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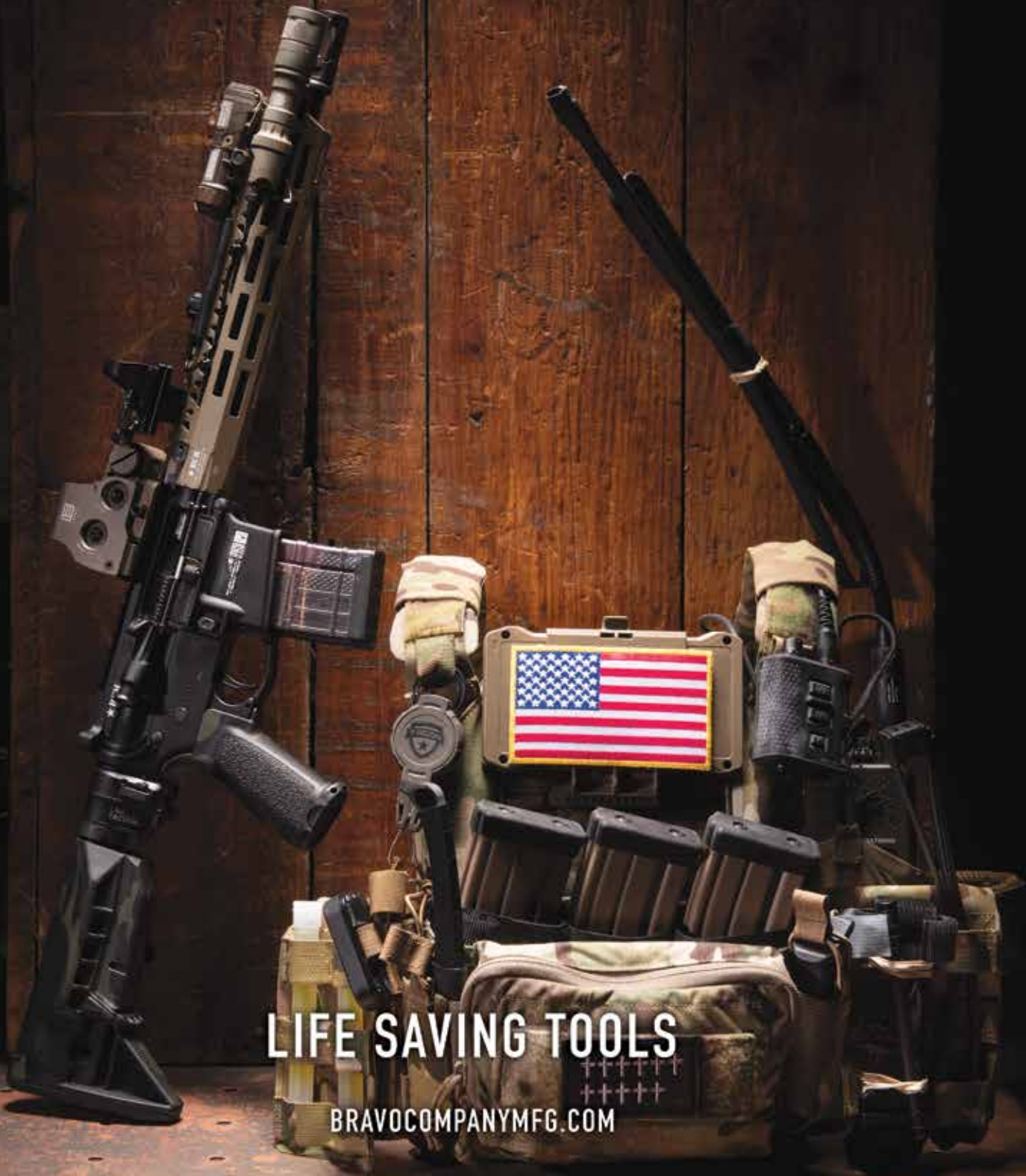
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THE STOEGER STR-9 FAMILY  
GREAT SHOOTING  
ON A BUDGET!  
Brent T. Wheat

**FEBRUARY 2024, VOL. 70, NUMBER 2, 830TH ISSUE**

**COLUMNS**

- 8 CROSSFIRE**  
Letters To The Editor  
*GUNS Staff*
- 14 HANDLOADING**  
BP .44 Conicals  
*John Taffin*
- 16 OPTICS**  
Open Sights  
*Wayne van Zwoil*
- 18 SHOOTER'S RX**  
Audie Murphy  
*Will Dabbs, MD*
- 20 SHOTGUNS**  
What Guides Wish You Did  
*Tom Keer*
- 22 MONTANA MUSINGS**  
Japanese Faults  
*Mike "Duke" Venturino*
- 24 RIFLES**  
The British MLE  
*Dave Anderson*
- 54 KNIVES**  
Finch Shiv  
*Pat Covert*
- 62 THINK TANK**  
German Metrics In Africa  
*Jeff "Tank" Hoover*
- 66 GUNS INSIDER**  
The Gun Store  
*Brent T. Wheat*



**DEPARTMENTS**

- 26 SURPLUS & CLASSIC**  
Remington Model 8  
*Payton Miller*
- 55 QUARTERMASTER**
  - Wedge XT EDC Light
  - Victors Upscale 3 Bag
  - ETS Gen 2 Coupled Magazine
  - Real Avid Smart-Fit Bore Guide*Brent T. Wheat*
- 56 2A DEFENSE**  
Crash The Party  
*Dave Workman*
- 13 CUSTOM CORNER**
- 58 NEW PRODUCTS**
- 60 GUN OF THE MONTH**
- 64 ADVERTISER INDEX**

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**Brent T. Wheat**



# 32 **Stoeger STR-9**

**King Of The Budget 9mm?**  
**Brent T. Wheat**

## FEATURES

**10** **CAMPFIRE TALES**  
Perfect ID — Other Single-Actions  
**John Taffin**

**12** **AYOOB ON HANDGUNS**  
Keep Ammo Handy  
**Massad Ayoob**

**28** **DIY: MOSSBERG 500 REPAIR**  
Rebuilding A Bad Mistake  
**Jeremy D. Clough**

**32** **STOEGER STR-9**  
King Of The Budget 9mm?  
**Brent T. Wheat**

**40** **MARINE CORPS 1911A1 M45 CQBP**  
Owning A Piece Of History  
**Will Dabbs, MD**

**44** **BRITISH SMALL ARMS OF WWII**  
"Plug Ugly" But Effective  
**Mike "Duke" Venturino**

**48** **BUFFALO BORE GAME PRESERVE**  
A Buffalo Trifecta  
**Jeff "Tank" Hoover**





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# CROSSFIRE

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### ONE FOR THE WHINERY

You need to get a clue. Always with the preface — that the .22 magnum beats no gun — actually it might — but not by very much — and the revolver featured is really no smaller than many other firearms — and appears to be a stupid solution at best.



My little Beretta 950BS is truly a pocket gun — that North American Arms .22 magnum is not — and the caliber leaves much to be desired as does the tinkertoy pistol chambered in it. Offer realistic solutions or don't bother but instead you continue to flog a dead horse. I refuse to read anything more about that pathetic solution.

*"Dadoctorisin" via email*

*The inspiration for this reader letter was a recent podcast episode where we discussed the value of the .22 rimfire as a self-defense round. My thesis is "it's better than a rock, but not much." Having a gun always beats not having a gun, but I was trying to frame the discussion around realistic concepts — the .22 Mag will certainly kill a person, but there are bigger, better options you can choose. As far as the Beretta 950 BS goes — chambered in either the devastating .25 ACP or proven manstopper .22 Short — I guess the same thing applies. —BW*

### WORDS TO THE WISE

Really appreciated Clint Smith's comments in "Time, Speed and Targets" (GUNSMagazine.com) on experience and teaching ability. I'm a volunteer RSO at the local range and we had a new gun owner come in — could barely hit NRA 25-yd slow fire target at 7 yards! Got her shooting much better by the time she left. Talking to her, found out she is going for her California CCW. I mentioned she would need an 8-hour training class and she said she already did it, "with a great expert trainer who was ex-special forces!" All I could think is, "How did she complete the course and still be pretty much incapable of accurate shooting?"

Boy, she is going to be pissed when she goes to qualify at the Sheriff's range and can't. There was an article a long time ago about not all trainers being created equal. Maybe you can write a nice new article to remind people to find PROPER training.

*Terry Kremin, PhD*

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Your Next Gun Story Begins Here!

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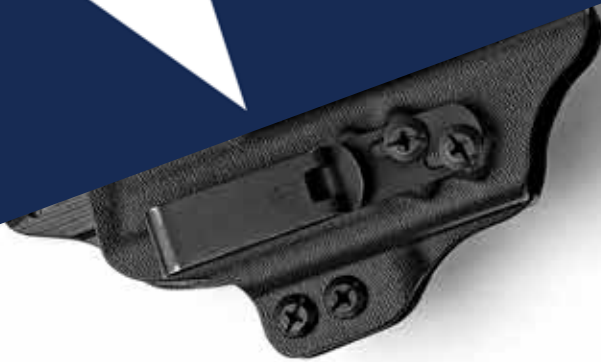
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EVERYDAY\_READY



John's pair of .45 Colt 10" Flat-Tops (top) compared to the 12" Colt and Great Western Buntline Specials (bottom).

## PERFECT 10S: OTHER SINGLE-ACTIONS WHO'S YOUR HUCKLEBERRY?

**John Taffin**

In 1992, my two sons-in-law contacted me to say they wanted to take me to see a new Western movie. It was called *Tombstone*. "Who is in it?" They told me Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday were being played by Kurt Russell and Val Kilmer. "You gotta be kidding! No thanks."

"Oh come on. You will probably enjoy it." So, reluctantly I agreed to let them take me to the movies, something I rarely do. The Dr. Pepper was good, the popcorn was very good and the movie was absolutely excellent. I was thankful I had allowed this to happen.

### BACK TO O.K.

Russell and Kilmer are just about the best I've ever seen at playing Earp and Holliday. They were also supported by a great cast including Sam Elliott, David Biehn and Powers Boothe. Whoever was the prop master also made sure they had the best leather and sixguns. I particularly appreciated the use of the proper sixguns — the real star of

the revolvers was the Buntline Special used by Kurt Russell.

Sixty-plus years earlier than this movie, the original, real Wyatt Earp claimed the 12" Buntline Special — presented to him by C.Z. Judson, a.k.a. Ned Buntline — never slowed down his draw. When one looks at the holsters, which were then available, the term "grain of salt" immediately comes to mind.

Two changes were made in the movie. Instead of a 12" barrel, the movie Buntline Special had a 10" barrel. It was manufactured by Uberti and supplied by Cimarron Firearms. Instead of a straight-drop Mexican-style holster,

Russell carried the Buntline in a cross-draw holster. When Russell as Wyatt removes his special Colt from its presentation box, we see the medallion inlaid in the right hand stock. This is also carried out in Cimarron's version as the badge-shaped shield contains the inscription, "WYATT EARP PEACE-MAKER, From the Grateful People of Dodge City, Apr 8th 1878." Notice there is no mention of Ned Buntline.

Balance-wise, the 12" sixguns can sometimes seem a little muzzle heavy. However, I find this feeling lacking with 2" less barrel. It just seems to hang on target.

It is not easy to find holsters for 10" barreled sixguns. I don't believe any of the old-line holster makers catalog leather for Buntline Specials. However, a call to Rob Leahy at Simply Rugged took care of the problem immediately. Rob crafted a pair of beautiful Buntline Special holsters, which ride high on the belt either straight-draw or reverse-draw, and embellished it in a frontier period-style of carving.



The rear sight of the Uberti Flat-Top frame shown raised out of its mortise.

He is a master at the three-legged stool of making holsters, namely quality design, quality craftsmanship and quality material.

### USPFA/USFA

United States Patent Firearms Manufacturing Company (USPFA), which would eventually become United States Fire Arms (USFA), supplied some of the most beautiful Colt-style single-action sixguns. Unfortunately, they shut down production. As with most situations when factories close, there were many parts still available to be made into completed sixguns. One of these parts was the frame.

These were not standard single-action frames but rather frames styled after the real Buntline Specials. That is, the top of the frame was milled out to hold a long-range rear sight, which could be raised out of its mortise, and then the sight raised up and down on a ladder for shooting at various long-range distances. When the sight was all the way down in its mortise, a standard rear sight at the rear of the long-range sight provided for normal shooting.

After USFA closed, I found my friend Brian Pearce had a good supply of USFA parts received in payment for work he had done. Included in these parts were the special Flat-Top Uberti frames with the lift-up rear sight. Using three of these frames, I had 10" Buntline Specials made up. One is a .44 Special with an auxiliary cylinder chambered in .44-40, while the other two are a matched pair in .45 Colt.

This .44 and the pair of .45s have been made into long-range sixguns with a taller than normal front sight to compensate for the taller rear sight assembly. Brian talked me into going with the easier handling 10" instead of the traditional 12" length. These sixguns are finished in deep blue, lockup is exceptionally tight, fitting has been carried out to perfection with properly sized chambers and stocks of one-piece walnut.

This 10" USFA Buntline single-action performs exceptionally well, greatly aided by the long-sight radius. I've been practicing long-range shooting



Simply Rugged fashioned these holsters for carrying the pair of 10" .45 Colt Flat-Top sixguns.

for nearly 65 years at distances from 100 yards out to where you can hardly see. Most of this has been done by raising the front sight while still keeping it lined up in the rear sight and placing the target on top. Long-range shooting becomes much simpler with the USFA Buntline Special as the rear sight itself is just raised on the elevated special sight. Once the proper setting is found for any distance, it is then just a matter of keeping the proper sight picture.

### SEVILLE

In 1985, Elgin Gates sent me his personal sixgun, a brand-new offering. It was a stainless steel Seville from United Sporting Arms with a 10 1/2" barrel and chambered in .375 Super Mag. The action was very smooth feeling like some of my Colt Single Actions, which have been tuned by experts. The trigger was also just about perfect for a single-action with just the slightest amount of creep. Someone who knew single actions put this Seville together. It was set up really tight with virtually no cylinder/barrel gap as it would not accept a 0.002" feeler gauge. Sights were excellent for competition with the front being an undercut post of 0.125" in width with a matching rear sight in flat black, giving an excellent sight picture.

Before my experience with this .375 Super Mag Seville, I had been using silhouette loads in the .44 Magnum with the Hornady 240 JTC at 1300 fps, and the .375 Maximum with a 180 JTC at 1400 fps. With the .375 Super Mag in the Seville, I used the now-long-gone Winchester 680 powder under the Hornady 220-grain JFP at 1,700 fps. This was a fast, extremely accurate shooting load. When shooting the above-mentioned .44 Magnum and .357 Maximum loads at rams, there was an instant between the firing of the gun and the clank of steel followed by the toppling of the target. With the .375 Super Magnum load in the Seville at 1,700 fps, all of this seemed to happen at once. When I hit the first ram, he was down before I could see him go.

The Seville proved not to be a Johnny-one-note as it also worked well with cast bullets. I used a 233-grain hard-cast gas-checked bullet originally designed for the .38-55 Winchester. With #2400 at 1,650 fps and IMR4227 at 1,700 fps, the cast bullet equaled the jacketed bullet loads for accuracy. Unfortunately United Sporting Arms, like USFA, is long gone.

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# KEEPING AMMO HANDY

## THE TRUTH BEHIND THE CLICHÉS

**Massad Ayoob**

If you're not sure when you'll need it, it's best to have it handy ...

Earlier this year, in June, I went from the Pin Shoot in Michigan (Pin-Shoot.com) to a class in the same state, then another in Indiana, and then to Illinois to spend some time with extended family. It wasn't until I got home weeks later that I had time to sort out and put away guns and ammo and magazines.

Darn ... there were a lot of single stack 1911 mags full of Federal HST 230-grain +P .45 ACP.

Before I reached Illinois, I had downloaded all the 17- to 22-round Springfield XD(m) and 17- to 26-round Springfield Prodigy 9mm magazines and secured them. The state's current law is 15 rounds max, but out-of-staters traveling to or from matches can (at this writing) have larger capacity so long as they're empty and under lock and key. I was just glad I didn't have to go through New York, where even the empty

**Mas likes to carry two spare single-stack mags, or one double-stack.**



**If the gun holds only five rounds, Mas thinks you definitely want at least five more in a Speed Strip.**

“hi-cap” mags would have been a separate felony per magazine.

For carry on this tour, I was wearing single-stack .45s, mostly all-steel Government Model-size 1911s, legal everywhere I went. When the sciatica

kicked in at the right hip, I lightened the load by switching to the Smith & Wesson Shield .45 I had used for the Concealed Carry event at the Pin Shoot: 7+1 of the big +P sluggers in a gun weighing only 21 oz. before the ammo went on board. It resolved the discomfort issue.

I carried one spare mag for the little .45 in a Pitbull pouch on the left hip, another next to the Streamlight Wedge flashlight in the cell phone pocket of my 5.11 pants and was perfectly comfortable. With a double-stack gun I'm happy with one spare magazine, but with a single stack, I want two. I started in police work in the early 1970s, when the standard load-out was a fully-loaded six-shooter and 12 more rounds on the belt. Today the standard remains “loaded duty weapon and two spare magazines” (minimum, some carry more) to protect oneself and the public. I always figured if this was what the justice system had determined I needed to protect the public, it was probably what I needed to protect myself and anyone else I was responsible for — on duty or not.

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If Miss Manners didn't say "You can't be too thin, too rich, or have too much ammunition," Mas thinks she should have ...

### COUNTING AMMO RESERVOIRS

Tell ya the truth, when I unpacked those 1911 mags, I lost count of how many there were but during the Pin Shoot, I was glad I had them all. I shot Space Gun, Pin Gun and Stock Gun back to back and although there turned out to be time to refill mags while the pin-setters were putting the targets back up, it was convenient not to have to count on it. When a friend's .45 went down and he needed to borrow mine, I was able to just hand him the gun bag with the 1911 and more full mags than he'd need already in the attached pouches.

The purpose of a gun is to shoot. This requires ammunition. Depending on what needs to be shot how often and how soon, it is awfully handy to have spare ammo readily at hand. Ask any of the survivors of the April 11, 1986 FBI shootout in Miami. I interviewed some of them. When one of them was later asked "How much ammo should an agent carry?" he answered immediately, "As much as you can carry."

### CONVENIENCE & DESPERATION

Most of the time, more ammo is simply convenient. For example, at

the Indiana class we had a storm coming in at qualification hour and it saved time for me to simply pull 10 full magazines from my Pin Shoot stash to shoot the "Pace-Setter," the demonstration of the qualification. We were done just before the torrential rain and the lightning hit. Whew.

Routinely, I'll have a couple more spare mags for my primary carry in my vehicle, in case of the unlikely event something happens, which might go beyond what I have on my physical person. The ones in the car will usually be in pouches I can quickly clip on the belt. I've never needed them, but the vehicle is a sturdy mule and doesn't mind carrying them for me.

Spare ammunition is like emergency funds, and indeed, like the gun itself. "Better to have and not need, than to need and not have." "No gunfight survivor has ever said 'Gee, I wish I'd had less ammunition.'" "There's no such thing as too much ammo unless you're drowning or on fire." Insert additional clichés as necessary ...

But, you know what? Clichés tend to be truisms. That's why they came to be uttered so often they became clichés in the first place.

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# BLACK POWDER CONICAL BULLET WITH OTHER .44S OLD DOESN'T MEAN WEAK

**John Taffin**

**D**uring the Civil War, the South was hard-pressed to produce revolvers. JH Dance and his two brothers and two sisters lived on 900 acres outside of Columbia, Texas. One of the things their factory produced was cotton gins. The brothers fully intended to enlist in the Confederate Army; however, they were told they could be of much more use by turning their factory into the production of revolvers. So JH, his brothers and all his employees were exempt from military service and instead, put to work producing revolvers.

## DANCE MAGIC

The Dance & Brothers revolver was like all the rest based on the Colt pattern. It has the loading lever of the Colt 1851 Navy and a round barrel of the 1860 Army Colt. The major change is found in the frame. There is no recoil shield. Dance found they could use thinner forged steel to make a frame if they didn't need the extra width necessary to reproduce the Colt recoil shield. If the percussion caps fit the nipples properly, the recoil shield is not necessary, plus this open space allows easy insertion of the caps.

The first production was in .36 caliber; however, they soon switched to .44 with about a total of 500 being produced. Today's replica from Pietta is found only in .44 and is available with either a full-blued frame or blued/case hardened finish. For whatever the reason, I find the Dance sixgun balances better for me than the Colt.

I replaced the front sight on both Dance revolvers with Remington front sights set in the dovetail. Milt Morrison did the work for me. I also replaced the low-quality factory nipples with the high-quality vented stainless steel nipples

from SliXsprings. I also de-fanged the face of the hammer, smoothing off the face with a stone, and used a small file to remove any sharp edges around the safety. This safety on the hammer fits over a pin on the back of the cylinder, allowing the sixgun to be carried safely with six rounds. However, if allowed to remain sharp, it can pull fired caps off the nipple and cause a cap jam.

With these modifications, I did everything to make the Dance sixgun totally reliable. Almost! It worked very well, almost flawlessly with round ball loads — the trouble started when I switch to conical bullets. My two loads are 22.0 grains of H777 under the Johnston and Dow 217-grain authentic design bullet from Eras Gone molds. The muzzle velocity is 686 fps while dropping down to 20.0 grains only



**Targets shot at 20 yards with the Kerr bullet (above) show the difference in accuracy with this particular load from two Dance & Brothers sixguns. Targets shot at 20 yards with the Johnston & Dow bullet (below) in the Dance & Brothers .44.**





Remington New Model Army 1858 compared to the Rogers & Spencer (above). The .44 bullets (below) include round ball, 200- and 220-grain Lee bullets, as well as Johnston & Dow and Kerr from Eras Gone.



lowers the muzzle velocity by 6 fps and grouping in 1 1/2" at 20 yards at point of aim. With the Eras Gone British Kerr bullet, I use 26 grains of H7774 at 760 fps and a tight group at point of aim. However, switching to Pyrodex using the same charge drops the muzzle velocity to 628 fps and opens the groups considerably. For my use, I find the Triple Seven load to be the best.

### CONICAL LOADS

Using conical bullets proved not to be practical in these two Dance sixguns without performing more modifications. The problem was not the load or the bullet but something I had not thought of until I started shooting them. For a percussion sixgun to be reliable, the mainspring has to be strong enough to hold the face of the hammer on the fired cap. If not, it can pull the cap off the nipple and cause a cap jam.

This proved to be what was happening. Not only did I get cap jams, but the fouling on the curve of the hammer where it meets the frame, built up very fast. Again this is the fault of the

mainspring. So the simple answer is, if I want to shoot conical bullets on a regular basis in my Dance & Brothers revolvers, it will be necessary to beef up the mainspring.

### ROGERS & SPENCER

What may be the best sixgun to come out of the Civil War era did not come from the South but actually came from Utica, N.Y. This revolver was the Rogers & Spencer. Depending on the resource, these sixguns either saw very limited use toward the end of the war or were not used at all. They were purchased as surplus by Bannerman and stored in a warehouse for decades.

The following quote is from Denis Adler in his book *Black Powder Revolvers — Reproductions & Replicas* (2008): "The large-frame revolvers resembled Remingtons, but were considerably different in execution, based on the Freeman revolver engineered by Austin T. Freeman who had been an employee of the Starr Armory in New York. The Freeman Revolvers in .44 caliber were originally produced by C.B. Hoard in Watertown, N.Y., but became a product

of Utica Firearms manufactured by Rogers & Spencer late in 1864. The R&S model combined the Freeman design with that of a Remington, and the double action Pettengill revolver, which Rogers and Spencer had previously produced. The guns also resembled the Whitney revolver with the overall design of the Rogers & Spencer combining the front frame of a Remington with the back frame of a Starr, Starr-type loading lever and Pettengill backstrap and stocks."

### TOO LATE

An order of 5,000 .44 Rogers & Spencer sixguns was placed in January 1865. The war ended in May 1865 but the original order was not completed until four months later. As mentioned, they were in storage until 1904 when they were finally offered for sale. This is an exceptionally strong revolver design. Today I know of no one producing replicas of the Rogers & Spencer — my example is from Euroarms several years back. Unlike most replicas with bead front sights, the Rogers & Spencer has one which is tall enough to actually be used.

In my Rogers & Spencer, I use 30.0 grains of H777 under the Eras Gone Johnston & Dow for 743 fps. It shoots to point of aim at 20 yards and would certainly suffice for most uses. However, just as with the Dance sixgun, I need to beef up the mainspring to increase reliability. I have developed an especially powerful load using the Eras Gone Johnston & Dow bullet in the Rogers & Spencer at 950 fps but I choose not to publish it! However, note it is more powerful than the factory-offered standard .45 ACP and .45 Colt loads. Not bad for a design more than 150 years old!

Both the Dance & Brothers and the Rogers & Spencer can be loaded without removing the cylinder as the loading port unmodified is large enough to accept conical bullets. For the Dance sixgun, this is only true of the Kerr bullet. The Rogers & Spencer will accept the Johnston & Dow, Kerr, Lee Precision 200RN and the commercial-cast Kaido bullet. This makes the Rogers & Spencer especially desirable.

**GUNS**



Sights on doubles can be installed very low, for natural, shotgun-fast pointing. These don't catch brush.

## OPEN SIGHTS: GOOD FOR NOTHING? ONCE STANDARD, NOW AN AFTERTHOUGHT

Wayne van Zwoll

In prone competition, my scores with aperture sights often equaled those fired with my 20x scope at identical targets. Open sights would have doomed them to ridicule.

So why, as aperture sights were refined, did open rear sights survive? Mounted on a rifle barrel, an open notch is the least accurate of rear sights. Almost undetectable errors in aligning it with the front sight can make you miss badly.

### PROGRESSION

A metal leaf welded or brazed to a barrel is cheap and rugged. Evolving to fold, slide and adjust to our whims, it became more expensive to make but no more so than apertures or optics.

If the front sight is easy to see, an open notch is very fast. On a well-fitted rifle, it's as fast as the bead on a shotgun. The notch merely confirms your bullet will hit where you look. And, because it can be mounted low, it naturally brings your eye close to bore-line. Fine British double rifles point like shotguns partly because you're looking right down the rib.

In 1959, when I was a wee lad, Remington exhibition shooter Tom Frye earned press for a new .22 autoloader stocked in lightweight nylon called Zytel. With a nod to tradition, he began firing at hand-tossed 2 ¼" wooden blocks. After 100,010 tosses, he had splintered 100,004 blocks. The Nylon 66's open

sights hardly fostered precise aim but Frye's aim was good enough and the sights didn't delay it.

Less-accomplished shooters have used open sights to lethal effect when speed mattered. A hunter who failed to flatten a grizzly with four shots was fumbling to reload when the bear charged. "Shoot!" he screeched at his partner, filming the event. The bear was a cyclone furrowing the alders as the cameraman snatched up his .30-30. At 20 feet, his bullet caromed off the skull. So did a follow-up. The third, sent with even less deliberation, pierced an eye en route to the brain. The grizzly collapsed at the fellow's feet. He leaped over its convulsing body, still firing.

Some rear sights have no notch, just a vertical white or gold center line. They obscure little. I still prefer a shallow V, cleanly machined to yield a crisp image. A U notch marries well with a bead up front if the pair is sized so a small rim of light appears around the belly of the bead. The U's shoulders needn't reach the top of the bead. I like a U that comes halfway up the bead, again, for better visibility.

While most rear sights are upright, the rear sight face on my Kilimanjaro rifle angles forward to catch light as an assist in dark cover. Other sights tilt to the rear, so they don't bounce light from bright sun. Matte finish or machined horizontal striations reduce reflection without killing skylight.

In my view, the best open sight is of one-piece steel, drift-adjustable for windage in its base or the barrel. Folding-leaves invite error. Unless a hinged leaf is very snug, recoil, brush or clothing can raise or collapse it. If you aim with the wrong leaf, you can miss badly. Besides, open sights are best used close enough for center aim. A .416 in my rack has a three-leaf sight marked for 100, 200 and 300 yards. Surely, Rigby's grand old cartridge works most of its mischief well inside 100! Whatever the cartridge, 300-yard pokes with open sights are exercises in optimism.

Faced with a sight that won't adjust, or with elevation steps that are too coarse, you can tweak your aim to compensate. A 6-o'clock hold with the high leaf on a 9.3x2 Mauser salvaged my hunt. In cover offhand, I used it to kill an old eland bull at 40 yards. Later, alas, my wobble scuttled a quartering shot at a mountain zebra, sending the bullet a hands-width to 3 o'clock. After threading rocky steeps, the injured beast broke cover to scramble across a face at 160 yards. It tumbled to my heavy softnose, fired quickly from a sit.

### THE FRONT DOOR

The proper size for a front bead depends on barrel length and how well you see. I no longer use beads that, in my youth, served in the squirrel woods. My eyes want bigger beads, gold-hued or white, with flat faces. Spherical bead faces can misdirect your eye as light





An ivory bead inlaid into the ramp (above) pops up over the brass bead on this dangerous-game double rifle for shots in low light. An angled face brings skylight onto this matte-blue open sight (below), with a useful shallow-U in a broad V.



reflects from the sun-side curve. Big beads aren't too big if you can see a bit of the target around them. My open-sight shooting is mostly at animals with vitals big as soccer balls, at ranges under 150 yards. It matters not if the bead subtends half the depth of the chest. If I've zeroed to keep bullets "inside the bead," they'll hit what I can't see behind it.

In the halcyon days of hunting in Africa and India, many double rifles had big ivory-faced beads you could flip up from the front ramp onto the fixed brass bead. So tended, the rifle was suited for night shooting, or for close, urgent shots in poor light.

An alternative to a bead front sight is the Patridge, a sturdy, square-topped blade with vertical or angled face. The Sourdough version has an angled inset on top. Skinner Sight's offers 0.065 Patridge sights in brass and steel, also angled steel 0.080 Bear Busters, in addition to fiber optic and flat-faced 0.062 beads. The company's aperture sights include those to replace open sights on barrels or ribs. Five aperture sizes range from 0.040 to 0.155. The larger holes, of course, excel as the sight is placed farther from your eye.

Fiber-optic front sights instantly catch your attention. They sell well, even on rifles of traditional bent. Ruger's



The "buckhorn" sight (above) hides more game than it helps you hit. What other purpose for those crab claws? One fixed sight is enough! Leaves accidentally flip (below). Will you really use open sights beyond 150 yards?



Marlin SBL .45-70 wears an adjustable HiViz ghost ring sight and a HiViz green tritium-ringed fiber optic rod on a thick blade atop a ramp. Sights aren't the only departure from tradition on this Model 1895-based rifle. For old eyes, they make it more effective. The size and glow of most fiber optic beads preclude fine aim but their speed on target more than compensates in thickets where open sights are most useful. My SAUER 101 in 9.3x62 has a generous fiber optic front sight. The sides of the rear sight taper up toward its U notch, leaving little flank obscuring the target. An orange triangle on the rear sight's face points to the U. Both sights grab your eye by the lapels!

A month ago at this writing, a friend fatally shot a Cape buffalo in the chest at 30 steps as it came toward us double-time. But the bull didn't pause. I can't recall the image over the open sights as my rifle added two solids to the ensuing volley — only that bead and notch, hooked up naturally, right away. This uncomplicated marriage still serves sharp-eyed youth under fall beeches, and hunters whose lives depend on fast aim. Perhaps open sights need no further defense. **GUNS**

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# AUDIE MURPHY MANS THE GUN ... HUNGER PANGS YIELD UNEXPECTED TREASURE

Will Dabbs, MD

My wife and I were driving through Greenville, Texas, and found ourselves peckish. As we poked around for a fast food joint, we came across a fairly nondescript building situated in a wide grassy space. What caught my eye was the enormous statue out front wielding a German MG42 belt-fed machinegun like he meant it.

American presidents get sprawling libraries erected in their honor. Vapid media personalities who contribute little more than chaos find themselves ensconced in palatial digs suitable for the sultans of old. CEOs who risk nothing more than their reputations are paid enough to support a small West African nation state. And then — there was Audie Murphy.

Audie Murphy was the most highly decorated American soldier who ever drew breath. He contributed more to the cause of freedom than every movie star, social media influencer, captain of industry, General, Admiral and politician combined. This was his museum.

The facility is of modest size but is beautifully executed. Half of the place is dedicated to local history, while the other half orbits around Greenville's favorite son. If ever you are in the neighborhood you'll regret not checking it out.

I arrived about an hour before closing and, aside from a single museum staff member, had the place to myself. My bride broke out her oils and set up outside for a quick *plein air* landscape. I soon lost myself in the story of a truly great American.

## ORIGIN STORY

The seventh of 12 children born to a sharecropper family, Audie Leon Murphy was a small man with a big heart. Abandoned by his father as a child, Audie's mother died when he was 16. Murphy dropped out of school in fifth grade to pick cotton and keep his family from starving. Along the way he ran a rifle to help keep meat on the table.

Incensed by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Audie tried to enlist only to be rejected by the Army, Navy and



After the war, Audie Murphy went on to star in 44 different movies.

Marines. The boy's older sister falsified his birthdate so he could try again. On his enlistment physical, Murphy stood 5'5" tall and weighed 112 lbs.

During infantry training, Audie passed out in the heat and his commander tried to have him reclassified as a cook. Private Murphy was having none of it. Through sheer force of will the young man survived his training and found himself deployed to North Africa for Operation Torch.

## WAR AGES A MAN

Murphy helped take Sicily as part of Patton's Seventh Army. It was here Audie Murphy took his first life. He later observed, "I have seen war as it actually is, and I do not like it. But I will go on fighting."

Once on the Italian mainland, Murphy's unit was moving along the Volturno River. Murphy along with two comrades unexpectedly came under fire from a German machinegun. One of his buddies died on the spot. Enraged, Murphy charged the enemy machinegun nest armed with a Thompson submachinegun and killed all five Germans manning the gun.

By September of 1944, Murphy was one of only three survivors of



Audie Murphy was ultimately recognized as the most highly decorated American soldier in history.



The Audie Murphy Museum (above) in Greenville, Texas, is full of cool-guy stuff like this WWI-vintage MG08 Maxim machinegun. It is a timeless drive for young warriors to take mementos of their military service (below). Audie Murphy brought this German helmet home from the war in Europe.

his original Infantry company not killed or removed due to wounds. Along the way, Murphy was shot in the hip and caught a piece of shrapnel in his heel. He was also wracked with malaria throughout.

By late January 1945, Murphy had been awarded a battlefield commission. While recovering from fresh wounds to both legs, his decimated unit was attacked by half a dozen German *panzers* and hundreds of dismounted

troops. The young officer sent his soldiers to safety and advanced alone to a burning American tank destroyer.

Lt. Murphy mounted the flaming vehicle and fired his carbine until he ran out of ammunition. He then got behind the 50-caliber machinegun. Between running the Big Fifty and adjusting artillery, he singlehandedly kept the enemy tanks and infantry at bay for more than an hour. When finally he left the field, he did so at a slow walk. He later claimed he was so exhausted he didn't care if they killed him or not. For this action, Lt. Murphy earned the Medal of Honor. He was 19 years old.

Audie Murphy received every award for valor the U.S. Army offered along with decorations from both France and Belgium. After he came home, Murphy slept with a loaded handgun under his pillow. Like so many of those old heroes, he struggled to leave the horrors of war behind. However, his fame did translate into a 21-year career as an actor, poet and a song writer. Toward the end, he fell upon hard times but steadfastly refused to appear in cigarette or alcohol commercials so as not to set a poor example for young people.

In May of 1971, Murphy was a passenger in a twin-engine Aero Commander 680 when it slammed into the side of a mountain Near



Roanoke, Va., in foul weather. He was 46 at the time of his death. Murphy's grave is the second-most visited at Arlington National Cemetery after JFK. Where most Medal of Honor gravestones are embellished with gold leaf, Murphy insisted his be left unadorned like that of a common soldier. It still lists his birth year as 1924 in keeping with the prevarication originally attested to by his sister. What a stud.

**GUNS**



This big guy with a big gun is what caught Doc Dabb's eye as he was passing through Greenville, Texas, enroute to Dallas.

Audie Murphy Museum  
CottonMuseum.com

# GUIDE ADVICE

## THE HOPES OF THE HUNTING PROS

**Tom Keer**

**I**t's dark when you pull up to the only breakfast place in town, but your guide is already there. How do you know? His is the pickup with dog boxes in the bed, in front of a trailer he's towing, which is full of ... you got it ... more dogs. Your guide knows where the birds are, his dogs are sharp as tacks and he wants the day to be your trip of a lifetime. It's "team play" from here on out and here's what he hopes you've done in anticipation of your hunt.

These outstanding guides represent nearly a century-and-a-half of experience hunting a wide variety of game birds throughout North America. Their goal is to get the client shooting birds over great dog work in some stunningly gorgeous settings. Take their advice for a great 2023–24 season!

*Don Brown, Virginia* — Don Brown has spent over 30-years as a wild bird hunting guide for ruffed grouse, woodcock and bobwhite quail. He's well-known for his string of excellent Vizslas. Bring your own dog if you wish, but Brown's one request is you do some pre-trip



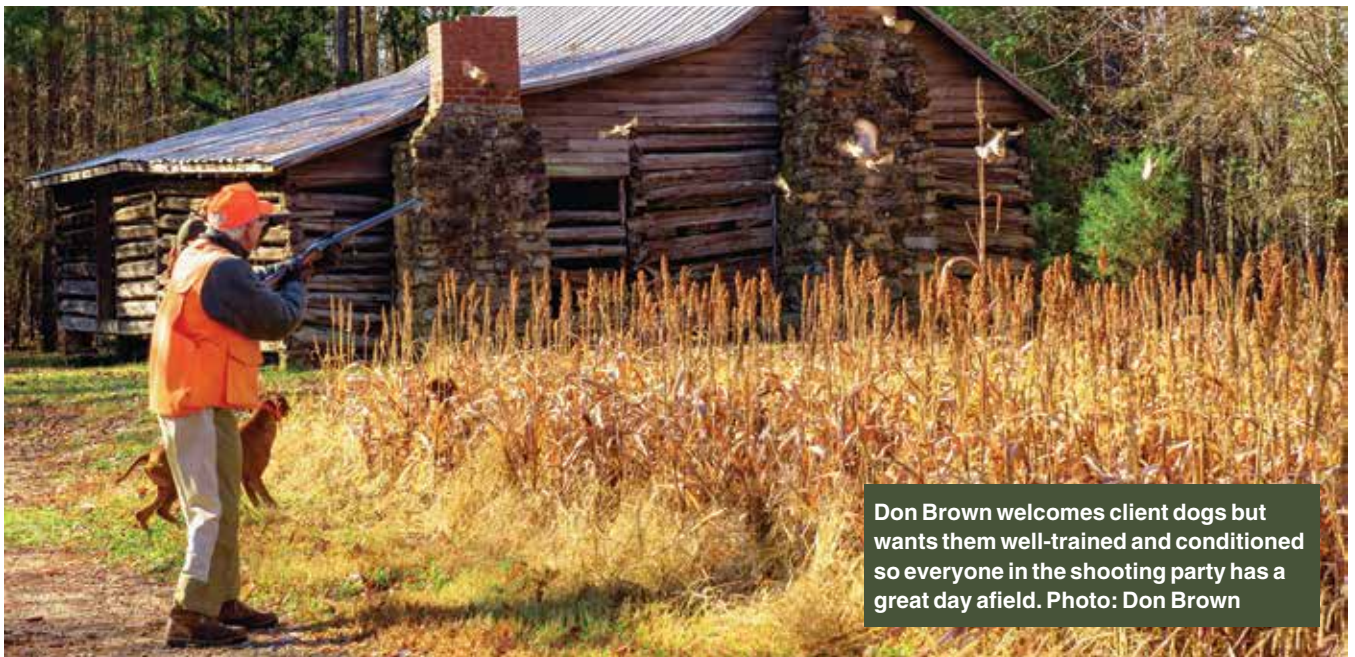
**Wild birds will hold but not forever," says Dave Brown. "To harvest more birds, get up on your dog when he's on point." Photo: Dave Brown**

training and conditioning.

"I never mind a sport bringing his own dogs to hunt over," Brown said. "That's the magic of bird hunting. However, the one thing I wished hunters would do is to bring a dog or a string of dogs that would handle. Too much time on many of my hunts are spent looking for a client's dog that really is a self-hunter. Sometimes the dogs range off, other times they won't listen, and still other times they bust birds. I can provide a training session for clients if that is what they want. But if they're booking me for a wild bird hunt then we all should have the same expectation, which is to shoot

birds over pointed flushes. To do that you've got to have a trained and conditioned dog."

*Dave Brown, Dave Brown Outfitters, Saskatchewan, Canada and Arizona* — Brown, no relation to Don, is a covey bird specialist. "I start my season in September hunting Hungarian partridge and sharp-tails on Canada's Saskatchewan Prairie," he said. "When the weather gets cold I move south to Arizona where I guide for Gambel's, Mearns and Scaled quail. I like my clients to get up close to a dog when it's on point and then to aggressively move past the point until the birds are in the air. Dogs are a threat to the birds



**Don Brown welcomes client dogs but wants them well-trained and conditioned so everyone in the shooting party has a great day afield. Photo: Don Brown**

so if the hunter doesn't quickly get up to the point and flush the covey, then the birds are likely to run off. Covey rises can intimidate some shooters, mostly because they get confused by all the action. When the covey is in the air, pick one bird and stay with it until it falls. Rushed shots resulting in poor gun mounts are a major reason my clients miss. Practice your gun mount so it's an instinctive motion. Shoot a clays course or mount your shotgun in your living room. Just be sure that your mount is smooth and solid."

*Mike Thompson, Eaglerock Setters, Central Pennsylvania* — Thompson guides for three different species of birds: pheasant, Ruffed grouse and woodcock. He also breeds English setters and is a trainer for just about every other breed. When it comes to a hunt, he wishes his clients would pause for a moment and think. "Bird hunting is much more than just harvesting birds," he said. "I wish all of the clients who hunt with us would take a moment and ponder that they're doing more than just hunting. They're preserving and continuing a tradition and a lifestyle. A bird hunt is a holy union between dog and handler and



"Days afield with family, friends and good dogs are ones to be savored," says Mike Thompson. "Bird hunting is a privilege we should not take for granted." Photo: Mike Thompson



Above, "Pre-hunt shooting should include the kind of shots you'll see in the field," says Tracey Lieske. Photo: Tracey Lieske. "'Fit' is it," says Stephan Faust (below), and by that he means your body. "The more ground you cover when hunting upland birds, the more points you get." Photo: Stephan Faust

between guide and gunner. Nowhere else can we touch the souls of those who have gone before us as in upland bird hunting over dogs."

*Stephen Faust, Stoneybrook Outfitters, North Carolina* — Depending on the time of year, Eukanuba pro trainer Faust guides for grouse and woodcock in Minnesota, Virginia and North Carolina. Hunting coverts of primary and secondary growth isn't always easy, and his advice is to be prepared for a day in the uplands. "My clients don't need to be Olympic marathoners, but they'll have a better hunt if they're in decent physical shape. Our coverts are big but we don't race through them. We hunt slow and thoroughly. Grouse and woodcock live in wild places that are far off the beaten path. Walking can be difficult, so break-in your new hunting boots long before the season. Add moisture-wicking socks to those comfortable boots and get your legs conditioned. If you're in good shape the rest of the day will be awesome."

*Tracey Lieske, Wild Wing Lodge North Outfitters, Kentucky and Michigan* — For the past 25 years, Tracey Lieske has guided hunters for a wide variety of gamebirds in Idaho, South Dakota, Texas, Tennessee and Kentucky. He's currently splitting his time between Michigan and Kentucky and has one piece of advice. "Shoot clay targets that simulate the kind of birds you'll see on a hunt. Don't worry about practicing bateaus, springing teal, or rabbits. For bird hunting, every shot needs to be ball cap height



or higher. Some are going away, some are crossing, and others are incoming. Specialized techniques like a snap shot for Ruffed grouse in thick cover is ineffective on a covey rise of Huns or Bobwhite quail. Work on the kind of shots you'll see on a hunt and you'll have an outstanding day."

These outstanding guides represent nearly a century and a half of experience hunting a wide variety of game birds throughout North America. Their goal is to form a team with their clients, one that focuses on shooting birds with great dog work in some stunningly gorgeous settings all of which makes us excited for the 2024-25 season.

**GUNS**

DaveBrownOutfitters.com  
StoneybrookGordonSetters.com  
Tracey Lieskye - tlieske212@aol.com

# JAPANESE WWII WEAPONS' FAULTS

## GOOD QUALITY BUT POORLY DESIGNED

Mike "Duke" Venturino • Photos by Yvonne Venturino

Japanese weapons of World War II are generally denigrated as low-quality junk but until late in the war, this charge was far from the truth. Japanese rifles, carbines, light machine guns and even handguns were built with high craftsmanship, especially in regard to metal work. I know this because I own samples of most of those firearms. The

problem was Japanese military firearms were not well-thought-out — a logical outcome because, as a nation, Japan had a rather short firearms history.

### CATALOG OF HANDGUN FAILURE

Let's look at some of these deficiencies. The Type 26 revolver was chambered for a specific 9mm rimmed

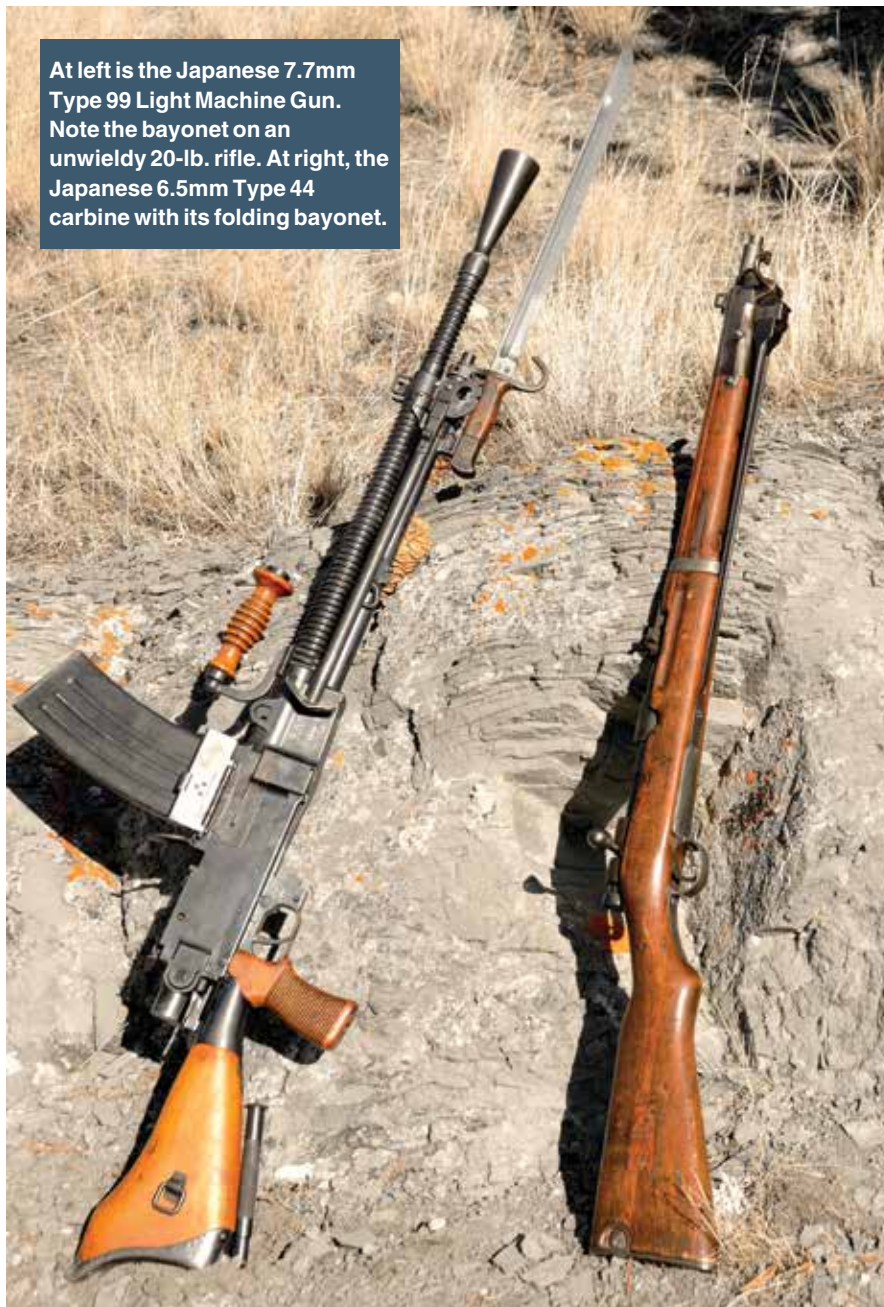
cartridge with a six-round capacity and was double-action only. That's no big deal. However, the cylinder locks in place only as the trigger is pulled. When it's released, the cylinder "free wheels," meaning it can rotate so the next round up could possibly be a previously fired one. Also, the revolver's lockplate is hinged and easily opened to reveal the lockwork. This is good for cleaning but makes it easy for curious or untrained fingers to tinker about. By World War II, Type 26 revolvers were relegated to NCOs so perhaps they were not inclined to be as inquisitive about their revolver's mode of functioning.

Next up are the Type 14 and Type 94 semi-auto pistols. First off, they were chambered for the weak 8mm Nambu cartridge, named after Col. Nambu who designed both pistols. Hardly has there even been a more dangerous handgun issued to a military force. There is a sear bar exposed along the pistol's left side. If a Type 94 is cocked with a round chambered, even lightly touching the bar will fire it.

The Type 14 was a much better design. Its receiver is a tube with the bolt sliding within. Bill Ruger actually borrowed the idea for his .22 LR Mark I pistols. However, when the Type 14 has fired the last round in its magazine, there is no bolt hold-open device. The magazine follower itself serves the purpose, making the magazine difficult to pull free from the grip and allowing the bolt to slam closed when removed. The pistol must be cycled again when a fresh magazine is inserted. Lastly, Type 14s were issued with a spare firing pin, which could not have inspired confidence about them.

### RIFLES

Japanese rifles and carbines are basically good because they are all based on Peter-Paul Mauser's Model 1898 actions. They were adapted to Japanese use by a Col. Arisaka whose



At left is the Japanese 7.7mm Type 99 Light Machine Gun. Note the bayonet on an unwieldy 20-lb. rifle. At right, the Japanese 6.5mm Type 44 carbine with its folding bayonet.

name is synonymous with virtually all their rifles and carbines of World War II. As such, they were all five-shot, bolt-action models with magazines contained inside the wooden stock.

The Japanese just could not leave well enough alone. For instance, instead of a lever at the rear of the rifle's bolt for safety, they put a mushroom-shaped knob at the bolt's rear. It was meant to be turned with the palm of the shooter's hand instead of his fingers.

Another unnecessary feature was the rifles and carbines were issued with receiver covers that moved back and forth with the bolt. No other military rifle of any nation in World War II was deemed to need its action protected. Besides, the covers rattled. Japanese Army and Naval Landing Forces troops must have discarded those covers by the ton. Few of the many thousands of rifles and carbines floating around the United States still have them.

### SIGHT FOR SORE EYES

Then we get to the sights. Most nations put "wings" on either side of their rifles/carbines front sights to protect them, especially when bayonet fighting. With most military rifles, these "wings" flared away from the sight itself. Instead, the Japanese had them standing straight. When rushed, it is easy to see one of those straight "wings" in the rear sight causing the shooter to fire off laterally to one side or another. I found this out when doing run and shoot courses in Thunder Ranch's old Rifle Classes.

Speaking of "wings" — with their Type 99 Arisaka 7.7mm rifles, the Japanese put folding "wings" on their rear barrel-mounted peep sights. They were there to provide lead when riflemen were aiming at low flying aircraft. Shooting at 300 mph airplanes with bolt-action rifles? Those folding wings were just something else to catch on brush in jungle fighting.

As to the peep sight, such sights are well regarded in some quarters. With Britain and the U.S., most of their World War II rifles and carbines carried peep sights set at the rear of



At rear is a Type 97 6.5mm sniper rifle (above). Note its offset scope. At front is a Type 99 take-down 7.7mm rifle intended for paratroopers with barrel-mounted peep sights. Shown below are three handguns the Japanese used in War II. From left, the Type 14, 8mm Nambu; Type 94, 8mm Nambu; and Type 26, 9mm Rimmed.



their receivers. Instead, the Japanese put their peep sights way out on the rifle barrel. Mounted close to the eye, peep sights are fast to use. Mounted out on a barrel, the shooter's eye must search for them. Again, I learned this at Thunder Ranch.

### SNIPER RIFLES

The Japanese fielded two versions of sniper rifles — Type 97 6.5mm and Type 99 7.7mm. Except for a small number of adjustable telescopic sights on Type 99s late in the war, Japanese sniper scopes had no means of adjustment. They were mounted at the armory, roughly zeroed by ordnance officers and then handed out to troops. The scopes' reticles had various lines and "tic" marks for windage and

elevation. It was the troops' duty to figure out which marks to use for various ranges and wind conditions.

The scopes were also mounted offset to the rifle's actions, which introduced another variable. By much experimentation I've been able to get first shot hits at 100 and 200 yards with my Type 97 6.5mm but at 300 yards, it's about a 50/50 chance of hitting with the first shot.

Last is the Japanese fixation on bayonets. Their Type 99 7.7mm LMG weighs 20 lbs. and was issued with a bayonet. Hoisting about a bayoneted 20-lb. LMG in combat seems a sure way to get hurt. Over the past 20 years, I've shot thousands of factory rounds and handloads through my Japanese World War II firearms collection.

**GUNS**

# THE BRITISH MLE RIFLE

## BOER'S LOVE AFFAIR WITH EMILY

**Dave Anderson**

The Lee bolt-action rifle was the British service rifle from 1888–1957. It went through many design changes but retained its basic form — detachable double-stack magazine originally for eight cartridges, later holding 10, rear-locking bolt, short bolt lift, short bolt throw, two-piece stock

and chambered for the .303 British cartridge. It also served other British Commonwealth nations including Australia, Canada, India and New Zealand. Though replaced by the self-loading FN rifle, its flame continued to burn as a sniper, ceremonial and special purpose rifle. The flame wouldn't flicker out until 2016 when the Canadian Rangers finally replaced their Lee Enfield rifles.

### SHORT-LIVED

The first version was the MLM, the initials standing for “Magazine, Lee Metford.” The designer was a Scots/Canadian/American named James Paris Lee, while the original rifling for black powder cartridges was designed by British Col. Metford. The shallow rifling did not have a long service life when the load was changed from black to smokeless powder and was redesigned with deeper rifling grooves at the Enfield armory. The redesigned rifle was the “Magazine, Lee Enfield” — MLE or “Emily.” It was also called the Long Lee for its 30" barrel and near-50" overall length. A shorter version was later adopted as the “Short, Magazine, Lee Enfield” — SMLE, or “smelly” as it was often called.

Both the MLM and MLE were used by the British military in South Africa during the Second Boer War. Many Boer settlers had trekked from their original settlements in South Africa to what was then called the Transvaal and Orange Free State. Their interest was in farming and ranching. Unfortunately for them, diamonds and gold were discovered on the land they claimed. The Boers soon realized if they wanted to keep their land and lifestyle, they would have to fight.

A most interesting book about the war is titled *Commando: A Boer Journal of the Boer War* by Deneys Reitz, written while he was in exile in Madagascar. Reitz joined the Boer forces at age 17 and fought throughout the war, then wrote the book while the memories were still fresh. The Boers were not so much an army as a volunteer citizen force.



The magazine cut-off of the MLE rifle in closed position (above). In order to preserve ammunition and encourage careful aimed fire, the cut-off required the soldier to load one round at a time while saving the rounds in the magazine for use in repelling an attack. Magazine cut-off in open position (below) to allow access to the cartridges in the magazine.



The MLE rifle (below) was sometimes called the “Long Lee” for its near 50" overall length. It makes sense as the doctrine of the day primarily considered the rifle a handle for the bayonet.





Reitz wrote, “Officers and men had to supply their own horses, rifles, clothing, and equipment, and nobody received any pay ... the Transvaal Government had been importing large quantities of Mauser rifles from Germany, which were sold to the burghers at a nominal figure, and as great stores of ammunition had likewise been accumulated, the commandos were very efficiently equipped.” The Mauser rifles were based on the 1893 design, chambered for the 7mm Mauser (7x57) cartridge.

“I was 17 years old and thus too young to be enrolled as a burgher. President Kruger himself solved this difficulty for me ... when he heard my age, he said: ‘Well then, Mr. State Secretary, the boy must go — I started fighting earlier than that,’ and he took me straight to the Commandant-General’s room close by, where Piet Joubert in person handed me a new Mauser carbine, and a bandolier of ammunition ...”

### HUNTERS OF MEN

I’ve often read the Boer War was primarily a long-range shooting duel at which the Boers had an advantage due to a superior rifle and better shooting skills. Reitz presents a different picture. True, the Boers were often experienced hunters and riflemen, and were generally very good shots. But much of the fighting was at very close ranges with men using terrain as cover. Reitz describes one such action where the ranges were 30 to 40 yards. The Boer’s experience at fast shots on game gave them a big advantage.

“Both sides were maintaining a vigorous short-range rifle contest, in which the soldiers were being badly worsted, for they were up against real old-fashioned Free State Boers for whom they were no match in sharpshooting of this kind ... the Free State men had eight or nine dead, and 15 or 20 wounded. The English casualties were about 200 killed and as many injured, the disparity being due to the fact that the English soldiers were no match for us in rifle-shooting.”

The fault was not with the British soldiers but in their training. Many in



The MLE (Magazine, Lee Enfield) had a barrel-mounted open rear sight and also this “volley sight” for shooting at extreme ranges, out to 2,800 yards.



One of James Paris Lee’s innovations was the double-stack detachable magazine. The rear locking lugs of the bolt meant bolt throw needed to be just a bit longer than the .303 cartridge, making for fast cycling.

the British military still saw the rifle as mainly a handle for the bayonet. British soldiers were trained to fight as a unit rather than as individual marksmen. Their skill at volley and rapid fire was formidable. Of another battle, Reitz said, “(We) came under a galling point-blank fire ... the moral effect of Lee-Metford volleys at 20 yards must be experienced to be appreciated. The English troops lay so near that one could have tossed a biscuit among them.”

The British MLE rifle was certainly superior to the Mauser in rapid fire, roughly equal in terms of

accuracy, reliability and power. The big advantage of the Mauser was its rapid reloading with five-shot stripper clips, or “chargers” to use the British term. Reloading the MLE magazine one round at a time, under great stress, must have been a trying experience. When Britain redesigned the MLE, rapid reloading with chargers was quickly incorporated along with improved sights and a shorter barrel. The MLE was an excellent rifle, which evolved into the splendid SMLE, which served so well in the First World War.

**GUNS**



## REMINGTON MODEL 8 EARLY AUTO-AWESOMENESS

Payton Miller

Sometimes, a particular firearm can flat-out grab your attention just by the way it looks. For many of us, such models might include the P-08 Luger, Mauser C96 “Broomhandle,” Mannlicher-Schonauer M1903 and Savage M99. But here’s another — and one with a 42-year production span to boot — although some might opine that its looks are a bit, well, industrial.

Besides being one of the most distinctive-looking rifles ever produced, Remington’s Model 8 had the distinction of being the first successful (commercially speaking) semiauto rifle offered to American hunters. Like so many classic and enduring platforms, the Model 8 was designed by — insert drum roll here — John Moses Browning.

### BIG SCREEN BANG

However, I first became aware of the Model 8 in the early 1960s when I saw Warren Oates using one in Sam Peckinpah’s *Western classic Ride the High Country*, an admittedly avant garde hardware departure from the usual Winchester lever gun.

A few years later, a guy I was deer hunting with was using one. I was intrigued by it but wasn’t able to actually shoot one until years later. There’s simply no way of ever mistaking it for anything else. The first time I saw one, I thought it registered off the charts in terms of the Cool Factor. I still feel that way.

In terms of real-world historical significance, the Model 8 was used by legendary Texas lawman Frank Hamer in both .25 and .35 caliber. In

fact, Hamer was carrying a .35 with an extended magazine when he and other lawmen ended the careers of Bonnie and Clyde near Gibsland, La. And, prior to propeller-synchronized machine guns in World War I, French pilots employed the Model 8 as an “air-to-air” solution to deal with German planes early in the conflict.

The Model 8 is a long-recoil-operated rifle featuring a 22" barrel encased in a sheet metal jacket giving the barrel a straight-taper beefy appearance. It has a fixed, non-detachable 5-round magazine just forward of the trigger guard



Just a few years past the turn of the 20th century, the Remington Model 8 represented “state of the art” in commercial sporting rifles. It also became a favorite of prison guards and law enforcement personnel.

while larger-capacity mags for LE use could be retro-fitted. The large distinctive-looking safety design was later “appropriated” in the decidedly unsporting AK-47 by no less a small-arms icon than Mikhail Kalashnikov.

The rifle was introduced as the Remington Autoloading Rifle in 1905 and officially became the Model 8 in 1911. The Model 8 morphed into the Model 81 Woodsmaster in 1936 and remained in

There’s no mistaking the profile of the Remington Model 8 — a beefy sleeved barrel, a distinctive, industrial-strength safety, large easy-to-grasp bolt knob and flip-up tang receiver sight.

production in various grades until 1950 and included a .300 Savage chambering.

Visual cues distinguish the Model 8 from the Model 81. The M8 has a straight-grip stock and a slender forend while the M81 has a pistol-grip stock and a beefier beavertail-style forend.

The Model 8 was significant as it served as the original launching pad for Remington’s family of rimless cartridges, the .25, .30, .32 and .35. The first three were, for all practical purposes, ballistically identical to Winchester’s .25-35, .30-30 and .32 Special. However, the potent .35 Remington — which was pretty much a “stand alone” item

— still exists commercially. A Model 8 so chambered is considerably more desirable today for anyone interested in easily obtained store-bought ammo.

Our particular Model 8, courtesy of collector/auction addict Doug Fee, was chambered in .25 Remington and featured a folding factory tang peep sight. The .25 Remington launches a 117-grain softpoint at a claimed velocity of just under 2,400 fps.

This is on a par with the .25-35 Winchester, a round that once served me well on a Texas white-tail/hog/javelina hunt. No, it’s not up there power-wise with a

.30-30 but it worked very well for stuff at short to medium range.

Up to now, my only previous experience in shooting a Model 8 had been with one in .35 Remington. I’ve heard it said the unique action of the Model 8 is a bit unkind recoil-wise, but the .35 version — while reasonably stout — was by no means unbearable when launching a 200-grain bullet at somewhere in the neighborhood of 2,100 fps.



At 50 yards, Payton's best result with the Model 8 was with "house brand" 117-grain ammo. That tang-mounted peep sight helped some!

In comparison, the .25-caliber Model 8 with a 117-grain bullet around a similar speed was fairly negligible in terms of felt recoil.

### CLEARING THE COBWEBS

The ammo we had was vintage, to say the least, consisting of 117-grain Remington Core-Lokt and Winchester SP. Both were well in excess of 75 years old. According to our chronograph, neither reached the claimed velocity of just under 2,400 fps. The Remington stuff we had clocked 2,060 fps; the Winchester averaged 2,073 fps.

But even with an 8-lb. sporting a "pad-less" curved butt plate, shooting was easy. The rifle produced the distinctive, long-recoil ka-chunk familiar with anyone who's ever shot a Browning A5 or Remington Model 11 shotgun. The trigger, incidentally, was excellent and crisp, a "bolt-action"-type at 3 lbs. Using the folding aperture rear, our best 3-shot group at 50 yards was slightly over an inch with the Remington stuff.

Our range session was facilitated by the fact we had an original 5-round stripper clip, which let us avoid a bit of fumbling in the reloading process. Originals can be a bit pricey, but Cogburn Arsenal (CogburnArsenal.com) offers a serviceable nylon facsimile for \$2.95.

Of course, in comparison with other early "quarter bores" such as the .250-3000 or .257 Roberts, the .25 Remington comes up short in the velocity department at least by modern "speed demon" standards. It's also pretty much a handloading proposition today. But, in the Model 8 it proved to be a delightful, easy shooting cartridge and one well-suited for whitetail at under 100 yards.

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## Second Chance

# SHOTGUN

## REBUILDING A BELOVED MOSSBERG 500 CRUISER

Jeremy D. Clough

I have a certain moral weakness that when I find something reliable, I simply trust it to do its job and sometimes overlook routine maintenance. I hadn't completely done this with the Mossberg 500 Cruiser I relied on for the better part of 25+ years but I did neglect to clean it regularly. No worries: The gun kept working.

In 60+ years of production with over 11 million produced, the 500 is the most-produced shotgun of all time, and mine has certainly shown why. It just worked and rocked on for a couple of decades until I used it to test some all-brass shotshells I loaded with black powder substitute. Having missed the memo those powders are also corrosive, I put the 500 in the safe and was surprised to find it a few weeks later with red rust growing in the barrel, bolt and everything steel that looked important.

Stripping it down confirmed most action parts were seriously rusted and the bore almost completely darkened. Fortunately, breaking the 500 down for repair provided the opportunity to make some other improvements I'd been thinking about. We'll start with the mandatory, then follow up with the improvements, most of which were provided by tactical-shotgun pioneer Vang Comp.

### TAKEDOWN

To disassemble the 500, make sure it's clear then loosen the nut beneath the barrel, pull the barrel forward and out of the receiver. There's only one dimpled pin going all the way through the receiver, the one holding

The front sight base in place (left, top) after soldering and its first coat of cold blue. It will get more to obtain a more-consistent black finish. After removing the front sight (left, bottom), shoeshine the barrel with 320-grit sandpaper to prepare it for soldering on the front sight.



Jeremy's beloved Mossberg 500 was nearly reduced to scrap after being shot with corrosive ammo and accidentally left to rust. Fortunately, it's back to fighting trim and with a few improvements!

Corrosive powder left most of the steel parts of the gun thickly coated with red rust (right, top). This was a valuable — and expensive — lesson in taking care of your guns! The action parts after bluing are ready to be reinstalled (right, bottom). Some of the pits were simply too deep to safely remove, so some pitting is still visible even with the new bluing.



the trigger assembly in place. The other round items are pivot points for internal parts. Drive out the trigger housing pin, then remove the housing by tilting it down at the rear. Forcing it out otherwise is likely to break part of the plastic housing and give you the opportunity to find a replacement on eBay.

The cartridge stop and interrupter ride in slots on either side of the receiver and they'll probably fall out after the trigger housing is removed. If not, gently lift them out. The ends of the twin action-bars on the back of the pump fit into notches in the sides of the bolt slide. This sits beneath the bolt and forces the pivoting bolt lock (pinned in place within in the bolt) up into the locking slot in the barrel.

Like an AR, the bolt locks to the barrel, not the aluminum receiver. The slide runs in a set of captured grooves with clearance for removal at the rear part of its travel. Move the pump back until the slide lines up with this area and lift it out, then squeeze in the legs of the elevator to free the studs on either end. The pump comes forward off the mag tube. The bolt can then be removed from the front of the receiver and the spring steel ejector unscrewed through the ejection port.

Unscrew the mag tube — probably with a strap wrench — to remove the spring and follower. Do not clamp the tube in a vise, as it risks crimping the tube. The spring



will make a sideways break for freedom as soon as the tube comes out and the follower may join it.

Restoring the action parts is basic remedial work — detailed disassembly followed by bead-blasting. A bead blaster and air compressor stout enough to run it can be a heavy investment, so having it done professionally or purchasing new replacement parts might be more cost-effective.

### PIT REMOVAL

The visible portions of the bolt and elevator on the 500 are left bright instead of blued, which is attractive but rusted particularly badly. After blasting them



The front sight (above) jugged up and ready for the oxyacetylene torch. The receiver (below) was spotted using a 3/32" ball end mill for the sight base holes then tapped #8-40. This is an uncommon size but easy to find on Amazon.



both with 800-grit media, deep pits remained. I used 220 sandpaper backed by a file to polish the pits away from the bolt, using crosshatch and lengthwise strokes to keep the surface even, then re-blasted. You should never polish a flat with unsupported sandpaper as it creates a wavy surface.

The problem with polishing out pits is the entire surface has to be brought down to keep a true surface. There's enough mass in the bolt I had no compunction shaving it down a bit, but the elevator was too thin to risk thinning it further. The pits remain — an unsightly lesson in taking care of your stuff.

## BARREL TREATMENT

Similar with the barrel as all pits could not safely be removed. To recondition it, I used three Flex Hone barrel hones by Brownells: medium (180-grit) for the bore followed by fine (800) for the barrel and chamber. They must be used with the included honing oil to create an abrasive slurry inside the barrel and keep the hone from being damaged.

Chuck it into a drill and cover well with oil. The wise man will also put something around the muzzle end of the barrel. While you shouldn't run the hone all the way out of the barrel, it will come part-way out. When it does, grey slurry will spray all over the place.

Run the hone smoothly back and forth, supporting the flexible shaft to keep it running true and check frequently.

Candidly, the pitting in this barrel was so bad it's an open question whether I will be able to keep it from rusting. Time will tell if it has to be replaced. I did the final hone after installing ghost ring sights by Vang Comp.

## FRONT SIGHT SWAP

The front sight, which comes in the white (unfinished), must be silver soldered to the barrel — a bit of a tricky operation considering the similarly mounted lug on the bottom of the barrel directly beneath it. Too little heat and the sight won't stay, too much and you lose the lug. Way too much and you melt the barrel.

The factory heat shield slides on from the front and cannot be removed with the factory front bead in place. With this in mind, I kept the heat shield on when installing the Vang sight. The first step is always material prep, so after removing the factory front bead, I scuffed the bluing off with 320-grit paper using a shoeshine motion to get down to bare steel.

I used Brownells Silvaloy 355 silver solder, which comes in both round wire and 1/2" wide strips (the choice for this task), as well as their ramp-soldering jig. The fixture has a grooved base and adjustable armature with a spring-loaded contact piece to keep the sight from moving as the solder flows. While I attempted to follow the instructions of scribing a line to align the sight correctly, it did not work for me. I installed the barrel in the gun, fully bolted into the mag tube and clamped the sight in place after looking down the receiver to align it.



Unlike most popular shotgun card systems, the Vang system still uses a removable aluminum backing plate mounted to the receiver through an extended ejector screw.

To protect the barrel, especially the crucial lower lug, I surrounded the area with Bloc-It heat-absorbing paste and fired up the oxyacetylene torch to heat the barrel and sight base — but mostly the base — alternately until the solder flowed. Afterward, a touch-up with cold blue before screwing in the AR-style front sight blade.

### REAR SIGHT INSTALLATION

Rear sight installation is somewhat simpler, consisting of drilling and tapping holes for four #8-40 screws. These holes come on current Mossberg shotguns but as mine was made around 30 years ago, I had to add them. I spotted the holes in my mill with a carbide 3/32 ball-end

mill, which I promptly broke off in the second hole and got to spend a couple of hours grinding out with a diamond-tipped Dremel cutter. You can use a drill press or even do it carefully by hand but if there is a more precise option, use it.

### FINISHING TOUCHES

The final improvements were the Vang Comp's stainless follower, oversized safety and Detachable Side Ammunition Carrier kit. Velcro-attached shotgun cards have increasingly replaced the hard plastic sidesaddles of yore and for good reason — it may take a little longer to load one, but once they're empty, strip it off the gun and slap on another.

Unlike the common adhesive strip stuck to the side of the receiver, the Vang system uses Velcro on an aluminum plate mounted to the receiver. Although less critical on the aluminum Mossberg receiver, the ability to remove the plate keeps moisture from gathering behind it and rusting the receiver.

The plate installs on the 500/590 via a longer, threaded trigger housing pin and a modified ejector screw. Installation is dead simple and can be done without disassembling the gun. As for durability, the first one they sent out into the world is still in service on a duty gun.

This one should last for at least as long as it took me to clean this gun the first time — a mistake I won't make again.

**GUNS**



Jeremy used a set of barrel hones from Brownells to remove as much of the pitting as possible. They *must* be used with the proprietary Flex Hone oil.

“

I figured Stoeger would get the 'black pistol' bee out of their collective bonnet and then go back to building respectable duck guns. It didn't happen.







# Stoeger STR-9

## THE NEW KING OF THE BUDGET NINES?

Brent T. Wheat

Photos: Rob Jones/The Imagesmith LLC

When you look up the term “workmanlike” in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, one definition is “competent and skillful but not outstanding or original.” Given the leftward-slant of publishing folks these days, the dictionary company would probably be horrified to learn they just perfectly capsulized the Stoeger STR-9 pistol family.

Equally, my friends at Stoeger might be less than thrilled at the characterization but let’s be honest — the STR-9 is “skillful” or “competent” (as an inanimate object) but not really outstanding or original. In other words, think of a GLOCK, something from Springfield Armory, S&W, the Mossberg MC2 or any other of the countless mainstream, mass-market striker-fired 9mm polymer-frame pistols on the market. They’re not exactly “great” — insert your personal criteria here — but they’re good enough millions trust their life to them.

I’m now adding Stoeger to this yeasty mix, regardless of price.

### WRITING ON THE WALL

The journeyman gun writer has a major problem nowadays: We’re

expected to differentiate guns based on their unique features yet many of the mainstream pistols brought to market in the last decade are, frankly, quite similar. Most 9mm striker guns are ho-hum comparable and it becomes the writer’s curse to figure out what differentiates one from the next.

Having recently spent a week at Gunsite academy shooting three STR-9 models, I walked away without much to say — which is saying something. At night, holding editorial conferences over small samples of Kentucky Holy Water in the hotel bar, I heard the assembled scribes constantly saying things like, “These things are darn good. Amazingly so. They’re on par with most of the other leading striker nines. How am I gonna write this up?”

It’s a quandary, at least until you realize what is *truly* unique — the price tag.

At press time, the online “on-the-street” price for most of the STR-9 models starts just above three C-notes (based on \$399–\$629 MSRP). On a really good day, you might find a new one under \$300. Compare this to the vaunted “Perfection” polymer pistols where you’re talking north of \$500 for

The Stoeger STR-9 family: Everything you want — including reliability — but hundreds of bucks less!

# Stoeger STR-9

THE **NEW KING** OF  
THE BUDGET NINES?



# GUNS<sup>®</sup>

MAGAZINE

## STOEGER STR-9 GEAR LIST

**Ammo:** Federal Bulk Pack – Syntech Training and HST JHP Defense Ammo

**Holsters:** CrossBreed Supertuck and CrossBreed Freedom Carry IWB

**Ear Pro:** MSA Supreme Pro-X

**Mag Loader:** Maglula Universal Double Stack





Brent prepares to open the door to possible trouble on “The Scrambler” course at Gunsite Academy while armed with an STR-9C (Compact) model. Photo: Source Outdoors

the subcompact models. I’m not a financial wizard but if you get the same reliability, dependability, ergonomic features and accuracy for less money, it’s pretty easy to decide where the best value lies.

### PRIOR HISTORY

It all starts with the company DNA — most shooters know Stoeger for their shotguns. Whether you’re considering one of their inertial-driven semi-auto hunting or tactical guns, or fantasizing about guarding the 3:10 Yuma stage with a Coach Gun, Stoeger has a solid reputation for quality offshore-manufactured shotguns at a decent price.

Stoeger did build handguns over the years including a Luger copy and a takeoff on the Beretta Cougar. However, most recently they’ve left handguns to the competition while focusing on their bread-and-butter scatterguns.

Then, Product Manager Keith Heinlein had a crazy notion — he wanted Stoeger to get into the pistol market but not just with an also-ran representative. His vision was a *good* defensive handgun almost anyone could afford and the idea caught fire within Stoeger. The result was the initial STR-9 in 2019. The guns are built in Turkey but if you’ve been following the shooting business over the last decade, the country has developed a reputation for building high-quality firearms at 1970 prices.

I had an STR-9 in hand as soon as they came out in 2019 and was impressed. In fact, I was so surprised at the general lack of shortcomings I couldn’t come up with a suitable story angle aside from the bland “Yet another great striker nine.” The price was nice, but I figured it would quickly succumb to market pressure and inexorably creep upward. The review languished and I sent the gun back.

Despite having produced a pretty fair 9mm, I figured Stoeger would get the “black pistol” bee out of their collective bonnet and then go back to building respectable duck guns. It didn’t happen. They doubled-down and I’m happy they did.

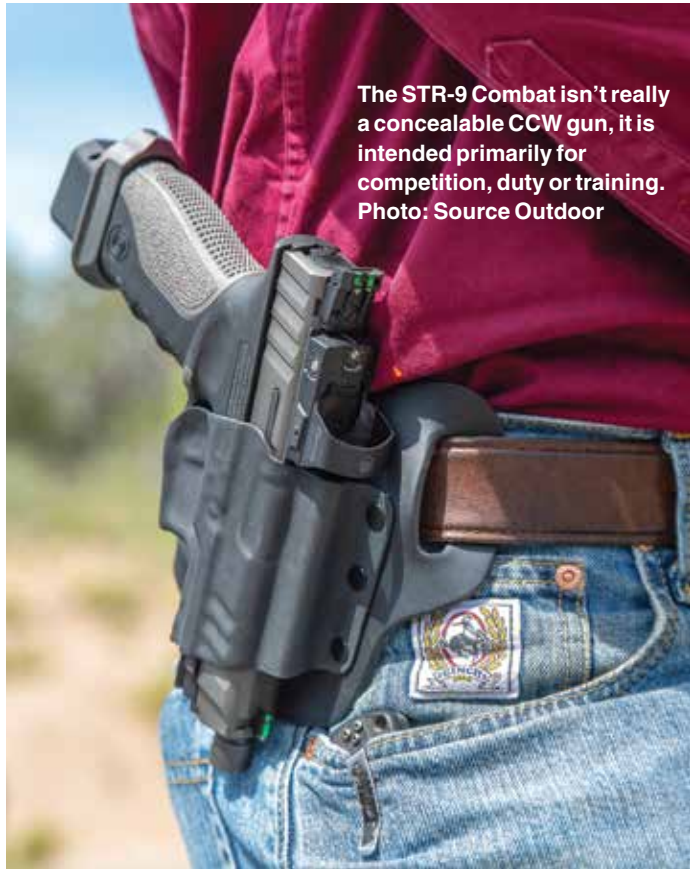
### MEET THE FAMILY

The best way to imagine the STR-9 family would be to figuratively melt all the leading 9mm poly pistols in one big kettle, then cast a new gun from the resulting stew. Whether you’re talking the S&W Shield-like slide scallops, finger grooves seemingly taken from the H&K VP9 and a host of other niceties, the STR-9 copies what works well and smartly ignores what doesn’t. Perhaps not having a longtime in-house engineering team dedicated strictly to pistols is a good thing — dogma is thankfully missing from the STR-9.

Starting with the basic STR-9 family in 2019, the folks at Stoeger have recently expanded the clan into what I wanted to compare to Goldilocks and the Three Bears — you know, mama, papa and baby. However, a focus group consisting of my wife and a couple of buddies thought it was a dumb concept so I won’t use it, even though it makes more sense than the numbering system of those Perfection pistols.

Regardless, the analogy is apropos. Starting with the STR-9MC (Micro Compact, Baby Bear) you have a top-flight 13+1 micro-nine ready for everyday carry with minimal hassle. Moving up to the STR-9C (Compact, Mama Bear), you have a medium-sized pistol very comparable to the same-sized GLOCK models in every regard.

Reaching the top of the line, you have the STR-9S, the “Combat Semi-Auto Pistol,” the Papa Bear of the lineup.



The STR-9 Combat isn't really a concealable CCW gun, it is intended primarily for competition, duty or training. Photo: Source Outdoor

These three guns — ignoring the original still-manufactured medium-size STR-9 for the moment — provided a wonderful three-part slant, at least until Stoeger got busy and threw a curve ball into my story hook. It seems they've added the slightly-larger 10+1 SC (Sub Compact) model along with an F (Full size) pistol in an effort to duplicate the Model obfuscation of our friends from Germany. Regardless, if you have a specific gun size in mind, there is an STR-9 to fit your requirements. They've also added .40 S&W to the mix in case you can't get enough recoil in your life.

### IT KEEPS ON TICKING

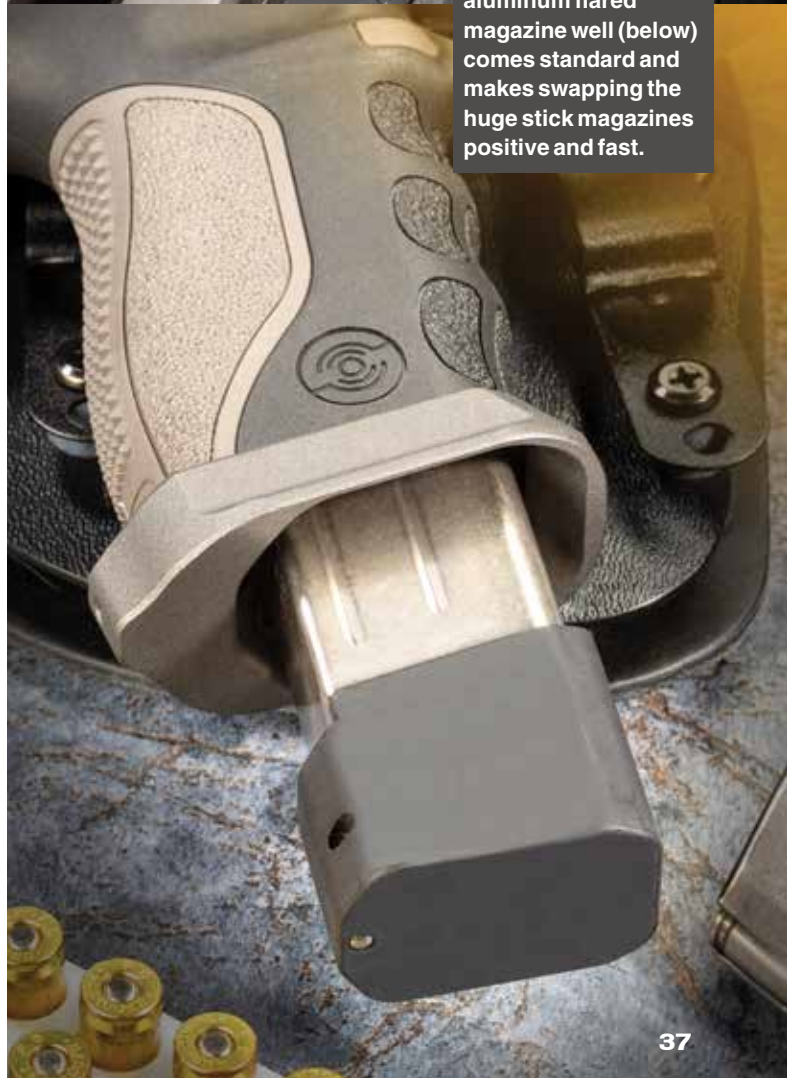
As mentioned, I spent nearly a week driving the MC, C and S models through all sorts of training at Gunsite, ranging from square-range work to the various simulators. This is where the workmanlike character begins to shine — no issues arose, as in “zero.” I confirmed this after overhearing the instructors talking one day about how none of the guns broke during our class. This is a noteworthy occurrence at Gunsite where countless new firearms are introduced to the gun press every year.

There is a silent understanding between all parties involved at these launches that a percentage of the new guns will quit functioning during the shakedown. This is why it was so remarkable to hear the instructors note not one of the Stoeger guns went “bosoms up” (saying it nicely) during the week.

After this experience I can swear and affirm the STR-9 has checked the dependability box and for me, reliability is by far the single most important factor for a CCW gun. I can make do with a poorly designed, uncomfortable,



The Combat model (above) features an optic cut with four adapter plates for mounting various sight footprints. The aluminum flared magazine well (below) comes standard and makes swapping the huge stick magazines positive and fast.



“

Since it's a polymer gun, you can't expect the super-crisp trigger of a custom 1911 but this is part of the tradeoff of plastic versus steel.



The Stoeger Combat model is a large gun primarily intended for duty or competition. With 20+1 capacity, flared bag well, suppressor-height sights and an optic cut, it is a tremendous value among nines.

The Combat model comes with suppressor-height sights, a threaded barrel for a can (plus thread protector), optics cut and great ergonomics. It also proved reliable in Brent's testing at Gunsite.



inaccurate handgun but if it doesn't reliably fire when needed, there is no point in owning it. In this regard, the STR-9 models clearly appear on-par with (*insert your favorite nine here*).

## FEATURES

Aside from top-notch reliability, the line is packed with features you wouldn't expect for a handgun at this price.

The incomplete list is long: reversible mag release, three-dot sight system, great ergonomics, accessory rail, Nitride or Cerakote slide finish, loaded-chamber indicator and replaceable S-M-L backstraps. An optics cut, fiber-optic and night sights are also available on some models.

My personal favorite of the group is the STR-9S Combat model. Boasting additional features such as threaded barrel, suppressor-height sights, flared magwell and 20+1 capacity, the low bore axis, 1911 grip-angle and refined ergonomics make it a sweet shooter. I noticed most of the scribes chose this gun during the "Pick Your Poison" segment of training. The 9S is a substantial full-sized gun, weighing in at 28 oz. compared to the G17 at nearly 25 oz. but you probably won't be carrying it as a daily CCW anyway.

## RANGE TIME

I'll make this quick and easy — pick up your favorite well-known polymer 9mm, shoot it and you'll get a good preview of the Stoeger STR-9. Whichever flavor

you choose, it will have all the good and lesser characteristics of any major-manufacturer polymer nine, such as the pretty-fair flat-faced trigger. Since it's a polymer gun, you can't expect the super-crisp trigger of a custom 1911 but this is part of the tradeoff of plastic versus steel.

Behind dependability comes shooting comfort. I noticed after several days of training, there were no hotspots anywhere on my hands. Had I been shooting certain other brands of gun, the adhesive bandages and tape in my shooting kit would have gotten a workout. It wasn't necessary with the Stoeger. Good design and attention to manufacturing detail work together here, resulting in a non-punishing gun.

In the end, this may sound like a case of damning with faint praise but honestly, there really isn't anything unusual or standout about the STR-9 family — aside from the fact they do all the striker-nine stuff you want but for a couple of hundred bucks less. Sure, it doesn't carry the cachet of the sexy bigger names in the 9mm space. However, if you're a practical, down-to-earth kinda guy or gal who appreciates the value of a dollar and just wants a good solid handgun — in other words, a *workmanlike* polymer nine — consider joining the STR-9 family.

**GUNS**

MSRP: \$399–\$629

[StoegerIndustries.com](http://StoegerIndustries.com)



As Will observed, gun nerds everywhere went nuts over the chance to own a gen-u-wine issued Marine 1911 — but brace your checkbook for serious damage. Photo: DOD

# MARINE CORPS

## COLT M45A1 CQBP

### OWNING A PIECE OF HISTORY



The Colt 1911 Rail Gun is essentially the same gun as the M45A1 minus the cool GI markings. Photo: Rock Island Auctions

#### Will Dabbs, MD

**G**unnery Sergeant Cody Brevley was number three in the stack. His men called him the Terminator. At 6'2" and 215 lbs. of pure lean muscle, he certainly looked the part. On this black Afghan night, Gunny Brevley and the rest of his Marine Raiders stood poised to rid the world of yet another scumbag.

This evening's vermin was one Mustafa Moeen Ali, bomb-maker to the stars. Ali's artistic medium was Semtex and he had already accounted for several Allied KIAs in this part of Helmand Province. For these reasons as well as a few others, this evening Mustafa Moeen Ali was going to die.

#### THE HIT

The breacher blew the front door and the Raiders rushed into the squalid dwelling. MK 18's sporting PEQ-15 IR lasers swept everything before them. Their NVGs turned



the dimly lit hovel into daytime. Then the entire world exploded.

Gunny Brevley's awareness came back slowly. His ear-pro had helped him retain some vestiges of his hearing, but his rifle and NVGs were gone. Over the high-pitched squeal in his head, Brevley could just make out the pressured chatter of the Hajjis as they quickly exploited the aftermath. Brevley didn't speak Hajji, but he could tell these boys were up to no good.

Brevley had no idea what had happened to the rest of his guys, but he wasn't going out like this. As one of the Hajjis poked him in the side with the muzzle of his AKM, Brevley allowed himself to roll over heavily. In the dim dusty light of the room, he could make out the outlines of three terrorists, all with AKs.

Before the Taliban insurgents could put him down, Brevley had his Colt M45A1 CQBP up. The thumb safety came off during the draw. In a literal instant, he put two big fat .45ACP rounds center mass into each of the three terrorists. They immediately dropped to the floor amidst the clattering of their rifles. Brevley, now panting like a St. Bernard in the Sahara, activated his SureFire weapon light and quickly swept the room. Pulling himself heavily to his feet, Gunny Brevley safed his weapon, retrieved his rifle and moved to tend to his wounded. Now that he could think straight, Brevley was just mad. These unwashed swine would rue the day they blew up the Terminator.

### IN THE BEGINNING ...

The origin story of the 1911 should be foundational dogma to anyone clutching this sacred tome. The Moro Rebellion of the Philippine/American War ran from 1899 through 1913. American troops armed with .38-caliber M1892 revolvers had a devil of a time stopping tooled-up fanatical Muslim tribesmen. Considering these guys were often hopped up on drugs and not infrequently tied wet leather thongs around their 'nads that shrank as they dried to keep them focused, this is not surprising. In response, John Moses Browning designed the most effective general-issue combat pistol round in human history along with the manliest handgun in the world to throw it.

The resulting 230-grain FMJ bullet was exactly twice as massive as the comparable European fare. Additionally, while the Lugers, Mausers, Frommers,



Colt M45A1 Close Quarter Battle Pistol  
USMC Decommissioned Units

Dear Valued Collector:

Thank you for participating in Colt's rich history by purchasing a genuine Operator Issue Colt M45A1 Close Quarter Battle Pistol. History shows that the United States Army formally adopted the Colt Model 1911 Automatic pistol on March 29, 1911, and this faithful sidearm has served America in the hands of our military heroes and protected our freedom for over 100 years. The Colt 1911 was selected to continue to serve at the side of our service men and women. After a rigorous selection process, on July 20, 2012 the Colt Rail Gun® was chosen by the United States Marine Corps as their Close Quarter Battle Pistol.

The first fielding of the Close Quarter Battle Pistol featured a Desert Tan Cerakote finished stainless steel slide and receiver, MIL-STD-1913 Picatinny accessory rail, National Match® barrel, front and rear slide serrations, a long solid aluminum trigger, an enhanced hammer, an upswept beaver-tail grip safety with palm swell, a Colt Tactical ambidextrous safety lock, a flat serrated stainless mainspring housing with lanyard loop, Novak 3 Dot night sights, and Desert camouflage G10 composite stocks.

The USMC has purchased the Colt M45A1s for combat use by its Special Operations units, including Force Recon. As the USMC fields the newest generation of M45A1s to operators, a precious few previously issued originals are available on an exclusive basis. An "X" has been engraved over the top of the "USMC" lettering on the slide to reflect the decommissioning of these pistols prior to their commercial resale.

Colt certifies that this pistol was purchased by the USMC for combat use by its Special Operations unit, including Force Recon. We at Colt congratulate you on your purchase of this unique piece of American history and are proud to certify it as a genuine issue service pistol.

Sincerely,

Dennis Veilleux  
President and CEO  
Colt's Manufacturing Company LLC

### A letter from Colt verifying the provenance of the M45A1 CQBP.

Gassers, Werders and Steyrs have all come and gone, Browning's immortal M1911 yet still marches on. There is a good reason for it.

We adopted the big fat bullet because we were restricted to FMJ ammo and the stopping power of 9mm ball has long been suspect. Nowadays, advances in expanding bullet design are said to have reinstated relevancy in the 9mm Para. However, it follows if better bullets in the 9mm made

Colt non-USMC-issue M45A1 CQBP pistols are available and at press time, hover around the \$2,000 price range on Internet gun sale sites. Photo: Rock Island Auctions





**The forerunner of the CQBP model was the M45 MEU(SOC). Built by an all-star team, the USMC literally wore them out, necessitating the new model. And, young Marine, get your finger back on the trigger! Photo: DOD**

it bad, those same bullet technologies in the larger, heavier .45ACP should make it even badder.

As for the gun, technology has indeed moved on to a degree. That original M1911 only carried seven rounds in the magazine and the steel frame was heavy. Modern plastic-framed guns can pack more than twice the ammo at about half the weight. However, a combat pistol's effectiveness is driven by more than raw numbers.

Over the past two centuries, the humble handgun has meant something more than a simple piece of issue equipment. Though I have a near-unhealthy affection for my Woobie, the tattered poncho liner with which I maintained an intimate relationship everywhere from the desert to the arctic and all spaces in between, a soldier's pistol is yet more than that. That combat handgun is the last line

of defense between life and death in a combat zone. If a soldier slaps leather, it is because every other option has already been expended.

The U.S. Marines understand this better than most. In the 1980s when the rest of the U.S. military was neck deep in high-capacity 9mm Beretta M9 pistols, USMC Colonel Robert Young began politicking for a resurrected version of the classic Browning-designed M1911 for his special ops Devil Dogs. The end result was the MEU(SOC) 1911.


The M45 MEU(SOC) stood for Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), and it was a heavily customized amalgam drawn from a variety of suppliers. Nowlin Manufacturing provided the barrels, bushings, mainspring housings and sundry inci-

dentals. Springfield Armory cut the slides. Ed Brown did the recoil spring guides and grip safeties, while Novak produced the sights. Wilson Combat and King's Gun Works rounded out the Dream Team. The frames were resurrected from old WWII-vintage stock. The end result was ballistic art. However, over time the Marines just wore these guns out. No kidding, some of those frames had round counts exceeding half a million. By July 20, 2012, it was time for a massive rethink.

The end result was the Colt M45A1 CQBP (Close Quarters Battle). Colt's initial order was for 4,036 pistols with an option for another 8,000. A customized version of Colt's 1911 Rail Gun, the M45A1 had all the expected bells and whistles along with an accessory rail on the dust cover and a sexy-cool Cerakote Desert Tan finish. Later guns were



**The M45A1 CQBP pistols spent plenty of time downrange before being returned to Colt. Photo: DOD**



The surplus M45A1 QCBP's saw service in the Global War on Terror. Here a female marine puts one of the guns through the paces while training at sea. Photo: DOD

finished out in a bonded material called Decobond. These optimized Browning guns were issued to Force Recon companies, MARSOC (Marine Special Operations Command) forces, and the Special Reaction SWAT teams under the command of the Provost Marshal's office.

Four years later, the Marine Corps finally succumbed to the relentless grind of “progress” and began trading in their M45A1 pistols for GLOCK 19s. Along the way, some of the M45A1's suffered undue finish wear from a zillion draw strokes against Kydex. Colt honored their warranty agreement with the Marines and replaced the guns with new versions. However, at this point the smart kids at Colt realized they had a veritable gold mine sitting in their corporate safes.

These combat-used M45A1 pistols were undeniably sexy cool and Colt now owned them outright. Never before had there been a serious lot of modern GI-issue handguns transferred back to a manufacturer in such a way as to facilitate civilian consumption. Geeks like me went ape over the prospects.

### DOOR-KICKING LEATHERNECKS TO CHAIR-SITTING CIVILIANS

Seeing this as a unique opportunity to market genuine GI-issue handguns to a clamoring public, Colt struck a tasteful “X” across the “USMC” on the left side of the slide and offered them for sale. Interestingly, at the Marines' behest, later runs eschewed the USMC markings. American gun nerds snatched them up like monkeys after pancakes.

Nowadays, the Internet links gun geeks everywhere in their never-ending quest for cool old guns. Auction sites like GunBroker.com hocks the pedestrian stuff while Rock Island Auction moves the really bespoke examples. That's where you go to find a combat veteran M45A1 these days.

No kidding, in 2019 a nicely used example brought \$12,650 at auction through Rock Island. This was against a pre-auction estimate of \$6,000 to \$9,000. As my friend and boss Brent T. Wheat opined, “These are supposedly the



A small number of genuine GI-surplus M45A1 special ops pistols made it into the civilian gun market. Photo: Rock Island Auctions

first GI-issued handguns sold to the public since George Washington was a brevet corporal.” Of course the American gun-collecting public salivates over them.

### RUMINATIONS

I can't tell you how these guns run. I haven't personally dropped 12 grand to make one my own. I opted instead to pay my mortgage, keep my wife and eat. However, there are indeed those out there with enough liquid cash and excess testosterone to buy these remarkable pieces. Like Brent said, they've never been available before and it's not like they're making any more.

There are lots of GI-surplus guns in circulation these days. A few were actually sold through the NRA many decades back before we all became such flaming pansies. However, the vast majority were frankly stolen. I have a few of these vet bring-back beauties in my own stable. If you have a massive chunk of change just burning a hole in your pocket and you'd like an M45A1 of your own, just surf on over to Rock Island Auctions and be patient. They really are lurking out there.

**GUNS**

RockIslandAuction.com



Top is British SMLE No. 3 while bottom is British No. 4 Mk I. Both are .303 and the resemblance is obvious.



British No. 4 Mk I (top) compared to the British No. 5 "Jungle Carbine." It was intended for use in the China, Burma and India Theaters but was also issued to a Polish Parachute Regiment.



The U.S. Government "borrowed" the Brits' design for a World War I battle rifle. The U.S. Model 1917 .30-06 (top) is clearly very similar to the British Pattern 1914 .303.

# BRITISH WWII

## INFANTRY SMALL ARMS

Mike "Duke" Venturino  
Photos: Yvonne Venturino

If any phrase could be used to collectively describe Great Britain's WWII small arms, it would be "Plug Ugly!" Be that as it may, I must paraphrase Forrest Gump's famous saying, "Ugly is as ugly does." Many high ranking British officers were found wanting between 1939 and 1945 but the everyday "Tommy" was well respected by allies and enemies alike, regardless of how ugly his weapons were. The same goes for Commonwealth side-kicks from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India and Poland who fought beside them.

### THE 'SMILE'

The Brits used three basic infantry rifles in World War II, all chambered for their famous .303 cartridge, which actually was introduced with black powder in the late 1880s. By World War II, its standard ballistics were a 174-grain FMJ bullet moving at about 2,450 fps. When they declared war on Germany in 1939, their standard army rifle was the same Short Magazine Lee-Enfield (SMLE) No. 3 used in World War I. Barrel length was 25" with full-length stock ending with a steel cap. Cartridge capacity was 10 rounds in a detachable box magazine although loading was performed with five round stripper clips. The rear sight was an open type, with graduations to 2,000 yards with a post front sight protected by "wings." Weight was 9 ½ lbs. based on the single sample in my own collection.

The SMLE was produced by the millions in factories in England, India and Australia and surrendered to Axis nations by the hundred thousands during Great Britain's many defeats early in the 1940s. Even in 1945 at war's end, many of their combat troops were still packing SMLEs.

Shortly after war was declared, a plan to remodel SMLE No. 3s was completed but none reached troops until 1942. This was the No. 4 MK I, which stayed in British service through the Korean War and several colonial revolutions until replaced by

## 'Plug Ugly' But Effective

semi-autos circa 1957. The 10-round box magazine was retained as were barrel length and weight but sights were changed from open to peep rear graduated to 1,300 yards. Front sights remained essentially the same. Later, to save manufacturing time, a simple two-leaf rear peep replaced the long distance sight. An interesting aside is there was also a No. 4 Mk I produced in Canada and the United States by Savage. Another trait retained with the No. 4 Mk I was the two-piece stock. The buttstock was retained with a metal band and were made in different lengths so rifles' lengths of pull could be fitted to individuals.

A sniper version of No. 4 Mk I's was devised using a 4X No. 32 scope in very strong and heavy mounts. My No. 4 Mk I sniper weighs 11 ¼ lbs. To help shooters' eyes to align with the scope, a wooden cheek rest was affixed atop buttstocks. Wisely, the Brits' No. 32 scopes had both windage and elevation adjustments unlike most World War II German scopes, which only had elevation adjustments, and Japanese scopes, which had no adjustments at all.



**A Browning Hi-Power 9mm made by Inglis in Canada after reverse-engineering those made by FN in Nazi-occupied Belgium. It was issued to British Commando units and Paratroopers.**



Great Britain's third infantry rifle, the .303 Pattern 1914 (P14), also dated from World War I. It was also designed in their Enfield facility but ironically all were produced in the United States by Winchester, Remington and Eddystone (a Remington affiliate). Those three factories made 1.2 million of these .303 rifles in merely 15 months of production. The P14 also had peep rear sights graduated to 1,650 yards but their integral magazines held only five rounds. Barrels were 26" and the weight of my Winchester-made sample is 10 lbs. According to my research, the British never issued P14s in World War I, which seems very odd, as they were desperate

for arms. However, for sure P14s were pulled from stocks and used in the Second World War, mostly being issued to foreign-born troops such as the Free Poles who fought well with British equipment in Italy.

### CARBINES

The Brits issued two carbines in World War II. One was a true carbine based on the No. 4 Mk I but the other was classed as a "machine carbine." This was their famous 9mm STEN gun, more commonly called a submachine gun. Mine is the No. 2 version with wire buttstock and 7



Great Britain fielded both these domestically made revolvers in World War II. Top, the Webley Mk VI .455. Bottom, the Enfield No. 2 .38-200.



**A British sniper rifle, the Enfield No. 4 Mk I(T) with No. 32 4X scope. Unlike German or Japanese sniper scopes, it is adjustable for both windage and elevation. This close up (right) shows the sturdy (and heavy) mounts used on the No. 32 scopes for the No. 4 Mk I sniper rifles.**



$\frac{3}{4}$ " barrel. It weighs a mere 7  $\frac{1}{4}$  lbs. Some experts feel it was one of the most practical submachine guns ever issued to troops. It could be disassembled into three parts in seconds for cleaning or packing. Furthermore, the side-mounted 32-round magazine allowed combatants to get closer to the ground than was possible with other submachine guns with long magazines hanging under the receiver. STEN guns may look shoddily-made because they were — costing only about \$10 to produce.

The other British carbine is the No. 5 .303 "Jungle Carbine," distinctive by the flared flash suppressor. Barrel length was 20.5" and mine weighs 7  $\frac{3}{4}$  lbs. Buttstock and sights were essentially the same as with the No. 4 Mk I. However, the forestock was round ahead of the barrel band, slightly resembling a sporting rifle stock. In an effort to reduce weight, lightening cuts were made in the No. 5 action and even the bolt handle knob was hollow. Supposedly these cuts result in an affliction specific to the No. 5 called the "wandering zero." Mine has not shown signs of this trait but I've not shot it in long strings. Perhaps zero will wander if the barrel gets hot enough. Although its name indicates it was only intended for the China/Burma/India Theaters of action, according to my research, No. 5s were also issued to a Polish Parachute Regiment.

## HANDGUNS

Now let's move onto handguns. Discounting American-made Smith & Wesson revolvers and perhaps imports from other nations, I count three basic handguns carried by British officers and certain troops such as machine gun and tank crews. The standard-issue revolver starting in 1928 was the Enfield No. 2 chambered for their .38-200 cartridge. Although underpowered, the No. 2 revolver is a delightful little handgun. It is of break-open design with a six-round cylinder capacity and 5" barrel. Mine weighs a mere 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  lbs. It functions as both single- and double-action, and there was also a double-action-only version. Sights were a simple notch in the barrel latch but front sights were pinned so different heights could be used for zeroing.

Actually, the .38-200 was nothing more than the American .38 S&W. There was an interesting incident early in World War II concerning the Brit's .38-200 load. Its bullet was lead, which was proscribed by the international rules of warfare. This outraged the Germans so the British went to a 178-grain full metal jacket bullet. The cartridge then

became the .380 Revolver. Regardless of 200- or 178-grain bullets, velocity was only about 650 fps. I put a surplus U.S. Army helmet on a post and hit it from 10 yards with my Enfield No. 2 using a handload duplicating the .38-200. The helmet didn't even jump off the post and was barely dented by the bullet.

The other revolver issued by the British was their Webley Mk VI. It had been introduced in 1916 as a renovation of the basic .455 Webley from 1887. Whereas the earlier Webleys had shorter barrels, the MK VI barrel was 6". Also top-break with a six-round cylinder and dual single- and double-action function, Mk VI is a large, robust revolver. Mine weighs 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. Sights were essentially the same as with the Enfield No. 2, just larger. By World War II, the .455 Webley was loaded with 265-grain full metal jacket bullets with nominal velocity of 620 fps.

During the war, the British army finally decided to join the 20th century in regards to handguns. This was due to the Canadian firm of Inglis reverse-engineering the Browning 9mm Hi-Power — *aka* Model 1935 as made by FN in Belgium, then-occupied by the German Army. These Inglis Hi-Powers were a little more crudely finished than Belgian ones but were perfectly functional. They had a 4.63" barrel and my sample weighs 2 lbs. Their magazine capacity of 13 rounds was surely appreciated by combat troops. Speaking of which — Inglis Hi-Powers were not issued to the rank-and-file British fighting men. They were only issued to Commando units and Parachute troops.

## ACCURACY WITHOUT THE POWER

As I've mentioned several times, I have shooting samples of all the British weapons mentioned herein. I consider my .303 rifles and No. 5 carbines perhaps not as accurate as U.S. Model 1903/1903A3 bolt actions but likely on par with un-tuned M1 Garands. Their handguns are just as accurate as American revolvers as is the Inglis Hi-Power to our Model 1911/1911A1. They were just less powerful.

By the way, British troops proved what was implied in the first paragraph ... guns don't have to be pretty to win wars.

**GUNS**

# Triple BULL HUNT

## Cape Buffalo *Trifeeta*

Jeff “Tank” Hoover

**T**im Sundles, head honcho of Buffalo Bore Ammunition, has supplied test ammo to me for years while patiently answering all the questions from my prying mind. He is indeed knowledgeable, thinking of things never considered by most handloaders.

### THE GREAT ESCAPE

A few years ago, Sundles purchased a 15,000-acre ranch on the Eastern Cape of South Africa. The ranch consists of lush, green, steep mountains and rolling savannahs — a dead ringer for Hemingway’s *Green Hills of Africa*. As a game preserve, it holds over 27 different species of animal including Cape buffalo, Buffalo Bore’s logo. The main house was built in 1897 and is a scaled down version of the original British Embassy in South Africa. It was used as a field hospital during the Boer War of 1899–1902. Sundles invited me for a field-testing cull hunt using Buffalo Bore Ammunition. We’d be culling certain species to balance the herd to improve health and trophy potential. Culling prevents animals eating themselves out of existence. By maintaining meticulous records, managers can calculate how many animals can be maintained without stressing the environment should drought, or other unforeseeable circumstances present itself.

On the cull list was Cape buffalo. Oh, boy! I’ve always dreamed of killing a Cape buffalo with a .45-70 lever gun and now would be my chance. Sundles recommended his 380-grain monolithic solid load (8DG) for the job. My Model 1895 Ruger/Marlin SBL liked the load, shooting under an inch when scoped while I could hold 1–1.5" at 100 yards with peep sights. I practiced for three months prior the hunt with my Skinner Sights-sighted Marlin SBL. This keeps the gun slim, trim and handy. The results paid off. Did I mention the .45-70 is my favorite cartridge?



### BUFFALO

The property was originally a sheep farm consisting of a bowl-shaped mountain range with a series of criss-crossing roads down in the thick, brushy savannah. An old, abandoned hunting camp consisting of stone buildings in various states of disrepair was a known hangout for the Cape buffalo. Walking the roads was a favored method of hunting the buff.

You never know what critter you’ll bump while in Africa. Hopefully, it would be a shootable buffalo!





This is the bull (above) Tank saw Sundles shoot at 25 yards — up close and personal! Here's the whole gang ready to disassemble the bull. Those smiles mean fresh meat to eat! Here is "Mr. Marvelous" (inset), the Buffalo Bore Preserve chef, serving the crew bone marrow from Tank's bull. Nothing goes to waste in Africa!

Rounding a bend, there he was at just over a hundred yards. Dropping his head as he spotted us, the bull looked down his nose. The contempt was obvious.

He wasn't scared — he was annoyed. Sundles examined his horns through binoculars. The bull was hard-bossed and heavy, but not trophy-status wide. For me, he was perfect. The bull continued walking toward us, stopping near a tree. Facing-off, he started assaulting a two-foot diameter tree with massive horns, hooking the tree, trying to uproot it.

He wasn't raking the tree — he was molesting it! Mud was flying from his rear hooves, his muscled haunches flexing in unison with each coordinated shove and twist of his powerful neck. Bark ripped free. It was an amazing demonstration of raw power I'll never forget.

### TICK-TOCK

Tim suggested it might be a good time to shoot, as these posturing assaults are usually followed by a charge.



Author Robert Ruark said Cape Buffalo "look at you like you owe them money." Tank agrees, considering the expression on this bull's face just before Tim Sundles shot it!



Tim Sundles trying to herd off the young bull goring the dead lead bull as a show of dominance. It was a touchy matter getting this close to a ton of enraged sirloin!



Thumbing the hammer back on the '95, I sighted the Buffalo through the Skinner rear peep. The white-line front sight settled tight behind the crease of the bull's near shoulder just before the .45-70 spoke.

The bull lurched at impact, his front hooves lifting 18" to 20" off the ground. I had no idea a ton of muscle and bone could jump so high! Hard hit

by the 380-grain monolithic solid, the bull wheeled to his right and ran through a thorny acacia bush. I felt like a gallon of adrenaline had just dumped into my bloodstream.

We waited for two minutes for the music every Cape buffalo hunter strives to experience — the death bawl. This stubborn beast let out not one, but six long bellows. Was he trying to lure us into an ambush? Not buying it, we waited a few more minutes to start the follow-up. Dead Cape buffalo and "unloaded" guns are two of the deadliest things known to mankind. Keeping this in mind, we proceeded cautiously.

### ON EDGE

Walking to the same acacia bush the bull ran through, we crossed a dry creek bed and saw blood going up the opposite bank on a large, flat rock. Sundles was at the lead, his trusty custom peep-sighted Wiebe .500 Jeffery bolt gun at the ready.

The bulls always watch their back-trail, positioning themselves to the side of the trail for attack — and this is exactly where we found my bull. Ten feet from the creek bank, head facing us in a flanking position, the bull was waiting in ambush. Unfortunately for him, he simply ran out of time.

### A KNOWN INSTIGATOR

My bull was well-known to the preserve's Professional Hunter (PH)/Farm Manager Chris Jonker. Jonker summed it up nicely in broken English/Afrikaans dialect, "This bull had 'angerment' issues." I couldn't agree more!

Sundles agreed, noting "This was a particularly aggressive bull. He charged the moving farm tractor a few months back, hooking and flattening the rear



These aren't bullet wounds. They are some of the holes Bull #2 received when gored by the younger herd bull. Imagine being on the receiving end after a failed shot ...

tire with his horns." He's also chased some of the workers, including Jonker, several other times." Yes, this bull definitely had "angerment" issues but he's no longer a liability.

### SUNDLES' TURN

While driving through a particularly thick section of hillside, we spotted a lone bull five feet from the road. He crossed the road and disappeared in the bush on the other side. Sundles examined him with his binoculars and determined the bull was another good candidate for culling.

We drove past him and parked several hundred yards away. We started carefully backtracking, peeking through the brush, looking for him. Nearing where the bull was last seen, Sundles froze after spotting him bedded down only 25 yards away. As Sundles shouldered his .500, the bull stood. After a short stare-down, the rifle exploded as 570 grains of Barnes TSX bullet flew into the bull's neck. He made it 25 yards and collapsed.

### HOG HUNT BULL

You never know what's around the next corner when hunting in Africa. This is why you must carry a gun large enough for not only what you're hunting, but large enough for what you may stumble onto. This was the case on my last day of hunting.

I really wanted a large, gnarly warthog boar and the abandoned



The second bull Sundles shot with his custom .500 Jeffery as Tank watched. The carcass of this bull was rolled and gored for over 70 yards by another bull wanting to take over the herd.

hunting camp was a hot spot for warthogs — and Cape buffalo. The two species both frequented the same wet, moist, thickly-brushed terrain. The buffalo also use the wary warthogs as warning devices.

Our plan was to park and walk the hunting camp road, hoping to sneak and peak as we walked the trail. Cape buffalo was the farthest from our mind. Hell, we hadn't seen any in days. We should have thought differently.

We bumped a bachelor herd of buff just off the road 20 minutes later. Most of the herd blew out of the area but one bull continued ahead of us. Knowing lone bulls like to ambush when followed, we continued more cautiously, checking left and right of the road for any waiting surprises.

The road track eventually narrowed to a natural pinch-point. Tim suggested we cut through an open field to improve our sight distance as we headed back to the truck. As we reached the field, there was the buffalo herd.

Sundles spotted a tight-bosser bull with narrow horns. Although his horns were narrow, he was the heaviest in the bunch and obviously the lead bull.

When the buffalo was around 100 yards, Sundles' Jeffery spoke again. Hard-hit, the bull stumbled and fell after 25 yards. Now the real show started as a younger bull with wide

horns started attacking the downed bull. Some say bulls do this to help the downed bull get up. This wasn't the case!

The young bull took all his frustration out on the downed bull. He flipped the 2,000-lb. carcass like a hamburger and gored him repeatedly. The young bull was definitely pissed and eventually rolled the corpse over 70 yards into a ditch. Sundles and I eventually left to get the truck.

When we returned, the bull was in the pond getting a cool drink. When he saw us, he returned and started goring the downed bull again. Now Sundles was getting pissed, as the downed bull's cape was getting ruined. Fortunately, after a tense standoff, the bull was eventually persuaded to leave with the truck and tractor/wagon full of workers.

It was the greatest show of pure power I ever saw, even better than my bull assaulting the tree. Cape buffalo are interesting beasts, to say the least. I'm ruined, completely hooked on buff now. Deer hunting just won't seem quite the same.

Every time I visit Africa, a small part of me is left behind and I feel something is missing each time I return home. Those who have been there know what I mean. Nothing is ever the same.

**GUNS**

# GOT PLANS FOR THE YEAR?



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Actual size: 11" x 17"



Finch Knife's Shiv is a modern, polished send-up of the old prison classic. The Shiv's 14c28n stainless blade is a Swedish Sandvik steel originally used in razor blades.

## FINCH KNIFE'S SHIV SATURDAY NIGHT SLICER!

### Pat Covert

The “shiv” is commonly known as a rough, handmade prison knife. Think of it as the Saturday Night Special of penitentiary life. Now, Finch Knife has taken the idea of the Shiv and made it downright presentable. Finch's hallmark is to take traditional pocketknife patterns, bring them up to modern design standards and give them cool names. Located far from the hi-tech crowd in Stilwell, Kansas, Finch is owned by two young entrepreneurs — Spencer Marquardt and Steve Laughlin — who take their jobs seriously and have fun doing it. The Shiv is their latest in an impressive line of pocket fare.

The Finch Shiv is 6.5" overall with a closed (handle) length of 3.7". Our review sample has Ghost Green G10 handle scales over black-coated

stainless steel liners with a blade to match, but you can also have it with an uncoated blade and liner combo. It's also available with Black G10 and Mkuruti wood scales.

The Shiv's 2.8" 14c28n stainless steel Wharneckliffe blade rolls out via a flipper smooth as a whistle and snicks into place via a liner-lock mechanism machined into the upper liner. The 14c28n stainless is a Swedish Sandvik steel originally used in razor blades. You can carry the Shiv via the 2.0" tip-up pocket located on the back scale or remove the clip altogether and tote it loose in the pocket.

### WHY YOU'LL LIKE IT

One of the Shiv's best features is its straight-edged Wharneckliffe blade. Similar to the Sheepsfoot but having a gentler curve to the spine, the Wharneckliffe is a workhorse blade



Here you can see the Finch Shiv's flipper for rolling out the blade and its 2.0" pocket clip. The clip is removable for good old-fashioned loose pocket carry.

just like its sibling. Should you get in a pinch, it's also proven to be a very effective tactical blade due to its ability to snatch — and keep on snatching. Add to the Finch's cool styling and slick action, and you have a pocketknife to make any street legal-user blush. MSRP for Finch Knife's Shiv is an affordable \$79.

GUNS

FinchKnifeCo.com



### WEDGE XT EDC LIGHT

The Streamlight Wedge has been around a couple of years and I carry mine nearly every day. The Wedge is a near-perfect EDC light except for one trifling detail — it's pretty big. Most of the time, this is a benefit. It clips nicely into your pocket like a backup knife, it's as bright as Taylor Swift's smile, easy to operate and I've yet to run down the huge battery. However, when you're wearing lightweight shorts or Sunday-go-to-meetin' clothes, it can get a little bulky.

This "10% of the time" problem has now been solved with the Wedge XT. This new light packs all of that sweet Wedge goodness into a package 2/3 as big. It's half as bright (500 lumens) and runs two hours instead of three, but it hits the mark for those times you need a smaller, rather than bigger, pocket light.

**Street Price:** Around \$90  
Streamlight.com

### VIKTOS UPSCALE 3 LEATHER BAG

I ordered this as an antidote for the "tactical" look of most sling packs. As a confirmed practitioner of "Gray Man" tactics, I don't want to advertise to the world I'm carrying a gun or two along with several magazines and maybe a thermo-nuclear device in my super-sexy tactical man-purse.

The details of the Upscale 3 Leather Bag exceeded expectations in every way. The buckles are high-quality metal with a quick-release, not plastic like 99% of



other sling packs, while the zippers and lining are equally top-notch. The hidden gun compartment is easy to access from either side. The only thing I didn't immediately care for was the semi-gloss brown leather — it's not my "scene" — but my wife immediately fell for it. Turns out the rig is several times more practical than those expensive gun purses I've bought her. I guess she'll be writing up the six-month review!

**MSRP:** \$125  
Viktos.com

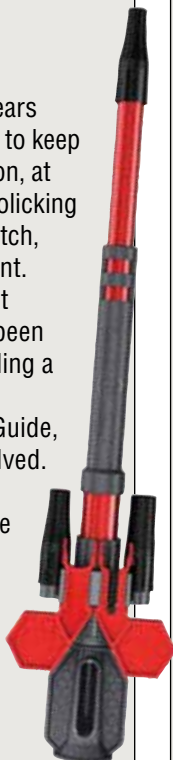
### REAL AVID SMART-FIT BORE GUIDE

I've used countless bore guides over the years and they work — well, mostly. They serve to keep debris and gunk out of your bolt-action action, at least until they unseat themselves and go frolicking about while you fight to get cleaning rod, patch, solvent and bore guide all back into alignment.

On the next patch, the process repeats. It kind of reminds you of Sisyphus if he had been sentenced to cleaning a .308 instead of rolling a stone for eternity.

Now, with the Real Avid Smart-Fit Bore Guide, your meandering bore guide problem is solved. After choosing the correct tip for your caliber, you secure the contraption in your bore with a locking key and scour away to your heart's content, secure in the knowledge the only place your patented bore-brightener will end up is in the trash can.

**MSRP:** \$24.99  
RealAvid.com



### ELITE TACTICAL SYSTEMS GEN 2 COUPLED MAGAZINE

Elite Tactical Systems (ETS) just makes great polymer magazines. I've used them for a while and they check all the boxes — great ergonomics, reliable feeding, no-tilt follow, easy disassembly for cleaning and they're stronger than my old drum teacher's breath after a 3-martini lunch. In fact, they claim to be "The World's Toughest Polymer Magazines" and I've seen demos to prove it, though I soon plan on using my 6,000-lb. Chevrolet truck to verify it to myself.

However, before I get all "crushy" with one of the test magazines, there is one feature I really like — their Tactical Coupled Magazine.

Shooters have been taping magazines together for decades and a few manufacturers have similar systems. However, the ETS mags give you the robustness of polymer, a secure mating systems and, best of all, a reasonable price. I'd still run some tape to make sure the mags didn't uncouple but overall, I'm a fan.

**MSRP:** \$15.49  
ETSGroup.us



# CRASH THE GUN BAN PARTY

## THE '24 CAMPAIGN HAS JUST STARTED!

**Dave Workman**

**Y**ou have one job this year: Throw out the party of gun prohibition — you know which party we’re talking about — before they manage to erase the right to keep and bear arms. They want to replace it with a proposal from California Gov. Gavin-I-Want-To-Be-President-Newsom, which is pure gun control.

Keep this in perspective: If anti-gun politicians are not in office, they cannot make their policies into law.

This should need no explanation, especially after New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham’s debacle last summer when she grossly overstepped her constitutional authority in an attempt to prohibit lawful firearm carry in Albuquerque and surrounding Bernalillo County. She exploited three tragic fatal shootings of three young people as an

and he hopes you are all as stupid as the Californians who voted for him. The ultimate goal is to peddle this plan to all the other states.

Nearly three years ago, Joe Biden admitted during a televised town hall forum broadcast by CNN he not only wants to ban so-called “assault weapons,” but also 9mm pistols. This guy is relentless, and despite all of his gaffes, this is one thing he has never gotten confused about.

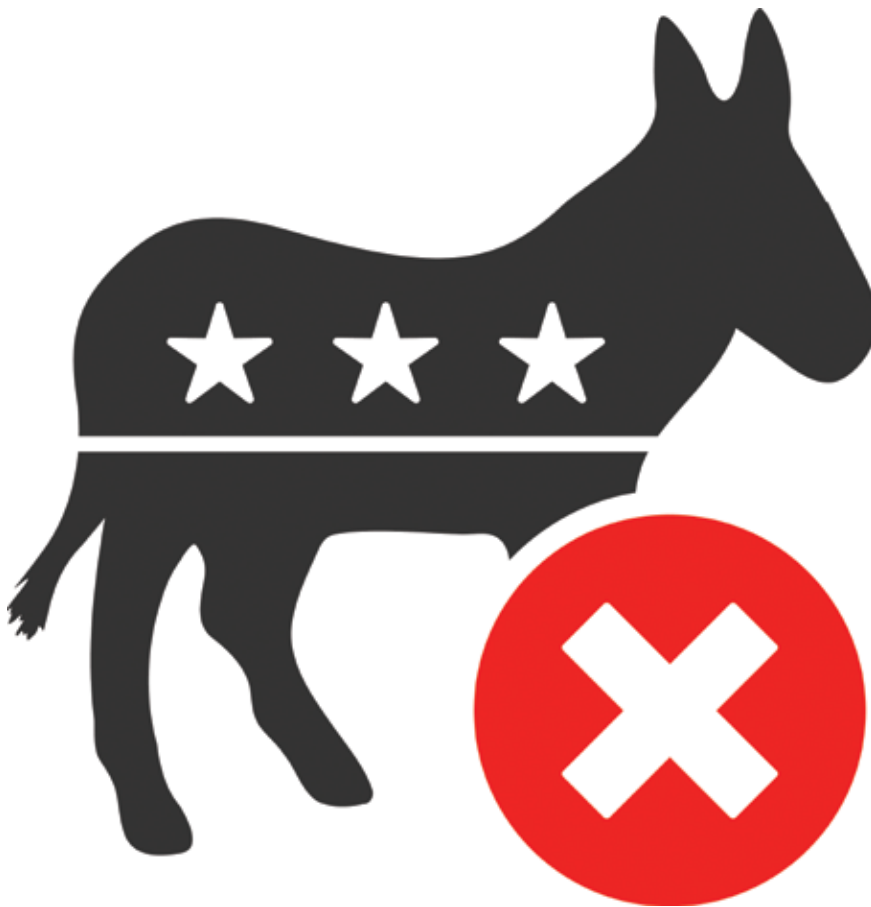
Understand this — these three people represent the policies of their party. The only reason their colleagues have publicly pooh-pooed these notions is because they don’t want the general public to realize this is really their agenda. Gun bans, suspension of a constitutionally protected right and a constitutional amendment turning the right to keep and bear arms into a strictly regulated government privilege are on their wish list. Assume otherwise at your own peril.

The late Sen. Dianne Feinstein, who never saw a gun control measure she didn’t love, allegedly provided the proper postscript to the nonsense of her party. The website “Wealthy Gorilla” quoted Feinstein stating, “Once you sacrifice your rights, it’s hard to get those rights protected again.”

### SOLUTIONS DON’T FIT

Alan Gottlieb, founder of the Second Amendment Foundation and chairman of the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, had this observation about the gun prohibition movement, and politicians including Grisham, Newsom and Biden — “None of their solutions fit the problem.”

Underscoring this opinion, during last September’s Gun Rights Policy Conference in Phoenix, John Lott — founder and president of the Crime Prevention Research Center and author of the ground-breaking book *More Guns, Less Crime* — discussed the New Mexico fiasco. Gov. Grisham, a far-left Democrat, got it wrong from the get-go



### FINISH THEM OFF

There are many ways to defend the Second Amendment from this bunch, but the most effective is to vote against any member of the gun ban party at all levels — county or city council, state legislature and especially both houses of Congress — and be rid of them. The time has come to put gun prohibitionists out of our misery.

excuse to declare a “public health emergency” for which she wanted to suspend the Second Amendment.

Fortunately, gun rights groups quickly took Grisham to court and a federal judge stopped her cold.

Newsom’s proposed 28th Amendment to the Constitution would — contrary to his claims otherwise — essentially nullify the Second Amendment. He knows this



and even the county sheriff and Albuquerque police chief backed away fast from the governor's edict.

One big problem was Grisham took an action that would only affect law-abiding citizens with concealed carry permits. Lott told the conference audience none of the shooters involved in the murders of those children were licensed to carry.

"Every place in the world that has tried to either ban all guns or all handguns," Lott said, "every single time, murder rates have gone up.... We tried banning handguns in Chicago and Washington, DC, and what happened to murders? They went up."

Gun grabbers despise Lott and they are constantly trying to discredit his research. But I have done similar research focusing on one state — Washington — and its largest city — Seattle — and arrived at the same conclusion, using data from the FBI and Seattle Police Department. Since the state started adopting restrictive gun laws, ostensibly to reduce the number of gun-related homicides and assaults, murders have gone up, and more shots have been fired in the city. Washington state anti-gunners don't like the data but it's not my data.

### FOLLOW THE PRIMARIES

So, you'd rather avoid or ignore politics and spend time at the loading bench or gun range, right? If we don't stop the party of gun prohibition this year by throwing them out, — as voters did back in November 1994 — what you do at your loading bench could be criminalized and your gun range just might be zoned out of existence. Stop imagining these people will leave you and your guns alone because they won't.

About 25 years ago, I was a guest at a radio debate with the spokesman for a Seattle gun control group. Afterward, we were in the lobby of the radio station, just chatting about our differences. I told him simply, "Gun owners just want to be left alone."

His response: "Well, we're not going to do that." Such candor should be rewarded at the ballot box.

People like him vote, and they do it in lockstep. They are convinced by past experience gun owners do not always vote, nor do they vote in lockstep, which is why anti-gunners get elected and re-elected. And this brings us back around to the 2024 campaign and the one job you've been assigned.

The primary season is already under way. Pay attention to these events, listen to what candidates say and do not be lulled into believing members of the gun prohibition party will ever see things your way. They will not, period. Behind the friendly smile, pat on the shoulder, a nod of the head and the handshake, is a political dagger waiting to be thrust into your back.

### DATES

At this writing, the New Hampshire Democratic primary was tentatively scheduled for Feb. 6, but there was some dispute over this. South Carolina was looking at Feb. 3.

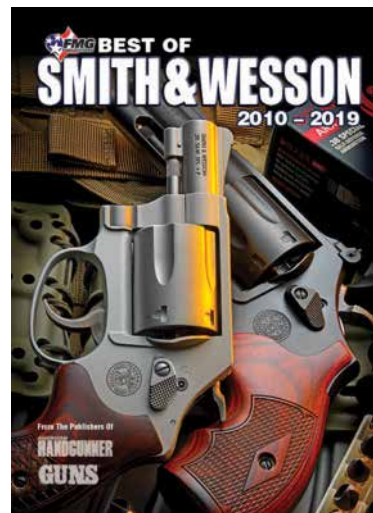
"Super Tuesday," which will see multiple primaries, was tentatively scheduled for March 5. Among the states with primary elections that day are Virginia, Vermont, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Maine, California, Colorado, Arkansas and Alabama. The following week, primaries are slated in Georgia, Idaho, Mississippi, New Hampshire and Washington. The New Hampshire secretary of state, however, is authorized to pick a date seven days earlier than any other state's presidential primary.

Two weeks later, on March 19, watch for primary elections or caucuses in Arizona, Florida, Ohio, Kansas and Illinois.

There's an April 2 primary in Connecticut, New York and Wisconsin, followed by April 23 primaries in Rhode Island and Delaware. A few others come in later, but the next couple of months will see most of the fireworks with public statements that should tell us all exactly where each candidate stands on the Second Amendment.

You have one job this year. Get it done.

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## LUPO KAOS BENELLI

The *Lupo KAOS* is the first high-performance bolt-action rifle from Benelli with a one-of-one finish treatment across the barreled action and stock. It is a limited-edition rifle chambered in 6.5 Creedmoor. Each Lupo KAOS rifle sports a base coat/overcoat that is hand-distressed at the factory to give it a unique appearance. The

barreled action has a Cerakote finish that adds two or more colors from a 15-color earth-tone palette. The rifle thus stands out for its appearance as well as its reliability and accuracy. Features include a free-floating Crio-treated 24" barrel with threaded muzzle, adjustable 2.2- to 4.4-lb. trigger and detachable box magazine. MSRP: \$1,999. For more info: (301) 283-6981, BenelliUSA.com



## BLACK LEATHER HYBRID HOLSTERS

### MISSION FIRST TACTICAL

Mission First Tactical introduces their line of *Black Leather Hybrid Holsters*. The line includes Appendix Inside Waistband (AIWB), Inside Waistband (IWB) and Outside Waistband (OWB) holsters. Functional and comfortable, these Kydex-style holsters are fused with genuine American full-grain leather. These everyday carry holsters give the benefit of exact tolerances, secure retention and easy re-holstering with all of leather's comfort, style and feel. All models come standard with a 1.5" belt clip. MSRP: From \$69.99. For more info: (267) 704-0001, MissionFirstTactical.com

## MULTIPLE HOLSTER SYSTEMS FOR KIGER 9C AND 9C PRO CROSSBREED HOLSTERS

The Kiger 9C And 9C Pro are the first semi-auto handguns developed by Anderson Mfg. Built on a polymer frame and featuring the striker-fired system, these handguns deliver top-end performance at a comfortable price point. *Multiple Holster Systems For Kiger 9C And 9C Pro* include the SuperTuck, Custom SuperTuck IWB, SnapSlide OWB, Freedom Carry IWB, Modular and more. From \$44.95. For more info: (888) 732-5011, CrossBreedHolsters.com



## RAZEL COMPACT CRKT

The *Razel Compact* is a pocket fixed-blade knife

with a 2.32" D2 steel blade with a stonewash finish. The blade balances Veff Flat Top Serrations, a front chisel and a gently curved leading edge. The Razel Compact can be used for cutting rope, scraping and slicing. Its G10 handle gives an exceptional grip. Comes with a thermoplastic sheath. MSRP: \$59. For more info: (800) 891-3100, CRKT.com



## KRYPTEK FISH/ WEIGH-IN COOLER EGO FISHING

EGO Fishing is proud to offer the easy-to-carry *Kryptek Fish/Weigh-In Cooler*. It is designed to provide a safe way for the serious angler to transport fish live to tournament weigh-ins, ice fish for dinner and even chill beverages. Large enough to contain a limit of bass, the cooler spans 21"x4"x22" and weighs a mere 2 lbs. Made of TPU performance fabric. MSRP \$189.99. For more info: (800) 698-6841, EGOFishing.com



## SUN PROTECTION PERFORMANCE GAITER WHITewater FISHING

The *Sun Protection Performance Gaiter* shields you from the sun while you're on the water. With UPF 30+ coverage, this 20" face/neck gaiter is constructed of comfortable, stretch materials composed



of 59% polyester, 26% nylon and 15% Spandex. It also uses odor blocking technology as well. Cover just your neck or pull the front up under your shades and protect your entire face. MSRP: \$24.99. For more info: WhitewaterFish.com

## LIVE BAIT BUCKET MAMMOTH COOLERS

The *Live Bait Bucket* from Mammoth Coolers is built to serve anglers and stand up to extreme conditions. The double-wall rotomolded bucket/cooler with a freezer-grade lid maintains and regulates water temperature to prolong the life of bait fish. Measuring 13 1/2" wide with the handle and 13" high, the 10-quart Live Bait Bucket is available in white, tan or light blue. MSRP: \$129.99. For more info: MammothCooler.com





### R8 ULTIMATE CARBON RIFLE BLASER

**B**laser's *R8 Ultimate Carbon Rifle* is designed for maximum performance and minimal weight. With a 100% hand-laid carbon fiber thumbhole stock to withstand brutal hunting conditions, this bolt-action rifle features vibration and recoil reduction

technology and high torsional strength. The Ultimate Carbon also comes with the Blaser precision trigger and manual cocking system like other R8 rifles. Available in calibers from .22 LR to .500 Jeffery, including 6.5 Creedmoor and 6.5 PRC. MSRP: From \$10,540. For more info: (210) 377-2527, [Blaser.de](http://Blaser.de)



### R3D 2.0 TRITIUM NIGHT SIGHTS XS SIGHTS

**X**S Sights introduces the *R3D 2.0 Tritium Night Sights*. These improved 2nd gen R3D notch and post tritium sights give gun owners a brighter, stronger set of self-defense sights that are easier to install than the original. The R3D 2.0 sights feature two rear tritium dots that are bigger and brighter than their gen 1 counterpart. The new sights also have a PVC ring surrounding the rear sight lamps to improve sight picture. The rear sight is also blacked out and serrated to reduce glare. Compatible with all GLOCK and select S&W models. MSRP: From \$131.99. For more info: (888) 744-4880, [XSSights.com](http://XSSights.com)

### EPIC BALLISTIC HELMET RANGE TEAM WENDY

**T**eam Wendy announced the launch of their *EPIC Ballistic Helmet Range* for first responders. Designed for law enforcement patrol officers, the three models under this line are the Responder, Protector and Specialist (in picture). They are substantially light, offer adjustability and come configured with Team Wendy's CAM FIT H-back retention, 8-pad Zorbium liner system and front cover plate. The new helmet series features lightweight material paired with Team Wendy liner systems for comfort and protection. MSRP: About \$1,000. For more info: (216) 738-2518, [TeamWendy.com](http://TeamWendy.com)



### BACKDRAFT OT TAGUA GUNLEATHER

**T**he *Backdraft OT* from Tagua Gunleather offers fast drawing in a high-quality holster to ensure safety. It features an open-top design that keeps the trigger guard covered for confidently carrying



a range of compact single- and double-action revolvers. The ambidextrous holster is constructed of premium leather for comfort and a lifetime of reliable performance. Available in black or dark tan. MSRP: \$64.99. For more info: (866) 638-2482, [TaguaGunleather.com](http://TaguaGunleather.com)

### SHIELD VERSE PANTS BLOCKER OUTDOORS

**B**locker Outdoors' *Shield Verse Pants* is made of a smooth, lightweight polyester double-weave fabric. This 4-way stretch fabric makes the pants strong as well as comfortable. Shield Verse Pants are DWR-treated to keep hunters dry. Available in Mossy Oak Terra Outland (in picture) and Real Tree Edge camo patterns. MSRP: \$119.99. For more info: (866) 344-1385, [BlockerOutdoors.com](http://BlockerOutdoors.com)



### WARMMASTER HOFFNER KNIVES

**H**offner's *WarMaster* is a heavy duty, upscale folder that is as beautiful as it is powerful. Its Tanto blade is D2 stainless steel in Stonewash Black hardened to HRC 58-60. With an OAL of 8.5", the WarMaster opens with a thumb ramp or Hoffner snap. Comes with a zippered carry pouch. MSRP: \$250. For more info: (281) 855-8800, [Hoffners.com](http://Hoffners.com)



### LIGHTOK X0 BEST EDC FLASHLIGHT WUBEN

**W**uben's *Lightok X0 Best EDC Flashlight* is a small and powerful light source. Producing up to 1,100 lumens of light, this pocket-size light features a magnetic tail cap that can be attached to any metal surface to give you hands-free operation. A built-in WUBEN 18350 battery (1,100mAh), fully charged in 1.5 hours, will last up to 130 hours on moonlight mode. MSRP: \$59. For more info: [Wubenlight.com](http://Wubenlight.com)



**SUBMIT  
YOUR  
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ONLINE:**

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If you are unable to enter online, mail a postcard with your name and address (no envelopes please). Entries must be received by February 29, 2024. Limit one entry per household.

WINNERS CHOSEN BY RANDOM DRAWING. Limit one entry per household. To protect the privacy and security of winners, their names will NOT be made public. Contest void where prohibited by law. Winners must undergo a background check and comply with all other federal, state and local laws. Taxes and fees will be the responsibility of the winner. Contest open to U.S. residents only. Employees and agents of Publishers' Development Corp. are not eligible. No purchase necessary. Winners will be notified by certified mail on official letterhead. Attention deployed military: Use stateside address! Giveaway guns and accessories may have evidence of being test fired or exhibit minor handling marks. Factory warranties may apply in some cases. The Gun of the Month package is awarded only to the entrant drawn and will not be awarded if the firearm presented is illegal in the jurisdiction of the winner. An alternate, authorized winner will be selected. No substitutions or transfers to a third party are allowed.



## ROCK ULTRA HC 10MM Pistol Package



The *Rock Ultra* full-size HC is built in the classic 70 series design and delivered with our precision engineering standards and first-rate upgrades. This pistol is chambered in 10mm with a 5" button rifled barrel supported by a full-length guide rod. It includes a double-stack magwell with a 16-round capacity. Smooth angled, snag-free styling allows for quick draws in fast-need situations. This firearm features a low profile adjustable rear sight and high visibility fiber optic front sight and includes a skeletonized hammer and trigger with adjustable over travel stop and ambidextrous safety. The *Rock Ultra* is finished with a tough, parkerized matte coating and G10 tactical grips. True to all Rock Island 1911s, the *Rock Ultra* comes with a crisp factory 4- to 6-lb. trigger, which gives you a great experience right out of the box.

If you win this month's giveaway, you can take the your *Rock Ultra* with you when you go biking! Just slip it in Falco's *G125 Concealed Carry Bike Bag*. Also called a frame bag because it can be attached to a bike's frame, the *G125* conveniently conceals micro, subcompact, compact and even full-size handguns while cycling. Made of ballistic nylon, the bag gives no indication there is a pistol or revolver inside. It can also hold wallets, passports, keys or phones.

The original *Manix 2 Lightweight* was the winner of a coveted Most Innovative American Design award. This version of the *Manix 2 Lightweight* is identical to that award-winning knife, except for its handle color. Weighing a scant 3 oz., the *Manix 2 Lightweight* features a full-flat-ground CTS BD1N stainless-steel blade, FRCP handle and Spyderco's signature round hole for easy, ambidextrous, one-handed opening.

The *Rock Ultra* from Rock Island Armory and other prizes await you! All you have to do is join! Go to [GUNSMagazine.com/giveaways](http://GUNSMagazine.com/giveaways) or to the post office to mail a postcard. —Jazz Jimenez

**GUNS**

### MANIX 2 LIGHTWEIGHT

Manufacturer: Spyderco  
(800) 490-7147  
[Spyderco.com](http://Spyderco.com)  
Value: \$182





# PACKAGE GIVEAWAY



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## **G125 CONCEALED CARRY BIKE BAG**

**Manufacturer:** FALCO  
(800) 490-7147  
FALCOHolsters.com  
**Value:** \$79.95



## **ROCK ULTRA**

**Manufacturer:** Rock Island Armory  
(775) 751-4425  
ARMSCOR.com  
**Caliber:** 10mm; **Capacity:** 16  
**Barrel Length:** 5"; **OAL:** 8.74"  
**Weight:** 2.5 lbs.  
**Value:** \$849

# “REAL” GERMAN METRICS IN AFRICA GUN SHOW IN THE BUSH

Jeff “Tank” Hoover

Hearing the name Kobus, pronounced “Qwi-biss,” grabbed my attention. Anyone having such a colorful name surely lived an adventurous life. I was in South Africa and my host was talking about his neighbor who lived on the other side of the mountain. Meeting Kobus was no disappointment — he lived up to his name. With looks displaying a lifetime of working outdoors, he was weather worn and tough, like a hickory fence post.

I met Kobus during a cull hunt/product testing adventure at the Buffalo Bore Game Preserve. A 3rd generation sheep/goat farmer, his farm borders the Preserve and he’s the closest neighbor residing on the other side of the mountain with his wife, Elise. We first meet at the cookout, or *braai*, at the Preserve. Naturally, talk turned to hunting and guns after dinner.

The conversation and fellowship carried over to the next day when Kobus invited us for a visit at his home to show us his guns. I could



The precision craftsmanship of the Mauser ladder-rear-sight by the long-dead builders is simply amazing.

smell the makings of a story to share with you. I was excited.

## SHOW & TELL

Arriving mid-morning, Kobus was finishing up his many morning chores and pulls up in his pristine ’81 Toyota pickup truck, or as they say, *bakkie*. Entering the cozy living room, one can’t help but notice the beautiful mounts on the wall from previous hunts. Beautiful representatives of kudu, impala, warthog and bushbuck are represented, as well as a leopard skin and numerous photographs.

Kobus didn’t waste time as he started bringing out rifles, one at a time, and telling us about them. Being a dedicated sportsman, he has several in different calibers, each for specific hunting species and circumstances. Top quality glass is mounted on his rifles with names like Leupold, Swarovski and Schmidt & Bender.

## MARVELOUS MAUSERS

I was excited seeing Kobus’ vintage sporterized Mausers, the first being a beautiful 9.3x62. A classic African cartridge designed by Otto Bock in 1905, it quickly became popular among German settlers in Africa needing an affordable rifle powerful enough for double duty, be it shooting garden-raiding Cape buffalo or self-defense from anything else.

The 9.3x62 is basically a European .35 Whelen. Its bullets are 0.008" larger at



Kobus holding his beloved 7mm Mauser standing amongst his wall of trophies.



Sporterized Mausers were popular among German immigrants in Africa.

0.366" and its neck a bit shorter, giving it a little more powder capacity. A tad more powerful than the Whelen, it's not quite as powerful as the .375 H&H but sits happily between the two in the power spectrum.

Its versatility is tops for usefulness, practicality and availability in European nations. The 9.3x62 is still popular in Europe due to its performance, balance and history.

### 7MM MAUSER

The last gun Kobus showed us is really a gem. Kobus said it saw use in the Boer War of 1899–1902 in South Africa. It was converted from its issued-military guise to a beautifully sporterized hunting rifle displaying an octagonal barrel, sculpted stock and other skillful administrations. It's the rifle Kobus is holding in one of the photos.

During the Boer War, the British knew the Boers were deadly out to 800 meters with their 7mm Mausers. They soon learned this distance was stretched out to over 1,200 meters.

The 7mm Mauser was a very popular military cartridge in South America and is beloved by hunters today. Designed by Paul Mauser in 1892, the 7mm Mauser was well respected and feared depending on which side of the muzzle you were on. A smokeless powder cartridge, its high velocities of the day gave it a great advantage with its flatter trajectories.

### HUNTING

The 7mm Mauser casts a romantic spell with its hunting history going back to the days of WDM "Karamojo" Bell and Jim Corbett, just to name



Milling the Mauser barrel to octagonal makes it lighter and gives it a classy look.



Coffee and a 9.3x62 Mauser, what else is there?

a few. The British took to calling the 7mm Mauser the .275 Rigby. In Bell's case, it's documented he took 1,011 elephants using six Rigby-made rifles using 173-grain military ball ammo. Corbett was known for killing numerous large man-eater "cats" with Rigby-made Mausers in .275 Rigby. These gentlemen with their extraordinary hunting feats are probably more responsible than anyone else, for the 7mm Mauser/.275 Rigby's popularity and cult-like status.

### LAST SHOT

Seeing such splendid rifles warms one's heart — it certainly did mine. Being able to hold and shoulder one makes it beat faster. It was a wonderful experience seeing these relics in a land where they were used for their intended purposes, from a friendly sheep and goat farmer who still hunts. It keeps the magic of the hunt alive, as well as the history when holding, seeing and experiencing such grand old guns.

**GUNS**

The companies listed have featured advertisements in this issue.  
Look to them first when you are ready to make a purchase.

ADVERTISER	PAGE	ADVERTISER	PAGE
Bravo Company USA.....	2	Ruger .....	7
Dixie Gun Works Inc. ....	17	Savage Arms.....	5
FMG 2024 Calendar .....	53	Spartan Blades USA .....	27
HSS Corp.....	13	Springfield Armory .....	68
IWI US .....	3	Staccato 2011, LLC.....	9
Kirkpatrick Leather Co. ....	13	Walk The Talk America .....	64
O.F. Mossberg & Sons ....	67	WRB Inc.....	17



### MENTAL HEALTH: IT'S OK TO TALK ABOUT IT.

As firearms owners, we often have a tough time admitting when we need help, and that is particularly true with our psychological struggles. One great way to check in on yourself and your mental state is to take a free and anonymous screening.

Walk the Talk America is made up of gun people who want to help other gun people while protecting our rights.



Take a free & anonymous screening  
at [WTTA.org/LOVE](https://WTTA.org/LOVE)





was important, license holders and suppurating bottles of deer urine would be offered for sale.

## THE CROWD

Hand's down, the most defining characteristic of a real gun store was the standard-issue collective of geezers sitting around the counter. In fact, this was so ubiquitous I sometimes wondered as a child if there was a federal law requiring a person in faded bib overalls to be sitting at a gun store counter during all business hours.

The thing was, it was literally impossible to escape notice from "the regulars" while making a purchase and it was considered an important part of the sales ritual to positively acknowledge their sarcastic remarks.

These fellows often reminded me of a flock of buzzards sitting around on an old leafless tree, waiting for something to pitch up dead. In the gun store, they sat around primarily waiting for someone to come through the door and either ask for a recommendation for purchasing a firearm or to try and sell something. Regardless if the person was a raw neophyte or a former Camp Perry winner, the geezers had plenty to say about the matter. During the hours a customer wasn't present — roughly 11 hours out of a 12-hour business day — they argued among themselves about anything and everything related to firearms. If you had a sudden urge to get involved in a vicious verbal disagreement regarding the merits of Unique versus 4759, an old-school gun store was the place to go.

Now, when I say "Geezer," realize I'm speaking as someone on the cusp of geezerhood myself so no slight is intended. In fact, I actually looked up to the herd of old reprobates sitting around smoking cigarettes, spitting and cussing all day. I couldn't wait to become one myself.

And in a twist of irony, here is yet another example of the old truism, "be careful what you wish for, you might get it."

But who cares about truisms anyway? Geezers are typically male, retired,

range in age from 65 years to older than metamorphic rock, and spend inordinate amounts of jawing, drinking coffee and offering unsolicited advice to customers. From their well-worn perch on a stool at the counter, they can be a great source of information about vexing shooting problems or current game trends. However, you should always take their advice with a grain of salt since none of them have actually shot a firearm or hunted since the Eisenhower administration. They knew if they did, there was a chance they'd miss the latest dirty joke going around.

## SHORTCOMINGS

In spite of my nostalgia for the old-school gun shop, there were downsides. As mentioned, product didn't turn over very frequently so you couldn't be sure if ammo you bought had been manufactured in the current century or the can of gunstock varnish hadn't turned into a puck of yellow goo. However, the most endearing part of the gun shop was also its most aggravating — those regulars.

As mentioned earlier, you couldn't purchase or even shop without some nosy Nelly(s) offering his advice on your choice. Most of the time, the commentary skewed toward critical if not outright hostile and sometimes a local gun store could almost seem unfriendly to outsiders. Don't worry — it *was* unfriendly toward outsiders but most of the time they wouldn't physically harm you. The damage was purely psychological.

However, despite the sometimes-unwelcoming atmosphere, the aged merchandise and non-bargain prices, an old-time gun shop was always one of my favorite places to visit.

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## THE GUN STORE RETAIL NOSTALGIA

**Brent T. Wheat**

**I**t's been a while since I've been in an honest-to-goodness gun store. I don't mean a retail establishment selling firearms and accessories. Those places are pretty common. In fact, most towns with any sort of population will have a gun seller. What I'm talking about is an actual, gen-u-wine old-school "Gun Store."

The differences between a gun store and firearms sales establishment are as obvious as night and day, or the difference between politicians and normal people. I also find it sad so many youngsters today have never been to a place selling guns, let alone a real gun store.

On the off-chance a young person has wandered into this space and hasn't been frightened off yet, I'll share my remembrances of these legendary establishments, which are fast disappearing from the landscape. Without installing a machine to make oat milk extra-foam sugar-free chai cappuccinos, gun stores might be doomed.

### A DIFFERENT KIND OF PROFIT & LOSS

Making a serious, concerted effort to sell firearms is one of the official

criteria nowadays for obtaining a Federal Firearms License — you must make a legitimate attempt to turn a profit in the course of your business. But how silly is that? Don't the folks in Washington understand what a gun store is *really* about?

Back in the old days, defined as anything prior to Al Gore's Internet, a profit was one of the last things a gun store owner worried about. Oh sure, the proprietors wanted to make enough money to keep the doors open another year, but when you got down to it, profit was a minor inconvenience like a buzzing fly or the federal government. Far more important was making sure the coffee pot didn't run empty.

You see, the gun store was really about establishing a community and offering a space where like-minded people could gather and argue pointlessly for weeks about grip angle, somewhere old men could hang out when their wives ejected them from the house before the bridge club luncheon. The gun store was effectively the center of life for the local shooting community. Commerce was merely the facade this collection of so-called humanity hid behind.

### FIELD GUIDE

A real gun store was easily identifiable from the second you clanged the little bell hanging over the front door. The focal point was, of course, the sales counter. Cluttered high with old magazines, an ashtray or two, a greasy gun mat and perhaps a rifle bolt or scope, the counter itself was usually a recycled plate glass display case full of handguns. These were occasionally taken out to prove various points in the ongoing dispute of the day and sometimes to even sell! This was especially true when something new arrived — an event which happened like clockwork every month or so. You see, the local gun store didn't turn the inventory over very frequently.

Behind the counter was a rack of long guns that reflected the local hunting opportunities. Shotguns predominated east and south, while rifles were most common west and north. There were generally one or two brand-new guns still sporting manufacturer tags, followed by a diminishing sequence of rag-tag firearms ranging in condition from "pretty decent" to "Where'd you get this? A lake?"

Somewhere in the shop were a few shelves groaning under a burden of ammunition. Here you'd find exactly two boxes apiece of the more oddball calibers such as the .17 Zipper or .375 H&H Magnum, along with several different loads for the more popular cartridges such as .30-06. The in-demand boxes stayed relatively clean while the others all wore a thick veneer of dust on their slightly dog-eared packaging after years of handling but no purchasing.

Dig hard enough and you'd also probably find a real treasure such as a box of .425 Westley Richards or the .219 Donaldson Wasp. Legend has it this last one was ordered for Teddy Roosevelt but he went west and never showed up to complete his purchase.

The other things in the store gave a clue about the owner of the store. If he or she was an avid reloader, you'd have bags of shotgun shell hulls, bottles of powder and boxes of bullets. If hunting

*continued on page 65*



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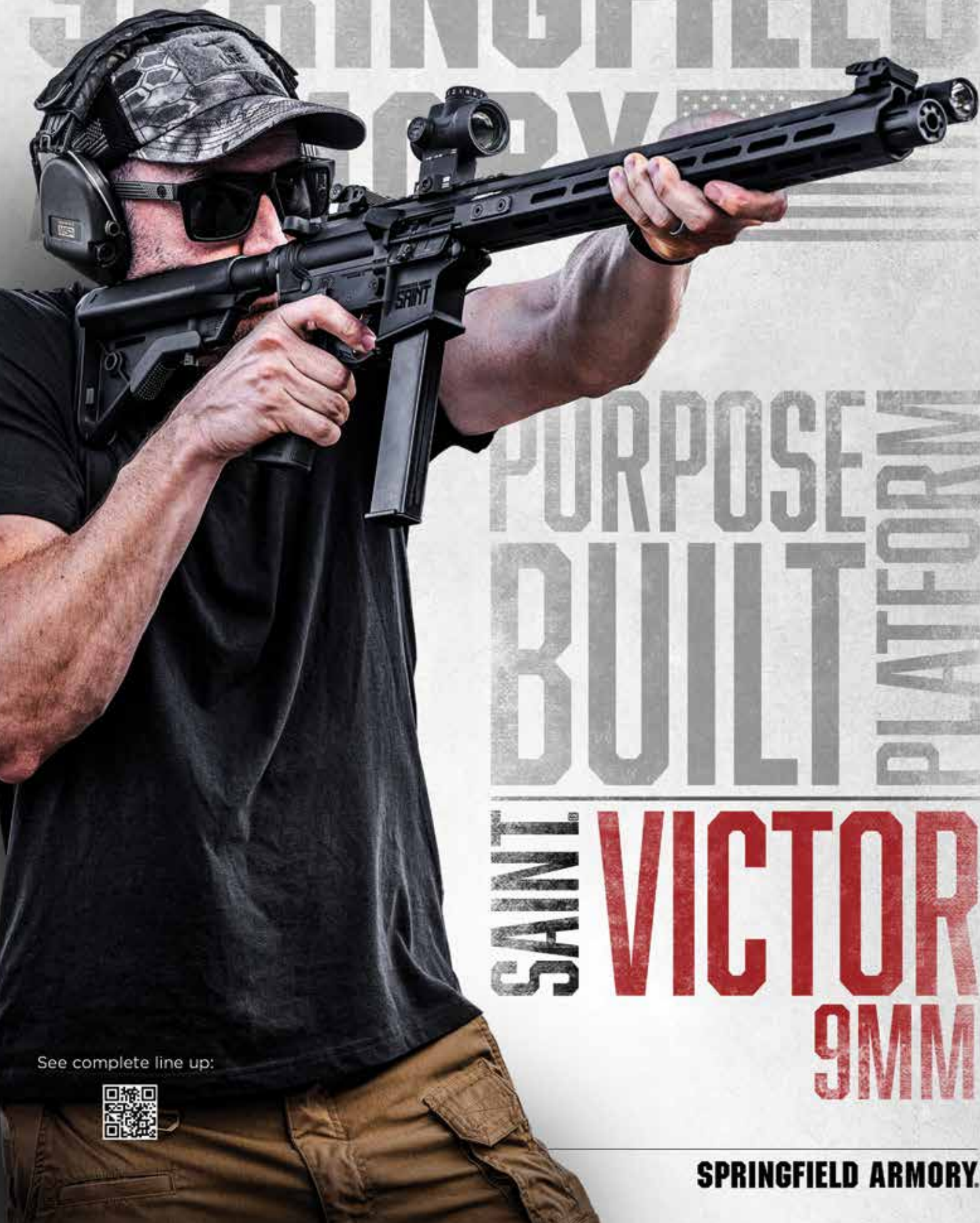
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