets eighty-sixed.

### **It Doesn't Run**

Nothing's more frustrating than a gun that doesn't work. I've owned a few revolvers that flat-out failed to revolve, but I've found the more common headache to be autoloaders that don't live up to either the “auto” or “load” portion of the term.

Sometimes bad magazines are the culprit of these issues, but other times it's some nastier gremlin located somewhere among the byzantine geometry of several interconnected parts. In severe cases, faulty linkages between the trigger, disconnect, and sear can turn any semi-auto into a single-shot-only proposition.

I'm not a gunsmith. I know some great ones, but if I don't already love a gun, I'm hesitant to create a money pit where I didn't have one before. I typically disclose my headaches to potential buyers and let someone else take the project on.

### **It Doesn't Shoot**

As Colonel Townsend Whelen once said, “Only accurate guns are interesting.” In some cases, inaccuracy is the fault of the user: I certainly have a hard time shooting incredibly tiny mouse guns with rudimentary, World War I-era sights to the bleeding edge of their mechanical precision. The same goes for massive handguns. Once I feel the shockwave of a fired .50 AE round in my teeth, the adrenaline dump that follows immediately after is going to make me jittery enough that I'll flinch every round after the first to one degree or another.

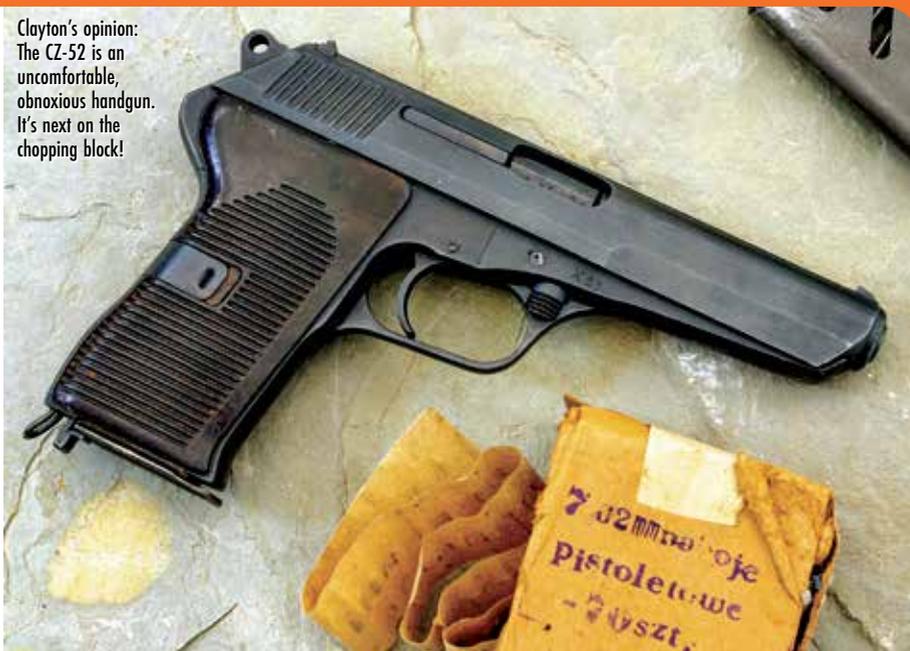
I've also owned guns that inexplicably sucked when it came to accuracy. I sold one small revolver that shot 4" groups at 7 yards — at about five inches low. After one particularly disappointing string, I marched out to the counter of my local range. I told the clerk, “I'm going to rent a J-Frame from you just to make sure I haven't forgotten everything I know about shooting.” Six rounds later, I was staring at a tight, centered group.

Needless to say, that old wheelgun went on the chopping block without a moment's regret.

### **Own Something Better**

There's a dark side to owning a Smith and Wesson Model 41: Many other .22s become a straight downgrade through no fault of their own. I won't even mention the name of the last rimfire pistol I sold because it was a fine, accurate, and

Clayton's opinion:  
The CZ-52 is an uncomfortable, obnoxious handgun. It's next on the chopping block!



reliable gun that taught me the fundamentals of shooting. It's a gun I unquestionably recommend to others! But I sold mine because it was like choosing to drive a Toyota Corolla with a Corvette parked in the same garage.

Granted, there's something to be said about owning service-grade pistols in addition to high-end target guns — and switching back and forth across multiple platforms has unquestionably made me a better shot. For example, the double action trigger of my Beretta 92 has been a stern but fair teacher. However, I appreciate the balance, weight, and faultless reliability of that Beretta compared to other, costlier pistols in my stable. In these dimensions, it is second to none, and so it earns a permanent slot in the roster.

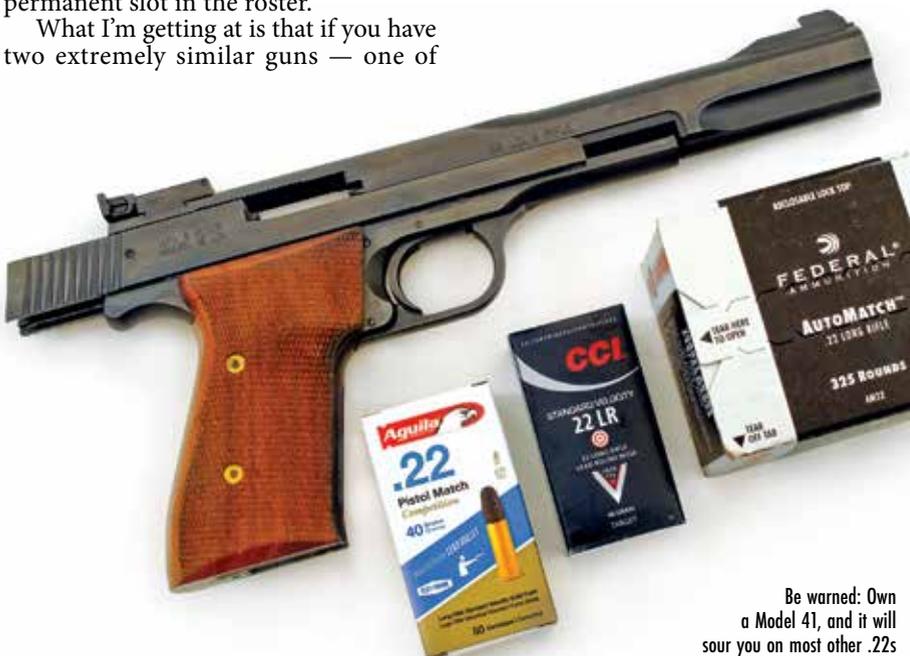
What I'm getting at is that if you have two extremely similar guns — one of

which you shoot constantly and the other you don't — sell the one that's gathering dust.

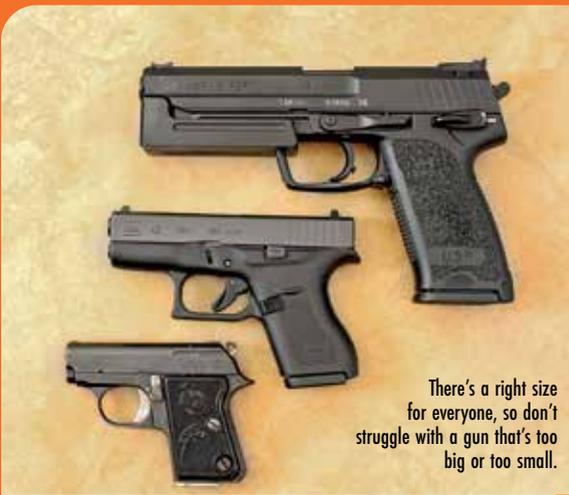
### **It Hurts You**

There's a reason I never got into the military surplus craze like many of my friends did. I'm small-framed and bony in the upper body, and full-sized, 30 caliber-ish battle rifles beat the snot out of me. It's hard for me not to mash the trigger when I know touching off a round will drive a metal buttplate right into the bones of my shoulder.

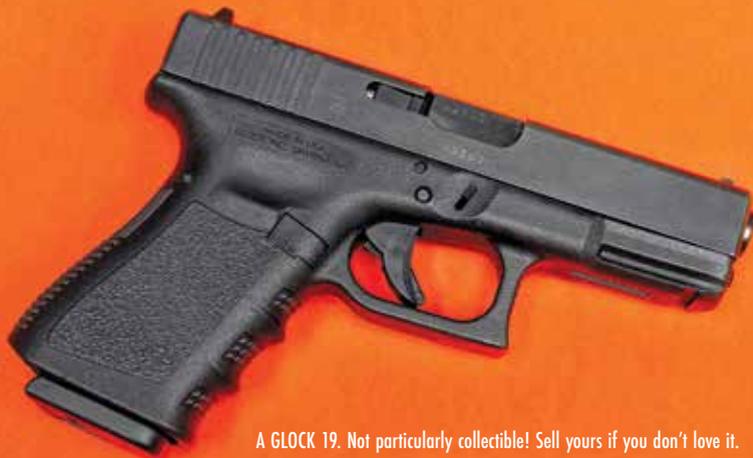
Handguns tend to be far more comfortable than rifles as a whole, but as the saying goes, some animals are more equal than others. Many blow-



Be warned: Own a Model 41, and it will sour you on most other .22s

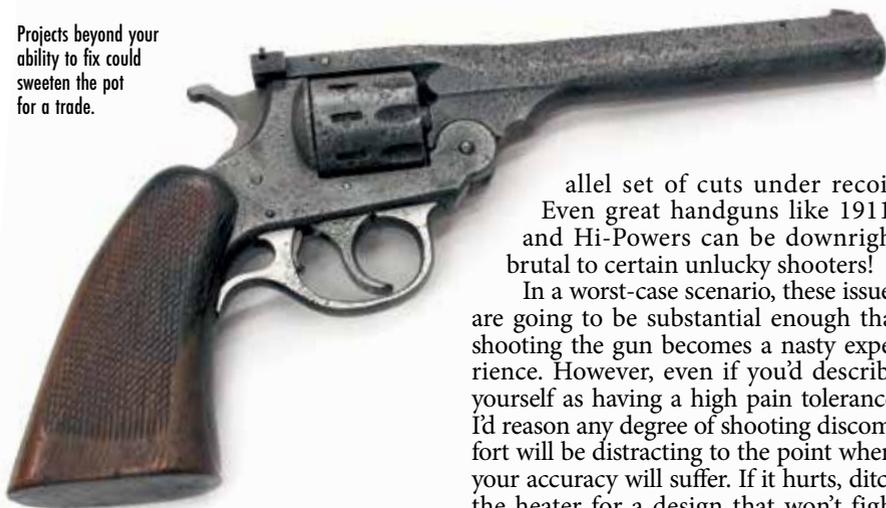


There's a right size for everyone, so don't struggle with a gun that's too big or too small.



A GLOCK 19. Not particularly collectible! Sell yours if you don't love it.

Projects beyond your ability to fix could sweeten the pot for a trade.



allel set of cuts under recoil. Even great handguns like 1911s and Hi-Powers can be downright brutal to certain unlucky shooters!

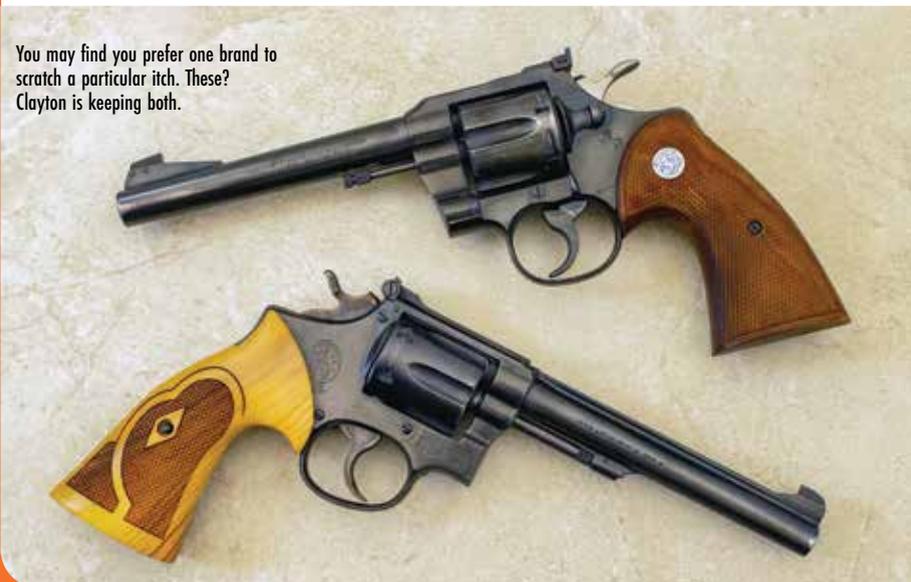
In a worst-case scenario, these issues are going to be substantial enough that shooting the gun becomes a nasty experience. However, even if you'd describe yourself as having a high pain tolerance, I'd reason any degree of shooting discomfort will be distracting to the point where your accuracy will suffer. If it hurts, ditch the heater for a design that won't fight you with every shot.

back action .380s have an unwelcome tendency to batter the web of the hand. In other cases, aggressively checkered grips can dig at the meat of one's palm, and the sharp edges of external controls can be very unpleasant when they twist under recoil. Big-handed folks who like a high grip must occasionally contend with external hammers gouging them or slides, creating a par-

### It Won't Appreciate

Let's talk about the idea of a "safe queen." It's one thing to invest in guns you know are highly desired by collectors and are certain to increase in value. If you have a Colt Boa or S&W Registered Magnum in its original box, continue to not shoot it. But if you're hanging onto a plastic wondernine

You may find you prefer one brand to scratch a particular itch. These? Clayton is keeping both.



made by the millions hoping it'll suddenly experience some Bitcoin-level spike, you may be sorely disappointed.

Similarly, not every gun is valuable just because it's old or rare, and guns (as with any product) are only worth what someone else is willing to pay. Commanding "top dollar" requires a bizarre asymmetry: you need to find a buyer who falls in love with something you don't really care about. You may not want to hear this, but sometimes it's best to grimace and sell a gun for less than you think it's worth. The "thousand-dollar gun" that never gets shot may be better utilized as \$650 towards what may be a constant range companion.

### Where Do I Sell My Gun?

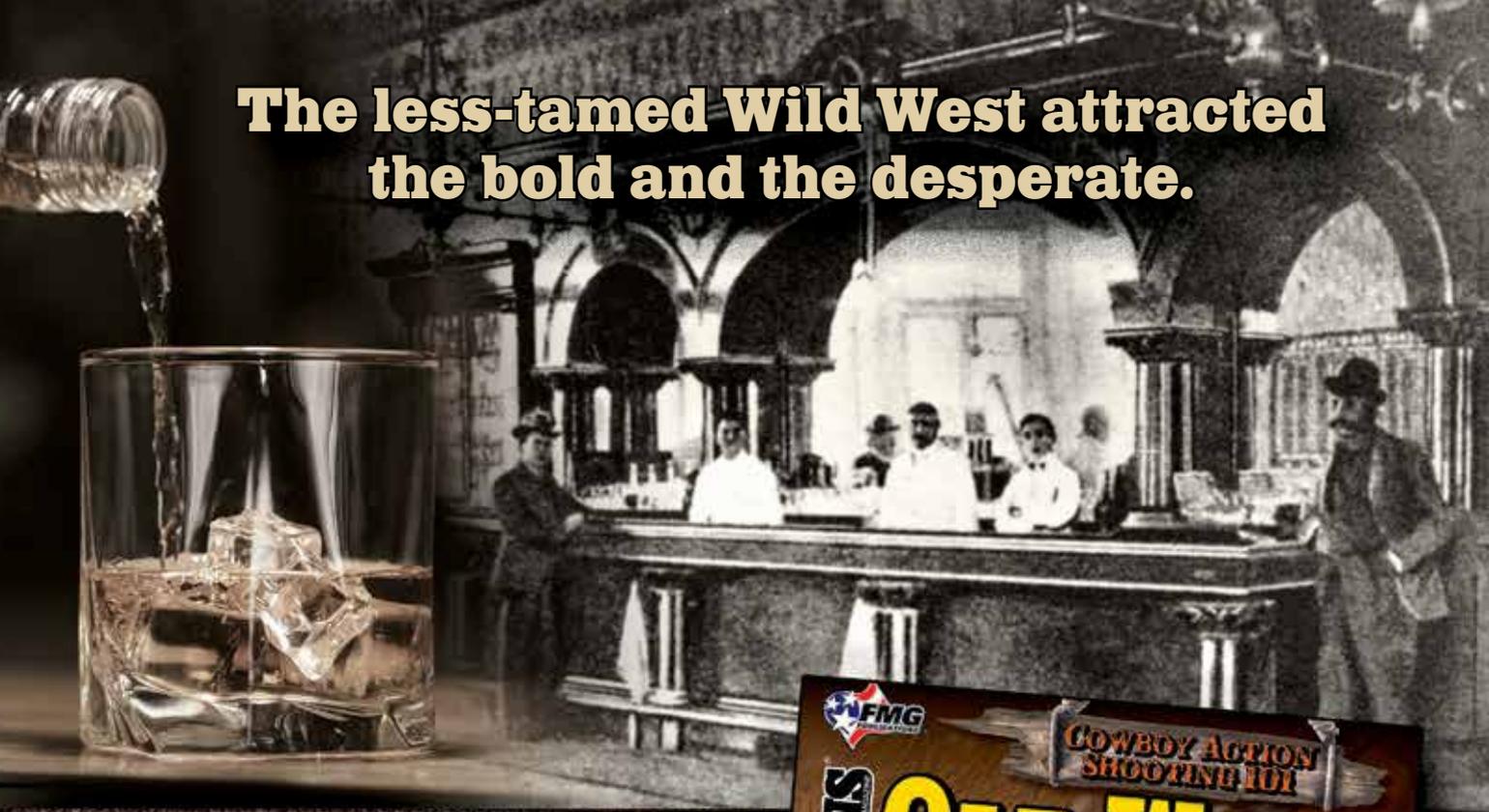
This topic can make for a full article, but without going too deep into the weeds right now, I can say this: Check your state laws first. I would Google "How to sell a gun in (your state)" to establish a starting point. For example, whether your state is okay with cash-and-carry transactions or whether FFLs must process the sale. Details matter when it comes to staying legal.

While sites like Gunbroker and Armslist are wonderful online marketplaces (think eBay for guns!), they can be intimidating for a first-timer. In such cases, I'd recommend you contact a few local gun shops and ask if they sell on consignment. In such cases, the shop will help you determine what the market in your area typically pays for the gun you want to sell, and then the shop takes somewhere on the order of 10% to 20% of the purchase price. To me, this is an excellent compromise between convenience and maximizing your return.

Again, not all guns will endear themselves to you. The good news is that it's easier to sell a gun than you think and even easier to find a good use for the cash generated from selling your misfit toys. Life's too short for you to be shooting anything that doesn't put a smile on your face!



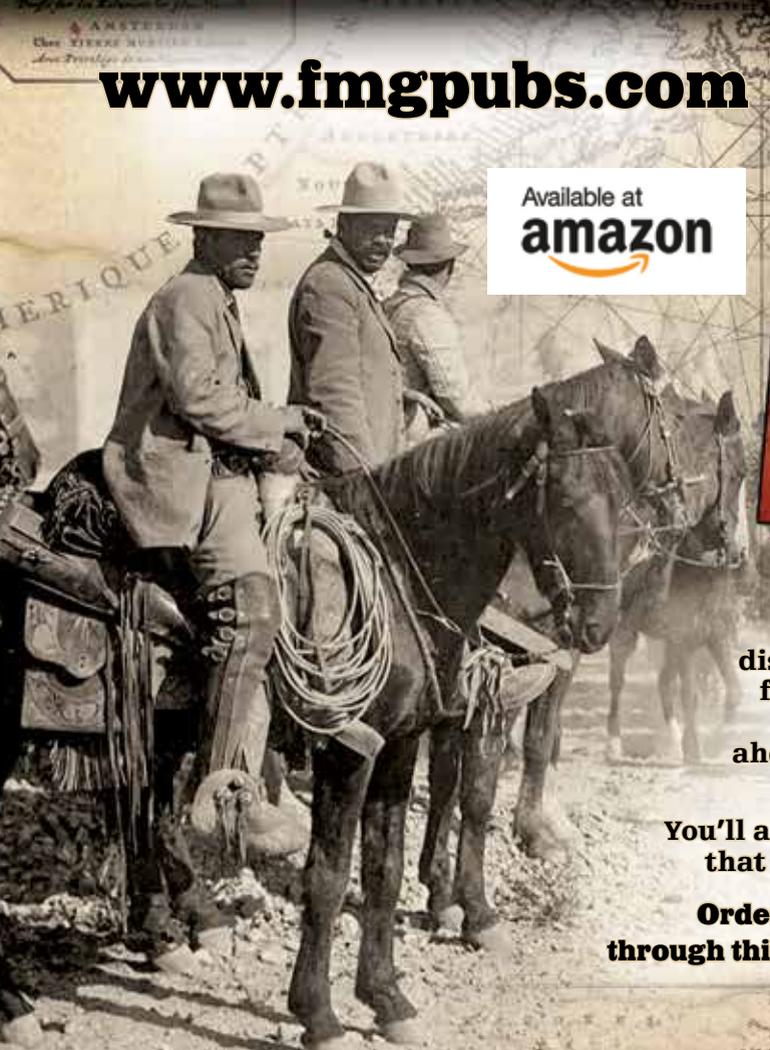
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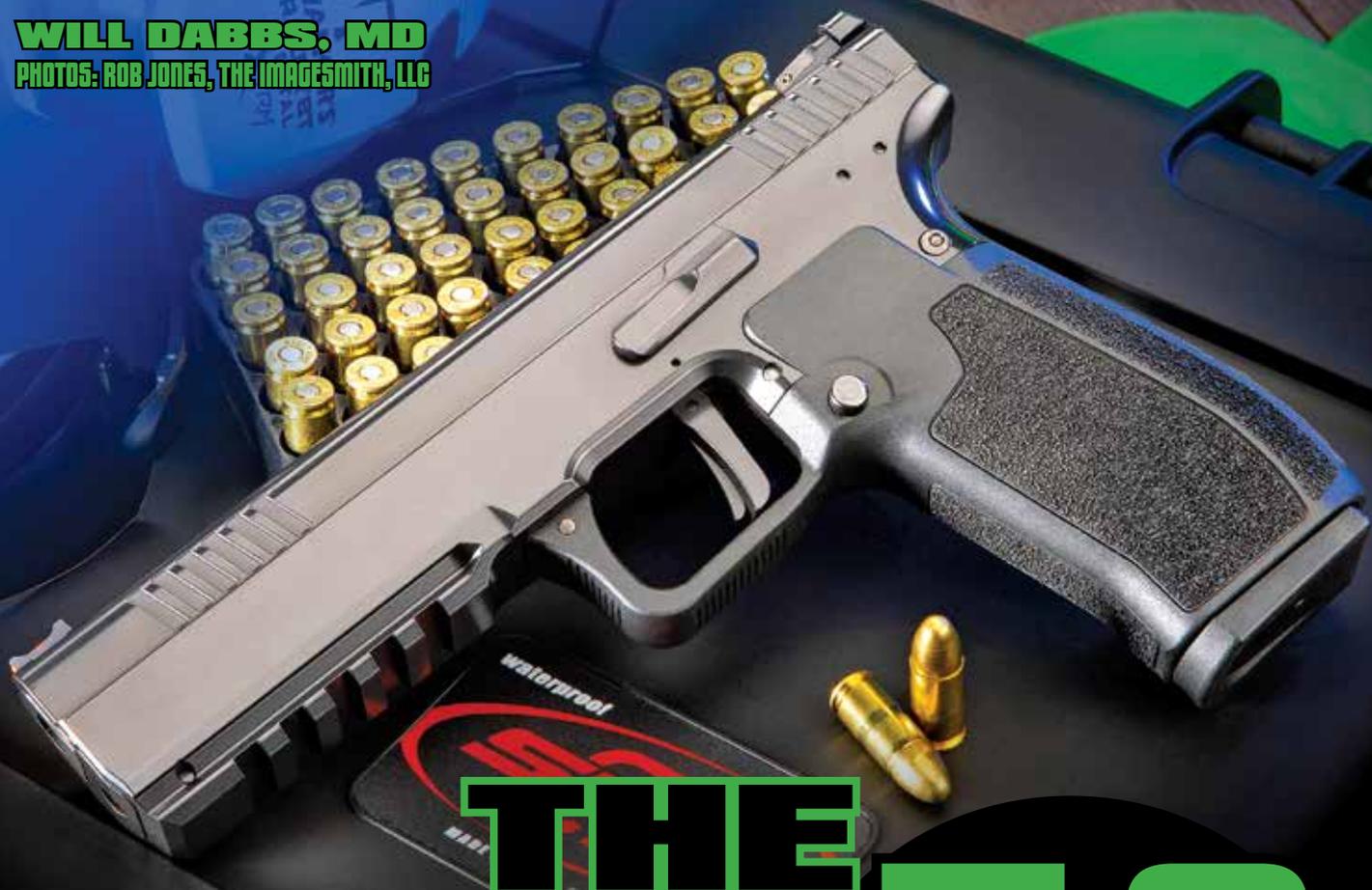
Inside this GIANT special issue, you'll discover extraordinary tales of men and guns from the old west era. You may be surprised by the facts revealed including innovations ahead of their time and single-action shooting styles that may be more myth than truth.

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**Order your copy now and get ready to mosey on through this edition of Old West: History, Guns & Gear.**



**WILL DABBS, MD**  
**PHOTOS: ROB JONES, THE IMAGESMITH, LLC**



# THE ROCK ISLAND ARMORY 5.0

**RADICALLY REVOLUTIONARY**

**T**he Rock Island Armory 5.0 is like the yeti, your daughter's imaginary unicorn, or the elusive fiscally responsible congressman. It is the sort of mystical thing you overhear folks speaking of in veiled whispers at the range while they glance furtively about, but you're not convinced it's actually real. Amidst a lamentable sea of sameness at your local gun emporium, the RIA 5.0 is something legitimately radical, new, fresh and different.

## **Paradigm Shifting**

John Moses Browning is a legend amongst geeks like us for good reason. The guy held 128 patents when he

finally keeled over from heart failure at age 71, toiling away at the FN plant in Liege, Belgium. He designed every rifle-caliber automatic weapon used by U.S. forces in World War II. John Browning is the Beyonce of the gun world. He's what would happen if Albert Einstein, Michael Jordan, John Wayne and Elvis all had a baby, and that baby started designing firearms.

Though the great man died before it was completed, the GP35 Browning Hi-Power was his crowning achievement. His colleague Dieudonné Saive, an extraordinary firearms engineer on his own merit (he designed the FN FAL rifle), completed the gun after he passed. The basic recoil-operated,

tilting-lock action has since come to drive almost every combat handgun on the planet. Just like the mousetrap, the paperclip, the movie *Aliens*, Count Chocula cereal and my wife, the Hi-Power was rightfully considered by those in the know to be perfect. It was thought to represent the ultimate pinnacle of firearms evolution. And then this thing happened. I feel kind of tingly all over just thinking about it.

The RIA 5.0 is the sort of gun you might stumble upon amidst the wreckage of an alien spacecraft. Where design influences in most modern combat handguns track back a century or more, the RIA 5.0 is legitimately groundbreaking. It feeds



RIA 5.0.

10-01



**AMERICAN  
HANDGUNNER**

# THE ROCK ISLAND ARMORY

# 5.0



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WALKER'S  
RAZORBT  
DIGITAL  
X-TRM

★ 9mm  
124 GR FULL METAL JACKET

# ROCK ISLAND ARMORY 5.0



the barrel on the RIA 5.0 remains stationary as the slide cycles. Everything remains directly in the line of recoil. More on that later.

The frame wraps around the slide in the manner of the Czech CZ75. This minimizes the slide gripping surface, but it drops the bore axis as low as physics will allow. It's not really possible to drop the bore axis of a handgun any lower. This nifty bit of unconventional architecture also contributes to minimizing recoil and excising muzzle flip.

The gun is unnaturally nose-heavy. The forward portion of the pistol is a massive aluminum frame cut into a Picatinny rail. The front-heavy architecture combines with the rest of this radically innovative stuff to do some of the most delightful things to the gun's recoil characteristics.

In keeping with the thoroughly unconventional nature of this beast, the frame itself is a composite of sorts. The structure is aluminum, while the grip is formed from a rugged polymer insert. The polymer bit is nicely stippled, easy on the mitts, and impervious to sweat and corrosion. The demarcation between steel and polymer is essentially seamless.

The hybrid nature of this design is just cool. The components that manage pressures and reciprocating components are all metal. The bits that interface with your soft sensitive flesh are polymer. It's the best of both worlds.

There are but two controls. The magazine release is left-side-only and in the expected spot. The slide stop is likewise on the left side of the frame. Aside from a simply extraordinary trigger, there's just nothing else to wiggle.

My particular test gun didn't have any iron sights. In their place was a top-flight C-More red dot. As I said, this is a different sort of handgun. Rock Island is launching this pistol with a limited run of such optics-only configurations to be followed by conventional iron-sighted models, as shown in the pictures here.

The finish is a deep, rugged black that looks like that inky spot between the stars on a clear summer night. Fit and finish are both superb, as we might expect. Additionally, stamped discreetly on the right side of the frame, it reads "MADE IN USA-Cedar City, UT."

Armscor, the international umbrella that owns the American company Rock Island Armory, is the largest manufacturer of small arms in SE Asia. They are the largest producer of 1911 pistols on the planet. Armscor is based in the Philippines and has been churning out quality firearms since right after World War II. It seems they are now going to try their



from a box magazine, but that's about the only thing with this gun that is familiar or conventional.

## Details

As you first heft the RIA 5.0, you notice immediately this is unlike your typical combat pistol. For starters, the barrel is square ... on the outside. The inside is round and rifled, just like you might expect. The external contour, however, is essentially a box. This

square shape interfaces seamlessly with a corresponding square cutout on the inside of the slide. That's kind of weird, but it's a good kind of weird. The slide rides on these glassy-smooth flats for an inimitably seamless cycling experience. This is tough to put into words, but you feel it right off when you cycle the slide by hand. Imagine warm snot across glass.

The barrel doesn't tilt. Unlike conventional Browning-style autoloaders,



hand at building guns on this side of the pond. I'm just giddy at the prospects.

### The Trigger

Ah, the trigger. In keeping with the overall mantra of radical differentness, the RIA 5.0 ignites via an internal hammer system. There's nothing on the outside to snag and very little to see. However, the hammer-fired ignition system offers an inimitably rapturous trigger experience. There is the obligatory safety tab built into the trigger face, but it is all beautifully smooth. The wide, flat-faced trigger draws through a modestly long yet ethereally light take-up to break predictably and brilliantly. The reset is as short as a toddler's attention span. The overall ambiance is like that of a superbly tuned target gun. If your groups wander, it isn't due to the trigger.

### Parentage

Fred Craig is the brains behind the RIA 5.0. That guy is my hero. He is the Leonardo da Vinci of firearms. He contrived the .22 TCM. The .22 TCM is my hands-down favorite firearms cartridge.

If you've not yet partaken of the .22 TCM, then you have my pity. TCM stands for Tuason Craig Micromagnum. I don't wish to oversell, but the .22 TCM is the coolest round in the world.

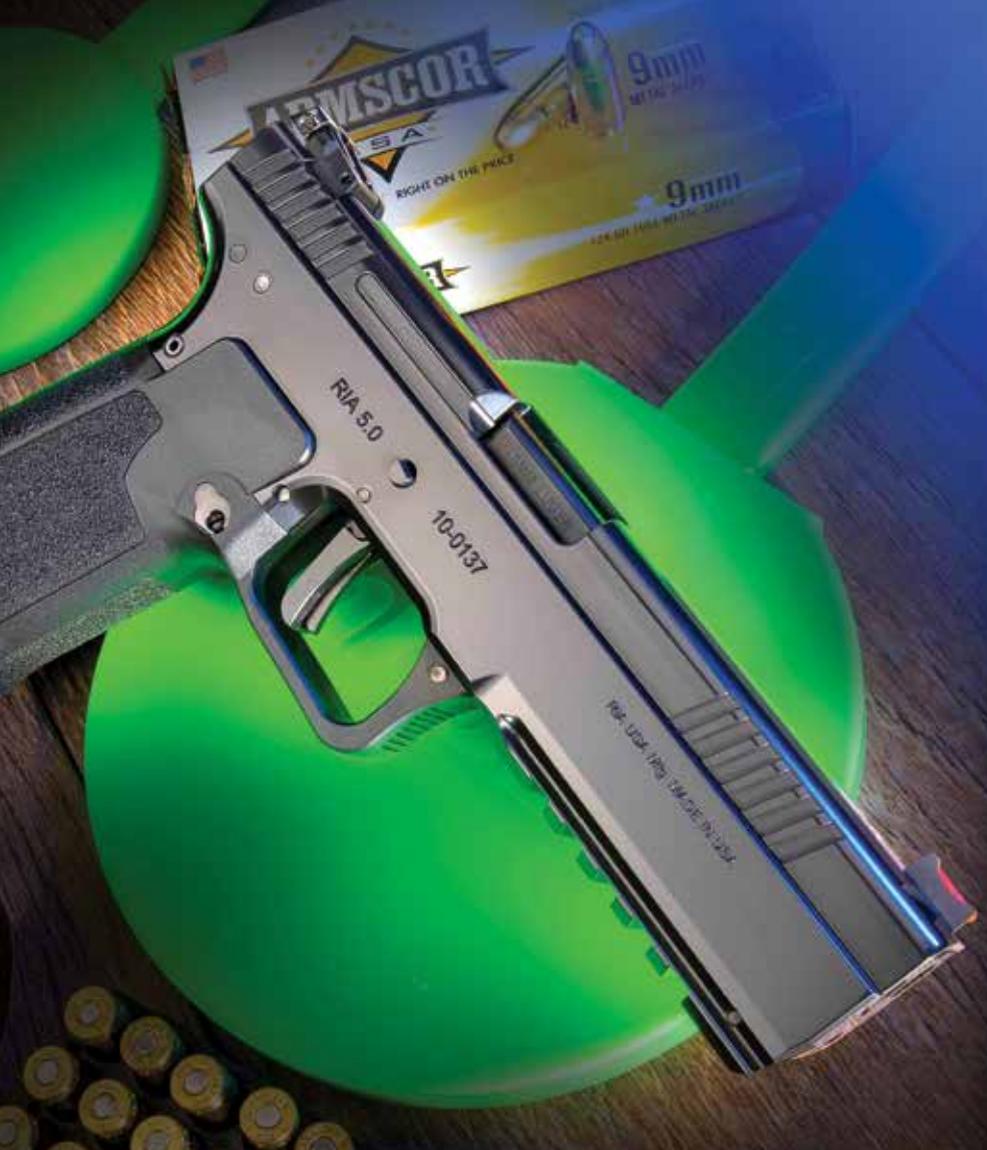
Fred started with a 5.56mm cartridge and then cut it down. If my math is correct, the technical appellation would be 5.56x26mm. This charming little cartridge pushes a 40-grain JHP bullet to around 2,000 fps out of my high-capacity RIA 1911. The end result is all but recoilless and shoots like a laser. It also produces the most adorable softball-sized muzzle flash each time you squeeze the trigger. If I had an unlimited amount of ammunition, I could shoot this thing until I starved to death.

Back in 2003, Fred came out with a radically advanced gun he called the M11 Merc. My friend and mentor Roy



Huntington reviewed it for *American Handgunner* back in the day. Roy described the M11 Merc as "The Gas Gun Meets the Terminator." That's quite the accurate statement.

The M11 Merc employed a novel gas-delayed action. That mechanism tapped a bit of gas from the barrel and used it



port. However, this valve manages raw mechanical energy rather than gas.

The RVS is a patented linear locking system that secures the action at the moment of firing but allows the weapon to cycle without upsetting the bore axis. In Browning-inspired recoil-operated handguns, the barrel has to tilt to unlock and affect operation. In the case of the 5.0, this mechanical valve unlocks and allows the gun's recoil forces to cycle the slide. All of this conspires to just gobble up felt recoil.

### **The Firing System**

Fred calls the internal hammer system the Micro Hammer Assembly. Up close, this looks more like a flapper of some sort than a conventional hammer. Fred first contrived this thing in 2008 while working for Smith & Wesson.

The Micro Hammer Assembly is spunky enough to ensure reliable ignition while offering a trigger personality in keeping with a finely tuned 1911. The overall effect, just like everything else about the 5.0, is just so refreshingly different. It's not really a 1911, and it's definitely not a striker-fired GLOCK. The 5.0 is indeed an entirely new experience on the range.

### **Trigger Time**

The RIA 5.0 is not the gun you toss into the tacklebox for use against water moccasins while you're out drowning crickets. In addition to some simply mad mechanical skills, Fred was, for years, a truly world-class competitive handgun shooter. That guy knows precision handguns. The 5.0 is designed to be competitive with the 5" target and combat match guns. The 5.0 is intended for match use right out of the box. It is rumored to be affordable in that stratum as well.



against a piston to slow down and buffer the reciprocating slide. The new RIA 5.0 is something else entirely.

### **Mechanical Magic**

I'm seldom the smartest guy in the room, but I'm not stupid. I have a degree in mechanical engineering and have been immersed in guns ever since I was weaned. Despite all that, it still

took a humble email requesting advice before I could get the RIA 5.0 disassembled. Once I had actually pawed over everything, it took yet another humble email to figure out just what it was I was looking at. I had never seen anything like this before.

Fred calls it the RVS or Ram Valve System. When first I saw the term "valve," I went searching for a gas



The combination of the nigh heavenly trigger, the radically innovative recoil system, and an unnaturally low bore axis synergistically produce a shooting experience that borders upon the surreal. Recoil is more a shove than a snap, and the trigger is simply to die for. Follow-up shots are fast, straight and fun. The minimalist combat controls still allow you to run your 5.0 like a machine gun in competition if that's your bag.

This is the smoothest handgun action I have ever encountered. I've been squeezing triggers for fun and money since 1989, and this thing is different. The gun cycles more like a sewing machine than a firearm.

I'm honestly not God's gift to combat pistol shooting. I certainly do it a lot, but you'll never mistake my groups for those of Mas Ayoob. However, running the RIA 5.0 off of a simple rest, I could kill the heck out of a tennis ball at 20 meters. By my standards, that is flirting with perfection. We naturally had no failures during our range time together.

## Denouement

The RIA 5.0 is a genuinely beautiful handgun. It is completely unlike anything else in the gun shop. It's a bit on the heavy side for concealed carry underneath shorts and a T-shirt, but I'd be completely

comfortable tucking this high-tech rascal into the bedside table for those times when the dog just won't shut up at night. Slap a Streamlight TLR-8G on the rail and you have a combat tool par excellence.

Most things that warrant shooting warrant shooting twice. I could bang out double taps while on the move behind the RIA 5.0 without breaking a sweat. If your rounds start to wander with the 5.0, I'm afraid it's not the gun.

So ask yourself what you're in this for. If you want some indestructible

beater to lose underneath the seat of your truck. (A very bad thing to do. Never, ever do this.) then hit your local gun emporium and ask for something ugly. However, if you are a connoisseur who appreciates the finer attributes of a truly inspired mechanism, then heft an RIA 5.0 and just cycle the slide by hand. You'll feel the difference as you stand there  at the counter.

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



## ROGER SMITH

King of Hollowpoint Hill: Keith/Lyman 358439 HP. Below left to right: Thompson/Lyman 358156 HP, MP Molds 360-156 interpretation of the 358156. Using Cramer-style inserts, it casts two styles of HPs, or solids and Thompson/Lyman 358156 solid.



# .38 & .357 CAST BULLET ORIGIN STORY

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF KEITH, SHARPE AND MOLD MAKERS

**W**hen Elmer Keith decided to abandon the .45 Colt cartridge and concentrate on bringing the 1/8" shorter and sadly underpowered .44 Special up to its full potential, his first problem was the lack of a suitable cast bullet

design. He never claimed to have invented the semi-wadcutter bullet design but rather modified and developed it to its full potential.

On page 229 of his book *Sixguns* (1955, 1961) and in his autobiography *Hell I Was There!* (1979), he provides a brief synopsis of the first two unsatisfactory designs of his own in custom-made Belding & Mull molds. Lessons learned,

Elmer then worked out a new design in 1927 that he sent to Lyman, which was reviving the old Ideal line of unvented single cavity bullet "moulds," as they spelled it.

### Elmer's Design Specs

He had six basic parameters in mind: First, second and third were a flat nose for maximum straight-ahead tissue

The .357 Magnum holy trinity. Top, H&G #51; left, Cramer #26; right, Lachmiller #358.



Ideal/Lyman molds, from left: Keith's 358429, the short-lived Lyman 357443 with near-useless crimping groove, their better 357446, the much better 358477 and Ray Thompson's 358156 gas-checked design with two crimping grooves for both .38 Special and .357 Magnum.

Bevel base bullet designs speed reloading and lengthen brass life by reducing the need to flare case mouths. Some opine they promote gas cutting and increase forcing cone leading with hot and heavy loads. From left, H&G #51 BB, Magma 38-158 SWC BB and SAECO #388.



crushing without deflecting like a round-nose, a sharp-edged full-diameter, wide wadcutter-type hole-cutting front band and equal-width middle and base bands. The wide/thick front band was to help align the bullet in the barrel's forcing cone and the same size rear band prevented gas cutting and barrel leading.

Fourth, a deep crimp groove was deemed essential to prevent recoil jumping and also to retard bullet movement long enough to assist the complete combustion of smokeless powders. Fifth, a deep, flat-bottomed lube groove was considered necessary to hold sufficient grease to prevent leading at the velocities he envisioned. Finally, it needed a radiused rather than a straight-sided truncated cone nose shape to make it more aerodynamic and accurate at long ranges.

A Mr. Pickering at Lyman understood Keith's sketches and requirements and turned them into design number 429421. It was a winner from the get-go.

### Other Caliber Extensions

With that success, Keith used the same principles to create a design for the .38 Special, followed by numbers 452423 and 454424 for the .45ACP/Autorim and .45 Colt, respectively. For some reason, he reduced the .421's diameter to .358 but retained nearly the .421's full length.

Keith admired the .38 Special's accuracy but disdained its round-nose bullet design and lack of power, so he sat on his own bullet design for it for a couple of years. After S&W introduced the more powerful .38/44 police cartridge in the fixed-sight Heavy Duty revolver in April 1930 and the Outdoorsman with adjustable sights in November 1931 to handle the cartridge, Keith's 358429 showed up in Lyman's 1932 *Ideal Handbook No. 30*.

Elmer intended 358429 for use only with heavy powder charges in revolvers with big cylinders for .44 and .45 cartridges bored for the smaller .38 Special. Standard bullet weight for the .38 Special has been 158 grains since its introduction in 1902. Elmer's 358429 weighs 173 grains and does not shoot to the

The long and short of it, left to right: Lee 358-105-SWC coated with Liquid Alox, original .357 Magnum 156-grain Sharpe/H&G #51, 173-grain Keith/Lyman 358429, 200-grain NOE 360-200-SWC and 215-grain Lyman gas checked, double crimp grooved 358627.



same point of aim as 158-grain bullets without serious experimentation with powder charges. Elmer never intended it to. His idea was to jack up pressures and velocities to very impressive levels in those S&W guns with thick-walled cylinders and adjustable sights, and did he ever succeed!

Never, ever use his old .38/44 loads for the balloon head cases. Never use his loads for solid head cases in anything other than an S&W Heavy Duty or Outdoorsman, a Colt Single Action Army or New Service, or a gun chambered for the .357 Magnum.

### Hollowpoint

Elmer quickly learned 173 grains was a bit much. Instead of designing a shorter, lighter bullet, he created a 160-grain hollowpoint version, 358439, which also expanded spectacularly, and another 160-grainer, the 358431 hollowbase version. He strongly advocated either of those two as superior to the heavier original.

### Later, Lyman

Lyman's original mold-cutting cherries for his bullets soon wore out, and they bastardized his designs with their

replacement cherries. Thoroughly disgusted, Keith turned to George Hensley, who was making excellent vented multi-cavity molds. Hensley's #43 was his faithful reproduction of Elmer's 358429 design.

Elmer's original 358429 and new #43 bullets and his even more powerful-than-factory .38/44 loads impressed Daniel B. Wesson at S&W. Keith sent him 200 of his bullets and his load information to work with. But Wesson wanted still more power. The introduction of Hercules 2400 powder in 1932 finally made both Keith's famous high-powered .38/44 loads and the .357 Magnum possible.

### Competition

Unknown to salty, rough-around-the-edges outfitter, guide, rancher, cowboy Keith living 30 rutted dirt-and-mud road miles from town in Idaho, Wesson was also working with another advocate of a souped-up .38 back east: urbane and sophisticated Philip B. Sharpe.

While Keith was hauling ditch water to the house, cutting and splitting wood for heating and cooking, and reading by kerosene lamps, college-educated Sharpe enjoyed indoor



Hollowpoint pins compared, clockwise, from top: Modern Keith/Lyman 358439, Thompson/Lyman 358156, MP-Molds 360-156 short pentagonal pin, discontinued Lee 358-150 HP, MP-Molds 360-156 long deep round pin, discontinued Lyman 357446.



Current designs from left: Keith/Lyman 358429, SAECO #388, RCBS 38-150- SWC, RCBS 358-158-SWC, MP-Molds 360-156, Lee C358-158 SWC and Lee TL358-158-SWC.

SWC bullet evolution from left: Keith's original 1932, Sharpe/H&G #51, Ray Thompson's 358156 design for Lyman with dual crimping grooves for .357 and .38 Special use and Lee Precision Micro-Groove for tumble lubrication in Lee Liquid Alox.



plumbing while he worked with Winchester and Remington and with the DuPont and Hercules powder companies. He conducted over 100 experiments with various powders and bullets using their chronographs and pressure testing facilities.

Wesson redesigned and strengthened the .38/44 to handle the still higher pressures he had in mind. He and Winchester decided to lengthen the .38's case a bit more than 1/8" to prevent

its use in .38 Special revolvers. In his book *Complete Guide to Handloading* (1937, 1941, pages 292-294), Sharpe acknowledged Keith's bullet "is ballistically one of the best-shaped bullets on the market."

But it was too long for the new Magnum cartridge case in the S&W, about which Keith was kept totally in the dark. If he had simply scaled the 0.775" long 429421 bullet down proportionally to 0.358", it would have come

out at 0.647" long instead of 0.742", and everything would have been just fine.

So, Sharpe modified Keith's design to make a 0.690" long 156-grain solid bullet and a 146-grain hollowpoint cast in vented molds by Hensley with up to six cavities as design number 51. In all his testing, Sharpe couldn't come up with a better bullet than a shortened modification of Keith's bullet. Eventually, Winchester took over the .357's development, cutting Remington and Sharpe out.

In his 10 books and hundreds of articles, Keith never even acknowledges Sharpe's existence, even though in later years, they were both staff writers at the same time for the *American Rifleman*. In an undated staff photo, the two men are posed far apart.

### Unloved Stepchild

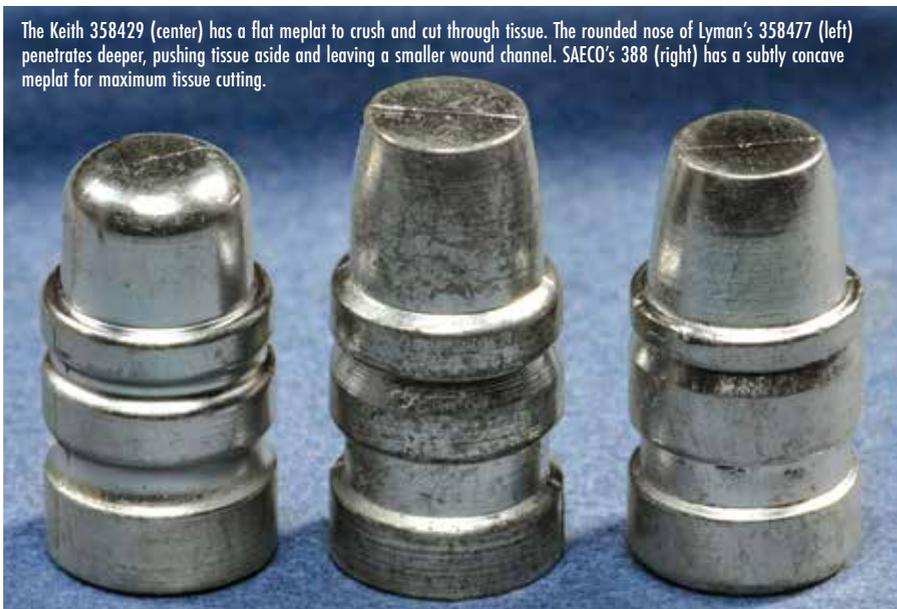
For unfathomable reasons of their own, Winchester modified Sharpe's bullet to the point neither he nor Keith (when he finally saw it) approved of it. Soft-swaged, it became a remarkable and commercially successful load anyway, even though Sharpe's much harder cast bullet delivered better accuracy without the atrocious barrel leading.

### Industry Adoption

The Cramer Bullet Mould Company started around 1937, making nice multi-cavity vented molds, including their 158-grain #26 for the .38/.357. Lachmiller got into the loading tool business in 1952, offering well-made two- and three-cavity vented molds in 1969, which included their 150-grain #358. Cramer and Lachmiller sold out to RCBS in the late 1970s, as did short-lived Ohaus.

SAECO's history is pretty murky, but Redding now owns their reloading equipment line. They offer a plain-based .358 SWC #382, #388, which appears to be a bevel base version of the same thing and #393, a 162-grain gas-checked SWC.

Lyman dropped the ball when it came to a 158-grain semi-wadcutter bullet design of their own. First, in the



The Keith 358429 (center) has a flat meplat to crush and cut through tissue. The rounded nose of Lyman's 358477 (left) penetrates deeper, pushing tissue aside and leaving a smaller wound channel. SAECO's 388 (right) has a subtly concave meplat for maximum tissue cutting.

1936 *Ideal Handbook* #32, they offered their oddball/ridiculous 357443 mold with its all-wrong driving bands and nearly useless crimping groove.

Things got a bit better in 1939 when the 156-grain design 357446 showed up as the "Standard bullet for .357 Magnum" in #33. In the mid-1960s, Skeeter Skelton allowed as to how it was "sorta" okay, but not nearly as good as Ray Thompson's very popular gas-checked, double-crimp-grooved 358156, which debuted in #40 in 1955.

Late to the party, the sensible 358477 showed up in the 41st edition of the *Lyman Reloading Handbook* in 1957. It sported Elmer's three equal-width driving bands (well, almost) and a large rounded blunt instead of flat nose shape. It lacked the deep flat-bottomed lube groove, using a round bottom groove instead. If it weren't for that, Elmer might have approved, sort of.

The change to his lube groove shape ticked Elmer off so thoroughly 20 or so years earlier he turned to H&G to make his mold designs and told readers about them and SAECO ever after. In recent years Lyman has finally been returning to the flat-bottomed lube grooves.

Besides the SAECO and Lyman designs, RCBS offers their plan



Left to right: Keith's Lyman 4329421 that started it all (this one case from a worthless eBay mold), Keith's 358429 for the .38/44, Phil Sharpe's original cast bullet for the .357 Magnum, a.k.a. Hensley & Gibbs #51, Cramer #26 and Lachmiller 358.

based 38-150-SWC (originally called 38-150-KT for "Keith Type") and gas-checked 358-158-SWC designs. Most commercial bullet casters today use Magma molds and casting machines. Magma offers three "Keith Style" molds, 38-145 FB, 38-150 SWC BB (bevel base) and 38-158 SWC BB.

Back in the day, Hoch, NEI, Yankee, Rapine and Modern-Bond also made highly regarded bullet molds that included copies, modifications, variations and permutations of Elmer's designs. They all have disappeared as their owners aged out. H&G closed its doors in 1999. Cast bullet

aficionados pay big money these days for those old cast iron molds.

Times change and beautiful CNC-machined brass and aluminum molds that are variations or copies of the classic and current .357/.358 SWCs are available today from Arsenal Molds, Accurate Molds, NOE Bullet Moulds, MP-Molds and probably others that have escaped my notice. Lee's designs in aluminum molds are excellent.

Cast lead projectiles go back to the very beginnings of firearms. But no other cast bullet has a history as rich as the modern .357/.358 semi-wadcutter design. 



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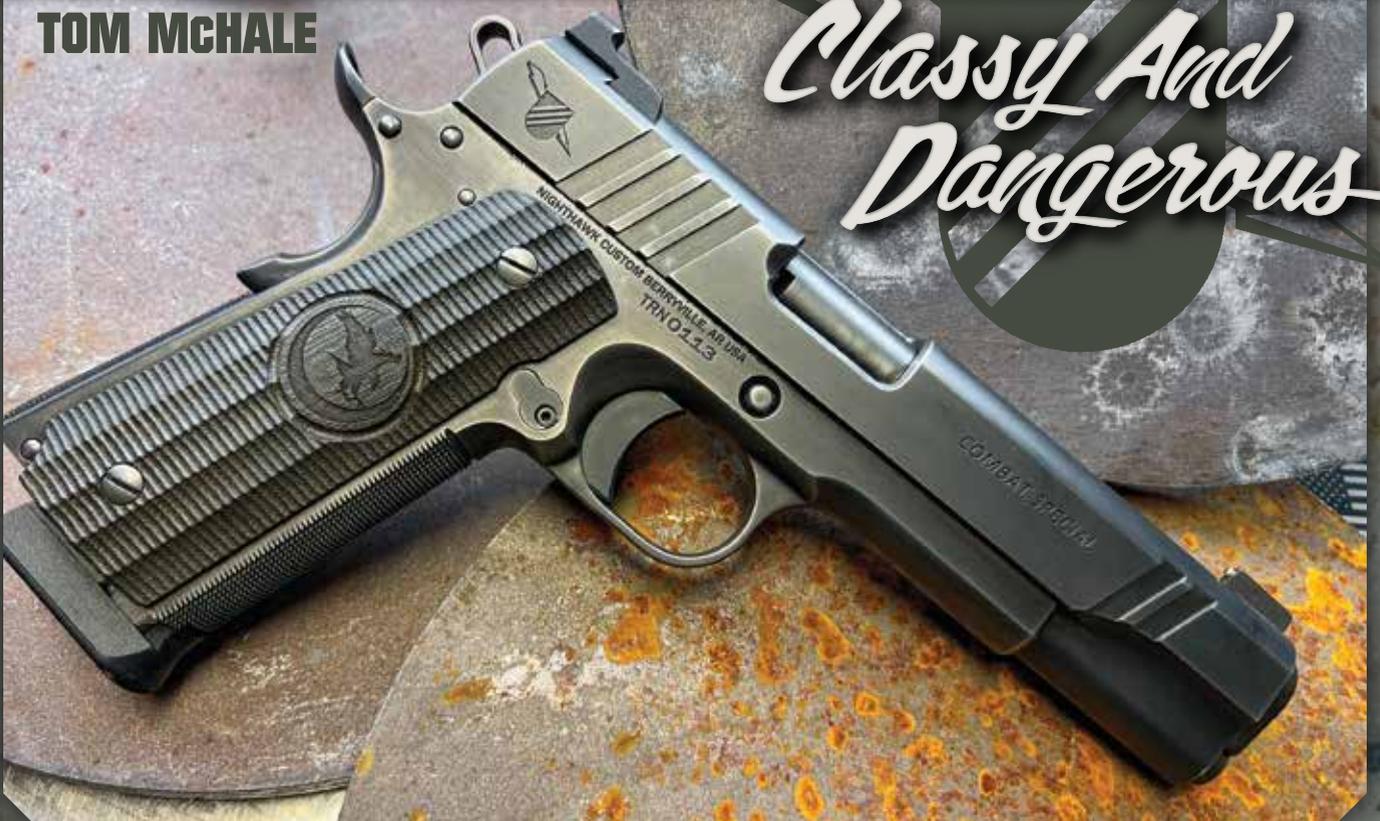
Two GREAT products. Two ALASKAN companies. ONE DESIGN. SHOP BOTH to find a CHEST HOLSTER that is right for you!



# NIGHTHAWK THUNDER RANCH COMBAT SPECIAL

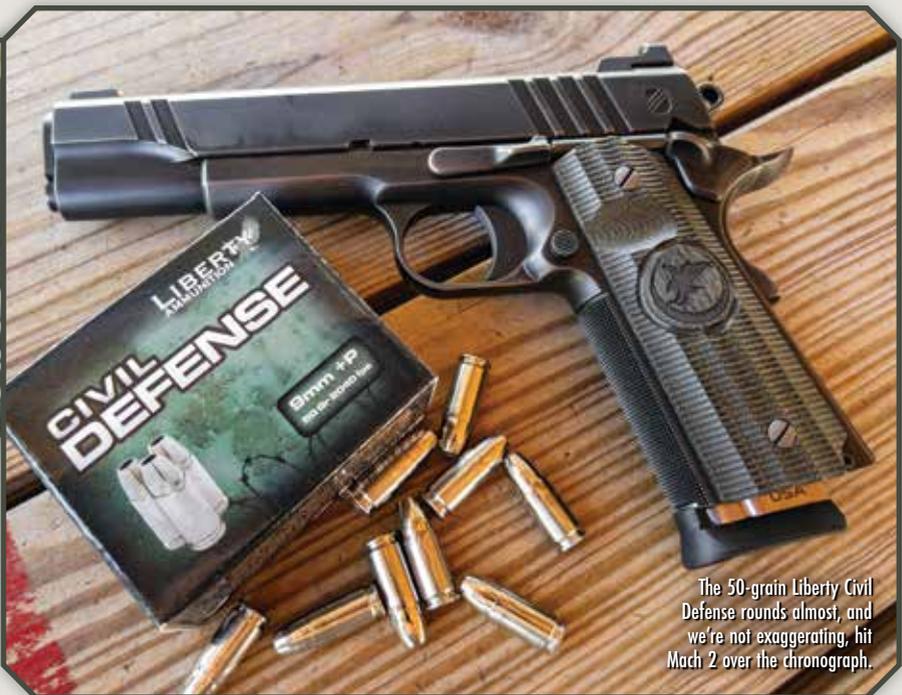
**TOM MCHALE**

*Classy And  
Dangerous*





Just one small example of the workmanship behind this pistol. Everything fits like the proverbial glove.



The 50-grain Liberty Civil Defense rounds almost, and we're not exaggerating, hit Mach 2 over the chronograph.

wouldn't consider myself a car expert by any stretch, although I enjoy the elegance of a fine automobile. As a long-suffering tech guy, I also enjoy process-related factoids about the world's ultimate performance vehicles.

The Bugatti Chiron (disclaimer: I don't own one ...) is electronically limited to a top speed of 261 mph, and yes, I said limited. That's because this supercar can exceed that velocity. The problem lies with tires. Nothing in current production can handle the stresses associated with a Chiron's full-out sprint, so engineers have to "ease off the gas," so to speak. The performance stats are equally impressive. Zero to 60 in 2.4 seconds, continuing to 124 mph in an additional 4.1.

As you might expect, Bugattis aren't made on a production line. Instead, parts are delivered in padded cases to an "atelier" in Molsheim, France. For those like me, who flunked *la Française* in seventh grade, "atelier" means "professional artists studio." The build process takes over six months while the car sits in a glass-walled suite. Technicians come to the car to do their work — they don't sit and wait for partially assembled cars to pass them by. You won't find any sort of conveyor belt in this NASA-like clean room.

### One Gun, One Gunsmith

The whole point of mass production is to make something "good enough" for an affordable price. If you want a pistol

that ranks among the very best, you'll look for a gun built more like a Chiron.

The folks at Nighthawk Custom coined the phrase, "One gun, one gunsmith" to capture their manufacturing philosophy. It means what it says.

Nighthawk starts each 1911 pistol with 46 parts, machined from bar stock billet. They're intentionally oversized to allow the gunsmith to hand-fit every one to each specific pistol. No parts bins here.

As the pistol becomes functional during the build process, that same gunsmith will test fire the gun, ensuring it meets their personal and company standards. When all is deemed up to exacting standards, it's time for finishing. Beveling 90-degree edges,

deburring and hand sanding out every machine mark complete the process.

The last step is applying a stamp under the left grip panel, which forever marks the pistol with the gunsmith's initials. Reputation matters, so you can bet things are just right when the stamp is applied.

The process and a hefty dose of personal accountability allow the company to offer a lifetime guarantee. Not your lifetime, but that of the pistol, regardless of who owns it. This is how you create heirloom guns.

### TR Combat Special

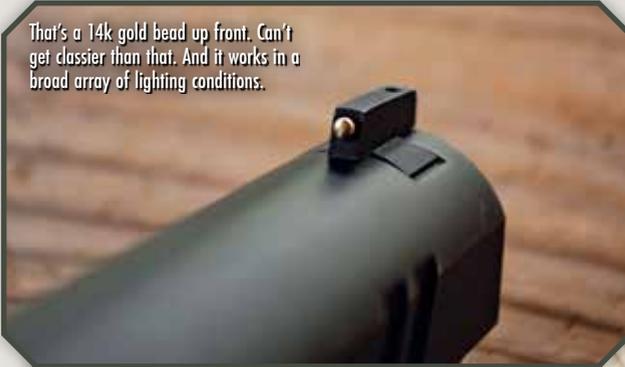
A collaborative design effort between Thunder Ranch's Clint Smith and Nighthawk engineers, the TR model encom-



The Thunder Ranch Combat Special comes in this nifty soft case with two 10-round magazines.



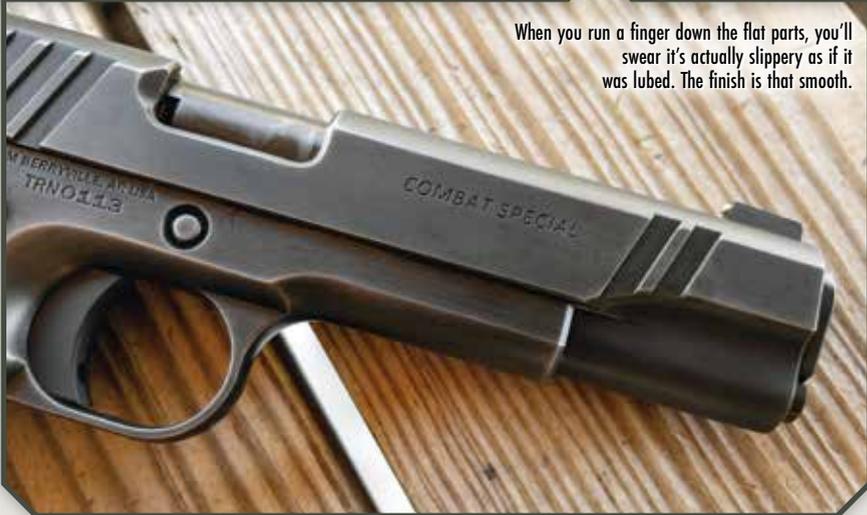
Even with Tom's decrepit eyesight, he could print tiny groups with a variety of ammo.



That's a 14k gold bead up front. Can't get classier than that. And it works in a broad array of lighting conditions.



The Heinnie Black Ledge keeps things simple on the back for faster front-sight acquisition.



When you run a finger down the flat parts, you'll swear it's actually slippery as if it was lubed. The finish is that smooth.

passes the feature set of the perfect fighting pistol. It's available in both .45 ACP and 9mm, but as Landon Stone of Nighthawk related to me, it's almost all 9mm now. Just a few years ago, the company was producing 70 percent .45 ACP pistols, 20 percent 9mm and 10 percent other calibers like 10mm and .38 Super. Now, with the resurgence of 9mm, those first two numbers have flipped.

The Thunder Ranch Combat Special signature features include extra-wide cocking serration grooves, two up front and four in the back, a lanyard attach-

ment point and a mil-spec style nubbed safety lever. The safety lever is short, front to back, yet activates easily enough using the section of my thumb below the joint. Once disengaged, it remains out of the way while shooting.

### Finishing Touches

The finish is stunningly smooth. Actually, that's an understatement, like saying a detour to Alpha Centauri is a "slightly longer" road trip. You'll see what I mean when you run your finger down any smooth surface on the slide. I might

liken the sensation to dragging an ear of steaming hot corn on the cob across a stick of melting butter. I don't know how they achieve this finish. Perhaps it's some advanced nano-injected butter polishing, or maybe they found a source for 618,000 grit emery cloth. Whatever the technique, the outcome is nothing short of stunning. It actually feels slippery.

My first hint at the attention to detail within this pistol appeared when I picked it up from my local FFL. As a home-based dealer, he often talks guns and shares the latest gear with other customers. Without fail, everyone who picked up this sample became instantly enamored. Until they racked the slide. That was the jaw-drop moment. If you can imagine a piece of hot glass, covered with hot butter, sliding against another piece of hot glass, also covered with hot butter, you're starting to get close to describing the feel of this action. It just glides — with no detectable shake — throughout its entire course of travel.

### Sights

Part of Clint's "fighting pistol" criteria is the sighting system. Up front is a classic gold bead — nothing fancy to break, dim, or wear out over time and hard use — just functional elegance. While a gold bead doesn't produce its own illumination source like Tritium, it does a surprisingly good job of reflecting even lower levels of ambient light. It's a visible solution in bright sun, shade and even indoors. If it gets dirty from range filth, no worries; give it a quick wipe, and it's like brand new. Gold is like that and this sight is legit 14k.

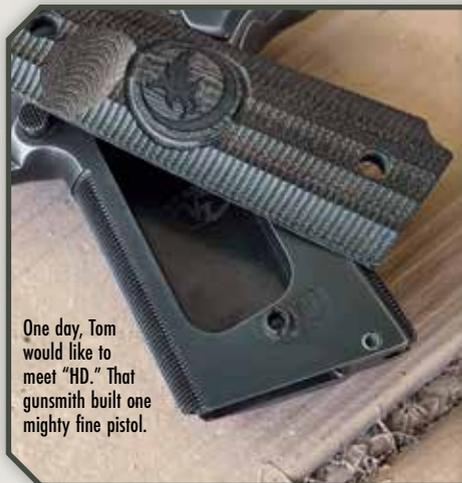
The rear sight is a Heinnie Black Ledge. Initially designed for special forces use, it features a sharp vertical front edge to facilitate one-handed weapon manipulation if necessary — think clearing a jam in a jam. The eyeball side is horizontally serrated to reduce glare. The rear notch is a bit wider, allowing more daylight on either side of the front sight post picture for speedier sight acquisition.

### All 1911

Everything else in this pistol is classic 1911, just done to the extreme.



The smoked Nitride finish is breathtaking.



One day, Tom would like to meet "HD." That gunsmith built one mighty fine pistol.

The Heinie Black Ledge is designed for one-handed operation in a pinch.



It's a full government-sized model, so it measures 8.6" end-to-end and tips the scales a hair over 41 oz. The linen Micarta grip panels are a well-textured green tint. Combined with 25dpi checkering on the front strap and mainspring housing, this pistol offers plenty of grip.

As tight as this pistol is, it takes down easily with bare hands, and the guts are just as you'd expect from a classic 1911. No full-length guide rod inside, just welcome details like the recessed hole for the slide stop on the starboard side, creating a flush alignment along the frame.

### Range Performance

Let's talk about recoil. There isn't any. Just kidding, but this is one easy shooting gun, and the recoil and muzzle flip associated with any of the 9mm full power defense loads was basically nil. Steel, plus a large pistol with superb grip ergonomics and a "slick as buttered-glass" action, all add up to one enjoyable sensation when pressing the trigger. This is one of those pistols you will gleefully shoot all day long. A thousand rounds wouldn't cause any undue discomfort.

Speaking of the trigger, the solid face with vertical serrations travels a hair under 1/8" of take-up before a breathtakingly crisp break. Time after time, I measured precisely 3½ lbs. of pull weight.

I shot the TR with a variety of 9mm, and, just for kicks, chronographed it all. For the ballistic geeks among you, here's what you get from the 5" barrel: Federal HST 124-grain, 1,184.5 fps; Federal Syntech 124-grain, 1,193.3; Norma MHP 108-grain, 1,204; Black Hills FMJ 115-grain, 1,172.3; Federal Punch 124-grain, 1,187.7; and Speer Gold Dot Carry Gun 135-grain, 1,149.7. The fun one of the bunch was Liberty Defense's Civil Defense screamer. With its 50-grain projectile, I clocked an average of 2,063.5 fps. Smokin!

As for accuracy, I found group size limited only by my eyesight. It would

be great fun to stick an optic on this pistol and shoot it at 50 or even 100 yards for accuracy, but the rail-less configuration and my lack of a grip-attached scope mount prevented that. So, iron sights at 25 using a Ransom Multi-Caliber Rest it was. Even still, the HST printed .77" while Speer Gold Dot came in at 1.08". The other loads ranged from 1.26" to 1.94". Except for violating the speed limit, the Liberty Civil Defense behaved well and printed 1.36".

### Rapport Sommaire

You get what you pay for. At \$3,799, you're investing in a special pistol, and this one doesn't disappoint. In addition to the functional elements already discussed, the smoked Nitride finish is simply stunning.

There are production pistols that shoot small groups and have earned excellent

reliability reputations. But if you're one to appreciate the finer things in life, check out a Nighthawk. How many shops have had six (and counting) of their gunsmiths inducted into the American Pistolsmith Guild?

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



Note the lanyard attachment point. Clint insisted on that.



The 9mm version shown here packs 10+1 capacity in its single-stack configuration.

# THERE'S A LOT GOING ON ...

JEREMY D. CLOUGH

The .22 conversions are an excellent way to keep in practice with your carry gun at lower expense. Marvel conversions have long been the most accurate of the breed.

## INSIDE THE .22 CONVERSION

The .22 conversion is almost as old as the autopistol itself. Shortly after the adoption of the 1911, Springfield Armory began experimenting with ways to train soldiers more cheaply and without the blast and recoil of a full-power pistol cartridge.

Early attempts ranged from a simple barrel with an offset bore that would align the rimfire cartridge properly with the firing pin, as well as an armory-made adapter with an internal bolt, before finally arriving at the Colt Ace, a blowback conversion with a full profile, hollowed-out slide that mimicked every aspect of shooting the big bore except for the recoil. Added recoil would come with the later Service Model Ace and its floating chamber, a recoil-amplifying feature dreamed up by moonshiner

David "Carbine" Williams while he lay shackled at night in a prison camp in the North Carolina woods doing hard time for murder.

In truth, the advantage of the recoil-enhancing floating chamber wasn't so much

that it made the gun feel more realistic; it's that it helped it function because the anemic recoil of the .22 LR has a hard time moving the substantial mass

CZ's Kadet conversion (now the Kadet II) takes the already low-profile slide of the CZ75 and uses the split slide principle to make it even smaller and lighter.

Jeremy built this titanium Commander at Novak's with its matching Marvel Unit 2 conversion, which has both flush and extended threaded barrels.



The split slide design popularized by pistolsmith Bob Marvel and used in a number of derivatives. The barrel locks to the frame via a threaded guide rod, and the sight rib is screwed to the barrel, preventing movement.



For the ultimate in rimfire fun, Kirst Konverters offers rimfire conversions for popular blackpowder revolvers, which is next-level cool.



of a slide designed to take .45 ACP. This is not a new observation: When John Moses Browning himself saw an early 1911 conversion, he was surprised it worked, which must have been a little unnerving for its inventor.

## Recoil Physics

To cycle, all semiauto pistols have to strike a functional balance between the recoil energy of the cartridge and the force that holds the action shut. With blowback pistols, the combination of the recoil spring and the weight (read: inertia) of the slide keeps the action closed during firing until chamber pressure has dropped enough for it to cycle safely. Most centerfire pistols have a locking mechanism that combines the barrel's weight with that of the slide for the first part of its travel, creating additional inertia for recoil to overcome and slowing down the opening of the action.

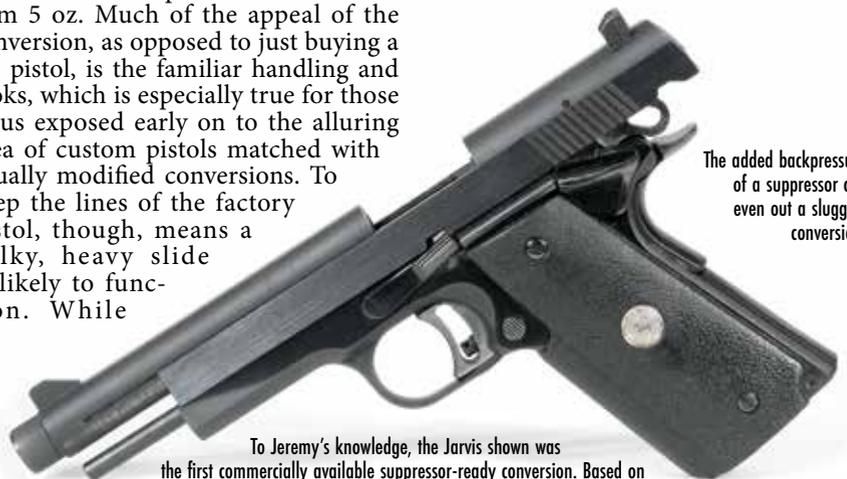
While spring weight matters — if it's too strong, the slide won't cycle, and if it's too weak, it won't reliably

force a cartridge forward out of the magazine — the biggest problem is the slide's weight. For comparison, a Government Model .45 slide weighs about 14 oz. on my postal scale. A GLOCK 19 slide weighs about an ounce less, while the bolt for a Ruger MkIV .22, the standard .22 pistol, comes in at a trim 5 oz. Much of the appeal of the conversion, as opposed to just buying a .22 pistol, is the familiar handling and looks, which is especially true for those of us exposed early on to the alluring idea of custom pistols matched with equally modified conversions. To keep the lines of the factory pistol, though, means a bulky, heavy slide unlikely to function. While

the "jump chamber" idea works — well enough that the Army adopted a version of it for training machine gunners on .30 cal. belt feds — it has to be kept clean, and it's not been picked up since Colt stopped production.

## Slide Work

This leaves lightening the slide, either by making it out of aluminum rather than steel or by significantly reducing its profile. For decades, the big kid on the conversion

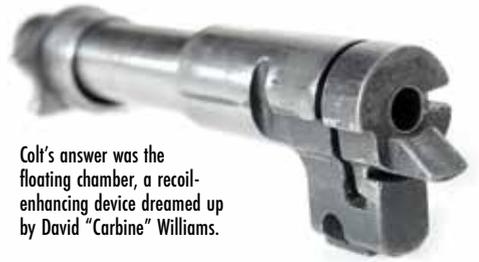


The added backpressure of a suppressor can even out a sluggish conversion.

To Jeremy's knowledge, the Jarvis shown was the first commercially available suppressor-ready conversion. Based on an earlier Centaur Systems conversion, it inspired the Tactical Solutions 1911 unit.



Tactical Solutions .22 conversion shown on a Gen 3 GLOCK 19.



Colt's answer was the floating chamber, a recoil-enhancing device dreamed up by David "Carbine" Williams.

Mounting a sight rib directly to the barrel, with a separate slide cycling beneath it, eliminates that variance. The Marvel unit goes one further, using the recoil spring guide rod to lock the barrel down firmly to the frame. I've used Marvel conversions for over 20 years, through at least four significant variations, and they remain spectacularly accurate, capable of 1/2" at 50 yards with the right ammo. Used successfully at the Camp Perry National Matches, Marvel offers an aluminum full-slide conversion better suited for CCW training and the split slide Unit 1, which comes in steel or aluminum. They also make dedicated .22 LR receivers in either material.

In my experience, the Marvel Unit 1 is unmatched as a marksmanship training tool. When your gun can shoot MOA, missing that clay pigeon on the 100-yard berm is your fault, not the gun's, and the relatively cheap cost of .22 ammo means you can keep trying all day long.

### Strikers And Hammers

In addition to slide weight, striker-fired conversions such as the GLOCK further play havoc with a conversion's delicate balance since the recoil spring has to push against the force of the striker spring for the slide to go into battery. That's not an issue with the strong recoil spring of a 9mm or some such, but it matters when the spring has to be rimfire-light.

It was no surprise when S&W introduced the M&P .22 with an internal hammer rather than a striker. Using a lighter hammer spring reduces



The challenge in the .22 conversion is finding a way for the anemic recoil of a .22 LR to cycle a slide sized for a big gun. A 1911 slide weighs nearly three times as much as the 5 oz. of a Ruger MkIV bolt.

block was Jonathan Arthur Ciener, who took a raw block of aluminum to a mill and carved it into a .22 slide. It worked well enough he made 1911, Browning Hi-Power, GLOCK and Beretta conversions and subgun and rifle units.

None of the pistols locked back on the last round because a steel slidestop being rammed up into an aluminum notch while the slide is still cycling is fated to chew it into nothingness in short order. Thus, you counted your rounds and did your best not to dry fire it so you won't score the chamber. A later advert adopted by others who use aluminum is inserting a hardened steel insert in the slide capable of stopping the slide and living.

### Split Slides

While you lose a bit of the aesthetics, and more of the handling, a split slide similar to S&W's Model 41 target pistol



makes for a lower-profile slide light enough to cycle even when made of steel. Conversions for pistols other than the 1911 have adopted the split slide, such as the older Peters Stahl units for S&W's Model 39 and the CZ75 Kadet conversion, which is perhaps the single most reliable unit I've ever spent time with.

Pioneered on the 1911 by Kart and Day, followed by Marvel, the split slide also means better accuracy. Generally, a pistol's barrel, frame and slide, to which the sights are attached, all move separately. The inevitable tolerances among those parts change where the bullet hits as the barrel moves relative to the frame, as well as changing where you aim as the sights move independently of the barrel.

The .22 conversions have long been an option for European service pistols, such as this Walther P38

conversion. The subcaliber barrel insert is a typical feature on many continental conversions.

Left: Using aluminum for the slide reduces weight, but it takes a beating. This one consumed a brick a week for quite some time. Unsightly but not a functional issue.





Jeremy shot this 1" group from 25 yards, resting his hands on the bench and using a Holosun dot. He's shot smaller groups at twice the distance from a Marvel Unit 1 held in a Ransom Rest.

Below: No longer available, German barrel maker Lothar Walther produced .22 conversions for revolvers using cartridge inserts and a barrel liner. A steel plug with an offset firing pin machined into its face was pushed into the cartridge insert behind the .22 round.

the resistance the slide has to overcome to cycle on a hammer-fired pistol since the fallen hammer holds the slide forward. Similarly, adjusting the radius of the firing pin stop is an old-school way to adjust a pistol's cycling since that curvature affects the force required to cam the hammer back into the cocked position.

### Magazine Challenges

As with all autos, magazines supply their own cohort of problems. Most .22 pistol mags traditionally hold 10 or fewer rounds. This has little to do with magazine capacity rules but with the rim on .22 LR cartridges. As rounds stack against one another in the magazine, they push the lower cartridges down at a more extreme angle, which makes for challenging feeding. If you've ever wondered why classic .22 autos like the Ruger Mk series, Colt Woodsman, High Standard, etc., have raked-back grip angles, it's because the angle makes for easier feeding than the more-or-less 18-degree grip angle of most defensive pistols.

Magazine spring tension also plays into it: A too-weak spring will not pop the cartridge up in time for the slide to pick it up on its way forward. Or, sometimes, not hold the cartridge against the feed lips when the slide hits the end of its rearward travel, letting the cartridge spurt forward loose into the mechanism. At its most extreme, the gun will eject the empty casing and the top live round in the mag out through the ejection port before feeding the next round in the mag, which is annoying but hilarious to watch.

The answer is not as easy as just putting in a strong spring because the top cartridge rubs against



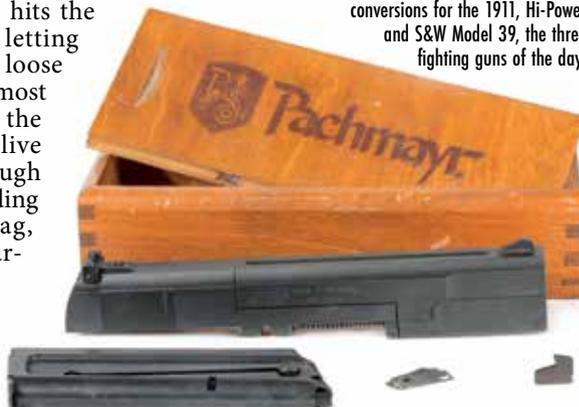
the disconnect rail on the bottom of the slide, creating friction that slows it down. It probably goes without saying conversions tend to prefer hotter ammo.

There is one easy solution to many of these challenges: a suppressor. The added backpressure of a can gives enough extra oomph on firing to even out conversions that otherwise cycle sluggishly. However, they can also blow unburned powder and debris back into the shooter's face through some of the split slide designs. As I said, a lot is going on in there.



For more info: [CZ-Usa.com](http://CZ-Usa.com), [FCWGuns.com](http://FCWGuns.com), [Holosun.com](http://Holosun.com), [KirstKonverter.com](http://KirstKonverter.com), [TacticalSol.com](http://TacticalSol.com), [MarvelPrecision.com](http://MarvelPrecision.com)

Pachmayr sold private labeled Peters Stahl conversions for the 1911, Hi-Power and S&W Model 39, the three fighting guns of the day.



# GUNFIGHTS

# AVERAGES DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR ENCOUNTER

**JOHN J. MCCARTHY, JR.**

**W**e all train in the basics: straight shooting, fast reloads, fast draws and clearing malfunctions. We have decided we will not be victims; we will fight.

On this warrior's path, we all want to know what to expect and prepare for. Many articles have been written about what really happens in a gunfight. The truth is we will never answer the question we are really asking: What will happen to us?

The bad news is that there's just one way to find out. But no two fights are the same. Not two gunfighters are the same. If you're unlucky enough to have been in multiple gunfights, not only will each fight be different, but you will also be a different gunfighter in each. In between elephants, you would have learned things about yourself, your weaknesses and strengths, and your continued training will have impacted these things. So how do we prepare for an event that has never happened before and will never repeat?

## **Do Statistics Matter?**

We've all seen the statistic proving that most gunfights happen within three meters, last three seconds and include three shots fired. This may be true, but so what? My combat mindset expects to shoot until reload. If I light-off plus or minus three shots, again, so what?

A noted firearms instructor performed an interesting experiment with some advanced students. The objective was to quantify the differences between shooting while standing still, shooting and moving, and seeking and using cover during a gunfight. This informal study yielded the following results: 85% of the students shooting while standing still sustained hits, 47% who shot on the move were hit, and 26% of the cover seekers were hit. This was an interesting experiment, but does anyone need a study to tell them a moving and covered target is harder to hit? Anyone who has swatted a fly or been in a snowball fight could have predicted similar results.

Noted criminologists Gary Kleck and Marc Gertz famously determined that citizens use their guns to defend themselves at a rate of 2.5 million times a year. This makes for great stuff to throw into

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Step one is to move — aggressively. No one needs an expert opinion to know this will lower your chances of getting shot.  
Photos: Tiger McKee

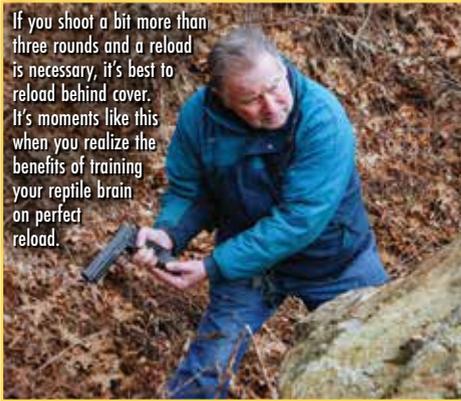
# STATISTICS



While statistics indicate "your" self-defense encounter will require three rounds, reality is under no such illusion.

# AND YOU

If you shoot a bit more than three rounds and a reload is necessary, it's best to reload behind cover. It's moments like this when you realize the benefits of training your reptile brain on perfect reload.



John's Ruger SR1911 in .45 ACP in a CrossBreed Hybrid Super Tuck IWB holster paired with Freedom Arms 230-grain FMJ range rounds and Hornady Critical Defense 185-grain hollow points.



the gun grabbers' faces, but it's utterly irrelevant to me. The only important thing is my use of a gun in self-defense. In that moment, it matters not if millions and millions have come before me or if I'm the first citizen in the history of the World to attempt such a feat. In either case, I still must win. End of study.

When I'm out and about with the spawn of John Moses Browning on my hip, perhaps the only thought I give to statistics is to remind myself of the words of the famous baseball pitcher and placekicker, Mr. Charles Brown: "Tell your statistics to shut up!" The only hard fact a statistic provides is what happened. Whether a statistic predicts what will happen is a matter of opinion. Try asking a gunfight winner or a loser's family what they think of statistics.

## Video Observations

In pursuit of my own answers, I spent some time on YouTube watching those security camera videos of actual shootings. My time spent was, of course, statistically significant. The most interesting to me are videos of armed citizens defending themselves, not police shootings or *Gangbangers Gone Wild*.

The first worthy item I noted while watching many gunfights unfold is that the bad guys often showed little of the "getting shot" reaction. Another common reaction was for the bad guy to get the hell out of Dodge in a hurry. The third worthy item I noted was the element of surprise. Any self-defense instructor will tell you the advantage of the first move always rests with your attacker. We are forever doomed to reacting to their "surprise."

However, what's also true is that no street thug ever knowingly attacks an armed citizen. Going to the tape, you can see the shock and horror expressed by some bad guys when the armed "victim" draws and blasts. It's the "Oh crap!" sensation goin' right back at 'em. In cases where multiple gunmen attempt to rob a store and fire is returned, watching ne'er-do-wells fight for the exit can be enlightening. Instead of seeing your life flash before your eyes, you might see the alternate flashing of the bottoms of your attacker's shoes. That's creating time and space without really trying.

## Deadly Threat Instincts

Call it the subconscious, instinct, the mid-brain or your reptile brain. This is the part of you that blinks your eyes when someone unexpectedly flicks something at your face. It's also what hits the brakes with your foot fast enough and hard enough to stop your car in an emergency. Both these responses happen with no effort or thought from you. This part of you, your reptile brain, remains unaffected by the stress of deadly combat.

In a crisis, your reptile brain runs the show and will do exactly what you trained it to do. It will not think, feel fear or doubt. The reptile will do precisely as you trained it. During the first Gulf War, I saw an interview with a combat pilot, and he was asked how he deals with combat stress. He replied, "When everything goes to crap, your brain turns to mush, and that's when your training takes over."

## Trained Brain

The only thing you can expect to happen in your gunfight is for your reptile brain to execute its training. The only way to program your reptile brain is through repeated repetitions of an action.

Take, for example, a speed reload. Repeat a speed reload enough times, and your forebrain relinquishes control to the reptile. The reptile will perform a speed reload if necessary. I always do a perfect speed reload during my combat shooting training or when I'm on the firing line practicing my trigger press. My motion may be slower and more deliberate, but I always make it one more "reptile training" perfect repetition. If you use sloppy form, then that's what your reptile brain will record.

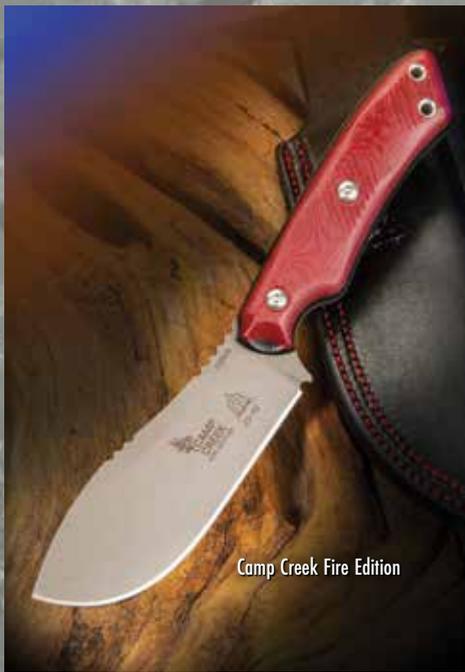
## Can't Control Statistics

None of us can control what specific circumstances may be waiting for us. No study, statistic or related experience can prepare us for "Our Elephant." What we can control is our training and our dedication to that training. I hammer on the basics of tactical combat shooting and rely on my reptile to respond and do whatever it takes to keep me on the top side of the dirt. 

Quality training and repetition will reap big benefits as it teaches your reptile brain always to move while addressing or escaping a threat.



# FIELD



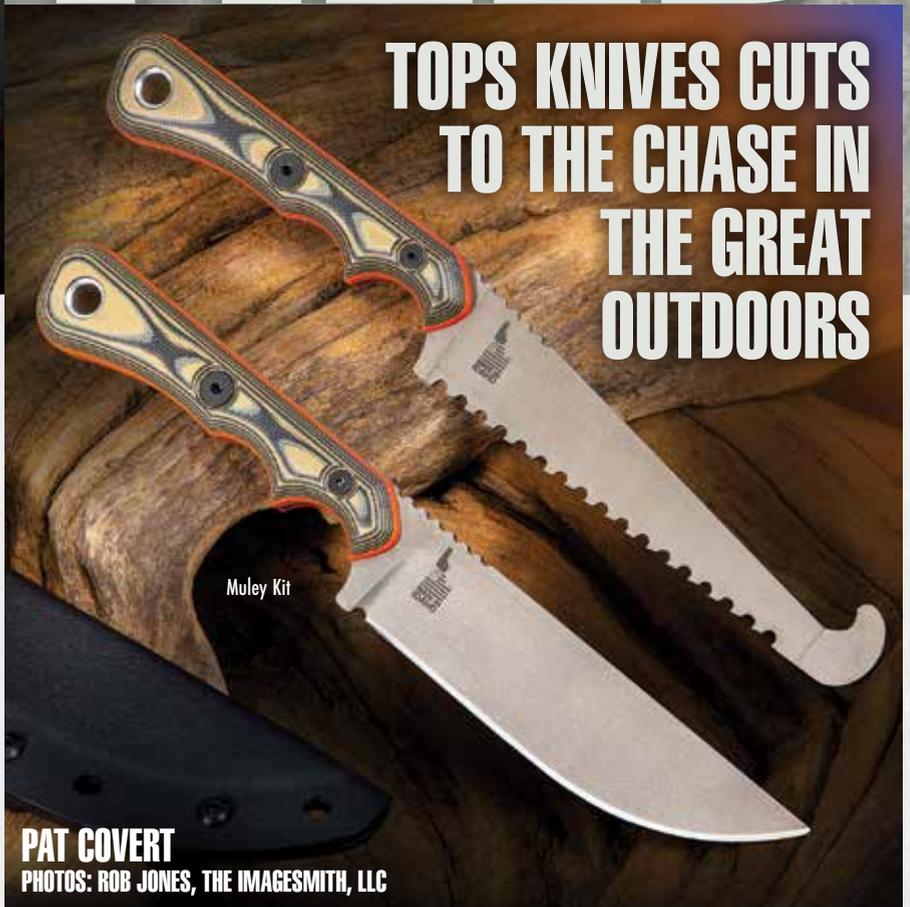
Camp Creek Fire Edition

**A**round 25 years ago, TOPS Knives jumped into the tactical fixed-blade market to supply our soldiers in the Middle East with affordable yet highly effective knives. Once they established that benchmark, TOPS turned its attention to the sporting segment of the cutlery industry.

Just so you know, TOPS Knives doesn't have offices in New York City. Their manufacturing facility is located in Eastern Idaho, where the outdoorsman can find just about any hunting, camping and fishing opportunity imaginable. The TOPS management and staff are seasoned experts in a myriad of outdoor activities, which gives them keen insight when designing their knives. While the tactical side of TOPS' business continues to thrive, the outdoors side keeps on booming. We'll focus on some of their sporting fare here with some stalwarts and new arrivals.

## The Name Is Game

TOPS' Camp Creek fixed-blades are based on the time-proven Nessmuk blade style, designed for skinning game without sacrificing utility around the camp. "Nessmuk" was outdoors



Muley Kit

## TOPS KNIVES CUTS TO THE CHASE IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS

**PAT COVERT**

PHOTOS: ROB JONES, THE IMAGESMITH, LLC

writer George Washington Sears' pen name, and the knife design first appeared in his book *Woodcraft*, dated 1884. The blade design is essentially a Drop Point with a widened, upswept tip (which, of course, negates it being a Drop Point) geared for riding under flesh and lifting it upwards as it goes.

The main cutting edge serves the same utility functions as a Drop Point.

The TOPS Camp Creek is 9.0" in overall length, with 4.4" of the total devoted to a Nessmuk blade that would do its namesake proud. Premium Crucible Industries CPM S35VN stainless steel does the cutting chores and its



Bull Trout



Muley Kit blades

# STEEL



tumbled finish cuts down on reflectivity. The Camp Creek's full-tang handle offers finger grooves, and a protective guard flows off the blade and meets the upper handle for a comfortable grip. The ample handle scales are an attractive layered Micarta lay up of Tan and Brown, and there's a fat, tubed lanyard hole at the base. A Coyote Tan Kydex dangler sheath is included.

TOPS' Camp Creek Fire Edition is a spin-off of the original geared even more toward skinning. Roughly the same length as its older sibling (9.38"), the Fire Edition has a noticeably deeper Nessmuk blade with less of a point at the tip. The 4.50" blade utilizes the same CPM S35VN stainless blade steel and tumbled finish. Designed as a "dream skinner," the Fire Edition blade glides under flesh with long, clean cuts with less chance of puncturing organs. The Red/Black G10 handle is wider and has a slightly steeper angle to the blade for better positioning when skinning. Included with the Camp Creek Fire Edition is a black leather belt sheath.

## Skinning Machine

TOPS pulled out the stops on their new Muley Kit, which contains both a skinner and bone saw. Ideal for the serious hunter and tough enough to handle a rendezvous, the Muley Kit is primarily for medium to large game and comes with a leather dangler sheath to hold both the knife and

saw side-by-side. The Muley Skinner is 8.75" overall with a 4.5" deep-ground 154CM stainless steel blade (tumbled finish) with a jimped thumb ramp for a surer grip. The Skinner's 4.25" full-tang handle has ample scales of Tan and Black G10 with bright orange G10 liners. Two finger grooves make for excellent purchase and there's a tubed lanyard hole at the base.

The Muley Saw is 9.130" with the same handle configuration and materials as its sibling. The 154CM stainless saw blade is 4.83" with 4.0" devoted to wicked ripping teeth and there's a gut hook at the tip for slicing through hide. The Muley Skinner and Saw make for a highly efficient team that will make a processing machine out of the user. If you have a hankering for just one of these edged workhorses — skinner or saw — TOPS sells each separately with a black Kydex belt sheath.

## The Angler's Angle

Our last two knives were designed with the angler in mind. At 6.13" overall, the TOPS Bull Trout is a small, versatile fixed blade for processing fish in the field and other routine duty the angler encounters. The blade is a 2.75" Drop Point of 154CM stainless steel with a tumbled finish and notching on the rear spine for a firmer grip. Below the blade on the front side is a deep index finger choil to enhance purchase further. Adding yet more grippiness to the



Bull Trout are handle scales of rough textured Brown Burlap Micarta. Don't count the Bull Trout out pulling extra duty as an EDC, either. Some knife users prefer a small, concealable fixed blade over a folding knife because, not requiring opening, it can be accessed much quicker — plus, there are no moving parts to break under duress. A chocolate leather belt sheath completes the package.

The TOPS Filet is for anglers who want a first-class processing knife to go with their top-shelf gear. The Filet is 11.5" overall with 8.0" devoted to a swooping Trailing Point blade of premium 154CM stainless steel with a tumbled finish. TOPS designed the blade (0.090" in thickness) to tackle both boning and filleting, saving the user both time and effort. The Filet's 3.5" handle has thick, sculpted Tan/Black SureTouch G10 handle scales with plenty of palm swell — and there's a jimped thumb rest on the backside of the blade for even greater purchase. Easy to handle at just 4.20 oz., the TOPS Filet has all the right stuff to turn a thankless task into a welcome challenge. TOPS delivers the Filet with a heat-formed OD Green Kydex sheath with a Black Kydex belt loop.

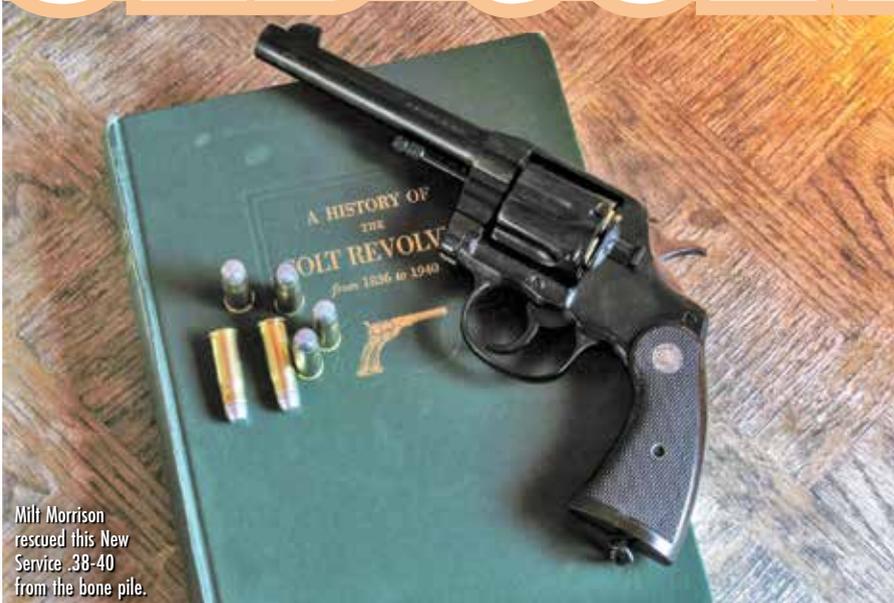
If you like what you see here, we've only scratched the surface of TOPS' offerings. There are lines devoted to pure Bushcraft, cooking and clearing jungle paths as well. Check out the TOPS Knives website for a gander at their incredibly deep line of knives and tools.

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

Three Old Classic Colt Sixguns ready for another lifetime of service.



# THREE OLD COLTS



Milt Morrison rescued this New Service .38-40 from the bone pile.

As we look back at sixgun history, we can see a decades-long race between Colt and S&W to be the “firstest with the mostest.”

Colt was the first to offer a viable and truly usable repeating pistol with their 1836 Paterson. This was a percussion pistol — the user had to load powder and ball in each cylinder chamber and then place a cap on each nipple on the back of the cylinder.

Colt officially ignored any thought of fixed ammunition, so S&W emerged in the 1850s with the first .22 pistol — a seven-shot, tip-up pocket pistol. These were used as hideout guns, especially by officers during the Civil War, while Colt sold hundreds of thousands of Dragoons, 1851 Navies and 1860 Army percussion pistols to the military.

After the war, S&W offered the first big-bore cartridge firing sixgun in late 1869 with its .44 American, a top-break design. The United States Army was very interested in this first .44.

Colt countered by converting some of their percussion pistols to Cartridge Conversions, then offered the 1871–72 Open-Top, and then in 1873, one of the grandest sixguns of all time came from Colt — the Single Action Army. S&W



The New Service .38-40 partway through its resurrection process.

Targets fired with refinished Colt New Service .38-40.



Left & right: The cold Montana Auction 1878 Colt before going to Milt Morrison.

also brought out their Model #3 Russian, followed by the New Model #3, both grand .44 single-action sixguns.

Colt began looking at the idea of providing a pistol that could be fired by only pulling the trigger, a design we normally call double action today. Colt was the first with the 1877 Lightning and Thunderer in .38 Long Colt and .41 Colt, respectively. These were basically miniature single actions with a double-action trigger added. One year later, Colt brought out their 1878 Double Action, which was the same size as their single action. It had a double-action trigger, but just like the 1877 Model, cartridges were ejected one at a time with an ejector rod and then replaced one at a time.

Meanwhile, S&W added a double-action trigger to their New Model #3. With its top-break design and simultaneous ejection, the S&W was much faster to load and unload than the Colt.

What we think of as double action sixguns today with swingout cylinders for loading and unloading began to appear in the late 1880s with the Colt Navy and Colt Army sixguns. In 1896 S&W began to produce the double-action revolver, which became the Military & Police in 1899, to be chambered in .38 Special one year later.

While S&W was concentrating on their .38 Special, which we now know as the K-Frame, Colt came forth with the first big bore double action revolver — the New Service — in the late 1890s.

S&W would counter in late 1907 with their first N-Frame, the New Century or, as we know it better today, the Triple-Lock. That also brought a new chambering, .44 Special. From that time until the eve of WWII, adherents of each design lined up to proclaim their choice as the best big-bore double action.

### The First Old Colt

Classic sixguns are where you find them, and I watch for the old classics; sometimes, they come my way unexpectedly. When my grandkids were still young and needed someone to stay with them while their parents were gone, Diamond Dot went up to Lewistown, Mont., where they all lived at the time.

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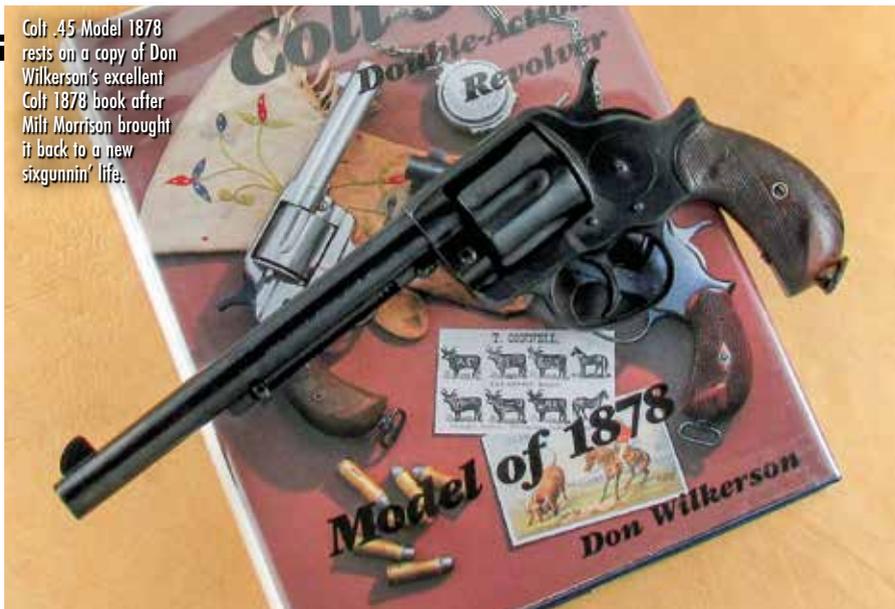
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Colt .45 Model 1878 rests on a copy of Don Wilkerson's excellent Colt 1878 book after Milt Morrison brought it back to a new sixgunnin' life.

They went to an auction sale while there, and Dot was bidding on an old Colt 1878 chambered in .45 Colt. The man bidding against her dropped out, and then someone else joined the bidding. She looked at him and said, "Why are you bidding against me?" He quit, and she got the old Colt for a very reasonable price. It was not in the best shape, and my local gunsmith, at the time at Shapels, had to repair the hand, for which he did an excellent job.

The gun had been poorly re-blued, and the barrel was cut even with the ejector rod and then a brass front sight installed. The grips were well-worn checkered walnut. But after the repair job, it was safe to shoot. It just looked like an old abused Colt.

A couple of years ago, my friend, well-known gunsmith Milt Morrison, moved to my area, and I decided this old Colt and two others could definitely benefit from his talented touch. A look through my parts box revealed a 2nd Generation 7½" Colt Single Action .45 barrel, which was turned

over to Milt along with the old 1878 to be re-barreled and re-blued. He first installed the barrel so I could check it for windage and elevation, and then it went back to him to be totally re-finished. It now looks good enough to be out among mixed company.

### The Second

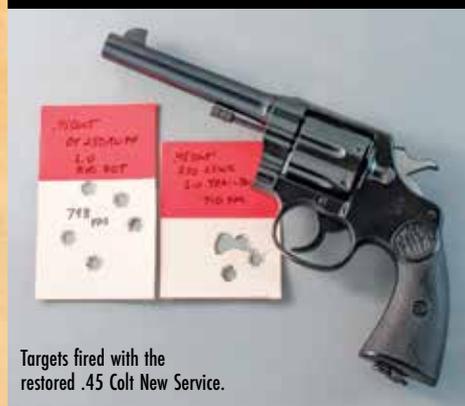
The second Old Colt was a 5½" New Service also chambered in .45 Colt and manufactured between the two World Wars. I found this one in Texas at a shoot about 15 years ago, lying on the table and looking almost pristine — until you turned it over! One side of the frame and the cylinder were pitted. Milt said it looked like what he had seen with sixguns soaked in Coke. The barrel and cylinder were both in excellent shape, as was the action. However, the pitting lowered the price substantially.

I purchased this Colt with the idea of turning it into a Fitz Special complete with a shortened barrel, rounded grip frame and cut-out trigger guard. I made one huge mistake. I shot it first. It shot so well

I felt it would be a shame to change it. So, for several years I just shot it as it was. However, with the arrival of Milt, this looked like a perfect chance to have it re-blued. He could not get all of the pits out without taking off a lot of metal; however, he did get most of them out, and this is now an excellent looking (as well as shooting) sixgun. With the Oregon Trail 250-grain RNFP over 6.0 grains of Hodgdon's Red Dot, it clocks out at 800 fps with five shots in 1½". That's why I didn't turn it into a Fitz Special.

### Colt 3

The third of this Trio of Old Colts was also a New Service and quite a bit older than the .45 New



Targets fired with the restored .45 Colt New Service.

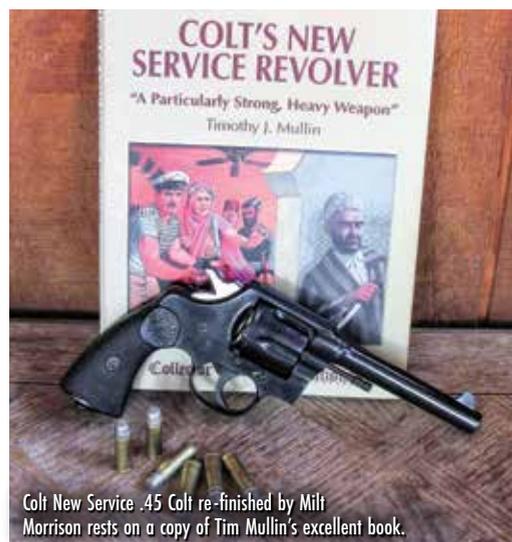
Service. Before WWI, the New Service barrels were straight; however, when Colt produced the .45 ACP Model 1917, the government asked for a collar around the barrel where it threads into the frame. This not only locks the barrel up tight against the frame, it also looks much better.

This older New Service had very little finish, let's say none, and someone had hacksawed the barrel to 2" and just left it alone — no re-crowning, no installation of a new sight. After this "custom" work, the .38-40 New Service had a price tag of only \$200. Usually, this would not be worth buying; however, several years before, I had picked up a collared New Service .38-40 barrel at a gun show for \$5, along with a Great Western .45 Colt barrel at the same price. I used the 7½" Great Western barrel on a Great Western movie gun with a shot-out cylinder and barrel, and using a Colt cylinder brought this old gun back to life.

The like-new 5½" .38-40 barrel was installed on the butchered New Service, and I now had a two-tone sixgun with a nicely blued barrel and the rest of the gun with little finish. One positive attribute was that the checkered Colt grips were in excellent shape. It lay in my safe for years, and I only shot it occasionally. Milt re-blued this .38-40, tuned up the action, and the result would make Duke Venturino, who also appreciates .38-40s, really like this sixgun. With Oregon Trail's 180-grain RNFP cast bullet over 5.0 grains of Hodgdon's Clays, it clocks out at just over 800 fps and places six bullets in one ragged hole at 20 yards. It was definitely worth purchasing and bringing back from the bone pile.

There is something about the old Classic Colts that just stirs my sixgunnin' soul, spirit and heart. Yes, today's guns, in many cases, are better than ever. However, Colt no longer offers a big-bore double-action sixgun, so I am very content with these. Either one of the New Service Colts could easily be used as an everyday Perfect Packin' Pistol. 

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



Colt New Service .45 Colt re-finished by Milt Morrison rests on a copy of Tim Mullin's excellent book.

WILLIAM STARNES

## ARREDONDO M&P MAGBASE

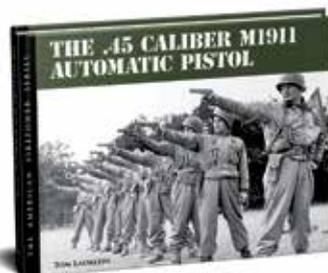
Give me another round — or six. I carry an M&P9 Compact and keep the standard mag in it for concealment purposes. But I wanted more rounds in my spare mags. After all, I don't care if an extended mag hangs out of the gun once the shooting starts. If you've got a similar desire for more firepower, I've found the product for you. I ordered the Arredondo M&P MagBase for my M&P9 and changed my magazine capacity from 17 to 23 in less than a minute without tools. This polymer MagBase directly replaces the standard floorplate on M&P full-size, compact and subcompact guns. It adds six additional rounds in 9mm or five for the 40 S&W. The best part is that it does it at a reasonable price point. Now, I'm all smiles. Models for different guns are available. The street price is \$17.99. [ArredondoAccessories.com](http://ArredondoAccessories.com)



TOM McHALE

## THE .45 CALIBER M1911 AUTOMATIC PISTOL BY TOM LAEMLEIN

You know Tom Laemlein. Among other things, he produces stunning pictorial weapons history articles. You've seen him here in *Handgunner* and in our *Old West History*, *Guns and Gear* and *Surplus Vintage and Classic Firearms* special editions.



Recently updated and re-released is Tom's unique photo study of John Browning's iconic M1911 automatic pistol. This hardcover book contains 168 pages of fascinating photos covering the iconic 1911's history from its introduction to the recent conflicts in Iraq. You'll see and appreciate the pistol's contribution by seeing its century-long use by U.S. soldiers in the field.

This book kicks off an entire American Firepower series over the coming months, covering the M1 rifle, M1 carbine, Thompson SMG, BAR, Browning .50 cal. MGs, Browning .30 cal. MGs, U.S. bolt action rifles, bazookas and flamethrowers. While you're at it, be sure to check out Tom's *U.S.A.A.F. Aircraft Weapons of W.W. II*. I'm perusing that one now, and it's riveting. [PortrayalPress.com](http://PortrayalPress.com) and [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

TOM McHALE

## THE BLUE BULLETS

This aptly-named company, perhaps the best-kept secret known to thousands of competitive shooters, makes ... blue bullets.

At first glance, they may look like powder-coated projectiles, but these lead bullets are coated with a tough, blue polymer material. I pulled some after some overly aggressive (for science!) crimping to see how the "jackets" held up, and they looked pristine — no exposed lead visible.



I loaded a batch of the 9mm 125-grain truncated cone bullets with a mid-level 4.6-grain charge of Hodgdon CFE, and they performed beautifully. I clocked them at an average of 1,034 fps from a Staccato P 4.45" barreled pistol. From 25 yards, my first 5-shot group measured 1.62". I was pleased with that "pre-load development" result. I'm looking forward to tinkering with other powders and charges to see what they'll really do.

You'll find a wide variety available in the standard calibers, but also .45 LC, .460 S&W Magnum and .50, to name a few. [TheBlueBullets.com](http://TheBlueBullets.com)

NIG LENZE

## HEIMDALL'S WORKSHOP V.1 M4 BLACK LIMITED EDITION

Heimdall's Workshop creates limited runs of very stylish and high-quality wristwatches. The M4 series of watches aim to honor the battle-proven platform of the same name. The V.1 M4 Black Limited Edition 45MM comes in a few flavors, but my favorite is the Winter Camo model. The case is a beautifully finished stainless-steel work of art and the band is made from calf leather. It uses an automatic Miyota 8N40 skeleton movement, visible through the double-domed sapphire glass.



Within the movement of the watch are intricate details linking it to its namesake. My favorite example is the front sight posts on the ends of the hour and minute hands. The hands and numbers are luminous, powered by C1 lume. There are only 300 of these in the world, and each ships in an air and waterproof carrying case. You better jump on one of these while you still have the chance. [HeimdallsWorkshop.com](http://HeimdallsWorkshop.com)





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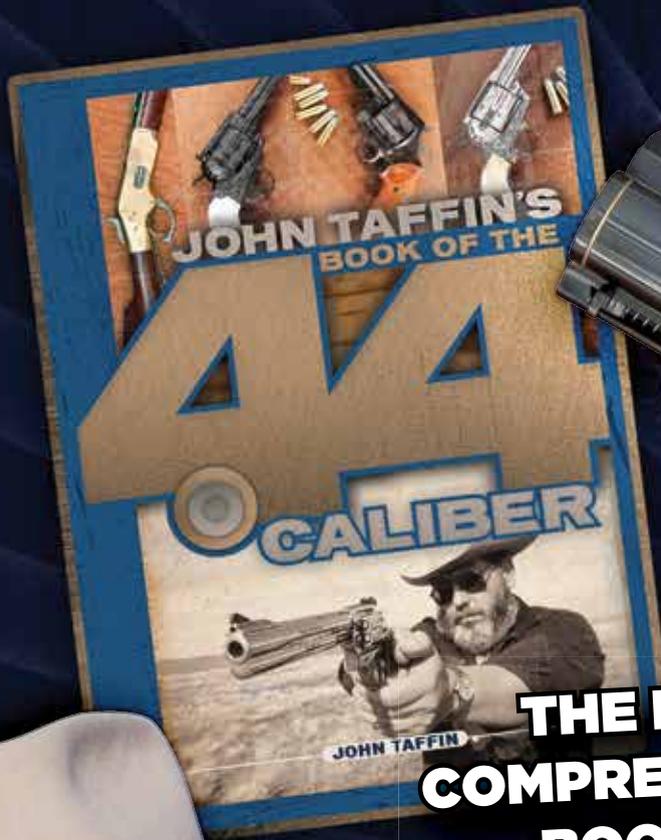
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**LESSON:** Others may remember your last fight differently. Ensconced defenders have some advantages over invaders. And if you have to die early, at least die bravely.

---

I am a "boomer" whose childhood centered on the 1950s, in the middle of which Walt Disney captivated us, little boys, with his multi-part rendition of the story of Davy Crockett. We cajoled our parents into buying us coonskin caps (an estimated hundred million bucks worth). We played "Davy Crockett at the Alamo," a doomed hero fighting to the end for freedom and going down clubbing enemy invaders with our empty rifles. And, if you watch the Disney version carefully, sinking our knife icpick-style into the chest of one of them at the last minute.

We are a nation that does not treat its heroes well. Someone always wants to depict them as having feet of clay. So it was with David Crockett. Some historians have noted the man preferred to be called "David" and implied it was the Disney stuff that popularized "Davy." You could even make a couplet out of it:

Davy Crockett died at the Alamo, but revisionists brought his good name low.

## The Man, The Myth

Crockett was a justly famous frontiersman before he got to the Alamo. He had been elected to Congress ... and then not re-elected. He had been a close friend of a President, Andrew Jackson ... and had then fallen out of favor with him. Many saw his trip to Texas as an attempt to re-invent himself, as we'd say today, and there is reason to believe this was true of many who died at the old Texas mission, even of the Texas rebels' leader Sam Houston.

I've found no harsher revisionists than Bryan Burrough, Chris Tomlinson and Jason Stanford, the authors of *Forget the Alamo: the Rise and Fall of an American Myth*. They describe the three most famous Alamo martyrs thus: "Bowie was a murderer, slaver, and con man; Travis was a pompous, racist agitator and syphilitic lech; and Crockett was a self-promoting old fool who was a captive of his own myth." (1)

As to Crockett, even his harshest critics admit he was a charming man with a way with words, one of the best marksmen of his time, and an extremely successful hunter. It seems uncontested he killed three figures worth of bears, primarily for their meat.

During his service with the Tennessee Militia in the Indian Wars, one of Crockett's main contributions was shooting meat to feed the troops, who were often on the edge of starvation. According to the popular site Mental Floss, "Midway through his state assembly career, he received 'Old Betsy,' a .40-caliber flintlock presented to him by his Lawrence County constituents in 1822. Today, it's in the Alamo Museum in San Antonio. During the 1830s, the Whig Society of Philadelphia gave Crockett a gold-and-silver-coated gun. Her name? 'Fancy Betsy.' If you're curious, the mysterious woman after whom these weapons were christened was either his oldest sister or his second wife, Elizabeth Patton." (2)

Crockett's skillful riflery fed the troops, but there is some question about what else he did with a gun in his hands during that period.

## The Dark Side of Crockett

In the Tennessee Militia and serving under then-General Andrew Jackson, Crockett engaged with the Red Stick Creek Indians more than once, but most notoriously at the Battle of Talushatchee in 1813. Jackson's forces under General John Coffee had surrounded an Indian village. Crockett was quoted as saying, "We shot 'em down like dogs."

*Continued on next page*



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Richard Call, a participant in the battle, later wrote: "It was a horrible and revolting scene — the battle had ended in the village, the warriors fighting in their board houses, which gave little protection against the rifle bullets or musket ball. They fought amid their wives and children, who frequently shared their bloody fate.... We found as many as eight or 10 dead bodies in a single cabin, sometimes the dead mother clasped the dead child to her breast, and to add another appalling horror to the bloody catalogue — some of the cabins had taken fire, and half consumed human bodies were seen amidst the smoking ruins." (3)

**Jackson's forces under General John Coffee had surrounded an Indian village. Crockett was quoted as saying, 'We shot 'em down like dogs.'**

The saying goes, "One man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist." Those dueling perspectives were in place during the Indian war and indeed also decades later at the Alamo. One reason the Texans wanted independence from Mexico was that they sought the prosperity of Southern-style cotton plantations, which were only economically viable with slave labor at the time. Thus, the defenders of the Alamo were seen as being on the side of slavery, while the Mexican government and Santa Anna strongly opposed it. After the Alamo fell, history shows that Santa Anna did free the handful of African-American slaves who had been within its walls.

Being on the side of a force that had killed women and children was certainly not a feather in Crockett's coonskin cap. However, it should be noted that many years later, Crockett took the side of Native Americans, even though he knew it would likely cost him his political career. He publicly spoke out against Andrew Jackson, then president of the United States, and Jackson's plan to force native Americans of the Southeast to abandon their homeland and be sent to reservations in Oklahoma. This opposition turned the President against Crockett, and Jackson used his influ-



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ence to prevent Crockett's re-election to Congress. It was after this defeat that Crockett uttered his most famous and perhaps most fateful words:

"You all may all go to Hell, and I will go to Texas."

### Crockett Finds Hell

General Santa Anna had the Alamo defenders at a monstrous disadvantage. Estimates of the size of the Mexican force vary wildly. I've heard as many as 6,000 and as few as 1,800. Even that smallest estimate vastly exceeds the mission complex's 185 to 188 known defenders.

One reason the siege lasted for 13 days is that while the Mexicans were armed with smoothbore muskets, the armament of the Texans and Tennesseans leaned heavily toward rifles, giving them a tremendous accuracy and distance advantage. Attempting to cross open ground to reach the walls, Santa Anna's troops were cut down by defenders who often had three or four pre-loaded rifles and were shooting from behind cover. It is no wonder Crockett's side was initially able to drive superior forces into retreat.

Military strategists widely believe Santa Anna ordered the final attack in pre-dawn darkness to minimize the riflemen's ability to aim and hit his

troops. According to lore, early in the siege, Crockett spotted Santa Anna at his own front lines, carefully braced Betsy, and squeezed off a shot that tore the Mexican leader's epaulet from his shoulder. Some say another of the defenders fired that shot, and others say it never happened at all. We are left to believe what we will.

The Mexicans had gathered intelligence and knew a famous American sharpshooter was inside those walls. Decades later, at the Battle of Spotsylvania Courthouse during the American Civil War, Union General John Sedgwick rode his horse to the edge of the battlefield and into history when he noticed puffs of gunsmoke from the Confederate lines hundreds of yards away. He entered the book of Famous Last Words with the contemptuous statement, "Those idiots! They couldn't hit an elephant at this dist —"

Sedgwick's last word was cut off between syllables when a bullet struck him in the head, killing him instantly. The Confederates had been shooting rifles, not muskets. So, yes, the story of Crockett's shot at Santa Anna is believable.

### The End of Travis & Bowie

Let us look at the three most famous icons of the Alamo: William Barret Travis, Jim Bowie and David Crockett.

All were killed in the last attack on March 6, 1836. There are a couple of versions of Travis' death, but most historians seem content to take the word of Travis' slave, Joe (no last name). He claimed the 26-year-old Travis fired a shotgun blast, almost certainly killing a Mexican soldier and was then almost immediately struck in the forehead by a fatal musket ball.

James Bowie, famous for his knife and his resilience and courage in lethal duels, almost certainly was bayoneted in his sick bed. By all accounts, he was about 40 years of age, in extremis, and probably dying from typhoid, pneumonia, or a combination of the two. While at least one historian theorizes he was too weak to do anything but helplessly die, most do not contest the most popular account, in which he took three of the enemy with him. Two would have fallen from the brace of single-shot pistols he dual-wielded, the last from the namesake knife.

Why not shoot him in his bed? From both sides, every account of the final battle points out that once their single-shot weapons had been discharged, no one was standing around shoving ramrods into their muzzle-loaders. In the final fury, it had become a contact weapon melee,

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with swords and bayonets on one side and knives, the occasional sword, and clubbed rifles on the other in hand-to-hand combat.

### Many Deaths Of Davy

Between the movies and the actual accounts of survivors, there are many versions of David Crockett's last moments. Let us count them up.

**The Disney Version.** Crockett, by all accounts, was among the last to fall. In this, he is the last, swinging his clubbed, empty rifle after shooting many of the enemy and stabbing at least one. This account derives from Susannah Dickinson, the widow of one of the slain Alamo defenders Santa Anna spared after her capture.

**Sixteen Dead.** In many accounts, Crockett is found dead amidst a pile of dead Mexican soldiers. The number "sixteen" is often mentioned. In one variation, Crockett has somehow amassed 16 rifles and muskets, all pre-loaded, and kills an advancing enemy with each of them as he makes his doomed last stand. This is not as implausible as it sounds. There are other accounts of Alamo defenders staging multiple loaded single-shot guns at their firing points when they repelled earlier assaults on the makeshift fortress.

Shortly after the battle, one newspaper reported: "David Crockett (now rendered immortal in glory) had fortified himself with sixteen guns well charged, and a monument of [the] slain encompassed his lifeless body." (4)

Supporting this theory is another contemporary account reported by writer Jim Motavalli, who tells us: "(T)here are also other Mexican eyewitness accounts that say Crockett died fighting. Sergeant Felix Nunez was interviewed in 1889 (when he was 84), and he says he saw 'a tall American of rather dark complexion (who) had on a long cuera (buckskin coat) and a round cap without any bill, and made of fox skin, with the long tail hanging down his back.' Nunez said, 'This man apparently had a charmed life.' Every soldier was aiming for him, but all missed. 'On the contrary, (Crockett) never missed a shot. He killed at least eight of our men besides wounding several others.' A lieutenant finally took down Crockett with a sword in this account, 'and in an instant, he was pierced by not less than 20 bayonets.'" (5)

**Blowing Up The Armory.** In John Wayne's movie version, Wayne as Crockett is mortally wounded by a Mexican lancer; he clubs away from him with a flaming torch then staggers into the armory with the torch and blows it up. No one seriously believes Crockett died this way, and we don't



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even know if the late actor/producer believed that. Some believe another Alamo defender named Robert Evans did throw a blazing torch into the armory, but if he did, it did nothing to change the outcome.

**Captured And Executed.** Long after the Battle for the Alamo, a document surfaced purporting to be the memoirs of a Mexican officer, Jose Enrique de la Peña. Peña claimed Crockett was one of a handful of survivors who were captured alive and brought before Santa Anna. Peña wrote that he and other officers begged Santa Anna to spare their lives, but the latter refused, and then junior officers eager to impress their leader rushed forward and stabbed the prisoners with swords and bayonets.

According to the de la Peña manuscript, Crockett and the others faced their death stoically and with dignity. The de la Peña manuscript has been highly debated, compared with known samples of the Mexican officer's handwriting, and its paper and ink scientifically tested — with conflicting results as to authenticity.

## Lessons

Document, document, document. Had security cameras, bodycams and such been available in 1836, historians wouldn't be debating nearly as much about who died and how. If anyone inside the garrison kept a journal daily, it apparently hasn't survived. As you've noted, the recollections of the survivors vary wildly. Such is the nature of eyewitness testimony.

Later accounts of an incident may involve wild speculation. For example, did a defender named Robert Evans blow up the armory with a torch? Did David Crockett? Did anyone?

Changing social values may alter the lenses through which your actions are seen. Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna saw the Texian rebels as unscrupulous wanna-be slave-holders motivated by greed and disloyal to their nation, Mexico. The Texans and Tennesseans saw themselves as fighters for freedom.

Individual values can also change. Crockett was proud to be an "Indian fighter" in his younger days. By his death at age 49, he had become an advocate for the native Americans he'd fought, knowing he would suffer professionally for it.

As a footnote to that, when a nut case attempted to assassinate President Jackson and his pistols misfired, then-Congressman David Crockett was one of those who leaped forward to help restrain the lunatic. Crockett would say later, "I wanted to see the damndest (sic) villain in the world, and now I have seen him." (6) We don't know if Jackson remembered this when he targeted Crockett for defeat after Crockett opposed him on the native American resettlement issue.

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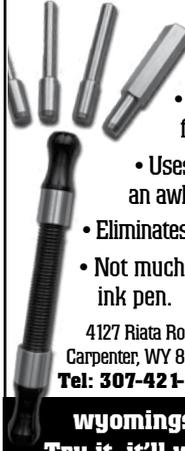
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Note the inherent advantages of the ensconced defender position. Just as assessments of the strength of the Mexican forces at the Alamo vary widely, so do casualty counts. One historian claimed that by the time the last of the defenders had fallen, they had accounted for 8.5 of the enemy apiece. Various sources put the Mexican deaths from a low of 600 to as many as 2,000, not counting wounded soldiers.

Approaching across a broad, flat plain with no cover, the unarmored soldiers were easy meat for skilled riflemen, an appellation that fits Texans and Tennesseans of the time alike. Let's remember "rifles versus muskets." Each of the defenders could stage as

many loaded single-shot guns within reach as he could find; their opponents couldn't very well pause to recharge their muzzle loaders while in the open under murderous fire nor carry additional heavy muskets.

The translation for home defenders today is obvious: Ensnore behind cover and wait, ready to shoot at the portal or hallway through which you know the invader must come. If the Alamo's defenders had instead cried, "Castle doctrine! Let's kick open the gates and go out there and hunt down those darn soldiers," they would have all been slaughtered my pronto.

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Texians and their allies from Tennessee came from times and places where men grew up shooting to feed their families, and delivering deadly accuracy was second nature to them. So, of course, was safe handling and target identification.

The opposite appears to be true of Santa Anna's soldiers in this battle, with many deaths by "friendly fire." We find this in de la Peña's account: "Our soldiers, some stimulated by courage and others by fury, burst into the quarters where the enemy had entrenched themselves, from which issued an infernal fire. Behind these came others who, nearing the doors and blind with fury and smoke, fired their shots against friends and enemies alike, and in this way, our losses were most grievous ... one was as likely to die by a friendly hand as by an enemy's." (7) There are no such reports of fratricidal killing on the Texians' side.

**It was after this defeat that Crockett uttered his most famous and perhaps most fateful words: 'You all may all go to Hell, and I will go to Texas.'**

In the end, whatever one's political identity and beliefs, one must concede Crockett died like a Man with a capital M. He and his companions were up against worse odds than that other David versus that Goliath fellow, but even in de la Peña's account, Crockett and the others died bravely. They may not necessarily have shown us how to die — to me, Nelson Rockefeller is a more desirable role model for that — but they showed us how to face death  for a cause they believed in.

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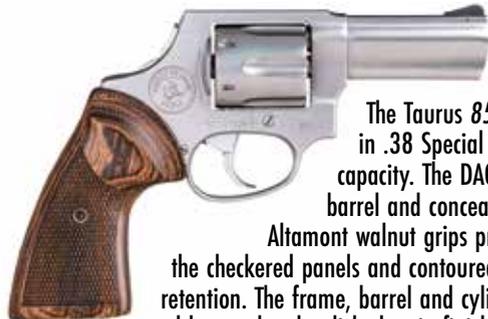
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The Taurus 856 Executive is chambered in .38 Special +P and has a six-round capacity. The DAO revolver sports a 3" barrel and concealed, spurless hammer. The Altamont walnut grips provide improved function; the checkered panels and contoured profile ensure handgun retention. The frame, barrel and cylinder are stainless steel and have a hand-polished satin finish. The 856 Executive has an OAL of 7.5" and weighs 25 oz. MSRP: About \$430. For more info: (800) 327-3776, [TaurusUSA.com](http://TaurusUSA.com)

**EQUALIZER**

Smith & Wesson

Next-gen EZ technology, low recoil impulse and versatile magazine capacity make the EQUALIZER an ultimate CCW. This micro-compact 9mm pistol with a 3.675" barrel offers balance of power and capacity across 10-, 13- and 15-round magazines. It features a single-action trigger allowing for a short take-up, clean break and fast reset for quicker follow-up shots. The slide operates uses easy-to-rack technology and the frame includes a Picatinny-style rail to mount lights or lasers. MSRP: \$599. For more info: (800) 331-0852, [Smith-Wesson.com](http://Smith-Wesson.com)



**.358 RIFLE AND PISTOL BULLETS**

Northern Precision

Northern Precision is producing a new line of .358 caliber bullets designed for single-shot handguns as well as rifles. The .358 Rifle and Pistol Bullets include both light and heavy weight extremes, custom weights, bonded-core thick jacketed bullets for big game, a "Poly-Ban" plastic tip version and a "Base Guard" plinker. The "Base Guard" offers the same shape and weight ranges as the jacketed bullets but are about 1/4 the price. MSRP: \$25 for 50 "Base Guard" plinkers; \$35 for 25 Bonded Core bullets. For more info: (315) 955-8679, [NPCustomBullets.com](http://NPCustomBullets.com)



**ROSWELL**

Alien Gear Holsters

Alien Gear Holsters has launched Roswell, a new series of AIWB and OWB holsters. This new line is thinner, lighter and stronger than the standard full-wrap Kydex holsters. Each is made from an injection-molded polymer that's 20% lighter, 40% tougher and 80% more heat resistant than other molded holsters. It's the most concealable Kydex holster you'll ever wear. MSRP: Under \$40. For more info: (208) 215-2046, [AlienGearHolsters](http://AlienGearHolsters)



**SYCLONE JR.**

Streamlight Inc.

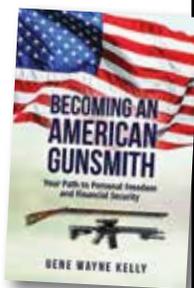
Streamlight's Syclone Jr. is a compact rechargeable work light that fits in tight spaces for identification and repair uses. Hands-free or hanging, the body of the light can rotate 360 degrees in its U-shaped magnetic base and can be easily adjusted with one hand. It weighs just 2 oz. and delivers up to 210 lumens and 8.5 hours of run time. MSRP: About \$65. For more info: (800) 523-7488, [Streamlight.com](http://Streamlight.com)



**BECOMING AN AMERICAN GUNSMITH**

American Gunsmithing Institute

American Gunsmithing Institute (AGI) Founder and President Gene Wayne Kelly offers instruction, encouragement and motivation to readers in *Becoming An American Gunsmith: Your Path to Personal Freedom and Financial Security*. In the book, Kelly shares firearms history and the importance of preserving gunsmithing methods. Topics covered include advice on "setting up shop," entrepreneurship and more. For more info: (541) 941-3788, [GunsmithingBook.com](http://GunsmithingBook.com)



**BARKEEP ROSES**

Davidson's Inc.

Davidson's exclusive Barkeep Roses has a 2" barrel and features a bird's-head grip engraved with roses and vines. The .22 LR revolver's six-round cylinder is also engraved with roses and flourishes adding a dramatic flair. Made in conjunction with Heritage Mfg., it comes with a custom wooden Heritage ejector rod. MSRP: \$209. For more info: (800) 367-4867, [DavidsonInc.com](http://DavidsonInc.com)



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ADVERTISERS**

A chamfering tool set (muzzle cutter and arbor for the caliber you like) will allow you to cut your own muzzle chamfers.



The cost might be shared by several shooters. It's easy and there are lots of YouTube videos showing you how.

tests, chatting with accomplished gunsmiths and long-range shooters, and testing from reputable sources I've read, a flat, sharp and clean-edge chamfer definitely contributes to accuracy. I'd consider assuring your favorite guns have a good chamfer the same way I'd encourage you to sharpen and really hone a good knife. While the stock edge may be adequate, taking the time to really put a shaving edge on a knife, well, gives you an "edge."

For me, I use a 1,000 grit diamond stone, then a series of wet-or-dry abrasive papers from 1,500 to 3,000 grit, then diamond paste applied to leather strops (4,000 to up to 12,000 grits). The result is an edge that makes hair pop off your arm. It works great on wood-working chisels too. The reason for the effort though is to make the tool better.

Ditto for your guns. This last bit of attention to the muzzle chamfer helps to "polish the edge" for you when it comes to attaining real accuracy, likely up to the gun's ability to shoot — with good effort from you, of course.

**How It Works**

Refer to the bullet drawing image. Okay, I'm not a great artist but this gets the point across. On the left, you see a bullet exiting the bore of a gun with a straight muzzle chamfer. The yellow bits are the gasses escaping around the base of the bullet. If they escape evenly around the base, chances are good the bullet will be stabilized and run true.

Now look to the right. There the bullet is exiting the bore of a barrel with an off-kilter chamfer, one side

being a tad lower than the other. As the bullet leaves, gasses begin to escape first at the lower portion, throwing things out of whack.

Try this simple test. Put your phone on the table. Now push it forward by the base using two fingers, one on each end of the base. Now stop pushing with one finger. What happens? The side where your finger is still pushing forces it to the side where the pushing stopped. So when the gas escapes early (in an uneven chamfer), the "pushing" on the base of the bullets stops or is lessened there while the other side is still in the bore being pushed. This "kicking" out may/can/does affect accuracy, depending on the bullet, load, the barrel in question and other variables. But removing at least *that* variable makes sense, doesn't it? Then you can concentrate on other unknowns as needed.

**Final Thoughts?**

Check out the photo of the muzzle. See how the powder residue is evenly distributed completely around the muzzle? That's a .32 H&R Magnum barrel I chamfered to 11 degrees. The original muzzle was slightly off and the residue was heavy on one side and lighter on the other. And guess what? It shot much better after the chamfer was corrected. Any decent gunsmith can do this sort of work easily. You can too with some tools from Brownells. If you have questions, drop me a note at [editor@americanhandgunner.com](mailto:editor@americanhandgunner.com) and I'll get back to you. I'm no expert, but I did play one in a video  one time.

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# GUN RIGHTS

Alan Korwin



## THE GUN DEBATE HAS GOTTEN BIGGER **IT'S NOT JUST BRASS, LEAD AND POWDER ANY LONGER**

**T**he times they have a' changed. The forces of darkness, working feverishly to take your guns away and deny the Second Amendment to all Americans, are now fighting us on multiple fronts. It's not just about registries, restrictive laws, confiscations, carry bans, required licenses, no-knock raids, illegal searches and seizures, lawless enforcement officers, redefined words, gun types, ammo restrictions and the rest. They've been down that road so long they're tired of it and have expanded. We must expand as well.

We must broaden our horizons, focusing on some larger issues if we're to preserve rights we've had for nearly two-and-a-half centuries. You real hard-core gunnies out there may resist because you just want to think about brass, lead and powder, primers, reloading gear, sights, ranges and carry options — the field is vast, as you well know and love. But our problem is now bigger than that.

### **Woke Front Expansion**

Americans must rise up to meet the new challenges if we are to preserve The Bill of Rights and all it represents. You can barely speak publicly about guns any longer! Your voice and the First Amendment are evaporating by design. For Pete's sake, they're going after shipping companies, so you (and retailers!) can't get legal merchandise delivered.

People who are woke, a brand-new psychosis disease now upon us, hate guns and hate people who have guns. Woke-ism represents as great a threat to your rights, all of your rights, as jackbooted thugs at your door — maybe worse. So many of the woke don't know better — they've been brainwashed, and store shelves are out of brainwash detergent.

We now face a wider problem; it's not just anti-gunners. It's now an entire social structure against

freedom. We have to be alert to this. As readers of this magazine are typically aware, The Bill of Rights was a single amendment to the U.S. Constitution, with 10 ratified articles. They all must stand for the Second to stand. Picking it apart — religion, assembly, the press, search and seizure, strict limitations on government power, an honest judiciary with due process — as the woke community is doing, counts for as much as the RKBA.

### **All Rights Matter**

Woke-ism is mental paralysis. Woke people can't think clearly, can't receive new information and are subject to groupthink. Hear me, my friends; we don't control the groupthink narrative. They've walked into newly "established" ways that are unhealthy for America, and denying our right to keep and bear arms is only a piece. I ask, who do you point the muzzle toward when you can't leave your home because healthcare edicts have been announced?

People outside our legislatures are now writing bills that are too long, complex and convoluted for anyone to read and understand. When I heard Kimberley Stassel of the *Wall Street Journal* Editorial Board say these bills are not read by the people who pass them, it clarified many things. Government power has been usurped by the deep state, enemies of our country and the permanent bureaucracy. Bills are drafted by self-interested people in remote offices of the deep state. They decide on their own whom to spread money to — namely, their friends. You ain't their friends. And they ain't yours.

### **Mass Formation**

That whole mental process (mass formation) has a name that you may know as "mass psychosis." Look that up, but not on Google, which distorts the answers. It can take over a nation while it's sleeping and becomes virtually intractable. People were sucked

into mass formation after the violent criminal George Floyd (aggravated robbery with a firearm, drugs, armed trespass, and more) was brutally and illegally killed on national TV. The media declared the criminal a hero. People became intolerant and invulnerable to any messages that did not comport with the national hysteria monologue.

It's not so much a political problem as a medical one, and it threatens your arms worse than a fifth column. For Pete's sake, it's a fifth column. We make a grievous error thinking it's the political arena — we're in the padded-cell stage.

A perfect example is the so-called inflation reduction act that experts agree won't reduce inflation. That doesn't matter. Naming bills deceptively works for the power brokers managing the psychosis. The money you need for ammo and gear is evaporated by people managing the economy. They enact massive giveaways to political insiders with this inflation perpetuation act. The \$80 billion to IRS, tax handouts to green companies, and Medicare drug-price negotiating do not maximize freedom. And while they don't directly affect your guns, increased government power and your reduced finances will.

Woke-ism, the economy, socialism and communism, and socialist and communist enemies like dictatorial Russia and communist China are where at least some focus must be. Again, your right to keep and bear arms does not include lists of where to use that power to enhance your freedoms.

We must embrace the  bigger picture.

*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](http://GunLaws.com).*



ROY HUNTINGTON

# THE INSIDER™

# MUZZLE CROWNS: BE A SQUARE



Simply cutting the forcing cone and muzzle chamfer correctly turned this Bearcat into a real laser beam of a shooter.



Here's a couple of custom Wranglers Roy's done lately. Attention to proper muzzle chamfers, forcing cones and action work turns these modest guns into great shooters. HS-Custom.com can do this work if you're interested in having your own Wrangler or other Ruger gussied up. The red one definitely qualifies as a "Red Rider!" Both are done in Cerakote colors.

In the May/June 2018 *Insider* ("The Muzzle Chamfer Challenge") I wrote about some experimenting I did with an S&W Model 10. I fired groups with the stock muzzle chamfer, then put an accurate 11-degree chamfer and fired again using the same loads. Groups were consistently smaller after chamfering.

Since then, I've done more experimenting after starting to do some custom Ruger Wranglers.

I've found stock Wranglers to be pretty much consistent 3" to 3.5" guns at 25 yards, depending on the ammo. I've done actions, making the trigger pull smoother, lighter and more precise and even that small modification will often improve groups due to the shooter's ability to be more consistent in the press. Groups often shrunk to the 2" to 2.5" area, which I think is about as good as it gets with the stock gun. I've also noticed Wranglers seem

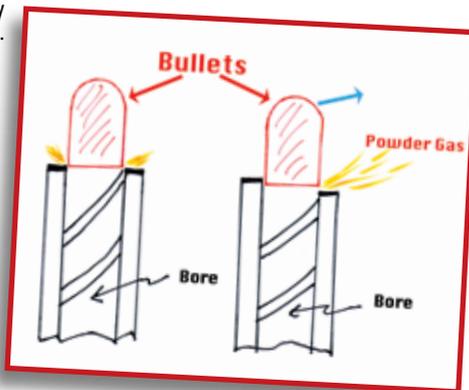
to have very consistent cylinder throat sizes, sized right for .22s.

I re-cut the forcing cones then and found some modest improvements but not consistently gun-to-gun. The stock forcing cone looks like it was cut with a sharp rock on most Wranglers I've looked at, but I'm guessing the .22s aren't as sensitive to it as center-fire revolvers seem to be.

But, the big change always comes after a trigger job, forcing cone re-cut and a sharp 11-degree muzzle chamfer. The fact I do it at 11 degrees isn't critical, it's simply because I have the cutter and arbors at hand. A perfectly flat muzzle chamfer seems to accomplish the same improvements, but the 11-degree angle does protect the bore-to-chamfer area from abuse from dropping. Once all three mods are done groups will often shrink to the 1.25" to 1.5" range very reliably. They do seem to be ammo sensitive and it varies from gun-to-gun. One will shoot great with CCI Mini-Mags, while another will shotgun them. Some have liked standard velocity loads while other don't, so it certainly pays to experiment with different loads in your own guns.

Note the even distribution of powder residue around the muzzle on this correctly cut chamfer.

Before it was redone, it was uneven and the residue was darker on one side. Check your own gun muzzles to see what story they tell.



Above right: The chamfer on the left is even, so the bullet leaves the muzzle square. The chamfer on the right is uneven, so the bullet is pushed off to the right (blue arrow) by gases behind the bullet base still "in the bore" on the left edge.

## Is This Legit?

While there seems to be some argument about it, based on my own

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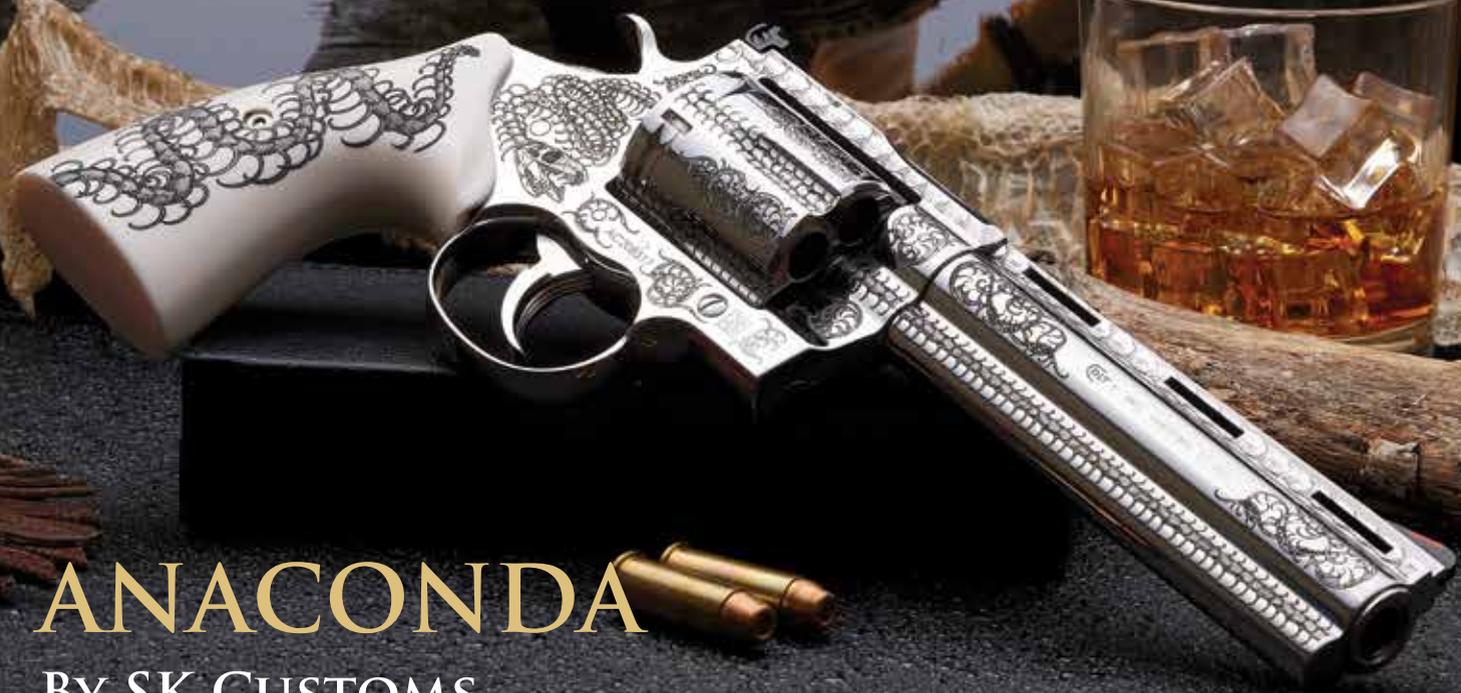


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