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TIGER MCKEE ...

I just got my latest *AH*, saw the writings by Tiger McKee and thought I'd pen a quick note. Even though I never had any personal dealings with him, I have always enjoyed his writing and found them to be thoughtful and on point.

My condolences to you and the other FMG staff that knew Tiger — I am sure you will miss him personally and the firearms community has been diminished.

Sincerely,
Tom Beaty



Gun Cranks Podcast

In reference to the “Worst Training Experience” episode ...

When President Reagan was shot, it became a big issue over the “exploding” bullets (Devastator) that were used.

In a major magazine (I believe it was *Time*), there was a three-part illustration of the ammunition in question. The first was a cross-section of a .22 LR showing the projectile, case and

powder in the case. The second showed the round (shell casing still attached) entering the body. The third illustration showed the shell casing exploding and throwing fragments inside the body.

I was taught to shoot when I was 11 and would have recognized that as incorrect at the time. I guess the illustrator and editor did not have an 11-year-old handy to proofread it before publishing.

Victor Jurkowski

I always enjoy every episode, but the “Best Shot Ever” episode reminded me of two special memories.

The first was with my Uncle's Model 88 Winchester that he bought new right after they were introduced. My uncle was like a second dad to me and the best shot I ever knew. Even after he had aged to the point where he could no longer go hunting, he always

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wanted to check his scope to make sure it was zeroed before the season. A couple of years before he passed away, he asked me to check it for him. I was only shooting at 50 yards, but I shot 4 shots dead center bullseye, and you had to look hard to tell it was not just one shot. This is the only true one-hole group I have ever shot in my life. I was lucky enough to inherit his Model 88 after his passing and it is one of my most prized possessions.

The second was not the shot but how to handle making the lucky shot. My cousin, father-in-law and I were shooting at some rocks on a distant hillside. My cousin and I were not able to hit the rock we were shooting at. My father-in-law, who was a character but not a very good shot, said, "Let me show you boys how to hit that rock." He proceeded to hit the rock with the first shot and said that's how you do it. My cousin told him it was just a lucky shot and to do it again. I will never forget his reply. Without cracking a smile, he said, "No, I proved it. Doing it again would just be showing off, and I don't believe in that." With that, he just turned and walked away. I will never forget the look on my cousin's face. Thanks for the memories.

Galen Berrier

I'm sure each of you has multiple handguns suitable for EDC. I would love a discussion about what goes into your decisions on which to carry on any given day.

Herb Daniel

I just watched your *Guncranks* episode on cleaning and lubrication and have something to add.

First, I agree with your observation about paper towels. I use blue shop towels from Walmart, they're much tougher than kitchen towels and more absorbent too.

Second, I use Slip 2000 725 spray degreaser, brush everything with a nylon brush, followed by ZEP ID Red spray degreaser (which a gunsmith told me about — get it from Amazon), then blow residue with compressed air. Then wipe.

Lubricant: At the suggestion of my late friend Mike Benedict, who knew more about firearms than anyone else I've met or read, I tried Echo chainsaw bar oil. It's meant for hot, dirty environments, after all. Works fine and is very cheap. I got a condiment squeeze bottle to apply it. I use it on GLOCKS, M&Ps, AKs, FALs, ARs, not revolvers. Have yet to try it on 1911s or Hi-Powers. Might not be good in very cold weather, but I live in Georgia.

If I could have only one cleaner/lubricant, I'd use Ballistol. Used it for

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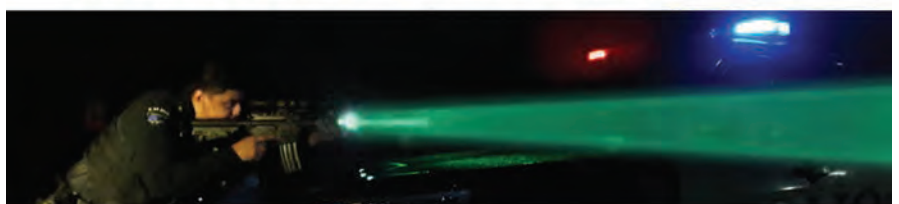
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SPEAK OUT

years on all my guns as a CLP, works fine. It helps leather, too, and wood. Not for holsters, though. I used it with very fine steel wool on the stocks of a beat-up 870 and an old single-shot .22 I was refurbishing, and they look fine. Bought a gallon many years ago now and still have most of it.

So, for what it's worth ...

Jack Feldman

Tips From Alaska

Congratulations on the finest handgun magazine I know of. I was fortunate to attend Gunsite back in the late 1980s and early 1990s when Col. Cooper was actively running the place. Not much has changed.

I would like to pass on some observations gained over the years.

First, there seems to be a trend toward using the 10mm pistol for bear protection. The most powerful 10mm load shows 680 ft-lbs. of energy. A .410 slug has 780 ft-lbs. and is not considered an adequate bear load. Alaska Troopers use a 12-gauge slug

or a Marlin .45-70 with good success. I know of a large bear killed in self-defense with a .40 S&W and another with a 9mm Beretta, so it can be done if that's all you have, but that would not be my choice.

Secondly, I tried one of the chest holsters with the strap across the back. Although it was very handy, it was also bitter cold because the strap compresses the insulation in your parka across your back. Best wishes to all.

AK Blues Man

Young Patmore

I can tell Dave Anderson has more than a passing acquaintance with the great P.G. Wodehouse, his Golf Omnibus in particular. Wodehouse's Oldest Member and Anderson's "Senior Member" would either become instant friends or the deadliest of enemies the moment they were introduced to each other. I'd like to hope they would become friends.

That said, while I understand the Senior Member's preference for large calibers that make big holes in goblins, Rodney Patmore does have a valid point. The pistol to carry for personal defense should be a pistol that fits your hand like a happy kitten, chambered for a round

you can put right where you want it, with enough authority to put down a goblin and keep him down. That is going to vary from person to person. My personal choice for a concealed carry gun would be a Yugoslav Model 57 Tokarev. Same controls as an M1911, enough power to kill a horse at 25 meters with one shot, and excellent issue sights that can be improved with a little sight paint. The Senior Member might curl his lip at my choice, but my Tok will punch through most body armor that would stop his 230-grain FMJ or a 124-grain 9mm NATO round at short ranges.

But the Senior Member is right about one thing. If young Patmore does not lock Pat Kelly down, he is indeed a darn fool.

Sincerely,
Roy J.

Thoroughly enjoyed Dave Anderson's "Advice," in the July/August edition. I can't tell you how many times I have railed against the ".380 ACP/.38 snub" advice handed out to women. But your editors need to read the magazine. Turn the page after the article, and on pages 70-71, "New Products," you have not one, but three .380 pistols!

Ron Beason

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The Whinery

I just wanted to say thank you. Thank you so much for the highly informative and creative article by the incredibly humble and modest Tom Mcnale [sic] titled "The Art of Reviewing a Semi-Auto Pistol."

I mean this is Pulitzer stuff and you would expect such an article to come from one of the legends in the industry like Clint Smith or Massad Ayoob but that I hadn't really heard of the author just makes it so much more bold.

I love the creative word newly introduced to the language "Triggernometry." Although I fail to see the link behind trigger opinion and the math of angles and their applications. Unless he was referring to his "angle" or view point [sic]. So witty.

I also love the bold claim to self accuracy [sic] and again his opinion of sights. Oh I almost forgot about the part about limp wristing and how malfunctions should be dismissed as operator error. Although, isn't limp wristing relevant to the shooter and maybe some should be reported if they are prone to such malfunctions as to make the buyer aware of a gun that is either finicky to ammunition or perhaps simply made for stronger stances and is tunable like a, oh I don't know ... Shadow Systems DR920P or a Sig P320 X-Five Legion?

Anywho, I can't wait to read another piece from this true artist. Hopefully, next month he can write something on overcoming humility or maybe he can just teach us about hubris or maybe and [sic] article about audacity and how it pertains to writing absolute crap.

If I can be privileged to another wonderful article in the future I will respond be [sic] no longer reading this magazine.

Sincerely,
Tai Yamauchi

PS Write me back if you guys are that hard up, I can write circles around this ass clown.

Mr. Yamauchi, I guess we don't see this as a big loss as you clearly don't read the magazine now. I've been the editor going on three years, and the Vantage Point column has been right up front the whole time. However, in the interest of good community relations, I'll see if I can round you up an American Handgunner blankie. —TM

Ruger Mk I Mount?

I'm a 66-year-old retired Science teacher who's been living and teaching here in Thailand for the past 22+ years. Now that I've retired, I've again taken



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SPEAK OUT

up target shooting, but only with an “airsoft” rifle and pistol.

Here in Thailand, it’s extremely difficult to get an air rifle or air pistol. I still have one being held by Bangkok customs for the past two years. I bought a copy of a Ruger .22 Mk I in airsoft configuration. The dimensions seem identical.

Years ago, there was a scope mount made for this pistol that attached under the left grip panel. I found a pic of something close to it, made (now) by Aimtech, but it’s more than twice the price I paid for my pistol.

Therefore, what I wondered is if there were anyone out there who had purchased one of those “under-grip-panel scope mounts” for this pistol and isn’t using it much and if they’d be willing to sell it to a poor (living on SS), old retired teacher. The trigger on this pistol is horrendous and I’ve developed a very complicated grip system to hold the trigger for the final pressure till break, but I think a scope would help a great deal.

I only target shoot, and the fact that I had to resort to “airsoft” to get to do any kind of shooting is why I’m taking this route to find this grip attachment. Parts here are incredibly restricted. That’s why this is one of the only ways I can think of to find this piece of older gear. Any input from anyone would be welcomed.

David Schmidt

Common Sense

Just received the latest issue; always an exciting day when that happens. Regarding Alan Korwin’s *Gun Rights* column on ages for voting and gun ownership ... Here is my take on the matter:

Democrats want to raise the age for owning a gun to 21 because, as everyone knows, teenagers have a notorious lack of common sense and often make bad choices.

Democrats also want to lower the voting age to 16.

Both these statements are true. Your magazine is the best.

Bob Christensen

How Was Your Day?

Dr. Dabbs: Your March/April *Gun-crank Diaries* hit a nerve in a good way. I’m a physician, and deal with my share of big-city trauma and “people being mean to each other.” I sometimes feel bad about coming home after a bad day in the OR and facing the question, “How was your day?” As you so eloquently state, it’s not fair to

bring that baggage home and dump it on your loved ones, yet it has to go somewhere. And in the medical world, we often have to pivot to care for the next poor soul without much time to process what we’ve just dealt with. That’s what makes having a loving and sane family and moments to decompress (at the pistol range, on a hike, in church, or just fun family time) so precious. I really feel for the first responders, who have to deal with the unvarnished awfulness before it gets to the hospital.

Thanks for putting into words what a lot of us in the healing professions deal with. And thank you for a great column!

Keep the faith.

James Stangl, MD

When It Rains ... DIY!

I just wanted to show you the leatherwork I did when the weather was bad outside. Your magazine is great for information. I read it cover to cover.

John Wagner



Nice work, John! Now we know what you did during COVID-pocalypse! —TM

Gun Id Challenge

(Speak Out May/June 23)

As always, love *American Handgunner* and *GUNS* magazines! I know this issue of your magazine has been in homes for a bit, so you may have already received this reply. But my guess is: The gun from *Heat*. I am on the forum AR-15.com daily and this is the standard reply to this type of question. If you didn’t already receive this reply 87 times, I hope it gave you a bit of a chuckle.

Tim

The handgun appears to be a Lefacheux 7mm pinfire manufactured in Belgium around 1850.

Laurence Duffy

The revolver you have pictured is a pinfire revolver. It is of a type originally produced by Lefauchaux in France. Although there were many copies made by numerous makers in Belgium. It’s hard to tell size from the

picture, but a full-size revolver would usually be chambered in 9mm or 11mm pinfire. From what I see in the pictures, the only thing about it that is unusual is it is a solid frame as most Lefaucheuces and copies were a two-piece frame, like Colt cap-and-ball revolvers, with no top strap.

Van Schneider

Your Tucson gun store clearly has a version of a pinfire revolver. It could be French or Belgium. His gun has the top strap and folding trigger combination. Proof marks were not visible on your pictures. It would've helped if they had provided physical information on the firearm, such as barrel type and length, etc. Today's value of these guns appears to be less than \$500.

Dennis Yost

Although I am no expert, I can offer a clue regarding the *Speak Out* inquiry by Gary Hickey. I have a book titled *Arms & Armour* published by Dorling Kindersley in London in 1988, with my copy reprinted in 1995. This book is a pictorial of various types of antique weapons from several European Museums authored by Michele Byam.

On page 59 of this book is a clear excellent photo of a revolver described only as a French pinfire revolver from about 1855. After studying the design details of Mr. Hickey's photo compared to the book photo, I am convinced that although not identical, both are pinfire versions from the same manufacturer.

I have no doubt from the obvious quality of Mr. Hickey's piece that it is at least as valuable to a collector as an original Le Mat. I hope this is helpful.

John Maka

Thanks to all of you who sent in tips about this pinfire revolver. Marvin Sow found a photo as well from The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Handguns by A.B. Zhuk, so I think this mystery is solved! —TM

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INEVITABILITY IS INEVITABLE

Some things are inevitable. For those unpleasant inevitabilities, we have a choice: We can rage our way into a state of denial and stick our head in the sand, or we can “man up” and take on the challenge of figuring out how we’re gonna deal with the situation.

My inevitable inevitability challenge these days is ... smart guns.

James Bond used them. In *The Living Daylights*, Timothy Dalton used a signature rifle assembled from camera parts. Yeah, Dalton was a lousy Bond in one of the cheesier movies in the franchise, but in fairness, I blame the writers — they gave him garbage material. Anyway, with its palm print recognition, he could shoot the rifle, but the bad guys who tried to kill him with his own gun were stymied. In *Skyfall*, 00-cool-spy-guy used a “smart” Walther pistol. Once again, a nameless henchman got ahold of it and wasn’t able to perforate our double-oh-hero because he was born with not-James-Bond’s palm prints. Nifty.

Trust Issues

In the real world, our industry seems to be, let’s say, skeptical of the prospect. I can count the number of my shooting acquaintances who are enthused about smart guns on precisely null fingers and toes. That’s not many.

The near-universal fear in our community is real — and completely understandable.

From the knowledgeable gun owner side of the discussion, many don’t trust the technology. Will it work when it’s raining, when your hands are sweaty, or when you’re bleeding from fighting off an attacker? Add infinity-plus-one more scenarios to this list — you get the idea.

People are nervous about all of these things, and rightfully so, but like all technology, those challenges will likely be solved sooner or later. It wasn’t that long ago when no one trusted the reliability of red dot sights on handguns.

Whether or not I ever trust the tech, I tend to think I’ll always prefer the flexibility for someone else to use my gun in an emergency. My wife, a friend, or a nearby good Samaritan may need to put my gun to use in a bad situation. Farfetched? Maybe, but using a gun, by definition, is a worst-case scenario event, so everything that can possibly go wrong already has. For the foreseeable future, put me in the old-fashioned mechanical pistol camp. Your mileage may vary.

Broader Concerns

If you’re an anti-gunner, you’re salivating over the idea of smart guns. What “common sense” gun control argument is more compelling than guns that can only work for one or a designated few people? I can hear the battle cry now: “Sure, gun ownership is fine, as long as it’s a smart

gun!” That’s gonna be a tough one to fight in the court of public opinion, so the road to smart gun mandates is icy indeed.

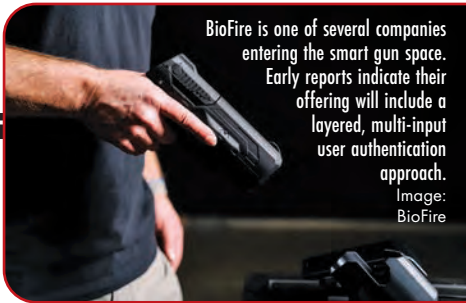
I’ll bet you 50 bazillion dollars there will be a massive push for universal adoption — a mandate — as soon as viable smart guns hit the market. Will those efforts be successful? That’s up to us, and we’ll be fighting a battle against tactical nuke talking points.

Inevitable Strategy?

Here’s the thing. Smart guns are inevitable. Being cranky about them isn’t going to cause them to be unvented or unreleased to the marketplace. There are plenty of companies out there developing the technology, and big and powerful forces are all for it. People are building them, so they will come.

From a cursory look at the emerging market, I see significant investment and support from traditionally ultra-liberal venture capitalists. Interesting. I see support from decidedly anti-gun media conglomerates — just Google “smart guns” and see who’s gushing about them. Even more interesting.

And all of this is enabled by high-tech hubris. What’s that? After spending a couple of decades working in the high-tech space, I came to learn far too many techies really do believe they know what’s best for you, and that guides their self-appointed mission of saving you from yourself. Early signs seem to indicate there are folks out there with near



BioFire is one of several companies entering the smart gun space. Early reports indicate their offering will include a layered, multi-input user authentication approach.
Image: BioFire

This early BioFire pistol looks a bit non-traditional as it has to contain electronics, power source, and mechanisms to disable the gun until validated.
Image: BioFire



zero practical experience or relevant knowledge “solving problems” for gun owners. And the less-informed eat it up.

Follow the Money ...

As with most things in life, if you really want to know what’s going on, follow the money. When looking at what is coming down the road, do your own research into the funding and motivation behind such initiatives. That might shed some clues on the end game.

One of the things I’m pondering is the business model behind the smart gun movement. Venture capitalists don’t lend money to do favors or take principled stands on social issues. And venture capitalists based in liberal hotbeds aren’t exactly fighting for gun rights. They’re in business for one reason — massive exit payouts.


While no investment is ever a “sure thing,” I have to believe one that comes with a push for government-mandated purchases will attract a lot of investor attention — even from those who would prefer to see you disarmed. Who wouldn’t want to invest in a product when the government is itching to mandate its purchase?

Parting Thoughts

Sure, an individual can choose whether or not to own one (assuming

there’s no successful future mandate initiative), but none of us can wish them away.

What’s the ideal response? I don’t yet know, but I will embrace the inevitability “head-on” by learning a lot more about the technology, the companies involved and the motivations of the people running those companies.

I’d love to hear your thoughts on the matter, so feel free to drop me a note at editor@americanhandgunner.com. 

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THERE IS NO OFF SEASON

Axis deer are beautiful and can be hunted during the off-season. Mark took this dandy buck in Argentina with an H-S Precision 270 WSM.



This Birchwood Casey KYL Target provides a challenge for rimfire enthusiasts. Mark practices with his Freedom Arms 22 LR with Lapua Super Long Range ammo.

At the conclusion of big game seasons, handgun hunters often refer to the months ahead as “off-season.” It’s a time when we all anxiously await the next hunting season. This period of downtime can be productive and meaningful if we have the desire and proper motivation. As a matter of fact, there are many projects we can pursue in preparation for the next hunting season.



In the right location, prairie dogs can provide a target-rich environment. Handgunners get quality trigger time and help landowners control these destructive pests.

“OFF” PROJECTS

Spending time on the loading bench is almost therapeutic on those cold, nasty days of winter. This is a great time to fill up the empty brass or experiment with load development. I don’t want to be reloading ammo when the weather permits shooting sessions outside.

This is also a good time to make sure your equipment is in top shape. Guns need to be cleaned — even though I hate doing so. It’s a great time to check scope rings and mounting screws for proper torque. General gun maintenance can lessen headaches down the road.

Quality time behind the trigger is beneficial. I’ve been having a lot of fun shooting a Freedom Arms .22 LR with Lapua’s new Super Long Range ammo at targets on the farm. The KYL target rack from Birchwood Casey is ideal for honing your marksmanship. This provides a lot of good practice and a great opportunity to work on the fundamentals. Shooting a handgun with consistent accuracy requires practice for most of us mere mortals.

If you’re a property owner and passionate about deer hunting, there are endless chores to be addressed before hunting season. Habitat enhancement is an ongoing endeavor with timber stand improvements, food plot management, bush-hogging, keeping shooting lanes open, repairing deer blinds, and the list goes on and on. I spend a lot of time on the tractor every year with projects to enhance and improve wildlife habitat. The chain saw and pole saw also see a lot of action. What does all this have to do with

handgun hunting? Well, when deer season rolls around, all that work may increase my enjoyment and success rate when I’m out there with my favorite handgun.

DREAM HUNTS

With seasons being reversed in the southern hemisphere, Africa is another fantastic option. For many of us handgun hunters, this is a dream hunt. The Dark Continent is blessed with a wide variety of game, from the smallest duikers to giant pachyderms. Hunting plains game in South Africa can be accomplished for less money than a premium elk hunt. There is a plethora of desirable plains game species such as kudu, impala, bushbuck, wildebeest, gemsbok, warthog, and many, many others that provide ample opportunity for minimal costs compared to a brown bear hunt. Many South African outfitters offer specials for several species of plains game every year at hunting conventions.

Argentina is another option during May, June and July. Karen and I are headed back to this beautiful country in a few weeks for red stag, blackbuck and some of those big, ugly wild hogs. The country is safe, folks are friendly and the hunting is good — not to mention the food and wine!

There are many productive and beneficial activities we can tackle during the down time. Embrace the journey!

NON-TRADITIONAL GAME

Squirrel season opens Memorial Day weekend here in Missouri. Hunting small game with your favorite

.22 rimfire pistol is an excellent opportunity to get in the woods and enjoy the great outdoors. This type of hunting demands shooting from all sorts of different positions and is good practice and experience for big game hunting. Headshots on a gray squirrel can be challenging — there is a lot more space outside the target area than in.

Many exotics, such as axis deer and blackbuck, can be hunted long before general deer seasons. This may not be everyone’s cup of tea, but it does provide some wonderful hunting experiences, and the meat is delicious. In the right setting, hunting exotics is fun and exciting. Those axis deer are beautiful and the blackbuck most graceful.

Varmint hunting is another productive opportunity that may hone your skill. Prairie dog towns often provide a target-rich environment exposing the shooter to a lot of trigger time. In western states, you will quickly learn how the wind affects bullets.

Bear hunting is another option during late spring. In many western states and Alaska, bear hunting in May and June provides handgunners the chance to pursue these magnificent creatures. Whether you hunt over bait, spot and stalk, or with hounds, bear hunting is a challenging and rewarding pursuit — a great way to eliminate cabin fever.



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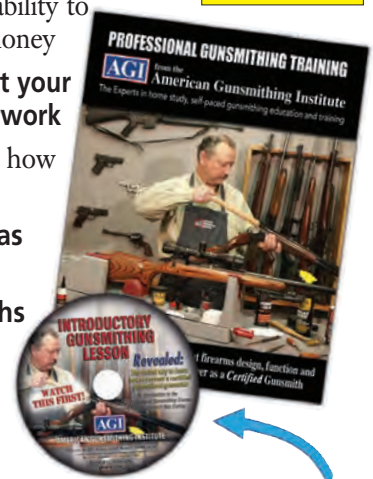


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Duke fired Missouri Bullet Company's coated bullets in these autoloader cartridges. From left, 9mm 115-grain RN, 9mm 124-grain RN, .38 Super 135-grain RN, .38 Super 147-grain TC, .40 S&W 200-grain TC, .45 Auto 230-grain RN and .45 Auto 200-grain TC.

COATED BULLETS



Throughout my handloading career, the vast majority of handgun bullets I've sent downrange have been cast — mostly by me but a significant minority by commercial casters. My shooting results from revolvers have been superb, but my shooting results from semi-autos have ranged from very good down to problematic. Until recently, every one of those cast bullets has carried lubricant in grooves — hard types from commercial casters and softer lubes on my own cast production.

MISSOURI COATING OPTIONS

Before continuing, however, I'll quote this paragraph from MBC's website as it refers to their powder coating named Hi-Tek.

"The coating itself consists of a catalyst which binds a polymeric colorant agent with acetone which is then applied in bulk to raw bullets and baked onto the bullets' surface at nearly 400 degrees. The coating is a polymer (bonded with metal) and forms an extremely tough new surface for



A few years back, an acquaintance asked me what I thought of coated bullets. My amazingly fast response was, "Huh?" Never one to keep up with the modern world, I'd never heard of lead alloy bullets that didn't need lubricant because they had a baked-on "powder coat." Eventually, curiosity caused me to give them a try. I'm glad I did, for they worked well. I contacted Missouri Bullet Company and they generously supplied me with a variety of samples.

Duke used these four pistols from his collection for testing coated bullets. Clockwise from top left: Colt ELCEN 1911 .38 Super, Les Baer .45 Auto Thunder Ranch Special, Kimber .45 Auto 1911 and World War II vintage P38 9mm Luger.

the bullet. The application of the coating is repeated for an additional coat. The bullets are then sized normally but not lubricated, as the coating itself acts as bullet lube. Nominal bullet diameter is not affected."

MBC catalogs a large range of bullet shapes: roundnose, roundnose/flatpoint, truncated cone, wadcutter and semi-wadcutter. Furthermore, they offer bullets of different BHNs (Brinell Hard-

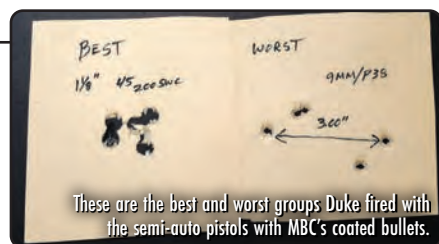
ness Number) of 18 and 12. They recommend hardness 18 for bullets traveling over about 850 fps and 12 for faster ones. Also, it should be mentioned many of their bullet designs are the same as offered with traditional lubes, meaning that although they have lube grooves, they are still coated. Some grooveless (smooth-sided) bullets are available, and I expect as coated bullets become more common, so will smooth bullet designs.

SHOOTING... COATED

Aware of how my handgun groups on paper tend to grow as my hands and eyes tire, I used a Ransom Pistol Machine Rest for accuracy testing. Then I divided the shooting into two sections — semi-autos and revolvers. This is the semi-auto part. All the handguns used came from my own personal collection. They were: Les Baer .45 Thunder Ranch Special, Kimber 1911 .40 S&W, Colt 1911 ELCEN (stainless steel) .38 Super and

German 1943 vintage P38 9mm (made in the Mauser factory).

Most of MBC's coated bullets come in a variety of weights per caliber. I used two each in all the pistols except the .40 S&W. I meant to use two weights there, but when getting set up at my machine rest I discovered I'd only loaded 200-grain TCs. (I'm old! Don't laugh, or I'll report you for senior citizen abuse.) All handloading was done normally using taper crimps as the final step. The chart shows the details.



Now here's the best part. The smallest five-shot group at 25 yards came with the 200-grain SWCs from Les Baer .45. It was a mere 1 1/8". The largest group of all came with the wartime P38 9mm with 115-grain RNs, and it was still just 3". The Colt ELCEN .38 Super was the last pistol fired that day, so on a whim, I shot a 10-shot group with the 147-grain TCs. It was still just 2 1/4". Since the machine rest testing day, I've shot up the rest of my semi-auto MBC bullet handloads at my favorite pastime — plinking at steel. I still haven't discovered a reason not to like them and that's saying something from an old dinosaur like me.

For more info: MissouriBullet.com

CALIBER	BULLET	CHARGE	POWDER	VELOCITY (FPS)
9MM LUGER	115-GRAIN RN	4.1	W231	999
9MM LUGER	124-GRAIN RN	3.8	W231	927
.38 SUPER	135-GRAIN RN	4.5	W231	1,001
.38 SUPER	147-GRAIN TC	4.5	UNIQUE	1,063
.40 S&W	200-GRAIN TC	4.5	W231	818
.45 AUTO	200-GRAIN SWC	5.0	BULLSEYE	799
.45 AUTO	230-GRAIN RN	4.5	BULLSEYE	781

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ONE-HANDED SHOOTING

There's really no debate anymore: Two hands on the gun is the best way to shoot a handgun. With two hands, the gun can be held more steadily. Recoil management and recovery are superior. I remember long ago, a two-hand hold was virtually unheard of.

Today the pendulum has swung so far that it's unusual not to see a two-hand hold. Don't get me wrong, I am as big a proponent of a two-hand hold as anyone, but I believe a competent handgunner should be able to shoot well one-handed and with either hand.



WHY

The practical reasons are obvious. It may be only one hand is available. The other hand may be needed to hold a steering wheel, ladder, door, phone, or safety rail. Or the hand may be in use to pull a bystander to safety, fend off an attacker, control a prisoner, or toss a grenade back at the thrower. Okay, the last is a stretch.

The other possibility is one arm may be disabled, for example, by a gunshot, knife attack, a bad fall, or a vehicle accident. In reading and hearing accounts of gun battles, it is surprising how often one or both arms are hit. I suppose because the arms and hands are in front of the chest area, plus the natural tendency to focus on what is most dangerous to you. It happens often enough that one would be foolish not to have the ability to stay in the fight even if one arm is rendered useless.

CHALLENGES

I'm an old-timer who started out shooting one-handed. From what I see today, most beginning handgunners start out with a two-hand hold and only learn one-hand shooting later, if at all. Compared to shooting with two hands, they find one-hand shooting has several challenges.

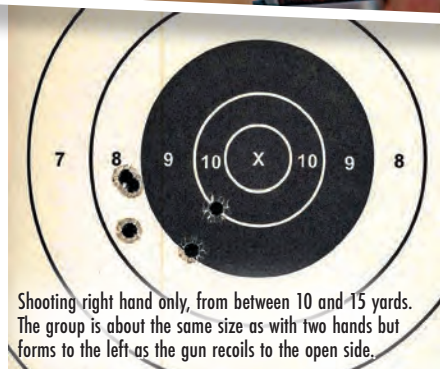
Accuracy is reduced, or perhaps a better way to say it is accurate shooting is more difficult because it's harder to hold the gun steadily. The splendid scores posted by bullseye shooters prove it can be done, but it does take more effort. Recoil management is more difficult and breaks between shots during fast strings of fire are generally longer.

The point of impact can change even with a good sight picture. Those who can shoot with reasonable accuracy using two hands often notice such a change. A right-hand shooter will often find their shots grouping to the left. How big a difference? It varies, but at 10 yards, I've seen shifts from only a couple to 6" to 8".

There are two reasons for this shift. One is the recoil action of the gun. When held in one hand, the gun tends to recoil away from the mass of the hand and toward the open side. The heavier the recoil, of course, the more this becomes apparent. The other reason is trigger pressure. Ideally, the trigger is pressed straight back along the axis of the barrel. It is very common to put some sideways pressure on the trigger during the press, typically to the left for a right-handed shooter. A solid two-hand hold can compensate for sideways pressure, but it becomes more evident when shooting with one hand.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

There are several things a shooter can do. One is to increase hand and arm strength. When I was doing a lot of competitive shooting, I used to keep



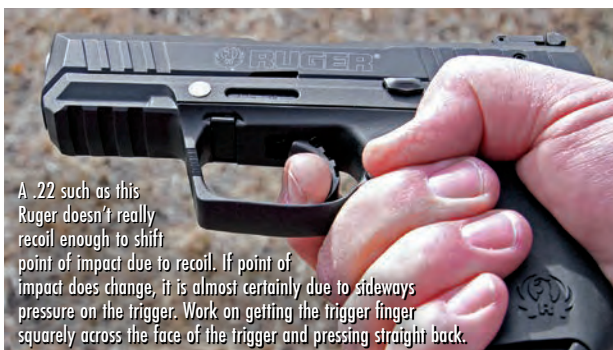
Shooting right hand only, from between 10 and 15 yards. The group is about the same size as with two hands but forms to the left as the gun recoils to the open side.

one of those grip squeezer things in my vehicle and use it on long drives. A rubber ball works as well if you can keep the dog from running off with it.

In training, focus on pressing the trigger straight back without adding sideways pressure. As a nice bonus, such skill will enhance your accuracy when shooting two-handed as well.

Another fix is to compensate for impact shift while aiming — for a right-hand shot, holding more to the right than you would shooting two-handed. I see this as a stopgap measure; impact shift should decrease as arm strength and technical skill improve. Personally, I am not very ambidextrous. I can barely wave hello or activate a turn indicator with my left hand. By dint of hard practice, I got to be reasonably competent shooting left-handed, but I confess to still holding a bit to the left.

The primary fix (you knew this was coming) is regular, focused, attentive practice. It may be boring, and the results may never be spectacular, but competent shooting with either hand can win you matches. It might even save your life.



A .22 such as this Ruger doesn't really recoil enough to shift point of impact due to recoil. If point of impact does change, it is almost certainly due to sideways pressure on the trigger. Work on getting the trigger finger squarely across the face of the trigger and pressing straight back.

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MIND THE GAP!

.45 GAP SECRETS

One of my carry guns is a GLOCK 38. I derive great pleasure in shooting it, and since ammo is not readily available, I reload .45 GAP. I stock it with “store bought” for carry, but I sure do like to reload for it.

If you are reading this, your thought pattern is probably going down one of two roads: “We all know that this was a solution, just searching for a problem, right?” Or perhaps, “I bought a .45 GAP, and I’m still trying to justify its existence.”

GAP FACTS

The logic behind the GAP is the same logic that gave birth to the .30 Super Carry. We strive for efficiency in smaller and smaller packages.

The GAP can do most of the tasks a .45 ACP can do, including propelling decisive projectiles with morale-boosting accuracy. The GAP can do these things in a cartridge shorter than a 9mm and in a 9mm-sized gun.

The GAP is probably the most entertaining gun for reloaders and one of two guns I shoot for range therapy. I know you’ll ask, so the other gun is a .45 Long Colt. Why? Simple: I’m only an average shooter, but I can print tiny, often one-hole, groups all day with my GAP.

The maximum OAL for a .45 GAP is 1.137", which is shorter than the 9mm at 1.169". The GAP is loaded to .45 ACP +P pressures, which are lower than 9mm and .40 S&W. Because of these specs, the GAP can duplicate .45 Auto performance in bullet weights ranging from 155-200 grains.

In my experience, 230-grain bullets don’t work well, usually because they are too long. Lyman does have published loads for their 452374 cast bullets, however. The density difference between a jacketed and solid lead bullet is the trick.

GAP LEARNINGS

Every piece of reloading information on the GAP will tell you not to convert .45 ACP cases to GAP. Compared to the ACP, the GAP

has a rebated rim, uses small pistol primers, and has a completely different internal taper. The first two factors don’t scare me. The third should scare everyone. Unless the zombie hoards are banging on the chain link fence surrounding your compound, don’t even try it.

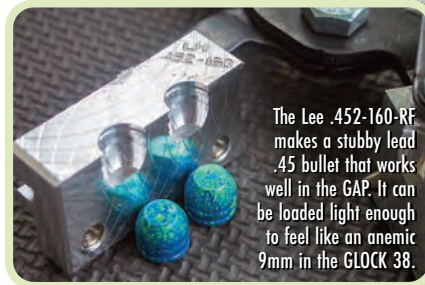
You can reload .45 ACP “mixed” or “range pickup” brass until it cracks or it is so worn out one cannot read the headstamp. With GAP, it gets a little trickier. Run questionable brass and one may discover a new definition for “GLOCK bulge.” You’ll get fewer reloads from GAP brass.

GAP LOADS

The GAP works best with medium to fast-burning powders. I generally run 231, True Blue, Unique, or Accurate #5. I get my best accuracy with True Blue and AA#5, so I’ll share my pet loads.

Up first, I use Bear Creek Bullets .452" 180-grain LSWC with 5.6 grains of True Blue and Wolf small pistol primers at an OAL of 1.136". This load prints single hole, off-hand, groups at 7 yards for me. Please use caution when using lead in polygonal barrels.

Next up, Lee Precision .452-160-RF sized to .452" over 7.0 grains of Accurate #5 and a CCI SPP for .968" OAL. Western Powders lists a similar load using a 155-grain Laser Cast bullet, which is an excellent product, by the way. Depending on your alloy, the .452-160-RF will run plus or minus 160, so these bullets will have almost identical characteristics. These cartridges have about the same recoil as a light 9mm. This is a cheap practice round.




How about Everglades Ammo .45 caliber 200-grain PFP over 6.0 grains of True Blue and a CCI SPP at 1.045" OAL? This is the load for high-volume or progressive loaders who like the ring of steel. True Blue is the perfect powder for accurate metering and consistent load weights.

GAP LOADING

Reloaders can use almost any .45 ACP dies for sizing the GAP, and almost as many for seating bullets. The most important thing is to use a taper crimp. I use an RCBS Taper Crimp, part number 18962. I have tried several, but this is the best taper crimp I have used.

Cartridge OAL is critical. Because of the short case, the volume can change dramatically, which affects pressure. When in doubt about your specific load, use the *Lyman Pistol & Revolver Handbook*.

Light loads mean more brass life. There is a very good reason why I load on the bottom end of the charts for practice loads. The less I stress my brass, the more I get to use it. It does not take much to get a 200-grain bullet to bang a plate rack. I only load higher pressures when my gun is in a chest rig over my waders. 

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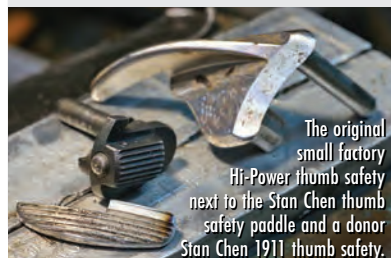
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HI-POWER MODS

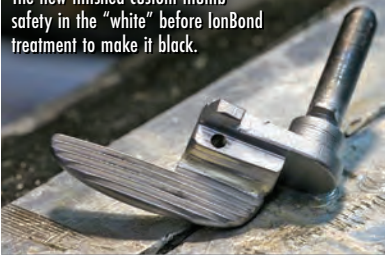
The Hi-Power makes a comeback. John M. Browning never got to see it completed — dying before the design work was completed in 1927 and production began in 1935. The M-35 or more commonly called Hi-Power is a fantastic pistol with a simple design. It has some features making it popular with shooters, like the double stack 13-round magazine for higher capacity than the 1911 and an external extractor that self-adjusts. It has been produced in the millions and has been a service sidearm for many countries. Even the FBI hostage rescue team used them at one time. New “clones” by Springfield Armory and *Fabrique Nationale Herstal* have reinvigorated interest by shooters looking to add their own features.

I recently had a client bring me an older, rare, light-weight version, probably an Israeli military surplus gun. The pistol was a bit rough but had good bones. The barrel and lock-up stud showed little signs of use. The exterior, on the other hand, looked like it was carried for years. The sights were dinged up and it had a large lanyard loop ring. The client wanted it refreshed with some upgrades.



The original small factory Hi-Power thumb safety next to the Stan Chen thumb safety paddle and a donor Stan Chen 1911 thumb safety.

The new finished custom thumb safety in the “white” before IonBond treatment to make it black.



FUNCTION FIRST

First, I replaced the sights with something more visible, a Richard Heinie “Slant Pro” rear sight with a 0.140” square notch. For the front, I went with a custom “gold line” sight made using a Heinie blank, the 0.060” thick base model to avoid cutting into the Hi-Power’s screwed in barrel bushing at the nose of the slide.

Next was the trigger, one of the shortcomings of the original model. This model came equipped with a magazine disconnect, which used a spring and plunger to rub against the inserted magazine and allows the trigger to engage the sear lever. This was removed to decrease friction and lighten the trigger pull. Then, the cast sear and hammer were replaced with bar stock parts from Extreme Engineering in California for a crisp trigger break. I never liked the shape of the trigger blade, which had a rather large, curved shape. The late Jim Garthwaite had made Hi-Power triggers that were wider and less curved. Those are no longer available, so I modified the factory part with the help of a torch, forging it straighter and then making it shorter to fit in the trigger guard. All springs were replaced with match-grade Wolff pieces.



The finished project with some of the new parts that were installed, hammer sear and springs.

ERGONOMICS NEXT

The Hi-Power has a reputation for biting the web of the shooter’s hand with the hammer. I’ve seen a few added “beavertails” on Hi-Powers but never felt they looked right or would carry well in a holster. On this model, it would not work being made of aluminum. A new shorter hammer is easier on the hands and solves the biting issue, at least in my hand.

The original thumb safety design was rather small and stubby. I had an idea in the back of my head to make one larger with a graceful swoop like the Stan Chen 1911 thumb safety.

Stan sent me a few blemished parts to play with, I cut the paddle off the 1911 piece and silver soldered it onto the Hi-Power factory part.

Next, the lower frame. The front strap of the Hi-Power is really paper thin on the front corners, which makes it almost impossible to checker unless you are Ted Yost with a 50 lpi file. I opted for stippling the front and rear grip areas of the frame (Nick, aka Mr. Stipple, did this work). The stippling will provide plenty of grip, the stippling is all done with a hammer and chisel, taking care not to deform the thin areas of the frame.

There are few options for finishing aluminum. Anodizing, which can be spotty on an old alloy or spray-on product, that would not wear well on the soft aluminum. I chose a PVD (physical vapor displacement) process. I use IonBond through Evolution Armory in New Hampshire.

Dave Panciotti at Evo, a gunsmith himself, walks the parts through the process and has a keen eye for anything I might have missed. The black IonBond is very durable and scratch resistant, even on aluminum.

The lower was bead blasted with 120-grit aluminum oxide beads. The slide was also matted on the rounds, and the flat areas sanded with 400-grit paper. The IonBond looks really nice, particularly with some polished areas next to the matte rounds. A set of black VZ grips completed the project, making it a stealthy carry piece.



All the parts prepped for IonBond treatment and bluing. Note the hand stippling.

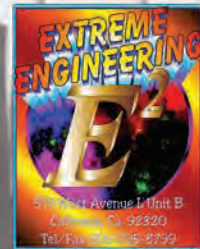
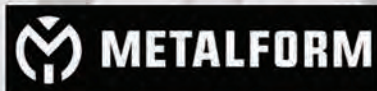
For more info: VZGrips.com, Heinie.com, IonBond.com, EvolutionArmory.com

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TO COPS, *From Dave Lauck*



Lauck's D&L muzzle standoff attachment on a rail-equipped GLOCK.

STAND-OFF MUZZLE ATTACHMENT

Famed police gunfighters such as Jim Semone in Cleveland and Ralph Friedman, NYPD's most highly decorated detective, were partial to revolvers because, among other reasons, each of them at some point had to neutralize a would-be cop-killer at muzzle contact distance. Press contact of the muzzle on a human body can push a semi-automatic service pistol's barrel/slide assembly out of battery and prevent it from firing, but that won't happen with a revolver.



Mas's Lauck customized Colt .45 auto with Lauck's 7- and 8-round magazines.

There are a few autos that won't succumb to that — the shorter barrel Springfield Armory XD, for example, or the little S&W CSX subcompact off-duty pistol, whose recoil spring guides create a "stand-off" effect. Stand-off effect can also be created by a weapon-mounted light (WML) if the light projects far enough from the muzzle ... but not every cop or armed citizen has a WML on their primary self-defense weapon.

Enter Dave Lauck, with an attachment that mounts on the accessory rails of later-model GLOCKS, the most popular handguns of America's police and lawfully armed citizens alike, and also "railed" 1911s. Because the front piece riding ahead of the barrel/slide assembly is secured to the dust cover (for new readers, the underside of the frame), the barrel and slide can't be pushed rearward by hard muzzle contact with the target.

One advantage of Lauck's concept over the WML is if blood and gore blast back toward the gun (as they often do at press contact), the Lauck device helps to shield the front of the gun from the "splashback" and reduces the likelihood that matter will get into the front of the pistol and prevent a return of battery. Many years ago, testing ammo in a slaughterhouse, I shot a large steer in the head from a foot or so away. While the high-velocity .45 JHP killed the animal instantly, viscous brain matter splashed back into the front of the Colt Government .45 auto and prevented the slide from fully closing on the next round. I honestly don't think that would have happened had something like the Lauck device been in place.

LAUCK REVOLVERS



Note how the Lauck-designed S&W revolver grips change the grasp angle.

Revolvers ain't dead, at least not for backup, off-duty, and us geezers. D&L Sports does some bitchin' custom revolver work. Personally, I can vouch for his improved fixed sights for S&Ws. I have a set on my AirLite Model 342 J-Frame .38 Special and they hugely improved hit potential. He offers rugged replacement sights for larger models, too.

Dave's latest contribution to revolver performance is found in his G10 grips for K, L and N-Frame S&Ws. The 1911-ish grip angle and flange over the web of the hand prevent Magnum recoil from rolling

the gun up in your grasp and Dave feels the angle lets you lock your wrist better. He also maintains it gives you a stronger hold in a struggle for the gun.

I've always found Dave Lauck's stuff worth the price and with reasonable delivery time. His mission is *Keeping the Good Guys and Gals Alive*. I've trusted his products for decades, and after you've worked with them, I think you'll understand why.



For more info: DLSports.com

Lawmen and armed citizens alike can benefit from this man's wisdom.

At the Pioneer Sportsman Range in Dunbarton, NH, many years ago, I put my youngest daughter behind a Dave Lauck Custom AR15 Patrol Rifle on a bipod, and she proceeded to shoot a rapid-fire group dead center into a target a hundred yards away. "Dad, I want one of these!" she exclaimed, which is how she wound up with her own custom AR15 at age 12.

Before then, I had been carrying a Dave Lauck Custom Colt .45 auto, his LFI Special built to my specifications and equally suitable for winning a match, carrying off duty and wearing to work. The gun gave honest 1" groups from the 25-yard bench but without the sensitivity to malfunctions that normally comes with an "accurized" 1911.

Dave Lauck served for many years in law enforcement and is the founder and head of today's D&L Sports. He is most famous for his custom 1911 pistols and AR15 rifles. If you're not up for custom guns, you should check out his website and consider his accessories. For instance, his 1911 .45 ACP magazines — a 7-rounder with short baseplate and an 8-round mag with a slightly longer one — I've found to be absolutely bulletproof and reliable and right up there with Wilson Combat's.

But just because he's best known for ARs and 1911s doesn't mean he hasn't paid attention to other defensive firearms technology. Consider ...

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It is with a heavy heart we're running something a little different in this space. Tiger McKee, long-time author of this *Tactics & Training* column, has passed away.

While Tiger has graced the pages of *American Handgunner* with his insightful teachings on personal defense, concealed carry and firearm-related tactics, he's perhaps best known for his lifelong commitment to being a student. This "always learning" mentality was behind the success and reputation of his ShootRite Firearms Training Academy in Langston, Ala. Tiger racked up accolades from recognition, including expert ratings on pistol and rifle from none other than Col. Jeff Cooper of Gunsite Academy, and teaching certifications from Thunder Ranch and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. But it was always his self-described "lifelong student" approach that made him so relatable.

Tiger has been a prolific writer, publishing hundreds of "how-to" articles on self-defense and shooting techniques. In addition to his magazine and newsletter work, he found time to publish two successful books, *The Book of Two Guns*, "a unique chronicle of 10 years of training in the tactical use of the 1911 pistol and the AR-15" and *AR Skills and Drills: Learn How To Run Your AR Like A Pro*.

In recent years, Tiger's passion expanded to DIY gunsmithing and customization. You may have noticed more and more articles in *American Handgunner* and some of our special editions highlighting Tiger's shop work on revolvers, Hi-Power pistols and more. I know of no better way to honor the man than to share his work, so for this issue, we're running his more recent "DIY" story submission in this space.

Tiger will be missed. He was a true gentleman. —Tom McHale



The final step after any pistol modifications is test firing to ensure function. This is very important if a refinish is required. The last thing you want to do is apply a nice finish only to discover there's a little more work to do.

DIY REVOLVER MODIFICATIONS

Revolvers are great weapons for self-defense. They come in a variety of sizes, are generally more accurate than we can shoot them, plus, they're available in effective Magnum rounds. A well-maintained revolver is more reliable than a semi-auto. If you don't provide the resistance required for the slide to cycle, eject and chamber the next round, the semi-auto will malfunction. Revolvers are dependable even if you don't have a perfect grip or firing position. During a close-quarters struggle, there's a big chance of the pistol's muzzle pushing against the threat's body. This forces the semi's slide out of battery; it will not fire. Not so with a revolver. Yes, semi-autos can hold more rounds, but for self-defense, as long as you perform properly, the wheelgun's "limited round capacity" isn't usually an issue. But, as with all firearms,

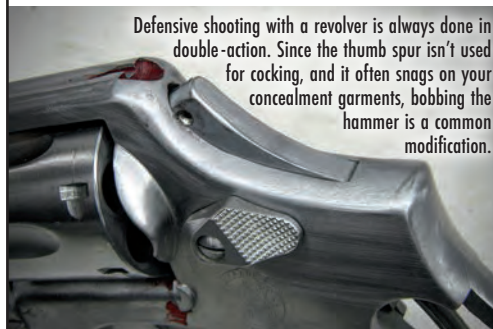


Properly tuning a revolver involves honing and polishing every part of the pistol.

there are a few modifications that make revolvers more efficient. Most are perfect DIY projects.

Stocks

One of the easiest modifications to a revolver, the one almost everyone needs to perform, is replacing the stocks. (People call them "grips," but the stocks attach to the pistol's grip.) The right size and shape



Defensive shooting with a revolver is always done in double-action. Since the thumb spur isn't used for cocking, and it often snags on your concealment garments, bobbing the hammer is a common modification.



Slightly narrowing the trigger guard provides a smooth transition for the finger when it's time to place it on the trigger to fire.

Adding a third lock to the crane provides a more positive lock-up for the cylinder.



stocks transform a revolver from an object you struggle against that's painful to fire into an extension of your hand and a pleasure on the range.

Stocks come in all shapes and sizes, compact for concealment and larger for "shootability." You can get in wood, synthetic, rubber, horn, antler and about every other natural or man-made material. Some have finger grooves, while others are more linear. The surface can be checkered, smooth or have a stippled finish.

I prefer symmetrical stocks. The left side stock is relieved for loading/unloading the cylinder. The right-side stock on some designs doesn't have this cut. For shooting with both right and left hands, ideally, each side should match. With my hand size, I prefer "open-back" stocks that don't cover the rear of the grip. I stipple the rear of the grip, using a craft-type engraver, for additional traction.

Another option is the Tyler T-Grip or similar accessory. This adapter goes against the front of the grip and is held in place by tabs that go underneath the stocks. These adapters completely change the way a set of factory stocks feel. They also look very "retro," which is a plus.

You'll end up testing and evaluating several stock options before discovering the right fit. The discards are great for selling online; one person's "reject" is another's "perfect." After deciding what's "best," you may realize the stocks need a little fine-tuning for "perfect." Every set of stocks I use for carry has been sanded and reshaped to fit my



With a small milling machine, you're only limited by the imagination. This Model 28 S&W has a fixed rear sight plus a custom base with protective wings to hold an XS "Big Dot" front sight.



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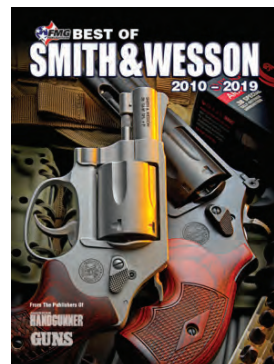
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Cutting a new crown on the muzzle will improve accuracy, even with a new factory pistol. This is an easy modification and the tools to re-crown are not expensive.



hands. Don't stop experimenting until you're completely satisfied with the fit and feel, especially when firing and manipulating the pistol. There are so many stock options that, eventually, you'll strike "gold."

Sights

A defensive pistol must have a set of sights that work under all conditions, especially in low-light situations. They should allow you to instantly acquire a sight picture on large, close targets and provide the precision needed for surgical and long-distance shots. If your revolver didn't come equipped with such from the factory, it's something that needs correcting.

Sights come in a plethora of styles, although choices may be limited according to what type of revolver you're carrying. Some pistols have dovetails cut into the frame and barrel for the sights. "Pinned" front sights are common with revolvers. "Fixed-sight" pistols have sights that are part of the frame and barrel. In the past, gold beads were popular; today, it's mostly fiber optics and tritium.

Dovetail sights are easy to remove and replace. This can be done with a hammer and a nylon or synthetic punch, which avoids marring the metal. (If there are any locking screws, make sure to loosen them first.) Pinned sights normally require drilling a hole in the replacement sight for the retaining pin. With care, a hand-held drill will work, but a drill press or milling machine is best. Position the sight in the barrel, drill from one side to about halfway through, then flip the pistol over and drill from the other side. This is more forgiving than trying to drill all the way through from only one side. To avoid damage, determine what type of pins

you're working with and use the appropriate roll-pin or a cup tip punch.

Modifying a fixed-sight pistol requires some metal removal. I install XS Sight's tritium "Big Dot" front sight on my S&W "J" frame revolvers with fixed sights. Installation requires cutting down the existing front sight and epoxying the XS sight on top of the remaining stud. I've done this using hand files, but like any metalwork, a milling machine is best. (Yet another reason to own a small bench-top milling machine.)

Other pistols require a little creativity and some mix and matching. XS "Big Dot" shotgun sights can be installed on fixed sight "K" frames. The front sight is completely removed, then the barrel drilled and tapped for the required shotgun bead. The sight epoxies on top of the bead. Careful measurements are required to ensure the XS sight is at the proper height. The barrel can be slotted and a custom base machined as a base for the XS sight, which allows easy removal and replacement if needed.

I'm not a big fan of adjustable rear sights on fighting pistols. The sight's small parts and screws are easily damaged during hard use. For S&Ws with adjustable rear sights, Cylinder & Slide and D&L Sports offer replacement fixed sights. Depending on the pistol, this is a simple remove-and-replace process or may require drilling and tapping the frame. With a little cutting on a milling machine, this replacement fixed rear sight can be installed on a fixed-sight frame. When paired with XS Sight's tritium "Dots," these fixed rears provide a better sight picture for both speed and surgical shooting.

Tuning

All revolver shooting for self-defense is double-action. Cocking the hammer for a single-action shot is dangerous. The

single-action trigger pull weight is too light, especially with a pistol that has had reduced-weight springs installed. Under stress, you lose dexterity and feeling in the fingers and cocking increases the chances of firing a negligent shot. Also, revolvers are not made to be de-cocked. It can be done but isn't something that's safe to attempt, especially under adverse conditions. Do not cock the hammer.

The double-action trigger on most revolvers is heavy, with weights of up to 10 or 12 lbs. This heaviness, which can vary over the stroke, the distance the trigger must travel and sometimes a hitch or gritty feel make it difficult to smoothly stroke the trigger. Tuning the internals reduces the trigger's weight to a manageable amount and smooths out the action throughout the entire stroke. Trigger reset — forward movement to fire the next shot — should also be slick, without any hitches. Every part inside the gun is polished or honed.

Replacing the revolver's springs is a balancing act. The goal is to reduce the pull weight, which also decreases the striking power of the hammer against the primer. Springs in a competition pistol can be tuned to a specific ammo/primer combination, but this can be too light for rounds with "harder" primers. Defensive pistols should fire any factory ammo you feed them; your favorite load may not be available. Best to go a little heavier on the springs, then test with a variety of rounds. Installing an adjustable strain screw allows you to fine-tune the weight.

There's much more to tuning a revolver than just replacing springs. A smooth trigger stroke is achieved by honing and polishing the internals. There's no great gain in "reworking" just a few of the parts. When every part is addressed, seemingly "small" improvements add up to a large gain. The difference between the trigger in a factory pistol and one with a tuned action is significant.

Obviously, there's too much involved here to list everything involved in tuning the wheelgun. I recommend starting with Jerry Kuhnhausen's "Shop Manuals" and some of the great videos on tuning by Jerry Miculek.

Tuning also includes cutting a new crown on the barrel. This improves accuracy, even on a new factory revolver. A caliber-specific brass pilot goes in the barrel to keep everything aligned and the cutters will work with a variety of calibers. The pilot and cutter are attached to a "T" handle and you apply a little arm power.

I normally start by squaring the muzzle. Use plenty of cutting oil, apply light pressure and turn in a clockwise-only direction. Remove the setup constantly to clean metal shavings from the cutter and barrel and re-oil. This ensures

a smooth cut and extends the life of the cutter. After squaring the muzzle, the crown is cut in the same manner. If the barrel diameter is large enough, counter-sink the crown to help protect the muzzle. Final cleanup is done with a round-tip brass tool mounted in a hand drill using a lapping compound.

Melting And Dehorning

Most revolvers will benefit from a little “chopping.” Bobbing the hammer is a popular modification. As mentioned above, all defensive shooting is double-action, so the spur isn’t needed. When drawing or presenting the pistol from concealment, the thumb spur will snag on the cover garments. Use a rotary tool with a cut-off wheel to remove the spur, then sanding drums for the final shaping and finish work.

Compared to a semi-auto pistol, the revolver’s double-action trigger travels a long distance. It’s a “stroke,” as opposed to the short “press” of a semi-auto. During the stroke, your finger slides down and pivots across the face of the trigger. A lot of triggers have boxy shapes or vertical serrations on the face. Removing the serrations and putting a nice radius between the face and sides of the trigger produces a smoother stroke.



Tools of the trade include hones, various polishing pads and, for more aggressive metal removal, sanding drums and hard rubber polishing wheels.



Adjustable rear sights are easily damaged during hard use. Companies like Cylinder & Slide offer fixed sights for these pistols.

Manipulating the revolver — loading, reloading, and unloading — is somewhat of a juggling act. You can keep it in the strong hand or transfer it to the support hand. Regardless of the technique used, melting and dehorning, removing any sharp edges or corners on the revolver makes these actions more “user-friendly.” A small radius on the front of the cylinder and barrel makes holstering easier. Narrowing the front of the trigger guard slightly allows a smoother transition of your trigger from finger guard — where it’s safe — onto the trigger when it’s time to fire.

While the pistol is disassembled, it’s a good time to install a third lock in the crane, which some earlier model pistols were equipped with from the factory. A

hole is drilled into the top of the crane, and a spring and ball detent staked in place. A corresponding concave spot is cut into the frame, providing a third point for the cylinder to lock into the frame.

Revolvers are easy to shoot, and with the proper training backed up with plenty of practice, they’re ideal for self-defense. They offer numerous advantages over a semi-auto pistol. After discovering a revolver that works “good” for you, a few modifications will make it “perfect” for defensive purposes. Time and a little investment in the proper tools can produce “expert” work in your shop. Like everything, it’s all about practice. Each time you repeat a process, you’ll learn more and become comfortable and confident in your work.



The Golden Eagles



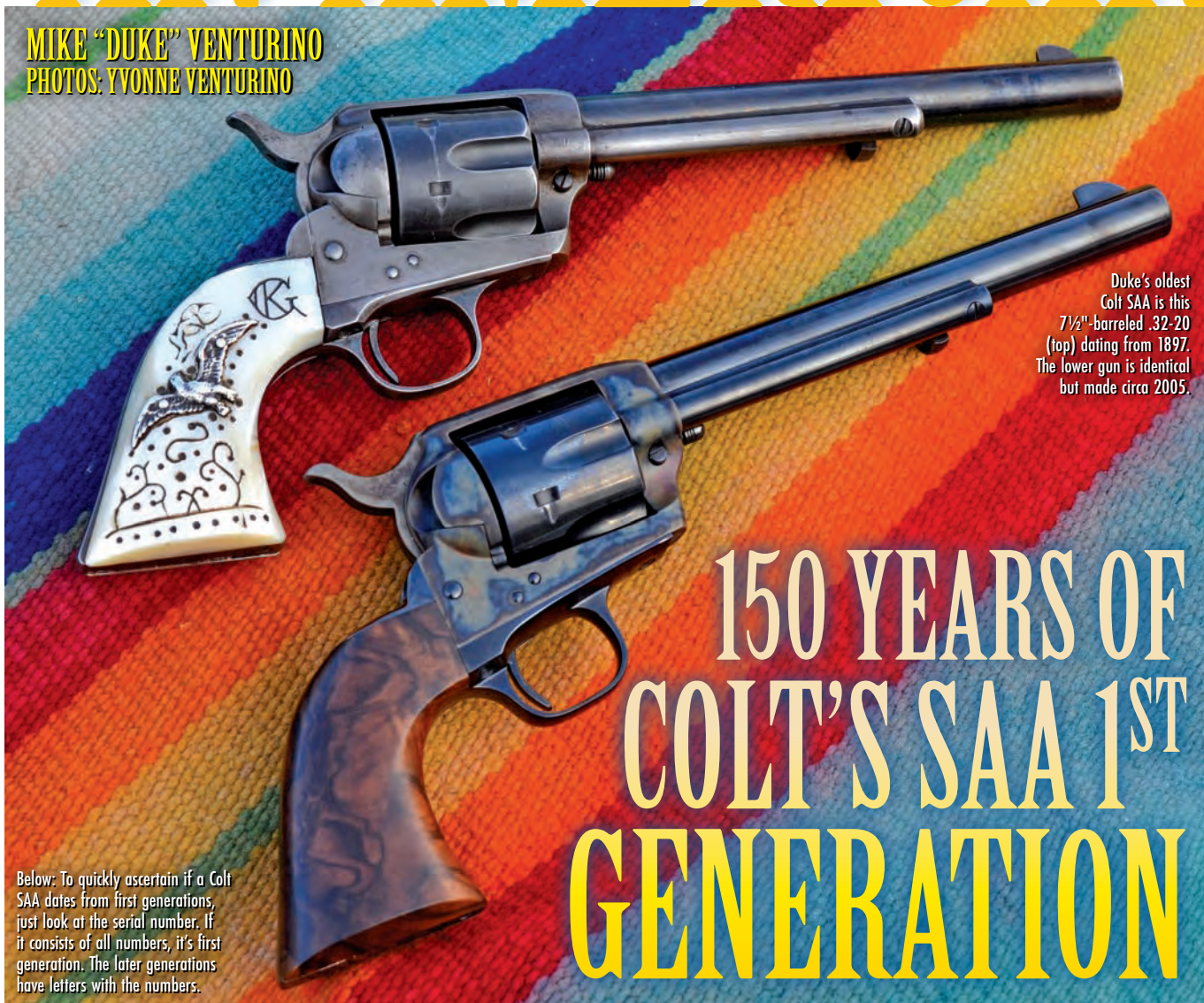
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Duke's oldest Colt SAA is this 7 1/2"-barreled .32-20 (top) dating from 1897. The lower gun is identical but made circa 2005.

150 YEARS OF COLT'S SAA 1ST GENERATION

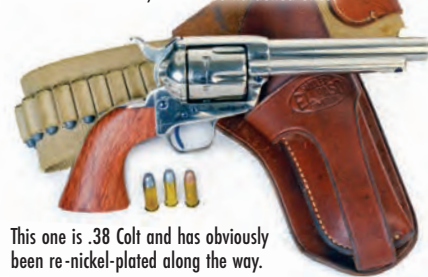
Below: To quickly ascertain if a Colt SAA dates from first generations, just look at the serial number. If it consists of all numbers, it's first generation. The later generations have letters with the numbers.



In 1873 no one involved in the development of Colt's new "Strap Pistol" or members of the U.S. Army who tested it could have possibly dreamed this revolver would forever be an American icon. That it did as Colt's Single Action Army, and now 150 years later, it not only remains one of the most recognizable and copied firearms worldwide but has remained in Colt's production. Keep in mind, that's less about 17 years of non-production between the 1st and 2nd Generations (1941-1956) and 2nd and 3rd Generations (1974-1976).

At this 150th Anniversary of America's most iconic handgun, Colt SAAs are in limited production. Available only chambered for its introductory

A great many Colt SAAs in the late 1800s were shipped nickel-plated because they would stand up to outdoor use better than blue/color case hardened ones.



This one is .38 Colt and has obviously been re-nickel-plated along the way.

cartridge — .45 Colt. It still comes in choices of 4 3/4", 5 1/2" and 7 1/2" barrel lengths. The finish is the time-honored vivid color case hardened frame with blue finish otherwise. Standard grips

ICON



This is Duke accuracy testing his 1913 vintage Colt Frontier Six Shooter .44-40.

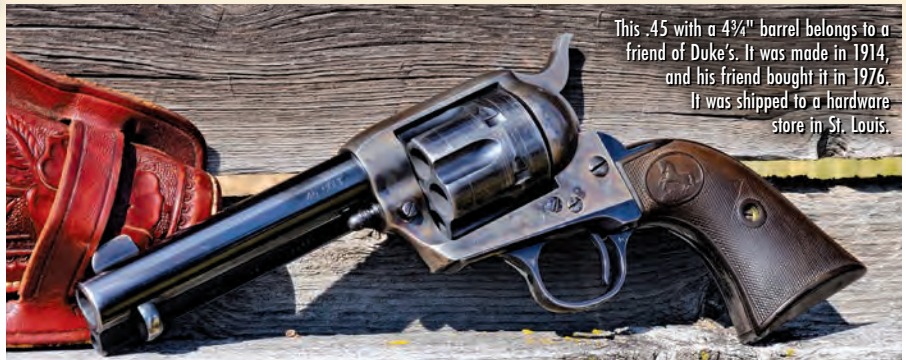
These five cartridges were the most popular during the first generation of Colt SAA production. From left to right: .45 Colt, .44-40, .38-40, .41 Long Colt and .32-20.



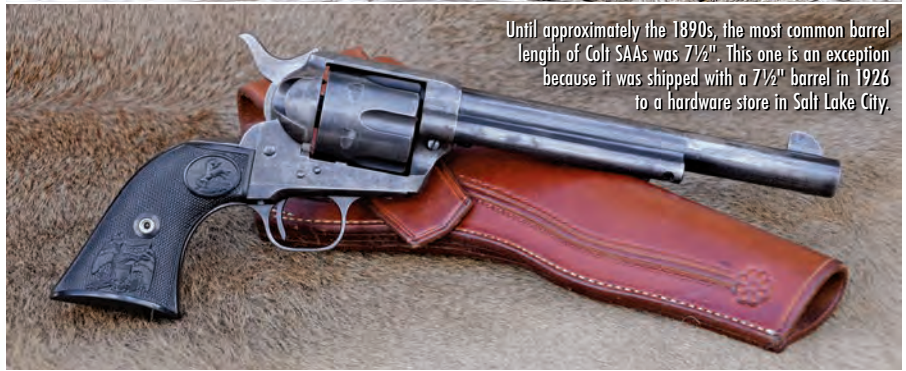
are checkered hard rubber as was instituted as a replacement for wooden grips well over 100 years ago.

Fun Facts

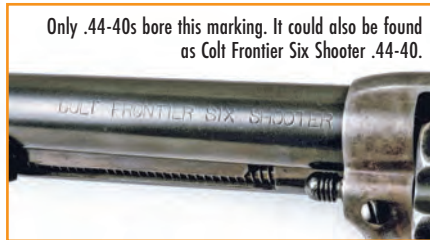
Be sure of one thing, however. In the early 1870s, this revolver would never have been developed if not for Colt seeking U.S. Government contracts. Another little-known fact is the very first "Strap Pistol" (meaning with top strap) prototypes shipped for U.S. Army testing were not chambered for the famous .45 Colt, which has become near synonymous with the revolver itself. Instead, the Colt factory shipped the U.S. Army testing officers four revolvers chambering S&W's .44 Russian. At that time, the army's standard issue revolver was S&W's Model #3 .44 American. The



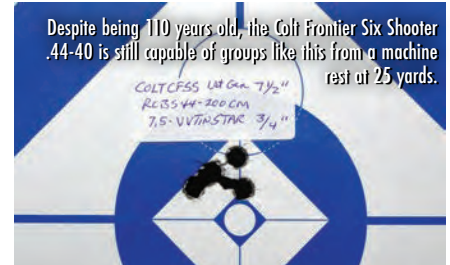
This .45 with a 4 3/4" barrel belongs to a friend of Duke's. It was made in 1914, and his friend bought it in 1976. It was shipped to a hardware store in St. Louis.



Until approximately the 1890s, the most common barrel length of Colt SAAs was 7 1/2". This one is an exception because it was shipped with a 7 1/2" barrel in 1926 to a hardware store in Salt Lake City.



Only .44-40s bore this marking. It could also be found as Colt Frontier Six Shooter .44-40.



Despite being 110 years old, the Colt Frontier Six Shooter .44-40 is still capable of groups like this from a machine rest at 25 yards.

army testers had to return the prototypes for conversion to .44 American because they had no source for large quantities of .44 Russian ammo. Executives at Colt explained the mistake by saying the .44 Russian was a better cartridge than the .44 American, and so they felt the army would prefer it.

Regardless, all talk of .44s was put aside, and the U.S. Government decided both their handgun and rifle/carbine cartridges would henceforth be of .45 bore size. For revolvers that became the .45 Colt caliber: a copper case with center fire primer holding 30 grains of black powder under 250-grain lead bullets.

A contract for 8,000 of the new .45 revolvers was let to Colt with the first 1,000 arriving at the government-owned Springfield Armory on November 28, 1873. The full contract was completed on March 18, 1874. Cost to the U.S. Government was \$13 each including a screwdriver valued at \$10. The last of the government's total of 37,000-plus SAAs was delivered in 1891.

Civilian Sales

That took care of military needs but what about the civilian market? As has always been the case, if a firearm is adopted by the U.S. Armed Forces, its popularity with civilians is assured. It is interesting to note the new Colt .45s went to civilians as quickly as the government. In November 1873, 40 were sold to J.P. Moore, a distributor in New York City, and 100 went to Colt's London Agency on January 5, 1874. The Prussian Government was shipped 40 Colt .45s to their Spandau Arsenal on December 23, 1873. (These numbers and dates were taken from the book *A Study of the Colt Single Action Revolver* by Graham, Kopec and Moore.)

First Models

For the first two years of production, all Colt SAAs were of a type. They were



These two .38-40s — a standard SAA (front) and Bisley Model (rear) — both have 5 1/2" barrels and both were made in 1904.



Close-up of Duke's 1913 vintage Colt Frontier Six Shooter .44-40 as mounted in a Ransom Pistol Machine Rest.

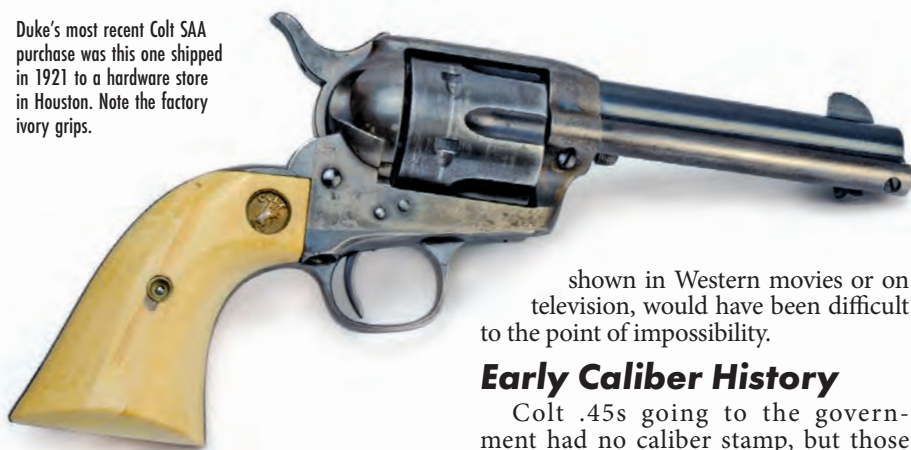


Most first-generation SAAs were marked rather simply, such as 38 Colt, 41 Colt or .45 Colt.



The SAA's third most popular cartridge, according to manufacturing figures, was what we term .38-40 today as marked on the lower revolver. The upper one bears the original .38 WCF marking.

Duke's most recent Colt SAA purchase was this one shipped in 1921 to a hardware store in Houston. Note the factory ivory grips.



shown in Western movies or on television, would have been difficult to the point of impossibility.

Early Caliber History

Colt .45s going to the government had no caliber stamp, but those sold to civilians had only a tiny ".45 cal." on the left front of their trigger guards. However, only two years into production, Colt bought into the concept of one cartridge for both sixguns and lever guns. Winchester Repeating Arms had been offering lever guns chambered for .44 Henry Rimfire since 1866, and .44 Henry rifles had been available since 1862. In 1875 Colt brought out a special run of over 1,500 Colt .44 Henry single actions. Interestingly, that special run had its own dedicated serial number range.

Then following Winchester's lead with their Model 1873 .44 WCF (Winchester Center Fire) in late 1877 or early 1878, Colt followed with what I consider one of the most interesting of their big single actions. Early on, the factory named them Colt Frontier Six Shooter. In the beginning, that was acid etched into the left side of their barrels. As time passed, the words were roll stamped and eventually, in the 20th century, the roll stamped marking became Colt Frontier Six Shooter .44-40 or just Colt Frontier Six Shooter sans the .44-40. Some .44-40s got no caliber marking at all. One such dating from the 1880s has been

all .45s, all had 7½" barrels, and all were either finished with blue and color case hardened frame and hammer or fully nickel-plated. Most were fitted with one-piece walnut grips, but some for the commercial market carried ivory one-piece grips. All had very thin blade front sights — so thin it is easy to cut oneself with them. The rear sight was a simple groove down the revolver's top strap. They shot so high that at shorter ranges of, say, 25 to 50 yards, which we consider normal handgun distances today, their point of impact was far above the point of aim. In other words, it would have been extremely difficult to hit smallish targets up close. Feats of precision shooting, as

in a friend's family for over 100 years. Incidentally, .44 WCF (.44-40) was the only caliber on which Colt bestowed a special name.

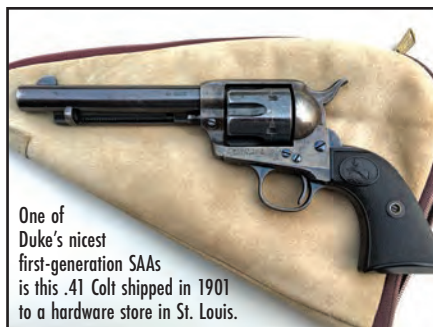
Colt and Winchester followed the same path for two other famous calibers. In 1879 Winchester added to their '73's cartridge options .38 WCF (.38-40) followed in 1882 with .32 WCF (.32-20). In the same order, Colt followed in 1884 and 1887 with revolvers for those rounds. To round out the top five selling calibers, in 1885, the rather odd .41 Colt was introduced. Wrap your minds around this conundrum. Colt used the exact same .40" bore/groove dimensions for .38 WCF (.38-40) and .41 Colt.

All of this talk of Colt's early chamberings shouldn't be mistaken that those were the totality of different cartridges for which the SAA has been offered. There was actually a book printed in 1965 titled *The 36 Calibers Of The Colt Single Action Revolver* by David M. Brown. It has entries for tiny .22 rim fires to huge .476 Eley rounds. For that latter, cartridge chambers had to be drilled at an angle in order to fit six to a cylinder.

As said above, all early .45 Colts had 7½" barrels. By 1875, a 5½" length was added, with the now most popular 4¾" length coming along as standard factory option in 1879. As "standard," I mean that 4¾" barrel lengths could be custom ordered prior to 1879. That length happens to be as short as could be practically offered, retaining the ejector rod and housing. Some shorter SAAs had two, three or even 4" barrels and were made sans ejector rods and housings. Also, barrel lengths out to 16" were available on special order.

Bisleys

Starting in 1894, the Colt factory began offering one of its strangest variations — the Bisley. About that time,



One of Duke's nicest first-generation SAAs is this .41 Colt shipped in 1901 to a hardware store in St. Louis.

some U.S. shooters had been invited to compete in matches held at England's most famous range — Bisley. Therefore, Colt engineers began designing an SAA version that fit the shooting style in fashion over there. Americans tended to shoot revolvers with their gun arm extended fully. English shooters preferred having their elbows bent. Holding a Bisley Colt straight away feels awkward but holding one with elbow bent lines its sights up rather well.

Bisley SAAs were made with standard fixed sights or in a flat top model with an adjustable rear sight. They were offered for most of the so-called 36 calibers of the SAA. However, the popularity of the top five switched about. Bisley .32-20s were most popular (13,291), with .38-40s (12,163), .45 Colt (8005), .44-40 (6,803) and .41 Long Colt (3,159). To many Americans then and today, Bisley Colts are sort of a red-headed stepchild. That said: They do have a number of devoted fans, although not enough to have Bisley variations made in 2nd and 3rd Generation SAA production.


Production History

Colt's First Generation of SAA production lasted from 1873 to 1941. In that time period and including standard SAAs, Bisley SAAs and both types'



Counting all SAAs made in the first generation, Duke feels it is likely the 5 1/2" barrel length was most common. This .45 was shipped to an arms dealer in Maine in 1926.

target models, 71,292 .44-40s were made, 50,402 38-40s and 43,102 .32-20s. Incidentally, of .45 Colts, there were 158,885 made. That was of 357,859 manufactured in total. (Figures quoted from David M. Brown's "36 Calibers" mentioned above.) My figuring says the WCFs counted for a bit over 46% of SAA production between 1873 and 1941. Interestingly Britain once again became part of 1st Generation SAA history when during their war emergency of 1940, they bought 163 SAAs in a variety of calibers with which to arm their home guard.

I've owned over 100 Colt SAAs from all generations. Of those over 25% were 1st Generation in calibers, .32-20, .38 Colt, .38-40, .41 Colt, .44-40 and .45. And I've reloaded for and shot them all extensively. For me, they are the epitome of the American six-shooter. One thing I enjoy about them aside from shooting is that factory letters can be obtained, giving the point to which SAAs were shipped along with their original finishes, barrel lengths, calibers and date of shipment. My personal ones' shipping dates range from 1897 to 1926, and places shipped range from  Maine to Utah.



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WORTH THE SQUEEZE

JEREMY D. CLOUGH



40 CALIBER TS2 ORANGE

I'm not sure who at CZ came up with the idea of color-coding their match pistols, but it's sure easier than remembering yet another sequence of numbers. In this case, I'm referring to the Orange version of the TS2, developed partially by shooters on the CZ Shooting Team to be match-capable out of the box for those who want to compete. And have mercy, do these things shoot.

CZ also offers a Blue model with different features and recently discontinued the Green, of which the Orange seems to be an update. One thing to know at the outset: This isn't just a reworked CZ75, magnificent as those

pistols are. The TS series guns (short for Tactical Sport) were introduced in 2005 as a successor to the Standard IPSC model and are dedicated competition guns using different frames, slides and other components. This includes the magazine, so if, like me, you find yourself staring covetously at those 20-round TS2 mags for use in your '75, I'll save you the disappointment: They don't fit.

What's Different?

The double-action is gone, replaced with a single-action-only trigger mechanism that retains the usual CZ roll in the break but with far less poundage.





CZ 40 CALIBER TS2 ORANGE



AMERICAN
HANDGUNNER[®]

CZ TS2 ORANGE



My test Orange broke at 1 lb., 15 oz. and change, while a Blue I spent time with managed 1 lb., 5 oz., far lighter than the 3 lb., 12 oz. trigger on my CZ75B Omega.

Conversely, the gun itself is much heavier, weighing in a pound more than a '75, a weight gain of some 50%. No doubt, some of this is from the bull barrel of the Orange, which also soaks up recoil, helped along by its added length (5.28" instead of 4.6") and the full-length dust cover that goes almost to the muzzle. And it's not just the dust cover: One of the CZ distinctives is that the slide rides inside the frame rails instead of outside like the vast majority of other pistols, which means the slide rails stretch the entire length of the gun, greatly increasing bearing surface. It also makes for a lower profile

slide, which is made even more so on the TS2 by angling the sides of the slide inward toward the shallow rib running the length of the top of the slide, *à la* the Shadow 2, instead of having a flat on either side like most handguns, including the '75.

Ergonomics

Low-profile, but not hard to grasp: CZ saw to that with deep-ish square cocking serrations in the rear and a similar set near the front on both the sides and top of the slide for those who are less leery than I of having their fingers close to the muzzle.

The grips are brightly anodized aluminum checkered with an interesting overlapping radial pattern, while the front and rear of the receiver have coarse checkering that my dial caliper is calling 18 lines per inch. Checkering that rough can usually shred those tender fingers — ask anyone who's spent a week at Gunsite with a sharp-checked 1911 — but the tops of the diamonds have been slightly rounded. It will definitely do its job of keeping the gun firmly in your hand but do it comfortably. In 500 rounds (plus another 500+ through a Blue 9mm), it never bothered me.

Other ergonomic changes consist of a prominent "gas pedal" thumb rest mounted just forward of the slide-stop by a sturdy pair of Torx screws,

an enlarged checkered mag catch in orange aluminum to match the grips and a prominent ambidextrous safety. This last is mounted somewhat higher on the Orange than on other models. While I didn't have trouble using it, my medium-sized hands found the usual position (such as on the Blue pistol) more intuitive to use. Similarly, although the mag catch is nice and positive, it didn't work well for me shooting left-handed, where the bottom edge dug into my finger just below the second knuckle. That edge has been courteously beveled at the factory, but the dimensions just didn't fit my hand. If I were keeping this gun, I'd spend a few minutes at the 3M wheel trimming it just a bit, as I regularly shoot with either hand. Right-handed, no problem.

The test gun arrived with a thoughtful complement of four 17-round magazines, each with an orange aluminum base pad that is likely to survive the rigors of competition better than plastic and chambered in .40 S&W. While the caliber has fallen a bit out of favor as of late, it still does what it's always done: Packs more punch than 9mm, which can matter on steel plates, and holds more rounds than a .45. Plus, it makes Major.

Ammo Time

Black Hills provided 500 rounds of its 155-grain JHP for the test, which I enthusiastically burned through the Orange in short order. Like the Blue, which consumed over 500 rounds, there were no failures to feed. One of the Blue magazines stopped locking the slide back, and I took it out of rotation: There were no other malfunctions of any kind with either pistol. The large orange magwell made reloads fast and positive, and the aluminum showed no scratches or scuffs after the test, suggesting it



should survive the hard use of getting mags slammed into it over and over during matches.

As it arrived, the Orange hit a bit low. Nonetheless, once I took the first couple rounds to figure out holdover, I could put the rest of the mag onto a 14" steel plate at 80 yards, mag after mag. Since I tend to focus on defensive pistols, I don't put in much time with gas pedals, but the broad thumb rest made it simple to lock the gun into place, and recoil was minimal. Combine that with the light trigger, and it's easy to shoot well. Despite the usual recoil of the .40 — often more than the .45 — I was able to make consistent 50-yard hits on the same steel target surprisingly quickly. If you're used to shooting polymer pistols, however, get ready. The Orange's easy-shooting characteristics partially result from its weight, so it may be an adjustment. Or just do a few more pushups.

Sighting Observations

While the mechanical interface part of the gun is fabulous, I had to focus harder than usual on the sight picture: The front fiber optic blade is a bit narrow, which helps for fast shooting, since it's easier to slot that tall, narrow post down into its notch than it is to line up one that's broad and doesn't allow as much light on either side. The difference in dimensions, though, between the height of the sides and the narrowness of the top often led me to


focus more on the windage than elevation. Simply put, it's easier to center the post than it is to level it. Once I realized what I was doing, a strong focus on the top of the sight improved my accuracy. At closer ranges, you're not likely to notice it, and the sight is a good choice for the sort of gun games for which the TS2 is intended.

The rear sight is click-adjustable for elevation and drift-adjustable for windage. Since I didn't want to take a punch to the rear sight, I just brought the elevation up, and while the bullet hit barely left at a distance, I was still able to make good hits out to 100 yards on smaller targets. Not every shot, but some back-to-back. On paper, using the Ransom Multi Cal Steady Rest, my best five-shot group at 25 yards was 2"; following the common practice of dropping the worst shot from the group, I put four into an inch in a different group.

A dot interface would be a welcome addition and make it easier for most shooters to get closer to the limits of the gun, but the IPSC Standard Division and USPSA Limited classifications for which the Orange is intended don't allow optics. That may be changing with USPSA Limited, but for now, it would not make sense from a cost perspective for CZ to include a feature the intended audience can't use. But maybe they'll do a Red model next...

I've put about 1,500 rounds through various CZs in the last few months,



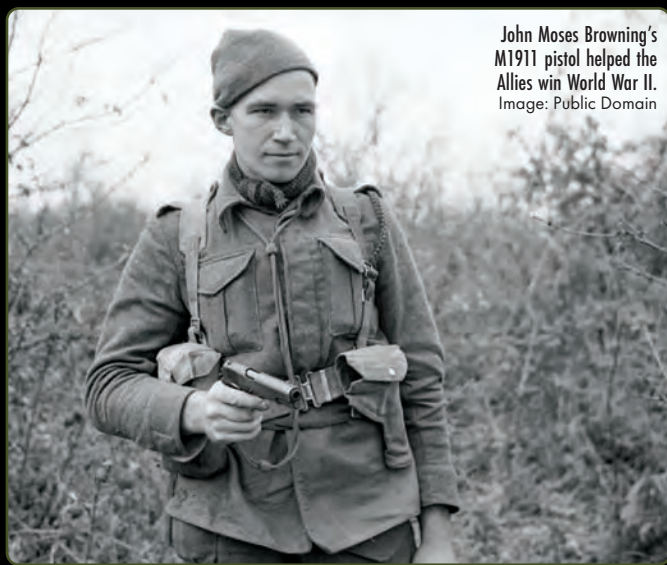
and they've all punched above their weight. This one matched everything I've come to expect: It works, it hits, it handles well and is carefully thought out for what it's for. With a suggested retail a little over \$2,000, it's not cheap, but this Orange's juice is worth the squeeze. 

For more info: CZ-USA.com, RansomRest.com, Black-Hills.com

ISAAC NEWTON'S AMAZING SINGER PISTOL



Image: Public Domain



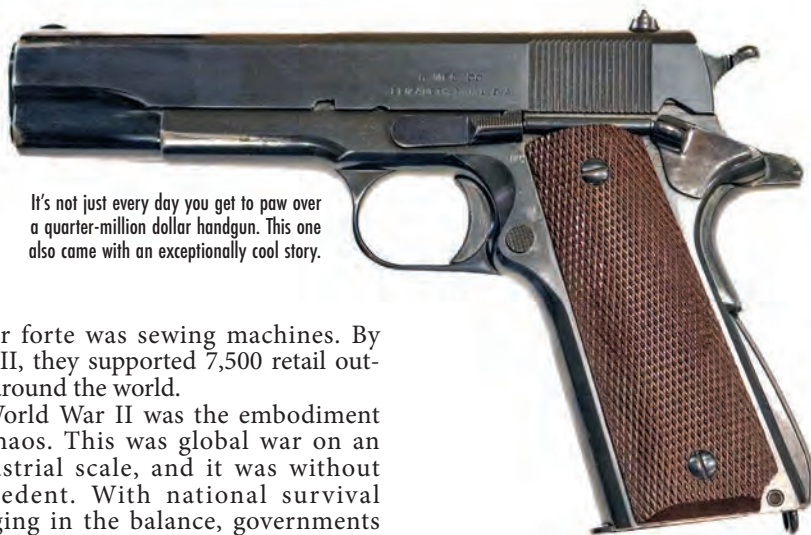
John Moses Browning's M1911 pistol helped the Allies win World War II. Image: Public Domain

A ONE-OF-A-KIND FIND

WILL DABBS, MD



Will has trekked all over the planet looking for cool writing grist. This extraordinary Singer M1911A1 pistol was quite literally right down the road.



It's not just every day you get to paw over a quarter-million dollar handgun. This one also came with an exceptionally cool story.

It began with a text message from a great friend that read, "I've got somebody you need to meet."

I've traveled all over the world to find cool stuff about which to write. This was literally a quarter mile from where I grew up. Sometimes the most amazing things are right in your own backyard.

The Gun

The Singer Manufacturing Company opened for business in the winter of 1863 during the American Civil War.

Their forte was sewing machines. By WWII, they supported 7,500 retail outlets around the world.

World War II was the embodiment of chaos. This was global war on an industrial scale, and it was without precedent. With national survival hanging in the balance, governments threw everything into the war effort. In April of 1940, the U.S. government contracted with the Singer Manufacturing Company to produce the jigs, gauges, fixtures and sundry kit necessary to manufacture M1911A1 .45

ACP pistols for the military. Singer was also to build 500 pistols as a proof of concept. Should things go as hoped, Uncle Sam promised a follow-up deal for 15,000 guns. That first contract was



All Singer M1911A1 pistols have low serial numbers, but Isaac Newton's is lower than most.



Colonel Clement's initials are perched on the frame right where he left them.

for \$278,875.67, or roughly \$558 per weapon. That would be about \$11,829 apiece today, but that number included all of the tooling as well.

Colonel John K. Clement oversaw the contract. His initials, JKC, were stamped on the frames. Unlike other GI M1911A1 handguns, these were perfectly executed, beautifully blued and gorgeous. They were, after all, made by a sewing machine company.

As the war heated up, it became obvious Singer's talents might be better used elsewhere. In March of 1941, Singer devoted its efforts to producing M5 Artillery Fire Control Directors. These mechanical computers helped manage the countless thousands of artillery pieces U.S. Army dogfaces used to spank the Axis. Those 500 Singer test pistols were just dumped into the general pool of weapons destined for the front.

American industry ultimately produced 4,294,345 M1911 pistols via eight major manufacturers. Collectors of military M1911 handguns approach their particularly quirky hobby with near-religious zeal. Singer examples in any condition are the most coveted of the lot. In 2017, serial number 221



Image: Public Domain

brought a cool \$414,000 when it was sold through Rock Island Auctions. Now hold that thought.

The Guy

Isaac Alton Newton was born in 1932. He was the ninth cousin once removed of THE Sir Isaac Newton, whose work in calculus, optics and physics earned him a tomb in Westminster Abbey. Isaac Alton Newton's family knew him as Big Ike.

Like his well-known forebear, Big Ike was a pretty quick kid. He grad-

uated High School at 16 and subsequently earned his college degree three years later. From there, he went to medical school. He was residency trained in Cardiology, Internal Medicine, and Gastroenterology. As a physician myself, I simply cannot imagine.

Dr. Newton served as a military physician in the U.S. Air Force. He had one uncle who flew P-51 Mustangs during World War II and was shot down twice. Another uncle served as a spy with the OSS and was buried at Arlington. Those Newton boys were indeed some great Americans. Throughout it all, Big Ike was also an inveterate gun nerd.

Dr. Newton lived during the Golden Age of gun collecting in America. Sixteen million young Americans served in WWII and many of them brought home captured or pilfered weapons. There were not so many rules back then. Once the luster wore off, many of these great old guys sold their combat trinkets to get money for diapers and rent. A physician with the gun nerd gene and a little folding cash could score some serious deals back then.

Big Ike eventually ended up with 2,200 firearms. According to his son,



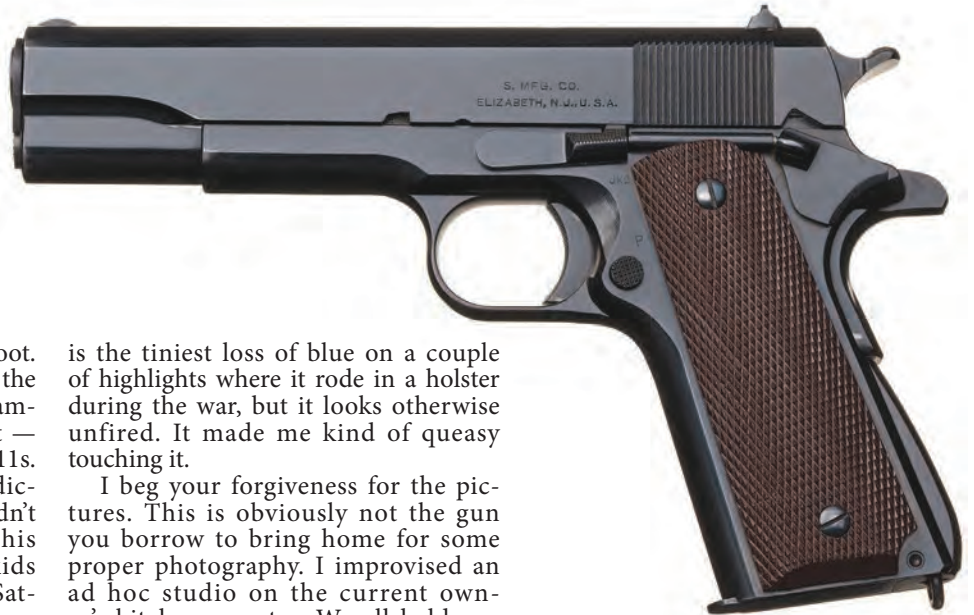
That little "P" means a lot to some people.



The action has been cycled, but I'm not sure the gun has been fired. The pictures really don't do it justice.



This cherry Singer M1911A1 pistol sold for a whopping \$414,000 through the Rock Island Auction Company in 2017. Photos courtesy Rock Island Auction Company.



the man really didn't much like to shoot. He just liked guns and was ever on the prowl for good deals or cherry examples. His forte was most things Colt — Single Action Army revolvers and 1911s.

Dr. Newton played his gun addiction fairly close to the vest and didn't discuss many of the details of his remarkable collection with his kids until later in life. However, one Saturday, many decades ago, he was walking through the parking lot of a regional gun show when he bumped into some nameless vet with a pistol he wanted to sell. As is so often the case, these two men cranked up a friendly conversation and struck a deal before they got to the building. Big Ike left with Singer M1911A1, serial number 74, for \$2,500. That was a whole lot of money back then. However, it turned out to be a pretty decent investment.

The Present Day

The gun originally came with a letter that outlined its military service. However, that document has been tragically lost. The pistol is almost perfect. There

is the tiniest loss of blue on a couple of highlights where it rode in a holster during the war, but it looks otherwise unfired. It made me kind of queasy touching it.


I beg your forgiveness for the pictures. This is obviously not the gun you borrow to bring home for some proper photography. I improvised an ad hoc studio on the current owner's kitchen counter. We all held our breath when we leaned it up for pictures. I really, really didn't want it to fall over and get scratched.

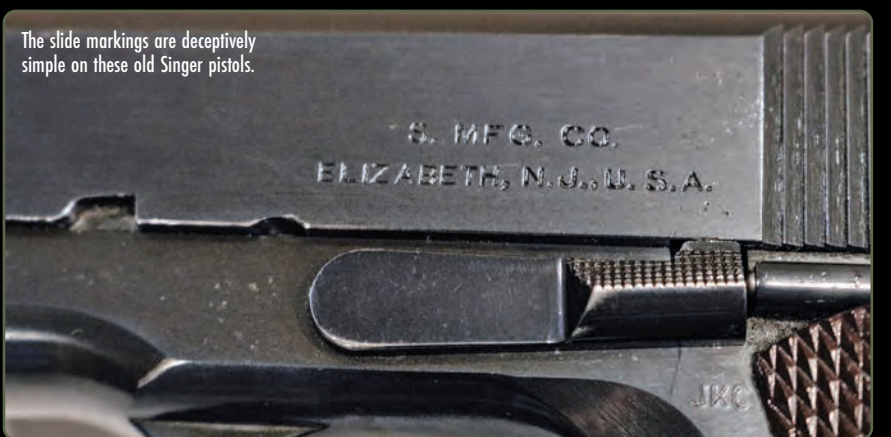
The blue is indeed beautiful, and the workmanship flawless. There is an inverted P on the top of the slide and old Colonel Clement's initials behind the trigger, right where they should be. The left side of the slide is marked, "S. MFG. CO., ELIZABETH, N.J., U.S.A." The right side of the frame reads, "UNITED STATES PROPERTY M1911A1 U.S. ARMY, No S800074." The milled trigger is nicely checkered and the Keyes Fiber Company stocks lack the strengthening ribs as expected. Singer made every piece of their guns save the stocks.

If you're not really a 1911 guy, at this point, you're starting to look lustfully at Mas Ayoob's magnificent bimonthly gunfight column. However, if you do attend the John Moses Browning High Exalted Church of M1911 Pistol Collecting, you appreciate the significance of this piece. Among martial pistol collectors of the 1911 denomination, this really is the Holy Grail.

These 500 guns were documented in the Ordnance Department procurement records in December of 1941. Most of them ended up being issued to the U.S. Army Air Corps. A handful actually went to the aircrew at Hickam Field in Hawaii on December 5, 1941, two days before the Pearl Harbor attack. The extraordinary example sold by Rock Island Auctions was recovered from the wreck of a B-24 Liberator that crashed in Iceland in 1943. The Newton gun is perhaps a bit nicer.

That the gun was in Isaac Newton's collection makes it all the more fascinating. We never really own stuff like this. We are just custodians for a time who eventually pass such remarkable artifacts on to others. However, it's not every day you can hold the Holy Grail in the palm of your hand.

If you've never had the pleasure, I would encourage you to surf on over to RockIslandAuction.com. It's the place where dreams are born. 



The slide markings are deceptively simple on these old Singer pistols.

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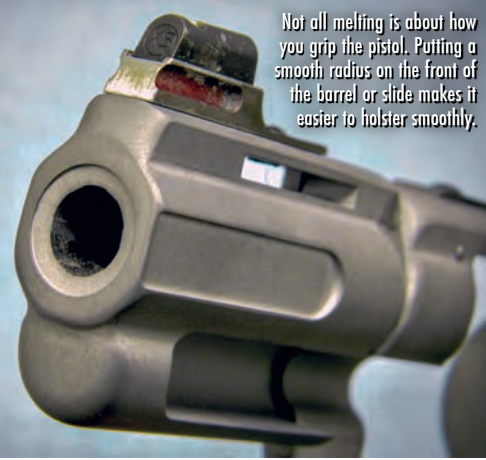
Dehorning and melting a pistol is a perfect DIY project. It doesn't take many tools, and the results are a pistol that feels better. Your most expensive investment is "time." This isn't something you can do in a hurry.

MAKE IT "JUST RIGHT"

DEHORNING & MELTING YOUR HANDGUN

TIGER MCKEE

For a complete melt job, a pistol — smoothing out every edge and corner — you'll go through a lot of supplies. And, no matter what type of power tools you use, eventually, you'll finish up working by hand.



Not all melting is about how you grip the pistol. Putting a smooth radius on the front of the barrel or slide makes it easier to holster smoothly.



Every edge and corner of this Browning Hi Power has been dehorned/melted. This removes any hot spots that will wear into the hand when manipulating and firing the pistol.

"Fit" is key for the efficient use of a firearm; it's much more important than people realize. The pistol's dimensions and shape must match your hand size. Another part of fit is "feel." For example, when shooting and manipulating the pistol, its sharp corners and edges — hot spots — wear sore spots in various places on your hand. A pistol, or any other tool, that "bites the hand that feeds it" isn't one you want to spend time with. Getting the ideal feel may require some "dehorning" and/or "melting."

Using a firearm properly — safely and efficiently — requires lots of repetition, with both dry and live-fire practice. (Ninety percent or more practice should be dry — without firing a live round.) This is especially true for "gun handling" or your manipulation skills. You practice until you can operate the pistol at a subconscious level. This is especially true for "functional" manipulations — reloading and clearing stoppages and malfunctions. The pistol's slide locks to the rear on an empty magazine. The conscious mind thinks, "Reload." The subconscious takes over to perform the actions required to reload, freeing the conscious mind to focus on dealing with the threat(s). Developing this level of skill requires thousands of proper repetitions. If every time you cycle the slide, the sharp edges of the rear sight catch and snag your hand, you're not going to practice as much or as often as needed.

While there are more options for handgun type and size today than ever, you're probably not going to find "perfect." Everyone's hands are different. After choosing the best pistol and spending time with it, its "imperfect" points will be revealed. The cure is to either dehorn the pistol, addressing specific edges or corners, like removing the horns from a bull or melt it, smoothing and rounding every edge and corner. Obviously, you can have a gunsmith perform this task. But it's an ideal DIY project, requiring minimal equipment. It's one of the

first "custom" modifications I ever performed on a pistol. A warning, though: It is addictive.

Hot Spots

The first step is identifying the pistol's hot spots. Some will be immediately apparent. For example, after depressing the thumb safety to fire a 1911-style pistol, the thumb stays on top of the safety, especially when shooting. (If the thumb is underneath the safety, it can bump it up into "Safe" while shooting.) Sharp edges/corners on the safety will wear into the web of the hand between the thumb and trigger finger during recoil. Other hot spots will be subtler. After cycling the slide several hundred times during a day of training, the hot spots on the rear sight are revealed, something that won't be indicated with just a few racks of the slide.

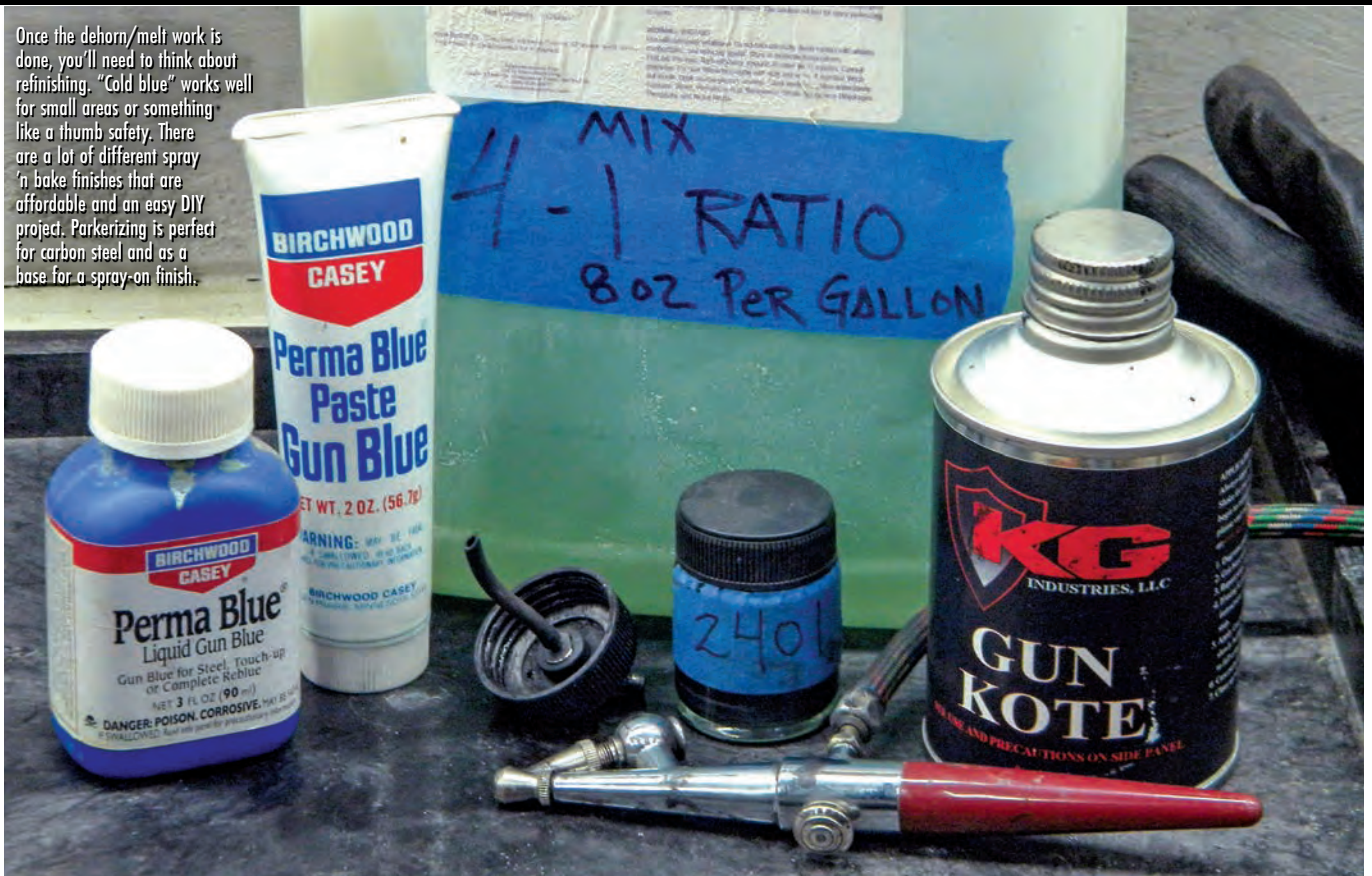
Dehorning and melting will change the way you grip the pistol. The hand will instinctually avoid areas that want to harm it, which produces an improper grip or hand position on the pistol. As the hot spots are smoothed out, the hand begins to find the proper grip. This adjustment in your grip may then reveal other areas needing attention. Ultimately, the pistol should feel like a well-used bar of soap worn to fit your hand.

Some dehorning/melting has nothing to do with how you grip the pistol. Putting a nice smooth radius on the front end of the barrel or slide makes it a little easier to holster the pistol. The same is true for the front edge of the cylinder on a revolver. Bobbing a hammer, and removing the thumb spur, ensures it doesn't catch on clothing when drawing from concealment. Narrowing the trigger guard on a wheel gun makes it easier for the



The rear sight on this pistol had a lot of sharp edges. You wouldn't notice them until cycling the slide several times and then you could feel them on your hand. A little grinding and sanding solved this problem.

Once the dehorn/melt work is done, you'll need to think about refinishing. "Cold blue" works well for small areas or something like a thumb safety. There are a lot of different spray 'n bake finishes that are affordable and an easy DIY project. Parkerizing is perfect for carbon steel and as a base for a spray-on finish.



finger to flow onto the trigger. There's also no denying a pistol with a nice melt job looks good.

Make Ready

The tools required are not extensive or expensive. You'll need a hand-held rotary tool with assorted grinding stones and sanding drums in various grits. The course grits are for the initial rough work. Different types of sandpaper, both paper sheets and cloth-backed rolls, and sanding "blocks" of different shapes are used for cleaning up everything. Rubber drums and Scotch-Brite wheels in different grades

are used for final finishing. Unless you have super vision, magnifying eyewear like something in the 6x zone lets you see details. Plus, you'll need all the standard safety gear. Last but not least, allocate time. Plenty of time. Doing this project in a "rushed" state of mind will only result in disappointment.

For removing large amounts of material, it's best to start with grinding stones. With a stone, the key is to get the piece close to the final shape but leave enough material to go back over the work with the finer sanding drums to remove the aggressive marks left behind by the stone. If there's minimal material to remove, start with finer grit sanding

drums. The best teacher here is experience. If you're not sure, always start out with finer, less aggressive sanders. It's much easier to keep working the material as opposed to going too far, too fast and cutting away too much metal.

Regardless of how you start and what the middle looks like, eventually, you'll end up doing some hand finishing. This is where the different types of sanding blocks come into play. I use both hard and soft blocks to wrap the paper around. Some of these blocks are store-bought; others are homemade. I use wooden dowels, a rubber-coated handle from a paintbrush, along with rubber blocks molded into concave and convex shapes. Rolls of cloth-backed sanding paper are good for sanding using long dragging and pulling motions, just like using a cloth to buff polish your shoes.

Be patient. When I first started this type of work, a lot of my time was spent correcting mistakes. Practice your angles of attack, determining how the hands and tools will flow before starting the actual grinding/sanding. If you're not sure how to proceed, step back from the bench, reach for a beverage and ponder on it before moving forward.

Final Finish

After dehorning/melting, you'll need to refinish the areas that have been worked over. Just don't be too hasty to call it "done." It sucks to discover there's one more spot that needs




The hammer on the left is "bobbed." Now the spur of the hammer won't catch on clothing when drawing from concealment.

The revolver trigger on the right had the serrations removed and a nice radius applied to both sides. This lets the finger flow smoothly across the face as the trigger pivots.

work after you've re-finished the pistol. Before moving on to the final finish, spend a lot of time dry practicing — especially manipulations — and live-firing on the range, evaluating the effects of the recoil.

There are a variety of ways to refinish your work. For smaller areas, "cold blue" is a good choice. If it's a complete melt job, every part of the pistol has been worked over. A good option is one of the "spray 'n bake" finishes. These are easy, affordable and offer a great degree of durability. I use Gun Kote. For stainless parts, a blasted finish looks good, and it's easy. For carbon steel, parkerizing is one of my favorites. Different types of finishes can be combined to create a unique "This is mine," look.

If forced to fight with the pistol, you want to perform as efficiently as possible. It takes lots of practice/repetition to "become one with your pistol." A pistol with the proper fit and feel, combined with plenty of practice, transforms both you and the pistol. The weapon becomes an extension of the hand and mind, as opposed to an uncomfortable object you struggle against. Dehorning and/or melting will turn a pistol that's "O.K." into one that's "just right" for you. 

A vise that rotates and pivots is mandatory. It holds the pistol securely; slips with a rotary tool create ugly "scars." The ability to change your angle of approach allows you to grind and sand from every different direction. Marking fluid helps you see as the work progresses and reveals scratches that need more sanding.



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BROTHERS IN STEEL

BLADES FOR BROTHERS: A CHARITY FOR VETS

PAT COVERT

Leon Combat Fighter

BLADES FOR BROTHERS

6 Gun Dagger

Bob Purple Heart Fighter

There is a special bond between our U.S. Military Veterans that spans generations of dedicated service to our country through wars, conflicts and times of peace. We'd like to introduce you to one veteran and his band of brothers who gave of themselves and keep on giving.

Custom knifemaker Greg Coker served as an AH-6 Littlebird attack helicopter instructor pilot in B Company 1-160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment for 15 years. He conducted 11 combat tours in Afghanistan and Iraq from 2001-2007. "I was shot down in Iraq on March 19, 2004, while supporting a team of Delta Force operators south of Fallujah, then conducted a six-hour gunfight at the location," Coker tells *Hand-*

gunner. "I was also a part-time member of the Army Marksmanship Unit 3 Gun team and won the silver medal at the All-Army shooting competition in 2005 at Fort Benning. I have been a competitive shooter for many years while in the Army and after I retired in May 2008." Greg has written a book about his trials and tribulations during wartime entitled *Death Waits in the Dark*.

Fast forward to 2021. "I had to have my knee replaced in September 2021, and following surgery, an infection took over, and I was down for six months," notes Greg. "I built a small shop at my house and started making knives in

March of 2022; it is therapy for me and my brothers. I had an accident in June 2022, tearing my distal bicep tendon, setting me back another six months." It is not unusual for many custom knifemakers to pick up the avocation after they retire — in fact, it's common — but thanks to a little help from his friends, Coker learned the ropes at light speed.

"As a new knifemaker, I sought after the best in the industry to help me with this mission. I could not screw it up!" Coker exclaims. "I turned to established custom knifemakers Steve Schwarzer, John Horrigan, Chris Williams, and Bill Harsey for their help." Greg, who named his shop The Crusader Forge, obviously took to knifemaking with extreme gusto and the exquisite knives you see here are examples of his talents.

Blades For Brothers

Then Coker shifted to an even higher gear. "In the summer of 2022, I attended the Blade Show in Atlanta and met some Vets who had started making knives. In November 2022, the idea to start a non-profit for Veterans hit me." Greg informs, "I contacted 10 veterans who were new knifemakers and asked them if they would be interested in making a knife to

Damascus Detail

Purple Heart Inlay

Mini Gun Inlay



Bob Fighter

Mini Bob EDC

auction at Blade Show Atlanta 2023 and donating all of our proceeds to a 501c3 non-profit that supports veterans, first responders and their families. They all agreed and Blades For Brothers was born. I submitted the paperwork in November 2022 to form Blades For Brothers and my strategic plan is to have BFB Chapters across the country. We will auction our blades in June 2023 at Blade Show. I named our group 'Iron Sharpens Iron' and we have all made two to four knives each for our first auction."

A Unique Sampling

Greg didn't just learn knifemaking at a fast pace — he took the long road to get there. Rather than take bar stock straight from a steel manufacturer, he made his own by pounding out red-hot steel in a forge. Additionally, he learned to make patterned steel, a.k.a. "Damascus" — you're talking about one of the highest levels of difficulty in Knifedom.

Coker's mission is a story in itself. "I decided to use the Minigun barrels, pieces that were recovered from the crash site, and a piece of World Trade Center steel that was gifted to me on September 11, 2022, by Steve and Lora Schwarzer to make some knives and raise money for nonprofits that support veterans, first responders, and their families."

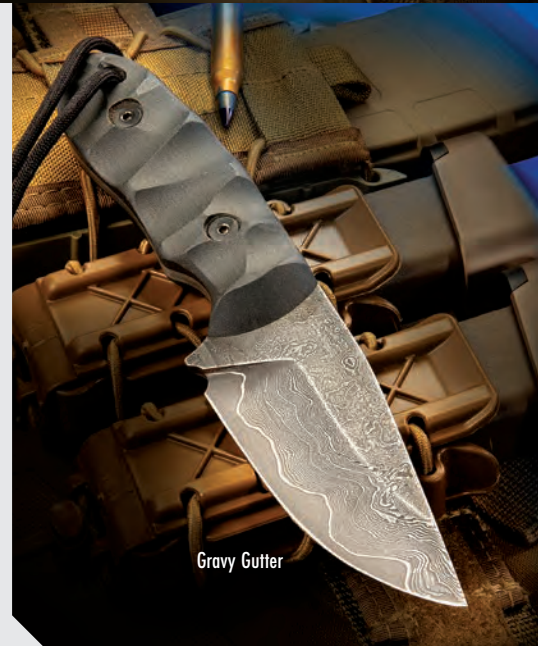
The Bob Purple Heart Fighter is dedicated to Coker's friend Master Sergeant Robert "Bob" Horrigan, who was killed in action on June 17, 2005, while conducting combat operations in western Iraq. "Bob was one heck of a great bladesmith, and I am honored to have his twin brother John, also a knifemaker, help me with this mission," Greg explains. "The overall length of the knife is 10" with a hand-ground saber cut 5" blade. I made the scales out of Purple Heart wood and embedded two of my Purple Heart medals in each scale." Note the pins Greg uses on his handles. "The pins I use in all my knives represent the Dillon Aero M-134 Miniguns that I carried on each side of my AH-6 little bird."

Greg's 6 Gun Dagger is a 12.5" *tour de force* done up in 1600-layer Damascus teamed up with a stacked Canvas Micarta coffin-style handle. "I had no idea what I was getting myself into when I decided to make a dagger," says Coker. "This is the second dagger I had ever made, and the learning curve was steep — to say the least. The blade length is 6.75" and it's based on human anatomy. It is 5.5" to reach the aorta of an average size human in a frontal attack. The coffin handle is versatile and can be used with either the left or right hand. It is flat, so one can index the blade for a blind tactile reference without looking for the cutting edge for close work."

The Leon Combat Fighter is another Coker magnum opus with a story behind it. According to Greg, "Master Sergeant Leon Hanson was a good buddy of mine for many years. He was a Ranger and fire supporter in Delta Force, and we invaded Afghanistan together on October 19, 2001. Leon took his life on June 26, 2015. I wanted a fighter like Leon, that was versatile and not as big as a Bowie. The overall length is 12" and the blade is 7.25". There are four different patterns showing in the 1600 layers of Damascus steel."


"I wanted something unique for the handle, so I used pieces and parts, and I made the scales using marine epoxy and red G10 liners. On the right side is a piece of the main rotor blade, the flight suit I was wearing when shot down, the headstamp of a 7.62 shell, a 7.62 bullet and link. The left side of the handle has a piece of the "T" tail, flight suit, bullet, link, head stamp, a small stone and dirt from the crash site in Iraq." The Leon Combat Fighter is more than a knife — it's a journey.

The Bob Fighter and the Mini Bob EDC are a big 'n little pair of knives, once again, devoted to Coker's friend and fellow vet Bob Horrigan. In fact, the Bob Fighter is Greg's standard line version of the Bob Purple Heart



Gravy Gutter

Fighter mentioned above. The Bob Fighter pictured here has a forged San Mai blade with layered Brown Micarta handle scales. The scaled-down Mini Bob EDC is 7.25" overall with a 3.5" blade — shown here in Damascus steel and layered Black/Red Micarta handle scales. Last but not least is the Gravy Gutter, a small Skinner photographer Rob Jones and I took a shine to while compiling this feature. Coker's nickname is "Gravy," and the version pictured here is done up in Damascus and a "chunked" Black Micarta handle. The "Gutter" has an overall length of 8.0" and the blade is 3.75". The thumb serrations on most of Greg's knives are hand cut with a checkering file that goes back to his days of hand-built 1911s. Sweet!

We owe a lot to our U.S. Veterans for the decades of service they've given toward keeping our nation free and whole. Greg Coker is one who has given and keeps on giving. 

For more info: BladesForBrothers.com

TEAM TACTICS...

WITH YOUR... SPOUSE?!

Why would you need training in tactics with your spouse or significant other? You don't have to become the next high-speed operator to leverage basic skills and tactics with your significant other. On the other hand, you cannot put your head in the sand and hope danger passes you by; evil does not care who you are or how important you are to your family or loved ones. Understanding some basic team principles and tactics will better prepare you to handle an incident.

ADMIT IT CAN HAPPEN

The most important step is to understand that something can happen to you and your family anywhere or anytime. This mindset is key to not freezing when the preverbal fight comes. It won't make you and your partner paranoid maniacs — it will empower you to do more because you have the skills to survive a critical incident.

Communication is key to working with others or teams. Create and have keywords your "team" understands. Use terms not in your everyday vocabulary so there is no misunderstanding of what you need to do.

MOVEMENT

During an incident, do you stay together or separate? I don't mean going in a different direction and losing sight of your team. I mean, you create distance from your partner so you can see things they cannot. If the threat is near you, do you want to be standing next to each other,



Who goes left? Who goes right? Far better to communicate in advance to work these details out.

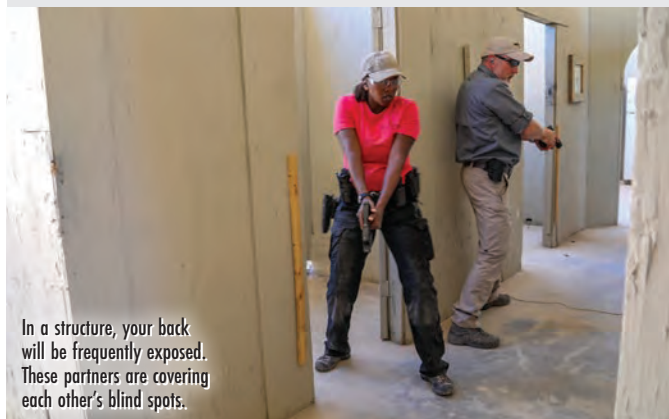
or do you want to separate and create a decision for the bad guy to have to deal with? Remember, the bad guy has to process problems too. We want to get inside their decision-making process (OODA loop). This takes time — which you can use to act.

DISTANCE AND ANGLES

When searching a structure, you need to understand how to leverage distance and angles. What we see most in shoot house runs, even after explaining the use of cover/concealment on the square range, is that people do not effectively use distance from the cover. If you are on level ground, you can create as much distance as your structure will allow so you will have a better angle to see your threat.

In the shoot house, we see people hugging (getting close to) cover because it makes them feel safe, but we expose more of ourselves to the threat. It's easy to understand this basic principle by getting your partner to sit inside of a room or around a corner — with no weapons! Get close to the door frame and try to look in and see them, then back off a little and repeat, then back off to the maximum distance the structure will allow and see which gives you the ability to expose them without exposing much of you. Then swap positions.

If my threat is on high ground or below me, I may need to "hug" the cover/concealment and work that way. Understand I am hitting the high points only here. Remember, reading what to do does no good unless you put the knowledge into hands-on practice.



In a structure, your back will be frequently exposed. These partners are covering each other's blind spots.

READING & SEARCHING A STRUCTURE

Learn to understand the basic construction of a building. Look at doors and where the hinges are. Where is the doorknob? This will tell you in which direction the door will open and if it will open in or out. This will allow you to position yourself and your partner in a better position of cover, distance and angles to handle the room.

Once a new problem presents itself, such as a new room, I want to see as much as possible before I enter. I do that by applying distance and angles to “slice the pie” of the room. I will take a small “slice” of the room and look for threat indicators before I take another “slice.” I will also search in rays and not in bands, looking from the ground to the ceiling and then from the ceiling back to the ground. I will not look left and right because I miss low and high threats and not look past something like a couch or table.

Searching a building or an area outside is a perishable skill, just like training with your weapon. Adding another person to this is even more demanding.

Knowing precisely what your partner will be doing takes practice and repetition. Note her muzzle discipline as he enters the room and her supporting position.



We're just scratching the surface of this topic, so the best way to understand working with your partner is to seek out training and put all these words into hands-on practical scenarios to see what works for your team!



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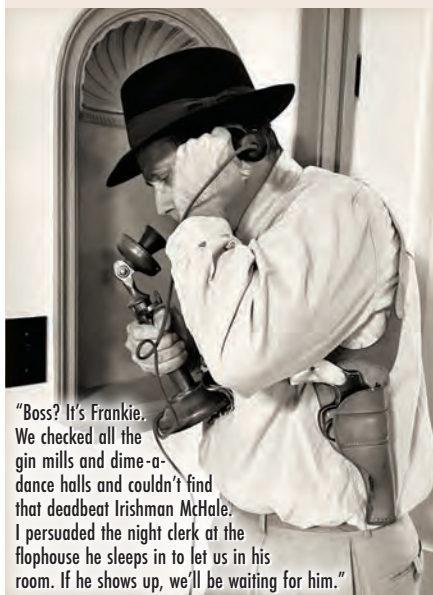
605: 5-SHOT 357 MAG | 856: 6-SHOT 38 SPL+P | 3-INCH BARREL

 **TAURUS**

RESTORING A CLASSIC SHOULDER HOLSTER

If you like old guns, you probably also like old holsters. I've collected a nice assortment of vintage leather over the years from digging through the box of used holsters you see at just about every gun show. You know the box I'm talking about. Written in marker on the outside, it will say something like, "Any holster in this box \$15."

Interested as I am in historic guns, that box has also offered up a fascinating array of holsters from famous (and not so famous) manufacturers now gone and for guns long obsolete. Personally, I lament the decline of the spring retention vertical shoulder holster for concealed carry. These fast-drawing but complex-to-build holsters have gone out of style and hardly any makers still offer one. Only Triple K and Bianchi come to mind. The currently available holsters also use a long, top-to-bottom style spring retainer rather than the front-to-back style spring found on the older designs. The current style is great for automatics, but I think the old front-to-back springs worked better with revolvers since they gripped the gun firmly around the cylinder making it less likely to fall from the holster if you bend over.



"Boss? It's Frankie. We checked all the gin mills and dime-a-dance halls and couldn't find that deadbeat Irishman McHale. I persuaded the night clerk at the flophouse he sleeps in to let us in his room. If he shows up, we'll be waiting for him."

VINTAGE HOLSTER USE

For years, I toyed with the idea of making one of the old-style revolver holsters, salvaging the spring and harness hardware from a poor-condition bargain box find. Old leather can look nice but often becomes brittle and unusable with age because of poor storage or imperfect tanning when new. Using any vintage holster is a sure way to destroy it. Your sweat can turn dry doomed leather black and brittle with one wearing.

If the leather's surface cracks when the material is bent back on itself, it has dried out and will not stand any use. If the leather is pliable but seems to be turning to powder on the surface, it is seriously weakened by red rot and is also unusable. I consider holsters over 50 years old to be collector's items or sometimes pattern pieces if they are in really poor shape.

My DIY Shoulder Holster

I credit St. Crispin, patron saint of leatherworkers, with getting my first DIY vintage shoulder holster rebuild project going. Digging in the bargain holster box, I found a miraculously well-preserved Brauer Brothers Manufacturing Company shoulder holster pocket weirdly denuded of straps. Here was the nucleus of my project with the hard work already done. All I need do was make and attach the missing straps and harness.

The pocket delivered to me by saintly intercession was an archetypical style from a famous maker. Based in St. Louis, Mo., Brauer Brothers Manufacturing Company got into the holster business at the tail end of the Old West and expanded quickly. They were manufacturers of leather goods, shoes in their case, and already had the skills and machinery to manage the mass production of a complex leather product line with scores of different patterns. In the early 20th century, they were well known for above-average quality holsters

The basic tools for the project and the replacement leather already cut. The leather tools are inexpensive and in stock at your local Hobby Lobby store.



marketed under the "BRAUER BROS. MFG. CO." and "Moose Sporting Goods" brand names. Their reasonably priced holsters were very popular and equaled the quality of competing mass-produced holsters made by Bucheimer and Hunter.

Brauer Brothers Manufacturing Company made leather holsters for a century for just about everything up to and including GLOCKS. They also had notable law enforcement sales and military contracts. I guessed my bargain box find dated from the 1940s or '50s, but its classic design goes back at least to the 1930s and remained popular through the whole era of the double-action revolver's supremacy as a self-defense arm.

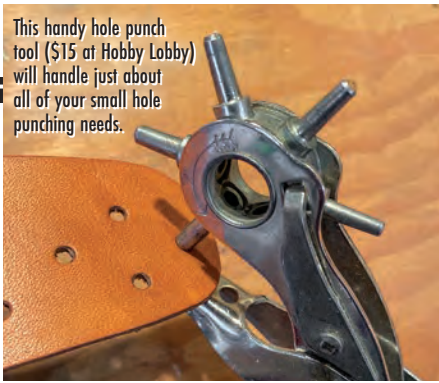
Restoration Planning

The first step was to make a pattern for the missing leather portion cut away from the top of the holster, which included the shoulder strap connecting stubs. Having another complete holster in my collection, I traced the shape of



Patterns are all around you! This cap from an old 35mm film container was the perfect size for the ring of stitching that joins the shoulder strap to the holster.

This handy hole punch tool (\$15 at Hobby Lobby) will handle just about all of your small hole punching needs.



A smooth plastic pulley is handy for rounding and burnishing the edges of newly cut leather for a finished look.



the missing "U" shaped portion onto a piece of paper and then oriented the partial holster on top of the tracing until it matched the complete holster. I marked the overlap line and extended the pattern below it to include enough leather to make sewing it on the pocket convenient. Then I wrote on the pattern face "Flesh Side Up," so I wouldn't lay the pattern down the wrong way on the new leather and cut the piece out backward. Don't laugh, it's easy to make this mistake.

With the pattern drawn and cut out, I laid it on the backside of the holster pocket and, with a sharp pencil, marked the bottom edge of the pattern onto the pocket back so I could index the new piece of leather in exactly the right spot for correct sewing. Pencil marks need to be dark enough to see. Unless it's wet, supple leather tends, over time, to raise the depressions your pencil presses into it, causing them to disappear. This is especially true of marks made on the rough (flesh) side.

Measure Twice ...

The pocket appeared to be full-grain leather of 8- to 9-oz. weight measuring 0.132" thick. Leather thickness is commonly expressed in ounces, with each ounce equally 1/64" (0.0156") of thickness. I made my new strap base from a scrap of matching vegetable-tanned skirting leather left over from another project. If you had to buy that piece of leather, it seems a good online price for a 6"x10" piece is about \$11 delivered. Skirting leather is the cut over the shoulders of the animal and is considered the best material for holsters.

You get a better cut on leather when you work from the skin side, and it's also much easier to mark on the skin side. I spread out the new leather skin side up

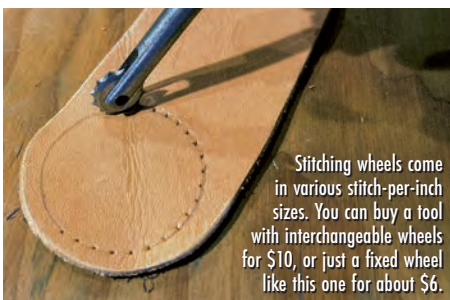
on a scrap of plywood and made sure my paper pattern was laid on it with my "Flesh Side Up" marking facing down. Once marked, the leather was easily cut with a sharp utility knife. All the lacing holes were located by placing the complete original holster over the replacement piece and marking the center of the holes with a pencil point so they could be punched with a standard leather punching tool.

The curved leather strap that goes over the top of the shoulder was patterned directly on a piece of new leather hide by laying the original on top of it and marking the outline with a pencil. Take care when you lay out the original over the new leather that they both have the same side facing up, or the new part will be the reverse of what you want.

Shoulder Strap

The complete original holster in my collection had a shoulder strap made of supple, sueded cowhide sanded on both sides and slightly thinner than the full-grain leather used in the holster body. It measured 0.10" thick, which translates to a 7-oz. weight. Because this strap is curved, I needed a piece of suede at least 6.5" x 21". Online searching yielded only pieces that were too small or half hides that were absurdly more suede than I could ever find a use for.

I believe suede was originally chosen because it is very soft and supple, which allows it to conform comfortably to the body. In addition, the suede's velvety surface gives it a little better grip on the shoulder to resist sliding off under movement and the weight of the gun. When regular leather hide is used for this shoulder strap, the flesh side is on the inside (bottom) for this reason.



Stitching wheels come in various stitch-per-inch sizes. You can buy a tool with interchangeable wheels for \$10, or just a fixed wheel like this one for about \$6.



Poking the holes through the shoulder strap with a hand awl.

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To cut the slots in the shoulder strap for the harness strap, Frank first located and marked their ends with the hole punch. Then he made connecting cuts between them for a very neat, even, slot. Slots with round ends are less likely to tear out than slots with squared ends.



With the holster pocket glued to the new leather strap base, they stayed in alignment while Frank used a drill press and a big needle to poke nice straight holes through both pieces of leather at once.

Frustrated in my search for matching suede, I opted to use some equally supple but thinner, 3- to 4-oz. full-grain leather. A 4" barrel .38 Special revolver only weighs about 2 lbs., so I wasn't worried the leather would stretch.

Poking Holes

Once both replacement leather parts were finished, I was ready to locate and sew them onto the holster pocket. Saddle stitching with waxed thread through thick layers of leather is very hard on the fingers if you don't pre-poke the holes. This can be done with an awl or poked and stitched at the same time with a special tool aptly named a stitching awl. I usually prefer to mark my stitch lines with a pencil and then roll a stitching wheel over the lines to mark the holes, and then poke all the holes with a heavy needle installed in the chuck of my small bench drill press. The advantage of this method is the holes are round, not oblong like they are when you use an awl; they are straighter because the needle doesn't wander off course much on its way through the leather; and the drill press has so much leverage, making the holes is no more difficult than lining the leather up correctly.

To keep the parts correctly oriented with each other during the sometimes lengthy hole-poking operation, I use a spray adhesive to join the parts. If I'm concerned the parts will shift before I poke all the holes and cause misalignment between the holes in the top and bottom

pieces, I'll first poke and stitch a few holes on opposite ends of the pieces to anchor them together before I poke the rest of the holes. I did this for the circle of stitches that connect the shoulder strap to one side of the "U" sewn to the holster body.

The Harness

I noticed my original Brauer Brothers holsters all used basically the same harness system. It was a 3/4"x48", white, non-elastic strap adjusted with the small, thin, nickel-plated, stamped steel, tri-bar friction buckle commonly used on the back of vests to adjust their fit around the waist. The ends of the harness strap were folded over and secured to the tri-bar buckle on one end, and the leather shoulder strap on the other, with just a nickel-plated dome head split rivet pressed through all three layers of strap before having its prongs bent in. It doesn't seem like much, but it was clearly durable enough.

The older holsters had a cotton harness strap. The newer ones used a synthetic strap that probably resisted deterioration from sweat and friction better. This minimalist harness may not have been the most comfortable, but its thin straps and hardware don't protrude noticeably through the back of a suit jacket. The white harness strap anchors the leather shoulder strap supporting the gun at two points. From the higher anchor point, just behind the peak of the left shoulder, it runs across the back, around the opposite shoulder, comes out under the armpit, and goes back to the lower anchor point on the leather shoulder strap behind the left shoulder blade.

To my amazement, I could not find any 3/4" wide cotton or synthetic strapping or 3/4" tri-bar buckles at my local brick-and-mortar stores. They are still available, but I had to go online for them. An eBay seller (icraftforless) had the original style, 3/4" stamped steel, nickel-plated, vest buckle/adjustable suspender slides with the teeth at \$10 for 10 buckles delivered. Another eBay seller (craft-worlddepotinc) had the old style 3/4" cotton web strapping at five yards for \$8 delivered. For modern harness, I found at


StrapWorks.com 3/4" flat stamped steel, nickel-plated, three-bar, slide buckles for 30 cents each, 3/4" Mil-Spec 17337 black nylon web strapping for 38 cents per foot, and 3/4" black, white and tan elastic for 54 cents a foot.

By the way, the flatter and thinner the buckle, the flatter the strap will lay across the back. If a non-elastic strap is used, the original style vest buckle (or perhaps a stamped, flat, steel, tri-bar buckle) is the best choice to minimize printing of the strap through the back of your jacket. If an elastic strap is used, a better choice of adjustable buckle would be the sheet metal sliding bar type because of the serrations on the bar and its mechanical locking action that increases when the strap is pulled.

A Good Investment

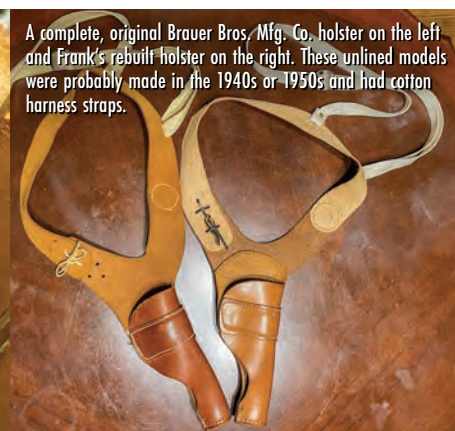
Because I had a parts holster with a good harness strap on it, I opted to install it on my project. If I hadn't, the cost of the new straps and hardware wouldn't have exceeded \$20 with shipping. I already had the leather working tools and plenty of leftover leather from previous projects to work with, so this repair cost me only my time and not much of that. This was half a Saturday's work, excluding the time wasted looking for the harness strapping and hardware in town. The big take-away from this story is you shouldn't pass over a shoulder holster you could use just because it's missing the harness straps because those are the cheapest and easiest parts to replace!

While my holster pocket needed more than just the harness, I am really glad I bought it. As restored, it's now my favorite for carrying my 4"-barrel Colt and S&W revolvers. This type of vertical holster is very stable on the body. The harness strap across the back keeps the holster from falling forward when you bend over, even if the toe of the holster isn't strapped to your belt. The horizontally oriented spring also grips the cylinder firmly, keeping the gun from falling out of the holster when you bend over.

It begs the question, why on Earth did they stop making these? 



Saddle stitching (lock stitching) is the normal way to hand sew leather.



A complete, original Brauer Bros. Mfg. Co. holster on the left and Frank's rebuilt holster on the right. These unlined models were probably made in the 1940s or 1950s and had cotton harness straps.

JEREMY CLOUGH

CAJUN GUN WORKS CZ ACTION COMPONENTS

Cajun Gun Works, founded by David Milam, offers an extensive line of action parts for the popular CZ pistols, primarily hammer-fired models. Parts such as the EDM-machined billet hammer, billet disconnector and springs have been redesigned to smooth and lighten the factory trigger pull on the DA CZ's as well as many clones such as those by Canik, IWI and Tanfoglio. Components are available individually or as kits, such as spring packages or short-reset kits. Some are specifically designed to work with Cajun components rather than factory ones, and these are marked on the website. If you have any questions, they'll be happy to help you assemble the combination of parts you need. Look for a detailed install article in the near future. CajunGunworks.com



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TOM McHALE

SEIKO PROSPEX AUTOMATIC DIVER

My four absolute daily carry essentials include gun, phone, knife and ... a watch. Checking that smartphone for time takes waaayyyyy longer than you think because of distractions like texts, emails, games, news and, well, you get it.



This particular Seiko has become my favorite and quite literal everyday wear. It's rock solid, seriously waterproof and the silicone band has proven comfortable and nearly indestructible. It's a classic automatic, so if you're wearing it, it's winding itself. Old school analog display means easy to read and no batteries to let you down. It'll even tell you the day and date.

I do have to confess what attracted me to this one is the cool green face and band. So, yeah, it looks good but performs even better. It's got some serious weight, too, so I guess in a pinch, a watch-side backhand would leave a serious mark. If you shop, you can find one for about \$400. SeikoUSA.com

JEREMY CLOUGH

D&L SIGHT PACK OPTIC BASE

While revolvers remain a stubbornly popular choice for self-defense (and for good reasons), they're much more difficult to equip with an optic than comparable autos. Enter D&L Sports, founded by innovative gunsmith Dave



Lauck, a previous *Pistolsmith of the Year*, whose products include exceptional semiautos, revolvers in both single- and double-action and precision rifles. The Sight Pack base mounts into factory rear sight holes on current K, L, N and X-Frame S&W revolvers (older guns may need these drilled), has an RMR/SRO footprint and includes integral iron sights as part of its rugged single-piece construction. These both co-witness through the listed optics and can be equipped with night sight inserts. DLSports.com



TOM McHALE

MAGLULA UPLULA

Okay, so I can be slow on the uptake sometimes, like "discovering" the binge-worthy streaming show everyone else has already seen.

The UpLULA has been around for years (and years), but it's just as handy now as the day it was released. Out of sheer laziness and habit, I've been loading thumb-busting pistol mags the old-fashioned way, well, forever. Finally tiring of trying to jam that last round or two in magazines, I've relocated the UpLULA from my wife's shooting bag to mine. Let's keep that between us.

The universal model will load most .380 ACP to .45 ACP single- or double-stack magazines. The clever design uses a table or shooting bench combined with the strength of your whole arm to overpower the most stubborn magazine springs. It's easier to watch than explain, so check out the video on the company's website to see exactly how it works. While you're there, check out the other offerings for .22LR and rifle magazines. Maglula.com



WHEN ANIMALS ATTACK:



Coyotes will eat just about anything. This makes them a bit unpredictable at close quarters.

Image: Public domain, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

THE TRUE MEASURE OF A MAN

You never really know how you will respond until you get there. Most of us grizzled gun-toting types fancy ourselves amateur heroes. We imagine that should we find ourselves in the midst of some unexpected life-threatening peril, we might rise to the occasion and do something epically manly. And then there was this guy.

Now before you get all judgy, appreciate that this is everyman. He is both a patient and a friend. He looks like us, and he acts like us. His genus is *Redneckopithecus Sapiens*, as is mine. He likes guns, and he lives for the outdoors. His experience could have happened to any one of us.

Field Philosophy

I don't hunt anymore. I used to a great deal and certainly do not harbor ill will toward those who enjoy the sport. It is simply that I don't much care for venison. Additionally, as I get older, it gets harder and harder to strike out in the predawn darkness for anything less than a house fire. However, back when I was a kid, my dad and I hunted together constantly.

My lifelong tally is a pair of deer and 13 wild turkeys, along with squirrels, doves and rabbits uncounted. I shot a yellow-hued coyote when I was about 12, whose pelt produced \$15. Those were 1978 dollars, mind you.

I have accounted for 61 water moccasins from my backyard lake. I've kept a record, but that's hardly hunting. My war against venomous reptiles is more of a lifelong existential fight for survival. I've had some bad experiences with poisonous snakes.

Of the lot, turkey hunting comes closest to tripping my trigger. Our Easter and Christmas dinners were never without a wild turkey when I was a kid. It was always a bit of a game to see who first discovered a piece of lead shot in their entrée.

Deer hunting always felt a bit too random. It always seemed bitterly cold

when we trudged out in pursuit of deer. Success or failure also seemed to be driven more by whether the beast happened to wander by than any skill on my part. By contrast, chasing wild turkey was an art.

Siting your blind was important, but you conversed with the bird. The mission was to convince him to drop by for a visit. As a guy, your tools that involved mimicking his fairer sex always seemed to be drenched in pathos. The poor randy gobbler just wanted a date, and he got a face full of number fours for his trouble. Back in my prime, when I chased girls myself, I suppose something similar could have happened to me.

AT THAT VERY MOMENT, A ROBUST COYOTE GRABBED HIM UNEXPECTEDLY FROM BEHIND AND CLAMPED DOWN VISE-LIKE ONTO HIS LEFT UPPER ARM.

What made it hard was the quarry. Wild turkeys are either too smart or too stupid to be terribly predictable. However, the inimitable satisfaction of cajoling a bird close enough to make him dinner was indeed unparalleled.

The Clinical Presentation

Our hero came to see me for an animal bite to his upper arm. I work in an urgent care clinic. Animal parts are background clutter. There was a bit of torn flesh, but it was mostly bruising. He earned the equivalent of a battle dressing, a tetanus shot and some antibiotics. Along the way, I got the story.

This is a big guy. He had been sitting at the base of a tree during the spring turkey season. He was chatting up a



A coyote about the size of a fairly large dog. However, they are tenacious in close quarters.


Image: Public domain, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture

gobbler who was now within sight and moseying his way. The man's heart rate went up commensurate with the moment as he shifted his shotgun behind the cover of his blind. At that very moment, a robust coyote grabbed him unexpectedly from behind and clamped down vise-like onto his left upper arm.

The man said the visceral shock was indescribable. He was utterly fixated on the approaching bird and had apparently exposed part of his shoulder to the predator as he shifted position. The coyote presumably was also on the stalk and simply lunged at the movement.

The hunter reflexively leaped to his feet. The coyote, for his part, clung on dogmatically. The man said the thing was shockingly heavy as it dangled from his injured limb. As I sat mesmerized by his story, I asked the obvious question, "Did you shoot the coyote?"

He responded, "Heck, no. I screamed like a little girl. My turkey call flew in one direction and my shotgun in another. I just ran around in circles trying to get that blasted thing off of me."

The bird was gone in an instant. Once the coyote realized his mistake, he let loose and beat feet as well. The man was ultimately none the worse for wear save his sore shoulder and a bit of wounded pride. He indeed lost the turkey, but he gained an epic story. 

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SCAN TO ENTER



**STREAMLIGHT
PROTAC 1L-1AA**

PLUS



**SPYDERCO
PARA 3
LIGHTWEIGHT**

The gun of the month for this issue of *American Handgunner* is the *Savage Stance*. This pistol from Savage Arms refines the micro-nine into a thin, easily concealable pistol that is built to be functional in the hand. With its aggressive surface textures, advanced slide serrations and ergonomic grip, *Stance* is designed to be comfortable when holstered and formidable when it needs to be. The *Stance* has a 3.2" stainless steel barrel, black nitride steel slide, stainless steel frame and glass-filled nylon grip. It comes with two magazines: one 7-round and one 8-round. The *Stance* is offered in Black, Gray and FDE.

The *ProTac 1L-1AA* from Streamlight produces 350 lumens of light with a beam distance of 160 meters. The 4.25" everyday carry light runs on a single lithium or alkaline battery. Run time on high is 1.3 hours; on low it's 14 hours. It has durable, anodized aluminum construction with an impact-resistant tempered glass lens and is waterproof to one meter for 30 minutes.

Spyderco's best-selling *Para 3 Lightweight* folding knife distilled all the key qualities of their *Para Military 2* model into a compact, carry-friendly format. Almost 30% lighter than its G-10-handled counterparts, the *Para 3 Lightweight* has an OAL of 7.21" and boasts linerless, open-backed construction and Spyderco's high-traction Bi-Directional Texture pattern. The knife's 2.92" full-flat-ground blade is crafted from CTS BD1N, a nitrogen-enriched high-carbon chromium steel.

Savage Arms' *Stance*, Spyderco's *Para 3 Lightweight* knife and Streamlight's *ProTac 1L-1AA* flashlight are prizes you'd want to own! Enter our giveaway for a chance to win! Go to AmericanHandgunner.com/giveaways. Or you can mail a postcard! —Jazz Jimenez

SAVAGE STANCE

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VALUE: \$479

PARA 3 LIGHTWEIGHT

MANUFACTURER: SPYDERCO; SPYDERCO.COM ; (800) 525-7770
VALUE: \$178

PROTAC 1L-1AA

MANUFACTURER: STREAMLIGHT; STREAMLIGHT.COM; (800) 523-7488
VALUE: \$50

TOTAL VALUE: \$707

JOHN LINEBAUGH: OLD SCHOOL GUNOLOGY



Lee Jurras and John Linebaugh.



An example of high-quality firearms artistry is found in this pair chambered in .500 Linebaugh.



Early Linebaugh .500 Bisley Model compared to one in .44 Magnum.



Special editions by John Linebaugh are the .500 Alaskan and the .475 African.



Packable, Portable and Powerful: The .500 Linebaugh.

“**W**here has all the time gone?” is a well-worn cliché, however, no one has ever been able to answer the question. And the older we get, the faster it seems to go. It only seems like a short time, but it happened 40 years ago. It was on the 4th of July, or as my late brother Terry Murbach always insisted, it was to be called Independence Day. We had had our family barbecue, and I was now home resting and relaxing and looking forward to a quiet weekend. It was not to be.

I received a phone call from a young man who said he was a revolversmith living outside of Cody, Wyo. His name was John Linebaugh and I

had never heard of him. He was very enthusiastic about his pet project, and he had my attention, although I must admit I had doubts. His reaction was to suggest he send me a test gun so I could see for myself. This is what he told me, “I’m sure my guns will stay on a car door-sized target to half a mile if you can hold ‘em. They are bigger guns, both in caliber and size. We only claim 50% to 90% over a .44 Magnum, 1,500 to 2,000 foot-pounds energy in 7½” or longer barrels.”

That seemed to me an exaggerated claim, but I held on. “Practical, this gun uses .45 Long Colt brass, bullets and readily available components. No brass forming, reaming, trimming, etc. No special dies or malarkey. Use readily available bullets, molds, powder, etc. It is a total custom sixgun in barrel lengths from 4¾” to 10” or 12”. It is packable in reasonable-length barrels and handy enough for use from defense to hunting. The guns hold to the heavy single-action tradition and are not specialized like the single-shot TCs. They can handle factory or equivalent loads and be at home under your pillow or in your belt, or be moved up the ladder to full potential with our recommended handloads and be used successfully on

the largest game. I’m old school (that means single-action) and use and build common sense sixguns.”

Easy Power

At the time the prevailing wisdom said .45 Colt was weak but after spending two months shooting this first test Linebaugh Custom Sixgun, I was thoroughly convinced everything John said was true. I did take a wooden dowel and mallet with me to the first shooting session. I thought I would have to pound cases out of the cylinder, but it just didn’t happen. All the loads I tried extracted easily. I had no stuck cases, no blown primers, not even flattened primers.

I loaded everything just the way John instructed me including sizing all bullets to .452” for the .451” custom barrel. I started with new Winchester-Western brass using CCI Magnum primers. Even with new cases I full-length resized them before loading. For bullets, I went with the standard Keith bullet, Lyman #454424 as well as 310 and 330 Keith-style bullets. I also sized the Lyman #457124, a 385-grain .45-70 bullet down to .452”. When my first article was published on this Linebaugh Sixgun, the editor decided not to publish the actual loads. The key to making



John gathers with three special friends: Gary Reeder, Ben Forkin and John Linebaugh.

everything work so well was and is tight tolerances and smooth, properly dimensioned cylinders.

Shop Tour

In July 1985, Brian Pearce and I loaded up my Ford Bronco with plenty of ammunition and big bore sixguns along with our sleeping bags and headed over to Cody to visit John. He was living with his wife and two sons, Dustin and Cole, in a small cabin 40 miles outside of Cody. There was no running water, and the family had to carry water from Line Creek in buckets. Half of the cabin was used for living, and the other half for gunsmithing. A loft provided the sleeping area. We rolled our sleeping bags out on the floor, got up the next morning and had a great time shooting .45 Colt sixguns at long-range. Twenty years later Dustin Linebaugh, a superb sixgunsmith in his own right, his wife, and two young sons visited me and rolled out their sleeping bags in my family room.

John built me two custom .45 Colt sixguns, one being a heavy-duty, 5½" Abilene. This gun started as a .44

Dustin Linebaugh carries on the tradition of the Linebaugh sixguns.



John's first article on John Linebaugh appeared in American Handgunner in 1985.

New Speed, New Power for the COLT .45

Here's a single action

Magnum, and John re-chambered the cylinder and fitted a new barrel. My friend, the late Charles Able, furnished ebony stocks and over the years, this gun has been used with 260-grain and 300-grain bullets at 1,200 and 1,100 fps. The other one started life as a 2nd Generation .357 Magnum Colt New Frontier. I found a 4¾" .45 Colt barrel and John re-chambered the original cylinder to a tight .45 Colt.

For many years both S&W and Colt supplied their .45 sixguns with oversized chambers. So much so one could often actually see the bulge in fired brass. This

resulted in short case life and mediocre accuracy. With my "new" New Frontier, there was no bulging of brass, fired cases were removed easily from the cylinder, and accuracy was such this .45 New Frontier was a tack driver. I found 20 grains of #4227 under the Keith bullet would shoot one-hole groups at 25 yards. It can still do it, but alas, I cannot.

Big Gun Origins

In the early days, John was struggling driving a cement truck and trying to do gunsmithing and I found out

XL750

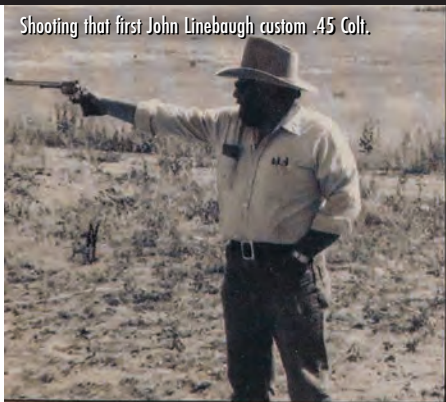
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Shooting that first John Linebaugh custom .45 Colt.



Author demonstrates that full house loads in Linebaugh's custom .45 does have considerable recoil.

Comparison of the .500 Linebaugh and .44 Magnum.



there wasn't much money for them for Christmas. So Diamond Dot and I went shopping and had a very enjoyable time coming up with gifts for the family. The hardest thing to find was Lincoln Logs. We felt so good about being able to help them and certainly did not look for anything in return. However, it was not to be. John called me and said I should send him a base gun.

By now, John was building really big guns. He trimmed .348 Winchester brass to 1.410", reaming the inside of the neck, and the result was the .500 Linebaugh. When my base gun returned, it was chambered in this new, extremely powerful cartridge. Using full loads with 400- and 420-grain bullets resulted in exceptionally heavy recoil. The Ruger Bisley Model, with its grip frame designed for heavy recoil, made the .500 Linebaugh usable.

When it looked like Winchester was going to drop .348 brass, John decided it was best to come up with another cartridge. His favorite rifle was the lever action .45-70. He trimmed this brass to the same length, loaded it with .475" hard-cast bullets, and the result was the .475 Linebaugh. In the early days, it was necessary to make brass for both of these sixguns. However, it's much simpler today with properly formed and head-stamped brass for both cartridges available.

The Shootist

In November/December 1984, John published the first issue of the magazine called *The Shootist* — dedicated to The Old School Sixgunner. John said of this

new endeavor: "With this first issue of *The Shootist* we hope to start the bible of what is nearly a lost art, the art of Old School Handgunning. We dedicate this first issue fittingly to Elmer Keith, who was indeed a shootist who brought us from the Black Powder era into the smokeless age, polishing and refining his ideas and knowledge with time. What we hope to do with *The Shootist* is to keep this knowledge alive and circulate it to those who, like ourselves, consider themselves a part of the Old West and Old School style shooter... Our word is Practical."

From the first issue in 1984 to the last issue in 1994, John published 15 issues. They were basically photocopies of hand-typed articles just as the writer submitted them; however, the information was and remains priceless. John often said he didn't like big guns, just big calibers and just as with Elmer Keith, he looked upon the sixgun as something that was easy to pack, practical, powerful and could be carried all day and then placed in a bedroll at night. He opened all new vistas to the art of six-gunning. The above-mentioned sixgun he built for me is a 5½" Bisley Model .500 Linebaugh.

Anything In The Lower 48

John became a close friend and I learned to listen to him when it came to anything about sixguns. Over the years, we came to the same conclusion. A large caliber heavy bullet at 1,200 fps is more than adequate for hunting situations and will shoot through just about anything that walks in the lower 48. More muzzle velocity simply flattens out the trajectory, which is rarely of concern for the up-close sixgun hunter.

I settled on 300-320 grains bullets for the .45 Colt heavy duty sixguns using 21.5 grains of W296

or H110 with the 310-grain Keith Bullet, which gives me 1,200 fps from a Ruger 7½" .45 Colt Blackhawk. This load is only for heavy-duty sixguns. With the .500 Linebaugh, 29 grains of the same powders under a 440-grain bullet gives the same muzzle velocity from a 5½" barrel. Needless to say, I cannot handle any of these loads at this stage of my life, so with the .45 Colt, 10 grains of W231 gives me 860 fps, while nine grains in the .500 results in 825 fps. They are still powerful loads and manageable for me.

A Legend Lost

For decades John had two carry six-guns: a 4" S&W .45 Colt for everyday use and a 5½" .500 when traveling off the beaten path. In later years, he also discovered the .45 ACP 1911. He always stayed true to his Old School Gunology. John was born in Missouri in November 1955, and like Elmer Keith, he migrated West settling in Wyoming. He was called Home on March 19, 2023. One of his family members wrote the following for his memorial service:

"He smiled his signature smile as he pulled down his old cowboy hat. I asked if this was goodbye; he just shook his head and chuckled. He said that this wasn't goodbye, just a simple see you later on the other side. I asked him how is this 'see you later' when you're already gone? He said in a cowboy tone, 'Because one day we will meet again, maybe not here on earth, but one day in another world.' I have asked him if so, where would we meet? Then he smiled as he looked up to the sky, 'It'll be in greener pastures,' he said, 'on the back of two untamed mustangs, that is when I'll see you again.' Then I watched as he pulled on his boots and walked out the door. His old-timer's laugh still filled the room. You could still smell the scent of sagebrush and gunpowder. He laughed as he watched our tears fall. 'Stop your crying,' he said. 'I am up here with the good ol' boys, catching up on lost time. Stop your tears,' he said, 'for I am up here with my Lord and Savior. Stop your tears,' he said, 'for I had done my time on this old earth. And boy ... It was one hell of a run. Stop your tears,' he said, 'for I left the cowboy way ... with my boots on.'"

John, keep the beans bubbling and the bacon sizzling, but I have one request. Pick out a mild Mustang for me and I will see you soon.



This custom-cased set of Linebaugh sixguns consists of a .500 and a .475.

EGGSHELL SKULL: THE CASE OF THE VULNERABLE VICTIM

SITUATION: A 250-lb. bouncer smashes the head of a brain surgery patient into the floor ... and it's deadly force time.

LESSON: Expect to have to overcome the myth that shooting an "unarmed man" can never be justified ... and don't expect the aftermath to be either quick or cheap.

For any new readers, it's important to understand the deadly force of a firearm is justified against another human being only in a situation of immediate, otherwise unavoidable danger of death or great bodily harm to oneself or another innocent person. That situation requires three simultaneously present criteria: ability, opportunity and jeopardy (AOJ). Ability means the opponent has the power to kill or cripple an innocent party. Opportunity means the aggressor is capable of doing so in the immediate here and now. Jeopardy means he is manifesting by words and or actions an obvious intent to kill or cripple.

While the ability factor is most obvious if the opponent has a gun, knife, or other lethal weapon, it also exists in a situation known as "disparity of force." This means the opponent is apparently "unarmed" but has such a great physical advantage over you, the defender, that if the attack continues, it is likely to leave you dead or severely injured. Disparity of force can take many forms: a larger or stronger assailant, force of numbers with multiple attackers, an opponent with disproportionately high skill in hand-to-hand fighting, position of disadvantage (meaning even if you were equally matched at the start, the opponent has you down and is beating your head against the concrete and you can't break free), male attacking female (in most cases), and, cardinal to the case we're about to examine, the able-bodied attacking the handicapped, even if the disability has taken place in the course of the attack in question.

Multiple elements of the above came together in the case we'll examine. As regular readers know, I normally use real names here. This is one of the rare occasions where the defendant was so embarrassed by the experience and so eager to put it behind him that he asked me not to use his real name. At his request, I will call him "Mr. Bell." I have to extend similar courtesy to the involved parties on the other side. However, the real names of the attorneys and judges, and the jurisdiction, are used here.

Setting The Stage

It was mid-March of 2018 in Pasco County, Fla. Over the last several years, Mr. Bell had endured multiple neurosurgeries for brain cancer. The surgery and radiation therapy had saved his life but at a terrible cost. A successful transmission engineer, he had been declared 100% disabled and had been unable to work for the last five years. His wife had apparently not taken the part about "in sickness and in health" too seriously and had run off with her new boyfriend, a former friend of Mr. Bell's, known to Bell to be a 250-lb. ex-bouncer. The estranged couple had a three-and-a-half-year-old son. Mr. Bell's mother, whom we'll call "Mom," a woman of senior citizen years, had moved into the house to take care of Mr. Bell and the little boy.

On that day, a custody hearing had allowed the Ex some weekends with her son, with pickup scheduled for 5 p.m. The Ex and the Bouncer showed up at 1 p.m. They were told in no uncertain terms the child would not be released until the stated 5 p.m.

When the Bouncer and the Ex returned at the appointed hour, Mom would state later that when she met them outside, the Bouncer roughly bumped her with his shoulder and had told her son about it.

Continued on next page

AYOOB FILES

Inside the house, Mr. Bell turned on the video recorder of his smartphone.

What it records is not pretty. The Bouncer begins a litany of disparaging remarks. Mr. Bell's father has come out as gay, and the Bouncer accuses Bell of having similar tendencies. I will leave the exact wording to your imagination, but the Bouncer continues to brag about his own sexual prowess and denigrate Mr. Bell's. The Mom calls him on it and accuses him of assaulting her in the driveway, and instead of denying it, the Bouncer sneers, "I don't remember that."

Escalation

Mr. Bell has been a shooter since his youth and has several firearms locked in a safe in his bedroom. He also has a license to carry and keeps his .45 ACP GLOCK 36 loaded at the bedside in his locked bedroom. However, The Ex who once shared that bedroom has a key to it. Mr. Bell realizes she has opened the bedroom door and led the Bouncer in there. Bell enters the room and is heard on the recording ordering them out. The Ex refuses to leave, claiming

she is looking for her laptop and the Bouncer refuses to leave also. Realizing the tenor of the meeting is such that it is not a good idea for either his Ex or her new boyfriend to have access to a loaded gun, he picks up the .45 and secures it by holding it down at his side out of reach.

Throughout, both the Ex and the Bouncer have been complaining about the video and playing to it at the same time. The Bouncer starts yelling that Mr. Bell has a gun and is pointing it at him, which is not supported by the video. The Bouncer shouts for help from the police. Mr. Bell orders them out of the bedroom, and they finally comply. Bell sets the pistol back on the nightstand, closes the door behind them, and follows them back into the living area.

Assault

In the living room area, the Ex suddenly grabs the recording smartphone from Mr. Bell's hand. Bell attempts to snatch it back ... and by all accounts, the 250-lb. Bouncer tackles him and smashes him to the floor with what even the Bouncer will admit was a hard hit.

The Bouncer will later deny it, but Mr. Bell and his Mom both swear the Bouncer then grabs Bell by the throat and head and smashes his head repeatedly into the floor. The Bouncer will

later admit he knew at the time of Bell's many neurosurgeries and the fact that his brain was in a delicate condition. Blood pours from Bell's face. He is heard on the recording saying to the Bouncer, "You broke my nose!"

Mom kicks the Bouncer in the crotch, distracting him from his attack on her son. As the Bouncer is heard on the video snarling, "Get the #@*&% off me!" Mom experiences blows to her legs, which will leave telltale bruises. But she has opened a window for Mr. Bell to get to his feet and stagger to the bedroom ... and retrieve the .45.

The Shooting

From the door of the bedroom, Bell levels the GLOCK at the Bouncer and orders him to get out of the house. Instead, Bell will testify, the Bouncer lunges toward him in an aggressive posture similar to the tackle he had successfully employed moments ago. When they are approximately 10 feet apart, Mr. Bell opens fire.

Bang ... bang ... bang ... a longer pause and a final bang, and it's over. The Bouncer has scuttled out the door on all fours, the last shot hitting the doorframe some eight feet above the floor.

The first part of the nightmare is over. The second part now begins.

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Mom has been on the phone to 911. Police arrive quickly. The dispatcher tells Mom to bring the little boy out, and she does. Mr. Bell then cooperatively exits the house, with multiple .223 patrol rifles leveled at him, and is pruned out and taken into custody. (Brief aside for fellow gun people: The Pasco County Sheriff's Office is not only well-trained in arrest techniques but apparently has an excellent weapons policy. In their well-written reports, one officer refers to pointing his HK 416 patrol rifle at Bell and another describes a high-end AR15 used for the same purpose.) Their reports also describe the battered, bleeding condition of Mr. Bell's face and head.

In custody, Bell waives his Miranda rights and answers all questions. His traumatized head, held together after all the brain surgeries with a Titanium plate the size of an adult man's palm, was giving him agonizing, burning pain. Asked if the final shot high into the doorway was a warning shot, he answered at first that no, it was a shot fired in self-defense; asked the same question later in the interrogation, he allowed that perhaps it might have been. This appeared to be an inconsistency in his testimony, always "indicia of guilt" to police detectives. The

hospital had reported five separate gunshot wounds on the Bouncer, all behind the lateral midline, and that, along with the fact the investigators had not yet seen the video from Mr. Bell's camera, all led to Mr. Bell being arrested and charged with attempted murder with a firearm.

Court Proceedings

Florida law allows for a pre-trial hearing, essentially a mini-trial, with both sides presenting evidence and the defense requesting the charges be dismissed. Judge Kemba Lewis did not accept some exculpatory evidence and declined to dismiss. This one was going to trial.

The trial took place in Dade City, Fla, in the first week of February 2023 in the court of Judge Gregory Groger. Opposing one another was an all-star cast of attorneys. Mr. Bell had hired the firm of Hendry & Parker. Don Hendry was the older of the pair, and the most experienced, with many self-defense cases under his belt. Kris Parker was a skilled orator. He gave the opening and closing statements, while Hendry handled most of the direct examinations of his own witnesses and cross-examination of the other side's. At the prosecution's table were Hannah Tait, a young but tal-

ented attorney who had been working the case from early on, and Andy Garcia, a long-standing and highly respected veteran of the courtroom as lead prosecutor.

As an expert witness for the defense, I was not allowed to be in the courtroom until after I had testified, so I had to rely on the impressions of those who were there during the state's case. While the prosecution usually tries to keep armed citizens who could identify with the defendant off the jury, that's tough in Florida: The six jurors and two alternates impaneled included several men and women who owned firearms, some with permits to carry, and one who admitted he owned so many guns he couldn't give an exact count.

Some who were in the courtroom when the Ex and the Bouncer testified thought they were under the influence of something, claiming their testimony seemed slow and confused. The general consensus was Don Hendry absolutely destroyed the credibility of each of them on cross. The lead investigator admitted he had never been trained in homicide investigation and had not seen the critical video of the incident prior to making the decision to arrest and charge.

When it was the defense's turn, those who had treated Mr. Bell testified to just how disabled he was at the

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time of the shooting. The brain surgery had affected his eyesight, with one eye looking far left and the other looking far right. (One doctor said, “Like a hammerhead shark,” having to constantly turn his head to focus on what was happening around him. The prosecution would, in closing argument, turn this into “hammerhead shark, a predator seeking its prey.”) The medical testimony spoke to his terrible vulnerability to head blows and made clear the fact it was something close to a miracle that he had been able to survive the assault, fight back, and drive his attacker away from himself, his mother and his child.

What I can “testify” to is what happened when I was in the courtroom speaking for the defense. Among other things, we were able to establish that a man lunging at you as if to take a gun is not an unarmed man but a man reaching for a gun. Judge Groger, in pre-trial motions in limine, determined the jury could not see the video I had done showing a man 10 feet away with a gun could be disarmed in three seconds ... but did allow a live demonstration. Kris Parker, who towers over me and is

much younger, faced me 10 feet away directly in front of the jury box holding a dummy GLOCK as Don Hendry ran the stopwatch. I disarmed him in ... three seconds.

Whether you are shot in the back or the front is determined by whether or not the point of the bullet’s entry is in front of, or behind, the lateral midline. I showed the jury this line starts at the crown of the skull, passes down across the ears and across the shoulder seam of your shirt, down the side seams of that shirt and of the pants (or the common peroneal nerve).

The Bouncer stated from the beginning he was facing Bell when the first shot struck him in the shoulder near the neck. It was a graze wound, with the “skin tags” clearly showing front-to-back bullet travel ... consistent with a man whose upper body was forward coming toward the man with the gun. The second hit, according to the alleged “victim” himself, was in the shoulder — a classic entry wound just behind the top edge of the shoulder, a classic (larger and more ragged) exit wound in the tricep near the armpit, and totally consistent with a front-to-back shot on a man charging the shooter in a “football tackle” position. The Bouncer testified from the beginning and at

trial that when he came under fire, he went down on all fours and turned toward the door. The third shot went left to right across a fat roll in the Bouncer’s lower back, near-missing the spine, when he was down on all fours in a posture that would look to a visually impaired man (among other things, there was medical testimony in the case that a broken nose causes lachrymation, tearing, which is literally “water in your eyes”) like a man still lunging toward the shooter. The fourth shot, of course, never touched the Bouncer. He was out of the hospital in a couple of hours. His wounds weren’t much more than “boo-boos.” Our demonstration got that across to the jury.

The defendant took the stand after I did. Nearly five years of therapy had made him much more balanced and poised. I was told he did great in both direct and cross-examination.

The Verdict

The case went to the jury on Friday afternoon, the trial having begun Monday morning. While the six jurors were in deliberation, Hendry and Parker spoke with the two alternates. Both young women told them that they would have voted Not Guilty, and one of them said, “The only thing I

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would have done differently from your client was to make sure the bastard was dead.” You can’t get a better outcome than that when you’re defense counsel in a self-defense shooting, and approximately an hour after entering deliberations, the jury came back with a verdict of Not Guilty.

When it was over, the defendant told me the lead investigator came up to him, shook his hand, and apologized for having arrested him. The prosecutors shook his hand too ... but did not apologize, Bell told me.

Lessons

Realize that disparity of force is not known to most citizens in the jury pool and, apparently, not even known to some attorneys. Lawyers learn in law school the “eggshell skull rule” is that if you punch someone with a condition like Bell’s in the head and he dies, you are guilty of murder or at least manslaughter even if you thought “It was just a punch in the head.” They don’t realize it constitutes disparity of force and justifies the use of deadly force in self-defense by the person with the enhanced vulnerability of the medical condition.

Don’t waive your Miranda rights and talk at length to investigators, particularly when you are hurt with a


serious head injury! You’re just not in shape to do it. Most defense lawyers recommend, “Say nothing and demand a lawyer.” I and some others with experience in this recommend a limited statement similar to the “public safety statement” generally required from cops in officer-involved shootings. It would sound like, “This man attacked me. I will testify against him. There is the evidence, there are the witnesses, and you will have my full cooperation after I’ve spoken with counsel, which I now request.”

Be able to show you were neither reckless nor irresponsible. From the beginning, a core tenet of the prosecution theory was that Bell was irresponsible and reckless for leaving a gun where his toddler could find it and firing wildly while visually impaired and endangering the same child. By the time the jury went into the deliberation room, the jury knew the .45 had been in a locked room inaccessible to the child until the Ex unexpectedly unlocked the door, and thereafter Bell was safely between the little boy and the bedroom, and when the shooting started the kid was always at least 10 feet out of the line of fire. They also implied a brain surgery patient with admittedly impaired vision was reckless and irresponsible to fire a gun; it

was not lost on the jury that he hit the man he was shooting at three times out of four, a 75% hit ratio higher than most police departments.

Be able to show a violent attacker lunging for your gun isn’t an unarmed man, he’s a man reaching for a gun and capable of gaining control of it quickly.

Strongly consider belonging to a post-self-defense support plan. The best defense lawyers charge hundreds of dollars per hour and take countless hours to prepare for and carry through a trial. Hendry and Parker gave Bell a helluva deal on fees, as I did, but being unable to work, the cost of being under this Sword of Damocles for a few weeks short of half a decade left him with a severe financial deficit. Under Florida’s 10-20-Life Law, if convicted, Bell would have been looking at a minimum/mandatory 25 years to life in prison. Personally, I’m on the advisory board of the Armed Citizens Legal Defense Network, which would have paid all legal fees and costs had Bell been a member.

The man I’ve called Mr. Bell is in severe financial straits right now. If you care about justice and have disposable income, you can donate to his GoFundMe page at [GoFundMe.com/f/help-me-recover-from-a-wrongful-accusation](https://www.gofundme.com/help-me-recover-from-a-wrongful-accusation). 

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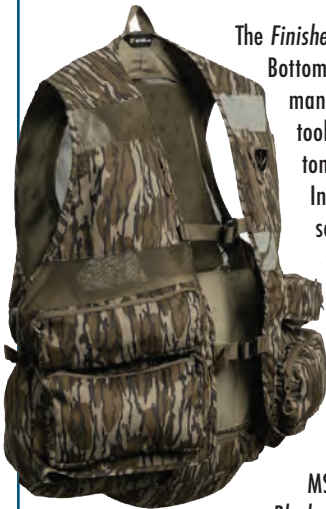
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Taylor's & Company



Taylor's & Company has added the *1875 Outlaw Revolver* to their Lifestyle Series. Taylor's & Company partnered with Uberti to create this faithful reproduction of the 1875 Remington single-actions that kept the solid frame and overall styling of Remington's 1858 percussion models. The 9mm revolver is offered in 7.5" and 5.5" barrel lengths. It has a smooth walnut finish and an all-blued finish, forged steel frame with a rear frame notch and fixed front blade sight. MSRP: \$669.75. For more info: (540) 722-2017, TaylorFirearms.com

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Galco's *Royal Guard 2.0* is now available for the GLOCK 43X with and without red dot sights. Made of premium horsehide, the *Royal Guard 2.0* has the rough side of the leather out for greater stability in the pants, with the smooth side of the leather against the handgun for a slicker draw feel. The holster features a butt-forward cant, a raised sweat guard and a metal-reinforced mouth. MSRP: \$209. For more info: (800) 874-2526, GalcoGunleather.com



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The *Waypoint 400* is an updated model of Streamlight's *Waypoint 300*. The new version of the rechargeable pistol-grip spotlight offers up to 1,400 lumens of ultra-bright white light with 400,000 candela and a beam distance of 1,265 meters for enhanced down-range lighting capability. The portable light can be used either as a handheld mobile searchlight or as a hands-free scene light to illuminate an area. MSRP: \$240.67. For more info: (800) 523-7488, Streamlight.com



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Kershaw Knives

Kershaw Knives has come up with the first OTF auto: the *Livewire*. It has a 3.3" CPM 20CV blade with a stonewashed finish, a black-anodized aluminum handle and a curved, staircase-like release button. Overall length is 8.1"; closed length is 4.8". MSRP: \$304. For more info: (800) 325-2891, KershawKaiUSA.com



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RANGE DYNAMICS SUBSONIC 5.7X28MM AMMO

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Fiocchi announced the availability of its latest cartridge — the *Range Dynamics Subsonic 5.7x28mm Ammo*. Sporting a 62-grain FMJ bullet, the *Range Dynamics Subsonic* is the ideal option for high-volume suppressed or unsuppressed fun on the range. Available in 50-round boxes, *Range Dynamics Subsonic* is ideal for personal defense carbine training and semi-auto pistol use. MSRP: About \$57.99 per box of 50. For more info: (417) 725-4118, FiocchiUSA.com



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Versacarry is expanding their leather options with the *Vintage Series*. The water buffalo leather in the series goes through a special tanning process to give it a stylish look and a durable finish. Vintage leather is now available in the *Guardian Holster* and *Underground Belts*. The optics compatible *Guardian OWB holster* now features three designs: the *Luna*, *Horizon* and *Arc Angel* (in photo). Holsters and belts are offered in several color combinations. MSRP: \$54.99 for the *Arc Angel* holster. For more info: (979) 778-2000, Versacarry.com

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The *Papa Delta* was designed for those that need lightweight, easily concealable options. This knife will disappear — under clothing, on a belt or in a pocket — but it will be ready when needed. With an OAL of 5.88", this knife is the ideal concealed carry knife. The *Papa Delta* has a 1.63" skeletonized 1095 blade with *Midnight Bronze Cerakote* and includes a low-profile *Kydex* sheath. MSRP: \$150. For more info: (208) 542-0113, TOPSKnives.com

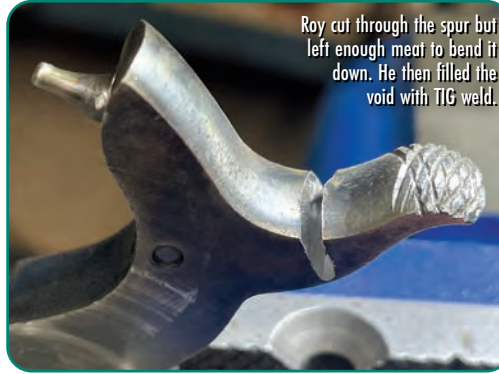


smoothing with various wet-or-dry grits and a final bead blast and I had a much better hammer spur in hand.

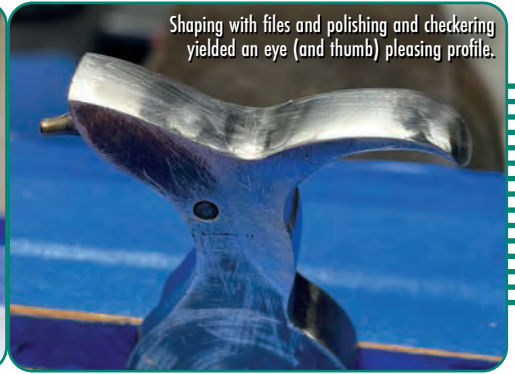
Final Touches

I was originally going to hand-checker the end of the spur for a better purchase with my thumb but spotted my skateboard tape stash. Skateboard tape is an awfully handy tool around the shop and once applied to a pistol front strap, back strap, grip area or wherever, the term “non-slip” gets a new meaning. It works great, and the self-adhesive on the back of the tape really stays put. So, a bit of tape and some trimming and I was almost there.

I used some touch-up cold blue to make things match the blued hammer and installed my final product. You



Roy cut through the spur but left enough meat to bend it down. He then filled the void with TIG weld.



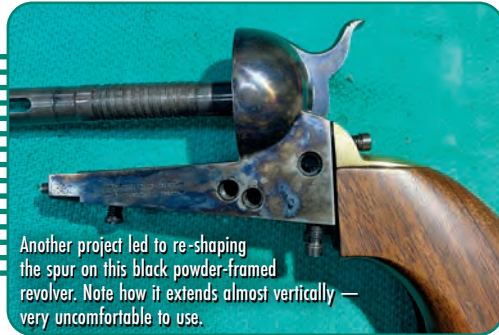
Shaping with files and polishing and checkering yielded an eye (and thumb) pleasing profile.

can see from the photos it reaches past the circumference of the scope allowing me to get a good purchase on that spur for cocking. It changed the whole character of the gun and suddenly made shooting it fun rather than a frustrating ordeal filled with much fussing and grumbling.

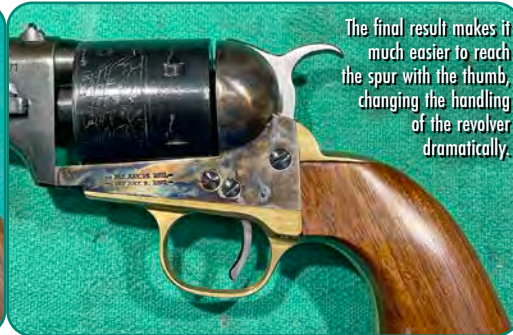
In the same way, I altered the shape of a black-powder frame .38 cartridge

revolver I have. A typical Italian import, the hammer spur was way too high to reach easily. I cut through the spur almost all the way, bent it down slightly, then filled the gap with TIG weld. More filing, shaping and polishing offered a much more comfortable reach to the spur and changed the entire feel of the gun when shooting. Don't be afraid to tackle simple jobs like this. Just think beforehand about what you want to accomplish, then move ahead slowly.

I've re-shaped hammer spurs on other single-action revolvers, DA revolvers and even H&R Handi-Rifles, and it almost always makes the gun easier to handle and more pleasing to shoot. Keep this in mind if you're confronted with a recalcitrant hammer spur “situation.”



Another project led to re-shaping the spur on this black powder-framed revolver. Note how it extends almost vertically — very uncomfortable to use.



The final result makes it much easier to reach the spur with the thumb, changing the handling of the revolver dramatically.

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GUN RIGHTS

Alan Korwin



NO MORE SUGAR COATING: THE NATION IS IN TROUBLE

I have been writing gun-rights columns for decades, defending and explaining our rights to arms. I've always assumed the laws we enact are meaningful and matter. It seems to me the truth of that may be fading. If the legislature has been corrupted, along with the judiciary and the executive, the wording of our laws does not matter. It's said, "A good lawyer knows the law. A great lawyer knows the judge." We're witnessing this. The political parties, where only one is perceived as the pro-gun-rights party, look more like a uni-party, not fully on the right side.

I've become adept at reading legislative language, understanding the legislative intent and communicating that in plain English for gun owners. Lawyers, politicians, journalists, activists and friends have called on me to help understand the now insane panoply of gun laws we have. We have way too many incomprehensible, self-contradictory and worse, often total infringement laws. Who your judge is counts for too much.

People have told me my books, like the *Arizona Gun Owner's Guide*, are really doing the states' dirty work by telling people what they cannot do. On balance, my books also tell people how to arm up, own a machine gun, travel safely armed and shoot bad guys legally (but only when they need shooting), so it's a mixed bag.

Law? What Law?

It hurts to say, but today the rule of law barely applies. Our Constitution is all but abandoned. Speedy trial? Fuggedaboutit. Most criminal court results are now from coerced pleas, and jury trials are rare. Constitutional defenses? Laughed at, rarely allowed. How long has it been since warrants, "particularly describing the place to be searched and the persons or things to be seized" (4th Amendment), have been fairly applied? People in legislatures do whatever

suits them and don't even pay the lip service of, "Let's see if the courts will allow it." If there's a question, they ought to know better than to try. When I wrote the unabridged *Gun Laws of America*, in my naiveté, I thought here, at last, we have all the federal statutes controlling guns, all 271 of them. To quote a failed candidate for president, what difference does it make if the rules are suspended by fiat, ignorance and a lawyer cabal?

The rule of law now barely applies to citizenship. Now anybody can become a citizen, which implies a right to arms (by sneaking in and going to states that issue papers). Worse, everyone interested seems to be a natural born Citizen — the specifically spelled out constitutional requirement for who can run for president. Only full Americans can do that, but candidate after candidate lacks an American parent or was born elsewhere. No one watches or cares. Citizenship means allegiance to one country, subject to armed military service and the place where you vote.

Good For The Goose ...


The effect on your gun rights is monumental. The U.S. Supreme Court has clearly and repeatedly determined "the people," as in the Second Amendment and (four other places in the Bill of Rights) is essentially the body politic, those of us legitimately here and subject to our laws, military service, paying taxes, you know — citizens. The idea that foreigners (or partial foreigners) can run for president raises the issue — can illegal aliens legally own guns here? Why not? Aren't there controls any longer? The largest single category of prohibited people in the NICS background check system are migrants, undocumented workers, paperless people, foreigners — illegal aliens.

I fear this question is no longer meaningful. If a person can sneak in, then go to New York State, where new law enables them to vote — then on what basis can they exercise (or be denied) the right to arms we prize so highly? You think January 6 was an

insurrection? We are building the foundation of a real insurrection, a revolt of rights-denied wannabes with no fundamental attachment to this land the rest of us adore.

Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton, Adams and the rest wanted us armed for that dire emergency when resistance to tyranny and the fate of the nation depended on an armed populace ("the people") capable of repelling invaders, stopping tyranny, enforcing law in the absence of law enforcement and preventing Old Glory from being discarded for flags of cartoons, rainbows and unicorns. We are perilously close.

At the risk of repeating myself, it's Barack's surprisingly salient remark, once again, "... cling to your guns and Bibles." Faith gives strength, but power, that comes from the barrel of a gun. Government exercises that power without qualms, as mass-murderer communist Chinese dictator Mao Tse Tung demonstrated. President Reagan wisely added that power comes from the barrel of a pen, which is what I'm using while any guns near me rest idle. And we need all of these powers more than yet another Supreme Court decision or another statute.

Author and pundit Ken Royce, writing as Boston T. Party (*Boston's Gun Bible*, Javelin Press, 2002), pointed out if you depend on the Supreme Court or legislatures for your rights, you'll be sorely disappointed. They can turn on a dime and ignore rule of law. The only real power is what you personally hold and exercise. It's no longer Democrats vs. Republicans. It's government vs. you. 

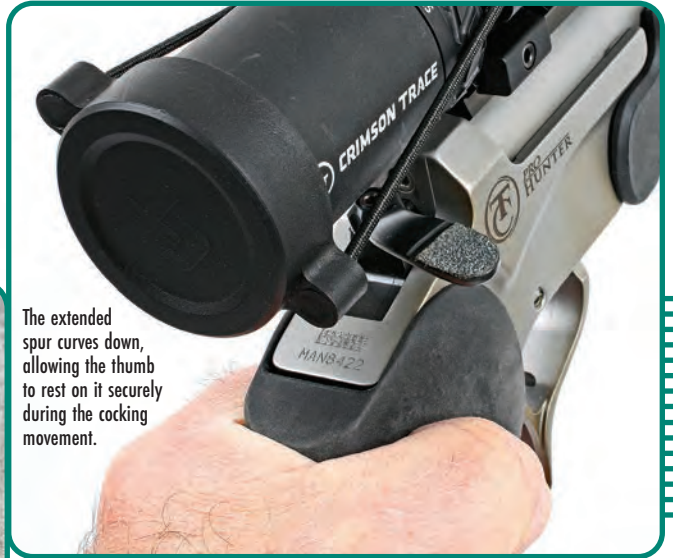
Award-winning author, writer, consultant and musician Alan Korwin has written 14 books, 10 of them on gun law, and has advocated for gun rights for more than three decades. Now writing his 15th book, Why Science May Be Wrong, see his work or reach him at GunLaws.com.



HAMMER SPUR HAPPINESS

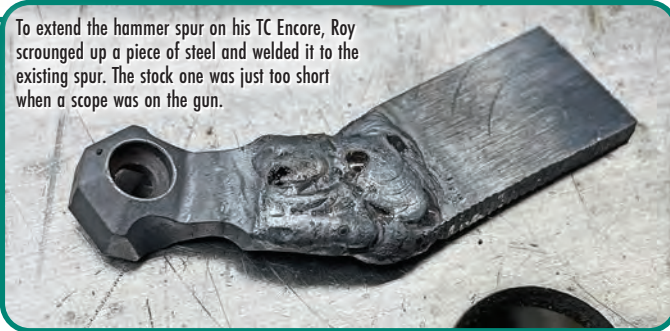


The final install showed the mod was a success and now there was plenty of access to the hammer spur for cocking.



The extended spur curves down, allowing the thumb to rest on it securely during the cocking movement.

To extend the hammer spur on his TC Encore, Roy scrounged up a piece of steel and welded it to the existing spur. The stock one was just too short when a scope was on the gun.



After finally finding a newer TC Encore in .308, I snapped it up, looking forward to testing it in my backyard range. I scoped it with a Crimson Trace rifle scope, promptly discovering even with the supplied nifty TC Hammer Spur adjusted sideways, it was all but impossible to cock the hammer. Really?

It seemed to me it would have been an obvious issue at the factory level, but I think with S&W taking over the line some years ago and their general lack of interest in it, such things could happen. They have since closed down the TC brand, much to the dismay of fans everywhere. But

receiver and .308 barrel, and the ability to swap barrels and calibers sweetens the deal. But I had to do something about that hammer spur situation.

The stock spur is secured to the top of the hammer with an Allen head screw. Where things went awry is the spur itself is simply too short, especially if you use a rifle-style scope with a lens bigger than an average pistol scope. Since these guns can shoot sub-1" groups at 100 yards, I didn't want to limit myself with a 2x pistol scope and a narrow field of view.

Work The Problem

I always start a new project by simply deciding what I want to be able to do with the gun when I am finished.

Extending the existing hammer spur would work — but how? I thought about making a new spur using my milling machine, but then it dawned on me I could just shape a spur extension out of mild steel and TIG weld it to the existing spur. That takes advantage of the stock attachment bolt, making things much easier.

I band-sawed a piece of scrap steel into a rough shape, then TIG welded it to the existing hammer spur. If you don't weld, this is a \$20 job at any shop so don't let that scare you away. It's also always just a bit intimidating to look at the rough part after being welded. It's easy to think, oh Lord, I'll never get that looking right. But there are few things I enjoy more than file work, so that's just what I did — and you can too.

After a half-hour or so, it started to look like I was going to win this war after all. I re-shaped the welded piece, blending it to the original spur, shaping the curve to clear my scope lens. When I had it roughed out, I installed it and found I had guessed right, and things were going to work out just fine. More hand-shaping,

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Some initial rough filing helped Roy to sort of eyeball things to see if it was working out or not.



Note the original screw hole from the stock spur.



Various grits of wet-or-dry abrasive papers, some cold blue and skateboard tape rounded things out.



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